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Founders' Memorial Issue

The Enduring Theological Wisdom of the Founders of Concilium: Congar, Rahner, Metz, Schillebeeckx and Küng

Edited by Catherine Cornille

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Karl Rahner
Johann Baptist Metz
Edward Schillebeeckx
Hans Küng
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Editorial

In April of 2021, the last of the founders of the journal *Concilium* passed away. **Yves Congar, Karl Rahner, Johann Baptist Metz, Edward Schillebeeckx** and **Hans Küng** launched the journal in 1965, right on the heels of the Second Vatican Council. Its aim was to give voice to the new theological winds that were blowing in the Church and in theology and to disseminate and further advance the reforms that were initiated during the Council. Each of the founders a theological giant, they shaped not only the direction of the journal but of Christian theology in general in the second half of the twentieth century and beyond. They pioneered a new way of doing theology in a spirit of openness to the world, and stretching the boundaries of theological reflection by integrating insights and methods from the social sciences, modern philosophy and history. Often, the theological ideas for which they became renown were first presented in their articles in *Concilium*, and their contributions also at times contain original theological ideas that were not published elsewhere. They each edited numerous issues of the journal, and gave it the reputation it continues to enjoy as a progressive international theological journal that seeks to remain faithful to the Church and the Christian tradition.

With the passing of the original generation, we, the current editors of the journal, thought it appropriate to pay tribute to the founders by republishing two of their seminal articles. Since so much of their theological insight remains relevant today, it was not easy to make a selection among their many contributions to the journal. A list of most of the other articles published through the years is also included. In addition, we have invited theologians with expertise in the work of each of the founders to briefly comment on the republished articles and situate them within the broader context of their theological oeuvre. This adds an important and original dimension to this memorial issue.

In the case of **Yves Congar**, we have chosen 'The Church: The People of God' since it so profoundly shaped the understanding of the Church during and since the Second Vatican Council. It was published in the very

first issue of *Concilium*, and it surprisingly offers a nuanced defense of the expression 'People of God', pointing to its merits, but also to the need to complement it with other metaphors. The article on 'Reception as an Ecclesiological Reality' is a tour de force through Church history that demonstrates that the ultimate efficacy of Church teachings lies not in their promulgation but in their reception by the faithful. Commenting on these articles, **Richard Gaillardetz** emphasizes the instrumental role Congar played in the drafting of many of the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the way in which his notions of the Church as the People of God and his understanding of reception, though not uncontroversial at the time, have shaped the notion of synodality that today has gained particular purchase.

The articles by **Karl Rahne**r reflect his acute awareness of the challenges to Christian faith and theology posed by the modern world as well as by internal developments. His article 'Christianity and Ideology' offers compelling arguments for why Christian faith should not be classified as ideology, while also warning Christians of the possibilities and risks of becoming ideological. The article on 'Pluralism in Theology' rings even more true today than it did in his time. Rahner points to the stark reality that there does not seem to be a common ground or discourse that would allow theologians to disagree or even to realize where their frameworks differ, or how to evaluate different theologies. While he offers no answers or solutions to this problem, he points to the possibility of experiencing oneness or unity in the sacramental life and action in the world. In his commentary on these texts, **J. Matthew Ashley** offers a helpful clarification of some of Rahner's terms and ideas, such as the term 'transmanence' and the famous notion of 'transcendental experience'. He also draws attention to Rahner's theological courage and originality, but also his humility in facing difficult theological issues.

The selected articles by **Edward Schillebeeckx** offer a window into his exploration of some of his trademark notions and themes, such as the importance of "contrast experiences" in Christian experience and theological reflection, and the need for the Church to engage in the world of politics through a critical and prophetic perspective informed by the notion of Kingdom of God. Strongly inspired by Metz, Schillebeeckx also affirms the world and history as a source of continuing revelation and the

role of the Magisterium in discerning and engaging the truth revealed in history. In his commentary on these articles, **Stephan van Erp** points out that a radical shift to experience and a hermeneutical approach occurred in Schillebeeckx's thinking after Vatican II. Against the critique that he prioritized or emphasized experience over revelation, van Erp points out that Schillebeeckx viewed the cross as the symbol of the irreducibility of Christian faith and hope to lived experience and reality.

The articles by **Johann Baptist Metz** chosen for this volume focus on his monumental contribution to the development of political theology, and to his reflection on the place of evil and suffering in Christian theological reflection. Both articles emphasize the need for the Church to fully engage the social and political realities, or rather unfold the socio-political potentialities of faith, without providing easy or ready answers to the reality of sin and suffering. While the Church must engage the world, its eschatological orientation provides a critical and liberating lens on the present. In his commentary, **Dietmar Mieth,** himself one of the early generations of editors of the journal, draws attention to Metz' particular approach to suffering, not as a problem to be explained in relationship to sin and evil, but as a reality that calls for Christian solidarity and critical theological reflection. This is what is expressed through the notion of mysticism with open eyes. It calls for a de-privatization of theology, and its engagement with critical theory. Mieth, however, raises questions about the role of the Church, itself an institution that is not free from sin, in this process.

Many of the contributions to the journal by **Hans Küng** have focused on the development of an ethical consensus among world religions and the development of a "World ethos". The article republished in this volume illustrates the fact that Kung was far from naïve about the differences and "spectacular disagreements" between religions in terms of their respective interpretation of the basic ethical principles. And yet, he remained committed until the end of his life to the importance of developing common ethical standards of living between religions as the basis for world peace. The article 'Is the Second Vatican Council Forgotten?' reflects Küng's critical mind and fearless challenge to the Church. While applauding the many developments since the second Vatican Council in the areas of ecumenism religious liberty, liturgy, and openness to the secular world, he

also calls attention to its unfinished nature and to the need for reform in the areas of sexual morality, priestly celibacy, the election of bishops and the Pope. In his commentary on Küng's articles, **Werner Jeanrond** draws attention to his emphasis on the need for ongoing criticism and reform of the Church and society, and points to the central importance of the "humanum" as the central criterion in this process of reform. He reminds us that for Küng, all ethics had to be grounded in religion, or in a reference to the unconditional as the basis for ethical behavior.

The founders of *Concilium* were all white, male and clerics. But they were not afraid to push the theological agenda, and to risk being criticized and ostracized by the Magisterium and by more conservative theological voices. Each one of them was also investigated for their theological views at certain points in their careers. But their courage and fearlessness has opened doors for new voices and for further theological developments. The composition of the editorial board of *Concilium* has come a long way since then, including many women, lay and religious, and people of color. The journal has also come to give greater voice to people on the margins of the Church, and to a variety of forms of liberation theology. All this, however, is part of their legacy, of their attention to lived realities, to the voice of the people, to contrast experiences, and to the need for the Church to become de-privatized, and engaged in the realms of politics and ethics. For this and much more, the journal *Concilium* and the world of Christian theology owes them an enormous debt.

Catherine Cornille

The Church: the People of God

YVES CONGAR

As result of an intervention by the Coordinating Commission of Vatican II, a chapter *De Populo Dei in genere* was inserted in what is now the *Constitution De Ecclesia*, between the first chapter "On the Mystery of the Church" and the chapter "On the Hierarchy and especially the Bishops". The intention was, after having shown the divine causes of the Church in the Holy Trinity and in the incarnation of the Son of God: (1) to show this Church also in the process of constructing itself in human history; (2) to show this Church expanding and reaching various categories of men who are unequally situated in relation to the fullness of life that is in Christ and of which the Church is the sacrament; (3) to explain what all the members of the People of God hold in common on the plane of the dignity of Christian existence, prior to any distinction among them based on office or state.

There was only the briefest of hints of the first aim in the conciliar text. Therefore, it can scarcely satisfy the request made by Pope Paul VI in his allocution to the Observers on 17, October 1963: "Your hope that 'a theology' will be developed 'that is both concrete and historical' and 'centred on salvation history', is one which we gladly support. We believe that this suggestion deserves to be studied in depth." The third aim is fairly well attained, though it stops short of the formulation of a Christian anthropology, an image of the Christian man. As a result, after a substantial first part corresponding to this third aim, the chapter *De Populo Dei* discusses the second aim *De Membris Ecclesiae* without, however, using the term that would have occasioned interminable debates. A paragraph on the universality or the catholicity of the People of God links these two parts.

This initiative of the Co-ordinating Commission was momentous. The new chapter is important not only because of its content, but also because of its title and its place in the Constitution. Words have their own value; one can even say that they have their own vitality. The expression "People of God" has such depth of meaning and such dynamism that is impossible to use it in reference to the reality that is the Church, without also referring to certain other concepts. As for the place assigned to this chapter, everyone knows the often decisive doctrinal significance that may result from the order in which questions are arranged and from the place assigned to one of them.

In the *Summa* of St. Thomas Aquinas, order and place contribute to the intelligibility of a given fact. In the Constitution *De Ecclesia* the sequence might have been: Mystery of the Church, Hierarchy, the People of God in general. This would have meant a failure to honour the third aim expressed above: to discuss what affects the quality that is shared by all the members of the Church, before examining how they are differentiated by their function or state of life. This would also have suggested the idea that the hierarchical organization represents the first value in the Church, that is, the grading of members according to an order of superiority or subordination. But the sequence adopted was: Mystery of the Church, People of God, Hierarchy. Thus, the highest value was given to the quality of disciple, the dignity attached to Christian existence as such or the reality of an ontology of grace, and then, to the interior of this reality, a hierarchical structure of social organization.

Is this not the path followed by the Lord who first assembled and trained his disciples, then from these disciples chose twelve whom he made his apostles, and then from these twelve apostles selected Simon Peter and made him the head of the apostolic college and of the Church? Is this not, also, what we find when we study the very important theme of service and of the hierarchy as service in the New Testament?[1] It is within a whole people characterized by service as by its own proper form of existence that certain members are placed in a position of command which is, in the last analysis, a post of responsibility for service.

Only time can tell what consequences will follow from the option made when the chapter *De Populo Dei* was placed in the sequence that we have indicated. It is our conviction that these consequences will be considerable.

A wholly new balance will be introduced in the treatise on the Church, along the lines of Ephesians 4. 12, where St Paul states the place of the hierarchy and the role of its function: "… to perfect the saints [that is, the Christians] for a work of ministry [which is the work of the whole body and which St Paul defines as], the building up of the Body of Christ."

Yet, in Chapter II of the Constitution *De Ecclesia*, the Council only partially undertook the work of recovering the biblical idea of the People of God, which was one of the characteristic marks of Catholic ecclesiology in the years 1937-57.[2]

I. Renewal of the Idea of the People of God in Contemporary Theology

It is not always possible to pinpoint the first expression, the origin of the ideas, in a few years, have won general acceptance. Between 1937 and 1942 the idea of the People of God was firmly re-estabilished in Catholic theology. This re-discovery was the work of men who wished to go beyond the rather juridical concept of the foundation of the Church made once by Christ, and they sought in the whole Bible a development of God's Plan. This led them to re-discover the continuity of the Church with Israel, to locate the fact of the Church in the larger perspective of the history of salvation and to see the Church as the People of God of messianic times. This was connected with the re-discovery of the nature or the historic dimension and the salvific institution of revelation, which culminated in the re-discovery of eschatology. All this occurred at a time when, thanks to the liturgical movement and especially to Catholic Action, it became clear in a new way that the Church is not only the institution, the totality of the objective means of grace, but that it is made up of men whom God calls and who answer his call.

The liturgical movement, still in its early stages, and Catholic Action, then already well established, were jointly responsible for the re-discovery of the idea of the Mystical Body. Then came critical studies. In a short but incisive study, M. D. Koster questioned a concept of the Church as the Mystical Body (1940)[3]. He held that this idea was responsible for keeping ecclesiology in a pre-scientific state. The time had come, he declared, to elaborate a true definition of the nature of the Church which should begin with the idea of the People of God (of Christ), in which men enter by

baptism and take their place by confirmation and orders. These sacraments imprint a character; at the same time they are juridical signs that give visible structure to the People of God and are supernatural, efficacious symbols of grace bringing men supernatural life and salvation.

Shortly after, starting from an entirely different point of view, employing an entirely different technique, that of philological-exegetical analysis, Canon L. Cefaux showed that the concept of the (Mystical) Body was not, for St Paul, the *fundamental* concept to be used in *defining* the Church.[4] St Paul began with the Jewish idea of Israel as the People of God to whom had been given the testament and the promises, the knowledge and worship of the true God, and finally, his presence. Christian are the *new* People, profoundly linked with Israel; and their assembly, just like that of Israel, is called "the Church of God". It was merely to express on the one hand the deep unity in Christ of the communities or "Churches", and on the other hand the heavenly existence of the Church, its mystical union with Christ, that St Paul had called the new Israel according to the Spirit, the Body of Christ. This was but a transcendent attribute of the Church whose definition, if we wish to use the word, remains on the level of the fundamental concept, the People of God.

The Protestant exegete, A. Oepke, agrees with Cerfaux's conclusions though he would quarrel with some of his technical considerations.[5] There is no need now to present the many strictly exegetical studies devoted to the theme of the People of God.[6] More than one recent ecclesiology refers to the idea of the People of God or is structured according to this term. After writing *The Spirit and the Bride* (London, 1935), in which he presented the Church in the absolute terms of its supernatural existence as the spotless Bride of the Lord of Glory, Dom Anscar Vonier published a much smaller book entitled *The People of God* (London, 1937), in which he studied or at least looked at the human and historical aspects of this Church. According to him the "Church" means what is sacramental and cultic, while "People of God" denotes the element of life. God's total life in mankind. Our idea, therefore, was taken both in the sense of the history of salvation and as a compensating concept for an exaggeratedly perfect notion, even though a glorious one, of the Church.

The theme is treated more biblically by Frank B. Norris in *God's Own People. An introductory Study of the Church* (Baltimore, 1962). The

Church is this People whom God made for himself, which was in process of formation throughout the history of Israel and was given the form of the Church as we know it through the action of the Incarnate Word and the sending of his Spirit.

German theologians have done most of introduce the theme of the People of God into ecclesiology. M. Schmaus in his *Dogmatik* devotes a section filled with positive facts to this theme.[7] I. Backes earned even higher esteem for this concept by supporting it with abundant documentation.[8] Many other authors could be cited.[9] Let us merely point out the vigorous work of canonist K. Mörsdorf who follows M. D. Koster quite closely.[10] He defines the Church as a People of God structured according to the type of an organic body possessing members and a head and therefore with a certain hierarchical order. In other words, the Church is a people called together to bring about the kingdom of God. This People of God is structured and organized on a sacramental basis through the consecrations of baptism, confirmation (completing baptism) and orders (which is itself divided hierarchically into diaconate, priesthood and episcopate). All the members of this People share in the activity of the Church. There Mörsdorf develops a complete and altogether positive theology of the laity. He points out that some of the People of God are set apart from the rest by a special way of exercising this activity in the triple domain of worship, teaching and pastorate.

II. The Interest and Value of the Idea of the People of God in Thinking About and Explaining the Mystery of the Church

Historical Value

The idea of the People of God, in the first place, enables us to express the continuity of the Church with Israel. It at once invites us to consider the Church inserted in a history dominated and defined by God's Plan for man. This Plan is one of covenant and salvation: People of God connotes Plan of God, therefore sacred history. We know that his Plan and this history are translated into a positive and gracious historical intervention. Unique though this intervention may be (this note is essential to its historical character), its object is all men and even all of that creation which is linked with their destiny.

To relate the Church in this way to the Old Testament, is to ascribe to it at once all the values that belong to the biblical notion of the People of God and that determine their religious status:

(a) The idea of *election* and *call* (*ecclesia* and *convocatio*). This idea had been too often forgotten in the classical *De Ecclesia* treatise. In fact, how were the treatises on Predestination and Grace related with the Church? Election in Scripture is not just a privilege, it always involves service and mission. Someone is selected and set aside to *fulfil* a plan of God that is beyond the power of the one chosen. The whole Bible is permeated with the idea of *Pars pro toto* that is also found in the idea of first-fruits.

(b) The pregnant idea of *covenant*.

(c) The idea of consecration to God. The People of God is dedicated to his praise, to be his witness, to live in order to serve him, to glorify and to help others to glorify his name. The People of God belongs to him: *populus acquisitionis* (cf. I Peter 2. 9).

(d) Lastly, the idea of the promises. This does not mean merely promises of assistance ("I will be with you", Ex. 3. 12; Matt. 28. 20), but promises of fulfilment in a tension towards the future and finally towards eschatology.

The meaning of eschatology is one of the greatest re-discoveries of contemporary Catholic theology. This supposes an orientation of history and of God's Plan bringing all to a final consummation. This means much more than a static study *De Novissimis* such as was usually found in manuals of theology. It seems that the presentation of religion primarily as worship and moral obligations, the classic heritage bequeathed by the seventeenth century, deprived us in some ways of the realization that Christianity presents a *hope*, a total hope, even for the material world.

This religion of reason allowed eschatology to be laicized. In fact, at a time when Christians were neglecting this aspect of their message, philosophies of history were coming into being (Vico, Montesquieu) that were the preparation for the great modern interpretations of a history of the world without God and without Christ (Hegel, Marx). Confronted by religion without a world, men formulated the idea of a world without religion. We are now emerging from this wretched situation; the People of God is rediscovering once again that is possesses a messianic character and that it bears the hope of a fulfilment of the world in Jesus Christ.

The idea of the People of God, therefore, introduces something dynamic

into the concept of the Church. This People possesses life and is advancing towards an end established for it by God. Chosen, established, consecrated by God to be his servant and his witness, the People of God is, in the world, the sacrament of salvation offered to the world. By this we mean to say that God who has willed (according to an antecedent will) the salvation of all men, has placed in the world a cause, of itself sufficient to achieve this purpose effectively. Thus, he has sent Jesus Christ into the world, and has made the Church, dependent on him and derived from him, a messianic People formed according to the new and definitive Dispensation of the covenant and living on the blessings of this covenant by the means chosen by the Lord for this purpose. The People of God formed by revelation and by all the institutions and the sacraments of the new and definitive Dispensation of the covenant, is in the midst of the world and is for the world, the sign and, as it were, the sacrament of salvation, offered to all men.

The People of God is a people advancing towards the complete fulfilment of its destiny, a servant and witness people, dedicated to the furtherance of its own growth, according to the admirable term that describes this mission in many an ancient text. *Populus* or *populi* are precisely the correct words found in this connection in liturgical books.

Placing the Church in the context of the history of salvation, the idea of the People of God makes it possible to examine the difficult but important question of Israel, that is, of the Jewish people according to the flesh who actually did stumble (Rom. 11. 11) but who continue to be the people chosen and loved by God.[11] The relation of the "mystery" of Israel to the "mystery" of the Church is one we should try to understand and it can be envisaged adequately only in a perspective of the history of salvation; this includes the question of the Church's roots in Israel and the destiny of the Jewish people in the eschatological context (cf. Rom. 9-11).

Anthropological Value

When using the word "Church" in speaking or writing, the reference is usually to the institution as such. Sometimes this has meant, and even now may mean, that the Church is being considered apart from men, as it were not composed essentially of Christians. As a result, a distinction is made in some texts between "the Church" and men. This practically

places the mediating institution in opposition to those for whose sake it functions.[12] There I some reality, some truth in this. Yet, to speak in this way is to ignore an essential aspect of the Church, because the Church is composed of men who are converted to the Gospel. This aspect of the Church was especially dear to the Fathers. A thorough examination of their ecclesiological thought shows that their ecclesiology included an anthropology.[13] This is why the Fathers so often described their vision of the Church in terms of typical biblical personages (Abraham, Rahab, Mary, Magdalene, etc.), or of some Gospel parable. The Church indeed is composed of men who open themselves to God's call, Christians who live the religious relation with God into which we are introduced by loving faith. The liturgy parallels this and sees the Church as the community of the faithful who walk along the paths of salvation and frequently refers to this Church as *populus tuus.*[14]

In the community in which the Christian works out his salvation and sanctifies himself, he brings to all the benefit of the spiritual gifts he has received. We are here re-discovering the variety of the charisms or spiritual gifts given to so many of the faithful as well as to the salvific action of true spiritual motherhood exercised by the Christian community.[15] Certainly the idea of the People of God most appropriately sums up these realities, but it is only just to recognize that this is equally true of the "(Mystical) Body".

Historicity Value

The liturgy many times uses the expression *populus tuus* in a context of penance, for example, in the Lenten collects (see texts in Schmaus, op. cit., pp. 295 f., and A. Schaut cited in note 14). There, *Populus Dei* denotes the community of men for whom one implores God's help, his mercy, graces of fidelity or conversion. This community is the beneficiary of God's pardoning and saving act frequently with a typological reference to the various salvations from which Israel benefited, beginning with the departure from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea. People of God, therefore, describes the Church as composed of men advancing towards the kingdom and enables us to express the values of historicity.

As Dom Anscar Vonier saw so well, this is the *locus* in the Church where there are failures and sins, the struggle for a more perfect fidelity,

the permanent need for reform and for the efforts this involves. The Church as an institution does not need to be converted. Reform may be needed, at least in some of its parts, if it concerns the institution's very existence of its historical forms. But is it not remarkable that in the patristic period, which may be considered here as lasting until the middle of the eleventh century, the Fathers knew nothing of the medieval and modern theme of the "reform of the Church" but spoke of the restoration of *man* or of that Christian in whom the image of God had been obscured?[16] This is the anthropological point of view.

III. Interest of the Term People of God in the Question of the Constitution of the Church

The category People of God as it is found in Scripture makes it possible to affirm *both* the equality of the faithful in the dignity of Christian existence and the organic or functional inequality of the members. Israel had realized that the priestly and kingly character of the people as such (cf. Ex. 19. 5-6) did not prevent but rather required the existence of a priesthood instituted and ordered for the service of public worship. The priestly, kingly and prophetic people, the people wholly consecrated and witnessing, was organized according to priestly, kingly and prophetic functions. The whole history of Israel is illustrated and, as it were, condensed and systematized in a passage of Deut. 14-18, 22. In this connection the concept of "body" would serve equally well as that of "people". It is likewise a kind of type or model for Christian realities, according to which these realities are conceived.[17] There is always a totality of members, all living and active, all sharing in the quality or dignity of the life of the body and a structure of functions with a head that gives unity and controls the conduct of all. In a people, all citizens participate in the life of the city and perform specific tasks.[18]

In this connection we have already seen the significance of the chapter *De Populo Dei in genere* in the conciliar Constitution *De Ecclesia.* Let us here add a thought that is not foreign to this chapter and is related to the idea of the sacrament of salvation alluded to earlier. It is the People of God, structured in this way, which continues the mission and represents in the world *the sign of salvation* that God established definitively, totally, adequately *in Christo et in Ecclesia.*[19]

IV. The Value of the Term People of God in Relation to Local Communities and the Universal Church

The subject is treated most happily several times in the Constitution *De Ecclesia* under two different aspects.[20] The first is the consideration of the local community as the assembly of the eucharistic celebration (German theologians like to accentuate this aspect). The second is the consideration of individual Churches as representing in a certain way the different peoples and cultures in the Church. Obviously this is a vital topic in pastoral, ecumenical and missionary fields where it is very important to propose within the whole Church and in reference to the whole Church, a theology of the local community as the realization of the *Ecclesia* and a theology of individual Churches, for example, national Churches in their relation to its catholicity.

In patristic and liturgical texts, *populus* often denotes the local assembly, above all, the eucharistic assembly in which the deep mystery of the Church is to be found here and now.[21] Exegetes agree to interpret in this sense the terms used in the salutations of St Paul's epistles: "To the Church of God insofar as it exists or is realized at Corinth". He might just as well have said: "To the People of God insofar as it exists in Corinth." But it is a People uniquely one that is being recruited throughout the whole world for the kingdom of God. As for the peoples of the earth, inasmuch as they are conditioned by a certain special way to being and possess their own values of culture or humanity, all these plainly have a place in the catholicity of the People of God or of the Church. This follows from a theology of catholicity that can be supported by dozens of patristic and even liturgical texts,[22] and it is to be found in the chapter *De Populo Dei* of the Constitution *De Ecclesia*.

This chapter, then, seems to contain, in one way or another, all the chief values of the idea of the People of God, especially the value of the equality of the dignity of Christian existence as well as those values that belong to the chapter *De Membris*. The other values that we have just described are suggested or mentioned in passing, rather than fully developed.

From the pastoral point of view, the idea of the People of God lends itself to an extremely realistic catechesis and it communicates an understanding of the Church that is both concrete and dynamic. It can be shown how, in the midst of all the peoples of the world, God assembles a People that

is his – a People of God. Not only in the midst of these peoples in an anthropological and almost political sense of the word (in this respect faith and charity, transcending all differences, destroy no valuable natural bond; on the contrary, they purify and confirm all authentic values), but this People is to be found in the midst of every population unit – my village, my city, the block of flats in which I live, the train on which I am travelling, the hospital in which I am sick. In any given group of people, each of the different human gods recruits a people to serve him: Mercury, the god of commerce; Mars, the god of war and force; Venus, the goddess of love, etc.

The true God and Jesus Christ, his beloved Son whom he sent into the world, also wished to recruit a People to serve them, a holy People bound by the law of a love that is all humility and service. This People is recruited from employers and employees, from men and women, from Greeks and barbarians, but in it, above and beyond all this, is Christ (cf. Gal. 3. 28). This People has its law, the love of God and the love of neighbour. It has its assemblies, its hierarchy, its insignia, its customs. This People is called to give witness to Christ and to his charity. It is a People composed of sinners who do penance and try to walk along the path of conversion. This is a point that many "classical" presentations of the Church neglect, static and juridical as the often are.

Dialogue with Protestants

The ecumenical interest of the idea of the People of God is obvious, especially in the dialogue with Protestants.[23] Let us speak of this dialogue. This idea provides many points of agreement and encounter. What Protestants like about the category of People of God is first, the idea of election and of call: everything depends on God's initiative. Then it is the historicity that it involves in the sense of incompletion and of movement towards eschatology. It suggests less sharply defined frontiers, because it is composed of a multitude assembled by God himself. On the one hand, Protestants are happy to find in the frank use of People of God, a way of avoiding institutionalism with it intemperate use of ideas of "power" and infallibility, and on the other hand, the romanticism of a biological concept of the Mystical Body whose favourite expression is that of "continued incarnation"; just as if the Church were literally "Jesus Christ extended and communicated".[24]

The idea of the People of God, according to some Protestant authors, would make it possible to avoid an ontological concept of the Church, what Professor R. Mehl used to call "*Ecclesia quoad substantiam"*, and to see the Church simply as the assembly of God's eschatological kingdom. This is not a substantial body with fixed contents but the result of grace which, because it selects, may also reject. Under these conditions, U. Valeske asks whether it is still possible to speak of the infallibility or the irreformability of the structure.[25]

It seems to us that Protestant thought fails to see what the incarnation of the Son of God has introduced that is new and definitive. No doubt it is on the Christological level that this inadequacy begins. As a result the idea of the Body of Christ is not given its full value. There is a tendency to reduce the Church of the Word Incarnate to the conditions of the People of God under the old Dispensation.[26] In the dialectic of *is now* and *not yet* that is characteristic of the Church in its itinerary condition, it seems in Protestant thought, that the *not yet* diminishes or overshadows the truth of the *is now*. All this suggests to us that the idea of the People of God, rich and true though it may be, is insufficient of itself to give an adequate idea of the mystery of the Church here and now.

V. The Limits of the Idea of People of God and its Completion by the Idea of the Body of Christ

Composing his epistle, perhaps as early as the year 48, James, the "brother of the Lord", addressed himself to "the twelve tribes of the dispersion". This is a title that is derived from the theme of the People of God. James, no doubt, was writing to the dispersed Judaeo-Christians. But is it enough to think of the Church as the People of God, in the sense of the ancient Israel who might merely have received and acknowledged its Messiah? It certainly seems that the answer is no. Since the category People of God, within its own proper limits, means no more than this, it would seem that, to define or to designate the Church, this idea should be transcended and completed by another which can add all that is new in the Church in relation to Israel, while at the same time continuing the notion of the People of God.

What is truly new is clearly the fact of Jesus Christ and this means that Christ is not only a Messiah, but the Son or the Word of God himself

made man: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16. 16). Admittedly, Jesus is "the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1. 1; cf. Luke 3. 31, 34). This is to be expected because of the continuity between the covenant and the promises. But Jesus Christ, fulfilling the promises, is made minister of the heavenly eschatological blessings that are to come (cfr. Heb. 9. 11) of which the Law could offer but the shadow (10. 1). He is the Son of God. Incorporated in him, we can become his coheirs and enter into the joy, not of a world of this creation, but of the patrimony of God himself (cf. Rom. 8. 17). Granted that one alone ascended into heaven to take possession, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven (cf. John 3. 15); but if we are incorporated in him, we become with him and in him, the unique subject of filial life and we enjoy the right to God's heritage. The Fathers often repeat that we ascend to heaven with him and in him, glossing in this way St Paul (cf. Eph. 2. 6; Col. 3. 1-4).

We see how even the programme of the life of the People of God as it was announced in the old Dispensation of the covenant, when it is realized in the Christ-Son of God made man and become our head, means that the People of God constitutes the Body of Christ: a new title that is given to it under the new and definitive Dispensation (*"novi et aeterni Testamenti"*).[27]

Israel has sometimes been called "son" of God in the Old Testament,[28] just as Yahweh is sometimes called "Father". But this fatherhood consists in a relation of special intimacy and provident attention that is the result of Yahweh's election and his covenant with Israel. This filiation is not a personal or natural filiation. It denotes a particular relation of the People as a People, in virtue of which, having been specially chosen by God, it enjoys his powerful care and share in his heritage.[29] In the New Testament there is a filiation through the communication of the Spirit of God and through a true participation in the divine life.[30] Is it not significant that, having quoted the typical expression: "They will be his people and he, God-with-them, will be their God," the Apocalypse adds, alluding to and far transcending the literal meaning of the words of the prophecy of Nathan, "He who overcomes shall possess these things (i.e., the source of life) and I will be his God and he shall be my son" (cf. Apoc. 21. 3, 7)?

To tell the truth, the inheritance, which here is life itself, has been largely transposed in the course of the Old Testament.[31] In the promises made to Abraham, it meant the land of Canaan (cf. Gen. 15. 1 f.). The

idea of inheritance, and correlatively that of their, became progressively spiritualized in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. The blessings connected with the observance of the covenant were promised to a group of the pious whose hearts were circumcised (cf. Deut. 30. 5; Jer. 30. 3). After the exile this theme was repeated by Zachariah (8. 12) and Isaiah (57. 13; 60. 21; 65. 8-9). Eventually Yahweh himself became the heritage of the just (cf. Lam. 3. 24; Pss. 16 and 73). In the New Testament men may inherit the kingdom of God or of eternal life.[32] This is the land promised as a heritage to the humble (Matt. 5. 5). In the liturgy for the dead, this is the light that is promised to Abraham and his descendants.

Throughout the Old Testament runs the theme of the promise that God will dwell with his people. In their midst he will make his home in the Temple at Jerusalem. But it is not in a material place, nor in a temple made by the hand of man, that God wishes to dwell. His true presence, his true temple is himself. That is why in the new Dispensation, God dwells, as in his temple, in the disciple who loves him, in the Body of Christ offered and glorified (cf. John 2. 21), in the community of those who belong to him.[33]

Under the old Dispensation the Spirit of God was not revealed as a Person. The Spirit acted as a power in the men whom God called to execute his plans on special occasions. As early as the exile, through the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who announced a religious restoration, an interiorization of the Law was promised as the fruit of the gift of a new Spirit. Mention was even made of a new covenant (Jeremiah) and of a liberal outpouring of the Spirit (Isa. 32. 15; Ez. 36. 27; Joe 2. 28-29). This last text is the one Peter recalled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2. 16 f.). The promise was thereupon to be realized. The Spirit not only acts but he also dwells. His interventions are not only occasional, he has been given to the Church as the very principle of its life.

The encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*, citing St Augustine, developed the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the "soul" of the ecclesial body of Christ, making the bond uniting Pentecost and the Cross, uniting the pneumatological moment and the Christological moment. The Holy Spirit is given personally to the disciples, he dwells in them, but he is also given to the Church as such, not merely because it is the People of God, but because it is the Body of Christ.

The Church "in via"

Let us consider this ecclesiological aspect. The gift of the Spirit as a principle of life in the Church changes the conditions under which it is possible to speak of sin, lying and repentance in connection with the Church.[34] In one way or another, a distinction is introduced between the Church, inasmuch as it is a certain superimposed reality united to Christ by the bonds of an unbreakable union – spouse, Body of Christ, and the Church inasmuch as it is the totality of Christians who, each and all, are sinful and weak. These we may call with Dom Vonier the People of God. Nevertheless, just as it is legitimate to speak of the Church in the first sense and to attribute to it, under certain conditions, indefectibility and infallibility, it is equally necessary to recognize the duality of these aspects. The Church is not yet completely holy, as St Augustine acknowledged when considering the interpretation of Eph. 5. 27 ("without spot or wrinkle").[35] Here we have one of the many and very fruitful applications of the truth in dialectical form in which is described the condition of the Church *in via* between Pentecost and the Parousia, what *is now* and what is *not yet*. But just as we noted above, we must not allow the *not yet* to take all truth from the *is now.*

Let us add a last characteristic of the Church as People of God in messianic times, during the new Dispensation of the covenant. This is the result of the coming in the flesh of the Son of God and of the sending of the Holy Spirit, which makes it possible to call the Church the Body of Christ.[36] Under the old Dispensation of the covenant, the People of God existed in a special people, in the human, social and ethnic sense of the word. Under the new Dispensation, it is established through faith in the apostolic Word, on a spiritual plane that made it possible to draw new members from all peoples in the ethnic sense of the word, while preserving its own special existence and character. Therefore, it is not for the same reason that the People of God under the new Dispensation is spiritual and that it has *its own* social structure and *its own* formal visibility, independent of all purely temporal society, of all human reality of race, culture and power.[37]

Henceforth it is established not only in a new community but in a body *sui juris* and in the Church. From the beginning Christians were aware they formed a *tertium genus,* unlike the Jews and the pagans.[38] A soon as the Church could be free, it was characterized in an edict of a still pagan emperor as "*Corpus Christianorum*".[39] In reality this Church was the Body

of Christ. Charles Journet has cogently shown that the visibility and the spirituality of the Church grow in strength together and are inseparable.[40] This is a deep theological truth that history confirms in a remarkable way, especially the history of the Gregorian reform in the eleventh century when the Church, confronted by temporal society and Roman law, affirmed its own position as a spiritual society with its own law.

The People of God under the New Dispensation

We see how the idea of the People of God, however rich pastorally and theologically it may be, is alone unable to express the reality of the Church. Under the new Dispensation, that of the promises realized through the incarnation of the Son and the gift of the Spirit (the "Promised One"), the People of God was given a status that can be expressed only in the categories and in the theology of the Body of Christ. This is, moreover, what exegetes have been saying recently, N. A. Dahl,[41] R. Schnackenburg,[42] Catholic theologians like M. Schmaus,[43] I. Backes,[44] J. Ratzinger,[45] K. Algermissen,[46] L. Bouyer,[47] and Orthodox like the excellent patrologist, Father Georges Florovsky.[48]

Father Koster, whose book was really worthwhile, made the mistake of not encouraging the use of the category, People of God, considering it as opposed to the category of the Body of Christ, because he was influenced by medieval practice. Canon Cerfaux restricted the Pauline idea of the Church to the concept of the People of God and made the Body of Christ as a simple attribute of this Church, inasmuch as it is united and mystically identified on earth with the heavenly Christ. In doing this Canon Cerfaux failed to give full *ecclesiological* value to the idea of the Body of Christ. St Paul never contented himself with adding the attribute "the Body of Christ" to the concept of the People of God, just as he had received it from Judaism. He introduced the idea of the Body of Christ as the essential concept in treating of the Church. This idea was needed to explain what the People of God had become since the incarnation, Easter and Pentecost. The People of God *was* truly the Body of Christ. Only thus does it secure its adequate Christological reference.

Translated by Kathryn Sullivan

Notes

1. See "La Hierarchie comme service d'après le Nouveau Testament et les documents de la Tradition", in *L'Episcopat et l'Eglise universelle* (Unam Sanctam, 39), Paris 1962, pp. 67-99. Reprinted in *Pour une Eglise servante et pauvre* (Paris, 1963).
2. The idea of the People of God had been discovered prior to the works of Koster and Cerfaux, as a result of the slight efforts made everywhere to relate the Church to its biblical bases and to the Plan of God begun with Abraham. See the references given in U. Valeske, *Votum Ecclesiae* (Munich, 1962), p. 202, n. 62. Our own study cited there, published in French in *Esquisses du Mystère de l'Eglise* (Paris, 1941), pp. 11 f., was written in May 1937. An English version is now available: *The Mystery of the Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1960).
3. M. D. Koster, o.p., *Ekklesiologie im Werden* (Paderborn, 1940). K. Adams sharply criticized this book in *Theol. Quartalschrift* (Tübingen, 1941-4), pp. 145-66. Also *Volk Gottes im Wachstum des Glaubens* (Heidelberg, 1950); 'Von den Grundlagen der Kirchengliedschaft', in *Die Neue Ordnung,* 4 (1950), pp. 206 ff.
4. L. Cerfaux, *La théologie de l'Eglise suivant saint Paul* (Unam Sanctam, 10), Paris, 1942. English version: *The Church in the Theology of St Paul*, trans. By Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker (London: Nelson, 1959).
5. A. Oepke, *Das neue Gottesvolk in Schrifttum, Schauspiel, bildender Kunst und Weltgestaltung* (Gütersloh, 1950); cf. "Leib Christi oder Volk Gottes bei Paulus", in *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 79 (1954), col. 363-8. Oepke shows that, even in Jewish thought there is a logical movement from the people to the body, but not vice versa. The idea of body is a construction, an elaboration, not a primary concept. St Paul began with the idea of the People of God. This was the subject of his missionary preaching and of his proposal of the doctrine of justification. Only later did he move, as to a deeper doctrine, to the use of the idea of the faithful, to the affirmation of Christ in us and to all the ethical consequences of *vita in Christo*.
6. Let us cite especially H. F. Hamilton, *The People of God*, 2 Vols. (Oxford, 1912). This author has an ecclesiological interest. He shows the permanent significance of the Old Testament and its religion, the origin and meaning of the functions or of the ecclesiastical ministry. E. Käseman, *Das wandernde Gottesvolk. Eine Untersuchung zum Hebräerbrief* (Göttinge, 1938); H. Strahmann, "Laos", in *Theolog. Wörterbuch zum N.T.* of Kittel, IV, pp. 29-57 (Fasc. Appeared in 1938); N. A. Dahl, *Das Volk Gottes. Eine Untersuchung zum Kirchenbewusstsein des Urchristentums* (Oslo, 1941): this is a basic study, too little known because of the war but re-edited in 1962; C. Spicq, "L'Eglise du Christ", in *La Sainte Eglise universelle* (Cahiers théol. De l'actualité protest., Neuchâtel et Paris, 1948), pp. 175-219 (Cath.); F. Asensio, *Yahveh y su Pueblo* (Rome, 1953)) (Cath.); J. M. Nielen, Gottesvolk und Gottes Sohn. Zum christlichen Verständnis des Alten Testaments (Frankfurt, 1954) (Cath.); G. von Rad, Das Gottesvolk im Deuteronomium (Stuttgart, 1929) and Theologie des Alten Testaments, I (Münich, 1957); H. J. Kraus, Das Volk Gottes im Alten Testament (1958), trans. Into French: Le Peuple de Dieu dans l'A.T. (Neuchâtel-Paris, 1960); W. Trilling, *Das wahre Israël. Studien zur Theologie des Matthäus-Evangeliums* (Leipzig, 1959); H. Wildberger, Jahwes Eigentumsvolk. *Eine Studie zur Traditionsgeschichte und Theologie des Erwählungsgedankens* (Zurich-Stuttgart, 1960).
7. *Katholische Dogmatik, III/I, Die Lehre von der Kirche* (Munich, 1958), pp. 204-39.
8. "Die Kirche ist das Volk Gottes im Neuen Bund", in *Trierer Theolog. Zeitschrift*. 69 (1960), pp. 111-17; "Gottesvolk im Neuen Bund", ibid., 70 (1961), pp. 80-93; "Das Volk Gottes im Neuen Bunde", in *Die Kirche: Volk Gottes*, H. Asmussen, ed. (Stuttgart, 1961), pp. 97-129.
9. H. Hanssler, *Dad Gottesvolk der Kirche* (Dusseldorf, 1960). He does not really discuss our theme. Rather he provides a popular explanation oft he actions of Christians in the world. O. Semmelroth,

"Um die Einheit des Kirchenbegriffs", in *Fragen der Theologie heute* (Einsiedeln-Cologne, 1957), pp. 319-35, esp. 321-3. Father Karl Rahner uses the term "People of God" in a special way, to denote mankind in so far as it is now consecrated to God, because of the fact of Christ, and in a situation of salvation objectively possible for every man. The Church is called to establish this redeemd mankind in a formal society. Cf. *Theological Investigations*, vol. II (London: Darton, Logman & Todd, 1963), pp. 82 f.

10. "Die Kirchengliedschaft im Lichte der kirchlichen Rechtsordnung", in *Theologie und Seelsorge* (1944), pp. 115 f. "Die Stellung der Laien in der Kirche", in *Revue de Droit canonique,* 10-11 (Mélanges en l'honneur de S. E. le Cardinal Julien, 1960-1), pp. 214-34. In his *Lehrbuch des Kirchenrechts,* 7th ed. (1953), p. 25, Mörsdorf defines the Church as "the new People of God existing according to a certain hierarchical order and assembled to realize the kingdom of God".

11. Cf P. Démann, "Israël et l'unité de l'Eglise", in *Chiers Sionens,* 1 (1953), p. 23.

12. Here is an example from the Austrian catechism of 1894 which was repeated in the German catechism of 1925. Since then there have been changes: "Why did Jesus Christ found the Church? Jesus Christ founded the Church so that it may lead men to eternal happiness. How does the Church lead men to eternal happiness? The Church leads men to eternal happiness through the exercise, with God's help, of Christ's threefold function, namely his teaching power, his priesthood and his royal prerogative." (Cf. M. Ramsauer, "Die Kirche in den Katechismen", in *Zeitschr. F. kath. Theol.*, 73 [1951], pp. 129-69, 313-46, 330).

13. Patristic ecclesiology might well be still alive in Orthodox thought. During the discussion of the schema *De Ecclesia* at the second session of the Council, we were speaking one day with two friends who were Orthodox Observers, Father Nissiotis and Father Alexander Schmeeman. They said to us: If we had to write a *De Ecclesia*, we would write one chapter on the Holy Spirit and one chapter on the Christian man. Then we could stop. We would have said what was essential… This is just the opposite of an ecclesiology such as we had known, which was practivally reduced to a somewhat juridical theory of an institution, or a "hierarchiology".

14. See *Ausdrukformen der lateinischen Liturgiesprache bis elften Jahrhundert*, ges.u.darge. v. V. Manz (Beuron, 1941); A. Schaut, "Die Kirche als Volk Gottes: Selbstaussagen d. Kirche im römischen Messbuch", in *Benediktinische Monatsschrift*, 25 (1949), pp. 187-96; *populus* is found 90 times in the Roman missal; *ecclesia* 80 times, *familia* 12 times. For the Leonine expression, see P. T. Garriga, *La Palabra Ekklèsia, Estudio historico-teologico* (Barcelona, 1958), pp. 300 f.

15. On this point, see K. Delahaye, *Erneuerung der Seelsorgsformen aus der Sicht der frühen Patristik* (Freiburg, 1958), trans. into French with a Preface by us: *Ecclesia Mater chez les Pères des trois premiers siècles. Pour une renouvellement de la Pastorale d'aujourd'hui* (Paris, 1964).

16. See also G. B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform. Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (O.U.P., 1960).

17. On this subject, see J. Auer, "Corpus Christi Musticum", in *Die Kirche und ihre Aemter. Festgabe Cardinal J. Frings* (Cologne, 1960), pp. .1-23; "Das 'Leib-Modell' und der Kirichenbegriff der katholischen Kirche", in *Münchener Theolg. Zeitschr*, 12 (1961), pp. 14-38.

18. St Thomas insist on this point in one of the texts in which he speaks of the Church as People and City of God: *Com. In Ephes.*, c. 2, lect. 5, in connection with his doctrine of the city and its political rulers.

19. See P. Barrau, "Le Laïcat, signe d'Eglise", in *Masses Ouvrières*, 135 (Nov. 1957), pp. 130-88; Father Crespin, "Qu'est-ce qu'un laic?" in *Lettre aux Communautés de la Mission de France* (Feb. 1962).

20. In the chapter *De Populo Dei* and in the chapter *De Episcopis,* either in reference to individual Churches or to the priesthood and its exercise in local communities.

21. See J. Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche* (Munich, 1954), pp. 159 f.

22. In the writings of the Fathers and often in the Latin liturgy, especially in reference to baptism and to the motherhood the Church exercises there, *populi* (in the plural) denotes the faithful in so far as

they enter the Christian community and form themselves into communities. The expression denotes either the Church as community or the Church expanding among men. On this point there are many texts.

23. See Bo Reicke, "Die Bedeutung des Gottesvolksgedanken für den neutestamentl. Kirchenbegriff", in *Kirchenblatt für die Reformierte Schweis* (1955), fasc. 17; N. A. Dahl, "The People of God", in *Ecumenical Review,* 9 (Jan. 1957), pp. 154-61, dialogue between Protestant and Catholic theologians. On the role of this notion in the ecumenical dialogue, cf. Th. Sartory, *Die Oevumenische Bewegung und die Einheit der Kirche. Ein Beitrag im Dienste einer ökumenischen Ekklesiologie* (Meitingen, 1955), pp. 51, 57, 60, 61, 70, 71, 104, 105, 127, 128, 129, 130, 145, 156, 180. See other references in U. Valeske, *Votum Ecclesiae* (Munich, 1962), p. 239, n. 11.

24. See H. Asmussen, op. cit., pp. 33 f.; U. Valeske, op. cit., pp. 202 f., 233 f., 248-9. Criticism by Protestant theologians of the idea of "continued incarnation" is constant.

25. Op. cit., p. 249.

26. See our *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Eglise* (Unam Sanctam, 20), Paris, 1950, pp. 466-82; "Pour le dialogue avec le Mouvement oecuménique", in *Verbum Caro*, 4 (1950), pp. 111-23; *Le Christ, Marie et l'Eglise* (Paris, 1952); "Regards et réflexions sur la Christologie de Luther", in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon. Geschichte und Gegewart* (Würzburg, 1954), III, pp. 457-86, reprod. in *Chrétiens en dialogue* (Unam Sanctam, 50), Paris, 1964, pp. 453-89; *The Mystery of the Temple* (London: Burn & Oates, 1962), Appendix III.

27. See Appendix III, *The Mystery of the Temple*.

28. See Ex. 4. 22; Os. 11. 1; Deut. 14. 1; 32. 5-6; Jer. 3. 4, 14, 19, 22; 31. 9, 22; Is. 45. 11; 63. 16; Mal. 2. 10; Wis. 2. 16-18; Ecclus. 23. 4; 51. 10.

29. See *Bible de Jérusalem* note on Matt. 4. 3 and J. de Fraine, *Adam et son Lignage* (Paris, 1959), pp. 116 f.; Origen, *De Oration,* 22, 2 (ed. P. Koetschau, pp. 346-7).

30. Cf. Rom. 8. 14-17; Eph. 1. 5; John 1. 12; John 3. 1; 2 Pet. 1. 4.

31. Cf. L. Cerfaux, "L'Eglise et le règne de Dieu d'après S. Paul", in *Ephem. Theol. Lovan*., 2 (1925), pp. 181-98 (reprod. in *Recueil Lucien Cerfaux*, Gembloux, 1954, pp. 365-87); F. Dreyfus, "Le theme de l'heritage dans l'A.T.", in RSPT, 42 (1958), pp. 3-49.

32. The Kingdom: Matt. 25. 34; 1 Cor. 6. 9-10; 15. 50; Gal. 5. 21; Eph. 5. 5; John 2. 5. Eternal life: Matt. 19. 29; Mark 10. 17; Luke 10.25 and 18. 18.

33. See our *The Mystery of the Temple* (London: Burns & Oates, 1962).

34. For the first and last reference of note 26, see "Comment l'Eglise sainte doit se renouveler sans cesse", in *Irénikon*, 34 (1961), pp. 322-45 (reprod. in *Sainte Eglise*, Paris, 1963, pp. 131-54).

35. "Ubicumque autem in his libris commemoravi Ecclesiam non habentem maculam aut rugam, non sic accipiendum est quasi iam sit, sed quae praeparatur ut sit, quando apparebit etiam gloriosa. Nunc enim propter quosdam ignorantiae et infirmitates membrorum suorum habet unde quotidie tota dicat: Dimitte nobis debita mostra." *(Retract*., II, 18; PL, 32, 637-8). Com. S. Thomas, *Sum Theol.*, III, q. 8, a. 3, ad 2.

36. For what follows, see A. Chavasse, "Du Peuple de Dieu à l'Eglise du Christ", in *La Maison-Dieu*, 32 (1952), pp. 40-52.

37. This was one of the reasons for the victory of Chrstianity over Judaism, which was engaged in effective proselytizing, but which had to go through the Law of Moses.

38. Testimony in Ad. Harnack, *Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums*, 4 (1924), pp. 259 f.; P. Bariffol, *L'Eglise naissnate*, 7th ed., p. 92; M. Simon, *Verus Israel* (Paris, 1948), pp. 135 ff.; A. Oepke, op. cit. supra (n. 5).

39. See the Edict of Licinius, apud Lanctanctius, *De mortibus persecutorum,* 48 (Kirch, Enchir. Fontium Hist. eccl. ant., no. 353) and the studies of M. Roberti, "Il Corpus mysticum di S. Paolo nella storia della persona giuridica", in *Studi di Storia e Diritto in onore di Enrico Besta,* IV (Milan, 1939) and of A. Ehrhardt "Das Corpus Christi und die Korporationen im spätrömischen Recht", in *Zeitsch.*

D. Savigny-St. f. Rechtsgesch., Röm. Abt., 70 (1953).
40. Charles Journet, *L'Eglise du Verbe Incarné*, *II. Sa Scructure interne et son unité catholique* (Paris, 1951), p. 8 and following, 40, 44-9, etc. English title: *The Church of the word Incarnate,* trans. By A. H. C. Dounes (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955).
41. Speaking of the Pauline notion of the Church, he writes: "The difference is that the concept of the Church in the Old Testament is perfectly expressed by the concept of the People of God, while the Church in the New Testament is the People of God only because at the same time it is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit".
42. He writes: "The Church in the New Testament remains God's People but it is a People of God newly constituted in Christ. The Church is the People of God because it is the body of Christ and it is the Body of Christ is a sense determined by, or grounded, in, a concept of the People of God." – *Die Kirche im neuen Testament, Quaest. Disp.,* 14 (Freiburg, 1961), p. 147. (English translation in preparation).
43. "The Church is the New Testament People of God, founded by Jesus Christ, hierarchically structured, ministering to the advance of God's kingdom and the salvation of men, and this is the Mystical Body of Christ" (op. cit., p. 48).
44. See the studies cited *supra,* note 8 (in the vol of 1961, pp. 119 f.).
45. Op. cit. (note 21), p. 327.
46. *Konfessionskunde* (Paderborn, 1950), pp. 78 f.: "The Church is the People of God consisting of the baptized, given life by the Holy Spirit, made visible in the Mystical Body of Christ, held together by the bond of faith taught by Christ as well as by the magisterium, liturgy, and sacramental system instituted by him."
47. "Où en est la théologie du Corps mystique?" in *Rev. Des Sciences relig.,* 22 (1948), pp. 313 f., 330 f.
48. "Christ and His Church. Suggestions and Comment", in *L'Eglise et les Eglises. Mélanges Dom L. Beauduin* (Chevetogne, 1954), II, pp. 159-70: "The continuous existence of the 'Church' throughout the whole of the bibica *'Heilsgeschichte'* should be conceived and interpreted in such a way as to include the unique 'newness' of Christ, the incarnate Lord. And the notion of the 'People of God' is obviously inadequate for the purpose. Nor does it provide a sufficient link with the mystery of the cross and resurrection…" (p. 166).

Reception as an Ecclesiological Reality

YVES CONGAR

Even if this is not a dangerous theme, it is one that is not often examined. This is strange, for it is of major importance from the viewpoint of ecumenism as from that of a wholly traditional and Catholic ecclesiology.[1]

The very term "reception" has been used in modern times by legal historians, mainly Germans, in regard to the part played by Roman law in the usage of ecclesiastical or civil society, as in Germany from the fifteenth century. Grillmeier, who produced a major study of the Council and reception (L) drew on a recent analysis by one of these legal historians, F. Wieacker (*Privatrechtsgeschichte der Neuzeit*, 2nd ed., Gottingen, 1967). Wieacker is of the opinion that reception does not exist in the strict sense unless two different cultural areas are involved, one of which takes over a law pertaining to the other: in the strict sense of the word, reception is "exogenous". Grillmeier has made an interesting attempt to avoid a too global treatment of the reception of Councils, as formulated by Sohm within a stimulating though questionable systematic framework. Grillmeier tries to apply Wieacker's principle—a *genuine* reception is exogenous. Accordingly, reception would exist properly only in the case of the reception of specific synods by the universal Church or by a very large part of the Church, or by separate Churches: for example, if the Nestorians were to accept Ephesus, or the Monophysites Chalcedon. Anything else is reception in a wider, imprecise sense.

This way of looking at reception seems too narrow. Of course there must always be a certain distance, a certain difference, between the party which gives and that which receives. But if one remains within the framework of the one Church, its nature or its firm requirement of communion prevents the difference from being total. It is true that the theme of reception may

have an ecumenical interest: there is a concern for reception within the framework of the ecumenical Council of Churches, for example in regard to the re-establishment of communion between the preChalcedonics and the Orthodox (or the Catholics) (cf. H, I and J): this is a sign that a new chapter is beginning in this regard. But history offers an enormous array of actual "receptions", and theories of reception within the one Church. I want to explain the ecclesiological value of this fact. By "reception", I understand (in the present article) the process by means of which a church (body) truly takes over as its own a resolution that it did not originate in regard to its self, and acknowledges the measure it promulgates as a rule applicable to its own life. Reception includes something more than what the Scholastics called "obedience". For the Scholastics it is the act by which a subordinate submits his will and conduct to the legitimate precepts of a superior, out of respect for the latter's authority. Reception is not a mere realization of the relation "*secundum sub et supra*": it includes a degree of consent, and possibly of judgment, in which the life of a body is expressed which brings into play its own, original spiritual resources.

I. The Facts

That the concept of reception is still valid was shown adequately by Vatican II in its envisaging a collegial initiative emanating from the bishops, which could be a "*verus actus colegialis*" only if the pope approved it "*vel libere recipiat*".[2] This text speaks of the reception of the privilege of the bishop of Rome that Vatican II so firmly reaffirmed and to which history bears adequate witness. It constitutes an authentic statement regarding reception since it is a matter of consent (by means of judgment) by one church body to a resolution put forward by others. Apart from this, law as at present knows no case of reception (so far as I am aware) other than acceptance by the pope, and, after him, by the world episcopate, of new bishops of the Eastern rite elected to their patriarchate after a mere "*nihil obstat*" from Rome, but neither named nor confirmed by the Holy See. The word "reception" was not pronounced, but its essence inhered in the expressions "recognize in its communion", "put its trust in and adhere to the free decisions of the Patriarchs and their synods".[3]

It is not in the present *ius conditum* that we can find anything substantial on reception. The actual life of the Church should prove more instructive.

But it is history that we must interrogate for positive information.

(a) The Councils. The creed of Nicaea was "received" *in toto* only after fifty-six years of contentions punctuated by synods, excommunications, exiles, and imperial interventions and violence. The synods of Tyr and Jerusalem, in 335, deposed Athanasius and rehabilitated Arius. Pope Julius himself would not seem always to have been of the opinion that the judgment of Nicaea was irrevocably established. The Council of Constantinople of 381 marked the end of these quarrels. And that very Council owes its designation as ecumenical not to its composition (which was not at all ecumenical: St Ambrose complained that Rome and the West were ignored and absent—Epist. 14. 4-8; PL 16, 952-3) but solely to the reception of its creed by the Council of Chalcedon as the most proficient expression of the faith of Nicaea. In fact the so-called Chalcedonian creed was read after the Nicene creed, and the canons of 381 were taken as "synodikon of the second Council". But it was only in 519, and at first more by tacit acquiescence that Rome, or rather Pope Hormisdas, in "receiving" the profession of faith of Patriarch John, recognized Constantinople as second of the first four Councils.[4] The history of the third Council was hardly such as to allow it to be considered as properly ecumenical. A decision was rushed through by Cyril of Alexandria before the arrival of the Syrian bishops four days later, and that of the legates eighteen days later; and there were two assemblies (without any contacts between them). It was only because of the agreement reached during the two subsequent years between Cyril and his group, and John of Antioch and his supporters, that Ephesus was able to reach an elementary state of ecumenism. Newman often argued from this historic episode to the usage of those for whom the opposition of a large minority (during the First Vatican Council until the definition of 18 July 1871 inclusively) constituted a decisive barrier. The subsequent accession of those on the other side, that is their "reception", was like a "complement to the Council and an integral part of it".

With the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople, Chalcedon had also "received" the works of St Leo and the two letters of St Cyril (second session).[5] The famous "Peter has spoken through the mouth of Leo", exactly like the "Peter has spoken by the mouth of Agathon" of the sixth ecumenical Council against Monothelitism (as anathematized by Pope Honorius), was an act of reception: the Council recognizes Peter's

declaration of faith in the pope's formulary. But the total and definitive reception of Chalcedon itself required many explanations: it was a long story (cf. J: Coman and Grillmeier). There was non-reception, at least legally and literally, either from the Armenian hierarchy, or the Egyptian Copts, because of anti-Nestorianism: reaction, in the one case against Persia, and in the other against Byzantium, in terms of rejection of an "exogenous" decision. "That abominable council of Chalcedon", said John Rufus, Bishop of Maiouna around A.D. 515 (J, p. 371), just as some integrists now talk of "that awful Second Vatican Council...".

On the other hand, "reception" was sometimes established and expressed by means of explicit decisions. In this respect, acceptance by the apostolic Holy See of Rome was decisive in the West (cf. J, pp. 387-9). But reception was also confirmed by means of a more extended and complex process employing proclamation (the kerygmatic aspect), spirituality and theological elaboration (see J: Coman and Grillmeier). The liturgy consecrated and definitively assured the trinitarian and christological doctrines: *lex orandi*.

It is possible to study the history of all the Councils from the angle of their reception. The last that we had in common with the Orthodox East, the second Nicaean Council, of 787, itself proclaimed that for a Council to be considered ecumenical, it had to be received by the *praesules ecclesiarum*, and primarily by the pope.[6] But this very Council had to wait a long time before it was accepted in the West: not only by the Frankish theologians of the Council of Frankfurt of 794, under the influence of a bad translation and rivalry towards another Empire, but by the papacy, maimed and under attack from the Byzantine Caesaro-papism that seduced into its realm of obedience Sicily, Calabria and Illyria. Not until the profession of faith sent by Leo IX to Peter of Antioch in 1053, was there any *express* reception of Nicaea II by the popes.[7]

I should like to cite a few examples from the West in the second millennium. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) was received in the West in such a way as permanently to affect the life of the Church: whether because its profession of faith *Firmiter,* reproduced at the head of the Decretals, became a fourth creed and a kind of syllabus of instruction for clergy and faithful, or because sixty of its texts and fifty-nine of its seventy canons entered into ecclesiastical law and then into the Codex of 1917.[8] In

this regard, the reception of a Council is identical with its effectiveness; this point has a certain value, as will become clear, in respect of a theological interpretation of reception. The case of the Council of Trent will serve to illustrate the same remark. In addition, the problem and the difficulty of its "reception" by Protestants recurred incessantly in the correspondence between Leibniz and Bossuet. This was already a case of that "exogenous" reception looked for today in the ecumenical movement in order to bring about a consensus between separated ecclesiastical bodies.

The acceptance of the dogma of 18 July 1870 by the minority bishops who had left Rome the day before in order to avoid pronouncing a "non placet" when the voting was clear, was also a case of reception, and all the more interesting a one inasmuch as many of them, faithful to their principles, grounded this acceptance on the fact that the dogma was "received" by the whole Catholic Church. This was the argument of Mgr Maret. But it was not a convincing argument for Döllinger.

Within the framework of present christological research, which is concerned more with the man-Jesus of the synoptic gospels, there has been talk of the "re-reception" of Chalcedon.[9] Chalcedon was accepted and not contested. But within a new context of christological vision, and of ecumenical inquiry, a new reading of its history and of its underlying intentions is necessary in order to "receive" it once again. It is possible, analogously, to speak of a "re-reception" of Vatican I by Vatican II and, again, in a new context and by means of a renewed reading such as that which allowed the minority of Vatican I to be represented as the *avant-garde* of Vatican II.

I shall now attend to a few literary expressions of this method of reception:

St Augustine enunciates a general principle: "Vides in hac re quid Ecclesiae catholicae valeat auctoritas, quae ab ipsis fundatissimis sedibus apostolorum usque ad hodiernum diem succedentium sibimet episcoporum serie *et tot populorum consensione firmatur* (C. Faust. XI, i; PL, 42, 246): "In fiducia securae vocis asserer, quod in gubernatione Domini Dei nostri et salvatoris Jesu Christi *universalis Ecclesiae consensione* roboratum est" (De bap. VII, 53: PL 43, 243).

St Leo, speaking of the conciliar canons regarding the right of metropolitans used a formula which was often taken up later: "secundum

sanctorum patrum canones Spiritu Dei conditos *et totius mundi reverentia consecratos*"' (Epist. 14, 2; PL 54, 672; Jaffe-Ewald-Kaltenbrunner 411): a formula incessantly repeated by Hincmar and other authors of the high Middle Ages.[10] In regard to the Council of Chalcedon, St Leo wrote: "quae an universis Romani orbis provinciis cum totius mundi est celebrata consensu" (Epist. 164, 3; PL 54, 1150), but what is in question is certainly the internal *consensus* of the Council.

It was another pope, St Simplicius, who held definitively: so "quod apostolicis manibus *cum Ecclesiae universalis assensu* ..." (10 January 476: Denzinger, 160, not in DSch). St Gelasius, writing in 495 to the bishops of Dardania, gives the criteria which allow a good to be distinguished from a bad Council: The first is that "*quod universalis Ecclesiae probavit assensus*" and that the Holy See approves and holds; the second speaks "contra Scripturas sanctas, contra doctrinam patrum, contra ecclesiasticas regulas, *quam tota merito Ecclesia non recepit* et praecipue sedes apostolica non probavit" (Thiel., I; p. 395); a little later, the Council is described as one accordant with Scripture and tradition "*quam cuncta recipit ecclesia*, quam maxime sedes apostolica comprobatur" (p. 400). That part of *De recipiendis et non recipiendis libris* which may be attributed to Gelasius makes considerable use of the vocabulary of reception: "suscipere", "recipere", etc.

In his synodical letter of February 591 to four other patriarchs, Gregory the Great professed a veneration for the first four Councils, and then the fifth, "quia... universa sunt consensu constitua" (Mansi, IX, 104; PL 77, 478; MGM Epp. I, p. 36; JaflfeEwald-Kaltenbrunner 1092), quoted by Gratian, 15, c. 2—but he possibly refers to the agreement of the conciliar Fathers.

Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite was the first to introduce the so-called apostolic canons, those of Sardica and of Africa into the first two redactions of his collection, the Dionysiaca. But he excluded them from the third redaction, before 523, and grounded his action thus: "quos non admisit universitas" (Thiel. I, p. 986; F. Maasen, *Geschichte d. Quellen*, I, p. 965).

In his *Pro Defensione trium Capitulorum*, in about 548, Facundus of Hermiane argued insistently for reception by the universal Church of the Council of Chalcedon: "in Ecclesia Dei recepta est", "ab Ecclesia universali receptis".[11]

Hincmar of Rheims put forward a fine ecclesiology of the Church as a community, and a theology of the Councils and of reception. He approved of a text of St Leo in this regard. He defined the ecumenical Councils (*generalia*) by the fact that, since they were called by the emperor and consisted of numerous bishops with a "specialis jussia sedis apostolicae" ... "pro generali ad omnes christianos causa pertinente", they were "a catholica Ecclesia receptissima".[12]

The question of knowing what *constitutes* the ecumenicity of a Council is a complex problem which has been given various answers in the course of history and which is not wholly identical with another question: Who *recognizes* the ecumenicity of a Council? Since Damasius and even since the synod of 368, the popes have affirmed that their approval is necessary, and it is quite certain that no Council can be ecumenical if the see of Rome does not "receive" it. As has been pointed out, Leo and Gelasius united the assent of the whole Church with pontifical approval. But reception by the Church certainly has its place. In the full Council of Trent, Martin Perez de Ayala said, in a treatise composed for the Council: "Est secunda via apprehendendi veritatem in dubiis: Conciliorum scilicet generalium omnium consensione populorum fidelium receptam auctoritem" (*De divinis... traditionibus... Coloniae*, 1549, pars I, ass. 1; fol. 44v). It is possible to object to the Slavophile thesis according to which the Councils would have no dogmatic authority by or in themselves, since authority would pertain only to truth, which has no organ other than the Christian mind of the community of the faithful. A considerable number of Orthodox theologians do reject it.[13]

The texts speak another language. These same theologians, however, retain part of the Slavophile argument: it is not the juridical correction of a Council or its properly formal structure that ensures its authenticity, but the contents of its teaching. In support of this argument, a number of Councils that are just as regular as the others from the formal or juridical point of view, and which were rejected because the Church did not recognize its faith in their decrees, are cited in support of this argument: Rimini-Seleucia, 359, the Council of Ephesus, 449, the iconoclastic synod of Hieria, 753-4, and so on. The Gallicans, who were well acquainted with the history of the Councils, almost to a man held that acceptance by the whole Church was the factor that ultimately allowed recognition of the authority of a Council,

its ecumenical character, and the infallibility of its decrees.[14]

On the other hand, many local councils or specific documents acquired a universal value because the Church acknowledged its faith in them, and did so by "reception", by means of a process in which, above all in the West, reception by the see of Rome often played a decisive role. Hence the synod of Antioch in 269 condemned Paul of Samosata; its decision was communicated and received everywhere and proved a serious handicap for Nicaea. Similarly in regard to the anti-Pelagian Council of Carthage of 418 (DSch 222-30): the *Indiculus* written in Rome by Prosper of Aquitaine says, while citing its canons 3, 4 and 5 on grace: "quasi proprium Apostolicae Sedis amplectimur" (DSch 245); yet the *Indiculus* was subsequently incorporated by the pseudo-Dionysius in his collection, which brought about the reception of the Carthaginian canons in the West (cf. M., p. 334). The composite texts of the Council of Orange (Arausio) on grace (DSch, 370-97) were received, even though with some delay (they were drawn on by the Council of Trent), as possessing an authority which extended beyond the occasion that brought together fourteen bishops at Orange in 529. The same might be said of the credence given the eleventh Council of Toledo in 675, and its trinitarian creed (DSch, 525-41), to the extent that it was "confirmed" by Innocent III, and the Councils of Quierzy (833), Valence (855) on predestination (DSch 621-4 and 625-33). Indeed, it was surely by means of "reception" that the credal article *Quicumque,* of unknown authorship, and the *filioque* were recognized as authentic expressions of faith. In this way, individual Councils, whose actual representation was quite small, came almost, by reception, to rank with general Councils of the Church.

What is essentially important here is what constitutes the authority of Councils and what makes their decisions valid. Some first-class studies are available on this subject.[15] The validity of Councils derives from their expression of the faith of the Apostles and the Fathers, the tradition of the Church (*vide* Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria and Vincent). The Councils expressed the apostolicity and catholicity of the Church, inasmuch as they represented the totality of the Church and realized a consensus. Athanasius does not appeal to any other principles. After Nicaea (and always taking Nicaea as a model) there was a tendency to stress the assurance that Christ presided over, and the Holy Spirit was present at, Councils of

the Church. But the essential thing was to detect in them the faith of the apostles transmitted from the apostolic era by the Fathers of the Church (*Paradosis*). It was certainly for this reason that a Council in ancient times began with a reading of the decrees of previous Councils: it was intended only as a new stage in the process of transmission, but it was also an act of reception.[16] Conciliar theology seems now to be linked with that of apostolicity, of which it is an aspect. Just as the most decisive factor is not the formal succession (*nuda successio*), but the profound identity of the contents and of the faith; just as the two should go together, the most decisive element of a Council is neither the number of participants nor the juridical control of its procedure, but the content of its decisions, even though the two should go together.

If there is a truth universally acclaimed from early times to Vatican II, it is that faith and tradition are borne by the whole Church; that the universal Church is the sole proper subject, under the sovereignty of the Spirit who has been promised to the Church and who dwells in it: "Ecclesia universalis non potest errare". This is why the witness of several neighbouring bishops is required, and indeed that of the community of the faithful, in the case of an election and an ordination. This is why the greatest possible unanimity, agreement and consensus have always been seen as a sign of the action of the Holy Spirit, and therefore a token of truth. A specific theology was able to monopolize the recognition of the ecumenicity of councils and infallibility only by identifying the pope with the Roman church and the Roman church with the universal Church (of which one would not deny the pope was the supreme pastor). It was not by chance that Nicholas I thought of the Roman Church as the "epitome" of the Church, and Pius IX uttered that almost incredible statement: "La Tradizione sono Io!"

* * *

Two other cases of reception in essentially doctrinal matters deserve mention:

1. *The canon of Scripture* evolved by a process of reception. The very term is to be found in documents on the subject: the Muratori fragment (lines 66, 72, 82), the decree of the Roman synod of 382 and of Gelasius *De recipiendis et non recipiendis libris*; the decree of 4 February 1441 for the Jacobites "*suscipit et veneratur*") (DSch 1334), the decree of the Council of Trent on the writings and traditions that are to be received

(DSch 1501). This official, normative and express form of reception was preceded by a factual reception in the Churches, as described in the historical works on the subject.

2. *The synodal letters* were a means of communion and unity in the early Church. The Councils sent one to the major centres, such as Rome or Alexandria, in order to communicate their decisions to the other Churches. This fact is particularly well attested in the case of the Councils held before the Constantinian peace in the East or in Africa.[17] Evidently "reception" was the response to this communication. The same is true of the synodal letters and so on that the popes or Eastern patriarchs sent to the major sees, together with their profession of faith, in order to announce their election and to establish communion with them.[18]

(b) *Liturgy*. The extension of certain liturgical forms and unification occurred by means of "receptions" that were in some cases enforced. I shall cite only the reception of the Roman liturgy in the empire of Charlemagne (*Codex Hadrianus* and the Council of Aix, 817); the reception by Rome (then, after and since Rome, by the Latin Church) of the Mainz pontifical in the tenth century, which was of considerable theological significance, and then its ordinal, lent support to the thesis that connected the form of Orders with the "porrectio instrumentorum".[19] It is scarcely possible to use the term "reception" for the way in which Gregory VII substituted the Roman liturgy for the ancient Hispano-Visigothic (or Mozarabic) liturgy in Spain. On the other hand, it can be used for the process by which the Roman liturgy replaced what remained of the "Gallican" rites in France in the nineteenth century.

It is well known that the see of Rome, after Alexander II, then formally and *de jure* from Gregory IX (1234), claimed the sole right to canonize saints. Canonization, which was more a liturgical fact than a juridical decision, had previously been a matter for local churches, and was generalized "accedente totius Ecclesiae consensu et approbatione", as Mabillon says.[20] In this way a decision of the local cult was extended by means of reception. When the popes reserved to themselves the right to canonization, the canonists justified this measure by arguing that only the pope could impose on the whole Church whatever must be held by all. This was the opinion of Innocent and Hostensis. Thomas Aquinas justified with the same argument the reservation to the sovereign pontiff of the

promulgation of an article of faith (IIa IIae q. i, a. 10). In the same way it is possible to retrace the history of the adoption of liturgical feasts and their diffusion in the West, and, especially in Rome, of a number of Marian feasts celebrated in the East: the Purification, the Nativity, the Presentation, whereas the Immaculate Conception was received progressively from its base in England Just like canonizations, the saints' feasts spread by "reception" before the papacy started to regulate the calendar of what was (improperly) called the "universal Church". The commemoration of the souls of the departed on 2 November, a Cluniac feast established by St Odilo between 1025 and 1030, was introduced into the universal usage of the Latin Church by means of "reception".[21]

(c) *Law and discipline.* The theologians did not wait for the legalists to use the notion of reception. Cf., for example, Nicholas of Cusa, *Concordantia Catholica*, lib. II, cc. 9 and 10 *et seq*. Of course it was mainly the German legal historians who, in the nineteenth century, accredited the term and the concept, in regard to the "reception" of Roman law in Germany from the fifteenth century onwards. But, before that, there was a form "reception" in the Church. This process has been studied age by age. Roman law became an auxiliary form of law, supplying maxims and directives where the canons offered none (Gratian, Lucius III, the decretal *lntelleximus*).[22] As far as I am aware, there has been no adequate and systematic study of the reception or non-reception by the Roman Church of the canons accepted in the East. Hence the Roman Church received only the last thirty-five of the eighty-five so-called apostolic canons accepted in the East, and did not receive the canons of the Quinisext Synod or the Trullan Synod of 692 until they had been expurgated.[23] For its part, the East sorted out the canons admitted by Rome, accepting some of them and rejecting others, and not always following exactly the same text; the same is true of the canons of the Council of Sardica.

I have already mentioned some cases of non-reception: the nonreception of Chalcedon is all the more significant inasmuch as it did not touch upon essentially profound aspects of christological belief. Later there was the non-reception of the *filioque* clause by the East, the non-reception of the union of Florence by the Orthodox faithful, more or less alarmed by enthusiasts. H. Dombois also cites the example of the extended non-reception of the bull *Execrabilis* of Pius II (1460), which forbade any

appeal to the Council (K, pp. 827-8). It also happened that some doctrine or maxim received for a fairly long time might cease so to be accepted: for example, the pope's right to depose monarchs. In our own age, we have the case of the constitution *Veterum sapientia* of John XXIII, prescribing the use of Latin in the instruction of the clergy (i960), and cases of the non-reception of the papal dogma of 18 July 1870 by a number of Catholics, and of the teaching of Humanae Vitae by a section of the Christian laity and even of Catholic theologians. Is this "non-reception", or "disobedience", or what? The facts are there.

II. Some Theories Justifying Reception

In the integral text of the present essay (cf. note i above), I examine two theories which have now been abandoned:

(a) The theory of the acceptance of laws, held especially by Francois Zabarella (f 1417), Nicholas of Cusa, and some Gallicans (Pierre Pithou, Pierre de Marca, Claude Fleury).

(b) A variation on the preceding theory: the legislator is unwilling to force those subject to him who refuse his ruling. A theory held by Dominic of St Gemignano (f before 1436), Martin of Aspilcueta (+ 1586), Escobar y Mendoza (f 1669) and, in an extreme formulation ("absque ulla causa!") condemned by Alexander VII, on 26 September 1665 and 18 March 1686 (propos. 28, DSch 2048).

(c) Some considerations of the first Gallicans do seem to be of a more assuredly ecclesiological interest. The Gallicans liked to argue from ideas which do not at first seem appropriate or topical, but which do reveal their depth on the reflective analysis.

"Reception" evidently implied that the local churches, and local episcopates, were not reduced to the passivity or "blind obedience" which Bossuet cited. This is why the Gallicans, considering and then refusing a thesis of papal absolutism, associated reception with a conception of apostolic power expressed in two biblical texts: authority in Christianity is not domination (Mt. 20. 26; Lk. 22. 25); power is given "non ad destructionem sed ad aedificationem" (2 Cor. 13. io).[24] Those who did not conceive things other than juridically could not understand this as spirituality or an attitude of piety. A characteristic of Gallican thought, in addition to a sound historical reference (which, in its extreme form,

threatened to become a form of archaeologism), was its strong pastoral emphasis. It held to local pastoral structures. It introduced into the theology of power a consideration of its finality and of the use made of it, which was not finalized but conditioned and measured by the good of the Churches. This was commonly admitted in the case of laws: thus, in fact, St Isidore,[25] Gratian[26] and Aquinas.[27] Under such conditions it is impossible to admit at the head of the Church any discretionary and despotic power that would not take into account the good which the Churches and their pastors themselves have at heart, which no one is entitled to counter with a "Cur ita facis?" Since the extraordinary increase of what G. le Bras calls "pontifical domination", the canonists had variously introduced into the law itself the conditions for its reasonable and Christian exercise.[28] This was also the basis of the ecclesiological reactions of Pierre d'Ailly and Gerson, and of the valuable ecclesiology John of Ragusa advanced at the time of the Council of Basle.[29] The texts constantly cited a power (of the pope) given "*in aedificationem*"—not for the sake of domination, but in order to serve the good of the Church, and for no other end.[30] Such is the sense of the formula according to which the keys were given to the Church (to the "*ecclesia*") "finaliter".

It ought to be added that in modern theology, the text of 2 Cor. 13. 10, "in aedificationem, non in destructionem" has become a classic source of respect for the order desired by Christ in his Church. It was cited during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, by authors who had not a whiff of Gallicanism about them, sometimes even in order to justify the non-obligatory nature of a "non-received" law.[31] The same text was invoked at the First Vatican Council, both by the *de Fide* deputation and by those who wanted the limits of papal power to be laid down.[32]

III. Theological Interpretation and Justification

"Reception" has suffered from a construction and presentation on the level of constitutional law, like any legal theory. It was also by putting it on the juridical level and by using a dissociative polemical method that Capellari tried to refute the theory, at the risk of ignoring the historical fact and theological depth of reception.[33] This last derives from another level, as noted by P. Fransen, who qualifies it as "organic" in contradistinction not to "juridical" but to purely "jurisdictional" (cf. G, p. 85). It derives

from a theology of communion, itself associated with a theology of local churches, a pneumatology and a theology of tradition and a sense of the profound conciliarity of the Church. The notion of reception—but not its whole reality, since life is resistant to theories—is excluded (or even expressly rejected) when for all the foregoing there is substituted a wholly pyramidal conception of the Church as a mass totally determined by its summit, in which (quite apart from any consideration of a largely private spirituality) there is hardly any mention of the Holy Spirit other than as the guarantor of an infallibility of hierarchical courts, and where the conciliar decrees themselves become papal decrees "sacro approbante concilio".[34]

This ecclesiological process has been associated with another process that accords with it entirely: the transition from a primacy of truthful content, which it was the grace and mission of the whole Church to protect, to the primacy of an authority. In the theology of tradition it would be put thus: a transition from the *traditio passiva* to the *traditio activa*, or from *traditum* to *tradens,* the latter being identified with what, since the beginning of the eighteenth century, has in fact been called the "teaching Church".[35] I have pointed out that the authority of the "Nicene creed" was attributed not to a "power" of the hierarchical assembly, but to the conformity of its teaching with the faith received from the apostles. Essentially, in the doctrinal area, only the truth has authority. "Hierarchical" ministers exercise no more than a service, a function and a mission (Cajetan, in a commentary on St Thomas, calls the Church "ministra objecti"), it being understood that a mission includes the means necessary for its accomplishment: in this case, grace or charism. But this charism cannot, as such, be interpreted in terms of juridical "power". Such a "power" certainly exists: it is the jurisdictional authority which, in the Church and on behalf of its members, adds to the authentic proposition of truth an obligation which comprises "dogma" and is handed on, in the course of history, by means of an "anthema sit". But the accession of faith, when doctrine is in question, concerns the content of truth. In scholastic terminology, one would say that it concerns the *quod* and not the *quo*. If an *authority* relative to the content of truth as such is attributed to the ministry, one argues upon the juridical level, and the only permissible connection is one of obedience. If the content of truth and of good is taken into account, the faithful and, better, the *ecclesia*, may be allowed a certain activity of discernment and "reception".

We may now try to define the theological (ecclesiological) status of "reception" (A), then its legal status, remembering that this legality is still clearly *theological* (B).

A. The whole body of the Church, which is structured locally as individual churches, is enlivened by the Holy Spirit. The faithful and the churches are true subjects of action and free initiative. Of course there is no true pneumatology without christology: that is, without a normative reference to something given. The Spirit unceasingly renews that which is given, but he does not create anything which is substantially other. One of Sohm's errors is to have conceived a kind of pneumatocracy without given structures. But the faithful and the local churches are not inert and wholly passive in regard to the structures of belief, and ethical and cultic rules that history has necessarily defined since the original apostolic transmission. They have a faculty of discernment, of co-operation with the determination of their forms of life. Of course, in those matters which concern the unity of the Church, and therefore the unity of the faith, all must unite in a substantial unanimity, but they should come to that unity as living independent subjects. Naturally obedience is itself an activity of life and the Holy Spirit inspires it. But not everything is laid down in the tradition of the Church, and the dogmatic formulas themselves require a form of adherence which does not call merely upon volition, but upon intelligence and its conditioning factors, which are culture, knowledge language, and so on. The history of the slow reception of Nicaea or of Chalcedon cannot be explained other than in this context.

Hence we can see that there are two means of arriving at unanimity: obedience, and reception or consent. The first is insisted upon if the Church is conceived as a society subject to a monarchical authority; the second comes into question when the universal Church is seen as a communion of churches. It is certain that this second conception was the one that prevailed effectively during the first thousand years of Christianity, whereas the other one dominated in the West between the eleventh-century reformation and Vatican II.[36] It is true that this rule of local churches in communion with one another was the only form possible before the Constantinian peace allowed an open organization of ecumenical life within the framework of the Empire. I admit that another means of unanimity is possible: one by means of submission to a unique head of the Church viewed as a kind of

unique and immense diocese.[37] But, apart from the fact that the East and a part of the West never accepted this idea, and never experienced such a form of rule, we have to ask whether it accords with certain aspects of the very nature of the Church, whose authenticity is indefeasible and which Vatican II rediscovered. There are two conditions, supported by numerous witnesses, for this particular ecclesiology:

1. The universal Church cannot err in faith.[38]

2. Consensus, or unanimity, is an effect of the Holy Spirit and the sign of his presence.[39] It is the Holy Spirit who brings about the unity of the Church in space and time; that is, according to the dual dimension of its catholicity and its apostolicity or tradition. It is in fact a matter of acknowledging and expressing the tradition of the Church, in the sense spoken of by Eusebius when (HE V, 28, 6) citing a treatise against the heresy of Artemon. The unanimity which the Councils tried to attain to, and which should not be too idealized, intends this. It does not express a more or less perfect numerical sum of individual ways, but a totality such as that of the memory of the Church. This is the meaning of the formula "ego consensi et subscripsi": I have entered into the consensus which has emerged and by virtue of which it is clear that the Church believes because the truth has been handed down to it in this way. *It is this* which constituted the authority of the Councils in the eyes of the early Fathers of the Church. In this respect, reception is no more than the extension or prolongation of the conciliar process: it is associated with the same essential "conciliarity" of the Church. It may be opined (and this is the basis of the Orthodox position) that the ground of this vision is to be found in "theology", in the sense that the Cappadocian Fathers think of theology: the mystery of the Holy Trinity. If, in trinitarian theology, the consideration of the hypostases is not obscured by an affirmation of the unity of nature, but is instead fully developed, one may also, in ecclesiology, see personal subjects communicating in a unity which is not imposed on them so as to obscure them as individuals. Authority is evidently common to the three Persons, but each of them brings to it his own hypostatic mark, which ought to be reflected in the Church: the monarchy of the Father and the authority of the creator; the submission of the Son exercising his power within a rule of service; the intimacy of the Spirit who inspires initiatives tending to the kingdom of God, and a communion in which each individual is alive to

whatever another may reveal to him.

B. It is not reception which bestows their legitimacy upon a conciliar decision and an authentic decree: they obtain their legitimation and their obligatory value from the authorities who have supported them. As H. Dombois remarks: "Reception always has to do with a previous fact offered to the one who receives it as possessing an obligatory value" (K, p. 827). Even though reception creates neither legitimacy nor a legal force of obligation, one has had immediately to add that, in the soundest Christian tradition, *those ministers exercising authority never act alone*.[40] This was true of the apostles: cf. Acts 15. 2-23 and 16. 4; 2 Tim. 1. 6 and i. Tim. 4. 14; 1 Cor. 5. 4-5, where it is possible to discern an application of the communitarian discipline reported in Mt. 18. 17-20 (see also Clement, Cor. 44. 3). This was true of the bishops of the age of the martyrs, Ignatius of Antioch [41] and Cyprian.[42] The basis for this, well brought out by Mohler, is that a Christian always has need of a Christian brother: he has to be supported or confirmed by another, and, as much as possible, by a community. This is the basis of the "fraternal correction" which is also a real aspect of the life of the Church. The principle enunciated in Dt. 19. 15 on the necessity of two or three witnesses was taken up in the New Testament in a way that goes beyond the juridical or procedural framework, and assumes a general value as a rule of Christian behaviour.

If reception confers neither legitimacy nor an obligatory value, what does it do? R. Sohm says that it is an open process, and juridically very unsatisfactory:[43] this is very true. In addition, he attributes to it a purely declaratory value, "the significance of attestation". It attests that these decisions really arise from the Spirit which directs the Church, and that they are of value for the Church as such (and not primarily by virtue of their reception).[44] I am not far from subscribing to this formula: Bossuet also says, speaking of the judgments made by the bishop of Rome: "Since he is in effect at the head of the ecclesial communion, and since his definition intends nothing other than what he knows to be the feeling of all the churches, the subsequent consent only attests that everything has been done in due order and in accordance with truth."[45] H. Dombois, however, notes rightly that, in Sohm, this interpretation is connected with the same author's general thesis: in the early Church there was no law, but merely recognition of the action of the Spirit: "Sohm interpreted the

concept of reception in an extrajuridical (*ausserrechtlich*) manner" (K, p. 826). Therefore Sohm would not escape criticism, but less for what he says than for what he omits to say. Perhaps Paul Hinschius offers a better appreciation of the situation. In regard to the ecumenical councils of the first millennium, he remarks: "Reception is not an action which brings about validity and constitutes it in principle; it merely declares that decisions have been valid since the beginning; non-reception, on the other hand, does not harm the perfection of validity (juridical validity, that is); instead, it affirms that decisions have been null since their making."[46]

Reception is not constitutive of the juridical quality of a decision. It has no bearing on the formal aspect of the action, but on its content. It does not confer validity, but affirms, acknowledges and attests that this matter is for the good of the Church: because it concerns a decision (dogma, canons, ethical rules) that should ensure the good of the Church. This is why the reception of a Council is practically identical with its efficacy, as may be seen from Lateran IV, Trent, and even Nicaea, Chalcedon or Nicaea II. On the other hand, as Ph. Bacht remarks, non-reception does not mean that the decision given is a false one. It means that this decision does not call forth any living power and therefore does not contribute to edification:[47] for religious truth, and what is sometimes called the development of dogma, do not derive from a pure conceptuality of the mathematical or geometrical type; they derive from what tradition calls "pietas fidei" or "veritas secundum pietatem" (in reference to i Tim. 6. 3; 3. 16; Tit. 1. 1; Rom. 1. 18) or, in St Thomas, "sacra doctrina", "doctrina salutaris".

Distinctions have sometimes been made between power and authority. Power is juridical, it is a right; it has been defined as "the possibility that a man has of making his idea and his will prevail over those of others in a determined social system". Authority is spiritual or moral; it is an efficacious process of extension and transmission. There may be such a thing as a power without authority, but an authority without "power" may also be held and exercised: what, for example, is to be thought of St Cyprian, of whom Gregory of Nazianzen said: "He does not exercise his presidency over the Church of Carthage and Africa and no other, but over the whole region of the West and over almost all those of the East, from the South to the North, wherever his marvellous fame has reached."[48] One might also cite Isidore or Thomas Aquinas, but above all Augustine, bishop

of a city of average size, who for more than a thousand years determined the countenance of Christianity in the West.

The ideal would be an overlapping of the two: a certain authority, in the above-mentioned sense, should always be accorded to the act of power. Thanks to God, that has often happened. I would cite in this regard St Gregory, or St Leo, to whom we owe this formula: "Etsi diversa nonnunquam sunt merita praesulum (spiritual authority!), iura tamen permanent sedium (power!)."[49]

Once again we meet with juridicism: reception no longer has any place in a conception where formal juridical authority takes up all the space, without any consideration of the content of its decisions. On the other hand, in this perspective of recognition by the Church of what is good for it, we ought to listen to those conciliarist churchmen or Gallicans already cited when they speak of the idea of a power not of domination but of service, given "ad aedificationem", finalized and measured by the good of the Church.

But certain qualified defenders of papal monarchy also introduce some interesting considerations. Thomas de Vio (Cajetan) asks what the Council may add to the pope, when he answers the Gallican Jacques Almain. The answer is: nothing, from the viewpoint of the degree of authority, but something, and indeed a large thing, in regard to the richness and extension of the doctrine, for its acceptance without opposition and thus by all.[50] Cajetan's predecessor, like him a Dominican, Juan de Torquemada, acknowledged that in a case of extreme doubt respecting a matter of faith, a Council had to be summoned. In answer to the objection that this would imply that a Council was of more account than a pope, Torquemada remarked that this was not so in the case of a greater power of jurisdiction and when the pope was incontestable (even though he was writing in 1457, he had experienced the situation that arose from the great Western schism); on the other hand, it was true of a greater authority of faculty of judgment: for a Council was held to be able to bring to its deliberations more reasoning power than a single man.[51] Torquemada composed a reply to the demand of Charles VII of France, who wanted a third general Council to be held beginning in 1442). The bishop of Meaux, Pierre de Versailles, ambassador of Charles VII to the pope on this point (16 December 1441), put forward the following argument: there are two

kinds of authority, that of the *power* that one has received, and that of the credence (or credibility) that one may enjoy. Although power is the same power in the case of all pontiffs, the credence accorded each of them differs: St Gregory and St Leo had more than others, and the general Council is superior in this respect.[52] This is very like the distinction I have suggested between "power" and "authority". The concept of "credence" or "credibility" is in favour today. It may certainly be used to characterize the support that reception gives to a decision that is legitimate in itself.

Hinschius spoke of a "confirmation" (*Bewahrung*) by means of reception. We may accept this term, not in the technical, i.e., legal sense (as when, for example, one speaks of the confirmation of an election by a higher authority or court: CIC, can. 177), but in the sense of the increased effectiveness that the consent of the affected parties gives to a decision.[53]

Translated by John Griffiths

Notes

1. The following is a list of studies to which I refer hereafter by the appropriate letter, together with the page number. An extended text of the present article, with more detailed notes, is to be found in fasc. 3 of the *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et theologiques*, 1972. (A) R. Sohm, Kirchenrecht, I (Leipzig, 1892), pp. 320, 322-44; II (Munich & Leipzig, 1923), p. 71. (B) J. Haring, "Die ehre von der Epikie. Eine rechtwissenschaftliche Studie", *Theol. Quartalschr.*, 52 (1899), pp. 576-600, 796-810. (C) J. Didiot, art. "Acceptation des lois", *Diet, theol. Cath.*, I/i (1903), col. 295-9 (wholly negative). (D) L. de Duca, "L'accettazione popolare della legge canonica nel pensiero di Graziano e de suoi interpreti", *Studia Gratiana*, vol. Ill (Bologna, 1955), pp. 193-276. (E) Y. Congar, "Quod omnes tangit ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet", *Rev. hist, droit français et etr.*, 36 (1958), pp. 210-59. (F) E. W. Kemp, *Counsel and Consent. Aspects of the government of the Church as exemplified in the history of the English provincial synods* (London, 1961). (G) Peter Fransen, "L'autorite des conciles", in "Problemes de l'autorite (Unam Sanctam, 58) (Paris, 1962), pp. 59-100. (H) Livin Stan, "The 'reception' by the Church of ecumenical decisions" (in Rumanian), in *Studii Theologice,* ser. II, XVII, no. 7-8 (Sept.-Oct., 1965), pp. 395 ff.; "Uber die Rezeption der Beschlusse der oekumenischen Synoden seitens der Kirche", in Theologia (Athens), 40 (1969), pp. 158-68. (I) *Councils and the Ecumenical Movement* (World Council Studies, 5) (Geneva, 1968). Articles by Greenslade and Kappers. (J) *The Ecumenical Review*, 22 October 1970): "The Reception of the Council of Chalcedon by the Churches". Mesrob Ashjian, "The Acceptance of the Ecumenical Councils by the Armenian Church, with special reference to the Council of Chalcedon", pp. 348-62; J. Coman, "The Doctrinal Definitions of the Council of Chalcedon and its Reception in the Orthodox Church of the East", pp. 363-82; A. Grillmeier, "The Reception of Chalcedon in the Roman Catholic Church", pp. 383-411; E. R. Hardy, "Chalcedon in the Anglican Tradition", pp. 412-23. (K) R. Dombois, *Das Recht der Gnade. Oekumenisches Kirchenrecht* (Witten, 1961), pp. 825-36. (L) A. Grillmeier, "Konzil und Rezeption. Methodische Bemerkungen zu einem Thema der okumcnischen Diskussion", *Theologie u. Philosophie,* 45 (1970), pp. 321-52.

2. *Lumen Gentium*, 22 end; *Christus Dominus*, 4; in the 1970 version of the *Lex Ecclesiae jundamentalis*, can. 41 and 46, 1.
3. Communication from the Cardinal president of the Central Commission for the Co-ordination of Post-conciliar work and Interpretation of decrees of the Council, dated 24 May 1966, and a letter from the Eastern Congregation to Patriarch Maximos IV, dated 22 June 1966.
4. Cf. A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil von Konstantinopel und sein Symbol* (Forschg. z. Kirchen- und Dogmengesch. 15) (Gottingen, 1965). T. Camelot says in this regard: "It is a kind of consensus of the Church after the event that has recognized this (ecumenical) character of a Council which was ecumenical neither in intention nor in actuality" ("Les conciles oecumeninques des IVe et V>e siecles" in in *Le Concile et les conciles* (Chevetognc & Paris, i960), p. 73.
5. See W. de Vries, "Die Struktur der Kirche gemass dem Konzil von Chalkedon (431)", *Orient, christ. period.*, 35 (1969), pp. 63-122.
6. In regard to the iconoclastic Council of 753 (which called itself the "seventh ecumenical Council": Mansi 13, 350E), "quam neque receperunt neque concordaverunt reliquarum praesules ecclesiarum": Mansi 13, 208 DE209 A (Greek), 207 DE-210 A (Latin).
7. PL 143, 772 D-773 A. After having declared that he "received and venerated" the first four Councils, Leo IX added: "Pari modo recipio et veneror reliqua tria concilia ..., etc."
8. R. Metz, "Les conciles oecumeniques et le Code de droit canonique de 1917", *Rev. de Droit, canon*. 10 (i960), pp. 192-213; R. Foreville, "Lateran I, II, III and Lateran IV" *(Hist. des Conciles oecumeniques* 6) (Paris, 1965), pp. 311-17.
9. "Le concile de Chalcedoine. Son histoire, sa reception par les Eglises et son actualite", *Iremkon* 44 (1971), pp. 349-66 (p. 361). Report of the commission for "Faith and Constitution" on the colloquium held in 1969 on this subject.
10. Cf. Hincmar, PL 125, 384 BC, 1038 A; 126,113 C, 189 A, 190 C, 199 D, 232 A, 509 B, 510 A, 535 D, and PL 124, 890 AB; *De ordine palatii* 4 (MGH Capit. II, 519); Paschase Radbert, *Vita Walae* II, 16 (PL 120, 1635 A); Gerbert, *Ep. ad archiepisc. Senon* (PL 139, 268 B). The theme and the expression were to recur for some time; St Leo's text was cited in the canonical collections: *Anselmo dedicata* I, 105 (104); Yves de Chartres, Decret V, 346; Collect, duodec. P.I. 29; Gratian C. XXV, c. 5 (Friedberg, 1013).
11. Cf. Lib. II c. 1 and 2 (PL 67, 559 C, 565 B); lib. II c. 1 and 2 (PL 832 D, 834 C, 837 D).
12. Hincmar, *Opusc. LV, Capit*., c. 20 (PL 126, 359 AB, 361 A: before June 870). Cf. H. Bacht, "Hinkmar von Reims. Ein Beitrag zur Theologie des allgemeinen Konzils", in *Unio Christianorum*, *Festgabe L. Jaeger* (Paderborn, 1962), pp. 233-43; *Notre Ecclesiologie du haut moyen-age* (Paris, 1968), pp. 166-77.
13. Cf. my note in A. Gratieux, *Le mouvement Slavophile a la veille de la Revolution* (*Unam Sanctam,* 25) (Paris, 1953), p. 16 n. 19; B. Schultze, "Orthodoxe Kritik an der Ekklesiologie Chomjakovs", *Orient, christ. period.* 36 (1970), pp. 407-31; P. Duprey, "La structure synodale de l'Eglise dans la theologie orientale", *Proche Orient. Chret.* 20 (1970), pp. 123-45, n- 37-
14. Cf. W. Palmer, *A Treatise on the Church of Christ,* London, 1838, vol. II, pp. 154 ff.; references: Bossuet, *Lettre a Leibniz* (cf. infra); J. B. Bouvier, *Tract. de vera Ecclesia,* p. 234; Mgr de Barral, Archbishop of Tours, *Defense des libertes de l'Eglise gallicane* (Paris, 1817), p. 284; Abbe de Trevern, *Discussion amicale sur I'etablissement et la doctrine de l'Eglise anglicane...* (London, 1816), vol. I, pp. 191 ff. (fifth letter).
15. H. Goemans, *Het Algemeen Concilie in de vierde eeuw* (Nijmegen,1945); my review, *Rev. Sciences phil. theol.* 31 (1947), pp. 288-91; H.-J. Sieben, "Zur Entwicklung der Konzilsidee", *Theologie u. Philosophic* 45 (1970)> PP- 353-89; 46 (1971), pp. 40-70, 364-86, 496-528: the first article examines the idea of a general council in Athanasius, the second between Nicaea and Ephesus, the third in St Vincent of Lerins. See also A. S. Greenslade (I).
16. There is a form of reception of earlier by later Councils: e.g., Chalcedon receives Nicaea and Constantinople, and confirms the ecumenical validity of Ephesus.
17. Cf. the letters of the Palestinian Council of c. 190 on the question of Easter (Eusebius, HE V. 23,

2-4); Jerome's (Epist. 33. 4: PL 22, 447) remarks on the "consent" of Rome to the condemnation of Origen by the synods of Alexandria, of 230 and 231; letters from the Council of Carthage of 252 to Cornelius of Rome (cf. St Cyprian, Epist. 41; 42; 55); letter of Cornelius to Fabius of Antioch (Eusebius, HE VII, 30, 1—17); letter from the Council of Aries of 314 to the Pope (Mansi 2, 469-71). 18 The bishops who elected Maximianus to the see of Constantinople in place of Nestorius, write to Pope Celestine (October 431) and mention this custom as "ecclesiastical".
19. C. Vogel and R. Elze, "Le Pontifical romano-germanique du ioe siecle" (*Studi e Testi*, 226, 227) (Vatican, 1963); my *Ecclesiologie du haut moyendge* (Paris, 1968), p. 313.
20. *Acta* SS.O.S.B., *Praefatio ad saeculum decimum* (saec. V O.S.B.), VII, 1685, q. LVIII, sectio 6.
21. 1 do not know if this formula of the Roman Martyrology (1 January) goes back beyond Baronius (1584); the edition of 1914 reads: "Apud Silviniacum, in Gallia, sancti Odilonis, abbatis Cluniacensis, qui primum Commemorationem omnium Fidelium defunctorum, prima die post festum omnium Sanctorum, in suis monasteriis fieri praecepit: *quem ritum postea universalis Ecclesia recipere comprobavit.*"
22. Cf. A. van Hove, "Droit de Justinien et droit canonique depuis le decret de Gratien (1140) jusju'aux Decretales de Gregoire IX (1234)": *Miscellanea historica Van der Essen* (Brussels and Paris, 1947), vol. I, pp. 257-71; P. Legendre, *La penetration du droit romain dans le droit canonique classique de Gratien a Innocent IV* (1140-1154) (Paris, 1964) (thesis); H. D. Hazeltine, *Roman and Canon Law in Middle Ages* (*Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. V, pp. 697-764)-—Gratian, examined by A. Vetulani (*Rev. hist, droit francais et etr.,* 1946-1947 pp. 11-48) says that "non *recipiuntur*" without discernment everything admitted by the leges principum": *Diet. post* c. 4, C. XV q. 3 (Friedberg, 752).-Lucius III, c. i.X 531 (Friedberg II, 844).
23. Cf. V. Laurent, "L'œuvre canonique du concile in Trullo (691-692), source primaire du droit de l'Eglise orientale , *Rev. Etudes byzant.* 23 (1965), pp. 7-41.
24. The classic texts of John de Segovia (cf. A. Black, *Monarchy and Community. Political Ideas Controversy,* 1430-1450 [Cambridge, 1970], pp. 143, 159-60); Pierre de Marca, *De concordia Sacerdotii et Imperii seu de libertatibus Ecclesiae Gallicanae*, lib. II, c. 16, n. VI, p. 115; Honore de Tournely, *De Ecclesia Christi* [Paris, 2i7i7], q. Ill, a. 6; CI. Fleury, *Institution au droit ecclesiastique* [Paris, 1771], vol. II; ch. 2, p. 18 and ch. 25, pp. 195 ff. (D, p. 202 n. 9).
25. "Est autem lex honesta, iusta, possibilis, secundum naturam, secundum consuetudinem patriae, loco temporique conveniens, necessaria, utilis ... pro communi utilitate civium conscripta." *Etymol.* lib. V, c. 21 (PL 82, 203)
26. *Dictum post*. c. 1 D. IV (Friedberg I, 5): "In ipsa constitutione legum maxime qualitas constituendarum est observanda, ut contineant in se honestatem, iustitiam, possibilitatem, convenientiam".
27. Cf. I;a Il.ae q. 90, a. 2 and 4; q. 95, a. 3.
28. Cf. L. Buisson, *Potestas und Caritas. Die papstliche Gewalt im Spatmittelalter* (Cologne-Graz, 1958).
29. See his *De Ecclesia, l*ib. II, cc. 23 and 32; *Eglise de S. Augustin a l'epoque moderne (Hist. des dogmes,* III/3) (Paris, 1970), pp. 329-30; by Gerson, pp. 316-20.
30 Cf. inter al., Pierre d'Ailly, "De Ecclesiae et cardinalium auctoritate", in *Opera Gersonii*, ed. Ellies du Pin" (Antwerp, 1706), vol. II, p. 100; Gerson, *De potestate ecclesiastica, consid.* 1, 8 and 11 (id. op. 227, 237 BC, 243 B); *De aujeribilitate sponsi (papae) ab Ecclesia* (1409), 12 ff. (215 ff.); *Trialogus de materia schismatis* (83 ff.); *Propos. facta coram Anglicis* (123).
31. D, p. 224 and n. 60 also cite Gregory of Valence; *Commentaria theologica*, vol. II, disp. VII, q. V punct. V, col. 804 f.; Valerius Reginaldus, *Praxis fori poenitentialis,* lib. XIII, tr. IV, tit. 1, c. 16, n. 160, p. 523. Cf. also, Jemolo, *Chiesa e Stato negli scrittori politici italiani del Seicento e del Settecento* (Turin, 1914), p. 130 ff.
32. Preparatory Commission (Mansi 49, 707 CD), rep. by: D'Avanzo (Mansi 52, 715 B); Zinelli (52, 1105 CD; 1115 D-1116 A).
33. *II trionfo della S. Sede e della Chiesa* (Rome, 1799), chap. XVII.
34. Cf. Lateran III, Florence, Vatican I, etc....; Lyons I (1245) is presented as a mere amplification of

the pope's decision. Cf. G. Alberigo, "Una cum patribus, Ecclesia Spiritu Sancto edocta", *Melanges theologiques. Hommage a Mgr Gerard Philips* (Gembloux, 1970), pp. 291-319.
35. See my *La Tradition et les traditions, I. Essai historique* (Paris, i960) and *"Eglise enseignante", L'Eglise de S. Augustin a l'epoque moderne* (Paris, 1970), p. 389. I cite (p. 371), the text of Thomas Stapleton's (+1598): "In doctrina fidei non quid dicatur, sed quis loquetur a fideli populo attendendum est" (*De principiis fidei doctrinalibus,* 1572, lib. X, title of ch. V).
36. See my *De la communion des Eglises a une ecclesiologie de I'Eglise universelle: L'Episcopat et I'Eglise universelle* (*Unam Sanctam* 39) (Paris, 1962), pp. 227-60; *L'Ecclesiologie du haut moyen age. De S. Gregoire le Grand a la desunion entre Byzance et Rome* (Paris, 1968). Other references L, p. 332, n. 30.
37. See the texts cited in *De la communion* (*supra*, n. 36), p. 238 f. Also Gregory IX, letter *Vas ammirabile sol. Gaudemus,* of 13.1.1240 to Queen Georgia de Rusude and her sons David (Potthast 10841), in Baronius-Raynaldus, *Annales* eccl. XXI, pp. 225-6. The Roman Church, as the head of the whole body, is supposed to contain and represent the whole ecclesial body. The same idea appears in St Nicholas I (858-867): "Suscepit ergo et continet in se Romana Ecclesia quod Deus universalem Ecclesiam suscipere ac continere praecipit": *Epist.* 88 (MGH. Epp. VI, p. 480, 15; PL 119, 952), comp. Epist. 90 (p. 498,5)-
38. Texts in O. Rousseau et al., *L'infaillibilite de I'Eglise* (Chevetogne, 1963); G. Thils, *L'infaillibilite du peuple chretien "in credendo". Notes de theologie posttridentine* (Paris & Louvain, 1963). Cf. St Thomas, IIa II.ae q. 1, a. 9, sed. c.; q. 2 a. 6, ad 3um; Quodl. IX, 16; *Const. Dogm. Lumen gentium* n. 12.
39. See my article "Konzil als Versammlung und grundsatzliche Konziliaritat der Kirche": *Gott in Welt, Festgabe K. Rahner*, vol. II (Freiburg im Br., 1964, pp. 135-65 (p. 152 ff.), reprinted in: *Le Concile au jour le jour. Deuxieme session (*Paris, 1964), pp. 9-39. See also, K. Oehler, "Der Consensus omnium als Kriterium der Wahrheit in der antiken Philosophic und der Patristik", *Antike und Abendland* 10 (1961), pp. 103-29, reprinted in K. Oehler, *Antike Philosophie und byzantinisches Mittelalter. Aujsdtze zur Gesch. des griech. Denkens* (Munich, 19 69), pp. 234-71.
40. See J. A. Mohler, *L'unite dans l'Eglise ou le principe du Catholicisme d'apres 1'esprit des Peres des trois premiers siecles,* § 16. Trad. A. de Lilienfeld (*Unam Sanctam* 2) (Paris, 1938), pp. 28 ff.; Darwell Stone, *The Christian Church* (London, 3i9i5), pp. 333 ff.; Y. Congar, *Jalons pour une theologie du la'icat (Unam Sanctam*, 23) (Paris, 1953), esp. chap. V.
41 Cf. Ephes. 20; Magnes. 6, 7; Trail. 3.
42 Cf. Epist. 14, 4; 55, 8, 5. Cf. *Jalons*, pp. 329 ff. and 335.
43. *Das altkatholische Kirchenrecht und das Dekret Gratians Festschrift der Leipziger]uristen-Fa\ult'dt jiir A. Wach*. (Munich & Leipzig, 1918) (reprinted: Darmstadt, 1967), p. 134.
44. *Kirchenrecht* I (Leipzig, 1892), p. 320.
45. *Dissertatio praevia* of 1696 to the Gallican clergy, n. 78.
46. *Das Kirchenrecht der Katholiken und Protestanten in Deutschland,* vol. III/i (Berlin, 1879), p. 349.
47. H. Bacht, "Vom Lehramt der Kirche und in der Kirche", *Catholica* 25 (1971), pp. 144-67 (pp. 157 ff.: "Das Problem der Rezeption im katholischen Verstandnis").
48. *Oratio* XXIV, 12 in Laud. Cypr. (PG 35, 1184).
49 *Epist. 106 ad Anatolium* (Jaffe-Kaltenbrunner 483; PL 54, 1007 B); 119 ad Maxim. Antioch., 3 (Jaffe-K. 495; col. 1043 A).
50. *Apologia de comparata auctoritate Papae et Concilii,* c. XI (1514): ed. V. M. I. Pollet (Rome, 1936), n. 636, p. 269.
51. Ioannes a Turrecremata, *In Gratiani Decretorum primam Commentarii,* in D.XIX, c. 8 (Venetiis, 1578), p. 176*).
52 Dans Baronius-Raynaldus, Annales; ed. Theiner, t. XXVIII, p. 363 (n. 10).
53 Compare this comment of St Albert the Great on Apoc. 5, 14: "Duplex est confirmatio: per ratificationem, et haec est auctoritas et pertinet ad majores. Alia est par approbationem et consensum, et haec pertinet ad minores" (*Opera*, ed. Borgnet, vol. XXXVIII, p. 571).

Commentary

RICHARD GAILLARDETZ

By practically any measure, Yves Congar stands as a colossus in the pantheon of modern theologians. He was born the same year as Karl Rahner—another founding member of this journal—and the French Dominican's prodigious scholarship in the history of theology, pneumatology, ecumenism and, above all, ecclesiology, exerted a range of influence on 20th century Catholicism matched only by the German Jesuit. Congar's ecclesiological project, so much of which found its way into the council documents, was driven by a determination to recover the sacramental and trinitarian foundations for the church, foundations that had in large measure been obscured by more apologetic and juridical considerations. He persistently nudged the church he loved beyond a reflexive defensiveness before the world. But a few weeks after his ordination in 1930, Congar composed the following prayer:

> My God, why does your church always condemn? True she must guard the deposit of faith, but is there no other means than condemnation, especially condemning so quickly? ….[I]f your church were only more encouraging…. My God, your church is so Latin and so centralized…but Rome is not the world and Latin civilization is not the whole of humanity…. My God, why has your church, which is holy and is one, unique, holy and true, why has she so often such an austere and forbidding face when in reality she is full of youth and life?[1]

Here, at the age of 26, Congar had articulated many of the concerns that would occupy him over his long career. Sadly, for much of the first half of his career, this kind of frank assessment would put him at odds

with the powers that be. He reluctantly accepted the restrictions that were imposed on him, often unfairly. Yet he understood well that the real issue underlying his censure was not any phantom heresy in his work but the way in which his work threatened those who held ecclesiastical power. In a letter to his mother he wrote:

> What I am blamed for is usually very little. Most of the time, whatever problem is raised about an idea in my work is explained in the preceding line in that same work. What has put me in the wrong (in their eyes) is not having said false things, but having said things they do not want to be said….What Rome wants is to impose on the whole of the Christian world: to think nothing, to say nothing, except what they propose. There would be one pope who thinks everything, who says everything and the totality of being a Catholic consists in obeying him and saying, Isn't it all wonderful.[2]

Elsewhere he would compare his treatment by church authorities unfavorably to the German Gestapo.

Congar's principal theological project pursued what he termed a "total ecclesiology," that is, a theology that did justice to the mystery of the church in all its many dimensions.[3] He was convinced that the only adequate theology of the laity must appear within such a total ecclesiology.[4] This total ecclesiology would go beyond the arid, juridical approaches to the church then being taught in seminary manuals. Congar believed this manualist tradition veered toward a reductive "hierarchology." Rose Beal notes, "[w]hereas an integral ecclesiology considered the totality of all the dimensions of the church, a hierarchology tended to neglect all dimensions except the hierarchical structure and powers of the church."[5] He saw the need for this total ecclesiology to attend more comprehensively to the work of the Holy Spirit if it were to avoid the charge of ecclesial Christomonism.[6] A renewed ecclesiology must also reestablish the eschatological conditioning of the church as a pilgrim people immersed in history and ever moving toward its perfection "in the consummation of history," as *Lumen gentium* 48 would put it. It was precisely this eschatological conditioning that rendered the church subject to ongoing reform and renewal.

Appointed by Pope John XXIII as a conciliar *peritus*, the sheer breadth of Congar's influence on Vatican II was unmatched. In his council journal he recounted, in the entry for December 7th, 1965, all the conciliar texts to which he made a direct contribution, some to the point of virtually authoring the text. This list included eight of the sixteen council documents, including three of the four conciliar constitutions. That morning a number of the conciliar texts were read out in the public session prior to formal approval. Congar noted in his journal, "…what was read out this morning came, to a very large extent, from me."[7]

Congar's extraordinary influence at the council helps explain the enduring significance of the article he contributed to the first volume of *Concilium*: "The Church: the People of God". The article stands as an apologia for one of the most important ecclesiological developments of the council, its recovery of the biblical affirmation of the church as the "people of God." Indeed, the opening lines of this essay recount the momentous decision at the council to shift the chapter order of the second schema of the *De Ecclesia* (what would become *Lumen gentium*), placing the chapter on the church as the people of God in front of the chapter on the hierarchy. This single move had the effect of reversing a longstanding tendency in Catholic ecclesiology to begin reflections on the church by focusing on the lay-clergy divide. With this architectonic shift in the *De Ecclesia* draft, ecclesiology would begin with a reflection on divine election and the baptismal faith of the *Christifideles*. This ecclesiological turn marked the end of a view of the church as a *societas perfecta,* hovering above the vicissitudes of human history. The church as people of God was firmly rooted in history and, as such was on its own pilgrim journey toward the eschaton. In this seminal essay Congar recounted the dramatic shift that had transpired in the decades prior to the council away from the "mystical body ecclesiology" enshrined in Pope Pius XII's 1943 encyclical *Mystici corporis*. Yet he was careful not to oppose the two approaches. He carefully defended the way in which mystical body ecclesiology remained necessary for articulating the Christological foundations of the church.

Congar's essay inaugurated the first stage in the reception of the council's teaching on the people of God. This theme would figure prominently in a number of post-conciliar ecclesiological trajectories, most notably in liberation theology. Sadly, people of God ecclesiologies would come

under attack at the 1985 extraordinary synod of bishops which Pope John Paul II convened to assess the ecclesial reception of the council.[8] This ecclesiastical suppression makes Pope Francis' remarkable rehabilitation of people of God ecclesiology all the more significant.

The second of Congar's many *Concilium* essays to be included in this volume, "Reception as an Ecclesiological Reality", reflects his enormous contributions to a theology of tradition. Congar had, on the eve of the council, authored a magisterial two-volume work titled *La Tradition et les traditions*, and a one volume version *La Tradition et la vie de l'église*.[9] The French Dominican offered a much more historically sophisticated, dynamic account of tradition that went well beyond the role of the magisterium to recognize the contributions of the liturgy, the writings of the fathers and doctors of the church and, most astonishingly, the witness of ordinary believers. However, Congar soon realized that this dynamic exploration of the ways in which the faith of the church was "handed on," also required a corresponding consideration of the accompanying process of ecclesial "reception."

In the years immediately after the Second Vatican Council, Catholic scholars had begun to pay more attention to the role of reception in the life of the church. Initially, reception referred to the process by which some teaching, ritual, discipline or law was assimilated into the life of a local church. One of the first scholars to develop a theology of ecclesial reception, Alois Grillmeier, was indebted to certain theories of legal reception in which a legal tradition from one group of peoples is "received" or taken over by another group.[10] Within this legal framework reception, strictly speaking, must be "exogenous," that is, it is a reception of something within a community which comes to it from the outside, i.e., from another community. Grillmeier, applying this legal theory to the life of the church, saw it as a helpful way to describe the ecclesial process by which the ancient churches accepted synodal decrees from other churches as binding for themselves.[11] He also seemed to have had in mind the modern ecumenical situation in which separated churches might eventually receive certain teachings and/or practices from another church.

In the essay included here, however, Congar argued that Grillmeier had defined "reception" too narrowly by insisting on its exogenous character.[12] It is certainly true that any act of authentic reception presupposes some

kind of distance between the party giving and the party receiving. However, Congar pointed out, since local churches are not autonomous entities but exist in spiritual communion with one another, this distance is always relativized by the unity of the whole church. That which is received by one local church from another or others, can never be totally foreign. Congar also had a much broader understanding of reception; he refused to limit it to the process of a community receiving a law or decree from outside its boundaries. For him reception denoted a constitutive process in the church's self-realization in history. He illuminates this process through an extended consideration of the history of ecumenical councils and highlights the key role that subsequent reception played in the determination of a council's true authenticity.

Congar linked reception with that ancient reality which he refers to as "conciliarity." For Congar, conciliarity described, not just an ecclesiastical event—an ecumenical council—but the fundamental reality of the church constituted by the Spirit as a communion of persons. Councils then, are formal expressions of what pertains to the reality of the church itself:"... reception is no more than the extension or prolongation of the conciliar process: it is associated with the same essential 'conciliarity' of the Church."[13] By correlating reception with conciliarity, Congar helped direct our attention to the quality of ecclesial relationship essential for a proper understanding of the enunciation of God's Word in the Christian community. Congar's theology of ecclesial reception would lay the foundations for much of Pope Francis' emphasis on ecclesial synodality.

These two essays, but a miniscule sample of Congar's prodigious scholarly output, give a good indication of how he, and the journal he helped found, set the course for post-conciliar ecclesiology in the decades that would follow.

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Notes

1. Yves Congar, *Dialogue between Christians* (Westminster: Newman, 1966) 5-7n5.
2. Étienne Fouilloux, "Lettre du Père Congar à sa mère," *La Vie Spirituelle* 154 [2000]: 137.

3. Yves Congar, "Vers une ecclésiologie totale," in *Le Concile au jour le jour* (Paris: Cerf, 1964), 2: 107.
4. Yves Congar, *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat* [Unam Sanctam 23] (Paris: Cerf, 1953), 14.
5. Rose M. Beal, *Mystery of the Church, People of God: Yves Congar's Total Ecclesiology as a Path to Vatican II* (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 2014), 171.
6. The Eastern Orthodox theologian, Nikos Nissiotis had levelled just such a charge against the western church. Congar felt compelled to rebut the charge in "Pneumatologie ou 'Christomonisme' dans la traditione latine," in *Ecclesia a Spiritu Sancto edocta* [Festschrift for Gérard Philips] (Louvain: Duculot, 1970), 41-63.
7. Yves Congar, *My Journal of the Council* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 871.
8. See José Comblin, *People of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004).
9. Yves Congar, *Tradition et les traditions* (Paris: Fayard, 1960-63); *La Tradition et la vie de l'église* (Paris: Fayard, 1963).
10. Alois Grillmeier, "Konzil und Rezeption. Methodische Bemerkungen zu einem Thema der ökumenischen Diskussion der Gegenwart," *Theologie und Philosophie* 45 (1970): 321-52.
11. Grillmeier, 324.
12. This essay is an abbreviated English translation of a much longer version in French with more substantive documentation. The longer French version would later be included in Yves Congar, in *Église et papauté: Regards historiques* (Paris: Cerf, 1994), 229-66.
13. Congar, "Reception as an Ecclesiological Reality," 64. See also, Yves Congar, "The Council as an Assembly and the Church as Essentially Conciliar," in *One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. Studies on the Nature and Role of the Church in the Modern World*, edited by Herbert Vorgrimler (London: Sheed & Ward, 1968), 44-88.

Christianity and Ideology

KARL RAHNER

The last session of the Council has brought us to an awareness of the Church's relation to the contemporary world, a theme, which like no other, has stirred up the deepest attention in the widest circles, a theme, moreover, beyond any other in its complexity and number of presuppositions. But behind every discussion of this theme there lurks a question that is always involved at least implicitly, a question constantly raised and argued, the question, namely, of the relation of the faith, or more generally, of Christianity, to ideology. The following reflections will attempt to deal with this question.

By way of proceeding, let us first define what we mean by "ideology", for we cannot assume that his term is so univocal and so commonly understood as to be taken for granted. Then we will investigate briefly the reasons for considering Christianity as an ideology and for rejecting it as such; we will show how Christianity is not an ideology, and that it cannot therefore be rejected on this score. In the last part of our consideration, we will deduce a few corollaries from the basic thesis of the third part.

I. What is "Ideology"?

What, then, do we mean by "ideology" in this discussion? This is not the place to examine the origin and history of the term. In fact, historically, the term has been used so inconsistently that at best all we can hope to do here is to define our own usage, alluding to the historical usages as reference points, whenever that is useful. But for all that, the definition to be developed here is not arbitrary, but rather one that philosophically conforms to the subject itself. Let us say at once, then, that by ideology, in the negative sense we intend, we mean an erroneous system that must be

rejected by a true interpretation of reality. We are not concerned now with the question whether these false systems occur outright as fully developed theories or as unreflexive attitudes of the mind, or as arbitrary and voluntaristic moods. In fact, the question is left open just where we would find an ideology in our sense, whether, for instance, every metaphysics might not be understood as such an ideology. What interests us here, apart from the obvious errors that characterize all ideologies, has more to do with the very essence of an ideology, namely, the way all ideologies set themselves up as *total* systems by willfully slamming the door, so to speak, on reality as a whole; in more customary language this is spoken of as absolutizing a partial aspect of reality. We should broaden this definition by adding that this absolutizing of a partial aspect of reality, insofar as it may claim men's assent, occurs in connection with practical matters and for that reason is usually found as the basis for political action and ultimately as the rule of social life. From this we may appreciate the fittingness of Lauth's definition of ideology as pseudo-scientific interpretation of reality in the service of some political, social end which in its turn legitimizes the ideology.

From our formal definition of ideology as a kind of closing off, an absolutizing of a part of reality, it would seem that three possible forms of ideology suggest themselves *a priori*. This is not to say, we must add, that these forms are ever going to be wholly realized purely and simply as such. There is, then, an ideology of immanence, an ideology of transmanence, and an ideology of transcendence. These divisions may be explained briefly as follows:

1. In the ideology of immanence, specific, limited regions of our total experience are absolutized and made to be the rule and law for all reality. This group includes the greater part of what we usually refer to as ideologies: nationalism, blood and soil, ideologies of race, Americanism, technologism, socialism, and of course that materialism for which such words as God, spirit, freedom, and person in their true sense are but empty phrases.

2. As a counterpart – although it is seldom seen this way – to this ideology of immanence, the ideology of transmanence embraces such systems as supernaturalism, quietism, certain forms of utopianism, Chiliasm, indiscrete "fraternalism", and so on. In this kind of ideology what

is ultimate, infinite and pervasive of all spheres of reality is absolutized (or better still: totalized) in such a way that the penultimate and finite, the things always given and assumed in immediate experience are not given their due and are overlocked. If anything, they are manipulated by projections from that absolute vision of the mind – a failing to which philosophers and religious men are particularly susceptible.

3. The third form of ideology, the ideology of transcendence, seeks to overcome the first two forms of ideology that we enumerated and to hypostatize its purely formal victory over their claims to validity. This form of ideology shuns the data of immediate experience through historicism and relativism, etc., and looks upon the transcendent in its true nature as something elusive and unutterable. Thus, this ideology advocates a program of so-called boundless openness to everything in general together with a scrupulous avoidance of a straightforward commitment to anything in particular. One can also see from this how this attitude, which is peculiarly and recognizably Western, could be set against the claims of an "Eastern" ideology, and why it is that Communism, with its "engagement" ever and again exercises a seductive power over Western intellectuals.

II. Is Christianity an Ideology?

The reproach is often made that Christianity, too, is merely an ideology in this negative sense. Before we consider why such a reproach is unjust, we need to ask ourselves briefly what could be the reasons that would appear to justify this interpretation of Christianity.

The reproach that Christianity is an ideology could very well seem legitimate to someone who refused to reflect on the matter at all, or who expressly held a consistently skeptical, relativistic view of things. Whenever experience, for personal or cultural reasons, is automatically identified with the kind of reality which technology and the natural sciences can demonstrate; whenever every other reality and experience is felt to be a freely exchangeable, i.e., ideological superstructure upon the true reality of exact empiricism, or is so devalued; whenever metaphysics, because of the undemonstrable nature of its subject, is devalued as a mere opinion or a plain conceptual figment by an experience which, to begin with, has been confirmed to the empirical sciences, Christianity, to be sure, will inevitably be seen as an ideology. It would not make any difference, either,

how the origin of this ideology was explained, whether as the opium of the people, as the product of a particular social condition, as a utopian dream for human existence, or as effect of the basic need for an all-inclusive interpretation of reality.

A further ground for the interpretation of Christianity as an ideology is found in the historical fact that Christianity has actually often misused, sometimes for revolutionary purposes, but, for the most part in conservative, reactionary ways as a means of justifying a social, economic, political, cultural, or scientific condition, which can claim no permanent reality. To be sure, such a misuse of Christianity is difficult to avoid and for the most part is only overcome gradually by the slow processes of history; but where such a misuse has been made, Christianity is indeed changed into an ideology, and not infrequently this conservative ideology bearing the name of Christianity has been quite rightly combated precisely as ideology. If true Christianity itself has had to suffer in this struggle, this was the fault or the tragic misfortune of the representatives of Christianity and the Church who brought it about, since they themselves provided the occasion for this misunderstanding of Christianity as an ideology which was to be overcome.

The need for objectivizations of Christianity's essence presents a greater and more subtle ground for this danger that Christianity will be mistaken for an ideology – the need to objectivize the inscrutable mystery of God who is above the world and his salvation through an absolute giving of himself for our pardon categorically, historically, institutionally, sacramentally, and legalistically, revelation in human words, in sacramental signs, and in social organizations of the believers. These objectivizations of God's own divine self-giving, which seizes man at his transcendental source, are necessitated by the fact that man must live out his original nature and his eternal destiny as an historical being in time and space, and cannot discover his true nature in pure inwardness, in mysticism, and in the simple dismissal of his historical being.

These objectivizations are necessary; they are the body in which the spirit finds and realizes itself. They, however, necessarily veil the true object of Christianity, making it somewhat equivocal and to that extent expose it to misuse and unduly narrow interpretations. As ideology of immanence they are apt, especially in the case of fervent Christians, to provide the

temptation to the ideologies of transmanence and transcendence to regard themselves as the true reflection of Christianity's essence, thus further exposing Christianity to the accusation of being itself an ideology.

Another basis for this danger is given in the pluralistic world outlook which is so prevalent today, and which, moreover, underlies the skeptical relativism given as the first reason for this confusion of Christianity with ideology. If man today, formed as he is by the natural sciences, assumes the universal validity of truth as a self-evident ideal and norm, and if he is basically inclined in his democratic view of things to attribute to others as much intelligence and goodwill as he attributes to himself, then he cannot help but be struck and dismayed by the fact that the various outlooks people have, the interpretations they give to their own being in the world, are so utterly lacking in unity. Such a person would be in danger of concluding from this fact that any understanding, which ventures beyond the strict realm of the natural sciences and generally acknowledged cognitions, is a loose fabrication of ideas which possess subjective significance at most. And he will be tempted to include Christianity – just because it is so controverted – among such subjective, poetic ideas, conceding at most that it has a more profound subjective affinity for us.

III. Why Christianity is not an Ideology

These in rough outline are the reasons for the assessment of Christianity as an ideology, which brings us to the third part of our reflection, to the central question of why Christianity is not an ideology. To answer this question adequately, we would first have to establish the justice of Christianity's claim that it sets forth the truth about the whole of reality and that it is the absolute religion, or (if one shies away from the word religion) that it accomplishes what the religions of men vainly seek to accomplish of themselves. It is clear, of course, that a demonstration of this kind would require too much discussion and could not be offered here. There would have to be an account, for instance, of what in such a connection, truth and absolute validity really mean. The question would have to be asked whether man finds access to God and to his revealed Word at all: how the Christian message as the efficacious Word of God proves itself to man's sense for truth; what is really affirmed in this message and what is not affirmed; what does image, symbol, and cipher signify in this message;

what does it intend to teach, what is its reality and truth?

It is obvious that these and many other necessary questions cannot be answered here. All we can hope to do here is to stress a few of the highlights of Christianity as it relates to ideology, whereby Christianity can be differentiated from that which in a false, erroneous system is especially signified and emphasized by the word "ideology". What follows, then, will be seen in the light of this restriction.

First, the charge that Christianity is an ideology is inadmissible from the fact that Christianity makes absolute assertions which claim to be true in the pure and simple meaning of that word. These assertions can be called "metaphysical", since on the one hand they are made with an absolute claim to truth, and on the other hand, the validity of this claim cannot be directly demonstrated in the empirical world of the natural sciences. Of course, anyone who regards all metaphysics as false or undemonstrable will obviously look upon authentic Christianity, in its very own understanding of itself, as an ideology. He may then perhaps go on to reflect in a mood of existential irrationalism how this Christianity still holds an essential meaning for his life. What he does not realize, to be sure, is that such a reflection, as an irrational conception and ideologizing of life, is itself metaphysics, even if a bad one. This does not mean, of course, that faith and metaphysics, in their basic structures, are the same or that they are differentiated only with regard to their stated objects. But the Christian faith and metaphysics do agree with respect to the claim each makes to truth. So that if the possibility of a metaphysical affirmation is disputed on principle and *a priori*, then Christianity, too, will have to be accorded only the status of subjective ideology because in this view there is no subject that can claim absolute truth – there are only isolated individuals trying to make their lives more bearable and noble through some such poetic idea.

To defend Christianity from the charge that it is an ideology, we must stress that metaphysics, by its definition cannot under any circumstances be regarded as an ideology. The truth of this is already shown from the fact that in the last analysis, the proposition, every metaphysics is an ideology, is itself a metaphysical proposition, whether it is stated as a theoretically gratuitous argument or is implied in an attempt to live a life free of metaphysics (in a radically skeptical attempt at "bracketing" any going beyond the brutal experiences of life and the knowledge of

natural science). Relativism and skepticism are themselves metaphysical decisions whether theoretically formulated or untheoretically attempted in life. Metaphysics in inevitably given with man's existence; man invariably interprets his experience from a previously established and comprehensive context of *a priori* judgments. Genuine metaphysics, however, consists of reflections on those transcendental and irrefusable implications which carry in themselves their own light and certainty and which of necessity are present in a free, spiritual actualization of existence.

Inasmuch as metaphysics, as reflective understanding, does not originate these implications, but only reflects on what is always given, making them thematic – and for that reason may be spoken of as the thematisizing of transcendental experience, which as the unthematic ground of every empirical experience and understanding of truth on principle surpasses them in rationality and certitude – metaphysics can acknowledge with equanimity the incompleteness and unexclusiveness of its reflections, the ever recurrent need to begin anew, and yet still be able to say with confidence that its object, the transcendental experience itself, is still the common good of men who are open to the truth. This can be seen as such even in the plurality of metaphysical systems, when to the untutored eye and to bad philosophers of history these systems simply appear contradictory, and so create an impression of arbitrariness and subjectivity, a poetry of ideas.

Only by closing the mind completely and by living in what amounts to an animal immediacy with one's biological being, unaware of one's metaphysical *epochê* and unable to realize it, could a person be said to be free of metaphysics and able to escape any pretension to absolute truth. But if a metaphysics, which cannot be disposed of *a priori* as ideology, is at least in principle possible, then neither can Christianity be rejected, since the sphere of the affirmations of the faith does not coincide with that of the primitive, objective experiences of daily life or the empiricism of the natural sciences. The mere existence of philosophical pluralism then, is no valid reason for disposing of every view of the world as an ideology (so far as one includes metaphysics and the teaching of the Christian faith among these world views). For this attitude itself would affect the individual objects of empirical experience and their functional relations in such a way as to convert experience as such – which is never

the object of experience – into the object of an affirmation, which, by this very definition would be an ideology.

A right approach to the pluralism in metaphysics and in philosophy in general must consist not in having blanket misgivings about them, looking upon them as mythologies, but in preserving an attitude which painstakingly examines everything, keeping itself open to new understanding and to modifications or previous understanding, modestly trying to discover the transcendental experience common to all the systems that are offered, but which also then has the courage to come to a decision, to acknowledge with calm certitude that absolute truth is being attained in an historically determined, finite, incomplete and open-ended statement, even if this in the last analysis is that holy and unutterable mystery which cannot be fitted into a higher order, subject to our disposal.

It metaphysics is understood as a rational, or still better, as a spiritual induction into this attitude of openness to the absolute mystery, which always lives on the ground of our spiritual, free and responsible being (which, because of that, man dare not take for granted) then metaphysics loses its appearance of ideological poetry even in confrontation with all the pluralistic views of the world today. The pluralism of world views adversely affects only the rationalistic presumption of a false metaphysics, i.e., that man seizes the totality of reality in its ultimate ground and masters it in his own system, instead of being himself seized by it and struck dumb before the ground of reality's wholeness, both in his life and in his reflections on the implications of this mystery.

There is a still further reason why Christianity is not an ideology. We have already stated that the basis for all metaphysically valid understanding of truth is the transcendental experience by which man, for the sake of concrete, individual experience, is already previously turned to the incomprehensible wholeness of reality at its very center: that holy mystery, always present, which confronts man with the distance in his finiteness and guilt, and which we call God. This transcendental experience which penetrates our understanding and our freedom as the unthematic ground and horizon of our everyday experiences, as the very condition of their possibility, is the primary "locus" of Christianity, without prejudice for Christianity's history or its historicity, as we shall show later. Because this experience of transcendence, this induction into an absolute and holy

mystery which we cannot seize but which seizes us instead, by its own transcendental necessity, transcends ideologies which absolutize limited regions of experience and because Christianity in its reality signifies just exactly this transcendental experience itself, and in its teaching represents the right interpretation of this transcendental experience in its true and unabridged essence, then for this very reason, Christianity cannot be an ideology. And if the reality of Christianity is what Christians customarily call grace, if grace is the self-communication of God to the finite creature and the creature's immediacy to God, the dynamic participation in God's life as a creature raised above everything finite and mortal; if grace signifies that man in spite of his finiteness and guilt is raised above the forces and powers of this world even as he suffers and endures them; if this grace because of God's will to save all mankind is at work in everyone (even where man resists it of his own volition): then all this means that man, in the ground of his personal being, is borne by God himself and is drawn into an intimacy with him.

By grace, then, we mean the real truth and divinely given reality of the transcendental experience of the personal spirit's openness toward God. So then if Christianity by its very nature is grace, i.e., the innermost possibility and reality of receiving God's self-communication into the ground of our being, then Christianity is nothing less than the purest actuality of that transcendental experience, the experience of the absolute and forgiving nearness of God himself. And this nearness is differentiated from the reality of this world, is exalted above it, and for that reason remains the holy, adorable mystery (also and even especially in this absolute presence).

It this is the true nature of Christianity, then Christianity exists on an altogether different plane than ideology. For each ideology wants to deal with the data of experience in the world, whether this is blood and soil, society, rational technologization and manipulation, the pleasures of life, or the experience of true emptiness and absurdity, etc., and takes these as the fundamental determinants of life. Christianity, on the other hand, explains these powers and forces, the masters of unredeemed existence, as false gods, unworthy to be our masters, and explains that by God's grace man has already subdued these powers and forces in the ground of his being. The only issue now is whether or not man cooperates with grace by giving his free consent to his transcendental openness to the immediacy

of the God of eternal life, which consent is likewise given by the power of this grace. Because Christianity is achieved from the very center of man's transcendentality, which very precisely as a transcendence to the mystery of God's absolute, forgiving presence rises above ideologies of this world, Christianity by definition cannot be an ideology; at least, not an ideology of immanence. And since this transcendence is not extrinsic but is intrinsic to man's being, not a dimension superadded to his life in the world but rather as the ground condition for its possibility, then Christianity cannot be considered as a later and superfluous ideologizing of man's life.

Christianity is also essentially history, however; it is man turned to events fixed by time and space in human history as events of salvation, a history which has its climax in the absolute event of salvation, Jesus Christ, who is both the center and the measure of history. This history itself belongs to the very essence of Christianity; it is not just a loose collection of agreeable recollections about the transcendental experience of the grace of the absolute, forgiving presence of the holy mystery, as the overcoming of the powers and forces of this world. That is why Christianity appears as an unmistakable "no" to every ideology of transmanence and transcendence – not, let it be understood, as the undoing of transcendence, but as the undoing of the ideologization of transcendence, the barren formalization of true transcendence.

Two things should be understood at this point. First, the intrinsic connection between the genuine, unexcelled historicity of Christianity as a turning to real events of salvation in history, and the transcendental nature of Christianity as the grace of openness to the absolute God must be made abundantly clear. It must be shown, therefore, that true transcendentality and true historicity mutually condition each other, and that man by his transcendentality is referred to a real history that he cannot dismiss by an *a priori* judgement. Secondly, it must be understood that man in his burden of actual history is obligated and empowered to take his *secular* existence with utmost seriousness and to be engaged in the historical even where the recognition and experience of the contingency and relativity of the historical is most painful. The right understanding of man's history is not that it is an accident which has been imposed as an additional burden on his transcendental nature, but that it is the history precisely of his transcendental nature as such. Man lives his existence toward God, not

in a pure, quasi-metaphysical inwardness in depths beyond the reach of history, but rather in the very history of his being, both individual and collective. Hence, Christianity can be the condition of grace for man's transcendental nature and still be truly history, in which this nature realizes itself and in the objectivity of space and time encounters man himself.

This is why there is true history of salvation of the human word together with the Word of God which is given through it, and a Church which is both the community of salvation and Sacrament, even though all these historical objectivizations drawn by God's grace from the absolute depths of man's nature realize their true nature – something which is true for all historical manifestations – as mediations and signs of God's incomprehensibility, who share himself with man through an absolute forgiving immediacy in all truth and reality. As long as these historical mediations, therefore, manifest the mystery of God's presence and acceptance, they preserve their relationship, and as long as (before the immediate vision of God) they prove to be indispensable for man's historical nature, then history and transcendence are inseparable; and Christianity for this reason could not be made out as an ideology of immanence, which idolizes the powers of this world, nor as ideology of transmanence and transcendence, which idolize man's grace-filled transcendentality into empty, formal abstractions.

Two further points must be made in this connection. First, man's historicity, understood as the mediation to his transcendental nature, elevated by grace, finds its culmination in Jesus Christ, the God-Man. In him God's promises of himself to the world are realized, and in such a way that this mediation and its acceptance by man in history are inseparably joined without becoming confused; God's historically unexcellable eschatological mediation to himself is given through the history of grace in the world, without this mediation ever becoming identified with God himself as the Monophysites have done. Man must accept this mediation through God's immediacy as something irreplaceable, receiving it humbly in his own grace-filled transcendentality as a purely contingent provision of history.

Man's relationship with this historical mediation of grace to the ground of his being is not established by a purely theoretical, historical knowledge of these saving events in history, a knowledge that could be suspected of being an ideology, but by a direct, realistic, utterly untheoretical process

of knowing, achieved through the living unity of the history of salvation, through the Church (which is more than the sum of theoretical accord), through Sacrament and cult, through what we call anamnesis, tradition, etc. Because this mediation to the historical events of salvation occurs not through a theoretical process of knowing but as an event of man's own grace-filled transcendental nature, he is completely outside the arena of the three basic forms of ideology which we have been discussing.

The second point to consider is that the Christian, aware of his need for this historical mediation of grace, can and must take his "secular" history with perfect seriousness, too. To be sure, he does not absolutize it into an ideology, but he sees this history as the concrete expression of God's will who in his freedom brings forth the events of history as conditioned and contingent, in contrast to his own nature, and who endows them with the seriousness of a situation in which eternal destinies are decided before God. How history can be taken so seriously and not be ideologized will be discussed later.

One last point remains to be stressed against the thesis that Christianity is an ideology. Ideologies mutually exclude each other in their teaching and intention; and in fact this warfare and mutual contradiction are what ideologies are made of; what they have in common, as it were, exists despite their ideological theories and not because of them. Christianity, on the other hand, acknowledges an aspect of its faith which we will call "anonymous Christianity". It does not restrict the reality of its forgiving and divinizing grace to the circle of those who profess its categorical, historical, didactic objectifications, its expressly Christian teachings and their bearer, the Church. Instead, Christianity, bearing in mind God's holy will and the possibility of justification through the Sacrament, incorporates its adversaries into its own reality and accordingly can hardly regard them as adversaries in the same sense as ideologies necessarily regard them. Of course, ideologies may still accept their adversaries out of a certain tolerance (which is not completely reconcilable with the nature of an ideology) because they are people, or because they otherwise have some neutral ground in common. But that one's own positively intended and specific position should be acknowledged also in the antagonist on the deeper level of theoretical reflection and social existence, this, no ideology can concede because no ideology can acknowledge a third power

outside of itself which transcends explicit differences and is able thereby to re-establish a common reality. Ideologies can never be bigger than themselves; Christianity on the other hand is bigger that itself because it is the movement of man's abandonment to this indisponible mystery, in the knowledge that this movement will bring him into the saving presence of this mystery, Jesus Christ.

IV. Corollaries

We should add to these reflections on why Christianity is not an ideology, a few corollaries that follow from our thesis.

1. Christianity is not an ideology. From its nature and from the teachings about its own special reality, certain universal norms of action are given by which man conforms himself to God, even in secular matters, norms which in the end will bring man to a renewed openness to God's absolute, forgiving presence in all the dimensions of human existence. We ought not to confine the faith, therefore, to any particular dimension; rather we should see it as the inner law of our whole life. These universal norms, however, insofar as they are contained in the Christian message and are proclaimed in the teaching ministry of the Church, leave ample room for imperatives and programs that are conditioned by the situations in history. This gives rise to several considerations. On the one hand, the Church as such cannot become the direct, official bearer, as it were, of the concrete imperatives and programs, i.e., the concrete archetypal patterns for the shaping of history. She cannot tell the Christian in his individual and collective history exactly what he must do here and now. She cannot take from him the burden of hazardous, historical decisions, and their possible frustration, nor can she spare him the fact that history ever and again turns into blind alleys. The Church must, therefore, refuse to become an ideology, if we mean by this an historical program which has to regard itself as absolute in order to carry any historical weight.

The refusal of the Church to become an ideology in this sense, however, does not mean that the Christian, in his individual and collective decisions here and now, does not have the obligation by virtue of his Christian responsibility to choose a particular, concrete imperative and thereby to take upon himself the burden and risk of putting such an imperative into practice. If his transcendental Christian nature is to be realized in

his historical being in all its dimensions, then it becomes necessary and obligatory for him to find a concrete imperative for the affairs of history, deriving from the very center of his Christian existence, even though the Church as such cannot supply it. He accepts this Christian responsibility for concrete decisions in his historical situation, but he accepts it in earnest obedience to the absolutely binding will of the Living God, and therefore he does not ideologize these decisions. This is possible for the Christian because without falling into quietism or skepticism, without relativizing his conduct, he secures his decisions more and more deeply in the decrees of the absolute sovereign Lord of reality, by whose grace the outcome and the risk of this decision become secure and salvific, who is able to demand and render possible for other times other decisions which conform to his will.

2. If Christianity is not an ideology, if the imperatives and the concrete decisions attendant upon the attitudes and affairs of this world, which the Christian can and must make, are not to be ideologized, then tolerance is necessary to the Christian; tolerance as an expression of the need to avoid particular ideologies in the Church. Such tolerance is necessary to him because we cannot expect that all Christians will come to this choice of a concrete imperative, to this interpretation of the historical hour and to a decision on a definitive historical course all in the same way.

Strife among such varied decisions will certainly be unavoidable, even for Christians. Nor could it be avoided by theoretical discussions, since such discussions would assume basically that the concrete imperative for the here and now could be derived univocally from universal principles and from a purely static, neutral analysis of the given situation. This would be, however, a rationalistic error, since each decision for some concrete action adds to our *a priori* knowledge of essence, an irreducible element, the choice, namely, of a single existence among many that are possible. Just because strife, the concurrence of real opposing tendencies in regard to performance is unavoidable beyond the purely theoretical level, both the Christian and the Church need what we mean by tolerance: sympathy for the position of the other, fairness in battle – that singular unity of decision with which one defends one's own position (but for all that, fair, event when waged in earnest) – and the readiness to allow oneself to be overruled and to remain within the wholeness of the Church when the

decisions of the Church go contrary to one's own.

From what was said previously about anonymous Christianity as the refusal to regard Christianity as an ideology, it would follow that a similar attitude of positive tolerance toward the non-Christian is also appropriate, a tolerance which distinguishes the firmness and missionary zeal of the believer from fanaticism. The latter is peculiarly a trait of ideology, for only through such fanaticism can ideology, with its limitations, be sure of itself against the fuller reality which surrounds it. Christianity, however, by its very nature, is called to seek itself in the other, and to trust that in the other it encounters itself again in a greater abundance.

3. Christianity must, of course, constantly be on guard against the danger of misunderstanding itself as an ideology. It makes no difference whether this would occur as an ideology of transmanence, as an ideology of transcendence, or whether a particular attitude and decision valid for some special circumstance and adopted practically for the moment throughout Christendom becomes absolutized and hardened into a particular, reactionary ideology. Christianity is not preserved from such dangers simply as a matter of course, and it cannot be said that it has never lapsed into them. All that is merely doctrinaire and institutional hardening, especially since one can in turn absolutize the protest against the former into an empty ideology. The Christian has solely the trust that the pure and indisponible grace of God will not fail to ward off this danger.

Christians may disagree as to where God's victorious grace is concretely situated in his Church, or what its nature is, that this grace in his Church preserves and rescues us from the absolutizations of ideology. But in their trust in this grace itself, Christians are one. Grace is always also the grace of preservation from ideology, which in the end is nothing more than the absolutizing of man by his own means.

Pluralism in Theology and the Oneness of the Church's Profession of Faith

KARL RAHNER

The theme of this article is a very topical one today. The pluralism of theology is making itself felt in the concrete life of the Church, particularly when this theology is not viewed in narrow Scholastic terms. Church authorities and the faithful are confronted with urgent questions: How can any genuine oneness of credal profession be maintained in the face of this pluralism? What does such oneness involve? How can it be distinguished from pluralistic interpretations and be preserved along with a legitimate pluralism in theology?

The problem is a new one. It is a real *quaestio disputata*. As yet we have not seen the problem clearly enough to work out a clear answer to it, or even to provide an answer that would be generally acceptable and that would resolve the practical difficulties it poses to Church life.

No one would expect me to cover all the aspects of the problem in this article. I myself realize that I am caught in the middle of it, and that I have not resolved it to my own satisfaction. My outlook is still a fragmentary one, and my approaches to an answer are still very much open to question. Upon closer inspection, they may even turn out to be erroneous.

However, one of the consequences of our pluralistic theological situation is that a man cannot go off into a corner and quietly let a fully rounded answer take shape in his mind. He must have the courage to think out loud, in public, before he can offer a simple and clear answer. This may explain why my thoughts are presented here in a more personal tone than they ordinarily would be in a learned article.

I. A New Situation

First of all, and most importantly, we must realize that present theological pluralism presents *a real problem*, and that it is *a new problem*. Both these facts are often overlooked or bypassed by professional theologians themselves. Why? Because the professional theologian knows that there have always been different schools of theological thought in history, that theologians have not always shared the same opinions on a given issue, and that the Church has fostered theological diversity by defending controversial theses against charges of heresy or heterodoxy.

Knowing these things, a theologian might well be inclined to see nothing new in the theological pluralism of today. He might feel that such pluralism has always been around, that the Church and her magisterium long ago worked out sound guidelines and procedures to handle this situation, and that she has been able to foster theological diversity while preserving the oneness of her credal profession.

But here appearances are deceiving. The quantitative increase in theological pluralism over the centuries has produced, as it were, a qualitative mutation. The present pluralism is quite different from the old pluralism. If one does not recognize and admit this fact, he cannot appreciate the real problem facing us today. He will fail to see the new difficulty which the Church has in preserving the oneness of her credal profession.

The Old Pluralism

What was the general situation in olden days? There were schools of theological thought and different tendencies, of course. To some extent, however, they were divided along geographical lines and separated by a cultural no-man's land (e.g., the Eastern and Western Church Fathers). To some extent, the differences and variations among them were not taken into conscious account. When these differences were noted and challenged head-on, the opposing views usually confronted each other as black and white within an overall context of shared presuppositions, concepts and focal questions. Even if later historians might dispute the extent of this shared framework, the differences were not adverted to by the schools that engaged in these debates.

In the old days, a person could operate on the assumption that he knew

the position of the other side. He understood the other's position and he could explain why he did not accept it. When agreement could not be reached within this context of real (or presumed) mutual understanding, people shrugged their shoulders and accepted this simply as a fact. If any explanation was offered for the failure to reach an agreement, it alluded to the difficulty of the material in question or (usually) to the stupidity of other theologians and the malevolence of the heretic.

In any case, people operated on one of two convictions. Either they knew what their theological opponent was saying and understood him, or else they didn't even know that there was a theological opposition around. Either they shared the same terminology, philosophical presuppositions, speech world and outlook on life, or else they did not advert to whatever differences were present.

The New Pluralism

Today the situation is radically different. Many factors have contributed to this qualitative change, and they cannot all be analyzed closely here. The historical material, on which the theological disciplines must work, has become so enormous that the individual theologian cannot master it all, and the theologian himself now realizes this. Moreover, the methodology of the various disciplines has become so complicated that no individual theologian can handle them all. The theologian must use philosophy in his work, but philosophy itself has become so pluralistic that no single theologian has the philosophy. He must work with some specific philosophy, however eclectic it may be.

Unlike former days, philosophy is no longer the one market place where theology picks up relevant information about man from his whole cultural life and from other scholarly disciplines. The modern disciplines of scholarship (the natural sciences, the social sciences and the history of ideas) have emancipated themselves, rightly or wrongly, from philosophy. The theologian should maintain direct contact with all these disciplines. This is almost impossible to do in practice, unless one chooses to believe that what he does not know about them is theologically irrelevant.

Any Catholic theology today finds itself in a completely new dialogical relationship with other Christian theologies of an exegetical, historical and systematic nature. It is no longer a simple yes or no relationship, because

the theological lines of division now cut across denominational lines. The resultant theological pluralism cannot be overcome by teamwork either, no matter how necessary it may be and how intensively it may be organized. No team can embrace all the theologians in the world.

The cognitive process in theology and other liberal arts, moreover, differs from that in technology and the natural sciences. In the latter disciplines, conclusions and findings can be taken over and adopted as ready-made. In the former disciplines, by contrast, the personal cognitive process itself is a pre-condition for the proper understanding and appreciation of the conclusions reached. That is another reason why teamwork cannot resolve the problem of theological pluralism.

Today not even the basic outlines of every possible theology can be retained in the mind of the individual theologian. This, too, is a new situation, and the theologian is well aware of it. Knowing that he cannot know everything around, his personal theology seems fragile and open to question.

The new theological pluralism described here does not involve a confrontation between clearly contradictory theologies. If such were the case, the principle of contradiction could be invoked to show that a thing cannot be true and not true at the same time. When a person can regard two positions as clearly contradictory alternatives, he is in a position to make some basic option with regard to them. The contradictory nature of the alternatives allows him to surmount the pluralism he sees.

The pluralism we face today, however, does not provide us with a set of clearly contradictory alternatives. Theologians cannot find some higher ground, outside both alternatives but common to both, from which they may pass judgment on both. Nor do they possess a common framework of mutual understanding, within which they might start a debate over specific theses. Nor is it possible for theologians on either side to tell each other exactly where their basic frameworks of understanding differ. All they know is that there are differences, because they feel a trace of strangeness in their encounter. The other party seems to move from a different starting point or to introduce different material; his presuppositions seem strange to me, or less important than my own. The dialogue breaks off in mid-air, because it cannot go any further.

The Theologian's Existential Problem

To make clear what I have been talking about, let me take a more personal tack. Here I speak from experience. An older theologian, born and bred in the old Scholastic tradition which reigned pretty much up to Vatican Council II, finds it difficult to understand what I have been describing. How have we older theologians gone about our business?

Well, if we were not the sharpest people in the world or were overly impressed with the absolutes of Scholastic theology, we found the assertions of other theologies to be alien or somewhat strange. We rejected them as false or, at best, unimportant. Without really sensing the objective and existential weight of an opposing position, we found enough reasons and distinctions to "deal with" these opposing positions. The whole problematic involved in our reaction was never consciously adverted to.

If we were smarter and more wide awake, we took a different tack. We revised our basic presuppositions, we broadened the horizons of our understanding, we expanded our terminology, we introduced nuances into our viewpoint and perspective, we learned how to think in terms of modern exegesis and modern philosophies, and we calmly and openly revaluated the changing history of dogma and theology (without losing our sense of continuity) . In this way we managed to assimilate much of the seemingly strange data that came to us from other theologies (non-Catholic theologies in particular) and the context of modern existential thought. We made this data a real aspect of our own theology.

Now this latter approach is certainly legitimate. It bears some fruit, and it should not be given up. But today, I feel, we have come to see the limits of such a procedure. Alien ideas are close to us, and we can see them as such. Yet we cannot relate them to our own system, or legitimately reject them as being false or one-sided. Today we often find it impossible to adopt a clear-cut stance toward someone else's basic theological position, especially (but not only!) when he belongs to another Christian denomination.

When one of these alien theologies explicitly and directly rejects some obligatory teaching of the Church's magisterium, then we have a relatively easy time of it. We can, at the very least, pronounce a definite no against his rejection. But then the gnawing questions begin: Did our

opponent really understand the magisterial teaching he was opposing, or was he merely rejecting a false interpretation of it? Have we orthodox theologians understood and explicitated the magisterial teaching in such a clear-cut way that we can expect our opponent to have understood us and to accept our viewpoint?

But this particular case is not the real crux of our present dilemma in dealing with alien ideas. We are encountering basic positions, held by alien theologians, which do not spring from a shared horizon of fundamental understanding and which do not directly contradict our own theology. The disparity is not clear-cut, so that we cannot tackle it directly. ln such cases we cannot adopt a clear yes or no toward the other side.

Examples

Who among us can say for sure whether the basic conception of Barth's doctrine of justification is Catholic or not? If someone feels that he can, I would like to shake his hand. But where do we go, if we cannot even do that? Who can say for sure that the ultimate root positions of Rudolf Bultmann are really un-Catholic?

Who can say that the ultimate conclusions to be drawn from the postulates of the Bultmann school actually undercut his real intention and are unacceptable to Catholics, whether the Bultmann school realizes it or not? What do we do if we are not in a position to form some clear and responsible stance toward the other positions which confront us?

We run away from the real problem when we say that we should leave the matter alone, when we feel we have done enough by calmly reflecting on our own Christian faith and presenting our theological views to others. We must remember that there are other theologies around which claim to reflect the same profession of faith. It would be simple enough, of course, if we could have our profession of faith without worrying about the disparate theologies. But faith and the theological explication of it cannot be neatly divided off from one another. Therefore, how do we find out what the other person's profession is when we cannot understand his theology or come to terms with it?

Here is a second example. We are all aware of the debate going on between the Roman and Dutch theologians over the doctrine of the

Eucharist and the explanation of transubstantiation. I for one could not say that the Roman theologians are less intelligent or less expert than their Dutch counterparts. But I cannot help feeling that the Roman theologians, with all the good will in the world, simply cannot follow through on the philosophical presuppositions and the existential ontology that lie behind a serious doctrine of transignification. The dialogue, therefore, cannot be fruitful.

Now such an understanding is theoretically possible, of course. And if we did reach it, we would have to check to see whether such an interpretation would hold up dogmatically. But what are we to do if these presuppositions are not present on the Roman side, or if they are present but not clearly articulated on the Dutch side? Such a situation is entirely possible, and it is no reflection on the intelligence of either side or on their desire to reach mutual understanding. (Look how long it took for the insights of post-Descartesian philosophy to filter into the Church's philosophy!) And what are we to do until mutual understanding of each other's presuppositions and eucharistic doctrine becomes truly feasible?

Now, one cannot explain the problem away by saying: "Well, if we establish that these two positions are incommensurable, at least for the time being, then we have introduced a third position here. This third position understands both sides and, in making a judgment on their incompatibility, has created a bridge over them." The holder of this third position, you see, feels (perhaps correctly) that he has understood both sides and overcome the disparity between them. But he must ask himself whether in other cases he himself is faced with the same inability to follow through on the other side's position. After all, the two parties in our present case are convinced that they have really understood each other's position and have checked it out objectively.

Here is a third and final example. What happens today when a professional theologian meets an educated Catholic intellectual who has not been shaped by Scholastic theology but who is interested in theological questions? The theologian often finds that he is faced with an entirely different complex of ·theological viewpoints, involving fundamental structures and perspectives that are quite different from the ones he is used to.

When the layman begins to speak out of his framework, he will often

say things that strike us as outright heresies. We see astonishing *lacunae* in his framework, shortcomings we feel should not be there, and a stress on realities and values that seem secondary to us. The whole framework of his theology has a different cast than the one we would expect to find in any good intellectual Catholic. For we expect that the cast of his theology, shaped by his early catechism training and later religious instruction, will mirror our own theology to a large extent.

That is not the case. Here, too, we confront an alien theology, and we soon realize that we have neither the time nor the ability to reconcile his theology with our own. His alien theology is influenced, even more than ours, by personal experiences in life, by psychological factors, and by his intellectual and social milieu. These conditioning elements are quite different in the life of the professional theologian, and the resultant theological differences are not going to be resolved with a little dialogue or instruction.

This means we must ask ourselves some hard questions when we confront alien theologies. Does the cast of our theology display the same contingent elements that we found in the theology of the Catholic intellectual? Does it contain gaps and loopholes and one-sided emphases that others find shocking? Are we unaware of them because we spend too much time talking to ourselves with a common terminology and within a common horizon of understanding?

II . Basic Considerations

When we have honestly faced up to the reality and complexity of the new pluralistic situation, we can try to figure out how to deal with it. This is our crucial question, and the answer will not come easily. The proposal made here will certainly not satisfy all the theoretical and practical problems involved. It is presented, with many personal reservations, in the hope that it may lead to a revision of our thinking.

The Burning Quest for Knowledge

The first thing we must realize is that the present pluralism in theology is not simply a static condition that must be taken for granted. It is a fact that cannot be erased casually; rather, we must do everything we can to overcome it. We must engage in dialogue with every school and line

of theological thought. We must critically reexamine our own outlook, broaden our horizons of understanding, and learn as much as we can from others.

The present state of theological pluralism signifies that man's burning quest for knowledge has come into its own. The individual Christian and the theologian want to know more, and the Church's theological awareness has suddenly come of age. Knowing this, the theologian should realize that he cannot simply accept or try to erase the present pluralism in theology. He should realize that it is part of the reality of the human condition, of man's historical and provisional nature. It cannot be overcome once for all time. It is something to be conquered anew every day.

A New Situation for the Magisterium

The second thing we must realize is that the continuing pluralism in theology places the Church's magisterium in a new situation. This certainly does not mean that the Church no longer has the right, through her *sensus fidei* and her magisterium, to draw new and clear-cut boundary lines. Nor does it mean that she cannot, in certain circumstances, reject the teaching of a theologian as heretical or intolerable in the Church. (On what grounds and in what manner she will do this remains to be discussed.) Nor does it mean that the magisterium no longer has the function of declaring something anathema under certain circumstances.

Theological pluralism does not permit us to tolerate anything and everything. Credal profession and theology have a mutual relationship to each other, and they cannot be neatly distinguished from each other in concrete cases; but the oneness of the Church's profession, which makes her what she is, must be maintained in this complex interrelationship. We may gain some psychological, historical or sociological insight into the reasons why someone arrived at a clearly heterodox position, but this does not mean that such a position can be held legitimately in the Church. In rejecting a heterodox position, the Church does not rule out a person's good faith or his chances for salvation; nor does it mean that these heterodox views cannot contribute in a positive way to the further development of the Church's understanding of the faith.

Granting all that, we must still say that the way in which the Church exercises this right and this duty will have to take on a wholly new cast in

the light of the new pluralism. This is the real question we are dealing with here. If the Church does take conscious note of the new pluralism, and if she realizes that it cannot be overcome in an instant, how can she reshape her way of preserving the oneness of her profession? It is a new question because the pluralism itself is new and has a bearing on the way in which the Church and her magisterium will preserve the oneness of profession. My comments provide only a fragmentary approach to the answer.

III. The Grammar of Church Pronouncements

We cannot tackle the problem of theological pluralism adequately if we do not realize that there is a definite grammar and vocabulary involved in the magisterial formulas which express the Church's profession of faith. This grammar need not have been the one it is. It is not dictated by the doctrine itself; it is influenced by historical, psychological and sociological factors. Because it involves a deliberate determination and formulation, it deserves our respect. But this respect is not to be equated with our assent in faith to the binding doctrine itself. The role of grammar and vocabulary in the formulas of the magisterium has not been given much consideration as yet, although we find vague allusions to it here and there. This is not surprising, because in earlier days both sides shared the same speech world or did not advert to the gradual changes taking place in it. As a result, the opposing doctrines were formulated with the same words.

Today, however, we need only reflect on some of the older terms to see that a definite grammar and vocabulary is involved in the dogmatic formulations, and that it need not have been the one it was. Consider the use of "person" and "nature" in christology and the doctrine of the Trinity, and such terms as "original sin" and "transubstantiation". This terminology is not dictated by the doctrine itself. Indeed it becomes a real problem when changes take place in the secular speech world, within which this terminology was used and understood, and when the Church cannot control the linguistic history and development of these concepts.

In the light of this changing linguistic situation, we cannot conceive and practice the oneness of credal profession, the pluralism of theology, and the interrelationship of these two factors as they were conceived and practiced in the past. We cannot operate on the assumption that authentic fundamental statements of *both theology* and credal profession can *only*

be found within this grammar and vocabulary. Nor can we any longer assume that the "explanations" of these magisterial concepts, which are necessary and have always been provided, are purely secondary and supplementary commentaries on the real authentic theological statements. These theological commentaries, which were once regarded as secondary comments on the authentic theological corpus of magisterial concepts and theses, can have an entirely different role of importance in today's theologies. They can even form part of the real substantive corpus of theological doctrine.

Let me repeat this in another way. In former days, the statements of the Church's magisterium were the truly important theses of theology. This need not be the case for theology in the future. Indeed, it cannot be the case if theology is to perform its proper task. The grammar and vocabulary of magisterial pronouncements hold primarily for the Church's credal profession; they do not hold, in the same pristine and obligatory way, for theologies as such. To be sure, the theologies have a continuing relationship to the doctrine of the magisterium, and hence to the grammar and vocabulary employed by the magisterium. But today we must realize more clearly than before that it is the grammar of the Church's credal profession more so than the grammar of theology.

In former days, people realized that this grammar had a history that pointed back toward the past, and that it came into being at some point in this history. Today we must also take cognizance of the fact that this grammar also has a history that points toward the future - at least insofar as theology is concerned. (Attempts to present such theological concepts and their grammar as irreplaceable in the future - such as we seem to find in *Humani generis* and *Mysterium fidei* - are neither proper nor convincing.)

Even if some such procedure were proper where our credal profession was concerned (and we shall come back to this), it does not hold true for theology and theologians. It is the fundamental right of theology as such to express the substance of its teachings, insofar as they are primarily theological, in terms that are different from the formulations of the Church's magisterium. This, of course, does not mean that theology can pass over these official formulations and their grammar in complete silence, or that it is not bound to the real obligatory teaching contained in these formulations.

For example, an updated theology of the Trinity might well explicitate and elucidate the obligatory elements of the Church's teaching without having "three persons" and "one nature" as the central elements. The doctrine of original sin could be expressed in an orthodox and acceptable way, without ever using the term "original *sin*". It could do justice to the teachings of Trent, and it need not obscure the real content of this doctrine any more than the classical formula does. The latter, after all, fails to bring out the purely analogous relationship between personal and inherited habitual sin.

To sum up: there is an element of grammatical influence in the pronouncements of the magisterium, and we now realize this. It shows us clearly that theological pluralism is both possible and justifiable, and that theology can move even further away from the formulations of the magisterium.

IV. Credal Oneness and the Magisterium

Our problem is thus brought into even clearer and sharper focus. How can we ensure the oneness of our credal profession amid this plurality of theological expression?

Greater Trust in Theology and Theologians

Our general predicament is this. On the one hand, our credal profession must be formulated in some specific theological language; even the formulations of the magisterium use theology, a specific theology, to some extent. On the other hand, the commensurability of various theologies - i.e., their convergence toward a unified credal profession - cannot be verified by the individual.

In the light of this situation, and keeping in mind the reservations stipulated above, we would have to say that the Church and her magisterium must give much more room to the individual theologies. She must give them the responsibility of making sure that they remain in accord with the Church's credal profession, and that their interpretations preserve the profession rather than destroy it.

It is clear that the Church's magisterium, too, is faced with the consequences flowing from a pluralistic theological situation. On the one hand, the magisterium may be guided by representatives of a specific

theology. On the other hand, it may accord equal weight to the views of widely differing theologies; in this case, the insurmountable pluralistic situation in the Church will be mirrored in the magisterium itself. In either case, the Church must give much more responsibility to the theologies themselves than she has in the past. These theologies must see to it that they preserve our common credal profession.

As we pointed out earlier, it is quite possible that in certain cases the Church's magisterium may have to say that the formuJations of a specific theology are incompatible with her profession of faith. But we certainly cannot set down *a priori* norms that would tell us automatically when a theology is using its new-found responsibility correctly and when the magisterium has to step in to challenge heterodoxy.

Even in the latter case, we can assume that it often will involve a matter of grammar and vocabulary rather than a matter of doctrine itself. The magisterium will be defining limits on an epistemological and sociological plane, even though its pronouncement may take the form of a declaration on doctrine itself. In other words, the magisterium will really be saying this: "You cannot talk like this in the Church without endangering your own faith or the faith of others and doing injustice to the doctrine involved." After admonishing the theology in question to respect the grammatical boundaries laid down, the Church will again leave it up to the theology to interpret our credal profession.

Criticism and Pastoral Inspiration instead of Dogmatic Formulations

In the new situation we face, the old credal formulations and magisterial pronouncements may well have a different degree of importance and significance. They were, after all, fashioned in the language of a specific theology, even in the New Testament itself. (Even there, of course, a certain amount of theological pluralism is evident, but it was a pluralism that was not consciously adverted to by those involved.) Yet they do represent a perduring and obligatory starting point and norm (norma *normata*) for later pluralistic theologies, because they were the unique expression of the Church's common profession and helped to preserve the continuity of the Church's *sensus fidei*.

Today the magisterium must still use some theology to express its profession of faith. But now there may be a greater or lesser degree of

difference between its credal profession and the theology used to express it, and this difference may be insurmountable. Therefore, we may well have to assume that in the future the magisterium will not be able to formulate new emphatic doctrinal pronouncements. Why? Because the unity of theology, which is a presupposition for such pronouncements, is no longer present. In the future we may expect the magisterium to set limits from time to time, to protect and encourage the various theologies that are trying to give contemporary expression to our credal profession, to view with favor the pluralistic theological situation, and to expand its traditional function by providing occasional pastoral directives that will guide the Church, in a prophetic and evangelical way, through a new, concrete historical situation.

In the recent past, more than one theologian dreamed that the Church's doctrine might undergo a new flurry of dogmatic development on varied levels. They foresaw a whole series of specific statements coming in rapid succession. But it may have been only a dream after all, because such a process presupposes that there is a common theology at everyone's disposal.

The cessation of such dogmatic development need not represent an impoverishment of the Church's life of faith or a paralysis of her *sensus fidei*. It only means that the Church would concentrate more fully on the most central issues of the Christian faith, and the present spiritual situation of the world offers much inducement for such concentration. Moreover, these central issues are being examined, interpreted and made real by widely differing theologies.

The interplay of central issues and differing theologies certainly offers as much room for a vital *sensus fidei* as does the older notion of dogmatic development. This older notion, cherished by many theologians in the last few centuries, saw "new dogmas" as the goal and purpose of any development of dogma.

It is also clear that the existing dogmatic statements of the Church will serve a different function than they used to. They will no longer serve as a *terminus a quo* for the development of new dogmas within the framework of a unique theology. Instead, they will serve as the given expression of a common credal profession, to which the many and varied theologies will ultimately relate.

V. Verifying Credal Oneness in Practice

But let us look at the problem again. We cannot verify the oneness of our credal profession by pointing to the verbal identity of the credal formulas used. The various theologies use different formulas, and we must respect this variety. Moreover, the pluralism in the theologies which try to explain this credal profession is something which is insurmountable. Now if all this is true, we may have to adopt an entirely different approach in trying to reconcile theological pluralism with credal unity.

Credal Formulas as Signposts

If we want to make progress here, we must first realize certain things. Faith and credal profession, as they are understood in the Church, cannot exist or do without words. For many people, the oneness and sameness of their faith and creed cannot be verified in a wordless context e.g., an atmosphere of shared feelings, a collaborative effort, or a cultic act (leaving aside the fact that these situations are rarely wordless anyway).

But even these words, as such, have a signpost character. They point to realities, happenings and experiences which are not present to us by virtue of these words alone. Faith and credal profession are not purely and simply "word happenings" that are enclosed within themselves. Human beings need words to communicate and fashion unity among themselves, but the "word happening" alone is not the whole of this unity. The words point toward a unity which they do indeed allow to unfold, but which they do not fashion by themselves alone.

Words themselves, as conceptual abstracts, point toward the mystery of God, the historical reality from which mankind derives, and the world and activities which men share. In short, they point to realities which always involve words but which are not simply identical with the words themselves. These realities are mediated to us by words, but they are experienced as being present, not absent.

Thus, in words we have the possibility of verifying a unity of Word which is not the product of words alone. This possibility presupposes the Christian faith as a given datum, totally independent of the problem posed by comtemporary theological pluralism. How else could one individual be sure of his agreement with another individual in personal convictions, if the other person's convictions can be mediated to him only through

his own consciousness? The human mind never verifies this agreement simply by establishing the identical nature of the conceptual content. Real community, identical utterances (as opposed to purely abstract thinking) and common concrete action are necessary elements in verifying the sameness of many people's convictions.

The Practice of Unity

In Christendom we find the same baptism performed as a concrete action, and a concrete cultic worship celebrated by all. All our words point to the same historical reality, and to features of it that cannot be explicitated conceptually. Moreover, we all must operate together in the concrete framework of the spatio-temporal world. These facts and many others are not simply the products of a common conviction which we have already verified on the theoretical level. On the contrary, they are elements through which this common conviction is shaped and seen to be real.

The circle has no beginning or end. Common concrete activity (in the broadest sense) is not only the result of a shared conviction; it is also the way in which we fashion this common conviction and come to take cognizance of it. The maintenance and verification of credal oneness amid theological pluralism depends in no small measure (but not entirely) on the fact that this oneness is made real and operative in deeds. In deeds we will find a oneness that can never be provided by concepts alone.

Verification of credal oneness will always remain a human process. It will never be fully achieved once for all time; it will always involve an element of longing and hope. If we wish to achieve credal oneness and to verify it, then we must utter this profession together, concretely celebrate the death of the Lord together, execute the sacraments together, and engage in joint activity in the world. Through these activities, the oneness and sameness of our credal profession will become real, whatever pluralism may exist in theology.

VI. Ecumenical Repercussions

In conclusion, we might well ask what all this will mean for ecumenical theology and the effort to reunite the Christian Churches. Here again, no definitive answer can be offered. We merely offer some reflections.

In the light of what we have already said, we might well ask this

question: Is it possible that, unnoticed by us, the theologies of the separated Churches have largely converged into the theological pluralism that should really be found within the one united Church? The reason is not simply that these theologies have undergone further development since the Reformation - a fact alluded to by all. On a deeper level, it is because they now occupy a different place of importance in the credal outlook of their individual Churches. In other words, they now are put at a greater distance from credal profession in every Church, and are viewed in a larger context which leaves room for the legitimate coexistence of many theologies.

In this new context, the theologies of the various Churches may no longer be incompatible to any great extent. Perhaps we can accord them the large measure of autonomous responsibility which we proposed earlier, without requiring a common theological formulation of old or new credal professions as a precondition for their coexistence in the one Church. Perhaps there is a real theological possibility, not only of moving from a unified profession of faith to a unified Church, but also of moving from a reunited Church to a unified credal profession or some other satisfactory verification of this unity. I offer these reflections, but I have no cure-all to prescribe for the credal differences between us. But we must ask ourselves this question: If genuine theological pluralism does exist in the Catholic Church, and has a right to exist, what implications does this have for our ecumenical efforts in the quest for Church unity?

Commentary

J. MATTHEW ASHLEY

Like all of the founders of *Concilium* Karl Rahner's (1904-1984) life and career stretched over a period of profound political, cultural and social transformation in Europe. He lived through deep changes in the church, which set in well before the Second Vatican Council. He was particularly aware of the growing predominance of the condition that Charles Taylor has named "secularity 3": "a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace."[1] Rahner noted in the 1950s that the young men studying for the priesthood in Innsbruck arrived without culturally mediated and reinforced "convictions of faith accepted as foregone conclusions in such an undisturbed manner as in the past."[2] Theology had been able to presume and build upon this basis in the past; now it had to help the young theologian-in-training find his (or, increasingly, from the fifties on, her) way toward such convictions, soberly recognizing that they could never be as uncontested in a secular milieu.

In the 1950s and 60s Rahner also became keenly aware of a growing pluralism in philosophy and theology, and of the knowledge explosion in all the disciplines. One could no longer presume that Thomistic philosophy, however retrieved and deployed, could be asserted as *the* philosophy that could in some way "manage" the encounter with other modern philosophies. Indeed, it was no longer even the case that philosophy was the only discipline with which theology had to be in dialogue in order to be critically aware of the ever-expanding reach of the sciences and technology.[3]

William Dych has described Rahner's work in the face of all this as a creative and evolving attempt to respond to a two-fold challenge:

> The task was, first, to make theology intellectually respectable in the modern world by honestly confronting the difficulties posed by modern philosophy and science, and, second, to place theology at the service of larger concerns of Christian faith and life. The principle governing both is that they must be done together, that the success of one depends on the success of the other.[4]

The first, and earlier, of the two essays reproduced here, on ideology, is a response to the first challenge, and the second, on pluralism in theology, to the second. But, as Dych suggests, each entails and complements the other. In each, Rahner deploys key concepts and argumentative schemata that he had worked out in nineteen-thirties in two monographs on the ontology of human knowing (*Spirit in the World*) and the relation of reason and revelation (*Hearer of the Word*). Yet these later essays evince the conviction that he voiced about theological pluralism which expresses how he approached the most serious theological problems: "It cannot be overcome once for all. It has to be conquered anew every day."[5]

The Essays

a. "Christianity and Ideology"

Starting in 1960, Rahner had been in dialogue with a number of revisionary Marxists, particularly through meetings of the *Paulusgesellschaft,* a loose coalition of doctors, scientists and academics who began meeting to address the confrontation between faith and the natural sciences, but soon turned to other issues. This particular essay originated as a lecture that Rahner gave to Catholic students at the University of Erlangen in July of 1964 and reflects the thinking that he had been doing about the challenge of Marxism.[6]

Conceding the plurality of approaches to and definitions of ideology, he starts with a formal definition that highlights ideology's absolutizing of one element or arena of human experience, the way it closes itself off to reality as a whole, and its service of a particular political or social end, which in turn legitimizes that ideology. Insofar as Rahner's is a theological approach to the question, he complexifies this starting point (which gives us the commonly recognized "ideology of immanence," say, white supremacy) with the faith-based premise that the transcendent

impinges on or is a part of human experience. This gives two other forms of ideology.

The ideology of transmanence absolutizes a certain understanding of the transcendent and overlooks, manipulates or distorts the experience and analysis of our immanent experience. An example would be creationism, which absolutizes a certain understanding of divine agency based on a literalistic reading of Scripture, and ignores or dismisses the way science presents the facts of the world of our experience. The ideology of transcendence seems not to fit, because it won't absolutize either the experience of the transcendence (insofar as it is completely ineffable so that nothing is presented that could be absolutized) or our immanent experience. In an odd sense, it absolutizes the refusal to absolutize, and thus is an ideology tailor-made for free-market neoliberalism. Its advocates can retreat to reservations of the spirit to enjoy the experience of transcendence that fits their particular tastes, while leaving social and ecological challenges to be met by the invisible hand of the market.

Rahner concedes that the suspicion that Christianity is an ideology is not simply capricious or a produce of ill will. That it has been rendered ideological (often by Christians themselves) is a matter of historical fact. Moreover, because Christianity cannot do without "objectivizations" (doctrines, structures, practices that make a claim on persons by virtue of their claim to "objectify" the God and God's will for us) it will always run the risk of absolutizing them (an ideology of transmanence). To parry the suspicion Rahner takes a shortcut by pointing out that metaphysics and Christianity are in the same boat insofar as both make universal claims about the totality of reality, claims that cannot be immediately verified on the basis of empirical experience itself. There is a "more" at play in both vis-à-vis empirical experience and the sciences that study it. To this extent, a defense of metaphysics can aid Christianity, at least against the accusation of being an ideology of immanence (an accusation that denies that there is any "more" that could make it anything other than, say, "the opium of the people").

His defense of both metaphysics and Christian faith invokes "transcendental experience." One of the most philosophically complex and controverted conceptualities in Rahner's theology, the general idea is not that difficult to sketch. In any particular act of knowing, I am focused

on the object of knowing, but I am also tacitly aware of other things—of myself as a knower, for instance. Tacitly aware of myself as a knower also implicitly involves an awareness of the fullness or horizon of being that is the correlate to my knowing. It is my nature not to know this or that, but to know unrestrictedly all that is, being as such. These elements of experience are (a) not the same as or reducible to the specific acts of knowing empirical realities they accompany (the tides are caused by the influence of the moon's gravity on bodies of water), and (b) only available to us as we thematize them by disciplined reflection (metaphysics) on these specific acts (what is entailed by my awareness/conviction that this claim about tides is not just my opinion, but true as such?). A blanket denial of this kind of experience and its appropriateness for human reflection is itself a tacit metaphysics, and requires defense as such. Moreover, such a tacit metaphysics often presumes (hubristically, and falsely) that "man (sic) seizes the totality of reality in its ultimate ground and masters it in his own system, instead of being himself seized by it and struck dumb before the ground of reality's wholeness."[7]

With this, Rahner sets the stage for appeal to another element of transcendental experience, the experience of grace: "the self-communication of God to the finite creature and the creature's immediacy to God." What is crucial is that the self-communication of God does not do away with or compromise God's character as absolute Holy Mystery, beyond all grasp, and yet it happens in and through human history in its concreteness, its immanence. This is for Rahner *the* mystery of Christian faith.[8] It is thematized by the logic of the Incarnation, and the doctrine and theology of grace (rendered in an Ignatian key by the notion of finding God in all things—the God who is always *beyond* all things, but also found *in things* in all their particularity and messiness). Genuinely engaged, then, Christianity cannot be an ideology of immanence, because this compromises the "beyond-all-graspness" of the God encountered in it.[9] It cannot be an ideology of transmanence for the same reason, but also because the God who meets us meets us in our immanent experience, so that the facts of that experience, disclosed in the human sciences and in engaged action for a more human world, matter immensely. And it cannot be an ideology of transcendence because the mystery of God, even if beyond all grasp, is not beyond the possibility, and necessity, of thematization, in

our speech and in our action. To be sure, these stipulations do not claim that Christianity *could not* be an ideology, but that if this happens it has lost itself. This danger is ever present. Every Christian, and the church as a whole, has to work against Christianity's ideologization, "in fear and trembling," trusting that finally "the pure and indisponible grace of God will not fail to ward off this danger."[10]

b. "Pluralism in Theology and the Oneness of the Church's Profession of Faith"[11]

This essay is in some ways an *ad intra* reflection of the same challenge looked at *ad extra* in the first, so that the two complement one another. Composed five years later, it shows, if anything, an even deeper awareness on Rahner's part of the challenges that modern pluralism and the 'knowledge explosion' present to theology and the church. He admits that he has not resolved it to his own satisfaction, and that even his prior strategy of doing his best to understand other theologies and to modify and expand his own theology in their light has its limits.[12] Yet, it is not the kind of question that one can bracket "for the time being." One has to take a position on it, and this for the sake of two urgent issues in contemporary Catholicism. The first is the future of ecumenical dialogue between different churches (so it is interesting to read this essay in light of the formulation and reception of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification), and second, a new understanding of both the legitimacy of the church's magisterium and the concrete limits on how it exercises its task.

Rahner focuses on the relationship between the language and grammar of the creeds (which guarantee the unity of faith) and of theologies, which interpret and apply that to which the creeds point, taking necessary reference to the creedal language, but not being strictly held to it. In a sense, Rahner is expressing in his own way the point made by Pope John XXIII in his introductory address at Vatican II, and repeated by Pope Francis, that the substance of faith is one thing and the language in which it is expressed is another. His descriptions are evocative of the risks, the dignity, and the responsibility of the task of theology today. Words (including the words of Creeds) only (but indispensably) point toward the mystery of God, the depth and complexity of our historical reality, and our experience of the world that we share and are called to shape. There is no way to test and

verify the unity of our faith than by engaging these creedal formula, but we must do so realizing that the unity is "a unity of the Word that is not the product of words alone."[13] Later he writes "verification of creedal oneness will always remain a human process. It will never be fully achieved once for all times; it will always involve an element of longing and of hope."[14]

Conclusion: Rahner's relevance today

Rahner's diagnosis is truer today than fifty years ago. Our societies are more than ever riven by ideological polarization, often reinforced by believers themselves surrendering Christian faith to the ideology of immanence, and painfully reminding us of Rahner's remark that "only by fanaticism can ideology, with its limitations, be sure of itself against the fuller reality which surrounds it."[15] Too many church leaders (and theologians) respond to the threatening pluralism of theologies by making faith an ideology of transmanence, absolutizing their interpretation of the mystery of God at the cost of obscuring or distorting the details of our concrete historical reality and thereby misconstruing the genuine challenges it presents us. And, perhaps disgusted by both options, many "nones" or "spiritual but not religious," walk away from Christianity altogether, potentially surrendering themselves to the ideology of transcendence.

Rahner's response is not an easy one (he is famously difficult to read), and these essays remind me of the need to return to the fuller analyses of Rahner's entire opus that stand behind them. Yet perhaps the more important and more difficult challenge his work presents is not the intellectual rigor of his analyses, but the humility out of which they are presented, the openness to other positions (he practiced what he preached), and, finally, his ultimate hope that it is the grace of God that will carry us through precisely as theologians. Ignacio Ellacuría once said that Rahner carried his doubts about his faith elegantly. Theology was never for him an endeavor that would put an end to our doubts, or compensate for them in some other way. His theology arose out of and reinforced a faith that achieved much because it was able to be honest with its doubts, however troubling or painful. For this we can remember him with gratitude, and strive to emulate him in our own way.

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Notes

1. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2007), 2.
2. Rahner, "Reflections on the Contemporary Intellectual Formation of Future Priests," in *Theological Investigations volume 6: Concerning Vatican Council II,* trans. Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger (London: Dartman, Longman & Todd, 1969), 113-38, here, 118-119. The reflections in this essay date back to the early 1950s (see 113, n. 1).
3. On this, see "Pluralism in Theology," 106.
4. William Dych, "Theology in a New Key," in Leo O'Donovan, SJ (ed.), *A World of Grace: An Introduction to the Themes and Foundations of Karl Rahner's Theology* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1995), 1-16, here 2.
5. "Pluralism in Theology," 112
6. It was also published in TI 6, along with "Christian Humanism."
7. "Pluralism in Theology," 49.
8. See "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," *Theological Investigations IV: More Recent Writings* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1973), 4:36-74, especially 67-74.
9. Here I use Philip Endean's superior way of translating "*Unbegreiflichkeit*".
10."Christianity and Ideology," 57.
11. This was originally given at the Hogeschool für Theologie en Pastoraat, in Holland, in April of 1969.
12. "Pluralism in Theology, 108.
13. Ibid., 121.
14. Ibid., 122.
15. "Christianity and Ideology," 57.

The Magisterium and the World of Politics

EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX

Recent actions and documents of high ecclesiastical authority, such as Paul VI's address to the United Nations, the encyclicals *Pacem in terris* and *Populorum progressio,* and for a large part also the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, have created a problem: What is the nature, the bearing and the obligatory character of such statements by the magisterium? For such statements are not directly based on the data of revelation but are also dependent on a good (or not so good) analysis of the actual situation of human society. Such statements by the magisterium are therefore also determined by non-theological information. And this raises certain issues for the theologian.[1]

I. Two Objections that Will Not Hold

1. One cannot maintain that Pope or Council were not aware of the fact that these questions belong to the sphere of historical and contingent actualities. The Pastoral Constituion says explicitly that it appeals to the conscience of all "in matters that are subject to constant development"?[2] The magisterium knows, therefore, that in this field it speaks more or less hypothetically, i.e., given that this is the situation of man and society.

2. The second objection is far more tenacious. Some feel that, although at long last Christianity has become nonpolitical in the sense of having rid itself of ecclesiastical politics and, although the world's own secular character has been recognized and confirmed as such by the Christian faith, Council and Pope are, in a roundabout way, again "dabbling in politics" and exceeding their competence.

I do not deny that the gradual and rightful recognition of the world's autonomy has led many Christians to a kind of "political liberalism", taking refuge in what is "spiritual": religion is a private matter, the world and politics belong to the world as such, while the Church's place is in man's heart, in one's private social ambiance, in the sacristy and the church of stone and bricks. Thus Christians were not interested in politics and took part in it mostly in order to secure as many advantages for the Church as possible. On the other hand, this same "political liberalism" caused Christians to fight each other in political conflicts, convinced that in political matters Christians are wholly free, as if it does not matter whether political affairs are conducted according to the demands of the Christian message or not.

In its doctrinal section the Pastoral Constitution, which recognizes the world's autonomy, has nevertheless denounced the schizophrenic situation which separates *life in the world* from *Christian life*.[3] It stresses that the Christian message concerns man as a whole, also in his personal relationships, whether privateor public, and in his labors to make this earth more habitable and worthy of man: "The Church's religious mission is by the same token a human one";[4] "the Church is charged to show forth the mystery of God, man's last end; simultaneously she shows man the meaning of the existence, the intimate truth about himself."[5] Therefore, the eschatological expectation is not a brake on this building up of a human world but rather the fulfillment of it by adding new motives;[6] it is a more intensive stimulus toward this building up of the world and this promotion of all nations[7] because the *eschaton* stimulates us to bring about a better earthly future.[8] Therefore, the Church has "to serve the general welfare of all".[9]

Particularly the doctrinal part of the Constitution contains striking statements that are the more remarkable if we remember the history of what happened before the Council. It says that, although we cannot identify the humanization process of this world with the growth of the Kingdom of God, these two are very closely intertwined insofar as a better ordering of the human community contributes toward this Kingdom.[10] Several Council fathers protested against a radical separation between the future of this earth and the Christian expectation, and this led to a change in the original text. The *expensio modorum* (reasons for accepting

an amendment) rightly explains that insofar as laboring for welfare on this earth is an aspect of concern for brother, an expression of charity, this commitment to a better future on t his earth cannot be adequately distinguished from a commitment to the Kingdom of God.[11] Just as typical is the modification of the original text from: "The form of this world, distorted by sin, *will pass* away" to "*is passing* away". What was meant here is that in the world's progress toward a better future through concern for brother, the *eschaton* itself is already shaping history,[12] obviously not automatically, but through the commitment of love which demands justice for all, and, given the human conditions this is impossible without a concrete social and political order.

This shows that the very process by which Christendom is being extricated from an entanglement which tied restructures to political ones (caesaro-papism, all kinds of "theocracies" and the harnessing of the Church to particular régimes), has now made it possible for Christians to be involved a genuine, Gospel-inspired commitment in the realities of the world of politics.

II. Evangelical Inspiration and the "Signs of the Times"

From what has been said it is clear that when the Church's magisterium speaks about social and political issues, it is founded on the specific mandate of the Church to proclaim and promote the *salvation* of the *concrete human person*. Therefore, the Church speaks out of her own historical responsibility for man. It is precisely this claim that creates problems. It hardly needs demonstration that, just as all fundamentalism is abhorrent in the interpretation of the Bible, so a biblical fundamentalism in political matters would have disastrous consequences. The Christian message does not provide us directly with any concrete program for political action. On the other hand, one cannot maintain that the choice of a particular social policy is an open question for Christians. Therefore, between the message of the Gospel and the concrete historical political decisions, some decisive element must intervene. This was clearly seen in the Pastoral Constitution: "To carry out this task the Church must *continually examine the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel*."[13] In other words, the Church cannot directly rely on revelation in these matters. Human experience and "nontheological" factors play a very important part here.

Can we analyze its structure?

1. A General Structure

There is no need to insist here on the fact that if the Church cannot fulfill her mandate in this field except through dialogue with the world, this is by no means an exceptional case. The Church does not speak *in spite* of but precisely *because* of her claim to exclusiveness (*Ausschlieszlich-keitsanspruch*), she never speaks exclusively from revelation, but is essentially a Church of dialogue, even in the witness to, and proclamation of, the Good News. The actual situation, as the hermeneutical situation, exercises an essential influence on the *contemporary* proclamation of the *total* evangelical message.[14]

I only recall this point in order to make clear beforehand that the contribution of nontheological information to the Church's magisterial pronouncements cannot be the immediate reason for the specific character of such ecclesiastical pronouncements about political matters. The same happens, for example, in a dogmatic definition where the Church tries to express this particular message in other than purely biblical words and concepts. The Church and the magisterium can never live exclusively on the "data of revelation". The relation of the Church to the world is not simply one of a "teaching Church" to "a listening world", but an exchange, a dialogue, where contributions are made from both sides and both sides listen to each other, even in the authoritative proclamation of the Church's unique message. There is no need to develop this further.[15]

In the case of a magisterial pronouncement on political matters, this dialogue character of the Church stands out because here directives are given for right conduct *in the field of the world as such* and not merely because the world is used to express possible truths of revelation in conceptual form, as is the case with doctrinal definitions. In this field the Church takes up a position with regard to the world precisely as worldly. And this she does because of her function of service with regard to mankind's salvation. For example, she demands, or points to, agrarian reform. For this she can obviously not draw directly on revelation. This revelation does indeed impose on her a constant concern for brother. But this concern must be expressed in terms of concrete history. That this expression of concern demands here and now this particular measure

and not another (for example, whether she should emphasize the right to property or rather the need for fair distribution and socialization), makes one wonder where the magisterium obtains this kind of knowledge, and on what the binding character of such of her directives would be based.

2. The Particular Structure of Such Decisions of an Ethical and Historical Character

1. I have already pointed out that it is impossible to derive any concrete political plan of action directly from the Gospel message. Some think that this is possible when we combine this message with a scientifically conducted analysis of our present society. On the other hand, one may say that even such a scientific analysis still leaves a wide choice of alternative measures, and does not imply that only this or that political measure is ethically binding here and now, whether for a region or for the whole world. Often a number of possibilities stand open which then usually give rise to different answers according to different social tendencies, organizations or even political parties. And the fact is that, except where room is left for various solutions, the papal documents referred to and the Pastoral Constitution often refer to one particular concrete option. And here the problem becomes pressing: How can the Church justify an authoritative demand for specific options in political matters in such a way that, given the necessary conditions, it is no longer an open question for the Christian but requires him to act?"[16]

Without denying the charismatic assistance of the Spirit in the teaching, sanctifying and pastoral function of the Church, but rather accepting it fully, I nevertheless cannot see in this charismatic assistance the immediate explanation of the final concrete choice made in such ecclesiastical pronouncements. For this might create the impression that we invoke the Spirit on those difficult points which we cannot explain and that we try to bridge the unbridgeable distance between general Christian principles and the many-faced concrete situation by appealing to an intervening impulse from on high which would decide the definite choice from among the many possible ones. The Spirit of God does not work as a stop gap, but in and through man himself. In this sense we may say that an appeal to the Spirit cannot *explain* anything, while on the other hand, we emphatically maintain as believers that we see the charismatic assistance of the Spirit

become historically manifest precisely when we have analyzed the inner structure of such a concrete decision by the magisterium and have made it intelligible (*insofar* as free human decisions can be penetrated intelligibly). Thus, the factual analysisof this inner structure is also an homage to the Spirit.

2. Here we must discuss a general problem of ethics. Many start from a certain "duality" in ethical norms because they *proceed from* an abstract and theoretical morality. Therefore, they talk of abstract norms that are generally valid and concrete norms that refer to a "precise situation". Thus, they draw the conclusion that general principles of ethics can never lead to aconcrete situation by simple *deduction*. They are inevitably confronted with the question of how to bridge the gap between the abstract and generally valid norms and the increasingly complicated human social situation which can, as such, usually call forth a variety of possible human solutions and reactions. Moreover, while in some cases it may be of little importance what particular solution is found, there are many cases where only one particular answer is capable of promoting human dignity here and now and for that reason is truly morally binding.[17] If, therefore, on the one hand, the general principles cannot provide us with a concrete solution and, on the other, even scientific analysis of the situation cannot give us an unambiguous and clear solution,it follows, in the opinion of those dualists (general norms *and* strictly situational norms), that there must be somewhere an unknown third factor to act as a catalyst and to release the one proper and obligatory option from among the many. This catalyst would then *either* be a "supernatural" one, the guiding power of the Spirit, which breaks through the ambivalence of the problem, or some human, irrational factor such as intuition, *or* an unrationalized sympathetic hunch, an imaginative sense of history, etc.

One may ask whether the starting point of such reasoning, the abstract norm *and* the concrete norm, is the right one for this problem. I do not deny the significance of abstract, generally valid norms in the total context of human life. The question is, however, whether we place them in the right context and see them in their proper function in such a way that they show at the same time that a mere situational ethics would provide no solution. I cannot fully deal with this here, and if I did, there would not be enough space left for the real problem, but some points have to

be mentioned. Abstract pronouncements cannot seize hold of the reality simply by themselves; they nevertheless derive a realistic value from our total experience of reality. For instance, "to be human" is not a part of the real, ie. individual and concrete human person *side by side* with another part which would constitute the individuality; for the individuality determines "being human" from within. Only and exclusively as intrinsically individualized is "being human" a reality and can it be the source of moral norms (which in religious parlance, we can rightly describe as the will of God). Therefore, there is only one source of ethical norms, namely, the *historical reality* of the value of the inviolable human person with all its bodily and social implications. That is why we cannot attribute validity to abstract norms *as such*. Moreover, no abstract statement can produce call or invitation. The abstract and general nature of the norms simply shows up man's inability to express the concrete reality exhaustively. These abstract concepts appear in fact only as a "moment" of a more integral human awareness of experience in which they obtain, due to the concrete existential contact with reality, the value of an inner objective reference to this experienced reality: only in that direction, indicated by the abstract conceptual pronouncement, lies the concrete reality, and in no other. But for the rest, the abstract content cannot determine this direction in the concrete.

Therefore, these abstract, generally valid norms are an inadequate yet real *pointer* to the one real, concrete ethical norm, namely, this concrete human person living historically in this concrete society. Ethical norms are requirements made by reality, and the so-called abstract general norms are but the essentially inadequate expression of this. Therefore, it is not the inadequate expression which, by itself, constitutes the ethical norm, but it is a pointer to the one and only norm: these persons who must be approached in a love that demands justice for all. The abstract expression can only indicate in a vague and general way the content of this one, concretely determined reality as it calls on me; therefore, I can never see in an abstract norm what I must do or not do here and now. For the same reason, namely, because these general norms express, however inadequately, at least something real about the concrete reality, my concrete decision must never fall *outside* the direction indicated by these norms (if, of course, correctly formulated). These general norms are directives, derived from

earlier experiences and indicating a moral appreciation of basic human values without which human life would simply become absurd. And thus we overcome a morality that is either purely abstract or mere situation ethics.

If, then, for all practical purposes, the problem is not one of a confrontation between general norms and strictly situational elements, but one of respect for, and the promotion of, the concrete human person in his concrete society, the question is still: How do we know, or how does the magisterium know, what should be done in practice within the present society in order to contribute as a Christian to an existence that is more in line with man's dignity for this particular mankind in this particular society? How does such a constructive ethical investigation proceed?

3. The Pastoral Constitution states that we must "examine the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel"; that means, we must interpret the concrete reality of sociey as the expression of a moral demand made on the Christian conscience. But human history shows that this is not primarily a matter of finding a *theoretical* interpretation of these "signs of the times", because when we do that, the prophetic voice of a new moral imperative is usually heard too late. Elsewhere the Pastoral Constitution speaks more realistically about a concern with urgent problems "in the light of the Gospel and of *human experience*". The past has shown that, long before the Churches had analyzed the social problems, there were people who, in their commitment and in a preanalytic dialogue with the world, had already reached the moral decision that fundamental changes were required. New situational ethical imperatives have rarely or never been initiated by philosophers, theologians, Churches or ecclesiastical authorities. They emerge from a concrete experience of life and impose themselves with the clear evidence of experience. Theoretical reflection comes afterward, and so do the critical examination and rationalization, the philosophical or theological and official formulation. And so, after the event, such imperatives are put forth as "generally valid, abstract norms". All this brings out the essential need for a "living presence in the world". The Church cannot fulfill her prophetic task with regard to the worldly problems of man and society simply by appealing to revelation, but only by listening very carefully to that "outside prophecy" (*Fremdprophetie*) which appeals to her from the situation of the world and in which she

recognizes the familiar voice of her Lord.

When we listen to and analyze this voice of worldly prophecy, we discover that moral historical decisions and the initiation of new moral imperatives and directives are in fact not born from a confrontation between general principles and the result of a preferably scientific analysis of the social situation, but usually (though not necessarily exclusively) from those concrete experiences which may perhaps best be described as "contrast-experiences". The vocation, the concrete ethical decision of Cardijn (later Cardinal Cardijn) as to what he thought should be done here and now about some social problems, emerged, as he said himself, from such a "contrast-experience": his fellow workers' bitter resentment of the fact that he, a worker like themselves, was lucky enough to get the money to study. There are hundredsof such cases. The contrast-experiences of the two World Wars,the concentration camps, political torture, the color-bar, the developing countries, the hungry, the homeless, the underprivileged and the poor in countries where there is so much potential wealth, and so on—all these experiences make people suddenly say: "This should not and must not go on." And so develops the protest against war, social injustice, racial discrimination, the ownership of vast properties, etc.

In our present society moral imperatives and historical decisions spring, moreover, particularly from the experience of a *collective* evil, such as the too low income of certain sections of society, colonial exploitation, racial discrimination and other injustices. When we analyze these contrast-experiences insofar as they may lead to new ethical imperatives, we find that these negative experiences imply an awareness of values that is veiled, Positive, though not yet articulate; that they stir the conscience which begins to protest. Here the absence of "what ought to be" is *experienced* initially, and this leads to a perhaps vague, yet real, perception of "what should be done here and now". This experience is of course but the preliminary stage leading to the proper reflection of both a scientific analysis of the situation as of a new assessment of principles gained from experiences in the past. Yet, without this initial experience, which evokes a prophetic protest, neither the sciences nor philosophy or theology would have been stirred into action. (Such experiences often lead even to new sciences such as the "polemological" [war-science] institutes and the sociology of religion.) Through these experiences man begins to realize

that he is living at a level *below* that of his basic potential and that he is kept at this low level precisely by the pressure of existing social structures to which he is subject.

In the past, such contrast-experiences led conscientious people to the ethical imperative of charitable deeds in the private sphereo f immediate interpersonal encounter (Vincent de Paul, Don Bosco, etc.). Today, in contrast with "medieval" man, we know that the social "establishment" is not a divine creation, but a cultural and man-made situation which can be dealt with and reformed.[18] Historical imperatives that emerge from such contrast-experiences then immediately tackle the reform of the existing society itself. In other words, this type of contrast-experiences now leads to the moral imperative of decisions in the social and political field. This shows once again that the new moral imperatives, based on negative experiences, are part of human history; the science of ethics then begins to reflect upon this and in the course of time a whole framework of generally valid principles (basic and detailed) is built up.

Therefore, it is not this ethical thematization which is either the most important or the most decisive. And this makes it still clearer that the concrete ethical decision is not a mere "moral case" of a generally valid abstract norm. For these contrast experiences show that the moral imperative is first discovered in its immediate, concrete, *inner* meaning, before it can be made the object of a science and then reduced to a generally valid principle. For that reason there is no need for an appeal to a "third" factor which some want to introduce in order to bridge the gap between the "general norm" and the "strictly situational element". The initial creative decision which discovered the historical imperative directly in its *inner* meaning in the very contrast-experience *is*, for the believer, at the same time the charismatic element of this whole process. The general norms, on the contrary, are the mapping out of a long history of experience (full of contrast-experiences) in search of a society more worthy of man, and doing so precisely on the basis mainly of these negative experiences.

This should make it obvious that a Christian's life is not very much helped by the magisterium proposing merely "general principles" for social and political issues because in that case the Church lags by definition behind the historical situation since such principles are the tail end of a preceding history, while the history of the future must be prepared by

historical decisions and moral imperatives. To have seen this constitutes the real contribution made by such encyclicals as *Pacem in terris* and *Populorum progressio*. They deal really with moral "historical decisions" (though obviously against a background of basic principles already gained from past experiences).

So far, I have tried to analyze the concrete origin of moral historical decisions. There remains the specific Christian aspect to be dealt with in all this. Does the experience of our human existence guarantee that we *can* make life more worthy of man in a meaningful way? Does this not founder on man himself? Moreover, if a better future is the norm, does this belief in a better future allow us to sacrifice human beings in the present in order to achieve this better world in the future? The Gospel can indeed bring some clarity to this.

The heart of the message of Jesus' death and resurrection unto eternity lies in the proclamation that, by virtue of the Christ event, it is indeed possible to build up humanity and that this is not a labor of Sisyphus. In biblical terms this possibility is maintained, over against all human despair, when we say that this is the grace of God's Kingdom being achieved in man's world; it is a Kingdom of justice, peace and love, a Kingdom where there will be no evil, nor mourning, nor crying, nor pain (2 Peter 3,13; Apoc. 21, 4). Christian hope knows that this possibility is given to man as a grace, and so the Christian lives in the conscious faith that his faithful commitment to a better temporal order is *not in vain*, although he does not see *how* this temporal order which is not yet the promised Kingdom, can be the obscure beginning of the *eschaton*. The hope of this radically new andfinal Kingdom stimulates him neverto rest satisfied with what hasalready been achieved in this world. Historically we can never say *this* is the promised future. The Gospel called the one who said that "anti-Christ".

I agree with Ricoeur, Metz and Paupert [19] that the evangelical message gives us no direct program of social and political action, but, on the other hand, is socially and politically relevant in an indirect way, namely, in a "utopian" sense. But how should we understand this? The Gospel message of Christian expectation offers the stimulating possibility constantly to overcome the limitations of any present "establishment". It contains a permanent criticism of the actual situation: secular institutions, social

structures and their dominant mentality. It urges constant improvement, and above all, it brings the firm conviction that this building up of a more human world is genuinely possible. We should not be afraid of the word "utopia" here, as it refers to that angle from where we can criticize society. Moreover, it is an historical fact that most of the "rights of man" which are now accepted (at least in principle), were initially considered by all well thinking people as unrealistic and utopian dreams of peculiar individuals. The pressure function of a "utopia" is indeed an historical factor: mankind believes in what is humanly impossible. Moreover, the future with which we are concerned is not a mere accumulation of vague wishful thinking but something that was promised in Jesus Christ and becomes real, through grace, in history, and so possible for man. From the point of view of life in a political society, the Christian expectation and theSermon on the Mount play the part of an effective "utopia" which will keep on exercising an ever-present pressure on all social and political matters.

When we allow this Christian factor to play in human experience, particularly in what I have called contrast-experiences whence the new moral imperatives spring forth, it becomes clear that the protest prompted by these negative experiences ("this cannot go on") is also the expression of the firm hope that things *can* be done differently, *must* improve and *will* get better through our commitment. The prophetic voice that rises from the contrast-experience is therefore *protest*, hope-inspiring *promise* and *historical initiative*. To put it still more accurately: the possibility and condition of the protest and the historical decision lie in the actual presence of this hope, for, without it, the negative experience would not prompt the contrast-experience and the protest. Thus the negative experience itself shows the primacy of this hope ofa better future.[20] Is the history of these contrast-experiences not the *historical* soil on which the profoundly human and religious notions of *salvation* and *disaster* ("non-salvation"—*onheil*)could grow? Moreover it is only when people become *aware* of the fact that a better existence than the "established" one is possible and indeed seen as realizable that protest appears and the need for historical decisions is sensed. Was it not this awareness, for instance, which has created a pre-revolutionary situation throughout Latin America?[21]

Because of the continuity in man's consciousness, where prereflexive experience and reflexive analysis meet in a complex unity, we can roughly

distinguish two phases in these contrast-experiences: first, that of the negative experience itself, where the "utopian" urge of the Gospel provokes the prophetic protest against man's misjudgment of the possibilities of his own existence, and where the moral demand for changes and improvements develops, with the result that in a vague way some concrete moral pointers begin to stand out; secondly, the phase where the message of the Gospel matures through a combination of theology and the scientific analysis of a particular situation into a responsible and more concrete plan of social and political action. In this way the Gospel message becomes indirectly relevant in social and political matters.

I agree, therefore, with Prof. J. B. Metz that we can truly speak of two functions of the Church, one that criticizes society and one that applies the "utopian" view to society."[22] And this should be understood in the sense that it is its "utopian" view which is the standard of its criticism. This holds for the Christian Churches as such, and therefore for all the faithful and particularly for the ecclesiastical authorities who, through their service, are responsible in the Church for the world. That something of this senseof responsibility begins to find a clear expression in such documents as *Pacem in terris* and *Populorum progressio* shows the beginning of a new self-awareness in the magisterium which no longer merely registers the historical past in general principles but means to give a lead in those moral "historical decisions" that are opening up the future. In *this* sense we may call the Church (as *sacramentum mundi*, or *sacramentum historiae*, insofar as she serves God's Kingdom, since we now see the historical dimension of the world as implied in the primacy of the future) the institutionalized "critical function" with regard to the temporal order, a function based on a divine charisma. This is based on the prophetic character of the Church and thus on her hope of that promised future which starts already modestly in the history of this world as salvation history, i.e., as the gradual *redemption of history* itself.

This Christian expectation itself creates history in and through the commitment of the believers. This new self-awareness of the magisterium is the more valuable today as our present society with its indispensable involvement in rational planning urgently demands *collective* historical decisions in social and political affairs. That is why non-Catholics, too, watch these ecclesiastical decisions: Church and world are more and

more convinced that they need each other's contribution for the sake of the one, communal, overall welfare of all mankind. Perhaps this new self-awareness demands that this critical function be better organized while individual Christians themselves (nourished on this "utopian" and "critical" contribution) should not withdraw from concrete social politics but join in with all men of goodwill (but this, too, is an historical decision that affects the concrete situation).

The New Testament criticism of emperor-worship, together with its confirmation of the real and proper authority of the emperor, is already a symptom of this "utopian" and "critical" function of the Church with regard to society, and provides an authentic biblical foundation. This critical function can only be exercised through a genuine "presence in the world", through experiences where God, so to speak, inserts the world and history between himself and us as the perceptible *expression* (or "translation") of his call on us here and now. They are also the *medium* in and through which the Christian is made explicitly aware of this call. Lastly, they are the *sphere* within which he must embody his response to that call in his life. Thus, the world and history explicitly teach the Christian the concrete content of this call from God with regard to what happens in society. There the Christian should be first of all the active *prophet*, not of what can be achieved by power politics, but of that Christian "utopia" which brings about the *totally new*, all that is radically worthy of man, through his concern for brother. This "utopia" is the permanent source of criticism of all life on this earth, but attacks particularly the existing situation insofar as it pretends to be already the realization of the "Christian order". This is not to deny the importance of a policy based on the balance of power during a given period of time. But it *does* mean that precisely in this case the Church and the individual Christian must continue to exercise a critical function, and that therefore the element of prophetic "unrest" must be kept alive. Eschatological hope makes the commitment to the temporal order *radical* and by the same token makes any already existing temporal order *relative*. Thus, the Christian's social and political commitment, rooted in his care for mankind, is the hermeneutic of his faith in the Kingdom of God's promise. The Church's critical function is not that of an outsider, pursuing a parallel path, but rather that of a critical involvement in the building of the world and the progress of the nations.

III. The Morally Binding Force of the Church's Magisterium in Social and Political Matters

The specific nature of statements by the magisterium on political, economic and general cultural issues can only be understood in the light of what has been said so far in this article. I presuppose here that we are dealing with statements where the magisterium pronounces directly on the *doctrinal* background of a moral historical decision in the field of politics. For we are concerned here with the theological value of the "historical decisions" contained in such documents, in other words, of the value of a non-doctrinal, somewhat "hypothetical" pronouncement by the Church's highest authority, Pope or Council. The words "somewhat hypothetical" refer to the fact that such texts also depend on nontheological information and speak of a contingent secular reality. This is the same as saying that such a pronouncement can only have value insofar as a condition is realized: "given this particular historical situation of society". The concrete indications are therefore not, by themselves, valid for all times, or even everywhere here and now, since the situation may be completely different in various places.[23] Given the pace of development in today's society, these official documents may, therefore, be soon out of date, so that to keep on appealing to such concrete historical indications might soon become reactionary in the future. This is implied in the very definition of an "historical decision". Therefore, apart from possible inadequacies with regard to the analysis of the situation and past principles, social and political encyclicals appear in relatively quick succession and there are striking differences in their moral indications. Therefore, the Pastoral Constitution states quite rightly that the signs of the times must be *continually* examined. In the meantime, *this* specific pronouncement will hold *here and now* for the ecclesiastical community.

Basically, and first of all, the obligation lies in a demand addressed to all Christians and arising from real situation, insofar as it is seen as inhuman and unchristian. This situation ought to stir the Christian conscience even before any official pronouncement. The Church's intervention merely confirms this. The specific character of such an intervention lies in the fact that this demand is formulated in a clear, precise, concrete and definite sense (e.g., in this situation the breaking up of vast landed properties by expropriation is morally necessary). Although in many cases the concrete

demand is meant to be understood as "illustrative" and leaves room for other possibilities,[24] occasionally such an official document puts forth a decisive choice in a way that rules out other measures. And history has shown *after the event* that among various possible measures only *one* proved to be objectively right. Thus, we are faced once again and in a still more pregnant fashion with the question: Does the magisterium provide us, believers, with a guarantee that its specific indication is the only right one among many others? It seems to me that this can never be maintained in an *absolute* sense because "historical decisions" in the field of politics can never have that kind of guarantee, not even when they proceed from ecclesiastical authority, although we believe nevertheless that it stands under the charismatic guidance of the Spirit and that it functions in and is borne by the whole community of the Church. We may say that this gives the Christian confidence (within the limits of the "hypothetical" element referred to above) that whoever acts accordingly will really act more in line with what the situation demands, and that the, Christian can therefore face the consequences of such an action more confidently, even if it should lead to trouble. All this, indeed, is not so much directly concerned with obedience to the Church's teaching authority as with her pastoral prophetic function. This function does not have the same precision but a more powerful prophetic ability to "call forth", to stimulate a continuous search, and no Christian can close his ears, his heart and his inventive imagination to that. This leads us to the specific nature of the obligatory quality of these official directives. Because the concrete moral imperative grows mainly out of contrast-experiences, it has a primarily and principally *negative* character: "this cannot go on". What, for instance, *peace* may positively mean when we reject cold or hot wars, nobody knows. The Christian only has the vision of the "eschatological peace" (which he can only describe negatively for a large part). But in the experience of the concrete "non-peace" both our will to overcome *this* situation and the inventiveness of our informed love-seeking means to achieve justice for *all*, will grow apace.

And so this, perhaps somewhat abstract, yet significant analysis (so it seems to me) leads us to the conclusion that the obligatory character of a magisterial pronouncement on political and social issues lies rather in the "negative" aspect (this *must* change) than in something positive, although

the specific obligation contained in this positive element *shares*, in a contemporary and prudent manner, in the absolutely obligatory character of the negative experience. The "negative theology" in speculativematters shows us here the way to a "negative theology" in practical matters, in which the eschatological vision of the future is the positive, "utopian" and "critical" norm for this particular concrete and changing situation. A Christian, therefore, who has read, e.g., *Populorum progressio* without any noticeable change in his day-to-day life, is guilty with regard to the prophetic voice of this papal document. He is guilty particularly with regard to mankind and God because he obviously accepts the existing order which the Bible qualifies as disorder, an order that will remain subject to the criticism of the biblical message for as long as history lasts.

Notes

1. This problem was studied by K. Rahner, "Over de theologische problematiek van een 'Pastorale Constitutie'," in *Vaticanum IL*, n. 2, *De Kerk in de wereld van deze tijd* (Hilversum, 1967), pp. 315-38. I do not intend to repeat what he has said but rather to approach the issue from another angle without implying any criticism of Rahner. It is rather a *complementary* view.
2. N.91. Also *Pacem in terris*, n. 154.
3. N. 43. Tillich says in the same sense: "The existence of religion as a special realm is the most conspicuous proof of man's fallen state", in *Theology of Culture* (New York, 1964), p. 42.
4. Loc.cit. n. 11.
5. N. 41.
6. N. 41.
7. N. 39 and Ch. 4 and 5 (Pt. 2)
8. N. 43 and also 34, 36 and 41. Cf. E Schillebeeckx "Christelijk geloof en aardse toekomstverwachting" in *Vatican II,* n. 2. *De Kerkin de wereld van deze tijd* (Hilversum, 1967, pp. 78-112).
9. Pastoral Constitution, N. 42.
10. N. 39,
11. *Expensio modorum*, in cap. 3, parsI, p. 236.
12. Pastoral Constitution, n. 39 (with corresponding Expensio modorum).
13. N. 4.
14. I have tried to explain this in: "De Kerk als sacrament van de dialoog," in *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* VII (1967), n. 4, and especially in: "Naar een katholiek gebruik van de hermeneutiek," in *Geloof bij kenterend getij (Liber amicorum voor Prof. W. van de Pol*) (Roermond, 1967).
15. The Council admitted this: "The Church does not ignore how much she has received from the history and development of humanity" (Pastoral Constitution, n. 44), and it applied this explicitly to the way in which she expounds her unique message (n. 58).
16. The immediate obligation lies with the ecclesical community as such, and therefore on "faithful at large", not all individual faithful. Not every *individual* faithful is, for instance, called upon to go to a developing country, nor need he be a theologian although there must be theology in the Church. I

am taking this point for granted.
17. The question is not that there is something relative and imperfect in *all* human decisions, also those of Church authorities. This is the mark of the human condition. I am referring here to the problem that specific historical decisions, however imperfect, can carry a moral obligation.
18. See among others, H. Freyer, *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters* (2nd ed., Stuttgart, 1963), who, in 1955, was one of the first to analyze the tractability of the world and of society.
19. P. Ricoeur, "Tâches de l'éducateur politique," in *Esprit 33* (1965), n. 340, pp. 78-93, esp. 88f.; J. M. Paupert, *Pour une politique évangélique* (Paris, 1965): J. B. Metz, "Nachwort," in *Der Dialog,* by R. Garaudy, K. Rahner, J. Metz (Reinbek, 1966), pp. 119-38.
20. I do not consider here the question how and how far it is possible, outside an explicitly Christian conviction, to have the firm will to construct a better world for all men, either as based on a positive reality which we, Christians, *can* interpret as an anonymously "Christian hope" (clarified through revelation), or as based on false ideologies, although this question is not without importance, also politically.
21. See C. Furtado, *La pré-révolution brésilienne* (Paris, 1964).
22. Cf. J. Moltmann, *Theologie der Hoffnung* (Munich, 1964); J. Metz, loc. cit, and "The Church and the World" in *The Word in History,* St. Xavier Symposium (New York, 1966), pp. 69-85; P. Ricoeur, *loc. cit.*, and "Le socius et le prochain", in *Histoire et Vérité* (Paris, 1955), "pp. 99-111.
23. See the qualification mentioned in n. 16. Moreover, the condition "given the generally described situation" remains always valid here. Because of the unification of the world and the consequently greater solidarity of people and of Christians, a given situation may well hold elsewhere though not in one's own country. The obligation is therefore influenced by all kinds of modifications.
24. This is why the Pastoral Constitution speaks of "searching out solutions of so many involved questions" (n. 46).

The "God of Jesus" and the "Jesus of God"

EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX

The New Testament contains the testimony of men who found salvation explicitly from God in Jesus of Nazareth and who therefore called Jesus, in the light of their expectations of salvation and confronted with his concrete historical appearance in history, "the Christ, Son of God, our Lord".

I. The History of Suffering: Man's Expectation of Salvation

Man's ideas and expectations of salvation and of personal and social happiness have always been formulated in the light of his experience of and reflections about the absence of salvation, suffering, misery and alienation. They have, in other words, arisen from an accumulation of negative experiences throughout a history of suffering that has lasted for centuries. This history, however, has always included fragmentary experiences of happiness and the promise of happiness, of salvation and of unfulfilled expectations, mingled with experiences of guilt and evil. This, of course, is the problem of Job in human history.

What has eventually emerged from this experience and man's reflection about it is a view of what is good, happy and true in the state of being man. Man's longing for happiness and salvation, which has always been subjected to criticism, but which has always survived that criticism, has therefore developed into the idea of redemption or liberation *from* and of going *into* a completely new world. This fundamental idea has, of course, been expressed in many different ways, but it is in general true to say that a people's negative experiences of contrast mark out its ideas and

expectations of salvation. It is so to speak possible to read the history of a people's suffering in its expectation of salvation even if the precise traces of that suffering cannot be followed in other sources.

Jesus' own period of history was marked by a proliferation, among both the Jews and the Gentiles, of expectations of salvation and these were expressed in a full spectrum of ideas which had accumulated in centuries of historically experienced salvation and of unfulfilled expectations. The Jewish apocalyptic period, from the Maccabees (167 B.C.) through the Jewish war (A.D. 66-70) to Bar Cochba (A.D. 135), was above all a "history of blood and tears",[1] which gave rise to an increasing longing for a definitive and radical change in the world.

Within this sphere of general expectations, within which many of the ideas of salvation merged together, the conviction grew, in confrontation with Jesus of Nazareth, that there was "salvation in no one else" (Acts 4. 12). The early Christians expressed their experience of salvation from God in Jesus in ideas which already existed for them and which had been derived from many sources, but which they vitally shared. They believed that their expectations had been fulfilled here and now in Jesus of Nazareth and that they were consequently new men.

After a period of Christian life and reflection, these early believers bore witness, in the New Testament, to their recognition of their salvation in Jesus. It is not possible, however, to disentangle the closely interwoven threads of their expectation of salvation and their happy recognition of the fulfilment of that expectation in Jesus of Nazareth that are found in the New Testament. The question about man's true being and the finding of an answer to this question in the historical man Jesus are correlative.· They are, moreover, correlative in that it is not the already existing expectations of salvation that determine who Jesus is, but that, in the light of the history of Jesus, those expectations are not only included, but also changed, adapted or corrected. There is, then, both continuity and a discontinuity between man's question about salvation and the concrete historical answer which is Jesus.

This means that we encounter great difficulties when we read the New Testament for the first time. We do not live in a social and religious environment with a traditional expectation of a Messiah or a mysterious Son of Man or of the approaching end of the world. We are, in other words,

confronted in the New Testament with an early religious society, which is very strange to us today, both in its Jewish and in its Hellenistic expressions of these expectations. Such expectations are always conditioned both historically and culturally, even though the "human predicament" may remain the same.

In the modern world, man's expectation of salvation has assumed the form of a movement of "emancipative freedom". The aim of all the branches of this movement to redeem mankind from his social alienations. At the same time, many different kinds of· scientific techniques, such as psychoanalysis, Gestalt therapy, social work, counselling, and so on, are used to liberate individuals from personal alienations and from a loss of personal identity. A conviction which has become more and more widespread nowadays and which is increasingly used as evidence is that, apart from Jesus, there are so many factors in man's. life which really bring historical salvation and make man whole. The expression, "there is salvation in no one else" other than Jesus Christ, so often used by Christians, has therefore become to some extent difficult to understand and to believe. The religious concept of salvation has undoubtedly become narrower in the modern world and it has had to give way to other and visibly effective means of bringing salvation. This has brought the question as.to what really saves man into a position· of central importance.

It is certainly true that it is possible to eliminate all kinds of human alienations by scientific and technical means. At the same time, however, the only alienations that can be removed in this way are those which result from the presence of physical or psychosomatic conditioning or conditioning by social structures, from the absence of conditioning by infrastructures or of liberating conditions or from the presence of conditioning by freedom that can be helped by human commitment. Human freedom is not, after all, a purely inner freedom. It is physically directed outwards and can only become fully conscious of itself when it encounters free people within structures that make freedom possible.

Man himself is only a possibility of freedom and freedom itself is really a vacuum and without content. Society enables freedom to fill that vacuum creatively, although there is no form or degree of society that can completely fill the vacuum. The individual person, society and ''nature" are related to each other in a situation of dialectical tension, with the

result that the deepest human alienations can never be fully overcome, either personally or socially. There is, for example, that human suffering which cannot be resolved by social or political measures. Man can still be broken by isolation even in the best social structures, since these cannot automatically make man and society good and mature. Nature can be humanized to a very great degree, but it will always remain alien to man (death is an example of this). Finally, man's finite nature may make him trust in God or it may lead to isolation and anxiety. Within human history, then, and in confrontation with nature and these various data, there is no single identifiable subject which can bring about man's total salvation or a state of real "wholeness" in him. Everything is, in fact, subject to the dialectical tension that exists between the person, society and nature.

Is this deeper problem, then, not expressed in a specific way in Jesus of Nazareth (as in all religiosity)? For slaves, salvation is emancipation. For the man who believes that his life is determined by an arbitrary fate or by evil powers, salvation is achieved in the overcoming of that fate or those powers. The material content of the "Good News", the gospel and salvation, for us changes according to our experience of the absence of salvation. It is clear from the history of Christianity since the time of the early Church that the material content of this Good News of salvation experienced in Jesus has been described in constantly changing forms, a process which is continuing for us.

Both our own longing for salvation today and what was expressed in Jesus make an essential contribution to our formulation of an answer that is faithful to Jesus and at the same time applies to us. The offer of salvation from God in Jesus will therefore subject our longing for salvation to criticism. Is it, then, not those alienations which cannot be removed by scientific and technical means used by man that are expressed in our interpretation of life as Christians in Jesus? If this is so, then it means that these human factors are recognized, confirmed and stimulated as such in this religious interpretation of reality, which has the essential task of liberating man from his deeper alienations and of redeeming him and setting him free so that he becomes autonomous in his adherence to the living God who is transcendent and can therefore make him free.

Man's search for the message and the praxis of Jesus of Nazareth is therefore a search for the structures of what appears in Jesus as really

"Good News" in the religious and human sense. It is not therefore a search for confirmation of what we, as men, can probably already achieve ourselves in the scientific and technical sense. However meaningful and indeed necessary it may be, this scientific and technical skill is not, for twentieth century man, "Good News" from God (see Mark 1. 14-15).

II. The Question about God and the Question about Man

In the light of what has been said above, it should be clear that Jesus cannot give a universal invitation that is justified by the consent that we give to it in faith, so long as it is not meaningfully demonstrated that we are essentially concerned here, in the man Jesus of Nazareth, with the living God as the creator of heaven and earth who makes us free and at the same time gives meaning to our lives. If the living God, the God of Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and so many others, is not personally involved. In the event of Jesus and does not allow his face to be seen in one way or another in Jesus, then our enthusiasm for Jesus as a man who can inspire and give direction to our lives may well be meaningful, at least within the limited tradition within which he appeared, but it will be non-committed and at the most a cipher for man's possibilities. This may still be inspiring, but it cannot be universally valid.

In his historical appearance, Jesus becomes a renewed and deepened question for us only if and because he is the one who has something definite and definitive to say about God and at the same time about man. In other words, he becomes a question if God is expressed in Jesus as a challenge to man. Within this question, what has to be sought in Jesus of Nazareth is the possibility of signs which may be able to direct man's question about salvation towards the Christian offer of an answer in faith which will point to God's special saving activity in Jesus of Nazareth, an activity that can be identified as such by Christians. The answer to the question about the unique and universal significance of Jesus will therefore inevitably be connected with the revelatton, on the one hand, of God's true face and, on the other, of man's true face, in which God's own face becomes to some extent evident and visible.

The question regarding the unique and universal significance of Jesus (as postulated by Christianity) can, of course, only be answered in faith. Any such theological statements made in faith must, however, be based on

the history of Jesus or they will inevitably have a fragmentary, divided and therefore ideological relationship with reality. "Who has seen me has seen the Father" something of this must have been evident in history. (If there had been too great a division between these two levels, Christianity would never have stood any chance.) What is ultimately at stake is an affirmation which is made in faith and which claims to give consent to reality, even though that claim may be a claim based on faith.

We may, however, give our consent, in the language of faith, to a reality, in other words, to something that is not postulated as such by me as a believer, but which urges me to give consent and makes that consent an act of faith. In that case, the reality in question, the historical event of Jesus of Nazareth, must provide the basis of what is said about Jesus in the language of faith and at the same time fill it.

Within the context of this question, there are therefore two points in the interpretation of Jesus today which come together in what is often expressed, wrongly, in the form of a dilemma. Is salvation contained in the historical appearance of Jesus, in his challenging message and in his good and critical words and way of life, in which he was faithful to death? Or is salvation contained in Jesus who was crucified and rose from the dead? The two points involved here are, firstly, is the expression of God essential to the identity of Jesus (the "God of Jesus") and, secondly, if the first question is answered affirmatively, what does it mean if the message and the praxis of Jesus' life resulted in failure, in other words, were rejected (the "Jesus of God")?

1. The "God of Jesus"

We should not approach the "God of Jesus" expressed in Jesus' life from the vantage-point of a previously existing idea of what God is, as though we knew better who God is than who Jesus is. The only way in which we can gain a perspective of the "God of Jesus" is by examining the message of Jesus and the praxis of his life. This God was also both the God of Israel and the creator of heaven and earth. Jesus' appearance cannot, in other words, be isolated from his past, which was Israel. Moreover, even though he remains the focal point as well as the norm and criterion of the whole "event of Christ", he cannot be isolated from his past, his present, during which he went round in Palestine doing good, acting with and reacting

to his contemporaries, and his future, which was the community of the Church which developed from him.

One of the data of Jesus' life which has a most firmly established historical basis is his expression of God in and through his message of the coming kingdom of God. This can be found in the traditions of the four gospels.[2] The content of this message of the kingdom emerges clearly from the original parables, in so far as these can be accurately reconstructed through the early Christian actualizations. The praxis of the kingdom of God is expressed above all in *metanoia* or conversion in these original parables and this central message is also filled with the praxis of Jesus' life, which is itself a parable of the kingdom of God.

"Rule" was a central concept in the ancient world, like "power". We do not find these concepts attractive, but, in Jesus' preaching and above all in his cures and and his driving out of devils, the concept of "rule" is opposed, as the power of love and goodness, to the powers of evil both within man and outside him. A respect for God's supremacy and therefore for his rule is an essential part of Jesus' appearance and his message and he interpreted God's supremacy as an unconditional desire for man's good. God's rule is, for Jesus, not a function of human salvation - he is the man who experiences joy in God himself. God's rule is God's state of being God and our recognition of the rule or kingdom of God brings about our salvation, our state of being human.

This emphasizes a form of "rule" which is not oppressive, but liberating: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you" (Matt. 20. 25-26). For Jesus, man's cause was God's cause, just as God's cause was also man's cause. This is clearly expressed in the Letter to Titus: "the goodness and the loving kindness (the loving mindfulness of man) of God appeared" (Tit. 3. 4).

The God of Jesus is undoubtedly God. He is not a function of humanity or of human liberation, but he is essentially a God who cares for man, with the result that the whole of Jesus' life was a "celebration" of God's rule and at the same time an "orthopraxis", in other words, a praxis in accordance (*orthos*) with the kingdom of God. There is therefore an inner connection between the "kingdom" or "rule" of God and "orthopraxis" as a human phenomenon or a consistent translation of God's love of all

men to the level of the praxis of human life. In this praxis, Jesus himself recognized the signs of the coming of God's rule, the kingdom of God. In the praxis of Jesus' own life, then, there was a proleptical or anticipatory realization in practice, not simply in theory, of the new world known as the "kingdom of God" and therefore a realization also of the new praxis that has been sought of a humane, good and true life. In Jesus, eschatological hope (the approaching kingdom of God) is linked with a new praxis, of *metanoia*, the aspect of which that "shocks" man being expressed in the parables. The message of the approaching kingdom of God - and Jesus' life itself is a striking parable of this - therefore means salvation from God in Jesus manifested in a new praxis of human life, the living example of which is again Jesus himself.

Jesus was conscious that he had been called to invite, from God, the host, all the guests, among whom were explicitly included all those who had hitherto been excluded from all communication and fellowship at table, namely the "tax collectors and sinners" (Mark 2. 15-17). The lost sheep, the man who was isolated from the group, had to be sought (Luke 15. 1-8; 19. 20; Matt. 9. 36; 10. 6). Jesus' striking solidarity with sinners and his association with them in order to open communication between them and God can be regarded as an offer of salvation, the "Good News" from God (Mark 1. 15).

Against the background of the current apocalyptic ideas and the convictions of the Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots and other similar "remnant" communities and movements, it is not easy to situate Jesus' message and his praxis in a religious and historical context. This is precisely why both his message and the praxis of his life cannot be understood without recourse to his own special and original experience of God. The history of suffering and of the absence of salvation within which Jesus' life was led provides no reason or basis for the certainty of salvation which characterizes Jesus' preaching. The hope expressed in his proclamation of the coming salvation of the world of men in.the kingdom of God is clearly based on an experience of contrast. On the one hand, he lived in a human history of suffering characterized by the absence of salvation, peace and justice and by the presence of painful slavery. On the other hand, Jesus had the special experience of God as the one who promotes good and refuses to recognize the power of evil. Jesus' conviction and proclamation

of the kingdom of God which set men free here and now in history were fashioned by this religious experience of contrast. He experienced God as the one who gives the future to those to whom no future can, from the worldly point of view, be promised.

Man is thus given a hope that cannot be traced back to his history in the world or to his personal or his social and political experience, yet it is none the less a hope that has at the same time to be fulfilled in this world in terms of man's personal and social and political salvation. Jesus was made conscious of the possibility of this hope by the original nature of his experience of God and this experience had been made possible by what had gone before in the religious life of prophetic Judaism. In other words, the best of Israel's experience of God reached an original and personal climax in Jesus-Yahweh as the one who was to come and who for the time being refused to present his credentials ("I shall be who I shall be", Exod. 3. 14). Believing in such a God was placing one's trust in one who took his identity very seriously and at the same time refused to reveal it fully "in advance". Jesus therefore experienced God as the power of good and "anti-evil", in other words, as man's salvation in the history of human suffering. The "God of Jesus" is a God to whom "all things are possible" (Mark 10. 27) and, in his words and his actions, Jesus has called on us to believe in this God. If we deprive Jesus of his relationship with God in his life and preaching, we deny his historical identity and make him into an "unhistorical'' being, a "non-Jesus", someone who was in any case not "Jesus of Nazareth".

2. The "Jesus of God"

The essence of Jesus' identity that emerges from a critical analysis of the four gospels is that he was not himself concerned with his own identity, but wanted to identify himself with God's cause as man's cause and with the salvation, the wholeness, of man as God's cause.

While Jesus was living in history, a history which was contingent and unfinished, the revelation of salvation in God was, for anyone who was able to experience it in Jesus, also unfinished and still in a process of development. "Christology" is essentially a statement, made in faith, about the totality of Jesus' life, which is therefore presupposed in the Christian experience of "disclosure". It is only Jesus' completed life which is God's

revelation in Jesus of Nazareth. Our story of Jesus can only really begin with Jesus' death, as the closure of his whole life, even though our story of Jesus or our recognition of Christ must also be a recognition of Jesus of Nazareth and not a myth or gnosis.

In fact, Jesus' message and the praxis of his life were rejected, because of the purely historical failure of his life and work. For this reason, his message and the praxis of his life, however important they may have been, cannot be the last word or the basis of real hope for us. This problem is resolved in the gospels by reference to faith in the resurrection and, while avoiding a full analysis of the emergence of faith in the resurrection, we are bound to consider its significance within the framework of what we have already said.

It is clear from the "missionary sermons" in Acts (10. 34-43; 2. 22-36; 4. 26-27; 3. 12-26; 13. 16-41) that there was a connection between Jesus and the Spirit. In these sermons, Luke throws light for the Greeks on the meaning of "Christ" as the one who was anointed with the Spirit - for example, declaring that God was with him (Acts 2. 22; 3. 14; 10. 38). Paul said similarly that "Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3. 23). Jesus, in other words, was God's "possession" - this is clear from the same texts in Acts, which speak of "thy Holy One", "thy holy servant", "his servant", "his Christ", "my Son", and so on (Acts 2. 27; 3. 14; 4. 27; 13. 35; 3. 13; 3. 26; 4· 30; 3. 18; 13. 33).

Jesus' rejection by men was counterbalanced by Jesus' belonging to God. In these missionary sermons, then, believing in the earthly Jesus meant recognising him as God's eschatological prophet of and for Israel, the last messenger from God who was to proclaim the kingdom of God as very close and to bring it in his words and his actions. Believing in the risen Jesus, on the other hand, was recognizing him in his universal significance as the saviour of all mankind. These two aspects are, however, defined by Jesus' belonging to God on the one hand and by God's faithfulness to Jesus on the other.

The resurrection - God made Jesus rise again - therefore confirms Jesus' message and the praxis of his life. It also reveals that his person is indissolubly bound to God and to this message. In Jesus' death and resurrection, man's rejection of God's offer of salvation and the constant provision of that salvation in the risen Jesus encounter each other. The

risen Jesus is God's overcoming of man's rejection of the provision of definitive salvation from God in Jesus. God goes so far as to break through man's rejection in the resurrection of Jesus, in whom he gives the future to anyone who has no future and who merits no future. He loved us "while we were yet sinners" (Rom. 5. 8). He shows himself in the risen Jesus to be the power of good and "anti-evil", unconditional goodness which refuses to recognize the power of evil and breaks through it. In his supreme need, in his suffering and crucifixion, Jesus gave up his personal secret, the mystery of his person, his inviolable bond with God, while the Father also gave up his personal secret with regard to Jesus, his constant acknowledgment of Jesus. In this way, the Father-Son relationship is revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus and we are therefore bound to ask the question about the Trinity.

When he sent Jesus to Israel, God fulfilled the promise of the Old Covenant and affirmed this and his creation. When Israel rejected this offer of salvation in Jesus, God brought about a "new creation" in and through the resurrection of Jesus. In the rejected but risen Jesus of Nazareth, then, the Old Testament was fulfilled and the New Testament was begun. There is a clear continuity between our human history and this new creation on the basis of Jesus' resurrection. At the same time, however, on the basis of the rejection of Jesus as the one through whom the covenant and creation itself were fulfilled, there is also a discontinuity which is inwardly connected with the historical continuity. This link is made by God's new saving activity which transcends the historical failure of Jesus, who fulfilled the covenant and creation, but who was rejected and crucified, and installs the rejected Jesus in a position where he can carry out his function of bringing universal salvation. Within our human history, the integration of Jesus' rejection and crucifixion into his offer of salvation, which is the meaning of his whole life, is the historical index of this transcendence. God has, in other words, redeemed us in Jesus Christ (see 2 Cor. 5. 14-18).

Jesus' resurrection is God's confirmation of his message and the praxis of his life precisely because his "belonging to God" was confirmed by God in the resurrection. This at the same time implies that the content of the eschatological liberation which is expressed in the language of faith as "resurrection from the dead" has to be filled in the light of Jesus' historical

appearance, that is, of his words and actions which are confirmed by the crucifixion and resurrection. The question as to whether salvation is foμnd in Jesus of Nazareth or in the crucifixion and resurrection is therefore a false dilemma. This is because Jesus of Nazareth is confirmed by God in the crucifixion and resurrection, whereas this confirmed crucifixion and resurrection is filled concretely in Jesus of Nazareth. In other words, a crucified Jesus who rose from the dead remains a myth or a gnostic mystery without Jesus of Nazareth. In spite of the astonishing message and the praxis of Jesus' life, without the resurrection Jesus of Nazareth would have been a failure, like all the failures of innocent men in the history of human suffering. It would have resulted in a brief hope and would have confirmed the suspicion that many people do not accept it, but do experience its utopian character because of the very nature of their history.

There is therefore no rupture between "Jesus of Nazareth" and the crucified Jesus who rose from the dead. Jesus' death confronts us with a fairly fundamental question about God because of Jesus' life which preceded his death. One answer to this question is that God, whose kingdom Jesus proclaimed, was an illusion on the part of Jesus (and also a God in whom Jesus' disciples were disillusioned). A second possible answer is that Jesus' rejection and death compels us to revise our own understanding of God and even to abandon it as invalid, God's real nature appearing as valid only in Jesus' life and death. God, whom Jesus called absolutely reliable, is, in other words, either a tragic farce or else a God to whom we must confess in the preaching and in the historical failure of Jesus. Faith in Jesus can only occur in the form of a confession to God.

The rupture in this Christian faith is therefore not to be found in Jesus' death. He experienced that death as an involvement in his mission to offer salvation and as the historical consequence of his love and care for men. This is the minimum of essential historical truth that has to be preserved from the tradition of the Last Supper. The break is rather to be found in the rejection of his message and the praxis of his life, which resulted in a rejection of his very person. God's confirmation in the resurrection therefore concerns the very person of Jesus and, in that person, his message and the praxis of his life. Both the rejection and God's confirmation of and consent to the person of Jesus therefore give validity to the specific

aspect of the event of Jesus, in which the person of Jesus and his task in life (his message and his praxis) form an indissoluble unity. This is why the kingdom of God is able to have, in the Christian confession, the appearance of Jesus Christ and why we can speak about the "Lord Jesus Christ" as synonymous with the kingdom of God as proclaimed by Jesus.

In speaking about God's confirmation of Jesus' person, message and praxis, we have to bear in mind that this statement is also an affirmation of faith and not a confrontation or a legitimation in the purely human sense of the word. The resurrection confirms that God was always with Jesus throughout his whole life, even when he was humanly forsaken in his death on the cross, when God himself was silent. A conviction of faith, the resurection, cannot be a legitimation of another conviction of faith, that of God's saving activity in Jesus of Nazareth. Any authentic legitimation, which is to be evident to all men, must therefore always be completely eschatological. This is why faith in the resurrection is a prophecy and a promise for this world and, as a prophecy, it is defenceless and vulnerable. Christian life is therefore not justified or made right by history. On the other hand, Christians, believing in the resurrection of Jesus, are liberated by their faith from the need to justify themselves and to claim that God has now to protect and ratify those who are faithful to him in public. The servant is, in other words, no better than the master. Like Jesus himself, the Christian dares to entrust himself to God and to trust that God will justify his life and he is ready to receive that justification, as Jesus did, beyond death. Because he has been reconciled to God's manner of acting in this way, he is also reconciled to himself, to others and to history, in which he none the less still tries to achieve emancipation and redemption. For this reason, he is able to be completely committed, without using violence, to make this world a more just and happy place for all men and to eliminate alienation. Like Jesus, however, the Christian cannot justify himself by producing his credentials, apart from his concrete praxis of the kingdom of God.

III. The Story of Jesus: a Parable of God and a Paradigm of Humanity

The answer which enables Christians to recognize Jesus as the one who offers definite and definitive salvation from God and therefore to confess

the "story of God" in the human story of Jesus cannot be distilled by an exegetical process from a deep analysis of New Testament texts, however necessary this may be if we are to know the real story of Jesus. This is because the mediated nearness of God's offer of mercy to man is conveyed in a more concentrated form than elsewhere in the revealing and the concealing mediation of Jesus. Nowhere else has there ever been such a concentration of concealing mediation - Jesus was even sent to his death in the name of orthodox religion. Nowhere else too is God's direct and gratuitous nearness in him so tangibly present for the one who, in *metanoia* (self-criticism), goes forward openly to meet him - in the tradition of the Church, he is even called the "true God". A person cannot be approached precisely as a person in a process of purely theoretical, scientific analysis. The one who is prepared to take a risk, however, can still recognize, in the story of Jesus, the great parable of God himself and at the same time the paradigm of our humanity, a new and unheard of possibility of existence offered because God himself was concerned with humanity. Part of the plot of the story of Jesus, however, is that his shocking freedom is a scandal to the one who takes offence at him (Luke 7. 23) and is at the same time able to act as a liberation to salvation in the case of the one who dares to trust the fascinating mystery of that story.

The question therefore arises as to whether too precise a theoretical definition of who Jesus Christ is is not more harmful than beneficial. A precise theoretical definition of a divine event which overwhelmed Jesus and which constitutes the heart and soul of his entire life empoverishes that event and is therefore likely to be near to distortion, one-sidedness and heresy. This is all the more likely in this case, since Jesus' death was violent. On the basis of a critically justified exegesis, it is essential to affirm Jesus' integration of his violent death into his surrender of himself to God and his offer of salvation to men. Despite this, however, it is impossible to deny the negativity of that death, as a rejection.

It is impossible, theoretically or rationally, to reconcile or mediate salvation on the one hand and the history of suffering on the other, especially when the latter is a history of the suffering of an innocent and just man.3 On the one hand, salvation history took place in Jesus' life. This is a fact which cannot be eliminated by his death or suspended by it. On the other hand, however, Jesus' suffering and death, as a rejection,

are, from the historical point of view, a pure absence of salvation. This negative aspect cannot be denied. It is impossible to achieve a theoretical, in other words, a rationally diaphonous reconciliation between these two aspects. For this reason, we are bound to conclude, with J. B. Metz, that salvation from God can only be expressed in the "non-identity" of the history of Jesus' suffering and death.'[4]

This situates Jesus' suffering outside God and within the secular framework of the human predicament and human freedom and this suggests that Jesus continued to identify himself with God's cause without contaminating God himself by his own suffering precisely within this non-divine situation of suffering and death. Even with regard to Jesus, God remained free: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways" (Isa. 55. 8). God's sovereign freedom applies to all men, but Jesus identified himself with this incomprehensible freedom of God in complete self-surrender at the approach of death. It was precisely in the non-divine aspect of his innocent suffering and death and therefore ultimately non-diaphanous aspect that Jesus persisted in his personal identification with the kingdom of God that was to come. God's sublime and definitive revelation thus occurred in his silent but extremely intimate nearness to the suffering and dying Jesus, who experienced, in his suffering and death, the depths of the human predicament and at the same time his inseparable belonging to God. This is what cannot be theoretically included within a rational system - it can only be the object of a testimony of faith.

We are therefore bound to be more careful in any attempt to define the soteriological significance of Jesus' suffering and death theoretically, above all because we are confronted here with salvation that cannot be expressed but does offer a basis for living. Our reluctance to do this also has repercussions on any attempt that we may make to define Jesus' personal identity theoretically. It is clear that Jesus is entirely both on God's and on man's side. His solidarity both with God in his sovereign freedom and with man is certainly the real definition of the kingdom of God who is concerned with man and of that kingdom which was experienced by Jesus himself in the alienation of his innocent, non-divine suffering and death.

This means that the cross is not what J. Moltmann has called an "event between God and God", but rather the index of the anti-divine in human history, which is transcended from within in Jesus, through his belonging

to God. This belonging to God in an anti-divine situation has brought us salvation. Jesus rejected all competition between God's honour and sublimity on the one hand and man's happiness and salvation on the other. But how can all this be given a more precise theoretical definition if it is impossible for us to define God himself more precisely and to define the meaning of humanity?

My intention is not to impose silence or to check reflection about this question. What I have in mind is that a mystery of love and solidarity such as this ought to be approached with a certain reverence. What is more, any "theoretical" theology should also be connected[5] both with "stories"[6] and, even more importantly, with orthopraxis. This orthopraxis is the praxis of the kingdom of God, without which any theory or story will cease to be credible, especially in a world which is demanding justice and freedom. When this is done, theory, story and the praxis of the kingdom of God will become an effective invitation to answer in real freedom the question: "But who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8.29; Matt. 16. 15; Luke 9. 20).

Translated by David Smith

Notes

1. 1 M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus* (Tiibingen, 1973), p. 354.
2. Luke 6. 20; Matt. 5. 3; Luke 7. 28; Matt. 11. 11; Luke 10. 9; Matt. 10. 7; Luke 11. 20; Matt. 12. 28, etc. Mark 1. 15; 4. 11; 4. 26; 9. 1, 27; 10. 14; 12. 34; 14. 25, etc. Matt, 3. 2; 4. 17; 5. 19, 20; 19. 24; 21. 31; 21. 43; Luke 4. 43; 9. 2, 11, 60, 62; 14. 15; 16. 16; 17. 20; 19- n; 22. 16, 18; John 3. 3, 5.
3. E. Schillebeeckx, "Naar een definitieve toekomst: belofte en menselijke bemiddeling", *Toekomst van de religie. Religie van de toekomst* (Bruges and Utrecht, 1972), pp. 37--55, especially pp. 48-51.
4. J. B. Metz, "Erlosung und Emanzipation", *Stimmen der Zeit*, 191 (1973), pp· 171-84.
5. It is, after all, possible to begin telling a story too soon.
6. See J. B. Metz, op. cit., and "A Short Apology of Narrative", *Concilium*, May 1973 (American edn., Vol. 85).

Commentary

STEPHAN VAN ERP

During the 1990s and early 2000s, it seemed that Edward Schillebeeckx was considered a theologian from the past, especially in his own context in the Low Countries. His particular version of hermeneutics was regarded as part of the theological emancipatory movements after the Second Vatican Council. His ecclesiology was responding to the questions and developments of his time, and therefore not up to date. His Christology, and especially the historical-critical method he chose in the early 1970s, was not as current anymore, as it had been among the many other Christological projects of its time. Schillebeeckx would have been the first to acknowledge that his theology was out of date, and that every time and age needs to develop its own theologies, connected, as theology should be, to the political and cultural situation of the moment. For this reason, he entitled his valedictory lecture 'Theological Understanding of Faith Anno 1983', to accentuate that what he had to say theologically, was part and parcel of the here and now it was uttered in.

Be that as it may, after an initial diminishing of its influence, his theology has gained a new attraction in the past fifteen years. A younger generation of scholars has reinterpreted his work, and brought it in conversation with the political developments of the twenty-first century. Schillebeeckx's theology has proven to be a fruitful source for interdisciplinary studies into, for example, theology and ecology, theology and economy, theology and conflict studies, theology and the public sphere, and queer studies. His hermeneutics of experience, especially his concept of the negative contrast experience, his anthropology, and his ecclesiology and theology of the sacraments have demonstrated a greater resilience and universal applicability, then he himself foresaw, let alone his critics.

Edward Schillebeeckx was born in Antwerp, Belgium, on 12 November 1914. He attended the Jesuit college and boarding school in Turnhout, and although he felt drawn to the religious life there, he chose the Dominicans over the Jesuits. He became a lector at the Dominican Study house in Leuven in 1943, where he lectured on theological topics for the student brothers. After the war was over, he did his doctoral studies at the Dominican study house, Le Saulchoir, which had moved from Belgium to Étiolles, near Paris. There he came under the mentorship of the great Dominican theologians of the twentieth century, Marie-Dominique Chenu and Yves Congar. The two theologians influenced him significantly, as he took different lessons from each, with Congar providing formal historical and theological lectures, while Chenu was a source of more personal inspiration and a dynamic spirit.

In 1952, Schillebeeckx published his dissertation on Thomas Aquinas' doctrine of the sacraments, entitled 'The Sacramental Economy of Salvation'.[1] He wrote in the introduction that it was an attempt to locate the encounter with God in history between tradition and situation. The dissertation already evidences Schillebeeckx's talent for detailed theological-historical and biblical analysis. He continued to work on a renewed interpretation of the sacraments in his later books on marriage and Christology, the latter of which, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, became an international bestseller, translated in nine languages.[2]

In 1958, Schillebeeckx was appointed as professor of Dogmatics and the History of Christianity at the Catholic University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands. Almost at the same moment, the announcement came that an ecumenical council would soon be held in Rome. Schillebeeckx always presented the work of the Second Vatican Council in terms of reform and continuity with tradition, but he was not wildly optimistic about its results. He certainly praised the new openness of the church to the world and to the modern age. He was clear that the new importance of Scripture as a symbol of the church, the recognition of freedom of religion and conscience, and the emphasis on salvation as also occurring within history rather than exclusively after death, were all significant and positive steps. However, immediately after the Council and much later, he was quite critical of it for the places where it had failed to make significant changes or left dogmatic possibilities open and able to be ignored by later interpreters.

After the Second Vatican Council, Schillebeeckx's own theology changed – radically, according to his own assessment – especially in terms of his use of methodology and the integration of philosophy into theological hermeneutics. More than just a rephrasing of older language or repackaging of propositions of doctrine, Schillebeeckx uncovered a new theological foundation in the intrinsic relation of experience and interpretation. According to him, in the experience and interpretation of faith, God's self-revelation has been at work in history, making that history *a locus theologicus*. It is essential to the process and structure of revelation within creation, and therefore a fundamental part of the reality of salvation. By engaging with critical theory of society of Jürgen Habermas and the political theology of Johann Baptist Metz, Schillebeeckx also began to articulate the theo-political aspects of the Christian faith.

His turn to experience and hermeneutics had convinced him that a new approach was needed, and as part of that he started to prepare a book on Christology. He planned three volumes on the subject, which, after his methodological and fundamental theological writings of the late 1960s, came as something of a surprise to his readers. His first volume, entitled *Jesus, the Story of One who is Alive* (1974), appeared in English as *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, and it included an impressive synthesis of historical critical research.[3] The second volume appeared in 1977 with the title *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord in North America*, and *Christ: The Christian Experience in the Modern World* in the United Kingdom.[4] This second volume is widely seen as one of Schillebeeckx's most important works. In it, he moves away from exegesis, which is still a significant part of the volume, and into a political theology of grace and liberation. Its core issues are grace, salvation coming from God, and the mystery of human suffering in history. The two books are together often counted as two of the most important Christological works of the twentieth century, and certainly of post-Vatican II theology.

In 1984, Schillebeeckx received a letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith that demanded he renounce views on ministry that he had published in the late 1970s. The book, titled *Ministry* in English, was a response to the extraordinary situation in the Netherlands and a prophetic prediction of the current situation in western nations regarding the chronically low numbers of priestly vocations. The letter mandated

that he agree to the doctrine set out by a letter from the Congregation to the bishops concerning ministers of the Eucharist, *Sacerdotum ministeriale.* Schillebeeckx responded by telling Joseph Ratzinger, during an 'informal meeting' in Rome, that he would address the concerns in a new book, which was published in 1985 as *The Church with a Human Face*.[5] Despite this, Ratzinger issued a notification dated 15 September 1986, claiming that Schillebeeckx persisted in holding to a conception of priestly ministry that was out of step with the doctrine of the church.[6] An explicit condemnation of Schillebeeckx, however, was never issued and the matter eventually faded away.

After a long illness, Edward Schillebeeckx died on 23 December 2009 at the age of 95. His passing went not unnoticed by the international press, and he was eulogized in many newspapers, academic journals, and in Catholic publications.

The two essays that are chosen for this special issue mark two important moments in Schillebeeckx's theological development after the Council. In the first one, 'The Magisterium and the World of Politics', he asks what the theological authority is of modern magisterial documents that concern the world. According to Schillebeeckx, the Church cannot directly rely on revelation for matters that concern the present, and therefore, these documents are not only based on revelation, but also on an analysis of the actual situation, so there is a new and important role for human experience and non-theological elements. It is crucial, he argues, to also not use the Holy Spirit as a 'stop-gap' for magisterial authority, since the Spirit works through human experience and interpretation.

This first essay is a crucial text in the development of Schillebeeckx's work, because it is the first time he speaks of the negative contrast experience, a concept that would play a central role in his Christology and theological anthropology. For historical reasons, it is important to realise that this concept was not his way to develop a general epistemology of human experience, but to understand the way God works through the prophetic voice of Church and theology. He writes: "Abstract pronouncements cannot seize hold of the reality, simply by themselves; they nevertheless derive a realistic value from our total experience of reality." Therefore, he argues that the magisterium should never merely apply general principles to social and political issues. Instead, it should listen very carefully to

the prophetic voices, in which the Church can recognize the familiar voice of the Living One, a divine name often used by Schillebeeckx. The inner meaning of events in the world, the divine charism, is discovered by believers in negative contrast experiences, instances in which conflict, injustice and suffering evoke protest. Through the believers' commitment, which also creates history, the working of salvation history becomes manifest to them. By listening to the accounts of these contrast experiences, the magisterium gets a new role in Schillebeeckx's theology, as he considers it to have the prophetic ability to call forth and stimulate a continuous search for God's salvific presence in the world. Since this task of the magisterium is built on negative contrast experiences, he regards the authority of the magisterium a negative theology in practical matters, in which the eschatological vision is the positive and critical norm for redemption in concrete and changing situations.

The apophatic also plays a significant role in the second essay that was chosen for this special issue, 'The God of Jesus and the Jesus of God'. It is a text that was written while Schillebeeckx worked on the first two volumes of his Christology, *Jesus and Christ,* in which he explored the historical experience and interpretation of the humanity and the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. According to Schillebeeckx, the universality of Jesus depends on the personal involvement of the living God. He writes: "The answer to the question about the unique and universal significance of Jesus will therefore inevitably be connected with the revelation, on the one hand, of God's true face and, on the other, of man's true face, in which God's own face becomes to some extent evident and visible." Schillebeeckx has been criticised for focusing too much on human experience and interpretation, and therefore, not enough on the universality of truth, or on the reality of God's presence. But this assessment of his ideas is incorrect, because he considers interpretation as a form of consent to that which is and should be a historical reality:

> We may, however, give our consent, in the language of faith, to a reality, in other words, to something that is not postulated as such by me as a believer, but which urges me to give consent and makes that consent an act of faith. In that case, the reality in question, the historical event of Jesus of Nazareth, must provide the basis of what

> is said about Jesus in the language of faith and at the same time fill it.[7]

So, he argues that, although the historical is crucial, it is always grounded in the reality of God's relationship with us. Salvation, therefore, is not the outcome of human interpretation, but is contained in the historical appearance of Jesus and in his crucifixion and his resurrection from the dead. The work of God is not a function of humanity or human liberation, but of the Living One who was celebrated in Jesus' life. Jesus, for Schillebeeckx, is the man who experiences joy in God himself, the God of Jesus, whose rule he followed with his life.

Schillebeeckx sees Christology as a statement about the totality of Jesus' life. According to him, God's revelation in Jesus of Nazareth is present in the totality of Jesus' life, which is confirmed in the resurrection. Schillebeeckx interprets the resurrection as God's overcoming of the human rejection of the provision of definitive salvation from God in Jesus. As in the first essay on the role of the magisterium, rather than choosing an anthropological starting point for his theology, he accentuates the apophatic nature of his Christology, a quality that emerges from the mystery of the Cross. The Cross is, Schillebeeckx argues, is the apotheosis of the anti-divine in human history, which becomes transcended from within in Jesus, who, like no one else, belonged to God:

> It was precisely in the non-divine aspect of his innocent suffering and death and therefore in the ultimately non-diaphanous aspect that Jesus persisted in his personal identification with the kingdom of God that was to come. God's sublime and definitive revelation thus occurred in his silent but extremely intimate nearness to the suffering and dying Jesus, who experienced, in his suffering and death, the depths of the human predicament and at the same time his inseparable belonging to God.[8]

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Notes

1. Henricus Edward Schillebeeckx, *De sacramentele heilseconomie. Theologische bezinning op S. Thomas' sacramentenleer in het licht van de traditie en van de hedendaagse sacramentsproblematiek* (Antwerp/Bilthoven: 't Groeit/H. Nelissen, 1952). A French translation was published in 2004: Edward Schillebeeckx, *L'économie sacramentelle du salut: réflexion théologique sur la doctrine sacramentaire de saint Thomas, à la lumière de la tradition et de la problématique sacramentelle contemporaine,* Studia Friburgensia 95 (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004).
2. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament, Collected Works,* vol. 1 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014); Edward Schillebeeckx, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery,* trans. N.D. Smith, vol. 1 & 2 (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965).
3. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jezus, het verhaal van een levende*, Baarn 1974; transl. *Jesus, Collected Works,* vol. 6 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014).
4. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Gerechtigheid en liefde: Genade en bevrijding*, Baarn 1977; transl. *Christ, Collected Works*, vol. 7 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014).
5. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Pleidooi voor mensen in de kerk* (Baarn: Nelissen 1985); transl. *The Church with a Human Face, Collected Works,* vol. 9 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014).
6. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Notification on the book Pleidooi voor mensen in de kerk. Christelijke identiteit en ambten in de kerk* (Nelissen, Baarn 1985), by Professor Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P. (15 September 1985), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19860915_libro-schillebeeckx_en.html.
7. Edward Schillebeeckx, 'The "God of Jesus" and the "Jesus of God"', 115.
8. Idem, 126.

The Church's Social Function in the Light of a "Political Theology"

JOHANN BAPTIST METZ

I. The Problem of "Political Theology"

"Political Theology" can mean several things and is therefore ambiguous. It also suffers from historical implications. Since space is lacking for an historical investigation of this concept, I beg the reader to understand it in the way I use it here and as I seek to explain it in the process. I happen to see it as a critical corrective to contemporary theology's tendency to concentrate on the private individual, and at the same time as a positive attempt to formulate the eschatological message in the circumstances of our present society.

I. The Function of Criticism within Theology

Let us briefly look at history before explaining the function of political theology as a critical corrective to contemporary theology.

(a) The Historical Starting Point

The early Enlightenment in France was already aware of the fact that the unity and coordination of religion and society, of religious and social life, had collapsed. For the first time the Christian religion appeared as something special in its social environment. Its claim to universality was therefore recognized as conditioned by history. This problematic situation directly provoked the criticism of religion, first by the Enlightenment, later by Marxism. From the very start this criticism took the line which it still follows today: it criticizes religion as an ideology, in other words, it seeks to expose religion as a mere ideological superstructure based on a specific

social practice and power structure. It seeks to expose the religious subject as suffering from a false consciousness, the consciousness of a society which is not, or not yet, genuinely aware of itself. A theology which tries to answer this criticism must of necessity grapple with the socio-political implications of its images and ideas. Briefly and frankly, I must say that classical metaphysical theology has failed to justify its position on this point. Its notions and categories assume in principle that there is no problem where the relations between religion and society or between faith and social practice are concerned. As long as this assumption holds good, a purely metaphysical interpretation of religion may well be socially relevant as when, for example, medieval theology reached its peak. But when this unity collapses, such a metaphysical theology can no longer sit in judgment on the conflict between the Christian message and the socio-political reality, and it falls into a radical crisis.

(b) The Modern Trend to Concentrate on the Private Individual

The present prevailing tendency in theology, with its transcendental, existential and personalist orientation, is fully aware of the problem created by the Enlightenment, and may even be said to have arisen as a reaction to it. But this reaction consisted mainly in treating the controversial social dimension of the Christian message implicitly or quite openly as not genuine or secondary; in brief, it turned this message into a basically private concern and reduced the practice of the faith to a matter of mere individual decisions, unrelated to the world. This theology tries to solve the problem by eliminating it. It tries to overcome the Enlightenment without having passed through it. In the light of a religious consciousness, molded by this kind of theology, the socio-political reality has but an evanescent existence. The basic categories used in the interpretation of the message are preferably the intimate, the private, the a-political. Charity, like all the phenomena of interpersonal relationships, is no doubt emphasized, but as something that is *a piori* and almost obviously private and stripped of political meaning, a mere I-and-thou relationship, an interpersonal encounter or a matter of neighborliness. The category of encounter dominates. The real religious expression is mutual contact, and the proper religious experience is the summum of subjective freedom or the shapeless, speechless, in-between I-and-thou relationship. The present

prevailing forms of transcendental, existential and personalist theology seem to have one thing in common: concentration on what is private.

(c) Demythologization and the Need to Reverse the Trend toward Concentration on the Private Individual

I would like to illustrate this trend by referring to the literary genre of the Christian message and its interpretation by modern, theology. We know that the gospels do not intend to give us a biography of Jesus in the current sense of the word. The various accounts of Jesus do not belong to the genre of private biography but to that of public proclamation. The result of what is called Form Criticism has shown that the text of the gospels speaks at various levels. It seems to me unfortunate that these insights and discoveries of Form Criticism are at once interpreted in the terms of our theological existentialism and personalism. This turns our understanding of the proclamation *a priori* into the channels of the private and the intimate. The Word of proclamation is then understood as a personal self-communication of God to the private individual but not as a promise addressed to society. The hermeneutics of the existential interpretation of the New Testament remains imprisoned within the circle of a private I-and-thou relationship. We seem, therefore, to be in need of a new critical approach in order to reverse the basically individualistic tendencies in the very foundations of our theology.

The reversal of this "privatizing" tendency is the primary critical task of political theology. This "de-privatizing" seems to me in a certain sense as important as our demythologizing. It should at least accompany a legitimate demythologization, since this latter is constantly in danger of reducing God and salvation to a matter of private existence and of turning the eschatological message itself into a symbolic paraphrase of the metaphysical problem of man and the private situation in which he makes his decisions. But this deprives the promise of its conflicting and contradictory character with regard to the present state of reality and robs it of any power to influence society critically. This existentialist interpretation of the New Testament has a pronounced tendency toward individualism. It practices demythologization at the price of the myth of an existence detached from the world and soaked in private subjectivity.

The message of the New Testament clearly also has an element of

legitimate individualization of the single person before God, which can be considered as a basic point of the message of the New Testament, particularly in its Pauline tradition. This *individualization* is not queried by the rejection of *individualism* because it is on the contrary, precisely this tendency toward individualism which exposes theology to the danger of not touching the individual in the challenge of his existence. For this existence is today closely intertwined with the vicissitudes of society, and every existentialist and personalist theology that does not understand existence itself as a political problem in the broadest sense of the word, remains today an abstraction insofar as the existential situation of the individual is concerned. Moreover, such an individualistic theology runs the risk of exposing the faith to modern socio-political ideologies in an uncritical and uncontrolled manner. Lastly, an ecclesiastical religion that sees itself in terms of such an individualistic theology assumes the character of "ineffective norms which are only binding insofar as they upset nobody and which still impress many in spite of being ineffective since they are incapable of producing anything else but their own repetitive reproduction''.[1]

2. The Positive Task

Here we discover the positive task of political theology: it aims at reassessing the relation between religion and society, between the Church and public society, between eschatological faith and social life, not in a pre-critical sense, in view of identifying these two realities, but in a post-critical sense, the sense of "second thoughts". As political, theology is forced to go in for these "second thoughts" if it wants to formulate the eschatological message in the condition and circumstances of modem society. Therefore, I want briefly to analyze the peculiarity of this situation and how to understand it as well as the peculiarity of the biblical message which determines this political theological reflection.

(a) The Starting Point

The situation which gives rise to theological reflection today may be clarified by referring to a problem, already raised by the Enlightenment and no longer avoidable at least since Marx. The problem can briefly be posed as follows: According to Kant, he is enlightened who is free

to make public use of his intelligence in all circumstances. To achieve such an enlightenment is therefore never a purely theoretical problem but in essence a political one, a problem of social life, that is, it is tied up with those socio-political assumptions which alone make enlightenment possible. Therefore, only he is enlightened who, *at the same time,* fights for the creation of those socio-political conditions on which the public use of one's intelligence depends.[2]

Where, then, the mind is determined on political freedom, and where, consequently, the theoretical transcendental reason appears *within* practical reason, and not the other way round, the mind must unavoidably go through a process of "de-privatization". And any "pure theory", however strained to the utmost, is only a falling back into a pre-critical consciousness. For now the critical claim of the subject can no longer be maintained as "purely theoretical". Here a new relationship operates between theory and practice, knowledge and morality, reflection and revolution, and this new relationship must also determine the theological consciousness if it does want to fall back onto an earlier pre-critical stage of consciousness. Practical, and in the broadest sense of the word, political, reason must henceforth take part in every critical reflection of theology. Thus conceived in concrete terms, reason will have an increasing and concrete influence on the classical problem of the relation between faith and reason, and consequently on the problem of how to justify the faith. The so-called basic hermeneutic problem of theology is not really the question of the relation between systematic and historical theology, between dogma and history, but that of theory and practice, of understanding the faith and social life. And so we have a brief description of the task of political reflection in theology as we discover it in the present situation. After all that has been said, it has nothing to do with a reactionary mixture of faith and politics, but it has everything to do with the unfolding of the socio-political potentiality of this faith.

(b) The Biblical Tradition

Biblical tradition, too, forces us to have "second thoughts" about the relation between eschatological faith and social life. Why? Salvation, the object of Christian faith in hope, is not a private salvation. The proclamation of this salvation drove Jesus into a deadly conflict with the public authorities of his

day. His cross does not stand in the exclusive privacy of the individual, nor in the sanctuary of a purely religious existence, but outside the threshold of sheltered privacy and the screen of the purely religious; it stands "outside", as the theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews formulated it. The veil of the Temple has definitely been torn. The scandal and the promise of this salvation are both equally public. This public aspect cannot be taken back, dissolved or hushed up. It accompanies the message of salvation on its way through history. And in serving this message the Christian religion has been molded in the critical and liberating form of public responsibility.

"All the authors of the New Testament are convinced that Christ is not a private person and the Church not a club. And so they have also reported on the encounter of Jesus Christ and his disciples with the political world and its representatives. No one understood this encounter more profoundly than John the Evangelist. In general, he sees the whole story of Jesus as a lawsuit which the world, represented by the Jews, brought or meant to bring against Jesus. This suit reaches the public judicial stage before Pilate, the representative of the Roman State and the wielder of political power."[3]

The whole composition of the passion narrative concentrates on this scene, but not when read with the eyes of Bultmann. The scene of Jesus before Pilate shows typical features.

(c) From Eschatological to Political Theology

Political theology seeks to make contemporary theology once again aware of the suit pending between the eschatological message of Jesus and the reality of political society. It stresses that the salvation proclaimed by Jesus is permanently concerned with the world, not in the natural cosmological sense, but in the social and political sense, as the discerning and liberating element of this social world and its historical process. The eschatological promises of the biblical tradition - freedom, peace, justice, reconciliation - cannot be reduced to a private matter. They constantly force themselves into the sense of social responsibility. It is true that these promises never let themselves be simply indentified with any given social situation, however much we try to determine and describe it from our point of view. The history of Christianity is only too well aware of that kind of direct identification of certain policies with the Christian promises.

But in all these, that "eschatological proviso" has been lost which shows up the provisional condition of every social situation reached in the course of history, and I mean "provisional", not merely "arbitrary". For this "eschatological proviso" does not make us deny the social reality but creates a critical and dialectical attitude toward it. The promises toward which this proviso points are neither a distant void of religious expectation nor a mere regulative norm but a discerning and liberating imperative for our present. They are meant to be made operative and "embodied in truth" under the historical circumstances of the present, for their truth must be "done".[4]

The New Testament community knows that it has been called from the beginning to live the promise of the future in present conditions and *thus* to overcome the world. The orientation toward the promise of peace and justice changes every time our historical presence changes. It creates and forces us constantly into a fresh critical and liberating position with regard to the existing social environment in which we live. In a somewhat similar way, the parables of Jesus are parables of the Kingdom of God and *at the same time* parables that put us into a new critical relationship with the world that surrounds us. *Therefore, every eschatological theology must become a political theology in the sense of a theology of social criticism.*

(d) This ls Not a New Science

This question of a political theology does not demand a new theological discipline with a separate sector of theological issues. This political theology rather means to lay bare in the first place a basic feature *within theological awareness at large*. It does not look at itself as excluded from the task of describing the content of faith and the working out of this in practice and from explaining the problem of life in faith within our world. It sees itself as the historical and concrete interpretation of theology as a whole. This life, this existence, is, as I have already stressed, a social and political theme in the broadest sense of the word. Therefore, the. process of rescuing it from the purely private sphere is in no sense a process of depersonalizing or vulgar collectivization. Its task is rather to see the situation of the faithful in the concrete and in all its aspects. Finally, it wants to put its reflection and its theological categories wholly at the service of the effort to find a language that is liberating and redeeming, so

that "people will be shocked by it and yet be overcome by its power, the language of a new justice in truth, the language that proclaims the peace of God with men and the nearness of his Kingdom".[5]

II. The Church as the Institution of Free Social Criticism

Here we reach the second stage. In this theological perspective, the Church appears, not "by the side of" or "above" the social reality, but within it as an institution of social criticism.

l. Institutionalized Criticism

Because of its orientation toward the eschatological promises, faith develops a constantly fresh critical attitude toward its social environment. But can the individual faithful today shoulder this discerning freedom with regard to society in a compelling and effective manner? Does not precisely the *critical* aspect of this task of the faith bring up again the question of its institutionalization? Ideas can indeed persist and spread as long as they correspond to the needs of an age, a culture or a social order, but not where they contain adverse criticism and must rely on the subjectivity of the individual.[6] Institution and institutionalization therefore emerge here not as a repression but as making a critical awareness *possible*. Must the faith not be institutionalized if it wants to shoulder this freedom of criticism with regard to present society? If so, does this question not. point to a new understanding of the ecclesiastical institution? Does it not demand a Church which is *an institution of free criticism by faith?*

2. Two Objections

There are two objections to such a tentative definition of the Church. (a) There, is, first of all, the basic question whether an institution can be such an embodiment of criticism at all. Is "institutionalized criticism" not something like a square circle? Does every institution not imply an anti-critical tendency? Is it not rather utopian to think of this postulated "institution of a second order" as not only the object, but also the embodiment of free criticism, as something which makes this criticism possible and ensures it? I can only counter this briefly with another question: Is the religious institution of the Church not specified precisely by the fact that it must be, and is, the bearer of such freedom of criticism?

As an institution, the Church itself lives under the "eschatological proviso". It does not exist for its own sake or for its own self-assertion, but for the historical affirmation of salvation for all. The hope it proclaims is not a hope for the Church but for the Kingdom of God. Thus, the institutional Church lives in the constant proclamation of its own provisional character. And it must translate this eschatological proviso institutionally into reality by being an institution of free criticism with regard to life in society with its absolutist and exclusive tendencies.

(b) Even if we can dispose of this objection in this way, we are faced with another critical question concerning the Church: What is the *historical and social ground* on which the Church can base this claim of free criticism? When was the Church such an institution of free criticism in actual fact? When was it not sheerly counter-revolutionary, embittered and mean in its relations with society? Has it not often failed to utter the criticism it should have made or uttered it far too late? Has it not constantly been exposed to the danger of being seen simply as an ideological superstructure on top of definite social situations and established power structures? Could it really still successfully wipe out this image? Is it not true that, particularly during the last centuries, the religious institution and critical reflection have each gone their own separate ways, so that today we have a theological reflection which is alien to the institution and an institution which is hostile to reflection. Where, then, do we find the historical and social basis for the claim that the Church has a critical institutional function with regard to society? The objection is valid. There is, so to speak, no single great social criticism made in our history - revolution, enlightenment, reason or even love and freedom - which has not been disavowed at one time or another by historical Christianity and its institutions. Neither is there any point in trying to justify this by a kind of posthumous apologetics, even if it were possible; the only answer lies in a new "praxis", a new concrete attitude in the Church. Is there any hope of this coming about? I think there is, and what follows is based on this confidence.

3. The Liberating Critical Function of the Church in More Detail

In what does this liberating function of the Church exist with regard to our society and its historical process? What are the elements of that creative resistance which makes social progress real progress? Abandoning any

method and any attempt at being complete I would like to name only a few of these critical tasks.

(a) The Defense of the Individual

Because of its eschatological proviso over against any abstract concept of progress and humanity, the Church protects the individual of the present moment from being used as material and means for the building up of a technological and totally rationalized future. It criticizes the attempt to see individuality merely as a function of a technologically controlled social process. No doubt, our social utopian ideals may well include a positive understanding of the individual. But does the individual count here only insofar as he is the first in opening up new social possibilities, and therefore insofar as he anticipates the social development in a revolutionary way? But what happens then to the poor and the oppressed, who are poor precisely because they can never be the first? Here the eschatological proviso of the Church with jts institutional power of social criticism must protect an individuality which cannot be defined by its value for the progress of mankind.

(b) Criticism of Totalitarianism

Another "critical" point seems to me to be that the Church must constantly use this liberating power of criticism with regard to all political systems; it must stress that history as a whole is subject to God's eschatological proviso. It must apply the truth that history as a whole can never be contained in a political idea in the narrow sense of the word, and therefore can never be limited to any particular political conduct. There is nothing within this world that can be designated as the subject of all history, and whenever a party, group, nation or class sees itself as such a subject and consequently tries to dominate the whole process of history with its particular political interpretation, it must necessarily become totalitarian. [7]

(c) Love as a Principle of Revolution

Finally, today more than ever, the Church must mobilize the potentiality of that Christian love that lies at the heart of its tradition. This love must not be confined to the interpersonal contact of I-and-thou. Nor should it be understood as a kind of philanthropy. It must be interpreted in its social

dimension and made operative. This means that it must be understood as the unconditional commitment to justice, freedom and peace *for others*. Understood in this way, love contains a power of social criticism, and this from two points of view.

On the one hand, this demands a committed criticism of *mere* force. It does not allow us to think in terms of "friend" and "enemy" because it commands us to love the enemy, and even to bring one's opponent within the sphere of one's own universal hope. The credibility and effectiveness of this criticism of pure violence will, to a large extent, depend on how far a Church, which puts itself forward as the Church of love, can avoid the appearance of being itself a religious power structure. After all, its mission is not to assert itself, but to affirm in actual history that salvation is there for all. It has, therefore, no power that precedes the power of its promises. That, in itself, is a preeminent criticism of power. It forces the Church into a passionate criticism of mere force, and it accuses the Church itself when, as so often in its history, the Church criticized the powerful of this world too meekly or too late, or when it hesitates to stand up for all threatened human beings without respect for persons, or when it does not passionately attack any form of contempt for human beings. This criticism of force does not mean that a Christian must withdraw from the wielding of any political power in every case. Such a basic withdrawal would be in itself an act against love of brother, for in his very faith and its tradition, the Christian has a principle by which to criticize this power.

Finally, Christian love as potential social criticism implies another aspect. When this love operates socially as the unconditional commitment to justice and freedom for others, it may in certain circumstances command something like *revolutionary force*. Where a social *status quo* is so full of injustice that it might equal that created by a revolutionary movement, then a revolution for the justice and freedom of "the least of the brethren" cannot be ruled out in the name of love. We should take Merleau-Ponty's objection that the Church has never yet supported a revolution the more seriously since this objection is justified. Once again it becomes clear that the Church's function of social criticism always turns into a criticism of religion and of the Church itself. Both are only two faces of the same coin.

4. Consequences for the Self-Understanding of the Church

This function of social criticism is therefore bound to have a repercussion on the Church itself. In the long run it aims at *a new self-understanding of the Church and at a transformation of its institutional relationship with modern society*. I want to expand this somewhat. So far, what I have stated was based on the fact that not only the individual but the institutional Church as such is the bearer of this critical function toward society. This assumption rests on various grounds. One is the philosophy and sociology of modern critical awareness. It shows the uncertainties that beset the critical individual in his relations with this society and its anonymous structures. He demands an institutionalization of this criticism and so demands "institutions of a second order" which can carry and guarantee this freedom of criticism. Is the Church such an "institution of the second order"? The answer is "No" in its present form. I might go further and say "Not yet". How, and under what conditions can it become so? In answer, I would like to make a few observations in conclusion.

(a) The New Language of the Church

We ask ourselves what in fact happens when the Church makes such a critical statement today? It has attempted to do so, as, for example, in some passages of the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* and more clearly and definitely in the encyclical *Populorum progressio*. What happened? Here the institutional Church was forced to take note of, and assimilate, various *information* that did not simply spring from theological reflection in the ecclesiastical sense. Such critical statements, therefore, demand a new attitude toward non-theological information. Only when the Church accepts such information, can it produce impulsive critical reactions that do not merely aim at self-assertion and self-reproduction. This kind of information will in the long run dislodge an uncritical monolithic self-awareness within the Church itself. This new source of information for ecclesiastical statements also requires a wholly *new way of expressing things, of speaking, in the Church.* Statements based on such information cannot be put forward in purely doctrinal terms. This demands that the Church has the courage to speak in contingent and hypothetical terms. What is required is an indication, which is neither lacking in force and sense of direction nor doctrinal and dogmatic. The

present need of the Church to have to speak in a concrete critical way must therefore bring with it a kind of demythologization and deritualization of the Church's language and attitude. The institutional Church now finds out that it must let itself be critically contradicted, that it cannot avoid a certain onesidedness and must therefore run the risk of saying something provisional. When it learns to speak in this way, it will also avoid burdening the social initiative of individual Christians with a doctrinal rigidity while removing a certain arbitrariness from such initiatives.

(b) Public Criticism within the Church

Another point follows immediately on what has just been said: ecclesiastical criticism of society can only be credible and effective in the long run if it is based on growing public criticism within this Church. The reason is that without this public criticism no one would see to it that the institutional Church itself does not embody what it criticizes in others. Frankly, such public criticism within the Church so far has little to show for itself. I may, therefore, be allowed to name a few of the tasks this public criticism should undertake. One of them is critical opposition to every kind of ideological self-authorization assumed by ecclesiastical institutions; I mean opposition to any attempt to enforce quite definite socio-political and economic things through its own institutional measures. Another task is that of breaking down the uncontrolled domination within the Church of a prevalent 'social milieu - usually that of the small bourgeoisie - to the exclusion of others that are considered not to be normative or worthy of sharing in the public image of the Church. It should also be pointed out that the social images within the Church itself are historically conditioned and subject to change; since this change usually lags behind the social processes, it may be less easily recognized, but it nevertheless exists. A further aspect of public criticism is that it should oppose the Church when it is fighting on false battlefronts.

Very often the ingenuity spent on securing certain social positions would be more than adequate to change the situation. Finally, the institutional Church must also be seen to be effective in the exclusion of specific situations such as racism, individualistic nationalism and any contempt of other human beings in whatever form. These examples may suffice. The courage to develop such public criticism in the Church will only grow

with the confidence that there is a change in the institutional situation within the Church itself. But this confidence is perhaps one of the most important concrete manifestations of Church membership today.

c. The Importance of the Critical Attitude

A last observation: The socio-critical attitude of the Church cannot consist in the proclamation of one definite social order as the norm for our pluralistic society. It can only consist in that the Church operates its critical and liberating function in society and applies it to this society. The task of the Church is not a systematic social doctrine, but a *social criticism*. The Church, as a particular social institution, can only formulate its universal claim with regard to society without any ideology if it presents this claim as effective *criticism*. This basic critical attitude implies two important points. *First,* it will show that the Church, defined as a socio-critical institution, does not become a political ideology. No political party can have this criticism as its sole plank. Moreover, no political party can embrace in its political activity the whole scope of the Church's social criticism which covers the whole of history under God's eschatological proviso, otherwise it would drift into either romanticism or totalitarianism. *Secondly*, it is precisely this critical function of the Church that creates the basic possibility of cooperation with other non-Christian institutions and groups. The basis for such cooperation between Christians and non-Christians, between people and groups of the most varied ideological tendencies, can neither lie primarily in a positive determination of the social process nor in a definite notion of the substance of this free society of mankind in the future.

Within this positive perspective there will always be room for differences and pluralism. This pluralism within the positive perspective cannot be eliminated in our historical circumstances without substituting totalitarian manipulation for free realization. This cooperation should therefore be primarily an attitude of negative criticism and experience: the experience of threats to humanity, to freedom, justice and peace. And we should not underrate this negative experience because here lies an elementary positive power of mediation. If, indeed, we may not immediately and directly agree on the positive meaning of freedom, peace and justice, we all share a long-standing and common experience of what these things are

not. And so this negative experience offers us an opportunity to unite, less, perhaps, in the positive planning of the freedom and justice we are seeking than in our critical opposition to the horror and terror of unfreedom and injustice. The solidarity bred by this experience, the possibility, therefore, of a common front of protest, must be understood and put into action. For the danger of "non-peace" remains too imminent. The irrational factors in our social and political conduct are only too clearly visible. We have not erased the possibility of collective obscurantism. The danger of "nonpeace", unfreedom and injustice is too great to allow us to remain indifferent in such matters for this indifference will inevitably lead to more criminal behavior in society.

Notes

1. A. Gehlen, quoted in H. Schelsky, *Auf der Suche nach Wirklichkeit* (Dilsseldorf, 1965), p. 271.
2. Cf. G. Picht, "Aufkliirung und Offenbarung," in *Der Gott der Philosophen und die Wissenschaft der Neuzeit* (Stuttgart, 1966).
3. H. Schlier, *Besinnung auf das Neue Testament* (Freiburg, 1964), p. 193, more fully developed in the same author's *Die Zeit der Kirche* (Freiburg, 1956), p. 310.
4. For this requirement of a creative critical eschatology, see J. B. Metz, *The Word in History* (New York, 1966), pp. 69-85.
5. D. Bonhoeffer, *Widerstand und Ergebung* (Munich, 1951), p. 207.
6. Cf. A. Gehlen, *Anthropologische Forschung* (Hamburg, 1961), p. 76.
7. Cf. H. Liibbe, "Herrschaft und Planung," in *Die Frage nach dem Menschen* (Freiburg/Munich, 1966), pp. 188-211.

God and the Evil of this World: Forgotten, Unforgettable Theodicy

JOHANN BAPTIST METZ

The topic of this issue, 'The Return of the Plague', finally confronts theology with the question which in scholastic terminology is discussed under the heading of 'theodicy'. How does talk of God - note, not some postmodern invented 'God', but the remembered God of the biblical traditions, of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who is also the God of Jesus - relate to the experiences of evil, suffering and wickedness in the world, in 'his' world? Attempts at such a theological answer, a theological explanation of evil in the world, have been and are manifold. They cannot be pursued in detail within the framework of this text, nor should they be[1] - especially as my starting point is that there is no 'answer', no 'solution', to this question by means of which theology could settle it once and for all, provided that the question is put properly. This conclusion governs my approach. But anyone who speaks of God in the sense of the biblical traditions encounters the question of theodicy. It is and remains *the* eschatological question. What does it mean?

Exodus theodicy - Job theodicy

This issue of *Concilium* picks up a word which is familiar to us from the biblical traditions, the so-called 'plagues of Egypt'. In the book of Exodus these plagues are described in detail and a 'justification' is also given for this visitation of misery on Egypt. This is a divine punitive action against the Pharaoh of Egypt with his sinfully hardened heart, who is preventing the liberating exodus of Israel. Evil as a punishment for sin: down to the present day this is a recurrent motif in 'answers' to the question of

theodicy. However, already in the biblical traditions themselves there is a counter-story to this Exodus theodicy, namely the Job theodicy. This Job theodicy makes it quite clear (and in the relevant narrative passages even finds the approval of God himself for this) that the plagues which fall on Job, his suffering and his misfortune, have nothing to do with his sin or with his failure before God. Here a just and innocent man is suffering! So there is no causal connection between suffering and sin.

The eschatological question

In order to take account of the complexity of the theodicy question, I do not propose to start directly from the 'plagues', from the evils of this world, but from what I would like to call here the 'human history of suffering'.2 In my view this category of the history of suffering undermines the familiar distinction between physical evils (natural catastrophes, epidemics, illnesses ...) and 'moral evil' (guilt, evil); however, above all it prevents an over-hasty ontologization of the problem, of the kind known to us from the history of theology and philosophy, especially in all dualistic or quasi-dualistic attempts at an explanation, e.g. in the theodicy of Gnosticism and the Gnostic relapse in Christianity.3 Now if we begin with the 'human history of suffering', we shall no longer misunderstand theodicy as the attempt at a belated and to some degree defiant 'justification of God' by theology in the face of the evil, suffering and wickedness in the world. Moreover we shall recognize that theodicy is concerned, indeed is exclusively concerned, with the question how it is possible to talk of God at all in the face of the abysmal history of suffering in a world which we acknowledge in faith to be God's creation. This question may not be either eliminated or over-answered by theology; it is, as I have already said, the eschatological question. Theology does not work out any all-reconciling answer to it but continually seeks a new language and praxis in order to make it unforgettable.

Two fundamental reservations

Of course there are objections to such a 'weak' conception of theodicy. Here I shall discuss - briefly - two fundamental reservations, namely 1. objections which are made in the name of reason and 2. objections which are made in the name of Christian doctrine.

1. Does not this conception contradict a principle of human reason which is expressed, for example, in Ockham's razor: *entia sine ratione non sunt multiplicanda* (entities are not to be multiplied without reason)? Applied to our topic, is it not necessary on rational grounds finally to drop and forget a question to which, it is granted, there can be no answer? But what if one day human beings could defend themselves against the unhappiness in the world only with the weapon of forgetfulness, if they could build their happiness only on the uncompassionate forgetfulness of the victims, on a culture of amnesia? What if only time heals all wounds (and one day even the wounds which bear the name of Auschwitz)? If that happens, on what does resistance to the senselessness of suffering in the world feed? What inspires an attentiveness to the suffering of others and the vision of a new and greater justice? What remains if this cultural amnesia is complete? The human being? What human being? An appeal to the self-preservation of the human in this instance seems to me to be highly abstract. It derives not least from an anthropology which has long bidden farewell to the question of evil and the 'perspective of theodicy' in human history and which forgets that not only the individual human being but also the 'idea' of humanity is vulnerable, indeed can be destroyed.

2. Does not the 'weak' conception of theodicy presented here contradict the theological understanding of Christianity as this has developed over centuries? Is not Christianity the successful response to and also the stilling of that question of theodicy which accompanied the history of the faith of Israel in the form of lament, cry and insatiable expectation - in the Psalms, in Job, in Lamentations, in many passages in the prophetic books? Is not christology, is not above all Christian soteriology, the answer to the question of the history of human suffering in God's good creation?[4]

But even the christology of Christians does not lack eschatological unrest. Not only Israel has constantly moved in an eschatological 'landscape of cries'; [5] as is well known, the New Testament, the biography of early Christianity, ends with a cry, with a cry which now has a christological point, though in the meantime this has usually been silenced in a mythical or idealist-hermeneutical way. In his article 'Why Does God Let Us Suffer?',[6] Karl Rahner mentions an account by Walter Dirks, which has often been quoted since, of a meeting with Romano Guardini, who already had the marks of death on him. This is an account in which it

becomes dramatically clear how much the question of theodicy constantly disturbs the whole of Christian doctrine: 'The one who experiences it will not forget what the old man on his sick bed entrusted to him. He would not only allow himself to be asked questions at the Last Judgment but would also himself ask questions: he confidently hopes that the angel would not refuse to give him a true answer to the question which no book, not even scripture, no dogma and no magisterium, no "theodicy" and theology, not even his own, has been able to answer for him, "Why, God, this fearful way round to salvation, the suffering of the innocent, guilt?"' Why the burden and excessive demands of the human history of suffering? Why guilt? This question remains. Why sin? This 'first' question of theodicy does not derive from a typically intellectual cult of questioning, which would indeed be most remote from the sufferers themselves. No vague speculative questions, but passionate personal questions are part of that experience of God about which Christians have had to learn time and again. And this above all because the mysticism which Jesus lived and taught is not really a mysticism of closed eyes but a mysticism of open eyes, which obligates us to a heightened perception of the suffering of others.

Jesus' first gaze

Christianity began as a community which remembered and told stories in the footsteps of Jesus, whose first gaze was not directed to the sin of others but to the suffering of others. This sensitivity to the suffering of others, this heeding of the suffering of others - including the suffering of enemies - in Jesus' own action lies at the centre of that 'new way of living' which is associated with him. It is the most convincing expression of that love which Jesus entrusted to us and asked of us when - completely in line with his Jewish heritage - he invoked the unity of love of God and love of neighbour.

There are parables of Jesus with which he told himself into human memory. One of the best-known parables is that of the 'Good Samaritan', with which he illustrates this love. Here (in the imagery of an archaic provincial society) it is the one who fell among thieves who is disregarded by the priest and the levite 'in the interest of higher things'. Those who look for 'God' as Jesus understands God do not know 'any higher interest'

to excuse them here. This authority of the sufferer is the only authority in which the authority of the God who judges manifests itself in the world for all human beings (Matt. 25.31-46). Conscience constitutes itself in obedience to it, and what we call its voice is our reaction to a visitation by this suffering of others.

However, at a very early stage Christianity lost its elemental sensitivity to suffering. The question of justice for innocent sufferers which disturbs the biblical traditions was restated too quickly and transformed into the question of redemption for the guilty. Thus theology believed that it could draw the sting of the question of theodicy. The question of suffering found itself in a soteriological circle. Christianity transformed itself from a religion which was primarily sensitive to suffering into a religion which was primarily sensitive to sin. The focus of attention was no longer on the suffering of the creature but on its guilt. That paralysed the elemental sensitivity to the suffering of others and darkened the biblical vision of the great justice of God, though according to Jesus this had to apply to all hunger and thirst.

Questions about the adventure of theodicy

Our concern here has been above all with a background reflection on the question of God and the evils of this world, on fate and the enduring significance of the question of theodicy in Christianity. But is not this concentration on the question of theodicy too much characterized by resignation and evasion? Are there any open ears in Christianity to the heightened sensitivity for the suffering of others? Should not religion protect us from the pain of negativity? If it does anything at all, does it not serve the triumph of the 'positive', the optimizing of the chances of survival? And finally, is not the sensitivity to suffering addressed here an attitude which is very difficult for young people in particular to achieve and show to others? Youth and theodicy: is not that *a priori* a combination doomed to failure?

I can attempt to answer this only with a counter-question. To whom should one entrust the attention addressed here which is paid to the suffering of others, an attitude of empathy which is boundless ('There is no suffering in the world which does not concern us'[7])? Of whom should one require the adventurous notion of being there for others before one

receives anything from them? To whom could one offer the 'other way of living' thus indicated? To whom, I ask myself, if not to young people in particular? Have we completely forgotten that Christianity once began as a revolt of the youth within the Jewish world of the time?

Has Christianity possibly already grown too old for the sensitivity to suffering which is required by Jesus? Is the refusal of a theodicy really the sign of a living Christianity? Is it not rather the sign of a Christianity which is growing old? The older Christianity becomes, the more 'affirmative' it seems to become, the more closed it seems to be, passing over the refractory features of creation. A sense of the misfortune of others is withering away; the steadfastness of faith is insidiously becoming the steadfastness of bewilderment. Anyone who now still has questions, passionate questions, for God is suspected of either loosing the tongue of doubt or propagating a cult of negativity. For me the specifically Christian form of fundamentalism is reflected in such an attitude. Such a kind of fundamentalism is a symptom of ageing, which does not really dare to look the negative features of the world in the face. It has lost the first gaze of Jesus.

Translated by John Bowden

Notes

1. In his brief work 'Why Does God Let Us Suffer?', *Theological Investigations* 10/2, London and New York 1973, 450-66x, Karl Rahner offers a brief but convincing criticism of the common attempts to make sense of the suffering and evil of this world.
2. For this encounter see my text 'Die Rede von Gott angesichts der Leidengeschichte der Welt', *Stimme der Zeit* 1992/5. This text has since appeared in English (Critical Inquiry, 1994).
3. See here for example the investigations by H. Blumenberg in *Siikularisierung und Selbsbehauptung*, Frankfurt 1974. Theodor W. Adorno has pointed out that concepts of theodicy which make use of an ontological argument end up in an ontology of the torment of creation. Cf. now J. A. Zamora's work on Adorno, *Krise - Kritik - Erinnerung*, Munster 1995.
4. For the aporias of the classical position of Augustine and contemporary attempts to respond to the question of theodicy with talk of the 'suffering God' cf. all the contributions in J. B. Metz (ed.), *'Landschaft aus Schreien.' Zur Dramatik der Theodizeefrage*, Mainz 1995. See also W. Gross and K.-J. Kuschel, *'Ich schaffe Finsternis and Heil'. Ist Gott verantwortlichfur des Ube?*, Mainz 1992.
5. A formulation of Nelly Sachs.
6. Seen note 1 above.
7. A formulation of Peter Rottliinder.

Commentary

DIETMAR MIETH

When I, acknowleding the achievements of a founder of *Concilium*, mention his article on the issue of theodicy first, I do not follow the chronological order of his publications in *Concilium*, but mention his later contribution (1997) before the earlier one (1968), for which it was named: the "political theology",[1] which he removed from its affirmative right wing context of institutional triumphalism and re-founded.[2] His books often served as an initial ignition for new theological thought that was critical of society and of itself.[3] He was a master of the pointed theological essay.

This is true for this question, too: How can we relate God to experiences of ills and evil? Metz' point of departure is this: there is no "answer", no "solution" through theology which would be systematically satisfying. The question remains an eschatological one which is answered in different ways. In the Book of Exodus, the evil that is imposed on the people of God is answered by plagues that God imposes on Egypt. This is different from the Book of Job. His "plagues" are not a punishment, but the sufferings of an innocent person. There is no causal relationship beween sin and punishment (as plague)!

For the human history of suffering, for the suffering of creation, there is, initially, a difference between physical ill and moral guilt. If we assume, instead, the suffering of the living, Metz says, we should no longer treat theodicy as a question in the face of which God as the creator or spectator has to be justified. If we believe in the world as God's creation: why then does it contain this history of suffering? If we categorise it, with Metz, as an eschatological question we cannot answer it retroactively: we are looking forward to the eschatological answer. In this tension we live with the attempt to find a language for this, and with a praxis that sustains this

question further, namely by continuing to work on it.

Metz has two "fundamental reservations" about this: one reservation which concerns enlightening reason, and one reservation when it comes to Christian teaching. For the first reservation, he cites Ockham's Razor: there is no gain in amassing unclear answers to a clear question. These answers contained the attempt to offset misfortune, to surpass it, and to forget the victims, in the sense of an amnesia. In this context, Metz speaks of "Auschwitz, the ultimate name for the violation of humanity". The second concern stems from the understanding of Christianity as the final answer to humanity's and creation's need for salvation.

According to Metz there remains, in Christianity, an often covered-up or concealed eschatological unrest. It is imperative that it is kept awake or awoken. This is because not only in Israel's history of suffering, but also in the history of Christianity, the scream of the suffering does not fall silent. With Karl Rahner and Walter Dirks, Metz tells us of the question that Romano Guardini poses, when he was already marked by death: will I finally, in death, find the answer to the question of the meaning of the suffering of the innocent? Why do the guilty become guilty?

The answer cannot come from the speculative cult of thinking. The scream has to suffuse the questioners themselves as a deep experience of contrast. The ears and eyes must not be closed to think about it, but must remain open. This is Metz' definition of "mystics": open eyes, a wakeful gaze. In addition to this: Jesus was not sensitive to sin, but to suffering. He taught the unity of thinking about God and loving your neighbour. In the parable of the Samaritan it is clear which praxis is understood by God and therefore which one Jesus is thinking of. In the love of neighbour it becomes obvious who the "idem" is for Christ (cf. Mt 25, 31-46).

Sensitivity to suffering is elementary to Christianity. Suffering is the hub of an "eschatological circle". Christianity became, wrongly, more sensitive to the marking and fighting of sin and to the retaliation or forgiveness of guilt. Through this, the origin of Christianity became "paralysed" with Jesus. Christianity became, in addition, "affirmative"; it hardly perceived its own ruptures.

The true adventure of Christianity are the open ears and eyes for the suffering which leads into an inescapable praxis. Resignation, or trying to out-manoever this calling, is not allowed. Such a manoeuvre would be an

uncritical opening up of "prospects" as hope. But is this not precisely what each young generation expects when it is newly setting out? Metz turns this question on its head: their setting out is meant to challenge us! What would he have thought about "Friday for Future"?

Theology, according to Metz, is a discipline of ruptures, not a stronghold of evasive answers. It needs the "language of doubt" and the "experience of negativity" instead of showing it up with its affirmations, of being suspicious of it or accusing it.[4] Theologians do not have revealed knowledge about everything. Their answers are piecemeal, but this does not relieve them of their duty to give them.

Does all suffering that affects people affect God before it does them? Metz turns again this idea of a "loving passion" of God's (from Jürgen Moltmann). For him, the co-suffering has its Christological foundation in God's humanity.

Due to this, Metz already asks the question about a theology after Auschwitz as "political theology" very early on. Very early on (1965) he recognised: The "world" is a theological "place", not a counterpart to God's acts of salvation. Whoever believes in creation believes that the being in the world has to be created and sustained in every moment. There is no "When" for creation, because time itself is also, in the first place, created. God also creates time, but God does not act within the categories of time. The only thing that results from God becoming human is this: God has his "Where" in the human person.

The crisis of Enlightenment described by the "Critical Theory" of the Frankfurt School is, according to Metz, a "radical crisis" of "metaphysical theology as a theoretical lawyer in the court case brought between the Christian message of salvation and socio-political reality." Against this, the privatisation of faith established itself as an interpersonal matter with transcendental, existential and personalistic versions. It is therefore necessary for theology not only to be "de-mythologised" but also to be de-privatised.

From this emerges a "positive task": establishing the socio-political conditions under which not only enlightenment, but also life in freedom is possible. This means that "transcendental freedom" is not a prerequisite for praxis, but the other way round: praxis as the inclusion of transcendental freedom. No "pure theory", but theory in praxis. Praxis

then becomes "the unfolding of the societal potency of faith". Eschatology does not exist "privately", its "reservation" has to become dialectic. *"Jede eschatologische Theologie muss daher zu einer politischen Theologie als eine (gesellschafts-) kritischen Theologie werden*" ("All eschatological theology does, therefore, have to become a political theology as a theology that is critical of society") (496). This is about the fundamental orientation of all theology and of the Church. And of the Church? We aren't the first to ask this question today. Metz does admittedly view institutionalisation "not as repression, but as an enabling of critical consciousness."

Admittely, doubts occur to him, too: can institutions be critical? And: does the Church even have the basic constitution for this? Metz demands that this would only work with "a new praxis of church. Is it to be expected. I think: yes". (407) In this context, he makes the following demands: more protection of individuality in and through the church; criticism of totalitarian systems (1968!); life as a criticism of violence and willingness to bring about justice and as an enabling of revolutionary violence in the name of the poor.

Metz therefore demands a *"transformation of its institutional behaviour"* of the church. To me this was, even then, a long time ago, a question of the not to be expected upholding of such hopes: hope of a "new language of the Church", of a "social criticism by the church ... in cooperation with 'non-Christian institutions and groups'". All this has been in existence already since Metz' time (1968), but only individually, '*plurale tantum'* and, in my view, not in the institutional whole of the Church.[5]

It seems to me that, systematically, the demands of Metz can be seen in Helmut Peukert's "Analysis on the approach and status of forming theological theory" a few years later. This fundamental theology of Peukert's ignores the question about the Church.

How can a meaningful connection be made between theology – as a Christian fundamental reflection that takes its lead from the praxis – and the Church as an institutional domain? This question also concerns the further history of the church and of *Concilium*. In ethics, the question of the praxis can be asked reflexively critically as well as cooperatively. In 1968 – I am a witness! – the reflection on ethics mainly took place within the Church. That is not the case today. It is the other way round: it is the Church that, today, is morally questioned. It is more concerned with itself.

When I confronted Metz in the 1980s with the Tübingen Theological Ethics as "autonomous ethics", that is, an ethics of a self-commitment to overarching values and norms as they are laid down in human rights, he referred to the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School which I, too, like to use as a point of departure for my thinking. Habermas highlighted, in his analysis of the history of philosophy, the "biblical story of salvation" for the steps of enlightenment. Metz, who held a doctorate in both disciplines, made this dialogue with philosophy possible.

If we think back to 1968 and 1997 – that is, a generation of *Concilium* that, during this time, were continued with a different generation to which I also actively belonged between 1979-2001 – we remember a tension filled process with a number of self-renewals. In this, the motivation is to establish what the founders of *Concilium* in Saarbrücken (Metz was the youngest of the group as Rahner's assistant) dreamt of at the time. Chiefly the question as to whether the "Church, even with the momentum of the Second Vatican Council, which has frequently been blocked" should not be imagined in a way that far exceeds itself.

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Translated by Katharina Smith-Muller

Notes

1. Cf. in Concilium: *God and the Evil of this World. Forgotten, Unforgettable Theodicy* (1997), *The Church's Social Function in the Light of Political Theology* (1968). The German title is: *Das Problem einer 'politischen Theologie' und die Bestimmung der Kirche als Institution gesellschaftskritischer Freiheit*. I would like to draw your attention to the contribution by Hille Haker in Concilium 2007 when it comes to an analysis of Metz' teaching about compassion as "a global programme of Christianity".
2. The German title *Kirche als Institution gesellschaftkritischer Freiheit* does not make the criticism of the institution as clear as the English title, which replaces "institution" with "praxis"!
3. *Zur Theologie der Welt* (On the theology of the world) (1968), *Glaube in Geschichte und Gesellschaft* (Faith in history and society) (1974), *Gott nach Auschwitz* (God after Auschwitz) (1979); *Jenseits bürgerlicher Religion* (Beyond bourgeois religion) (1980), *Zum Begriff der Politischen Theologie* (On the term 'political theology') (1997).
4. Cf. also Regina Ammicht-Quinn's study from the point of view of the literature of theology, *Von Lissabon bis Auschwitz, Zum Paradigmawechsel* in *der Theodizeefrage* (From Lissabon to Auschwitz, On the paradigm change in the theodicy question)(Studien zu Theologischen Ethik 43) *Freiburg in*

Ue-Freiburg i.Br. 1990. Among others, she references Metz and Moltmann.
5. Little can be seeen, in Metz' fundamental work, of the complex of problems that is uncovered and put forth by feminism. He did, however, show himself, in *Concilium*, to be open to a connection to liberation theology which he supported. His intention was, in rememberance of Columbus, to lay out the change from 'monocentric' European centrism to a 'polycentric world church' as a vision, in the memorial edition of *Concilium.*
6. Cf. Helmut Peukert, Wissenschaftstheorie, Handlungstheorie, *Fundamentale Theologie. Analysen zu Ansatz und Status theologischer Theoriebildung*, Düsseldorf 1976, Frankfurt a.M. 1978, especially on "unlimited community of communication" and on "the aporia of anamnetic solidarity", 300-310.
7. In this, I am thinking particularly of finding a place for liberation theology and feminist theology that gives them equal importance to the theology of established subjects. In both cases, there are also founders: Gustavo Gutierrez and Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza.

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Towards a World Ethic of World Religions: Fundamental Questions of Present-day Ethics in a Global Context

HANS KÜNG

The danger of a vacuum in meaning, values and norms

Why should a human being do good and not evil? Elementary questions are often the most difficult of all – and today such questions are no longer only for the 'permissive' West. Much in terms of customs, laws and traditions that was taken for granted throughout the centuries, because it was safeguarded by religious authority, is no longer a matter of course anywhere in the world.

One might ask concretely in respect of evil: Why should human beings not deceive, cheat and rob their fellow human beings if this is to their advantage and they have no fear of discovery and punishment in a particular case? Why should the politician resist corruption if he can be sure of the discretion of his financial backers? Why should the businessman limit his concern for profit if greed and the 'get rich' slogan are publicly preached without any moral scruples? Why should the embryo researcher not develop a commercial reproductive technique which manufactures guaranteed perfect embryos and casts the rejects into the rubbish bin?

But the question is not only directed at the individual: why should a people, a race, a religion, if they have at their disposal the necessary instruments of power, not hate and bully and, if that is their concern, even exile and liquidate a minority that is different and believes something different, an 'alien' minority.

Or one might ask in respect of good: Why should human beings always be friendly, gentle, even helpful to other human beings? Why should a

young person in particular renounce the use of force and opt in principle for non-violence? Why should the entrepreneur or the banker, even if no one is supervising, behave with unconditional correctness? Why should the trade union official, even if it were to damage his career, not only fight for his own organization but also for the general good? Why, for the scientist and for a doctor working on transplantation, should a human being, in experiment and therapy, never be the object of commercialization and industrialization (the embryo already as a proprietary article and object of trade), but always a legal subject and an end?

But the question must also be put in quite general terms: why should one people, or one race, or one religion show tolerance, respect or even reverence towards another? Why should those who wield power among the nations and religions commit themselves in every case to peace and never to war?

So, once again, the fundamental question: why should human beings – understood as individuals, groups, nations, religions – why should they behave in a humane way, a truly humane way, that is, with humanity? And why should they do this unconditionally, that is, in every case? That is the basic question in every system of ethics, that is to say, in every doctrine (philosophical or theological) of values and norms which should guide our decisions.

Such fundamental questions are often asked today, often even by young people in a quite open and radical manner, at least in our Western industrial societies where achievement and consumerism are the norm. How many of them today no longer know what the basic options are which should help them make the daily minor or major decisions in their lives, what preferences they should follow, what priorities they should set themselves, and which role-models they should choose. The reason is that the old authorities and traditions that gave them their orientation are no longer valid. Through the media, human beings are being showered with a wealth of fleeting images which, in both the private and the public sphere, more often than not fail to provide orientation. For a long time it has been no secret that, at the most widely varying social levels, as well as at all age levels, a clear crisis of orientation is rife, in spite of, or because of, all this excess of information. This crisis of orientations as much connected with drug addiction and crime amongst young people as with the most recent

scandals in the world of politics, the economy, unions and society. The scale of these scandals, at least in Germany and Japan, is unprecedented.

And since the official ideology of the Communist state is now, to a large extend, bankrupt in the Eastern states – those within both the Soviet and Chinese spheres of influence – and the Stalinist party discipline has also been undermined, where it has not yet collapsed with increasing glasnost and perestroika, we shall ultimately see exactly the same signs of a lack of orientation, not only in the Soviet Union but also in Catholic Poland (a large number of Poles who have so far come to the West already no longer practice their belief). But for the 'capitalist' countries as well as the 'socialist' ones, it is not just a question here of the private problems of the individual psyche and a healthy soul, but rather a political issue of the very highest order. It must be of concern to all those in positions of responsibility in state, church and society, when an increasing number of people, and particularly the young, are virtually facing a vacuum in meaning, values and norms. Total withdrawal from politics, football hooliganism and alcoholism in the 1980s are no less disturbing than political anti-authoritarianism, revolutionary activity, violent protest, even terrorism in the late 1960s and the 1970s.

And as far as the countries between the blocs are concerned, can one – in view of these 'side-effects' of Western modernization and secularization which are constantly increasing in India, South-East Asia, Arab countries and black Africa – can one not understand the fierce reproaches levelled at 'the West', namely that it is destroying the old ways of life, concepts of value and their resultant ways of behaviour, without putting new ones in their place? What authority, it is asked, is now valid in family, state and society for all those sons and daughters who have been emancipated or 'contaminated' by Western style, who now, in line with the 'capitalist ethic', only make money, achieve promotion and seek personal enjoyment, an enjoyment whenever possible without remorse?

Democracy without morality?

In fact, there is widespread criticism on the part of non-Western countries that while the West has given the world a great deal, it has not been all good. The West has given:

- *science*, but no wisdom in order to prevent the misuse of scientific

research (why not also consider the industrial production of human matter in Japan?);

- *technology,* but no spiritual energy to bring the unforeseen risks of a highly efficient, major technology under control (why not also work on atom bombs in India and Pakistan instead of putting a stop to the mass poverty?);

- *industry,* but no ecology to combat the ever-expanding economy (why not also cut down the Brazilian tropical rain forest by the square kilometre?);

- *democracy*, but no morality which could counteract the huge power interests of the various men of power and the power groups (but what can one do to combat the Colombian drug cartel, the corruption in the Indian Congress Party, in the Japanese National Liberal Party or in Mobutu's Zaire?).

So the great achievements of the West are viewed, especially by the intellectual élite of Third-World countries, with increasing distrust: what is modern democracy's attitude to morality? It ought to be evident that here we have a fundamental problem of Western democracy on which we should not moralize self-righteously but rather reflect self-critically. For in the way in which it sees itself the liberal-democratic state – in contrast to the authoritarian-clerical state or the modern totalitarian state – must be ideologically neutral: that is to say, it must tolerate different religions and confessions, philosophies and ideologies. It was without doubt a huge step forward in human history that the democratic state must, according to its constitution, respect, protect and further freedom of conscience and religion, freedom of the press and right of assembly, everything that can be counted as modern human rights. But for all that, the state cannot decree precisely what meaning life should have and how it should be lived; it cannot prescribe any supreme values and ultimate norms, if it does not wish to damage its ideological neutrality.

Here, therefore, lies the root of the dilemma of every modern democratic state (be in Europe, America, India or Japan): it is at the same time dependent on what it cannot prescribe by law. For here too there is now general agreement: without a minimal basic consensus on particular values, norms and attitudes there is no possibility, either in a smaller or a larger community, of living together in a manner which befits human

dignity, nor can a modern democracy function without that. Indeed, as for example the Weimar Republic of 1919-1933 proved – it will sink into chaos or into dictatorship.

The necessary basic consensus

What does a minimal basic consensus mean? I will clarify that with a few points:

- The *inner peace* of a smaller or a larger community presupposes the agreement that people want to resolve social conflicts without violence.
- *Economic and legal rules* presuppose that people definitely want to hold on to a particular rule and laws.
- *Institutions* which sustain these rules, but which are subject to constant historical change, presuppose that the people's assent to the rules is always being renewed, at least tacitly.

What, however, if exactly the opposite happens in the technological state grown abstract and incalculable, and people react with terror in the ideological conflicts? What if crass Machiavellianism in politics, shark-like methods in the Stock Exchange and libertinism in private life are taken more and more for granted?

In the face of so many pubic scandals people call regularly for more regulation and control. But however important legal regulation and control are, they are no substitute for giving a basic ethical orientation. Still more rules for interaction and behaviour, still more laws, instructions and forms will certainly not help human beings, already under the stress of too much information and too much regulation, to find the way. Human beings today are not short of signposts here and there, telling them what they ought and ought not to do; it is rather that they so often do not know where they really ought to be going: they lack the main direction, the goal.

No, if modern society is to function, then we must not neglect the question of the intended goal and the 'ligatures' (as Ralf Dahrendorf puts it), the things that bind. And basic to human life is that which binds it to a direction in life, to values in life, to norms in life, to a meaning in life. Viewed across nations and across cultures, human beings have an elementary need for such basic ties (assuming that it has not been completely suppressed): they feel the desire to cling to something, to rely on something, to have a standpoint in such an incalculable, complex,

technological world and in the confusions of their personal life. They need to follow some kind of guiding line, to have standards at their disposal, an idea of what the goal is: in short, to possess something like an underlying ethical orientation. And in an industrial society, where there is so much uncertainty because of too much information and disinformation, regardless of the undoubted importance of that open communication on all sides, which is so emphasized by social-psychology, and of models for alternative resolutions of disputes, proposed by lawyers, human beings will never behave in a truly humane way, in matters great or small, without having something that binds them to meaning, values and norms. (These must certainly never chain and shackle human beings, but should rather help and support them.) But what is the concrete meaning of underlying ethical orientation? Here it is precisely religious people who must ask themselves self-critically the following question:

Can human beings not also live a moral life without religion?

Now there is no doubt that, throughout the centuries, religions were those systems of orientation which formed the basis for a particular morality, gave it legitimacy and motivation and often sanctioned it by punishment. Indeed, it is incontestable that religions have been aware of this function for better and for worse, as everything human is aware of the great ambivalence of history. Better *and* worse: for only prejudice could overlook the huge contribution of the great religions to the spiritual and moral progress of the people of this world. However, at the same time we can hardly ignore the fact that they have also hindered this progress, indeed prevented it. Religions often proved themselves to be less driving forces of reform (as, for example, we find the Protestant Reformation despite all the imbalances and weaknesses) than bastions of counter-reform and counter-enlightenment (as we find in the Vatican's high-handedness and obsession with power in the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries and again today).

Positive and negative things could, of course, be said about Judaism and Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, Chinese Confucianism and Taoism, as well as about Christianity. In every one of the great world religions, along with a more or less triumphal success story (by and large better known to its adherents) there is also a chronicle of scandal (about which they would

rather keep quiet). Indeed there were times, right up to the present, when, as the American psychologist Edgar Draper put it, '… institutionalized religion has never been particularly troubled by its bizarre adherents, wild movements, comic saints, lascivious Brahmans, paranoid preachers, disturbed rabbis, eccentric bishops or psychopathic popes. Nor has it seen fit to acknowledge character strengths in those heretics, reformers or rebels who opposed its teachings' (*Psychiatry and Pastoral Care*, Englewood Cliffs NJ 1965, p. 117).

In these circumstances, can it be surprising that some enlightened contemporaries preferred rather to do without religion, which they equated with obscurantism, superstition and brainwashing the people; that today, while they no longer declare themselves militant atheists or agnostics, in every case they claim quite decisively to have a basic orientation and to be able to lead a moral life even without religion?

The religious person cannot escape the question: can only religious people really live in a truly humane, truly moral way? One's experience gives a negative reply: there are too many people in our society who are hardly religious at all, indeed clearly non-religious, yet who in terms of the requirements they make of themselves, set out to lead no less moral life than believers, and who sometimes show more moral sensitivity in all possible (political-social) areas than certain 'pious' people (who usually have a fixation on sexual sins). Is, then, only the religious person to be able to have goals and priorities, values and norms, ideals and models, criteria for true and false? Can one make such a strong assertion in view of the character and work of an Ernst Bloch, an Albert Camus and a Bertrand Russell – to name only these three as typical representatives of major trends of the time? No, the highly moral philosophical thinker Immanuel Kant has spoken convincingly for many people: as rational beings, men and women possess a truly human autonomy which allows them to realize their basic trust in reality and to be well aware of their responsibility without believing in God. Many of the pioneers of human rights, particularly in England and France, were notorious freethinkers, whereas many opponents of human rights were believers in God, indeed notorious bigots, amongst them many bishops and popes.

So also today, many secular people exemplify in their lives a morality which orientates itself on the dignity of every human being; and according

to present-day understanding, with this human dignity go reason and responsibility, freedom of belief and of religion, and the other human rights which have won through in the course of a long history, often laboriously enough against the established religions. And it is of the greatest importance for peace among nations, for international operation in politics, economics and culture, and also for international organizations like UNO and UNESCO, that religious people – be they Jews, Christians or Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Confucians, Taoists or whatever – do not dispute the fact that non-religious people, calling themselves 'humanists' or 'Marxists', can also, in their own way, represent and defend human dignity and human rights, a humane ethic. Indeed, both believers *and* non-believers are represented in what stand as Article 1 of the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights, adopted on 10 December 1948 after the Second World War and its 55 million dead: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.'

And from that comes also the right to religious freedom, which also includes, by logical necessity, a right to have no religion: 'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance' (Article 18).

All this, it appears, can be quite easily justified with human reason, without any principles of belief. As Immanuel Kant demanded to know in his programmatic work *What is Enlightenment?*, why should a human being not overcome the 'immaturity that is his own fault', the 'inability to make use of his understanding without being guided by someone else', and also use his understanding for the establishment of an ethics of reason? According to Kant, this inability is founded 'not in a lack of understanding, but of courage': 'Have the courage to make use of your own understanding!' For that reason many philosophical and theological ethicists today also advocate and defend a genuine human autonomy in all of a person's practical decisions, a moral autonomy which even Christian belief cannot simply cancel out. However, it is precisely the theological ethicists who at the same time draw attention to the danger of this moral autonomy, and rightly so. Why?

The difficulties reason has with ethics

'But from where do we get these standards that guide us, and where necessary, put us in our place? Science cannot teach us such norms?' So says a prominent scientist, the evolutionary biologist and President of the German Research Association, Hubert Markel. At the same time he warns not only against an anti-scientific fundamentalism, but also against a knowledge that is 'free of values', which no longer tells us 'why we ought to know what it teaches us' (*Die Zeit*, 8 September 1989).

What Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer analysed immediately after the Second World War as 'the dialectic of enlightenment' (1947), has today become to a large extent common property. It is in the nature of rational enlightenment itself for its reasonableness easily to turn into unreason. Not all scientific advances are advances for humanity. The restricted, particular rationality of science and technology is certainly not total, undivided reasonableness, a truly reasonable rationality. And a radical criticism of reason which literally goes to its roots by necessity attacks the very roots of this reason, and so easily undermines every reasonable legitimation of truth and justice. That is why Adorno and Horkheimer see the Enlightenment as being caught up in an inexorable process of self-destruction and why they call for a self-transcending enlightenment.

Indeed, the evil brought about by science and technology cannot simply be cured by even more science and technology. It is precisely scientists and technologists who today emphazise that scientific and technological thinking is indeed capable of destroying an ethic that is traditional and estranged from reality; and much that has spread in the modern age by way of immorality is not the result of ill will, but is rather an unwanted 'by-product' of industrialization, urbanization and secularization. But modern scientific and technological thinking have proved themselves, from the outset, as incapable of justifying universal values, human rights and ethical standards.

Indeed, even today, philosophy has difficulties in providing a foundation for practicable ethics: where should it get its criteria from in order to judge the 'interests' that lie behind all 'knowledge' (Habermas)? How should pure reason decide between true and illusory, objective and subjective, acceptable and reprehensible interests? How should it establish purely

rational priorities and indeed limits? Up to now, it seems, the foundations that philosophy has provided for concrete norms have scarcely gone beyond problematic generalizations and utilitarian-pragmatic models which are generally too abstract for the average person and can in no way be generally binding. Do these generalizations and models not fail at precisely that point where a human being, in a specific case – and this is not all that unusual – is called upon to carry out an action which in no way serves either his interest or general happiness, which can rather demand of him an action against his interests, a 'sacrifice', and in an extreme case, even the sacrifice of his life?

There is a question which even Sigmund Freud, affirming his ethics on the basis of reason, was unable to answer: 'When I ask myself why I have always behaved honourably, to be ready to spare others and to be kind wherever possible, and why I did not give up doing so when I observed that in that way one harms oneself and becomes an anvil because other people are brutal and untrustworthy, then, it is true, I have no answer (Letter to J. J. Putnam on 8 July 1915, quoted by E. Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work*, Vol. 2, London 1955, p. 465).

Can one therefore meet every danger of spiritual homelessness and moral waywardness with pure reason? Of course, in view of the lack of assistance from the sciences and technology and indeed philosophy, many people help themselves, each in his or her own way. The interest of many contemporaries in horoscopes, incomprehensible to those who know about astronomy, is due to this need for a basic orientation for future important decisions, as is the widespread thirst for serious and less serious 'aids to living'. But the great economic and technological problems of our time – from atomic energy through genetic manipulation and artificial insemination to the polluted environment and the North-South conflict – have become more and more political-moral problems (which is also the perception in the Club of Rome), and these problems are beyond the reach and also the power of any psychology and sociology. Today, when we can do more than we should, who can tell us what we ought to do? One is entitled to ask: can not *religions* perhaps contribute something here after all? However, religion also has its quite specific problems today.

The difficulties religion has with ethics

For a long time now, what perhaps some people in Islam and Hinduism today also feel to be a problem has been clear to many religious people – to Jews and Christians above all, but doubtless also to members of the Chinese religion. A first difficulty is that at the end of the twentieth century we can less than ever get fixed moral solutions from heaven or from the Tao, or derive them from the Bible or any other holy book. This does not contradict the transcendentally justified ethical commandments of the Bible, the Qur'an, the Torah, and of Hindu or Buddhist writings. But first, it must be admitted that, from the historical point of view, the concrete ethical norms, values, insights and key concepts of the great religions have, according to all historical research, developed in a highly complicated social and dynamic process. It is easy to understand that where life's necessities, human needs and imperatives appeared, human behaviour was subjected to regulations, priorities, conventions, laws, commandments, directives and customs; in short, precise ethical norms. And so much of what is proclaimed in the Bible as God's commandment can also be found in the Codex Hammurabi. That means that human beings have had to test and still have to test, again and again, ethical norms and ethical solutions in draft and model form, and often practice and prove them over generations. After periods of concession and acclimatization, the process finally leads to the recognition of norms to which people have grown accustomed in this way, but sometimes – if the time has completely changed – it can lead to their being undermined and dissolved. Are we perhaps living in such a time?

Religious people should also now bear in mind a second difficulty: for all problems and conflicts differentiated solutions 'on earth' must be sought and worked out. Whether as Jews, Christians, Muslims, or as members of an Indian, Chinese or Japanese religion, human beings are themselves responsible for the concrete fashioning of their morality. To what extent? To the extent that they too must proceed from their experiences, from the diversity of life, and must keep to facts. Even religious people cannot be excused from acquiring sure information and knowledge for all concrete problem areas, from sexual ethics to economic and state ethics. They must operate in all areas with factual arguments in order to arrive at verifiable aids to decision-making and finally also to reach practicable solutions. It is precisely religious people, often with their heads in the clouds, who

today must say to themselves that they cannot call on a higher authority, however high that may be, in order to remove from human beings their autonomy in the world. In that sense there is certainly what was worked out at the time of the Enlightenment: an ethical self-legislation and self-responsibility for our self-realization and fashioning of the world, situated in the human conscience.

And religious people should take a third difficulty into account: in the face of the multi-layered, changeable, complex and often impenetrable reality of the technological society, even religions cannot avoid bringing scientific models to bear in order to examine this reality in as unprejudiced a way as possible for its factual regularities and future possibilities. Certainly not every average Christian, Jew, Muslim or Hindu needs to apply these scientific methods. Pre-scientific consciousness of precise ethical norms, in so far as it is present, of course retains its basic importance for a majority of believers today. And, happily, many people still act in particular situations in a 'spontaneously' correct manner, without having read a moral-philosophical or moral-theological tract. But it is precisely the misjudgments (with regard, for example, to war, race, the place of women or the importance of birth control) made by several religions in recent times which show that modern life has become too complex for one to be able to disregard, out of naïve blindness to reality, scientifically secure, empirical data and perceptions in the determining of concrete ethical norms, particularly with regard to sexuality or aggression, but also with regard to economic or political power.

This means in positive terms that modern ethics is today dependent on contact with the natural and human sciences, with psychology and psychotherapy, with sociology and social criticism, with behavioural research, biology, cultural history and philosophical anthropology. In this respect, religions, their responsible leaders and teachers, should show no feat of making contact. It is precisely the human sciences which offer them a growing richness of relatively sure anthropological knowledge and information to act upon, and these can be used as verifiable aids for decision-making – even if they cannot replace final foundations and standardizations of the human ethos. For this is exactly where religions have their own contribution to make.

Religions – a possible foundation for an ethic

I firmly maintain that a human being without religion can also lead a life that is genuinely humane, that is to say with humanity, and in this sense moral; this is precisely the expression of a person's inner autonomy. But one thing those without religion cannot do, even if they were to accept unconditional moral norms for themselves, it to justify the unconditionality and universality of ethical obligation. It remains uncertain why I should follow such norms unconditionally, in every case and in every place – even where they run completely contrary to my interests. For what is an ethic worth in the last analysis, if it is not valid without all ifs and buts – unconditional, 'categorical' (Kant)?

One cannot, however, derive an unconditional, 'categorical' 'thou shalt' from the finite limitations of human existence. And even an independent, abstract 'human nature' (as justifying authority) could hardly provide an unconditional obligation to anything. Why should even the 'survival of mankind', not exactly threatened by any one individual alone, be a personal challenge to anyone in such a categorical way? Indeed, provided one is running no risks, oneself, why should not a criminal kill his hostages, a dictator violate his people, an economic group exploit a country, a nation start a war, a power block launch rockets in an emergency against the other half of humanity, if that happens to be in their own best interests, and if there is no transcendent authority which is unconditionally valid for all? Why should they all act unconditionally in a different way? Is the 'appeal to reason' sufficient in that case? And was not the Terror of the French Revolution justified in the name of the 'Goddess of Reason'?

Here in brief is the fundamental answer. Today – after Nietzsche's celebration of 'beyond good and evil' – one can no longer count on making the well-being of *all* people the measure of one's *own* action using a quasi-innate 'categorical imperative', common to all people. No, the categorical nature of the ethical demand, the unconditional nature of the 'thou shalt', cannot find its justification in a human being who is conditioned in so many ways, but only in the unconditional: an absolute which can provide an overall meaning which embraces and pervades the human individual even human nature, indeed the whole human community. That can only be the final, highest reality which, while it cannot be rationally proved,

can be accepted in trust based on reason – whatever this reality is called, and however it is understood and interpreted in the different religions. At least for the prophetic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the only unconditional in all that is conditioned which can justify the unconditional nature and universality of ethical demands is the primal ground, the primal support, that primal goal of humankind and the world which we call God. This primal ground, this primal support and this primal goal does not mean that human beings are directed from without. On the contrary: having grounding, anchoring and orientation of this kind opens up the possibility for human beings truly to be themselves and act for themselves; it makes possible self-legislation and self-responsibility. Properly understood, theonomy is therefore not heteronomy, but rather the ground and guarantee of human autonomy.

But however the unconditionality nature of ethical demands is grounded in the different religions, whether they derive their demands more directly from a mysterious absolute, or a figure of revelation, from an old tradition or a sacred book, one thing is sure: religions can express their ethical demands with a completely different authority from a merely human one. For they speak with an absolute authority and are, in that very way, an expression of the 'oldest, strongest and most urgent desires of mankind' – to take up the atheist Freud's description of religion ('The Future of an Illusion', in *Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XXI, London 1961, p. 30). And religions do not just express these desires simply with words and concepts, doctrines and dogmas, but also with symbols and prayers, rites and festivals – that is to say, both rationally and emotionally – for religions have the means of shaping the whole of a human being's existence – and this will be tested by history, adapted to a particular culture and given concrete form in the individual case.

But when one speaks, in this or any other way, of religion as the foundation of morality, one will hear the objection that religions are in no way in agreement themselves, that all their statements, not only about the absolute but also about the ethic of mankind, are different, even contradictory. Indeed one may ask: do religions not have totally different, mutually contradictory, theoretical and practical concepts of offer? We cannot avoid these questions in view of the contributions of the different religions to a world ethos.

Agreement and disagreement among religions: global commandments, vices, virtues

The disagreement between the greater religions is so manifest that only someone who sees ghosts needs to fear as a reality in his lifetime the one single universal religion which many theoreticians strive for as the ideal. I personally believe in a possible unity between the Christian churches: in the lifting of all mutual excommunications in favour of a basic communion which would represent a reconciled variety, a unity in diversity. But I do not believe in the unity of the world religions representing different paths, all of which one can simultaneously follow without a second thought. Such a unity of world religions is not even necessary, so long as we also allow the other religions to be accepted as legitimate paths to salvation in themselves. What we need, however, and what I hope for, is peace between the religions; because without peace between religions there will be no peace between nations! And so it important that, despite all the differences, we try to discern a precise agreement or at least convergence.

The various religions differ from one another in their teachings and writings as well as in their rites and institutions, and finally also in their ethics and discipline. The members of the various religions, for the most part, know only too well exactly where they have spectacular disagreement with one another in matters of practice. Christians, for example, know that Muslims and Buddhists should refrain from alcohol in any form; the latter know that, as a rule, Christians are allowed it. Jews and Christians know that Christians are allowed to eat pork; but the latter know that that is considered unclean by Jews and Muslims. Sikhs and high orthodox Jews may not cut their beards or hair, but Hindus and also Christians and Muslims can do as they wish. Christians may slaughter animals, Buddhists may not. Muslims may have several wives, Christians only one. And so on.

But are the members of the various religions so well informed about what they have in common precisely with regard to an ethic? By no means. Therefore what unites all great religions would have to be worked out in detail on the basis of the sources – a significant and gratifying task for the scholars of the various religions! But even at the present stage of investigation, some important areas of common ground can be

emphasized. For – and this could be easily demonstrated – not only the prophetic religions of Near-Eastern, Semitic origin, but also the mystical religions of Indian origin aiming at unity with the Absolute, and also, finally, the religions of Chinese origin, steeped in wisdom and concerned about cosmic harmony, are in absolute agreement in some basic ethical imperatives:

Thou shalt not kill the innocent.

Thou shalt not lie or break promises.

Thou shalt not commit adultery or fornication.

Thou shalt do good.

These are all fundamental ethical demands on humanity. There is no doubt that an enormous amount could be achieved for the human race if all the great religions, their leaders and teachers, with all the means and possibilities at their disposal, were to lend their support to such common fundamental ethical demands, so that they became something like the basic pillars of a common fundamental world ethic.

If the part of the Jewish Decalogue aimed at one's neighbour has its direct or indirect parallels in all other religions up to and including Buddhism, so presumably also has the Christian catalogue of virtues and vices: as, for example, the seven main or cardinal sins as they have been numerated since Gregory the Great: pride, envy, anger, greed, unchastity, immoderateness and (religious-moral) laziness; likewise also the four cardinal virtues taken over from the Greeks: wisdom, justice, bravery and moderation. Can one not find parallels in all the other great religions to these vices which Christianity condemns and these virtues it desires? Is there not something like universally prevalent sins, something like 'world vices', but, happily, also universally demanded virtues, something like 'world virtues'? Why should not the world religions find reconciliation in fighting world vices and promoting world virtues?

That could be easily confirmed from the perspective of the other religions. If, for example, self-sufficiency and lack of envy have a high status in Buddhism; if the world is to be respected, and not simply exploited; if human beings are to be seen as an end and never as a means; if knowledge means more than riches, and wisdom more than knowledge; if grief is no reason for despair, then one will certainly find parallels to these views on the Christian side – despite all the differences in the overall

context. Or if the Muslim places especially high value on a sense of order and a striving for justice, if the virtues of courage and calmness occupy a particularly important place, while at the same time the Muslim is to distinguish himself by forbearance, humility and a spirit of community, one will certainly find parallels to all these virtues in Christianity and Judaism.

However, the last example in particular shows that in all religions one should always ask self-critically what the original nature of Christianity (of Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, etc.) really may have been. If we take the example just given, if we go back to the original Jesus of the Gospels, we can see that not only meekness and humility, but also prophecy and militancy, are part of Christianity. For this Jesus of the Gospel is as little understood as the prophet Mohammad, if he is seen only as a soft, gentle, unresisting, meek and humble figure, as he was in Pietism or in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Catholicism ('the sacred heart'!): a feeble image of Jesus, against which, rightly, the pastor's son Friedrich Nietzsche was not the only one to rebel in his youth. But the Gospel sources make it abundantly clear how very much Jesus of Nazareth was a thoroughly aggressive critic of the hierarchs and court theologians and how in his case, selflessness and self-awareness, humility and toughness, gentleness and aggression belong together. Could not, conversely, something of the selflessness, humility, gentleness and non-violence of Jesus of Nazareth be found in the militant prophet, general and statesman Muhammad? Neither the New Testament, the Qur'an nor the other holy scriptures have so far been examined with reference to global convergences of this kind.

At one point, indeed, the ethical convergence of the religions is expressed particularly strongly, namely in that supreme principle which for so long has been claimed exclusively for Jesus of Nazareth – the so-called 'golden rule'. This demands that one should treat one's fellows as one would want to be treated oneself. Today we know that the great Rabbi Hillel (v. 20 BC) was already familiar with this golden rule, although in a negative formulation, indeed that he even described is as the sum of the written law; in the Jewish Diaspora it is also found in a positive formulation. But K'ung Fu-tse, many hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, was also familiar with this golden rule in a negative form. And one can say that it is known in all the great religions in this or a similar form: do not do to

anyone else what you would not like done to you. Or put positively: do to others as you would be done by. Kant's categorical imperative is basically a modernization and secularization of the golden rule.

Now that has also made it clear how very much true humanity represents a point of convergence in the great religions.

The *humanum* as a criterion of truth

At a UNESCO colloquium in Paris under the title of 'No world peace without religious peace', I defended the thesis that only a religion that promoted true humanity, *humanitas*, could be a true and good religion. The above reflections may serve to substantiate this thesis. For in all the convergences I have indicated, what matters in the end is that a human being should behave in a truly humane way towards fellow humans. In this sense, true humanity is indeed the prerequisite of true religion, and *humanitas* is the minimum demand made of all religions. Religions which in themselves do not make human rights a reality are no longer credible today.

But the converse has also become clear. True religion, in so far as it is directed in this form at one's fellow human beings, is the fulfilment of true *humanitas*. Religion (in the sense of the correct determination of the relationship of theonomy and autonomy, as described above) here shows itself as the optimal prerequisite for the realization of the *humanum*. If there is to be humanity among men and women as an unconditional and universal obligation, then there must be religion.

But what about the completely different theoretical and conceptual frames of reference of the various religions? Do they not put in question the convergences I have indicated? The answer to that can now be given: an ethic is concerned in the last analysis not with a variety of theoretical frames of reference but rather with what should or should not be done, quite practically, in life as it is lived. And with reference to this praxis, people who are religious in the best sense of the word from the various religions have always found and understood each other. Whether in fact the particular tormented, injured or despised human being is given help from a Christian or Buddhist, Jewish or Hindu stance, ought in the first instance to be immaterial to the person concerned. In this respect, common action and acceptance can certainly be arrived at, on both a smaller and

a larger scale, even if the theoretical implications of the various religions are completely different.

This is emphatically confirmed by a declaration which the 'World Conference of Religions for Peace' adopted in 1970 in Kyoto in Japan, and which expresses in exemplary fashion what a concrete, universal basic ethic, a world ethic of world religions, could be:

> Meeting together to deal with the paramount theme of peace, we discovered that the things that unite us are more important than the things that divide us. We found that we have in common:
> - a convinction of the fundamental unity of the human family, of the equality and dignity of all men and women;
> - a sense of the sacrosanctity of the individual and his or her conscience;
> - a sense of the value of the human community;
> - a recognition that might is not the same as right, that human might cannot be self-sufficient and is not absolute;
> - the belief that love, compassion, selflessness and the power of the mind and inner truthfulness have, in the end, more power than hatred, enmity and self-interest;
> - a sense of obligation to stand on the side of the poor and oppressed against the rich and the oppressors;
> - deep hope that good will, in the end, will triumph.

Translated by Gordon Wood

Is the Second Vatican Council Forgotten?

HANS KÜNG

Around the dinner table in my childhood home in Sursee/ Switzerland, there was always talk of politics. From time to time my parents would discuss the First World War. For us as children these events were some thirty, forty years in the past. Yet all these conversations and images left us children with little more than a very vague and diffuse impression of these major events of world history. What we were lacking was having experienced them ourselves. My thoughts often go back to this these days when I speak about the world historical events of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). For us today these are forty years in the past and as a consequence almost half the population only knows about them from hearsay or from pictures. Not least for this reason did I recount the dramatic and complex history of this Council in my *Memoir,* as I had been there myself and had made my own small contribution to it. Hence I may be permitted to dispense with the task to report on the events themselves, to offer my own impressions, scattered with anecdotes and characterizations of popes and certain bishops and theologians. In this contribution I may concentrate on what is essential under the two key terms 'legacy' and 'agenda'.

I. Legacy

Legacy: in its constitutions and decrees, decisions and impulses the Council has left us with a precious but nevertheless problematic legacy. It is a legacy which one could, instead of taking it up or making it bear fruit, reject or at least leave unused. However, how much poorer would the Catholic Church and Christianity in general be without this Council! No other Church since the Reformation has undergone a reform of this kind - in an orderly fashion and without a major schism:

1) Without the Council, the Catholic Church would still regard *religious liberty* and *tolerance* as dangerous products of the modern Zeitgeist and Catholic countries would still deny other ('heretical') religious bodies the right to practice their faith. After long and hard debates the Second Vatican Council took a turn which representatives of the ideology of infallibility find hard to accept: all human beings have the right to religious liberty. They are entitled particularly in matters of religion to act unhindered by oppression and according to their conscience. All religious communities have the right to practice their religion publicly, without restriction and following their own laws.

Indeed: the Second Vatican Council did on the whole terminate the discrimination of Protestants in Catholic countries. There are no more restrictions with regard to the training of pastors, the erection of church buildings, the distribution of Bibles and participation in public life. And of course, those Catholics who live in predominantly Protestant regions have also benefited from the realization of such religious freedom.

2) Without this Council, the Catholic Church would still close itself off from the *ecumenical movement* and it would still fight cold wars both on paper and in heated discussions. There would still be polemical dissociation, even militant separation in theology and society - all of it of course entirely mutual!

Vatican II did, by the skin of its teeth, recognize its share of the responsibility for the schism and the need for ongoing reform: no longer a simple 'return' of the others to an unchanged and static Catholic Church but renewal of our own Church in its life and teaching on the basis of the gospel as the prerogative for a desirable reunification. Other Christians are addressed as ecclesial communities or churches. The Council went without new dogmas and condemnations, at the explicit instruction of Pope John XXIII.

Indeed, since Vatican II the Catholic Church has to a large extent adopted an ecumenical attitude. On all levels mutual encounters, dialogue and cooperation have begun, even joint prayers and increasing fellowship in public worship. There is ecumenical convergence even in theology: it is particularly visible in biblical exegesis, in church history, religious education and practical theology, but obvious also in dogmatic theology. Therefore one could ask why in Germany in the name of ecumenism and

in the light of increasing cuts in public funding one does not advance the integration of theology departments in universities (as in the USA). Here in Tiibingen we were further advanced immediately after the Council than we are now. But also the relationship between congregations and especially their priests and pastors has significantly improved under the influence of Vatican II and also that of the World Council of Churches. In many cases it has become one of colleagueship or even friendship.

3) Without this Council, the Church would still regard *other world faiths* as mainly the object of negative-polemical conflict and conquistadorial missionary strategies. There would still be enmity mainly with Islam and particularly with Judaism. The racially motivated antisemitism of the National Socialists would indeed not have been possible without centuries of anti-Judaism on the part of the Christian churches. For Vatican II however all nations with their different religions form one community: in their different ways they all seek to answer the same profound questions about the meaning and the way of life. We must therefore disregard nothing which in other faiths is perceived to be true and sacred - rays of the one truth which illuminates all of humanity. Words of high regard for Hinduism, Buddhism and especially for the followers of Islam who - following the example of Abraham - together with Christians worship the One God and honour Jesus as the prophet of God. Enmity between Christians and Muslims should be replaced by mutual understanding and shared commitment to social justice, peace and liberty. In a unique way however the Christian Church is related to the Jewish religion from which it originated and whose sacred scriptures are also hers. For the first time in history the Council rejected the idea of the 'collective responsibility' of the past or even the present Jewish people for the death of Jesus. The Council takes a stand against any idea of the ancient people of God being rejected or even under a curse, it 'decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone' and at the same time promises to 'foster and recommend mutual understanding and respect' (*Nostra aetate*, article 4).

It cannot be overlooked: since Vatican II there has been a tremendous increase in the knowledge and respect of other faiths and especially of Judaism - in preaching, catechesis, study and conversation. Discrimination of any kind for reasons of race, skin colour, class or religion is now frowned

upon. One proclaims love among all human beings as brothers and sisters under the One God. Also the possibility of salvation for non-Christians, even of well-meaning atheists, i.e. those who follow their conscience is explicitly recognized.

4) Without the Council, Catholic *liturgy* would still be a prerogative of the clergy, celebrated in a language incomprehensible to the people who are merely in attendance, in Latin High Masses and private masses whispered against a wall.

Vatican II restored the celebration of the Eucharist to be once again the worship of the whole priestly people: accessible shape, active participation of all in shared praying, singing and receiving communion. All of these are welcome realizations of the concerns of the Reformers: the medieval private mass was replace by a shared public celebration; the laity was once again given the chalice, at least under certain circumstances; the introduction of the vernacular and thus the adaptation of the liturgy to different nations, finally simplification and concentration on the essence of the rite.

5) Without the Council, the Catholic Church would still neglect the theology and spirituality of the *Bible* in its preaching, academic theology and the personal piety of its members. In practical terms the Tradition of the Church is with regard to both theory and praxis above Scripture and its teaching office is above both. Biblical renewal like that of the liturgy encountered a large number of difficulties. Against modern methods of exegesis there was much opposition.

Vatican II did, though unfortunately without clearly defining the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, recognize the preeminent significance of the Bible. Within the Church all proclamation, preaching, catechesis and indeed all aspects of Christian life must be fed and guided by Scripture. The teaching office is not above the Word of God but subservient to it. The historical-critical study of the Bible was encouraged. The study of Scripture should at likewise be the soul of theology.

Indeed since Vatican II the justification of genuine historical-critical exegesis is no longer disputed and, with a very small number of exceptions, hardly impeded. The so-called inerrancy of Scripture is only claimed for the fundamental truth of salvation but not for purely scientific-historical statements. Access to Scripture for all believers has been made easier

through good and partly ecumenical translations. In public worship there are readings of Scripture which are accessible and follow a new varied order of pericopes. There is now no Sunday Mass without a homily. The liturgy of the Word, even without the celebration of the Eucharist, has been restored, sometimes even led by lay people.

6) Without the Council, the *Church* would still be understood as a supernatural 'lmperium Romanum': at the top the Pope as an absolute monarch, below the 'aristocracy' of the bishops and priests, finally in a passive function the faithful people as 'subjects'. Altogether a clericalist, legalistic and triumphalist model of the Church.

Vatican II criticizes such a model of the Church and sees the Church - although with fatal compromises between medieval and biblical models of the Church - once again fundamentally not as a hierarchical pyramid but as a community of faith, as *communio*, as the pilgrim people of God, always on its way in the world. The Church is a pilgrim people which, in its sinfulness and contingency, has to be open to ongoing reform. Those who hold office within it are not above but part of the people of God, they are not its rulers but its servants. The common priesthood of all believers is to be held in high regard.

It is indeed true that since Vatican II the local churches are once again taken seriously in the context of the Church as a whole. As worshipping communities they are Church in the genuine sense of the word. The bishops shall, irrespective of the primacy of the Pope, be collectively and collegially responsible for the leadership of the universal Church - for that the Synod of Bishops was installed. Everywhere there are now diocesan and parish councils consisting of both clergy and members of the laity. Moreover even outside the Catholic Church churches and ecclesial communities are now recognized: the Council rejected the idea of the Church of Christ being the visible Catholic Church.

7) Without the Council, *the secular world* would still be viewed in largely negative terms: even in the twentieth century the Catholic Church, having lost its medieval claim to govern the world as a whole since the Reformation and the Enlightenment, liked to regard itself as a bulwark under siege. Defensively and offensively it sought to secure its traditional rights, in a rather unpleasant manner, even frequently rejecting the scientific, cultural, economic and political progress of humanity in the

modern world.

Also with regard to the secular world Vatican II took a turn to the positive. The Church now seeks to be in solidarity with humanity as a whole, it will no longer reject its questions but seek to answer them. Instead of polemic there is now dialogue, instead of conquest witness.

No doubt: since Vatican II the Catholic Church has taken up many of the concerns of the Enlightenment. Today it clearly advocates the dignity, liberty and rights of humanity, for the development and improvement of human society and its institutions, for a healthy dynamic of all human creativity. Proofs for this are: an unrestricted rejection of war, advocacy of democracy and the benign separation of Church and State, cooperation in the international commonwealth of nations, emphasis on love and partnership, on personal responsibility in marriage, contemporary sexual morality...

A contemporary sexual morality - in Rome? Here at the latest readers will want to interject: contemporary sexual morality - and what about the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* against birth control? Is that also part of the legacy of Vatican II? Unfortunately I have to tell you: yes and no. While it is not one of the Council's documents as such, it is however one of its burdens of guilt! It is founded on one of its countless fatal compromises between the overwhelming reform-minded majority and a tiny curial party in charge of the apparatus of commissions and the general secretariat of the Council. Thus I can no longer conceal that along with its many benefits the legacy of the Council also includes burdens of guilt: compromises, dark corners, omissions, partialities, errors - a legacy that has been a tremendous burden for us all during the past four decades.

II. Agenda

Of course, we the overwhelming majority of bishops and theologians minded towards reform hoped in 1965 that to those questions which the Council had put to one side, postponed, concealed or prohibited there could be a positive response after the Council from the Pope, the Synod of Bishops or Conferences of Bishops. However, it is well known: the reform-minded majority along with the Synod of Bishops, after the Council demoted to an ineffective consultant agency, was counteracted by a curial apparatus, not in favour of reform and not in favour of the Council all along. The latter

constantly attempted to impede the work of the Council and afterwards refused to take up its commission. With increasing insolence it blocked its reforms with reactionary encyclicals and declarations and mainly through strategic appointments to senior posts; only those who had passed Rome's security test could become bishops and cardinals. The longer we look at it the clearer it becomes: the Council had managed to shake up the eleventh century Roman system of absolute power, clericalism and celibatism, but had not been able to abolish it. Rather the curial bureaucracy made every effort to restore this system *urbi et orbi*, although it was the central impediment to reconciliation with the Orthodox Churches of the East and the Reformed Churches of the West.

Although the curia had not formally rejected the legacy of the Council in the manner of the Catholic traditionalists under Archbishop Lefebvre, it had left its legacy largely lying fallow and also partly let it slip. Those conservative passages in the documents of the Council which the Curia had wrung out of it became its basic principles. Everything was interpreted staunchly backwards and the decisive aspects of progressive epochal new approaches were passed over. In spite of the demands of the Council the findings of exegesis (and the history of dogma) were not taken up, rather the tedious neo-scholastic theology was reproduced over and over again and the *Codex Juris Canonici* was rehashed in an authoritarian fashion.

And yet with good will and a bit more theological expertise it would have been easy to achieve a solution to the outstanding problems. In my own resume of the Council, already published in 1965 and sent to Pope Paul VI, I did, alongside pointing out the positive results of the Council, draw attention to the impending *dangers* of the post-conciliar era: a crisis of a merely external authority, tensions between the Church and the Curia, the endangering of the liberty of theology, the difficulties with regard to the interpretation of the ambiguous formulations of the Council, the stagnation of post-Vatican II Catholicism, especially with regard to Canon Law. At the same time I listed eight questions which the Council had left unresolved. I will return to these below. However, in a friendly confidential letter the Pope responded as follows: 'Is it not justified to ask if the Church is served by unreserved questions which touch on the external and internal existence of the Church and its future, and this in a manner which here and there leaves necessary responsible consideration

to be desired?' Thus Papa Montini.

But did not the Council commission the Church - and this is my second point - courageously to implement the resolutions of reform? Not to stop its renewal, but to act on it, in the sense of the *ecclesia semper reformanda*? Under Paul VI this did, at least to a limited extent, happen, mainly in the area of liturgical reform and with regard to ecumenical dialogue. With regard to three of the eight matters of reform raised with the Pope there was during his Pontificate significant progress: with regard to the question of mixed marriages concerning the validity of marriage and the raising of children, with regard to the praxis of penance, auricular confession and fasting, even with regard to the however tentative reform of clerical dress and titles...

And the other five matters of reform? Frequently I find myself thinking: how different would the Catholic Church be placed forty years after the Council if these other five concerns, shared by many at the Council and in the Church, had been taken up positively instead of ignoring them.

How easy would it have been for Montini, Pope Paul VI, an experienced man of the Curia, with the Ecumenical Council behind him, to implement a profound *reform of the Curia*: decentralization and internationalization, not merely of different nationalities, but also of different mentalities, a 'cabinet' of reformers? Instead Papa Montini decided to modernize the Curia - in the Spirit of old-style absolutism. Not to grind the bastions of Rome, but to consolidate them: and in parts even an increase of centralization, with the result that soon the Curia would once again be as strong and high-handed as it had been before the Council.

Secondly, how easy would it have been after the Council to publish a convincing encyclical about *sexuality*, a sensible *via media* between permissive libertinism and escapist rigor. It could have corrected the fatal condemnation of any kind of birth control and at the same time called for responsibility?

What came instead, was *Humanae vitae,* the said encyclical against artificial contraception: the first case in the history of the Church where the overwhelming majority of the people and the clergy refused to obey the Pope concerning an important matter (today approximately 97°/o of all US Catholics between 20 and 40 years of age). And that, although in the Pope's opinion this is effectively 'infallible' teaching of the 'ordinary'

magisterium of the Pope and the Bishops (Art. 25 of the Constitution of the Church), in the same way as Pope John Paul II explicitly declared his condemnation of the ordination of women to be 'infallible' teaching for time and eternity. The almost complete absence of historical-critical exegesis at the Council is visible everywhere one goes.

Thirdly, how easy would it have been to resolve the question of the *law of celibacy* which it was forbidden to discuss at the Council: as before the affirmation of the scriptural free call to remain unmarried (temporarily or permanently), still the abolition of the medieval concept of lifelong compulsory celibacy for priests which is neither scriptural nor appropriate for our time? Instead there was once again the single-handed decision of the Pope: an encyclical which affirmed the law of celibacy - against the wishes of many bishops concerning this question so pertinent for the lack of priests on the continents of Latin America and Africa. This is one of the main reasons why the numbers of candidates for the priesthood and new priests in traditionally Catholic countries like Ireland or Spain has dwindled to an all-time low and in some places almost half the parishes are vacant. In Germany, there were 360 ordinations to the priesthood in 1969, still 297 in 1989 and in 2002 only 131, with a corresponding decline in the number of theology students, even Bavaria since 1986 by about 60%. Married deacons or lay theologians with limited powers, now permitted, are not a substitute for priests.

Fourthly, how easy would it have been, to include in the *election of bishops* following ancient Catholic tradition the regional churches concerned represented by the now created Councils of Priests and Pastors, and thus to involve clergy and laity, in order to achieve the necessary acceptance for bishops in this age of democracy? Instead one stuck to the secretive curial process in which candidates were mainly selected for their conformity to Rome. The biggest scandal in the history of the modern Church, mainly though not exclusively that of the USA, the sexual abuse of children and young people by priests, was systematically covered up by bishops, 90% of whom had been appointed by Pope John Paul II, less obliged to be truthful than to be obedient to the Pope.

Fifthly and finally, how easy would it have been to transfer the *election of the Pope* from the Roman College of Cardinals to the universally representative Synod of Bishops? Instead the election of the Pope is left to

the body of cardinals (which had only been responsible for this since the Middle Ages), selected for this purpose on the basis of Rome's criteria by the Pope and the Curia. It is well known that in controversial questions - such as more recently with regard to counseling on pregnancy options and intercommunion - they are more concerned with the interests of Rome's position of power than with the views of the people of the Church, 80 to 90% of which disagree with in with regard to both these questions.

Thus instead of resolving these problems they were denied or sat out with backward-looking solutions. As a consequence: forty years after Vatican II the Catholic Church finds itself in an impasse, an enormous stagnation of problems and ecclesial frustration.

As far as the future is concerned: I cannot and will not rule out Rome under a new Pontificate will not in the light of the increasing pressure of problems (such as the decline of clergy numbers, the exodus of women, lack of integration of young people, the collapse of pastoral care, sexual scandals, financial problems ...) eventually inspired by the gospel come to a new recognition of the legacy of the Council, its great spiritual legacy, so that instead of the slogans of a new conservative-authoritarian magisterium the programmatic words of John XXIII and of the Council may once again apply, i.e.:

- once again *aggiornamento* in the spirit of the gospel instead of traditional integral 'Catholic teaching' of rigorous moral encyclicals and traditionalist catechisms;
- once again colleagiality of the Pope with the bishops instead of a tight Roman centralism which in appointments to episcopal sees and academic chairs of Catholic theology ignores the interests of the local church in favour of the obedient;
- once again *appertura* to the modern world instead of accusing of, complaining about and lamenting the supposed 'complicity' with the Zeitgeist;
- once again dialogue instead of magisterial monologues, inquisition and practical refusal of the freedom of conscience and teaching within the Church;
- once again ecumenism instead of emphasizing all things narrowly Roman Catholic: even with regard to the question of the Eucharist application of John XXIII's famous distinction between the substance

of the dogma of faith and its linguistic-historical presentation, a 'hierarchy of truths', not all of which are equally important.

In any case, one thing is certain in spite of all resistance and regression: the Second Vatican Council marked even for the Roman Catholic Church the end of the Middle Ages including the Counterreformation! To be more precise: the Roman-medieval, anti-modern paradigm of the Counterreformation has had its day! Many of the concerns of the Reformation and the Enlightenment have been taken up by the Catholic Church, and the paradigm shift towards a modern-post-modern constellation, whilst being slowed down from above, is far advanced from below.

Despite all disappointments: the Council was worthwhile, its resume on the whole positive! The Church after the Council is a different one from the pre-conciliar one, no doubt about it. The big debate about the future shape of the Catholic Church and Christianity as a whole however continues.

What does the future hold? No-one knows, not even John Paul II who of course wants a John Paul III. Not even he knows if there is not perhaps a Catholic Gorbachew hiding among the cardinals. Even up to the College of Cardinals there are not a small number of those who are convinced that it is impossible to go as we have done in the last 25 years. If the Catholic Church wants to have a future in the twenty-first century as a Church and note merely as a large sect, then what we need is a John XXIV. Like John XXIII, his predecessor, he should call a truly ecumenical council, a Vatican III, which sets out to find constructive answers to those questions which Vatican II left unresolved and which leads this Church from a narrow Roman Catholicism to a genuine open catholicity.

Translated by Natalie K. Watson

Commentary

WERNER JEANROND

The death of Hans Küng on 6 April 2021 marked the end of an era for *Concilium*. Now the last of the five founders of this international journal had passed away. Even more than his founder colleagues, Küng had developed a genuinely global theological agenda – not only for the church, but also for the world. The 24 volumes of his collected works contain not only major treatises on all central theological themes, but also important discussions of new methodological approaches to religious and cultural diversity and to the contemporary correlation between global religion and global society.[1]

All five co-founders of *Concilium* suffered in one way or another under Vatican censorship and persecution. However, no case attracted such a level of global attention than the famous "Küng case" which climaxed in 1979 when the Vatican revoked his teaching license because of Küng's critique of both papal infallibility and a host of what he considered untenable doctrinal positions.[2] Unfortunately, at times, his case has overshadowed the reception of his impressive theological achievement and reduced Küng merely to the status of a famous (or infamous) rebel within the Roman Catholic Church.

A more attentive and responsible consideration of his work will be able to identify four major themes in Küng's theological opus: (1) his concentration on ecclesiological issues and on the reform of the Roman Catholic Church; (2) his treatment of major articles of the Christian faith; (3) his reflections on theological method and on the dialogue between Christianity and other religions as well as the dialogue between religion and culture; and (4) the development of his Project of Global Responsibility (*Weltethos*).[3]

While the first two themes might have been expected of any decent academic theologian, notably one who also had functioned as *peritus* at the Second Vatican Council, the last two themes were more unusual among university theologians in the twentieth century. Moreover, Küng approached all his theological projects with a rarely seen frankness, conceptual clarity and fearless curiosity. For him theology was first and foremost a critical-constructive and not an apologetic enterprise. All of this brought him into conflict with a Magisterium still keen to defend dogmatic integrity and hierarchical power in the Roman Catholic Church.

Küng was not only a highly prolific writer and lecturer on a global scale, but also very successful not least in terms of book sales. Through his publications in a plethora of languages he reached an enormous audience across the globe. His skillful use of the emerging mass media and his frequent lecture tours throughout all continents further increased his global outreach. He not only called for a theology in critical conversation with the world, but he incorporated such a conversation in his personality and multilingual performance. At the same time, he always remained approachable and pastoral in his meetings with people.

His ambition for a better church and for a more critical theology combined with his firm insistence on the freedom of Christians to speak the truth can still be felt when re-reading the two articles reprinted in this issue of *Concilium*. Church reform and the contribution of religions to an emerging global ethics remained central to him throughout his life.

Like for all founders of *Concilium*, the legacy of the Second Vatican Council was of life-long concern also for Hans Küng. In the article 'Is the Second Vatican Council Forgotten?' of 2005, Küng attends both to this legacy and to the outstanding reform agenda.[4]

Among the great achievements of the Council he lists the right to religious liberty; the development of an ecumenical spirit among Christians beyond older schisms and exclusions; a new and constructive approach to other religions, notably to Judaism; the ongoing liturgical renewal which reflects the transition from a patriarchal and hierarchical two-class church structure to a new understanding of the pilgrim church in terms of the one people of God; a new appreciation of the theology and hermeneutics of the Bible; and a new discovery of the world and of the universe as created and affirmed by God combined with a new interest in humanity as a whole.

Küng knew very well that the agenda set by the Council was not received as good news by those Catholics who wished to defend the Church's patriarchal and hierarchical two-class system and clericalist governance structure. In the struggle between those for whom the Roman Church represented the perfect society as willed and revealed by God, on the one hand, and those for whom the Christian church, including the Roman Church, had to be measured according to insights into the biblical and theological demands of discipleship and ministry, on the other hand, Küng sided firmly with the second group and their ongoing call for church reform - forcefully expressed in the pages of *Concilium*. The mandatory celibacy of priests, the election of bishops, the need for a mutually critical dialogue between church and world and between religion and politics as well as the necessity of a respective paradigm shift in theology figure among the topics which Küng discussed in his plea for ongoing reform of church and theology. Thus, according to Küng, without the Second Vatican Council the Roman Catholic Church would have been long forgotten in the modern and postmodern world. However, in the absence of a fuller implementation of the reformist spirit and world-open agenda of the Council, the Church continues to be threatened in its very existence. Hence, the Second Vatican Council continues to deserve the full attention of critical and self-critical Christian theologians even beyond the era of the founders of *Concilium*.

The other article reprinted here, 'Towards a World Ethic of World Religion: Fundamental questions of present-day ethics in a global context' of 1990, offers important insights into Küng's project of Global Responsibility (*Weltethos*).[5] Reviewing the potential of religious traditions and experiences to mediate a sense of orientation for all peoples on earth, Küng was convinced that a new form of mutually critical conversation between the religions and global humanity might promise a more peaceful development of all. However, since it was unrealistic to expect world peace without religious peace, he set out to consider the potential of religions to contribute to such a world peace.

His project thus promotes and further develops three insights: (1) humanity will not be able to survive without some form of, however minimalist, global ethos; (2) there will be no peace in the world without peace between the religions; and (3) peace between religions requires an

active and mutually critical dialogue between the religions.

In a number of contexts, Küng explained and defended the thesis that:

> only a religion that promoted true humanity, *humanitas*, could be a true and good religion. (…) For in all the convergences I have indicated, what matters in the end is that a human being should behave in a truly humane way towards fellow humans. In this sense, true humanity is indeed the prerequisite of true religion, and *humanitas* is the minimum demand made of all religions. Religions which in themselves do not make human rights a reality are no longer credible today.[6]

Thus, the criterion for assessing religious traditions and doctrines was their respective support for genuine humanity. However, this very criterion demanded a continuous conversation between religious and non-religious worldviews on what may constitute a good human life. Küng was not naïve to expect that some superstructure could be established above all religions, nor did he believe in an easy consensus among religions. However, he remained convinced that both religious and non-religious traditions have something significant to contribute to such a mutually constructive-critical conversation on an understanding of true and good *humanitas.*

Hence, for Küng, the goal and criterion of a new global ethics is the *humanum*: "human beings must become more than they are: They must become more human!"[7] This imperative demands the consideration of all dimensions of existence, including the most humane society possible as well as an intact environment. Moreover, any analysis and assessment of the time which brackets out the religious dimension remains deficient. And the categorical nature of the ethical claim, the unconditional nature of the "ought", cannot be grounded in human beings, who are conditioned in many ways, but only in an unconditional: "an Absolute which can provide an over-arching meaning and which embraces and permeates individual, human nature and indeed the whole of human society. That can only be the ultimate, supreme reality, which while it cannot be proved rationally, can be accepted in a rational trust – regardless of how it is named, understood and interpreted in the different religions."[8]

Referring to the declaration of the 1970 declaration of the World

Conference of Religions for Peace, Küng both affirms the institutional necessity for religious co-operation on peace and the minimal content of such a vital co-operation: a conviction of the fundamental unity of the human family; the dignity of all women and men; the integrity of the human person and the value of human community; the significance of human rights; the belief in the power of love, truth and justice; and the urgency of human liberation from all forms of oppression and exclusion.[9]

Küng devoted the last thirty years of his life to the development of his project *Weltethos* and he skilfully set up its lasting institutional presence in the University of Tübingen.[10] He organised symposia and workshops with representatives from many academic and cultural disciplines and fields in order to explore global possibilities for co-operation between religious and other human agencies. Once again, Küng showed great sensibility to the demands of an ever more global understanding of religion and world. His call for a critical theology, for church reform and for an honest and mutually critical conversation between religious movements and traditions flows into a global call for exploring and implementing strategies for a better life in a better world.

In order to advance such a critical review of religious life and tradition in our world, Küng embarked on a very ambitious work of studying the religious situation of our time in order to identify possibilities for inter-religious dialogue. He assessed specific religious traditions with the aim of obtaining, as far as possible, the view of "the whole of a religion". Küng published major volumes on *Judaism* (1991), *Christianity* (1994), and *Islam* (2004).

This short survey shows that Küng never wished to ignore the specificities of each religion when he called for a stronger focus on the *humanum*. Rather, he fully appreciated that the *humanum* could only be approached through, among other ways, a critical and self-critical assessment of concrete religious movements and traditions. In turn, no claim to approach the *humanum* while ignoring the reality of religion would ever be acceptable, for "one thing those without religion cannot do, even if they were to accept unconditional moral norms for themselves, is to justify the unconditionality and universality of ethical obligation."[11] It is true that this unconditional nature of ethical demands is grounded differently in the respective religions. However, "religions can express

their ethical demands with a completely different authority from a merely human one."[12]

Küng's achievement transcends his many publications. His untiring engagement for church reform through books, lectures, conferences, meditations, prayers and liturgies has already born fruit in and beyond his Roman Catholic Church and will undoubtedly inspire even coming generations of Christians and theologians. Küng always knew that the catholic imagination requires the protestant principle as its complement in order to protect the human freedom to relate to God, to other human beings, to the universe, and to one's own emerging self. The task of theology remains to offer critical and self-critical analysis of the Christian religion's and other religions' call and praxis in this world, and to remind all academic disciplines of their obligation to serve the *humanum* – within the horizon of eternity.

Werner Jeanrond is Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Oslo.

Notes

1. Hans Küng, *Sämtliche Werke,* 24 vols., ed. Stephan Schlensog (Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 2015-20).
2. See Norbert Greinacher and Herbert Haag, eds., *Der Fall Küng: Eine Dokumentation* (Munich/Zurich: Piper, 1980).
3. For a more extensive survey of Küng's work and theology, see Werner G. Jeanrond, "Hans Küng", in David F. Ford, ed., *The Modern Theologians: An introduction to Christian theology in the twentieth century*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 162-78.
4. Hans Küng, 'Is the Second Vatican Council Forgotten?', in Alberto Melloni and Christoph Theobald, eds., *Vatican II: A Forgotten Future, Concilium* 2005/4 (London: SCM Press, 2005), 108-117.
5. Hans Küng, 'Towards a World Ethic of World Religion: Fundamental questions of present-day ethics in a global context', in Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann, eds., *The Ethics of the World Religions and Human Rights*, *Concilium* 1990/2 (London: SCM Press, 1990), 102-119.
6. Ibid., 118.
7. Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic*, trans. John Bowden (London/New York: Crossroad, 1991), 31.
8. Ibid., 53.
9. Küng, 'Towards a World Ethic of World Religion: Fundamental questions of present-day ethics in a global context', 118-119.
10. See: https://weltethos-institut.org/en/
11. 'Towards a World Ethic of World Religion: Fundamental questions of present-day ethics in a global context', 113.
12. Ibid., 114.

Additional *Concilium* Articles by Founders

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Toward a Catholic Synthesis (vol. 148, 1981)
The Conciliar Structure or Regime of the Church (vol. 167, 1983)

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