

## **Theological Themes**

*from editorial articles in Faith Magazine by Edward Holloway*

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## **THE THEOLOGIAN: MUST HE BE A SAINT?**

At a clergy fraternal recently I was reproached, a little crossly, by one of the Anglicans present. He was angered by the more than cool reception afforded the first ARCIC reports by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. These (ARCIC) men he said must be among the best you can muster, people of status and competence. They must have intrinsic authority within your Communion. Yet, here is the principal doctrinal tribunal of your Church virtually disowning five years of laborious work and conclusions. It means we cannot trust you.

He was shocked at my willingness to agree that theologians, as such, had no intrinsic authority in the Church whatever. Degrees gained, books and studies written, recognition among one's peers proved nothing. The touchstone of authority, that is to say of any intrinsic power over the minds and the consciences of the People of God, was this weird and aggravating thing called the solemn 'magisterium' of the Church.

Wisdom is often to be found in the youngster who is just old enough not to be very young, but not yet old enough to be withdrawn from deep communion with God by the fascinations and passions of the later teens. I put this paradox, this contradiction to such a youth once. He answered "I suppose it is because the 'theologian' as you call him although he is a very clever man, might be a worldly man. He might not love God enough to get it right". Precisely; that is the heart of the matter. In this respect, an honest simple-minded boy, furnished with a major, solemn doctrinal document of the Church, can confidently judge and set aside as spurious the contrary persuasions of the most prestigious doctors' of the day, which may possibly include his teacher.

### **Theology Is Not A 'Science'**

If such an honest, simple-minded boy is a church student, it would be most unwise to do this in 'the external forum' so to speak. There are some who have done so and have not survived it. There are limits to simple-mindedness. Guerillas do not wear uniforms. We have also the authority of the good Lord that the naive simplicity of the dove in judging must be balanced by the shrewd pragmatism of the serpent in speaking. Yet the point is validly made. Against this

touchstone of the solemn and magisterial teaching of the hierarchy and Peter through the ages, the honest but unskilled mind can make an unerring judgment against the wise and learned of the world in all basic, important matters.

At the beginning of Christianity, Jesus the Christ, in crisis with the competent and recognised theologians of his day, rejoiced before his Father that this was so (M. 11:25). My Anglican colleague, membered into a Church which does not admit this principle of an objective magisterium, was presuming that theology is a *science*, something in which by dint of study and gifts of intellect, men and women achieve first competence and then pre-eminence. From competence and pre-eminence there should follow intrinsic authority—the right to command assent, because the ‘scientist’ *knows*, and his ‘truth’, when fully assessed and sifted to become the majority view of his peers, should become the foundation of magisterium, of doctrinal acceptability itself.

This mentality is very common, and is found widely among Roman Catholics too. I remember some time ago, when a certain distinguished Catholic priest announced his marriage and his resignation from the priesthood, his friends, quoted in leading newspapers, remarked that he had always said that he felt his vocation was to be a *theologian* rather than a priest. At once one knew that the said distinguished person was not a theologian and he never would be. The theologian may also be a scientist in one or several meanings and disciplines of that word, but it is not as a scientist that he is a theologian. Alas for the theologian—alas for us all who teach and preach the Gospel of Christ—*theology* is not a speculative and ‘objective’ science. It is not the analysis and evaluation of Jesus as a guru, and of institutional Christianity through the ages. Theology is first a discipleship. Theology is a communing and a communion. Theology is a living love and a personal friendship with God Incarnate. The theologian is first a disciple, a friend of Jesus.

As it is written: *“You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you. I do not now call you servants, because the servant does not know his Master’s business. But I have called you ‘friends’ because all things, whatever I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you”* (John 15:14-15). To learn from Jesus the things of the Father, the *revealing* of the Father, to accept a commissioning which is Christ’s choice and not one’s own, to go out to the nations

and bear fruit, *fruit that will last* (cf. Jn 15: 16), this is to be conformed in mind and heart, in intellect and in will to the Divine personality of Jesus Christ. It is He who reveals the truth and the good of the Father, in the inflowing of the Holy Spirit.

So, must the theologian be a saint? Alas and alack, the answer one suggests must be affirmative. The real, the useful, the formative theologian must be a saint, and that narrows the field at once. Does he need to be a 'saint' in the canonizable sense? One can only say that to be preeminent through the ages, to be formative through the ages, to have a theological authority which becomes part of, or associated with the official magisterium of the Church—well, then yes! Is that not in fact the lesson of history, is that not the very meaning of the title given to some, of *Doctor* of the Church? The *Doctors of the Church* are canonized for heroic holiness of life and witness; the holiness reinforces the authority of their theology, and the title of Doctor, with its official approval of the content of their theology, is not given except in conjunction with their declared sanctity. Some saints, like St. John of the Cross, have been canonized really because of the truth and accuracy of their teaching on matters of great importance and great subtlety. They are not saints because 'they got it right' in fields where even great souls and mystics had got it wrong. They got it right because they were saints; because their minds and wills were so perfectly one, in humble love and faithfulness to the revealing of God, that "what I have heard of the Father" could stream into them from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

### **Theology: The "Craft" Of Jesus**

Those of us who are very conscious of not being saints may hope to teach basic truth in communion with Christ in his continuing magisterium. We may hope to communicate something of his love to God's children, and especially to *the* children. The measure of our success can only be our conformity in mind and heart with Jesus. Our personal holiness, worse luck, is going also to be the measure of our wisdom and usefulness in counselling, and in directing souls. There is a narrow track to be trodden here toiling to the summit of the ascent of Mount Carmel. To one side falls away the precipitous slippage into the lax, the confused, and finally the permissive; on the other stretches the impassable tumble of the narrow, the rigid, the tunnel-visioned through which there is no path.

People differ so much in temperament: according to the worthy gentleman in the in Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, “every boy, and every gal, that’s born into this world alive, is either a little Liberal or else a little Conservative”, and he considered this recognition to be one of the deeper discoveries of his philosophy. What we do find in ordinary life, as well as among the great saints, is that the fruit of full communion with Christ, the savoured peace of the Spirit, enables men and women, despite great differences of temperament, to give answers and counsel that concur in all essentials, even if, because of temperament, there are incidental differences of emphasis.

It is the reading of Duns Scotus and a consideration of the Franciscan school of theology which prompts this line of thought. In the fourth question to the Prologue of the *Opus Oxoniense*, Scotus asks himself whether theology is “speculative knowledge” or “practical knowledge”. He means is theology a science learnt from principles and discerned through erudition, or is it a knowledge accurate only through the impulse of the will? Is it, we could almost say a savoured knowledge, a *crafted* knowledge of God? You can get something right because your intellect has calculated rightly, because, as in mathematics, you are objectively right about an equation. But what if you are portraying and producing again a great personality, as does the artist, or the actor? For such, a man must become a channel of conformity to that which he portrays.

The highest gifts of intellect will be necessary, but also the perfect cooperation of the will. The great actor must become that which he portrays, and the theologian must become, *with love* Him whom he portrays, and this is a wisdom crafted upon love, a perception built upon the knowing by which a friend knows and loves another friend. It is here that the basic distinction lies between the theologian who is orthodox and develops doctrine, and the theologian who, maybe unconsciously, loves God to the image of his own self, and shows his theology to be not authentic, even as his personal knowledge of God and love of God is not authentic.

St. Bonaventure, quoted by Gilson in his *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, commenting on the difficulty of interpreting St. Paul, remarks that “you will never understand the meaning of St. Paul, unless you can enter upon the mind and heart of St. Paul”. Yes: theology must be a

crafted knowledge rather than an objective science. However, we speak only in metaphors, because theology is the personal relationship of knowing God, especially God Incarnate in Jesus Christ. in His words, and in His works, and in the whole sweep and economy of His Self-Revealing through the ages. Surely it is obvious that 'theology' requires holiness, actual living communion of the will with God, even as, let us say Mountaineering may be a science of accurate knowledge and of great specialisation, but also of sheer crafted experience, and feel for the terrain.

### **A Disagreement With Cardinal Danièlou**

It was at a conference some time in the early or middle seventies, a conference organised by the French group "*Fidélité et Ouverture*" (Faith and Growth) that I listened to Cardinal Danièlou extolling the nature and the rights of the theologian as a *scientist*, and completely disagreed with his emphasis. Of course, the Cardinal, feeling it his duty to reprove and warn the new heterodox tendencies now apparent in the post-conciliar movement, was at pains to make it clear how much he supported the theologian's right of enquiry, study, and new initiative. The theologian may well be—and to be a great theologian perhaps will need to be—learned also in many sciences and aspects of human culture and anthropology, both ancient and modern. Yet the many background sciences to the knowledge of God through history, are simply that: *background* wisdoms, the setting in which the beauty of the jewel—its 'truth' to its being—is more perfectly manifest. These background disciplines neither contain nor explain the essentials of human Religion itself.

The fundamental mistake of the school which sees theology as 'science' is failing to recognize that *The Transcendent*, the *I AM*, has from the beginning entered into human history as the Envioner, i.e. as the Way, the Truth, and the Life of men. The Humanist theologian—and all the theologians of the Dissent are Humanists—draws the reality of God, the nature of Religion, and the validity of Religion, out of the psyche of man alone. Naturally then, he feels at liberty to re-define Religion within the cultural ethos of his own era. All Religion is, for him, defined within culture and limited by historico-relative values. There are no absolutes, and the only 'magisterium' is the social acceptance at any given historical time, of certain postulates

arising within developed communities of mankind.

God emerges within mankind and through mankind, and the 'commandments' are 'divine values' acceptable to the majority human consciousness of an age. In such a perception of Religion there is every reason why he, the gifted and modern theologian should 'reinterpret' and revalue the individual and social spiritual values of the past. For 'magisterium' surges from within one's own self. It is not a communion with the Transcendent who is above and before one.

We see then why such men and women do intend a 'magisterium' of the theologians parallel to that of the official Church. They are often reproached by the orthodox as if they did not know they were doing it. They are reproached so that they can, as it were, wake up to their presumption, and say whether they accept the doctrines of the official Church or not; oh sorry, no of course I did not mean to imply that! But they did mean it, and they do mean it. It is all quite logical. Religion is for them a Pantheistic manifestation of that which fulfills human beings. For them it emerges within Man and within society, and is defined by the processes of society.

They do believe in themselves—the gifted, the concerned, the sensitive, as channels of the consciousness of the Divine in this age. They *are* the Magisterium. They do, on their own principles, flower for today. Tomorrow they are cast under the pot, i.e. 'reappraised' and passed over. In conversation, some of them admit this, others seem to have a strange hunger for theological immortality.

### **Briefing for the young Theologian**

The text is often quoted with a twinkle in the eye, "*If a man desires to be a bishop, he aspires to a noble task*" (1 Tim. 3:1) likewise, if anyone desires to be a theologian, he or she aspires to a noble vocation. St. Paul to Timothy next outlines the qualities of a good bishop (actually presbyter); and if anyone desires to be a theologian, there are certain requirements that should similarly be borne in mind, and they rarely are. The first requirement in the formation of a theologian is to be sure, truly and utterly sure of the existence of God, and that God is transcendent.

The next commandment for the novice theologian is 'like unto this': to be sure, totally and truly sure, of the real distinction of matter and of spirit, that is of soul and body. If you do not truly and coherently distinguish between spirit and matter, you cannot, simply cannot get *man* right. Moreover, there will be no objective values, no values of consciousness which do not evolve. Worse still: if you do not consciously and coherently believe in the real distinction of matter and spirit, you will not for long be able to believe in a transcendent and personal God. Just as you place matter in spirit and define spirit within matter so also you will merge God within the creation.

It is not an accident that the theologians of dissent, the men who formulated the appalling catechesis of the last twenty years, failed ever to prove the existence of God, but merely *presumed* the existence of God. They had no time for demonstration of the existence of God. They did not believe one could do it, and in any case they did not inwardly believe in a transcendent God. A further reason why the aspirant to theology—to wisdom concerning God—must be quite sure of the real distinction of soul and body, is that you can make no sense at all of original sin, as a doctrine, without it.

You may say: well, why bother about it? It can be accepted as an historical fact, and then put back on the shelf. That is how it is treated today anyway. Without a real, intelligent theology of original sin, there is no way in which you can sort out the problems of conscience and temptation, and especially of sex, love, and friendship. We are God's guitar if you like, but sabotaged and vandalised: the strings unwound and frayed, jangled, tangled and unhappily also bent. There is no way to unpick the threads of the love that is spiritual, the love that is sensitive and tender, and the pleasure of the genitals, unless first we know what these threads are, what is their original relationship, and re-read the notation of their first harmony so that we can restore them. There is no freedom and perfection in friendship and loving, unless we get right the consequences, the psychological consequences of original sin.

If there is a God who is personal and transcendent, then what follows on from it shows us at once why theology cannot be a science or a subject. A personal God will enter upon human history in a personal way. Yahweh—HE WHO IS—will enter upon the individual life, and upon

the social cultures of Man as determinant and determiner, as Way, Truth, and Life. He will raise up within the chaos of fallen man and the chaos of human society a line of life, of development, of growth in knowing and of growth in loving. God will be personally and physically the Lord of History.

As societies of men grow in tradition, in wisdoms and skills passed on, they will throw up the king and the warrior, the wise man and the doctor, the craftsman and the artist. God, working in and with His own will raise up the priest and the prophet. If God, in spite of sin, finds man redeemable and perseveres with him, one must expect a line to appear of God's consistent leading onwards, a developmental line, a line pregnant with climax.

God, real and personal will be entwined with the thoughts and desires of every human heart, whether that God is loved or rejected. God, real and personal will be entwined with the culture and values of every human society, whether that society be rebel to Him or loyal to Him. Far from evaluating God through the relative values of human history, it will be impossible to grasp those cultures rightly without the perception of his transcendence, at least in all the great historic faiths of mankind.

God will be the Envioner of mankind: in Him we will live, and move, and have our being, individual and social. Now this 'transcendence' of God as the individual and social determinant of men, is provable and demonstrable from the course of human history. There was such a straight and continuous line of God's leading on. It surfaces in Abraham, and develops through the Bible with amazing prophetic power. It shows the unique sign of Messianism, of a supreme 'word' to come: a unique prophet who is more than a prophet. It climaxes in not a prophet, but the Personal Word of God, the Divine Wisdom incarnate.

### **The 'Master' Teaching in History**

At once, in a Faith like this, (and the theologians whose inadequacies we criticise claim to belong to this 'line' of Religion) there is brought into the life of men and into the life of human society a new dimension: the dimension of literal Divinity. The Jew knew that his God was I AM WHO AM—the utterly transcendent One. Jesus Christ also claimed to be the I AM. This is where the Catholic concept of *magisterium* derives. God in his actual being and reality is now the

Teacher of mankind. *"You have only the One Teacher, and He the Christ"*.

If this Lordship of history, this continuing of the magisterial dimension down the ages since the resurrection, of a divine wisdom teaching, and a divine love forming, is part of Christianity, then again it is manifestly impossible for theology to be a human 'science'. The Incarnation is pointless unless its work and the values of a *redeemed* and *renewed* human nature are to continue. There must be infallibility in the basic gospel, and the *divine* perfection in the holiness of the loving to which this God—the Lord of History—calls us.

It would be tedious to outline further the line of proof that all this came to pass. The proof lives in the actual claims of the Catholic Christian Church (and to the essentials of this claim we admit the Orthodox Churches not in full communion with Rome) and in the sweep of her Councils through the ages, and their utter, inner self-consistency in doctrine defined and in doctrine developed. If we admit the transcendence of God, then the Incarnation of God in Christ will be, finally, an inevitable and consistent 'end of the road' in divine wisdom, and divine gift. If we admit the Incarnation of God in Christ, God truly so and God preexistent—the Eternal Word—then a Godly magisterium which is personal, living in the Church, but transcendent in being, is again inevitable.

Christ declared very fully and clearly that from his Incarnation there was and would be a continuing line of divine and infallible magisterium, until He come again. *"I have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now, but when He, the Spirit of Truth is come upon you, He will teach you all things, and the things that are to come, He will show to you. He will not speak as of Himself, He will receive of Mine, and manifest it to you"* (John 16: 12-16). This is the very vocation of the Holy Spirit as 'the Soul' of the Church. People speak glibly about it, but never stop to realise that it is the Personal vocation of the Living God: God the Holy Spirit. That Holy Spirit does not 'speak of Himself', but speaks of the Word, and speaks through the Word Incarnate.

It is here that we link the evidence of history, and the claims of the Catholic Christian Church, with the Petrine texts. The 'word' of the Spirit as *magisterium* is centred in the episcopate and in Peter. It is the word declared: "by the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and Our own, we declare, define, and promulgate ..." The

Magisterium is not an official 'line' from some out of date old fogeys in the Vatican's ivory towers. The *magisterium* is God the Teacher teaching always, and He cannot unsay in one age what He said in another. The *magisterium* is the One Voice that spoke to Abraham, was Incarnate in Jesus, and still speaks in Peter. If you get the existence of a personal God right, if you get the nature of the soul right, if you get the reality and consequences of original sin right: then everything else follows with an awesome coherence and consistency.

### **The Mouth speaks the fullness of the Heart**

So theology is not and never can be primarily a 'science'. You cannot walk out on your vocation, take a wife, and settle down to write 'theology'. The stuff simply will not be worth reading. Theology is first and primarily a communing with God. We may understand better if we cease to speak all the while of 'magisterium' and talk instead of 'The Master's Word'. What the Holy Spirit of Jesus the Master has said in one age, He cannot unsay for the convenience of human weakness in another.

The theologian is the gospel "*scribe, learned in the Kingdom of God, bringing out of his treasury new things and old*" (Mt 13:51). The scribe of Christ, the theologian of the Church Christian and Catholic, will trace the teaching and authority of the Master's voice down the ages of history. It is a transcendental voice, not man's wisdom or man's sense of the divine. The scribe of Christ will follow that voice as it lives personally in spoken word, living work and living enactment of liturgy and sacrament in the very Person of the Transcendent One made flesh. The scribe of Christ, as a disciple, will trace the history in Council and solemn teaching of that Word of the Master as, living in the Church, that voice rejects error, re-proclaims the truth, and *develops* that truth in solemn teaching and proclamation down the ages. One has already remarked on the awesome self-consistency of that 'Word' through the ages of Man.

The theologian, as scribe of Christ will and must live in holy and humble communion of life and meditation with Christ, as Lord of wisdom and Lord of love. Out of this personal communing will grow the theologian's own power to recognise the new truth that the Holy Spirit will prompt within the Church, the deeper insight into the majestic wisdom of God's economy of Salvation. In and through the theologian's personal holiness, and personal love of

God, will develop the deeper vision into what the times and the ages require of the Christian man or woman. What Jesus 'would have said' in our time, must be gauged from deep and humble contemplation of what Jesus has said and did say.

From that sure basis of the irrevocable word in faith, and especially in morals, there can be prompted in the prophetic soul, the newer and deeper and perhaps higher love, more fully in communion with the Father, and the Son, in the joy of the Holy Spirit, through which the man and the woman of 'this day' may live more perfectly the life, the insights, and the love of the Christian. It will not be any easier. It will not sell out the re-definition of human holiness, and the re-formation of fallen human nature once made in the Redemption of mankind in God transcendent: in Jesus Christ. We are not free to re-make an easier Jesus to our own image and likeness. Read the Bible, read the history of Israel. The great souls and priests and prophets who make up that 'book' and that tradition—that 'Living Voice'—were they ever the majority voice? Were not false prophets of dissent always the majority voice, and did not the people always seek a compromise with the Baals who were so much easier and cosier than the unrelenting Lord Yahweh?

We write this because the secret reason for the dissent of the leading theologians and their multitude of lesser followers is always: 'but they won't listen to you; you can't expect modern people to swallow that. It is too hard. It denies human fulfilment, by which they mean obvious comforts and pleasures'. Have they ever looked upon the crucifix, and realised that this is what humanity *like theirs* did to the perfect manhood of goodness, holiness, and joy, in God made Flesh. Could they possibly be still doing it?

### **Go to His Friends — follow the Saints**

Over the ages it has been the *minority* voice of the true prophet, the true saint, the true magisterium of the Holy Spirit which has prevailed; risen from the ashes and come back with a new power of Resurrection and Pentecostal confirmation. Without the hard truth that purges, and the pure love that sets fire and elevates, men fall miserably from decade to decade to an ever new low. There just is no final 'low', as we are finding today.

We must have the vision of the truth about human life, its meaning, its happiness, its holiness, and the moral law of perfect human living. It is no use asking with a contemporary British theologian, pleading for mitigation in the matter of divorce: “have we misinterpreted the spirit of Jesus and his mind, would He have wished to impose such pain?” The Pharisees made the same point, and Christ dismissed the appeal to Moses.

The disciples expostulated, but Jesus made no concessions. Read about it in Matthew 19:3-4. Eastern bishops exploded about it in the fourth century A.D., and many gave in. The Frankish counts protested about it to their local bishops, and to Rome, in the seventh and eighth centuries of the Christian era. It was even harder when there was no welfare state, no transport, and little in the way of ‘compensating interests’. Divorce at least is not a modern problem. Is life happier today, more secure, more faithful in love and beautiful living for all the concessions: the abortions, and the pills and condoms? Are children nobler and more beautiful of soul and ideal? Is anything equally better for the abandonment of Christ because of His ‘hard sayings’?

The mercy of God may have to cover many who fall under the weight of the Cross, but the true holiness, and the true beauty of man, and the true witness of the meaning of life and of love must be proclaimed. That is why Jesus carried a Cross so heavy. The proclamation cannot be a ‘recommended option’ for any to ignore with politeness. Follow the saints and the saintly souls like John Henry Newman—perhaps the only great theologian of our times. Follow those who identify with ‘their Master’s voice’. They got it right, and they get it right, because they loved Him. They knew his mind, and loved with his heart.

You can ignore the rest, because they lack holiness, they don’t get it right. They lack wisdom. Theology is not a science but a communion of truth and love. As a teacher, the theologian is a prophet in the Church. Prophecy is not ‘science’; prophecy is knowledge of the personal God, cradled in a personal love. You could call theology a ‘crafted’ wisdom, because Man was ‘crafted’ to the image of God, and repaired upon the likeness of that Eternal Beauty.

## GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE, PRAYER, AND FREE-WILL

The amount of complex and ingenious work written around this theme of predestination and freewill would sink a Titanic without any help from icebergs. Therefore one writes to proffer one or two naked and ill-thought out principles, which if they possess any validity at all, others with better minds and more time may be able to correct and develop.

### **Avoid The Time Series**

Perhaps we would do better in trying partially to understand the mystery of God's action upon His creatures, if we avoided putting God, all too unconsciously into the time series. Sometimes, it seems, we make God know, will and act like a Super-Man, and fall into error as a result. The School of Molina for instance, which makes predestination to grace and final glory depend upon God's knowledge of what man will freely do in response to God's grace, obviously does save the true nature of free-will as not preconditioned by God to consent to Him. However, the Thomist school of Banez makes the point that in this theory of grace and freewill, both the knowledge and the intention of God is determined by the creature, not by God's infinite wisdom and omnipotent will. Moreover, the position is unintelligible because, as the determining factor in the consent of the creature is not in the grace given but in the creature's use of that grace, not even God can know what will happen until it comes to pass! There is something in His creation—from the free-will of the creature—which even God is ignorant of.

The School of Banez overcomes such difficulties by putting all the certainty of predestination to final glory in the elective will of God. So, it quotes St. Paul, for instance, in his eighth chapter to the Romans: *"Whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the Image of His Son ... whom He predestined, He also called. Whom He called, He also justified, whom He justified He also glorified"* (Rom 8:29-30). This grace of salvation attained is not efficacious grace because the creature assents to it. The creature consents to it because the grace is efficacious. The root of efficacy is in the positive will of God, loving and drawing the creature, irresistibly in fact.

It is added that, of course, the consent of the creature is according to the spiritual nature and dignity of the creature; the man or woman *freely* consents. But, it is not a conception of freewill which easily makes intelligible sense. We are tempted to think, a little uncomfortably, that perhaps Calvin's grim doctrine of positive and antecedent reprobation is the logical development of the principle on which it is based. It also causes one to ask: if God can, by greater predilection of the creature, cause that even the most perverse and obstinate sinners will in fact finally consent to Him, why does He not do so always?

There lingers a suspicion that God could do a more merciful and loving work. Moreover, one begins to ask why God cannot use the 'efficacious grace'—since its efficacy depends entirely upon His decree—to avoid every single evil on earth that would follow from man's perverse free will? Why not a much, much happier order of life? Why indeed the Fall of Man at all? To this writer, it seems that the Banezian school has no answer whatever to such questions.

### **The Living God**

Could our first error be in putting God into that time and space series in which He does not exist, and within the created limitations of which God does not think, will, and act? It has been said that the school of Banez saves the omnipotence and knowledge of God, but makes a deep mystery of the reality of freewill. The School of Molina on the other hand, makes free will easily intelligible, but makes the omnipotence and divine foreknowledge equally hard to justify. Both have one thing in common, they do not put the mystery of God's call and God's economy in the basic mystery of Infinite Being in its relationship with finite, potential, contingent being.

Years ago, one read somewhere in the Stanbrook edition of the works of St. Teresa of Avila, that she, (who had Fr. Banez O.P. for her Father confessor for quite a time), being very troubled by the violent controversy in the Church between the two schools of theology, asked the Good Lord in prayer which of them was right? The divine response of the Lord was graciously given: 'neither of them are'. Nor, of course, will this writer be right. But, if St. Teresa heard rightly, we may all do a little looking elsewhere.

These 'divine decrees' which predestinate and unfold in time in every tiny detail, they put the being of God into the time series, as well as making it very hard to see how we do not live in a fatalistic order of being. The Molinist idea of God knowing within an order of conditionals, circumstances, 'futuribles', and so forth, is also making the Divine Being—which we know is *Pure Act*—work, plan and respond within a contingent order. There are no futuribles in God. There is no future in God. There is only a Present, which is His I AM. And that Presentality of God is *three dimensional in our regard*: all our past, present and future does act, react, and is contained within the Actuality of God's Being Present.

We tend to think of God's 'present' as two dimensional, like a vast thin disc, infinite in extent, on which all the future is inscribed. We even give examples of God's foreknowledge from the perspective of a man on a mountain top, who can see the travellers winding up from below. No: the Present of God bounds and *lives unto* all that was, all that is, and all that will be. Surely that is what Jesus meant when He said to the Sadducees, "*And that the dead do rise, Moses shows at the burning bush, when God said to him, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*". "*He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto Him*" (Mk 12:26, Lk20:38).

This must mean that if you save your soul, God knows you save your soul, because 'here and now', in the order of His presentality you have saved your soul. You live before Him as finished and complete. It is not a decree, it is a living communion of fact and being. We cannot imagine it, we find it hard to make it intelligible, but before God, your present state in which you say, 'I have not got there yet', is an actuality in which you live before Him in the term of both your potential and its consummation, in your present and in your final state.

There is no potential in God. He exists and lives and acts *only* in the order of Pure Act. There is no *scientia media*, no conditioned or conditional knowledge. There is the knowledge of Vision and nothing else besides. After all, we have to admit that in all our times, before birth, at birth, past, in the present moment, and in the future to come for us, whatever we have and are, will be because of that knowledge and will of God which gives actuality to all our being. Since God cannot be determined or moved by potentiality or contingency of any sort, surely it is more right to say that God predestines in a decree of living communion of action and interaction. He

knows what we will do, because before Him we are doing it, and that which in the future we will do, is in Him the presentality of His acting on us and our responding to Him. Within such a concept, in which we truly understand the Present of God as living, active and communicating from the beginning of creation to the final consummation of all things, with all His creatures all their time, we could probably work out a theory of grace and freewill which would overcome some of the contradictions of present approaches.

We will never solve the mystery of the Living Being of God; *how* in His one Present He contains actively and in a working manner, all the past, present and future of His creatures as one total unity of decree to create, and one fact of the Economy wholly held within and before Him. It will be equally true of course that all eternity is present to God in this way, because every measure of being is contained within the simple, dynamic, I AM of the Living God.

### **The Things God 'Could do'**

Again, perhaps it is a wrong approach to be always talking about what God *could do*. We don't know whether what we imagine and project in such hypotheses makes any sense of being at all. The first thing to do, when we think 'why does not God save all men', and for that matter, *all angels* (because we know He did not save all angels by His efficacious grace) is to ask oneself whether God can will the creature in an order of intrinsic necessity? The answer surely must be no. God can will only Himself with an intrinsic necessity.

If God could will us necessarily, and our blessedness in Him necessarily, then we would be divine persons in the Godhead. God can know and will only Himself with intrinsic necessity, and that unique Act of God is known to us as The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Our being is a bounty, a gift, also an act of love and of friendship, especially the vocation to be 'sharers of the Divine Nature' through the Divinisation of our being in Christ, Son of God and of Man. Therefore, the love of God must be an offer, a caring, an appeal. It must evoke from us a free love, a love which ought to be given, a love which beatifies, but not a love which is necessitated from within our being. There is no created person which God necessarily and intrinsically loves.

Christ remember, though true Man in the Incarnation, is not a creature nor a created person. He is God in person, the Second Person. But, if there is a creature whose being comes in

any way close to being ‘necessarily loved’, it must be that one on whose being and vocation the whole Economy or creative plan of God in Christ—as far as the material order is concerned—does hinge. That one person would be Our Blessed Lady. The love of God in her, the personal communion of the Holy Spirit in her, through which communion she conceived The Christ, is a love so *full of grace* that sin, even venial sin, in her becomes not a metaphysical but a moral impossibility.

There is a basic hierarchy in the loving and willing of God, a hierarchy in which we are membered and loved for service and care, not for self-glory and dominion. Who would we be to envy Mary, when for all of us the gift of being is an utterly gratuitous call out of the darkness of non-entity? We did not labour even one hour for it, let alone bear the burden of the day and the heat of it. Given that God cannot love or want any created being with a love of necessity, but only with the love of bounty, friendship and appeal, there must be this communion of offering and loving, seeking and acceptance between God and the angels and men unto God.

Sin was found even in the angels. God certainly did not will it, nor was He indifferent to it. For myself at least, I do not see that we are in a position to state that God could, if He willed, have created a world order in which no spiritual being refused His call. To say He could, would presume that the Banezian theory of efficacious grace—which makes so many difficulties for any common-sense view and experience of human freewill—was totally correct. I don’t think it is. It is more likely that there are precious elements of truth in the Thomist view, the Molinist view, and for this writer at least above all in the so called ‘Congruist’ view. We do not need to invoke predetermining decrees and the *premotio physica* (causative influence in the order of the real) on the freewill of man.

We do not need to make God see in some impossible and indeterminate order of *futuribles* (what *could* happen in the circumstances). If we can postulate instead an ever present, vital communion of God’s grace upon the human mind and will, which embraces in the Eternity of God all our time-moments from conception to the beatific vision, then God does not have to decree, nor foresee. God is simply there all the time. We come to be, but all the states of our being are one finished reality present unto the creative, communing, and fulfilling Act which is God.

Trying to understand this is quite another thing. But if God is first cause, ground of our being and prompter of every fulfilment, then surely it is certain that we are as much finished and consummated—i.e. predestined in His Eternal Present, the power of which embraces and contains all that is partial and potential—as it is that we exist in a given, time-changing potential from moment to moment, from birth to death, in this our present order. As far as we are concerned, God who certainly made us, will consummate us, we hope and pray, in a merciful consummation of joy in Himself. Surely then it is true that what *must* come to be in us (it is more than *a possible* remember, given our actual creation it is *a potential*) is already beginning, growth and fulfilment in God's presentality. As it is written, "*I am Alpha and I am Omega: I am the Beginning and the End*" (Rev 22:13).

### **Significance of Christ's Passion**

Since we cannot always be sure whether the things we assert God 'could' do if He so willed make any metaphysical sense, or at least whether they contradict the wisdom of the created order made by God, we may with profit apply a very pragmatic test. The life of Jesus on earth, was it one long melodrama? Was the agony of pain, rejection, mercy, and yearning that went into our redemption hollow, because 'If He wanted to, He could have given an efficacious grace to all those perverse Pharisees and Sadducees, so that freely they would have loved Him'. Or put in Molinist terms, 'He could have chosen another order, He could have given a grace He knew they would accept'. To me, the Passion of Christ is a most terrible reality, and I do not think these questions make sense. We are like children babbling about what mummy could buy me if she wanted to, but knowing nothing about the complexity of the order of adult life.

The fact of the power and depth of the creature's ability to resist God is clear from the life of Christ. If the life of Christ on earth is the supreme example of the real work of God upon the created spirit, the real salvific will of God and the degree of the patience and mercy of God, surely we must profess from what we know and read in the Books of the Covenant—the Old and the New Testament—that the loving mercy, appeal and seeking of God is an ocean of unmerited mercy indeed. What is so appalling in the life of Christ on earth is the recognition that even in the presence of utter truth, sheer nobility of soul, great wonders and surpassing

beauty of personality—the Personality of God made *fully operational* for Man, in both orders, spirit and matter of his being—that the creature can, and does, and did resist, and even hate.

Of course, we were dealing with a fallen humanity it is true, but there again, in the angel and in the first of men, we have to accept the fact that the creature can wilfully, and proudly fall, whether with the excuse of concupiscence or without it. The problem of evil derives not from the nature of God, but from the nature of freewill in the contingent creature. It derives from the awful dignity and power of self-determination in the creature—the power to know where one’s ultimate fulfilment lies, and to turn the power of one’s yearning for joy inwards, in an adoration of self. This is a denial of the contingency of the creature and of the obedient love which we must freely give in order to grow in the order of grace, and through stage after stage of growth in grace, to enter into the fullness of the likeness of Christ and so into the possession of God.

It is a mystery we will never understand. I am inclined to put the mystery not in why God does not do more from divine power, but how and why the creature can resist and does resist the appealing love of Infinite Good and Truth. The *order* and the *nature* of God’s action upon men to save, surely stands in the relationship we see in history, in the action of Christ upon men. I would say that we see here the *ontological nature* of the call, the working and attraction of grace. It does not fit in with the presumption that if only He loves enough, God can always change the human heart.

I don’t think that St. Thomas Aquinas meant the ‘principle of God’s predilection’ to be understood in that way. If he did, then I suggest that the meditations of the school of Molina offer a worthy correction, and that probably none of us is right. The truth will be a synthesis of all our best perceptions, almost certainly with the addition of many other things we have never even thought to add or been able to understand. Whether the Lord did speak personally to St. Teresa, or whether it was the inner voice of her holy subconscious, she was almost certainly right to hear the words: “neither of them!”.

### **The Chalice of Christ**

When tempted to worry about what God could do, look upon what Christ did and suffered.

Look upon the very fact of Redemption itself. You and I are not going to do any better, any more mercifully or any more worthily, if we could exercise the power of God! Understand the meaning of the sweat of blood of Christ as not fear and trembling but the utter agony of the vision of sin, and of the impact upon Christ's human soul of the destruction of spiritual beauty, and the destruction of all that is "Godlike" in man, by human sin, especially in its havoc upon the minds and hearts of innocent children.

Perhaps one is wrong, but may it at least be *suggested* that if the total order of creation—once the Economy is breathed into being—must be and is *present* from the beginning to the end in the presentality of God's Pure Act, then the total vision of sin throughout human history must have been unrolled before, and settled upon the human body and soul of Christ in vision and in impact. To know it totally, feel it totally, apologise for it totally in the reaction of utterly holy and obedient love, all of this and more must have been part of the requirement of a total human Redemption from the first man to the last. For our Redemption is both personal and individual, and collective and social in the Church.

This is why the life and Passion of Christ was called the revelation of *the ontological nature* (i.e. *the very being*) of that interplay and communion between God and the creature, in which consists the working of the order of nature and of grace, the growth to salvation, or the final refusal of even the utterly generous appeal and attraction of God. Christ and His works *are* the ontological revelation of the salvific will of God, at least for this writer. It is superfluous and even blasphemous to turn to Jesus crucified and ask why He did not do more. The revelation of God in Christ as the Sacred and Compassionate Heart says the same thing. I do not believe God *could* have done more. But of course, if ever Holy Mother Church said otherwise, I would know I was wrong. One does not intend to limit the power of God, but one does think that perhaps we ask questions of God which we do not know are ontologically possible or meaningful.

### **The Power of Prayer**

Earlier in this article one said that the variant—or better the partial synthesis—of the so-called Dominican and Jesuit positions upon grace and freewill called "Congruism" seemed especially attractive. This was not because it avoided making God act and think within the time series with

its conditionals, circumstances, and futuribles; it does not. If, however, we take all of this business of the '*scientia media*' (what God knows in the order of conditioned and possible truth) and make it apply to that *Living Communion* by which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit fulfil always the text "*My Father works until now, and I work*" (Jn 5:17), we may have something nearer to the synthesis we seek.

All of us have seen—perhaps in our own lives if we are priests, and equally in the lives of good lay folk—the unexpected change or conversion of mind and heart which is given in answer to unremitting prayer. St. Ambrose prophesied to St. Monica that the child of so many tears could surely not perish, and he did not. This is the giving of a suitable (congruent) and mighty grace which in fact has turned the will and sweetened the heart. However, it has always, but *always* followed the very pattern of Christ's Prayer for men. It has always been the redemption given through faithful love, and obedient service. It has always meant a total, purifying, filling out in oneself of "what was wanting to the Passion of Christ". It is in us, priest or lay folk, the application of Christ's Redemption through the members of His Body, the Church, and through the love in faith and communion which lives within us from His Abiding Presence. Notice how it follows the same *ontological law* of the creative appeal, the teaching and the loving given. The habit of grace—i.e. the being clothed in God's grace—conveys a power, a power of very being which works upon the created nature either to build and form, or to overcome resistance and disorientation.

Evil likewise exercises a contrary power, for these two forces are "*contrary one to another, so that you do not the things that you would*" (Gal.5:1). We have all known resistance also unto apparent final rejection, and the utter, inner and ghastly misery of the pain it inflicts. This is to share in the Cup of the Garden of Gethsemane. It is not to me a wonder that Christ sweated blood. It is to me a miracle that Christ's human nature continued to survive and His heart to beat at all. It is in this sense that I would interpret Luke's line: "*And there appeared an Angel of God, strengthening Him*" (Luke 22:43). I don't think it is a gloss of some mythologising scribe. It comes in conjunction with the terrible phenomenon of the sweat of blood. That is its meaning. It means for me that within the all wise, good and beautiful Order of Creation which God has made, God cannot and could not have done any more than He did so.

Even in a different order of Creation, the basic principles of interplay and communion between God and the creature would have been the same. Personally, I think, (subject to any correction from Holy Mother Church), that in the order of the non-necessary spiritual creation—the creation which God loves with the love of *friendship* but not the love of *intrinsic necessity* (as between Father, Son and Holy Spirit)—sin would have always been a possible phenomenon.

Finally, let us bear in mind that when we would yearn to save all men and to excuse all men—for sheer love and compassion for mortal and miserable man, and aware of our own waywardness—that such desire is prompted within us by the grace of God, which is the Grace of Christ. It is in us a reflection and a sharing of the salvific will of Christ. He got there first. We won't desire, or yearn, or make excuses better than He will. We do not know who or how many are damned. We are commanded to judge sin, and to accept the person of no man against truth, in matter of sin and goodness. We are equally forbidden, utterly, to judge and pass inner sentence on the soul of the sinner. That is God's secret. We can only say that if anyone is damned, it is because he or she resisted God, whose total will and work stands in the Passion of Christ, and that they quite obstinately resisted to the end.

God Himself could do no more, because God Himself was the Christ and could have given no more. You do not have to remind God that most human spirits are devastated and crucified from the cradle. He knows, and it will go to their account. They may even be incapable, some of them, of committing true mortal sin, because of the state of spiritual imbecility into which they have been brought, like confused and terribly hurt children. Do not make excuses for men to Jesus Christ: He knows them all. He saw it all in the Garden, and on the Cross, as they drove in the nails. He reminded the Father: "*Father forgive them, they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34).

### **In Summary**

Thus we come to the end of an article which should never have been attempted. It has been done at the imperious behest of some Church students and even more for some theology graduates. The writer does not know whether there is anything in it of further developmental

use. The principles people might like to be reminded of for their own further thinking are:

1. Whether God knows and sees all things, including those things not yet made *in our order of time* in the consummated order of His own Pure Act. In that case Predestination would not be given antecedently to merits foreseen in grace, nor in merits foreseen after grace accepted, but *in meritis visis jam nunc*—in merits through grace and human freewill, here and now actual and actuated in living communion with God.
2. Whether the ontological root of the mystery of evil, and of freewill to hell or to heaven, does not consist in the fact that only God Himself can be loved by God with an intrinsic, a necessary love. The love that God bestows upon the creature is in the order of invitation and desire, and that is the order of communion and dialogue between God and the creature.
3. If Christ is the revelation in person of God's redemptive work and salvific will, can we not say that all His life, words, works, communion, and yearning is the manifestation of the very manner in which God *must* work, and the limits, so to say—given true freewill—of even God's love and power upon the free-will of the creature? Are we sure—that sure—that it makes sense to say that God could have created another and even nobler order, in which no spiritual creature would ever have sinned? Given the sheer majesty of the decree of Incarnation in the order we have and know, personally, this writer begs leave to doubt such a suggestion, unless Holy Mother Church, whom God instructs directly, should rule otherwise.

With the pressures of age growing, I feel rather like St. Paul in the reading for this very day's Mass: *"My time is at hand, and I am being poured out as a libation"* (2 Tim 4-6). The developmental future is with the young. But, finally, when talking of the life of Christ as the actual, here and now answer to the problem of evil, even if we cannot penetrate fully the interplay and mystery of grace and freewill, mark well St. Paul's meditation on just the same

problem, in the letter to the Romans:

*“Since God did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up to benefit us all, we may be certain, after such a gift, that He will not refuse anything that he can give ...For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, nor angel nor prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power in height or depth, not any created thing at all, can ever come between us and the Love of God, made visible in Christ Jesus Our Lord” (Rom 8:32-40).*

Do observe what Paul says: that the salvific and efficacious Love of God is made *visible*, made working in the real, the *ontological* order, in the Incarnation of Christ. Is it not magnificently said by St. Paul? Is it not the only answer, and possibly, in fact, the final answer?

## SACRAMENTUM MUNDI: THE EVIDENCE FOR JESUS

### Fading Force of Time

The modern man or woman looks at the evidence for Jesus, especially the factual evidence of the Bible, Old Testament and New, and murmurs 'it was all an awful long time ago, nobody can be really sure what happened'. Is it fair to say that two thousand years of time and cultural upheaval must dim the credibility of evidence that is so far back in time? It surely must. So vast a lapse of time lessens the credibility of faith based upon such an historical record. The modern mind of the ordinary man says, 'people were simple in those days, they knew nothing about what we know of the world and the universe. They could not even tell the difference for sure between illness and being possessed by the Devil. Anything that happened which they could not understand, they thought had been done by God directly'. One of the faults of a recent television series, *Jesus: the Evidence* was that the approach was simply that of faith from an ancient historic record. In fact, the *evidence for Jesus* has to be much more than that. It has to be faith from the evidence for the activity of God in human history.

The subconscious presumption of the mandarins of the Media establishment is that of an ancient Protestantism which they have long since abandoned. That faith comes from hearing or reading the 'word', and the word is the Bible, more particularly the New Testament. So, they said, let us consider how *reliable* is this word. One must say that for the Non-Catholic Christian, faith must in any case become more agnostic with time, because in fact their belief is based only on the Bible, and any word written two thousand years ago, and understood only as *testimony*, is a dead word and an uncertain word. We cannot ask it questions.

The Non-Catholic Christian does not admit any power on earth that can or does preach, teach and define with an objective certainty. That was made pathetically clear in the recent Synod of the Anglican Church. in which the Archbishop of Canterbury rejected demands to define objective belief, against the doubts of the bishop of

Durham and others. It was not, he said, “our way to tie things down in rigid formulae. It is in any case impossible to attempt to define Mystery”. Yet, those ancient creeds *did* attempt to define Mystery. They did not pretend to exhaust it, but they meant just what they said in such terms as “*God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one Being with The Father*” and so forth.

### **Catholic “Identity” lost on the Young**

The Roman Catholic should be better situated. His faith, he knows, depends on Scripture *within* Apostolic Tradition, within a living Magistracy that claims, and through history has used, the power to define with God’s own guarantee of infallibility. He is not naked with his own mind before the far-off words about deeds done in a prescientific age. We would be wrong to be complacent, however. In order to vindicate our line, and to bring a thrill of joy and relief to the contemplative soul, must be of evidence *within a context*.

This claim to *magisterium*—which is a claim to the living support of God, the author of history and its ever-working Lord—is quite lost upon our modern Catholic youth. They have never been taught it, in the miserable, totally inadequate catechesis that has been given to them. They have been educated at their Catholic schools, only in vague, sweeping concepts of Christianity, which could equally well be acceptable to any non-Catholic Christian, until one begins to delineate and ask detailed questions. Where the infallibility of the Church is concerned, (and it has not figured at all on some diocesan schemes in the last twenty years) it has been presented only in the most minimal and negative way.

Constant dialogue with young Catholics at our universities has taught this writer the sheer truth of such an assertion. For the non-Catholic, the ‘evidence for Jesus’ has been the Bible as recorded. For the Catholic it is the Bible as recorded, plus the ‘say-so’ of the Pope in particular, and the Roman Curia in general. But why should I believe the word of the Pope or his Cardinals? They change their minds often enough. As one young man did say to the editor at Oxford recently: “my Dad says that he cannot

recognise the religion called Catholic today, compared with what they taught him was the truth when he was a boy. It has changed out of all recognition. Why should I believe the Pope now, or *you* this evening? He and his friends have no notion of *Magisterium* as a divine witness or as a divine proclamation.

### **God as “Living Context”**

First, let it be clear that for the Catholic, the motives of credibility that buttress ‘faith’ are not the taking of the words of Holy Writ as an historic record simply. We should not even say that our faith stands on Scripture *and* Tradition, as if these were two distinct sources. We believe from Scripture *with* Apostolic Tradition. The written Scripture is part of the living tradition of the Apostles’ preaching. It was conceived within that tradition prior to being written down. It was written as the teaching of that tradition, and it is interpreted only *within* that living tradition of solemn teaching.

The ‘Good News’ spoken now is the ‘Good News’ spoken then. First comes proclamation with *divine authority*, that is to say *Magisterium*, then the written word that embodies it. There is no need to require that every doctrine of the faith should be explicitly and clearly evolved within that primal *Magisterium* of the written word. It is however essential, both for the Old Testament and the New, that it should be written down, and by witnesses protected by God against error. Otherwise, in the Old Testament there could be no sure provable prophecy in words and types that could later point to the credentials of the Christ. If the New Testament were not written, there could be no development of doctrine.

The development of doctrine is also the vocation of the Holy Spirit within the Church, not the work of private opinion. There could be no clear vindication of the promise “*but when the Spirit of truth is come, He will teach you all things, and bring to your minds whatever I have said to you I have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now ... but He will receive of Mine, and manifest them unto you*” (Jn 16: 12-15) In the evidences for Jesus, the claim to *divine magisterium* is essential because such is the only living vitality of Divinity upon earth. A divine teaching authority alone

gives objective certainty, and objective certainty alone gives a certain moral law, and a certainty and an integrity in holiness to be lived.

There is for us no living communion of joy with an agnostic God. Therefore, when we speak to the young or to the un-evangelised adult, of apostolic tradition, of infallibility as a power constitutive of the Church, of the Magisterium of Christ, exercised by the college of the Bishops with the Pope, let us bear in mind that we are saying that this magisterium is not a final decision, like any other ‘final’ human decision, settled by king or majority vote. It is the Truth of the Living God which encompasses the Church, because first it encompasses man in human history.

If the Church possesses the truth, it is because first *the Truth* which is the Living God, has encompassed and possessed the Church and ever protects her. “*And behold I am with you always, even to the end of the world*”. So, for us, *scripture with tradition* means that the word of the Bible is not a dead word, a merely recorded word. It is a word that lives unto God, and is declared in its final meaning and in its fuller, developmental meaning through the Church. The *evidence for Jesus* lives in a context. It lives in an *historic* context. That historic context is the Being of God himself, creator, fulfiller, redeemer and fulfilling love.

### **Creation as “Context” for Jesus**

The living authority’ of God, therefore, actively working in the Church, is the power that proclaims the evidence for Jesus. It is also the power which protects that proclamation from error and preserves the beauty of its positive fulness. It is this action of God upon men which, since the Incarnation of God in Person (for so we claim Christ to be), is the meaning of the Church’s claim to *infallibility* in the solemn definition of matter of faith and morals. It is this same action of God through men appointed by God—namely the college of Bishops with Peter—that constitutes the divine Magisterium through which the Holy Spirit, as part of His own vocation in the Church, develops, clarifies, and protects the divine word revealed in Jesus Christ.

If this is *the context*—not dead but living—within which the scriptures are contained and are an *ever-living* word, how far back in time shall we go? Where shall we begin to show the context that is part of the evidence for Jesus. Will it be with the New Testament—say from Pentecost day onwards? No: this is far too little. We have to put the Old Testament —which was in all its types, words and liturgy prophetic of Jesus — into the context of the divine manifestation of the truth of the claims of Jesus.

Very well then; shall we agree to start with Abraham and the history of the line that leads to Christ? That will take us from about 2,000 BC, a very respectable span of growing evidence. We know of many schemes and books that start from there. But, if we are going to be *really* coherent, and of help to men and women of this science soaked and sophisticated age, let us go back still further. Let us go back to the Book of Genesis, and beyond Genesis. For the book of Genesis portrays not only the creation of our world, but God as the living, purposeful context within which that world was framed.

Genesis, however, does not deal very explicitly with creation or with the universe itself. The Evidence for Jesus, we suggest, goes back to the primal explosion of creative energy within which the universe -our world and all it later contains —was held and is held. Let us go back to zero-point, to what the popular media journalists call ‘the BigBang’. The scientists today, especially the physicists, are telling us with emphasis and awe that this universe at the zero-point of beginning—when its radiation energies were held in laws and relationships we cannot even conceive—was no random mass of radiant power. Within the first second of its explosion into those relationships we name space and time, there were formed the basic relationships of physics and the laws we already know. Moreover, the detail of that universe in terms of physics and chemistry were already aligned to the possibility, the most unlikely possibility, of the emergence one day within that universe of the phenomenon of intelligent life, which is to say the Phenomenon of Man.

They confess to us that this universe of ours is poised in the first seconds of the creation to that ‘unlikely’ event, within unimaginably fine tolerances of organisation.

They speak already of a 'Unity-Law' which spans all creation and all its ages, and within which that primal explosion of ordered, creative energy was framed. Such an equation cannot be random. It must be centred in intelligent Personality, because its final end which is to be produced is contained before it happens within the original poising of matter-energy. The name of an intelligent Personality that transcends the developing, evolving universe, is *God*.

The modern scientist is beginning to give us an argument from *mathematics and physics* to the existence of God. Some of us would claim to have seen it a long time ago and the manner of seeing it is explained in *Catholicism: A New Synthesis*, because this vision of creation sweeps far beyond physics and beyond animal life to man himself. From man it rises to God Himself, and to Jesus Christ, as the Son of Man. It is an enormous vision. It can be convincingly presented and well defended. It is part of that *context for Jesus* within which His 'evidences' stand. That is where to begin.

### **A Unity-Law in Creation**

The scientist has discovered a 'Unity-Law' because he knows that all the laws of matter and energy, including those we cannot at present fully reconcile, *must* have been contained within the primal poising of the Primal Explosion. From this intuition he hopes to deduce a unified theory of matter both as particle and wave. He hopes to explain the apparent contradictions between 'classical' and 'quantum' energies and forms. He hopes for a lot, although he hardly dares to hope to know the initial relationships of energy within which the universe was framed and poised at 'zero point' in space and time. Such is the power of man's intellect however, even when his senses are of little help, that he does aspire to hope to deduce a final answer even to this last query.

Some of this line of thought was expressed in a previous article (*Faith vol. 16. no. 3, May/June 1984*). We can, however, go much further. This sudden apprehension of a Unity-Law, and a Law of Unity, within which all things are framed, applies not only to the Primal Explosion of the universe in ordered energies. The order and the energy

persists in mutual interplay of galaxy upon galaxy, star upon star, sun upon planet, environment upon life forms, and in the controlling interplay of one living form upon another, as predator and prey and in many wonderful and complex ways at all times of the development of the universe and in all changing aspects of its ordered, evolutionary ascent of being.

The universe changes as new and more complex forms of being appear, and in our planet at least, finally life itself. But the Unity-Law is always the same. The *harmonic* interplay, the law of mutual control and direction unto self-fulfilment and unto a stable natural order, that remains always. Yet until we get to man and come to the non-material energy—to the spiritual soul, free thinking and freely willing—all of this harmonic order and life-law found within diversity is contained within the poising of the initial equation of creation, by the laws of necessity, not of freewill.

We say by the law of *necessity*; first the necessity of sheer mathematics and physics, and then by the necessity of *determinism of being*, even in the life forms, until we get to man, who is the unique one. Of course, it is all part of the ‘evidence for Jesus’. We cannot treat of it now in any detail, we can however indicate that the evidence was initialled by St. John, who must have got it from Jesus Christ himself. John writes: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: the Same was in the beginning, with God: all things were made through Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made” (Jn 1:1-2).*

The term John uses is *“Logos”*. In the beginning is the *Mind*, Personal and self-conscious; God’s knowledge of Himself, the Mind that poises all things in their beginnings and in their final ends, altogether in one creative act. This is the same *“Word”* who also says through St. John, *“I am Alpha and I am Omega, I am the Beginning and I am the End” (Rev 22:13)*. Since the mind which is the Living Word of God conceives all things, *of course* this law of harmony and ordered fulfilment is a perfect unity-law, from its inception until the ‘last day’ and for eternity. But, you may say, how is this *evidence for Jesus*? Because *this Word is Jesus*. Through Him all things are thrown across space and time in being, and in the end, we show the evidence for

the coming of this *Living Mind* among human kind as God incarnate, the Word made Flesh.

### **Spiritual Dimension of the Unity-Law**

The evidence for this begins most immediately with mankind. First, the making of man as a synthesis of living matter and spirit. We can show how the living body, through that unique brain which is the brain of man, needs the soul from its own material formulation, and requires the non-material spirit as its principle of life, formation, and personality. This relationship is equally true whether in a philosophy of ordered evolution or of direct creation. If we postulate the creation of man by an ordered evolution, then we keep the unity of the Unity-Law, within which all being is framed in the beginning, as a much more majestic process and economy. We can also show how man is at once continuous with natural evolution through the body, but *a special creation* through the soul. For God alone can directly create the spiritual energy. The soul cannot evolve. This is why angels neither marry nor beget, because they are totally spiritual in nature.

The thrill about this line of evidence for Jesus is that Man, breathed by God into a new dimension of being, needs *anew dimension of the Unity-Law* to give him his control, his direction and his fulfilment in being. All life forms that are less than mankind are controlled by a law of fulfilment which is 'personal' and according to their species. They are controlled by the law which is within the interplay upon them of nature around—the impact of earth and light, air and forest, and their inbuilt nature and its brain; in a word, by the environment that is of their own kind, and is the closed cycle of material, deterministic being. With us it is different. We are made into a new dimension. We live, learn, think, and are fulfilled by intellect and free-thinking reason, by the inward knowledge and by its expression *in the spoken word*, because in man the soul is synthesized with matter. So, we need both the inner word of understanding—the word of prayer and consciousness of God—and also the word expressed with matter.

This is to say that mankind needs the word *made flesh* in writing, speech, ritual, art, and deed. Whether to learn or to love, we look up to God and say: ‘what about me?’ Where is your *Unity-Law* of control and direction to life and fulfilment for me? What is my meaning and my measure? Who are you, Lord of Creation? Am I your servant, and you my Master, or am I your son, Oh my Father?’ There was One in human history who, uniquely among all prophetic or priestly figures, declares with utter perfection the answer to the query which arises from man’s very nature, and because of man’s very nature. That one declared “*I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, no man comes to the Father, except through Me” (Jn 14:6).*

There has been nobody, apart from Jesus Christ, who has dared to speak thus. The declaration He made is the answer to man’s question to God. As we unfold the evidence for Jesus, we are looking for more than any old proof of the existence of God. We are looking for more than any sort of ‘revelation’ from God to human kind. We are looking for a line of perfection. The development of the universe was poised with perfection within a material *Unity-Law* of control and direction to ordered fulfilment. We are saying that when we get to man—the summit of the universe—we must look for that same one, perfect *Unity-Law* to continue *without break*, perfectly and coherently from God Himself, in His relationships to mankind.

We are saying that with man, God becomes the Lord of history, and that this ‘perfect line’ of God’s determination of the spiritual creation will inexorably lead to Christ and will vindicate Christ. It is only in this age that so full a vision can be seen in all its detail, but it was seen even in the apostolic age. What else did St. Paul mean when he declared of God to the men of Athens that: “*we are His offspring, as your own poets have said, and in Him we live, and move, and are*” (Acts 17:28)?

Everything below man, “lives and moves and is” within the environment of that material universe, within which it finds its life law and the determination of its being. St. Paul is saying that God is the *spiritual environment* within which we human beings live and move and are. In Him alone we find the life-law and the determination to

fulfilment of our being. We must look for it in Him on the personal level, the family level and the social level, the community and the world level. We do not look simply for the leadership of great souls who have found God by contemplation—as in the faith of Hinduism and Buddhism.

We look for a line in history, given by God as one with his first law of creation. In the name of coherent continuity and a more perfect truth and love, we look for our own manifestation from God which is the Way, and Truth, and Life for mankind. By this—individually and socially—we will come to the Father by his own uniquely true and perfect ‘Unity-Law’ for angels and for men.

### **The Bible Lives Again in this Context**

If we look, we will find it uniquely in the Bible and its magisterial tradition down vast ages. How that ‘dead record of more simple times’ lives now and is radiant in its living context of God’s direct leading on! We will find in the Bible a sign we find in no other Faith. We will find a record of God’s revealing *by the word* which begins with the creation of man. It is simple in its beginnings, as becomes God’s word to simple folk, but contains within itself an enormous power of true and coherent development in depth of understanding. No myth possesses this quality of coherent development.

Together with a pure, noble and coherent concept of God, the Bible goes on to develop down long ages in depth of wisdom and a growing truth. The Bible alone gives us the seed of that doctrine of ‘original sin’ in the fall of man—of the damage done to the nature of man by the disobedient power of the soul—which explains why man alone in all nature is self-divided against his true good and against his own better willing. The wisdom of the great souls of the contemplative East perceived the ‘*tanha*’—the thirst of greedy desire in man—but they made it basic to material life and being, and therefore made all matter in some way a fallen thing, a principle of evil.

In the Old Testament too, as the record of God’s leading on of men, we find the raising up gradually and coherently, in line with man’s nature, of the priest and the prophet, who parallel the natural development of community and state, king,

counsellor, warrior and scribe. The Bible alone possesses the one unique sign of a special vocation in history for mankind. We mean it is totally prophetic, and the people of the Jews, who were made God's trustees for a final climax of God's Unity-Law for mankind, understood it to be so.

All the Bible contains, whether in prophecy, word of wisdom, psalm, liturgy, or human type, was pointing forward to 'He who is to come'. Messianism, as we find it in the long ages of the Bible's span is unique among faiths. This characteristic is the very *elan vital* of a spiritual evolution given by God and guided by God. It develops to a peak and anticipates some mighty culmination of God's provision for us. The whole of the Old Testament, with its unique signs of God's preparation for Jesus Christ, as The Lord of History *Incarinate*, is the Advent season of the Saviour's coming.

### **Centre of the Unity-Law made "Son of Man"**

And come he did. With him begins the 'New Testament' in God's final perfection of his creation. This is the line of God's perfect salvation, and his redemption of fallen mankind. This is also the line of God's perfect truth and holiness for mankind: the line of marriage restored, chastity for the Kingdom of God's sake, and the banishment of even the evil thought which is adultery in the heart.

We could require of God, in the name of his own divine wisdom and goodness, that he give us some revealing of Himself and some fulfilment in Himself, in the name of the One Law within which He framed creation. We could not demand, nor even dare to conceive that the Word—the Living Mind of God in whom all creation, angels, matter and men was framed—should be decreed for us, within that One Unity-Law of creation, as *The Word made Flesh*. We could neither require it nor conceive of it in our hearts. Yet this is the Christian claim.

If God should declare it and prove it by his own signs, the utter and appalling coherence of it all—our living communion with the Infinity, the Truth and the Goodness that defines God's own being—becomes another facet of the evidence for Jesus. The majestic declaration of the prologue of St. John is echoed also in St. Paul,

apostle of the Gentiles. This is significant, for the vision of St. John was given by Christ personally to the “beloved disciple” trained to know Christ as “He who is”, and to fulfil the special vocation of the author of the Gospel of Christ’s explicit Divinity.

Paul also claimed to have learned his gospel of Christ *not from the other apostles*, but immediately from Christ. And Paul writes of Jesus: “*Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature. For in Him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations, or principalities, or powers. All things were created by Him and in Him. And He is before all, and through Him all things do hold together. And He is the head of the body, the Church: Who is the Beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may hold the Primacy. For in Him it has well pleased the Father, that all Fullness should dwell* (Colossians. 1:16-19).

This is to say that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment in the Flesh for us of the Word, or Intellect of God, in which the first equational poising of the Unity-Law of primal creation was poised. Does not the sheer majesty of the *evidence for Jesus* begin to shine? And those ‘dead words of long ago’, do they not live and testify with undiminished power when shown within the living context of God the Lord of History, who is at all times—Old Testament and New— “*the Head of the Body, the Church*”, who is “*the Beginning*”, and through his physical resurrection “*the First Born of the dead*”?

In such a presentation of Christ, the whole majesty of His divinity can be traced: in the New Testament, in His person, His doctrine, His constitution of the Church and the meaning of the sacraments of the Church. The inevitability of the Holy Eucharist as both sacrifice and sacrament is shown as well, because the Church lives in and through Jesus Christ risen. He is the very life of the whole man, body and soul, and so He would, surely inevitably, as his ‘last testament of love’ have left us the Sacrament of His Living self—body and blood, soul and divinity, under the forms of bread and wine—not transignification, but *reality*, namely transubstantiation.

We can follow also the necessity of the claim to a divine magisterium of Jesus Christ, exercised on earth *through the word* as the abiding office of His divinity within the Church. And by title of divinity, such a word is also an infallible magisterium. To claim as much is to possess a unique mark of the fulness of the Church, the Truth in which such a Church subsists. There is mighty evidence for Jesus, too, in the development of the Church's defined and solemn doctrine over two thousand years through this magisterium that she claims and its exercised power. There is no denying the coherence nor the sign.

### **Tragedy of an Opportunity Missed**

It has never been more necessary than now to show all of this. Only a *divine* magisterium can hold to God's true vision of man and human goodness, the mighty, untrammelled intellect of man, which is growing more godlike through each decade, more terrible, too, in the decadence of a fallen nature and the arrogance of evil pride and lusts running amok. Should not the Council have taken this line? Did it not call for such an *aggiornamento* for the world of today and for mankind in this age?

Yet the Council did not take this line, or at least did not centre itself clearly and unambiguously in this way. If the Fathers of the Council had done so, if the Commissions had done so, then the Rationalist Neo-Modernist could not have seized the initiative at the intellectual centres of the Church's life. This has happened, and so we see dissent, uncertainty, self-division, great loss of our people and appalling loss to vocations and of the contemplative life.

The very need for the Encyclical *Humani Generis*—Pope Pius XII's last despairing warning of the resurgence of neo-Modernism in the Church—should have shown us the way we needed to go, and *the alternative vision* the Holy Spirit asked for and did not receive. If in her leaders the Church had followed the true vision of the evidences for Jesus, then, one thinks, She would have given us a vernacular liturgy indeed and the wealth of new Eucharistic Prayers, but would not have tolerated the poverty of prayer and aspiration found at least in the offertory rite, nor the lessening of the

language of sacral sacrifice in the sweep of her Canons. She would not have allowed—whatever provision is rightly made for the sick, through the hands of women as well as of men—that general free-for-all and desacralisation of the Mass, which must follow when anybody at all, (from the sheer frequency of communion under both kinds), is able to be called to the altar to ‘help out with communion’.

There are many things to think of, and the years since the Council have been no era of pride and joy and new certainty in faith. We pray God, and Our Blessed Lady—whose warnings of the dead sea fruits of human pride, arrogance of intellect and sensual lust have come so terribly true—that we will all do better in the times to come. Then we may be able to declare to God’s family and to all mankind *Sursum Corda*: “Lift up your hearts” at the vision of Jesus and the evidences for The Sacrament of the World.

## THE INSPIRATION AND INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

The decision to write on this theme came after the urgent appeals of Catholic undergraduates who find themselves engulfed by Bultmannism and historic relativism, and who receive little help from the spiritual advisers available to them. So, this article is directed to them to fulfil a promise, together with a sense of the insufficiency of a such a short treatment of so vast a topic.

Biblical inspiration has a context. We do not mean a context in history and culture. That is obvious, for such a context must be true of all human speech and writing. We mean a context of fact and another context from the very nature of man. The context of fact is the existence of a personal God, a fact which environs and is the context of human existence at all times. The other context of biblical and religious inspiration is the real existence in man of a spiritual soul, a soul which is not one same principle of reality with matter-energy, but which transcends the order of matter-energy. Without understanding these two basic facts fully and rightly, it is impossible to go about the study of the Bible or of biblical inspiration. A mind steeped in agnosticism or a mind which does not admit the existence of a truly personal God, and then later a literally Divine Christ, cannot possibly have any objective teaching on biblical inspiration or concerning the truth of biblical prophecy.

When you think of *the context* of biblical inspiration, it is the majesty of the Bible's prophetic build up and its fulfilment in the historic order that is the best apologetic and proof for the 'inspiration' itself. We should not begin from 'God's revelation to men' or some such similar heading, but from the context which is the relationship of the very nature of man to the being of God. *We will find that biblical inspiration is related to a divine magisterium upon earth, as a principle of God's continuous and permanent relationship to mankind.*

In the end we will find that biblical inspiration is reducible to the principle of divine magisterium itself, as that principle and claim is constitutional to the very nature of the Catholic and Roman Church. A magisterium, which confers power to define indefectibly and infallibly in the name of Christ's Divinity and His continuing mission on earth, will be found to be only the fulness of the principle of 'inspiration' of the Bible. We will also find that *the interpretation* of

the meaning of the Bible as 'inspired' follows the same order. It belongs ultimately to that same *magisterium* in the Church which is a divine and not a human principle.

If Christ is the Lord of human history, then the mind of God, long before the Incarnation of God as Christ, has intervened in human history and given witness in human history, not as something external and incidental, but as part of the very process of the creation of man and the fulfilment of man. This is a very different vision from the one that sees all religion as proceeding from within man, from man's *immanence*, so that man's human consciousness is all we know of God, and the consciousness of man is the origin and law of what we say about God. It is not man who determines the nature and meaning of God, it is God who controls and directs the destiny of man.

The stress is upon the organic and necessary relationship of God to men, whether in the personal life of the individual, or in the public and social life of men in those communities that men integrate by nature. Among those communities which, by right of being and existence, grow out of the nature of man, is the Church as a People and a Kingdom. When we come to recognise this relationship to God which grows out of our very being, then the meaning of the Bible, as of Religion itself, becomes apparent. Then the sheer credibility of this Divine Economy—proven in the present from the lineage of its past—overwhelms the mind and heart with joy and with peace.

### **In The Beginning: The Word**

The personal context of biblical inspiration must be looked for in the relationship of interior prayer and seeking between God and the human personality by which, from conception onwards, there is elicited within the human spirit *faith* as a state and a virtue of being; and through faith, hope and charity.

The comparison one offers is that of the seed in the ground. With variations, this is a favourite comparison of Our Lord's as well. The seed lives in a context. That is to say it lives in an environmental relationship *at all times* with Nature around it. The sun and the shower, the good earth and the atmosphere, all of these prompt within it a fuller life, a life more abundant. Within these things it lives, and is, and has its being. It receives through them its law of life and

fulfilment. We say that the law of life for the spiritual creation is the very same, whether that be the life of the purely spiritual order— ‘angel’ good or bad—or the life of man who synthesizes within his one being both orders, spiritual and material.

The Law of Life and being of the spiritual creation is ministered by God, and *is* God. God prompts within the spiritual being that deeper, richer, joy-giving increase of depth and nobility of being which comes from the possession of God, and makes it yearn more fully for the possession of God. God is the milk of this life, God is the bread of the maturity of this life. That is why, quite necessarily, at the end of time and the fulness of the Divine Economy, Jesus Christ gave us the Eucharist. God is the food indeed, God is the drink indeed, and in Christ His body and blood—His human reality—must share with His Divinity in this ministry of Life-giving.

God is quite literally the natural (in strict theology we ought perhaps to say ‘the proper’) environment of the soul and therefore of the personality of man, defined through the soul. In God we live, and move, and are, and have our being. From this relationship also we obtain that *Law of Life and being*, which lesser creatures draw from visible Nature around. God is quite literally come to us “*that they may have life, and have it more abundantly*”.

Now, the angel—whether that dynamic spiritual creation accepts God in an instant, and in all its powers and loving of Him be transformed into a blazing union with Him, or whether it rejects Him selfishly and becomes centred totally on itself and self-love, which is the heart of all sin—does not need *words* to go to God, or to be reached by God. God can enlighten the intellect, fulfil the longing, and suffuse with love the very being of the angelic spirit totally and immediately as Pure Spirit unto pure spirit. The flesh and its works would be an utter irrelevance.

With man it is quite otherwise. Flesh and spirit as we are, we need the word. Our words are knowledge wrapped up in material signs and sounds. Whether we know or love by contemplation or not, we cannot convey to another, nor fully express within ourselves, that which we know and enjoy without the sign, the picture, the material beauty that expresses the spiritual—without, in a word, *the word* in all its aspects. This will cover writing and speaking, music and ritual, everything in the physical that must go along with the material in man, so that both orders in him fully express each other. This is true in the individual mind and heart, and

true also in the family, and in the communities of men living in that ordered harmony out of which society grows.

### **The Evocation of The Word**

So, God must *evoke the word*. The 'word' is the proclamation for man of the knowledge that is within him. God must evoke the word to express to mankind the knowledge which is within God. Since there is no space in one article to cover so vast a panorama, one must hint ahead and jump many a stage. Because God must evoke the word which is within God, and utter it to Man, God will ultimately become Man, because in the Divine Nature *The Word* is the Living Personal content of the divine self-knowledge, and this Word must be uttered eventually to man, as— without the flesh —it was and is uttered to the angels of God.

In human affairs there is no deep knowing of God and loving of God which does not carry with it a desire to express this good to other men and share it with them. Even the most contemplative joy in God seeks to witness to men. How much more so with God. Thus, God must evoke the word of His Word and must witness it to men. That word is God's own word. It is transcendent as God is. It is before all men and its purpose is known and uttered long ages before the last of men are born. It is Alpha and Omega. If God utters a 'word' like this, He will need to raise up in society—not by arbitrary love, however great, but by the very law and wisdom of man's nature—the priest and the prophet, the spiritual genius who will minister the word of God.

In just the same sort of way, nature itself, in good men and bad, throws up the leader, the kings and the counsellors, the wise men and the seers. All men have some power to know, to declare and to rule, otherwise there would be few good parents. Only the few, however, are geniuses in rule and in teaching, and in wisdom. There would need to be the spiritual genius as well—the saint, the priest, the prophet, the 'great soul'. The meaning of such a word will be in God, and not in man. It will be knowable only from God, and not from man.

Man does not make or explain himself, neither does the whole creation. Man does not possess within himself his fulfilment of nature. One has of course to be *sure of all this* from other argument and evidence. Once one is sure, then the coherent logic and necessity of divine

revelation, and the divine communication of spiritual life to man, unfolds before us with sheer majesty. The word of God will be spoken *through* a man and through the consciousness of a man. The prophet himself will be aware within himself that the knowledge, the power and the authority come not from himself, but rather has come upon him from another. The prophet will know this in the peace and joy, awe and power that possesses his spirit when he 'speaks the words of God'.

The word spoken—if it is not simply a word of doctrine concerning God, or morals concerning human goodness —will also be a forward-looking word. If the economy of God is building up, like the process of life and evolution itself before man, to a supreme climax, then that 'word of God' must be prophetic in the sense that what is said now possesses its fuller sense and ultimate meaning in the long years ahead, however much it may have an immediate meaning. In the same way, men, events, actions, good things and disasters, all of these within their own being can show forth a greater reality that is yet to come. God must protect the word He speaks through the prophet so that with all the limitations, and all the cultural attachments and symbolisms that belong to the prophet and his age, God's word of truth remains without falsity and can develop through time. The word of God may develop, but if it is the official, the authentic, the continuing and permanent line of God's guidance upon mankind, that word must not be falsified through human error, nor is it merely mythological. The false cannot develop from its own intrinsic energy and vision. The mythological may be a beautiful picture, but because it is arbitrary and usually partly erroneous, it too cannot develop.

Such a process by which God possesses the seer or teacher is quite possible because of the total self-surrender of the 'great soul' to God, and because in the humble joy of his vision of the meaning of God, the seer will express —at least adequately—just what is the truth which gives him the joy. There is no difficulty at all in God keeping his prophet 'on the lines' without in any way dictating verbally to him. The process by which God guides and teaches, expressing his own divine word through the loving and humble ministry of man is 'inspiration'. Because the content given is of God's mind in the primary sense of the meaning conveyed and intended, God is and must always be the principal Author of the Sacred Scriptures.

## **The Meaning of Messianism**

There are sacred books of great thought and great beauty in all great religions of the human spirit. This beauty and truth proceeds from great souls who seek God in contemplative communion and great purity of heart and find an answer in the personal love and communion of God. This also is the gift of God, who is no snob, but in every age and nation takes up into His love those who seek for Him with a sincere heart. But this is not 'inspiration' in the biblical sense. Inspiration in the biblical sense is the claim that God has raised up among men—in spite of original sin and all the incoherence and confusion it causes in the human psyche, in doctrinal and moral truth and values—a line developing through the ages, which is the full, authentic, and consistent line of growth towards God's final communication of Himself to mankind.

It is the guidance of this line, as written down, taught and used to expect the blessing of God yet to come, which is the 'inspiration' of God. Not only the doctrine, but also the prophecy and the entire control and direction of this line of truth and love to the fulfilment of mankind is under the magisterial guidance of God. This is to be 'inspired' of God. This line of doctrinal tradition has a unique capacity for development to reveal God's mind, not man's mind through history. It is also the 'trustee line' for the human race itself.

In the Bible we do find unique characteristics. It has an amazing sobriety and freedom from myth and magic. It is utterly rational and factual. So much is this true, that the Victorians could believe that the creation narrative of Genesis and the later chapters on the development of human culture were literally and directly true, without any need for further criticism or exegesis, simply because of the grave, sober tone of the narrative, and the absence of gods and goddesses, warring, sinning, and being so very like human beings writ large in the higher heavens.

We can also trace in the Old Testament a continuous development of doctrine concerning moral excellence, union with God, monogamous marriage, the survival of the soul with joy and blessedness after death. We cannot find, and we do not find any such continuous, laborious development in a straight line in any of the creation stories of other religious cults of the Middle East. Nor is there any such coherent development in a continuous manner in the religion of the Hindus or of the Buddha. The faith of Islam in the opinion of this writer, is simply

a lateral development of the Old Testament itself, to which it obviously owes so very, very much. And it is stultified by its own rigidity in as much as it is claimed to be the last words of God dictated to the prophet. Such developments as there are in Islam are the intrusions of human opinion and concessions to the Scientific Society whether Eastern or Western. They are making such inroads upon Islam that a fierce, fundamentalist reaction against them, and against everything that belongs to the 'infidel society' is at this moment convulsing Islam itself.

That which is unique in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and which makes the Bible, and is at the heart of biblical inspiration, is of course *Messianism*. This is the concept of the 'chosen people' and the Anointed and Holy One who is to come. This may rightly be called the sharp, hard spearhead of the evolution upward of the faith of the Bible. It is no random evolution, it is patterned and structured, consistent and total. Age after age it grows only clearer and more claimant. And the whole interpretation of the prophets was turned to it by the official priesthood and the rabbinate of the Jews.

There is no explaining this mighty fact—a fact spread across at least five thousand years of consistent development, a growing magisterium consistent in itself, and preaching a doctrine that *we ought to expect* of God—except that we are in the presence of a living magisterium which transcends man and man's history and man's culture. It works within that history, but the magisterium leading onwards is from outside man. It is the leading of God, the Lord of human history.

To some of the students mentioned earlier at the beginning of this article, one would add: do not believe your professors in their easy assertions of their power to know and understand the culture and history of ancient Israel, through which alone they would explain away all things. They have no real idea at all of the deep, inner meaning of aspirations, hopes and ideals of men who flourished nearly four thousand years ago. They were not there, and the records — apart from the Bible itself and its *living* tradition—are sparse.

Just as we have had many retractations from the scientists since space probes passed alongside the planets of our own solar system, and doubtless will have many more when men reach further into space, so also with the historic-relativist theory of the Bible, its origins and its meanings. The modern 'experts' are too far away. They see too little of the subject they study,

and their theories are distorted and fuzzed by the 'atmosphere' between them and those events, which is in their own very Germanic minds. They are not even Semites with an understanding and reverence for the tenacious and secretive mind of the East.

### **Inspiration to Christ**

Cardinal Newman has proven very well that the meaning and origins of doctrine in a living faith can be understood only by the official and authentically recognised saints and theologians of that faith. In a word by orthodox, consistent, and 'canonized' development. One might add that it is by 'martyred' development, because that was so often the price of genuine development. It is the same with the Bible. The whole 'inspiration' of the Bible is of 'One That Is To Come'—to a supreme climax. Preached for so long a time, the climax came, and has come, and is living now, and is contradicted now. And the sword of sorrow pierces many a heart because of the contradiction now.

When you look back from Christ upon the past, you can see the quite amazing and often very detailed fulfilment in Him of so many a prophecy, so many a type, so many a 'suffering servant' of the Lord Yahweh. If Christ, along the road to Emmaus, "*beginning at Moses*" opened to the two disciples 'the things that were concerning Him', He was expounding only what was there to be found and following a tradition wholly accepted as true and meaningful by the Jews of His time and of earlier times. Since the prophecies of Daniel, however, Messianic fervour had grown stronger and much clearer among the Jews than in earlier times. The Messiah was to be a person, a King, a new sort of priest, in all things the saviour of His people, and of all mankind. Simeon at least, in his farewell canticle of praise expressed the mystic knowledge and hope of the holy Jew, whatever the sword swinging zealots and the cynical Sadducees might have looked for in the Messiah.

There is nothing like Messianism in the whole history of human religion. It is *the Magisterium of God* leading on to a climax in God and in the Person of God. It is fulfilled in Christ, *and it passes with Christ into the Magisterium of the Catholic and Roman Church*. It is one principle with God revealing Himself as The Eternal Word, and becoming Incarnate as the Word made Flesh. Here you have the basic meaning of biblical inspiration and biblical

inerrancy. It is compatible with many a statement made in the presumed context of human history in distant ages past and widely accepted among men as true of human culture, which might have been only very partially accurate. It can have its *'obiter dicta'*, its cultural presumptions, its implicit citations, but the message preached and the facts asserted as facts within the ambit of the prophet's message, whether directly doctrinal or not, must be true and are true.

### **The Interpretation of Scripture**

This writer would accept, with St. Thomas Aquinas, that every so called spiritual sense or mystic sense of the Bible—if it be indeed a sense within the text directly willed by God—is part of the *literal* sense as the 'fuller sense' of the Scripture. There is a twin authorship to the Bible, and the 'literal' sense of the prophet may be simply the 'typical' and prophetic sense of God, who is leading this sense forward to its understanding uniquely in Christ.

One would accept also, with Cardinal Daniélou, that the whole of the Scripture is Christocentric and Christological in final meaning and final interpretation (which is not a position admitted by all, even orthodox scholars). Just as the womb of Mary was Nature's offering to God for the Incarnation of Christ, so, for this writer, the Scripture is the vehicle of the Divine Magisterium of Christ as the Eternal and pre-existent Word of God, and is consummated in all its aspects in His coming and His attributes.

In the nature of the case, the Scriptures are not subject to private and human interpretation, but to the meanings of the Holy Spirit of God and to the magisterium that declares that meaning, as St. Peter asserted a long time ago. Among the Jews themselves, the priesthood and the rabbinate, which killed the prophets, nevertheless alone had the canonical power to declare the Canon of the Scriptures. Neither the seer himself, nor the individual as such had power over 'the word of God'. That magisterium given in Moses and Aaron was trustee only for the Christ, in whose person it was to pass away. Yet even that limited magisterium asserted and used its power to declare and to interpret the inspired word of God.

That power—dim, partial, and hesitant before the Incarnation—passes now into the Magisterium of Christ which lives in the Church and stems directly from the Divinity of Christ.

Christ as Lord of history lives, teaches, and defines with a final word within the Catholic Church. One is forced to use the word 'Catholic' and not simply the word 'Church' because only within the Catholic Church is there the will and the faith to declare and to use this power—a power totally necessary to vindicate the Divinity of Christ and to allow Christ to fulfil His mission among men till the end of time. Christ is not only Lord of the Church, but as Lord of all human history—Lord indeed of universal history—He is Lord of the Bible as well. It teaches and declares through the leading and inspiring of God, 'the things that are concerning Him'.

In the last analysis therefore the written word, the 'Holy Writ', is always subject to the word, *the spoken and declared word of Magisterium*, that is to say of the divine authority within the Church. The scripture had to come out from the mouth of priest and prophet before ever it was written. It had then to be accepted and declared authentic by those who have received from God "*power to sit in the chair of Moses*", as Christ put it. Only then could the people know that it was indeed the word of God. Whether it was written down after the death of the prophet, maybe, or declared in blazing words by the prophet, it was all part of one living tradition, one living magisterium of God which was the faith of Israel.

The law and the rule is the same now. The magisterium of the Church declares in her faith and in her liturgy the meaning of the Holy Writ. It is God's meaning, not always obvious to man, and God must speak His mind. The same magisterium of the Church has power to define such meaning if necessary. Sometimes it has done so, as in the case of the meaning of the text concerning the primacy of Peter and the power on earth of "*the keys of the Kingdom*".

Much more often the magisterium of the Church has indirectly taught the meaning of the Scripture either by accepting the universal consent of the Fathers of the Church, or by basing definitions in Council on long passages so quoted, as for instance at the Council of Trent. The coherence of the development of doctrine in the Catholic Church, allied to the coherent and continuous development of prophecy, doctrine and Messianism in the Old Testament, raises up *in history itself* one vast monument to the direct participation of God in the history of mankind and the religious and spiritual life of mankind.

Observe we did not say 'intervention' but *participation*, because we are speaking about the natural, the proper, the always to be expected union and communion of God upon man. In

Him we live, and move, and have our being. This sign set before the nations is its own evidence and it is not explicable from the historic, cultural, relative social life of human society itself. If it were so, then there would be many another example, and there is not. The line from Adam and Abraham to Christ and the Vicar of Christ reigning today is a unique line, and a line unique in its claims and the unity of the principle—namely God Himself—in which that claim is vested from around 5,000 BC until today.

Through the Bible and the Jewish religious teaching synagogue, and then with continuity in the Catholic Christian Church, we are in the presence of a Mind, a Power, and an Authority-with-love that transcends the mind of man and the power of man. Yet it manifests itself as the control and direction—the Environment to be expected—of the life of Man. It carries its own conviction. If there were more time and much more space this theme could be enormously developed, especially by linking it with the insights of Cardinal Newman, whose own theology is not even now exhausted in its developmental potential.

What we have merely indicated here may be enough, we hope, to give heart and courage to generous young minds. They may be sure that there is within the Church and its treasury of God-given wisdom from the past a majesty of truth and life that far outstrips the quite wretched limitations of their rationalist critics. There is no such thing as an ‘on-going revelation’ that proceeds from the mind of man. There will be merely the disintegration of the fulness of Christ and of the real meaning of human nature and the dignity of human love. (This we know from Newman’s tests of doctrinal development, as well as from common sense and the evidence of our own times).

There is an on-going development of the understanding of doctrine and of the vision of Christ’s majesty, but that understanding resides within the Church Catholic, and in that work the meaning of the Scriptures is still carried on. It is carried on by the One who prompted it in the beginning within Adam, by the Holy Spirit of God who receives the things that are of Christ and manifests that fulness to men through the Word of the Eternal Word, made now the solemn word of the Church which Christ animates until the end of time.

## THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

The title of St. John the Evangelist is *“the Disciple whom Jesus loved”*, and one suggests that the full meaning and import of this title and its relationship to Christ answers many a ‘radical’ and minimising exegesis of the scriptures, especially in all that pertains to the true and literal Divinity of Christ. What does this title mean? Was it simply an expression of a deeper personal and natural love between Jesus Christ and the youngest and most virginal of the Twelve? Was it simply a personal relationship and affection, or did it mark a special relationship for a work or function also in the Church, as in the case of the relationship of Christ to St. Peter? Did the others in some vague way expect that this especial love between Jesus Christ and John meant that he would be given some special office or work to do? The evidence to suggest that, even among the Twelve, this special love of Christ for John implied an office or vocation over and above being one of the Twelve stands in two things. The title and the relationship as fact evokes no obvious jealousy among the Twelve. The request of the mother of the sons of Zebedee for places of especial honour for her sons, *“one at your right hand and one at your left”* did provoke such jealousy and anger. Christ repudiated both the request and the type of relationship to Him it presumed. His disciples, in the Kingdom, were not to think or to behave like the lords of the nations.

The relationship of Christ to St. John was not it seems one of purely human preference, even less of favouritism. It was a love so clearly spiritual—though not for that fact less tender and fulfilling—that it evoked reverence and acceptance. John both deserved this love, and the love given and received between Christ and St. John suggested an office to come and made him the obvious one for such an office. The same nuance of vague expectation comes across, for this writer, in the beautiful drama which closes the Gospel according to John. Peter has been humbled into the dust and deeply grieved as well, in this humiliation he makes his own act of perfect and humble contrition, in self-abandonment to the Master: *“Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? ... Lord you know all things. you know that I love you ... feed my sheep!”* Then, as the Master prophesies the manner of Peter’s own death in His likeness, and says *“follow Me”*, Peter sees John following as well. *“Lord, and what is this man going to do?”*

he asks. The whole context implies that just as Peter has now received back his former office and position among the Twelve, so also he expects that *this man* whom Christ loved in some deeper way will also have some special work or office among the disciples. Peter is told, not for the first time, to mind his own work and mission and not to be inquisitive about another's vocation. The question of Peter does however point to a reality in the relationship of John to Christ and the presumptions that arose out of it. We have no reason to think that others among the Twelve would not have the same thought and expectation in their minds. We ask ourselves, what was the special significance in the relationship of Christ to John the apostle, and what was the office and function in the Church which required his election to some especial love?

### **The Intuition of the Divine**

There is only *one Personality* in Jesus Christ, the divine personality of God pre-existent made Son of Man for us. In any deep and truly spiritual love, it is the personality and its quality which is the object of the loving, and the centre of the sheer joy in the possession of that loving of another. In the Beatific Vision there will be knowledge of God as He is, and possession of God as He is in love. The knowing and loving will be total joy, which is to say utter fulfilment of very being. While St. John did not enjoy the beatific possession of God in Christ in the special relationship he had to Him, the analogy is directly helpful. John entered by the knowledge of faith and wisdom into a unique intuition of the Divinity of Our Lord.

This possession communicated between them a special knowledge and a special love. It was to understand and later to express in his gospel the Divinity of Christ in Christ's own way of expressing and speaking of *Himself* that John was formed and taught in a relationship of understanding with love, unique even among the Twelve. The love given by Christ to the 'beloved disciple' and the love returned by the beloved disciple to the Master was indeed more than a natural love, in even the deepest and most noble sense of a natural love. Christ was doing more than form the mind and heart of John to know Him and love Him. He was forming a mind and a love in John that would be the very closest expression in a disciple of Christ's own manner of knowing, speaking and loving in His—Christ's—own human psyche.

We will see later that this would have a unique and tremendous significance in John's portrayal and expression of what Jesus said about Himself, and the words and ideas in which Jesus spoke about Himself, both when He confronted the Temple Establishment, and when He prayed to the Father at the Last Supper. John was trained and formed to be almost a 'mirror image' of Jesus Christ. Peter knew and loved Our Lord with a loyal, brave, and indefatigable love. It was not a love without weakness or without incoherence. Time and again we are told of the Twelve that "they did not understand the meaning of these words".

If to Peter was given in the power of the keys, a humble and utterly steadfast courage in keeping and expressing the doctrine of Christ, and to Paul was given the understanding to a supreme degree of the philosophical and theological evolution through time of the Mystery of the divine Economy in Christ, to John was given in an especial degree the intuition in recognition and love of the Divine Person in Himself. This would do more than place between them a unique communion of love, it would also cause John to remember and value supremely those moments and meanings in which Christ taught Himself to men in His Divinity, and in all its tremendous claims and impact. In this perhaps, as much as anything else, lies the distinction between the Christ of the catechesis of the people, the Christ of the synoptics, and the Christ the Son of God literally and utterly so, in the bosom, or being, of the Father. This was the Christ of the Eucharist, the Bread of Life, the Christ of the vine and the branches, the Christ, that is to say, of the direct life of grace, the inner as well as the outer Way, Truth, and Life.

### **Vocation of John to Modern Man**

The vocation of St. John as the apostle of the Divinity of Christ's *one person* has fed and powered the true development of the doctrine of the Church at all times, not least in the first centuries in which the true doctrine of both the divinity and the humanity are hammered out in great Councils, and the concepts are refined in the fires of contrary heresy against either the full Divinity or the full Humanity of Christ. His vocation is uniquely important to us at the present time, in the age of Bultmannism, one might say. For the testimony of St. John to the transcendent and pre-existent Divine being of Jesus Christ sticks in the gullet of the modern, radical' or liberal' scripture scholar. They take refuge in the claim that John can be ignored, his

Gospel is very late, it is in any case the rewritten symposium of a mass of fragments, welded together by devoted disciples.

It is too, they say, not a direct account of the actual sense of Jesus words, but the late theologising of John upon events and confrontations in the life of the Master. John has, by secondary reflection come to see the meaning of Jesus and His life and being, and has rewritten the themes, the events and the allocutions of Jesus to the Father (as in John: chapters 13 to 17) on a wider canvas which is itself a 'development' not only of the doctrine of Christ, but also of the very facts themselves. They would say that John has taken the same sort of spiritual 'licence' with the actual events of Jesus, as a consortium of film directors might take with some heroic theme from history, an heroic theme perhaps from the Bible itself. After all, Hollywood did much the same with the theme of Moses, and of Solomon, even of the life of Christ Himself, and all with reverence and excellent intentions.

The argument against this modern position, which is often taught in even Catholic Colleges to the students of theology, consists first in the stark coherence of St. John, and the spare, intense build-up to a confrontation with the official Jewish mind, or even the expectation of the people themselves, which could never have been the natural development of the mind of any orthodox Jew. Take for instance the setting of chapter six in St. John, the promise of the giving of the Bread of Heaven, in the context of the recent feeding of the multitude with 'bread of life' and with the mention of the Manna as the trail type of the One Bread whose flesh given for the Life of the World is Jesus Christ in person. The whole idea is totally alien, in a realistic and factual sense, to anything an orthodox Jew, or even any man or woman of sound common sense, could possibly conceive or 'develop' in their own human mind. No wonder so many went away, finally shocked into abandoning this man and all he stood for. Peter also and the Apostles were beaten to their knees, to the ultimate motives, in what they had seen and known, of their belief and trust in Jesus. There is also Christ's own amazing line in confirmation: "it is the *Divine*, the Spirit that quickens, the flesh profits nothing. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and Life". "What if you should see the Son of Man ascending up to where he was before?"

People who had never in their lives thought about God as literally enfleshed do not speak that way. No pious Jew could have thought about It that way from the development of his own

mind. No Muslim could think that way about God's being. The whole passage on the promise of the Eucharist makes no sense, it is the claim of a madman, unless it makes the one, total blinding sense of a relationship of God's own being to man's spiritual being, should God, *the Life of Man*, be made flesh. It makes perfect sense if John got this from Christ. It makes nonsense as the development of a beautiful metaphor that John has exaggerated. If Jesus is only "divine" in as much as he is perfectly and fully human, then as a devout Jew and a unique prophet he could not have spoken about 'drinking my blood'. As a metaphor, such a thought, in direct breach of the Law of Moses, would be a horrible blasphemy. It makes sense only if he, as The Word made flesh, the Bread of Life and the True Vine, really and factually meant what he said.

### **Convergence of St. John with St. Paul**

The same point could be made concerning the first chapter, the Prologue as it is called, of the Gospel of St. John. The only degree of development it contains is in the poetic excellence of the thought and its expression. It is sparse, taut, wholly excellent, and it speaks a doctrine never before spoken on earth. Interestingly enough, the doctrine of St. John, if it is analysed, is the same as that of St. Paul to the Colossians and to the Ephesians, for instance. It is the doctrine of the Mystery of God, the distinct Word, in whom all things do consist and hold together, who holds the primacy in all things, enfleshed at the end of time as the Heir of the Ages and the final manifestation of the meaning of Creation and of the saving intentions of God for all his creations the angels and mankind. He certainly could not have learnt it from John; Paul's busy, breathless, intense and far-flung line of life hardly crossed that of John the Evangelist in both his acts and vision, but that of John is more perfect in the relation of what Christ Jesus is in Himself, and His personal meaning and loving towards ourselves; "the men thou gavest Me" (John 17:21.). The Prologue of St John does not represent the manner in which ideas are worked out by the sane human mind, either could and would come across from a human theologian and by development through long years afterwards. It is too perfect, too terse, too beautiful and too utterly coherent in itself. It is comprehensible, for one thing, only if Jesus was and **is** pre-existent in the Godhead before the Incarnation, and in that Reality of God knows,

wills, and sees all His meaning and purpose in the world of men. Then he comes into His own and His own received Him not, and the stark drama and tragedy of the Mission at Christ the Son of God and the Son of Man begins to unfold. What Paul expresses a little breathlessly in pastoral epistles, but often with moments of literary majesty, of the Mission of Christ in Creation and unto Creation, St. John expresses with terse and perfect poetry the inner Life of Christ in Himself unto His Father and unto men as Redeemer. There is a literary development here, but not a development proceeding from the dynamism of human concoction.

Of the notion of Christ's "divinity" as it that would develop from purely human knowledge and insight, we can read it and find it in the Gnostics, against is whom the Gospel of St. John is as the great rock of support and document of choice of the Fathers of the Church. It is from them we know how the mind of man, working outwards from its own human psychology would deal and does deal with the Divine in Christ, and we have it in the presentation of many modern and Rationalist thinkers. We have it, one would suggest. In the meditations of Hans Kung, in *Christ Sein*, for instance, the human mind that abstracts from the realism and intuition of St. John. to theologise it as a version of the *Jesus of History* distinct from the *Jesus of Faith*, must always end up with a supreme Prophet who is less than the transcendent divine, who is not pre-existent to the Universe and Creation, and who at the very highest is 'divine' only as a supreme emanation of a 'holy and noble consciousness' at the root of being itself, and identified with Creation itself. In other words, at its very best, the mind of man alone will come up either with a prophet who is more than a Mahomet, or with Pantheism. What St. John gives us is the psychological truth of The One who was God and Man in the unity of One Person, and gives us the work, teaching, claim, and impact of Him who was both at one and the same time— the Christ of Faith and the Christ of History. John was there, and more than there as Annas and Caiaphas were there, or Judas for that matter—John was formed from within by a unique relationship of personal formation from Jesus Christ, to treasure and value the things that Jesus said and did which expressed Jesus' divine being and relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit. John was formed also to so treasure their import and significance that he could, and did, express in the words of Christ and the manner of speaking and thinking of Christ, the reality of the Word made Flesh.

## Mirror-Image and Recall

The question arises therefore, how far the words of St. John, and the literary cadences of St. John do reflect directly the words and very expressions of Jesus Christ Himself. One suggests that the correspondence will be very close indeed. It will certainly be 'substantial' in the sense of communicating the essential thought of Christ in all its beauty and more than human coherence. It could be more or less verbal, be a correspondence very, very close to the literal reality, especially in the so-called 'sacerdotal prayer', the four chapters spoken almost personally and verbally by Christ, at the Last Supper. The possibility of this involves certain human factors. There is first the power to retain, verbalise, and memorise *in detail* long passages of speech or writing, a power native to the Semitic mind, and found among the Arabs to this day. Indeed, among the people of Spain as well, and their descendants, whether because of their partly Moorish and Semitic inheritance or not, this writer is not competent to say, something of the same ability, an ability alien to the Nordic mind, still exists.

There are a number of cases recorded in the lives of Spanish saints of the whole Bible being learned by heart and being at the memory recall of the person involved. This writer has personally sat in an empty lecture room of the Gregorian University at Rome as a student and listened to members of the South American College there rehearsing each other in the theses on which we were to be examined for the Licentiate of Philosophy. One can attest that these young men were *word perfect* page, after page, after page of the author, comprising not only the theses themselves and their formal arguments. but the words of their author concerning the opinions, the adversaries, the corollaries, etc, etc. One does not imply that this is a good or worthy way to learn philosophy, or that it would happen that way now. One is saying that in fact it did happen, and one can testify to the amazing type of prowess it contained.

We have already suggested that St. John made himself, in his relationship of total personal discipleship of Christ *the very mirror image of the mind of Christ and the heart of Christ*. We are saying that to this he was invited by Jesus Christ and formed by Jesus Christ. No other human came as close to sharing and copying the human characteristics, in teaching and speaking, of Jesus the Christ, as did him who was 'the Beloved Disciple'. As a result, St. John could and did express Christ, and express Christ in what he said, and did, and meant, with a

unique clarity and authority. Such was John's vocation in the Church, and that vocation gives us unerringly the Gospel of St. John. This dramatic, detailed, and rich picture is the living Christ, the Christ of history and the Christ of faith.

The question of recall in the Gospel of St. John has its own fascinating overtones as well. It is a known fact that it is possible in deep hypnosis for a subject to recall *in detail*, facts of deed, dress, and relationship going back to events in their very early childhood. This writer at least has had the testimony from a soldier who was there as a medical orderly in a hospital in Egypt in the boredom of the last great war, that such a doctor of psychological medicine could not only make willing subjects recall back to their early youth, but that the voice of the man relating changed to the accents of childhood as he spoke. About all these claims this writer cannot claim to have personal competence. If, however, detailed recall of this nature is possible at all, one must ask whether as much, and more, would not be a psychological possibility in one who was not only totally formed in the mind and heart of God made Man, but who had known, retained, and always did possess his Master at all times in the communion of the deepest and most loving contemplation. St. John of the Cross tells us that in the deepest communion of mystical contemplative union with God, the mind, heart, will, and love of the mystic is made as much one with God Himself as if a 'little flame' on a wick were merged with a great flame. When they are merged you see but one flame. When the wick is moved away, you prove the separate identity of the 'little' flame. Indeed. St. John of the Cross teaches that in the highest and most final phase of perfect mystical union with God, the soul so blessed cannot think any thought not according to the will of God, nor will anything unless God will that the mystic should will it. When John set his mind to write his Gospel, a Gospel which ancient writers of the Johannine school and tradition tell us was written expressly to vindicate and manifest the Living Divinity of Christ against the first burgeoning heresies concerning that Divinity, would he not have been in his own psyche in some special relationship to Jesus Christ?

### **The Graphic Mind of St. John**

St. John would have been willing to do that which Christ wanted him to do, something also that Christ positively willed John to do. He had been formed, moulded, loved to do it well and do it

truly. He had never lost the presence of the person of Christ to his own soul; he had loved and possessed the Master within a communion of being, even after that Master had “ascended up to where He was before”. To this writer it seems that the ‘recall’ of St. John arising from a living communion of contemplation with Jesus Himself, would have reached a level of graphic perfection and visual acuity which it would be hard for most of us to conceptualise. John had also, from his description of many incidents in the Gospel—as for example “full of great fishes, one hundred and fifty-three”— a mind capable of almost photographic fixation. He is a master of the dramatic moment, a moment to which he thrilled. So, for instance, he not only gives us the terse, idiomatic exchanges of Jesus and His mother and of Mary to the waiters at the first public miracle at Cana, he gives us also the rough, good-natured, rustic jest of the best man of the bridegroom as well. John, elevated by a living love of Jesus, at the moment of writing or dictating the high points of his Gospel, would live again the fact and expression of the same Jesus Christ, whom John had known, loved, and almost ‘fused with’ in the days of his discipleship on earth.

Does he not say himself of that same Jesus, *“that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and palpably felt with our hands, concerning the word of Life. — the Life was made manifest and we saw it, and testify to it etc.”* (John 1:1—2.) Who can doubt the vivid, graphic manner in which St. John lived his love and recognition of the Lord Jesus? With St. John we would be in the presence not of any kind of hypnotic recall, not any sort of passive unconscious self-surrender, but in the presence of a recall that was total, active, loving, and fully given over to the purposes of the wisdom and will of God Incarnate Himself. This is a higher principle of prompting and recall than that of a passive response to the command under hypnotic trance of another’s will. It would be similar to that process attested by St. John of the Cross, presumably from his own mystic communion with God. Upon what St. John of the Cross himself calls: “the very threshold of the beatific vision”, the saintly soul can only think what God would have it think, and will what God would have it will, so fully is that soul now become the very mirror-image of the God in whom it is about to be beatified.

### **Temple and Liturgy fulfilled in Christ's Body**

In such a state of union and communion with God, no doubt even in extreme old age. St. John the Evangelist could write with the verve and power of his youth. Yet, this writer does ask leave to doubt if St. John really was at the very end of his earthly life when he wrote that Gospel. It is the Gospel of a man in the full possession of great power of intellect and dynamism of personality. It reads like the work of a man who was, psychologically speaking, in his prime. In that sense of 'his prime', it could of course be taken up to at least the early seventies of his life. For the whole scheme of the Gospel of St. John is amazing. Besides the points we have briefly touched upon, there is the presentation of Christ as the physical fulfilment, in His veryBody, of the Temple itself, of the liturgy of the Temple, of the meaning of all its feasts, and the meaning of all the prophetic utterance, and living types of the Old Testament itself.

Indeed, the great writer and former Rabbi, Dr. Alfred Edersheim does not hesitate to state that both from the Gospel of St. John, and from somewhat arcane references in the Book of Revelations, St. John reveals that he was himself either of the priestly line of Aaron, or at least intimately aware of the most secret ritual and practices of the priests within the Temple itself by day and by night. If it is so, that John was indeed of the priestly line, then once again we see how wonderfully he was chosen and formed by the Word made Flesh to reveal to men *the whole import and meaning* of the age-long ascent of the Bible, its inspired word, and its unique prophetic and Messianic message.

One could imagine that the Epistles of St. John, especially the second and the third, do show something of the fading grasp on detail of a very old man. There is in them the permanent, blinding *reality* of God loved and held in contemplative communion. There would seem to be the weariness of detail of a brain now extremely fatigued. There is no sign of any such in the Gospel of St. John, nor in the Book of Revelations, itself compiled upon a pattern totally similar to the Apocalyptic writings such as the *Books of Henoah*, etc of the Old Testament. In John the Evangelist one is tempted to say we see the noblest and most perfect of the Old Testament prophetic minds, taught and fulfilled in the meaning of that tradition—the Person of God revealed in the Flesh of Jesus the Messiah. Neither is it true to suggest,(a final thought), that later and fuller reflection on any great vision of the truth, whether natural or

supernatural truth, does in fact dilute or degenerate or expand by extraneous addition the content of the original vision, knowledge, or experience. The effect of time, when the soul reflects and ponders the word of God, is to refine, deepen, and basically to simplify in expression the fullness of God revealed or known in all its implications. If this is true when great philosopher Mathematicians like Einstein or Heisenberg reflected on their work in their most mature years, much more is it true of the knowledge and experience of the things of God.

Doubtless there is a lot more work to be done, especially if the Gospel of St. John is linked with his Book of Revelations, upon the fascinating character and personality of the *Beloved Disciple* who conformed himself so closely to the human psyche and the divine personality of Jesus Christ. One dares to suggest, while admitting that other and more careful scholars will do much better, that more fruit of truth is to be found by following the theology one here suggests, than by wandering in the deadly desert of the Bultmannite mind. One is also grateful once again, to those students, seminarists, and most dear friends, whose earnest enquiries in their tribulations from their confused teachers of theology, force one, in trying to answer their needs, to rethink and understand much more satisfyingly, the beauty and truth of the Word of God as that Eternal Word is manifested in the Economy of the Church, and in the utterly true and loving words of the writers of the New Testament.

## JESUS: THE SELF-CONSCIOUS MANIFESTATION OF GOD

In dialogue once with hostile scribes Jesus Christ asked "how can the theologians (scribes) say that the Christ is the son of David. for David himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit calls him *Lord*, how then is he his son? And they were not able to answer him" (Matt 22:42-46). For Jewish tradition, with magnificent truth, forbade any king, however high, to accept the title of "Lord" from his father. Out of the life of his father came his own life in subjection. His father was for ever his Lord. The Holy Spirit, author and vindicator of the Law, inspirer of the Holy Writ, would not belie his own ordinance. They could not answer him. St. Paul gives the answer almost as if the question had been put to him: "And to them (the Israelites) belong the patriarchs, and of them the Christ, according to the flesh; the same being God over all things, blessed for ever and ever" (Rom 9:5). The Son of God made Son of Man has two sources of generation, one from eternity, the other from David through Mary Virgin, in time. Only by his Self-Revelation could the Son of God reveal the meaning of the Spirit whose words are the prophecy in sacred scripture.

Likewise we must say to those theologians (scribes) who teach a 'kenotic' theory of Christ's consciousness of His own Person and oneness of being with the Father: if Christ is to manifest Himself as God, how can He not be conscious of Godhead, literally and factually so? It is a gross misuse of St. Paul to insinuate that he teaches that Christ emptied out his consciousness of his own being and person. On the contrary, Paul teaches that Christ *knew* that he was in the 'reality of God' (*morphe*) and thought it no robbery to be equal to God. Yet, he *emptied* himself, taking on the outward appearance (*schemati*) of man. Then, going further yet he emptied himself yet more, being obedient to a criminal's death, even death by crucifixion (Phil 2:5-11). St. Paul indeed implies by his very words that Christ *consciously* emptied Himself of his proper form and reality. If he did it consciously, then indeed He knew who he was, at all times and all the time. Who was Jesus the Christ? We have it from St. John that He was the Eternal Word, who was with the Father in the beginning and who was God. We have it from John that in this Word was Light, light that was the life of humankind. Through that Word, that Intelligence, all things were made, and without Him was made nothing that was made, either

visible or invisible. Can you have an Eternal Word, the Intelligence through whom all things are made, the true Light of every man that comes into this world, who revealing Himself and being manifest in the flesh, does not know who He is? Does it make the slightest bit of sense, or is it an unconscious but quite dreadful blasphemy against the Divinity of that One Same Word, Eternal as the Father, now made man “for us men, and for our salvation”?

What is conscious personality in ourselves? Is it not the full, the *existential* reality of our being, grasped and possessed in fulfilment as being, as knowledge, as love, as our full self; is this not my consciousness of being 'me'? Consciousness is my being through all that my nature is and possesses, rejoicing in the rich experience of existence. In us who are creatures, this experience of richness can and should grow, for we are not self-defined, self-determined, nor self-fulfilled. We should grow, and the conscious joy of being should grow, even as according to his manhood, the boy Jesus grew "in wisdom, age, and favour before God and men" (Luke 2:40-52). The personality of Christ is the personality of God. In our own personality we experience the richness of being, of our existence, through the nature that we possess. In Jesus Christ the person who was God, must experience the richness of his personality, through the natures, plural, which He possesses. In ourselves, all that we possess, including our bodily senses and feelings are experienced through that 'personality' which is active from *the peak of our being*, and through which, and unto which, all the experiences of both soul and body are drawn up, and through which they are co-ordinated in the rightful order of our twofold nature as body and as soul.

### **“I Am” Spans God’s Nature and Experience**

Can we think that in Jesus Christ, the *person* in Him did not experience, necessarily and always, the richness of his being through the *divine* nature which He possessed and through which alone that 'personality' of His was defined? For Jesus, to experience the joy of existence which defines His being is to know and love Himself as “from the Father, in the love which is the Holy Spirit”. For God to know Himself in the simple, un-splittable richness of the experience of being God, is to know “MYSELF” as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; one I AM. The divine persons of this necessary Trinity through which God’s Unity is defined cannot be unaware of each other,

cannot be 'siphoned off' from each other. For Jesus, *if he is Divine*, is always to know the Father, and to love the Father in the Holy Spirit: this is the experience of being God, and also of being the second Person of that Trinity through which the divine nature necessarily is, and through which Father, Son and Holy Spirit experience themselves as One God. Approaches to Christology which deny this necessary, simple truth have not worked out and in humility understood from the whole philosophy and theology of the Church's present and past what must be so or else, they proceed from a first, deeply unconscious approach to Jesus Christ which does not accept his transcendence, nor his eternal pre-existence, nor his identity and equality of being with the Father.

For the prayerful reader, especially the *religious* reader—priest, nun, brother, seminarist, novice—the understanding and love of Jesus as He is for us, and was for us, must come from reading the bible and from the liturgy of the Church, and the great saints of the Church (not forgetting the principal documents of the Church) for in these sources the life, the consciousness of Jesus, who He is, is breathed out for us. Take St. John. It is impossible to give constant texts; the entire gospel of John is the revelation to men, and especially to the intellectual and sophisticated Christian whether of his day or of our own, of Jesus, who He was<sup>1</sup>. For this the 'beloved disciple' was raised up, for this He was and became the *beloved* disciple, that he might enter into the self-consciousness of The Word made Flesh and reveal to us, in prayer and teaching, in parable and assertion, in meditation, power, and in pain, the complex consciousness of Jesus the Christ.

It is useless to claim that "John gives us only a theological meditation, not the actual words of Christ": John gives us in words and ethos the impact, with word, power, fact, and feeling of what Jesus did, and Jesus said. Who formed this mind and heart, this way of speaking in St. John? Did the facts he relates, the claims he makes, ever find denial in the early Church, or in the great Fathers of the Church? Do or do not the first great Councils of the Christian Church base themselves solidly on his doctrine of Christ and his vision of Christ? Besides, the synoptics also, Matthew, Mark, and Luke echo this doctrine. So does Peter in his doctrine of our being made through Christ "co-sharers of the divine nature". So, above all, does Paul in the Letters to the Romans, the Ephesians, the Colossians, the Philippians, the Hebrews, in the most explicit

manner<sup>2</sup>. The doctrine of St. Paul is, in fact, the universal, the *cosmic* application of the doctrine that John manifests in Christ's teaching concerning Himself, and in Christ's *meditative prayer* unto the Father, through the Holy Spirit of them both. John also makes a cosmic application, harder to penetrate than Paul's, because again more intimately and inwardly of the divine self-realisation of Jesus, in the Book of the Apocalypse.

### **The "Thunder" of St. John**

In an article it is impossible to delineate and analyse texts, at least in their abundance. We can, however, ask does St. John insinuate this *Consciousness of being God* which permeates the whole personality on earth of Jesus the Christ and which defines his nature as He knew Himself, through the Father, in the Spirit? It is clear from the very opening prologue of the Gospel according to John. This prologue is a summary of the whole work, life, and mission of Jesus from the Divine Self-Possession to the bestowal on men of the birthright of those who are born not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God. It spans the conscious identity of the Word through and from the Father; the nature of the Word as God "*and the Word was God*" and follows through to his vocation as the life and light of men, the coming of the Heir with grief and rejection unto *his own things* (not own people) and His perseverance in the divine work of Redemption. Redemption is the gift of being made co-sharers in the divine nature. And finally it states one other thing. That other indication of St. John is mistranslated, in a way, (one says it with regret), which is either incompetence or deliberate derogation from Christ's Divinity, in our Jerusalem bible. The Jerusalem bible writes "No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, *who is nearest to the Father's heart*, who has made him known". The Greek, the Old Latin of the Vulgate, and the Revised Standard Version (the most humbly accurate of modern English texts) translate "*who is in the bosom of the Father*, he has made him known". To say that Christ has his being in the bosom of the Father is to state unity of being, equal Divinity, and Christ's consciousness in his Divine Person, of his own divine being. To say "nearest to the Father's heart" speaks the merest Adoptionism of this man, Jesus Christ. In fact, it says nothing at all except "the most loved". It is a patent mistranslation, and to be denounced as such.

Interestingly, the most ancient of the Greek readings, and the one accepted by the Pontifical Biblical Institute in their edition of the critical Greek New Testament, (Augustine Merk, 1938) reads “*God the Only-Begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has expounded Him.* Apart from the occurrence of this reading in the earliest of the Fathers of the Church, this reading is the more likely, because it concludes the Prologue of St. John, at the end of the summary of the life’s work of Christ, with the proclamation which begins it: “*In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: the Same was in the Beginning with God.* Thus in the beginning of his prologue, so akin as a summary in epic style to the first chapter of Genesis, St. John proclaims the divinity and the divine personality of The Word made Flesh. This again, is to present Christ in the prologue as ‘alpha ...’ and to conclude it with Christ as ‘omega’. This presentation of Christ, together with the explicit naming of Jesus as “the Alpha and the Omega”, occurs also in the Book of the Apocalypse, which the tradition of the Church rightly attributes also to John the Evangelist.

The Greek word which we commonly translate “reveal” or “declare” in the above passage from the prologue of St. John’s gospel (*exegeisthai*) means to tell at length, to describe, and therefore one presumed to render it as ‘expound Him. For John is making the profound distinction between the *prophetic* word, which, though guaranteed and holy, can never penetrate with authority to God’s own inner being and self-expression, (“No man has seen God at any time, the Only-Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known”) and the Word of the Living Truth, divine, absolute, certain in his Magisterium. This revealing of God in God the Only-Begotten is more than the revelation of a word, or the gospel of the true good. It is the revelation of a communion of life and love—for the *law* was given by Moses, *grace and truth* came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17-18). Upon this vision of Christ, this explicit teaching, and this experience of Christ in prayer and liturgy, the very constitution and self-manifestation of the Catholic Christian Church has always depended. From this experience of the Christ the Church’s own conscious awareness of her own divine magisterium proceeds. The infallibility which crowns her solemn witness in faith and in morals is the voice of The Word who is the Living Word of God. That Word may, through the Holy Spirit, speak again and again to develop and to fulfil. It can never un-speak what in the past has been said of solemn faith or

laid upon the consciences of the people as solemn obligation. For the Church is conscious in herself on earth, of the voice of the Living God. Here is the difference between the word of prophecy, as of Moses or of The Law, and the Word who fulfils every partial prophetic word in his Living Self-Consciousness as God.

Such a presentation of Christ is the whole ethos of the Gospel according to John. It comes across to us most fully in that "Sacerdotal Prayer" of St. John's Gospel which concludes the public teaching of Jesus on the eve of his Passion (John 17 passim). It is the thoughts and aspirations of Christ in these chapters which alone, and fully, explain the dramatic and explicit sixth chapter of St. John, the revelation of Him who is "The Bread of Life" to men, and the statement that "as the Living Father has sent Me and I live through the Father, so he that eats of Me, the same shall live through Me". Could a sane human, being only creature, ever conceive the thoughts that this man spoke'? Could He speak this way and not be conscious of sheer Godhead in person'? Could He reveal what he said as true doctrine and *not* be consciously God in person? "Did ever man *speak like this man?*". The Temple police of Jesus day posed this question. We pose it also to the theologians of our own day.

### **Juxtaposition of Divine Name and Divine Attributes**

It is not a polemic of theology which interests us, in the attempt to enter into the consciousness of Jesus Christ. We try to thrill to the majesty of that unique personality, divine made human, which entralls us in all the New Testament. If we can enter into understanding, it will lift us up to communion with God whose divine life we are to share. Immediately, another aspect of the same question comes in before us: did the Twelve and the other close disciples of Christ enjoy the same uplifting and transforming communion with the divine as an *experience*, as a communing with the Son of God'? If they did not,. how could they pass on the word that teaches us? If they did not, they had less than we have. It would be absurd to claim that our teachers, the Apostles, had the same fullness as we have if their Jesus did not know consciously the Godhead that He was.

Besides the Prologue, the Sacerdotal Prayer, the promise so explicit of the Bread of Life to be eaten, there are those other amazing passages which juxtapose the words "I AM"—the all

holy, unpronounceable Name of God—against claims which are also synonyms for the prerogative of God. Could this have been accidentally, shall we say *unconsciously*, done? "I AM: The Way, The Truth, and the Life". What creature, even the Messiah that was to come could speak that way? For only God is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life? Even if you are able to think that, as the greatest conceivable of mortal guides, the supreme prophet could indicate himself as the way, and the truth, no created being can ever be, or claim to be *the life* of men. It is this claim that John makes for the Eternal Word, also in the prologue. As he goes on to explain to Philip that 'he that sees Me sees the Father also'. Christ also promises the sending of the Holy Spirit to keep them, and the Church after them, in the truth of God. The unity and equality of the Godhead between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is so manifest in these and similar passages. There is here the echo from the synoptics, Matthew and Luke, of the baptizing in *the Name*— the holy, the incommunicable Name—of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the return to the Father, 'taken up into heaven' and the sending of the promised 'Spirit' by the Father, *in my Name*. All of this makes sense of conscious divinity. It makes sense no other way.

"I AM: the Light of the World". Again, a title which made without the slightest qualification could apply to none but God, and which no Jewish prophet, no matter how holy, could, psychologically, ever conceivably apply to himself. Once more, it echoes that supreme prologue of John—in the opinion of this writer the greatest thing in the whole of the bible—where we are told that in the Word, through whom were made all things visible and invisible, there was Life, and that Eternal Life was both the Light and the Life of humankind. This chapter of St. John, like the sixth chapter, leads up to a mighty climax as , challenged by the Jews, answers their demand to know who He is and what are his credentials. It is in the eighth chapter (v.25) to the query: "*Who are you?*", that we have the answer: "*the Beginning, who also speaks unto you*"; ending as the confrontation deepens with the supreme statement of Christ in St. John's gospel that, "before Abraham was made, I AM." (v. 58). Therefore they took up stones to cast at Him. It was either the most eternal truth or the most explicit blasphemy. Can we go on to say, in some childish way: "Jesus had no hot line to God, his Father ... Jesus did not always know what to do ... He had to pray like us ... he was uncertain ... He had to work his way out and find the Father's will in the darkness ... Jesus did not know at first (or, as a variant,

‘until after his resurrection’) who he was”. It makes the most utter nonsense of, and shows a total lack of understanding of the fact that Jesus IS God. And being God cannot be part of your ME, of your I AM, without that consciousness defining your whole being and your whole personal consciousness. There are no parts in God, no faculties in God, no aspects of created limitation in Him whose Essence is defined and experienced as “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit”. It is not possible to slough off Divinity, nor that Consciousness which spans all Eternity in the Presentality of I AM, as if it were a shirt of which one ‘divests oneself’ in the heat of the day, to put it on afterwards when the toil of one’s work is over.

### **Divinity Incapable of Being “Exaggerated”**

Once, fingering around a coin, Jesus Christ said to the deceitful theologians, Pharisees and Sadducees who surrounded Him: "'Whose image and inscription around is this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's!'" So also, of one of the children, one of ‘the men Thou gayest me’, a pastoral priest may ask himself within his soul, “whose image and likeness is this?” And there will come to him the answer of Christ in the pages of Holy Writ, and in all the doctrine and life of the Church—“God’s!”. To the image and likeness of God we are made, to that *personal* image who is the identity of the Eternal Word, the living image and form of God, in whom it was no robbery to claim equality with God in the unity of God’s incommunicable being. It is this image and Person who is the *Son of Man*, the revelation to us, in the fullness of God’s own personal communication, of who we are, what we are, and into whom we must, through the Bread of Life, grow up in fullness of maturity to be like (Matt 22:20). One asks, how can Jesus be God the Son, made also for us Son of Man, unless He communicates to us *the Communion of God’s own being* in Himself? We seek upwards towards God for knowledge, for truth and goodness, for law and for life. We don’t seek a creature, we seek the Uncreated Light and Life for whom we are made, and in whom, by gift and grace, we find our meaning. That meaning is to be "co-sharers in the Divine Nature". How can God do this for us unless He communicates *Godhead* to us, not Manhood, the creature only? How can God work the work of the Life of God, which is what we call “the supernatural order” if God is not *consciously* “God-for-us” at all times and in all things?

It is absurd, and the taint (though usually unconscious) of the Arian heresy which teaches that in the past we have overemphasized or exaggerated the *Divine* in Christ to the loss of the 'human' in Our Lord. *It is impossible to exaggerate the Divine in Jesus Christ*, you cannot have too much of a good thing in the subject matter of the being and communication to us of God Incarnate. You cannot overemphasize the *God* against the *Incarnate*. It might be possible to fail to appreciate and express rightly the humanity in Christ, but we do not need to play down the divine to appreciate the human. We can only understand the human in Jesus Christ by first rightly understanding the Divine. The implicit, and usually unconscious pressure of the 'kenotic' theology of Jesus Christ, has been to deny the real Divinity and emphasize a human personality in Jesus. To this *human* personality they add, as if it were extrinsic, the 'dimension of the divine'. They put the mystery of the full understanding into the *divine* dimension, so that Jesus becomes in fact a subject of human understanding, analysis, and appreciation, on our terms, not on his own.

The *divinity* of Christ, as the existential, i.e. the real, impact of Jesus Christ upon the Twelve, the disciples, the Jews, and upon the life and ethos of the Church herself is subtly denied and then lost as the centre of prayer and personal spiritual life. If we read the Pastoral Letters which make up the New Testament proclamation of the Christian Faith after the Ascension of Christ, we can be in no doubt that the men who walked with Jesus Christ, and the all important apostle who knew him by direct revealing "as one born out of due time" (1Cor 15:8; Gal 1:9-2,10), were in no doubt that they had experienced *the personality of God*, God become a man for them.

If we are going to make an emphasis in the elements of what is *Mystery* in Christ, then let it be in the affirmation of the human in Jesus Christ, and not in the affirmation of the Divine. It is the Divinity which is revealed through the Word made Flesh. It is not, as some actually dare to say, the Godhead which is revealed through "the perfect Humanity". There is only *one personality* in Jesus Christ, one centred reference—that says "*me*"; in Jesus Christ that centre of reference is through the nature of God, which IS; and Jesus experienced it and declared it as I AM. If you are God, then you experience yourself as God at all times and all the time.

This is necessary philosophy, necessary theology, and the totally clear witness of John,

Paul, the author of Hebrews (if not Paul) and indeed clearly enough in claims made by Christ, and the self-psychology it implies, also in the synoptic evangelists. The Christ of the kenotic theology accords well with a God who is immanent within the creation, but not its transcendent creator. It accords well with a Jesus whose real consciousness is *human* as personality in the sense in which we feel our own: a consciousness hounded with ignorance, doubt, and the temptations which derive from the war of the “two laws” (Romans 7.23) within the flesh of fallen mankind.

This is the Christology preferred by the theology of The Dissent. It is no accident that it is so, for it destroys *Magisterium* in the Church on earth. By so re-defining Christ in terms no longer of dogmas, but more potently of psychology, it is possible to keep the dogmas as ciphers, but to destroy the actual, existential Christ of living Divinity in the flesh—the’ flesh that walked on earth, and the flesh that lives in the magisterial claims of the Church. It becomes possible by so emphasizing the ‘human’ in Christ (but not the *human* as we find it in the gospels, never intelligible except *through* the Divine personality and nature) to correct Jesus Christ as the ages pass by. For we have as authority in the bible only what he said or is alleged to have said while teaching on earth, and we know that Jesus “did not have any hot line to the Father”, that “Jesus did not always know what He had to do”, that “Jesus had to pray, trust, agonize, and walk in faith as we do, in the dark” etc.

### **Witness of Mystici Corporis**

Once we have thus changed the authority of Christ’s personality in all the pages of the gospel, especially in the pre-resurrection pages, we can reinterpret Christ’s appeal to the “Coming of the Spirit”, who will lead the People of God into the future knowledge of the things that are to come, and of "the things that belong to Me". Jesus, we can say, knew that as Man-God, even He did not know all the answers, but his 'Abba' experience<sup>3</sup> made Him certain that his Father would provide through ‘the Spirit of God’ among the chosen community. Then ‘the Breath of the Spirit’, especially the spirit of change, can become community-based within the People of God, known through prophetic spirits (like Charles Curran, for instance, and Hans Kung?) who are recognised and accepted by a majority of the Assembly of the People of God. Then it can be

whispered "in the cloister" (Cf. Luke 12:3) that St. John's gospel, though very beautiful, is not literal fact nor history, but "Haggadic Midrash"<sup>4</sup>, after all, there are many who already insolently say as much of the Nativity chapters of St. Luke. In the opinion of this writer, the Jerome Commentary comes near to this position in the matter of St. Luke, because it does not add the comment that the technique of clustering 'stories and tales' around a central fact is perfectly compatible with history *if only the stories are true* and are not legendary, although still of human interest!

As considerations of space force us to wind up this somewhat discursive meditation, it is time to break off and make a few points which some priests, and quite a lot of students of theology may not know. How many of them are aware of this passage from the Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis* (1943) of Pope Pius XII? It is hardly ancient history. "*But the loving knowledge with which the divine Redeemer has pursued us from the first moment of his Incarnation is such as completely to surpass all the searchings of the human mind; for by means of the beatific vision, which He enjoyed from the time when He was received into the womb of the Mother of God, He has forever and continuously had present to Him all the members of His mystical Body, and embraced them with His saving love*"<sup>5</sup>. The presence of this passage in a major Encyclical may not add up to its establishment as solemn doctrine, but it does declare this vision of the personality of Jesus, even in the womb, as the safe and certain doctrine of the Church. It is totally incompatible with the modern kenotic theology, and in the opinion of this writer, quite incompatible with the theology of Fr. Patrick Purnell, whose *Our Faith Story* is inflicted upon priests and people as sound doctrine by our own bishops. The theology of the humanity of Christ, through its communion with the divine Person as taught in the Encyclical of Pope Pius XII, does however fit very well with another interpretation of the Agony of Christ in the Garden and the horrific meaning of the vision of sin, total and individual, through all the ages of mankind. (*See Catholicism: a new synthesis, Faith Keyway, 1976, ch. 17, p26*).

A further consideration worth bringing to the notice of the thoughtful reader concerns that passage "if you loved Me you would indeed be glad that I am going to the Father, *because the Father is greater than I*" (John 14.25-31). We all know the basic orthodox interpretation, but the passage causes uneasiness to many, especially in the age of a falsely kenotic theory of

Christ's knowledge before the resurrection. St. Basil seems to have the perfect answer. In the *koine*, the Greek of the Romano-Hellenic civilisation he says, *nieizoon*—'greater' like *major* in Latin—means also 'ancestor', source, origin, or cause of being. Thus Christ means, "sad of heart as you are because I have told you that I am going back to the Father, *if you loved Me you would glad to let me go*, because I go from a valley of tears to *my own home*. I return to the Father, the centre of my being, my source and my joy. How perfect a sense this makes in the context!

Some ten years ago one referred this text to Dom. David Knowles O.S.B., perhaps the greatest Greek scholar of our time. He confirmed it as being from St. Basil *Contra Eunonium* (Migne P.G. 59-62. vol ii col 566) and judged it an excellent exegesis, entirely compatible with usage at the time of Our Lord. From the same theme, and probably the same discourse of St. John, what do we make of the following, acclaimed by the disciples as "clear, plain speaking indeed": "*I came out from the Father and have come into the world, again I leave the world and return to the Father*" (John 16:27-33). Did Jesus have a body when He 'came out from the Father'? But it is the same I, the same person, who speaks of Himself in both states, as the eternal Word, and also as the Word made Flesh. The "I" who speaks about Himself is the same conscious Jesus, equally aware of Himself, all the time, in either respect. And by the way, did any human being in history ever speak in this way? If we want to begin to understand the consciousness of Jesus, we must start from the Divine I AM. There is the abiding reality and self-possession of Jesus. From that position we may begin to try to understand something about his human knowledge and to develop, if we can, our understanding and 'experience' of the pain of God made man. The kenotic approach is a nonsense of theology, philosophy, psychology—and of course, exegesis.

Since one wishes to end on an untidy note, let us take finally that passage in St. Luke where his frantic parents burst in upon that wonderfully good boy who had never done so strange and cruel a thing to them before. There are times when God just has to let people suffer in faith, because there is no way of teaching the lesson beforehand. "Son, why ever have you done so to us. Your father and I have sought you sorrowing". "Why ever did you go looking for Me? Didn't you know that I must be in My Father's House, about His trade and business?"

(Luke 2:46-52). They had never told Him a word, never discussed 'Christmas Night' with the child. But now He told them, and us, that as He came up to dedicate His manhood to God in the ceremony of *bar mitzwah*, that *He knew who He was*, and was not as other men are. They were astounded and awed, and of course "his mother kept all these words, pondering them in her heart". Naturally she did. There is nothing of "haggadic midrash" about it. So we end where Jesus taught us to begin and to end, conscious of His divine being in the unity of God: "In *the Name* of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit". Amen!

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Representative texts are John 1:1-18; 3:12-18; 3:31-36 5:17-18,21-29; 6:7; 7:46; 8:12,51-59; 10:14-31

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Rom 8:9-17; 9:1-6; Eph 1:1-10; 2:18-22; 3:9; Phil 2:5-11; Col 11:2-20; Cor 4:4-7; 5:19; Heb 1 passim: 2:10-18; 5:5, 11 & 12, (Jesus as author and finisher of Faith) 2 Pet 1:1-5

<sup>3</sup> Abba Experience: Christ's allegedly unique experience of God as 'My Father', presented as less than the personal experience of Himself as God, of One Being with the Father.

<sup>4</sup> *Haggadah*: opinion in matters of the Law drawn from the scribes had no more authority than the reputation or popularity of the scribe. It could embody legendary, speculative and apocryphal material.

*Midrash*: rabbinical commentaries on the scripture. They could embody legendary or popular traditional material.

<sup>5</sup> Encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, n. 75 (C.T.S. translation 1944. p.46)

## THE “SHEKINAH” AND JESUS’ CONSCIOUSNESS OF DIVINITY

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made. In Him was Life, and the Life was the light of men (John 1:1-2). So, in the bosom of the Father, Jesus is *the Sacrament of the Angels*: to them He mediates *consortium divinae Naturae*, the co-sharing of the divine nature with the Father, in the love who is the Holy Spirit. In our beginning, in the first flash of the Universe, Jesus is *the Sacrament of the Universe*, and more specifically for us (because we may be the only spiritual life in the Universe), *the Sacrament of the World*. In the angel, a ‘sacrament’ is the mediation of the Divine Life through the ministry of the Word. In our order of reality, a sacrament is the mediation of the Divine Life through the ministry of the Word made Flesh. Every Christian sacrament is consummated through “matter and form”, through the Divinity and the Humanity of Jesus the Word enfleshed. He is the *Sacrament of The World*: in his Being and his Person He mediates God-liness to us. As with the angels, He is the source of our being, and the fulfilment of our being, but to us, the call and grace to be made “co-sharers in the divine nature’ is made through the Word become Man. Thus through Jesus, all things, and both orders of the real, matter and spirit, do come together and cohere in Unity, so hat in all things He may hold the primacy of being. (Col. 1:18)

### The Unity of Jesus

Some may say, 'No! In the beginning is the Word, but not Jesus. *Jesus* is a name mixed with manhood. It is not right to say “Jesus is God”; the subject here and the predicate are not identical<sup>1</sup>. Jesus is indeed *Sacrament of the World*, but from the time only of the Incarnation. This will not do. There is no such thing as a *descent* theology of the Word coming down into Christ and an *ascent* theology from Jesus the man being assumed into the Godhead. That way, we would conceive of two natures indeed, but two persons as well<sup>2</sup>. Jesus is the one Person of the Word made flesh. This Word, the living contemplation of the divine Mind, so took soul and body among us, that in Him we saw the *shekinah*<sup>3</sup>, the majesty of the incommunicable *Name*,

the glory of *God-in-presence*: "And we have beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The name, as also the concept of the *Shekinah* is proper only to God, and even only to God-in-presence. John has also declared Jesus Christ as the glory of God present among us when earlier he proclaims the Life and the Light (the *Shekinah* of the Life which is the light of men) that "shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:5.)

Next, to ask ourselves what is the act-centre<sup>4</sup> which defines the *person* and the *personality* in any one of us? We must put aside intricacies of expression which are unintelligible to all but trained theologians. Then we can say that *person* is that final and ultimate centre of being which says "me", and which gathers up all the different aspects and orders of reality into the affirmation "I", "Me," and "Mine". In ourselves, there is spiritual and material reality, one might even say spiritual, animal and vegetative maybe, but there is only one "me", and all that is so composed in us remains the one "mine". It is the ultimate in being which defines personality, that says "I" and "Me" and "Mine". An animal has life and a body, but is not a "person" in one order of understanding with us. It has no soul. It does not say "me" as we do. In Jesus Christ, his human reality, body and soul, is distinct in nature from the Godhead, but not through human seed of Mary does Christ say "me". That which predicates (i.e. "says") "me" in Jesus Christ is the person of the Eternal Word, or "Son" of God, who is in the bosom of the Father. In any "person", that which says the unitary "me" predicates it through the ultimate nature or power of its being. So in Jesus Christ the unitary absolute "Me" is spoken by the Person generated by the Father within the one divine being of God. Always through the fullness of the personality which proceeds within the nature of the Godhead—in *the bosom of the Father*—does Christ speak himself, relate to us, and act upon us when we respond to "Himself" inwardly and outwardly in his body the Church.

### **Jesus Does Not Patronise**

Jesus Christ, from the first moment of his conception. never was, and never is, less than God in the full predication (affirmation) of the word. The definition of the Council of Chalcedon<sup>5</sup> stands stark and clear in the Creed we proclaim every Sunday: "*God from God, Light from Light, True*

*God from True God, begotten not made, of one Being (consubstantial) with the Father".* Therefore we reject such theological comments as: "the misunderstandings with which these formulas (the Creeds and of Chalcedon) resonate do not harm the pious in their traditional piety. They think rather that these misunderstandings are the most radical form of orthodox faith, but people today are inclined in many ways to understand these misunderstandings as parts of orthodox faith, and to reject it as mythology. Not everyone who has problems with the statement 'Jesus is God' must for this reason be heterodox" etc<sup>6</sup>. To which one must say that God never does nor ever did patronise his 'little ones' with childish misunderstandings good enough for them, but, of course, grants a very special and 'other' Gnosis (secret perception) to much superior specimens of the enlightened amid 'modern' mankind. Jesus has his own comment on such 'theology': *"In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, 'I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, for such was your glorious will. All things have been delivered to Me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father; or who the Father is, except the Son, and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him"* (Luke 10:21-22). The 'natural' attitude to Jesus, prompted within the poor and the humble by the prayers, liturgies, and formation of the Church is the actual revealing of who He is.

We ask where this influence of Jesus—who at all times is Lord—begins upon human kind and in the pages of the Bible. Will we turn to the New Testament? No indeed, for the work of Jesus begins with the fashioning of the face of Adam, of man, in the creation amid poisoning of the Universe. It works in the first movements of grace within the persons of our first parents, the inner Jesus and his Holy Spirit was scorned when conscience spoke of the danger from the fruit of the tree of sin forbidden. The Spirit of Jesus, i.e. the same Holy Spirit who "receives of mine, and shows it unto you in the development of the Church and of her doctrine (John 16:11-16), consoles with the promise that in the war between the seed of the Woman and the serpent, He, the seed who is Christ, will crush its head (Genesis 3:15).

### **The Evocation of The Word**

As the living Word through whom all things were made, Jesus speaks in the inner spirit of every

man or woman born, and with growing power publicly and in community through that fuller *Evocation of The Word* which is the Old Testament. Orthodox rabbinical theology taught that all the words and works of the Law, and all the foresight of the prophets, spoke only of the time, the person, and the coming of the Messiah. Jesus the “Word” spoke and worked with the Father, in ever growing fullness of the Spirit through Israel’s long advent, and stated explicitly its consummation in his Incarnation: “My Father works till now, and I too work” (John 5: 17). St. Paul, alluding to the Jewish legend that the rock which gave the Israelites water of life in the desert also followed them in this ministry (1Cor. 10:4), insists “and that rock was Christ”. Already long before Paul, Jewish writers had identified the rock with Yahweh<sup>7</sup>, the rock of Israel. Here Paul credits the pre-existent Christ, we note, with the attributes of Yahweh. Simply and powerfully St. Peter tells Jew and Gentile converts that: *“the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours, searched and enquired about this salvation. They enquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them, when predicting the sufferings of Christ, and the subsequent glory”* (1Peter 1: 10-11). Incidentally, in the same passage Peter remarks of Christ that, *“He was predestined before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest at the end of the ages for your sake”*, a delineation of Christ which ill accords with a theology of the Incarnation which begins only with the fall of mankind,

### **Shekinah: Majesty of Real Godhead**

It is the theology of the *shinekinah*, the glory-in-presence of the living God of Israel, which so fascinates this writer, because it becomes so intimately associated with Jesus as God and Messiah in the economy of the Incarnation. Only a selection of manifestations can be mentioned. The *shekinah*, “the majesty of the Name”, which finally became one of the titles of God himself for the Jew, is not always, but so very often associated with a cloud both numinous and luminous of the actual divine real presence. Not all theologians would agree, but one would think to see it in the pillar of cloud and fire which led, lit, and protected Israel from the Egyptians in their desperate flight from Egypt. Certainly Exodus is full of it, whether at the foot of Mount Sinai where the people begged Moses to mediate in their stead with the Lord, lest they look and die, or more intimately in the descent of the cloud of the *shekinah*, the presence

of the numinous and luminous One, upon the Tent of Meeting where Moses would go to consult with God. That Tent of Meeting has so many wonderful overtones<sup>8</sup>, whether in the Temple of Solomon<sup>9</sup> as a type and prophecy of the human body of Christ, or in its final attribution to the tabernacle (tent) of meeting in the Catholic Christian Church where the divinity and the humanity of the Lord still dwells for our meeting: veiling the *shekinah* of the Real Presence for His people to gather around Him.

Among the loveliest passages, and most pregnant with prophecy both of the Incarnation and the true personality of the Anointed One to come, is the *shekinah* vision of Isaiah (Is.60): *“Arise, shine, for your Light has come, [recall: ‘in Him was Life, and that life was the light of men...’] and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. See, darkness shall cover the earth, thick darkness the peoples, but the Lord will shine upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you ...”*, and the text goes on to passages which must have fired the expectation of the Magi when they set out on their journey West. For they had seen the “star of David” (Num. 24:17) in the first rays of dawn on the eastern skyline. In the same passage the Messiah is named as *“your Saviour, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob”* (v.16), while the concluding verses in which the sun and the moon will lose their office, because *‘Your God will be your Glory, and the Lord your everlasting Light’*, are repeated almost exactly in the Apocalypse of St. John, the passage in which he describes the glory and the nature of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:22). In the vision of St. John, he sees no Temple in the City of God, *“for its Temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb”*, in which again we see a reference to the Body’ of Christ as the Temple of God on earth, and the Lamb as the sacrifice and sacrament of the New Jerusalem. Can we wonder that the very first Christians found so much, so very much in the Law and the Prophets from which to argue to the fulfilment of its proclamation in the Godhead and divine person of Jesus the Christ! Concerning this *shekinah*, the Splendour of the Presence, Daniel too, who almost alone uses the one title which for Jesus was most fully significant of his meaning to us<sup>10</sup> and for us, “the Son of Man”, has a magnificent prophecy of the Christ: *“... and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall*

*not pass away ...* (Dan. 7:13-14). The same vision, with more explicit references to death and resurrection, is found in the first chapter of Revelations and repeated or insinuated in several other passages.

### **True Love Requires True Knowledge**

If Christ is not properly understood then Christ is not properly prayed to and loved in the relationship He always has to us of true God at all times. Then there follows lack of true formation of *the image of God in us* and of the life of grace, which of its very nature leads into the co-sharing of the divine nature as its direct final consummation. Even as man, it is always *God's life* that Christ mediates to us. That is who He is always. It is to the image of God we are made, and in God as nature that our final meaning consummates in the beatific vision. We are not helped by talk of the “pre-resurrection Christ” and the “post-resurrection Christ”, or of a crisis of identity in Jesus, ignorance of who he was, moments of despair on the Cross and so forth. There is no such thing as a pre-resurrection Jesus (less divine and less sure of himself) and the post-resurrection Christ. The personality, the “I”, of Jesus is the divine at all times. It cannot be sloughed off by kenosis (emptying out) like a shirt in the heat, and then put on again at a later time, or after the resurrection—the physical reality of which is also fudged or played down. The phenomenon of the *shekinah* in Old Testament theology is so important, because it is the physical, corporeal sign of God-with-us.

It is no coincidence that this *Emmanuel* is the name of the Saviour. The prologue of St. John does not mark a first beginning in the work of God the Logos in the Judaeo-Christian dispensation. It marks its climax and consummation, a work in which the divine Word always laboured with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and in which through the long years of his messianic expectation in the prophets (see ref. quoted from I Peter), He climaxes his own work and same person in becoming Son of Man as decreed from before the foundation of the world. St. John, as has been said, introduces the *shekinah*, the glory of God-in-presence into that prologue itself.

### **Synoptics, John, Paul: One Witness**

It is sometimes claimed that while John often and explicitly quotes Jesus as claiming literal Godhead with the Father—and indeed the divinity of Christ is the whole fulcrum of John’s Gospel—that the synoptic writers do not. Apart from many signs that Jesus did so claim divinity, such as “power on earth to forgive sins” and “power over the Sabbath,” which was *only* God’s prerogative, they overlook the arrogation to himself by’ Jesus of the *shekinah*, the majesty of God-in-presence, very much in the early and pre-resurrection phase of the mission of Our Lord. There is the solemn judgement day passage of Matthew 25:31 and following: “when the Son of Man shall come in his majesty, *and all the angels with him*, then shall he take his place upon the seat of his majesty. And all nations shall be gathered before him”. In this remarkable passage, which no prophet, however great, could arrogate to himself, Christ calls himself “the King”, gives judgement for failure to recognise his own human nature and need in the brethren and gives final judgement of everlasting life or everlasting condemnation. It is clearly both a ‘divinity’ passage and a *shekinah* passage concerning God made Son of Man. It is impossible in our space to outline many passages from St. Paul, who is constantly attributing to Christ the *shekinah* of God. Myself, I like most the insinuation at least (but surely certainty?) that it was the *shiekinah* of God in presence which struck down Paul on the road to Damascus, when the Lord said “Paul, Paul, why are you persecuting Me?” (Acts. 9:322: 6-11). Paul attributes his blindness to the “greatness of the light”, and after when later ‘scales fell from his eyes”, he came to know, directly from Jesus *who He is*. It is significant that the Christology of Paul<sup>11</sup> is identical with that of John. On earth, therefore, the personality radiance of Christ upon the twelve, the pre-resurrection Jesus, was *that of God*, the same as the impact of the post-resurrection Jesus on Paul, who never walked with Jesus in Palestine.

### **Overtones of the Shekinah in Eucharist**

The association of the *shekinah*, God majesty-i-presence to creatures, is fundamental to understanding the Incarnation as the culmination and climax of the Old Covenant. It appears in the Benedictus: “*the Day-Star from on high has visited us*”. Of all passages in the Bible it is most movingly and powerfully evoked in the Annunciation to Mary: “*The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, the Power of The Most High shall cover thee within its shadow, therefore the Holy which*

*shall be born shall be called the Son of God*". In which we recognise that the Holy Spirit, the Love by which our universe burst into being, "begets", takes the place of human seed in prompting the response of the seed of Mary. There is no room for an "ascent to God" theology of Christ from the human to the divine in Our Lord, only a proper understanding of the role and response of the human reality in one divine person. The hypostatic union of God does not consist through either the immediate vision of God or the beatific vision of God in Christ's human nature (Rahner). The beatific vision follows from the moment of Christ's Incarnation from the fact of the assumption of Jesus' manhood into communion of Person with the Second Person of the Trinity. It is the predication of "mine" in the moment of the covering of Mary with the *shekinah*, God-in-presence, which is the moment of the hypostatic union. This is a mystery no created mind can ever fathom, and one more indication of the impossibility of an ascent to God theology of Christ from the human reality into the divine. There never were "two people". It is significant that St. Justin the Martyr, witnessing for the Church around the year 130 AD, gives exactly the same parallel for the moment of the Incarnation in the mystery of the Eucharist<sup>12</sup>. It is the Holy Spirit overshadowing bread and wine which gives the "Mine" when the priest says "this is My Body", just as at the Annunciation. An excellent reason of course why *girls* should bring up the gifts of bread and wine at the offertory procession.

### **This is my Son, my Beloved,..**

The *shekinah*, the glory of the Presence, which in sheer fact binds the Old Testament theophany (manifestation of God to men) to the explicit manifestation in the New Testament of Jesus as *one in Being with The Father and The Spirit*, is again fully manifest in the Christmas annunciation to the shepherds as Christ is actually born, and there is no need to give the obvious reference. Unless we are going to reject anything in the New Testament which does not fit our personal theories (and this does happen) we have to give a most special importance to the *shekinah* phenomenon of Jesus amid the three "pillars" among the Apostles on the mount of the Transfiguration. The whole of this narrative is fully and classically *shekinah*. It is the *fully divine* Christ who shines with the glory of God. He speaks with Moses and Elias—the Law and the Prophets—of his death which he is to accomplish in Jerusalem. As the numinous

and luminous cloud overshadows them, there speaks the voice of God: "this is my Son, the Beloved, listen to Him." (Matt. 17:11 Mark 9:2-10: Luke 9:28-36). We note that all three synoptic evangelists link this theophany with the preceding passage that: "there are some of you standing here who will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God coming with power". The phenomenon itself, the words of Jesus, and the talking with Moses and Elias link the Old and New Testaments into *one integrated economy of the Evocation and then the Incarnation of The Word in the Person and the divinity of Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man*. In the second Letter of St. Peter (2 Pet.1:4,12-21), Peter not only says explicitly that the voice on the mountain was borne to Him by the *shekinah*, i.e. "the Majestic Glory", but seems to link his realisation that through Christ men are called to be "partakers in the divine nature" with this particular manifestation. We also learn, with a touch of pathos, that after the vision on the mountain, they did not really understand, but "would discuss among themselves what this 'rising from the dead' might mean!" So much for a theology of a confused, uncertain, identity-stricken Jesus before the "resurrection. The physical reality of this resurrection is rarely unambiguously accepted, and within this relativist-historical theology is always played down as in some way' unimportant to the "real" resurrection.

There are various passages in Mark and Matthew in which Jesus attributes to himself the *shekinah* of the incommunicable Name, and none more powerful perhaps than that which was the occasion for his definitive condemnation. If there is any lack of certainty in the precise meaning of the question of the high priest to Jesus: "I command you, by the Living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God" (Matt. 26:64), the answer of this defeated, rag-tag prophet before them was breathtaking. To conflate the three accounts, He said "I am"—and we are reminded of his other "*I am*" statements which are all predications of the prerogatives of God: The Way, Truth, and Life, the Bread of Life, the Good Shepherd etc. —"I am, and hereafter you shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with the Power and the Majesty". He had quoted Daniel 7:11 and had invested the prophecy and himself with the name of the "Power". He had invoked upon himself, this head of a rabble, the *shekinah* of the most Glorious One. It was the end. The high priest rent his garments in token of sorrow at blasphemy. He was guilty of death. But, even then, Jesus had no doubt who He was and is!

## Do Not Confuse Nature and Person

There is no way in the understanding of Christ in which we can bring pain or sorrow into the divine nature in itself. Some good and loyal Catholic theologians who seem to be of the school which call themselves "transcendental" Thomists (not to be confused with the original formula!) seem to say—since the being and nature of God envelops, transcends, and “contains”. all time and history, in the gift of the Incarnation God 'freely allows' his most intimate essence to 'feel' pain, sorrow, and loss in the Person of Jesus. The doctrine of St. Thomas is unmistakable. If God *is Actus Purus*, sheer simple Perfection, there is not within the divine Essence that which can possibly respond to the experience of pain and loss. It is a self-contradiction to say of the Godhead as Godhead, "*Actus Purus*", and simultaneously “agony and loss”. Only the created has the inner ability to suffer pain or loss, simply because its joy and fulfillment lies in something outside itself. There is no need either to split Jesus into two persons, two people, so that we can make him ignorant of who he was, uncertain, surprised at his reception on earth in the depths of a “human” personality, and at a loss in plain error, as are all of us poor sinners.

There is no space in this article to develop it, but there is an incident in the Gospels rarely mentioned. It is Mark 5:24: the woman who fought her way through when Jesus was being “mobbed” sure that if she touched but the hem of his garment she would be healed. Jesus did not notice it or her, and the disciples were exasperated when he stopped and demanded, “*who touched me?*”. It was such a silly question. But Jesus perceived “*in Himself that power had gone forth from Him*”, yet in the human sense Jesus knew nothing at all about it, nor could he in the circumstances. It came as an indication of loss in the one person of God and man, a decision taken in his divine personality and known in his human will as 'mimic', was received not from his human senses but communicated down to them. Since we cannot follow the subject-matter through, suffice it to say that in Christ it is never possible to start from an “independent” human psyche and work back to union with the divine. We think and pray from the Godhead out through His manhood, seeking to find the requirements of his human psychology in this unique case in which it is very God who predicates ME and MYSELF through the distinct natures of God and man in the unity of one personality "Jesus"<sup>13</sup>.

## Full Meaning of "Son of Man"

To understand the pain of Jesus in all aspects of that human feeling and its ultimate Passiontide, there is no need to reduce Jesus to a human individual with, at the bitter climax of his life, an identity crisis of doubt. Nor may we speak of God freely 'allowing' the divinity itself to suffer, encapsulating time and the contingent within an essence of God which embraces all time. etc. This would implicitly involve an Hegelian form of pantheism. God is not then *Actus Purus*, sheer utter Perfection. We ponder who Jesus is. We are made to the image of God as persons, body and soul. If we accept that we are made through the Humanity as well as the Divinity of the Word, before the foundation of the world, as both Peter and Paul teach this, then we can say that we are created *in Christ* in that sense in which St. Paul says that Jesus, God and man, who was in the *form of God*, thought it no robbery to be equal to God but humbled himself etc. etc. (Phil. 2:6). It is this likeness to Christ in the form of God before the world was, which gives the *filiation*, the "sonship" to which every man and woman is called in Christ, to be through Him and in Him a co-sharer in the divine nature. Not through the Logos, The Word, the divine person and nature alone are we predestined, but through *The Word in the gift of the Incarnation* are we made and offered the blessedness of sharing the Life who is God. The important debates about how much is of nature in our seeking of God, and how much of grace, space does not allow us to consider.

There is the gratuitous gift of creation (out of nothing we come), the gratuitous order of grace and the divine life, and the further gratuity of a redemption from sin, which did not have to be given and is the free gift and "the obedience to the Father" of Our Lord, yet Brother, in the flesh, Jesus Christ. The sheer beauty and power of his preferred title *the Son of Man* shines through only in this full perception of Jesus and who he is. The divine nature in the Person of the Word is incapable of sorrow or loss. Even such power to "feel" is denial of its perfect self-fulfilment. In the human reality of Jesus, however, his human "being" must respond by reaction and response proper to the meaning of that humanity in its intimate existential union with the divine, and to its *mission* through which "in the beginning with God" we were conceived and willed in the Word. In such a sense, as has been suggested in the Faith Pamphlet, *Did Jesus, Did lie Know Who He Was?*, He could suffer and draw back in horror from the agony

contained for Him in the gift he freely gave, both as God and man, but did not have to endure.

Jesus could and did so suffer, not in spite of the beatific vision (which he had from the very union of his human soul in one Person with the Word) but *because* of that communion of being. Jesus as human has the unique dimension of being at once *comprehensor*, a word we use for the saints in their glory, but also *viator*, or pilgrim on the way. Jesus had a mission to fulfil for us in our manner and the conditions of our pilgrim contingency on earth. It was His to redeem us in our own fallen condition, because to the Father he was *The Son of Man*: we were loved in His manhood at creation and loved again in reconciliation “for the reverence due to Him”. The real drawing back from “*the chalice My Father has given me*” is not human dread of the morrow, but the vision in his mighty soul—the soul through whom we were decreed and made—of the vision of sin through all ages. This vision is personal, individual, not in general, for every one conceived till the end of time. In all its aspects and in all his *human* reparation in His Person to the All-Holy Father, it broke his mighty heart. He sweated blood. The Father’s response to this gift of the Son of God, and of Man, is *the shekinah* of the Resurrection. Yes, the tomb is empty.

### **Prayer of a Parting Thought**

One had hoped, but there was no space, to have said something—in view of the feast of Corpus Christi—on Christ as the Bread of Life, and *The Sacrament of The World*, but it cannot be. This aspect of the vocation of Christ’s Body, of his human reality to us, is capable of being worked out to the destruction of modern “reductionist” Christologies of the theandric (God-Man) relationship of the human and the divine in Jesus. If Jesus is not a super-prophet, but God in Person, there is a vocation given to the Body of Christ as our Bread of Life which is quite unlike the form and figure of our own, yet belongs to our need. The theologian who dismisses this as making Jesus simply God “in the livery of a man” must take into account that it is but Monophysitism to say and proclaim that in the Eucharist as Sacrament this white wafer is ‘*My Lord and My God*’, worshipped with *divine* honour, “consubstantial with the Father”, just as He was in the crib at Bethlehem. If someone finds it “not modern”, and “mythological”, then sorry, but you have missed your way and missed so very much else as well.

And, dear Jesus, when I look upon your “Tabernacle”, your flesh-pitched tent, and the little bronze box in which your Glory dwells, and consider the enormous wonder of the sheer continuity and utter coherence of your being “with you, even to the end of time”, I think one thing. I think you deserve—*Sacramentum Mundi*—to be allowed to pitch your tent over and behind the altar of your Sacrifice, with the Cross on which you worked our redemption overshadowing all, as its own perpetual *shekinah*. Then all your children, especially the little ones, would know you, see you central to their eyes and lives, and give you the vocations you need and deserve. Dear Jesus, you deserve better than a hole in the wall, a side chapel, or a patch wide enough only for a couple of kneelers. Dear Lord, do go to Peter about it. He always loved you. You gave all your lambs and sheep to him, but he was not always quick on the draw. You always made him understand. I pray you will.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Karl Rahner, *Foundations*, chapters 5 & 6, especially pp.195, 220 & 293. In general the critiques in this article are prompted by *Foundations* passim, and *Theological Investigations*, vols 7 & 8 in my rather modest library of Rahner. One is largely indebted to a most interesting article by Fr. John McDermot S.J. in the *Gregorianum*. My run-off from a friend in Rome is not fully legible in the title page. I can make out vol. 57: "*The Christologies of Karl Rahner*".

<sup>2</sup> *Foundations* ch. 6. p 195

<sup>3</sup> The "shekinah", the glory of God in presence, later becomes one of the names of God, a personification. Edersheim, (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*) remarks that the rabbi taught it was withdrawn after the Fall, but returned to guarantee the work of Moses (vol.1 pp.161, 168). Pathetically, it is said to "hover over the destroyed Western wall of the Temple".

<sup>4</sup> Act-Centre is a Rahnerian expression one is glad to have. I am using it strictly in the sense of Person. In Rahner, where there is no precision in definition of person/nature, it seems to be used of Christ sometimes in a Nestorian sense.

<sup>5</sup> Council of Chalcedon, 451 A.D. , defines with great precision the two natures, distinct and unmixed in Jesus Christ, of God and of Man. It also defines quite precisely the unity of one divine Person, the Person of the Logos within the Trinity, Far from being vague, or defining person in a "vulgar" sense (Rahner) it is so precisely clear that it is still an obvious stumbling block to unreliable theology.

<sup>6</sup> Foundations, p.201.

<sup>7</sup> From the full *Jerusalem Bible* comment on this passage from St Paul.

<sup>8</sup> FAITH, Nov./Dec. 1989: "*The Incarnation and the Eucharist*" by Fr. Roger Nesbitt.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. 1Kings 8:22ff. Attention is called not to the phenomenon of the cloud etc., but to "yet will God really live with men on the earth", a prophetic reference to the body of Christ as the Temple in St. John. Also to "watch over the place of which you have said: 'My Name shall be there' ". This latter being precisely the *shekinah*, the "God-with-us" of the Presence.

<sup>10</sup> We almost overlooked Psalm 8. Here Jesus himself gives us the exegesis of "Son of Man" referring not only to Himself (Palm Sunday), but apparently to the visitation of mankind itself in the decree of the Incarnation.

<sup>11</sup> "Christology" is the study of the divine and human in Our Lord in its detailed relationships to the Godhead and unto man through the human nature of Christ. Within the guidelines of the Church's solemn teaching there is room for much difference of speculative opinion. Naturally there are erroneous 'Christologies' as well.

<sup>12</sup> *Apologia prima*, S. Justin Martyr, section 66. edit, Jenae 1847.

<sup>13</sup> Fr. J. McDennot SJ., in the *Gregorianum* extract quoted, remarks: "In S.T. III, q 17,a.2., Thomas affirms only one *esse* (act of existential being) in Christ, while in the *De Unione Verbi Incarnati*, a.4, he allows a secondary *esse secundum quid* (existence in a dependent sense) for Christ's human nature ... " In as much as Jesus' human soul and body are "real things", just like ours, and not of one nature with the Divine, it seems quite acceptable so to speak. When, however, in the original draft of *Jesus, Did He Know Who He Was?* (Faith Pamphlets series) this writer so used the words ".. the human 'being' of Jesus , with inverted commas, the *ensor deputatus* boggled! One had to make do with "psyche" which was not really accurate. Had one been Rahner, or even so distinguished a scholar as Fr. McDermot, the censor might not have been unnerved!

## THE THEME OF PRIESTHOOD

There are sacraments which we know confer a 'character'—the Fathers who wrote in Greek prefer the word 'seal'—not just on the soul, but on the Christian person, which includes the flesh as well. Through this 'sealing' or consecration, the essential relationship to God of this sacrament and its grace or status is defined. The character of Baptism is the seal of the 'divinization' of man through our incorporation into Christ as both Son of God and Son of Man. These twin titles make Jesus Christ the Priest-King of all human stock. This membering into Christ through both the Divine and the human nature in Him is through the likeness of his Passion, Death and Resurrection. It proceeds through the washing and cleansing of men from original sin, and where applicable, actual sin. The first effect of this membering into Christ is membering also into the Church, through the adoption of sonhood or daughterhood to the Father, through the Son, in their mutual love, the Holy Spirit.

Through this incorporation into Christ—as the anointing with chrism at Baptism states—we participate in Christ's life as priest, prophet, and king for humankind. Thus, the 'seal' of Baptism is the essential consecration and configuration of the human person, flesh and spirit, into God the Word made flesh. Incorporation into Christ is one in essence with the 'supernatural' order, for by this we are made in Christ *"co-sharers of the Divine Nature"* (2Pet 1:4). No other status or sanctifying sacrament of Christ in the economy of the Church can be received except through this fundamental 'sealing' to the Image of God in the Person of Christ. Baptism is thus the character or seal of perfection, of 'divinization' as the Greeks prefer to call it, which is restored in and through the Redemption of Christ. Every other sacramental character or grace is consequential upon this supreme character of being born again through water and the Holy Spirit.

### **Confirmation and Order**

Confirmation, it seems to me, cannot be ranked as a 'sealing' unto God on the same level as Baptism, though I have not found any development of this theme in the theological manualists. It is not essential to the salvation and incorporation of man into God through Christ in the same way as Baptism; and, of course, Baptism does, must, confer the Holy Spirit. When I was a young priest we did not confer this sacrament of Confirmation upon babies or adults who were dying. It was a less worthy custom, but the Holy Spirit could not have allowed to fall into disuse for centuries any grace or status vital to the life of the Church. We recall that the Fathers of the Church were wont

to refer to Confirmation as the ‘perfection of the seal’, i.e. the seal of Baptism. Confirmation would seem to confer a status in the order of a consequential, or further ‘dignity’, (in the language of an older Scholasticism), that enhances the status of Baptism.

It seems best described as the character or dynamic relationship to God through Christ which goes with the personal work—i.e. work proper to the Person—of the Holy Spirit within the Church consequent upon the Ascension of the Lord. It strengthens the Christian personality to resist evil and bring in the mature fruits of the grace of Baptism. Just as much, it is the seal of empowerment to teach and preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God revealed in Christ with ‘power from on high’. We would refer the words of Christ: “*He will receive of Mine and show it to you*” to this seal of status. While this text refers primarily to the specific mission of the Holy Spirit within the Magisterium of the Church down the ages, it also conveys, consequentially in its own personal character, the apostolic power of witness in the individual Christian.

### **The Sacrament of Order**

Holy Order likewise would seem to be a character, (the seal of a status), which while being essential to the very constitution of the Church, conveys a grace which, in terms of our individual Christian perfection, is a further enhancement (in the philosophical category of an ‘accident’) of the graces given in Baptism and Confirmation. In a footnote to the Faith Pamphlet *Sexual Order and Holy Order* I make a comment derived in part from Emile Mersch’s *Theology of the Mystical Body*<sup>1</sup>, explaining that while the call to Holy Order—to the work and friendship of Jesus personally as his apostle—is a supreme privilege and joy. It does not divinize a priest ontologically—i.e. in the order of his human personality—one whit more than the layman or laywoman. Our Lady did not possess any degree of the character of Holy Order, but no dignity, status, or sanctity in heaven or upon earth is equal to hers. In the Declaration concerning *Women and the Priesthood, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* makes the same point. I would add that in heaven it is the saints—those who have most heroically conformed themselves to Christ through the characters of Baptism and Confirmation—who are the highest, not the ministers as ministers.

Order then, is the sealing unto service, the character of ministry as a grace for others. But in that very act of loving service, it is a privileged degree in the sanctification of one’s very self. “*To whom very much is given, of him very much will he required back*” (Lk 12:48). Our personal holiness through Order must the more closely resemble Him whom we touch and handle. The priesthood (and we are not considering the degree which is the Diaconate in this article) is never

conferred as a title of honour. If a bishop does not need more priests he may not ordain them. It is a ministry of love within the ecclesial ministry of Christ, essential to the Economy of God Incarnate which is the Church.

Sanctity of the highest degree can be won apart from Order by that sealing (consecration) unto the Son of God and Man given in Baptism and Confirmation, especially when lived within the three vows of perfection. This is said to clarify a theological perspective, not to diminish the dignity of a vocation which calls to the familiar friendship with Jesus in his mission upon earth. We live in an age when Jesus is calling urgently to many a 'rich young man' to sell up and follow Him and share in His treasure. It is precisely because of our spiritual conditioning as sons of God and lovers of his Holy Spirit, that—hearing the call and meeting the gaze of Jesus "*who looking upon him, loved him*" (Mk 10:21)—we leave all other things and follow Him only 'down the arches of our years [the allusion is to *The Hound of Heaven* by Francis Thompson].

### **Perspective on the Character of Priesthood**

We ask what exactly is this character or seal conferred by those sacraments which give some intrinsic conformation either to the natures and Person of Christ or to his active mission, in the Christian personality? I know no book more carefully or more beautifully researched than that of my one-time Dogma professor, Fr. Bernard Leeming S.J., *Principles of Sacramental Theology*<sup>2</sup>. Myself I do not follow my old master in his theories of sacramental causality. I dislike theologies of 'title' 'sign' 'modality' and intentional 'entitlement' etc. They are too man made. The Divine is always divinely direct and simple. I would prefer the direct, physical perfective causality taught by St. Thomas Aquinas. Yet, I know nothing more beautiful or full than Bernard Leeming's work on the inner meaning of the character in those sacraments which confer such a status. He told me he found it with delight in especially the Greek Fathers of the Church.

I would express it this way. The sacramental 'character' is always a relationship to God through the Person of Jesus Christ in the order of the Incarnation. Jesus, we know, is the *Sacramentum Mundi*, the Sacrament or Holy Liturgy of ontological communion (i.e. communion of very being) between the Father and mankind. Baptism conforms sinful human nature—reconciled in the Person and in both the natures of the Person of Christ—to the image of the Father in the love of the Holy Spirit. This seal, image, or character conferred is specifically that of Christ as Son—Son of God, and Son as source, origin, and Head of mankind.

Subject as always to correction, I would suggest that Adam, as unfallen, was created with the 'character' of the Son of God and Son of Man, in being made into the supernatural order, together with the entire Universe which expected Christ as its Crown, the Heir to the Ages, the final term of its glory. The womb of woman is the sign and symbol of that status of the Universe. Baptism restores what is lost by the Fall, lost to our nature and to our individual persons. From the nature of the Incarnation as an economy (God in the Flesh) and the nature of man, there is required in the external ecclesial order an operative sign of our restored status. Cleansing and redemption must be part of that sign of the restoration of God's grace and gift of status, for it affects the ontological order, the lifting of man's being into sharing the Divine Nature.

Adam was membered to Christ "*before the foundation of the world*" (Eph 1:3) Baptism members us into Christ again after our loss of status. Thus we become 'a royal people, a kingly priesthood', deputed to the honour and love, the worship and joy of God through Christ our Priest-King. We do this for our own persons and nature, but we do it also for the inanimate creation below human kind, which over the ages has ministered the body to our souls. This universe cannot speak God's glory for itself, but it does so through us, in whom it is taken up into the spirit, and so into that human nature, which through Jesus Christ is taken into the very being of God. In the words of the fourth Eucharistic prayer: "we shall sing your glory with every creature through Christ Our Lord, through whom you give us everything that is good".

### **Power over the Body and Blood of Christ**

The Fathers of the Church speak of the characters of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Order in terms of consecration to God. This is either the hallowing of basic nature—as in Baptism—or it concerns the vocation of the Christian unto God in the Church and because of the Church. The language of 'consecration' is preferred because it echoes the words of Christ: "*For them I consecrate (sanctify, or hallow) myself, so that they may be consecrated through Me*". (Jn 17:19)

Thus the character is a permanent relationship to God. It is a status. The Latin Fathers so often refer to the analogy of the Roman soldier, tattooed with the Emperor's 'mark' and consecrated to his service. One would agree with Leeming that the first effect of such sacraments is not to confer sanctifying grace, because a person can be baptised or ordained in grave sin. The direct effect is a status. Yet this status is more than an entitlement to grace (as Leeming would hold), because the grace flows directly and intelligibly through the status. It may be blocked in its

flow, and the technical term here is indeed an *obex* or obstacle. This blocking is man-made and incidental, the moment the detritus is removed from the stream the grace ‘flows’.

Theologians argue about whether the character of Holy Order is a habit or a power; is it only a moral entity or a physical one, etc. To my liking it is a *habitus*, a ‘clothing’ literally—a permanent state or endowment of person. I would call it physical, because it stays real in your personality for ever, even in the damned. As an endowment, a potentiality, it can be activated or conferred in differing degrees according to the relationship given to Christ the Minister in his own ‘character’ as Priest, Prophet, and King. Hence the threefold actuality of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon.

The character of Order does not admit of any difference of degree in the essence of priesthood itself. The essence of priesthood lies, as St. Thomas declares<sup>3</sup> in the power over the Body and Blood of Christ, a permanent power which not even the Pope can invalidate in the schismatic or heretic. The Eucharist validly celebrated will always be valid, and in this the heart of priesthood is manifested. As an official power, ‘prophecy’—the authority to speak in the name of the Church— may be removed by the Church. A theologian may lose his licence. A priest can lose all power of jurisdiction as well, for this belongs to the focus of ‘kingship’ and we have bishops and pope above us. But power over the Body and Blood of Christ takes us by a *habitus*—a power of person—into a relationship with Christ the Minister to Man, which is ontological. This means that it is a definitive sharing in His relationship to the Father, as High Priest of mankind ‘according to the Order of Melchisedech’, by which Jesus has power to sanctify and feed. We are not delegates in this work, we are channels of His Ministry.

We bear in mind that at the altar Christ is actively, not only passively, the Minister of the Eucharist, just as at the Last Supper. Here is the heart—the defining principle in the order of being—of priesthood, of the ‘sealing unto Christ’ in his Kingly Priesthood. Through this relationship given for ever in the ‘now’ of eternity, priests are apostles and commissioned ministers of Christ even though their apostleship as priests of the second rank is intrinsically subject to the episcopal rank, whose *presbyterium* it participates and applies. Subject always to the judgement of the Church, I would agree with St. Thomas in this now rather the minority view, that the Episcopate is not a distinct sacrament from the priesthood, but rather the highest modality of Holy Order. The common defining factor by which both bishop and priest enter into the Ministry of Christ as *Sacramentum Mundi* (Sacrament of the World) is this ineffaceable power to actively present again the Sacrifice of Christ, and from it to feed the Faithful with the Bread of

Life and with the Reconciliation which flows from the Sacrifice. I do not think this awe-ful power within the character of Order admits of higher excellence.

### **The Essence of Order**

Some seminarians are currently being worried by teachers who seem to place the defining essence of the priestly function in the Church within prophecy. The rebuttal of this lies in all the documents of the Church, including the recent Second Vatican Council, and subsequent statements since. These confirm that the summit and centre of the Church's life is the Eucharist as Sacrifice and Sacrament, and that this is the supreme work and ministry of the priestly character.

Indeed, John-Paul II in his *Letter to Priests* of 1979 remarked on something which has always seemed important to me: the powers of priest, prophet, and king must not be thought of as individual charisms, separate either in the character of Baptism or in the character of Order. He is talking about Order, and he reminds us that these three powers all flow from the one single focus of Christ's Kingly Priesthood, and that they all inhere as a unity in His Person as Son of God and Son of Man. However, the central Unity who is Christ-the-Person consummates a work of salvation and justification through Sacrifice and Sacrament, i.e. it gives the life of grace and brings to perfection the image of God that is given and revealed in Christ. The defining essence of priesthood, then, is Eucharistic, even as Christ is Our Eucharist—our Mediation of Thanksgiving, of Life, and of Peace with the Father in the love of the Holy Spirit.

### **Consequences of the Priestly Character**

In everything a priest does, therefore, the preaching of the word of The Word culminates in bringing men and women into union and communion of life with God in Christ. Sanctification is no abstract idea, nor is it the mere function as minister of the Mass as a rite. It is the filling out of the lives, and loves, and works of young and old through the Life of Jesus which is within them by grace—that is to say by the dynamic indwelling of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God gives the increase, but we do the watering (cf. 1 Cor 3:6). Priests minister for Jesus through every power of flesh and spirit. Sanctification, which is a making to grow like God—with its unique reference to the Cross, the Resurrection, and the Holy Eucharist which contains them both—subsumes the office of prophecy within this central definition of the consecration of men in Christ. It is here that the joy and the maturity of the priesthood lies. All the work, the teaching and

forming, the weary striving, the day by day minutiae, focuses through your personal communion with Christ as friend and apostle in his work and ours.

It is ours because in Ordination we were consecrated in Him, that others might be consecrated through us. There will be the 'drinking of His chalice', as He ironically promised to the two bright boys who asked for "*seats at his right hand, seats at his left*", but there will be the unique joys of Jesus too. You bask in the love of those who love God, perhaps especially the young. You love God and them in a surge which passes from God to them, from them to you, and back again from you to God. Finally you understand what Jesus meant when he prayed that "*the love with which I have loved You may be in them*" (Jn 17:26). This is the working out in practice of the grace of Order, the fullness of Christ's self hallowing relationship first to His Father, and then—as Son and Minister of Man—to us.

All the documents of the Church this century relate our life of prayer as priests to the Liturgy, and to the Eucharist as the heart of the Liturgy. This again places priestly identity within the central theme of prayer, praise and the self-consecration which is the Eucharist who is God made Man. The Divine Office is the continuation, the follow through of Eucharistic ministry within the Church. Some of the most beautiful theology concerning this relationship of the Office to the Mass is in the introductory notes of the breviary, which we never read! Here the defining note of the character of Order is again placed upon sanctification, increasing within yourself and your people the work of Christ to make all things new on earth. Prophecy is an essential function in bringing to sanctification, but sanctification—like the Incarnation itself—is sacramental: the communion of Life between God and "*the men You gave Me*" (Jn 17:24). Here then is the formal definition of the character of priestly order.

### **Celibacy**

Some thoughts now on chastity for the Kingdom of God's sake, which is the vow of celibacy in the Roman tradition. It is much more than a *votum non nubendi*, a vow to abstain from marriage. It is the perfect consecration of our lives and energies to Christ and his Church. It is more than celibacy as utility, because it is the love which follows Christ with undivided mind and heart. In the old Anglican rite of marriage, the couple were mutually admonished "wilt thou be faithful unto him, and forsaking all other cleave only unto him, wilt thou comfort him and obey him" etc. In the vow of chastity, we make a similar total pledge of love to Christ alone. It is impossible to be, at all

times and seasons, at the beck and call of Christ in his People unless you make Him and them the total object of your worrying, your work, and your loving.

Christ invites, just as He did the Twelve around Him (Matt. 19:12) to this total consecration of personal love to himself. The prophets declared that *“the Lord our God is a jealous God”* (Ex 20:5) and jealousy is the characteristic of an all-demanding love. You cannot have the people of God, and especially the young people coming to you at all times and seasons, with the perfect freedom of Christ, unless you are bound by a different sacramental bond to others. In everything that we do, the title of ‘Father’ should be no idle courtesy. We belong only to God and his People.

### **Redeeming the Flesh**

Another aspect of chastity for the Kingdom of God’s sake is less mentioned, although the Fathers of the Church were well aware of it. Personally, I dislike using ‘Mediterranean’ superlatives, such as calling celibacy ‘a sign of the eschatological kingdom’, ‘crown, jewel, glory of the Church’ etc. All very true, I’m sure, but no use at all when tempted by a human love, or by all too human desire. What is the real (i.e. the ontological) issue about chastity under vow? Chastity is indeed a sign: a sign that sex is not love, nor an essential within love—love of its very nature as human transcends sexuality and the pleasure of erotic function. However, it is not as a sign that Christ recommends it to us, but as a fact of life, a fact of the highest ‘natural’ perfection of human loving.

Jesus Christ never knew the use of sex, but Christ is the perfection of all human love, as He is of human nature, and no love was ever more human or natural than the love of Christ. Indeed, as Son of Man, Christ is the norm of all human love, according to its vocation. In the language of older scholastic theology, sex as erotic function is ‘accidental’ to human loving. I would call it a ‘modality’ in human love, it defines one particular vocation of love.

A priest, and even more a bishop, if he will be perfect, is called by Christ to live out Christ’s perfect human love, in Christ’s perfect modality of love, through the perfection of human consecration in love. The modern world is soaked in sexual addiction and child corruption, its morals those of caged monkeys, to use the cruel idiom of Evelyn Waugh. All around us are the devastated lives and loves of men and women, youths and children, who have never known how to love. They do not know how to place and conform genital sex within the human experience of love.

The vow of celibacy does not call us to emasculation but to emancipation. This is not said to dishonour sex, its pleasure, or its sacramental hallowing. Christ carried our sexuality in his human organism. It is said to point out with clarity of definition the call to the most perfect and fully human form of human love: the love which is prompted first in the soul as spirit, and then conveyed to the sense of the flesh not as erotic, but as tenderness and the belonging. Such love admits— but with painful prudence in youth—manifestation in the embrace and the caress. But the love of chastity does not allow of an erotic bond to man or woman. Apart from sex in a genital sense, if our love cannot be tied by the possessive bond of holy matrimony, neither can our loving be tied selfishly to the demands of any one person, even within chastity, even to a friend who is a fellow priest. It is true that ‘a brother who is helped by a brother is like a strong tower’, but our loving is always tied to the demands and promptings of Christ, even when vocation calls for separation.

### **For Reverence of the Flesh of Christ**

Another aspect of celibacy as the spiritual perfection of human love, comes from a phrase I once noted in reading the Fathers, (and lazy as always, I neglected to file). I think it comes from St. John Chrysostom. Anyway, the writer stressed two things. First, he emphasised chastity as the priestly and kingly love of Christ for all flesh, and especially for the men He had chosen. This is chastity as consecration to Mission, to the Church as “Bride”, and it redounds into our earlier concept of total consecration - *“he who can take it, let him take it”* (Mt 19:12).

The second emphasis was that of reverencing in our bodies the flesh of Christ by the vow of chastity for the Kingdom. This is chastity as the remedying in our mortal flesh of the wound of concupiscence, that disordered desire which is left as the legacy of original sin in our flesh even after Baptism. From this recognition of concupiscence as greed—a sign of the disobedience of sin within our flesh—comes the quaint suggestion of Aquinas (but through St. Augustine I think) that the vehicle of the inheritance of original sin might be the ungoverned vehemence of ‘libido’ in the sexual act.<sup>4</sup> Frankly, it is an unacceptable suggestion. Yet while unacceptable, it throws light upon the meaning of chastity for the Kingdom of God’s sake, as a way of loving in which nature sweetened by grace works to restore human relationships in loving to the original intention of God. In this is a human reverence and aspiration towards the flesh of Christ. In the original intention of God—in the vocation of marriage or out of it—every human pleasure principle should be subject to the governance of the godly wisdom of the soul in man; governed with peace in

God, in the experienced love of God. This would be true not only in sexual congress, but especially in sexual congress, because the relationship of sexual intercourse possesses an intrinsic holiness from its central and primary finality to human life and personality.

Love is of the soul in man, in the likeness of the reality and experience of love in the psyche of Christ. Christ is normative of all human perfection, and grace perfects nature to the likeness of Christ as man. Love was always meant to be ruled, held, and led in man by the peace of the felt presence of God. Intrinsically, therefore, love must govern sex. Sex should never rule love in any vocation of human loving. In chastity for Christ's sake, this rule is made fact, and thus we reverence the flesh of Christ, as our Friend and Head of the apostolic order. By our conformation to the chastity of Christ, we work to heal within the flesh in the fullest possible degree the wound of concupiscence in the most vehement of the urges of the flesh.

### **Exhortation to perfect purity**

To young priests I say, do try to live this perfection of human loving honestly, without humbug. You may not always live it without confusions, unconscious imperfection, or even some slippage, but live it as humbly and totally as you can. It gives in the character of a priest an especial radiance and beauty of personality. It mightily reinforces your power with the young. They do not know precisely what it is, but they sense it within the man. Cleanness of heart is a virtue with a promise: *"Blessed the pure of heart, they shall look upon the face of God"*. God is very purity, because He is perfect beauty and perfect "wholeness"—from which word 'holiness' is derived. The pure may look upon that beauty without wincing, because chastity in loving is the integrity and beauty of love.

If Jesus said that the 'little ones' were nearest the kingdom of God, it would be because of the simplicity and beauty of their loving at an age in life when ugliness and lust in loving does not yet arise. One can promise you that the beauty in loving which keeps men young when old is the fruit and gift of this whole-hearted chastity, this 'reverencing in one's own body the flesh of the Lord'. Do not lose this charism. If you lose it, you lose moral and inner power, radiance of spirit, and of course the wide, rich span of so many, many loves that chaste consecration to the People of God and their children, bring to every decade of your life, according to the promise of Christ recorded in the Gospels (cf. Lk 18:29).

### **Order fulfils the ‘Priesthood of Baptism’**

So, the character or ‘seal’ of the degree of Holy Order which is in the priesthood configures priestly ministry to the sanctifying relationship of Christ to mankind as Priest and King, - Son of God and Son of Man. The role of the priest in history as sanctifier is basically a role of establishing union and communion with Godhead through sacrifice, that is through sacred gifts of faith and love which of their nature express worship, love, recognition of dominion, intercession for blessings and—given the incursion of sin—also the inevitable and most necessary element of atonement and reparation of friendship. All of these, which are the entire connotation of Salvation and Redemption, are fulfilled in Christ our Eucharist. Quite apart from sin, the inner meaning of sacrifice is loving, worshipful communion with God. Hence St. Paul:

*“Therefore my brothers, I implore you by God’s mercy to offer your yourselves to Him; a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for his acceptance, the worship proper to spiritual beings. Conform yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world but let your minds be made anew, and your whole nature thus transformed. Then you will be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is the good, the acceptable and the perfect” (Rom. 12: 1-2).*

Sin brings to Christ’s oblation, and to our own, the element of reparation, of ‘redemption’ which is essential to reconciliation. From reconciliation follows a New Covenant of love. This love of Christ for the Church, and of priestly lives and work, is beautifully expressed in the Roman Canon where the priest prays: “may Your Angel take this Sacrifice to your altar in Heaven. Then as we receive from this altar the sacred Body and Blood of your Son, let us be filled with every grace and blessing”.

In this earthly stage of the Kingdom of God, the priestly character of the People of God—as lived out in the Liturgy, which is itself a pledge and foreshadowing of the Liturgy which is heaven—takes them only as far as the beginning of the Offertory of the Eucharist. There they present to God by the hands of the priest what belongs only to men, even as Christian people. They bring up “what earth has given, and human hands have made”. Through his hands and voice, his mind, heart and character of Order, the Lord takes up the gifts of all, including those of the priest himself, and gives them back in Himself as God’s gift of Redemption, peace and the Bread by which men spiritually live.

This is the sacrifice of our inter-communion with God: God the Sacrament of the World. The priest extends across time the *persona* of Jesus Christ as enfleshed. He does not participate in Christ's Divinity, nor formally in that unique Priestly Manhood through which He alone is Mediator between God and men. We are not co-redeemers, nor co-sanctifiers in our own right. Indeed, priests also are in need of redemption and of sanctification. Yet we do sanctify for Him, because we participate by his choice and by aggregation into his 'character' as Minister to men. We minister His Ministry. But for the priesthood, and our being sealed with the Seal of his High-Priesthood, the Mass would end with the Offertory procession. Through Him we too are 'consecrated' to his people.

By Baptism we were membered into His Flesh and into His Divinity as co-sharers of His Divine nature. As commissioned into Order we are membered into his personal Ministry to men as well. What greater privilege can be spoken of mortal, sinful men? Rightly is the, now shunned, title of *alter Christus* (another Christ) predicated of the priest. The priest confects (makes possible) Christ's work as Sacrament of the World, not in his own baptised character, but in His as Son of Man. Here then is the heart of Holy Order. God may confer grace and status *ex opere operato* irrespective of our goodness or badness, but he cannot work through us fully and fruitfully in His communion with men unless our lives, works, and personalities reflect Himself. It is Him we reflect: "*I live now not I, but Christ lives in Me*" (Gal 2:20); a statement supremely true of the priestly character of Order. The people yearn to see it so and take comfort that it is so.

Their yearning and their reverence illuminates another aspect of the meaning of *alter Christus*. When robed for Mass as priests and kings—in his *persona*, not our own—for His Eucharist, the People of God see in us and revere in us the Ikon of Christ. That is why they kiss our hands at our ordination. May they see and love in us his ministers some poor reflection of what they see and love in Him.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Emile Mersch, *Theology of the Mystical Body*, trans. Cyril Vollert, Herder, 1952

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, The Newman Press, 1956.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Aquinas *Supp. 40 art. 5 resp.2*

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* Ia 2se q.73 art.4

## **WOMEN PRIESTS: THE MEANING OF SEX IN THE PLAN OF THE INCARNATION**

The argument over the possible ordination of women to the priesthood of the altar goes on, and it will not go away simply by being ignored. As far as FAITH is concerned we made our contribution a couple of years ago in the *Theological Comment* which was later expanded into the pamphlet *Sexual Order and Holy Order*. Given its relevance, it is not surprising that it has already sold out, and is now being reprinted. Since it is obvious from requests for an editorial on the matter that many, especially of the clergy, do not bother to wade through pamphlets, may one urge them to do so. The pamphlet presents the argument with a degree of completeness and coherence not possible here.

### **First: The Angelic Order**

When God created the angels, He created beings totally in his own likeness as pure spirits; beings, so to speak, concentrated of knowledge, will, and power to love or to hate; beings without composition of matter-energy in their natures; beings from their order of nature immediately like to God. To the angels also God offered the destiny of knowing and loving Him as He is in himself, if they would have Him in an obedient and perfect love, as 'co-sharers of the Divine Nature'. There was no need for God to take upon himself the angelic nature. It would have been quite pointless, because there is no hindrance within the angelic order to the direct irradiation of the being of the angel with the touch of the Divine Being. Supreme Spirit upon created spirit, God could commune directly with the nature of the angel as pure Spirit upon pure spirit. For which reason it is written in the Letter to the Hebrews: "For nowhere does He take hold of the angels. It is of the seed of Abraham that He takes hold" (Hebrews 2 :16).

### **Second: The Order in Christ for Man**

But God willed also to call into existence a further order of reality, so that in fact, the Divine Being is imitated from near or from afar by every possible degree of creation. It is a great way from the elements of basic matter-energy to Lucifer, Star of the Morning, and within that

sweep of the divine munificence, God created Man. Man is a synthesis of matter and true spirit, and Man is also called to be more than the steward of the material creation and its crown; man is, like the angels, called to the vocation of being made 'co-sharer in the Divine nature', to use that awe inspiring phrase of St. Peter. Nor can we say that at the consummation of their destiny men will not equal the angels themselves in dignity and depth of being. God in person took to Himself a human nature, while Mary as the Mother of God is the greatest creation God has made; one would dare to think that God could make. As Queen of heaven and earth, men and angels, she possesses a greater fullness of grace, and *grace* in this sense means intrinsic likeness to the very nature of God.

But how can God himself endow Man with the fullness God has given to the order of the angels in creation? Had God not willed to communicate Himself to us in Christ, it would seem that the creation of matter-energy lacked all point in its creation. It is nothing to God to contemplate the glory of the galaxies and the sweep of their being, because whatever their glory, these material energies can never know Him and love Him as He is in Himself. Even of man, concerning whom the psalmist writes: "Thou has made him a little less than the angels; Thou has crowned him with glory and with honour; Thou hast set him over the works of thy hands", (Psalm 8 : 6-7), even he would seem to be, because of matter, a handicapped spirit. All the needs and limitations of matter are woven into man's way of knowing and loving. He is not fulfilled by direct contemplation alone, as is the angel, nor can God bring the whole order of man's universe into communion with Himself directly by the action of the Divine Spirit upon the created soul of man. To be perfect in its own order, the soul of man needs also the co-operation of the word in knowing, and the co-operation of the tangible and manifest in seeing and loving.

Truly, there would have been no way in which man, and the whole universe of which he is part and in which his being is embedded could have been given the total communion with God of the angelic order, *except through the unique decree of the Incarnation of God as man, in Jesus Christ*. Therefore for this very purpose, the entire material universe and its laws was framed to bring God into his own possession, this creation, as King of kings and Heir of the Ages. God's coming and the season of his advent in Nature, the season of his 'universal'

expectation is written not in the Bible, nor in the liturgy, *but in the laws of Nature and the configuration of the flesh of the living thing*. The Advent season of this creation, the season of expectancy through space, time, and light-years, is written in the preparation of the womb of the living creature. The womb was fashioned through the laws of Nature so that the material creation could offer from its own resources the vessel for the enfleshment of the Divine, but without that Divinity being 'caused' in any way by the action of the creature. Thus, the order of the universe and the order of mankind will be *divinised* in the birth on earth of God made man: "*The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*". If, as St. Paul teaches in the first chapter of the Letter to the Colossians: "all things do hold together in unity" through the predestination of Jesus Christ, then the vessel of giving flesh to 'Emmanuel' must be found within the order of the created nature. For the requirement of God is that the Divine should come into determining contact with, but not be caused or created by, the creature which is controlled and directed by God. We have many beautiful titles for Mary in the Litany of Our Lady; we might well add to "vessel of Election" the thought "vessel of Expectation", or "vessel of Emmanuel", because her womanhood brings Nature's liturgy, and that of the Church, to fruition on Christmas Day.

### **The Meaning of Womanhood**

The office of Mary in creation is the reason for womanhood itself. God could not have been born—as so many even sound theologians presume—by the taking up of a child conceived in the womb by natural sexual union into the 'hypostatic' union (as it is called) of human nature with the Divine Person of Christ. The role of natural generation is more honourable than they know. When a child is born of sexual union, the act of will and of body of the parents terminates not at flesh to be used by God, but at the creation of another human person through the action of God and these spouses. That is why, on this writer's theology at least, the use of the sexual act out of marriage, or denatured within marriage, is a sacrilege. For this act of procreation consummates a Sacrament in the likeness of the union of Christ and the Church. It belongs to the order by which men have the privilege of sharing with God in the peopling of heaven and of earth. No: even in the holiest of unions, Christ could not have been born of sexual congress, nor could He have been born by the will of man and the power of the flesh if

man had been made unisexual in nature. Once again, the power of the creature as *cause*, although it is secondary to God's power as cause, would still enter into the making of another being from nothingness into reality. God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—pre-exists before all creation. For the Mystery of the Incarnation it is required that the Father, for the Son, through the Love of them both in each other which is the person of the Holy Spirit, should determine the seed and the womb of Mary, and thus the Son of God be born also as Son of Man. God needed the consent of Mary, and her consent is given at The Annunciation and sung in the Magnificat. All creation sings it with her, every woman in particular. Mary represents all material creation not only in symbol but in the fact of her womanhood. Her womanhood speaks in itself the service the creature offers to God, in being prompted and quickened to a life more abundant by the fruit of her womb. Her womanhood looks for determination and quickening by Him who is the Determiner of all life and being. Through this act of God in becoming man, the natural order of creation, even in the material universe, is lifted into the supernatural order through the body of Jesus Christ. This is the unique service Mary renders to God, through her fullness of grace, her freedom from original and personal sin, and the function and office which is her womanhood.

God, we think, created the male as determiner of the womb in the making of new human life simply because on that one special unique occasion, the occasion to which all creation looked forward and longed. God needed to set aside the creative function of the male, and determine the womb of woman Himself, in his pre-existing Person, that God the Son might take to Himself a human nature and be made "the Son of Man". This means The Man in whom, as perfect image of the Father, all human nature—male and female—is created loved, reconciled, and beatified. If God had not needed in this way to influence the womb of woman without Himself being in any way controlled or determined in his person by that influence, then males would have been redundant to the entire created order. There is no intrinsic reason why, even in mankind's case, life could not have been unisexual except for the meaning and work of Christ. What is happening in the laboratory is every day making this more obvious. On the grounds of mere biology, males can be done without. As Christ, and the order of family life is denied and dishonoured by a permissive secularism, it is interesting to see how in the name of

flat equality and 'an end of sexual discrimination' some people are indeed trying to make us all, and all human life, "unisexual". They dishonour the basic facts of nature and of grace. Chivalry is an essential for nobility and decency in a man, and its acceptance as a grace, not an annoyance, is essential for mature and sweet womanhood. For man was made to cherish and protect woman while she is 'weak' for the bringing forth of life; and woman was made to look for that cherishing that she might fulfil the office of bringing forth life an office which is denied the male. For woman is irreplaceable in the plan of God. Quite rightly St. Paul teaches that in marriage the husband stands in the place of Christ. and the woman stands in the place of the Church, fruitful and fertile through the vocation of Christ unto mankind. The mutual, complementary work of the sexes is for the Incarnation, and if it is fundamental to the natural and biological order. It is fundamental also to the spiritual and liturgical order. What God has joined together in the Person of Jesus, God and Man—the Supernatural and the Natural Order—let not man seek to put asunder.

### **The Priesthood of the Altar**

It becomes clear what St. Paul meant when he wrote: *'I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God ... The man was not created for the woman but the woman for the man ... But yet neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man, in the Lord'* (1Cor 11: 3, 9, 11). As one has argued in *Sexual Order and Holy Order*, the prophetic meaning of this passage is quite clear, and fits in perfectly with St. Paul's doctrine of marriage, and of authority in the Church. Adam is created only because mankind is predestined first of all in the Only-Begotten Son of God, in whose sexless perfection is the source of all life and power. Adam stands for Christ to come, and Eve is shown as 'taken out from Adam' (and the word *rib* really means 'generative principle') as the vessel of reception and expectation, through which God will determine his creation that He may enter it in human reality but not as a created human person. It should be obvious then that no woman, not even Mary who is greater than any created priest of the altar in her person, her office, and the dignity of her human nature, can be *also* a priest of the altar, extending physically and ministerially the work and office of her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mary, and every woman with her, manifests in the office of her nature the expectancy of the world and the universe for *that other* whose office is complementary to her own, and whose very human nature, in its sexual office, must show Him as Son indeed, but also as the Determiner of life, the prompter of the womb, and not the one who responds to 'the Divinity that quickeneth'. Christ as 'Son' is also the perfect image of the Father, from whom He proceeds in his Person not by sexual but by a so-called 'intellectual generation' within the nature of God. In as much as Christ shows, as perfect image of the Father, the First Person of the Holy Trinity as the source and origin of all being, rightly do we call the First Person of the Trinity 'Our Father'. Although there is no sex in God, there is an order of source and origin, even in the order of the Blessed Trinity. This is also manifest in the order of physical creation, by which the male, for the purposes of Christ's coming, is the source and origin, the determinant which prompts life through womanhood. Quite naturally, then, do we refer to 'Father', 'Son', and 'Holy Spirit', whilst remembering that we are speaking in the order of analogy, and that we are *not* speaking in the order of some degree of lesser likeness to God in the spiritual personality of woman as opposed to man.

The order of the Sacred Liturgy shows forth for ever across the ages the order and meaning of Christ in creation, and the role of creation in making his coming to be possible. We have lost the sense of this type of majesty in the modern world, because we live in the last period of Nominalist decay in Western philosophy. The order of Christ in Nature ought to be manifested in the Liturgy, because in Christ the order of Nature and the Order of the Supernatural—of God's own order of being and destiny—are made one economy. Christ has no meaning as Man without us; nor we, nor the material creation without his Incarnation. The sexual order of life shows forth the Mystery of God in Christ in reality not merely in symbol. It can never be set aside. Till the end of time, the one who by a union of office and character puts on the Person of Christ—above all at the moment of the Consecration in the Eucharist—and extends ministerially, through his sexual nature, the ministry of Christ ever acting through time, must always be a male, showing forth that Christ is given for mankind. The woman, in the likeness of Mary, shows the Church as God's People, and Nature as it awaits Christ's coming and provides the vehicle of his human nature within its own order.

## **The Place of Mary**

The identity of Mary with all creation, and with all mankind as The Church, the People of God living through Christ, is magnificently portrayed, of course, as follows:

*“And a great sign appeared in heaven a Woman clothed with the sun, and with the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars.*

*And being with child, she cried travailing in birth*

*and was in pain to be delivered And she brought forth a man-child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.*

*And her son was taken up to God, and to his throne” (Rev. 12 : 1 & 5)*

The 'Woman' is first the planet Earth, through the womb, and because it is 'clothed with the sun' it teems with life and fertility in every species of living thing, but only because the reason for the earth is Man. It has the moon under its feet' for service, 'for times, and for seasons, for days and for years' (Genesis. 114). In the creation of man it is crowned with the glory of the galaxies, which is Nature labouring through time for the achievement of the body of man. In the second and fuller sense the Woman of vision is Mary, for whose office in creation all life is directed and divided in its sexual office. The gift of Mary to God for Christ is "our tainted nature's solitary boast" (Wordsworth) in deed and truth. The Son of Mary is Son of Man, but first, Son of God. He is taken up in recognition and heirship to the throne of God his Father. Finally, the Woman who is the Earth, and Mary, is also, through Mary, the Church—the People of God out of all nations. She is mankind for whom Christ is born. Through the office of her womb Mary is in fact and not in compliment 'Mother of the Church'. That Church, brought into being in the flesh of Christ at the moment of the Incarnation, is clothed and lives by Christ the Sun of Justice, and crowned by 'The Twelve', the Magisterium through men of Jesus Christ on earth. All these various meanings are not separate, but the fullness of *one meaning* which is the order and the dispensation of the Mystery of the Incarnation.

## Quaestiones Quodlibetales

A subtitle which corresponds in our days to 'Any Questions'? Therefore:

1. *Would you say, from what you have written above, that the character of Holy Order as a sacrament inheres in the sexuality of the male?*

The character of Holy Order one suggests can only inhere in a person through his spiritual soul, but with a necessary link to that person's sexuality as male. Since sexuality is a secondary human characteristic, this could explain why the character of Order is not on the same level as those of Baptism and Confirmation. These are endowments deriving from that relationship to God in Christ that we are given as 'co-sharers of the divine nature'. It would also explain why the role of the priest of Holy Order is ministerial, for the priest does not participate in the divine character of Christ as High Priest and Only Mediator between God and mankind. If a priest participated directly and formally in the Priesthood of Christ through Christ's divine nature we would surely all be co-redeemers and intrinsically holy, and certainly we are not. Perhaps this point is better summarised at the end of the pamphlet *Sexual Order and Holy Order*.

2. *If a woman cannot be a priest, surely she cannot be a perfect image of God?*

This does not seem to follow, because the sacrament and character of *divinisation* is that of Baptism, in which St. Paul teaches expressly there is no distinction of male or female. God is sexless; likeness to God must reside essentially in the spiritual soul. To this writer it seems that Our Lady, as the greatest creature God has made, and one entirely without original sin among mankind, must be more 'like to God' than any other creation of God in perfection. The degree in which a creature is 'like' or 'an image' of God would seem to depend first of all on the free and intrinsic gift of God, as in the case of the status given to Our Lady, and partly on the degree of holiness and response of any creature to grace. Again, from St. Paul, 'star differs from star in glory'. Only in the case of Our Lady would this unique vocation of nearness to God seem to be sex dependent, and to depend on *not* being a male!

3. *But a woman cannot be a perfect likeness of Christ though, can she?*

As Christ is God revealed and manifested for us through human nature, she certainly can. The 'likeness' is in human perfection, and sexuality is only a secondary characteristic of human nature. Obviously a woman cannot be a perfect *copy* of Christ in all respects, and if she could there would have been no Christ for any of us. Even here, one must tread cautiously on ground undeveloped in theological reasoning. Christ as *male* is not self-sufficient either. The body of Christ showed in its configuration the need God had for *woman*, and without us—without mankind—there would have been no *office and function* as Saviour and Messiah for Christ as God made man. Again, the office of Christ is unfulfilled *without the Church*. It is the union of Christ and the Church which gives us 'the whole Christ' as it is called, the Person of Christ fulfilled in His living relationship to the Communion of Saints—all those who live by Christ's grace in heaven, in purgatory, and as still pilgrim on earth. Here again, the necessary relationship of the very *vocation* of Christ to womanhood is made manifest. I do not think we can approach questions of 'Christ-likeness' in this way, for as Man (not as God), Christ is *defined* to the need of woman just as He is defined towards the need for the Church. We are made in an order of service, of membering, and complementarity, not in an order of first and second class sexual citizenship. The priesthood of the altar would seem to be a permanent charism, given through an indelible character to a baptised male for the service of Christ in the Church. It is a great and wonderful grace to be so called, let no one undervalue it. There are, however, other great charisms in the Church, from the unique vocation of Our Lady onwards. There is prophecy, for instance, as a grace of wisdom, witness and further revelation of the fullness of Christ. This, together with great works of mission and care have very often shone out in saintly women. In Our Father's House there are so many mansions, and we are rarely in a position to put a 'valuation' on the treasures with which the mansions to which we are allotted may be furnished.

*4. So many women yearn to fulfil a pastoral ministry with the freedom and authority of a priest!*

It must be granted that a woman cannot be a minister of the Eucharist, the forgiveness of sins, nor in the case of the supreme degrees of the ordained ministry, exercise the magisterium of Christ as does a bishop or uniquely the Pope. Nor for that matter can more than one in ten

thousand males, or one in thousands of millions in the case of the Pope. What one thinks (and knows from experience) many holy and apostolic Religious who are women want, is *the power to teach and form*, and especially the young, with the freedom and power granted to a priest. This could be granted them, and most urgently *should* be granted to them. They would lack that element in a priest's authority which derives from Order, it is true, but they would not lack that power, grace to move the mind and heart, and personal authority which comes from true holiness allied to competent wisdom. A priest whose personality strikes the young as *not loveable* or *not holy* (well intentioned but trendy pastors, please observe) carries no weight or authority with the people, and least of all with the young. They never attract vocations. One would like to see Religious Sisters *working more in the parishes directly, and among the people through the streets and, houses*. This should not entail loss of community, which is essential to holiness, and it should involve a recognisable habit, with its manifestation of dedication, but a modern and sensible type of dress. If older Orders just cannot adapt themselves more to a new *ethos* in the Church than to any revolutionary new groupings, then new Orders will have to be raised up from the grass roots. Every parish priest knows that there are things that a priest cannot do as well for the girls and women of his parish as can a deep, holy, and theologically well taught Sister. Some of us have seen the transformation worked within the characters of girls in the parish within two or three years of the apostolate of such, and seen also the complete collapse of what has been achieved when the said Sister is whisked away to other work. The Church does not need so much *new Orders* as *a new orientation upon the formation of the people in teaching the faith and teaching prayer*. This is where our weakness is, and it is more total in the vocation of the woman in the Church than in that of the lay man or the priest. But more than ever we need in the Church today the life of the state of perfection, and the living of the counsels of perfection. This, as *witness*, as *achievement*, and as *call to conversion* attracts the unsophisticated and multitudinous people of God to the Church in a way that the lay apostolate alone cannot. We are members one of another. The laity don't need only the priest, they need the *Religious* as well, and in the case of the woman, they are not yet getting what they need.

*5. Should there be any special recognition in the Liturgy of the Eucharist of the sexual order of Mary, and womanhood in its nature?*

Why not indeed! The Offertory Rite gives such an opportunity. There is no need to stick rigidly to the present rather simplistic form of a Jewish Meal Blessing or *berakah*. The *berakah* of Christ over the Last Supper was prophetic of the order of the New Covenant in His Humanity and Divinity. Liturgy is prophecy not archaeology. The meaning and role of Mary and of womanhood in giving us the supreme gift and fruit of the earth should be written in. Likewise, the Offertory Procession seems to belong to the woman and the girl in the same special way that serving at the altar belongs to the man and the boy. There is a sexual order in the works of God, it ought to be reflected in the Church's liturgical order as well.

*6. And Lastly ...*

It would help if the Church would emphasize much more, from the vocation of Mary in the Church and in the universe, *Motherhood as a Holy Vocation*, and the office of the womb as an office in the Church. It is already contained, rather thinly done, in the final blessing of the revised rite of Baptism. This writer regretted the suppression of the Feast of the Motherhood of Our Lady. Perhaps the Octave Day of Christmas could be so used if it were changed a little to express not only the universal Motherhood of Mary, but also the specific honour and vocation of motherhood in the plan of God, in the home, and in the Church. We badly need to bring back sanctity to sex in marriage and among adolescents. We also need to stress that the formation of noble and beautiful young men and women is God's own work, and not a biological nuisance which stops one from earning more money. There is a lot we have to develop and to think out concerning God's sexual order in creation and its relationship to married order, Holy Order, and liturgical order.

## TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

To begin an article with 'towards' implies a very tentative initiative, the awkward prototype of something much more perfect which could be developed by working along the same lines. Such will be this article. Expressions like 'towards' usually mean that the subject cannot be developed within the scope available. So, again, will it be. The thought to write perhaps more than one article on the sacramental doctrine of marriage—the *Christological* relationships within marriage—had been in my mind for some time when I was sent a translation of themes presented in 1977 to the *International Theological Commission* by Fr. G. Martelet S.J., a member of that Commission and a frequent adviser in theological matters to Pope Paul VI. While as students in pre-Conciliar days we had heard a lot about the moral law and obligations of marriage, many of us had heard very little about the doctrinal roots of Christian marriage, i.e. its relationship to God, and specifically to Christ as Son of God and Son of Man.

### **The Couple as Ministers of Christ.**

To this writer the need to develop a doctrine—that is to say a creative pastoral wisdom—of living and loving in Christian marriage has come home painfully through years of giving instructions before marriage to young couples. Above all else it is the indissolubility of Christian marriage which must be presented to the young couple from its positive and not simply its negative aspect. The pastoral priest finds himself asking what is it in authentically understood Christian marriage which makes this communion of a man and a woman not simply a subjective state of loving, which one profoundly hopes—as an ideal—will last till 'death do us part', but makes of it a *permanent state*, an *objective* bond of life and love which—succeed or fail—lasts till death do them part?

At once you find yourself thinking of marriage not simply as an *office*—although of course it is an office of nature—but also as a *ministry*, properly so called in the Church. Within that ministry the quality of the loving is all important. All that belongs to the flesh—the tenderness of natural complements, sexual communion, the joy of a natural friendship within a unique bond of possession and mutual support—all of this must be taken up into the spiritual quality

of a love which is based upon holiness of heart and nobility of person. In order for marriage to be fulfilling, this communion of love must derive—as do the deepest friendships—from a love in which is God possessed in grace and humility, loved in Christian striving for perfection, and is the prompting of the human love and the cementing of its endurance. In the love of marriage, this quality of the loving is bound to a sacramental status and grace. That is to say, it is bound in a personal relationship to Jesus Christ; to a relationship of office, ministry, and mutual covenant.

Once again, the orthodox and authentic concept of the Catholic sacrament helps us to understand and develop the wealth within this idea. For in a sacrament—as opposed to personal prayer and devotion, liturgical or otherwise—Christ is the primary minister and the direct giver of the status conferred, and the graces that go with that status. That was the value of the old Latin tag which said a sacrament conferred grace *ex opere operato*—from the rite as effected and consummated. That phrase has been wounded with as many sneers as the human back of Jesus Christ was wounded with bruising lashes. It expresses a supreme truth: the *objectivity* of the Christian sacrament, not simply as a suffrage of Man graciously accepted by God, but as a work of God in Christ which is effected upon human beings by Christ's status as Son of Man. It is an objective and Godly work done within the order of the Incarnation, and neither enhanced in its grace by the holiness of the human minister nor lessened by his sinful unworthiness.

In the case of marriage, the priest or deacon who blesses the marriage is not the proximate human minister of the sacrament. He merely accepts and recognises what takes place *ex opere operato*, within and between the couple through the primary agency and will of Christ. The couple are the ministers of the sacrament. The *truth*—i.e. in professional language *the validity*—of their marriage depends upon its physical possibilities as an office of nature, upon which is built the office of grace and the ministry within the Church. It also depends upon their knowledge, their will, and their consent. In as much as Christ is the principal minister in every Christian Sacrament, the relationship to Himself which the couple bring about by their vows depends also upon Christ's knowledge, will and consent. The relationship to God in Christ is objective and is permanent. Marriage is always a 'triangular' relationship. It is not between

two people, but between three. Christ is the third, and that relationship is what makes the couple ministers of an objective sacrament, because the relationship to Christ and from Him endures till death do them part.

### **The Sign of “Adam”**

The doctrine of marriage, like so many other aspects of Catholic Christian doctrine, flows much more coherently from first principles if we presume that the Incarnation is decreed as a condition of the creation of the material universe, and of the final synthesis of matter and the spiritual soul in Man. That is to say, it is without a necessary dependence upon the fact of original sin and the Fall of Man. In such a viewpoint, Christ’s flesh and His human nature as Son of Man is the reason for our own nature and for the condition of our own nature as a synthesis of flesh and spirit.

This is the deep meaning of that ‘*covenant*’ between God and Man in Christ, to which St. Paul likens the sacrament of Christian marriage itself in the profound and fully worked out theology of the fifth chapter of the letter to the Ephesians. To translate St. Paul more literally and correctly than do modern ‘literary’ translations: our flesh is membered unto God’s flesh in Jesus Christ, “*For we are members of His body: we are of His flesh, and of His bones*” (Eph. 5:3(1)). There is an echo here, not accidental but prophetic, of the cry of Adam in the first chapters of Genesis “*this now, is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called ‘She’, because taken from He*” (Gen 2:23). This too is the literal, exact translation of Adam’s words.

It is the common doctrine of the Fathers of the Church that ‘Adam’ in this context is primarily and prophetically *Christ*, and the Woman or ‘She’, in this context of the primeval revelation, is *the Church*. That is why St. Paul teaches the Ephesians that marriage images the communion of the flesh of Christ with the Church, not vice-versa. Marriage is not simply a convenient metaphor of the union between Christ and the Church, between Christ and mankind; *the being of the Church causes marriage*. We are fortunate in English to be able to express as precisely as in the Hebrew the relationship as well as the pun comprised in ‘man’, ‘wo-man’, and ‘he’ and ‘s-he’. If the creation of Man depends upon the decree of the

Incarnation, then we are in truth, not in metaphor, *of His flesh and of His bones*. This is the basic covenant between God and Man in the Incarnation of the Eternal Word. The Covenant is to create, to prompt life, and then to nourish and fulfil it once prompted. That is why all created flesh is said to be in the relationship of 'spouse' to Christ. That flesh is the Church herself, whether 'actually' or 'potentially', already called or not yet evangelised. Christ gives being to all flesh. He determines its existence and it responds to Him through the sacramental life and economy of the Church with life that is conceived, born, and brought to the font. The Church responds as a *woman*—as the one who brings forth life and life more abundant through the determination and act of Christ.

The relationship of Christian marriage and of the married couple to Christ—the relationship of their very flesh to the Church, *to Mary* and to Christ—comes out so very clearly if we draw the conclusions from the link between what St. Paul teaches in the Letter to the Ephesians and the cry of Adam in recognition of Eve. Indeed, Christ Himself refers to this basic relationship when He sets aside the dispensation of divorce allowed by Moses "*because of the hardness of your hearts*" and restores its original grace and status, the *order* of sacramental marriage to His own divine self. "*Have you not read that He who made mankind from the beginning made them male and female, therefore these are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder*" (Mt 19:4-6).

First, we observe that they are indissolubly one in the flesh because of the office of marriage as created. God did not make man and woman sexually complementary principles of life for sexual enjoyment, and you may have a child if you feel like it. Marriage as an office in creation—the natural order—and in the Church as an office of ministry—the supernatural order—is so clearly first and primarily a ministry of creation to life. That life—the child conceived—is a gift to man *and to God* which begins in time but endures for eternity. It is also a gift to God *for ever*.

In fact, what Christ really said to the Pharisees is even more striking if it is analysed according to the Jewish rabbinical norms of that day. It would go thus: Do you not read that God made Adam *one flesh*, and then found that there was no helpmate for him like unto himself. Does God make mistakes? Make silly oversights like man? No. But for what reason did

God take from him a sexual principle, a principle of life and generation (for the original meaning of the word 'rib', related to the sign of the 'arum lily', almost certainly means the male member as principle of life and generation) and build it into the woman from Adam's own flesh? He did it only to re-one him more beautifully, happily and fulfillingly than before, *and that man might be one in the unity of marriage*. For what God has thus re-oned—as much as before 'the rib was taken from his side'—is now as much one as if it had remained in Adam's body

### **Sexual Union and Holy Love**

Myself, I do quote this to young couples. It is good to remind them that Christ creates in them, and through them. That is why their marriage is a sacrament, and has its indissoluble meaning and office of love together through Christ and in a permanent relationship to Him. Christ does not even give to the spouses a delegated power. He actually allows their *act of love to be a participation* with Him in the very act of God's creation of us for time and unto eternity. This should govern the spiritual depth, the quality, and the basic reverence in the love of man and of woman. It also makes so clear the deep meaning of St. Paul in that passage of the Ephesians, in which He bids men love their wives as Christ loves the Church, and wives to love their husbands in the way that the Church, the whole family of God, responds to Christ. Young couples should bear in mind that when they have communed in love spiritually with joy, in natural tenderness and in sexual union, and of that total experience a child was conceived, that the love of Christ which desires us and breathes us into being is as physically present also in that act of theirs.

Young couples, if you teach them *this way* of looking at their sexual lives (most of them today have already started it anyway) will sometimes pull a wry face at each other. But, that measures only the degree of greed and coarseness—the 'concupiscence' in the theological sense—which has entered so much into married congress since the incursion of Original Sin. What one has taught them is the truth. Their act of love should be the reflection of Christ's spousal act of love in creating. Also, this relationship to Christ should measure the chastity, the fidelity, and the peaceful subordination of the body to the soul, which is the reflection of the *divine wisdom* in Christ, by which nothing of the flesh and its delights is an end of itself, much

less an end to the exclusion of the meanings of God contained in the creative office of life. All things, if they are to be perfect in our lives and loves, in marriage or in the celibate state, are related to and ruled by the perfection of love as it lives and rules in Christ's Divinity and in the holiness of his own human body and its powers.

When one thinks that way one finds oneself asking—if the love of husband and wife reflects the communion of Christ and His Office to us as 'the Church'—how a man should react when for good reasons a woman cannot or should not consent to mutual physical intercourse. Should there be anger, sulks, martyr-like behaviour and mutterings about "my rights"? Hardly: the office of love begins first in the soul, in goodness and nobility of personality. There is the heart-core of the love. It should be a joy to lie in the arms of the beloved and to forgo the final physical pleasure. That is not the main thing, not the heart of loving. That is only a bodily pleasure which in love and in friendship can be—and in the unmarried always should be—separated out from the communion of life together and the tenderness of man and woman made one in the flesh but also one in the spirit. It will certainly not justify or be thought compatible with that 'anal' or 'oral' behaviour to which rugged peasant perception rightly gives much harsher names.

The question arises whether modern 'contraceptive' loving which subordinates the office of creation through Christ to mere physical pleasure and personal communion of satisfaction, is itself the root cause of the modern breakup of marriage? One is convinced that it is. The habitual selfishness and deep interior sense of wrong that exists within confused consciences, the inversion of order and rightness, leads to mutual irreverence and mutual loss esteem. The love becomes meaningless as a relationship *of love for life*, because the element of the ministry to life has gone out of it. More and more purely physical experiments are tried, along the newspaper lines of 'Need married passion die? Read all about it in next week's 'Sunday Porn' etc. Life together becomes a bore, and sexual pleasure a natural right at the workplace. or with a neighbour. Youngsters who behave sensually at parties and elsewhere will admit (as this writer knows from discussion with them over many years) that the end result of a long session of loving which has become simply erotic is a mutual boredom and mutual disgust with each other. It is not dissimilar to the reaction that follows the drinking party or other acts of sheer greed. It

is a sign that the order of loving and its spiritual wisdom has been violated. It occurs even in any confused consciences, but is most acute in young people who have some real, sincere prayer life, and whose spirit is willing, but whose flesh, as in us all, is alas so weak. The same loss of values and meaning, of reverence and spirituality, rules and ruins also in married life, and people cannot and will not get away from it. Most of the time their frustrations and mutual boredom are due not to lack of sex, but to far, far too much of it. Somehow, I don't think I am on the same wavelength as Dr. Jack Dominian in my approach to all this—but I do know as a priest that I am right. Psychologically, the love which does not recognise that sexual communion must always be open to life, destroys its own meaning in relation to its other constituents, both natural and spiritual, bringing in a cloying boredom.

### **Testimony of a Holy Woman**

If young couples do—and if they more regularly *did* —relate their loving to the way *Christ* would love in marriage—and St. Paul teaches us that the husband is a *Christ* figure in the love of marriage—and if the wife responded to her husband as she would to *Christ* in the act of creation, what a totally different emphasis there would be in the bond of their loving and the holy wisdom that would control, rule and make joyful all elements of that relationship at all times, not only in health but also in sickness! For again, in the likeness of the Covenant of 'God with us' that brought about the Incarnation, did they not reach out to each other: "to have and to hold for better for worse, for richer for poorer, *in sickness and in health*, till death do us part"?

At a Summer School, now twenty years ago, after a heated discussion on such things, an elderly nun who had been present came up to me and said: "Father, you are quite right. I am a convert. We were high Anglicans, my husband and I. We had six children. It is nonsense to say that we had them all just because we Victorians could not help it. We thought of every child with delight as our gift to God. We loved to think we had given them the gift of eternal life with God. Whenever I was pregnant my husband would love me but never enter me. He would say: "God has closed your womb, dear, for His own purposes, and I will not desecrate it by trying to force a way". After my sixth the doctor said to my husband: "Charles, she is getting into a mess

now and there must be no more". He never minded. Welay in each other's arms and loved as before but ties there was nomasturbation, or these oral and anal things they talk about. It would have horrified us and been a desecration of life. I suppose there must have had flow sometimes. but we never bothered about it one way or the other". I pause to say that, apart from the name 'Charles' this is a totally true story. I do not give further details, because she was in fact the Reverend Mother of the convent which hosted our Summer School. Yet, in the personal testimony of that wife and religious, I do find echoes of the teaching upon marriage of the Fathers of the Church, of Aquinas, and of great souls through the ages. I don't find it, or anything remotely like it in the confused and libidinous paragraphs of the intellectual press, Catholic or non-Catholic, still less in the media which has degenerated into a permanent state of obsessive porn.

### **Before 'Adam' was made**

Let us return to the primary vision given to the seer who, guided by God, first taught Israel and all mankind the story of the making of *Adam*, of *the Man*. In that vision *Adam* is *not*, repeat *not* the 'male', but the common stock of both sexes. Feminists, so-called, always miss this point. *Adam*, which means in Hebrew 'Man' is first and foremost a type or figure of Christ. God Incarnate, who is come.' *Adam* 'the one made from earth' (or matter) is shown as containing the potential of *both sexes*, but of being alone, without 'helpmate'. One suggests it means that Christ is barren and meaningless as God Incarnate without us created humans who are membered into Him. It is only after a 'principle of life and generation' is taken out of *Adam* or 'Man' in the sense of human nature, that Adam is male and the life built up upon his flesh is female.

The image is that of God in Christ who is the source of our being, and the principle of our flesh and of our creation as beings *at* flesh and spirit, matter and soul, in the decree of the Incarnation. We are wanted in the Son of God, who is made in his human nature Son—or *source* —of Man, both male and female. Christ as God determines our life as first cause, and in creation we respond to Him with life more abundant, as the children of Adam and of Eve, generation after generation. This family, the Church, is nourished and fed by Christ, and

through the Cross and the Eucharist quite specifically made bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. What God 'took out of the Flesh of Christ', of the human nature prefigured in Christ, may have needed to be expressed in limited, and primitive pictograph language by a *male* sign for 'principle of life', but in fact, what God took out of the stock of human nature was *the woman*, when life divided the fullness of the flesh of God Incarnate, figured in Adam.

It was the *woman* He took out, that she might *receive* Him when He came, for God needed the womb of Mary that the Word might be made flesh at all. Therefore, it is wrong to think that, in the body only the male images Christ. The male images Christ as the One to Come, the Saviour and Redeemer since sin. The woman images Christ as created mankind, as life itself expecting and yearning for Christ, because without us as 'His brethren' the Incarnation is pointless. These two relationships—Christ the creator and determiner of man as a creation of matter and spirit, and mankind as made to the image of Christ and responding to Him with life and life most abundant which rises—both belong to the fullness of Christ. They cannot be expressed perfectly in either sex alone, but only in their mutual relationship together. God is sexless in nature, and the divine essence expresses the fullness of all created meaning. When God is made Son of Man, this fullness must be divided and becomes one again, one fullness when both are re-joined. in the communion which is Christ and the Church; i.e.. God Incarnate, and Man created because of the decree of the Incarnation.

If we ask why did God need to separate out His image, the original Adam, so that the full potential of the flesh as an office of creation towards Christ needed to be made male and female, one suggests that it was the inevitable need at the Incarnation. God needed to possess in Mary the vessel of life, the womb, to take human nature without coming under that natural law of God's own making. That which the congress of male and female, the actuation of the full potential and office of life, that is sex, produces not simply human nature but also a human person. Here is the privilege and sacramental grandeur of spouses, man and woman, the male and the female. When in the congress of sexual union they create life *they participate directly with Christ* who through them, and with them, and in them, creates a being in His likeness for time and for eternity. The spouses do not create just human nature, they create under God, and as a necessary part of His creative and intention, *a human person*. That is why one said that

spouses do not have a merely delegated power of creation. They participate *immediately* with Christ in the creation of a human person for time and for eternity. Christ as Eternal Person, full and utterly complete as being in the Godhead, cannot and does not need to use that law of His own making, which consists in the actuation of the full procreative potential of human nature in itself. He so divides Adam, the rational life made from the earth, that the full potential is divided into prompter of life, giver and determiner, and the vessel of reception which responds with life and life more abundant.

When the time for the human birth of God as Man will come, God will need to set aside the role of the male, because together with the female, in the office of life and nature, they create another human person. He simply takes up the vehicle of human reality alone, of the nature not the person, and asks permission of Mary. So that existent Person as He is, He may be made flesh through her seed and her womb. Her response to the Holy Spirit, for the conception of God the Word within her, is not merely personal. As Prophetess supreme, she speaks for all created nature as it ends in Man. She speaks for the whole universe as it looks towards and expects Christ and is fulfilled in her "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to this word". That is why she is shown in the twelfth chapter of the Revelations of St. John as a great Sign: *a Woman clothed with the sun, standing on the moon and crowned with the stars*, for Mary is all creation's vehicle of life, for the body of Jesus Christ. Her sex is divided out from a 'unisexual Adam'—the first 'man' of Genesis—that creation might offer, from its own sinless resources in her, the means for the reception of its God. And also that God might not deny His own law, namely that the co-operation with God of the full reproductive power of human life brings into being through Christ not simply human nature but a created human person as such.

So God makes the 'woman' so that at the climax of human history in one unique case to which all material creation looks towards, God may set aside the office of life in the male and use directly the office of the female, the mode of His reception into human kind and nature. For the Word who is to be made Flesh and dwell amongst us is already Person indeed in the being of God, with the Father and the Holy Spirit. It is still true that in his office towards life the male represents Christ as the determiner of the womb, the *One to Come*, the minister who is the

Christ. The woman represents Christ in the Church's (and all mankind's) membering to the Lord as *of His flesh*, and *of His blood*. For God does not need the Incarnation, but we do, and we are made His "brothers and sisters" (see Hebrews 2: 10-16) through the Incarnation, in the One Mystical Body of Christ through the office of marriage.

### **Christ and Holy Order**

The full office of Christ as 'Son of Man' is understood only in the complete office of man and woman together in marriage. This is imaged in Adam before he is divided or, to speak much more truly, *before he is divided sexually and then re-oned again in the relationship to Christ of Adam and Eve*, of the male and the female. This is a sign to us also of why only the 'male' can be a priest of the Eucharist. Every Catholic sacrament is an *objective* act of Christ, and in the Eucharist Christ acts through the priest in the order of the ministry of His own self, and His own body. Christ's own body is 'male' only because He needs the vehicle of His own reception into the world, and shows forth in that maleness the relationship to Himself of all mankind, of the Church, and of the People of God. In the Eucharist Jesus must be *Himself*, He cannot be His mother, who was taken out from the order of the flesh, in the division of 'Adam' that the Word might be made Flesh. And in that showing forth, uniquely through *the male priest*, the whole mystery and majesty of the office of Christ, and of the meaning of the Church as His spouse is manifested to all believers.

For the same reason this writer would strongly defend the incidental ministry at the altar of altar boys and not altar girls. Even in marriage the male and the female show forth in their mutual office the full meaning of Christ, Son of God and of Man. The husband is a Christ figure to his wife. For the same reason, while anybody can bring up the bread and wine at the Offertory of the Mass, in fact only girls or women do it with the perfection of liturgical and sacramental order. There is only one true offertory gift and Mary made it through the ministry of her womb. As every woman makes it when she brings forth a child for Christ through the ministry of her own womb. The man cannot do this necessary thing. He must have another ministry and the expression of it in creation, or he would be little more than a drone.

## **In Summary**

It is very obvious by now that an article is too small a medium for so rich a theme. In summary we conclude only with some of the things it is possible to tell couples, and much more importantly boys and girls at school. Tell them that they share *directly* with Christ in the ministry of creation, making His People and the Church, in time and for eternity . Explain to them the *office* of male and female in relationship to the division of the flesh sexually, for the person of Christ and for the needs of mankind. Let them reverence their physical chastity as the vehicle of this office of life, and not desecrate that act which uniquely, and necessarily consummates a sacrament of the Church. In marriage itself, let their love reflect the holiness of Christ, for the body is made for the soul, and the pleasure of the sexual act is made as a sign of the goodness of that work in creation which is one with the love of God when He wills us into being. Let it be subject to the wisdom and peace that is of God, in the love and tenderness of the spouses between themselves. The physical ecstasy in itself is a much lesser thing; transient in time, fading with the years, but no less in its office.

Let them know also that their communion of life is a ministry in the Church, because if children are conceived lovingly and in a state of permanent love, then Baptism does not exist in the Church for its constitution except through the ministry of marriage, and baptism is membership of the Church, new birth into the Family of God. Their work in marriage is also a ministry like to that of the priest and the Religious. Their participation with Christ in creation is not simply liturgical. It is a ministry of forming and fashioning the child of God to know Him, love Him, pray to Him and better to serve Him.

In all of this it is like a natural priesthood. Without this office well done, an office which is the solid foundation of the Church herself, the work of the priest becomes one long salvage operation, and few are the vocations formed among a people in which stable and steadfast married love crumbles to dust, among the ever smaller 'nuclear' family, the ever rising tide of sexual and erotic addiction, which is represented in alarming rates of divorce in our country. Teach the young that as Christ's love for us was faithful in joy and in great sorrow, even in betrayal and dereliction, so must be their own love. It is for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health till death do us part.

A love like this is most certainly born only of deep spiritual union with God, and through that communion with God, fed at least weekly at the table of the Lord, their own love and fidelity it must thrive and must grow. A lazy, lapsed family life means the loss of the children, and within the hearts of spouses that quiet desperation of boredom and mutual meaninglessness which is the lot of so many, and shows in their very faces in older years. The office and ministry of marriage is founded first and foremost upon a ministry that creates life, and then fosters that life in the body and even more in the soul of the child. At the same time, it must, as the perfect 're-union' of Adam in the flesh, bring with the years a quiet mutual happiness, fulfilment, and mutual appreciation. Faithfulness to God, and to His will and His law, brings peace of soul, and in mutual joy and happiness in each other. If they use their sexual communion always according to the laws of God, and the perfect meanings of marriage contained in those laws of God, then they will civilize and spiritualize that which since the Fall of man belongs at times to the greeds and selfish desires of the flesh. They will be subordinating the physical expression of their love to the truth of God, and their mutual fidelity and exclusive lifelong love, a mature love which grows more inner, noble, peaceful, and fulfilling with the years.

At the end, in a work of love which never finishes till death, but has mutual care for the beloved and for the children of that love, differing at different seasons of life, but enduring unto to the end—they will at the evening of life deserve to hear from their children, in the tones in which those simple words "mum" and "dad" are spoken of them and to them, an echo of the reverence for a ministry and a love truly faithful which belongs to "Father" when the people love their priest. For this is a great Sacrament in Christ and of His Church.

## TIMES AND TIDES IN WORLD RELIGION

Not every tide in the spiritual affairs of men today is an ebb tide. Christianity may be an ebbing tide, at least in its heartlands, but elsewhere tides are coming strongly in. There is something for us to learn, and urgently, about the reasons why. First, there is Islam. It would be a mistake to see the resurgence of Islam as merely a response to new found Arab nationalism, pride and oil power. Islam was once a great culture as well as a faith, and it could be so again. Islam was also actively and militantly conversional. It is so again. The shadow of hostility already hangs over the Christian and non-Moslem communities of the Middle East. Islam is sweeping through black Africa, and through black North America as well.

Wherever Islam is found one will find the demand for a growing autonomy, ultimately for separatism and Islamic Law, a demand enforced by the sword as numbers grow. This is the real reason for the recent trouble on the frontiers of Burma. There is nothing one little bit ecumenical about Islam, neither has the word any place or meaning in the Moslem mentality. One wonders whether the woolly, compromising and semi-Humanist initiatives we have seen pass for ecumenism recent years have done anything in mission lands except help to dissolve Christian communities in the presence of Islam. This writer is not in a position to make assertions, but does know the misgivings of many missionaries.

### **Phenomenon of the Sons of Israel**

The sons of Israel are also back again, demanding the lands given them by God through promise through Abraham and Moses. There is nothing ecumenically vague or compromising about them either. They have achieved their return to Palestine by an interpretation of the tradition of their sacred books which bears no relationship at all to the traditions of German biblical scholarship and exegesis. Islam and Israel may be enemies, but they are similar in ethos, in mentality, and in principle.

From a personal reading of the Koran, it does seem that much of what is best and finest in Islam derives from the common heritage of the Old Testament. The war between Arab and Jew is a war between brothers of blood and brothers of a common mind. Both peoples have a

common name for God, and both a common conception of God and God's word. Israel is a scientific state, and is said to be a secular and sophisticated society. Things are not quite as simple as that. The British never understood the Zionist movement. Come to that, we pragmatic rather prosaic British have never grasped the deeper philosophical and theological thoughts which have inspired any nation. The Zionist has from the beginning worked for just one thing, and all the pointing to persecution and pogroms has been just an excuse to get it: the borders of Joshua, and in greedier moments, the borders attributed to king Solomon.

The Israeli claims it as the heritage of God, of the word once spoken which is never retracted, a word without repentance or shadow of change. To bring about the phenomenon of modern Israel, the Jew has changed the 'irreversible' tide of progress in history. They have made a nonsense of historic relativism and reinstated an ancient absolute with a fixed, univocal meaning. The People of the Bible have made a fool of Bultmann and of the whole Germanic biblical tradition. A people which was not really a nation—which had lost purity of blood, unity of language and culture and its homeland—has come back again into its own after two thousand years.

You look upon them in the documentaries as they ride their tanks over the desert and you see every variant of Western and Eastern blood. There is nothing like their achievement in all recorded human history. It has been done by prayer and by planning, by wiles and by brutal violence. It has been done in the name of the *objective* gift of God, the *un-demythologised* meaning of the Scriptures, the *transcendence* of the divine word and will. That is why it is true that Israel has made a nonsense of Bultmann and of all the ephemeral prophets of the higher criticism. Understand the achievement of Israel—and I judge not of its right and wrong in the eyes of God—and the tradition through which it has been brought about, and you may throw away the Nordic scholarship for the mush it really is. The Nordic exegetes have never understood the Semitic mind and they never will. They are too arrogant and too self-introverted. They always make God in their own wonderful 'Aryan' image and likeness. God however is a Semite and has quite a different tradition of the Bible!

There can be peace between Israel and Arab only if the Arab will in the end grant the rights and borders of Israel from a *religious* principle and a spiritual authority, because *it is*

*written*. One does not pretend to know whether they will. This however is the heart of the matter, and the futile manoeuvrings of the Anglo-Saxon mind on either side of the Atlantic, the weary waving of dollar bills, is an utter irrelevance. The phenomenon of Israel is not the outcome of liberal democratic Western civilisation. It is from the collective subconscious of peoples, as much as from the subconscious of individuals, that one must look for the positive forces which shape history. Both God and Satan are unchanging and 'transcendent' in their minds and wills through history. The only real myth is the myth of liberal Humanism, the myth called 'historic relativism'. The actual myth is the myth which teaches that the only stable reality in history is the present mentality, and the present belly, of Western Aryan humanity.

### **The Buddhist and the Hindu**

In an aside somewhere in *The Phenomenon of Man*, Teilhard de Chardin remarks that the faiths of the East must crumble before the critical impact of scientific knowledge, and this because their answers to the ultimate problems of the universe are founded upon a quite inadequate mythology. Teilhard considered that he himself had saved Christianity from a similar fate by offering it his own synthesis of natural and revealed wisdom. Unfortunately, the reduction of Christ to 'Omega-Point' is also a modern, scientific myth. For the Christ of Teilhard is not transcendent, but immersed within the evolutionary process, and Himself only the projection of the mind of man, a projection bound within the limits of man making God to man's own image and likeness.

But apart from this, the assertion of Teilhard de Chardin is not working out quite as projected. For there is arising in the World, also in the West, a seeking for God by the paths of meditation and contemplation, union and communion. The hunger of the spirit breaks through the scientific affluence, breaks through the kingdom of the belly and of lust made safe by technology. In this respect the Buddhist and the Hindu has more to offer Western man than has Islam. Alas, 'the Way' of the East has more to offer than present Catholic Christianity itself, which stands naked and ashamed like Adam after the fall, its doctrine levelled and distorted, its liturgy and Eucharist ready to any hand to give, its monasteries empty, its spiritual life turned into the fussing over the provision of 'small change' for the poor of the Third World. Its

priesthood too is devastated by rationalism speaking in the name of ecumenism, and a spirituality of the flesh which emphasises the pleasure of sexuality as the supreme and only valid expression of ecstasy and joy.

All this is the constantly recurring folly of the North Atlantic peoples. The old barbarian returns again and again out of the Northern mists. G.K. Chesterton was quite right in his insight that these cultured men and women are barbarians of the spirit. The only true Christian civilisation is in the inner refining of the soul in humility and contemplative wisdom through God. Perhaps the faith has yet to be better learned in the subconscious of the northern peoples. Certainly, few heresies have come from Italy, but a never-ending stream of them has issued from north and east of the Alps. In the beginning of the Church's history the great errors concerning the Divinity of Christ did indeed come from the Middle East. It is a strange coincidence that even then the prince of heresiarchs was Arius, whose name echoes the pride of Aryan race and blood.

### **Faith and Myth**

Religion founded upon man's opinion and interpretation must be based upon myth. Only a faith which is transcendent, which is the literal word of God, can be intrinsically free from myth. Myth is always man's inadequate and directly erroneous way of interpreting the works of God or answering problems of evil which are above the power of the human mind to answer. Once a religion is forced to proceed from individualism and subjectivism, to say in effect 'this is how I see it', then we are in the realm of the myth. Therefore the present 'existentialism' of the northern theologians, which stretches indeed the whole way from Luther to Hans Kung, is a religion of myth. It must be rejected by mankind, and it must fail to possess any gospel or 'good news', because it is limited and time dated by the mind of man, whether at the sixteenth century or at the twenty-first century.

Any faith which does not possess a divine and infallible magisterium is pre-scientific to the age which proximately follows it. Yes, there must come a day of reckoning for the authority of Islam, when the words of the prophet are subjected to the test of the rational critique. But, neither for Islam nor for the Buddhist or the Hindu is the day of reckoning going to be totally

destructive. All these will say that in the final analysis the myth is of lesser importance, the reality of religion is the inner possession of God in light and joy, and the recognition of a basic moral law which subjects a man's desires to wisdom, place and measure, not to mention to the love of his neighbour.

Yet it will be a pity, in the final analysis for the contemplative faiths of the East, for Islam, and most of all for Israel, still patiently and steadfastly awaiting the final Word of God ("I know that the Messiah when he comes, will teach us all these things" Jn 4:25), that there exists no teaching in the clear word expressed outwardly, which clarifies the wisdom and the joy sensed in the spirit, so that the joy of the spirit is not clouded again by confusion and error in the works of the flesh. But of this be sure; every teaching concerning God, which demythologises the scriptures because they are too simple to be believed, asserts the primacy of the mind of man over the word of God., such a faith can only replace myth with another myth. For the essence of myth is that it is outgrown and outdated, and from age to age, year to year, individual to individual, every work of man grows outdated. Is this not very evident in the child's rejection of the authority of its parent? There is no virtue in demythologising only to produce an alternative myth.

### **The Way of the Catholic Church**

The Church of Christ alone does have the only possible answer to the dilemma of mankind. She rejects the intrinsically fallen nature of matter, which is the Eastern answer to 'tanha'—the desire or thirst which vitiates the pleasure urges of mankind. She reveals instead *original sin*, an intrinsic damage and warping of man's pleasure principles, and a loss of perfect orientation to the Living God. One would not expect to find this fully and explicitly revealed in the Old Testament. It is so fundamental, deep and profound that it can be understood only in Jesus Christ, and so St. Paul, writing to the Romans, preaches and perfects the doctrine in Jesus Christ.

If the created universe and the nature of man is not intrinsically evil, however wounded, then there ought to be an outward word of utter truth, that echoes and clarifies the inner word which is contemplative vision and joy. There ought to be *an external Magisterium of the divine*

*union which clarifies the inner magisterium of the divine presence.* Only Christianity, and only Roman and Greek Orthodox Christianity at that, teaches without cavil that the Living Word of God's own self-contemplation was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.

Now here we have a heart principle for the Catholic Church in the ebb tide of her fortunes. They will cease to ebb and come surging in as soon as she, in her Pope and bishops lives strongly again from the basic principle of her very being, and asserts the unchanging certainty age by age of that Divine Magisterium which is the necessary consequence of the Incarnation, and also the fifth mark of the nature of the true Church. This claim alone distinguishes revealed religion from human myth. Therefore let there be an end put to that uncertain and temporising sort of ecumenism which tries to compromise on the very nature of divine magisterium, which waters it down, and confuses its proclamation.

If Christ is divine, then his doctrine must grow more clear, firm and developed through the ages, for the Lord is a strong Lord, and not a watery and confused Lord. The Lord of Heaven and Earth is not a theologically handicapped mind. There is no gospel without literal Divinity in Jesus Christ, and no development without an active magisterium. For the magisterium of the Church is man asking 'why' of the Holy Spirit, and receiving an answer from the Spirit which is *"of the things that are Mine"*, and showing those things to us. The dreadful destruction of the priesthood and of vocations, above all in the contemplative life, which has proceeded apace these last fifteen years, is due first and foremost to a refusal of the princes of the Church, her bishops as teaching leaders, to proclaim, live and defend the fulness of the Church's doctrine and ascetical life.

### **The Council Not To Blame**

It will not do to blame the Second Vatican Council. Whatever the blemishes in some documents of the Council, the great classic tracts of the Council are magnificent documents which call for authentic and further development in the same sense as the Church has come, without swerving to left or right for two thousand years. It is this faithfulness in development which has been lacking since, and it is the theologians who have been to blame, but some of them were also bishops, and some of them were even cardinals.

One did not blame the theologians for failure, but the bishops. Theologians do not possess any intrinsic authority in the Church, no matter how great their scholarship or how highly they may rate themselves. It is for bishops to rule theologians, and to discipline theologians, not to fear them from human cowardice or intellectual snobbery. It is not to the wise and prudent that God has revealed the wisdom that measures His own divine being, but to 'the little ones'. (cf. Luke 10:21). And Jesus exulted in the Holy Spirit when he proclaimed the fact. But the Church has—temporarily only—forgotten that mystery.

It has been a very great error to proceed upon a path of ecumenism which seeks to reunite Christians without a clear recognition of the literal Divinity of Christ fundamental to the preaching of the gospel to all nations, and without an equally clear recognition that this gospel of Divinity implies a divine and therefore infallible magisterium of the spoken word. We have tried to ignore and to soften the authority of the living word of teaching, and in so doing have weakened and confused the very Divinity of Christ himself. What is the purpose of the Eternal Word, through whom all things were framed, becoming flesh, if He is not to bring into the world and to perpetuate in the world the corresponding *certain word* of his apostles in Pope, Bishops and Council? We fumbled it, and deservedly we have lost our way. We have done most terrible damage, and been found unworthy of the call of the Holy Spirit which was to revival indeed, to resurgence and to a new and rising tide of Christ in the affairs of men. We had no right, and we have no right to refuse to propose this principle of new life in God which is Divinity living in its magisterium, a divine authority in daily faith and daily morals, before the faces of our separated brethren. This principle, through which uniquely the full truth of Jesus Christ subsists in the Catholic Church, and cannot subsist in any other Church, is the *organic divinity* in teaching and in defining which is the continuation through time of the *divine word* enfleshed in Christ.

There is no possible reunion of the separated churches except upon the basis of the Roman Catholic Church's retention of this fundamental principle of divinity incarnate, *for all the Churches of the Reformation having rejected it or lost it*. There will be no high tide in the affairs of the Christian Faith before other religions, except upon the basis of the unique answer of

Christ's literal Divinity to the inadequacies and errors necessarily left within every other faith. These doubts and errors result from their being less than the Divine answer, less than the *certainty* spoken in God's own Personal Word. Nor is there any possible reunion by gradual recombination and living intercommunion, no union between the uncertainty of human subjectivism in Christian communities and the unique certainty which is truth inerrant because divinely guaranteed in its infallibility.

At the Reformation many Christians made a fundamental, drastic error concerning the structured manner in which Divinity lives within the Church among men. This error means that for them the tide can only ebb and never rise again. There can be no further missionary gospel, because there is no literal Divinity. The mistake was hidden because for long years the inerrancy was placed upon the printed words of 'the Book'. That will no longer serve, and therefore there is no hope as the years go by for any Christian Church with this basic flaw in its constitution and its missionary proclamation.

At all times in the history of salvation, the Divinity was organic in the living magisterium of seer and prophet, bishop and pope. These men wrote the scriptures, the Old Testament and the New. They determined the written word, it did not determine them. For the Divinity of the Church is the Divinity of God living in *His* word, not man's word in the Old Testament, and consummating it in His Living Self in the New Testament. The Divinity lives in men through Christ, and not through private interpretation of written characters. The letter must kill, unless the Spirit who wrote the letters quicken and guarantee their transcendental and divine interpretation.

We had no right to conceal this from our brethren, and because we have done so—in deed if not in theory—we have brought confusion and ruin into the Church of God, and frustrated the meaning of resurgence also to those nations which have not yet accepted Jesus Christ in any large measure at all. How shall they accept Him unless his word rings upon them with *divine* truth, power, certainty, and challenge as it did for the Gentiles two thousand years ago? Will it be the same gospel if the divinity and the certainty of the teaching—teaching concerning God, sex, love, personal and social morals—is any less clear or any less *dogmatic* than it was two thousand years ago?

If we are to do this thing, we must present the unique face of Christ as the ultimate fulfilment of the truth in all the religions, and the answer to the human confusions in them all. This must mean *strong development* from the heart of a centred and divine magisterium. It will mean the utter opposite of what we have lived through and with in the nightmare of the last twenty years or so of the Church's life. When we give to Christ the obedience of mind He asks of us in the Church, we will find that we can also perceive through it a new and deeper synthesis of man's natural and scientific wisdom. This will be a vision of the inner majesty of Christ, through whose being and predestination for us, all being in the universe hangs together in unity and expects His Coming. But the answer to the seekings of men—the gospel which will vindicate the quite unique and humanly 'awe-ful' claim of the Christian and Catholic Faith—is the gospel of the Eternal Word which framed all things, was made *Flesh* for our salvation, and His word and His way is utter truth, and is found and lived as *certain*. Let us meditate upon what this means and we will discover again the possibility of divine mission, and of the only meaning of ecumenism which can at once carry Christianity into the next century and develop anew, with a powerful proclamation the word of *the God strong and divine*, a word to men in the scientific, rich, and decadent West, and a new word to the nations which have not yet truly heard the Gospel of Christ preached to them humbly and reverently in the majesty of its full and most profound measure.

## THE LORD OF HISTORY

The theme is prompted by an important study by the American theologian and catechetical expert Eugene Kevane entitled *The Lord of history (Daughters of St. Paul 1980)*, although MgrKavane cannot be held responsible for this writer's thoughts and opinions. *The Lord of History* is a fascinating thesis upon the manner in which the history of mankind and of the People of God in particular is presented in the Bible as a purposeful and straight-line ascent of the meaning of human life. This history culminates in the Messiah, the Saviour and the Teacher who is the very meaning of history itself. There is a philosophy of history, and it is God's philosophy of history. The meaning of secular life and culture is found in the theology which is God's purpose and plan for the Salvation of all mankind as one race. This ultimate real meaning of history (which incidentally in the New Testament is the whole purpose of evangelization) intermingles with and runs parallel to the course of secular world history.

The Lordship of Yahweh and His coming-Christ over history is not something incidental to the philosophy of history, but part of the fabric of human life and of history itself. This affirmation of Jesus Christ as *The Lord of History* reappears in the Fourth Eucharistic Prayer of the revised Order of the Mass in the Roman Rite. It is the Canon of the *History of Salvation* and significantly recapitulates the very essentials of the greatest thinking of the Greek Fathers of the Church upon the meaning of Christ in the history of Man and in the work of Creation.

This vision of God's work within human society and history means that the Church and her institution is *natural* to Man and to the human order. It must also mean that the Eternal Sacrifice of her Cross and Eucharist, and the *Episcopate*—the 'pastoral care'—of her *divine magisterium* dominates all human history, in vocation if not in actual fact. The Church as Christ the Saviour working upon all men in word, in life and in sacrament, is not accidental or incidental to the order of human history, but part of that order and the sign of the deepest meaning of human culture in time and for eternity.

There are two streams of authority in human social life. One derives *by nature* from mankind for the good of all, and is named the State; the other derives directly from God *for*

nature and for the destiny of mankind, which is beyond nature in the very being of God, and is the Church. The Church as much as the State is *constitutional* to the very order of man's life and being. And Jesus Christ is the Lord of History because Christ is "*Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end*" (Revelations: 21:6) in time and in eternity.

This order of reality is true even though "*He came unto His own, and His own received Him not*" (John. 1:11). In the brief Palm Sundays of history in which Christ is acclaimed as King, or in the Golgothas and Passiontides of history, through that life which Christ ministers to men in sacrament, or '*in votosacramenti*', (in implicit desire of the provision of God), the Church is always the leaven in the mass of mankind. She is the '*Opus Dei*', the work of God in His Christ. Kevane points out how this theme is expressed within 'Christendom' by the division of human history itself into time 'B.C.' and time 'A.D.'

### **A Sign Set to be Contradicted**

The Confession of Christ as the meaning of the upthrust of human history and the crown of its scientific and cultural progress is contradicted, Kevane indicates, by the modern (but already outmoded) division of history into Ancient, Medieval, and Modern periods. We have Voltaire principally to thank for that, and it was the French Revolution one remembers that first in Europe tried to abolish time 'AD.' in favour of a new secularist calendar. In this new division of history, a new meaning is imposed, and the role of Christ in human history is most subtly played down. Finally, it is played out.

It is the pagan glories of the 'Ancient' world that are extolled. The vices, the despair, the slavery and the ritual suicides are never dwelt upon. The 'Modern' period is presented as the direct heir of Ancient Greece and Rome through the Renaissance. That Christianity not only converted pagan Rome and her Emperor, but, surviving the military collapse of Rome, reformed and forged the wild tribes of Europe into a new and Christian Roman Empire that lasted for at least one thousand years, is not ever mentioned. The 'Medieval' period is presented as a long dark age of ignorance and bigotry, dominated by Religion, which produced nothing of cultural worth or significance. It is not truth, and it is not history, but it is the presentation of the Christian phenomenon in history as most boys and girls get it in their education. In this view of

history—a view as slanted and prejudiced as any ‘religious’ view—Religion as life in God is no longer the meaning of history, nor the driving force behind the ideals of the community. Religion is a private, personal, quite subjective matter, incidental and apart from the life of human society. Nor is Religion a *magisterium*, a Word Incarnate, which shapes the person, the family, the community, and the state. Religion is a subjective appreciation of the divine, an affect of the emotions, and a set of values.

Quickly, the very transcendence of God—His real existence apart from the Creation—is denied or questioned. What we call ‘God’ lives as Immanent in man and in man’s experience of himself. Quite naturally, the ‘will of God’ is subject to the law of the individual conscience, because God, in so far as He exists, is made to the image and likeness of Man. In this perspective neither God, nor Christ as God Incarnate, is Lord of History. Man, whose ‘insights’ are the projection of the divine and the measure of the divine, is Lord of History. And so we are already in the order of Humanism, because the essence of Humanism is that Man is the Lord of History. Christ is ‘divine’ only in so far as He is the most perfect of human beings. We will find as much said in works such as Cupitt’s *The Myth of God Incarnate*, and, in the opinion of this writer, in *Christ Sein (On Being a Christian)* by Hans Küng.

For five hundred years we have lived through all the cultural triumphs and glories of ‘mankind’ —an age of the increasing evolution and inner development of ‘the Mystery of Iniquity’— the military rebellion, so to speak, against the Lordship of Christ in the philosophy of history and the meaning of history on the social plane. It can be followed beyond the evolution of Deism into Humanism. It can be traced through Hegel and Nietzsche into the philosophy and social organisms of Nazism and Marxism. It seems to be coming to a supreme crisis in our own times.

### **The Mystery of Iniquity**

In the Greek of New Testament times a ‘Mystery’ is a sacred theme, work, or economy. In the theology of the Church the word is often interchangeable with ‘sacrament’. The Mystery of Christ is the end and purpose of all creation, and therefore the ultimate dynamism of the philosophy and meaning of history. The *Mystery of Iniquity* is the organised and age-old

strategy of Satan and of every spirit and human will that works against God and the purposes of God. The Mystery of Iniquity says St. Paul “works until now” (2 Thess. 2:7.) and he hints rather obscurely about something that holds it back, until it be taken out of the way and the “man of sin” be revealed.

Apparently, the Fathers of the Church interpreted that which held back the final onslaught of the Gates of Hell as the conversion of the Roman Empire, and believed, most of them, that the Parousia or Second Coming of Christ would follow the final persecution, a persecution which would follow on from the fall of Christian Rome. At the same time, we bear in mind that St. Augustine, whose great work *The City of God* did so much to inspire the building of Christendom in Europe, expected the end of the world shortly after his day, following the fall of the Roman Empire of that time. We just don't know when the Parousia will be. Cardinal Newman can be found arguing that in the widest sense of 'Christendom' the Roman Empire had not passed away even in his times (op. cit p.72 note 128).

It is possible to argue speculatively otherwise. It could be argued that the 'Millennium' of St. John in the Apocalypse was the vision of the first span of Christendom, roughly from 500 AD. to 1500 AD. Christ ruled with His saints and martyrs. Even His rule in the Pilgrim Church had some sort of unity in one faith based upon Rome on earth. After 1500 AD there comes the great divide, the descent with great power and fury, the showing of great signs in scientific knowledge and achievement, and the redundancy of God.

Satan knows that 'he has but a short time'. Mgr. Kevane is more interested in the rise of Rationalism, known variously as Modernism or now Humanism (In non-Catholic circles usually called Liberalism or Radicalism) in theology, and its direct challenge to the Church Catholic in her inner, divine constitution. He distinguishes three phases, or moments of one same movement against Christ as Lord of History: Anton Guenther, at the beginning of the 19th century; Loisy, Tyrrell, *et al.* dated from the promulgation of *Pascendi Gregis* (1908) by Pope St. Pius X; and finally the phase of the New Dissent, which for him surfaces at the Conference of Juvisy in 1933, and comes to a climax after the Second Vatican Council, attempting, and still attempting, to take control of the reform and renewal of the Church.

For reasons which perhaps are more clear in *Catholicism A New Synthesis* (ch. 20. *Man: the Individual and in Society*), the editor would prefer a different order of strategy for the Mystery of Iniquity. It would date from the time of the New Learning, about 1480, and climax in and through the rise of Protestantism and the great division of Western Christendom. The secularisation of life through the new wisdoms of science and the philosophy of science would be part of the same one revolt from Christ as Lord of human life and history. This aspect of the revolt was more weakening and damaging to the Protestant Christian culture than even the Catholic, because Protestantism has no intrinsic authority, or living, constitutional magisterium.

Marxism and Nazism would be but variants of the same evolution of Humanism, a stressing not of the individualism and liberalism of the Western, Rationalist and Protestant ethos, but a return, through scientific Atheism to a corporate society very like the Catholic, and even more like the Greek and Russian Orthodox model of the Church. There was always a little caesaro-papism around in the East. But, it is still *Humanism*, for whether the individual man, his pride, his passions, and his *conscience* are made the ultimate manifestation of God, or whether God is totally denied and abolished, *Man*, either as Individual or as Community, is still the final meaning of history and still the 'Lord' of History in both these systems.

### **The New Learning and the Great Divide**

What is suggested here does have, if correct, a great significance for the real meaning of ecumenism. For the meaning the Holy Spirit intended and intends for ecumenism may not consist in an always more minimal approach to doctrine and to the Magisterium of the Church. There may be another way, another understanding of the Divinity of Christ as active and living in the community life of mankind. The principle of unity may consist in finding anew the full Divinity of Christ, with the fidelity of the early Church and that full obedience to His Lordship which makes Him 'Lord' in the individual life, in the Church, and in the laws and community life of the nations.

There was much in the New Learning of the early sixteenth century which called for assimilation within the theology and philosophy of the Church. St. Thomas More was an apostle of the New Learning, but even in his own day he was warning of the danger to the unity of the

Church and the integrity of her doctrine from false paths in the New Learning. The Counter--Reformation did embody something of the new outlook, the new life style, new art and music, and also new approach to philosophy and theology in that renewal of the Church which followed the Council of Trent.

We have to ask, did the New Individualism beget Protestantism or did Protestantism beget the New Individualism? One suggests that the New Individualism which went with the New Learning, but which was already discernible in the Church in say, William of Ockham and the Nominalist philosophy, begot that 'private judgement' in religion which is the core principle of Protestantism. The heart principle of the Reformation in European Christendom is not the denial of the Mass as a sacrifice, nor the real presence of Christ under the sacred species; the heart principle is the denial of *Magisterium* in the Church, the power to define doctrine of faith and morals with infallibility—whether that infallibility resides in the college of bishops, in General Church Councils, or sometimes and extraordinarily, in the solemn definition out of Council, of a Pope, in the name of Christ.

It is the power to define with objectivity, with a clear minimal meaning for all time, and with inerrancy concerning what is asserted or condemned, which makes Christ the Lord of History. It does not matter how much the Bible is said to be inspired, even verbally inspired. If the interpretation is left to the minds and consciences of men, then the mind of Man is the final arbiter, and the final result, across four hundred years of research, argument, criticism and corrosive human doubt, is going to be Humanism in religion, the loss of all objective certainty and truth. If the Church has the power to define doctrine, then the written word—which was the living *Magisterium* of Christ before the evangelists wrote it, before Paul dictated it—still lives on in the living word of a teaching power which is guaranteed by the living, working, intervening Divinity of Christ.

Once this goes, all else goes with it. It is a cardinal principle of all forms of Protestantism that there does not exist within the Church any objective, constitutional power to define doctrine infallibly as of the mind of Christ and according to the mind of Christ. If this power does not exist on earth, Jesus Christ does not live and teach among men with the fulness of power and light that He exercised two thousand years ago. It is not true that "*as the Father has sent*

*Me, so do I send you”, nor true that “all authority is given to Me, in heaven and upon earth”* (Matt. 28: 18-20). There is no Lordship of Christ over *all the ages* against new knowledge as men gain new wisdoms from science, and new power in the universe, unless His voice can speak with as much authority affirming and defining now, and a thousand years from now, as it did in the market towns of Galilee, in the Temple at Jerusalem, and along the shore of the Sea of Tiberias.

The ‘New Learning’ pushed on far beyond the confines of the literature, art and music of the Renaissance. It became swallowed up and identified with the progress of the sciences, both abstract and mathematical, empirical and technical. So much is this true that the total separation of faith and religion from life and culture became a cardinal principle of a new outlook, now called *The Philosophy of Science*, the central doctrine of which is that nothing is valid in society, in community law, or in educational principle—valid to be taught to all men and to all children—unless it belongs to the experimental order, and can be proven by the senses and tested by material experiment. Anything else, however important some may consider it to be, belongs to the individual and the individual judgment. It does not belong to the culture as taught, or to the values of a civilisation as imparted. It is not unanimous, or morally unanimous, and therefore it is not history. History is the tracing of purpose through social life. In the West it becomes Hedonism, with an appeal to be nice, and to work together to maximise yet more wealth and general pleasure. In the East, (which means Eastern Europe through Russia), it means the centring of all power and development upon Man and the power of man’s unaided skills. So far it has not meant the hedonism of the West, possibly because of its evangelising and revolutionary nature which is always preparing for advance through war. There are no pacifist Marxist states, and no Marxist states without large, conscript armies.

### **Is Ecumenism Apocalyptic?**

The Books of Wisdom of the Old Testament give us many an insight into the manner in which the devout, orthodox Jew had incorporated the best of Greek and possibly even of Indian wisdom, into the line that led to Christ. In the New Testament, St. John boldly proclaims Christ, in language originally Greek, but with a meaning uniquely new, as *The Word who was in the*

*beginning, the Word who was with God, and the Word that was God.*

St. Paul not only speaks to the Athenians in their own idiom and ethos, but also in many of his epistles, notably to the Colossians and Ephesians, he speaks of the meaning of Christ as the foundation stone of all creation, and as the *primary meaning of all creation* in a manner which combines the revelation made to the Jews with the great, but imperfect natural wisdom of the pagan world. We have to do something similar now. The ‘three moments’ of Rationalism, Modernism, and now Neo-Modernism are only three moments of the development of the sciences and of the philosophy of Science with a capital letter. Besides the error in this age of science, there is a vast amount of misdirected truth awaiting synthesis within the authentic thought in philosophy and in theology of the Catholic Church. This assimilation and synthesis must be done again, and it can be done again. There can be development in doctrine. And much more obviously, though with less divine certainty, there can be development in the human wisdom which is philosophy. In doctrine there can be *no development which denies the past or proceeds on lines which cancel the clear proclamations of the past.*

The answer to both Marxism and Humanism lies in vindicating again the transcendence of God, and the creaturely, dependent nature of man. Man is not his own sufficiency. That He is, or should be, was the original teaching of the Serpent to our parents in Eden. This is the root of sin: “*you shall do as you like, and you shall live like gods*”. When the certainty of God’s existence is vindicated anew using the full majesty and sweep of modern knowledge, then the reality of the soul and its place in the material ascent of being must be shown. Once that is done, Original Sin becomes not only a possibility—as terrible as the Fall of the Angels—it becomes the sober and only reasonable way of assessing the nature of mankind as in fact we find it.

Once we turn about the full majesty of the wisdom of modern knowledge to establish again the transcendent reality of God, the nature of man, the spirituality of his soul, and the fall of man, then the path to the Divine Revelation which is made to man, the Incarnation for us of God in Christ, the Redemption through His Cross and Resurrection, this becomes the foundation of human history. The Bible is not a book. It is layer after layer of spiritual tradition and teaching. It reads like a book because there is an author and an actor working from the

beginning until now. And the effect in history of 'the Phenomenon of Christ' becomes overwhelming in its continuity and sheer coherence. It cannot be explained unless God transcends all human history, and unless the Word Eternal did indeed "*come into His own things*" and is the Heir to the Ages.

### **The True Ecumenism**

The message of all this for the Church, and specifically for the ecumenical movement must be that now, as in long ages past, God acts, is acting, and will act to give to His own People—to all that look for Him and love him—the deeper knowledge, vision, hope and faith to surmount the crisis of this age and to revitalize their communion with Him. As it was in the days of the prophets of Israel, so it must be now. We do not know whether we are in the last convulsion before the 'End of the World' on this planet. We could be. It could be the reason why the Holy Spirit, through the Second Vatican Council, has brought back into the Mass as Liturgy the insistence on the theme of Christ's 'Coming again'. If the signs of the times are read in that way, we would do better not to think of ourselves too much as 'The Easter People' with a light-hearted breathlessness, but rather as the 'People of the Passiontide', remembering that great tribulation first awaits the people of God before they are really and truly the people of the Resurrection when God has wiped all tears from their eyes.

What we can be sure of is that at the end of this century we are living through a period of sheer crisis for the Church, and that in every time of culminating crisis, every moment or high peak of challenge and need, God provides a new answer, a new call and new saints. There is no devaluation now or ever in the coinage of holiness. The new saints will be as pure, holy, and utterly conformed to the mind of Christ as the old saints. They will not be the saints of dissent. There are no saints of dissent to the Magisterium of Christ, such are the children of the Evil One numerous though they be.

The Second Vatican Council, in assenting to the document on Ecumenism, and insisting in that document that there can be no change or concession within the Church Catholic in matters of doctrine of faith and morals, has equivalently informed us in the name of the Holy Spirit, that it is the will of God to give to His Church, and to His people who "*seek Him with a sincere heart*"

just such new knowledge, new vision, and new unity. There is no point in the Decree otherwise. The decree on Ecumenism must mean, however, something dramatic also for the non-Catholic Churches, something which not all of them as communities, and not all of their members as individuals, can possibly take in at once. It must mean the setting aside of that which is at the *intellectual* and *spiritual* heart of the division between us: the denial of the Living Magisterium of Christ that is constitutional to the Church, and which alone makes possible a definitive word and witness through the ages.

If there is no infallibility on earth in doctrine, then there is no useful or objective Divinity in Jesus Christ. The implication is that a new vision of the meaning of Christ in the history of creation can be and must be deduced from the heart of the Faith, and the perspectives, pastoral and doctrinal, of the last Vatican Council. It will also imply that the initiatives in Ecumenism in which we are currently engaged are on the wrong lines, and are hindering the meaning of the Holy Spirit in asking Ecumenism of the Church. The lines we are currently pursuing are all of them engaged in minimizing doctrinal meanings and doctrinal differences. We are seeking reunion without ever facing up to the supreme matter of decision: is there, or is there not an infallible word of Divine Teaching on earth in the name of Christ? It is central to the doctrine of the Catholic Church that there is. In which case, Ecumenism, which has finally stalled *upon that very point of Authority in the Church* means that God is trying to show us all—Catholics and non-Catholic Christians—that it is through this very concept of *Magisterium* that we will all come to see a new meaning in His work and role in creation and history as Lord of All Things, Lord of the Church, and Lord of all human history.

In that fulness we will see new depth, riches, and *maximum content* in Christ and His teaching. We are not meant to find 'reunion all round' by denying, forgetting, pretending, minimizing, and clouding the content of faith and morals by ambiguous formulas which can mean all things differently to all men. Along that false path has lain the failure to teach the faith in our schools, and the failure to form young priests in our seminaries. The reality is much greater, more thrilling, and more humbling to us all. In that very fact, we can be sure it is God's way. Any other way leads to Man as the Lord of history and the arbiter of truth. But Christ is the Lord of history, and the word of the Word Incarnate is a clear word and a certain word. There is

no Lordship in the word ambiguous. Let us all ponder this theme, this call, and this certainty. There is a new fulness of truth to be found for the crisis of our times, and God has not failed to visit His People.