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Journal of Theology and Pastoral Life

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Quaerens is published twice a year, in June and December, by Recoletos School of Theology, Inc. of the Province of St. Ezekiel Moreno, Order of the Augustinian Recollects (OAR). Its name draws its inspiration from the celebrated Anselmian formula for theology: *fides quaerens intellectum*. The title is also very Augustinian. It calls to mind the constancy of spirit required of every restless heart: “Sic ergo quaesumus tanquam inventuri; et sic inveniamus, tanquam quaesituri” (*De Trin.* IX, 1, i).

As a journal of theology and pastoral life, *Quaerens* is committed to the noble mission of deepening the modern-day Christian’s understanding and praxis of the faith, of fostering an atmosphere of dialogue with cultures and religions throughout the world in general and throughout Asia in particular, and of promoting a scholarly theological discourse that addresses the specific pastoral needs and questions of our time.

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Contents

Revelation: God’s Self-Disclosure	7
<i>Kenneth Onda, OAR</i>	
 The Child in Matthew 18:2, Isn’t He the Best Presidential Bet?	 39
<i>Leander Barrot, OAR</i>	
 Elements of Karl Rahner’s Christology: A Retrospective Reappraisal	
<i>Prof. Earl Muller, S.J.</i>	
 St. Augustine On Love	 111
<i>Jubanie Rey F. Baller, OSA</i>	
 Instruction: To All Contributors	 149
For Subscribers	149

Revelation: God's Self-Disclosure

Kenneth Joseph L. Onda, OAR

Abstract

The word revelation has been an object of contention among various religions. In the past, Christian theology treated revelation as something identical with a communication of a set of divinely authenticated facts thus, a body of information. This is the so called "propositional view" or the truths about God. But, the Catholic Church's theologians did not hold permanently to this propositional view; rather, they introduced significantly the innovative understanding of revelation as an interpersonal and experiential encounter between the revealer and receiver. This study addresses the problem of concretizing the realm of theology which is the dilemma that ministers of the church are facing, specifically, on how to explain and convince the people that God reveals Himself within human experiences. In order to figure out the matter, diverse perspectives are treated in this work, but this paper centers on the main theme i.e. the understanding of the self-disclosure of God. This study confirms that Christians could personally claim that God performs His self-disclosure not as far from the receiver but as an intrinsic self-manifestation and communication of Himself.

The Concept of Revelation

The primary meaning of the word revelation according to the Oxford Dictionary is the disclosure or communication

of knowledge to man by the divine or supernatural agency. It implies a sense of disclosure of some forms of truth or knowledge through communication. Etymologically, its root word “reveal,” derived from the Latin *revelare* (to reveal) and from the Greek *apokalyptein* (uncover), suggests the notion of the removal of a veil.¹ Thus, revelation in that sense is the unveiling of something that is hidden but can be revealed.

However, this act of revelation includes not only the act of communicating something hidden or unknown but also the content of what is being communicated. Joseph Bairei explains the meaning of revelation in relation to the understanding of something being revealed and been made accessible to the knowledge. According to him, “through revelation, therefore, what was before closed to knowledge, is now opened to it, what has hitherto hidden in obscurity, is now made manifest; what was before veiled, is now uncovered, and, as it were, made palpable.”²

Carmelo Dotolo, on his part, asserts that though the definition of revelation reveals something which at first is hidden and then disclosed, the consideration of the opposite which he calls “concealment” should not be disregarded. The act of revealing does not nullify the presence of concealment, because revelation does not remove it in its entirety; rather it points to what he calls mystery.³

For Gerhard Ebeling, the concept of revelation can also be seen outside the world of religiosity. Revelation for him is not only limited to the religious circle but also to the aesthetic experience of every person. Revelation in this context signifies an event that ignites an idea, an emotion or intuition that clarifies confusions. This is a kind of revelation which is closely related to feelings and individuality.⁴ In a similar manner, Dotolo

¹ John Joseph Baierl, *The Theory of Revelation* (Rochester: 1955), 20.

² Baierl, *The Theory*, 21.

³ Carmelo Dotolo, *The Christian Revelation, Word Event and Mystery* (Aurora: 2006), 12.

⁴ Gerhard Ebeling, *Dogmatica della fede Cristiana* (Genova: 1990),

discusses the aesthetic significance of revelation as proposed by Ebeling. Revelation, according to him, can be seen as an experience of something that is dependent on the person who is undergoing the feeling. The consequence of that experience stimulates the person to revise his own world by acquiring new meanings and knowledge.⁵

The personal notion of self-communication of the person who does the revelation is very significant to the understanding of revelation. The idea of Colin Gunton regarding the personal element of revelation is evidently described, saying that:

We do not truly know the other unless he or she opens up himself or herself to be known. Knowledge of the other is mediated by all five senses, but the saying rightly indicates word and sight as the central. What we say and how we present ourselves for example, in the way we dress and bear ourselves are at the centre of the way we make ourselves known to our neighbour.⁶

The statement suggests that a person who reveals himself or herself enters a situation where he or she would not normally be a participant. It also involves the initiative of meeting others and making oneself available to be known by the other party. Being personal in revelation thus corresponds to letting others have a broadened knowledge about the person who reveals.

Even within the ambit of Christianity or in the religious contention of the meaning of revelation, the issue on personality of revelation has been very evident. The long-held meaning of the word revelation before the Vatican II is worth remembering. Gerald O'Collins demonstrates the longstanding understanding of the Church regarding revelation. According to him, during the Pre-Vatican II, the Roman Catholic theology treated the word revelation as if it was identical to the communication of divinely

304.

⁵ Dotolo, *The Christian Revelation ...*, 12.

⁶ Colin Gunton, *A Brief theology of Revelation: The 1993 Warfield Lectures* (Edinburgh: 1998), 21.

authenticated truths of the body of information communicated to man. This kind of idea about revelation has become the battleground of debate against the Church because of the sense of “depersonalisation.” Accordingly, the revelation that the Catholic Church was holding was “entirely depersonalized and materialized concept of revelation,”⁷ In response to the contention of the non-Catholic theologians, the Church offered a refutation. Vatican I in its Dogmatic Constitution on Catholic Faith *Dei Filius* describes revelation as a supernatural manifestation of God.⁸ Long after that, the dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum* of the Vatican II intensifies the interpersonal dimension of the revelation of God to emphasize its personal characteristic.⁹

In summary, revelation proposes an idea of the process of disclosing something or opening of something which is previously hidden and obscure. It is a course of disclosure which is primarily concealed from the possibility of knowing and experiencing. The experience of revelation in a general sense could either be an involvement of knowing something from a religious, aesthetic experience or a communication from a personal encounter.

Revelation as History

In theology, the question on the accounts of theological procedure and subject matters are vital elements for the exercise of its own reflection. The term revelation encompasses comprehensively both the object of faith and the content of theology.¹⁰ Before the Vatican II, some Lutheran theologians like Paul Althaus, labeled the Catholic understanding of revelation as intellectualized and depicted revelation as the disclosure of new truths about God. This contrasting position from the non-Catholic theologians was suspected to be caused by the conciliar and papal formulations. They demonstrate a little sense of

⁷ Gerald O’Collins, *Foundations of Theology* (Chicago: 1971), 24.

⁸ *Dei Filius*, 2.

⁹ *Dei Verbum*, 1.

¹⁰ O’Collins, *Foundations...*, 23.

indifference because instead of talking about God, it lapses to being talk about God.¹¹ Undeniably, the word revelation is a key point that scholars in theology hold as a basic point of departure for seeking further understanding in their search for theological meanings. This sort of understanding suggests that the doctrine of revelation encompasses the whole investigation in theology even its own historicity.

Revelation becomes the type of reflection that theology leans on to trace its relationship with history. Edward Schillebeeckx, a Dominican theologian, states that this divine revelation makes history. He proposes that history of men becomes itself the object in which God accomplishes His revelation and performs His saving actions.¹² In the same manner, Avery Dulles, holds the nature of revelation as historical. In his analysis, there is a clear relationship between the terms history and revelation. Christianity as presented in the Scripture is grounded on a series of events.¹³

According to Gabriel Moran, the emphasis on the historical character of revelation envisions the understanding of “salvation history.” It facilitates the understanding of history as God’s method of teaching, which comprises the fact that God employs the means that men utilize as a pedagogical tool for communication. However, it must be clarified that the nature of history that is being discussed here is not a collection of recorded events in the past handed down through written documents. Moran clarifies that history, in this sense, is the entrance of God into a personal relationship with man. Man, for that reason, is the one who makes history and, reflexively, history is man’s self-understanding in time. In short, man is history and, since God enters into history, God enters into relationship with man.¹⁴

In connection with the preceding argument, the Anglican Bishop William Temple expresses the necessity of understanding

¹¹ O’Collins, *Foundations of Theology*, 24.

¹² Edward Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology* (New York: 1968), 94.

¹³ Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Maryknoll: 1992), 53.

¹⁴ Gabriel Moran, *Catechesis of Revelation* (New York: 1966), 45.

the correlation between God and human history in relation to revelation. For Temple, in as much as God is a personal being, He cannot sufficiently reveal Himself through other means like nature, but only through the stage of human history. Thus, revelation is only possible through the human person.¹⁵ The fullness of revelation is best given only in the life of a person. Temple asserts:

For two reasons the event in which the fullness of revelation is given must be the life of a Person: the first is that the revelation is to persons who can fully understand only what is personal; the second is that the revelation is of a personal Being, who accordingly cannot be adequately revealed in anything other than personality. Moreover, if the Person who is Himself the revelation is to be truly adequate to that function, He must be one in essence with the Being whom He reveals.¹⁶

The history of revelation was fulfilled during the coming of Christ as the Incarnated Word of God. *Verbum Dei*, in the second chapter, points out that “the deepest truth about God and the salvation of human beings is made clear to us in Christ, who is the Mediator and at the same time the fullness of all revelation.”¹⁷ Without Christ, present and active in human nature, men could not come to know and respond to God.¹⁸

G. Ernest Wright offers a more Biblical interpretation regarding the notion of revelation as history. By citing the Gospel of John which speaks about the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among men, Wright says that the “Word” in the gospel is a “Person” who lived in history and not a mere system of ideas or teachings nor even an abstract principle in the Greek sense. He further clarifies that “it is the occasion and the accompaniment of God’s action in history, which attains its

¹⁵ Dulles, *Models*, 54.

¹⁶ William Temple, *Nature Man and God* (London: 1965), 319.

¹⁷ *Dei Verbum*, 2.

¹⁸ Francis Schussler and John Galvin, (editors), *Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: 2011), 99.

ultimate form in the historical person of Christ.”¹⁹ In addition, Wright utilizes the expression of “God Who Acts” instead of “God Who Speaks.” He explains that many of the theologians tend to think of the Bible predominantly as the Word of God but in fact according to him it is more accurate to call it the “Acts of God” in order to avoid the risk of obscuring the fact that the Word becomes substantive and dissociated from the history.²⁰ Hence, the nature of the Bible, which is considered to be the source of revelation, according to him must not be considered as the Word of God rather it is--the record of the Acts of God--because these are the series of the saving acts of God revealed to the human history. Wright contends that the revelation of God is not about the experience of any mystical events but by objective historical events (the saving acts of God).²¹ Oscar Cullman gives emphasis in a similar manner to the terms “Word” and “Acts.” The Word which is the *Logos* is God Himself in his revelatory action. According to him:

Nowhere, however, is God’s action more concretely revealed than in the history, which to speak theologically, presents in its innermost nature the revelation of God to man. Primitive Christian theology treats this fact with unreserved earnestness: it makes the offensive assertion that the climax and central point of all revelation is the fact that the self-revealing God, that is, His Word, His Logos, once entered completely into history that this unique entrance can be designated by dates just as can every other historical event.²²

As a biblical theologian, Cullmann connects the idea of revelation in the light of the doctrine called “salvation history.” He argues that in order to understand the revelation of God clearly “Christ, Time and Salvation history” are the key

¹⁹ G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts* (London: 1960), 85.

²⁰ Wright, *God...*, 12.

²¹ Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 5.

²² Oscar Cullman, *Christ and Time* (London: 1965), 24.

representations. In his discussion on the conception of time and history, he postulates that biblical history is also designated as revelatory history because it is indeed true that all revelation is God's love, hence, redemptive history.²³ According to him, the calculation of time in this context does not follow the usual counting of years that begins at a fixed initial point. Instead, it must begin from the center which is the event of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The mid-point of event is accordingly open to historical investigation and can be chronologically fixed. It follows the two directions of counting, one is "forward" the other is "backward": "after Christ" and "before Christ."²⁴ However, for Judaism the expectation of the coming of the Messiah continues to exist. They are still expecting His coming in the future. The center of the salvation history is not any more the future but lies now on the historical event centered in Jesus Christ.²⁵

In another perspective, Cullman, according to Dulles, arrived also at the idea that by rendering the term revelation, he signifies it as the enlightenment received by the interpreters or the prophets in the context of the Bible to recognize a certain event as a revelation of God. The Bible for him is beyond doubt a source of revelation because it is a narration and interpretation of the action of God in history.²⁶

Jean Daniélou, on the other hand, explains this idea in a more balanced Catholic approach because he combined the insights of Cullman to those of the Greek patristic tradition. He expounded the idea of revelation as history by explaining that Christian revelation has nothing to do with the knowledge of God's existence. Rather, it is in the consideration of beholding the activity of God within the scenario of space and time which is God's intervention in the world of human history. These activities according to him are recorded in the Bible, not as a collection of doctrine but a story from the creation narrative up to the

resurrection of Jesus.²⁷ Daniélou, demonstrates the exact reason of the superiority of Christian religion compared to other pagan religions by enumerating characteristics of Christianity. One of them is the belief of Christianity in an event like the Resurrection of Christ. According to him, it represents the arrival of God's action into the historical process. This is for him a fundamental difference of Christianity from all other religions.²⁸

One of the questions this revelation in history poses is the exact time when revelation happened. Gerald O'Collins offers his analysis to this question by citing stages of the self-communication of God. According to him, the preparation of revelation started in the Old Testament history. It can be traced back from the history of the Israelites during the period of the patriarchs, the Exodus and of the Judges in which the early Israelites built sanctuaries to meet and receive messages from God. When they were in the desert, they had their "meeting tent" which served as their place to talk to God.²⁹ The Israelites made use of these places or sites of worship in order to meet and receive the answers of God to the crisis they had. These are some of the means as simple beginnings and experiences of the revelation of God during the Old Testament history.

The second stage that he mentions is the climax of God's revelation which occurred in the course of the time of Christ. Revelation in the Old Testament is considered to be partial and fragmentary communications of God but served as preparations towards the climax.³⁰ St. Paul made this clear when he says "now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the Law, though testified to by the Law and the Prophets ... The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe, for there is no distinction" (Rom. 3:21-22). Therefore, taking the point of reference that Jesus Christ is the climax of revelation, the self-communication of God, as O'Collins says, revolves around the history before Christ, with Christ and after

²³ Cullman, *Christ...*, 26.

²⁴ Cullman, *Christ...*, 19.

²⁵ Cullman, *Christ...*, 84.

²⁶ Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 57.

²⁷ Cullman, *Christ...*, 111.

²⁸ Jean Daniélou, *The Lord of History* (London: 1968), 109.

²⁹ Gerald O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology* (New York: 1981), 85.

³⁰ Cf. G. O'Collins, *Fundamental*, 87.

Christ. The truthfulness of Christian revelation cannot deny the fact that it is a timeless idea. It is irreducible to any set of time because even the New Testament makes it clear that the faith of the people arises as a consequence of certain events in the past.³¹ Revelation of God is undeniably tied with history, as a series of numerous specific events in collaboration with sets of persons including Jesus Christ.³² And, it is something complete and unrepeatable self-disclosure of God through Jesus Christ that occurred in the past but is repeatedly actualized at present.³³ In order to clarify the distinction between the two major parts of the history of salvation, O'Collins described the past revelation in the history as the "foundational" revelation while the present was termed "dependent" as it depends totally on the foundational.³⁴

The revelation in history must not be singled out only during the time of the Jewish people in the past because if the people of the past discovered God in their historical experience, the people of today definitely discovers God as well in their own situation and condition.³⁵ For if God enters into the history of men therefore each man born in history will find God in their present personal history. In 1979, John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* mentions the sense of historicity in revelation by taking it as a reality not only in the history of the past but also up to the present. According to him "authentic catechesis is always an orderly and systematic initiation into the revelation that God has given of Himself to humanity in Christ Jesus, a revelation stored in the depths of the Church's memory and in Sacred Scripture, and constantly communicated from one generation to the next by a living active tradition."³⁶ In a similar way, he once again reiterates this notion

³¹ O'Collins, *Foundations*, 66.

³² O'Collins, *Foundations*, 65.

³³ Gerald O'Collins, "Revelation Past Present" in R. Latourelle, (ed.) *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives* (New York: 1988-1989), 126.

³⁴ O'Collins, *Vatican II...*, 125.

³⁵ Gabriel Moran, *Catechesis of Revelation* (New York: 1966), 45.

³⁶ *Catechesi Tradendae*, 22.

of historicity of revelation in number 35 of the same document:

In our pastoral concern we ask ourselves: How are we to reveal Jesus Christ, God made man, to his multitude of children and young people, reveal him not just in the fascination of a first fleeting encounter but through an acquaintance, growing deeper and clearer daily, with him, his message, the plan of God that he has revealed, the call he addresses to each person, and the Kingdom that He wishes to establish in this world.³⁷

The aforementioned discussions point out to the fact that Christianity is a concrete reality that happened within real history. Looking at the development of the series of occurrences, the revelation of God did not happen immediately to a certain person or group of persons but within a definite time and to definite persons. Through this, the nature of historical character of Christian revelation is clarified.

Sources of Revelation

In the Catholic Church, the Bible stands as a norm for faith and practice. It was received as Holy Scripture during the first five centuries and was officially proclaimed as canonical by the Council of Florence.³⁸ This Council professes that "the one and the same God is the author of the Old and the New Testament—that is, the law and the prophets, and the gospels—since the saints of both testaments spoke under the inspiration of the same spirit."³⁹ The whole Bible is authoritative and trustworthy regarding its affirmation on the revelation of God and His plan of salvation. However, revelation is never contained in the Scripture alone. The Catholic Church teaches that the divine word of God would not be rightly understood apart from

³⁷ *Catechesi Tradendae*, 35.

³⁸ Francis Schussler Fiorenza, *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspective*, 100.

³⁹ THE COUNCIL OF FLORENCE: «Bull of Union with the Copts», *Decrees of the Ecumenical Council: From Trent to Vatican II*, Session 11.

the presence of a living community of faith and for which these books were written. The Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit, holds the responsibilities of reflecting and discerning the real meaning of the Scripture. According to Schussler, neither Trent nor any of the Church Councils asserts that “tradition” teaches something that is not part of the Scripture.⁴⁰

The fundamental principles governing the relationship between the scripture and tradition were elaborated by Yves Congar. Scripture, according to him, does not produce its significance entirely for itself. It is not by itself the word that God proposes to give life to men. The word in the scripture is considered the word of God in as much as He assumed responsibility for it. However, by itself it is not the word of God “in the sense that God could be called the subject of the act of speaking” to somebody.⁴¹ The word is understood to be “laid down or deposited.” It becomes an object or a thing. Fundamentally, Congar adds that the Scripture is only a witness to the revelation that God has made. It is a means that God has given in order to make Himself known and ultimately for men’s salvation. Furthermore, according to him, there were two stages in the revelation of God. The first is the act which God “posited once and for all in the presence of the prophets, Christ and the apostles.”⁴² The Scripture is what was posited once and for all. The second act is the Church’s tradition which God has promised to accomplish continually in the Church. It is the “active presence of revelation in a living subject by the power of the Holy Spirit, representing what is as yet unfulfilled, in progress, ceaselessly requiring fulfilment, in the Word of God.”⁴³

The doctrine concerning the sources of revelation was specifically defined by the Council of Trent in opposition to the overrating of Protestantism to the authority of the Sacred

⁴⁰ Fiorenza, *Systematic Theology*, 102.

⁴¹ Yves M. J. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* (Wheathampstead: 1966), 400.

⁴² Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 401.

⁴³ Congar, *Tradition...*, 402.

Scripture to the detriment of the Tradition. The Council defines:

This Gospel of old, promised through the Prophets in the Holy Scriptures, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, promulgated first with His own mouth, and then commanded it to be preached by His Apostles to every creature as the source at once of all saving truth and rules of conduct. It also clearly perceives that these truths and rules are contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions, which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down to us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand.⁴⁴

The move of the Council of Trent opposes the claim of Protestantism and asserts the equal value of written and unwritten Traditions as deposits of revelation. It preserves the teaching of the Catholic doctrine that the preaching of the Apostles-- the written and the unwritten--is a trustworthy source of faith equal to the Holy Scripture.⁴⁵ Even St. Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonians reminds the people to take hold both of what he preached and those of what he wrote, “therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word, or by our epistle” (2 Thess. 2:14). The Sacred Scriptures are clearly sacred and canonical because they make up the written Word of God. They were handed and entrusted to the Church by the apostles through an authoritative promulgation. The Council of Trent holds it firm that Sacred Scriptures are apostolic deposits and their authoritative interpretation belongs to the members of the teaching Apostolate. The truth and the rule of conduct that are contained in the written books and the unwritten tradition were received by the apostles from Jesus

⁴⁴ COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Concerning the Canonical Scriptures*, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Council: from Trent to Vatican II*, N. Tanner & Alberigo, eds., Vol II, London 1990) Session IV.

⁴⁵ COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Concerning the Canonical Scriptures*, First Degree.

Christ, and, from them, they were transmitted to the Catholic Church and preserved.⁴⁶

In a similar manner, Vatican II in its Dogmatic Constitution *Verbum Dei* insists on the unity of the two sources:

Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it, preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently, it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.⁴⁷

This is very important because it became a point of contention between the Roman Catholic and the Protestants during the period of Reformation. The reformers held strongly their claim against the Church's synthesis of Scripture and Tradition as main sources of Revelation. They taught that the Bible alone contains everything that is necessary for the salvation of men. During the Reformation period the Protestants went against the Catholic fusion of having both Scripture and Tradition as sources of revelation. The Calvinists and the Puritans went far from the Catholic's claim and held instead

⁴⁶ COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Concerning the Edition and Use of the Sacred Books*, Second Degree.

⁴⁷ *Dei Verbum*, 9.

that the Bible alone legislates for the matters of faith, morals, worship and church order.⁴⁸ Calvin at first claimed the idea that God manifests Himself to men by means of His creation. However, since man was stained by the sin of Adam, man's reason was so badly affected, and thus, the manifestation of God through creation according to Calvin became useless. For this reason, God gave mankind His divine Word and man can only reach God through His revelation demonstrated in the Scripture. Through the course of time, Protestantism, according to Rene Latourelle, devalued all knowledge of Christ except His revelation through Jesus Christ until they arrived at settling the principle of the authority of Scripture alone.⁴⁹ According to him, "Protestantism goes on to devalue any knowledge of God which does not come from revelation through Christ.... At the same time, it affirms the principle of salvation through grace and through faith alone, Protestantism poses the principle of the sovereign authority of the Scripture."⁵⁰

Furthermore, Latourelle explains that Protestantism believes that it was exalting the transcendence of revelation because of the direct process of reception without intermediary; however, in reality, it compromised this transcendence. He says that

It compromised this transcendence, for, while asserting the principle of the sovereign authority of Scripture, it resisted the authority of the Church, whether located in its tradition, or in the current decisions of its teaching office. Protestantism thus risked opting for an uncontrollable inspiration and thereby moving toward individualism or rationalism."⁵¹

The Protestant Reformation promoted the inclination to

⁴⁸ Paul Avis, *Divine Revelation* (London: 1997), 45.

⁴⁹ Rene Latourelle, *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology* (Middlegreen: 1994), 923.

⁵⁰ Rene Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation* (Staten Island: 1987), 249.

⁵¹ Latourelle, *Dictionary...*, 923.

a more rationalistic view point as it rejected the authority of the Church and made the Scripture as the sole source of revelation to the “free investigation of the individual.”⁵² Protestants affirm the supreme sovereignty authority of Scripture and claim that by itself Scripture is perfect and self-sufficient.

Natural and Supernatural Revelations

The doctrine of materialism negates the supernatural because their assertion is that there is nothing in the universe except matter. According to Joseph Baierl, the term natural implies the understanding of something that is “sensible” which is in opposition to “supersensuous.”⁵³ For the materialists, the concept of supernatural has no meaning because there is nothing that exists in the universe except matter.⁵⁴ This understanding is also in close connection with the doctrine of positivism because natural is taken as the physical world only. The physical world or the natural which is within the scope of sense-perception is the only source of knowledge. Therefore, supernatural just like the claim of materialism has no meaning at all and it is considered a product of irrationality.⁵⁵

However, a more unique understanding of the terms natural and supernatural is the conviction held by the pantheists. According to this doctrine, there is no distinction between nature (natural) and God (supernatural) because the physical world, which is the nature, is a manifestation of the one divine substance--the supernatural. Here, there is no difference between the spirit, material and God because they all belong to one single reality or substance, the term used by Spinoza.⁵⁶

Another school of thought that draws a distinct line between the natural and supernatural is the theory of evolution.

⁵² Baierl, *The Theory of Revelation*, 36.

⁵³ Baierl, *The Theory...*, 7.

⁵⁴ Baierl, *The Theology of Revelation*, 7.

⁵⁵ John Thomas Discroll, *Christian Philosophy: A Contribution to a Philosophy of Theism* (New York: 1900), 326.

⁵⁶ Braierl, *The Theory of Revelation*, 8.

It promotes the concepts of cosmic evolution and biological evolution, which tries to explain the phenomena of the existence of the universe. Basically, this philosophical “evolutionism” holds that nature is not static; rather, it is a dynamic principle of living beings. Baierl explains that this process of dynamic evolution of nature is not without end, but it has its destination, the supernatural. This, accordingly, leads man's mind into an understanding that the world and man's history itself are based on a long and gradual development and not through special divine act.⁵⁷

According to Baierl, in order to understand the concept of supernatural, one must begin to analyze the notion of nature. Nature according to the theists denotes the essence of a thing. It comprises the constitutive elements of something--the faculties, powers and the activities coming from its essence and its totality. Natural or nature signifies everything that God has put into existence. The existence of the whole world including human beings with all its dispositions, powers, impulses and achievements are by His free creative act.⁵⁸ It becomes unnatural if something or a thing is hindered or threatened by the functioning of a faculty that intrinsically belongs to its nature. However, the notion of supernatural arises if the essence of a thing is complete and nothing is lacking in its intrinsic compositions and something surpasses in respect to what is natural.⁵⁹ On the other hand, based on theists' definition, supernatural is that which lies beyond the order of nature or “that which is not due to the nature of a thing.”⁶⁰

The discussion above gives an indication of the proceeding discussions on natural and supernatural in relation to revelation. The point of departure is the claim that man has the capacity to know God. In this sense, revelation leads to the understanding of what has been revealed. The presence of the reality, the world, created things around, and life itself provide

⁵⁷ Braierl, *The Theory of Revelation*, 10.

⁵⁸ Braierl, *The Theory of Revelation*, 13.

⁵⁹ Braierl, *The Theory of Revelation*, 15.

⁶⁰ Braierl, *The Theory of Revelation*, 15.

man the possibility to know God. Avery Dulles explains the notion of natural as one of the forms of revelation. According to him, God is both “transcendent” and “immanent”, as “absolute” and “unconditioned.” Citing the Acts of the Apostles: “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts.17:28), Dulles resolves that God is immediately present in every point of creation.⁶¹ He presents natural revelation as a self-manifestation of God through the regular order of nature.

In the words of Carmelo Dotolo, natural revelation relates to where man is being pointed out to the presence of the conditions of perceiving and knowing God.⁶² These are symbols and figures that invite reason to go beyond itself. Through the order of nature, human beings have the possibility to know the existence of God by contemplation. God by His nature as infinite is not “know-able” in Himself, but He can be known through the things He created. This proposition is seen in the work of James Dunn. He says:

The thought is basically the same. God is not knowable in Himself. But He has put something of Himself into what He has made, so that something of God can be known through what He has created. Creation is, as it were, the “shadow” cast by God, by means of which the Creator may to some extent be discerned. Presumably tied into this is the thought of humankind as the “image of God”—homo sapiens as the highest of creation reflects God more clearly than inanimate creation.⁶³

Dei Filius of Vatican I indicates the distinction between the natural and the supernatural revelation of God. In the second chapter of the document dedicated to the topic on revelation, it insists that God’s existence together with certain divine attributes

⁶¹ Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 70.

⁶² Dotolo, *The Christian Revelation*, 60.

⁶³ James Dunn, “Biblical Concept of Divine Revelation,” in *Divine Revelation* (London: 1997), 2.

can be known with certainty by the natural light of reason. The Document states:

The same Holy Mother Church holds and teaches that God, the beginning and end of all things, can be known with certitude by the natural light of human reason from created things; “for the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made” (Rom 1:20); Indeed, it must be attributed to this divine revelation that those things, which in divine things are not impenetrable to human reason by itself, can, even in this present condition of the human race, be known readily by all with firm certitude and with no admixture of error. Nevertheless, it is not for this reason that revelation is said to be absolutely necessary, but because God in His infinite goodness has ordained man for a supernatural end, to participation, namely, in the divine goods which altogether surpass the understanding of the human mind, since eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him (1Cor 2:9).⁶⁴

Rene Latourelle, on the other hand, distinguishes two manners in which man can know God based on *Dei Filius*. The first is by ascending, wherein human reason takes creation as its point of departure until it reaches God. However, this is not accordingly part of man’s inner life but through his causal relationship with the world.⁶⁵ The document points out that by the help of reason man can have the possibility of arriving at the natural knowledge of God through the perception of the visible nature and creation. Baierl in a similar sense expresses the same

⁶⁴ *Dei Filius*, 2.

⁶⁵ Rene Latourelle, *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology* (Middlegreen: 1994), 925.

idea. According to him, created beings can be considered as books in which God has written basic truths of His hidden truths. This enlightenment regarding the understanding of divine things perceived from the nature through the aid of reason is the so called “natural revelation.”⁶⁶

The second manner of knowing God according to Latourelle is by descending manner. It is God who reaches out to man through creation which is an entire gift and not man’s mind which rises up to God. Hence, the interpretation is from man, but the initiative of giving perceptible signs to be demonstrated is from God.⁶⁷ The whole universe which is a creature points towards the question of a presence of a creator or author, thus it is a certain manifestation of God. Latourelle deepens the relationship between the Creator and the creature by proposing the ontological bond that joins God with the world. According to him, it is impossible to think that there are no resemblances between creator and creatures because creatures are in debt of their existence to the one who brought them to existence. The presence of the observable characteristics of the universe demonstrates the presence of a Creator and attributes of His Who created. He states that “the Will of God expressed in the physical laws of the inanimate world, is expressed in man in the natural law.”⁶⁸ However, the interpretation of the signs that God has given is normally accompanied by grace to uncover His mystery.

Natural revelation is termed as natural because it is from the order of nature and creation. The point of departure for the demonstration and reception of the revelation are creatures through the light of human reason. As the artist is known by his art works so as God is known by His creation. This is the natural revelation because nature is the object and the natural reason is the subject. Braierl calls this as “mediate,” for God does not speak directly to man but through His works of creation, but it does

⁶⁶ Braierl, *The Theory of Revelation*, 21.

⁶⁷ Rene Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation* (St. Paul), 337.

⁶⁸ Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 338.

prepare for a higher degree of revelation.⁶⁹ The manifestation by the use of reason discovers only “a present and a personal God”⁷⁰ and not the mystery of Him. In order to understand this obscure mystery of God, He manifested Himself in a gratuitous approach called Supernatural Revelation.

Supernatural revelation is not a result of a mere demonstration or interpretation of creatural visible things, but an immediate divine inspiration. The manifestation of God in this context is not mediated by natural enlightenment, but a direct illumination by God. It transcends the realities and capacities of natural reason to act above the exigencies of nature through the communication of grace.⁷¹ Rene Latourelle describes this as the revelation of pure grace. It is the benevolent and gratuitous approach of God.⁷² The gratuitous approach of God has been the main principle in the supernatural revelation.⁷³ It inaugurates personal communication and union with God because “it is a communication of thoughts, ideas, and truths made by one spirit to another, who is able to think and to think in truth.”⁷⁴ The personal encounter between God and man is the nature of this gratuitous gift of revelation. God wills to perfectly communicate Himself in order to have vital union with man. Latourelle says “God intervenes in person, at a given point in time and space, he enters into a dialogue and of friendship with man, makes known to him the mystery of His inmost life and plan for salvation, invites him to a personal communion of life.”⁷⁵ Instead, in natural revelation, man does not feel that he is being addressed and does not invite him to respond to any call. Creation as the object of revelation only speaks of God, but God Himself does not speak; thus, there is no dialogue in between. It only invites homage and adoration but does not terminate in the assent of

⁶⁹ Braierl, *The Theory of Revelation*, 22.

⁷⁰ Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 338.

⁷¹ Braierl, *The Theory of Revelation*, 22.

⁷² Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 339.

⁷³ Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 339.

⁷⁴ Braierl, *The Theory of Revelation*, 22.

⁷⁵ Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 339.

faith.⁷⁶

Furthermore, Latourelle points out that in supernatural manifestation, God Himself is the object of revelation. This object includes divinely revealed truths that are accessible to human reason, but the power of man's intellect cannot fully comprehend them even after they have been made known by God. However, through a supernatural way, the full knowledge of the inner secrets, nature, being, attributes and person that are naturally beyond the range of human reason can be possibly learnt through God Himself.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, more than illumination of mind, man receives the opportunity to be facilitated not only in the movement to reach God but the gift of becoming sharers in the secrets and goodness of His inner life.⁷⁸ It also shows God's infinite kindness as manifested by taking an initiative to emerge from His hiddenness and by calling man to enter into a personal relationship with Him. Vatican I in its dogmatic constitution on the Catholic Faith *Dei Filius* teaches

That it pleased His wisdom and bounty to reveal Himself, and the eternal decrees of His will by another and a supernatural way, as the Apostle says: God having spoken on diverse occasions and in many ways in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days, hath spoken to us in His Son.⁷⁹

Deeply rooted from the freedom of God, He discloses Himself by direct speech and testimony. Not by means of the works of creation does He reveal Himself but through direct experience of His words and deeds.

Public and Private Revelation

Christianity holds that God's revelation has been

⁷⁶ Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 339.

⁷⁷ Braierl, *The Theory of Revelation*, 33.

⁷⁸ Latourelle, *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, 927.

⁷⁹ *Dei Filius*, III.

apprehended in many forms and ways. It was revealed through special events, specific times and places. In a general sense men received the revelation of God through nature and contrasted with that is the revelation given through a series of events which is called special.⁸⁰ Other than these distinctions, revelation is being distinguished also as "public" and "private" revelations.

Vatican II in its dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* mentions the conducts of God's revelation through His words, deeds and wonders. The document states:

For this reason Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling it through his whole work of making Himself present and manifesting Himself: through His words and deeds, His signs and wonders, but especially through His death and glorious resurrection from the dead and final sending of the Spirit of truth. Moreover He confirmed with divine testimony what revelation proclaimed, that God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to life eternal. The Christian dispensation, therefore, as the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away and we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ (1Tim. 6:14 and Tit. 2:13).⁸¹

As mentioned in the preceding discussions, by divine revelation, God has communicated man's salvation fulfilled in Jesus Christ. After the coming of Christ, there was no new revelation that is to be awaited because God has already made fully known His plan for humanity through His Son. The economy of revelation started from the Old Testament and ended with the death of the last apostle. Whatever is contained in the scripture and in tradition belongs to what the Church calls public revelation. It refers to the deposit of faith entrusted to

⁸⁰ Avery Dulles, "Faith and Revelation" in F. S. Fiorenza & J. P. Galvin, eds. *Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: 1991), 98.

⁸¹ *Dei Verbum*, 4.

the Apostles, which includes all Church's teachings (i.e., dogma and doctrine) that ended with the death of the last apostle. The Catechism of the Catholic Church clarifies this matter:

The Christian economy, therefore, since it is the new and definitive Covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries.⁸²

Everything has been revealed by God through His Son and nothing to be expected before His second coming. This is the public type of revelation that was completed and therefore was concluded. St. Paul, in his letter to the Hebrews teaches "In times past, God spoke in fragmentary and varied ways to our fathers through the prophets; in this, the final age He has spoken through His Son, through whom He first created the universe. This Son is the reflection of the Father's glory, the exact representation of the Father's being, and He sustains all things by His powerful Word" (Heb.1:3). Pierre Adnes clarifies the term "public" and says that it is to be public because it is addressed "through the ministry of the Church, to the human beings of every time and place."⁸³

Joseph Ratzinger makes clear the distinction between the "public" and "private" revelations. The term "public" revelation according to him refers to the revealing action of God directed to humanity as a whole and finds its literary expression in the two parts of the Bible, the Old and New Testaments. He states:

It is called "revelation" because in it God gradually made himself known to men, to the point of becoming man himself, in order to draw to

⁸² CCC, 66.

⁸³ Pierre Adnes, "Revelations, Private," in R. Latourelle, ed., *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology* (Middlegreen: 1955), 950.

himself the whole world and unite it with himself through his Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. It is not a matter therefore of intellectual communication, but of a life-giving process in which God comes to meet man. At the same time this process naturally produces data pertaining to the mind and to the understanding of the mystery of God. It is a process which involves man in his entirety and therefore reason as well, but not reason alone. Because God is one, history, which he shares with humanity, is also one. It is valid for all time, and it has reached its fulfilment in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Christ, God has said everything, that is, he has revealed himself completely, and therefore Revelation came to an end with the fulfilment of the mystery of Christ as enunciated in the New Testament.⁸⁴

The revelation of God which is addressed to all people had its completion with Christ and again there is no new revelation that is to be awaited before His next coming. However, even if the revelation has been completed through Jesus Christ, in the economy of salvation there is still room for divine revelations. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says in this regard, "even if revelation is already complete, it has not been made fully explicit; it remains for Christian faith to gradually grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries."⁸⁵

The reality of continuous revelation is a fact in the life of the Church which is intended to give light to the life of the faithful on how they should behave in different circumstances of their lives, specifically in the practical, social, spiritual and religious activities.⁸⁶ The Catechism of the Church continues to say that there is room for divine revelations even if it has

⁸⁴ *Verbum Domini*, 14.

⁸⁵ CCC, 66.

⁸⁶ Pierre Adnes, "Revelations, Private," *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, 950.

been concluded after the death of the last apostle. The document teaches:

Throughout the ages, there have been so-called private revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ's definitive revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history. [...] Christian faith cannot accept revelations that claim to surpass or correct the revelation of which Christ is the fulfilment, as is the case in certain non-Christian religions and also in certain recent sects which base themselves on such revelations.⁸⁷

The document refers to the understanding that private revelation refers to all the visions and revelations that happened since the completion of the New Testament. It must not be defined or considered as new. It must not be considered as well to be outside the teachings of the Scripture. Pierre Adnes insists the fact that received revelations in private are not exclusive and must not be outside of the Sacred Scripture. These two elements namely Scripture and private revelations are actually, according to him, not mutually exclusive. The presence of private revelation does not change the truthfulness of the revelation in the Scripture; rather, it ensures their authenticity.⁸⁸ It neither adds to nor subtracts from the deposit of faith. In some theological expositions the terms "special or particular revelations" are utilized instead of private.⁸⁹

The Catholic Church as stated in the CCC recognizes revelations that are given to a private person. The Church does not doubt that God truly can and does reveal truths to certain persons, but it does not necessarily mean that this revelation is

only intended for that individual. In fact, according to Adnes, these revelations received by the individuals often apply to a group and to an entire Church at a given time in history. However, such revelation must be carefully determined whether the revelation is authentically from God because any private revelation that contradicts public revelation clearly manifests its own falsity. On the given criteria for the authentication of any private revelation the first is doctrinal in its sense. God being the revealer under this criterion does not contradict His own word. It is impossible for God to contradict His own statements deposited on public revelation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church contends that "Christian faith cannot accept revelations that claim to surpass or correct the revelation of which Christ is the fulfilment, as is the case in certain non-Christian religions and also in certain recent sects which base themselves on such revelations."⁹⁰ Here, it is made clear, that the authorities of the two revelations are not of the same level. Private revelation is essentially not the same to that of public revelation.

The second criterion for the evaluation of a private revelation has something to do directly with the recipient of the revelation. The psychological disposition of the receivers must also be examined to see if they are well balanced or are showing or displaying pathological tendencies.⁹¹ The authenticity of private revelation is also examined based on the effects or the spiritual fruits being produced to the subject and to the community who accepted the revelation. The claim, therefore, must encourage the person or persons to live their lives with greater commitment to the Gospel.⁹² Given the criteria for discernment, Adnes says that the Church in its own judgment "takes into consideration the genuineness and breadth of the collective movement of prayer, conversion, and real fervor that flows from the revelations, as well as any miracles that are clearly connected with them."⁹³

⁸⁷ CCC, 67.

⁸⁸ Adnes, *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, 951.

⁸⁹ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For* (New York: 1994), 198.

⁹⁰ CCC, 67.

⁹¹ Adnes, *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, 952.

⁹² Adnes, *Dictionary...*, 952.

⁹³ Adnes, *Dictionary...*, 952.

Revelation and Faith

In theology, revelation and faith are correlative terms. The actualization of revelation is realized when it is embraced in faith.

Within the range of meanings, the word faith in Greek word is *pistis* which is understood as “faithfulness”⁹⁴ and the Latin is *fides*. In its wider perspective, faith does not only correspond to what one says but fundamentally, it entails trust in the person. It is frequently used as a generic term for the acceptance of anything which is not evident and without any religious implication.⁹⁵

In view of the scriptural meaning of faith Gilles Langevin explains that “it is the integral response of the human being to God who reveals Himself as Savior.”⁹⁶ He holds that in the Old Testament, faith is shown with the sense of trust while the New Testament conveys the act of the assent to the message.⁹⁷ However, faith in theological sense comprises the dimensions of trust, obedience and intellectual assent. All these aspects are integrated in an expression of full personal connection. This definition of the act of faith is provided by the following Church documents. Vatican Council I in its Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* explains faith as

A full obedience of intellect and will to God who reveals. But the Catholic Church professes that this faith, which is the beginning of human salvation is a supernatural virtue by which we, with the aid and inspiration of the grace of God, believe that the things revealed by Him are true, not because the intrinsic truth of the revealed things has been perceived by the natural light

⁹⁴ Dulles, *Systematic Theology*, 105.

⁹⁵ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things*, 185.

⁹⁶ Gilles Langevin, “Faith,” in R. Fisichella-R. Latourelle, eds., *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology* (New York: 1990), 315.

⁹⁷ Langevin, *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, 315.

of reason, but because of the authority of God Himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.⁹⁸

With a slight change of emphasis on the theme of obedience, trust and intellectual assent, Vatican II in Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* teaches this same doctrine.

The obedience of faith (Rom. 13:26; cf. 15:2 Cor. 10:5-6) is to be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man commits his whole self freely to God, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals, and freely assenting to the truth revealed by Him.⁹⁹

Rene Latourelle, on the other hand, pointing to the scholastic tradition, discusses the assortment of significance of revelation. According to him, scholastic tradition utilized the term revelation carrying both aspects as a “communication of divine thought” as well as an “interior grace which moves man to give his free assent to this external word.”¹⁰⁰

In another perspective, Edward Schillebeeckx postulates that faith is a way of knowing. However, this act of knowing has its distinctive character because it is rooted deeply from the being of a person being addressed through God's grace. According to him, there are two distinct phases in the historical revelation of God. The first is what he calls the “constitutive phase of revelation.” This is the stage where Jesus Christ appeared bearing the human form both in the “prehistory of the Old Testament and the completion in human action.”¹⁰¹ The second phase of the historical self-disclosure of God is what he calls the “explicative and continuing phase of revelation.” It is in this period that everything that has taken place in Christ is “accomplished within humanity in and through the church.”¹⁰²

⁹⁸ *Dei Filius*, 3.

⁹⁹ *Dei Verbum*, 5.

¹⁰⁰ Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 375.

¹⁰¹ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 94.

¹⁰² Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 94.

Now, in relation to these phases, it is evident that faith is conditioned by this revelation, in which men are addressed by God. Thus, according to Schillebeeckx, faith is knowing in a more special way because it is a knowledge which comes about by the being addressed by God. Addressed inwardly through the grace of faith and addressed from outside by God's revelation.

The correlativeness of faith and revelation is shown also in the distinction between the formal and material objects of faith. According to Dulles, there can be no faith without these two objects.¹⁰³ The formal object of faith is the authority of God who reveals. It is the ultimate reason for the assent of faith and «it relies on God's supreme knowledge and truthfulness.»¹⁰⁴ The material object, on the other hand, is the revealed truths or the content of faith. Thus, in the assent of faith one primarily believes in God, in His authority and truthfulness and secondarily to the revealed truths that are humanly recognizable.¹⁰⁵ By necessity the formal and the material objects of faith are inseparable. No one can discuss faith without considering revelation.

Closing Words

Revelation in general suggests the notion of disclosure or removal of veil of something which is previously hidden and then disclosed. It designates the initiative of the person who confides his inner sentiments or thoughts to another. In Christian theology, it denotes the action by which God communicates Himself to humanity. It is an initiative on the part of God. Regarding the nature of God's revelation, the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church *Dei Verbum* of the Vatican II adopted the personalist approach to revelation in contrast to the propositionalist. From that document, revelation is seen as the experience of personal communication and encounter with God.

Furthermore, this revelation as made by God may

be either natural or supernatural, as well as public or private revelations.

In relation with the history, Edward Schillebeeckx a Dominican theologian states that this divine revelation makes history. The experience of revelation is historically mediated through tangible medium. It could be a person, an event, a thing etc. In the same manner, Avery Dulles affirms that God reveals Himself in the Scripture through a series of events.

Instructed by the teaching of the Church, it is always believed that Christian revelation is not contained in Scripture alone but in Scripture and Tradition. The Catholic Church teaches that the divine word of God would not be rightly understood apart from the presence of a living community of faith and for which these books were written.

¹⁰³ Dulles, *Systematic Theology*, 107.

¹⁰⁴ *Dei Filius*, 3.

¹⁰⁵ Dulles, *Systematic Theology*, 107.

The Child in Matthew 18:2, Isn't He the Best Presidential Bet?

Leander V. Barrot, OAR

Abstract

The article deals with the disciples' question on "Who is the Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" (Mat 18:1) The author works on how Jesus in Matthew develops discipleship through the image of the child. The author believes that in Mat 18-19, Jesus in Matthew interprets what a child really means, what humility consists of and how the disciples, who are advanced in age, can really become child-like and become the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. In the end, one realizes that the child is not a child after all. In fact he can be the best presidential bet.

Setting the Parameters of the Study

The Use of παιδίον in Matthew

The term παιδίον (neuter, singular) appears in the book of Matthew only in two sections. The first cluster is in the infancy narrative to which the term always refers to the child Jesus. The second cluster appears after the second prediction of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection. In this context, the child is an unnamed and unidentified one. He is used as a metaphor

for the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

παιδίων in the Infancy Narrative. In the infancy narrative (2:9, 11, 13, 14, 20, 21) the term *παιδίων* always refers to Jesus as a child. In v. 9, it refers to Jesus lying in a place on which the star stopped leading the *μαγοί* to the child; in v. 11, the *παιδίων* was seen by the *μαγοί* to whom the latter prostrated in homage and offered their gifts; in vv. 13 & 14 Joseph was instructed by an angel in a dream to take the *παιδίων* and her mother to Egypt for safety because Herod planned against the life of the *παιδίων*; in vv. 20 & 21 Joseph is again commanded to return to Israel to bring the *παιδίων* and her mother. To these commands Joseph obeyed.

παιδίων in the Second Passion, Death and Resurrection Prediction Narrative. A second cluster of appearances of the term *παιδίων* is found in chapter 18: 2, & 4. Its immediate context is the question of the disciples to Jesus on “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heavens?” To this query Jesus placed in the midst of his disciples the *παιδίων*. Addressing his disciples, Jesus dished out the challenge: “Whoever, therefore, will humble himself like this *παιδίων* he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (18: 4).

The application of the term *παιδίων* does not refer to Jesus. The *παιδίων* is a nameless one, a faceless one but has become the metaphor for the one who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. However, v.4 has redefined what *παιδίων* stands for—it refers to someone who *ταπεινώσει ἑαυτὸν*. To make oneself humble becomes parallel with *παιδίων*. However, the verb *ταπεινώσει* (future tense) is very much different from the noun *παιδίων*. On the one hand, the future aspect of the verb underlines a decision, a choice, a personal project, a self determination for oneself to become; it demands personal effort to really become humble; on the other hand, the noun *παιδίων* is simply descriptive of a state in the whole growth process of a person, it is a condition one finds oneself in.

Παιδία *An Inclusio*

Interestingly the plural form is found only three times in Matthew. First, the plural form is used in 18:3 instead of the singular *παιδίον*. Robert Grundy explains that the use of the plural form is due to Matthew’s resort to his more favored vocabulary *στράφητε* in place of Mark’s *δεξεται*. Thus, resulting in the use of the plural form *παιδία* to agree consequently with the change of the verbal form.¹

However, the term *παιδία* is also found in 19: 13 and 14 for the last time. In this context, children were being brought to Jesus for him to place his hand and pray over them. It is also interesting that the disciples were protesting to the bringing of the children to Jesus. But Jesus, called out saying “Let the *παιδία* come to me, and do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs. And He laid his hands on them...” (vv.14-15).

The use of the term *παιδία* in 18: 3-5 and 19:14-15 sets a very interesting *inclusio*. In chapter 18, we hear Jesus challenging his disciples “unless you change and become like *παιδία*, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven”; and in 19:14-15, Jesus by way of external gestures underlines covertly his challenge by allowing the *παιδία* to come to him, and then adding, “... it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs” (v.14).

In this study, the article will try to uncover how the child or children is/are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, how can the disciples become like little children and thus be eligible to the kingdom, and how children are a metaphor for humility and thus a best presidential bet.

¹ Robert H. Grundy, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1994), 360. The author observes that there is Mattheanism in this section: Matthew’s change was not only in the use of *στράφητε* but also by adding *γένηθε ὥς* and the use of the *ἐάν μή* construction.

The παιδίον as a Metaphor for Humility

The narrative presented in 18:2-5 has a very metaphorical orientation. To the disciples who asked the question “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heavens?” Jesus calls a child, he made him stand in their midst with the challenge: ἐάν μὴ στραφῇτε καὶ γένησθε ὡς τὰ παιδία... Interesting in this construction in Matthew,² is his use of the verbs στραφῇτε and γένησθε with the particle ὡς. In no way can one take the implications of these verbs literally taking into consideration that the addressees are already adults and Jesus is talking about how to enter into the kingdom of heavens. The term στρέφω in the passive form has the sense of being changed from something into something.³ This verb is complemented by Matthew with the expression γένησθε ὡς. The disciples are thus challenged by Jesus to change from being what they are--adults--to something and become like children. How can adults become like little children again if not in a metaphorical manner? The child is an image—a metaphor.

The intended use of the παιδίον as metaphor becomes more evident in v.4. where Jesus in Matthew equates ταπεινώσει⁴ ἐαυτὸν ὡς τὸ παιδίον τοῦτο with the one who is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens (thus answering the initial question posted by the disciples). The future tense of the verb ταπεινῶω and having a reflexive pronoun ἐαυτὸν as the direct object of the verb lends to the thought that to become like a “child” is a forward-looking task, a personal project on oneself, a journey

² Mt 18:3-4 The response of Jesus to the disciples’ question on who is the greatest, (excluding also the introductory form “and he said”) is a Matthean insertion. It is absent in Mark and Luke. Matthew takes up the material from Mark beginning v. 5. “whoever receives one such child in my name...” c.f. *Synopsis Quator Evangeliorum* (Ed. Kurt Aland, edition quindecima revisa), (Stuttgart: 1996), 246.

³ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 4th ed by William F. Arndt & Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: 1979), 771.

⁴ Bauer, *Ibid.*, 804. Notes that the term ταπεινῶω may be used in the literal sense but with reference to the leveling of mountains or hills c.f. Lk 3:5 and Is 40:4. However, it is generally used in the figurative sense of “humble or make humble in the good sense” and he cites 18:4 as an example.

to become, and an unfinished business with oneself to become humble. The sense of making oneself humble in the future as compared to the present status of the disciples is what constitute to becoming a child and being eligible to the kingdom of the heavens. How will this happen is the question Matthew develops from 18:6-19:12.

Becoming Once More a παιδίον: The Many Faces of Humility

The book *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* has listed the various interpretations of the church fathers on the imagery of the child. To mention some of them are the following: For Origin, the child refers to the Holy Spirit and the disciples are to turn away from worldly matters and to become like little children who had the Holy Spirit; For Hilary of Poitiers, the metaphor refers to the simplicity of children, for children “follow their father, love their mother, do not know how to wish ill of their neighbor, show no concern for wealth, are not proud, do not hate, believe what has been said and hold what they hear as truth”; For Jerome it refers to the innocence and purity of mind, for the child “...does not persist in anger, does not long remember injury suffered, is not enamored inordinately by the sight of a beautiful woman, does not think one thing and say another...”⁵

A Disciple is not a σκάνδαλον to the believers (vv.6-9)

Matthew uses the conditional statements to picture for the readers the instances with which one is not acting like the child or is the humble one: Ὁς δ’ ἂν σκανδαλίση.... Α σκάνδαλον refers to one who is a cause to sin, entices to apostasy, leads to false belief or that which gives offense or causes revulsion or that which arouses opposition, or an object of anger or disapproval

⁵ Manlio Simonetti, (Ed.). *Matthew 14-28 in Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament 1b* (Downers Grove, Illinois: 2002), 66-69.

etc.⁶ In the particular context of Matthew, Luz suggests that it refers to one who leads the μικρῶν who are believers to apostasy.⁷ However, one takes the context in Matthew, it is clear that the matter is not a small one for the judgment on the σκάνδαλον is quiet grave. To the disciple who is a σκάνδαλον there are only two options either (a) he is forever vanished⁸ συμφέρει αὐτῷ ἵνα κρεμασθῇ μύλος ὀνικὸς περὶ τράχηλον αὐτοῦ καὶ καταποντισθῇ ἐν τῷ πελάγει τῆς θαλάσσης [cf. vv. 6^b] or (b) he heeds the imperatives ἔκκοψον ... καὶ βάλε [v.8] and ἔξελε καὶ βάλε [v.9] anything that leads oneself to sin (cf. vv.8-9).

In the first option, the verbs are in the passive forms κρεμασθῇ [aorist, passive, subjunctive, 3ps] and καταποντισθῇ [aorist, passive, subjunctive, 3p]. The verbal forms suggest that the actions are imposed on the one who is already a σκάνδαλον. In the alternative option, the verbal forms are in the aorist imperative, active, 2ps (ἔκκοψον... καὶ βάλε [v.8] and ἔξελε... καὶ βάλε [v.9]) and the object of the cutting off, tearing off and throwing away are hyperbolically the one's part of the human body which leads one to become a σκάνδαλον. One who heads these imperatives takes on a personal choice, a determined task and a personal journey to correct oneself and this closely reflects with the thought of future aspect of the verb to become humble which, in this article, is considered as the process of becoming like a child—ταπεινώση ἑαυτὸν ὡς τὸ παιδίον τοῦτο (v.4).

⁶ Bauer, "A Greek English Lexicon...." 753.

⁷ Ulrich Luz, *Hermeneia: Matthew 8-20* (Minneapolis: 2001), 432.

⁸ *Ibid.* Luz describes what this ass's millstone looks like and what it could mean in this context, he writes "... usually made of basalt of a Greco-Roman mill.... The stone is usually narrow in the middle so that from a distance it looks like an hourglass. To be thrown into the depth of the ocean with such a stone around one's neck is a hyperbolic image for a gruesome fate from which there is no escape." 433.

A Disciple Seeks out the Lost and Rejoices at the Find (vv.10-14)⁹

Addressing the disciples, Jesus commanded¹⁰ them not to despise or look down on the little ones. Frederick Dale Bruner identifies the ἐνὸς τῶν μικρῶν τούτων as the unattractive individual or the insignificant person or one person for whom we feel something like deserved contempt, socially unattractive or spiritually unattractive.¹¹ Augustine Stock makes a distinction between the little one in v.6 from that of v.10. While the former could very well refer to believer whose faith can be compromised by the bad examples of others; the latter "... refers to a member of the community whom the disciples may be apt to disregard or even condemn."¹²

How not to despise the little one is clarified in a positive way through the metaphor of a certain man having a hundred sheep of which one is lost (vv. 12-13). Interestingly, Jesus as narrator of the parable dishes out a question prefixed by the negative particle οὐχί, quite difficult to reflect in English

⁹ Authors are divided in setting the beginning and ending of this pericope. In this article, the author is convinced that verses 10-14 belong to one pericope for reasons of literary markers between vv. 10 and 14. Present in these two verse acting as literary brackets are the following phrases: ἐνὸς τῶν μικρῶν τούτων (v.10) ἐν τῷ μικρῶν τούτων (v. 14); τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς (v.10) ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς (v.14). Bogdan G. Bucur, "Matt 18:10 In Early Christology and Pneumatology: A Contribution to the Study of Matthean *Wirkungsgeschichte*." (*Novum Testamentum* 249 (2007), 209-231. The author develops the various interpretation of the second sentence of the v.10 "...the angels continually see the face of my father in heaven." However, in this article this side of the discussion is not considered.

¹⁰ Daniel Wallace, *Greek Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1996), 469. The author discusses that the use of the negative particle μὴ plus the verb in the aorist subjective second person has the force of an imperative and thus is better translated as "do not" rather than "you should not."

¹¹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew A Commentary: The Church Book Matthew 13-28* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: 2007), 217-18.

¹² Augustine Stock, *The Method and Message of Matthew*. (Collegeville, Minnesota: 1994).

translation. In a way, this questioning is unnatural; for Jesus is forcing his disciples to answer to his question affirmatively. That the owner should leave the ninety-nine sheep in the mountains in search for one is not a best proposal or not a normal way of taking care of the flock. But for Jesus, his disciples are to say “yes”¹³ – the owner will leave the 99 in the mountains (τὰ ὄρη) in search for the one that is lost. The twist of the parable does not end there. Upon finding the lost one, the owner rejoices more than the 99 which had not been astray.

The parable ends with much precision on building character for the disciples: Jesus, tells his disciples that it is not the will before (ἐμπροσθεν) your father in the heavens that one of these least would be lost (v.14). This summary statement eventually brings the readers and the disciples back to how this section all started: Ὁρᾶτε μὴ καταφρονήσητε ἑνὸς τῶν μικρῶν τούτων (v.10)—seek that you do not despise one of these little ones. And this is addressed to the disciples to have the same mindset, attitude, and way of life.

A Disciple Corrects a Sinning Brother¹⁴ (vv.15-18)

The nature of the sin of the brother in this pericope does not consist of a personal sin or crime against the disciples of Jesus. Personal sins of bothers against the disciples are treated in vv. 21-35. Rather, it is most probable that the sins of the brother are those that are committed against the community bringing scandal, bad example or disgrace to the nascent

¹³ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (London: 1919), 1157. The author discusses that interrogatives prefixed by the negative particle οὐν always expects the answer “yes.” The use of οὐχι “... is a bit sharper in tone.”

¹⁴ The Greek text Novum Testamentum Graece (27th edition: Nestle and Aland) has the prepositional phrase [εἰς σέ]. This phrase is found in the early manuscripts of κ and B. The editorial committee has placed this in brackets and opined: “It is possible that the words εἰς σέ are an early interpolation in the original text, perhaps derived by copyists from the use of εἰς ἐμὲ in verse 21.” Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.). (New York: 1994), 36.

Matthean community. These are the sins and offenses that are publicly known but in many instances others are just afraid or unwilling to take the guts to confront the erring brother. This case is definitely different from the one mentioned in vv. 6-9.

The obligation to correct is imperative (ἐλεγχον aorist, imperative, active, 2ps) to the one who is a witness, or who sees or comes to know of the sin. There is also the sense of immediacy or urgency for the correction¹⁵ so that the brother is restored to the good standing within the community.

No matter how public the sin might be, Jesus as the narrator, demands from his disciples to move, although with promptness, also with much care for the person making sure that, as much as possible, he is restored back to the community.

A disciple knowing the offense of a brother is obliged to reprove him, bring to light with him the fault, set forth before him (ἐλεγχον αὐτόν) the fault. However, the disciple is to observe levels or a process of correction. In the first instance this is to be done between him who is a witness and the brother alone (αὐτοῦ μόνου). The reference to Lev 19: 17 underscores the intention of the reproving or the bringing to light privately with the brother the sinful matter. It is not about hate or vengeance but love (Lev. 19:18)—“You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt” (Lev. 19:17). The same quotation underlines the obligation of the disciple to correct a brother in good faith and love. If a brother in this first instance of correction listens, then he is regained to the community and the community is healed.

If the disciple is not successful in regaining the brother, he is to bring with him two or three who are to act as witnesses to the sin the disciple is presenting to the erring brother (v.16). The reference to Lev 19:15 puts to light the true role of the witnesses. They are not put forward to give biased or unjust judgment. On

¹⁵ Daniel Harington, *Sacra Pagina 1: The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville, Minnesota: 1991), 271. The author opines that Matthew has taken the fraternal correction process from the Qumran community where sins “shall be reprovod on the very same day” quoting from 1QS 5:26-6:2).

the contrary they are to be witnesses to the fault so that justice to the erring brother and the community is best served. Thus, the correcting disciple does not render false or unjust judgment—“You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor.”

If, even, before two or three witness the brother would not obey or refuse to listen, then, the disciple is to bring the matter to the community, the congregation or the church. And if, he remains incorrigible, only then will he be treated just like (ὥσπερ) a gentile or a tax collector. The text does not specifically say that the brother is to be expelled or cast out from the community. Daniel Patte¹⁶ renders the two nouns as “foreigner” or “someone who exploits you or abuse you.”

There are two instances in the life of the Pauline community that probably could give light to the discussion. In 2 Thes 14-15, Paul writes that if anyone in the community refuses to obey (ὕπακούει) the brothers are to mark (σημειοῦσθε) such person and not to associate (μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι) with such a one. Interestingly the verse 15 with which the letter is coming to a closure, Paul continues “Do not look on him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. However, in 1 Cor 5:11, Paul writes: “But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother who is sexually immoral or greedy, or is an idolater reviler, drunkard, or robber.” And in v. 13 Paul commands; “Drive out the wicked person from among you!”

From these two references with Paul, it seems that there is still that leeway given to a non-repentant brother even after the third intervention is already made. A space for repentance is still given with the hope that the brother would in time consider his scandal or fault to the community. But in some very extreme cases of immorality, there is also the need for the expulsion from the community.

¹⁶ Daniel Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith* (Philadelphia: 1987), 263.

A Disciple Forgives from the Heart (vv. 21-35)¹⁷

In this section, Matthew now treats the theme on personal sins against the disciples or probably to anybody. The main concern or issue, in the superficial reading, is how often must sins be committed against a believer and how often must forgiveness be given in return. Would there be a limit to forgiveness? And what would happen after the maximum limit of forgiveness is exhausted? These issues are contained in the question of Peter to Jesus: ποσάκις ἁμαρτήσῃ εἰς ἐμὲ ὁ ἀδελφός μου καὶ ἀφήσω αὐτόν; ἕως ἑπτάκις; There are various interpretations to the implication of the numerical value of seven (7) in Peter's repetitive forgiveness: Ulrich Luz maintains that Peter was not referring to a limited number of repetitive forgiveness since the number 7 traditionally signifies perfection, on the contrary the implication of Peter's question was “Is perfect forgiveness expected of me?”¹⁸ Other authors see in the number 7 a reference to Gen 4:24 where Lamech makes reference to the seven-fold revenge God has placed on whoever will lay hands on Cain.¹⁹ In the context of Matthew, if indeed there is reference to the book of Genesis then the theme of revenge was changed to forgiveness and thus seven-times forgiveness forwarded by Peter was not trivial.²⁰

The response of Jesus to the question, although cast in the language of quantity (οὐ ... ἕως ἑπτάκις ἀλλὰ ἕως ἑβδομηκοντάκις ἑπτὰ) points to a qualitative forgiveness.

¹⁷ W. F. Albright W & C. S. Mann, *The Ancor Bible: Matthew Vol 21* (New York: 1971). The authors opine that the parable is a conflation of two parables due to identification of the main character—a king in v.23 and a landowner in v.31. p.223. In this paper, the parable will be taken as it stands. The parable is found only in Matthew (c.f. Kurt Aland. ed. *Synopsis Quattor*....,254).

¹⁸ Luz, U. *Hermeneia*...., 465.

¹⁹ Bruner, *Matthew A Commentary*...., 236.

²⁰ Santi Grasso, “La Parabola del Re Buono e del Sevo Spietato (Mt 18,21-35): Analisi Narratologica,” *RivBiblt* XLVI (1998), 31-32. The author affirms that the number 7 is synonymous with “completezza e totalita.” He writes, “quindi invitando a perdonare il fratello sette volte, Pietro si dimostra molto disponibili.”

However, one understands ἐβδομηκοντάκις ἑπτὰ whether 77 or 490 times points to “there can be no limit to the willingness to forgive.”²¹ The parable in vv.23-34 is supposed to explain what is the implication or meaning of Jesus counter proposal ἐβδομηκοντάκις ἑπτὰ.

In the parable, the question of repetitive forgiveness has taken a backseat; it is faintly implied, if ever, in the μυρίων ταλάντων (ten thousand talents) which the servant owes to the king. At the forefront of the parable is the unimaginable debt, which is impossible to repay, and which was written off by the king because, (a) the impossibility of the debt to be paid, (b) the pleading of the servant, and (c) the compassion [σπλαγχνισθεις v.27] of the king.

However, the same forgiveness was rescinded by the king for the reasons that the servant was evil (δοῦλε ποιηρέ v.32) because he did not have the king’s heart, mind and attitude in his dealing with his co-servant (σπλαγχνισθεις v.27; ὡς κἀγὼ σὲ ἠλέησα v.32): He did not forgive his co-servant even if (a) the debt was payable and (b) the servant pleaded and promised to pay back.

The parable ended with the challenge in v. 35 to be like the Father in the heavens or like the king in the parable—to forgive each other from the heart.

A Disciple Upholds the Dignity and Sacredness of Matrimony

The final metaphor for the disciples to become like a child comes in a fairly different context. Chapter 19 deals with the Pharisees testing (πειράζοντες αὐτὸν v.3) Jesus on his thoughts on divorce and matrimony. The test question revolves around the two poles of interpretation for allowing the male to divorce (ἀπολῦσαι) his wife -- εἰ ἔξεστιν ἀνθρώπῳ ἀπολῦσαι τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ κατὰ πάσαν αἰτίαν;

The phrase κατὰ πάσαν αἰτίαν translated as “any matter

of indecency or for any cause”--taken from Deut 24 and as basis for the issuing of the writ of divorce by the male partner--was interpreted differently by two noted Rabbi of the time of Jesus who believed divorce to be lawful: the School of Shammai believes that the husband may divorce his wife for reason of unfaithfulness; while Hillel, being more liberal, understood the phrase to give permission for the husband to divorce his wife for any cause, even for just burning his bread.²² Warren Carter commenting on the early century socio political and cultural context writes:

The dominant cultural perspective of the Greco-Roman world regarded male power over women as unrestricted and divorce as legitimate for most reasons, including stealing money (Cicero, *Att* ii.24), adultery and being drunk (*Aulus Gellius* 10.23.5), loss of looks (Juvenal, *Sat* 6.142-47), arguments with one’s mother-in-law and unpleasant temperament (Suetonius, *Augustus* 62), sickness (Plutarch, *Sulla* 35.2) and unpleasing behavior (Josephus, *Vita* 426). Several, though, complain about frequent divorces which undermine social stability. Juvenal notes a woman who has initiated eight divorces in five years (*Sat* 6.224-30). Seneca complains about women who reckon their years not by consuls but by divorced husbands (*De Ben* 3.16.2-3).²³

The response of Jesus to the question of the divorce’s legality or non was not only proverbial but was a way for the disciples to listen to and to journey back to the reason why the Father in heaven in the first place has initiated matrimony. The Jesus of Matthew referred his response to Genesis, the story of creation, rather than to Deuteronomy and the possible

²² Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge, UK: 1999), 463.

²³ Warren Carter, *Matthew and the margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll, New York: 2001), 379.

²¹ Harington, *Sacra Pagina*...., 269.

interpretations of the teachers of the law. Referring back to Gen 1:27 ... ἔρρεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτοὺς (Gen 1:27), Jesus underscores the equality of dignity²⁴ of both sexes and that both were created according to the divine image. In a way this reference to the original equality of sexes nips in the bud the discussion on the legality of divorce and the males preponderance to initiate it. The creation of the individuality of sexes to the image and likeness of the creator (ὁ κτισας v.4) underscores not only the sanctity of the bond that governs both but also the dignity of both before God. Jesus was not skirting the issues on whom he is to follow among the two interpreters of the possibility of divorce but is leading both the testing-Pharisees and most importantly his disciples to the original intention of matrimony in the plan and economy of creation.

Jesus continues his response by quoting Gen 2:24 ἔνεκεν τούτου καταλείπει ἄνθρωπος τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν (Gen 2:24). This phrase is taken from the second creation story focusing on the partnership of male and female--becoming one--even to the point of leaving their father and mother. This reference to the Genesis underlines that the coming together of both sexes is not for legal conventions only but for lasting union—this is a joining of life with life and that God blesses such a union of lives.²⁵ In both references to the creation stories, Jesus in Matthew places matrimony in the highest pedestal, negates even the discussion of the possibility of divorce for it was not part of the original plan of creation.

This beautiful intention of creation though is destroyed by the hardness of heart (σκληροκαρδίαν v.8) of the people. And thus during the time of Moses, concession was made (v.8). But Jesus insists that from the very beginning this was not supposed to be. It is no wonder that in v. 9 Jesus underscores the beauty of the original intention of matrimony even amidst human hardness

²⁴ Nahum M. Sarna, (Gen Ed.) *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* בראשית (Jerusalem: 1989), 13.

²⁵ Richard B. Gardner, *Matthew in Believers Church Bible Commentary* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: 1991), 289.

of heart. Verse 9 tries to underline the sacredness, beauty and dignity of matrimony such that a husband who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery.

The Child: The Humble Disciple and a Presidential Bet

The child whom the Lord presents before the disciples with the challenge for them to be like one is after all not a twelve-year²⁶ old kid or younger. The child is a representative of the greatest resident of heaven who is first and foremost characterized to be humble. Matthew from 18:6-19:12, by way of metaphors and parables, has shown to the disciples and the readers what really constitute humility in the kingdom of the heavens and how to become one.

A humble disciple is one who strives not to become a stumbling block to the believers. If he has become one he must be ready to accept to be thrown out of the community or must strive to cut off all possible causes and sources of scandal so as not to cause others to sin. This is a humility.

Like the present pope (Pope Francis), a truly humble disciple must have a heart for the poor, the marginalized and the lost--the unattractive little one. It is a sign of humility to reach out to them, to listen to them, to seek for them, to feel the pain of poverty and alienation and to work relentless for their alleviation and rejoice at their success.

Likewise, a humble disciple is brave enough to bring back to the fold of truth and justice a wayward or erring or scandal causing brother. However, this courage is not propelled by hate, bias or desire to destroy a brother but sheer love and respect for the brother and peace of the community. He must be quick enough and even obliged to fraternally correct but following the proper levels of correction for it too is a sign of great humility.

A truly humble disciple is one who is also capable for forgiving from the heart like Jesus who cancels all guilt and sins

²⁶ Authors note that the term παιδίον refers to a child whose age is not above 12 years old cf. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 264.

away.

Finally, from the Matthean context a humble disciple is one who has a high regard for the sanctity or unity in matrimony; who is not swayed by the preponderance to the right to initiate divorce but works so hard for the saving of family and matrimonial relations because this is precisely what was intended from the very beginning of creation and the intention of the divine image to which both sexes are made.

The five faces of humility are not five independent values distinct and separate from each other. There is an inner mutuality and co-penetration of all these faces of humility. One who seeks out for the lost must be equally brave enough to point out the sins of the brother and willing to forgive and rejoice at the return or repentance of a wayward or scandal-causing brother; and one who is corrected and forgiven must at the same time be grateful and forgiving likewise and strive for the rest of his/life not to be a scandal to anyone. One cannot think of a husband or wife to last for the rest of their life in matrimony if both are not courageous enough in mutual love and respect to point out or talk about problems and difficulties of their relationships, to reach to out to each other's weaknesses, to be forgiving as though like a shepherd in search of a lost sheep and willing to forgive each other from the heart because of love.

The child after all is not a child. He is the disciple *par excellence*, he is the perfect image of Jesus, he is the mature and ideal disciple having a heart closest to Jesus. If this is the best a disciple could ever become, Isn't he also the best presidential bet for any national elections?

Elements of Karl Rahner's Christology: A Retrospective Reappraisal*

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Some fifty years ago Karl Rahner produced a lengthy essay, originally part of a three-volume retrospective study of the Council of Chalcedon, on "Current Problems in Christology" which developed several points which would be thematic for his Christology throughout his life.¹ It would be appropriate to revisit this essay and its themes in this memorial to the centenary of his birth.

The article is expressly divided into an introduction and three sections. The first section, the longest, could be

*This article was intended for vol 4 (2004). This is published in this volume since the publication was in hiatus by then.

¹It appeared in its original form as "Chalkedon – Ende oder Anfang?" in Alois Grillmeier and Heinrich Bacht, eds. *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 3: *Chalkedon heute* (Würzburg: Echter, 1954) 3-49. It was republished as "Probleme der Christologie von heute" in *Schriften zur Theologie*, Bd. 1 (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1954) 169-222 and translated as "Current Problems in Christology." *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1: *God, Christ, Mary and Grace*, trans. Cornelius Ernst, O.P.

characterized as a reflection on Chalcedon from the perspective of Biblical theology, “or more accurately, the transcendental hermeneutics for a Biblical Christology.”² The second section focuses more specifically on the problems deriving from the Chalcedonian formula proper. A final section surveys eight problems of modern Christology. In what follows I will set out few elements of Rahner’s discussion (mostly from the first section of his essay), provide sporadic indications of how the themes which develops here find expression in his later work, and provide a critical commentary detailing some of the difficulties occasioned by Rahner’s thoughts as well as more positive suggestions on how that thought could be developed. I make no claim to be exhaustive in any of these tasks. In particular, while I do occasionally indicate points of contact with his later thought, I make no systematic attempt to show development in his thought after 1954.

Rahner sets the stage for his comments in his introduction. He is aware that he will be expressing things in a controversial fashion in his article; indeed, he does this deliberately. The historicity of human truth requires a dialectic which neither abandons an older formula of faith nor preserves it in a static fashion. Thus, preservation is only authentic when “the history goes on, and the movement of reflection departs from the formula which has been reached in order to discover it (just this old formula itself) again.”³ He intends a departure from the Chalcedonian formula precisely so as to rediscover it in a higher synthetic form. He implicitly acknowledges the Hegelian character dialectic and there is some points to his claim. He is not so much looking for a statement that is precisely antithetical to that of Chalcedon as for a statement that is simply different from it and in its difference able to cast light on Chalcedon and spur a development of thought that goes beyond that council even while preserving its insight into the mystery of Christ. It is

²Rahner, “Current Problems,” 174.

³*Ibid.* 150.

in this context that he turns first to the biblical text to search for alternatives to Chalcedon.

Biblical Theology and Chalcedon

Rahner begins his discussion by noting, on the one hand, that the Church has never claimed to exhaust Scripture in its dogmatic definitions, and, on the other hand, that the Bible must remain the source of theology and Christology: “the Scriptures are the *inexhaustible* source of truth about Christ.” He takes “the statement that Jesus is the Messiah and as such has become Lord in the course of his life, death and resurrection” as a central Biblical affirmation (acts of the Apostles is cited) which continues to be of seminal importance even though Acts’ starting point “from below” has been overshadowed by Chalcedon. He rhetorically asks whether, in point of fact, the perspective represented by Acts “has simply been made obsolete by the doctrine of metaphysical Sonship,” which is to say, by Chalcedon.⁴ This seemingly simple statement and the accompanying rhetorical question are dense with Rahnerian themes. There is, as well, an exegetical context that at once provides one motive for Rahner’s approach to Chalcedon in particular as well as considerable support for his anthropological approach to theology in general.

The following comments are divided into four parts. In the first, Rahner’s own understanding of this “central Biblical affirmation” will be set out and explored. This will be followed by a sketch of some of the exegetical support that exists for Rahner’s position. The third section of these comments will briefly sketch a challenge to this position on exegetical grounds. Finally, this material will be evaluated in terms of preparing us to continue our examination of Rahner’s 1954 article.

Rahner presumes that the affirmation —“Jesus is the Messiah and as such has become Lord in the course of his life, death and resurrection”—is true of the Synoptics and of St. Paul without examination and cites only Acts of the Apostles

⁴*Ibid.* 155.

in a footnote. Acts 2:21-36 seems to provide a paradigmatic example of what he intends. It begins by calling attention to “Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God,” continues with the human history of this man—his death, resurrection, and exaltation to God’s right hand—and concludes with the notice “that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”⁵ He describes this perspective as “from below” and contrasts it with a metaphysical Christology. This language recurs in his later article. “The Two Basic Types of Christology,” where he distinguishes a “saving history” Christology or a Christology that ascends “from below” to a “metaphysical” or “descending” Christology.⁶ This later article can illuminate what Rahner has in mind in the 1954 article.

As Rahner describes it, in a Christology “from below”

... the eye of the believer in his experience of saving history alights first on the man Jesus of Nazareth, and on him in his fully human reality, in his death, in the absolute powerless and in the abidingly definitive state which his reality and his fate have been brought to by God, something which we call his Resurrection, his glorification, his sitting at the right hand of the Father.⁷

In contrast, a “metaphysical” or “descending” Christology “clearly goes beyond the original experience of Jesus by the believer.”

The pre-existence of the Logos, his divinity, his distinction from the Father, the predicate ‘Son of God’ ascribed to the divine Logos as him who pre-exists in this Christology, are regarded as manifestly belonging to him from the first, and assumed more or less to be statements based upon

⁵Scriptural quotation are generally from the Revised Standard Version or from the New American Bible. Occasionally I have altered these in the interest of clarity or modern idiom.

⁶Karl Rahner, “Two Basic Types of Christology,” in *Theological Investigations* 13, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury, 1983), 213-23.

⁷*Ibid.* 215.

the verbal assertions and convictions of Jesus himself.

This type of Christology further presumes a cosmic and even transcendental significance to the Incarnation.⁸

Rahner is convinced that the “metaphysical” or “high Christology descending” presupposes a Christology “from below” which is judged to be more primitive.⁹ In this he can claim the support of numerous exegetes. Raymond Brown, for instance, has arranged, in what he judges to be rough chronological order, various “Christological moments.” The sequence begins with exaltation Christologies, proceeds in order to public ministry, family circle, conception, and finally to preexistence Christologies. Such an arrangement would clearly serve to “illustrate” Rahner’s “saving history” approach to first century Christology.¹⁰

Frank Matera, more recently, sets out the simple “working hypothesis...[that] we can learn how the writings of the New Testament understand the person and work of Jesus Christ by paying attention to the explicit and implicit stories of Christ in the New Testament.”¹¹ In his conclusion he argues that the “Synoptic presentation of the Son of Man who will come at the end of the ages” is difficult to reconcile “with the Johannine figure of the descending and ascending Son of Man who reveals what he has seen and heard in the presence of the Father.”¹² The Gospels agree that Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel but the Synoptic Gospels, in Matera’s view, affirm that “Jesus is God’s Son because he is the Spirit-anointed Messiah who obediently follows the destiny of the Son of Man.”¹³ There is, thus, a range of positions manifest in the New Testament

⁸*Ibid.* 217-18.

⁹*Ibid.* 220.

¹⁰See Raymond Brown, S.S., *An Introduction to New Testament Christology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994) 108-9, 110-41.

¹¹Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Christology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1999) 3.

¹²*Ibid.* 243.

¹³*Ibid.* 253.

between the “low Christology” of the Synoptic Gospels and the “high Christology” of the Gospel of John. Mark has the lowest Christology in this view, “primarily concerned with the destiny of God’s messianic Son” whose “sonship is intimately related to his destiny of suffering and death, as well as resurrection and parousia.” Matthew and Luke begin a reflection on the nature of Jesus’ sonship with the addition of the virginal conception stories. Paul is similarly concerned with the destiny of God’s Son but “gives intimations of Christ’s preexistence.” In the deutero-Pauline letters “Christ takes on a godly status.” Hebrews and Revelations take Christology “to yet another level” and “relate Christ ever more closely to God.” But the “crowning achievement” is John’s Gospel where “there is no doubt that Christ is the preexistent Son of God.”¹⁴

There are numerous other studies that could be cited in support of Rahner’s position. Brown and Matera provide enough materials for present purposes. An effective challenge to Rahner’s conviction that a “low Christology” is primitive in the New Testament Church and that a “high Christology” emerges from the experience of the human Jesus would have to take the form of challenging this exegetical consensus. This is not at all possible here though a few brief indications of the form this would have to take would be in order.

First, there is need for a reassessment of the Gospel of Mark. The exegetical consensus noted above generally turns on an assessment that the Gospel of Mark represents a “low Christology,” i.e., that the focus of the Gospel is primarily on the destiny of a very human Jesus on whom supernatural elements have been pasted.¹⁵ Mk 10:17-25, the story of the rich young

¹⁴*Ibid.* 252-54.

¹⁵John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1990) 77, summarizes the prevailing view of Mark well enough: “Mark has been praised for the vividness of his narrative, and there are many passages where we have glimpses of the human Jesus, in what we might call his ‘naturalness’. As we shall see, this humanity is overshadowed in the total Marcan picture by a heavy stress on the supernatural qualities ascribed to Jesus, but a man existing amidst the chances and changes of human life is

man, is one of the stories usually cited in support of this. Jesus challenges the characterization of himself as “good Master” noting that no one is good “but God alone.” It is noted that Jesus does not deny the appropriateness of the title as such; all he does is make explicit the implications of the title as a title of divinity. The expression “but God alone” has an exact verbal parallel in Mk 2:7—“Why does the man talk in that way? He commits blasphemy! Who can forgive sins except God alone?” Mark’s Jesus can forgive sins, he is the “good Master,” he is David’s Lord (12:37), he is the Lord of the Sabbath (2:28). He walks on the water (when in the roughly contemporaneous Jewish literature only a ghost or Yahweh God walks on water) and identifies himself to the disciples saying, “I am” (6:50). He is the bridegroom of Israel/Jerusalem (2:19). The wind and the sea obey him (4:41). The examples can be multiplied. Mark’s Jesus is handed over because in these and similar affirmations he has, in the judgment of his accusers, committed blasphemy. This “blasphemous” Marcan Jesus is vindicated. This is not a “low Christology.”¹⁶

Much of the chronological sequence commonly presumed in accounts such as Brown’s can be resolved in terms of different audiences. Public proclamation to nonbelievers would have to begin with their (the nonbelievers’) experience of or expectations of Jesus as “this man” (and the Acts accounts that Rahner relies on are public proclamations to nonbelievers). New converts

certain there.”

¹⁶My own work in Paul [*Trinity and Marriage in Paul* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990) and Mark [“Marcan Christology: A Narrative and Rhetorical Examination,” given at the SBL International Meeting at Rome, 14-17 July, 1991; “Marcan Christology: A Rhetorical Examination of Mark 2:1-12, 23-27; 10:17-18; and 12:35-37,” given at the annual meeting of the Midwest Region of the Society of Biblical Literature held February 16-18, 1992; “Compositional and Narrative Studies in Marcan Christology,” a session paper for the Narrative Exegesis Continuing Seminar, Catholic Biblical Association, 12-15 August, 1995 LSI, 40LI—] has convinced me (and others) that the early New Testament material is far higher Christologically than is generally appreciated. A monograph on Marcan Christology has been in preparation.

would require catechetical instruction in the Christian life which would encourage early collections of public ministry stories in which Jesus' explicit teachings and examples would be set forth. On the other hand, a pre-existence Christology is already attested to in the earliest of the New Testament writings. In Hebrews, which most scholars date early, we find that God "leads his first-born into the world" (Heb 1:6) and that God "made him *for a little while* lower than the angels" (Heb 2:7). Even prescinding from Phil 2:6-7, one notes an incarnational perspective in Gal 4:4 where Paul writes that at the fullness of time "God sent forth his Son." Even Matera, as noted above, finds "intimations" of preexistence in Paul. Paul's controversy with certain people from Jerusalem in an even earlier period was over the Judaizing of Gentiles, not over diverse understandings of who and what Jesus was. These observations are insufficient to "prove the case" but do alert us that the exegetical case is complex and that the New Testament does not necessarily provide the sort of support that Rahner and the exegetes of his (and even our) generation presumed.

There is more. As noted above Rahner's "metaphysical" type of Christology understands the Incarnation as having cosmological significance. Such a significance is certainly well attested to in the Pauline corpus. In Christ we are "a new creation" (Gal 6:15); Christians have been freed from the beggarly elementals of the world (Gal 4:9) and been "re-elementized" in the Spirit (Gal 5:25). Hebrews has the universe being created through Christ (Heb 1:2) which echoes 1 Cor 8:6. John's Gospel is as explicit on the point (Jn 1:3). Luke centrally locates Christ in human history certainly in the parallel he establishes between Adam, "the son of God" and Jesus who is the Son, but also in affirming that there is no other salvation apart from Jesus (Acts 4:12). First century Jews and Christians, and pagans for that matter, were instinctively far more "cosmologically" oriented than is modernity. Indeed, one might suspect that Rahner's two types of Christology have far more to do with his Kantian presuppositions than with first century Christianity when he

admits to basing the types on "the transcendental and the historicity of man as constituting the two poles of our basic understanding of humanity."¹⁷

There is another point to consider. One of the marks of a "high Christology descending" is the revelation of this by Jesus himself. This can be considered from two perspectives: from the words and actions of Jesus himself but also from the self-understanding of the first generation or so of Christians. Jesus' self-revelation was largely indirect, which is to say, it was by way of specific claims made and actions engaged in rather than by explicit propositional affirmations. He did not say "I am God" but rather persisted in forgiving sins in the teeth of the objection that such an action was blasphemous (Mt.

9:2-6; Mk 2:5-10). He set the disciples on thrones judging Israel (Mt. 19:28; Lk 22:30). He claimed to be the bridegroom of Israel/Jerusalem (Mk 2:19) and parallels; (see also the various references scattered throughout the Gospel to the parable of the marriage feast of the Son). The examples can be greatly multiplied. In the end, he was condemned and handed over for crucifixion on the charge of blasphemy, of claiming divine prerogatives. His disciples may not have realized at the time the import of the various things Jesus did and claimed—they were, after all, "uneducated men" (Acts 4:13) who could not be expected to grasp the dangerousness of Jesus' claims—but they witnessed Jesus' execution for blasphemy and then saw him vindicated. It would not have taken a transcendental deduction for them to conclude that "this man" is "divine" in a very strong sense of the word.

The first Christians uniformly understood their knowledge of Jesus' status to have been a revelation. Paul is explicit on the point, speaking of the time when the Father "chose to reveal his Son to me" (Gal 1:16) as is Matthew—"Blest are you, Simon son of Jonah! No mere man has revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father." Hebrews is likewise explicit in its opening verses—"In times past, God spoke in fragmentary

¹⁷Rahner, "Two Basic Types," 219.

and varied ways to our fathers through the prophets; in this, the final age, he has spoken to us through his Son.” Luke opens his Gospel with angelic revelations to Zechariah and Mary and closes it with the notice that Jesus miraculously “opened their minds to the understanding of the Scriptures” (Lk 24:45). Even Mark has Jesus’ divine status revealed on the mountain of the Transfiguration—“This is my Son, my beloved” (Mk 9:7; cf. 1:11)—and as importantly at his death—“Clearly this man was the Son of God!” The centurion was not commenting on how nobly Jesus died. He made the exclamation on observing the divine Spirit being breathed out by Jesus. Mark is emphatic on the point: “And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last.... And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last.... (Mk 15:37, 39). It is this which fulfills John’s prophecy at the beginning of the Gospel that “he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit” (Mk 1:8).

Still, even granting these counterarguments to Rahner’s position, there is still a point to his argument that a “low Christology” has to be more primitive though one needs to distinguish the trivial reasons for this from the more substantive ones. For instance, the encounter between the disciples and Jesus was mediated by their common humanity. He spoke with them, ate with them, slept in their presence. The relevant question, as Rahner has placed it, is whether Jesus revealed to them, with some level of explicitness (even if only realized by the disciples after the Resurrection), who he was. As I have suggested above, he did. One cannot point to the obvious fact that the disciples, in the self awareness of their own experience, first encountered Christ on a human level to argue that a “low Christology” is more primitive in the early Church. Paul, after all, once regarded Christ “from a human point of view” and persecuted the Church (2 Cor 5:16). The “scribes and the Pharisees” experienced Christ humanly and plotted for his death. Experiencing Christ in his “humanness” did not, of itself, produce a “Christology” of any sort, high or low.

Nor can one point to the experience of the disciples of

salvation in the presence of Christ as determinative. It is true that they observed that “this man” taught about God in a way that made sense to them and that they responded to his word positively and in a way that tended toward “salvation.” Jesus taught “with authority” unlike the scribes and Pharisees who, apparently, minced opinions found in their ‘traditions,’ and Jesus reinforced his teaching with the seeming ability to work wonders. The Gospels also make it clear that the disciples thoroughly misunderstood the salvation that Christ was offering them. The “sigh” on the part of the disciples on the way to Emmaus—“we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel” (Lk 24:21)—is evocative of this misunderstanding as was the question asked at the beginning of Acts (1:6)—“are you going to restore the rule to Israel now?” Some even doubted (Mt. 28:17). This is not the sort of experience on which one can base a “transcendental deduction.”

Still, even dismissing these supports (Christ’s very humanity or the disciples’ “experience of salvation”) for a “low Christology ascending,” there is still a residuum left. One of the reasons for the very different reactions to Jesus in his humanness represented by the disciples on the one hand and the Jewish leaders on the other was, on their part, very human. The disciples had gotten to know Jesus personally, the Jewish leaders had not. Jesus was able to establish a level of trust with his disciples over time that led to their recognition of him as “credible” and this was not simply a function of his having proved himself through the working of wonders. The scribes and the Pharisees had seen some of the same wonders but had nonetheless not found Jesus “credible”; they did not trust him.¹⁸ While Jesus could make all manner of claims, thereby revealing his divine status, he could not, in the same way, reveal his fundamental credibility. Why should his claims be believed? One can and ought to speak of the workings of divine grace in the hearts of

¹⁸This discussion of credibility echoes that found in Heinrich Fries, *Fundamental Theology*, trans. Robert J. Daly, S.J. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1985) 18-20. Fries was one of Rahner’s students.

the disciples, the Spirit, as it were attesting to Jesus' credibility. This in-working of grace was nonetheless still manifest in their human experience of Jesus. They 'found' him to be someone who was trustworthy. Our own contemporary Christian faith is itself founded on our "finding" the original disciples, in their testimony to the resurrection of Jesus, to be trustworthy. Such a Christology, however, based as it is in the fundamental human experience of trust and raised up by grace, it is not what is generally understood by a "low Christology ascending." As it is often understood, the conviction that Jesus was fully divine was something the Christian community came to (unevenly) over the course of years and decades.

That the exegetical situation has begun to change thirty and fifty years after Rahner wrote his articles should not blind us to the historical context in which he wrote. The general assessment by the exegetical establishment of the "lowness" of at least some of the Christologies in the New Testament by the middle of the last century had threatened (and still threatens) to undermine Chalcedonian faith. It has been common enough to hear that Jesus himself "did not know he was God." Rahner's provision of elements of a "Transcendental Deduction of faith in Christ"¹⁹ allowed numerous Catholics to weather the threatened theological storm. He himself was aware that things in the New Testament are not as tidy as his types suggested and spoke of frontiers being crossed between the two types even in the New Testament.²⁰ Still, the contemporaneous exegetical situation provided (and continues to provide) important support for his real and properly theological interest in developing an anthropological approach to theology.

The "Departure" from Chalcedon

As noted above in the introduction, Rahner intends to depart from the formula of Chalcedon. This is in the service of achieving a higher synthesis that ends by preserving the

¹⁹This is Rahner's phrase. Cf. "Current Problems," 185.

²⁰Rahner, "Two Basic Types," 220.

original formula. Departure from Chalcedon, however, requires that he move, in some sense, toward one of the extremes of which Chalcedon itself was a synthesis. He defines the problem of modern Christology in terms of a reduction of Christ's humanity to a mere instrumentality which, he argues, produces an understanding of the Incarnation that can only appear to the modern mind as mythological. It is an instance of "a single basic conception" [which] runs through the Christian heresies from Apollinarism to Monothelitism, sustained by the same basic mythical feeling."²¹ Clearly he is on guard against an exaggerated Alexandrian style Christology which suggests that his departure from Chalcedon will be in the direction of Antioch and Nestorianism.

It is, accordingly, not surprising to find him intent, as were the Antiocheans of the fourth and fifth centuries, on preserving the fullness and authenticity of Christ's humanity. Christ can serve as a Mediator only if "the real initiative, in some true sense, of the man Jesus with regard to God is given its *genuine* (anti-monothelite) meaning, and Christ is not made into a mere 'manifestation' of God himself" with the humanity having no independent validity. He reacts in particular to a notion of Christ's humanity as merely instrumental to the divine person and of no other significance, describing such a view as "mythological." Over and against a notion of Christ's humanity as merely instrumental to the divine person and of no other significance he insists that redemption "was an act of genuinely human freedom."²²

The particular stress Rahner gives to the Church's rejection of monothelitism, the reduced monophysitic claim that there was a single will in Christ, leads him to skirt very close to a Nestorian position. For instance, the rejection of monothelitism shows

... that the 'human nature' of the Logos possesses a genuine, spontaneous, free, spiritual, active

²¹Rahner, "Current Problems," 156, n.1.

²²*Ibid.* 156-57; cf. also n. 2.

centre, a human selfconsciousness, which as creaturely faces the eternal Word in a genuinely human attitude of adoration, obedience, a most radical sense of creaturehood.²³

The problem here is that the attitudes of adoration and obedience, implying as they do corresponding actions, are properly said of persons only and Rahner has these actions and attitudes directed to the person of the Word by the humanity of Christ.

This is not an isolated instance. A bit later he notes that some theologians refuse to see “that the doctrine of two natures involves a duality of even a merely psychological and relative kind between an existentially independent I-center...in the man Jesus and the Logos.” His phraseology suggests that he would go even further in the opposite direction toward a duality that is not merely relative. A danger in the concept of *person* is that it be “understood in such a way that the ‘independence’ in view here seems excluded” and Rahner is intent on maintaining some sense of humanly independence vis-à-vis God as a ground for a real Mediatorship on the part of Christ.²⁴ Yet again, he refers to “the defined doctrine that Christ’s ‘human nature’, on account of the *unio hypostatica*, is wholly subject in its freedom to the *Logos*, and thus was essentially sinless.”²⁵ The problem with this formulation of the doctrine is that statements appropriately affirmed of a *person* are being attributed to the “human nature” understood as, in some sense, independent of (the person of?) the *Logos*. How is this not Nestorian?

Rahner takes as his point of departure the Church’s condemnation of monothelitism. The doctrine of the two wills in Christ shows “that the ‘human nature’ of the *Logos* possesses a genuine, spontaneous, free, spiritual, active centre, a human selfconsciousness,” as noted above. He complains that “there were and are theologians who cannot see that the doctrine of two

natures involves a duality of even a merely psychological and relative kind between an existentially [*Existential*] independent I-centre (*Ichzentrum*) in the man Jesus and the *Logos*” and that “the concept of *person* is always at least in danger of being understood in such a way that the ‘independence’ in view here seems to be excluded.”²⁶ Rahner wants to maintain this independence to protect the authentic humanity of Christ.

The problem is that the “concept of *person* as the ontological principle of a free active centre, selfconscious, present to itself and through itself in being” is not simply a modern invention but that it “has always played round the edge of the most static and objective concept of *person*.” He does not offer a proof of this but simply argues that monothelitism is inconceivable apart from such a notion. This can be challenged, at least as it applies to the ancient heresies in question, but for the moment let us take this claim seriously. If the Christ consists of but a single *person*, as the Church has insisted, this would imply that there is a single “independent I-centre” and thus a single center of freedom which, in turn, implies single will. In such a conceptuality, conversely, Rahner’s insistence that there is a human self-consciousness distinct from the divine self-consciousness of the *Logos* is itself in danger of implying that there are two distinct persons in Christ.

Rahner is aware of the problem. In the traditional teaching about the distinction between *peccatum personale* and *peccatum naturae* there are, implicitly, existential ideas about the *person* that comes into play. There is an unspoken presupposition that

... where there is a *single* person, there is a *single* freedom, a *single* unique personal active center, in relation to which any other reality (= nature, natures) can only be in this person the material and the instrument, the recipient of commands and the manifestation of this single, personal centre of freedom. But this is precisely not the

²³*Ibid.* 158.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Ibid.* 160, n.2.

²⁶*Ibid.* 159.

case with Jesus.²⁷

Rahner does not, at this point, argue that it is “not the case with Jesus” because either the singleness of person or the duality of nature would be compromised but rather because “he would only be the God who is active among us in human form, and not the true man who can be our Mediator with respect to God in genuine human freedom.”²⁸ He presumes, it is worth noting, the singleness of person in the case of Christ. His complaint is that a static understanding of the concept of *person*, as he has defined it, undermines the full, free authenticity of Christ’s humanity which thereby “suggests” a monothelite interpretation.

Saying that it is the nature, rather than the person, which has a free will does not solve the problem because it “overlooks the question how freedom can belong to someone with whom it is not identical, whose intrinsic core it does not constitute, why this freedom is neither subjected to the ‘person’ distinct from it nor in a position to rebel against it.”²⁹ This simply raises the question anew why, given the two wills, the two freedoms in Christ, there are not two persons in Christ. At this point Rahner begins to give his resolution to the problem:

... only a *divine* Person can possess as its own a freedom really distinct from itself in such a way that this freedom does not cease to be truly free even with regard to the divine Person possessing it, while it continues to qualify this very Person as its ontological subject.³⁰

Rahner provides a quasi-Hegelian explanation for this.³¹

²⁷*Ibid.* 160.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹*Ibid.* 161.

³⁰*Ibid.* 162.

³¹He protests that his is not an Hegelian dialectic. There are differences, to be sure, but Rahner does make use of typically Hegelian motifs in his understanding of history (*ibid.* 152), of God (described here), and his methodology (discussed above). One begins with some reality (God, Chalcedon), one departs from or in some sense negates that reality (not-God, not Chalcedon), one integrates the thesis and the antithesis in a higher synthesis (Jesus Christ, at once true God and true man; a reaffirmation of

It is “only in the case of God that is conceivable at all that he himself can constitute something in a state of distinction from himself.” It is an attribute of the Creator God to be able “to constitute something in being which by the very fact of its being radically dependent..., also acquires autonomy, independent reality and truth...and all this precisely with respect to the God who constitutes it in being.” It follows, in Rahner’s view that the *nature-person* schema in its abstract dimension is inadequate. The “relation between the Logos-Person and his human nature” must be conceived in the sense “that here *both* independence [of the human nature] and radical proximity [to the Logos] equally reach a unique and qualitatively incommensurable perfection.”³² Given the intrinsic connectedness of personhood and freedom the only way a free human nature can be possessed is if “the person who has this free nature is either identical with the nature or is the *divine* Person as divine.”³³ That human life is most God’s own life which is most free before God, and thus, most capable of functioning as true Mediator. The Incarnation

... appears as oriented from the very first to this point in which God achieves once and for all both the greatest proximity to and distance from what is other than he (while at the same time giving it being); in that one day he objectifies himself in an image of himself as radically as possible, and is himself thereby precisely given with the utmost truth; in that he himself makes most radically his own what he has created, no longer the mere anhistorical founder of an alien history but someone whose very own history is in question.³⁴

Person and Nature—Nature

While Rahner’s final resolution of the tensions he Chalcedon precisely in its “negation”).

³²*Ibid.* 162.

³³*Ibid.* 163.

³⁴*Ibid.* 165.

has outlined is compatible with Chalcedon, it remains true that a number of statements he makes in getting there remain problematic. As noted in the last paragraph he crystallizes the “problem” he addresses in terms of inadequacy of the *nature-person* schema and the static character of the concept of *person* which tends to encourage a monothelite and even a monophysite position at least on an implicit level. He is certainly correct with regard to the inadequacy of the schema, as it is generally understood. On the other hand his own treatment of the concepts of ‘person’ and ‘nature’ in the 1954 article create some of the problems he is trying to address.

The problematic character of Rahner’s treatment of ‘nature’ has already been touched on above. It will be useful to examine his statements in a somewhat more systematic fashion. The first definition of ‘nature’ that one encounters is one that Rahner rejects—an instrument that is possessed by a person:

What we have in mind is that this reduction of the Mediator to a mean term between God and man does not exist in the common mind, when *nature* is seen as a mere instrument of the person, and consequently has no significance for a divine Person.³⁵

This is something of a caricature of instrumentality. The metaphor that lies behind it is of an artist who uses a brush to paint a picture. The artist is the efficient cause; the brush is the instrumental cause of the picture. Once the picture is painted the brush can be discarded. What is lacking to this metaphor, among other things, is the identity between the artist and the brush. “The Logos is a man” is instinctively understood to make more sense than “the artist is a brush”; yet one can speak of instrumentality in both cases.

The root concept behind instrumentality is the notion of mediation. The artist paints his picture “through” or “by means of” his brush. As soon as one states the issue in this manner, however, it becomes clear that instrumentality is not without its

³⁵*Ibid.* 156-57; cf. n.2.

own proper dignity. If all things are from and we are for God the Father, all things are also *through* the Lord Jesus Christ and we are *through* him (1 Cor 8:6). God created all things *through* his Word. Paul proclaimed his own instrumental status to the Corinthians:

After all, who is Apollos? And who is Paul? Simply ministers *through* whom you became believers, each of them doing only what the Lord assigned him. I planted the seed and Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. This means that neither he who plants nor he who waters is of any special account, only God, who gives the growth (1 Cor 3:5-7).

To be “of no special account,” however, is still to be “God’s co-workers” (1 Cor 3:8). If the instrumentality of the Son is freighted with such divine dignity, if the instrumentality of Paul is freighted with apostolic dignity, why would one assume, as Rahner does, that an instrumental use of his humanity by the Son would reduce that humanity to something that is not authentic, to something that can be thrown away? If, in Rahner’s view, “being radically dependent...., also acquires autonomy, independent reality and truth,” why would it not also be true that the more that something or someone is an instrument in God’s hands the greater dignity and intrinsic worth that something or someone would possess. Excoriating an instrumentalist understanding of Christ’s humanity is to set up a false problem.

It also involves a misunderstanding of what a ‘nature’ is all about is clear in a second text. It was noted above, in conjunction with Rahner’s claim that the “‘human nature ‘ of the Logos...faces the eternal Word in a genuinely human attitude of adoration, obedience, a most radical sense of creaturehood” that such things are properly said of persons only.³⁶ This is certainly true but it is also true that persons act *through* or by *means of*

³⁶ The text of this next locus of Rahner’s treatment of ‘nature’ was cited above near the beginning of the section on his ‘departure from Chalcedon.’ Cf. *ibid.* 158.

their natures. A human person, for instance, communicates with another human person by means of his or her body. Human persons cannot but communicate through their bodies even when they do not specifically intend to; the body is the outward manifestation of the person. It is this instrumentality which gives this particular collection of molecules its unique dignity. This collection of molecules is a human body and this body has been promised a resurrection and eternal life by God but it has no special dignity apart from its instrumental relationship to the person whose body it is. Acts of will are actions of human persons that have their seat in the human soul. Wills do not choose; rather, persons choose by *means of* their will and it is persons who will be rewarded or punished for their good or bad choices.³⁷ A 'nature' is, by definition, instrumental to the person whose nature it is. It is the *means by which* a person acts.

There is a further issue here. Natures exist only in persons or, alternately, persons subsist in natures. It is the person who is the concrete, existing reality. Anytime 'nature' is contrasted to the person whose nature it is, it is an abstraction. Abstractions do not exercise agency. Abstractions likewise do not possess anything, except in an extended sense, much less a 'genuine, spontaneous, free, spiritual, active center, a human selfconsciousness,' as Rahner asserts of the human nature of the Logos in a third text. Because these things are affirmed of persons rather than natures, when Rahner does affirm them of a nature the reader is lead instinctively to understand that a person is being spoken of. If one allows that a person is being spoken of. If one allows that instinctive reading to come to the fore, one cannot but conclude that Rahner is Nestorian in his Christology. This is, as noted above, not his intention; he concludes rather to a position compatible with Chalcedon. His apparent Nestorianism is an artifact, at least in the 1954 article, of his imprecise use of the term 'nature'.

A fourth text is found in a footnote:

³⁷Natures can also be affected by good and bad choices. Human nature was wounded by Adam's sin, *by this person's* sin.

Consequently when we are thinking, in connection with this unity, of a person as *ens rationabile*, we tend to think that the function of the person which consists in establishing unity is not the actual, centralized, existential control and direction of the plural realities of the person, but rather their ontological foundation, which most clearly emerges to view in this control and direction. How little permissible it is simply to exclude this position out of hand may be seen from the defined doctrine that Christ's 'human nature' on account of the *unio hypostatica*, is wholly subject in its freedom to the Logos, and thus was essentially sinless.³⁸

Being "subject ... to the Logos" can be understood both of persons, such as Paul or Apollos, who are ministers of Christ, or of natures, which can be understood as instruments or the "means by which" a person acts. It is less clear that "in its freedom" can be applied to both in a similar fashion. Persons have a proper freedom whereby they can subject themselves to God. But, as noted above, such a free activity is improperly affirmed of natures. The same could be said for the characterization "sinless." Natures do not sin; persons do. Natures can be damaged by sin, and this is one of the implications of the doctrine of original sin. What the Church teaches about Jesus' humanity is that it was (and is) undamaged by sin, not, as such, that it was sinless. Jesus was sinless. The end of the footnote just cited makes the same sort of categorical mistake. The *unio hypostatica*, the personal union between Christ's divinity and humanity, is put in "the wider context of the ontological relationship between God and the free creature." Jesus' humanity is not a free creature; Jesus is (who is simultaneously free as God).

In a fifth text he again objects to "a human nature thought of as purely instrumental, a nature which in relation to the Logos

³⁸*Ibid.* 160-61, n.2.

would be, ontologically and morally, purely passive.”³⁹ Persons are morally active or passive, not natures, though obviously, a weakened human nature can provide a bias toward sin. Natures are not agents; by their essence they are instrumental, as noted above, to the persons who subsist in them and who are moral agents. A few lines further on in a sixth text he addresses the objection that “a human nature has a free will” which resolves the problem he has been treating. Rahner responds with the question “how freedom can belong to someone with whom it is not identical, whose intrinsic core it does not constitute; why this freedom is neither subjugated to the ‘person’ distinct from it nor in a position to rebel against it?” This question personifies the nature.

More specifically, it identifies freedom with the will and implies that, since the will is a part of human nature, human nature has its own proper freedom. Freedom, however, is of the person, not of the nature. It is exercised according to the mode appropriate to a given rational nature. It is the person who chooses “by means of” his or her will, the rational power of execution. That power can be damaged by sin (“damaged by sin” is itself a kind of mode) but it cannot act independently of the person whose power it is. To describe the will as distinct from the person whose will it is or to suggest that the will ought to be in a position to rebel against the person whose will it is simply absurd. Will, so defined as to be distinct from the person who possesses it, is, like nature, a mere abstraction. Abstractions cannot rebel against anything. To say that a person has a free will is to say that that person has a rational power of execution that is defined or circumscribed in terms appropriate to a given rational nature. The doctrine about the two wills in Christ is the claim that there are two distinct modes or powers of rational execution of Christ’s single, personal freedom.

This needs to be explored a bit more. The paradigmatic scene is in the Garden of Gethsemane: “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will

³⁹*Ibid.* 161.

but as you....” (Mt 26:39). The first thing to note is that the dialogue is not between Jesus and God but between Jesus and his Father. What is indicated is the possibility of (but not actually) a diversity of will on the part of the Father and the Son. The implied tension is relieved by the Son’s free submission to the Father’s will. What grounds this diversity? Traditionally this possibility of diversity has been used to demonstrate the presence in Jesus of a human will. This is certainly an acceptable interpretation but it hides a more profound issue. It is easy to ground a diversity of wills (or will acts) where there are, in fact an, ontological diversity of wills (natural powers) as in the case of the human will of Jesus and the divine will of the Father. The problem is that Jesus is possessed of identically the same divine will. The question becomes, does one introduce a “possible” diversity indicated by Christ’s desire to have the cup pass from him into the divine willing or into Christ himself and what form would such a diversity take?

Distinguishing, in this matter, between the divine will in Christ and the human will, apart from the ease of distinguishing between ontologically different wills, has the unwanted effect of positing a certain schizophrenia in Christ whereby he can simultaneously chose to have the cup pass from himself and choose not to have it pass from himself, a conflict resolved by the artifice of an appeal to ontologically different wills. The problem is that it is identically the same person choosing (or potentially choosing) by one will and choosing by another will with regard to identically the same thing (this cup passing). This is schizophrenia. What one actually sees in the life of Christ is a harmony between the divine and the human in the actions of Christ. He humanly reaches out his hand in human compassion toward a person and in the same action divinely heals that person.⁴⁰ It is a single choice that is effected in two

⁴⁰An example of this can be found in Athanasius, *Four Discourses Against the Arians*, III.32: “Thus, when it was necessary to raise up Peter’s mother-in-law, who was suffering from a fever, it was a human act when he extended his hand but a divine act when he caused the disease to cease. Likewise, in the case of ‘the man blind from birth’... it was human spittle

different and distinct modes directed to the same object; it is not two distinct and different decisions that converge, by accident or by connivance, in the same object. This much the unity of the Christ, insisted on by Chalcedon, demands.

The alternative seems equally unacceptable, locating the diversity of will in God, or more precisely, between the Father and the Son. The substantial identity of their divine will would seem to preclude this absolutely. This, however, cannot be because in this case any diversity of will between Jesus and the Father would be foreclosed. It is precisely the Son, as seen in the address, “my Father,” who indicates the possibility of a diversity of will. However one finally explains that possible diversity of will, it has to be grounded in the relation of the Son to the Father, a relation that is eternal. Is the Son’s eternal submission to the Father, which underlies his submission as a man, a free submission? Of course it is. Is this act of submission simultaneously the Father’s act? Of course it is not. The Father does not submit himself to himself.⁴¹ This is true even though there is only a single divine power of rational execution exercised by both Father and Son. They individually exercise that divine power in a way proper to who they each are.⁴²

--which he spat, but it was a divine act when he opened the man’s eyes by means of clay. And where Lazarus is concerned, he uttered human speech in his capacity as a human being, but it was a divine act when, in his capacity as God, he raised Lazarus from the dead.” In III.35, in a similar context, he wrote “If we recognize what is proper and peculiar to each, while at the same time perceiving and understanding that both sets of deeds come from one [agent], we believe rightly and shall never be led astray.” The translation is from Richard A. Norris, Jr., *The Christological Controversy*, Sources of Christian Thought (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1980).

⁴¹Cf. 1 Cor 15:27-28.

⁴²This idea should not be very strange. Thomas says much the same in a frequently overlooked passage on creation. Having affirmed that creation is not proper to any one person but “is common to the whole Trinity” he goes on to say that “Nevertheless the divine Persons, according to the nature of their procession, have a causality respecting the creation of things... Hence also God the Father made the creature through His Word, which is His Son; and through His Love, which is the Holy Ghost. And so on the processions of the Persons are the type of the productions of creatures

At the same time the Father freely gives all things to his Son. The Son does not give all things to himself. The Father’s act and the Son’s act are distinct. And yet there is a single divine act. The Father’s love for the Son and the Son’s love for the Father is one love. The Father and the Son acting as a single principle breathe forth the Holy Spirit. This diversity and unity of act is only possible if the Father’s freedom is not identified with the Son’s freedom or vice-versa. The power that is exercised in their distinct freedoms is identically the same. God, hypothetically speaking, would be torn apart, schizophrenic, if the father and the Son did not agree. They do agree.

They agree even at the moment when the Son is humanly most aware of his distinct freedom with regard to the Father, when he sets aside his desire (and it is a desire that he expresses in his prayer to the Father and not a will) and freely submits to the Father’s choice and makes it his choice. That choice is at once human and divine; it engages both powers of rational execution because it is a decision made by a single person who possesses those distinct powers, those distinct wills. There is a single freedom because there is a single person. Rahner, in speaking of the Logos, the Son, as possessing “as its own a freedom really distinct from itself,” undermines the personal unity of Christ. He does not intend to do this, as noted above, but his treatment of Christ’s human nature as having a proper freedom “really

inasmuch as they include the essential attributes, knowledge and will.” *ST* I.45.1.6.corp. The translation is from the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, *St. Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologica* (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics/Benziger, 1948). One divine power, the power of creation, is diversely exercised by the three persons of the trinity in unison. All I am suggesting is that the power that is the divine will is likewise diversely exercised by the three persons in unison. Given that the exercise of the power of the will implies a proper freedom, the implication is that there are three distinct freedoms in God corresponding to the three persons exercised in unison through the same natural power. Freedom qua –freedom must be understood of persons, not natures. Although he tends, in this article, to locate freedom in the nature Rahner is not completely unaware that it is personal. Cf. Rahner, “Current Problems” 164, n. 1: “it is the spiritual creature which in a special way, *as person constituted by transcendence and freedom*, enters into relationship with God” (emphasis added).

distinct” from the Son forces a Nestorian conclusion.⁴³

This is reinforced by Rahner’s desire to see the union of divinity and humanity in Christ as an instance of the broader Creator-creature relationship. Thus, in a sixth text, he writes that we

... must conceive of the relation between the Logos-Person and his human nature in just this sense, that here *both* independence [explained in a note as freedom of the human ‘nature’] a radical proximity [explained as the substantial appropriation by the Logos of this human nature and its freedom] equally reach a unique and qualitatively incommensurable perfection, which nevertheless remains once and for all the perfection of a relation between Creator and creature [*eines Schöpfer-Geschöpf-Verhältnisses*].⁴⁴

The last line of this quote likewise has a note attached which amplifies the sense of this sentence: “If in the Incarnation [*in der Menschwerdung*] the Logos enters into relationship with a creature [*der Logos sich...zu einem Geschöpf verhält* — in the present context perhaps better translated “is related to a creature”], then it is obvious that the ultimate formal determinations of the Creator-creature relationship must also hold in *this* particular relationship.”

The question of the Creator-creature relationship which Rahner raises here will be dealt with later. Here it is the shift

⁴³Rahner is at least consistent in identifying freedom with the nature. With regard to the Trinity he writes in *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978): “This unicity of essence implies and includes the unicity of one single consciousness and one single freedom” (135). When he also identifies the immanent with the economic Trinity and speaks of the three Persons as three different “modes” of God’s existence he opens himself up to the charge of modalism as well as of Nestorianism. Cf. also *the Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel, *Mysterium Salutis* (new York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 21-24, 103-15.

⁴⁴Rahner, “Current Problems,” 162-63.

from the expression “human ‘nature’” to “creature” that is of interest because there is a correlate shift, at the end of the note at any rate, from “becoming” man to “being related to” a creature. The expression, “a creature,” as opposed to the more abstract, “creatureness,” is a clear reference to a concrete individual instance. This is certainly what Rahner intends which he talks in general of the relationship between God and creatures. What does it mean to say that “the Logos is related to a concrete instance of humanity” (which is what the reference to “creature” means) in the Incarnation? If one accordingly substitutes “man” for “creature,” one ends with an expression that is quite problematic (If in the ‘becoming man’ the Logos is related to a man...). The language implies that “the Logos is related to a human person” which is Nestorian. You cannot distinguish “this creature” from the Logos after the Incarnation as Rahner insists on. The Logos has *become* that concrete instance; he *is* now that concrete instance; that concrete instance did not exist prior to his “becoming man”; it is not “independent of” the Logos; “this creature,” “this man,” is the Logos. The “relationship,” if it makes any sense to speak of such, is one of identity, not one of independence.

Rahner does know this or seemingly intends it when he writes that “This human history...is the history of God himself.”⁴⁵ He obscures this point, however, when he distinguishes the Logos (which is, finally the name of a person) from a creature that is “independent” of the Logos even as it is brought into very close proximity. It is only Nestorian reading of the Incarnation that can be readily assimilated to or understood as the highest instance of the God-creature relationship. That relationship presumes a creature that is “independent” in relationship to God, not one that is identified with him. His statement of the Chalcedonian formula, “This human nature is hypostatically united to the Logos,” only exacerbates the problem. The demonstrative, “this,” already indicated a concrete individual instance of humanity, it indicates a person. He effectively has

⁴⁵*Ibid.* 163.

Chalcedon teaching that a human person is hypostatically united to the [person of] the Logos. It, of course, taught no such thing. What it teaches is that human nature and divine nature are united in the hypostasis, in the person of the Son.

Rahner wants to affirm both identity and independence because both are needed. If the Mediator is not distinct from God then in what sense is he an authentic mediator? But if the Mediator is not God then how can he offer an authentic salvation? Rahner tries to have it both ways by making the point that involvement of the divine enhances creaturely freedom rather than compromises it, and this is valid enough in general and worth stressing. Clearly, when this insight is brought into Christology, divine involvement is understood to have reached a zenith and, accordingly, so also human freedom. The problem is that Rahner has confused freedom with free will, as noted above, and tries to assert a freedom of Christ's humanity "even with regard to the divine Person possessing it."⁴⁶ He trusts that because the person involved is divine rather than created that the problem will be solved. If one takes Rahner's formulation seriously at this point one can only conclude either to the existence of a distinct human person in Christ or, if no longer distinct "as a person," then of a human person who has been absorbed into the divine person. Neither alternative is acceptable. As I have suggested above the distinction required for mediation is provided in the distinctness of the Son in his freedom vis-à-vis the Father in his freedom. The Son's freedom has a dual expression, a dual execution simultaneously on the divine and human levels.

Rahner continues assigning activity to nature in a seventh text. Making use of the scholastic axiom *ens et verum convertuntur* to argue that the "higher an entity...in its grade of being, compactness of being, 'actuality', the more intelligible it is and present to itself (*bei sich selbst*)," he argues that hypostatic union would have to be on the conscious level: "it is impossible that the immediate subject of the human presence-to-itself should not also be present to itself precisely in so far as it is wholly and

⁴⁶*Ibid.* 162.

substantially made over to the Logos."⁴⁷ He then argues that it is a mistake 'to say that Christ's human soul knows of the *unio hypostatica* only in the way in which an object is known (and so through the 'visio immediata'...)." Rahner, the "'visio immediata' is...the consequence and not the presupposition of the conscious being-with-the-Logos of Christ's soul."⁴⁸

This case is a bit more complicated. The problem is the identity of the "itself" of the *bei sich selbst*. Presence to oneself presumes a concrete individual existing reality, a person. Natures specify the character that this presence to oneself will have but natures, as such, are not present to themselves. His overall point is sound enough. One would expect a greater human self-presence on the part of Christ than other humans precisely because of the unique actualization of that humanity by the divine power of the Son in the *unio hypostatica* but, again, this is more appropriately said of Christ as a complete reality. Rahner is affirming this self-consciousness of the human nature rather than of the person of Christ. It is similarly a mistake to attribute knowledge to the human soul of Christ rather than to the person of Christ, though here there is more justification in the theological tradition which understands the human soul as, in part, a separated substance analogous to angels—the soul is immortal, it has its own proper (rational) operations apart from the body. It is not of itself complete and is accordingly not a person.⁴⁹

An eighth text continues the confusion. "All 'unconfused' says is that the same One is truly God and truly man and not some third thing in between. It does not however deny the unity, the human nature's state of having given itself away to the Logos (*das Sich-selbst-weg-gegeben-sein der menschlichen Natur an den Logos*)."⁵⁰ How can the Logo's human nature give itself to him? It can do this only if it is constituted as a person's distinct from the Logos. "Giving oneself" is a personal action, not the

⁴⁷*Ibid.* 169.

⁴⁸*Ibid.* 170.

⁴⁹So Thomas, *ST* I.29.1.obj. 5 and reply.

⁵⁰Rahner, "Current Problems," 170, n. 3.

action of a nature. One can say that this openness to the other is characteristic of human existence, of all human existence, and is thus constitutive of human nature.⁵¹ The fact remains that such relatedness to another person can only be personal. Rahner's language forces him in a Nestorian direction.

What Rahner is intent on saying is that Jesus' self-consciousness, in its depth, as well as being a self-awareness must point "beyond itself to that which it is united, the Logos."⁵² Of course, this can be said of all humans. Our self-consciousness, insofar as one distinguishes it from oneself, in addition to being a self-awareness points beyond itself to us whose self-consciousness it is. Rahner intends more, of course. He sees in Christ's self-consciousness a unique pointing precisely to the Logos. But to the extent that one insists on distinguishing Christ's self-consciousness from every other human self-consciousness in this manner it is very difficult to avoid a Nestorian reading because, as just noted, every self-consciousness points to the person whose self-consciousness it is. If the "pointing to the Logos" is something different in Christ, then either Christ's humanity is compromised or there is a second, human person in Christ who is the ordinary referent of Christ's self-consciousness. All Rahner is really trying to affirm is that Christ's self-consciousness is unique in the sense that it is the only one which points to a divine person. This is true but finally trivial.

More useful than trying to concoct a special (Nestorian?) relationship to the Logo in this self-consciousness would be to note that, in line with Rahner's argument, there is a unique reference to the Father. Jesus humanly (and divinely) knows himself to be "the beloved Son." Rahner touches on this point on the next couple of pages. Thus, for instance, in speaking

⁵¹Compare John Paul II's "original solitude" which characterizes human existence "from beginning" which involves an essential orientation to the other in his Genesis Catechesis. The pope develops a number of the ideas that Rahner is interested in but it is clear that these things are always affirmed of persons not natures.

⁵²Rahner, "Current Problems," 171.

of the relationship of this human self-consciousness to God he finally shifts from identifying "God" with the Logos (with all of its Nestorian connotations) to identifying "God" with the Father (which lacks those problematic connotations). Still when he analyzes the statement "Jesus is the man whose life is one of absolutely unique self-surrender to God" one strongly suspects it is the Logos Rahner has in mind since he has said as much in the eight text cited two paragraphs above.

A ninth text that calls for some reflection contrasts the way the Logos is human with the way I am human:

...but *He* is not a man as *I* am a man. For I am a man in such a way that the I, the person itself, becomes human through my human-being [*durch mein Mensch-sein menschlich wird*]; this is its [*sie* — presumably referring to *die Person selbst*] own lot, it does not itself remain untouched. And that is just what one cannot say about the Logos of God, according to just this doctrine of faith [presumably "the immutability of the Word in the Incarnation"].⁵³

There are a number of curious things about this statement. A first question to ask is what it means to say that "I become human through my human-being"? Is there a point in time when I am not a human being, and then, through some process, I *become* human? This makes no sense at all. I do not exist apart from my humanity and, as such, I *am* human. I strive to *become* more perfectly, which is to say more redeemedly, human. The difference that characterizes Christ is that he, which is to say, the Logos, does exist apart from his humanity. He does *become* human by assuming humanity. It is as true of him as it is for me, however, that he is human *through his humanity*. One ought to distinguish as well my being from the being of Christ, not simply the way that the being of any human is distinguished from the being of Christ, not simply the way that being of any human is distinguished from the being of any other human, but because

⁵³*Ibid.* 176.

of the finiteness of my being over and against the infinity of the being of Christ (since Christ exists not by a separate created and participative act of being but by virtue of divine being). The point that Rahner actually stresses is that *I* am “touched” by my humanity, the Logos is not since he is immutable.

The reference Rahner makes to every influence upon the humanity of the Logos being the object of the operation of the whole Trinity as a single efficient cause *ad extra* is somewhat beside the point. The same Trinity is similarly the single (divine) efficient cause of every influence upon everyone else’s humanity as well. Rahner uses this to underscore the fact that “the unique distinguishing feature” of Christ’s humanity “is simply the formal unity which gives it the reality of the Logos without affecting the Logos itself.” The overall point is the same. The common human person is “touched” by their humanity, the Logos is not.

The crucial point, then, is what does it mean to “be touched by one’s humanity”? This is set in opposition to the Logos who is unchanged by his unity with his humanity. The Logos is unchanged in what sense? The tradition identifies that which is unchanged with the divinity. The Logos in his humanity quite obviously has changed: he was born of the Virgin Mary, he grew in wisdom and grace, he suffered and died. What sort of “being touched by one’s humanity” does Rahner intend if these sort of things, which the tradition has also insisted on, do not count as “being touched.”

One can turn this around. Given the doctrine of the immortal soul of every human being in what sense does death “touch” an ordinary human person? There is some sort of personal survival, as it is commonly understood, in spite of physical death. It is difficult to figure out in what sense the human soul, at least as it has traditionally been understood, is “touched” by anything that happens in the body and if the soul is not really touched by physical events then in what sense is the ordinary human person touched by such events? If this is true, in the traditional presentation, of every human then why is there surprise or scandal when something similar is said of the

Logos? In point of fact even for the tradition one cannot simply say “they do not touch the Logos”; they do not touch the Logos “in his divinity.” Alternately one could say that natures do not “touch” persons at all; persons *are* in accord with their natures and since the Logos now has two natures he *is* in two distinct modes, one which allows for change, another which does not.

Still, there is some point to Rahner’s complaint. The tradition does tend to isolate Christ from change or from the world where possible. Thomas Aquinas provides sufficient examples of this. With regard to the unchangeableness of Christ Thomas presumes that there was “nothing imperfect...in Christ’s soul” which, he concludes, entails that nothing could be added to Christ’s knowledge. The “soul of Christ knew by infused knowledge all things to which the passive intellect is in any way in potency.”⁵⁴ He does nuance this conclusion in the next article, the *sed contra* of which is a citation of Lk 2:52, “Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and men.” He confesses that he had previously held the position advanced by Albert the Great, Alexander of Hales, and Bonaventure among others to the effect that Christ’s knowledge grew by experience only in the sense that he was able to compare what he had received through the senses for the first time with what he knew by infused knowledge. He eventually decided that the natural action of man’s active intellect was surely not lacking in the soul of Christ and so “in the soul of Christ there was a habit of knowledge which could increase by this abstraction of species.”⁵⁵ As an example of change in Christ’s human knowledge this is fairly thin. More telling is Thomas’s insistence that Jesus did not have a real relationship with his mother — “the filiation by which Christ is referred to His Mother cannot be a real relation, but only a relation of reason.”⁵⁶ The reason is that “every relation which is predicated of God from time does not put something real in the eternal God, but only something according to our way of thinking.” There are a number of reasons why Thomas

⁵⁴ ST III.12.1.

⁵⁵ ST III.12.2.

⁵⁶ ST III.35.5.

makes this move which need to be respected but it is also true that the relationship of Christ's humanity to the person of the Logos needs to be rethought as Rahner suggests. His solution is encumbered by the tendency to understand nature in terms really only appropriate to personhood as noted above.⁵⁷

Person and Nature—Person

A text already cited can serve as starting point in an examination of Rahner's understanding of personhood. He complains that some theologians refuse to admit that "the doctrine of two natures involves a duality of even a merely psychological and relative kind between an existentially independent I-centre in the man Jesus and the Logos."⁵⁸ The notion of there being two distinct consciousness in Christ has in the past been contested but that controversy need not detain us since I concede the point that there must have been (and are) two consciousness in Jesus, one human, the other divine.⁵⁹ What concerns us is Rahner's statement wherein "an existentially independent I-centre in the

⁵⁷I have made my own attempt to address this issue in "Real Relations and the Divine: Issues in Thomas's Understanding of God's Relation to the World," *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 673-95.

⁵⁸Rahner, "Current Problems," 159. The original from "Chalcedon—Ende oder Anfang," 12 is as follows: "Es gab und gibt Theologen, die aus der Zwei-Naturen-Lehre eine auch nur psychologische Zweiheit relativer Art zwischen einem existential eigenständigen Ichzentrum im Menschen Jesus und dem Logos nicht erkennen können, ja so etwas darin ausgeschlossen galuben."

⁵⁹Paul Galtier, S.J., "La conscience humaine du Christ," *Gregorianum* 32 (1951): 531, cites in particular Pietro Parente, *L'Io di Cristo*, 2nd rev. ed. (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1955) and Herman M. Diepen, O.S.B., "La psychologie du Christ," *Revue thomiste* (1950): 515-62. For his part Galtier championed two distinct consciousness in Christ in his article and in his monograph. *L'Unité du Christ: Etre, Personne, Conscience*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1939). The finitude and brain-based character of the divine consciousness precludes a single consciousness in Christ. The possibility of independence of consciousness is in principle admitted in Christ's prayer in the Garden that the "cup pass from" him (Mt 26:39 and par.) even if in reality there is harmony between the human and divine willing (and the consciousnesses that go with these).

man Jesus" is opposed to the Logos, who himself is a person, an 'I'. He is insistent on this, emphasizing that the persistent danger is that such independence will be excluded from the concept of person. Of course, if this is taken to mean that there is an 'I' in the man Jesus independent of the 'I' of the Logos, a Nestorian meaning cannot be avoided.

Rahner is intent, however, on warding off the opposite meaning; he makes the claim that "the concept of *person* as the ontological principle of a free active centre, selfconscious, present to itself and through itself in being" resonates also on the border of "the most static and objective concept of *person*," arguing that monothelism would otherwise be incomprehensible.⁶⁰ He does not completely distance himself from such an understanding of 'person' since such a "modern" notion is also operative in more dynamic notions of 'person' such as he claims. This last needs to be tested since, in point

⁶⁰Rahner, "Current Problems," 159-60. One can challenge this understanding of monothelism. The monophysites in general were operating with a structural understanding of human reality. The human mind was understood to be a finite participation in transcendent Mind in the Neoplatonism regnant in the time of Ephesus and Chalcedon. For that matter, the relationship of individual souls to Word Soul was similarly understood but was generally less important in the Christological discussions. Why would a finite participation in transcendent Mind be necessary to the Christ if transcendent Mind itself had joined to a human body or human flesh? It was the mind-flesh structure which defined humanness in such a perspective not the particular quality of mind which, after all, was more or less univocally understood of all rational creatures. The monophysites were forced to retreat in the ensuing debates and conciliar judgments. The question is why they settled in the oneness of will in the Christ as essential to preserving the oneness of the Christ? On this score Rahner may have a point. The ancients would not particularly resonate with the modern statement but they may well have thought that rational decisiveness was at the core of what it meant to be a person. If so they were not completely wrong. As I have suggested in the text one to distinguish between free will and freedom. Freedom is characteristic of persons and is expressed in a given mode, the free will characteristic of a given nature. If this distinction is not made insistence on unity of person would naturally lead to an insistence on unity of will. If the monothelites made the mistake of placing free will on the side of personhood Rahner makes the opposite mistake of putting freedom on the side of nature.

of fact, there are many aspects of Rahner's understanding of 'person' which are quite traditional.

This more traditional character of Rahner's notion of 'person' is more clearly seen in the context of Thomas's own treatment of 'person' in the *Summa Theologica*. There are three locations that are of prime interest for us: Thomas's discussion of the three persons of the Trinity; his discussion, insofar as he has one, of purely human persons; his discussion of the personhood of Christ. When Thomas "defines" personhood he resorts to the definition of Boëthius — "a person is an individual substance of a rational nature."⁶¹ He emphasizes different things, however, in the three places just indicated though he outlines the difference between the different uses of 'person' of God and of humans in *ST* I.29.4 where he asks the question whether 'person' signifies relation. It is worth citing in more detail:

Also, it is one thing to ask the meaning of this word *person* in general; and another to ask the meaning of *person* as applied to God. For *person* in general signifies the individual substance of a rational figure. The individual in itself is undivided, but is distinct from others. Therefore *person* in any nature signifies what is distinct in that nature:

⁶¹Boëthius, *De persona et duabus naturis*, c. ii: *Naturæ rationalis individual substantia*. Cf. Thomas, *ST* I. 29.1.1 and III.16.12. Thomas takes "substance" here in a general sense as including both Aristotle's first substance, the concrete individual, and second substance, the genera or species or, alternately, the essence; "individual" specifies that first substance is intended in the definition (*ST* I.29.1.reply 2). He indicates in the next article that, while *substantia* is the proper Latin translation of *hypostasis*, because it can alternately mean either essence or more specifically hypostasis, *subsistentia* is the preferred term (*ST* I.29.2.reply 2). He restates Boëthius's definition to reflect this: "a subsistent individual of a rational nature" (*ST* I.29.3.corp). Different terms used of concrete individual realities focus on different aspects of such realities. Thus, 'subsistence' indicates something that exists in itself and not in another, a 'thing of nature' refers to something that underlies a common nature, 'substance' or 'hypostasis' underlie accidents (*ST* I.29.2.corp). The theological application of 'substance' to God or 'hypostasis' to the person of the Trinity obviously prescind from this normal philosophical usage (*ST* I.29.2.reply 3).

thus in nature it signifies this flesh, these bones, and this soul, which are the individuating principles of a man, and which, though not belonging to *person* in general, nevertheless do belong to the meaning of a particular human person.

Now distinction in God is only by relation of origin, as stated above (Q. 28, AA. 2, 3), while relation in God is not an accident in a subject, but is of the divine essence itself; and so it is subsistent, for the divine essence subsists Therefore a divine person signifies a relation as subsisting. And this is to signify relation by way of substance, and such a relation is a hypostasis subsisting in the divine nature....

The principal thing to note here is that personhood in humans is not specified relationally; it is so specified in God. When one turns to the creation of man in the *Prima*, questions 75-102, there is no distinct discussion of human personhood. The closest one comes is in *ST* I.75.4 which asks the question "whether the soul is man." In responding to the objection that since the human soul is a particular substance it qualifies as a hypostasis, and, thus, as a person, Thomas observes that "not every particular substance is a hypostasis or a person, but that which has the complete nature of its species."⁶² The complete nature, however, involves a composition of soul, flesh, and bones, as he makes clear in the body of the article. Both of these understandings of personhood cause problems for Thomas's Christology.

On the one hand, because Thomas insists that God does not have a real relationship with the world and because real relationship multiply divine persons in God, it would be awkward to say that Jesus had a real relationship with his mother.⁶³ It would imply either that Jesus was not God or that

⁶²*ST* I.75.4.reply 2.

⁶³*ST* III.35.5.corp. "Now, every relation which is predicated of God from time does not put something real in the eternal God, but only something according to our way of thinking.... Therefore the filiation by which Christ

Mary was. Of course, there is the equal awkwardness in saying that “this man” did not have real relations with the world given the obvious real relations between his body and other bodies as would be demanded if one consistently carried through with the communication of idioms. Docetism seems to be threatened. Thomas is either unaware of the problem or did not think it outweighed the alternate danger.

On the other hand, if Thomas allowed an understanding of human personhood as composition of soul, flesh, and bones to stand in the case of Christ it would be impossible to avoid a Nestorian understanding of the Christ. He avoids this problem by shifting to yet another characterization of personhood that he had touched on earlier in addressing the question of whether the human soul by itself constituted a person: personhood requires completeness. The soul is not a person because it is not a complete nature in itself but requires a body. In the case of Christ, while the human nature can be understood to be a particular substance in the same sense that the soul by itself is a particular substance, in Christ it is not the complete Christ and, thus, is not a person. It is only the complete Christ which is, properly speaking, a hypostasis or person.⁶⁴

Let us now examine several statements on personhood which Rahner makes against this Thomistic backdrop before turning back to the problem posed by the first text cited at the beginning of this section. The next text is another that has already been cited above. Rahner argues that in the customary distinction between *peccatum personale* and *peccatum naturae* there is operative the presumption that “where there is a *single*

is referred to His Mother cannot be a real relation, but only a relation of reason.” It ought to be noted that relations of reason could be, in Thomas’s view, true. Thus, Mary is truly the Mother of God as Thomas clearly affirms in the preceeding article.

⁶⁴ST III.2.4.reply 2: “Hypostasis signifies a particular substance, not in every way, but as it is in its complement. Yet as it is in union with something more complete, it is not said to be a hypostasis, as a hand or a foot. So likewise the human nature in Christ, although it is in union with a completed thing, viz. the whole Christ, as He is God and man. But the complete being with which it concurs is said to be a hypostasis or suppositum.”

person, there is a *single* freedom.” Rahner’s placement of freedom on the side of nature has been critiqued above and will not be repeated here. In the context of this discussion, however, he provides a definition of personhood that evokes the Thomistic discussion: “Clearly it can be laid down that by ‘person’ we shall understand only the ultimate substantial unity and completeness of a subject which is incommunicable and whose reality as one in this sense can only be expressed by this subject itself.”⁶⁵ Thomas himself touched on the unity and completeness of the person as noted above. He also identifies incommunicability as a characteristic of individual substances.⁶⁶ Rahner’s definition of ‘person’ thus reduces to “an individual substance whose reality can only be expressed by this subject itself.” This requirement of self-expression can only be understood of subjects who are able to be present to themselves, which is to say, who are self-reflective. This requires a rational nature. Rahner’s definition, taking into consideration modern terminological shifts, is that of Boëthius.

One point in Rahner’s definition worth noting is that, rather than placing ‘person’ under the category ‘substance’ (Thomas would say “genus”), Rahner places ‘person’ in the category ‘unity’. This is important later in the second part of the article where he focuses on the Chalcedonian formula itself. There he asserts that the task at hand would be “to work out a fresh concept of unity (of a substantial, hypostatic kind, clearly).”⁶⁷ He develops this in terms of his characteristic Hegelianesque dialectic in which “Christ’s *concrete* humanity may be conceived of in itself as diverse from the Logos...by thinking of it *in so far as* it is united to the Logos.”⁶⁸ If what constitutes the human nature as something diverse from God is the same as that which unites this nature to the Logos “then we have a unity which (a) cannot, as uniting unity, be confused with the united unity...

⁶⁵Rahner, “Current Problems,” 160, n.2.

⁶⁶ST I. 29.3.reply 4.

⁶⁷Rahner, “Current Problems,” 180.

⁶⁸*Ibid.* 181.

..”⁶⁹ Rahner sets out two other requirements. The thing to note in conjunction with this first requirement is that it is the same structure as Thomas’s own solution to the problem. Thus, as a divine person, the Son is “complete” in himself prior to the Incarnation. The body and soul of Christ, in themselves, are not complete, and thus do not form a true hypostasis, a distinct person, but they enter into a greater complement, the whole Christ. There is a completeness (the Son in his divinity) which forms the ground for the completeness which includes a diverse element that is the whole Christ (body and soul, humanity and divinity).⁷⁰ Even when Rahner is seemingly at his most modern he ends by being quite traditional.

Still, this analysis allows Rahner to turn the focus away from the *unio hypostatica*, as such, to the prior divine unity of the Logos as the ground for both the *unio hypostatica* and the distinct independence of Christ’s humanity:

Consequently when we are thinking, in connection with this unity, of a person as *ens rationabile*, we tend to think that the function of the person which consists in establishing unity is not the actual, centralized, existential [*existentielle*] control and direction of the plural realities of the person, but rather their ontological foundation, which most clearly emerges to view in this control and direction.⁷¹

Of course, this creates a distinction between the *unio hypostatica* and the person of the Logos (=the person of Christ) that is not traditional as Rahner himself was probably aware. Midway between the two discussions he discusses the character of the unity in more details in these terms: “What faith really makes profession of is a substantial, lasting, indissoluble, hypostatic unity, the belonging of the two natures to one and the

same Person as its very own in virtue of its being the selfsame.”⁷²

One reason for this oscillation between identifying the *unio hypostatica* with the person of the Logos (=the person of Christ) is the insistence of the tradition on the unchangeableness of the Word. “God the Word of the Father, so we are told, ‘changes’ in no way when he assumes the human nature as his own. The change, the novelty, is entirely on the side of the human nature.”⁷³ This has the effect, according to Rahner, that

*He is not a man as I am a man. For I am a man in such a way that the I, the person itself, becomes human through my human-being; this is its own lot, it does not itself remain untouched. And that is just what one cannot say about the Logos of God, according to just this doctrine of faith.*⁷⁴

Some of the difficulties of this text have been examined above in the previous section on Rahner’s understanding of ‘nature.’ Here the question is the distinction he draws between the way in which my own person is “touched” by my humanity in a way that is not true of the Logos. The question is, what counts as “being touched” or changed in the way that Rahner considers important? Superficially there is no problem with saying that the Son changes. The qualifier is always added, of course, “in his human nature”; the immutability of the Son is “in his divine nature.”

One can alternately ask the question what does it mean for me, the created person, to be touched or changed? I can point to physical growth (or decline) in my body. This is one of the ways I change. The same can be said of the Logos (in his humanity). I can point to my increase of knowledge over the years. The tradition resists saying this of Christ because of the conviction that because he was perfect he had to have the perfection of knowledge. Thomas moderated this a bit because

⁶⁹*Ibid.* 182.

⁷⁰*ST* III.2.3. reply 2.

⁷¹Rahner, “Current Problems,” 160-61, n.2.

⁷²*Ibid.* 175.

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴*Ibid.* 176.

he was convinced that extracting “intelligible species from phantasms is a natural action of man’s active intellect” and thus appropriately affirmed of Christ.⁷⁵ The tradition was quite well aware of Lk 2:52, “Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.” In the end it must be affirmed that the Logos (again, in his humanity) has changed in knowledge as I have changed.

Rahner wants to insist, however, that such changes did not touch his person. It is not clear, however, what it means to say that such things touch my person? In my personhood I am a composite substance, an hypostasis. That substance changes, is touched, in line with such changes as indicated above. Indeed, not every part of me is equally touched by change. According to traditional understandings of the soul it can be specified in terms of time but not in terms of space. Spatial changes in my body, accordingly, do not “touch” my soul. They do touch my person, however, because I am composite. Jesus Christ, the person, is a composite substance, a more complicated (complete) hypostasis than I am. Still, that composite substance changes, is touched, in line with similar changes. It does not follow that every part of that Christic substance will be equally touched by those changes. The faith insists that they do not touch Christ’s divinity. Rahner has set forth a false problem arguing that because divinity cannot change, therefore a divine person cannot change, therefore the change in Christ’s humanity can have no effect on the person of the Son. This, however, forces a division between personhood and hypostasis that is illegitimate and not supported by the tradition. Indeed, such a statement of the issue goes far toward forcing a Nestorian understanding of Christ.

There is another possibility for understanding Rahner’s intention here and the clue to this is found in the contrast he sets up between “the actual, centralized, existential [*existentielle*] control and direction of the plural realities of the person” and “their ontological foundation.” This evokes the distinction he makes between the *existentielle* situation in the world that one

⁷⁵ST III.12.2.corp.

finds oneself in and the *existential* or ontological ground for our existence in the world. He could well be identifying the “uniting unity,” the Logos, with the *existential* or ontological ground for Christ and the “united unity,” the *unio hypostatica*, with the *existentielle* self-consciousness of Christ.

This would go far toward resolving some of the Nestorian tendencies of his thought, if this is the case, since the personalization that is so problematic in his understanding of human nature would, in the end, devolve not on the nature as such but on this self-consciousness that is the expression of the *unio hypostatica*. Thus, the *existentiell* freedom, experienced in the fullness of Christ’s humanity in its historical sitedness, would have the *existential* freedom of the Logos as its ontological ground. In Rahner’s thought every human is characterized by these two levels of freedom which, in the end, are united in their mutual referencing. In such a view Christ would thus not have a distinct, created self, constituted in ontological freedom, as every other human does; his ontological self is the selfsame as the self of the Logos. There would, however, be a distinct *existentiell* consciousness and manifestation of freedom. Rahner, in any event is not at all clear about this and his earlier characterization of “an existentially [*existential*] independent I-centre,” which as *existential* would be that ontological ground, would seem to preclude this interpretation.

One can conclude this section by observing that, given the general tendency to presume that divine immutability implies that a divine person cannot experience change, even as a human, one has to say that Rahner has done as well as anyone else. I would propose that the whole issue of divine immutability needs to be rethought. It is, finally, a concept grounded in Hellenistic thought and, in that form, seems not to do full justice to the divine freedom clearly evidenced everywhere in the pages of Scripture.⁷⁶ More attention needs to be paid to the “eternal

⁷⁶Joseph M. Hallman, *The Descent of God; Divine Suffering in History and Theology* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1991) provides an interesting survey of patristic material in which the Hellenistic presumption of divine immutability comes into conflict with the Scriptural

decree” in which God has chosen to create, to incarnate, to incorporate human (and angelic) beings into his (their) own eternal existence.⁷⁷

God and Creation

One final theme of significance in this early Christological article that will be briefly considered looks to the general relationship of God to creation. There are two aspects of this as Rahner develops it. The first is his conviction that the Incarnation itself should be understood in the context of this more general relationship of God to creation; the second is his suggestion that the general evolutionary dynamic in the world comes to term in Christ.

The theme first appears in a discussion of Christ’s human consciousness. Rahner writes that this sphere of consciousness proper to a subject, a sphere enclosed in itself in creaturely fashion by reason of the gulf that distinguishes and separates God from the creature, only knows and only could know of its hypostatic union with the Logos in virtue of an objective communication.⁷⁸

Rahner has here personified Christ’s human consciousness.⁷⁹ This consciousness knows “of its hypostatic testimony of a God passionately involved in this world. A revised edition is in preparation.

⁷⁷I provide more reflection on this point in “The Nuptial Meaning of the Body,” a paper given at the Eight Biennial Jesuit Conference on the Thought of Pope John Paul II on “The Theology of the Body,” Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 18-20, 2004. Publication is forthcoming.

⁷⁸Rahner, “Current Problems,” p. 158. Rahner is actually commenting on Paul Galtier’s position. Rahner’s statement of that position echoes his own position as seen in his understanding of nature as set out earlier here.

⁷⁹One needs to state the issue accurately. In this article Rahner distances himself from Günther’s concept of the person as a center of consciousness as noted above. It is also true that Rahner has a tendency to personify Christ’s human nature also as noted above. While here he is

union with the Logos.” Persons know; consciousness are the means by which persons know. One may well want to associate consciousness closely with personhood, and thus, for instance, speak of three divine consciousness in God with only one power of consciousness, but one also needs to understand consciousness as a function of a given nature, and thus speak of two consciousness in Christ, one divine and one human. Still, while consciousness is intimately related to personhood, it is not personhood. The consciousness of Christ knows nothing; it is Christ who knows. Rahner has personified consciousness, however, not because he has related it to personhood. He clearly affirms that there is but a single consciousness in God; he clearly affirms a dual consciousness in Christ, the unitary divine consciousness of the Logos and the *existentiell* human consciousness of Christ (which he may uniquely link to the divine consciousness as noted above) which stands in the greatest independence with regard to God even as it is closest.⁸⁰ If one presses this personification of nature then a Nestorian understanding is forced.

What he wanted to say, and what is consistent with his explanation of human consciousness found, for instance, in his *Foundations of Christian Faith*, is that Christ would have been aware, in his human consciousness, of being finite and derived in that very consciousness. While this very awareness of finitude would provide the ground for a transcendental experience, that experience would have taken the form of a question, an openness to an infinite horizon.⁸¹ That *human*, if transcendent, experience would be insufficient to ground his human awareness of being God’s Son in a unique and absolute sense since it is common to all human beings. That awareness could only be grounded in an objective revelation which emerged in Christ’s human

speaking of a position held by others (and with which he has some sympathy) he phrases the issue in the terms established by his own tendencies. It is this latter with which I am taking exception.

⁸⁰See Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 135 for the first affirmation; the second is established above in the text.

⁸¹*Ibid. chs.* 1-2.

self-consciousness. This sort of statement carries, in itself, no Nestorian implications. What Rahner is willing to say is that Christ must be aware of the *unio hypostatica* on the level of transcendent experience since Christ's actuality "is entitatively higher" there is a proportionately greater presence to himself which must include the fact that his humanity "is wholly and substantially made over to the Logos" and this is primary. Any objective knowledge, a *visio immediate*, flows from this.⁸²

The next text follows closely on the last text. Rahner asks whether it is possible to derive Jesus' characteristic relationship to God attested to in the Scriptures from the traditional "One Person—two natures" formula⁸³ His inquiry here is not problematic if one understands "God" here as referring to the Father; it is considerably more problematic if one understands it as referring to the Logos as Rahner at points does.

He first broaches the possibility of interpreting the *unio hypostatica* "in the wider context of the ontological relationship between God and the free creature" in a footnote a page later.⁸⁴ The point is developed a bit later more explicitly:

We must conceive of the relation between the Logos-Person and his human nature in just this sense, that here *both* independence *and* radical proximity equally reach a unique and qualitatively incommensurable perfection, which nevertheless remains once and for all the perfection of a relation between Creator and creature.⁸⁵

He is fully explicit in the attached footnote:

If in the Incarnation the Logos enters into

⁸²Rahner, "Current Problems," 169-70. Of course, it is not completely clear that Rahner would completely agree with all the suggestions made here. His insistence that a saving history Christology is more primitive (cf. "Two Basic Types of Christology") would suggest that such an objective revelation was not available to the first Christians and perhaps not even to Christ himself. It is also possible that he is not completely consistent.

⁸³Rahner, "Current Problems," 159.

⁸⁴*Ibid.* 160-61, n. 2 at the end.

⁸⁵*Ibid.* 162-63.

relationship with a creature, then it is obvious that the Logos enters into relationship with a creature, then it is obvious that the ultimate formal determinations of the Creator-creature relationship must also hold in *this* particular relationship.⁸⁶

Thus "Christological considerations have led the way back to the more general doctrine of God's relation to the creature and allowed Christology to appear as the clearly unique 'specifically' distinct perfection of this relation."⁸⁷ This provides a basis for Rahner's unique anthropological approach to Christ which, in some sense, forms the principle theme of the first major section of the 1954 article which claims to be a reflection on Biblical theology. He makes the transition from a general doctrine of creation to anthropology in a note appended just after the text just cited: "We shall be speaking in what follows about 'creation' in general; but this should not be allowed to obscure the fact that it is at men above all that we must look in order to learn what the Creator-creature relationship is." Thus "Christology may be studied as self-transcending anthropology, and anthropology as deficient Christology."⁸⁸

This line of thought leads Rahner to fuse together properly ontological considerations and historical, or at least temporally dynamic, ones in a curiously traditionally Thomistic (as opposed to the thought of Thomas himself) fashion. Thus, as "classical Christology makes use of concepts of formal ontology, the content of which recurs at every — level of reality, according to the distinct mode of each: nature, person, unity, substance and so on," he asks whether it would be possible to use "the concepts in terms of which the relation of created things to God is conceived" in fashioning a contemporary Christology.⁸⁹ Thomists similarly understand salvation history as being a concrete instantiation of general principles. Thus grace, for instance, which is treated

⁸⁶*FN 1 Ibid.* 163, n.1.

⁸⁷*Ibid.* 163.

⁸⁸*Ibid.* 164, n.1.

⁸⁹*Ibid.* 164.

without explicit reference to the Incarnation “has its own nature, its own structure, its own laws, beyond the temporal conditions of its realization.”⁹⁰ This is, to Marie Dominique Chenu’s and Étienne Gilson’s minds, a necessitarian structure to which the concrete manifestations of the economy of salvation conform: “Ici comme ailleurs, l’histoire presuppose des natures, dont elle ne se déduit pas, mais conformement auxquelles elle arrive.”⁹¹ Grace follows on and conforms to nature; or, in Rahner’s terms, Christology follows on and conforms to the general relationship between God and the world. One could say *mutatis mutandis* of Rahner what Chenu says of Thomas (mistakenly, I would argue)—“Humanity is encountered in the *Summa*, not primarily as the mystical body of Christ, but as part of cosmology.”

One important difference between Rahner and traditional Thomists is where and how one fashions a metaphysics. Rahner is on the other side of the Kantian divide from Thomas having arrived at Heidegger by way of Hegel.⁹² Metaphysical categories are not arrived at by a process of abstraction from or intuitive recognition in sense experience but through an analysis of subjective experience under the conditions of space and time. In such a venue concepts tend to be more fluid, dynamic. Thus, as should have been apparent in the survey of his understanding of human nature above, nature for him is not a static, abstract reality; it is rather filled with a dynamism that in older metaphysics is

⁹⁰Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., “Le plan de la Somme théologique de saint Thomas,” *R. Th.* 47 (1939): 104-5. This article was fundamentally reprised in his *Introduction à l’étude de Saint Thomas d’Aquin*, reprint, 1950 (Paris: Vrin, 1954), cf. 270. English translation by A.-M. Landry, O.P. and D. Hughes, O.P., *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964) 314-15. Rahner likewise treats of grace independently of the Incarnation. Cf. *Foundations* ch. 4. Grace is rather related to the natural transcendental of man; it has its finality in Christ, to be sure, and Christ is the highest exemplification of this relationship, but he is not the efficient cause of it. Cf. *ibid.* 120-122.

⁹¹Étienne Gilson, *Bulletin thomiste* VIII (1951) 9.

⁹²A felicitous description of the general movement of German thought to which Rahner was responding by Cornelius Ernst, O.P. in the introduction to the volume of *Theological Investigations* in which “Current Problems in Christology” appears, p. xiii.

associated with the *ens* rather than the *essentia*, with the person rather than with the nature. The problem with Rahner is that he is not explicit enough by far about such shifts; passing remarks about the need for a more dynamic (Existentialist?) understanding of the person-nature relationship do not suffice. What is left with is a kind of metaphysical halfway house in which he intends to be orthodox but ends by forcing a Nestorian understanding of Christ with considerable consistency.⁹³

In light of this more dynamic understanding of metaphysical or ontological categories it is not surprising to find him shading over from metaphysics to history. Ontology is discovered in the structure of subjectivity which is realized in personal history; world history is merely “the history of many subjects.”⁹⁴ If there is progress in history one would expect a progressive perfection. If the Incarnation is understood as a “distinct perfection” of the God-creature relationship, then it is clear that “the reality of Christ...appears as peak and conclusion, as the mysterious goal of God’s plans and activity for his creation from all eternity.”⁹⁵ “The Incarnation of the Logos...appears as the *ontologically* ...unambiguous goal of the movement of creation as a whole.” One is able “to conceive of the ‘evolution’ of the world towards *Christ*, and to show how there is a gradual ascent which reaches a peak in him.”⁹⁶ It is of interest to note that

⁹³It can be asked, given Rahner’s more dynamic understanding of nature, what justification there is for criticizing him, as I have above, on the basis of an older metaphysics. Even part from the lack of explicitness on Rahner’s part, the traditional person-nature distinction retains a considerable claim on Christian theology. The definitions of these terms may have been codified by Boëthius but they were in place with their essential lines in the West since Tertullian. This tradition, passing through Augustine and Leo, was codified in Chalcedon’s acceptance of Leo’s intervention. If one wants to understand Chalcedon one will have to do it, in part, in the light of this terminological tradition. Rahner has, as noted in the text above, reaffirmed Chalcedon in his analysis but he was so intent on confronting the challenge of monophysitism in its various forms that he took his eye off the Nestorianism that is a greater threat to any Thomistic system.

⁹⁴Rahner, *Foundations*, 41.

⁹⁵Rahner, “Current Problems,” 164.

⁹⁶*Ibid.* 165.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's *Le phénomène humain* appeared the year after Rahner's article. Evolution as a quasi-theological category was in the air at that time. Thus

... the Logos did not merely become (statically) man in Christ; he assumed a human history. But this is part of an entire history of the world and of humanity before and after it, and, what is more, the fullness of that history and its end. But if we take at all seriously the unity of this history as centered on Christ, it follows that Christ has always been involved in the whole of history as its prospective entelechy.⁹⁷

The advantage of such an approach, in Rahner's view, is that one avoids the mythological overtones that threaten the doctrine of the Incarnation in the modern world when the Incarnation is treated as an afterthought by God, an ad hoc remedy for a creation gone awry, a *deus ex machina* understood quasi-literally. Instead, he would argue, creation or history, in its intrinsic dynamic, can be shown to point to Christ.⁹⁸

This last needs to be qualified. The Incarnation of the logos is not reducible to the natural working out of a dynamic present in creation. The "unity of the created with the Creator given in creation itself attains...that unique height in which an existence as distinction from the Creator is bestowed upon a creature, an existence through which the distinct terms becomes absolutely and supremely God's very own" by God's own free act.⁹⁹ Anthropology is, finally, "deficient Christology," at least when it is understood as ungraced; Christology is "self-transcending anthropology," but only when called forward by grace. Still, as the transcendental experience of the individual points to the dark abyss that is God so too the self-transcendental experience of the individual points to the dark abyss that is God so too the self-transcendence ingredient in the evolution of creation

⁹⁷Rahner, "Current Problems," 167.

⁹⁸*Ibid.* 164-65.

⁹⁹*Ibid.* 183.

to humanity points to, at least retrospectively, a fulfillment that opens up to God. At the very least there is a convergence as one might expect between the structure of personal subjectivity and the structure of world history.

These considerations help to explain why there is another sort of oscillation in Rahner's thought in this article. On the one hand, he wants to use his anthropological approach "to express the very essence of Christ."¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, history must remain ambiguous until it has run its course; one can "know" in the context of historical existence that Christ is the center of history only through an objective self-communication of God in revelation. We must in some sense, be told that such is the case. The problem is that any experience of revelation will always be under the conditions of space and time and therefore be ambiguous. Rahner's insistence that a "saving history" type of Christology is more primitive makes such an objective revelation problematic at the very least.

There is another difficulty. The affirmation that Christ is the prospective entelechy of creation, its final cause toward which creation tends, leaves open the question of the efficient causality of this dynamic toward Christ. He is willing to speak of "God's free act" which, perforce, is efficient; he never speaks of Christ as being involved in that efficiency. Christ is always the perfect exemplar of the God-creature relationship, the end toward which creation tends, but not the source. The reason he is unwilling to do this is clear enough. Such a claim could only be made on the basis of a "metaphysical" Christology. If Christ (and not some detachable Logos) is truly God then he must have that relationship to all of creation that God has, which is to say, that he has an ontological priority to creation and in some sense is the source of creation. Col. 1:16-17 is fairly explicit on these latter points—"In him everything in heaven and on earth was created, things visible and invisible,...all were created through him, and for him. He is before all else that is." A similar affirmation is found in Jn. 1:1-3. One finds an echo of this in

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.* 164.

I Cor. 8:6. Heb. 1:2 — “in this, the final age, he has spoken to us through his Son, whom he has made heir of all things and through whom he first created the *universe*” likewise testifies to this conviction. If this is true then one might expect to discover that creation has a Christological shape even in its “beginning,” and a shape determined not simply by the eternal Logos but by Christ’s humanity. The early Church knows of this initial shaping of creation, of humanity, in its origins by the human Christ: “‘and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:31-32).

Part of the reason that Rahner sees only a final causality here is his view that efficient causality is extrinsic, the effect is different from the cause, whereas formal causality is (or can be) intrinsic; it is communicated into the effect. God’s offer of salvation to us does not come to us from outside but from within the core of our being. It comes as a self-communication of God and as such the effect has an identity with God or it is not a real self-communication. For these reasons Rahner associates efficient causality with creation and formal causality with grace, with God’s self-communication. The former provides the grounds for the possibility of the latter.¹⁰¹ In this regard Rahner shows himself to be traditionally Thomistic in insisting that “grace builds on nature.” The mistake in this line of thought, I would argue, is the presumption that efficient causality, even when the effect is different from the cause is necessarily extrinsic. Rahner acknowledges that his conviction about efficient causality is drawn from “our own categorical experience.” Divine efficient causality, however, does constitute creatures in the core of their being. Whatever categorical experience may be divine causality, even when it comes from without, touches the core. Even on the categorical level it is not clear that all efficient causality is always extrinsic. Parents are the efficient causes of their children. If one moves to a relational understanding of human personhood such causality determines both parents and

¹⁰¹Rahner, *Foundations* 120-22.

children to their core. They are who and what they are because of the other. The point needs a further development that is not possible here.

When Rahner, for his part, raises the question of the “universal significance of particular historical events,” he does not think in terms of an effect that seemingly moves backward in time. He is rather thinking in terms of the question of how an event that occurs at a distance in the past can have a contemporary effect. “Christianity says that historical events which lie far back in the past still touch my existence.”¹⁰² He is not alone in this almost instinctual expectation that human events can only have a forward moving efficacy. Traditional theology will explain a text like that in Ephesians away as a proleptic action by God. God foreknows that the Incarnation will take place and so acts as to prepare the way. There is surely a validity to such a consideration since one in no way wants to place Christ’s humanity temporally at the beginning of human history, but it begs the question of the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. The God who created humanity male and female is, “one and the same,” the one who walked the paths of Galilee. Mary, as the hymn *Alma Redemptoris Mater* affirms, gave birth to her Creator. How does one *not* involve his humanity in his actions even if those actions proceed solely by divine power?

There is more that is at stake in this question. It is not enough to say that God gives his grace to those who precede Christ in time by virtue of his foreknowledge that Christ will come. Is Jesus Christ the *source* of all grace or not? If graces are given proleptically through God’s foreknowledge, then the answer has to be that in principle he is not the source of all grace, that God can give his grace independently of the historical mediation by Christ in his death and resurrection. Rahner would protest that his is not his position, that for him all grace is oriented to Christ, but in point of fact Christ’s death and resurrection is not the efficient cause of grace for him; “orientation” provides only an account of the formal and final causality. The Spirit of God

¹⁰²*Ibid.* 223.

is present in the world independently of the Christ-event as a dynamic “merely” pointing to Christ. Carried to this extreme this reverses the order of the processions of the divine persons in the economy and, given Rahner’s equation of the immanent Trinity with the economic Trinity (with which I would fundamentally agree), forces a reversal in the inner life of God.

One can pose this issue in a different fashion. In the world there are multiple events of grace, multiple bestowals of the Spirit dispersed through time and space. On the other side “of the abyss” between God and creatures everything is unitary, at least according to traditional Thomism with regard to God’s relation to the world, including God’s bestowal of grace. Does this unitary bestowal of grace, of the Spirit on the world have an historical analogue? Is there an event in history in which God definitively and universally bestows his Spirit? If there is, it can only be that moment when Jesus, dying, breathed out his last (“And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last [-----], he said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God!’” Mk 15:39). That there is such an event is presupposed by Peter’s claim that “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). God died, and in dying bestowed his Spirit on the world for all time and space.

If this is the case then Rahner’s contention that “Christology most certainly cannot and should not form an absolute point of departure for an ontology (and hence still less for an anthropology)” at the very least needs to be rethought.¹⁰³ Whenever one tries to fit Christology into “general” categories of creation one invariably ends up with a deficient Christology because one has no intrinsic way in which to transcend those categories. The early Church learned this in its attempts to tame a pagan philosophy. Those categories invariably had to be transformed before they could (if they ever did) become fit vessels to hold the Christian mystery. They can only be adequately transformed in the light of Christ. If humanity at

¹⁰³Rahner, “Current Problems,” 166.

the very beginning was Christologically structured, as Eph 5:31-32 affirms, then one needs to take this seriously. Some of the anthropological structures that Rahner affirms indeed make most sense from this perspective. His conviction that there is an obediential potency in every human person establishes for humanity as a whole and individuals in principle a supernatural destiny. Such a destiny only comes with Christ and manifests, not simply on the biological level but also on a spiritual level, a Christological structural structuring of humanity. There is a self-communication of God involved in this. We were created in the image and likeness of God, a Trinitarian God. Jesus created his own humanity in his own likeness, in the likeness of his Father, and bestowed his Spirit upon it.¹⁰⁴ This sort of perspective is lacking in Rahner’s presentation.

Conclusion

One cannot underestimate the impact that Rahner has had on Christology since the 1954 article first appeared. One finds his saving history Christology fairly dominant in recent decades. His presentation of Christ as the final cause of human history with the universal Spirit being given the role of urging and leading humanity to Christ has encouraged many to think that salvation is possible apart from the historical mediation of the Church. His call for rethinking the person-nature distinction has led to or encouraged numerous efforts in this regard. He provided many with an interpretation of the faith that made sense in the contemporary context. These are all notable achievements. For this reason it was more than appropriate to take up his arguments one more time and test them out. I have at points been highly critical of his positions. Nonetheless, I would not want to return to that earlier theological world which Rahner’s thought stirred so mightily. It had its own problems.

¹⁰⁴Obviously much more needs to be said.

ST. AUGUSTINE ON LOVE

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ABSTRACT

The author discusses three important theses on Augustine's concept of love, First, love is a form of craving--it is an inclination towards the material or the spiritual objects; Second, charity is inclined towards God and the eternal things--these spiritual objects ought to be enjoyed for their own sake because they are the very source of true happiness; and Lastly, love is ordered in the hierarchy of goods--this well-ordered love is called virtue.

Part One

LOVE: AN INTRODUCTION

Love is the most magnificent experience in the life of man. It travels and transcends beyond the limits of time and the boundary of space. Nothing is more ecstatic in this world than to be in love and to be loved. This condition, filled with awe and wonder, allows man to have a glimpse of eternity in human life. But a man who loves should cling neither to the changeable things nor to the unknown categories in temporal life.

No one can love temporal things for a lifetime for every created thing in this world is not permanent. One cannot also love the things that are completely unknown to him for

knowledge precedes charity.¹ If man holds onto the temporal or the mysterious phenomena in life, then he cannot find true and lasting happiness. And if he clings to either of them, he lives a life of discontentment with no direction, because temporalities cannot grant him lasting delight; and the mysteries of life cannot give him security and assurance.

However, all men are called to love. But what does it mean to love? What is love? And who is to be loved? On the one hand, from the perspective of psychology, Sigmund Freud figures out charity as one of the most important elements for the constitution of the communal life of human beings by which every man and woman and their children are bound together.² This idea gives the academic world a concept of love as a constitutive element in the society. On the other hand, Christian theology identifies love as the other name of God (1 Jn 4: 8, 16, NAB).³ It springs from the Trinity, pouring it into the hearts of men through the action of the Holy Spirit (Rom 5: 5, NAB) so that men may be able to abide in Him (1 Jn 4: 8, 16) and may be able to fulfill the divine commandment.⁴ Love, therefore, is the central theme of Christianity. In the thought of Paul and the early Christian communities, it (*agape*) is related to the Gospel because “it expresses the richness and vitality of their experience of the divine acceptance.”⁵ Thus, in Christianity, charity is a

¹ *Trin.*, 8.4.6., in *Late Have I Love Thee: Selected Writings of Saint Augustine on Love*, John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne, eds. (New York: Vintage Books, 2006).

² Tarcisius J. Van Bavel, OSA, *Christians in the World: Introduction to the Spirituality of Augustine*, edited by John E. Rotelle, OSA (New York: Catholic Publisshing Co., 1980), 57.

³ The identification of God as love actually connotes the active role of God in the Old and New Testament. It also means the sending of His Son into the world as His gratuitous love for sinners. See Raymond Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary* (Makati City: St. Pauls, 1994), 118.

⁴ Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments (Mt 22: 37-40).”

⁵ James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Michigan:

divine experience that leads to the fulfillment of the Law. All Christians are called to love God, and to love their neighbor as themselves.

Part II AUGUSTINE’S VIEW ON LOVE

Augustine is one of the leading Fathers in the Catholic Church who elaborates on Christian love as the most sublime experience of men’s present state of life. He ponders on this condition as a deep awakening of oneself to cleave on to the good and the delightful object in order to attain happiness. Other than this, the Bishop of Hippo, following the teaching of Christ, also considers charity as the fulfillment of the Law: to love God with all of one’s heart, soul, and mind; and to love one’s neighbor as himself.

The Communion of Love

Sacred Scripture reveals that there are three Persons in one God (Gal 4:6; Mt 28: 19) John the Apostle called the Divine Triune as Love.⁶ Since there are Three Persons in one God, there are also Three in one Love. In this perfect form of charity, the Triune God is not only considered as a Divine community but also a communion of love. With regard to the elements of charity, Augustine describes that there are three basic constitutions in love. He says, “Behold, then, there are three things: he that loves, and that which is loved, and love.”⁷ Since God is a community of love, there is in Him the Lover, the Beloved and the Love that flows between the Lover and the Beloved. Just as Love unites the Lover and the Beloved, so also the Trinity is one in the communion of love of the Three Persons.

William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 320.

⁶ God is love. See 1 Jn 4:16.

⁷ *Trin.*, 8.10.14.

The Diffusing Love of the Trinity

Charity is a dynamic form of love that cannot be contained in oneself. Like the fire of the Holy Spirit, it crosses horizons and boundaries until it returns to its source. Because of God's overflowing goodness, He desires that all men may enter into perfect communion with Him. It is in the divine communion that men's quest for eternal happiness is found.⁸ To achieve this goal, Augustine teaches that men should be made perfect in charity.⁹

God lets His infinite fountain of love be poured into the hearts of men. Invoking the Letter to the Romans, the Bishop of Hippo describes how the love of God has been given to men. He says, "Anyone with enough mental agility should here follow your apostle, who tells us that 'the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given us.' But then, minded to instruct us on spiritual matters, the apostle points out a way of loftiest excellence, the way of charity."¹⁰ Through the Holy Spirit, men receive the gift of charity from God. This same gift is an essential means to attain perfection. Augustine emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit in the inclusion of man in the divine life through the perfection of charity. For him, there is no love without the Holy Spirit.¹¹ He remarks that the assurance that men receive the Holy Spirit is love. He says,

On what is anyone to ground assurance that he has received the Holy Spirit? Let him inquire of his own heart: if he loves his brother, the

⁸ The First Letter of John inaugurates the proclamation of the gospel so that the listeners may also have fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. At the later part of this proclamation, the writer inscribes his intention of writing the letter, that is, for the fulfillment of joy. See 1 Jn 1: 3-4.

⁹ *ep. Jo.*, 1.3., in *Late Have I Love Thee: Selected Writings of Saint Augustine on Love*.

¹⁰ *conf.*, 8.7.8., in *Late Have I Love Thee: Selected Writings of Saint Augustine on Love*. C.f. Rom 5:5.

¹¹ *ep. Jo.*, 6.10.

Spirit of God abides in him. Let him see himself, examine himself before the eye of God: let him see if there is in him the love of peace and unity."¹² The Bishop of Hippo invites the people to reflect if they show love to one another and to examine themselves if there is the presence of love in their life. In showing love and in keeping it in one's heart, there is the Spirit of God with them.

Men are called to love not only because they receive that gift in their heart, but also because they are created in the image of Love. In the first book of the Bible, God says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.... God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them (Gen 1: 26-27, NAB)." Being an image of God, man reflects the identity of his Creator. Like a mirror, every person carries the reflection of God in him. Augustine says, "So what we have been trying to do is somehow to see Him by whom we were made by means of this image which we ourselves are, as through a mirror."¹³ In oneself, the image of God is seen.

When the First Letter of John inscribes that God is love, the Scripture also considers man as an image of love as well. Although man carries the image of charity, it must be noted that this reflection is imperfect. Since he is only a mirror, he carries with him a blurred image of charity. To perfect this image, the Lord Jesus Christ left the commandment to love God and neighbor as one loves himself. Thus, as an image of God who Himself is charity, it is an inherent vocation of man to fulfill the divine mandate.

Faith Leads to Love God

But how can man love God whom he does not know?

Knowledge of an object precedes loving the object. In fact, Augustine emphasizes the necessity to know the preference

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Trin.*, 15.3.14, trans. Edmund Hill, OP, ed. John Rotelle, OSA (New York: New City Press, 1991), 405-406.

of love so that man should be inclined to it. According to him, “But who loves what he does not know? For it is possible something may be known and not loved: but I ask whether it is possible that what is not known can be loved; since if cannot, then no one loves God before he knows him.”¹⁴ Augustine points out that there are known things and yet they are not loved. He also points out that no one can love preferences beyond one’s knowledge. If this is the case, the Bishop of Hippo seems to conclude that God cannot be loved because He is beyond men’s knowledge.

While it is true that the essence of God cannot be known, this should not be an excuse so that no one is compelled to love Him. Although no one can grasp the totality of His being, God reveals His will in the Sacred Scripture. The revelation of His will requires the assent of faith so that men may be able to express their love for Him. Augustine points out, “He is loved by faith... even he therefore who is not known, but yet is believed, can be loved.”¹⁵ Thus, it is through faith that God is loved.

Augustine’s Definition of Love

Being learned in Greek philosophy and the Sacred Scripture, Augustine talks about various forms of love¹⁶ although he has only one definition of it.¹⁷ According to him, “Love is a kind of craving (*appetitus*), and to love, indeed, is to crave

¹⁴ *Trin.*, 8. 4.6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ The expression of love in various forms in the thought of Augustine originates from Plato. Corrigan, noticing the Platonic influence in Augustine’s concept of love, traces this influence in Plato’s *Symposia*. Commenting on the said opus, Corrigan says, “Plato finds it necessary to define love in its widest and yet most immediate application, and therefore not focus exclusively upon one form of love.” See Kevin Corrigan, “Love of God, Love of Self, and Love of Neighbor: Augustine’s Critical Dialogue with Platonism,” in *Augustinian Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, ed. Allan Fitzgerald, OSA (Villanova, PA: Villanova University Press, 2003), 99.

¹⁷ Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 9.

something for its own sake.”¹⁸ Many scholars interpret this definition in different ways.

Arendt’s interpretation of love is craving. To expound this definition, she describes how craving is understood. She says, “Every craving is tied to a definite object, and it takes this object to spark the craving itself, thus providing an aim for it. Craving is determined by the definitely given thing it seeks, just as movement is set by the goal toward which it moves.”¹⁹ Given this idea, Arendt shows that there is an inherent connection between craving and its object. Man is inclined towards something because it entices him to crave for it. The absence of any of these two elements, namely, craving and the preference, would not move the person towards his goal.

Like Arendt, Tarcisius van Bavel also interprets Augustine’s definition as a movement. But this kind of movement is by way of attraction.²⁰ There are two essential things to be considered so that this attraction is possible. First, there must be goodness in the object. According to van Bavel, “Good will attract us first by awakening in us a certain expectation.”²¹ It is presupposed that the preference of attraction is necessarily good itself so that man desires for it. Second, there must be an underlying joy when this goodness is obtained. Van Bavel opines, “That something joy is to be found in what is good; i.e., the joy which is included in the nature of good attracts man.”²² Given this whole idea, van Bavel interprets Augustine’s definition of love as a movement towards the good and at the same time delightful object.

While van Bavel emphasizes the criteria for the preference of inclination, Donald Burt focuses on the faculty of the will by which the person decides the goodness of the thing

¹⁸ *div. qu.*, 35.1-2., in *Late Have I Love Thee: Selected Writings of Saint Augustine on Love*.

¹⁹ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 9.

²⁰ Van Bavel, OSA, *Christians in the World: Introduction to the Spirituality of Augustine*, 59.

²¹ Van Bavel, OSA, *Christians in the World...*, 59.

²² *Ibid.*

with an aim to be united with it. According to him, “The only force powerful enough to do this [union] is the complex act of love, a decision to seek some good with the goal of becoming one with it. A wave of emotion whereby I feel good may be part of the attractiveness of the object, but only choice can move me towards it.”²³ Van Bavel sets the conditions of the object so that man is attracted to it. But Burt pays attention to the faculty of the will by which a person decides whether to choose to be attracted to the preference or not. However, Burt also affirms van Bavel’s preconditioned delight in the goodness found on the object so that the person is moved towards it. Aside from this affirmation, Burt adds the criterion of knowledge of the preference so that a person becomes capable of choosing. He explains, “Such movement depends on the preconditions of knowledge and delight. I cannot choose something I do not know and I will not wish to be united with someone who does not in some way delight me.”²⁴ Thus, from the perspective of the lover, Burt interprets Augustine’s definition of love as a deliberate and intentional movement towards the object.

All these three scholars agree that Augustine’s definition of love as craving connotes a movement towards a preference. In fact, in the Eighty-three Different Questions, the Bishop of Hippo also identifies craving as a motion gearing towards the object.²⁵ The gravity of love as a movement is equivalent to the strength of one’s desire. In Augustine’s *Confessions*, he describes the movement as follows, “Now, my weight is my love, and wherever I am carried, it is this weight that carries me.”²⁶ Such gravity pulls him to the proper and rightful place of his desired object. Using the analogy of the fire and the falling stone which tend to their respective directions, he illustrates the gravity in this manner, “This weight does not necessarily drag it downward, but pulls it to the place proper to it: thus fire tends

²³ Donald Burt, OSA, *Let Me Know You: Reflections on Augustine’s Search for God* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003), 69.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *div. qu.*, 35.1., quoted in Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*.

²⁶ *conf.*, 13.8. 9.

upward, a stone downward. Drawn by their weight, things seek their rightful places.”²⁷ Thus, love, as a kind of movement, draws the person towards the proper preferences of his desire.

The aforementioned scholars, however, differ in their understanding on how this movement has taken place. For Arendt, there is an inherent connection between human inclination and the object. In the case of van Bavel, he emphasizes the presupposed conditions of the preference so that the person is drawn towards it. These conditions are as follows: the object must be good itself, and there must be joy in the possession of that good. And lastly, in Burt’s interpretation, he focuses on the faculties of man so that he is moved towards his goal. Men must will to be drawn and must know the object which they are directed to.

Temporal and Eternal Objects of Love

Augustine identifies that there are two objects of love. He points out, “Two loves there are, of the world and of God.”²⁸ These two preferences are also considered as temporal (that of the world) and eternal things (that of God). These two cannot be joined together in human inclination. The person must choose which of these objects he is inclined to obtain. The Bishop of Hippo states, “In this life there are two loves wrestling with each other in every trial and temptation: love of the world and love of God. And whichever of these two wins, that’s where it pulls the lover as by the force of gravity.”²⁹ The mention of the world as a preference of love in Augustine’s words is used in a wider sense. According to him, “‘World’ is the name not only for this fabric that God has made, of heaven, earth and sea, of things visible and invisible. We use the word ‘world’ also for the dwellers in it, just as we do the word ‘house’ both for the structure and

²⁷ *Ibid.* See also *s.* 234.3., quoted in Pellegrino, *Give What You Command*.

²⁸ *ep. Jo.*, 2. 8.

²⁹ *s.* 344.1., in *Late Have I Love Thee: Selected Writings of Saint Augustine on Love*.

its occupants.”³⁰ In reading this citation, one may assume that Augustine considers all men, as dwellers of this world, are also the “world.” But this assumption is inappropriate for the Bishop of Hippo himself, in one of his works, exhorts the assembly in the Church with the following words, “Just as temporal life is cherished by its lovers, thus we should cherish eternal life, which the Christian professes to love.”³¹ If all the inhabitants of the world are also the “world” for Augustine, then why does he exhort the Christians to cherish and love eternal life? What is the point of desiring for eternal life if one knows he is the “world,” temporal and opposite for eternity? That is why Augustine qualifies who are to be called the “world.” According to him, “All lovers of the world are dwelling in the world by their love, and they themselves be called the world.”³² Thus, only those who are inclined to temporal things are also called the “world.” And these men do not only inhabit the world for Augustine, but they themselves are also the “world.” The lovers of created realities do not only isolate themselves from the temporal object of their love, but they also belong to that preference.³³ Aside from qualifying who are to be called the “world,” the Bishop of Hippo also illustrates that the lover and the desired object become one in the union of love. In this regard, Burt’s presentation of the goal of love as union is significant. In his view, the lover is not only associated with the preference of his love, but also united with it. He finds out, “The goal of love is union. To love someone means to wish to be united with them, to make them my own, to have them consume my ‘own-ness’... Until that happens, I feel incomplete.”³⁴ Love, as a movement,

³⁰ *ep. Jo.*, 2.12.

³¹ *s.* 302.2; See also *ep.* 127.4., quoted in Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*.

³² *ep. Jo.*, 2.12. Comparing the Christians’ life in this world while loving eternal things with the experience of the Jews wandering in the desert, Augustine describes that those who do not love the world are on the way to the promise land. They live not in their real homes but in tents. See *Jo. ev. tr.*, 28.9., quoted in Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 19.

³³ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 18.

³⁴ Burt, OSA, *Let Me Know You: Reflections on Augustine’s Search*

unites the lover and the desired object to become one. This claim is an interpretation on Augustine’s remarks, “Love is the only thing which binds all else together; without which all else is worthless; and which, wherever it is, draws everything else to itself.”³⁵ Therefore, whether the preference of love is temporal or eternal, love is considered as a binding element.

In dealing with temporal and eternal objects, one may raise a question which of this is the proper preference for Christian charity in the thought of Augustine.³⁶ The Bishop of Hippo discovers the centrality of love as the theme in the Scripture. He says:

Charity is in secure possession of the whole length and breadth of the divine utterances, the charity with which we love God and neighbor... if you know charity, you know something from which that also depends which perhaps you don’t yet know; and in whatever you do understand in the Scriptures, charity is revealed; while in the parts you don’t understand, charity is concealed. And so it is that those who keep a grip on charity in their behavior have a grasp both of what is revealed and of what is concealed in the divine writings.³⁷

With this conviction, he exhorts that charity must determine the very direction of Christian life.³⁸ Thus, Augustine teaches the followers of Christ that it is necessary to love the eternal over the temporal things. He urges, “The love of the world must depart, the love of God come in to dwell: make room for the better love. Once you loved the world, now cease

for God, 70.

³⁵ *s.* 354. 6. See also *ord.*, 2.18.48., quoted in Pellegrino, *Give What You Command*. Augustine observes that love flows from the vitality of the will, making the lover identical with what he loves.

³⁶ The adjective “Christian” is attached to the word “charity” by the researcher.

³⁷ *s.* 350.2.

³⁸ Pellegrino, *Give What You Command*, 178.

to love it: empty your heart of earthly love and you shall drink of the love divine; charity will begin its dwelling in you, and from charity nothing evil can proceed.”³⁹ However, this citation does not mean that all Christians must have a total abandonment of the temporal goods. In fact, when Augustine posts a question, “Why should I not love what God has made?” he is compelled to commend to the assembly in his Church in Hippo to love the goodness found in the creation of God. He states, “The things that are in the world are what God has made—heaven and earth, sea, sun, moon, stars, and all the furnishing of heavens. Why should I not love what God has made? Let God’s Spirit indeed be in you to show you that all these things are good.”⁴⁰ However, he warns the people not to love them while forsaking God. He continues, “But beware of loving things created and forsaking their Creator.”⁴¹ Temporal things ought to be loved not for their own sake but for the sake of God.

Loving Eternal over Temporal Objects

The Bishop of Hippo gives several reasons why the world or the temporal things cannot be the proper object of Christian love. Before presenting these reasons, it is necessary to bring into mind that “the world is not only not eternal, it never exists for its own sake.”⁴² All temporal things originate from Someone and are subject to corruption. The totality of Augustine’s reasons for not loving the world revolves around this idea. Christians are not to love the world. Augustine reasons out, “This [temporal] thing is good and that good, but take away this and that, and regard good itself if you can; so you will see God, not good by a good that is other than himself, but the good of all good.”⁴³ The goodness of the temporal things comes from God. This goodness is not inherent but only apparently present

³⁹ *ep. Jo.*, 2.8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.11.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 36.

⁴³ *Trin.*, 8.3.4.

in the created things.⁴⁴ They can neither be higher nor equal to God who is not only considered as the Supreme Good but also as the sum of all the good things.⁴⁵

Love, as van Bavel mentioned, is attracted to the good.⁴⁶ Although men find goodness in created things, and are attracted to them, these things cannot guarantee satisfaction and stability when they are obtained. All created things corrupt as well as the goodness found in them. Thus, they cannot give men the stability of having a lasting delight. Moreover, Augustine presents that man is a constitution of body and soul. As a Christian thinker, the Bishop of Hippo regards the soul as the most essential aspect of the person. The reason why every Christian must not love the temporal object over eternal goods is that the soul seeks satisfaction in eternity. The difference between the possession of the temporal and the eternal things lies in the satisfaction of the soul. Man values the temporal object before he obtains it, but it becomes worthless the moment it is possessed. However, the eternal object is loved with greater value the moment it is obtained than while it is still desired. Augustine opines:

For there is greater difference between things temporal and things eternal, that a temporal object is valued more before we possess it, and begins to prove worthless the moment we attain it, because it does not satisfy the soul, which has its only true and sure resting place in eternity; an eternal object, on the other hand, is loved with greater ardor when it is in possession than while it is still an object of desire, for no one in his longing for it can set a higher value on it than really belongs to it, so as to think it comparatively worthless when he finds it of less value than he thought; on the

⁴⁴ *doc. Chr.*, 1.22.20; *mor.*, 20.37., in *Late Have I Love Thee: Selected Writings of Saint Augustine on Love*; *mus.*, 6.14.46., in Mohler, SJ, *Late Have I Loved You*, 40.

⁴⁵ Burnaby, *Amor Dei a Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, 86.

⁴⁶ Van Bavel, OSA, *Christians in the World: Introduction to the Spirituality of Augustine*, 59.

contrary, however high the value any man may set upon it when he is on his way to possess it, he will find it, when it comes into his possession of higher value still.⁴⁷

It is natural for a person, a union of body and soul, to search for higher value in eternal things because his soul belongs to them. Eternal things are the preferences for Christian charity because they are the most valuable things for an immortal soul. The Bishop of Hippo exhorts the Christians to love the unchangeable goods higher than the temporal object. Commenting on the fall of Adam, Augustine teaches, “For if the will [of Adam] had remained steadfast in the love of that higher and changeless good by which it was illumined to intelligence and kindled into love, it would not have turned away to find satisfaction in itself.”⁴⁸ In loving eternal things, the faculty of the will cannot be attuned to find satisfaction in created things.

Furthermore, another reason that Augustine provides for not having the temporal things as the proper object of Christian charity is because of fear. Following the teaching of the Apostle John, Augustine says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment. He who fears is not made perfect in love.”⁴⁹ The temporal preferences, as created realities, are subject to corruption. In loving them, the lover is in constant threat of fearing not to possess them or fearing to lose them once they are already obtained. In this view, Arendt adds, “The evil that fear makes us shun is whatever threatens our happiness, which consists in the possession of the good. So long as we desire temporal things, we are constantly under this threat, and our fear of losing always corresponds to our desire to have.”⁵⁰ Man becomes happy when he obtains his desired object. But by loving the temporal things, his happiness is threatened because these preferences are subject to corruption.

⁴⁷ *doc. Chr.*, 1.38.42.

⁴⁸ *civ. Dei*, 14.13., in *Late Have I Love Thee: Selected Writings of Saint Augustine on Love*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.9. See also *ep. Jo.*, 9. 2.

⁵⁰ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 10.

This threat is a result of fear.⁵¹

The Objects of Love is either Used (*Uti*) or Enjoyed (*Frui*)

Although Augustine’s reasons for not loving the temporal over eternal goods are exhortations among the Christians, it is still an undeniable fact that men are attracted to temporal goods. As mentioned in the previous discussion, the Bishop of Hippo does not call on men to have total abandonment of the world or the temporal objects. This is because he himself knows that to desire some things or someone in this world, especially filial affection, is a natural human inclination. He says, “You will observe that this sort of charity can be found also among pagans,

⁵¹ Although fear is the root of why a person should not possess temporal things, it has a significant role in the perfection of Christian charity. But it should be in view of the day of judgment. Augustine speaks out, “A man has begun to fear the day of judgment: let fear make him amend himself; let him keep watch against the sins that are his enemies; let him begin to renew his life... For the perfection of charity is attested only when a longing for that day has begun to arise. To long for it is to have confidence in it is to have no alarm of conscience, in the charity that is perfect and pure.” See *ep. Jo.*, 9.2.

The Bishop of Hippo identifies the significance of fear in the perfection of Christian charity in the following points: first, fear compels man to amend himself; second, by this amendment he strives to renew his life; and lastly, by renewing his life, he becomes confident in the day of judgment. In the thought of Augustine, fear, in view of judgment, has two types. These are the following: fear of evil out of punishment and fear of losing what is good. According to him, “There are men who fear God because they fear to be cast into hell, to be burn with the devil in everlasting fire. This is the fear that makes an opening for charity; but it enters only to go out again. If as yet it is the thought of punishment that makes you fear God, not yet do you love him whom so you fear: you are not longing for good things, you are but apprehensive of evil. But that very apprehension leads you to amend yourself, and so to begin to long for the good things; and when you begin to do that, the pure fear will arise in you—the fear of losing what is good.” And he adds, “The first is not yet pure, for it comes not of the love of God but of the fear of punishment. But [the second,] when you fear God lest his presence leave you, you are embracing him, and longing to enjoy him.” See *ep. Jo.*, 9.5. Fear is necessary to amend one’s life and to perfect his charity, but when charity reaches its perfection, there is no more fear. See *Ibid.*, 9.4.

Jews, heretics. Which of them, after all, does not naturally love wife, children, brothers, neighbors, relations, friends, etc.? So this kind of charity is human.”⁵² To love someone or something is a common human condition. And in fact, before a person desires for eternal things, he should fulfill his bodily needs. Augustine opines, “Yet before a man can receive the commandment [of love], he must, of course, live according to the flesh.”⁵³ Thus, in this regard, Augustine himself points out that temporal objects are natural necessities of life. However, he set a certain limit to what extent men should love the temporal things. He explains:

They [men in this world] desire the pleasures of food, drink and sex. But in such things there is a due limit. When you are told not to love them, it does not mean that you are forbidden to eat or drink or beget children; but for the Creator’s sake, there is a limit set, so that the love of all this does not make prisoner of you—lest your love of what you should possess for use become the love of final enjoyment.⁵⁴

In this citation, there are two significant thoughts that can be abstracted to explain the proper attitude of the person towards the temporal things. First, these preferences can be desired without deserting the Creator. Thus, they are allowed to be obtained in a certain limit. Second, in loving such objects, one must consider them as a preference of use (*uti*) rather than an object of final enjoyment (*frui*). In this way, the lover does not become a prisoner of the temporal things.

Since love is an inclination or movement towards both objects, temporal and eternal, the Bishop of Hippo distinguishes two proper attitudes for each of these things. He points out, “There are some things, then, which are to be enjoyed (*frui*), others which are to be used (*uti*), others still which enjoy and

use.”⁵⁵ To love, therefore, is either to use or to enjoy.⁵⁶ To deepen the distinction of these two terms, the Bishop of Hippo adds, “To enjoy a thing is to rest with satisfaction in it for its own sake. To use, on the other hand, is to employ whatever means are at one’s disposal to obtain what one desires.”⁵⁷ Augustine teaches that enjoyment is the satisfaction of man in the possession of desired objects. These objects are enjoyed in their essence.⁵⁸ Thus, a man, enjoying the preference of his desire, loves that object not for any other purpose, but for the sake of what that thing is. To obtain the object, the person’s desire is fulfilled and comes to an end.⁵⁹ However, not at all time people can easily attain enjoyment. That is why the Bishop of Hippo points out that there are certain things that should be employed, that is, to be used, in order to enjoy the desired preference. If enjoyment is to make the person satisfied by the essence of the object, usefulness refers to something other than itself.⁶⁰ It directs and helps the lover to obtain the things he desires to enjoy. Thus, to incline oneself to the object of use is only partial and not yet a sort of fulfillment.

Comparing with the two preferences of love, Augustine finds out that temporal things are to be used while eternal objects are to be enjoyed. According to him, “Among these

⁵⁵ *doc. Chr.*, 1.3.3

⁵⁶ Kevin Corrigan differentiates “use” and “enjoyment” in the following words, “To use is to relate (*refere*) whatever it may be obtaining what you love (*amas*), if it is something which should be loved; to enjoy, by contrast is to cleave (*inhaerere*) to something in love (*amore*) for its own sake.” See Kevin Corrigan, “Love of God, Love of Self, and Love of Neighbor: Augustine’s Critical Dialogue with Platonism,” in *Augustinian Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, ed. Allan Fitzgerald, OSA (Pennsylvania: Villanova University Press, 2003), 101.

⁵⁷ *doc. Chr.*, 1.4.4.

⁵⁸ Kevin Corrigan, “Love of God, Love of Self, and Love of Neighbor: Augustine’s Critical Dialogue with Platonism,” in *Augustinian Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, ed. Allan Fitzgerald, OSA (Pennsylvania: Villanova University Press, 2003), 102.

⁵⁹ *Jo. ev. tr.*, 65.1.3., in *Late Have I Love Thee: Selected Writings of Saint Augustine on Love*.

⁶⁰ Burnaby, *Amor Dei a Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, 104.

⁵² *s.* 342.2.

⁵³ *ench.*, 31.120., in *Late Have I Love Thee: Selected Writings of Saint Augustine on Love*.

⁵⁴ *ep. Jo.*, 2.12.

things, these only are the true objects of enjoyment which we have spoken of as eternal and unchangeable. The rest are of use, that we may be able to arrive at the full enjoyment of the former.”⁶¹ Thus, the eternal things ought to be enjoyed and the temporal things are to be used. While there are objects of love that are to be used, these same things must be employed in order to obtain what men truly enjoy. The things in this world must be used so that whatever is invisible of God may be manifested in created things. Augustine states, “This world must be used, not enjoyed, so that the invisible things of God may be clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made—that is, by means of what is material and temporary we may lay hold upon that which is spiritual and eternal.”⁶² In using the temporal things, one should be led to possess the spiritual and the eternal—the true preferences of enjoyment.

Happiness in Eternal Things

The objects of enjoyment, not the object of use, make the person really happy. Happiness is the distinct characteristic of the things that are enjoyed. Augustine points out, “Those things which are objects of enjoyment make us happy.”⁶³ The previous discussion highlights that in the thought of Augustine, the temporal preferences cannot be the proper object of Christian charity because they are subject to corruption; and the person who is inclined to obtain them are threatened by fear of losing them. The fear to lose the material things threatens earthly happiness. In this way, the Bishop of Hippo claims that eternal things alone as objects for enjoyment guarantees everlasting happiness. God and eternal things cannot be lost except when the person, by the exercise of his freewill, chooses to lose them.⁶⁴ Between the two preferences of love, only those things which are eternal and of God can be enjoyed, thus, can make man truly happy. However, this does not mean that temporal goods cannot give

⁶¹ *doc. Chr.*, 1.22.20.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 1.4.4.

⁶³ *doc. Chr.*, 1.3.3.

⁶⁴ Mohler, SJ, *Late Have I Loved You*, 40.

men a sort of delight. In his *Confessions*, the Bishop of Hippo writes that lower goods (temporal objects) are also delightful to men, although they cannot equal God who is Himself the source of all things and Himself is joy. He inscribes, “These lowest goods hold delights for us indeed, but no such delights as does my God, who made all things; for in him the just man finds delight, and for the upright souls he himself is joy.”⁶⁵ The temporal things give man a sort of delight, but not a permanent happiness. That is why they are desired not for their own sake but for the sake of God. In desiring earthly goods, man should use them to attain God—the source of everlasting happiness, and the only One who should be loved for His own sake.

Different Forms and Terminologies of Augustinian Love

The different terms on love employed by Augustine, are therefore known depending on what preferences they are inclined to obtain. Although the Bishop of Hippo has only one definition of love, he refers to it in different forms. These forms depend on what kind of object the lover desires to possess.

Caritas and Cupiditas

Augustine distinguishes two forms of love as *cupiditas* and *caritas*.⁶⁶ *Cupiditas* is a passionate love. Its desired object is the world. The Bishop of Hippo states, “All that is in the world is the desire of the flesh, and the pretensions of this life which are not of the Father but of the world.”⁶⁷ *Caritas*, in some sense, but not at all times, is similar to *cupiditas*. They are similar in the sense that both are craving (*appetitus*). But the difference between these two forms of love lies in God and

⁶⁵ *conf.*, 2.5.10.

⁶⁶ The researcher intends to use the Latin words “*cupiditas*” and “*caritas*” to have a clear distinction for both words. Although *cupiditas* generally means as passion, it has a similar nature with *caritas*, that is love. Both terms are identified as craving in the thought of Augustine. See *ep. Jo.*, 2.12. But they have different objects in some sense.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.10.

the eternal things. *Cupiditas* is a kind of love, a desire in which there is the absence of the love of God. Augustine points out, “For appetite [*cupiditas*] reigns where the love of God does not.”⁶⁸ Whereas *caritas* is also a kind of love, but the love of God is present at all times even if the object is temporal.⁶⁹ The Bishop of Hippo points out, “Love but be careful what you love. *Caritas* says: love of God and love of neighbor. *Cupiditas* says: love of the world and love of this age.”⁷⁰ His expression of loving the temporal objects (like the neighbor and other earthly goods) for the sake of God actually describes that kind of love as *caritas*. It is purely directed to God.

It is the passionate inclination of *cupiditas* that draws man to love the world. This inclination does not only turn man to sensible pleasure; “it also turns the soul away from the contemplation of eternal things.”⁷¹ By loving the world, without the love of God, man generates evil and sin because “the root of all evils is *cupiditas*.”⁷² Moreover, the person denies his very self when he obtains the created things without the light of loving God. Arendt says, “In *cupiditas*, man wants not himself but the world, and in having the world, he desires to

⁶⁸ *ench.*, 31.117.

⁶⁹ Mohler states, “Charity is a motion of the soul whose purpose is to enjoy God for His own sake and oneself and one’s neighbor for the sake of God.” See Mohler, SJ, *Late Have I Loved You*, 47. In Augustine’s *Sermons*, the Bishop of Hippo points out that there are three forms of love. In these three forms, two of which (the divine and the lawful) describe *caritas* and the third one (the unlawful) is illustrated as the *cupiditas*. He says, “So my first division, as I said, is into a human and divine kind of charity; and the human sort I again divide into two, suggesting that there is both a lawful and an unlawful sort. So first of all I will talk about the lawful human kind, with no fault to be found; then of the unlawful human kind, which is to be condemned; third, of the divine sort, which conducts us through to the kingdom.” See s. 349. 1. The lawful charity is a natural human inclination that is a bond of relationship rooted in fidelity to Christ. The divine charity is man’s expression of his love of God. The third form, the unlawful love, is identified with fornication. See *Ibid.*, 349. 2-4.

⁷⁰ *en. Ps.*, 31.5., quoted in Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 17.

⁷¹ *mus.*, 6.3.f. quoted in Mohler, SJ, *Late Have I Loved You*, 41.

⁷² *en. Ps.*, 90.1.8., quoted in Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 17.

become part and parcel of it.”⁷³ By the inclination of *cupiditas*, man is united with the temporal objects. Through this union, the person becomes an exile from himself, because “men who desire what is outside are exiled from themselves.”⁷⁴ Departing from the love of eternal things, man trembles in fear as he opts to be united with the finite preferences. Such as the temporal things are perishable in nature, *cupiditas*, the binding element between man and the said objects, makes the person perishable as well.⁷⁵ In the previous discussion, the researcher mentions that to possess temporal objects would result to fear of losing them. This time, the inclination and possession of earthly things would not only result to fear of losing; but it would also frighten the lover of the world as he would be confronted with the fact that, through his union with the world, he too will soon perish and corrupt.

The Bishop of Hippo stresses the need to lower down passion so that *caritas* increases. He states, “Moreover, passion decreases as love (*caritas*) increases until love comes at last to that fullness which cannot surpass.”⁷⁶ Although man may incline to obtain the earthly goods, this must not make him a slave of temporal preferences. To love these things must be used in view of everlasting enjoyment. Arendt remarks, “Since *caritas* is tied to the highest good, it relates to the world only insofar as the

⁷³ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 20.

⁷⁴ *en. Ps.*, 57.1., quoted in Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 23. Although *cupiditas* estranges man from his very self, Burt sees the importance of this passionate form of love. Reflecting on the life of the Bishop of Hippo, the said scholar points out that the concupiscent love allows the young Augustine to venture in the created things but ends up with having a benevolent of God. See Burt, *Let Me Know You: Reflections on Augustine’s Search for God*, 71. Augustine finds out that “Temporal things cannot extinguish *cupiditas*.” See *en. Ps.*, 105.13., in Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 33. So he searches the fulfillment of his desire by way of interiority. There in his interior, he finds God and loves Him.

⁷⁵ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 18. The same scholar also states that “*Cupiditas* is fear, fear of not obtaining what is desired and fear of losing it once it is obtained.” See *Ibid.*, 35.

⁷⁶ *ench.*, 32.121.

world is of some use for attaining the ultimate goal.”⁷⁷ *Caritas* is the form of love that binds the lover and God and the eternal things. It is also the form of love by which the lover obtains temporal objects for the sake of God. By lowering man’s passion, he makes room for *caritas*; and in that form of love, he expresses his love of God.⁷⁸ *Caritas* allows man to transcend beyond himself. Augustine says, “And thus sometimes we weep in spite of ourselves, being carried beyond ourselves, not indeed by culpable desire; but by praiseworthy charity.”⁷⁹ Man is able to contemplate and has the glimpse of eternity when he transcends beyond himself to love the Divine and the eternal things. Like *cupiditas*, *caritas* is inclined to obtain a desired object. In this inclination, man craves to love God and finds the transit to eternity.⁸⁰ It looks to eternal things for enjoyment, either by directly loving God or by using the temporal goods to enjoy eternal things. In a deeper sense, this form of love is a bond of perfection that is not only a manifestation of craving but also an expression of man’s attachment to God.⁸¹ Since the final goal of *caritas* is to love and enjoy God, man cannot be threatened by the fear of losing, because God is eternal. He cannot be lost except when the person turns away from Him. When Augustine mentions “perfect love casts out fear,”⁸² he is referring to *caritas* in that form of perfect love.

Both *caritas* and *cupiditas* expect something in view of their desired preferences. But they differ in their manner of expectation. Arendt distinguishes this manner as follows, “It is hope for those who belong to God by virtue of *caritas*, and fear by those who belong to this world.”⁸³ When the person is confronted by the future, fear reigns with *cupiditas*; but in a

⁷⁷ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 33.

⁷⁸ *ep. Jo.*, 2.14.

⁷⁹ *civ. Dei*, 14.9. See also *Jo. ev. tr.*, 22.11., “No one attains Him unless he transcends himself.”

⁸⁰ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 30.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸² *ep. Jo.*, 9.4.

⁸³ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 29.

heart where *caritas* dwells, hope also reigns in that form of love. That perfect form of love hopes for eternal things while man is still in pilgrimage in earthly life.

Amor, Dilectio and Caritas

Augustine, reflecting on the interrogation of Peter in the Gospel of John, presents the different terminologies of love.⁸⁴ These are *amor* and *dilectio*. Appealing to the authority of the Scripture, the Bishop of Hippo identifies these terms as one and the same love. According to him:

I have judged it right to mention this, because some are of the opinion that charity or regard (*dilectio*) is one thing, love (*amor*) another. They say that *dilectio* is used of a good affection, *amor* of an evil love. But it is very certain that even secular literature knows no such distinction. However, it is for the philosophers to determine whether and how they differ, though their own writings sufficiently testify that they make great account of love (*amor*) placed on good objects,

⁸⁴ Many people in the time of Augustine tried to distinguish *amor* and *dilectio* in view of either good or bad objects. For them *amor* is for evil love while *dilectio* is a good love. But Augustine proves that *amor*, like *dilectio*, can also be used in reference to good objects; and in fact, even if the object of that love is the Lord. He says, “And when the Lord himself had asked Peter, ‘Has thou regard for me (*diligis*) more than these?’ Peter replied, ‘Lord Thou knowest that I love (*amo*) Thee.’ And again a second time the Lord asked not whether Peter loved (*amaret*) him, but whether he had a regard (*diligeret*) for him, and, he again answered, ‘Lord, Thou knowest that I love (*amo*) Thee.’ But on the third interrogation the Lord himself no longer says, ‘Hast thou a regard (*diligis*) for me,’ but ‘Lovest thou (*amas*) me?’ And then the evangelist adds, ‘Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, ‘Lovest thou (*amas*) me?’ though the Lord had not said three times but only once, ‘Lovest thou (*amas*) me?’ and twice ‘*Diligis* me?’ from which we gather that, even when the Lord said ‘*diligis*,’ he used an equivalent for ‘*amas*.’ Peter, too, throughout used one word for one thing, and the third time also replied, ‘Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love (*amo*) Thee.’ See *civ. Dei*, 14.7. Thus, *amor* and *dilectio* can be used interchangeably even if the desired object is the same.

and even on God Himself.⁸⁵

Augustine adds:

But we wished to show that the Scriptures of our religion, whose authority we prefer to all writings whatsoever, make no distinction between *amor*, *dilectio* and *caritas*; and we have already shown that *amor* is no doubt used both of good and bad loves, but that *dilectio* is reserved for the good only, let him remember what the psalm says, ‘He that loveth (*diligit*) iniquity hateth his own soul;’ and the words of the Apostle John, ‘if any man love (*diligere*) the world, the love (*dilectio*) of the Father is not in him.’ Here you have in one passage *dilectio* used in a good and a bad sense. And if anyone demands an instance of *amor* being used in a bad sense (for we have already shown its use in a good sense) let him read the words, ‘For men shall be lovers (*amantes*) of their own selves, lovers (*amatores*) of money.’⁸⁶

In the sacred writings, both *amor* and *dilectio* are used interchangeably. Augustine finds out that the sacred writers were not so conscious to appropriate *amor* with either good or bad preferences of love.⁸⁷ It is also true with regard to *dilectio*. These different terminologies are used in the Sacred Scripture with no regard whether the object is good or bad. Even the term *caritas* is employed without distinction among the terms *amor* and *dilectio*.

Knowing that *amor*, *dilectio* and *caritas* are not distinct in the Scripture, regardless whether the preferences of *amor* and *dilectio* is good or bad, seems to contradict the fact that *caritas* is exclusively used for good objects. The reader may think that like *amor* and *dilectio*, *caritas* may have good and bad preferences

⁸⁵ *civ. Dei*, 14.7.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Burnaby emphasizes that *amo* is a neutral term in the Scripture. See Burnaby, *Amor Dei a Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, 95.

as well.

However, the point of mentioning that *caritas* is properly reserved for the good and eternal objects is to distinguish a passionate form of love (*cupiditas*) from that kind of love which is always bound to the love of God (*caritas*). Although, the Bishop of Hippo finds out that love and charity are synonymous in the Sacred Scripture, he explicitly points out that *caritas*, also a kind of love, always redounds to the love of God. He says, “He who resolves to love God, and to love his neighbor as himself, not according to man but according to God, is on account of this love said to be of a good will; and this is in Scripture more commonly called charity (*caritas*), but it is also, even in the same books, called love.”⁸⁸ Even if *amor*, *dilectio* and *caritas* are employed interchangeably in the sacred writings, *caritas* is the term for an inclination that is proper for the good and eternal objects.

It is contradictory to the nature of charity if it is inclined to obtain evil. Reflecting on the story of Cain and Abel, Augustine explains that *caritas* cannot reign with evil (as represented by Cain); rather it dwells in a good heart (as represented by Abel). In that charity of Abel, God accepted his sacrifice. The Bishop of Hippo states:

There was no charity in Cain, and had there not been charity in Abel, God would not have accepted his sacrifice. When both brought their offering, the one from the fruits of the earth, and the other from the young of sheep, it is not to be thought that God cared not for the fruits of the earth and loved the lambs. God looked not at that which was in their hands, but saw what was in their heart; and seeing the one offer in charity had respect unto his sacrifice: seeing the other offer in envy, from his sacrifice turned away his eyes.⁸⁹

Both Cain and Abel express reverence to God by offering

⁸⁸ *civ. Dei*, 14.7.

⁸⁹ *ep. Jo.*, 5. 8.

their gifts. One is out of envy; the other is out of charity. The envious heart of Cain seems to appear that he loves God as he came to offer Him his harvest. But that same heart turns him away from the love of his brother, eventually from the love of God. But the *caritas* of Abel gives great significance. It is the expression of his love of God. That form of love that reigns in his heart, unlike that of Cain, is honored by God. In this regard, Augustine highlights that *caritas*, unlike *amor* and *dilectio*, has only God and the good as desired objects. *Amor* and *dilectio* may either have good or bad objects, or both. But *caritas* has only the good and eternal as desired preferences.

Yet the Bishop of Hippo claims that *amor* and *dilectio* are not distinct with *caritas*; and the three terms can be interchangeably employed in the Scripture. This interchanging is possible in one condition: *amor* and *dilectio*, like *caritas*, must have God and the eternal things as desired objects. Thus, when Augustine mentions that *amor* and *dilectio* are synonymous with *caritas* in the sacred writings, these terms must have a common preference of loving God and the eternal things.

Chaste Love

Lust and Fornication

Lust and love have something in common. Both are craving (*appetitus*). Although they are similar in that way, there are certain points by which these two forms of appetite differ. On the one hand, lust is a passionate inclination towards the created realities that leads to the enjoyment of unworthy objects.⁹⁰ This form of appetite is best identified with fornication. Both lust and fornication are vices⁹¹ that prefer to enjoy the world other than God. With regard to fornication, Augustine opines, “The fornicators against Him are they that turn aside and love the world.”⁹² A man, who sets aside God for worldly allurements, lusts in created and temporal realities.

⁹⁰ *doc. Chr.*, 1.24.24.

⁹¹ *conf.*, 2.6.13-14.

⁹² *ep. Jo.*, 9.10.

Augustine considers the man as a fornicator when he enjoys the worldly things as they are. Even if, as a created being, man is bound to love his Creator, he still prefers to hold onto temporal and carnal beauties. However, the Bishop of Hippo teaches that these beauties are toxic to man’s relationship with God. The pleasure of the flesh and the world entices man to succumb to temporal things. But Augustine admonishes all men that these carnal and temporal realities are not to be loved in replacement to the Creator. He points out, “And thus beauty, which is indeed God’s handiwork, but only temporal, carnal and lower kind of good, is not fitly loved in preference to God, the eternal, spiritual, and unchangeable good.”⁹³ Man’s aim is to attain happiness by enjoying the Supreme Good as He is. Man can only find satisfaction and security in his Creator. But to lust with the created realities contradicts this ultimate goal. That is why, in attaining the Supreme Good, Augustine cautions the Christians to get rid of the desires of the flesh. He raises his concern, “But what is it we wish to do when we seek to attain the supreme good, unless that the flesh should cease to lust against the spirit?”⁹⁴ To lust, fornicators do not only submit themselves to the corruption of the world, they are also opposed to the spirit. As to the Christians, they who fornicate with created things exclude themselves from the body of Christ and become united with those temporal realities.⁹⁵

For the spiritual welfare of the people, the Bishop of Hippo encourages men to make it a goal to subdue the fleshly desire. He states, “Even in this life, we must make it an object to have the carnal habit changed for the better, so that its inordinate affections may not war against the soul.”⁹⁶ Lust and fornication cause evil habit that destroys the tranquility of the spirit. As they are opposed to the spirit, men cannot find true peace in his inclination towards the worldly allurements. Thus, it is men’s duty to direct their inclination by not opposing the spirit but

⁹³ *civ. Dei*, 15.22.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 19.4.

⁹⁵ *s.* 349. 3.

⁹⁶ *doc. Chr.*, 1.24.25.

by subduing the flesh. Augustine finds out the significance of the spirit. When the spirit lusts, it does not deform the body but eradicates the lust of the flesh, destroy ill-founded peace of an evil habit, and give true peace which flows from the good habit.⁹⁷ Thus, Augustine's appeal to subdue the flesh does not simply mean to avoid lust and fornication but also to strengthen the will of the spirit.

The Virtue of Chastity

Love is also a kind of craving. It is either concupiscent (*cupiditas*) or chaste.⁹⁸ Being concupiscent, love is like lust. Both concupiscent love and lust are inclination towards temporal object without reference to God. However, when love is chastised in the love of God, it greatly differs from carnal impulse. Augustine remarks, "But if the Creator is truly loved, that is, if he himself is loved and not another thing in his stead, he cannot be evilly loved, for love itself is to be ordinally loved, because we do well to love that which, when we love it, makes us live well and virtuously. So that it seems to me that it is brief but true definition of virtue to say, it is the order of love."⁹⁹ Virtue is a way by which man chastises his love. It orders his inclination in the right manner. The identification of virtue as an ordered love is like *caritas*. Both virtue and *caritas* cleave to God as the object of love. In the same way also, chaste love, like *caritas* and virtue, cleaves to the love of God. Even if man is inclined to created realities, but loves these things for the sake of God, then his love is still chaste.

The Order of Love

Virtue is the right ordering of the hierarchy of goods. Thus, it is a well-ordered love. But while there is the gradation in these goods, all these preferences must be loved for the sake

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ With regard to love as a concupiscent form of craving, the researcher already elaborated this theme as *cupiditas* in the previous section.

⁹⁹ *civ. Dei*, 15.22.

of God. The Bishop of Hippo says:

No sinner is to be loved as a sinner, and every man is to be loved as a man for God's sake, but God is to be loved for his own sake. And if God is to be loved more than any man, each man ought to love God more than himself. Likewise we ought to love another man better than our own body, because all things are to be loved in reference to God, and another man can have fellowship with us in the enjoyment of God, whereas our body cannot, for the body only lives through the soul, and it is by the soul that we enjoy God.¹⁰⁰

The order of love, aside from identifying it as virtue, is also a hierarchy of goods by which they are ordered according to the love of God. The call of Christ for perfection reflects the will of the Father for His children, "Be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect (Mt. 5:48)." In order that men may come to Him in perfect communion in the spirit of charity, His Son Jesus Christ left a divine mandate. The Lord Jesus says, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments (Mt 22: 37-40)." This divine mandate is summed up into one precept, and that is charity. God declares that this precept be the fundamental norm for Christian perfection. Human laws set order and peace, but divine law leads men into the perfect love of the Triune God. Jesus says, "I am the way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me (Jn 14: 6, NAB)." The Lord declares that He is the way to the Father. If the same Lord is also called love, then charity must lead men to God and into perfection. The First Letter of John inscribes the following words, "No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us (1 Jn 4: 12)."

¹⁰⁰ *doc. Chr.*, 1.27.28.

In the divine mandate, there are three objects by which they must be accordingly ordered in charity. Augustine mentions, “As, then, there are four kinds of things that are to be loved—first, that which is above us; second, ourselves; third, that which is on a level with us; fourth that which is beneath us.”¹⁰¹ Augustine refers to God as that which is above men and he refers to the fellowmen as that which on their same level. Since that which is beneath men (temporal goods) are certainly loved because they are necessities of life, Augustine deals thoroughly with the love of God, the self and the neighbor in the order of love.¹⁰² According to him, “And we love ourselves so much the more, the more we love God. Therefore, we love God and neighbor from one and the same love, but we love God for the sake of God and ourselves and our neighbors for the sake of God.”¹⁰³ These three objects form an indissoluble unity in the thought of Augustine.¹⁰⁴ What makes the ordering of these goods indivisible in the mind of the Bishop of Hippo is that same charity by which these three objects are ordered together. The self is loved with the same charity the person loves God and his fellowmen. However, as to the manner of how this love is expressed, Augustine draws certain demarcations in each object. For the love of God, the Creator is loved for His own sake. As to the love of oneself and to the neighbor, they are loved for the

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 1.23.22.

¹⁰² The researcher drops the discussion on loving the temporal goods as the fourth level in the order of love because these objects are not included in Christ commandment to love God and to love one’s neighbor as himself.

¹⁰³ *Trin.*, 8.8.12.

¹⁰⁴ The researcher reechoes the fundamental nature and charism of the Augustinian Order. The *Constitutions* of the said religious Order states, “For our Father, the life of the religious ought to be dedicated essentially to a holy leisure in which his only ambition is to love God, who dwells in the interior man. For his part, man recognizing himself as the image of his Creator ought to transcend himself to be united with God. This holy leisure should not make us forget the love of neighbor, because love of God and neighbor form an indivisible unity in the thought of Saint Augustine.” See Augustinian General Curia, *Rule and Constitutions Order of St. Augustine*, §5, 41. God and neighbor are the explicit objects of love while the self is implied in the exercise of charity.

sake of God. This is what Augustine means of the right order of love.¹⁰⁵ Although there are different preferences, there is one charity that is directed to God.

The Love of God

In the order of charity, the love of God is placed at the highest and thus the ultimate end of Christian charity, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest commandment (Mt 22: 37-38).” Augustine explicitly asserts that all Christian must focus on loving the Creator. He admonishes, “You are to concentrate all your thoughts, your whole life, and your whole intelligence upon him whom you derive all that you bring.”¹⁰⁶ To love God in the highest order is to exhaust oneself in keeping Him as the ultimate end. God is loved not for any other purpose but for the sake of Himself. If Augustine points out that God is the very source of delight, the ultimate and Supreme Good of every created reality and the everlasting happiness of men, then to exhaust oneself in loving Him does not mean to be worn out in that charity, but rather to enjoy Him as He is. In that kind of love, man is able to unite and to contain himself in the dynamic spring so divine.

Dealing with the interpretation of Augustine on the greatest commandment, Ange Le Proust, OSA, describes four conditions of the love of God. Le Proust states,

In the first place, this love requires of the heart its whole affection and the sacrifice of all it can love—other than God. Second, it enjoins upon the soul a consecration of its whole life and of all it can possess. Third, it requires of the mind all its esteem and all the application of which it is capable. Fourth, it evokes from our power of action the utmost response.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ s. 368. 4. See also *doc. Chr.*, 1.23.22.

¹⁰⁶ *doc. Chr.*, 1.22.21.

¹⁰⁷ Le Prost, *Treatise on the Rule of St. Augustine*, 14.

The love of God, therefore, does not only mean to love the Creator in the totality of the person, but also to consecrate his life and to compel himself to respond in God's love.

The Bishop of Hippo sees a reason why there is the absence of God in the life of man. He finds out, "Why does a man not see God? Because he has not love."¹⁰⁸ When one deprives himself to love, he cannot find God in his life. God Himself is love; and to turn away from charity is turn away from God. There, in His absence, while man lusts for the temporal objects, the darkness of sin reigns lurking in the flesh. This is the cause of the deformity of man. He is no longer a reflection of the blessed image of love but an image of the corrupted world. However, this deformity cannot remain in him when he turns to love God. Augustine emphasizes:

But our soul, my brethren, is ugly through its iniquity: through loving God it is made fair. What manner of love is this, that transforms the lover into beauty! God is ever beautiful, never ugly, never changing. He that is ever beautiful, he first loved us—and loved none that were not ugly and misshapen. Yet the end of his love was not to leave us ugly, but to transform us, creating beauty in place of deformity. And how shall we win this beauty, but through loving him who is ever beautiful? Beauty grows in you with the growth of love; for charity itself is the soul's beauty.¹⁰⁹

The love of God encompasses every man even though he is deformed by sin. In loving his Creator, man shares with the image and likeness of God. In that divine image, beauty is perfect and true. By loving Him who is ever beautiful, man is transformed from his deformity into the beauty of God.

The Love of Oneself

After the love of God, there is the love of oneself. But,

¹⁰⁸ *ep. Jo.*, 9.10.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.9.

it seems there is a certain biblical passage by which one is discouraged to love the self. Christ gives men the conditions to become his disciples. He says, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me (Lk. 9: 23)." One of the conditions mentioned is the denial of oneself. Many Christians down through the century have scorned themselves because of their narrow interpretation on this passage. However, it is also the same Lord who gives men the commandment to love their neighbor as they love themselves. In that divine precept, the love of oneself plays a crucial role on how to deal with the neighbor. One may raise a question that if self-love is vital, then why is it only implied in the two-fold commandment? The reason why Jesus did not give an explicit mandate to love the self is that self love is a natural human condition. Augustine remarks, "Seeing, then, that there is no need of a command that every man should love himself and his own body—seeing, that is, that we love ourselves, and what is beneath us but connected with us [the body] through a law of nature... and which is common to us with the beast."¹¹⁰ To love oneself follows a natural law that is innate in human instinct. Since men are actually inclined to love themselves, to give a mandate to love the self would be redundant. Even if the person may turn away from God, he still continues to love himself and his own body.¹¹¹

But why are there some people who seemingly hate themselves? Augustine answers, "No man, then, hates himself neither does any man hate his own body. And when some people say that they would rather be without a body, they entirely deceive themselves. It is not their body but its corruptions and its heaviness that they hate."¹¹² The Bishop of Hippo follows the Pauline teaching that no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes it.¹¹³ To hate the self and the body and hating its corruption are two different things. The former is to scorn the

¹¹⁰ *doc. Chr.*, 1.26.27.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1.23.22.

¹¹² *doc. Chr.*, 1.24.24.

¹¹³ Eph 5: 29, NAB.

self while the latter is to ridicule corruption. The self is loved because it is a fundamental object by which the person sets certain conditions on how he projects his love for his fellowmen. Although it is nourished, no one must incline to enjoy the self for its own sake. Augustine instructs his fellowmen that they should love themselves for the sake of God.¹¹⁴

Then what does Christ mean to deny oneself? It means to transcend and not to contain love for oneself alone. Man is inclined to something more precious than himself that he is ready to sacrifice his own safety in order to obtain other objects with higher value.¹¹⁵ Christians are called to give themselves to love God and their fellowmen. Augustine raises a question on why some people hesitate to give themselves for the service of the divine precept. It is as if to give oneself is wasted in this noble commandment. He points out, “After all, why are you afraid to give yourself, as though you may waste yourself? Rather, it’s if you don’t give yourself that you will lose yourself.”¹¹⁶ It is a common understanding that to be inclined to oneself alone is a selfish form of love. Many are afraid to offer themselves because they may turn into nothing. But, there is a deeper sense why a person hesitates to give himself. Those who are afraid to offer themselves lack charity, because fear arises when there is the absence of love for eternal things and for wider preferences. Therefore, when man settles with himself alone, he loses himself in the process. Just as oneself corrupts, so the same self is lost when love is contained only in that object.

The Love of Neighbor

Other than the love of God and the self, the neighbor occupies a special place in the divine precept. The Gospels explicitly inscribe the commandment of Christ to love the neighbor. In that commandment, the neighbor holds a significant role on how the person projects his love of God and himself.

In dealing with the self and the neighbor, these two preferences are loved in the same manner. Both are loved for the sake of God. Augustine observes that the love of neighbor reflects the way one loves himself. He states, “You love someone else in a warped manner if you love yourself in a warped manner; but if you love yourself in the right way, you also love the person in the right way.”¹¹⁷ Here, the neighbor becomes an external object by which the love of self is projected.

Other than this, following the teaching of John the Apostle, the Bishop of Hippo also figures out that in loving the neighbor, man shows his love of God. Augustine opines, “If any man says I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar. Why is he a liar? Because he that loves not his brother whom he sees, how can he love God whom he sees not?”¹¹⁸ Augustine raises this objection to point out that there is necessary consistency in loving God by loving the neighbor. To deny neighborly love is tantamount to the refusal to love God. Thus, to sum up the relevance of the neighborly love in the divine precept, the neighbor is significant in discovering the attitude of man towards God and towards himself.¹¹⁹ Although the neighbor has a special place in the commandment of Christ, no one should enjoy his fellowman as he is. Rather, like that of self love, the neighbor must be loved for the sake of God.¹²⁰

Other than having a significant place in the divine precept, Augustine enumerates several reasons why man should love his fellowmen. Before specifying this reason, one should understand what it means to love his neighbor. The Bishop of Hippo states, “We love and that love in us is true love, sincere, not feigned, seeking our brother’s good, looking for no profit from our brother but his own well-being.”¹²¹ True love comes with sincere affection. The brother mentioned in the citation is the neighbor. To love him with utmost sincerity does not only

¹¹⁴ *doc. Chr.*, 1.22.21.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.25.26.

¹¹⁶ *s.* 34.7.

¹¹⁷ *s.* 385. 1.

¹¹⁸ *ep. Jo.*, 9.10.

¹¹⁹ Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 3.

¹²⁰ *doc. Chr.*, 1.22.20-21.

¹²¹ *ep. Jo.*, 6.4.

mean to respond to his needs but also to provide what is good for him. When the person provides the needs of somebody, it does necessarily mean that this response is always beneficial. However, to look after the good of someone, the person does not only express his loving concern to the needy but also allows him to benefit from that concern. Thus, to love the neighbor simply means to provide for his well being without expecting any form of reward.

Christians should love their neighbor because, first, they receive this commandment from the Lord. Without deepening this reason, to obey in that divine precept is only a shallow response to the Lord. It is not as simple as “why do you love your fellowmen?” then man simply answers “because the Lord said so.” The followers of Christ should love their neighbor because they love the Lord. Augustine reasons out, “He who loves God must both needs do what God has commanded; therefore he must needs also love his neighbor, because God has commanded it.”¹²² When man loves his fellowmen, it is not only an act of obedience to the Lord but also an expression of his love for God. The lover always desires that his beloved be with him at all times. If a Christian loves God and wants Him to be present, then he must love his fellowmen because by loving them, God is present among them. The Bishop states, “So therefore let us also love one another, so that, as far as possible by the concern of our love, we may draw one another to having God in us.”¹²³ In that love that unites one another, the Lord makes His dwelling among them and manifests His presence in their communion of love.

Second, Augustine notes that every man should love his neighbor because these are like them—children of the Most High. He instructs, “For they hear and keep: ‘A new commandment I give you, that you love one another,’ not as those who are corrupt love one another, not as men love one another because they are

¹²² *Trin.*, 8.7.10.

¹²³ *Jo. ev. tr.*, 65.2.2. See also *ep. Jo.*, 5.7. “Love your brother; in loving the brother whom you see, you will see God at the same time. For you will see charity itself, and there within is God dwelling.”

men, but as they love one another because they are gods and all of them, sons of the Most High.”¹²⁴ No one is loved because he is a sinner or simply because he is also a man. Augustine raises the dignity of the neighbors as gods, that is, they are children of God. Thus, while the Christians love God as their Father, they should also love their fellowmen since they are also like them—children of the same Father.

The ultimate goal why a Christian should love his neighbor should not be out of something that could benefit him. As already mentioned, true love for his fellowmen does not expect any form of reward. In loving these fellowmen, a Christian must lead them to love the Most High. The Bishop of Hippo says, “Whoever, then, loves his neighbor aright, ought to urge upon him that he too should love God with his whole heart, and soul, and mind. For in this way, loving his neighbor as himself, a man turns the whole current of his love both for himself and his neighbor into the channel of the love of God.”¹²⁵ It is the mission of every Christian to urge his fellowmen to love God. By showing his love for them, his neighbors are led to the love of God. Thus, in doing so, the ultimate goal of the divine precept is attained—that is communion in love of God and perfection of charity.¹²⁶

Part III CONCLUSION

Love is a central theme in Christianity. All Christians are called to love God and the eternal things. Augustine

¹²⁴ *Jo. ev. tr.*, 65.1.3.

¹²⁵ *doc. Chr.*, 1.22.21. Augustine also finds out that the ultimate purpose in loving the neighbor as oneself should lead the neighbor to join the fellowship in loving God. All help must tend to this end. He opines, “We ought to desire, however, that they should all join with us in loving God, and all the assistance that we either give them or accept from them should tend to that end.” See *Ibid.*, 1.29.30.

¹²⁶ *Trin.*, 8.7.10.

distinguishes the two objects of love and its different forms. All things in this world ought to be loved for the sake of God. The temporal things cannot be the proper object for everlasting delight since God alone can be enjoyed in eternity.

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