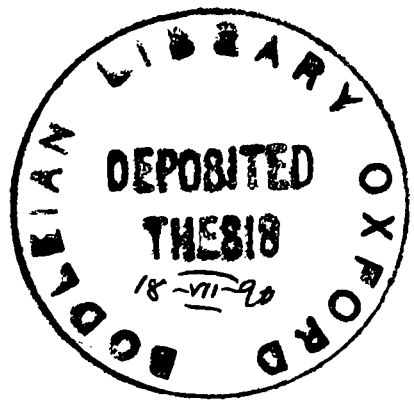
TOWARDS A DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE: A RESPONSE TO CONTEMPORARY CRITIQUES

by

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This essay is an attempt to find an approach to the Christian doctrine of providence which takes account of modern resistance to traditional formulations even while criticizing some current assumptions that make inevitable--mistakenly, we believe--a clash between the scientific view of reality and the biblical picture of a governing and intervening God. Our objective is not to develop a doctrine of providence as such, but simply to set in place some of the epistemological and theological conditions that would make such a doctrinal development possible today.

Our investigation is set against the foil of a prior analysis of several main currents in Greek and Roman metaphysical theology. We proceed to consider the "anthropological pole" of the Judeo-Christian doctrine of providence. First we examine the term "person"; then we conduct an exegetical and historical-theological study of the doctrine of the imago Dei. We argue that the concept of the personal was undiscoverable by speculation and could only have emerged as a consequence of divine revelation; and that this concept is the key to a proper understanding of the biblical doctrine of the imago Dei, the essence of which is the notion of divine-human relationship. We maintain, moreover, that the definition of man as a rational being makes complete sense only when it is integrated in the more comprehensive conception of man as a personal being.

We reinforce this argument by examining the other pole of the doctrine of providence, i.e., the theological. To this end we look at the doctrine of the Trinity. This inquiry forms the basis for the sketch of a theological theory of knowledge in which we apply our relational understanding of the imago Dei to the question of our knowledge of other persons and of things.

We conclude by bringing our findings to bear on the "non-interventionist" view of God's relation to the world. This position is critiqued in a final effort to remove some of the theoretical obstacles which have made it difficult to formulate a doctrine of providence faithful both to the biblical picture of God and to modern philosophical and ethical reflection.

ABSTRACT

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CHAPTER I

The aim of this chapter is to highlight the contrast between two fundamentally different ways of conceiving of divinity and of its relation to the world: the rational way of philosophy, involving impersonal metaphysical principles derived from speculation; and the relational way of revelation, arising from human experience of the self-disclosing God.

We look first at several strands in the cosmological and theological thought of Plato and Aristotle. Both philosophers equate the divine with the changeless realm of pure thought and being, a realm disconnected from the temporal sphere of existence and becoming. Plato avoids absolute dualism by his doctrine that temporal things are copies of eternal forms, therefore not

altogether separated from them conceptually; Aristotle avoids it by his doctrine of causation, which posits the Unmoved Mover as the universal cause of motion. In both cases, however, the two spheres are intrinsically distinct and do not, as such, interpenetrate; the question of how they are related is never systematically addressed and remains problematical.

We go on to consider aspects of Greek and Roman Stoic thought, with its pantheistic assimilation of divine providence, or Nature, to "God". Providence and fate are virtually indistinguishable in this philosophy, from Zeno to Marcus Aurelius. Rationalistic monism is seen, in contrast to Hellenic dualism, to be all-inclusive and to comprehend both change and permanence; yet, despite this, ultimate meaning and value are no more attached in Stoic than in Hellenic thought to what we today would call the "personal" in man.

In the remainder of the chapter we argue that only the reality of the personal God, Creator and self-revealing Redeemer of all that is, can provide an answer to the basic metaphysical and epistemological question of how the human being, in the totality of his experience, can be and is connected to the divine. Notions of God's general activity in the world are cognitively hollow, we suggest, unless based on God's specific historical activity as recorded in the Old Testament, manifested consummately in Jesus Christ, and experienced in the Church through the Holy Spirit.

The chapter concludes with a brief look at Tillich's notion of Being. We reverse his assertion that a supra-personal ground of Being includes personal being, and claim instead that the Trinity is primary and ultimate, the source of all that is.

CHAPTER 2

This chapter is concerned with the meaning of "person" as it bears on our discussion of the Christian doctrine of providence.

Arguing that Greek and Roman thought was logically unable to arrive at the concept of the person as it came to be understood in the Christian Church, we underline four essential components in this concept: the rational, the eternal, the historical, and the relational. An analysis of the Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of the individual and of the soul confirms our thesis that only the divine self-revelation in Jesus Christ could transcend both dualism and monism and provide a coherent integration of the rational/eternal with the material/historical. By the resurrection, the value of the physical creation was reaffirmed and eternal value conferred on the whole man, including his body; man's existence in history received a new and positive status, as did his longing for eternity and for the perpetuation of his individual identity.

The fourth essential component of "person", the relational, is examined first against the background of the Fourth and Fifth Century Trinitarian and Christological debates and then in connection with the thought of Augustine and Aquinas concerning the question of relations within the Trinity (the contrast of the

Western and the Eastern understanding of relations within the Trinity is left to Chapter 4, Section 3).

The concluding section is a discursus in which we consider the significance of "personalistic" representations of the deity found in primitive religion and mythology. It is argued that wherever there is "living religion", an encounter with a supernatural power experienced as <u>personal</u> lies behind it. The distortions and perversions of the divine that may be found in primitive religion and in mythology are understood to be the consequences of human sin and idolatry. This point is used to bolster our contention that wherever God is apprehended in some measure as personal, divine pressure and not human speculation is the source of the insight. Though not the ground for a natural theology, this argument can be used to explain the spiritual significance of personalistic religion as found in all cultures, and also to relate this universal phenomenon to the Judeo-Christian experience of the one God, Creator and Redeemer of all men, who always and everywhere has sought and seeks to draw men to a knowledge of himself.

CHAPTER 3

In this chapter we undertake an analysis of the concept of the imago Dei. Our basic contention is that the category of the person is the key to a proper understanding of this biblical concept.

We start with an exegetical analysis of the imago Dei as it appears in the Old Testament, using the thought of several Twentieth Century theologians, especially Karl Barth, to orient the discussion (all biblical citations in the thesis are from the RSV, unless otherwise stated). Our primary concern is to show that, as a concept, man-as-made-in-the-image-of-God is fundamentally relational and not qualitative; ontic qualities that characterize man arise out of and are integral to his prior essential relation to his Creator, not the other way around. We also argue that the task assigned by God to Adam to exercise dominion over the world is constitutive of the imago Dei, in that it is God's command to the human being he has just fashioned and also the self-expression proper to this creature made in the likeness of the Creator.

With this understanding in hand, we examine briefly how the concept of the imago Dei was interpreted by Irenaeus, Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, and Luther. We find in general that the relational understanding of the concept always remained in the

shadow of the philosophically rooted rational, or qualitative, understanding, and was never integrated systematically with it; and we observe that this failing in traditional Western theology opened the way for the post-Eighteenth Century flowering of natural theology in various forms, a development that had grave consequences for the Christian doctrine of providence.

An exegesis of the imago Dei in Pauline thought follows, after a glance at the use made of this concept in Psalm 8 and in Wisdom literature. We focus on the relation of Jesus Christ, the very Image of God, to the creature, man, created according to the image of God. The imago Dei is then examined in its connection first with the concept of sonship and then with the New Testament understanding of hope and suffering as these are linked with providence.

In conclusion, we stress the centrality to the doctrine of providence of a proper biblical anthropology and of the eschatological perspective arising from Christ's Cross and Resurrection. We suggest that the doctrine of the imago Dei which we have argued for integrates coherently the understanding in Genesis of the creation of man with the New Testament understanding of the new creation of man in Christ.

CHAPTER 4

The aim of this chapter is twofold: to show, in a preliminary manner, that the category of the personal is more comprehensive than that of the rational and actually includes the rational within itself; and, on the basis of the understanding of the imago Dei to which we have attained, to build the first storey of a theological theory of knowledge by analyzing the doctrine of the Trinity.

Our argument begins with a look at the concept of the Logos in the Fourth Gospel, and then at Stoic and Patristic views of the connection between reason, being, and person, in order to show that in Jesus Christ God has revealed to man the essential relation of the personal to the rational. A short analysis of the concept of truth as understood by the Fourth Evangelist is used to confirm this, and the point is made that the modern split between the personal and the rational has its source in the secularization of the concept of the person.

To say that God or man or the universe has rationality is to say that these realities are orderly and may somehow be known. Only persons can be knowers. Having examined in earlier chapters the personal creature, man, who is made in God's image, we now proceed to examine the nature of the God in whose image man is made. How do we know God, and what connection is there

between our knowledge of God and our knowledge of other human beings and of things? Our overall quest here is for a unitive approach to the knowledge of these three realities; the insight into the essential nature of man as person-in-relation-to-God serves as the theoretical lynchpin of this enterprise, since it holds together the anthropological and the theological poles of the doctrine of providence.

Our investigation of the theological pole takes the form of an analysis of the doctrine of the self-revealing Trinitarian God. This analysis is more systematic and extensive than what we did in Chapter 2. It proceeds in terms of a contrast between aspects of Eastern and of Western Trinitarian theology, with particular reference to the connected issues of the hypostatic relations within the Trinity and the procession of the Holy Spirit. Discussion of the filioque doctrine leads to an examination of the relation of the immanent to the economic Trinity and then to the issue of communion between God and man and its ultimate ground in the intra-divine communion between the hypostatic Persons (the doctrine of perichōrēsis). The chapter concludes with a consideration of the Spirit's so-called "anonymity", in which we argue, in an attempt to bind together the Third Person of the Trinity and God's Being as Spirit, that this self-effacement in love, as it is given to us to understand in revelation, is essentially characteristic of the divine nature. This brings to a close the first part of our theological theory of knowledge.

CHAPTER 5

In this chapter we develop more fully the two-fold aim of Chapter 4. First we amplify our argument that the rational can properly be understood only within the more comprehensive frame of the personal. We point out that reason is a function of personality, not vice-versa; and we indicate some of the unfortunate consequences in post-Cartesian Western thought of systematically abstracting cognitive reason from its personal context and then of raising it, thus isolated, to a qualitatively exalted position in the understanding of man. Second, we extend our theological theory of knowledge beyond our knowledge of God to include our knowledge of other persons and of things. If, as we have argued, God is Being-in-communion, involving mutual indwelling, giving, and receiving between the divine hypostases, and if our knowledge of him is likewise a matter of communion and mutual indwelling, can we not then suppose that man-made-in-his-image will be knowable in a similar way, and that the world this man is intended to care for will also be knowable in a way not fundamentally different? Can we not, in a word, discern a similarity of structure between man's knowledge of God, of himself, and of other creatures?

After examining briefly the question of our knowledge of other persons, we look critically at the epistemology of

Descartes, focusing on the problems raised by his separation of the cogito from the body and hence from the material world as a whole. We extend our critical analysis to Kant's doctrine of the thing-in-itself and to Hume's epistemological scepticism.

Next, in support of our own epistemological position, we set forth Whitehead's doctrine of perception, based on his understanding of the relationality of all elements in space and time. Finally, we investigate Polanyi's theory of personal knowledge, which is rooted in his analysis of the two kinds of knowing--tacit and focal--involved in comprehension. We point out the relevance of his concepts of bodily "indwelling" and of "commitment" to our contention that the way of knowing God is structurally paradigmatic of the way of knowing created reality. We go on to suggest that Polanyi's own notion of the structural affinity of knowledge and reality constitutes an indirect philosophical corroboration of our argument that the ontological relationality of man to God, as worked out in the doctrine of the imago Dei, is the basis of the possibility of human knowledge of creaturely reality and illuminates the very nature of knowledge itself.

CHAPTER 6

This chapter is an attempt to focus our findings, not in a simple summary but rather by bringing them to bear critically on the thought of Maurice Wiles and of Gordon Kaufman, two contemporary theologians who hold a "non-interventionist" position with respect to God's ongoing relation to the world. On the basis of the constructive arguments developed in the first five chapters, we aim here to uncover what appear to us to be the philosophical and theological weaknesses of their position, and in so doing to point the way forward towards a more satisfactory approach to the doctrine of providence.

We begin by outlining their contention that God is uniformly related to the world and its history and that specific divine activity in particular events is inconceivable. We then look at various aspects of Kaufman's thought, central to which is his argument that all speech about and experience of God are constructs of the human imagination. We criticize the assumption that the "scientific world-view" makes specific divine intervention impossible, and then go on to mount a broader critique along four different lines: 1. philosophical, where we question the logicality of a non-interventionist position, if held by someone calling himself a Christian; 2. hermeneutical, where we criticize the historicist notion of the "authoritative

present" and stress, with Gadamer, the impossibility of abstracting the present from tradition; 3. methodological, where we attack the continued use of Christian language and notions about God when the only reasonable basis for such talk, namely, God's particular historical involvement with his people, culminating in the history of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Bible, has been ruled out from the start as unacceptable to modern man; 4. theological, where the methodological critique is extended and applied specifically to the doctrines of the Cross and of the Spirit as set forth by Wiles and Kaufman.

Our brief concluding remarks recall our emphasis on the imago Dei and the Trinity as the two poles, anthropological and theological, of the Christian doctrine of providence, at the heart of which lies the concept of personal relation. Personal relation without specific mutual interaction is a nonsense; to exclude one is to exclude the other. But if that is done, one cannot have a coherent doctrine of providence in any Christian sense; one can have only philosophical speculations that borrow more or less widely from the Judeo-Christian theological tradition. It is our conviction that a forceful modern reformulation of the doctrine of providence must go in precisely the opposite direction, towards a rediscovery of the personal God and of the nature and form of his personal relationship with man.

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CHAPTER I

Greek and Roman rational conceptions of divinity and of providence, in contrast with the personal/rational experience of God in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

I.1

The Christian doctrine of providence; epistemological questions; strands in classical Greek thought related to providence.

The Christian doctrine of providence is concerned with the question of God-the-Creator's ongoing, active relation as Ruler, Preserver, and Guide, to the created world in time. It presupposes belief that this Creator-God is objectively real and ontologically distinct from, and transcendant of, his own creation; that as Creator he also is immanent in the things he has made, as the sustaining and safeguarding power by which they continue to exist; and that in his love and freedom he has a redemptive purpose for fallen men and for the whole created order that he has called into being by his Word, a purpose which he is dynamically and sovereignly carrying forward in history.

Epistemological questions immediately spring to mind. What are the warrants for these several assumptions behind the doctrine of providence? How do we come to believe in the first place that there is only one God and that he is Creator of everything that exists? How can we possibly know that he is loving and purposeful? The Greeks, for all their metaphysical

insight, lacked such clear convictions. On what grounds do Christians hold them?

Let us begin by examining briefly several aspects of classical thought, in order to establish a foil for our later discussion of Christian doctrine. Plato, under the form of myth, does glimpse the idea of a "framer of the universe", a god who, in a sense, goes out from himself and fashions a world; but the philosopher's concept has little in common with the living, personal God of Genesis. He writes:

> To discover the maker and father of this universe is indeed a hard task, and having found him it would be impossible to tell everyone about him.[1]

It is not easy to tell from this remark whether Plato actually felt he had discovered the "father of the universe" or not. An ensuing statement in any case makes it evident that this "father" is a philosophical myth--what we might call a religious rational principle--personified but certainly not personal:[2]

> He was good, and what is good has no particle of envy in it; being therefore without envy he wished all things to be as like himself as possible. This is as valid a principle for the origin of the world of change as we shall discover from the wisdom of men, and we should accept it.[3]

Now despite its divergence from personalistic biblical conceptions of God, such "downward movement" of the divine towards material reality was not actually characteristic of Greek

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[1] Plato, Timaeus 28c.

[2] See below, p. 3, note 1.

[3] Plato, op. cit., 29e-30a.

thought either, even in the mythico-rational form Plato here gives to it.[1] The metaphysical cornerstone of both the Platonic and the Aristotelian systems was on the contrary an upward movement of desire--eros--towards the divine. Aristotle's Unmoved Mover draws all other things to itself, as the object of their longing. "On such a principle," writes the philosopher, "depend the heavens and the world of nature."[2] This Unmoved Mover is said to be "a living being", because "the actuality of life is thought, and God is that actuality";[3] yet it remains impassive and unalterable, without relation to the world: pure actuality, yes, but in the order of knowledge, not of existence, and thinking only of itself, since to think of anything else would involve change, and "change would be change for the worse,

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[1] Of course, Greek religion and poetry were full of myths, divine apparitions, oracles, and tutelary deities; but the philosophers themselves, qua philosophers, were concerned as a rule to purge these beliefs and practices of their cruder anthropomorphic elements in an effort to purify and, where possible, rationalize the Greek religious imagination. See, e.g., Plato, The Laws X.884-910; The Republic II.376-III.412. It would be wrong, however, as Etienne Gilson has shown (Gilson, 1941, ch. 1), to assume that in Greek thought first principles are simply substitutes for gods as such. Principles and deities coexist, even in Aristotle and later thinkers, the one corresponding to the rational attempt to understand the world as a world of things, the other corresponding to existential and religious needs. It is the coordination of these two spheres that the philosophers find it impossible to determine clearly. The problem is most acutely felt in Plato, especially in the Timaeus; and we shall be suggesting that within the compass of Greek experience and understanding, no solution ever was found or could have been found.

[2] Aristotle, Metaphysics XII.vii.1072b.

[3] Ibid.

and this would be already a movement."[1] In a famous summary statement Aristotle writes: "The final cause, then, produces motion as being loved, but all other things move by being moved."[2]

In Plato, where this upward attraction is discussed more in relation to the world of souls than to that of objects in general, eros is conceived both mythically and rationally in terms of the soul's yearning and striving towards the heavenly sphere, the realm of beauty and truth, the immutable world of Ideas.[3] In the Symposium Diotima explains to Socrates that Eros is a mediator between divine and human life. It cannot be a god, precisely because of its nature: as desire, it has lacks. It longs for that which is immortal, such as the good and the beautiful, which only the eternal gods possess fully and all at once.[4] Lacking these itself, Eros pushes men to possess them; functioning as an intermediary, it thrusts men towards the divine. "God does not deal directly with man," Diotima instructs Socrates. "It is by means of spirits that all the intercourse and communication of gods with men, both in waking life and in

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[1] Ibid., XII.ix.1074b.

[2] Ibid., XII.vii.1072b.

[3] For a provocative, if over-simplified, discussion of the relation of Plato's Eros to dialectic, of mythos to logos, see Anders Nygren (1982), ch. 2.

[4] Plato, Symposium 199e-212c.

sleep, is carried on."[1] Eros, she explains, is such a spirit. Without it we should not be able to lift ourselves above appearances, we should remain "lost in multiplicity and change",[2] separated from Reality.

There is involved here, as the Phaedo and The Republic make explicit, a turning, even a fleeing, from the world of change, in order, by contemplation, to participate in the eternal. Although Plato is certainly not a radical dualist in the sense of considering the material world to be intrinsically evil, he unquestionably considers it, as subject to flux, to be inferior to the intelligible world of immutable Forms. Time, which contains measurable cycles that imitate eternity, is "as like as possible to eternity", it is "a moving image of eternity";[3] but, though modelled on eternity, it is far from being equivalent to eternity: it is not more than copy, approximation, shadow. The possibility of imitation, however, does presuppose analogous correspondence of some kind between the eternal and the temporal, and Plato's doctrine of Forms is a complex dialectic of transcendence and immanence.[4] This comes out especially clearly in the case of human beings themselves. Men contain, according

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[1] Ibid., 203a.

[2] Plato, The Republic VI.484b.

[3] Plato, Timaeus 38b; 37d.

[4] For a discussion of this subject in connection with Plato's debt to the Pythagoreans, see R. G. Collingwood (1945), Pt. 1, ch. 2. Also, see below, p. 6, note 1.

to Plato, an immortal principle within them, the soul, which strives against the body in which it is imprisoned, in order to discipline the irrational passions by reason and progressively to shake loose the material world of succession and decay. Both Plato and Aristotle believe this goal to be attainable, but only by those few able and willing to pursue philosophy. As Nygren observes:

> The relation between the two worlds is entirely one-sided; the movement is all in one direction, from below upwards. No helping action proceeds from the world of Ideas, reaching out towards the lower world. The Ideas do not participate in things, but things participate in the Ideas.[1]

Similarly, the concept of purpose in Hellenic thought is discussed in terms of causation and teleology, whether the sphere of reference be physics or metaphysics. There is no suggestion of a personal God behind or within the world, acting intentionally towards man and the cosmic order. Aristotle, likening nature to art, insists that telos is present in things, on the one hand as a final cause, "that for the sake of which" a thing is done, and on the other hand as a formal cause, the actual form of a thing being the end of its matter.[2] In another

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[1] Nygren (1982), p. 170. See Rowan Williams (1987), Pt. III, ch. C, for a discussion of the subtleties involved in the classical concept of "participation" as it was first developed by Plato in terms of Forms and copies, then modified by Aristotle in terms of common essences or definitions, then finally denied by Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists, Porphyry and Iamblichus, in so far as these thinkers held to an "imparticipability" of the "many" (things) in the "One".

[2] Aristotle, Physics II.iii.194b; II.viii.199a-b.

definition, he construes the final cause of a thing as "the end of all generation and change", and opposes it as such to the efficient cause, construed as the source of change.[1] At the metaphysical level, Aristotle's primary Unmoved Mover, as the pure actuality of thinking, produces movement by virtue of being the object of desire and of thought; it is, as we saw, the divine principle on which the heavens and nature depend, and may be called both their efficient and their final cause.[2] It would make no sense, however, to designate this production of movement as the Unmoved Mover's intentional "purpose", or even, conversely, to speak of this unmoved First Cause in its perfect intellectual actuality as the "goal" of things-in-movement. Between the Aristotelian and the Christian concepts of divinity there is little common ground, unless, as by Aquinas, a fundamental change is first made in the conceptualization of the divine nature, from the Aristotelian notion of the primary Unmoved Mover as pure thought to the Judeo-Christian understanding of God's essence as existence, i.e., as being-in-act.[3]

Plato's discussion of causation is more complex and less clear than Aristotle's, partly because he lacked the Stagirite's systematically delimited causal categories, partly because his

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[1] Aristotle, Metaphysics I.iii.983b.

[2] Ibid., XII.vii.1072a-b.

[3] See Etienne Gilson (1969), ch. 3. Cf. Aquinas, Summa Theologiae Ia. Q. 3, A. 4.

thought developed considerably from dialogue to dialogue. He takes the Forms to be the causes both of being and of becoming, in that it is "by participation in the reality peculiar to its appropriate universal" that an object comes to be.[1] A certain confusion may arise here because Plato's Forms serve both as the ground for the possibility of knowledge and as normative ideal standards for all existents. Thus, with respect to the form of the Good, taken to be the ultimate principle of reality, Plato can write: "...it is inferred to be responsible for whatever is right and valuable in anything, producing in the visible region light and the source of light, and being in the intelligible region itself controlling source of truth and intelligence. And anyone who is going to act rationally either in public or private life must have sight of it."[2] The Good, though beyond both knowledge and truth, is said to be "the source not only of the intelligibility of the objects of knowledge, but also of their being and reality."[3] There is a suggestion here even of

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[1] Plato, Phaedo 101c. Aristotle criticizes this view strongly, questioning even whether the Forms may be considered as essential causes. Certainly, he insists, they are not efficient causes: they cause neither movement nor change in sensible things; nor do they contribute to the knowledge or to the being of other things, since they are not the substance of these things and are not in the particulars which share in them. Indeed, to say the Forms are patterns and that sensible things participate in them is to use empty words and poetical metaphors--for how is it possible for the substance of a thing and the thing of which it is the substance to exist apart? Cf. Aristotle, Metaphysics I.ix.991a,b.

[2] Plato, The Republic VII.517c.

[3] Ibid., VI.509b.

efficient causation, and it was just such suggestions as this that prompted Aristotle's criticism of the Platonic theory of Forms (see p. 8, note 1). As Plato's thought advanced, the conception of the Forms as causes was supplemented or even superseded by that of mind or soul (psuche) as the real cause.[1] This goes along with a growing concern with movement and the "livingness" Plato associates with movement. To the world-fleeing concept of soul Plato adds a world-animating concept, which arises, fascinatingly, from the same inquiry into the body-soul relation (in the Phaedo) in which Socrates speaks of the soul as the prisoner of the body and seeks to demonstrate its immortality.[2] The soul resembles the divine, and so its nature is to animate, rule, and direct the body. In the Phaedrus the divinity of the soul is developed explicitly in terms of movement, and it is established that soul is immortal because it is self-moved and always in motion. This means in turn that soul is the prime origin, i.e., cause of motion.[3] In The Laws, as we shall see below (p. 13), this is carried even further, and soul is defined variously as "alive", as "the original source" and "the cause" of the generation and motion of all things and their contraries, and as "a divinity".[4]

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[1] See T. M. Forsythe (1952), pp. 23ff.

[2] Plato, Phaedo 80a-84b.

[3] Plato, Phaedrus 245c-e.

[4] Plato, The Laws X.895-897.

Parallel to this conceptual evolution in his thought about causality and the relation of change to immortality, Plato has recourse in the Timaeus to the mythological figure of the divine Demiurge to explain the efficient cause of becoming. But, like soul itself, the Demiurge, "the maker and father of the universe",[1] is, as we have seen, a principle, not a personal Creator with a will and a purpose--although, as suggested above (p. 2), we must always remember to distinguish in Plato's thought between a pure metaphysical principle such as the Forms or soul, and a religious rational principle (or philosophical myth) such as the Demiurge. If the eternal Forms are, in Collingwood's words, "standards, not agencies",[2] so both the Aristotelian and Platonic "divinities", when they figure in metaphysical or cosmological, that is, non-religious, contexts, function as conceptual determinations, not as objects of worship. Theology is identical with cosmology. The divinities are factors or principles that give intelligibility to the cosmos. Only in this sense may one speak of them as "agents". Their "acts" are notional and are defined metaphysically or mythologically. As rational principles, they are useful in providing an explanation of why and how the universe is what it is; but they can tell us nothing about why it is tout court.[3] To know the why of

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[1] Plato, Timaeus 28c.

[2] Collingwood (1945), p. 76.

[3] Cf. Gilson (1969), p. 69.

existence, we must have an understanding of God as absolute Source, of God as He who is (not as an It or as a "he" that is something): He who is not preceded, or eternally accompanied by, other first principles such as matter and form; whose essence is identical with his existence; and whose sole fiat has caused all that is, to be. We shall be maintaining that this understanding of divinity is not and cannot be the product of speculation, but only of revelation (cf. Exodus 3:14). Plato's personified Demiurge--not to mention Aristotle's Unmoved Mover--is nothing like such a sovereign Creator and Lord. One of a plurality of divine entities, "he" is a primordial organizing principle that fashions eternally pre-existent matter according to an eternally pre-existent pattern.[1] He is Plato's concept, not God's self-revelation, and as such differs fundamentally from the God of the Bible, who wills freely in love to create the world from nothing, for the purpose of being in eternal fellowship with the personal creature made in his own image, man.[2]

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[1] Plato, Timaeus 28a-30a.

[2] It is significant that Plato's Demiurge only makes the eternal (divine) realm of the fixed stars and plants the immortal seed of soul in man; the making of the mortal bodies of men, subject to change and death, is entrusted to these stellar deities, which, though immortal, are derivative.

I.2

Strands in Stoic thought.

Stoic writers have a marked concern with the question of providence; but they tend to think pantheistically and to use the phrase "the divine Providence" or "Nature" as a periphrasis for "God".[1] Stoic materialism is generally seen as a repudiation of classical Greek idealism.[2] There seems no reason to doubt, however, that affinities exist between the late Platonic emphasis on the immanent soul of the universe and the Stoic logos, even if that logos is conceived materialistically and equated, as in the thought of Chrysippus, with the active power of the universe called pneuma. This power is both the life-force in man and the cause of qualities in formless matter; it is thought of as being a body, made up of the elements of fire and air, that penetrates every part of the cosmic organism.[3] It is not equated with

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[1] See Charles Moule (1962), p. 940. Cf. among later Stoics, Cicero, On the Nature of the Gods II, esp. Sections 57-59 and 70-89, 98; and Marcus Aurelius, Meditations II.3, 11; IV.3; VI.9, 10.

[2] See Josiah B. Gould (1970), ch. 3. Gould shows that the overthrow of Platonic and Aristotelian idealism had come already at the end of the Fourth Century, before the rise of the Stoa. Aristotle himself had showed a growing interest in nature, both theoretically, by locating the Forms within natural objects, and practically, by extensive experimentation. After his death the pre-Socratic concern with the ultimate constitution of matter came strongly to the fore again. The Cynics and Sceptics had already undermined idealism by the time the Stoics and Epicureans came on the scene.

[3] Ibid., ch. 5.

Zeno's description of the first principles of this organism, but it is closely related. According to Zeno, these divine first principles were twofold: "acting" and "being acted on". They were the correlative aspects of a single body, Nature. This monistic concept of a body acting upon itself forms the theoretical basis of Zeno's cosmogony.[1] With Chrysippus, pneuma comes on the cosmogonical scene to account for the continuing immanent action of these primal rational principles. It expresses a causal process specifiable as Fate and Providence, the moving power of matter. Conceptually, its roots go back to Plato's cosmology and to Aristotle's theory of nature as a self-moving principle in bodies that undergo natural change.[2]

Soul, Plato tells us in the The Laws, is self-moving and is the cause of all things: "...as soul resides and keeps control anywhere where anything is moved, it controls the heavens as well."[3] Soul is a divinity, he declares, and "guides everything to an appropriate and successful conclusion..."[4] The heavens reflect the motion and calculation of reason, and so "clearly we have to admit that it is the best kind of soul that cares for the entire universe and directs it along the best path."[5] For Plato,

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[1] Todd (1978, ed. Rist), pp. 137ff.

[2] Ibid., pp. 148ff., 138.

[3] Plato, The Laws X.896.

[4] Ibid., X.897.

[5] Ibid.

the souls that "drive" the sun and other stars are gods. It is these gods, immanent in matter and expressive of reason, that "care for mankind". They are rational principles behind and within all movement in the world. For this reason, and not because of any "personal" qualities in them, Plato is able to say that they are omniscient and concerned with the tiniest details of the universe.[1]

We have already suggested that Plato's facility for shifting between metaphysical and religious categories should not mislead us into thinking that we have here a Greek version of the Christian God who numbers the hairs on our heads. What we have rather is the foreshadowing of the Stoic Providence, a rational principle which, like Plato's principle of Soul, pervades the universe, supervises it, preserves it, so that every aspect contributes to the good of the whole.[2] The teleological element is present, as we saw already in the Timaeus, but there is nothing personal about it in any way resembling what we find in the Bible. The Stoic philosophers extruded the idealistic-transcendent framework of Plato's thought while retaining and "materializing" the immanent world-soul found in The Laws, Book X, and in the Timaeus. Via Aristotle, they took over from Plato the picture of a dynamic universe and the conviction that movement is an immanent tendency of nature; but they rejected

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[1] Ibid., X.900-907.

[2] Compare, for example, The Laws X.903, with Marcus Aurelius, Meditations II and X.1-7.

transcendent and immaterial causes such as Plato's Demiurge and the Stagirite's Unmoved Mover. Chrysippus's god, for example, as primal principle, logos, and cause, is corporeal and engenders movement and qualities by extending in the form of pneuma throughout the universe and by mixing with its parts.[1] Such a god is difficult to distinguish from a deterministic conception of providence. Indeed, for Chrysippus, Providence and Fate are two sides of the same coin.

In the monistic systems of the Stoics the question of determinism loomed much larger than in the thought of Plato and Aristotle. Plato maintains in the Timaeus that the world came into being from a mixture of necessity and intelligence.[2] He did not conceive of necessity as causal law but, on the contrary, as that which was random, irrational, without order. The universe was originally constituted by the subordination of necessity to reasonable persuasion. Aristotle has rather a different perspective on the issue, but he holds just as firmly to non-determinism. In On Interpretation he argues that propositions regarding the future cannot be said to be either true or false, since that would presuppose absolute causal necessity and make nonsense of deliberation and action, which he insists are causative.[3] With regard to the future and, more generally, to

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[1] Gould (1970), pp. 107ff., 123.

[2] Plato, Timaeus 47e-48a.

[3] Aristotle, On Interpretation IX.18b-19a.

those things which are not continuously actual, there is potentiality in either direction (towards both the true and the false). In the Nichomachean Ethics he strongly affirms that the "moving principle" of action is in the human agent, so that, unless the agent has acted under compulsion or as a result of ignorance for which he is not himself to blame, he is responsible for his acts, which are according to choice and voluntary.[1] It follows that he is also responsible for his character, since, as Aristotle sees it, "it is activities exercised on particular objects that make the corresponding character."[2]

For both Zeno and Chrysippus, Nature, God, Fate, and Providence appear to be the same reality viewed from different perspectives: the universe seen from the standpoint of physics leads to the concept of Fate; from the standpoint of theology it leads to the concept of Providence. In either case it is construed as a continuous causal chain of necessary events, and the totality of this deterministic natural system is conceived to be the substance of God.[3] Evidence for the divine is to be found, as with Plato and Aristotle, in the unceasing circular motion of the celestial bodies and in the beneficent purposefulness of the universe, which is demonstrated in the harmony of its related parts. With respect to the special realm

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[1] Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics III.v.1113b-1114b.

[2] Ibid., III.v.1114a.

[3] Gould (1970), pp. 153-155.

of human action, Chrysippus tries to combine this benign determinism with responsibility. He uses the example of a dog tied to a chariot and fated to accompany it. The dog can freely choose to run beside the chariot or else foolishly resist the rope and be dragged along anyway.[1] As an argument for free will, this is specious. For the dog in such circumstances, to choose to run with the chariot is not an exercise of free will, it is an attitude adopted in the face of necessity.[2] If the dog is fated to accompany the chariot willy-nilly, his inner disposition does not make him more or less free. The idea that knowledge alone, construed as the virtue of reason, is sufficient to free one from the compulsion of Nature, fails as an attempt to safeguard the concept of moral responsibility in a strictly determined universe. The effort to act in harmony with, or to resist, Nature, may arguably result from mental acts that are attributable to us and for which we are accordingly responsible; but this cannot be an adequate basis for a defence of free will.[3]

Chrysippus's natural and moral philosophies were fundamentally at odds. It is not logically possible to coordinate free will and real responsibility with absolute determinism. As Gould points out, Chrysippus, sensing this, appears to hold these two viewpoints successively or alternately,

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[1] Ibid., p. 150.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., pp. 167ff.; and Stough (1978, ed. Rist), pp. 222-224.

since he cannot hold them together simultaneously.[1] Several centuries later, towards the close of the Stoic age, Marcus Aurelius seems unaware of, or indifferent to, this logical problem, though perhaps this is due simply to the unsystematic nature of his thought. In Book II of the Meditations, for example, he writes:

> The whole divine economy is pervaded by Providence. Even the vagaries of chance have their place in Nature's scheme; that is, in the intricate tapestry of the ordinances of Providence. Providence is the source from which all things flow; and allied with it is Necessity, and the welfare of the universe. You yourself are a part of that universe; and for any one of nature's parts, that which is assigned to it by the World-Nature or helps to keep it in being is good.[2]

And yet, a few pages later he can say:

> In all you do or say or think, recollect that at any time the power of withdrawal from life is in your own hands. If gods exist, you have nothing to fear in taking leave of mankind, for they will not let you come to harm. But if there are no gods, or if they have no concern with mortal affairs, what is life to me, in a world devoid of gods or devoid of Providence? Gods, however, do exist, and do concern themselves with the world of man. They have given us full power not to fall into any of the absolute evils; and if there were real evil in life's other experiences, they would have provided for that too, so that avoidance of it could lie within every man's ability.[3]

For Marcus, Providence is equivalent to the order of the universe. But in keeping with the monistic premise of Stoicism, this order is all-comprehensive and includes death and decay.

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[1] Gould (1970), p. 152.

[2] Marcus Aurelius, Meditations II.3.

[3] Ibid., II.11.

Change is no longer looked upon, as it was by the classical Greeks, as something fundamentally negative, but as involving an inevitable dissolution and reconstitution of elements in a never-ending series of cycles and cosmic conflagrations.[1] Moral evil, though essentially unexplained, is construed as ignorance; and in any case evildoers dissolve into dust soon enough, as do those who live according to the rational principles of nature.[2] We have arrived here at the limit of rationalistic monism, conceived not cynically but with a somber, respectful resignation. What we today would call the "personal" in man--his whole reality as a "self", a centre of consciousness and of relational activity--has the function merely of providing the means, if he will take them, for the individual to submit willingly to Nature. It has no enduring value apart from this, and certainly no connection with the divine. No possibility of personal relationship with Providence can be envisaged, since there is nothing in the universe corresponding to the personal in man. The universal logos, as impersonal principle of reason immanent in the cosmos and in human beings, is the sole link between the human and the divine. The individual in his singularity, with his peculiar characteristics and life-history in relation with others, has no place here; all such particularities await dissolution quite as much as does the unique body in which they find expression.

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[1] Ibid., X.7; II.3, 14. Cf. Jaki (1974), pp. 122ff., esp. p. 126.

[2] Ibid., III.11; IV.3.

> In short, all that is of the body is as coursing waters, all that is of the soul as dreams and vapours; life a warfare, a brief sojourning in an alien land; and after repute, oblivion. Where, then, can man find the power to guide and guard his steps? In one thing and one alone: Philosophy. To be a philosopher is to keep unsullied and unscathed the divine spirit within him, so that it may transcend all pleasure and all pain...accept each and every dispensation as coming from the same Source as itself--and last and chief, wait with a good grace for death, as no more than a simple dissolving of the elements whereof each living thing is composed.[1]

I.3

The concept of the personal as key to understanding the basic contrast between Graeco-Roman and Hebraic thought about divinity.

Neither classical idealism nor stoicism provides answers to the epistemological questions concerning providence raised at the start of this investigation. The Creator we find in Scripture cannot be "discovered", as Plato suggests it may be possible, albeit difficult, to discover the "father of the universe" construed as a rational principle of origin. Nor can any rational principle be "loving" or "purposeful" in the personal sense of the Judeo-Christian providence. Philosophy is powerless to arrive on its own at such a personal conception of deity. The full answer to the metaphysical question of how the human being, in the totality of his experience, is related to the divine becomes available only if the divine condescends to take the initiative and come towards men in self-revelation. Man-as-

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[1] Ibid., II.17.

person cannot unaided find his counterpart in the divine reality because that which is personal, on both the divine and human levels, is not capable of being <u>discovered</u> by another outside itself: it can be known only by self-disclosure. Gordon Kaufman makes this point succinctly:

> While thing-knowledge depends on the intentionality only of the knower, personal knowledge requires a highly complex process of interaction between agents both of whom are purposive and free. Moreover, the result is no static map of the reality observed but genuine knowledge of the other person-in-act, of the other in his freedom, creativity, and purposiveness.[1]

It is this truth, and the necessary priority of the divine self-disclosure, to which the Apostle Paul is pointing in Galatians 4:8-9:

> Formerly, when you did not know God, you were in bondage to beings that by nature are no gods; but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more?

The personal involves self-revelation and inter-relationship, and it is this which the Greeks were unable to imagine in connection with the divine. In Hellenic thought, reality was that which lay open to the intelligible. It was essentially rational and available to mind. For that very reason it was timeless and a-historical and existed independently of

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[1] Kaufman (1968), p. 34. Cf. Kaufman (1972), pp. 72-76; and Farmer (1942), pp. 77ff.

man. The ruling part of the soul, which was rational,[1] was able through philosophy to receive passively in itself a duplication of the true.[2] In Hebraic thought, on the other hand, reality was essentially historical because God was experienced as personal. The Hebrews believed this because they believed that God had disclosed himself to them and was continuing to do so. They could not otherwise have known that God was a Will with specific purposes concerning men. Being Creator, he was creative providence, constantly creating the new in the present out of a mixture of givenness and possibility. Though absolutely sovereign and no less transcendent than Plato's form of the Good or Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, the Hebrew God was involved in time. It was his revealed purpose to have communion with men, and this necessarily entailed participation in their lives, i.e., in history. The idealistic dualism of a timeless realm of truth/reality and a transient realm of appearance was overcome in the Hebrew experience of a God who, as Redeemer and Creator, was the supreme Author of all reality including time, and who,

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[1] Gould, (1970), pp. 167ff., points out that Chrysippus departed from Plato and Aristotle in viewing the human soul as a unified body, all of whose functions are of the soul's ruling, or rational, part. The rational is the soul's only faculty, hence the "appetitive" and "spirited" parts are no less rational than the intellectual. Reason finds itself in different dispositions. Impulse, for example, is explained as man's reason commanding him to do something. But the basic epistemological stance is hardly different from that of the idealists.

[2] Cf. Pannenberg (1971), p. 12. Pannenberg discusses the gradual "subjectivization" of truth in Western thought under the impact of the biblical understanding of man as imago Dei, i.e., as active and creative and destined to rule over the world.

precisely as such, was bound to the created world by his own determination, in virtue of which that world, for all its changefulness, had a ground and stability and value. Ontologically independent of the world, in that, as self-sufficient Creator, he was in no way dependent on it for his being, he was yet indissolubly joined to it, not by necessity but by his own creative, freely determined intention. In Hebraic thought, a paradoxical dialectic of transcendence/immanence stands in the place of the Greek dualism of being and becoming.

The difficulty of approaching the doctrine of providence today.

In this essay, as a kind of prolegomenon to a Christian doctrine of providence, we shall be exploring further, from a variety of angles, this issue of the personal God. We are not seeking so much to develop a particular doctrine as to elucidate an appropriate methodological approach to such an enterprise. Are we able today even to talk about providence in a traditional Christian sense, as having to do with God's Lordship and rule over all "world-occurrence",[1] or with God's loving purpose unfolding itself in the development of the cosmos and of human history? Scientifically-minded modern man is no less persuaded than the Stoics of the interlocking nexus of all physical events, even if he allows for an openness to new possibility and to

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[1] Karl Barth (1960), Vol. III/3.48, p. 3.

evolution within the orderly causal texture of the universe. On what grounds, therefore, does the Christian resist a concept of providence similar to that of the Stoics? If grounds can be found, what have they to do, if anything, with that very open-endedness we observe in the fabric of historical and cosmic reality, an open-endedness inconceivable to the Stoics, whose cosmology was rooted in the concept of cyclical recurrence? In the moral sphere, despite behaviourism and brain/mind equivalence theories, modern man in practice unanimously believes in human autonomy and self-determination, and the dilemma that so strained Chrysippus's logic is no longer one that today's thinker is able to take with full seriousness. This being so, how can the Christian speak intelligibly about God's rule and sovereign direction of men's lives? If necessitating material causality on the one hand, and human freedom on the other, together bring about events as they actually happen, what basis have we on which to conceive of God at work anywhere in the world except perhaps in the intimacy of our own hearts? Is some form of subjectivist, or historicist, theology, our only recourse? Or if that is unacceptable, have we any alternative to a progressive version of deism, modelled, it may be, on the concept of divine purpose rather than on that of mechanism, but no less resistant than its Eighteenth Century precursor to the notion of specific divine activity in the world? Let us begin by looking more carefully at the connection between providence and revelation.

I.4

Providence and revelation understood in terms of relationship.

John Macquarrie, in his Principles of Christian Theology, argues that belief in providence, like belief in creation, is founded existentially.[1] He suggests that an examination of the Old Testament shows that

> there is a continuity all the way from an individual conviction that God's grace has been experienced in the events of a personal life to the belief in God's providential rule over both history and nature. The belief is existentially based throughout, and never becomes a speculative hypothesis grounded on a theory of history or of nature.[2]

The doctrine of providence begins, Macquarrie insists, as an act of faith and hope, not as a speculation about the world. Furthermore, the error of thinking of providence purely as divine favour rather than as a dialectic of grace and judgment, is avoided in principle by the Church's affirmation that the supreme manifestation of providence is the Cross. From this point of view it is evident that the doctrine of providence in Christian tradition is fundamentally connected with God's self-disclosure, hence with his "personalness". It follows that such a doctrine cannot be construed as a metaphysical system based on first principles arrived at by reason, even if it is elaborated in relation to the world of objects as a whole. Revelation is its ground and must remain its point of reference throughout. We

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[1] Macquarrie (1977), ch. 11, esp. pp. 241ff.

[2] Ibid., p. 242.

share the general orientation of Karl Barth's thought on this matter:

> Our present reference is to faith in God's more general presence and lordship in world-occurrence. Of this it falls to be said that it is real, and takes place in the world, but it is concealed in world-occurrence as such, and therefore cannot be perceived or read off from this. Its revelation is not world-occurrence itself, but the Word of God, Jesus Christ....Hence the object of the belief in providence can only be God Himself, as God Himself in His revelation in Jesus Christ is its only basis....the belief in providence is not an opinion, postulate, hypothesis or world-view of the believing subject, but his freedom born of the Word of God. It is as God Himself tells man that He is the lord of history, and man hears and accepts this from God Himself, that he believes in the providence of God. He then believes in God.[1]

Barth affirms that the fact that God himself is known as Lord is the decisive difference between belief in providence and every philosophy of history.[2] We know this God, this Lord, as we receive his Word, "God with us"; and this "God with us" and "for us" is also "God over us", the eternal Father. The One who is <u>for</u> us as the Son is also <u>over</u> us as the Father.

The divine self-disclosure as the Bible bears witness to it, and of which the Bible itself, as Spirit-inspired testimony and interpretation, is an integral part,[3] has as its essential

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[1] Barth (1960), Vol. III/3.48, pp. 19-22.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 26ff.

[3] The doctrine of Scripture implied here is based on the modern hermeneutical commonplace that event and interpretation cannot be separated, as well as on an understanding of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ, such that we are led to say that the inspired texts belong to the self-revelation of the One to whom they bear witness. Cf. von Balthasar (1982), Vol. I, pp. 540f.

meaning that God is personal and wills to be in active personal relationship with men. As we have seen, it is this experience of God's self-disclosure on the personal level that enables us to speak intelligibly of general revelation in nature and history. Convictions of God's general activity in the world can have no cognitive meaning unless they are based on God's specific activity in the lives of individuals. Epistemologically speaking, the two kinds of activity are inseparable, but the specific has temporal priority over the general. H. H. Farmer argues that convictions about general revelation

> are not given through the contemplation of all nature and all history, which in the nature of the case is impossible; they are judgments of faith evoked by God's revealing Himself in the particularities of the individual's personal life. The content of the revelation, inasmuch as it concerns God, of necessity concerns all nature and all history in principle: but the medium of it is the soul's own immediate situation as part of its own unique life history.[1]

Farmer maintains that the word "revelation" refers to a two-way personal rapport, and that its religious usage involves the experience of an active personal Will approaching the individual in his own immediate situation in absolute demand and final succour.[2] This understanding of revelation in terms of ongoing relationship is able to encompass what is true both in the traditional orthodox understanding of revelation as the disclosure of authoritative truths and in the modern notion of it

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[1] Farmer (1942), p. 85.

[2] Ibid., pp. 79, 81, 87f.

as God's self-disclosure through his Word and his deeds and in existential encounter.[1]

The Bible confirms this view from beginning to end. All through the Genesis patriarchal narratives, for example, where the grounds for the history of redemption are laid, what Elohim seeks is relationship with individuals. This association of God and man consists in demand and promise, mutual allegiance, cult and prayer, and, in response, divine blessing and guidance into the future. It is concretized in words and acts which take the shape of a developing history and which give personal definition to the deity and to the individuals concerned.[2] Both Walther Eichrodt and Gerhard von Rad make the obvservation in their Old Testament theologies that in contrast to what we know of the Canaanitic cults, the cult of El among the migrant Hebrew tribes has no attachment to any specific place.[3] Its main emphasis is on the bond between God and the elected men (and through them the families and tribes they represent) to whom he reveals his will and intention. The particularity of the bond is essentially

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[1] Cf. Baillie (1956).

[2] See, e.g., Gen. 12:1-8; 13:14-18; 15:1-6; 17; 18; 22; 28:10-17; 31:42, 53; 32:22-32; 48:3-4; 49:24-25.

[3] Eichrodt (1961), Vol. I, p. 180; and von Rad (1962), Vol. I, p. 7. The later tradition of Zion as the dwelling place of God (cf. Pss. 46; 48; 78:65ff.), and the Deuteronomic insistence on the celebration of the cult of Yahweh at the place where he has chosen for his name to dwell (cf. Dt. 12:5, 11, 13-14; 16:1-2, 5-6, 11, 15), obviously depart from this early practice; but the emphasis on the personal bond between Yahweh and his elected people remains constant.

personal and therefore mysterious, working itself out within the frame of the world but not capable of being circumscribed by ritual, place, or concept. The God revealed here is both present and transcendent; and the men who, in turn, are called to open themselves to him are at once, similarly, bound to historical conditions and transcendent of them.

The same can be said regarding the revelation to Moses of the divine name. Like Elohim's earlier appearances to the patriarchs, this self-disclosure has as its purpose relationship, not in a mystical or an existential sense, where an ecstatic union or punctiliar encounter occurs, but in a historical sense involving reciprocity in space and time. We see this confirmed by the self-description Yahweh gives in Exodus 3:14 in reply to Moses's question as to who he is to say has sent him to the people of Israel. It is generally thought that the well-known words, "I am who I am", sometimes translated "I will be who I will be", are intended to be understood in the sense of "the One who is present and who will be present", that is, in a relative and efficacious sense and therefore precisely not in an ontological sense of absolute being, as the Septuagint's formulation misleadingly suggested (LXX: egō eimi ho ōn = "I am he who truly is").[1] We have here a revelation of the being of God as divine Will: of being, yes, but of being-for, not of being-in-itself. Yahweh's self-description is a self-

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[1] Cf. von Rad (1962), p. 180; Eichrodt (1961), p. 190; and Thielicke (1978), Vol. II, p. 111.

impartation; the revelation of his name constitutes a promise of his active, helpful presence. The temporal open-endedness conveyed by the Hebrew formulation at once binds Yahweh to the people of Israel now and in time to come and also, in the elusiveness and indefiniteness of its future reference, precludes any possible appropriation of the deity by those to whom he has revealed his name. A history is being inaugurated, in continuity with what has preceded. Yahweh names himself as its Author and in so doing commits himself to his elect; but in the same breath, as it were, he shows himself to be infinitely beyond their grasp. No confusion could arise here as to whether, in disclosing his name, Yahweh had opened himself to being made this people's possession. The implicit exclusion of all magic and idolatry is later made explicit in the First, Second, and Third Commandments of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:1-7; Dt. 5:6-11).

The conceptual god of the Greek philosophers did not have a name, nor did it enter into relationship with men. It was a principle, not a personal Will. The metaphysical problem of God's relation to the world was therefore insoluble for the Greeks. God was a rational principle, timeless and as such intelligible; the world was material and transitory. Such utterly different things could not be coherently related except in a purely intellectual way, by the theory of Forms or in terms of the category of motion. What we have called a "paradox" in connection with the God of Israel would have been simply

inconceivable, not to say contradictory, to the Greek philosophical mind.

This is not because the Hebrew conception of God was irrational, though it would have seemed so to the Greeks, given their understanding of reality as essentially rational. The Hebrew conception of God was personal, not irrational. Will, not logic, was its determining centre. We shall consider more carefully later the relation of rationality and personality; for our present purpose it is enough to maintain, with Tillich, that the use of the word "paradox" in theological language is not intended to say something illogical, but "to give the adequate, understandable, and therefore logical expression of the infinite tensions of Christian existence."[1] The central paradox in the Judeo-Christian tradition points beyond the realm in which finite reason is applicable: the infinite, the unbounded, the eternal, the One-beyond-time, comes to inhabit the finite and changing spatio-temporal world.

Such a paradox makes conceptual sense only if one understands God to be personal and sovereign and as willing communion with his creatures; and such an understanding, as we have seen, cannot be derived from the world but is given only in revelation. A personal, omnipotent God, purposing that men should know him, and capable of accomplishing all that he wills, can appear to men and reveal his name, can even become incarnate,

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[1] Tillich (1951), Vol. I, pp. 56f.

yet without compromising his transcendence and sovereignty. The revealed God is truly God and we may know him; yet this God whom we may know is free and remains ungraspable and mysterious even in his self-revelation.[1] This paradox, beyond human comprehension, is rationally acceptable if we see as its referent the God-who-acts, the Will behind and beneath all reality. Such a God will englobe rationality within his being, but his being will not be reducible to rationality. His relation to the rational cosmos he has made, and in particular to men, will not be inferable from or determinable by the rational terms inherent in his own creation. He will not contradict the logic and laws of the world (indeed he cannot do so, since he is true to himself and the world is his work); but neither will he allow this logic, as it may be more or less apprehended by intelligent creatures, to control him or define exhaustively what must be the nature and mode of his relation to created reality. The ultimate--what Tillich calls "the ground of being"--cannot be fully compassed by one of the contingent beings the Creator has made. God exceeds our comprehension not simply in fact but in principle.

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[1] Ibid., p. 109.

I.5

The necessity for understanding the "ground of being" as personal.

The Judeo-Christian God, unlike the God of the Greeks, is a mystery. That is to say, he is beyond the grasp of human intellect. This is because he is personal. There is no contradiction between saying ~~that~~ God is personal and declaring him to be the "ground of being", provided one understands the "ground of being" to mean the Creator of all that is. This is where, in our view, Tillich falls into confusion.[1] Though he can write that "the Logos (i.e., the divine self-manifestation) is actively present in everything that exists, because everything is made through it", and that "the Logos universal and the Logos as the power of a personal life are one and the same Logos",[2] he still feels obliged to insist that a supra-personal ground of being (the "Personal-Itself") is somehow "beneath" the Creator-God of the Bible and to be distinguished from him, at least conceptually. Thus he is able to say that

> <u>being</u> and <u>person</u> are not contradictory concepts. Being includes personal being; it does not deny it. The ground of being is the ground of personal being, not its negation. The ontological question of being creates not a conflict but a necessary basis for any

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[1] In our original draft we included a lengthy discussion of Tillich's ontology, which limitations of space have obliged us to cut. We mention here, without being able to argue for it, the main conclusion of that discussion; the point in question is central to our thesis, and we shall recur to it often in these pages.

[2] Tillich (1955), p. 75.

> theoretical dealing with the biblical concept of the personal God.[1]

We agree that being and person need not be contradictory concepts, but for us the basis for this assertion must be reversed: personal Being, who chooses to create the world, is the ground of being. By virtue of personal creative Being, there are beings. The doctrine of creatio ex nihilo provides the starting point for a comprehensive coordination of theology and ontology. Tillich's attempt to run the two enterprises on parallel tracks that join in infinity/ultimacy yields a dichotomous theology lacking simplicity. The Trinity, rather than Tillich's a-personal concept of Being-itself,[2] needs to be seen as primary and as the Source of all being. In saying that the Creator is a Being, and personal, one is by no means required, as Tillich fears, to compromise his transcendence and mystery or to enclose him in the limitations associated with finite beings. We do this only when our aim is to compass him with our minds rather than to know him with our spirits. We find no such compromise in the Bible, and it seems arbitrary to suggest that theoretical discussion of the biblical concept of the personal God requires any other basis than this personal God himself in his revelation. Tillich half-glimpses this in the astonishment he occasionally shows when referring to parts of Scripture, as in the following passage:

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[1] Ibid., p. 83.

[2] Tillich (1951), Vol. I, pp. 235ff., 244f., 261.

One of the most surprising qualities of the prophetic utterances in the Old Testament is that, on the one hand, they always appear concrete and anthropomorphic and that, on the other hand, they preserve the mystery of the divine ground. They never deal with being as being or with the absolute as the absolute; nevertheless, they never make God a being alongside others, into something conditioned by something else which also is conditioned.[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 242.

CHAPTER II

The concept of the person and the personal.

II.1

Components of the concept of the person; the classical concept of the individual.

We come now to the question of what we mean by person and personal. We shall restrict our discussion to aspects that seem directly relevant to the Christian doctrine of providence. We have suggested that the Greek and Roman philosophers, despite the considerable variety in their treatment of the subject, held, qua philosophers, a rational view of divinity and of divinity's relation to the world of matter. Within their conceptual framework, the incommensurability of the intelligible/eternal and the material/temporal spheres could not be overcome.[1] The consequent impossibility of a consistent and clear understanding of divinity and its connection with the world was perhaps the chief reason, logically speaking, why the concept of the person as it came to be understood in the Church did not emerge in classical civilization.

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[1] The problem was especially acute, of course, for Platonists and Aristotelians; but arguably it plays a key role in later Hellenistic thought as well, as a foil against which the materialist monism of the Epicureans and the Stoics, and the scepticism of the Academy from the Third Century B.C. onwards, were reactions.

This concept contains four essential components: the rational, the eternal, the historical, and the relational. We shall examine these in turn shortly. It is on the basis of all of them together that the concept of the person can be distinguished from that of the individual. Classical philosophy was thoroughly familiar with this latter concept. In Aristotelian thought, for example, the primary sense of the category of substance is "that which is neither predicable of a subject nor present in a subject: for instance, the individual man or horse....All substance appears to signify that which is individual."[1] For Plato, it is true, the real was associated with the ideal Form and not with a particular embodiment of it (or participation in it); but for Aristotle, only the particular can be said truly to exist, and a universal Form itself has no reality apart from a substance.[2] Yet even for Aristotle, what counted ultimately was the universal, not the individual, because individuals, though the only real existents, were ephemeral: the species alone endured. "Les individus passent," writes Etienne Gilson in this connection, "mais l'espèce dure, si bien qu'en fin de compte l'individu qui subsiste et passe n'est là que pour assurer la permanence de ce qui ne subsiste pas, mais ne passe pas."[3] The perdurability of any individual substance is clearly

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[1] Aristotle, Categories V.2a, 3b.

[2] See Aristotle's discussion of this issue in Metaphysics I.ix.990b-993a.

[3] Gilson (1969), p. 196.

ruled out by such an understanding, which is why Aristotle has difficulty with the idea of the rational soul as it is to be found in the human being. For Plato, the soul is pre-existent to the body, incomposite and rational; it is the source of movement, i.e., of life; hence it is immortal and of a different substance altogether from the perishable body.[1] Aristotle, by contrast, understands the soul as the form of the body (matter), so that the two are inseparable and make up a single substance.[2] How the mind fits in with this individual--and perishable--unity of body and soul remains problematical for him:

> We have no evidence as yet about mind or the power to think; it seems to be a widely different kind of soul, differing as what is eternal from what is perishable; it alone is capable of existence in isolation from all other psychic powers.[3]

And further on he adds:

> Thus that in the soul which is called mind (by mind I mean that whereby the soul thinks and judges) is, before it thinks, not actually any real thing. For this reason it cannot reasonably be regarded as blended with the body; if so, it would acquire some quality, e.g. warmth or cold, or even have an organ like the sensitive faculty: as it is, it has none....Mind in this sense of it is separable, impassible, unmixed, since it is in its essential nature activity....When mind is set free from its present conditions it appears as just what it is and nothing more: this alone is immortal and eternal...and without it nothing thinks.[4]

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[1] Plato, Phaedo 78e-84c; and The Laws X.892-899.

[2] Aristotle, On the Soul II.i.412a-413a.

[3] Ibid., II.ii.413b.

[4] Ibid., II.iv.429b; v.430a.

Neither Plato nor Aristotle could fully conceptualize the unity of an individual human being, including his body, soul, and mind: Plato had no desire to try, since for him the union of body and soul was unfortunate and merely transitory, the body being essentially unreal because mortal; Aristotle, while perceiving the unity of body and soul, was unable to integrate mind into this composite substance because mind, being imperishable, is not qualitatively determined but is essentially active and impassible. Aristotle's concept of mind, in this sense, resembles Plato's concept of soul. In both cases that which is eternal in man is detachable from the individual human being, who perishes with the rest of the material world. For Plato, what has reality is the Idea of man, not the particular participation in this Form which is an individual man; for Aristotle, what has permanence is the species (and mind), not the unitary existent. The rational/eternal is basically incompatible with the material/historical.

This incompatibility can be overcome only by God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. The divine Son incarnate, crucified, and resurrected, shatters the dualistic conceptuality of every form of idealism as well as the monistic conceptuality of every form of materialism. The God to whom the Judeo-Christian Scriptures bear witness shows himself, in his freedom, sovereignty, and love, to be the Creator and Redeemer of all that is. God in Christ provided the answer to the problem which the classical philosophers were unable to solve.

Christ's resurrection as source of the eternal value conferred by the Church on the individual composed of a body and a rational soul, and having a history.

It was on the basis of this divine self-revelation, adumbrated in the history of the Hebrews as recorded in the Scriptures, that the concept of the person could emerge, of which the first two essential elements are the rational and the eternal. This concept involves the whole man, both the material and the rational parts: the concrete part that is perishing and the intellectual or spiritual part that cannot simply be reduced to the physical and that seems, in its powers of reason, of will, and of self-transcendence, to belong to another sphere than the material. Only if the body, like the soul, can be said to have real value, can these opposite parts be integrated into such a whole; and to the classical world, only the quality of permanence, of immortality, held real value. The resurrection of Jesus Christ, by which the incarnation of the Son of God was authenticated and his crucifixion made meaningful, conferred such value on the human body. Hence Justin Martyr could write:

> For what is man but the reasonable animal composed of body and soul? Is the soul by itself man? No; but the soul of man. Would the body be called man? No; but it is called the body of man. If, then, neither of these is by itself man, but that which is made up of the two together is called man, and God has called man to life and resurrection, He has called not a part, but the whole, which is the soul and the body.[1]

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[1] Justin Martyr, Extant Fragments of his lost work on the Resurrection VIII.

Athenagoras develops the same point more lengthily in his De Resurrectione, after having argued that human nature has been constituted at its creation a living being compounded of an immortal soul and body having a common life and end:

> If there is one harmony and concord of the entire living being, including the things that spring from the soul and the things that are done by the body, then the end of all these phenomena must also be one....If understanding and reason have been given men to discern intelligibles, not only substances but also the goodness, wisdom, and justice of him who endowed men with these gifts, it is necessary that, where the realities because of which rational discernment has been given are permanent, the discernment itself which has been given to be exercised on them should also be permanent. But it cannot be permanent unless the nature which received it and the faculties in which it resides are permanent. It is man--not simply soul--who received understanding and reason. Man, then, who consists of both soul and body, must survive for ever; but he cannot survive unless he is raised. For if there is no resurrection, the nature of men as men would not be permanent.[1]

The value conferred on the human body by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was rooted by the early Christian thinkers in the doctrine of creation and in particular in the worth of man as made in the image of God. Justin Martyr, who based his anthropology on the Scriptural understanding of man as a unity of matter and spirit, links the Genesis 1:26 text with Genesis 2:7 to argue that in God's sight flesh is honourable.[2] From Paul onwards, Christian theologians were led by the fact of the resurrection to reflect on the doctrine of creation; the

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[1] Athenagoras, De Resurrectione XV.

[2] Justin Martyr, op. cit., VII.

latter was seen to be the ground of the dignity of man newly revealed and vouchsafed by the former. Here was the basis for a coherent doctrine of providence that bound God integrally to the material world in time and to the rational creature, man. Neither Plato's Demiurge nor Aristotle's Unmoved Mover had created matter, so they could not truly know the particular forms that matter individualizes.[1] By contrast, the Creator God of the Old and New Testaments knows intimately every individual creature he has made; and knowing them, he sustains them in being and provides for their needs.

We shall examine in the next chapter the doctrine of the imago Dei and its relation to the doctrine of providence and to personhood. For the moment let us glance at the third essential component in the concept of person: the historical. Already one clue to the meaning of this has been provided by the idea of permanence and continuity. The individual rational animal called a man was understood by the Church to possess an identity that persisted not only in time but even beyond death into eternity, by virtue of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, on the strength of which all men would be raised again from the dead, unto everlasting glory or judgment. As a rational being deliberately created and cherished by God, this individual had a history and a

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[1] Gilson (1969), p. 169. In The Laws X.900-903, Plato does speak of the gods as having knowledge of all details in the universe. But, as we suggested above (pp. 9f. and p. 13), his religious discussion of providence here must be seen in the metaphysical context of his prior discussion of the divine understood as rational soul.

destiny. He had freedom to act, being rational, and his historical actions had eternal significance, being inscribed in a vocation given him by God. This God-given vocation included, and did not contradict, his own free agency. Such a paradox was comprehensible precisely and only in the context of fellowship with God, and not by logic. A man could enter into his vocation or refuse it, but God remained sovereign whatever he did, to whom he was responsible momentarily and ultimately, as to the One who had called him out of nothing into life and dignity and purpose. It is as the bearer of such a God-given identity and destiny that a man may be said to be a person.[1]

Furthermore, when the experience of divine self-revelation within the confines of history is correlated with the doctrine of creation, man is seen both to be embedded in a natural/historical reality that is understood as essentially good, and to be transcendent of this reality through his creative freedom and ultimate destiny. The contingent, dynamic, and particular features that characterize the material/historical sphere are shown in the first place to be rooted in God's creative will and in the second place to be vindicated by his redemptive act through his incarnate Son, Jesus of Nazareth. This confers a completely new status on man's existence within history and links it fundamentally with his calling to be partaker of the divine

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[1] See Oliver O'Donovan's discussion of the importance of God-given vocation in the biblical understanding of an individual's historicality and of what we would call his personhood, in O'Donovan (1984), ch. 4, esp. pp. 53ff.

life. The historical and the meaningful are no longer at odds. The concept of the person as we understand it could take shape only in conjunction with a basic and positive revaluation of the historical.[1]

The concept of person, then, as it emerged in the Church over the course of centuries, was very much more far-reaching than the concepts of soul or of rational individuality found in Plato or Aristotle and taken up in various ways by later Greek and Roman thinkers. It was essentially bound up with the Triune God who, through the incarnation of the Son, had shown himself to be Redeemer and Creator of all that is. Revelation, not speculative thought, was its root. The Greek recognition of the rational individual, and the mature Hebrew understanding (itself the product of revelation) of the whole man as made in God's image and called by God into covenant with himself, formed the cultural matrix for the later development of the concept; but the person (and work) of Jesus the Messiah, understood by the Church to be God's self-revelation to all men, was necessary to forge these elements into a unity, by providing them with an altogether new context that validated man both in his historicity and in his longing for eternity. Through the enfleshment, passion, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God, man was given the promise of everlasting life and of conformity to the divine

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[1] For a luminous analysis of the doctrine of creation and its relation to the meaning of history, see Gilkey (1959), pp. 185-207.

nature, not as a negation of or escape from his historical creatureliness but as its ultimate fulfilment.

II.2

Emergence of the concept of person in the course of theological debate; relevance of this to relational component of the concept.

As a confirmation of this last point, it is important to recall that the Christian concept of person was hammered out first in the course of the great Fourth and Fifth Century Trinitarian and Christological debates. This fact underlines the source of the concept in revelation and also its integral connection with the historical. It also brings us to the fourth essential component of this concept, the relational, which we shall consider by examining several issues in these debates, using Karl Barth's analysis of Trinitarian doctrine as our guide and starting point.

To speak of divine revelation, at least as it is understood in the Old and New Testaments, is to speak of God disclosing himself by word and deed in history. It points us immediately to the paradox alluded to earlier (p. 31), of which the Incarnation is the ultimate expression: the Eternal One enters into time, the Transcendent One takes on flesh. Here we find ourselves necessarily talking in Trinitarian terms. The root of the doctrine of the Trinity, as Barth persuasively argues, is revelation: that is, we arrive at the doctrine by an analysis of

revelation as set forth in the Scriptures.[1] In revealing himself in Jesus Christ as the Son, God also reveals himself as the Father and as the Holy Spirit; more precisely: while unveiling himself in the incarnate Son, in whom he is present to us (though not at our disposal) and by whom we know the Father, God remains transcendent and veiled in the Father, the principle of Godhead, and imparts himself to men as individuals through the Holy Spirit, who, proceeding eternally from the Father, is the Spirit both of the Father and of the eternally-begotten Son, and who unites us to them both in revealing both of them to us. God truly unveils himself and imparts himself truly to us, so that the revealed God is truly God; yet he remains hidden even in his revelation, utterly mysterious and free. "Revelation in the Bible," writes Barth,

> means the self-unveiling, imparted to men, of the God who according to His nature cannot be unveiled to man. The element of self-unveiling in this definition may be described not as the logically material, but as the historical centre of the Biblical concept of revelation. When the Bible speaks of revelation, it does so in the form of narrating a story or a series of stories....But what is the meaning here of self-unveiling? Since it is the God who according to His nature cannot be unveiled to man, who unveils Himself there, self-unveiling means that God does what man himself cannot do in any sense or in any way; He makes Himself present, known, and significant to them as God.[2]

Clearly the God who does all this is <u>personal</u>, i.e., he is a rational Will who acts with purpose in history, in the sphere of

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[1] Barth (1975, G. W. Bromiley translation), Vol. I/1.8, 9.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 315.

humanity, such that we must say that he is not known or knowable from the man-ward side by deductive or inductive speculation but is known to us only by self-disclosure on his own initiative, in the form, as Barth puts it, of a story, of historical events involving words, and consummately in the form of the event of the incarnation-crucifixion-resurrection-ascension of the Word.

Barth continues:

> It follows directly from the Trinitarian understanding of the God revealed in Scripture that this one God is to be regarded not only as an impersonal lordship, i.e. as power, but as the Lord, and so not only as absolute Spirit but as a Person, i.e. as an I existing in and for Itself with a thought and will proper to it. It is thus that He meets us in His revelation. It is thus that He is God thrice as Father, Son, and Spirit.[1]

If God were not in this sense a Person, he could not be Lord. We have seen (pp. 33f.) how the notion of God as supra-personal Being-itself is impossible to square with the biblical picture of God as Creator. Here we see the same thing with respect to the biblical picture of God as Lord. An impersonal god is not Lord. Opposition to the concept of a personal God involves implicitly a rejection of his Lordship.

But we must be careful in defining what we mean by calling God a Person. In our thinking of God we cannot use the human person as a model. Tillich's dissatisfaction with the phrase "personal God" comes from his fear that it makes of God a giant-sized Individual who, as such, must necessarily be circumscribed and so finite and who therefore cannot possibly participate in

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[1] Ibid., pp. 358f.

every life as its ground and aim.[1] Such a "god", in other words, cannot be God. Tillich's concern is sound according to his own understanding of the term "personal". The difficulty here is that this understanding is confused, arising out of a post-Enlightenment conception of the human person as a self-conscious individual. In defiance of his own strictures against the methods of natural theology, Tillich makes the mistake of applying this humanistic conception to God. As a consequence, he is unable to call God a Person or personal. Tillich shows here how much he is heir to the Rationalist-Idealist tradition, in which the finite posits the infinite and determines its parameters according to the presupposition that God is to be equated with the idea of Reason. In theological discussion, however, as Barth argues in developing his doctrine of God, what is most important to proclaim "is not that God is person, but the particular person He is."[2] The only God we can truly know, says Barth, is "the One who loves", and the only reason we can know this God is that he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. This means that the Idealist critique of the idea of a personal God, which springs from the contention that that idea is based on two contradictory concepts, i.e., of personality and of absoluteness, is nothing more than a modern form of rationalist speculation of the sort placed off-bounds by Kantian criticism. The paradox

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[1] Tillich (1951), Vol. I, pp. 244f.

[2] Barth (1957), Vol. II/1.28, p. 296.

relevant to God, Barth writes, "is the paradox of the combination of His grace and our lost condition, not the paradox of the combination of two for us logically irreconcilable conceptions."[1]

In talking of God as Person or personal, then, we are referring to the self-revealing God of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. It is because he has revealed himself, and only because he has revealed himself, that we are able to use the epithet "personal" in connection with God. Without the grace of his revelation, God can never be the "object" of our thinking, whom we circumscribe by our human categories.[2] He is Subject, free and sovereign. This dovetails with our earlier finding that the concept of person has its root in revelation, not in speculation. Rationalist-Idealist thought about God conveniently forgets this and inverses the procedure. Its own anthropomorphic approach is then used as the basis for a criticism of the allegedly "anthropomorphic" notion of a personal God. A consideration both of the historical development of concepts and of theological logic shows this approach to be invalid.

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[1] Ibid., p. 287.

[2] Cf. Ibid., Vol. II/1.27, pp. 205ff. In revelation, however, as Barth argues, God does indeed give himself to be the object of our cognition. Otherwise, revelation would not be true revelation and our speaking about God would not be true speech.

Person in Trinitarian debate.

When we use the term person in reference to God, we must also distinguish its meaning for us today from its meaning in orthodox Trinitarian dogma. The two meanings have little in common, despite the fact that the former is rooted ultimately in the latter. Barth observes that the concept of person or personality as applied to God was not known to the Fathers or to the Medieval or Reformation Church, ev though the thing designated by this concept--that God is an "I" and not an "It" and has a thought and will proper to himself--was, of course, known to them, it being fundamental to biblical revelation.[1] The concept arose in the Church's struggle against modern naturalism and pantheism. The concept of person as it was used in the Church doctrine of the Trinity, however, originated in the very different struggle against the Sabellian heresy in the Second, Third, and Fourth Centuries and was meant to affirm plurality in God and to indicate the being in and for themselves of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit respectively.[2]

Persona was the Latin word for mask and was used in connection with the theatre. In its connotation of appearance, as distinct from that which underlies the appearance, it was not helpful and could actually play into the hands of the Sabellians, for whom Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were merely successive

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[1] Barth (1975), Vol. I/1.9, pp. 350f.

[2] Ibid., p. 355.

phenomenal modes of the one God, under which God's single essence was concealed as something different and higher; but in its connotation of continuity, as an actor or agent who appears again and again,[1] it was similar in meaning to the Greek word hypostasis, which, to the Greeks and eventually to the Latins as well, meant an individual subsistence.[2] In their effort to define theologically their understanding of the biblically attested revelation of God, the Fathers of the Fourth Century settled on the formula of one essence, or substance, in three Persons, or subsistences. It was far from their intention to attribute three personalities to the Godhead. Confusion of this sort has resulted from the modern understanding of person as an individual centre of consciousness. So unavoidable is this confusion now that Barth, in his exposition of Trinitarian dogma, prefers to replace the word person in reference to the three hypostases in the Godhead by the phrase mode of being, which he claims is what hypostasis has always meant anyway.[3] As we have already seen (p. 47), he uses our modern concept of person, personality, and personal in his exposition of the doctrine of God proper, and as a deduction from the doctrine of the Trinity:

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[1] Cf. O'Donovan (1984), p. 52, where the author points out that persona was also used in the law courts to designate an agent who could appear, or hold a part, in the public realm.

[2] Boethius, Contra Eutychen et Nestorium, in (1953), p. 87.

[3] Barth (1975), Vol. I/1.9, pp. 358ff. He does not, of course, use "mode" in the Sabellian sense of mere difference in appearance.

> ...it is to the one single essence of God, which is not to be tripled by the doctrine of the Trinity, but emphatically to be recognised in its unity, that there also belongs what we call today the "personality" of God.[1]

In the development of Christian doctrine, then, the term person was first used in reference to God, not to man. It was not the divinities of philosophical speculation but rather the God who revealed himself in history, to whom, and to whom alone, the epithets rational, eternal, and historical, appropriately defined, could all be applied: and they all had to be applied if an adequate description of this God was to be provided. The doctrine of the Trinity was worked out in order to do just this, and it was in connection with this doctrine that the word person began to undergo the development that led eventually to our modern understanding of person as a rational, free, valuable human being.

Person in Christological debate.

The use of the word "person" in the Christological debates of the Fifth Century marked the next crucial stage in this evolution. Although Barth, as far as I am aware, does not himself make much of this point in his historical analysis, he surely signposts the way in the following passage:

> The One, the person, whom we really know as a human person, is the person of Jesus Christ, and even this is in fact the person of God the Son, in which humanity,

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[1] Ibid., pp. 350f.

> without being or having itself a person, is caught up into fellowship with the personality of God. This one man is therefore the being of God making itself known to us as the One who loves.[1]

It was through the Christological definition of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. that the concept of person, having moved from the theatre and law courts of Rome into the very heart of the Godhead, returned, greatly enriched, to earth: Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, He who is both fully God and fully man, is to be understood as One Person in Two Natures, which are united indivisibly and without confusion. Here the paradox of the Incarnation is defined as precisely as it is possible to define what must ever remain an impenetrable mystery: Christ is not two persons, as Nestorius had wished, for then humanity would not truly have been assumed by divinity; nor is he one nature, as Eutyches had wished, for then he could not truly be both God and Man.[2] The One Person of Christ is formed by the union of the two continuing natures.

In expounding the Chalcedonian definition in the early part of the Sixth Century, Boethius defines nature in several ways, the most appropriate to our present purpose being "the specific difference that gives form to anything."[3] In Christ there are two natures, for the same specific differences cannot apply to both God and man. As to person, Boethius explains that nature is

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[1] Barth (1957), Vol. II/1.28, p. 286.

[2] Cf. Boethius, op. cit., pp. 95-101.

[3] Ibid., p. 81.

a substrat of person, so that person cannot be predicated apart from nature; that person is properly applied to substances (in the sense of subsistance or subject); and that it cannot be applied to universals, only to individuals. This leads him to his famous definition of person as "the individual substance of a rational nature."[1] By this definition Boethius means to say that a person has weight and dignity in himself, as a specific, historical, individual being who is rational. What is noteworthy in this definition is that the rationality is bound to the substantiality. O'Donovan makes the point that a person, for Boethius, is not qualitatively conceived, as being merely "the particular instance of a rational nature."[2] A person is an individual substance, not dependent on philosophical qualification for his ontic identity or worth.

Boethius's Christologically determined definition of person extended by Aquinas to man in general.

Boethius applies this definition to Christ, who is both God and man. But the definition need not be limited to Christ in its application, and indeed it has not been. On the contrary, its influence on medieval anthropology was profound, providing a vessel to contain the radical new Christian content of the meaning of a man that earlier thinkers like Justin Martyr and

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[1] Ibid., pp. 83-86.

[2] O'Donovan (1984), p. 54.

Athenagoras had already discerned. This is especially clear in Aquinas's treatment of person in the Summa Theologiae Ia. Q. 29, AA. 1-4. Aristotle's definition of the nature of man is interpreted and extended in terms of Boethius's definition of person, which presupposes the Trinitarian and Christological context. But the extent to which the anthropological reference of person has already become primary as far as the organization of dogmatic discussion is concerned is shown by the question at the head of Article Three: "Can the term 'Person' be applied to God?" Aquinas answers:

> ...Person signifies what is most perfect in all nature--that is, a subsistent individual of a rational nature. Hence, since everything that is perfect must be attributed to God, forasmuch as His essence contains every perfection, this name person is fittingly applied to God; not, however, as it is applied to creatures, but in a more excellent way; as other names also, which, while giving them to creatures, we attribute to God...

The word "person", he admits, is not found in the Old and New Testaments. "Nevertheless," he goes on,

> what the word signifies is found to be affirmed of God in many places in Scripture; as that He is the supreme self-subsisting being, and the most perfectly intelligent being....And because subsistence in a rational nature is of high dignity, therefore every individual of the rational nature is called a person. Now the dignity of the divine nature excels every other dignity; and thus the name person preeminently belongs to God.[1]

From here Thomas proceeds to distinguish the meaning of the word person in general from the meaning of the word as applied to

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[1] Aquinas, Summa Theologiae Ia. Q. 29, A. 3.

God, i.e., in Trinitarian doctrine. Already, however, as the above quotation shows, the notion of God as being personal *in his essence*, and not merely with reference to the hypostatic relations in the Godhead, has been made practically explicit, with due notice given of the analogical nature of this usage, as with any other use of a merely human term when applied to God. What Thomas means by this is certainly not quite the same as what post-Enlightenment theologians have meant when talking of God as *personal*; but the groundwork is being laid here for the later understanding. This is the case, indeed, not only for the *content* of the term *person*, but also for the manner of approach to discussion of the subject. Although Aquinas firmly asserts that the name *person* preeminently belongs to God, he does this at the *end* of an analysis that *begins* with an anthropological reference for the concept, in keeping with Boethius's general definition. This actually inverses the Boethian approach, which originates, as we have said, in a *Christological* context. With the passage of time this anthropological orientation would be accentuated and its Christological basis forgotten, until the Idealist thinkers of the Nineteenth Century, such as Fichte, Feuerbach, and Strauss, having overlooked or rejected outright the theological root for talk about a personal God, would flatly call such talk mythological and attribute it to anthropomorphic projection, precisely in contradiction of the historical reality.

The relational component of the concept of person.

From the Trinitarian and Christological debates of the Fourth , Fifth, and Sixth Centuries one other element emerged which decisively shaped the concept of person, and which has carried over into the modern secularized understanding of the term. It is what we have called the fourth essential component in the concept of person: the relational. Trinitarian doctrine defined person in the context of relations. The three hypostases in the Godhead were called Persons in that each had something proper to himself, something incommunicable;[1] and this proprium was to be understood not in terms of the divine essence, which all three Persons shared equally, but in terms of the relations between the Persons. It is Augustine who, in the West, most lucidly enunciates this truth:

> But in God nothing is said to be according to the accident, because there is nothing changeable in Him, nor does everything that is said of Him refer to His substance. For something can be said of Him in regard to relation, as the relation of the Father to the Son, and of the Son to the Father. There is no question here of an accident, because the one is always the Father and the other is always the Son....But because the Father is only called the Father because He has a Son, the Son must, therefore, be only called the Son because He has a Father, and so these terms are not said according to the substance. For each of them is not so called in relation to Himself, but the terms are used mutually and in relation of one to the other; nor

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[1] Cf. Barth (1975), Vol. I/1.9, pp. 360ff.; and John Calvin, Institutes I.xiii.6: "'Person', therefore, I call a 'subsistence' in God's essence, which, while related to the others, is distinguished by an incommunicable quality. By the term 'subsistance' we would understand something different from 'essence'."

> do they refer to anything accidental, because that which is called the Father and that which is called the Son is eternal and unchangeable in them. Consequently, although to be the Father and to be the Son are two different things, still there is no difference in their substance, because the names, Father and Son, do not refer to the substance but to the relation, and the relation is no accident because it is not changeable.[1]

The Holy Spirit, as a third distinct Person, is also in relation to the Father and to the Son, even while, in respect of essence, or substance, the name "Spirit" is common to the three Persons equally and to the One God. As Augustine formulated it, the Holy Spirit is not the Son, because he proceeds from the Father (John 15:20), whereas the Son is begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit comes forth, not as one born but as one given.[2] As far as the internal relations of the Godhead are concerned, Augustine sees the Holy Spirit as the gift of both Father and Son and as the ineffable communion between them.[3] Through the Holy Spirit, Father and Son are joined together in a unity of love.[4] Aquinas, projecting onto the Godhead Augustine's psychological analogy of Intellect, Word, and Will, stresses in the first place the order of the divine procession, identifying the Son with the intelligible procession-generation of the Word by way of

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[1] Augustine, De Trinitate V.5.6.

[2] Ibid., V.14.15.

[3] Ibid.; and V.11.12.

[4] Ibid., VI.5.7.

similitude, and the Holy Spirit with the volitional procession of love by way of impulse or movement towards an object.[1]

> For the procession of love occurs in due order as regards the procession of the Word; since nothing can be loved by the will unless it is conceived in the intellect....So, although in God the will and the intellect are the same, still, inasmuch as love requires by its very nature that it proceed only from the concept of the intellect, there is a distinction of order between the procession of love and the procession of the Word in God.[2]

At a later stage in his discussion of the Trinity, Thomas concludes that it is the three relations of paternity, filiation, and procession which are called personal properties and that they themselves constitute the Persons: "...the several persons in God are the several subsisting relations really distinct from each other."[3] Barth in principle follows Catholic dogmatics on this matter, by arguing that it is indeed their relations that make the separate Persons of the Godhead into those Persons.[4]

We see, then, that if the concept of person is henceforth indissociable in Western thought from the concept of relations, it is because of the Trinitarian discourse in which the concept was first elaborated. A person is much more than a rational

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[1] Aquinas, Summa Theologiae Ia. Q. 27, AA. 1-5.

[2] Ibid., Ia. Q. 27, A. 3.

[3] Ibid., Ia. Q. 30, A. 2. See below, section IV.3, for a fuller discussion of this issue. The problem involved in equating the hypostases with relations within the Godhead is that it tends to depersonalize the hypostases and endangers what the Eastern tradition calls their "absolute diversity".

[4] Barth (1975), Vol. I/1.9, p. 366.

individual: he is a rational individual whose identity involves being in relation to other persons. What was initially worked out in the context of theological debate was naturally extended to anthropology, in part through reflection on the Person of Jesus Christ and on the way he himself related to other persons during his earthly life. The incarnate Son who, in John's Gospel, repeatedly speaks of his relation to and dependence on the Father (cf. Jn. 5:30, 36; 6:38; 10:37f.; 12:49f.; 14:10f., 28; 17:4), speaks likewise of his followers' dependence on him: "Without me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) As he loves, so must they love; and the glory and authority the Father has given him on earth, so he gives to them (Jn. 15:9, 17; 17:18, 22; 20:21ff.; cf. Mt. 28:18ff.). Just as God is not an isolated Individual, so men are not autonomous units, either socially or ontologically. Both God and the rational creatures he has made are relational beings, and it is precisely the Creator's ultimate purpose that he and they live in free and joyous fellowship.

In sum we may say that it was through development of the dogmatic and ethical implications of the incarnation, itself the fulfilment of the covenantal meaning of all Old Testament revelation, that the all-important matters of the Triune God's internal relations, of his relation to men in time, and of men's relations to each other, were examined and expounded by the Church across the centuries, causing a whole new understanding of reality to emerge. A God who is personal, who has come among men as a divine-human person, who has revealed himself in the context

of historical life as the One who loves, as the Redeemer and Creator of human persons infinitely valuable to himself, is a God who demonstrably cares for men and wills to be in ongoing dialogical relationship with them within history and beyond it. This is the God of the Christian doctrine of providence, and it is because of this God, and only because of this God, that such a doctrine is possible and reasonable.

II.3

Relation to the personal God of "personalistic" representations of deity in primitive religion and mythology.

One other matter requires our consideration before we go on to examine the doctrine of the imago Dei. If it is true to say, as we are arguing, that the concept of person (as distinct from that of individual) with which we are familiar today is rooted ultimately in divine revelation as attested in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures, what connection, if any, does this have with the "personalistic" gods so common in popular religion and myth? There can be little doubt that what H. H. Farmer calls "living religion",[1] wherever or whenever it has arisen, involves encounter with a supernatural power or powers experienced somehow as "personal". Mircea Eliade, H. H. Farmer, John Oman, Bertil Albrektson, Rudolf Otto, and other scholars have shown that a personalistic conception of the divine reality, based on such

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[1] Farmer (1954), p. 28 et passim.

"encounter", is widespread in the history of religions, albeit under a variety of forms. Our concern at this stage is not so much to investigate important differences between the Judeo-Christian God of the Bible and the gods of other religions, including those of Israel's immediate Mesopotamian environment, as simply to suggest that the phenomenology of religion provides evidence confirming what we have discovered in our examination of the concept of the personal as applied to God, namely, that this concept derives in the first instance from the side of revelation, of the divine impinging on human experience, and not from the side of man projecting onto divinity an alleged consciousness of "self" and "personality".

Undoubtedly the mythological elaboration of deities with human character traits who engage in intrigue amongst themselves and in their relations to men--the kind of thing found, for example, in Homer or Virgil, and to which the classical philosophers were so vehemently opposed--is pure anthropomorphic projection and retains only the most tenuous connection with the inward religious apprehension lying behind it, i.e., that deity is personal. It would be a mistake, however, to confuse this inward and original apprehension with the symbols and crude "theologies" concocted subsequently by the human imagination, just as it would be misguided to confuse with idolatry the primitive intuition of a divine power meeting man in holy demand

and final succour.[1] "Failure rightly to perceive and respond to the personal aproach of God and failure to perceive or encounter Him in a personal way at all are obviously quite different things," writes Farmer perceptively.[2]

Distortion or perversion of the original apprehension of a personal divine power is the result of human egocentricity and fear, which cause men to resist their creaturely and dependent status and to crave immediate and total control over reality. Underlying mythological invention are the search to "explain" this reality and the quest for metaphysical security, both of which are in themselves proper and natural human drives arising out of the encounter of man's rationality with being as a whole, including his own precarious existence; but fallen man's incapacity for trustful submission to the personal source of being that he apprehends leads to idolatrous perception and activity. Polytheistic idolatry and the mythologies connected with it are a kind of shadow of the substantial truth intuited by primitive men that the divine personal will they encounter as both holy claim and merciful succour meets them in relation to their actual tasks and situations in the concrete world.[3] While this divine will is certainly experienced as transcendent, it is seen to be relevant mainly to the practical business of

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[1] See Farmer (1942), pp. 25ff.

[2] Farmer (1954), p. 38.

[3] Cf. ibid., p. 111.

maintaining physical and social life here and now. This intuition, though needing theological refinement, is essentially true as far as it goes, in as much as it senses something of what would later be called providence, and resists any false dichotomizing of the transcendent and the immanent spheres. But the rebellious human drive for ultimate domination and self-sufficiency, in virtual denial of its own contingency, leads to the quest for influence and control of this divine power that is perceived quite rightly to be concerned with the everyday realities of life. Primitive ritual, magic, and mythological story-telling all can be seen to a greater or lesser degree as exercises of this kind. Idolatry, at bottom, is the worship by men of what they themselves have made or appropriated, in the form of images or fancies or ideas. Subservience to "personalistic" deities is the "shadow" substitute for the genuinely personal relationship with God involving trust and obedience, which is implied in the original apprehension of the divine as being both holy and concerned integrally with the affairs of men.

The words "personal" and "personalistic" may stand here respectively for what we take to be living religion's true intuition and its distortions and idolatrous perversion. Used thus, the terms are categorically opposed, though in actual religious practice gradations between these poles are undoubtedly found. Applied to divinity, the concept of <u>personal</u> is analogical, in that it is an attempt in necessarily human

language to characterize that which is both like something men are able to experience and yet, for being divine, like nothing men can comprehend. The concept of personalistic, however, as we are employing it here, is basically anthropomorphic. By natural inclination, in the interest of securing their position, men tend to anthropomorphize whatever has to do with divinity. One of the more sophisticated ways of doing this is to confuse "personal" and "personalistic" in the senses we are giving them in this analysis, and then to label "anthropomorphic" all reference to God as personal. We are contending that the opposite is the case: the anthropomorphic move is precisely to call God impersonal or to reduce him to a rational principle of a metaphysical or moral kind, as philosophy is always prone to do. Such a move springs from the human mind and is patently not a response to divine revelation. It objectifies divinity and puts it at man's disposal, whereas the numinous power experienced in primitive religion, and the self-revealing God of the Old and New Testaments, is essentially non-manipulable.[1] Even the gods of the Greek and Latin poets and of the popular religions of antiquity were meant to represent forces known or felt to be beyond human control,[2] and to this extent classical mythology,

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[1] In his essay, "The Question of God" (1972, Vol. II), Wolfhart Pannenberg reflects on the immunity to manipulation of the all-determining power known in genuine religious experience, and concludes to the origin of personality in the phenomenon of religion rather than in a self-grounded human determination.

[2] Cf. Collingwood (1940), pp. 207f.

though manipulative by its imaginative domestication of divinity, still retained, in its personification of the gods, an echo of what Rudolf Otto has called the mysterium tremendum.[1] In any case the idea of the divine as somehow personal, with the attendant responses ranging from awe and reverence to sheer idolatry and anthropomorphism, may be properly understood as expressing, more or less truly, the sense of a transcendent and essentially mysterious and uncontrollable Will standing over against man, exerting upon him the pressure of a claim and a summons.

Following on from this, it is arguable that the glimpses found in classical philosophy and in pre- or non-Christian cultures, of an understanding of man as a being with intrinsic worth, of more value than the beasts, have their ultimate origin not in reason but in God and in his self-revealing pressure on the human spirit. Even if the Greek and Roman philosophers conceived of God rationalistically, it was still of God, not of man, that the majority of them were meaning to conceive. The standpoint of Plato in The Laws, for all his opposition to the poets and to the abuses of popular religion, was theonomous, not autonomous, as is evident in his argument for providence and in his denial of Protagoras's statement that man is the measure of all things.[2] The personal character of man, as Pannenberg

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[1] Otto (1923), esp. chs. 4 and 5.

[2] Plato, The Laws X and IV.716, 717; cf. Thielicke (1977), Vol. II, pp. 106f.

observes, is by no means self-evident.[1] Men are naturally inclined to exploit each other as things rather than to treat each other with the dignity deserving of persons. A sense of something eternal and valuable in the human being as such, of something that transcends his present mundane condition under the sign of change and death, requires for its emergence an approach towards the rational creature, and an affirmation of him, by the personal Being who is the Source of his existence. It is pride and fear that cause men to twist this sense of destiny into self-aggrandizement by reducing transcendence to manipulable immanence in the form of familiar anthropomorphic gods or of rational principles. With this distortion goes a corresponding limitation on the mutual respect men show in their relations. But all this does not negate the reality of the primary mystical awareness of the Personal Other or of that Other's summons, even if it renders insoluble from the man-ward side the problem of how to know this Other and to be in true communion with him.

This problem God alone can solve; and in his historical self-revelation to men as attested in the Old and New Testaments, he has solved it. Yet it is also our contention that the self-revealing God of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures is the same personal God whom primitive man dimly senses behind the contingency of events and the various kinds of limits imposed on him by his own finitude. This God is forever seeking, even

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[1] Pannenberg (1972), Vol. II, p. 228.

outside the bounds of his historical self-disclosure, to draw men to himself, a fact which accounts for the universal phenomenon of religious experience, however far from the mark this experience may be when judged by biblical standards. Pannenberg suggests that experience of the contingency of events and of a unity and power behind them, is what leads men to attribute to events a personal quality and to see them as acts.[1] He rightly stresses that awareness of their contingency is in itself not enough to achieve this insight. "The required additional factor," he writes,

> is the identity of the power that is operative in a series of contingent events, a unity behind contingent self-expressions. This unity acquires identity by exhibiting some meaningful connection in the sequence of events. If this meaningful connection is understood in such a way as to replace the contingency of events with deterministic models of reality, the notion of a personal power behind these events in untenable. But so long as we acknowledge the genuine contingency of events, the basic precondition for personal encounter is provided.[2]

Ironically--this is a point Pannenberg fails to develop--it is precisely this contingency of events, with the terrifying insecurity it entails for man alienated from God, that drives men to set up deterministic systems of a mythological or rationalistic sort, whereby events are perceived as repetitions of mythical archetypes or as the consequences of eternal law. The intuition or perception of a unity behind occurrences tends

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[1] Pannenberg (1969), p. 58.

[2] Ibid.

in practice to splinter into polytheistic worship or to harden into religious or philosophical systematization, rather than to bring about any clear sense of a free and sovereign personal God overseeing events for the sake of men. Thus while it may be true, as Pannenberg holds, that acknowledgment of the genuine contingency of events is the basic precondition for vital religious experience, it needs to be added that without divine revelation in certain particular historical happenings, such recognition cannot lead to a true knowledge and worship of the unique and personal God. We may affirm that God moves generally through and in contingency to press upon men his reality and his summons; we may even suggest that this pressure is revelatory of God in the sphere of time as the material order is revelatory in the sphere of space. But having said as much, we must go on to insist emphatically that in addition to this, because of human sin and blindness, specific disclosure of his redemptive presence, power, and will is necessary if men are actually to see the One who does really reveal himself, albeit indirectly, in his creation, and are to know and cleave to this God as he truly is: holy, righteous, full of mercy, ever desiring fellowship with his creature, man.

CHAPTER III

The doctrine of the *imago Dei*.

III.1

Person as the category by which we may make sense of the doctrine of the *imago Dei*.

If, as we have argued, our concept of the *person* has its origin in divine revelation and has come to be applied to man only after being worked out in reference to the Triune God of Christianity; and if the sense of the divinity as a *personal* power present in and above the world and somehow encountering man is to be found in all vital religion and in mythology and primitive ritual, then we are bound to understand the *personal* as being related intrinsically first to God and then to man, and to recognize the human person as one who *bears a likeness to God*, since the sense and eventually the notion of himself as personal is a *reflection* of his sense and notion of divinity as personal Will making upon him a claim. And so we arrive at our discussion of the *imago Dei*, as the phrase is used first in the Priestly account of the creation of man in Genesis 1:26 and in the related texts of Genesis 5:1 and 9:6. In these texts are to be found the content and basis of what we have been saying about the concept of the *person*. Correlatively, it is the category of the *person* that enables us to make sense of these texts and to develop a coherent doctrine of the *imago Dei*. If we can speak today of all

men as persons and mean by it their inviolable dignity as free, self-conscious, individually unique beings in relation to other unique beings like themselves, it is ultimately because of the reality of the imago Dei, as it was revealed in the early chapters of the Old Testament, developed implicitly in the history of the people of Israel, fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and set forth explicitly by the Church. "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image." (Genesis 9:6) Murder is an offence against God, because God has created man and has created him a special creature, in a special relation with himself. Even though today the religious basis of this high value placed on human persons is often forgotten, such an attitude, when it is found, must always at bottom be a matter of religious belief and can never be established on purely rational or empirical grounds.[1] Where that religious belief is lacking or drastically eroded, individual human life will not be appreciated for itself but only in so far as it can serve some cause or notion estimated for one reason or another to be of greater and more lasting importance; the person will be defined and viewed qualitatively according to varying philosophical criteria, rather than as a substance or entity having intrinsic value.[2] Ironically, when man by himself and without reference to the Judeo-Christian God judges the worth of

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[1] Cf. Pannenberg (1977), pp. 42ff.

[2] Cf. our earlier discussion, p. 54 ; also, O'Donovan (1984), pp. 53ff; and Thielicke (1979), Vol. I, pp. 160ff.

the individual person, he invariably depreciates his real value, as classical man did, in favour of a universal like the Race or the State or the Corporation. This is because his own real value cannot be located in himself, as if it were a quality or possession of his nature, but can be found only in his relation to the God who created him: it resides in his personhood, that is, in his being a creature made in the image of God.

III.2

Imago Dei in the Old Testament, with particular reference to the exegetical conclusions of Karl Barth.

The imago Dei, according to Karl Barth, is what makes the covenant history possible.[1] Hence it is integral to the Christian doctrine of providence, which, as we are beginning to see, is rooted in the covenant history. Since providence is to be understood as an extension of creation and inseparable from it, we are not surprised to find the imago Dei being enunciated in the context of the creation of man. We are not told that man is in the image of God; we are told rather that God "created man in his own image." (Genesis 1:27) This phrase, as Claus Westermann writes tellingly,

> is not a declaration about man, but about the creation of man....The text is making a statement about an action of God who decides to create man in his image. The meaning must come from the Creation event. What God has decided to create must stand in a relationship to him. The creation of man in God's image is directed

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[1] Barth (1958), Vol. III/1.41, p. 200.

> to something happening between God and man. The Creator created a creature that corresponds to him, to whom he can speak, and who can hear him.[1]

The opening chapter of Genesis tells us that everything apart from man was created by God's word: "And God said..." But with respect to the creation of man God is shown first as determining within himself to act: "Let us make man in our image..." He does not speak into the void, as he does when creating other things; he speaks rather to himself, because what he will now make is akin to himself and will be a representation of himself and a created copy.[2] When God speaks next, it is with a word of command issued to his newly made creature, man, whom he has created male and female: "...and God said to them, Be fruitful..." The Priestly writer binds God and man together by the inspired rhetorical device of having both of them be the object of the divine imperative in the form of a personal address. Like God himself, man is a conscious, rational, free being, to whom a command can be given. Like God, man is personal. This likeness, and the intimate relation between God and man that it implies, is first represented to us by the Priestly writer not in the form of description or commentary, as in verse 27, but, significantly, as direct speech, in the form of God's actual words to himself: "Let us make man in our image,

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[1] Westermann (1974), p. 56.

[2] Barth thinks tsalem, "image", can best be rendered as "original", and demuth, "likeness", as "prototype", giving the sense of man as representation of the original and as imitation of the prototype. See Barth (1958), Vol. III/1.41, p. 197.

after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea..." (Genesis 1:26) It is through this self-address that God is shown to be both an I and a Thou, both a Subject and an Object to himself. The form used here--an utterance of command--at one and the same time tells us and demonstrates the meaning of its content. We are given to understand that the one about to be created in God's image will share God's own power to address (intentionally or verbally), to be addressed, and to respond. He will have power to act and create, and this freedom and creativity will have as its basis God's will to make him thus and not otherwise, in the very image of himself.

And to whom will this power be directed? The text makes it clear, if not explicit: 1. to God first, as the One who, whether man knows it or not, <u>always</u> is addressed first, in virtue of his being the Creator and Sustainer of life, even as he himself addresses himself first when he makes man; 2. to man himself corporately, as a plural being, male and female: that is, as a <u>personal</u> being, a being essentially in relation to other beings, a reality of which, as Barth argues, the sexual differentiation and interdependence is the fundamental expression for man,[1] even as, for God, it is manifest in the hypostatic differentiation in the Godhead, intimated in the mysterious formula, "Let us", in

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[1] Cf. Barth (1958), Vol. III/1.41, pp. 186f.; pp. 195f.

verse 26;[1] 3. to himself individually, by each human person in his or her wholeness as both subject and object in a single centre of consciousness, even as, in Genesis 1:27, it is the one God, God in his unity, who is said to have created man, in distinction from the "Let us" formula of verse 26, where the focus is on God in his plurality; 4. to the rest of creation, over which God gives man dominion and to which, therefore, as much as to God and to himself but in a different manner, man is indefeasibly related. It is man as responsible to all these four realities who is made after the image and likeness of God. He is endowed with God's very breath, as the Yahwist tells us in Genesis 2:7, expressing thus in his own narrative style the truth of the <u>imago Dei</u>; yet he is also, like the beasts, formed of the dust of the ground: he comes out of the earth and is bound to it, he is a creature. The "living being" that is man, this whole man made up of matter and spirit, is the representation of the Creator in the creation, the very copy of the living God. He cannot create out of nothing, but he can make, he can order, act, give names to every living thing (Gen. 2:19); he cannot sustain the world in being, but he can govern and care for it, he can

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[1] Of course, as we saw earlier (pp. 51 f.), the divine hypostases are not to be taken as individual beings but as three modes of being in the one God. I find no good reason not to see here, with Barth and with early Christian exegesis, a reference to the divine plurality, if not precisely to a tri-unity; and for a Christian it seems as reasonable as any other exegetical proposal to read this irreducibly mysterious phrase against the background of the doctrine of the Trinity. Cf. Barth (1958), Vol. III/1.41, p. 192.

"till it and keep it" (Gen. 2:15), he can build culture (Gen. 4:17-22); he cannot make life where none was before, but he can nourish it, he can be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with his kind (Gen. 1:28).

As one created in the image and likeness of God, man has power to do these things, not in himself autonomously, as though this power belonged to him, but in relation to the Original and Prototype, God, from whom he has the power as a gift. This gift is the measure and expression of his freedom. When he forgets that it is a gift and treats it as his own possession, the freedom turns into bondage. What was intended by God to be done under grace, in joy, is then done under law, in obligation. Relations that were open and reciprocal become closed and hostile. Centred on himself, a slave to sin (Ro. 6:6), man is lonely and guilty and finds his days a burden. What was a task and vocation to be lived in freedom and delight, in wholeness and communion, becomes a chore and ceaseless struggle undergone in inner solitude and dislocation. For freedom, in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's words,

> is not something man has for himself but something he has for others....Freedom is not a quality of man, nor is it an ability, a capacity....Anyone investigating man to discover freedom finds nothing of it. Why? because freedom is not a quality which can be revealed--it is not a possession, a presence, an object, nor is it a form for existence--but a relationship and nothing else. In truth, freedom is a relationship between two persons. Being free means 'being free for the other',

> because the other has bound me to him. Only in relationship to the other am I free.[1]

Man made in God's image has the power to create and speak and govern and be fruitful; he also has the task to do these things. His power-as-gift, which is his freedom, is indeed, as Bonhoeffer says, "for the other". God's freedom is known to man as his freedom for us; so likewise man's freedom is manifest as he lives for God and for his fellow men and for the world in which he has been placed. The gift and the task cannot be severed; the one is the inner basis for the other; together they constitute the imago Dei. The joint between them is God's blessing (Gen. 1:27f.). It is after blessing man, male and female, that God commands them to be fruitful and commissions them to have dominion over every living thing. In Genesis 2 the link between the fruitfulness and the commissioning is implied by the man's need of the woman, of one like himself, flesh of his flesh. God is not solitary, and the man alone, without the woman, is incomplete, he is not yet man-created-in-God's-image. It is this insight and its development that constitute Karl Barth's most distinctive contribution to a modern doctrine of the imago Dei.[2] While Barth is careful to insist that there can be no question here of anything other than an analogy, he wants to coordinate the plurality in the divine, signified by the "Let

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[1] Bonhoeffer (1966), p. 36.

[2] See Barth (1958), Vol. III/1.41, pp. 183ff.; Cf. Barth (1961), Vol. III/4.54, pp. 116ff.; and Barth (1960), Vol. III/2.45, pp. 285ff.

us", with the male-female plurality in man-as-image-of-God.[1] As male/female, created man reflects his Creator; he also points forward to the consummation of God's purpose for mankind in the communion of Christ with his Bride, the Church.[2]

> The fact that he was created man and woman will be the great paradigm of everything that is to take place between him and God, and also of everything that is to take place between him and his fellows. The fact that he was created and exists as male and female will also prove to be not only a copy and imitation of his Creator as such, but at the same time a type of the history of the covenant and salvation which will take place between him and his Creator.[3]

Barth distinguishes the uniqueness of man's plurality as male and female (he sees all other differentiating qualities among men as strictly secondary) from the multiplicity among animals of different groups and species, and locates in this distinction man's authority and power over the animal kingdom.[4] Here we are brought back to the integral connection in Genesis 1:28 between God's command to man to be fruitful and multiply and his commission to them to have dominion. Though an animal like the other animals in that he too is formed out of the earth, man is also that special creature into whose very nostrils, as the Yahwist puts it in a significantly intimate image, God has breathed the breath of life. The power of fertility is given to

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[1] Ibid., pp. 195f.

[2] Ibid., pp. 190f.; p. 328.

[3] Ibid., pp. 186f.

[4] Ibid., p. 188, and Barth (1960), Vol. III/2.45, pp. 285f.

both man and the beasts; but the blessing is given only to man. It seems impossible, therefore, to equate the blessing with fertility as such, as Westermann is tempted to do,[1] though he does then go on from this to stress the particularity of God's blessing on man, which involves dominion over the beasts and the commission to subdue the earth. The point to be noticed is that the fruitfulness is inseparable from the dominion, and that God's blessing is given in order that man by his fruitfulness may exercise it.

The dominion and the blessing that undergirds it are integral to the imago Dei and are not withdrawn after the Fall, any more than is man's responsible relation to God and to his fellows which is the content of the imago. As Emil Brunner and Helmut Thielicke never tire of insisting, the imago Dei, precisely because it consists in relationship to God and not in ontic qualities belonging to man, is not destroyed by man's rebellion, rather is it reversed: the contradiction of sin turns communion into fear and enmity and introduces judgment into the sphere of God's blessing.[2] The imago Dei, involving by its very nature responsibility, freedom, and power, holds within itself the possibility of disobedience and self-glorification. But the broken relation is still a relation, because God chooses to

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[1] Westermann (1974), pp. 49f.

[2] Space prevents inclusion of an Appendix in which, with reference to Brunner's Nature and Grace and Barth's No!, we analyze and compare these theologians' respective doctrines of the imago Dei.

remain faithful to man and to redeem him. Nor does God revoke his blessing on mankind given at the beginning. The curses pronounced in Genesis 3:14 and 17 are on the serpent and the ground, not on man. Judgment is not identical with a blanket curse on the whole human race, as the later story of the Flood demonstrates: Noah found favour in God's eyes (Gen. 6:6-8). Nor is the curse entailed by breaking God's law as it was revealed to Israel (cf. Dt. 27; Gal. 3:10) equivalent to a rejection of humankind as such. If man unredeemed cannot have with God the joyful relationship of trust intended by the Creator, the Bible makes it clear that some men, even in their state of fallenness and outside of any divine covenant known to them, have sought after him and found favour in his eyes, and have actually been used by him to further his purpose of salvation (cf. Gen. 4:4, 26; 6:8; 14:8; Ex. 18; Num. 22-24; Josh. 2; 2 Sam. 15:19; 2 Kings 5; Lk. 4:25-27; 7:1-10; Mt. 25:31-46; Heb. 11:4-7).[1] God's merciful gesture towards Adam and Eve in their nakedness is the

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[1] Cf. Barth's discussion of covenant in Barth (1956), Vol. IV/1.57, pp. 26ff., and Eichrodt (1961), ch. 2. Barth is concerned here to connect the specific covenantal relation with Israel to God's gracious relationship to all men after the Fall. As we have suggested in II.3, it is our view that a religious intuition of God as personal, as well as traces of a genuine if unclear aspiration to know him, may be found in all "living religion" and may even be woven into some philosophies, as in the case of Platonism. By saying this, however, I am not arguing for the possibility of a natural theology as such, but am pointing rather to what may be seen as a consequence of the post-Fall Adamic promise (Gen. 3:15b) and Noachic covenant, of which the ultimate basis is the imago Dei and God's blessing on human being.

sign of his inalienable intention of love towards the human race, despite its rebelliousness which draws his wrath:

> The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them.[1]

The preservation of Noah and the Noachic covenant follow on from this and manifest God's providence towards mankind, of which the ultimate purpose is redemption. The Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants are the provisional instruments and focus of this purpose, and Jesus Christ as the Head of his Bride, the Church, is its supreme fulfilment. The basis of God's faithfulness as we find it expressed in the sequence of his covenants with man, is the imago Dei, for here we find his intention, willed at creation, to have a creature before him whom he can know in fellowship and who can represent his Lordship in the earth. For this to happen, needless to say, it is necessary that man (as well as the beasts) be preserved and be able to multiply. The blessing bestowed on man-in-God's-image, associated as it is with human fertility and dominion, is irrevocable.

Evidence corroborating this is found in the other two texts in Genesis where reference to the imago Dei is made: Genesis 5:1 and 9:6. Even in the text just quoted--Genesis 3:20f.--it is noteworthy that mention of God's providence comes right after a reference to the woman's fertility. In Genesis 5:1f., as in Genesis 1:27f., this connection is patent. Verse 3, with its

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[1] Genesis 3:20f.

description of Seth being in the likeness and after the image of his father Abraham, establishes a parallelism between man's procreation and God's creativity, mentioned in verse 1. This parallelism is in keeping with the analogia relationis of the imago Dei and cannot be made to demonstrate an analogia entis. We are not being told that human procreation is the means of perpetuating the divine likeness in man, for this likeness, as we have seen, is not man's to pass on but is a gift expressing and inhering in a relationship between man and God. Nevertheless, the biblical concern with what Barth calls "the nexus of filiation"[1] and with genealogical tables does indeed show the centrality of fruitfulness to God's plan for humankind. Both the Old and the New Testaments take fertility to be the locus of God's blessing, though certainly not the sole content of it. It was so at creation, and it is so in the covenant history that follows, culminating in the incarnation.[2] Sexuality is at the heart of the imago Dei, both in creation and in salvation.

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[1] Barth (1958), Vol. III/1.41, p. 199.

[2] Cf. Barth (1961), III/4.54, pp. 142ff. Barth stresses the point that the necessity in the Old Testament to marry and procreate was essentially connected with the covenant and the seed of Abraham, from which would come the fulfilment of the promise, the Son, the Messiah. With the advent of Christ, this necessity is removed, so that in the New Testament, marriage, though still the telos of the relation of man and woman, is no longer a necessity but rather, like celibacy, an option, of which the aim and inner meaning is no longer to produce the Child who will save his people, but to represent the relationship obtaining between the Saviour who has come and his Bride, the Church.

Further evidence of this is provided in Genesis 9:1-11. In verses 1-3 God's blessing is associated with fruitfulness and with man's dominion over the beasts and the whole earth; and in verses 6-7 reference to the imago Dei and to fruitfulness are again set side by side, as in Genesis 1:27f. Immediately following, in verses 8-11, comes God's declaration establishing the Noachic covenant, in which he promises explicitly to maintain life on earth. What has changed between Genesis 1 and Genesis 9 is not the fact of the imago Dei but the manner in which the relationships involved in it are experienced. The trust between man and God has been broken; hence the harmony between Adam and the beasts before the Fall and the trust between the man and the woman, are broken too: instead there is fear, guilt, jealousy, accusation, and bloodshed. Man's dominion over creation, which, manifested as care, government, and direction, had been intended to represent and be an image of God's own providence, has become domination, and this domination will extend to man himself.[1] The

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[1] By "domination" I mean the self-serving manipulation of the created world from motives of fear, power, and greed. The task of "dominion" is intended by God to be exercised with care, appreciation, and concern for the "other", whatever it is, on the pattern of God's own providence. "Domination", by contrast, is egotistical and heedless of the "other's" being or true interest. With the Fall, domination has become man's chief way of relating to all other reality, from God down to the earth itself (obviously man cannot really manipulate God, but he tries to do, as we suggested earlier). I agree with Augustine (De Civitate Dei XIX.12-17, esp.15) that the "dominion" of Genesis 1:26 has reference only to irrational creatures and does not include man within its scope. But it must be understood that Augustine is using the word "dominion" in the sense of Roman law, to mean "possession" and "absolute power over" (in De Civitate Dei he frequently refers to the "lust of dominion"). As such, it

positive relations of the imago Dei have been shifted into the negative mode.

Yet God remains faithful to his creation. He will carry through the purpose for which he made it. At the heart of this purpose, as both its content and its means of fulfilment, is the imago Dei. Even if man's own dominion is exercised perversely, God's sovereignty will not be thwarted and his providence will not fail. His blessing will not be withdrawn from mankind, even if now it must involve judgment as well. He "remembers" man (Gen. 8:1; 9:14f.; cf. Jer. 31:36f.; 33:25f.) and will continue to sustain and accompany him and provide for his needs, of which, as the goal of man's created existence, the deepest is fellowship with God and the brotherly fellowship with men that flows out of it. For this reason we find in the Bible that once the Fall has happened, salvation is an implicate of providence, just as providence is an implicate of the original creation. The imago Dei is their common basis. Hence it is to this doctrine that we must look when we search for the meaning of human existence: both the dignity of man and the meaning of his life have their foundation here.[1] "The divine likeness," writes Barth,

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implies rather what we mean by "domination". Cf. J. N. Figgis (1921), pp. 52ff. This being the case, I would wish to qualify--along the lines suggested above--Augustine's sense of "dominion" even in regard to Adam's pre-Fall mandate concerning the animals and the rest of created nature. Adam is given the task of exercising careful and productive stewardship over the creation; this does not mean that God intends him to dominate over it like a despot.

[1] Westermann (1974), p. 60.

> is the pledge and promise with which God accompanies the physical sequence of the generations and gives it meaning, thus giving meaning to the patience of God which makes it possible....The image of God, and therefore the divine likeness of man, is revealed in God's dealings with Israel and therefore in the history of Israel. But it is revealed only as the hope which accompanies and supports all the events of this history, as the goal towards which it moves in all its multiplicity, so that it can never take a single concrete form as an object of imitation by man.[1]

III.3

Imago Dei in the theological tradition. Understanding of human destiny transformed by the Christian gospel.

This understanding of the imago Dei in terms of an analogia relationis rather than in the ontological terms of an analogia entis makes it easier to coordinate the New Testament teaching on the imago Dei with what we find in the Old. But before we take a look at this teaching and its connection with providence, we must say something about the Church's traditional view of the imago Dei. Although this view contains both ontic and personal/relational features, the way these are held together has tended to put priority on the ontic. This in turn has contributed to an intellectualization of Christian faith and deprived the imago Dei teaching of its full theological and religious dynamism. Since the doctrine of man's created likeness to God is the anthropological reference for the Christian understanding of God's personal nature and of his relation to the

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[1] Barth (1958), Vol. III/1.41, pp. 199f.

world, it is clear that the doctrines of God, of revelation, and of providence will also have been distorted by a primarily qualitative appreciation of the imago.

The gospel of Jesus Christ introduced into the ancient world a conception of destiny utterly different from the impersonal determinism characteristic of the Stoic concept of fate as the causal nexus of all events.[1] We have suggested that Stoic cosmology, necessitarian in its structure, was in tension with the concept of moral responsibility, and that the concept of the logos--reason--actually operated on both sides of this tension and was used on the one hand to speak of the pervasive rationality of the cosmic continuum and on the other hand, in the context of man's distinctiveness from the beasts, to provide a logical basis for the notion of autonomous and responsible human action. Such equivocal reasoning was untenable, of course; but resolution of the quandary was beyond the reach of philosophy. The Christian gospel transcended the logical contradiction involved here, not by introducing a new rational insight but by revealing and at the same time resolving a contradiction even more fundamental, which may be said ultimately to lie--unbeknownst to the philosophers--at the root of the philosophical dilemma itself: the contradiction between man-the-sinner and man-the-creature-made-in-God's-image. Both sides of this latter contradiction are matters of revelation and cannot be discovered

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[1] Cf. Stough in ed. Rist (1978), ch. 9; and Gould (1970), pp. 138ff.; and our own discussion above, pp. 16 ff.

by unaided reason. This is because they presuppose knowledge of God as the personal Creator of all that exists, who has created man to be his creaturely and responsible counterpart. Such knowledge is unavailable to fallen humankind unless the Creator himself moves to disclose it by disclosing himself. Only the man who understands himself thus to be made in the divine image can understand himself to be also a sinner, one who has used his responsibility and power of decision to turn away from obedient relationship to the Source of his being.

The classical conception of the divine, as we have seen, was either rationalistic and impersonal or mythological and personalistic. Traces of polytheism and myth were apparent in much Greek and Roman philosophy, even if only as its background and foil; and this reminds us again of the important fact that for pagan antiquity, quite as much as for the Jewish and later Christian cultures, the *divinum* was the basis of the *humanum*, though its content was essentially different from that found in the Bible.[1] The philosophical coordination of the *divinum* and the *humanum* was carried out in terms of reason, the *logos*: herein lay the nature of the divine, the distinctiveness of the human, and the basis of any postulated connection between them. This conception of rationality as the essence of the divine nature and the hallmark of the human was characteristic of Greek and Roman antiquity as a whole. It was at bottom an impersonal conception

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[1] See Brunner (1939), pp. 547ff.

and for that reason unable to resolve the contradiction between cosmological order and human self-determination. The Christian gospel alone was able to do this, by disclosing the true nature both of God and of man. It was not at all that rationality was revealed by the gospel to be alien to the Creator-God and to the creature made in his image; it was rather that reason was caught up in a more comprehensive framework and shown to be subordinate to love. We shall explore this further in the next chapter; for our present purpose it is enough to say that the great theological challenge facing the early Church (as is also the case for the modern Church) was how properly to coordinate rationality and love, i.e., the philosophical insight of classical man and the theological truth revealed by God through his chosen people, Israel, and made available to mankind through the gospel of Jesus Christ. The way in which the Christian doctrine of providence was and is articulated is dependent upon the form of this coordination.

The Christian notion of destiny, individual and corporate, is part and parcel of the correlative notions of the person and of the imago Dei. It is determined by God-the-Creator's will and purpose to be in joyful communion with the human creatures he has made. This divine intention has been revealed in and made effective through Jesus Christ and will be realized consummately by him at his parousia. In the light of revelation both the humanum and the divinum are conceived essentially no longer in terms of reason but rather in terms of personal relationship, of

which reason, properly understood, may be said to be a function and instrument.[1] This means that the connection between God and man is not established with reference to a third qualitative factor common to both of them, i.e., rationality, but with reference to the personal bond binding together these two personal beings, the Creator and his creature, infinitely different though they may be from an ontic standpoint: they are connected not by an analogia entis but by an analogia relationis. It is this wondrous truth that cracks the grip of fate upon the ancient world and casts down death: destiny, hope, and a meaningful coherence of transcience with transcendence rise into man's field of vision, unveiled by the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Irenaeus's understanding of the imago Dei.

When coming to formulate this new understanding of man, however, the Church theologians, beginning with Irenaeus, had difficulty escaping the enormous gravitational pull of the classical paradigm, reason. The general tendency was to superimpose the new vision on the old in a kind of quantitative manner. Thus Irenaeus, on the basis of a peculiar exegesis of Genesis 1:26, distinguishes between the original natural endowment of man--man with corporeality and reason and the power of free agency--and his supernatural destiny, in which he is made

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[1] Ibid., p. 100.

perfect by the combination of his natural endowment and the Spirit of God.[1] What God formed in his own image (eikōn) was man, the rational animal: "Man is rational, and therein like unto God, created free in will and in his own power";[2] but man made in the likeness (homoiōsin) of God was more than this: he was the natural man plus the infusion of God's Spirit:

> But when this Spirit, mingled with the Soul, is united to that which God formed; then by the effusion of the Spirit the spiritual and perfect man is made: and this is he who was made after the image and likeness of God. If on the other hand the Spirit is wanting to the Soul, such an one is truly an Animal Man, and as being left carnal, will be imperfect; having indeed the Image in his form, but not assuming the Likeness by the Spirit.[3]

For Irenaeus, even pre-Fall man seems not to have been fully in God's likeness but had to "advance silently to perfection" under the guidance and providence of the Triune God.[4] This perfection, of which fallen man in any case is certainly deprived, becomes a possibility through Christ, who both "truly revealed the Image" and "firmly established the resemblance, by causing man to partake of His own complete likeness to the Invisible Father, through the Visible Word."[5]

While the details of Irenaeus's confused exegesis have long since been abandoned or modified by the Church, the framework he

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[1] See Thielicke (1979), Vol. I, pp. 197ff., for a careful discussion of this issue.

[2] Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses IV.4.3.

[3] Ibid., V.6.1.

[4] Ibid., IV.38.3.

[5] Ibid., V.16.2.

set up for understanding the *imago Dei* has continued to exercise a pervasive influence. At the core of this interpretative structure is the distinction between natural endowment and supernatural destiny. The former is seen, in Thielicke's words, as "something firmly given and in substance indestructible"; the latter, as "something variable which can be won or lost".[1] Thielicke goes on to observe that this dichotomy forms the basis of the later medieval distinction between nature and grace, "which allows for the *imago*'s having an explicitly ontological character which continues intact through its impairment by sin and its restoration by grace."[2] What has happened, quite simply, is that instead of the philosophical evaluation of the *humanum* being incorporated into the revealed vision of Scripture and then reinterpreted accordingly by this more comprehensive truth, the classical and biblical perspectives on man have been set side by side, in apposition, like two terms in an algebraic equation, each having, formally speaking, the same weight. On the one hand man is viewed autonomously, not according to his *creaturehood* but according to his *being* considered in itself: on this basis he is declared to be by nature, inalienably, a rational animal; on the other hand he is viewed as God's handiwork, called to know, to love, and to serve his Creator: on this basis he is declared to be a creature responsible to God, who, having chosen of his own

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[1] Thielicke (1979), p. 203.

[2] *Ibid*.

free will to rebel, is lost in sin and capable of being saved only by God's sheer grace in Jesus Christ. To think of man essentially as a rational animal is to think of him qualitatively, in terms of a posited ontic disposition; to describe him as a sinner saved by grace and destined for glory in the presence of God is to describe him relatively, in terms of a revealed and responsible relationship to the personal Author of his life. It is our conviction that the terms of these perspectives are too different to admit of coherent coordination by any method of mere addition, no matter how finely calibrated by philosophical distinctions.

Our objective in the present section is not to examine in exhaustive detail the historical development in the Church of the doctrine of the imago Dei, but merely to highlight those features in the traditional Western understanding of this doctrine which have importance for our attempt to delineate the underpinnings of a vital doctrine of providence for our own day. We have suggested that the dichotomous model of the imago Dei which we have just looked at has had enormous importance in this regard. A glance at the views of several other theologians will confirm this.

Augustine's understanding of the imago Dei.

In his treatise, De Trinitate, Augustine endeavours to elucidate Trinitarian doctrine by finding in man-made-in-God's-image a reflection of the Triune God. The starting point for such an enterprise had already been adumbrated in an earlier work, De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII, in the course of an analysis of the word "image" in I Corinthians 15:49:

> Moreover, as for those beings which know, they are so near to God's likeness that no other created beings are closer, for what shares in wisdom both lives and exists....Since man can participate in wisdom according to the inner man, as such he is in the image of God....Therefore nothing is more closely united to God, for man knows and lives and exists and thus is unsurpassed among created beings.[1]

By the time he came to write De Trinitate (a process which is thought to have extended from about the year 400 to the year 416),[2] the Neo-Platonic cast of his early thought had been permeated by the Judeo-Christian vision, so that his tendency to think along lines of a body/soul dichotomy--the soul being that part of man intrinsically susceptible of union with God--had been moderated.[3] When, for instance, he embarks in Book IX on his

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[1] Augustine, De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII, Question 51.

[2] Translator's introduction to De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII, p. vii.

[3] A body/soul dualism as such is not found in Augustine, even in his early work. In the discussion referred to in De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII, for example, he insists that God made all things good and that the outer man too will be renewed. Nevertheless, the Neo-Platonic framework of his thought was ineradicable and tended all his life to determine the way in which he asked his theological questions and gave his answers.

project of finding a "trinity" in man, he speaks of the "imperfect image" of God which man is;[1] and near the end of his project he issues a strong warning that although there certainly is in the mind of man a trinitarian image of the divine Trinity, one must not take it to be similar in every respect, but "should rather behold in this likeness, of whatever sort it may be, the great unlikeness that there also is."[2] Nonetheless, it must still be said that the rationalistic mode of classical philosophy always retained its grip on Augustine's thought, which may not unjustly be described as an attempt to synthesize Neo-Platonic categories with Christian truth. For our purposes the point to be made is that his whole enterprise in De Trinitate proceeds on the philosophical assumption that it is as man is a rational creature that he is in the image of God. As he is rational, he is in the image of God's essential nature; and as this rationality is articulated in a trinitarian manner, he is in the image of the Triune God.

Augustine writes in Book XIV of De Trinitate:

> ....that image of the Creator, that has been implanted immortally in its own immortality, must be found in the soul of man, that is, in the reasonable or intellectual soul. For just as the immortality of the soul itself is said to be according to a certain mode--for the soul too has its proper death when it is without the blessed life, which is to be called the true life of the soul, but is called immortal for this reason, that it never ceases to live some kind of a life, even when it is most wretched--so even though reason or intelligence is

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[1] Augustine, De Trinitate IX.2.2.

[2] Ibid., XV.20.39.

> now dormant in it, or now appears to be small and now great, yet the human soul is never anything but reasonable and intellectual; and, therefore, if it were made according to the image of God in respect to this, namely, that it is able to use its reason and intelligence to understand and to behold God, then certainly from the first moment that so great and so marvelous a nature began to be--whether this image be so effaced as almost to amount to nothing, or whether it be obscured or disfigured, or whether it be clear and beautiful--it always is.[1]

Elsewhere he writes that the mind is God's image "by the very fact that it is capable of Him, and can be a partaker of Him; and it cannot be so great a good except that it is His image."[2] But Augustine does not simply identify the rational soul with the imago Dei. He discerns in the rational soul two facets, which he distinguishes as sapientia--the intellectual cognition of eternal things--and scientia--the reasonable cognition of temporal things.[3] The eternal things are no longer abstract ideas: they are aspects of the one true God as he has revealed himself to man in Jesus Christ. Sapientia is definitely to be preferred, and it is here that the imago Dei is located:

> As we said of the nature of the human mind, that if as a whole it contemplates the truth, it is the image of God; and when its functions are divided and something of it is diverted to the handling of temporal things, nevertheless that part which consults the truth is the image of God, but that other part, which is directed to the handling of inferior things, is not the image of God.[4]

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[1] Ibid., XIV.4.6.

[2] Ibid., XIV.8.11.

[3] Ibid., XII.15.25; cf. XII.12.17.

[4] Ibid., XII.7.10.

In his analysis of various "trinities" in the human mind, Augustine's method is rationalistic even while his vision is theological. In Book IX, for example, he speaks of the trinity of mind, its knowledge, and its love. He describes this trinity *in itself*, as a coherent entity; but he does not describe it *for* itself, as if its significance lay in its autonomy. His purpose is resolutely Christian and theological: to show its structural similarity to the *divine* Trinity:

> But in these three, when the mind knows itself and loves itself, a trinity remains: the mind, love, and knowledge; and there is no confusion through any commingling, although each is a substance in itself, and all are found mutually in all, whether each one in each two, or each two in each one. Consequently, all are in all.[1]

Similarly, in Book X he points to the trinity of memory, understanding, and will, which together make up the mind. The mind is analyzed as the *locus* of the *imago Dei*, yet the analysis never loses its divine reference; for all the rationalism of Augustine's method, he never allows the *imago* to be secularized:

> Hence, this trinity of the mind is not on that account the image of God because the mind remembers itself, understands itself, and loves itself, but because it can also remember, understand, and love Him by whom it was made. And when it does so, it becomes wise; but if it does not, even though it remembers itself, knows itself, and loves itself, it is foolish. Let it, then, remember its God, to whose image it has been made, and understand Him and love Him.[2]

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[1] *Ibid.*, IX.5.8.

[2] *Ibid.*, XIV.12.15.

Underneath Augustine's philosophical approach to the issue we do indeed find his awareness of the biblical truth of the imago Dei as consisting in relationship to God; and we also find his strictly theological concern to show how it is that fallen man can (or cannot) still be said to be in God's image.

In the same manner as Irenaeus, though with greater depth and complexity, Augustine deploys two conceptual frameworks to interpret the imago Dei. As we have seen, he does thoroughly baptise, as it were, the classical notion of the humanum as the rational soul;[1] but it is still this notion, immanentist and rational, and not the revelational truth of responsible relation to God, that provides the mental grid and starting point for his understanding of the imago. As a result, though what he is intending to say refers us to the reality of relationship and to the truth that the imago Dei has to do with the love of God, the form of his saying it inclines us towards a more intellectualistic and man-centred conception:

> If, therefore, we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and it is precisely the new man who is renewed unto the knowledge of God, according to the image of Him who created him, then no one can doubt that man has been made to the image of Him who created him, not according to the body, nor according to any part of the mind, but according to the rational mind where the knowledge of God can reside....the image of God does

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[1] Added confirmation of this is to be found in the fact that Augustine's analysis of the human soul stresses the element of love and delight in its own existence, in conformity to the divine Trinity in whose image it is made. The value here attributed to particular concrete existence and to the emotions is inconceivable in dualistic classical metaphysics. Cf. De Civitate Dei XI.26; and Gilkey (1959), p. 198, note 24.

> not remain except in that part of the mind of man in which it clings to the contemplation and consideration of the eternal reasons...[1]

This is surely the reason why Karl Barth takes exception to Augustine's claim to find in the structures of human consciousness not just a vestigium of the divine Trinity but the imago Dei itself.[2] He does not accuse Augustine of doing apologetics, i.e., of attempting to prove the possibility of revelation in the world of human reason; the Bishop of Hippo, he suggests with a trace of irony, was not engaging in genuine natural theology but rather in polemics, that is, he was not seeking to demonstrate the possibility of revelation in the world of human reason but to fix the actual possibilities of this world of human reason as the scene of revelation.[3] But Barth faults the enterprise for lending itself to ambiguity and ultimately to reversal, in such a way that

> the asserted and assumed intelligibility of revelation became the assertion of an original commensurability of reason with revelation, the synthetic 'God into the world' became an analytic 'God in the world', the claim of revelation upon the world became a claim of the world upon revelation, and the discovered pointer therefore became a self-begotten proof.[4]

Barth thinks that Augustine quite unwittingly left a door open here to natural theology and that this led in time to a grounding

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[1] Augustine, De Trinitate XII.7.12.

[2] For Barth's views on this issue, see Barth (1975), Vol. I/1.8, pp. 333-347.

[3] Ibid., p. 341.

[4] Ibid.

(rather than just an illustrating) of the Trinity in self-consciousness and to the gradual splitting off in Western philosophical thought of anthropological speculation from its divine basis, to the point where, with Feuerbach, the divine is swallowed up altogether in the human.[1]

Thomas Aquinas's understanding of the imago Dei.

There is no doubt that Augustine's "psychological" approach to understanding the Trinity did provide an important building block in medieval natural theology and the doctrine of the analogia entis. This is illustrated in Thomas's teaching on the imago Dei, where he draws heavily on Augustine's thought in De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII and in De Trinitate. To realize the idea of "image", says Aquinas, what is required is a likeness in kind:

> But things are likened to God, first and most generally in so far as they are; secondly in so far as they are alive; thirdly and lastly in so far as they have discernment and intelligence. It is these latter, as Augustine says, which are so close in likeness to God that there is nothing closer in all creation. Thus it is clear that only intelligent creatures are properly speaking after God's image.[2]

God's image can be considered in man at three stages: 1) owing to creation, all men are made in God's image in that they have a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; 2) owing to

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[1] Ibid., pp. 342f.

[2] Aquinas, Summa Theologiae Ia. Q. 93, A. 2.

re-creation, the just do actually know and love God, but still imperfectly--this is the image by conformity of grace; 3) owing to the vision of God to which man is destined, the blessed actually know and love God perfectly--this is the image by likeness of glory.[1] Common to all three stages and constant in man from creation to glorification is intelligence: it is man's nature to be rational, and his nature does not change. Herein precisely is located the imago Dei, where not just a trace of divinity, i.e., an effect pointing to a cause, is to be found, but a likeness in kind:

> Thus God's likeness in the manner of an image is to be found in man as regards his mind; but as regards his other parts only in the manner of a trace. Man is not called God's image because he is image by definition, but because God's image is stamped on him as regards his mind.[2]

We have thus an ontic definition of the imago Dei conceived within the overall framework of the principle of the analogia entis, i.e., the participation of imperfect being in perfect being and the likeness of human intelligence to the higher intelligence of God.[3] This is the first element in what Thomas calls "the good in human nature". It consists of "the principles constitutive of nature together with the properties derived from

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[1] Ibid., Ia. Q. 93, A. 3.

[2] Ibid., Ia. Q. 93, A. 6.

[3] Cf. ibid., Ia. Q. 93, A. 2; Ia. Q. 79, A. 4; Ia. Q. 4, A. 3; and Ia. Q. 13, A. 5.

them, for example the powers of soul and the like."[1] But man's end and purpose in life surpasses nature, so grace must be added to this natural imago consisting in the rational soul.[2] Aquinas borrows here from Irenaeus and John of Damascus in distinguishing likeness from image: whereas image refers to mind and free will, likeness refers to the likeness of divine virtue, in so far as it can be in man.[3]

> Love of the word, i.e., beloved awareness, belongs to the idea of 'image'; but love of virtue belongs to 'likeness', just as virtue does.[4]

In distinction from Irenaeus, however, Aquinas sees this likeness, i.e., this inclination to virtue, as fully present in primal man and as rooted in his rational nature; yet he also views it as a gift of grace by which right order is imparted to the ontic qualities inherent in the rational soul.[5] This inclination to virtue is the second element in "the good in human nature"; though natural and remaining after the Fall, it is diminished by sin, which has the effect of disordering the ontic qualities and so annulling, or at least neutralizing, the gift of rectitude, that is, the rightness whereby man's reason is

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[1] Ibid., Ia2ae. Q. 85, A. 1.

[2] Ibid., Ia. Q. 94, A. 3.

[3] Ibid., Ia. Q. 93, A. 9. Cf. John of Damascus, De Fide Orthodoxa II.12.

[4] Ibid., Ia. Q. 93, A. 9.

[5] Ibid., Ia2ae. Q. 85, AA. 1-4. Cf. Thielicke's discussion of these issues in Thielicke (1979), Vol. I, pp. 204ff.

properly submitted to God, his lower powers to his reason, and his body to his soul.[1]

The third element in "the good in human nature" as it was to be found in primal man is the donum originalis justitiae, man's state of grace and holiness before God. This element is a supernatural gift and is completely removed by the original sin of the first parents.[2] The disordering of man's rectitudo follows from this loss.[3] Only by God's grace through Christ and the sacraments is this original endowment restored and a man justified. This restoration seems to mean, in effect, that righteousness before God is added back to the intact rational imago Dei by God's operative grace and that in consequence man's never wholly lost natural inclination to virtue is reactualized as the right order of subordination of his powers and is renewed by God's cooperative grace.[4] Thomas does not talk, however, of a state of restored nature, or of grace as a state of nature. The restoration is accomplished with respect to individual persons, not with respect to man's general state; furthermore, as long as men are in this life, even those restored by grace, though possessed now of healed minds, will not act perfectly but will

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[1] Ibid., Ia. Q. 94, A. 1; Q. 95, A.1.

[2] Ibid., Ia2ae. Q. 85, AA. 1, 5.

[3] Ibid., Ia2ae. Q. 82, A. 3.

[4] Ibid., Ia2ae. Q. 111, A. 2.

need a continual infusion of "subsequent" grace to persevere in virtue, because of the infection of the flesh.[1]

We find in this account a mixture of ontic and personalistic elements. Indeed, the characteristic we are concerned here to highlight is the dualistic conceptuality underlying it. The imago Dei is understood to be man's rational nature, existing in virtue of God's general love, by which he "bestows natural being on created things".[2] By itself this nature does not partake of grace, that is, it does not participate in God's eternal life and goodness. For this to happen, both in primal and in fallen man, grace is necessary. Nature and grace are conceived ontologically, the one referring to man in his (rational) essence, the other to God in that expression of "special love" towards the human creature whereby he draws man into union with himself.[3] Grace is "a kind of quality".[4] But it is not man's substance:

> Every substance is either just the nature of the thing of which it is the substance, or it is a part of the nature, as when we speak of matter or form as 'substance'. And since grace is higher than human nature, it is impossible that it should be a substance or a substantial form; but it is an accidental form of the soul itself. For what is in God in a substantial mode comes to be in an accidental mode in the soul which participates in the divine goodness, as is clear in the case of knowledge. Accordingly, since the soul

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[1] Ibid., Ia2ae. Q. 109, AA. 9-10; Q. 111, A. 3.

[2] Ibid., Ia2ae. Q. 110, A. 1.

[3] Ibid., Ia2ae. Q. 110, A. 1.

[4] Ibid.

> participates in the divine goodness imperfectly, that participation in the divine goodness which constitutes grace has a more imperfect mode of being in the soul than the being in which the soul subsists in itself. Yet it is of a higher order than the nature of the soul, so far as it is the expression of the divine goodness or its participation, though not as regards mode of being.[1]

Although original righteousness and justification both describe, for Thomas, the rightly ordered relationship of man to God (made possible by grace), the Angelic Doctor's Aristotelian vantage point causes him to express this personalist Christian vision in categorical terms fundamentally at odds with it. Man is not conceived simply as a creature-in-relation-to-God, but dichotomously, as a rational nature with or without sanctifying grace. This has the effect of neutralizing man's natural state, since his ontic qualities--freedom and rationality--are defined without reference to fellowship with God. "The logical consequence of this neutralizing," writes Helmut Thielicke, "is that the fellowship with God, and hence also faith, is not part of the true and proper nature of man as God created him....Faith and fellowship with God are rather among the 'superadded gifts' or 'accidents'."[2]

As fellowship with God is not part of the essence of man, neither is sin. It is a privation of communion with the divine, but not an impingement on the essentially human, which remains

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Thielicke (1979), Vol. I, p. 217.

untarnished.[1] "Sinning," says Thomas, "is nothing else than falling short of the good."[2] While it is certain that Aquinas himself conceives of the good theologically, and that falling short of it means for him to be cut off from fellowship with God by not being in subjection to him,[3] his philosophical schema logically undercuts the force and import of this truth. If the nature of man is conceived in ontic terms, as something other than his being-in-relation-to-God, then inevitably the door is open for the fallen nature of man, which is characterized precisely by its rebellious absolutizing of the illusion of autonomy, to be declared eventually by secular thought to be itself natural and indeed God-like. The Church's assertion that man is dependent on God for his very existence cannot prevent this from happening, if the same Church has also asserted that man's nature consists in his rationality, existing in independence of his relationship to God.

This is the danger inherent in the traditional dichotomous conception of the imago Dei, a conception built on the hybrid understanding of the human being as on the one hand rational soul and on the other hand creature. We do not wish to deny that a proper interpretation of the imago Dei will contain ontic features, such as rationality and freedom; but we do deny that

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[1] Aquinas, Summa Theologiae Ia2ae. Q. 85, A.2.

[2] Ibid., Ia2ae. Q. 109, A. 2.

[3] Ibid., Ia2ae. Q. 82, A. 2.

these features characterize the *essence* of the *imago Dei* and that man's God-likeness is to be understood qualitatively. Man as a creature made in God's image exists *essentially* in relation to God. This relation is not something added to or subtracted from his essence, it is the very definition of it. The Fall does not entail a subtraction of grace, as an ontological conception of the *imago Dei* requires; original sin, though undoubtedly it *involves* the privation of sanctifying grace, is not properly to be *defined* as the privation of grace that leads to a disordered natural disposition, as Aquinas set about to do.[1] Rather, the Fall and original sin are more truly understood in terms of a *contradiction* of the positive relation to God and its perversion into the *negative mode*. A fundamentally personal/relational perspective of this kind enables theology to hold God and man together in thought, from creation all the way through to redemption. This in turn allows a coherent doctrine of providence to be formulated, one that avoids the conceptual pitfalls of both determinist and deistic viewpoints as these may be articulated within a Christian frame of reference.

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[1] *Ibid*., Ia2ae. Q. 82, A. 1.

Calvin's and Luther's understanding of the imago Dei.

At the time of the Reformation, the exegetical distinction between image and likeness was decisively repudiated, along with the doctrinal conclusions drawn from it.[1] It was affirmed by both Calvin and Luther that although the imago Dei had not been annihilated, it had been so impaired by sin that regeneration alone could enable us to comprehend in what it consisted.[2] After explaining Augustine's view that the imago Dei was lodged in the powers of the soul, Luther, in his commentary on Genesis, goes on to say that the Bishop of Hippo's attempt to find kinds of trinities in man in order to help us to understand the imago Dei was not in fact very useful:

> I'm afraid that since the loss of this image through sin we cannot understand it to any extent. Memory, will, and mind we have indeed; but they are most depraved and most seriously weakened, yes, to put it more clearly, they are utterly leprous and unclean. If these powers are the image of God, it will also follow that Satan was created according to the image of God, since he surely has these natural endowments, such as memory and a very superior intellect and a most

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[1] See Calvin, Institutes I.xv.3; and Luther, Lectures on Genesis 1-5, in Luther's Works, Vol. I (1958), pp. 55-65.

[2] See Calvin, Institutes I.xv. 3, 4; II.i, ii, iii; and Luther, op. cit. and pp. 110-115. The Reformers' difficulty in formulating a clear concept of the imago Dei led them into a certain confusion in the references to it. When they are thinking of it in terms of supernatural gifts like original righteousness and faith, they tend to think of it as obliterated or unknown; but when they are thinking of it more in terms of human nature as distinguished from animal nature, i.e., in terms of rationality and volition, they tend to speak of it as corrupted but not altogether lost. This is the origin of the "remnant" or "vestige" idea, as in Calvin's Institutes I.xv.6 and II.ii.12.

> determined will, to a far higher degree than we have them. Therefore the image of God is something far different, namely, a unique work of God.[1]

While the basis of the Reformers' approach to the doctrine of the imago Dei was Christological and not rationalistic, these theologians still failed to give unequivocal expression to the relational understanding of the imago. A qualitative type of conceptuality continued to hold partial sway in their minds, even if they now provided content to the imago in terms of the New Testament revelation in Christ rather than in terms of philosophical categories.[2] Calvin, for example, writes of the image of God:

> Accordingly, the integrity with which Adam was endowed is expressed by this word, when he had full possession of right understanding, when he had his affections kept within the bounds of reason, all his senses tempered in right order, and he truly referred his excellence to exceptional gifts bestowed upon him by his Maker.[3]

Further on, in speaking of Paul's doctrine of the renewal of the imago in man through Jesus Christ, he says:

> Now we are to see what Paul chiefly comprehends under this renewal. In the first place he posits knowledge, then pure righteousness and holiness. From this we infer that, to begin with, God's image was visible in the light of the mind, in the uprightness of the heart, and in the soundness of all the parts.[4]

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[1] Luther, op. cit., pp. 61f.

[2] Cf. Calvin, Institutes II.ii.12.

[3] Ibid., I.xv.3.

[4] Ibid., I.xv.4.

The imago Dei is "the perfect excellence of human nature which shone in Adam before his defection but was subsequently so vitiated and almost blotted out that nothing remains after the ruin except what is confused, mutilated, and disease-ridden."[1] Calvin definitely understands the imago in spiritual terms, i.e., as referring to man's knowledge of and uprightness before God, and not in rational, ontic ones; yet when it comes to defining this imago, either he refers to its radical vitiation by sin, or else he uses a sort of qualitative language (albeit on the basis of the image of God in man restored through Jesus Christ) to say what it was like in primal man. Luther proceeds in similar fashion:

> Therefore the image of God was something most excellent, in which were included eternal life, everlasting freedom from fear, and everything that is good. However, through sin this image was so obscured and corrupted that we cannot grasp it even with our intellect.[2]

The imago, for rebellious man, is "something unknown";[3] human nature "has completely fallen" through original sin;[4] the intellect has become darkened, the will depraved.[5] Both theologians ascribe considerable powers to the human mind and even to the human will, but, as the imago Dei has been virtually

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Luther, op.cit., p. 65; cf. pp. 113ff.

[3] Ibid., p. 63.

[4] Ibid., p. 114.

[5] Ibid.

obliterated, these powers have bearing only on earthly things and cannot provide man with true knowledge of God or with true obedience to the divine will.[1]

The Reformers' error here lies in their doctrine of the imago Dei. In reaction against Scholasticism they go to the opposite extreme and argue that man's incapacity for God, due to sin, means that the imago Dei has been practically effaced. They rightly define human nature in its essence as consisting in man's proper relation to God; but by their unbiblical belief that the imago Dei was forfeited at the Fall they appear to sever man from his Creator; and they leave unsafeguarded from heretical and secular interpretations their biblical assertion that human nature has been fundamentally corrupted. In this way they unintentionally opened the way for the emergence in Protestant Orthodoxy of insoluble tensions that exposed its flank to secularism and its mind to various forms of natural theology. If human nature is perverted and the imago effaced, how is one to account for the preservation, albeit vitiated, of the humanum, consisting in rationality and volition? How does one speak of the positive achievement of human culture, even while recognizing

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[1] See sections from Calvin and Luther already cited, esp. Calvin, Institutes II.ii.12-27; also, Luther, Bondage of the Will (1957).

its fatal flaws and limitations? What, in a word, is the proper place, capacity, and function of reason?[1]

Flacius solved the problem by avoiding it: he simply asserted the utter corruption of everything human and claimed that original sin was the "substance" of man.[2] Of course, this negative and heretical "solution" was unacceptable, as it called into question the very concept of the imago Dei and the original goodness of God's creation, and made impossibly problematical the doctrine of justification and the new creation in Christ. Nor did it provide any sort of an answer to the anthropological question at issue. The "solution" of Protestant Orthodoxy, as Thielicke shows clearly, was to move back to a form of ontologism

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[1] Barth observes in No! (1946), pp. 101ff., that the Reformers did not "clarify the problem of the formal relation between reason with its interpretation of nature and history on the one hand and the absolute claims of revelation on the other, in the same way in which they treated the material problem of the relation between the will and work of man and the reconciliation once and for all effected in Christ." Relatively unaware as they were of the Thomist synthesis of the Thirteenth Century, and of the decisive connection in his system between the question of justification and the question of the knowledge of God, they did not probe to any great extent the problem of natural theology. Calvin's chapters in the Institutes (cf. I.i-vi and II.i-iii), in which he explores pagan philosophy and the corruption of the human intelligence as well as of the will, are unusual in the Reformation period, but even they do not include a systematic rejection of the very principle of natural theology, although they do describe the range and limits of human reason and show that even its efficaciousness in the realms of statecraft and of the liberal and mechanical arts is the work of "natural grace". This lacuna in Reformation theology had far-reaching consequences, as we suggest.

[2] See Thielicke's historical and theological analysis of this problem in Thielicke (1979), Vol. I, pp. 211-217. Flacius would have done well to read Calvin's Institutes II.i.10-11.

by presupposing the preservation of a "remnant" of the primal state. In this way the persistence after the Fall of human rationality and a kind of free will was "explained". But this was inconsistent with the Reformation doctrine of the totality of the Fall, the purpose of which had been to interdict the natural/supernatural dualistic schema of Scholasticism and so to avoid the "neutralization" of the state of nature. If the imago Dei had been destroyed by sin, it was illogical to declare that "remnants" of it could still be found in fallen man. While the Catholic doctrine of the imago might be said to provide a framework in which the reality and persistence of such ontic qualities could be intelligibly accounted for, the position of Protestant Orthodoxy had no such logical basis. It was therefore defenceless against the rising current of secular thought that first cut loose the creature, man, from his mooring in God (a move to which the Reformation doctrine of the imago Dei undoubtedly contributed) and then went on to reverse traditional Christian doctrine by declaring man's autonomy to be absolute and his (present) nature to be essentially good or at least neutral (the contrary move to that of Flacius). Inside its own walls, correspondingly, Protestantism witnessed an increasing tension between reason and revelation, as the "remnant", left, so to speak, to itself and deprived of grace, assumed larger and larger proportions under the impact of scientific method and a recrudescent Pelagianism.

Both Eighteenth Century (rationalistic) and Nineteenth Century (moralistic) forms of natural theology have their taproot in this misconceived doctrine of the imago Dei, whose lineage, as we have seen, goes at least as far back as the Second Century. Scripture can no more be made to support the contention of the Reformers that the imago was destroyed at the Fall than it can the Catholic view that the imago consists in human rationality as such and remained untouched by the Fall. Both these positions are intellectualistic rather than dynamic and lead inevitably to some form of ontologism and then to natural theology, the first (Protestant) with inconsistency, the second (Catholic) in perfect accordance with its own principles. The humanum must be accounted for, and if it is not taken up within the comprehensive horizon of an understanding of man's essential nature in terms of personal relation to God, it will be assessed qualitatively in ontological terms. Along these lines man is led logically to arrogate to himself the God-like status of self-sufficiency and to consider himself in his own "who-ness", as an existent with certain characteristics, quite apart from and prior to his relational bond to the Creator by whom he has his being in the first place. His sense of responsibility to God cannot but be eroded by such self-endorsement, and this can only lead to rash self-indulgence and ideology. Catholic and Protestant Orthodoxy have both unwittingly given impetus to this long-term development by their misguided view of submission to and fellowship with God as being something added to (or subtracted from) man's nature, as

a grace somehow to be coordinated with what man is in himself, rather than as that by which human nature is to be defined and understood truly. In our own century this equivocal and latently dangerous view has at last been systematically challenged. A discovery of the relational meaning of the imago Dei has gone hand in hand with a renewed Christological understanding of revelation. As we shall see, these connected insights have great importance for the doctrine of providence.

III.4

The imago Dei in Psalm 8 and in Wisdom literature.

We may approach our analysis of the imago Dei as it is used in the New Testament by glancing at several references to it found in the Hebraic tradition outside of the Book of Genesis. The relational/dialectical interpretation of the imago that we are developing is contained in principle in Genesis 1 and 2, confirmed in Genesis 5:1-3, and given ethical application in Genesis 9:6-7. But the imago then disappears from view in the Hebrew Scriptures, with the exception of two explicit references to it in the Apocrypha--in the Book of Wisdom 2:23 and in Ecclesiasticus 17:3--and the allusion to it in Psalm 8:5-6. In Psalm 8 and Sirach 17, the aspect of the imago emphasized is

man's strength and his dominion over creation;[1] in Wisdom 2:23 it is, significantly, immortality:

> for God created man for incorruption,
> and made him in the image of his own eternity.

Although, as we have seen, the Fall does not destroy the imago Dei, it undoubtedly prevents its fulfilment, which may partially explain the eclipse that the theme seems to suffer in the Old Testament. Yet this eclipse, as Barth suggests, is only apparent.[2] The very fact of the divine covenant with Israel, and of its prophetic extension to the whole of mankind,[3] can only properly be understood on the basis of Genesis 1:27-28. In this text it is disclosed that man's nature and destiny are inseparably bound to God the Creator. Sin places the divine-human relation under shadow, and with it man's earthly vocation as well; but because this relation is willed by God from

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[1] Sirach lays stress on the intellectual dimension of this strength and dominion, by pointing to man's "mind for thinking" (v. 6), his "knowledge and understanding" (v. 7), and his "knowledge" (v. 11). Such rational power is implicit in the concept of the imago Dei as such (the Creator God is necessarily rational, therefore man made in his image is rational also) and, more directly, in the power given by God to Adam to name the creatures (Gen. 2:19f.). We shall draw out some of the implications of this rational power later in our discussion of the relation between rationality and personality. What is striking in Sirach's presentation is that this mental strength of man is seen in the context of his personal and special relationship to God. Cf. Gerhard von Rad (1972), ch. XIII, esp. pp. 254ff.

[2] See above, p. 85 : the citation from Barth (1958), Vol. III/1.41, pp. 199f.

[3] Cf. e.g., Gen. 12:1-3; 17:1-5; Isa. 2:1-4; 42:1-13; 52:13-15; 56:6-7; 60:1-4; Mic. 4:1-4; Zech. 8, 14; Joel 2:28f.

eternity, man by his rebellion cannot overthrow it. God goes forth to find man, as he had originally gone forth from himself to create him. He establishes the historical post-Fall covenant because in his heart the eternal covenant had already been established from before the foundation of the world.

The imago Dei, then, precisely because it is the imago Dei, is fully present throughout the Old Testament, but under the form of the promise and hope contained in God's covenant with Israel. The references to the imago outside of Genesis evidently presuppose the covenant. In Psalm 8, for example, the One addressed is the Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, who has made man and cares for him; man's high dignity and task are explicitly attributed to God's sovereign will. We may assume that such a clear-eyed appreciation of the true relation between God and man will only be had by someone living within the framework of redemption. It is knowledge of and wonder at God's providential care for humankind that leads the psalmist to speak of God's creation of man to be his honoured steward. The close connection in biblical thought--so evident in this psalm--between the imago Dei and providence stands out against the backdrop of God's self-revelation to his people as their Saviour and Lord, who is also Lord of the whole earth.

The imago reference in Wisdom 2:23 likewise presupposes God's disclosure of himself and of his purpose for man. In this later period of Israel's history, when the nation was suffering oppression and persecution, the imago is seen under the aspect of

eternal life and incorruptibility, reserved by God as a reward for the righteous. The vindication of the righteous and the hope of immortality in which they live (ch. 3:1-4) are understood as the fulfilment of God's "secret purposes" at creation (ch. 2:22), when he created man for incorruption, "in the image of his own eternity" (ch. 2:2). The content of this "great good" (ch. 3:5) which "the faithful" (ch. 3:9) will receive is declared to be intimate association with the Lord:

> Those who trust in him will understand truth,
> And the faithful will abide with him in love,
> because grace and mercy are upon his elect,
> And he watches over his holy ones. (Ch. 3:9)

Once again, under the quite different light of intertestamental Judaism, the imago Dei is seen essentially to involve fellowship with God the Creator, who saves those who are "worthy of himself" (ch. 3:5). This covenant hope, however, now reaches forward beyond the earthly sphere into a future that includes life after death; and this means that God's personal providence, of which, on the manward side, the imago Dei is the ultimate basis, is understood likewise, as far as the righteous are concerned, as extending beyond the grave (chs. 2:23-3:4).

III.5

Paul's understanding of the imago Dei.

The Apostle Paul, in his doctrine of the imago Dei, recasts these themes in the light of Jesus Christ. In I Corinthians 15:47-50, he seems deliberately to echo Wisdom 2:23:

> The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Already in the Wisdom passage, as we saw, the imago Dei is given an eschatological reference to life in God's eternity. Paul accepts this insight but takes the decisive further step of placing it in a Christological context. It is because we shall bear the image of the last Adam, of the second man, i.e., Jesus Christ, who is from heaven, that we shall inherit incorruptibility. The righteous and holy ones of whom the writer of Wisdom spoke, whom God would judge worthy to abide with him, Paul declares to be as bound by the law and sin and death as all the rest. Only One is righteous, the Son of God himself, Jesus the Christ; and it is only through his virtue that we have the victory over corruption and death. Essentially this victory consists in our bearing Christ's image, the image of the heavenly, imperishable man: and this image is the imago Dei. In the Corinthian passage Paul puts the fulfilment of this destiny unmistakably in the future: "we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven", even while speaking of the "victory" in the present tense (v. 57), as something we have now "through our Lord Jesus Christ". In Romans 8:29f., however, and even more obviously in II Corinthians 3:18 and Colossians 3:10ff., he

brings this future image-bearing itself directly into conjunction with the Christian's present condition:

> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30)

To be glorified means here to be conformed to the image of Christ and so to be the true man, the renewed Adam, God's representative, rightly exercising dominion over creation. In that the Christian, through faith and baptism, has been incorporated into Christ, this has already happened, which is why Paul uses the aorist tense in v. 30.[1]

Nor is this already present eschatological reality without transforming power, even under the perishable conditions of our earthly existence:

> Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

This transforming power is the work of the Spirit, who, to some considerable degree, is able to conform us even now to the

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[1] Cf. Hebrews 2:8-9 in relation to Psalm 8. John 17:20-24 presents a strikingly similar picture, albeit in the very different terms and style of Johannine theology and with a rather different immediate aim: Christians share in God's glory in that they are in the Father and the Son and the Son is in them; and eternal life is to know the only true God, the Father of Jesus Christ, and the Son whom the Father has sent. Participation in God's eternal glory means, for John, to be in intimate relationship with the Father and the Son, through the Spirit (cf. John 16:13ff.).

glorious image of Christ. Although, as Paul tells us in I Corinthians 13:12, we still see in a mirror dimly and cannot yet fully understand the nature of our redemption, yet even now, because through Christ's sacrifice for us the veil between man and God has been removed and we stand before him in the freedom of grace and no longer under the law's condemnation, we are able by faith to behold the glory of the Lord: and the effect upon us of this beholding is not, as it would have been under the Old Covenant, that we are destroyed (cf. Ex. 20:18f.; Dt. 5:23ff.), but rather that the power of the old sinful nature over us is progressively broken and we are "changed into his likeness".[1] The Father, beholding us as we behold him, sees not condemned sinners but sons and daughters justified in Jesus Christ, "new creatures" in process of being conformed to his Son's image (cf. Gal. 4:19). In Paul's mind there is nothing speculative about this, it has immediate ethical consequences.[2] "For you have died," he writes to the Christians at Colossae,

> and your life is hid with Christ in God....Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which

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[1] Again, the parallel with the Johannine literature is patent: cf. esp. I John 3:2. We are already God's children, and to that extent already like Jesus Christ, the Son; but it is not until we see him at his appearing, in the full manifestation of his glory--"as he is"--that we shall be fully "like him". Cf. Colossians 3:4.

[2] Kittel sees this conjunction in Paul's thought of "eikōn" language with ethical commandments as characteristic of the Apostle's fundamentally non-speculative and Christologically oriented approach to the doctrine of the imago Dei. See Kittel (1964), esp. pp. 396f.

> is idolatry....Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all. Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience... (Colossians 3:3, 5, 9-12)

On the one hand these Christians are even now dead with Christ and raised up with him; the eschatological reality is already theirs; God has laid hold of them and given himself to them in his Son, and he promises to keep them. On the other hand, seen from the manward side, this new nature is not an ontic quality henceforth inherent in them, which turns them into perfect beings in the twinkling of an eye. Rather, they must continue day by day to "put on the new nature" and to "put off the old" (cf. Eph. 4:22ff.). The new nature itself, so far from being their static possession, "is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator".

What is Paul telling us in all this about the imago Dei? Most fundamentally he is saying that it consists in relationship with God the Creator and that this relationship has been shifted from the negative mode of human rebellion and divine judgment to the positive mode of human obedience and divine grace, through the vicarious and representative death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Salvation and eternal life consist in man's being conformed to the imago Dei, as it is perfectly represented in Jesus Christ. Jesus is God's Son incarnate, sent by the Father "in the likeness (en homoiōmati) of sinful flesh and for sin"

(Romans 8:3), in whom God and man are united truly and effectively. He is not, like the first Adam, created in the image of God; he is himself the image, the very "eikōn tou theou" (II Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15; cf. Heb. 1:3). He is one nature with God the Creator and is the Agent and End of creation, God's Word, the One in whom, through whom, and for whom all things in heaven and earth were created (Colossians 1:15f.; cf. Gen. 1:3-2:3; Pss. 33:6; 148:5; Jn. 1:1), and by whom they hold together and are sustained (Colossians 1:17; cf. Heb. 1:3). But by his incarnation, whereby he was born in the likeness (en homoiōmati) of men (Philippians 2:7), he is also one nature with man the creature. It is as the Son of God become man that he is the imago Dei. As such he unites in his gracious Person and effectuates in his redemptive work the relationship of love between God and man which we have seen to be the essential meaning of the statement in Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

The incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, fulfils man's destiny: as God, he is one with man; as man, he is one with God. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews tells us this in his distinctive way through his exegesis of Psalm 8 (Hebrews 2:5-9), in which he takes the psalm to be not an empirical reading of man's actual condition but a picture of man's destiny in its

eschatological fulfilment.[1] His Christology at this point dovetails with that of Paul. He points to Jesus, in whom human destiny has already been fulfilled:

> Now in putting everything in subjection to him [man], he [God] left nothing outside his control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one. (Hebrews 2:8-9)

Jesus Christ is God's image, the very reflection and effulgence of God's glory (Hebrews 1:3: hos hōn apaugasma tes doxēs): he is God's representative to man. But he is also, as made in man's likeness (cf. Phil. 2:7), man's representative to God. Because, as the merciful Son of God, he allowed himself to be conformed to man's likeness even to the point of being made into the likeness of sinful flesh (Ro. 8:3; cf. II Cor. 5:21)--though remaining, as man, obedient to the Father and so without sin (Heb. 4:15; II Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 2:22)--he made it possible for man to be conformed in turn to his image, i.e., to the image of God.

Thus it is through Jesus Christ that man as created in God's image is brought back from the negative mode of that image into which sin had plunged him, and is restored to its positive mode, i.e., to fellowship with God and to a position of dominion in creation, in fulfilment of God's eternal purpose. The logical (not the chronological) presupposition in the New Testament of this redemptive work through Christ is Christ's creative work at

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[1] We draw here on notes from a course on Hebrews given by George Caird in Hilary Term, 1980, at Oxford University.

the beginning, when, likewise through him (the Eternal Word), all things were made, including man (male and female), whom he created in his own image (Jn. 1:1-3; Col. 1:15f.; cf. Gen. 1:26, read in a Trinitarian sense). Personal, responsive intimacy between the special creature, man, and God the Creator was willed from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3f.). Christ's solidarity with men in atonement and redemption is the consequence and confirmation of his solidarity with them in creation: this is the truth revealed by the biblical teaching of the imago Dei. Furthermore, the form of this solidarity as it is expressed in the New Testament under the image of the Bridegroom with his Bride (Eph. 5:25ff.; Rev. 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17) recalls and consummates the imago Dei understood as male and female (Gen. 1:27) and emphasizes still more strongly its essentially relational nature, as a picture of communion within the Godhead and between God and man.[1]

Imago Dei and "sonship".

This fellowship--this immediacy of relationship with God--is defined in the New Testament in terms of sonship. There is a parallelism in the New Testament between, on the one hand, the revelation of Jesus Christ, the very imago Dei, who redeems us mortal men created in God's image, in order that we might be

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[1] As suggested above, pp.77f., this insight forms the core of Barth's discussion of the imago Dei.

united to himself and so be conformed to the imago positively and fully and become (in this relational and not in an ontological sense) "partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4); and, on the other hand, the revelation of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who, in identification with man, draws us by his life, death, and resurrection into brotherhood with himself and sonship with the Father, from whom they who believe have already received the Spirit of sonship (Ro. 8:15) and now await the fulfilment of their adoption, viz., the redemption of their bodies (Ro. 8:23). This parallelism appears sharply in Romans 8:29:

> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren.

Thus we see that in the New Testament what is actually meant by "conformity" to the imago Dei, that is, to the image of Christ, the Son of God, is sonship. Our being--through Christ--sons in communion with God our Father is the ultimate form of our relation to God. Indeed we may say that through the New Covenant the special relation to God of human creatures becomes this intimate relationship of sons.[1] By the Holy Spirit we are actually begotten of God, born as sons into his elected family. Thus does the New Covenant through Christ's shed blood fulfil the promise of the Old and the purpose of the creation itself. The

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[1] Cf. Jn. 20:17; I John 1:3f. Of course, this filial relationship with God was adumbrated in the Old Testament, in the covenant between Yahweh and the people of Israel. In and through Jesus Christ this covenant is fulfilled and made universal. Cf. Ex. 4:22; Isa. 63:16f.; 64:8; Jer. 31:9, 20; Hos. 11:1; and Isa. 9:6 and Ps. 2:7 in correlation with Ro. 1:3f. and 9:4.

whole creation, as Paul puts it in Romans 8:19, "waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God", that is, for the attainment of its own goal in the consummation of man's destiny.

> He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:5f.)

We must go on to affirm that this sonship does not come about in virtue of any natural disposition or intrinsic quality in human nature. As with the imago Dei, of which it is the final form, sonship is to be understood in the first instance relationally, not ontically.[1] As Christ the Son is begotten--not made--of the Father, so our conformity to his Image and our likeness to his Sonship require that we too be begotten spiritually. "Flesh and blood," as Paul wrote, "cannot inherit the kingdom of God." (I Corinthians 15:50) The Pauline idea of adoption as sons and the Johannine idea of being born from above and becoming God's children both express this necessity (cf. Ro. 8:14-17 and Jn. 1:12f.). The new birth is a present spiritual reality having radical ethical consequences (cf. I Jn. 3:9f., 14; 4:7; 5:4-5; I Peter 2:1-3). But as it is the work of the Holy Spirit, who is given to believers as a pledge of the life to come, it is essentially eschatological. This means that what is

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[1] The historical parallel with the Deuteronomic doctrine of election is clear: Israel was chosen to be Yahweh's special people not because of any intrinsic merit or superiority of her own, but through sheer grace. Cf. Dt. 7:6-8; 9:4-6.

present to us in it is our future.[1] We are pointed beyond our present state in grace to its ultimate perfection in glory, when we shall be conformed truly to the likeness of God in Jesus Christ:

> Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (I John 3:2f.)

Imago Dei and hope.

It is with this theme of hope and its ramifications that we shall bring to a close our discussion of the imago Dei. Hope, in Scripture, always involves the promise of God's presence with man and of his gracious favour. In Genesis 1 and 2 we are given a picture of man the creature in responsible personal relation with God his Creator. In Genesis 3 that relationship of trust is spoiled by sin, and man comes under God's judgment. Yet God holds on to man and continues to provide for him, as we have stressed:

> And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them. (Genesis 3:21)

This providence is expressed in the Old Testament by God's sequence of covenants with man, in particular by the covenant of promise with Abraham and his descendants, through whom all the families of earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:3). The promise

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[1] See Barth's discussion of the ethics of redemption, in Karl Barth (1981), pp. 461-475.

fostered an unquenchable hope and pointed always forward, so that with every change in Israel's fortunes down through the centuries it was reinterpreted and its light cast forward once again into the future. The basis and content of this hope was God; more particularly, it was God's covenant--the assurance of his presence and succour and specific benefits (e.g., land, progeny) for those who obeyed him--by which he had sealed the original promise to Abraham (Gen. 11:3) and guaranteed the continuance of his blessing upon his chosen people. As had been the case with God's blessing upon Adam and Eve, the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant involved generation and fruitfulness (Gen. 17:5-6). In the course of Israel's history, the various forms in which the hope of the promise was experienced but never realized fully or perpetually (e.g., offspring, land, law, kingdom, temple, restoration) came to be focused on One whom God would send, his Anointed, who would be born of woman and would fulfil the promise definitively by redeeming God's people from the oppression, bondage, and sin into which they had repeatedly fallen.

This Messiah the writers of the New Testament believed to have come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Hence Paul could write to the Corinthian Christians:

> For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God. (II Corinthians 1:20)

And the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews could speak of Jesus as being "the surety of a better covenant", by whose priesthood "a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God".

(Hebrews 7:22, 19). This unity and fellowship with God was seen to be the inner meaning of redemption, because it was the fulfilment of God's eternal purpose in creating man in his own image. Only Jesus Christ, as God's Son and very Image, who became man and as man's inclusive representative offered himself up obediently unto death and was raised from the dead by God through the Spirit, could accomplish this redemption. And only Jesus Christ--and again, as man's inclusive representative, bearing man in and with himself--would be able to accomplish the outer meaning of redemption, i.e., dominion over creation, and so complete the fulfilment of God's intention in creating man according to his image.

Hence, as the New Testament writers understood it, the lordship in creation entrusted to Adam and Eve at the beginning and reiterated in Psalm 8 is realized first by the man Jesus Christ and then by those who are his, who have been incorporated by grace through faith into him. God who raised Christ has raised his people with him (Eph. 1:20; 2:6; cf. I Cor. 6:14) and has seated them with him in the heavenlies (kai sunēgeiren kai sunekathisen en tois epouraniois en Christō Iēsou: Eph. 2:6). Already, therefore, they reign in life through God's gift of covenantal righteousness in Christ (Ro. 5:21), even though the fulfilment of this reign--i.e., of this destiny of dominion in fellowship with God--will come only at the eschaton (Ro. 5:2, 17; cf. Dan. 7:13f.), when, as Paul expresses it,

> he [Christ] delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 'For God has put all things in subjection under his feet.' (I Corinthians 15:24-27, including Paul's citation of Psalm 8:6)

We are assured explicitly by the author of the Book of Revelation that this final rule, too, will be corporate: Christ's brethren (his Bride!)--those sanctified by his blood--<u>will reign with him</u> (Rev. 5:9-10; 20:4-6; 22:3-5; and cf. Dan 7:21f.): and so the <u>imago Dei</u> of Genesis 1:26-28 will be perfectly fulfilled.

All God's promises find their Yes in Christ: but their ultimate realization is not yet. And yet it <u>will come</u>, and in this hope the Christian lives (cf. Ro. 5:2; Col. 1:27). This is the New Testament proclamation. Man the creature, created at the beginning to be in responsible relation to God his Creator, will find his completion, individually and corporately, at the eschatological redemption, in his final and perfect likeness to Christ the Son and in the love of God the Father. Hence Paul, as we have seen, writes of the <u>imago Dei</u> not only with respect to the present but also with respect to the eschatological future:

> The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven....Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. (I Corinthians 15:47, 49)

This is Paul's hope as, with all the elect, he waits for the

> adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (Romans 8:23b-25)

Hope, suffering, the Spirit, providence.

But patient waiting in a dark world is arduous. To live in the tension between the "already" and the "not yet" is to live at once in joy and pain. Sonship, until the final redemption, involves suffering. In the Bible, notably in the intertestamental period and in the New Testament, hope and suffering go together. We are heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ, Paul writes in Romans 8:17b, "provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." Chapter 8 of Romans draws out all the implications of chapter 5:1-5; and the entire second half of the chapter is concerned with the suffering of the saints, the travail of the whole creation, and the intercession of the Spirit who helps men in their weakness. And, most significantly for our present purpose, it is in <u>this context</u> that Paul speaks of providence and affirms that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ. The same Spirit who sanctifies us and enables us, as sons, to cry "Abba! Father!", helps us in our infirmity and intercedes on our behalf (vv. 13, 15, 26). The gift of the Holy Spirit (the promise of the Father sent in the name of Jesus: cf. Lk. 24:49; Jn. 14:26) is the expression of God's providence and the assurance of his love. The Spirit is the Paraclete. It is noteworthy that Romans 8:28, the great Pauline text on providence ("We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called

according to his purpose"), comes, in the sweep of the Apostle's thought, directly after his words about the Spirit's ministry of intercession (words which themselves follow on his exposition of hope and patient waiting), and before his ringing declaration about God's predestination of man to be conformed to the image of the Son. Earlier in the same chapter he had written that "all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." (v. 14) Paul is telling us that God's providence for man is made manifest in the Son, who fulfils human destiny, and in the Spirit, who, as the Spirit of Christ (v. 9), leads us to and in Christ the Son and through him to the Father, and who maintains us in our sonship until the time when we shall receive the promised redemption and be altogether like the Son, God's Image. The Spirit by whom we are already being changed into Christ's likeness (II Corinthians 3:18) is the same Spirit who guarantees that "we shall be changed" when the last trumpet shall sound, "for this perishable nature must put on the imperishable" (I Corinthians 15:52f.). "Here indeed we groan," he writes elsewhere,

> and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage... (II Corinthians 5:2-6a)

We are of good courage because God has already clothed us with the new nature in Christ, which, as he instructs us

repeatedly through his Apostle, we are to "put on" from day to day (cf. Eph. 4:22f.; Col. 3:9ff.); and because the Spirit who enables us to obey this command also assures us that we shall be <u>further</u> clothed at the <u>eschaton</u>, when we shall put on immortality and bear the unalloyed image of the man of heaven. It is because of all of this that Paul can write what he does in Romans 8:28. God's providence is established and vouchsafed in the covenant with his people, fulfilled by Christ, and made manifest to us by the Holy Spirit. And this covenant is the ultimate purpose and meaning of his gracious providence to Adam and Eve in the Garden after the Fall, when he made for them garments of skins, "and clothed them". (Genesis 3:20) All humanity is intended here, even if not all men will respond. All humanity is called to know God as Father, through Jesus Christ the Son (cf. II Cor. 5:19 and Jn. 3:16f.). All humanity is made in the image of God and called to be conformed to the Image of Christ.

> Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?...And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith?...But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. (Matthew 6:26, 28-30, 33)

Providence and the Cross.

We see, then, that a Christian doctrine of providence must take its starting point in the context of the Trinity, having reference to the kingdom of the God who is the Father of Jesus Christ, who created and redeemed the world through his Son (the Word) and by the power of his Spirit, to the end that his Son might be the first-born among many brethren, the Bridegroom with his Bride. Only here is there any basis for speaking of a personal God who loves and cares for man, who expresses this love and care by willing and establishing relationship with him, and who leads humanity forward to the fulfilment of his gracious and eternal purpose.

But it must not be forgotten, when speaking of providence, that the Bridegroom is the Lamb who was slain (Rev. 5:6-14). This means, as we have already suggested, that the doctrine must also be formulated with reference to the Church that lives (and dies) under the Cross, in conformity to its Head, and that groans inwardly with and on behalf of the fallen creation, moved and sustained by the Spirit. The disciple is not above his Master but rather must be like him (Mt. 10:23f.; Jn. 13:15f.; 15:20; cf. I Cor. 4:11ff.; Col. 1:24f.). To be like him in his resurrection life requires being like him in his crucifixion death (Phil. 3:7-11); to put on the <u>new</u> nature and so to be conformed to the image of Christ involves dying to the <u>old</u> nature. Christians, as they are led by the providential Spirit, crucify the flesh (Gal. 5:16-

26); and they are also persecuted by those born only according to the flesh (Gal. 4:29), who have not experienced the new birth by the Spirit. In both cases they undergo suffering and know in different forms the death to the egocentric self. We have said little directly thus far of this negative side of the New Testament doctrine of the imago, but we shall touch on it again in our concluding chapter. If the Church can dare to speak of God's providence and to formulate a doctrine that makes intelligible his sovereign relation to the world, it can do so convincingly only from an eschatological perspective and by the power of the Spirit, that is, in the strength of the new life given to men who have died to the old self-centred nature (Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:1-3). God's providence in history leads to and from, and is summed up and made effective in, the Cross; in the Cross that issues in the resurrection; in the resurrection whereby Christ is proclaimed the second Adam, the first-born among many brethren, the head of a newly-begotten race which is destined to joyful fellowship with the Father, Creator of the world, and to joint rulership with the Son over the whole creation.

If a doctrine of the imago Dei understood fundamentally in relational rather than in ontic terms is not first established as the basis of the possibility of a Christian doctrine of providence, then the latter will always be open to the danger of mere speculation of a rationalistic or historicist kind. A deficient anthropology can only give rise to a defective

conception of God and of his relation to the world. The interpretation of the imago Dei that we have been arguing for succeeds in integrating the New Testament concept of the already present eschatological new creation (cf. II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15)--consisting in spiritual regeneration and incorporation into God's life, and in conformity, as adopted sons, to the image of the Son, Jesus Christ--with the Old Testament concept of the primordial creation of man in the image of God. A primarily ontic/qualitative interpretation cannot do this, because its two-track conception of man as a rational being who is also responsible to God--a conception based on a philosophically oriented evaluation of the imago Dei--clashes with the New Testament Christological picture of the imago and its representative fulfilment in Christ, in which there is no question of an intrinsic value and authority to be found in human rationality. The imago Dei can be the basis for God's covenant with man--and the fulfilment of the covenant by Jesus Christ, the very Image of God, demonstrates that the imago is this basis--only if its structure and content cohere with the revealed purpose of the historical covenant itself. That covenant, from initiation to completion, has to do essentially with personal relationship between God and man.

CHAPTER IV

The category of the personal as comprehending the category of the rational; revelation and the knowledge of God-as-Trinity.

IV.1

Summary of preceding argument and of forthcoming chapters.

Thus far in our approach towards a Christian doctrine of providence we have been investigating the question mainly from the standpoint of theological anthropology, with particular attention to the notions of the person and of the imago Dei. We first contrasted the classical conception of divinity as a metaphysical principle with the Judeo-Christian conception of God as personal, and argued briefly, with a glance at Tillich's doctrine of God and Being, that if the concepts of an ontological Being and of a personal Creator are to be held together, then, in opposition to Tillich's belief, the latter must be primary. We proceeded to examine the development of the concept of person and to show it to be rooted in the biblical revelation of the personal God and not in any rational construction. Only such a personal God, we insisted, can be thought of as the Subject of a truly Christian doctrine of providence. Finally, in a biblical and historical study of the imago Dei, we argued that a relational and essentially personal understanding of the imago Dei, as distinct from an individualistic conception in terms of

ontic qualities such as rationality, will be required if our doctrine of providence is to avoid mere speculation and be consonant with the biblical picture of a dynamic God vitally interacting with his creatures. Since one's view of man necessarily conditions the way one conceives of God's relation to the world, we suggested that the "two-track" conception of the imago Dei, characteristic especially of the historic Western Church, has contributed, by its placing side by side of qualitative and relational categories, to the confusion and difficulty felt by many today in formulating a coherent and intelligible doctrine of providence.

We must now push our investigation farther and deeper. We propose to do this in the next two chapters by examining the connection of the personal with the rational. Our overall aim will be to show that the personal is the more comprehensive category of the two and that the category of the rational is made more intelligible and perspicuous as it is subordinated to that of the personal. First, by glancing at two features of John's Gospel, we shall try to give this central idea a more precise theological focus. Next, as a complement to our foregoing anthropological investigation, we shall take a closer look at patristic, medieval, and Twentieth Century Trinitarian theology in order to define more exactly the identity of the God of whom we may have knowledge. This theological analysis will serve as the basis for our rudimentary sketch of a theological theory of knowledge. In Chapter V, in dialogue with four philosophers and

using the related concepts of the imago Dei and of the personal, we will extend this theory to our knowledge of human persons and of the material world. In our last chapter we shall bring our findings to bear directly on the doctrine of providence and engage in discussion with two contemporary theologians.

IV.2

Scholarly views of the concept of Logos in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel; the identification, achieved in Patristic thought, of hypostasis with person; the concept of "truth" in the Fourth Gospel.

In Chapter I.5 we had occasion to criticize Tillich's manner of coordinating the concepts of Being and of person. This criticism was made in relation to the way he coordinates two primary senses of Logos: firstly, the classical sense, as universal reason, the implicit rationality of all being that makes possible a "cosmos" and that finds its human reflection and correspondent in the structure of the mind, whereby reason, through its cognitive, aesthetic, practical, and technical functions is able to grasp and transform reality;[1] and secondly, the New Testament sense, found quintessentially in the Johannine Prologue, as the universal become concrete, the Word become flesh, Jesus as the Christ.[2] Tillich argues that although the sources of these two concepts of Logos are different, they both

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[1] Tillich (1951), Vol. I, pp. 72ff.

[2] Ibid., pp. 16ff.

refer to the same ultimate reality, which is the divine self-manifestation.[1] This "divine" that is manifested is being-itself, or the ground of being. Tillich, as we saw, conceives this "ground of being" as supra-personal, as above or beneath the personal and as comprehending it; and we have maintained, on the contrary, that the concept of being becomes more fully intelligible when it is itself comprehended within the category of the personal. We suggest that this is illustrated by the way in which the writer of the Fourth Gospel uses two concepts: that of the Logos in the Prologue to his Gospel; and that of truth.

It is a matter of scholarly debate as to how much John was influenced by religious and philosophical ideas from outside the biblical and primitive Christian spheres. B. H. Streeter, writing in the 1920's, believed that the Evangelist's conception of the Logos owed as much to Greek categories of thought as to Jewish.[2] John's immediate audience, Streeter thinks, would have been brought up in the Greek-speaking Hellenistic city of Ephesus, and John himself would very probably have had at least a passing acquaintance with the religious philosophy of Philo, who had attempted to synthesize Greek and Hebrew thought. While the Evangelist's conception of the Logos was Christocentric and therefore fundamentally different from Philo's blend of Platonism, Stoicism, and the Hebrew Scriptures, Streeter has no

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[1] Cf. ibid., pp. 23ff., 28, 157f.; and Tillich (1955), p. 75.

[2] Streeter (1927), pp. 370ff.

hesitation in writing that "the essential consideration is that the Word in John is philosophically conceived; it expresses the idea of the Divine as an indwelling principle in the Universe."[1]

Similarly, C. H. Dodd, thirty years later, while allowing that the Prologue to John's Gospel might be read only in terms of a Christological application of the Old Testament sense of the Word of the Lord, finds it difficult not to see here the influences of speculative Hellenistic Judaism, which had served as a conduit for the introduction of the Stoic-Platonic logos into traditional Jewish thought. John's Logos, he writes,

> is not simply the uttered word or command of God; it is the meaning, plan or purpose of the universe, conceived as transcendent as well as immanent, as the thought of God, formed within the eternal mind and projected into objectivity. From the human point of view it is a rational content of thought, expressed in the order of the universe, but it is this not as with the Stoics, in the sense that the order of the universe is self-originated, self-contained, and self-explanatory, but in the sense that its order and meaning express the mind of a transcendental creator.[2]

Dodd also points out the close parallels between the traits of the Logos in the Prologue and those of Wisdom in the Jewish "Wisdom" School, especially as found in Proverbs 1, 3, and 8, in Wisdom 7-9, and in Sirach 24.[3] He thinks that the concept of Wisdom, that is to say, "the hypostatized thought of God projected in creation, and remaining as an immanent power within

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[1] Ibid., p. 376.

[2] Dodd (1955), p. 277.

[3] Ibid., pp. 274f.

the world and in man,"[1] takes us half-way to Philo's Logos.[2] Both are concepts of mediation between God and men, though in different senses. Wisdom is a personification, a mediator at creation and in the revelation given specifically to Israel, which is also, by Ben Sira, identified outright with the Torah.[3] Philo's Logos is more complex and philosopohical in conception, though in all respects a medium of intercourse between God and the world. It is to be understood on the one hand in terms of Wisdom, and on the other in terms of the Platonic world of ideas (as expressing the mind of the One God) combined with a modified Stoicism in which the Stoic notion of logos as the principle both of reality and of knowledge is taken on board, while the identification of logos with God is rejected in favour of a Wisdom-oriented notion of projection out from God.

Edwin Hoskyns and F. N. Davey, writing in the late 1930's, had taken a different view. They had denied any significant Greek or Philonic influence on the author of the Fourth Gospel. Besides being the Word, Jesus in John's Gospel has other titles, such as the Door, the Way, the Truth, the Light, the Vine, which, these scholars had argued, could not possibly derive from Hellenistic philosophy; and no theory of derivation applicable

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[1] Ibid., p. 275.

[2] Ibid., p. 276.

[3] Sirach 24:8-12, 23; Pro. 8:22ff. Cf. Hengel (1976), pp. 48ff.

only to one title among many could in the end be satisfactory.[1] The Word in the Prologue is patently related not to Greek thought but to the Jewish Law, against which it is set in opposition; John's Logos, like the logos as it is used in the Synoptic Gospels, means, effectively, the New Covenant, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.[2]

While doubtless Hoskyns and Davey are right in insisting on the priority of Old Testament and primitive Christian sources for John's Gospel, it seems to us that their Evangelist is sealed off artificially from his Hellenistic environment. Furthermore, and more positively, we suggest that John gives greater glory to Jesus Christ by showing inferentially the absolute supremacy of the living Word over all the philosopohical and religious notions attaching to the term "logos" in his day, than if he had neither known of these nor taken them into account.

Twenty years on, writing after Dodd, C. K. Barrett occupies a kind of middle position. He lays stress on the syncretism of the Hellenistic Age as the inevitable background of the Fourth Gospel, even while minimizing the importance of its formative influence upon the Evangelist.[3] John, he argues, effects a synthesis of Jewish, Hellenistic, and primitive Christian strands of thought, not by amalgamating them but by taking Christ, the

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[1] Hoskyns and Davey (1940), pp. 158f.

[2] Ibid., p. 160.

[3] Barrett (1960), pp. 28ff.; 127ff.

Word incarnate, to be their centre and fulfilment and the key to any meaning they might have. "The Johannine Logos," he writes,

> has a cosmological function similar to that described by Philo--but he became flesh. The Johannine Logos is parallel to the Sophia-Torah figure of Judaism; but John is quick to point out that as the Torah was historically given through Moses so grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (1:17). The Logos exists, but is unknown and incomprehensible apart from the historical figure of Jesus. Conversely, the events of the gospel narrative are comprehensible only in the light of the conviction that the chief actor was no mere man but the eternal Word of God.[1]

Ten years later, Rudolf Schnackenburg stands on the same ground. With Dodd, he carefully places the Fourth Gospel in the complex religious and philosophical setting of the First Century, examining the influences of the Old Testament, of Hellenistic Judaism, of rabbinic Judaism, of Qumran, and of Hermetic, Mandaean, and Gnostic literature.[2] He inclines to think, with Barrett, that John had cognizance of many of the movements and thought patterns of his age, but that, rather as the Priestly redactor of the Genesis creation story had appropriated Babylonian mythology for his own purposes, the Evangelist did not so much submit to the surrounding influences as take over motifs that would serve either to illuminate the figure and redemptive work of Christ or to establish points of contact with the Hellenistic world he was seeking to reach with the Christian gospel. Schnackenburg finds many formal similarities between

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[1] Ibid., p. 129.

[2] Schnackenburg (1968), Vol. I, pp. 119-152.

Johannine motifs and those found elsewhere, but also always profound differences, invariably due to the unique person of Jesus, the Logos incarnate.[1]

This brief examination of a strong current in Twentieth Century Johannine research suggests that, whatever the precise connection between the Fourth Evangelist and the many eddies of thought washing around him, the creative initiative in the production of his Gospel lay with him, not with them. He was able to take hold of Old Testament, Judaistic, and philosophical thought patterns and place them in an intellectual and spiritual framework that was fundamentally new. The heart of this framework was Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, the Logos of God become flesh. This Logos, understood by John to be the Creator of the universe, was not cosmic reason, but its Author; not the exemplification of metaphysical principles, but the personal Source of all reality, including metaphysical principles. Precisely as such, the Johannine Logos is a pointer to the thesis we wish to defend, that in Jesus Christ God has revealed to men the proper and essential relation of the personal to the rational.

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[1] See ibid., e.g., p. 125 ("mysticism" in John and Philo); p. 131 ("dualism" and "pairs of opposites" in John and Qumran); p. 133 (the doctrine of the Spirit in John and Qumran); p. 137 (the "Logos" in John and the Corpus Hermeticum); pp. 140f. (the concept of "truth", as well as imagery such as "shepherd and flock", in John and in Mandaean literature); pp. 144f. (conceptuality and imagery in John and the Gnostic Odes of Solomon, where Schnackenburg sees the similarities to be due to a dependence of the latter on the former).

Stoic and patristic views of "reason", "being", and "person".

Let us explore this further. The Stoics held, as we have seen,[1] that the universe is permeated by one operative principle, the divine Reason (logos), which is God. This logos generates all things, making of reality a continuous and self-enclosed causal chain, a totality of which men are parts and with which, by the same logos immanent in them, they are able to live in harmony. For Plato and Aristotle, too, the world was a cosmos, an orderly whole intelligible to mind. Man was connected with this immutable divine universe--with God--by virtue of his reason, i.e., his rational, knowing faculty. Knowledge of truth, which is eternal and unchanging and therefore divine, is man's possibility and the philosopher's achievement. "Knowledge is related to what is," says Socrates to Glaucon in The Republic; "it knows what is as it is."[2] And Aristotle, extolling the activity of reason and the contemplative life of the philosopher, speaks in the Ethics, in a manner very like Plato's in the Timaeus,[3] of reason as "something divine" that is "present" in man:

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[1] See above, pp. 12f. and p. 142; cf. Hoskyns and Davey (1940), p. 157.

[2] Plato, The Republic V.478a.

[3] See the Timaeus 41c.

> If reason is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life. But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us....for man, therefore, the life according to reason is best and pleasantest, since reason more than anything else <u>is</u> man. This life therefore is also the happiest.[1]

According, then, to a central strand of classical thought, reason, as that which is intelligible, true, and immutable, is divine, and that part of man which can have knowledge, i.e., the rational soul, is likewise divine and can share in or partake of the truth, of what which is real and beyond change. The systematic formulations of this conviction vary considerably from Plato to Plotinus, but the theme of a basic dualism of mind and matter is present throughout, with mind/reason associated with <u>being</u>, i.e., with the permanent, the true, the real, the divine, and matter/body/senses associated with <u>becoming</u>, i.e., with the transitory, the unreal, the unintelligible. That which could be truly <u>known</u> was that which the reason, not the senses, could intuit.

In our earlier discussion of this issue[2] we saw that within such a philosophical framework the concept of the <u>person</u>, as it came to be understood in the Church, could not emerge. The <u>being</u> of man, his ontological reality, was connected precisely with that in him--his reason--which was considered to be <u>im</u>personal,

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[1] Aristotle, <u>Nicomachean Ethics</u> X.vii.1178a.

[2] See above, pp. 36ff.

that is, not bound to his particular, contingent, material existence. The individual as such was perishable and so could not have ontological status. "You forget," says the Athenian to Clemias in The Laws, "that creation is not for your benefit: you exist for the sake of the universe."[1] We have noted how essentially the same thing held true for Aristotle and for Marcus, the Roman Stoic.[2] The determinism that became manifest in Stoicism was already latent in earlier Greek thought in so far as this thought was characterized by the concept of the cosmos, that is, of the harmonious and unbroken relationship of existent things among themselves. The unity of such a system constituted, as an oppressive rational and moral necessity, the fate of the Greek tragedians and later Stoics. It was surely not coincidental, therefore, as John Zizioulas suggests,[3] that the term "person" (prosōpon) made its appearance first in ancient Greek tragedy. To sin and transgress, for the Greek authors, was not, as for the Hebrews and Christians, to rebel against a personal God ("Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," cries the contrite David in Psalm 51:4a); it was to rise up as an individual against the harmonious order of the cosmos, against Reason (logos). Such a personal act was irrational and therefore doomed; it lacked ontological content; the prosōpon was a mask,

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[1] Plato, The Laws X.903; cf. The Republic VII.519a-520d.

[2] See above, pp. 37f. and pp. 18f.

[3] Zizioulas (1985), p. 31.

an ephemeral appearance. Zizioulas remarks that as a result of the mask, the actor (and the spectator as well)

> has become a person, albeit for a brief period, and has learned what it is to exist as a free, unique and unrepeatable entity. The mask is not unrelated to the person, but their relationship is tragic. In the Ancient Greek world for someone to be a person means that he has something added to his being; the 'person' is not his true 'hypostasis'. 'Hypostasis' still means basically 'nature' or 'substance'. Many centuries would have to elapse before Greek thought would reach the historic identification of 'hypostasis' with 'person'.[1]

The thinkers who achieved this identification were the Greek Christian Fathers of the Church. The basis of their achievement was the incarnation of the Son of God, whom the author of the Fourth Gospel calls the Logos of God: kai ho logos sarx egeneto kai eskēnōsen en hēmin (John 1:14). This Logos John has already

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[1] Ibid., p. 33. Arguably we have here the fundamental reason why Plato disapproves in principle of the poet and banishes him from the ideal State. Drama represents human beings in action; it appeals to, agitates, and strengthens the lower, irrational part of the mind, the part already disunified and in conflict with itself (see The Republic X.602c-608b). But, interestingly, it is in his earlier discussion of justice that he discerns a "third element" in the mind, besides reason and appetite, which Desmond Lee translates "spirit" and which includes positive qualities like courage and righteous indignation (The Republic IV.439a-444c. Cf. Phaedrus 246-256, the allegory of the Charioteer and his horses). It is precisely such qualities as these which great drama often highlights and which, from a Judeo-Christian perspective, are part of the essence of the person made in the image of God. The value of such qualities Plato was forced to recognize, provided they obeyed reason; but further than this he could not go, and one senses in his analysis a certain uneasiness and puzzlement, rather like Aristotle's in his discussion of the thinking mind in its relation to the soul (see above, pp. 38f.). In both cases the limits of the Greek reason-centred conceptuality were being reached, in its capacity to do justice to the complexity of human experience.

identified with and distinguished from God: kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos (v. 1). He is, as the Church would later declare, the hypostasis of the Son, enfleshed in Jesus of Nazareth. His being is this person, who, as the Word of God, is one with God the Father and with God the Spirit (en autō zōē ēn: v. 4), and who, as incarnate in Jesus, is one with man, that rational creature which is made in God's image. Zizioulas shows how the association of "hypostasis" with being rather than with mere appearance, and the correlative identification of "hypostasis" with "person" (hence, of being with "person"), was a long and complex development "born historically from the endeavour of the Church to give ontological expression to its faith in the Triune God."[1] In order to avoid Sabellianism, a way had to be found to provide ontological content to each Person of the Trinity, without endangering either monotheism or the principle of the absolute ontological independence of God in relation to the world. It was this challenge that impelled the Greek Fathers towards a very un-Greek and radical new vision: "an ontological view of man which would unite the person with the being of man, with his permanent and enduring existence, with his genuine and absolute identity."[2] Pringle-Pattison, in his Gifford Lectures of 1913, forcefully puts this same point in the rather different context of a discussion of Bradley's and

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[1] Ibid., p. 36. See esp. pp. 36-39.

[2] Ibid., p. 35.

Bosanquet's understanding of the relation of the Absolute to individuals:

> The relation of the Absolute to finite individuals cannot, in fact, be properly stated in terms of the old metaphysic of substance. The essential feature of the Christian conception of the world, in contrast to the Hellenic, may be said to be that it regards the person and the relations of persons to one another as the essence of reality, whereas Greek thought conceived of personality, however spiritual, as a restrictive characteristic of the finite--a transitory product of a life which as a whole is impersonal. Modern Absolutism seems, in this respect, to revert to the pre-Christian mode of conception, and to repeat also the too exclusively intellectualistic attitude, which characterizes Greek thought in the main. But no solution of the problem of God and man can be reached from a consideration of man as a merely cognitive being. Bare will is certainly an abstraction; but so is knowledge, if it is not regarded as the moving and determining force in a personality, shaping its attitude to the world and all the action which is the outcome of that attitude.[1]

In Greek patristic theology, then, <u>being</u> is traced back not to substance but to person.[2] The principle of the universe is identified not with intelligible Reason but with the hypostasis--the person--of the Father, as revealed in the Son by the Holy Spirit. This hypostatic principle, the Father, is knowable as a <u>person</u> is knowable, by self-revelation; he is not intelligible by reason alone. Specifically, he is knowable through the Son, who is one with him in communion and who becomes flesh in order to reveal him. The author of the Fourth Gospel, by his use of Logos in the Prologue, is not denying that rationality is the

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[1] Pringle-Pattison (1920), pp. 291f.

[2] See Zizioulas (1985), pp. 41f., note 37.

structural principle of reality; he is saying rather that reality, which is rightly perceived to be rational, is the product of a rational Mind that is absolutely creative (and therefore personal), of which Jesus Christ is the manifest expression: panta di' autou egeneto kai chōris autou egeneto oude hen ho gegonen. (John 1:3) In the Logos become flesh, ultimate being, the principle and origin (archē) of all other being, is revealed to be personal: it is the Trinity. Thus the Greek Logos is caught up within a more comprehensive principle of unity.

The concept of "truth" in the Fourth Gospel.

John confirms this interpretative intention in his correlative treatment of the concept of truth. In the Fourth Gospel, alētheia is attributed ontologically to the person of Jesus himself: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me...'" (John 14:6; cf. Jn. 17:17). The context of this statement is, revealingly, a discourse basically eschatological in nature, of which the first section is about where Jesus is going and where he will take his followers when he comes again to receive them to himself (Jn. 13:36-14:31). Though couched in spatial language ("mansion", "place", "whither"), the discourse is about relationship: between the Son and the Father, the Son and his disciples, the disciples and the Father, the Father and the Spirit, the Spirit and the disciples. Eschatology and communion

of created human beings with the uncreated Triune God, are identical. What it means for Jesus to be the truth, John is telling us, is that he, as the Son, is the way to the Father, who is the personal Source and End of all reality. In the Son is life, for the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son (cf. Jn. 1:4). It is this life that is eternal and that essentially characterizes divinity. Life is not a quality added to being, as Aristotle held;[1] life and ultimate being are one and the same, as is revealed by the One who is truth incarnate and who, as such, is the way to incorruptible being, that is, to eternal life. This life, made available to men through Jesus, consists in personal communion with God, which (as we shall see presently) John speaks of in terms of knowledge (cf. Jn. 1:4; 17:3).

Moreover, the temporal/historical is not dissociated from this eternal life or from the Logos, who, as the truth, is both the expression of this life and the way to it; rather, the temporal, as the sphere in which creatures necessarily exist and into which the enfleshed Word has had to come in order to share the divine life with fallen men, is caught up into the divine mode of being through the "grace and truth" that are in Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:17). "If you continue in my word," says Jesus in another place to the Jews who have believed in him as being the one sent by the Father, "you are truly my disciples, and you will

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[1] See especially On the Soul I.i.402a-403b; II.ii.413a-414a; II.iv.415b. Cf. Zizioulas (1985), p. 79.

know the truth; and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31b-32) Freedom comes through knowledge of the divine reality, and this knowledge is to be had not by the exercise of impersonal reason but by personal commitment and obedience to the divine hypostasis who is the truth. As John's use of Logos in the Prologue points to personal being in the beginning, who has come amongst men now, so his use of alētheia in other parts of his Gospel points to that same personal being in the end, who is present with us now as the truth, as Logos incarnate, and who will continue to be present with his Church in history, as the Spirit of truth (Jn. 14:17). Thus the vast tracts of historical time in between creation and new creation, which lie under the sway of change, becoming, and decay, are not cut off absolutely from the transcendent and eternal but are already proleptically transfigured and incorporated into them through God's gracious personal presence to men in his Word and in his Spirit. The trans-historical end of history is already within history as its meaning.[1] Thus history, because its end as and in communion with God is even now present in Christ and through the Spirit, can be correlated with truth.[2] This, it seems to us, is an implicate of John 14:6, understood in its context.

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[1] See Zizioulas's discussion of truth and history in Zizioulas (1985), pp. 94ff.

[2] Cf. above, pp. 42ff., where we discuss the historical component in the concept of person.

Such a correlation of the eternal and the historical was, as we have seen, unthinkable for the Greek philosophers, as was, for the same reasons, any coherent integration of the rational and the personal. Alētheia signified to the Greeks that which is, in the absolute sense: the real, the fixed, the changeless.[1] Truth and knowledge of the truth by philosophy were correlates; and the source of both, according to Plato, was the idea of the Good.[2] In the Judeo-Christian tradition, by contrast, the root understanding of truth (Heb.: 'emeth, 'emunah; alētheia in LXX) as firmness and stability, and its sense in common speech of the correspondence of word to fact, was readily applied to the faithfulness of the personal, dynamic God of Israel.[3] In the Scriptures this faithfulness is understood especially in relation to God's promises to his people, which do not change in their fundamental redemptive purpose. God reveals these promises through the prophetic word and establishes them by sovereign acts within the structures of space and time. For the New Testament writers, God's creative and redemptive word and act, both indissociable from his being, actually take flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, in whom all God's promises find their Yes

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[1] See Dodd (1955), p. 171.

[2] Plato, The Republic VI.508a-509c; cf. X.597e, where alētheia stands for "reality", in contrast to the third-remove representation of reality by tragic poetry; and Timaeus 29c, where it is contrasted with "belief" (pistis) and paralleled to "being" in its relation to "becoming".

[3] J. C. Lambert and W. D. Stacey (1963), p. 1016.

(II Cor. 1:20). Hence John's identification of Jesus with truth. Cognitive senses of truth, whatever their range may be, are placed within an encompassing theological framework, the centre of which is not a rational idea of the Good but the living God, Creator of all reality, who gives himself to be known personally through his incarnate Word.

John's complex use of Logos in the Prologue, and his correlative use of alētheia, corresponds, it seems to us, to Paul's Christological declaration in Colossians 1:15-17: "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities--all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." No authority or principle, including unitive philosophical concepts derived from Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, or Philo, could henceforth be considered autonomous, ultimate, or absolutely determinate. As for the concept of rationality taken as a cosmic agent or force or explanatory mechanism, the revelation of God in Christ had personalized it, not, certainly, by denying the order everywhere observable in the world, but simply by locating the source of that order outside of the universe itself, in the nature and will of a personal--and, through Christ, accessible--creative Power. Precisely because God had thus acted directly in history and graced material reality with his incarnate presence, the whole classical

understanding of time, eternity, matter, the individual, and knowledge, had to be revised. Not rationality but personality, had been shown to be the ultimate truth.

Person understood as the individual grafted into Christ; the modern split of the personal and the rational.

Let us conclude this section by focusing these issues more precisely. The inability of Greek philosophy to do justice to what we unhesitatingly think of today as the reality of the individual existent whom we call a person, stems basically, as we saw in II.1 and 2, from the contingency of matter and of all sensible particulars. That which perishes cannot be absolutely real. Greek thought was dualistic in its separation of the intelligible and material realms, and unitive in its restriction of true being to the universal. Aristotle was no exception, despite his critique of Plato's doctrine of Forms and his elimination of its ontological aspect.[1] He upgraded the individual substance in so far as he correctly perceived "that we cannot apprehend the universal except through apprehension of the particular."[2] In this sense, it is true, he overcame Plato's extremer dualism. But at the epistemological level the dualism

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[1] See above, pp. 37f. Cf. Frederick Copleston's discussion of Plato's doctrine of Forms in A History of Philosophy (1962), Vol. I, Pt. I, ch. 20; and of Aristotle's metaphysics in Vol. I, Pt. II, ch. 29.

[2] Ibid., Vol. I, Pt. II, p. 46. Cf. Aristotle, Metaphysics VII, where the question of substance is treated at length.

remained, since, for Aristotle, only the universal can be cognized. Copleston writes of his view:

> The individual is truly substance, but that which makes it a substance of this or that kind, that which is the chief element in the thing and is the object of science, is the universal element, the form of the thing, which the mind abstracts and conceives in formal universality.[1]

It is in this way that Aristotle integrates what he calls primary and secondary substance. The individual (primary) substance is a compound of matter and form. The matter individualizes the form, which is the universal (secondary) substance or essence. But only this universal substance is truly cognizable, since the individualization of it, the matter, will perish.[2] What this means with respect to man, the rational animal, is that in so far as he is individualized, he is unknowable. That which is particular in him is irrational; therefore, as we have seen,[3] it is a mere adjunct to being and lacks ontological status.

In our earlier discussion of the development of the concept of person (II.1, 2), we considered the four elements that make up this concept (the rational, the eternal, the historical, and the relational) and that together distinguish it from the concept of the individual. We saw that it was only as the implications of the Incarnation were drawn out that the full reality of the

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[1] Ibid., pp. 45f.

[2] Cf. Aristotle, Metaphysics VII.vi.1031b: "...there is knowledge of each thing only when we know its essence."

[3] See above, p. 148.

person could appear. As it did, the value of the individual was affirmed as well. But it is important to note that this was the case only to the extent that the individual was constituted a person and was filled out by all the spiritual significance and reference that attended the concept of person in the Christian context where it came into its own. The idea that an individual man might have value in and by himself, as an autonomous entity, was surely as far from the mind of the Greek Fathers as it was from that of the classical philosophers. The latter, we have seen, found the meaning of man and of reality as a whole, and the connection between them, in the principle of perduring and universal rationality. Perishing and unintelligible particularity was unreal and meaningless. The Greek Fathers found meaning in the saving relation of the contingent individual to the personal God revealed in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. The individual grafted into Christ became a person with ontological status. This could be so because his created nature as imago Dei was redeemed and brought from its sinful perversion to positive realization through his conformity by baptism to Him who was the very Image of God. It was as one created by God and for whom the Son of God had died that the individual as such was now understood to have eternal value. He was capable of being conceived personally, in the ontologiclal sense, in virtue of his being conceived with reference to the Three-Person God. Without this reference, there was no reason to conceive him as having eternal value. The rationality of the particular individual was

a function precisely of his being understood as a person, and such an understanding was possible only within a Judeo-Christian context.

This enormously significant fact has been largely lost sight of since the Seventeenth Century. We shall be looking at some of the consequences of this loss as we proceed. Arguably its root cause, at the intellectual level, can be traced back to the dichotomous conception of the imago Dei that we have already examined in III.3. To the extent that the imago Dei is understood ontically, in terms of man's inherent rational nature, rather than relationally, in connection with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the danger will always exist of splitting the rational and the personal and then of consigning the latter to the inferior sphere of the irrational. This is what has happened in the last centuries, with disastrous results. It is the main reason why modern theologians find the doctrine of providence so difficult to formulate. Conceived in terms of rationality and within the conceptual frame of Greek thought, the imago Dei cannot bear on the individual as such; its referent must be the universal, man. Such an approach is necessarily dualistic in its structure, since the rational and the individual are contradictory categories. Conceived relationally, however, the imago Dei can comprehend both the universal and the particular human being; the ontologically unitive concept of personhood emerges, bringing together rationality and individuality. The source of this revolutionary concept is the self-revealing God of

the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. It is not and cannot be reason. We may formulate the point ironically: considering himself in his own nature, from a qualitative, i.e., ontic standpoint, man is unable to reach the concept of the ontological person. The intrinsic and eternal value of the individual human being cannot be discovered or, as we shall be suggesting later, maintained for long after it has become known, outside of the Judeo-Christian context.

IV.3

Our knowledge of God: God's revelation of himself as Trinity.

We have now to define more exactly the implications of our relational/personal doctrine of the imago Dei with respect to the question of knowledge. To say that the universe or God or man has rationality, is to say that these realities are orderly, and so knowable. But what does it mean to say that we know something? What is the nature of knowledge? How do we know, and what is the relation of knower and known? Of course, these are immensely complex questions, whose scope we can barely hint at here. It is neither our purpose nor within our competence to develop a full-fledged theological theory of knowledge; we shall seek simply to suggest a unitive approach to the knowledge of God, of persons, and of material reality, on the basis of our understanding of man's essential nature as imago Dei, i.e., as person-in-relation-to-God. In order to do this it will be

necessary to look more closely at the God in whose image Scripture declares man to have been created.

The God of whom we may be said to have knowledge is the self-revealing God of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. Without divine revelation, "God" can be no more than an anthropomorphic projection, either philosophical and impersonal or mythological and personalistic.[1] If, on the other hand, such a thing as divine revelation has happened and happens, then we can and must say that God is personal and that the knowledge we have of him is true, that is, it corresponds to reality, to the way things are, in that it both has its source outside of ourselves and is objective and at the same time is really related to ourselves, who, as knowers, are clearly part of all that exists. The biblical God does not reveal himself fully; even in his revelation he remains hidden.[2] Yet he does <u>reveal</u> himself, and he does reveal <u>himself</u>. The God who encounters the Israelites and relates to them personally in diverse ways within the covenantal framework is surely not a mere appearance or mask distinct from the divine essence. In the person of Jesus Christ, God's self-revelation is stretched to the limit of the human capacity to receive it: "All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son

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[1] See above, II.3.

[2] Cf. Ex. 33:12-23; Ps. 25:14; Isa. 45:15; I Cor. 13:12; I Jn. 3:2. Also, see below, pp. 181 ff.

chooses to reveal him." (Matthew 11:27; cf. Luke 10:22) In the incarnate Son we see and know God in so far as God may be seen and known by mortal men: "No one has ever seen God; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known." (John 1:18; cf. 17:25f.) But the New Testament revelation is complex. As the Son makes known the Father, so the Father makes known the Son (cf. Mt. 16:17). He does this through the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father (Jn. 15:26), rests on the Son (Mt. 3:16), is sent by both Father and Son after the ascension (Jn. 14:16, 25; 15:26; 16:7), and bears witness to the Son (Jn. 14:25; 15:26; 16:14; I Cor. 12:3). In the light of the triadic God revealed here, all the hints in the Old Testament of a divine plurality[1] come into focus and fulfilment. The unfathomable mystery, encountered all through the Hebrew Scriptures, of a God who is at once transcendent and immanent, utterly distinct from the creation yet intimately involved in it to the point of entering into personal relationship with the creature, man--this mystery reaches, in the New Testament, an even greater depth and ineffability, yet at the same time receives what one might call a rationale: the possibility of the

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[1] We are thinking here not only of texts such as Genesis 1:26 and 19, but of the sense all through the Old Testament of God's Spirit and word and wisdom as being living realities in themselves, as if what then could be presented only as manners of speaking about God or as personifications, were in actuality already adumbrations of what the Church would later call the hypostases. Cf. e.g., Pss. 33:6; 107:20; 104:30; Job 33:4; Pro. 8:22ff.

kind of God disclosed in the Old Testament lies in the truth revealed in the New, that this God is Trinity.

Contrast of Greek and Latin approaches to Trinitarian theology.

It took more than four centuries for the implications of the New Testament revelation of the Triune God to be worked out dogmatically in the Greek and Latin Churches. Our chief concern in this section is to draw attention to the fact that in the patristic formulations of Trinitarian doctrine, the community of divine persons/hypostases is not considered to be something separable from God's essence (ousia). We do not find here a God who, in addition to being simple, uncreated, uncontained, eternal, transcendent, omnipotent, omniscient, and holy, is also somehow triune; rather, God is all these things as Trinity, and each of the three Persons is equally and fully all these things. The only God who has revealed himself, the only God we truly know, of whose nature we are in a position to speak theologically, is the One who is Three. In order to establish this in dogmatic terms, it was necessary to show both the equality and unity of essence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. With respect to the co-essentiality of the Father and the Son as it had been determined at the Council of Nicea in 325, Athanasius later wrote:

> If then any man conceive God to be compound, as accident is in essence, or to have any external envelopement and to be encompassed, or as if there is

> aught about Him which completes the essence, so that when we say 'God', or name 'Father', we do not signify the invisible and incomprehensible essence, but something about it, then let them complain of the Council's stating that the Son was from the essence of God....if God be simple, as He is, it follows that in saying 'God' and naming 'Father', we name nothing as if about Him, but signify his essence itself.[1]

In his first letter to Serapion he extends this con-

substantiality to the Spirit:

> Even though he is not called Son in the Scriptures, but Spirit of God, he is said to be in God himself and from God himself, as the Apostle wrote. And if the Son, because he is of the Father, is proper to his essence, it must be that the Spirit, who is said to be from God, is in essence proper to the Son.[2]

Arguing further that the Spirit, being unique and always

identical, is to be identified with God and not with creatures,

who are multiple, he boldly concludes:

> It is obvious that the Spirit does not belong to the many nor is he an angel. But because he is one, and, still more, because he is proper to the Word who is one, he is proper to God who is one, and one in essence with him.[3]

In De Synodis 53, Athanasius goes on to safeguard the Nicean orthodox view on equality of ousia against the possible attack by Homoeousians such as Basil of Ancyra, who claimed that what was involved was a similarity of essence, not an identity. He shows that "likeness" refers to appearances and qualities, whereas when

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[1] Athanasius, De Decretis 22.

[2] Athanasius, Ad Serapion I.25.

[3] Ibid., I.27.

we speak of a common ousia, we refer to sameness.[1] His argument also protects against the charge that the Nicean position implied the existence of three Gods. As Athanasius refined it, the orthodox position regarding the consubstantiality of Father and Son, extended at Constantinople in 381 A. D. to include the Spirit, implied that the ousia of the three Persons of the Godhead was "of one stuff" (equality) and also "of one content" (identity).[2]

It is well known that in expounding the relation of the one ousia/substance to the three hypostases/persons, Western thought tended to start from the common nature, while Eastern thought started from the Persons.[3] Zizioulas maintains that in the West the interpretation which eventually prevailed favoured an approach to the doctrine of God reminiscent of ancient Greek ontology in so far as it stressed that God first is God (his substance or being) and then (logically, not temporally) exists as Trinity, that is, as Persons.[4] He points out that this approach has even entered modern Orthodox dogmatics, with their arrangement of headings (similar to that of Aquinas) "On the One

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[1] Athanasius, De Synodis 53. Cf. Prestige (1936), p. 215.

[2] Ibid., Prestige.

[3] See, e.g., Vladimir Lossky (1957), ch. 3; and J. N. D. Kelly (1958), ch. 10.

[4] Zizioulas (1985), p. 40. The perilous consequences of such an approach are evident in Tillich, whose concept of God as Being-itself cannot coherently be coordinated with orthodox Trinitarian doctrine.

God" followed by "On the Trinity".[1] While this criticism is undoubtedly accurate, and its point of the greatest significance for theology today, as we shall see, it is unclear to us to what extent the onus for this unfortunate development may fairly be placed on Augustine, as Orthodox thinkers such as Lossky are wont to do.[2] Perhaps we may say that the critics are right in so far as Augustine's whole theology never shook itself entirely free from the rationalism which we noticed earlier in his doctrine of the *imago Dei*.[3] The very analytical power that enabled him to define the Persons in terms of relations and so to distinguish them from the common essence,[4] may have reinforced a tendency to dichotomize, at least formally, the personal and the rational, with an ultimate result in respect of the subsequent development in the West of the doctrine of God similar to the one we uncovered in respect of the *imago Dei* doctrine, namely, a movement towards the primacy of the rational. Kelly points out that Augustine's concept of the Trinitarian relations made it possible for him "simultaneously to affirm unity and plurality of the Deity without lapsing into paradox."[5] But it is precisely this paradox, under the form of an antinomy between the essence

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[1] *Ibid*.

[2] Cf. Lossky (1957), pp. 56ff.; and Lossky (1975), pp. 76ff.

[3] See above, pp. 94ff.

[4] See above, pp. 57f.

[5] Kelly (1958), p. 275.

and the hypostases, that Orthodox theologians insist on maintaining. In the context of a discussion of the filioque, Lossky writes:

> If the balance of this antinomy between nature and persons, absolutely different and absolutely identical at the same time, is upset, there will be in the one case a tendency towards a Sabellian unitarianism (the God-essence of the philosophers), or else towards tritheism. The Greeks saw in the formula of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son a tendency to stress the unity of nature at the expense of the real distinction between the persons. The relationships of origin which do not bring the Son and the Spirit back directly to the unique source, to the Father--the one as begotten, the other as proceeding--become a system of relationships within the one essence: something logically posterior to the essence.[1]

Elsewhere he speaks of "the positive approach employed by Filioquist triadology", which "brings about a certain rationalization of the dogma of the Trinity, insofar as it suppresses the fundamental antinomy between the essence and the hypostases." The "negative approach" of the East, however,

> which places us face to face with the primordial antinomy of absolute identity and no less absolute diversity in God, does not seek to conceal this antinomy but to express it fittingly, so that the mystery of the Trinity might make us free from our human limitations, by altering our means of understanding.[2]

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[1] Lossky (1957), p. 57.

[2] Lossky (1975), p. 80.

"Relations" in the Trinity and the procession of the Spirit.

Clearly this is a vital issue and central to our understanding of the biblical God of whom we have knowledge through his self-revelation and in whose image we are created. We must shed more light on it if we are to be able to make sense of the nature of our knowledge of God, of human persons, and of the material world. First of all, what does Lossky mean by "positive" and "negative" approaches to the Trinity? These phrases appear to refer especially to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as regards his particularity and his mode of origin.[1] It has always been generally recognized that a certain anonymity characterizes the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. The name "Holy Spirit" does not denote a positive personal distinction in the same way as do the names "Father" and "Son". The term "Spirit" is used both to name one of the divine hypostases and to designate what is common to all three. The same difficulty meets us when we come to the question of the Holy Spirit's mode of origin. Whereas the concept of "begottenness" is, as a concept, clear enough, the concept of "procession" is obscure.[2] The relationship between Father and Spirit that "procession" points to is impossible to define with precision. Lossky maintains that

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[1] For this discussion see especially Lossky (1975), pp. 74ff.

[2] Eastern theologians tend to call the procession of the Spirit an ineffable mystery and to treat it with great caution. See, e.g., Gregory of Nazianzus, The Fifth Theological Oration 8, and John of Damascus, De Fide Orthodoxa I.8.

Latin theologians have tried to rationalize this mystery by seeking to draw a "positive" picture of the Spirit's mode of origin, in the form of the filioque doctrine. With their predominant concern for essence they tend to stress that which is shared by the three divine hypostases. Holy Spirit being common to both Father and Son (both are Holy and both are Spirit), the logic of Latin thought, suggests Lossky, leads Western theologians to postulate that Holy Spirit "should denote a person related to the Father and the Son in respect of what they have in common."[1] The term "procession", accordingly, "should denote a relation to the Father and Son together, to serve as the basis for a Third Person, distinct from the other two."[2] Lossky argues that this approach gives us "an image of the economy of the Third Person rather than an image of his hypostatic character: we find the procession of a divine force or Spirit which accomplishes sanctification."[3] Such a conclusion, he points out, presupposes "that relations are the basis of the hypostases, which define themselves by their mutual opposition, the first to the second, and these together to the third."[4]

This observation, it seems to us, is correct. We have already noticed Augustine's relational conception of the

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[1] Lossky (1975), p. 76. Cf. Augustine, De Trinitate XV.17; XV.19.37; V.11.12; and Aquinas, Summa Theologiae Ia. Q. 36, A. 1.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 75.

[4] Ibid., p. 77.

Persons.[1] Aquinas, as we have also seen, takes Augustine's view so far as to declare that the Persons of the Trinity are relations.[2] He refuses an absolute antinomy of the One and the Three, as is shown by his repeated assertion that the divine Persons are not distinguished in anything absolute but only as regards something relative.[3] The difference between God as One and God as Three is a matter of perspective, since the essence in both cases is identical:

> Thus it is manifest that relation really existing in God is really the same as His essence; and only differs in its mode of intelligibility; as in relation is meant that regard to its opposite which is not expressed in the name of essence. Thus it is clear that in God relation and essence do not differ from each other, but are one and the same.[4]

And later he writes:

> Now distinction in God is only by relation of origin...while relation in God is not as an accident in a subject, but is the divine essence itself; and so it is subsistent, for the divine essence subsists. Therefore, as the Godhead is God, so the divine paternity is God the Father, Who is a divine person. 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, although in truth that which subsists in the divine nature is the divine nature itself.[5]

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[1] See above, pp. 57 f. and p. 167 ; cf. Augustine, De Trinitate V.5.6.

[2] See above, pp. 59 f., including esp. note 3 , with reference to apposite text in the Summa Theologiae.

[3] Aquinas, Summa Theologiae Ia. Q. 36, A. 2 and Q. 40, A. 2.

[4] Ibid., Ia. Q. 28, A. 2.

[5] Ibid., Ia. Q. 29, A. 4.

A third citation will reveal even more clearly what Lossky considers the dangerous tendency in Latin thought to depersonalize the hypostases:

> ...since the persons agree in essence, it only remains to be said that the persons are distinguished from each other by the relations....Now the relations or the properties distinguish or constitute the hypostases or persons, inasmuch as they are themselves the subsisting persons; as paternity is the Father, and filiation is the Son, because in God the abstract and the concrete do not differ. But it is against the nature of origin that it should constitute hypostasis as person....It is therefore better to say that the persons or hypostases are distinguished rather by relations than by origin. For, although in both ways they are distinguished, nevertheless in our mode of understanding they are distinguished chiefly and firstly by relations...[1]

The focus on that which is common, on essence, leads the Western tradition away from the Eastern stress on the monarchy of the Father: the Father as Source and Cause of the Son and the Spirit and as the root of unity. "For the Greek Fathers," as Lossky puts it, "to confess the unity of the nature is to recognize the Father as unique Source of the persons who receive from Him this same nature."[2] Not in the substance of God is the ontological principle of unity to be located, but in the hypostasis, that is, in the Person, of the Father.[3] The being of God is identified with this Person, the Unbegotten, who generates (in different modes) both Son and Spirit and confers his one

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[1] Ibid., Ia. Q. 40, A. 2.

[2] Lossky (1957), P. 59.

[3] Zizioulas (1985), pp. 40f.

nature upon them both alike. In Aquinas, on the other hand, the three Persons are identified with the relations between them, which subsist within the primordial unity and diversify it.[1] John of Damascus expresses the Greek viewpoint lucidly:

> Furthermore, because of the Father, that is, because of the fact that the Father is, the Son and the Spirit are; and because of the Father, the Son and the Spirit have everything that they have, that is to say, because of the fact that the Father has them, excepting the being unbegotten, the begetting, and the procession. For it is only in these personal properties that the three divine Persons differ from one another, being indivisibly divided by the distinctive note of each individual Person.[2]

For Aquinas, "relations of origin", as the manner of distinguishing the Persons, is interpreted with the stress on "relations", as we saw above. But, according to him, relations can only distinguish the Persons as they are opposite relations.[3] The monarchical approach of the East, he holds, yields two relations, Father to Son and Father to Holy Spirit. But these two relations are not themselves opposite to each other; therefore they make only one Person, not two. This is heretical, as it destroys faith in the Trinity. Hence a way must be found to relate the Son and the Spirit to each other by opposite relations. In God the only relations opposed to each other are relations of origin. Therefore, he concludes, "it is necessary

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[1] See Lossky (1957), pp. 58, 60.

[2] John of Damascus, De Fide Orthodoxa I.8.

[3] For this discussion see Aquinas, Summa Theologiae Ia. Q. 36, A. 2.

to say that either the Son is from the Holy Ghost; which no one says; or that the Holy Ghost is from the Son, as we confess." Thus Aquinas attempts to prove the necessity of the filioque by sheer logic.

To Orthodox thought this whole approach--in terms of the principle of relations of opposition--is unacceptable. The Greek Fathers held a different view of relations of origin in the Trinity. They did not develop filioquist considerations because they did not believe these relations--filiation and procession--to be the substratum for the hypostases, as that which determines their absolute diversity.[1] Lossky writes that the relations

> only serve to express the hypostatic diversity of the Three; they are not the basis of it. It is the absolute diversity of the three hypostases which determines their differing relations to one another, not vice versa.[2]

The use by the West of the concept of "relations of opposition" is what constitutes, for Lossky, the "positive" approach to Trinitarian doctrine. He censures this approach because, in his eyes, it suppresses the absolute quality of the personal diversity, thus relativizing and in some sense depersonalizing the Trinity.[3] The "negative" approach of Greek thought, based on a strong conception of the monarchy of the Father, is by no means the impersonal apophaticism found in certain strains of Neo-

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[1] Lossky (1975), p. 78.

[2] Ibid., p. 79.

[3] Ibid.

Platonic and later Latin mysticism;[1] to the contrary, it is a radical affirmation of the absolutely personal nature of God, i.e., of God as Trinity, and hence of the ultimate incomprehensibility of God's essence. The essence and the Persons of God are, so to speak, given at the same time. Because the Father is sole origin in the Godhead--the principle of the common possession of the same one essence--relations of origin signify the personal diversity of the Three and also indicate their substantial identity.[2]

A basic point in this discussion is that for the Greek Fathers, "the ousia of Godhead was not an abstract essence but a concrete reality."[3] Basil the Great insists on the specificity of the term "hypostasis", as that which restricts and defines in a certain object the general and indefinite notion of substance (ousia).[4] "For," he writes in connection with the three divine hypostases, "if we do not consider the definite qualities of each, such as paternity and sonship and holiness, but confess God from the general idea of existence, it is impossible to give a

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[1] Cf. Lossky (1957), p. 65. Lossky mentions in particular the "divine abyss" mysticism of Meister Eckhart. See ch. 1, where he compares the One of Plotinus--unknowable on account of the weakness of human understanding--with the Trinitarian God of the Eastern mystical tradition, who is unknowable by nature.

[2] Lossky (1975), pp. 80f. Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, The Fifth Theological Oration 14.

[3] Kelly (1958), p. 268.

[4] Basil, Letter 38.

sound account of our faith."[1] On the other hand, there is no question of a divine pluralism such as would compromise God's simplicity. Basil shows himself very reluctant to speak of God in numerical terms:

> There is one God and Father, one Only-Begotten Son, and one Holy Ghost. We proclaim each of the hypostases singly; and, when count we must, we do not let an ignorant arithmetic carry us away to the idea of a plurality of Gods. For we do not count by way of addition, gradually making increase from unity to multitude....We have never, even at the present time, heard of a second God. Worshipping as we do God of God, we both confess the distinction of the Persons, and at the same time abide by the Monarchy.[2]

The filioque doctrine.

As we have seen, in Greek thought the principle of this unity is the monarchy. The substance of God is the specific hypostasis of the Father, which he imparts to the eternally begotten Son by generating him and to the eternally proceeding Spirit by spirating him. The West, which, in the interest of safeguarding the unity of the Godhead, took very literally John 16:15 ("All that the Father has is mine..."), found this Eastern view unsatisfactory in so far as they perceived it as failing to represent adequately the unity of Father and Son.[3] If the Spirit did not proceed equally from the Father and the Son, how could it

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[1] Basil, Letter 236.

[2] Basil, De Spiritu Sancto 44, 45.

[3] See Augustine, De Trinitate XV.26.47 and XV.27.48; cf. Augustine, Sermones in Joannis Evangelium, Tract. 99:6-9.

be said that everything the Father had, the Son had too? Barth similarly gives voice to this view.[1] It is arguable that this consideration is the original ground of the filioque doctrine.[2] The Spirit is seen as being necessarily common to both Father and Son, and therefore as proceeding equally from both.[3] Once this position is adopted, the Orthodox notion of the monarchy as the basis of unity appears to be set aside in favour of an ousia logically prior to a system of relationships within it. As Lossky states it:

> This is no longer the 'simple Trinity' but an absolute simplicity of essence, which is treated as an ontological basis at a point where there can be no basis except the primordial Tri-Unity itself.[4]

It does not seem to us that Augustine, as the first forthright proponent of the filioque, is altogether liable to Lossky's charge, even if the structure of his theology opened the way, in Western thought about God, for an increasing separation between essence and Persons. In the following text, for example, the stress on God's nature seems as coordinate with the hypostases as any Greek Father could have wished:

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[1] Barth (1975), Vol. I/1.12, p. 482.

[2] See translator's note d, in Augustine, In Joannis, Tract. 99:9, p. 923. The Scholastic-Aristotelian notion of "relations of opposition" came much later and is not to be found in Augustine, so far as I know.

[3] Augustine does qualify this in the sense of saying that it is by the Father's gift to the Son that the Spirit proceeds at once from both. Cf. In Joann., Tract. 99:9.

[4] Lossky (1975), p. 88.

> There is then one sole Good, which is simple, and therefore unchangeable; and that is God....what is begotten by the simple Good is itself equally simple, identical in nature with its begetter: and these two, the begetter and the begotten, we call the Father and the Son; and these two, with their Spirit, are one God....Now the Spirit is other than the Father and the Son, since he is not the Father or the Son; but I said 'other', not 'another thing', because this Good also is equally simple, equally changeless, and co-eternal. This Trinity is one God; the fact that it is a Trinity does not mean that it is not simple.[1]

The first "Good" mentioned is clearly not understood abstractly as an essence but as a hypostasis, the begetter. The other two "Goods", of which the third, the Spirit, is explicitly called such, are also hypostases. The essence--i.e., the simplicity and unchangeability of the Godhead--is inseparable from these hypostases. The starting point, indeed, is the essence, and this was important for later developments; the concern with the Spirit as being common to the Father and the Son is also to the fore; but the difference between Augustine's idea of God and that of, say, John of Damascus, seems more one of conceptuality than of conception, of theological accent than of language. John writes of the Persons in his treatise on the orthodox faith:

> And we understand them to be inseparable and without interval between them, and united to one another and mutually immanent without confusion. And we understand them, while being separated without interval, to be united without confusion, for they are three, even though they are united. For, although each is subsistent in itself, that is to say, is a perfect Person and has its own property or distinct manner of existence, they are united in their essence and natural properties and by their not being separated or removed

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[1] Augustine, De Civitate Dei XI.10.

> from the Person of the Father, and they are one God and are so called.[1]

It is true that for Augustine the questions of origin and unity are conceptually <u>different</u> questions, the one to be treated in terms of relations, the other in terms of essence.[2] This is not the case for the Greeks, as John's association here of unity both with essence and with the Person of the Father shows. On the other hand, this same association <u>also</u> shows that, for John, unity can be referred to essence and "natural properties" and need not be talked of exclusively in terms of the hypostasis of the Father, even if the Monarchy is fundamental to his thought on this matter. Nor should it be imagined that the notion of "relations" as used in the West after Augustine was foreign to Eastern conceptions, though, admittedly, it was always subordinated to the monarchical principle.[3]

Furthermore, while Augustine was a strong advocate of the double procession of the Spirit, he by no means eliminated monarchical considerations altogether, as the following citation shows:

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[1] John of Damascus, <u>De Fide Orthodoxa</u> III.5.

[2] In addition to texts already cited, see Augustine, <u>Letter</u> 170.

[3] See, e.g., Gregory of Nazianzus, <u>The Third Theological Oration</u> 16; cf. Oration 25.5; and Gregory of Nyssa, <u>Quod Non Sunt Tres Dei</u>--for example: "But in speaking of 'cause', and 'of the cause', we do not by these words denote nature (for no one would give the same definition of 'cause' and of 'nature'), but we indicate the difference in manner of existence."

> For the Father alone is not from another and, therefore, He alone is called unbegotten....But the Son was born of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds principally from the Father, and since the Father gives without any interval of time, He proceeds from both in common.[1]

In an earlier chapter of De Trinitate, where he also uses the word "principally", he explains:

> I have added 'principally', therefore, because the Holy Spirit is also found to proceed from the Son. But the Father also gave this to Him, not as though He already existed and did not yet have it, but whatever He gave to the only-begotten Word, He gave by begetting Him. He so begot Him, therefore, that the common Gift should also proceed from Him, and that the Holy Spirit should be the Spirit of both.[2]

Evidently this is very different from the Eastern way of conceiving of the Spirit's procession as being solely from the Father; but it does retain an emphasis on the Father's monarchy, and it does not seem to be vulnerable to the charge of "depersonalizing" the hypostases in the same manner as may perhaps properly be alleged of the Scholastic formulation in terms of "relations of opposition". Augustine's ground for affirming the filioque is an exegetical one, even if, jumping off from John 16:15, he then uses logic alone to extend his theologizing beyond the strict warrant of Scripture.[3] Aquinas

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[1] Augustine, De Trinitate XV.26.47.

[2] Ibid., XV.17.29. Cf. In Joann., Tract. 99:9.

[3] An important issue is raised here, which we shall touch on briefly later. The biblical point is simply that nowhere is it actually said in Scripture that the Spirit "proceeds" from the Son. John 15:26 speaks of the Spirit of truth "ho para tou patros ekporeuetai".

inherits Augustine's approach, but develops it in philosophical terms that do to some extent have the (doubtless unintentional) depersonalizing effect of turning the hypostases into what Lossky calls a "system of relationships within the one essence".[1]

The filioque; relation of the immanent to the economic Trinity; God's hiddenness.

We come now, in our discussion of the self-revealing God of whom we may have knowledge and in whose image man is created, to the question of the relation of the immanent to the economic Trinity. Here a sharp variance does appear between the Greeks and Latins. Karl Barth, in his chapter on the Holy Spirit in the first volume of the Church Dogmatics, advances two chief criticisms against Orthodox doctrine on the Spirit's procession. The first, a formal one, has to do with the question of revelation; the second, a material one, with the question of communion between the Father and the Son. Barth argues, firstly, that the Eastern tradition establishes a difference between the divine modes of being as they manifest themselves in revelation and as they are antecedently in themselves.[2] This is against the

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[1] Lossky (1957), p. 57.

[2] Space prevents inclusion here of a short section on one of Barth's implicit targets for criticism, namely, the Eastern doctrine of the divine "energies", elaborated by Gregory of Palamas in the Fourteenth Century (cf. E. L. Mascall (1949), ch. 6, pt. 5; and Lossky (1975), pp. 88-96). This doctrine arose in response to the need to establish a dogmatic basis for the union of man with a God who was understood to be both incomprehensible and self-disclosing. At least since Basil, Eastern thought has

most fundamental principle of his theology, for it seems to him to preclude true knowledge of God:

> The reality of God in his revelation cannot be bracketed by an 'only', as though somewhere behind His revelation there stood another reality of God; the reality of God which encounters us in His revelation is His reality in all the depths of eternity.[1]

He goes on to apply this assertion to the filioque:

> In connexion with the specific doctrine of the Holy Spirit this means that He is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son not just in His work ad extra and upon us, but that to all eternity--no limit or reservation is possible here--He is none other than the Spirit of both the Father and the Son....The Eastern doctrine does not contest the fact that this is so in revelation. But it does not read off from revelation its statements about the being of God 'antecedently in Himself'....It goes beyond revelation to achieve a very different picture of God 'antecedently in Himself'.[2]

Barth insists that the very possibility of a readiness for God in man--which is the work of the Holy Spirit in revelation--requires that the Spirit come equally from the Father and the Son. If this is the case in revelation, as the East acknowledges, then, says Barth, it must be so also in the internal being of the Trinity. He concludes his case by objecting that the Orthodox interpretation of John 15:26, which speaks of the procession of the Spirit from the Father, isolates this text from other biblical passages which plainly call Him the Spirit of the Son.

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been inclined to accept, along with the essence/three Persons antinomy, a substance/operations antinomy (see Basil, Letter 234), of which the "energies" doctrine of Palamas may perhaps not unfairly be called a rationalization.

[1] Barth (1975), Vol. I/1.12, p. 479.

[2] Ibid., pp. 479f.

He calls the rejection of the filioque a speculation bearing no relation to the reality of God in revelation and for faith.[1]

Of course, neither Barth nor the Western tradition as a whole denies for one moment that God remains hidden even in his revelation. Yes, the incarnate Son who by the Spirit reveals God the Father to us, truly reveals God and does truly reveal him; but this truly revealed God is not the exhaustive totality of God; and, on the manward side, our capacity to know the uncreated and holy God is necessarily limited by our finite and fallen condition. Obviously the central problem for Christian theology has always been how to speak about the relation of the uncreated God's aseity and necessary hiddenness from objectified creaturely reality, to this same God's free and willing revelation of himself to and within this same creaturely reality. In the East, the apophatic and antinomic approach to the mystery has predominated. Its chief danger is, perhaps, a "darkness of God" mysticism, which, if pushed too far, may actually quench the light-filled wonder, meaning, and dynamism of the very (personal) revelation that Greek patristic thought in general wants so passionately to defend.

In the West, the concepts of grace, faith, and analogy, coordinated in a variety of ways, are the foundation pillars of the bridge between man and God. Since in this tradition the antinomic distinction between the divine essence and operations

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[1] Ibid., p. 480.

is not made, the problem is to show how we may intelligibly say that God in his essence is knowable by us even while remaining hidden from us in this life. For Aquinas, the possibility of knowing God has two grounds: the first is the analogy of being ("...all created things, so far as they are beings, are like God as the first and universal principle of all being"[1]); the second is the illumination of the natural intellect by grace, without which it cannot see God's essence.[2] The first ground is the formal condition of the possibility in general of knowing God. Thomas does insist, however, that when it comes to knowledge of the divine essence itself, as distinct from knowledge of the existence of God, a man does not gain it by any similitudes or ideas he may form in his mind, but by the divine essence itself being united to his intellect.[3] While it is the glorified faculty of mind being referred to here, not the natural,[4] it remains true to say that Thomas's perspective on union with God highlights, in the Augustinian manner, the cognitive side of man. This type of analogy, where mind is the image in terms of which the relation of God to man is conceived, is even more marked in Anselm, who speaks of the rational mind alone as "that through which the rational mind itself is most able to advance toward

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[1] Aquinas, Summa Theologiae Ia. Q. 4, A. 3.

[2] Ibid., Ia. Q. 12, AA. 2, 4, 5, 13.

[3] Ibid., Ia. Q. 12, A. 9.

[4] Ibid., Ia. Q. 12, A. 6.

finding the Supreme Being. For...the rational mind most nearly approximates the Supreme Nature through a likeness of natural being."[1] Anselm explains in the following way the principle of analogy underlying and legitimating this use of rational mind as the basis of the possibility of knowing God:

> Therefore, how could it be true that something was discovered about the Supreme Being if what was discovered is far different from the Supreme Being?...We speak and see obliquely; we do not speak and see in accordance with the respective reality. So in this manner, if the Supreme Nature is not at all assumed to be expressed in accordance with the reality of its essence but is assumed to be somehow or other designated obliquely, then nothing precludes the truth of all that was earlier stated about the Supreme Nature, and nothing prevents this nature from remaining as ineffable as ever. For whatever words seem to be predicable of this Nature do not so much reveal it to me in its reality as hint at it through a likeness. For when I think the meaning of these words, I more readily conceive of what I observe in created things than of that Being which I know to transcend all human understanding....So, then, this Nature is ineffable because words cannot at all express it as it is; and yet, if under the instruction of reason we can apprehend something about it obliquely, as in a dark manner, [this apprehension] is not false.[2]

Karl Barth's Protestant approach to the question of God's hiddenness and knowability eschews the <u>analogia entis</u> in general in favour of an <u>analogia fidei</u>. We cannot <u>comprehend</u> God, but in his revelation we may <u>apprehend</u> him, not by sight (nor by

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[1] Anselm, <u>Monologion</u> 66. The kind of "natural theology" involved here is, of course, going on within the prior framework of faith. As Augustine puts it in <u>De Trinitate</u> XV.27.49, any understanding that the mind may have of the ineffable divine nature can come only if it is "guided by the rule of faith".

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., <u>Monologion</u> 65.

intellect) but by faith.[1] The question of God's hiddenness is not the same thing as the question of the inapprehensibility of the infinite or the absolute, which in itself is a product of human reason.[2] Between the Creator God and the creature man there consists an irrevocable otherness, and our being created in the likeness of God "does not mean that we possess and discover an attribute within ourselves on the basis of which we are on a level with God." Rather, it means that "God has determined us to bear witness to His existence in our existence."[3] This we may do by faith in response to his revelation:

> We thus understand the assertion of the hiddenness of God as the confession of the truth and effectiveness of the sentence of judgment which in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is pronounced upon man and therefore also upon his viewing and conceiving, dispossessing him of his own possibility of realising the knowledge of the God who encounters him, and leaving him only the knowledge of faith granted to him and demanded of him by the grace of God and therefore only the viewing and conceiving of faith.[4]

In a later passage Barth makes even more precise this conjunction of revelation and faith as the proper way to approach, and in a sense resolve, the antinomy of God's hiddenness and knowability:

> The moment we have unreservedly to confess God's hiddenness, we have begun really and certainly to know God. As an assertion of revelation and therefore of faith, as a confession of our grateful responsibility to the God present to us, the insight that God is

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[1] Barth (1957), Vol. II/1.27, p. 199.

[2] Ibid., p. 188.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 191.

> hidden from us is the ineffable indication of the fact that it is by God Himself--namely, by His revelation--that we are led to the knowledge of Him, that we and our knowledge do not stand outside and afar off but in the very presence of God Himself.[1]

The filioque and communion between God and man; intra-divine communion; perichōrēsis.

Consideration of Barth's view of revelation and its relation to God's essence brings us to the second of his two objections to the Eastern understanding of the filioque. He believes that the Latin doctrine alone gives due recognition to the essential communion between the Father and the Son. The Eastern doctrine, though it shows how the Spirit is the Spirit of the Son (as well as of the Father) in revelation, does not show or even try to show how this is so in eternity.[2] According to Barth, this has the grave consequence of removing the eternal and objective ground for the fellowship in the Spirit between God and man. Conversely--and here Barth's second criticism links up with his first--the communion between God and man created by the Holy Spirit in revelation does not, in the Eastern doctrine, enable us to discern the eternal love in the Spirit between the Father and the Son. For Barth, this empties revelation of any ultimate content and meaning by reducing it to a merely temporal reality.

This question has great importance for our discussion, for

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[1] Ibid., p. 192.

[2] Barth (1975), Vol. I/1.12, pp. 480ff.

if there is a basic incongruence, epistemologically speaking, between the immanent and the economic Trinity, then the knowledge we have of God through communion with him in his revelation cannot serve as an absolute basis for a theological theory of knowledge in general. Lossky tries to get round this problem by a linguistic shift of focus from the term "knowledge" to the term "union":

> Unknowability does not mean agnosticism or refusal to know God. Nevertheless, this knowledge will only be attained in the way which leads not to knowledge but to union--to deification. Thus theology will never be abstract, working through concepts, but contemplative: raising the mind to those realities which pass all understanding.[1]

It seems to us that this begs the question. The Apostle Paul makes it perfectly clear that a real equivalence exists between knowledge of God, of his will, and of the love of Christ,[2] and that this knowledge is personal, not rational in the strict sense, such that Paul is led to pray in paradoxical manner that the Christians in Ephesus may know the love of Christ that excels knowledge: gnōnai te tēn huperballousan tes gnōseōs agapēn tou Christou (Eph. 3:19). The point Lossky makes about union is sound; but his distinction between knowledge and union (with the Orthodox distinction between the divine energies and essence as its background) is misleading. True knowledge of God is the same thing as union with God, and union with God means fellowship with

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[1] Lossky (1957), p. 43.

[2] See, e.g., Eph. 1:17; 3:19; Col. 1:9-10.

God in the Spirit. We shall look shortly at the significance of this for our discussion of the relation of the personal to the rational. What we wish to establish here is that the communion we have with God through Christ in the Spirit is real knowledge of God, and that the communion between the Father and the Son in the Spirit, which is its ground, must be a real intra-divine communion and not just a temporal manifestation for our sake. Barth's criticism may be excessively polemical and not altogether fair, but the point he is getting at is vital.[1]

What, then, is the nature of this intra-divine communion, and what can we learn from it about the God in whose image we are created? To answer this we must consider the doctrine of co-inherence, or perichōrēsis, and then the question of the relation of the Spirit to the Father and the Son.

As C. L. Prestige shows, the idea of perichōrēsis, meaning interpenetration or permeation, was applied first to Christology by Maximus and Pseudo-Cyril in the Sixth Century and then extended by Pseudo-Cyril and later by John of Damascus to the Persons of the Trinity.[2] This doctrine of the complete co-inherence and mutual indwelling of the divine hypostases, but without confusion, was the logical outworking of such biblical texts as John 14:10, 17:21a, and I Corinthians 2:10-12, from which Athanasius had already begun to draw out the theological

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[1] See below, pp. 198f.

[2] Prestige (1936), ch. 14.

implications in his letters to Serapion.[1] John of Damascus expressed it thus:

> The subsistences dwell and are established firmly in one another. For they are inseparable and cannot part from one another, but keep to their separate courses within one another, without coalescing or mingling, but cleaving to each other. For the Son is in the Father and the Spirit: and the Spirit in the Father and the Son: and the Father in the Son and the Spirit, but there is no coalescence or commingling or confusion.[2]

The doctrine of perichoresis may be seen as a counterpart and capstone to the Fourth Century doctrine of the hypostatic consubstantiality, i.e., the single identical concrete ousia of God belonging equally to the three divine Persons. It safeguarded against the tritheistic interpretation of Cappadocian teaching on the Trinity, which even Gregory of Nyssa's treatise, Quod Non Sunt Tres Dei, with its effort to secure the unity of being by pointing to the unity of the divine operations, had failed to do. The co-inexistence of the three hypostases, complete yet without forfeiture of independence, provides a way of talking about the One in Three without referring primarily to the one substance or to the monarchy and the question of origination. Both the commonness and the particularity of the Three Persons are fittingly preserved in a conception of unity that is thoroughly dynamic and communitarian. This does full justice to the notion of person as developed on the basis of Christian revelation, where individual and relational existence,

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[1] Athanasius, Ad Serapion III.4 and IV.4.

[2] John of Damascus, De Fide Orthodoxa I.14.

though distinguished, are inseparable.[1] The Christian God is personal precisely because he is self-differentiated and intra-relational. As today we are discovering more and more, in common experience and in science, that relatedness is intrinsic to all created reality, so in revelation, perhaps not surprisingly (!), we are given to see that it is ontologically constitutive of the Creator of that reality. The divine personalness that we presuppose when we speak of God as willing or creating or acting, is rooted in God's triune nature, in his being-as-communion. Only a personal God can create, because only a personal God is essentially not a numerical reality but a relational one, which is to say, he is in relation to himself-as-hypostatically-differentiated. Such relation is the ultimate paradigm (and possibility) of creation. The out-going and self-giving of God towards and to a created reality distinct from himself is, as a possibility, grounded in the perichoretic unity of God, i.e., in the co-inherence and mutual penetration and reception each by each of the three distinct divine hypostases. The God of revelation is a self-communicating God who unites himself to man, and man to himself; the doctrine of perichōrēsis points to the intra-trinitarian reality underlying this, by picturing a self-

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[1] See above, II.1 and IV.2, esp. pp. 157ff.

differentiated God, existing in inner unitedness and communion.[1]

Relation of the Spirit to communion.

How is the Spirit related to this communion? In the New Testament, the Spirit is referred to in two ways. First, as the substantial nature of God: "God is spirit," says Jesus to the Samaritan woman (John 4:24). Spirit characterizes God the Father (Jn. 4:23f.; Mt. 10:20; Ro. 8:11) and is shown to belong also to the Son, Jesus Christ (Acts 16:7; Phil. 1:19; Ro. 8:9). Secondly, the Spirit is referred to hypostatically, as the Holy Spirit promised to men by the Father (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4) and sent by the Father and the Son (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:7): "another Comforter" (John 14:16: allon paraklēton), the "gift" of God (Acts 10:45; 11:27: dōrea), poured out on all flesh in fulfilment of prophecy (Acts 2:17f.; cf. Joel 2:28f. and Jn. 7:37ff.). In II Corinthians 13:14--a suggestively Trinitarian text relating to God's gracious manifestation of his love towards men--Paul appropriates fellowship (koinōnia) to the Holy Spirit. If koinōnia among Christians is thus understood as the work of the

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[1] Jürgen Moltmann's discussion of this doctrine is important. He sees both Nicene Creed homoousios (unity of substance) Trinitarianism and Athanasian Creed "unus Deum" (identity of one divine subject) Trinitarianism as deficient in that neither does full theological justice to the communicable, open unity of the Persons as it is revealed in Scripture. In the perichōrēsis of the divine Persons, he believes, the non-communicable homogeneity of the one substance and the non-communicable sameness of the absolute Subject are both transcended in the at-oneness of the Triune God. See Moltmann (1981), pp. 148ff.

Spirit within the one Body of Christ made up of many members--a work by which Christ's grace and the Father's love are spread abroad in the members' hearts--it is perhaps not a great leap to the Augustinian notion that the Spirit's hypostatic identity in the one Godhead is precisely that of communion between the Godhead's two other hypostatic members, the Father and the Son. While we shall want to qualify this notion somewhat, it is certainly true to say that such unitedness, as the expression of the Spirit, is implied both in Paul and in John, especially in chapters 14-17 of the Fourth Gospel, where the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son is gradually extended, in the referential context of the soon-to-be-sent Holy Spirit, to include those who "abide" in Christ. As they abide in him, and he in the Father, so they too will be taken up into the Father when the Spirit, who is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son, will have come to indwell them (cf. esp. Jn. 14:10f., 17; 15:4; 17:11, 20-23). If the incorporation of Christians into Christ and, in him, into the Father, is seen as the operation of the Spirit, it is a short step to the thought that the co-inexistence and communion of the Father and the Son is likewise the expression and activity of the hypostatic Spirit within the immanent Trinity. The accounts of Jesus's baptism, especially in the Synoptic Gospels, where the Spirit is pictured as in some sense "between" the Father and the incarnate Son, binding them together, surely point in this same direction.

Having said this, we must also raise an objection to this characteristically Western position on the Spirit. In the Fifth Book of De Trinitate, Augustine writes:

> Hence, the Holy Spirit is in a certain sense the ineffable communion of the Father and the Son; and it is perhaps on this account that He has been so called, because the name is also appropriate to both the Father and the Son. For He is called properly what they are called in common, because the Father is a spirit and the Son is a spirit, and the Father is holy and the Son is holy. In order that the communion between them might be signified by a name which is appropriate to both, the Holy Spirit is called the gift of both. And accordingly the Trinity is the one God, alone, good, great, eternal, and omnipotent. It is itself its unity, deity, greatness, goodness, eternity, and omnipotence.[1]

The typically Latin emphasis on that which is common and unitive leads Augustine to understand the reality of the Person of the Holy Spirit more in the common terms of spirit as the substantial quality of God's nature than in the particular terms of the Spirit's hypostatic uniqueness. The Holy Spirit is made to appear more as a binding force expressive of and conducive to Trinitarian unity than as an independent Person or divine mode of being no less distinctive than the Father and the Son. Though Augustine certainly had no wish to depersonalize the Spirit, his manner of approach does open him to this criticism, as the Eastern theologians point out. The problem he faced, to which we alluded on pp. 169 f., is that a certain anonymity does in fact characterize the Third Person of the Trinity, which makes it difficult for theology to assign to the Spirit a positive

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[1] Augustine, De Trinitate V.11.12.

personal distinction. Augustine tried to solve this problem by designating the Spirit as Gift, though even here, as the last citation shows, his tendency was always to work his way back to the question of commonness and unity. This use of the biblical picture of the Spirit-as-Gift as a means of defining who the Holy Spirit is properly, is brought out in the following passage from De Trinitate XV:

> He is, therefore, the Gift of God, inasmuch as He is given to those to whom He is given. But in Himself, he is God, even though He is [were] given to no one, because He was God, co-eternal with the Father and the Son even before He was given to anyone. Nor because they give and He is given is He, therefore, less than they, for He is so given as the Gift of God that He also gives Himself as God....There is here no subordination of the Gift and no domination of the Givers, but the concord between the Gift and the Givers.[1]

Having established this, Augustine proceeds to show that as the greatest gift of God is love, the Holy Spirit must be love. This leads him back to the question of the Spirit's commonness to the Father and the Son:

> And if the love whereby the Father loves the Son, and the Son the Father, reveals in an ineffable manner the union between both, what more fitting than that He, who is the Spirit, common to both, should be properly called love....Just as in that Trinity He alone is not spirit, and He alone is not holy, because the Father is spirit and the Son is spirit, and the Father is holy and the Son is holy, which piety does not doubt, and yet not without reason is He specially called the Holy Spirit. For since He is common to both, He is properly called that which both are called in common.[2]

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[1] Ibid., XV.19.36.

[2] Ibid., XV.19.37.

Earlier, in a parallel discussion, he had pointed out that the Scriptures do not say that the Spirit is love but that "God is love" (I John 4:16): they speak, that is to say, of God as love in the same sense in which they speak of God as spirit.[1] Once again, "commonness" is to the fore:

> ...this Holy Spirit is neither the Spirit of the Father alone, nor of the Son alone, but the Spirit of both, and, therefore, He insinuates to us the common love by which the Father and the Son mutually love each other.[2]

Since Augustine, the West's paramount concern with the oneness and common nature of the Godhead has tended to veil the hypostatic particularity of the Spirit in the immanent Trinity. Doctrinally, the Spirit has been identified as the connection between the Father and the Son.[3] This has led to a concentration on the Father-Son relation and to a weak doctrine of the Holy Spirit in his manifestation.[4] "Spirit" as a substantial quality of God, and the "Holy Spirit" as the divine Person sent into the world by the Father and the Son, have not always been carefully enough either distinguished or integrated. As a result, a rather vague conception of "divine spirit" has had far more

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[1] Ibid., XV.17.27.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Cf. Lossky (1957), p. 62.

[4] Since it is the Spirit who reveals the Son and the Son the Father, it is obvious that the long-range effect of this approach will be a dimming of the Father-Son relation as well, and an inclination towards unitarianism or Christomonism.

currency in the West than in the East, both in theology and in philosophy.

Distinction between the immanent procession of the Spirit and the economic sending of the Spirit.

Exegetically, two texts in particular may be said to underly this development: John 16:15 and John 15:26. We have already suggested the importance of the first text for the filioque doctrine. While it is surely legitimate to argue on the basis of this text (and of others) that the Spirit belongs to the Son as much as to the Father--and it is Orthodoxy's reluctance to work out the implications of this in its doctrine of the immanent Trinity that constitutes, for us, a major weakness in its teaching--the filioque doctrine as it has been preserved in the Western tradition is another matter. The gradual introduction into the Constantinopolitan Creed, after the Council of Toledo in 589 A.D.,[1] of the filioque in what might be called its "naked" or "egalitarian" formulation, that is, without the safeguard of the per filium (adequately defined),[2] insinuated into the Western

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[1] See ed. Leith (1973), p. 32.

[2] Barth observes that this formulation (per filium), presupposing the ultimacy of the Father in the procession of the Spirit and therefore a distinctive and unequal relation of the Spirit to the Father and to the Son respectively, was the general usage of most of the Greek and Latin Fathers before the East-West schism (CD I/1.12, p. 482). As we suggested above, however (pp. 176ff.), the Western tradition following Augustine did diverge considerably from the Eastern in its interpretation of the relation of the Spirit to the Son, even before the hardening of positions in the later Middle Ages.

Church a kind of flattening of the hypostases and a consequent loss of relational dynamism in the manner in which they were conceived. This development undercut to some extent the West's positive effort, following Augustine, to explore, starting from revelation, the intra-Trinitarian relations and the nature of communion in the Godhead. The force of any conception of the Trinity depends both on the clarity of the hypostatic distinctions made in accordance with what God has revealed in his economy, and on the vitality with which the communion of the Three Persons is construed. The Eastern and Western approaches to the mystery are complementary, and each is inadequate by itself. The failure of the West to hold onto the strong Eastern emphasis on hypostatic diversity has weakened its own most original emphasis, i.e., the unity of the divine Persons on the Augustinian basis not of fixed oppositional relations but of dynamic Personal interaction in love.

The other central text in this connection--John 15:26--has also suffered exegetical distortion in the West. A tendency has existed to argue that because, in John 14-16, both the Father and the Son are clearly involved in the sending of the Spirit, it must be so also for the proceeding of the Spirit, even though this is not stated explicitly. It is not at all clear that "sending" and "proceeding" refer to the same thing, or that the latter can simply be read off the former on the basis of John 16:15 and a direct extrapolation from the economic to the immanent Trinity. Aquinas's logical demonstration of the

correctness of the filioque doctrine[1] is no more satisfactory than Barth's polemical question, "What gives us the right to take passages like Jn. 15:26, which speak of the procession of the Spirit from the Father, and isolate them from the many others which equally plainly call Him the Spirit of the Son?"[2] John 15:26 is not about the question of whether the Spirit is the Spirit of the Son as well as of the Father; it is rather about the sending of the Spirit by the Son from the Father, and the proceeding of the Spirit from the Father. It points undeniably to a distinctiveness and a primacy in the relation of the Father to the Spirit, which cannot be rationalized away by saying that because the Son is co-eternal with the Father, and because everything that the Father has the Son has also, therefore the Spirit must proceed likewise from the Son. The Son, as Moltmann reminds us in his work on the Trinity, has everything from the Father except paternity;[3] though co-eternal with the Father, he is not a second origin of the Godhead. Procession, of course, is not identical with filiation and does not involve paternity as such; but it certainly involves generation of some kind and does

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[1] See above, pp. 173 f.

[2] Barth (1975), Vol. I/1.12, P. 480.

[3] Moltmann (1981), pp. 166ff. This fundamental difference in the characters of the Father and the Son obviously excludes the possibility of an "egalitarian" conception of the filioque and makes the Latin creedal formulation appear theologically crude and offensive. A re-formulation involving some use of the per filium is surely necessary, for truth's sake as well as for the sake of ecumenical relations.

point to an origin, and origin in the Godhead cannot be double. The attempt at compromise with the East made by the Council of Florence in 1439, with its affirmation that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son "as from one principle and by a unique spiration",[1] seems to us to beg the question and to illustrate the trap the West had fallen into of flattening out the hypostases in its interest to preserve the divine oneness.

Orthodox thought, for its part, has failed to do justice to the implications of John 16:15 with respect to the problem of the Son's relation to the Spirit in the immanent Trinity. Its refusal, on the basis of its essence-energies distinction, to designate the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity by the name of attributes, entails a rejection of anything like what Lossky calls Augustine's "trinitarian psychologism", including his assimilation of the Spirit to the mutual love of the Father and the Son. Augustine's approach "is viewed rather as an analogical image than as a positive theology expressing the relationship between the Persons."[2] Lossky sums up the Eastern position thus:

> In His hypostatic existence, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone; and this ineffable procession enables us to confess the absolute diversity of the Three Persons, i.e., our faith in the Tri-Unity. In order of natural manifestation, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son (dia Hiou), after the Word; and this procession reveals to us the

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[1] Cf. E. L. Mascall (1986), p. 68.

[2] Lossky (1957), p. 81.

> common glory of the Three, the eternal splendor of the divine nature.[1]

We may question the overall cogency of this position. If the Eastern view, in which the monarchy of the Father both conditions the personal diversity of the Three and also expresses their essential unity, really does effectively safeguard the balance between the hypostases and the ousia, as Lossky insists,[2] it tells us little about the communion-in-oneness within the Godhead. The doctrine of perichōrēsis has the potential to make up for this deficiency, as Moltmann has perceived.[3] In the East, however, the posited epistemological gap between God's energies and his essence has prevented the full development of this doctrine as a legitimate way, somewhat different from Augustine's but not in opposition to it, of understanding the nature of the intra-Trinitarian fellowship on the basis of God's Triune self-manifestation. It is this fellowship within the Godhead which is the ground of the possibility of our own fellowship with God. It is the basis, therefore, of what we have argued to be the biblical understanding of the imago Dei and hence of any intelligible doctrine of providence.

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[1] Lossky (1975), p. 93.

[2] Ibid., p. 88.

[3] Moltmann (1981), pp. 150, 157, 174ff.

The self-effacement of the Spirit as characteristic of God's nature.

A closer look at the "anonymity" of the Holy Spirit (cf. above, pp. 169 f. and p. 194) will provide the coping stone to our inquiry into the nature of the God of whom we may have knowledge. We saw earlier, in reference to Augustine's doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the union in love between the Father and the Son, how the New Testament gives at least indirect support to something like this view, especially by the evidence in John and Paul that it is through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father in the Son's name and by the Son from the Father (Jn. 14:26 and 15:26), that believers in Christ may be joined to him and, in him, to the Father. What might we say in addition to this in order to avoid the "depersonalization" problem associated with the Augustinian type of approach? It seems to us that if we extend the notion of mutual indwelling to include that of mutual self-giving and receiving, we may arrive at a more precise picture of the being-as-communion that we take to be the essential nature of the God in whose image man is made. We are so accustomed to talking of the kenosis of Christ and of his obedience to the Father and his self-sacrifice at the Cross, that we give rather little thought to the similar kenosis and self-effacement of the Holy Spirit.[1] As Lossky reminds us, following

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[1] It is to Lossky's great credit that he does bring out strongly the kenosis of the Spirit's coming into the world (see Lossky, 1957, p. 168).

John of Damascus, the Third hypostasis of the Trinity is the only one not having his image in another Person.[1] The Spirit does manifest himself charismatically through members of the Body of Christ, as Paul writes to the Christians at Corinth (I Corinthians 12:7: hē phanerōsis tou pneumatos); but even here the Spirit himself remains hidden within the manifestation. The charismatic gifts that the Apostle enumerates are neither more nor less than the manifold operations of the Father's promised Gift, the Holy Spirit, who is alive within believers; but the Gift is so fully imparted to us, and so completely adapted to our individual persons, as to be altogether unobservable as such. This is certainly a radical self-emptying. The Spirit is not, like the Son incarnate in Jesus, obedient unto death; rather is he obedient unto anonymity. Not only does he "lose" himself within the Body of Christ, his corporate temple (I Cor. 3:16f.), and within members of that Body, whose individual bodies are also his temple (I Cor. 6:19); he also effaces himself entirely in his primary mission as the witness to and revealer of Christ (Jn. 15:26; 16:13-14; I Cor. 12:3). In this he is quintessentially representative of God's nature, as it is likewise and equally manifested in the Father and the Son. God, who is Spirit, is concealed from eyes of flesh. Even God in his manifestation is hidden from eyes not opened by the Spirit himself (cf. I Cor.

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[1] Ibid., p. 160. Lossky cites John of Damascus, De Fide Orthodoxa I.13: "the Son is the image of the Father, and the Spirit is the image of the Son."

2:11-12). The Third hypostasis of the Trinity, present in the Church, consummately expresses this: by setting aside his own Person, he reveals the common nature of the Trinity.

This nature may be demonstrated as follows: the Creator God imparts himself, by his Word spoken and his Spirit breathed out, to his creation, and is hidden under and within it, in order to sustain it and prepare it to receive the revelation of himself in his Triune being; the Redeemer God likewise imparts himself, in personal manifestation of his Word and his Spirit, to his Church, and indwells it, in order to sanctify it and receive it unto himself in eternity, when God and the creature made in his image will be joined in mystical marriage (cf. Eph. 5:26f.; Rev. 19:7). Both these movements of the economic Trinity show forth God's self-giving and receiving nature and reflect the intra-Trinitarian dynamic activity of the Three Persons, which we are given to know under the complementary relational patterns of Father-Son-Spirit and Source/Principle-Word-Breath. The Father begets the Son and generates the Spirit in eternity--and sends out (gives up: cf. Jn. 3:16) both into the world, the Son that he may take on flesh and die for men, the Spirit that he may live within flesh and transform God's reconciled people into the image of Christ the Son; the Son (Word) receives himself with the Spirit (Breath) from the Father in eternity and responds to him and indwells him by and in the Spirit common to them, even as he is indwelt by the Father and the Spirit--and goes forth from the Father and by the Spirit into the world, emptying himself in

incarnation and even unto a criminal death, in order to reveal the Father and to reconcile the world to him; the Spirit receives himself from the Father through and with the Son in eternity and exists as their common breath and as the hypostatic expression of their self-imparting nature, which is love--and goes forth first from the Father to rest upon the incarnate Son (cf. Jn. 1:32) and then from the Father through the glorified Son to indwell God's people and bear witness through them to Christ. The movement of each Person is utterly and always towards the other two, so that each is ever giving himself to them and receiving them into himself. The receiving is as vital as the giving. Communion is mutual openness in love. The self-imparting is also a self-receiving; the self-losing to and for the other is also a self-finding through and in the other. This is why the Holy Spirit in his anonymity is not to be understood simply as a kind of function of the love between the Father and the Son. The anonymity of the Third hypostasis of the Trinity is the very expression of the essence of the two other hypostases; and this anonymity, this complete self-effacement in love before the Father and the Son and even before created persons, is also supreme self-fulfilment, absolute self-finding.

Thus, far from being <u>im</u>personal, the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit, in representing that which is common to the Godhead, is quintessentially <u>personal</u>. For a "self" in the sense in which we are using the term exists <u>only</u> in relation to the other. It is not <u>merely</u> relation, but it does not exist apart from relation.

This is the nature of the personal, as we have emphasized. Communion is its joy and fulfilment (cf. Jn. 15:11; 16:24; I Jn. 1:3f.). It is this truth that may help us to resolve the problem for Trinitarian theology raised by the modern psychological understanding of the person as a centre of consciousness. Three Persons in the Godhead, even if "Person" is understood "psychologically" in some sense, is not at all the same thing as three Individuals. Communion between persons, divine or human, is totally different from a numerical aggregate of self-conscious units. It is the given and self-giving Holy Spirit--the one who is at once utterly receptive and active, both in the immanent and in the economic Trinity--who reveals to us who God is: Being-in-communion. And it is he who enables us to participate in this divine communion and so to be "divinized", as Eastern theologians put it. This divinization means conformity to the image of God in the God-man Jesus Christ, as, through him, we are united to the Father in the Spirit. The Spirit works to transform us (metamorphoumetha: II Corinthians 3:18) even in this present life,[1] and this transformation, which takes place as we die to self and live to God, is not a denial but a fulfilment of who we truly are: persons, male and female, created in God's image. The Spirit does not conform us to his own image, but to Christ's. Herein he shows us God's nature and purpose, and it is precisely in this self-giving and other-indwelling work that, with respect

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[1] See our earlier discussion of this, pp. 119 ff.

to the divine economy, the Spirit himself expresses and receives his own hypostasis. This is the reason why Lossky, at his most profound, can write:

> For the Holy Spirit is the sovereign unction resting upon the Christ and upon all the Christians called to reign with Him in the age to come. It is then that this divine Person, now unknown, not having His image in another Hypostasis, will manifest Himself in deified persons: for the multitude of the saints will be His image.[1]

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[1] Lossky (1957), p. 173.

CHAPTER V

Our knowledge of other persons and of material reality.

V.1

Reason--divine and human--shown by divine self-revelation to be an aspect and function of the whole person.

We have argued that God is essentially personal; and we have shown that this means he is intra-relational, Three-in-One and One-in-Three, one nature in three distinct hypostases equally and fully divine, mutually self-giving and receiving, indwelling each other perichoretically: Being-in-communion. This is what the God of whom we may have knowledge is like. From this standpoint, the notion of divine rationality is not, as in Greek thought, an impersonal extrapolation from an orderly cosmos, but is rather a necessary implicate of God's self-revealed nature as personal. The concept of rationality can, for analytic purposes, be abstracted by a thinker, who is a person, from the concept of the personal, but it is nonsense to talk about abstracting the concept of the personal from the concept of rationality. The two concepts are not interchangeable. The concept of the personal, as we have elucidated it, is logically prior to and necessarily comprehensive of the other, since only persons are rational, i.e., capable of thought, speech, freedom, and creativity, whereas the idea of reason as such is an abstraction and conceptually incomplete outside of a personal metaphysic. Only

personal beings reason and have concepts of any sort at all, as C. J. Webb reminds us.[1] Reason is a function of personality. On a strictly human level, the very possibility of epistemology is rooted in a reality that is personal. Mentality is an aspect of the whole man. Impersonal mind is scarcely cognizable, even as an abstraction, simply because anyone in the modern world attempting to conceive such a thing presupposes himself to be a unified person: particular, embodied, conative, and rational. He does this as an heir of the Judeo-Christian tradition, even if many of the categories of that tradition, including that of the personal, have long since been secularized. The abstractive procedures and metaphysical speculations involved in dualistic anthropologies cannot be maintained any longer. Wolfhart Pannenberg writes in this connection: "...in man there is no independent reality of a 'soul' in contrast to the body, just as there is not a body that is merely mechanically or unconsciously moved. Both are abstractions. The only reality is the unity of the living creature called man, which moves itself and relates itself to the world."[2]

The notion of the human self as an embodied centre of consciousness, a dynamic and continuous unity in time and space of its own multiple activities, with its conative and telic strivings constituting, in Peter Bertocci's words, "the womb in

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[1] Webb (1919), p. 116.

[2] Pannenberg (1970), p. 48.

which memorial and intellectual activities arise,"[1] has incontrovertible psychological and physiological evidence to support it, even if such evidence cannot in itself provide a full explanation of the phenomenon of such a "self". In a word, man's cognitive ability is inseparable from the many other elements in human activity and expression that together make up the entity we call a person. This is the basic reason for insisting that the category of the personal is more comprehensive than that of the rational and is inclusive of it. Bertocci makes the point thus:

> If, as we assume, there is no knowing without interest (of various sorts), the knowing self must also be a 'knowing-wanting' unity (or a unitas multiplex of knowing-feeling-wanting-willing-oughting activities, as we would propose). Knowing in all of its dimensions--from sensory perception to logical, aesthetic, moral and religious valuation and action--takes place as one phase of a unified matrix that is also feeling and wanting (at least).[2]

Such an understanding of human being was beyond the reach of the Greeks, for reasons we have already given.[3] From a biblical perspective we may say that as fallen men living outside of God's covenantal framework, they were quite unable to reconcile man's rational nature with individual human mortality. The crucified and resurrected Jesus of Nazareth alone was and is able to provide an answer to this inherent contradiction in the human condition as we know it, a contradiction that otherwise must lead

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[1] Bertocci (1970), p. 61.

[2] Ibid., p. 91.

[3] See above, pp. 36 ff., pp. 147 ff. (esp. p. 149, note 1), and pp. 157 ff.

to some form either of dualism or of monistic reductionism (religious or scientific). As men are caught up through faith into fellowship with the Triune God disclosed through Jesus Christ, they become "new creations" (kainē ktisis: II Corinthians 5:17), each one, in his totality as spirit, soul, and body, destined for eternal life. In light of this redemption, what one might call the immortal implications of man's constitutive rationality fall coherently into place with the rest of his human experience and cease to be at odds with his corporeality and individual selfhood, of which, in the Person and work of Christ, God has revealed himself to be both the Author and everlasting Lover. This, at bottom, is what the New Testament experience of salvation is all about. On the basis of his fundamental reconciliation with God through Christ's atonement, the justified man, the man of faith, is made a member of God's people and brought into the wholeness and harmony of Life, reconciled with himself, with his fellows, and with the rest of creation. The reality of his personhood, of his being-as-individual-in-relation, is divinely established, and his human being as created in the image of God is plucked from its estrangement and restored into communion with its Creator.

Our knowledge of God, being personal, involves our reason.

In our discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity, we saw that knowledge of this God who has revealed himself to us consists in communion with him in love through the Holy Spirit. The knowledge is not rational in as much as it cannot be derived from man himself by deductive or inductive reasoning; nor is it rational in the sense of being reducible, once given, to propositions. Knowledge of God is <u>personal</u> and may be had by human beings not in virtue of our rationality but because we have been created in God's image and are bound to him constitutively, being therefore in principle capable of receiving his self-revelation. Having said this, however, we must insist that, since the rational is an aspect of the personal, knowledge of God involves rationality and would not be possible without it. This is what justifies the enterprise called theology, provided it is founded upon God's given Word and not upon rational speculation. While God's truth as revealed to us is personal and therefore not <u>reducible</u> to propositions, the use of propositions to elucidate it in connection with the structures and processes of human life is altogether called for and fitting, for the very reason that the revelation is <u>truth</u> and hence is intelligible, even if, being divine, it will necessarily transcend our forms of thought and speech and not be fully graspable within them. The revelation is God's <u>Logos</u>, to whom the inspired human words of Scripture attest. Its intelligibility is not accessible to an abstraction

called man's reason, nor reducible to a mere concept of rationality, but may be known and responded to by the whole man, who is a person and therefore rational. This thought is well expressed by Emil Brunner:

> Reason is...only the organ of man's relation to God....Man's relation to God is not to be understood from the point of view of reason, but reason is to be understood from the point of view of man's relation to God. Responsibility is not an attribute, or an enrichment of the rational man, but from the very outset reason is directed towards the perception of the Divine Word. It is--so to say--the material, the substratum of man's relation to God. Because God creates man as one who can hear His call and can answer it, He also creates him as a rational being. The reason is the organ of perception, but the meaning of this organ, its final 'Whence' and 'Whither', that which determines its structure, is the Word of God. Because in creating man God creates one who stands 'over against' Himself, one to whom He wills to impart Himself, He creates man as a rational creature, as a being who is able to receive His Word.[1]

Epistemological implications of our knowledge of God for the doctrine of the imago Dei, especially in its aspect of dominion.

We must now ask what bearing this knowledge of God has on our knowledge of other persons and of the material world. In considering the doctrine of the imago Dei, we saw that man as created in God's likeness shares his power to address (intentionally or verbally), to be addressed, and to respond.[2] This power is to be deployed in four directions: with respect to

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[1] Brunner (1939), pp. 102f.

[2] See above, pp. 74ff.

God; to man himself corporately, as man and woman in society; to man himself individually, as a personal centre of consciousness; and to the rest of creation, over which his Creator has given human being dominion.[1] Man as imago Dei is man as he is in responsible relation to these four realities. The exercise of his power involves creating, speaking, governing, and being fruitful; and it is properly understood both as God's gift and as man's God-appointed task. This power is the expression of man's freedom, the meaning of which is not autonomy but responsibility to and for others in love.

If, as we have seen, being-in-communion, involving mutual indwelling, self-giving, and receiving, is God's nature, then it is reasonable to suppose that the creature made in his image will be like this. The imago Dei, as Barth suggests, is a matter of male-female plurality, in dim analogical reflection of the Triune God;[2] but more exactly, it is plurality-in-communion, in mutual submission and reception. We may go still further: if in respect to God and to himself-as-corporate,[3] man is essentially relational and constituted like God, as being-in-communion, then

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[1] On the matter of dominion, see above, p. 83, note 1.

[2] See above, pp. 77f.

[3] We may say also with respect to himself-as-individual, since, as a personal centre of consciousness, both subject and object in himself, the individual is in dialogue with himself and is intended to give and receive himself to and from himself in love, not in the closed self-absorption of deaf and dumb egoism but in the open self-acceptance of one loved by God and created a person, free and responsible.

with respect to the rest of creation, over which their common Creator has given him (male and female) the task of exercising dominion, is it not logical to expect that here too man will be in a relation that is both indefeasible and personal, involving mutual indwelling and responsiveness? That man is made of dust like other creatures (Gen. 2:7; cf. I Cor. 15:48f.) is the material basis of this relation; but the personal nature of the relation derives from the imago Dei, which includes the God-given mandate of governing and nurturing the world. Man's responsibility to and for the rest of creation is an extension and reflection of the Creator's rule and care. Thus we see that human dominion and lordship in the world is an integral aspect of God's Lordship and providence over his Creation. It is man-as-person who is called to exercise this authority: hence the dominion, though necessarily carried out by the operation of reason, will be personal and will involve the totality of man's being.

V.2

Sin and the abstraction of reason from its personal context.

What especially interests us at this juncture is the epistemological corollary of this understanding of the imago Dei. Speaking from the anthropological side, we say that we may know God because of our prior being-as-person, i.e., as a creature made in God's image. Knowledge and being cannot be divorced. "I

know" is inseparable from "I am". God being infinite Spirit and man being a finite creature made of dust, it is clear that even Adam before the Fall could have known God only in a way appropriate to God's nature as Spirit and not in the same way that he could have known the material world or even other persons like himself. But this is not to say that we may not discern a similarity of structure between man's knowledge of God and of creatures, whether we are talking of pre-Fall, post-Fall, or redeemed man. This follows from the understanding of the imago Dei that we have proposed, in which a continuum exists between man in relation to his Creator, to other men, and to the rest of creation. When we say that sin alienates man not only from God but also from his fellows and from the material world, we mean that his personal communion with these realities is broken and that his relations with them are severely warped. As a consequence, his reason, as that part of his person intended to be the organ of perception and knowledge, has been likewise warped, not by becoming impotent but by being abstracted from its proper personal context. This is the nature of the "corruption" of reason brought about by the Fall. Instead of operating in harmony with his will and emotions, man's reason, with its intuition of order and its peculiar kind of logical and discursive activity, has been found to be in tension or conflict with these other aspects of his being and has been presumed to function independently of them or even to have a different and

more exalted status and origin.[1] From this distorted perspective it has continued to exercise its authoritative capacity to know reality and to shape action. But since the perspective is distorted, so have been the knowledge and the action. Whatever has been focused in reason's sights in a given historical period has been grasped deliberately and abstractly, by analysis, in as universal terms as possible and as it were from the outside, as if from a position, at least in principle, of total control, rather than in terms of personal participation and indwelling that presuppose between reason and its object--whether the object be God, man, or non-human creatures--a fundamental connection and even, in a sense, a communion, more or less conscious and open to development as the object is itself more or less personal. In keeping with this state of affairs, other parts of the person, lacking their proper coordination with reason, have, like oppressed people in a despotic state, rebelled by turning reason to their own ends, asserting the will as will-to-power and feeling as the mystical key to truth. Most tragically of all,

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[1] Cf. Pols, in eds. Langford and Poteat (1968), p. 65. Pols briefly discusses the tradition stemming from Aristotle's distinction between demonstrative knowledge (epistēmē) and rational intuition (nous), the former concerned with the logical articulation and development of principles or premises, the latter with the creative acquisition of principles. He points out that the tradition does not insist on the body-rooted character of the higher, intuitive capacity, and does not hold that there is a continuity of this capacity with animal instincts. Intuition, he writes, "is taken to be so elevated and detached from the particularity of the person and his body as to seem impersonal and even God-like." Cf. above, pp. 37f; Aquinas, Summa Theologiae Ia. Q. 12, AA. 4, 11; Kant (1948), pp. 111ff.

each aspect of man, in thus asserting itself, has made cooptive and even absolute claims for its own limited perspective on reality.[1]

The fact that reason's capacities are in themselves operational and immensely effective has inclined alienated man, ever in quest of identity, security, and power, to find in them his basis for self-affirmation, his sense of significance, and, at least in Hellenic culture, his hope of (impersonal) immortality. Religion itself has been annexed by reason in a variety of ways, in the forms of rationalistic supernaturalism (magic), mythical, astrological, or philosophical speculation, and systematic legalism. We have already seen something of the distorting effect within the Christian tradition of a primary emphasis on man-as-rational rather than on man-as-personal. Even Luther, who perceived the rationalistic orientation of late Scholasticism and revolted against reason in so far as it was held to contribute anything to God's justification of man, was quite content to allow it the determinant role in the political-civil realm, by which he actually perpetuated, though in a novel and Christologically conditioned configuration, the Scholastic demarcation between reason and revelation.[2]

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[1] See, e.g., Schleiermacher's romantic claim for immediate feeling, which, as he argued, alone was able to grasp the Whole. Cf. Schleiermacher (1958, Torchbook Edition), pp. 39ff. and pp. 127-134.

[2] The medieval distinction was subtle and by no means a clear demarcation. It was essentially epistemological and had to do with man's knowledge of God. Anselm's ontological a priori

Since Descartes, this division between the cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of human being has taken an even more radical turn, with rationalism's imposition on "true knowledge" of the criterion of certainty, in the several forms of mathematical proof, synthetic a priori cognitions, and empirical demonstration.[1] Cartesian rationalism, with its primary understanding of man as a thinking substance, isolates mind from nature and opens up the insoluble philosophical problem of how, beginning with mind in abstraction from the body containing it, man can find his way back to the world and have true knowledge of it. Humean empiricism, operating completely outside of the realist framework of medieval epistemology (with its metaphysical

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proof and Thomas's five a posteriori proofs were rational arguments to demonstrate the existence of God (Anselm, Monologion; Aquinas, Summa Theologiae Ia. Q. 1, A. 1; Q. 2, A. 3; Q. 12, AA. 12, 13). But in order that man might have a more perfect knowledge of God (that God is Trinity, for example), and might know his end in God, which surpasses reason, and might be saved, which is only possible by grace, divine revelation was necessary in addition to the deliverances of philosophical science, which could neither yield knowledge of God's essence, nor of his being as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, nor of his redemptive act towards man. The Lutheran division between faith and reason, between the spiritual and the temporal, had a chiefly soteriological motive. It was also Luther's desire, for theological reasons, to break up the medieval identification of Church and society. In the spiritual realm faith alone was determinative, law and reason were of no avail; in the temporal realm reason ruled. See McGrath (1985), esp. pp. 136-141; Ozment (1980); Luther, Bondage of the Will (1957); Lectures on Galatians 1-4, in Works, Vol. 26; Temporal Authority: To What Extent Should it be Obeyed?, in Works, Vol. 45. Cf. Barth (1946), where he points out the Reformers' failure to reject explicitly all traces of the medieval system of natural theology and "intellectual works-righteousness".

[1] See, e.g., Whitehead (1946), chs. 1-3; and Temple (1934), ch. 3.

taproot in the biblical doctrine of God and man) and having therefore no reason to credit man's wholeness as a person or even his rational power to know, leads to a dissolution of the cause-effect nexus, of the rationality of inductive reference, and of the very notion of self-identity. Kantian idealism, oscillating to the other horn of the post-Cartesian dilemma, refuses us knowledge of things-in-themselves and gives to the mind a determinative role in bringing order to chaotic sense-data, which are supposed to have no knowable structure apart from the mental activity that organizes them by its conceptual constructs. Hegelian Absolute Idealism, while appearing, in its ontologizing of epistemology, to restore the objectivity of reality and the correspondence to it of our cognition, in fact interiorizes both in a historicist manner, by its doctrine that the reality of a notion is the history of its thought.[1] Schleiermacherian romanticism reinterprets the reason/revelation division in terms of a trichotomy between reason, practice, and religion, the latter term being identified with feeling, and faith being therewith consigned to the realm of the non-rational.[2] Finally, the various expressions of positivism adopt the empiricist stance while ignoring Hume's absolute scepticism, and insist that the observable is real but that it alone is real and that even scientific theories are no more than resumes of experience and

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[1] Cf. O'Donovan (1986), p. 36.

[2] Cf. Schleiermacher (1958), esp. pp. 35-39.

have no reality in themselves; any endeavour to understand "the hidden nature of things" is condemned as misleading and unscientific.[1]

In all of these epistemological approaches, despite their many differences, the unitive concept of the person plays no part. The personal, if it figures as a category at all, is either assimilated to the rational, as in Kant,[2] or placed in the sphere of the emotive, the essentially private and non-factual. The dualistic fragmentation of human being is assumed, knowledge being associated with what is thought to be the impersonal-universal-scientific-factual determinations of man according to theoretical and experimental reason (Kant's inclusion of morality in the sphere of practical reason was overturned in the next century, when his teleological justification for it was repudiated), while the rest of human existence is relegated to the sphere of the "private self", of "personal values", and is considered to be subjective and arbitrary.[3] The personal, in

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[1] Cf. Barbour (1966, Torchbook Edition 1971), esp. pp. 162-174; and Polanyi (1959), p. 20.

[2] Cf. Kant (1960, Torchbook Edition), pp. 22f; (1948), pp. 66ff., 99ff.; MacIntyre (1981, Second Edition 1984), pp. 55f.

[3] The movement in philosophy of history associated especially with Dilthey and Collingwood, with its roots in the thought of Vico, does not constitute an attempt to overcome the dualism of this attitude but rather to legitimize the study of history in the face of its inevitably "subjective" and "personal" methodology by establishing the intrinsic distinctiveness of the epistemological criterion for historiography and by affirming the validity of historical "understanding" as a form of knowledge, over against "objective" knowledge as determined by the natural sciences. Cf. Collingwood (1946), esp. Introduction and Pts. IV, V.

short, is taken as being equivalent to the non-rational. It is, in Webb's formulation, a "principle of unity", but of a very different sort from the other (superior) "principle of unity", which is reason. Even Webb, who wants to vindicate the concept of the personal and give it epistemological authority at least in the realm of morality, finds the integration of the two "principles of unity" problematic:

> Thus... the expression 'irrationality of the personal' upon which I fixed as conveniently suggesting the problem with which I am now concerned is not really an appropriate one. For it is persons only that reason, and reasoning beings only that are persons; and Reason is not unconcerned with persons though it is not concerned with persons only. Yet the personal principle of unity or organization in experience does appear to be distinct from the rational; and in cases where the latter affords no ground for a particular connexion, but we find one in the former, we come to institute a contrast and opposition between them which suggests that irrationality is characteristic of what is merely personal.[1]

The nature of post-Cartesian dualism: epistemology as the basis of ontology.

Now in the last seventy years a number of thinkers have come to see the dualistic heritage of Cartesianism as intellectually, socially, politically, and morally disastrous. When construed as the starting point for self-definition and for certain knowledge, the thinking ego (cogito) is intrinsically isolated from the world and from other minds. The alienation of fallen man is

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[1] Webb (1919), p. 116.

thereby systematically formalized and his impermeability to the other is structurally incorporated into his self-understanding, in such a way as to rule out (implicitly or explicitly) the possibility of divine revelation. Knowledge by power, as opposed to knowledge by communion, becomes the sole option, with all its totalitarian consequences.[1] Domination over the world replaces altogether, as if with the force of metaphysical necessity, dominion within the world. "Modern philosophy," writes John Macmurray,

> is characteristically egocentric. I mean no more than this: that firstly, it takes the Self as its starting-point, and not God, or the world or the community; and that, secondly, the Self is an individual in isolation, an ego or 'I', never a 'thou'. This is shown by the fact that there can arise the question, 'How does the Self know that other selves exist?' Further, the Self so premised is a thinker in search of knowledge. It is conceived as the Subject; the correlate in experience of the object presented for cognition.[2]

Cartesianism, which came fully into its own in the Eighteenth Century, posits epistemology as the basis of ontology. Man is no longer defined, as in the classical and Judeo-Christian traditions, in terms of a given ontological and teleological

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[1] This need not necessarily be a State totalitarianism, though that is a basic ever-present possibility in modern culture. "Liberal-technological" society is equally totalitarian in the sense that its world-view is self-contained and its relativistic ideology absolute and structurally impervious to fundamental criticism. Its constituency is composed of a multitude of self-centred, isolated, competitive units, who together constitute what is called "pluralistic society", the majority of whom, however, are subservient to the rationalistic vision of reality with its ultimate fact-value and public-private dualism.

[2] Macmurray (1957), p. 31.

relation to the cosmos, but rather on the basis of his own ultimately isolated self-determination, construed as a function of knowledge. Descartes himself avoids solipsism only by his ulterior use of the concept of God to ground the reality of his connection with the world; Kant avoids it by his scheme of synthetic a priori intuitions and categories, over which presides the synthetical unity of apperception, which he posits as the "objective condition of all cognition".[1] In both cases what is at stake is the possibility of the cogito's having knowledge of the world, without which, as these thinkers intuitively realized, reason's apparent triumph as the autonomous arbiter of truth would paradoxically have constituted its own demise, as it is only the intelligible interconnectedness of things, including ourselves-as-knowers, which allows us to speak of rationality in the first place.

Kant's effort to include morality within the framework of the rational, as practical reason, failed, because to do so he had to have recourse to a scheme of teleological regulative principles that was imported into his (transcendental) Ego-centred system from outside,[2] much like Descartes' concept of God. Thereafter, from the romantic period onwards, the solipsistic implications of Cartesianism have been avoided chiefly by the spurious and basically irrational device of

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[1] Kant, (1934), p. 97.

[2] See MacIntyre (1984), pp. 54ff.

positing a fact-value dualism, a kind of bastard child of Kant's phenomenal/noumenal dichotomy: fact is restricted to the phenomenal realm of the natural sciences (and, later, of other intellectual disciplines that could demonstrate their conformity to scientific method), while everything else is consigned to the now irrationalized "noumenal" domain of value. In the latter sphere a sort of existential solipsism holds sway: the private self, heir of the cogito, reigns supreme but has no possibility of obtaining truth or objective knowledge, neither about God (both natural theology and revelation are denied cognitive relevance) nor about anything else; in the former sphere, anchoring the isolated ego in the public and supposedly rational world, objective knowledge not only is declared to be obtainable but rules with an iron hand over the realm of "truth", determining absolutely its nature, definition, and limits. Thus mechanistic determinism and romantic anarchy feud unceasingly in the soul of contemporary Western man. He is radically bifurcated, a schizophrenic personality, whose psychic and even physical survival is seen to depend absolutely on technology and material progress, for the simple reason that in the ever greater availability of material goods and opportunities lies the one point within the civil war of this dualistic system where science with its "objective" deliverances and practical applications, and the ego with its subjective determinations and demands, coincide. Modernity as a cultural construct can find a semblance of meaning, unity, purpose, and self-justification here and here

alone. And yet, of course, that meaning and purpose are equivocal and unconvincing. A house divided against itself cannot stand solidly and is likely not to be able to stand at all for very long. Whitehead has expressed the matter thus:

> A scientific materialism, based on mechanism, is conjoined with an unwavering belief in the world of men and of the higher animals as being composed of self-determining organisms. This radical inconsistency at the basis of modern thought accounts for much that is half-hearted and wavering in our civilization.[1]

Since modernity is a construct built on an epistemological metaphysic, its critics have sought to expose and undermine its epistemological presuppositions. We shall continue our present discussion of knowledge by looking more closely at some of these presuppositions, especially in the thought of Descartes and Kant, and then by examining two of their most important Twentieth Century critics, A. N. Whitehead and Michael Polanyi. So far we have done no more than situate the problem and hint at a possible response to it in terms of a concept of knowledge-as-personal, structured on our knowledge, through divine revelation, of the nature of God as Being-in-communion. With respect to the Christian doctrine of providence, it should be obvious that any such doctrine conceived uncritically within the dualistic framework of modernity is bound to fall under the heading of a private "value"; or else it must adopt an "objective" and "impersonal" appearance as <u>process</u> and thereby assimilate itself to a cosmology modelled on terrestrial evolution, human history,

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[1] Whitehead (1946), p. 94.

and relativity physics--in which case it will need to abandon its claim to being specifically Christian. If, however, we refuse modernity's epistemological framework on the grounds that it is divided within itself and therefore fundamentally disconnected and irrational, we put ourselves properly in a position to argue for the greater intelligibility of a doctrine of providence derived from true knowledge of a personal God given us in divine self-revelation, through an act of saving grace which alone

enables us to talk rationally about providential sovereignty and care. That intelligibility will be substantiated as it is seen to fit with the structures of our knowledge of other minds and of material reality. If what we have called the personal--defined according to the revealed divine model and therefore in terms of relationship, inter-connectedness, reciprocity, and communion--is shown to be essential to epistemology in general, then our contention that it is the overarching and underpinning category of all reality, to be placed not below or alongside of the category of the rational but above it, will have been demonstrated to be itself a more rational contention than the dualistic case put forward by the proponents of the modern epistemological metaphysic. We would then be able, with Oliver Quick, to say:

> We conclude therefore that any faith, which can interpret the ultimate order of the universe so as to make man's spiritual nature and experience somehow coherent with other aspects of reality, may legitimately claim reason as its ally. And if the faith which can best perform that task is one which recognizes a special revelation of God to man in

> certain particular events, then that faith is seen to be supremely rational. For the really rational doctrine or theory is not one which can be logically demonstrated to be true, but one which, when it is believed as true, exhibits an intelligible order in the whole scheme of things and makes coherent sense of our experience....Reason, as we understand the term, considers the facts and interprets them so as to make them intelligible....it is our Christian conviction that the life of Jesus interpreted as God's unique and supreme self-revelation is uniquely and supremely illuminating to the reason of mankind....Reason and faith are not concerned each with a distinct sphere of cognition.[1]

V.3

Our knowledge of other persons.

Contrary to the Cartesian epistemology and to the dualism arising from it, we wish to assert, on the basis of God's creation of man in his own image (the true and obedient man, Jesus Christ, being the perfect expression of this creation), that man is by nature and inalienably in relation to God, his fellows, and the material world. This is what it means to say, as we are able to do by virtue of revelation, that man is personal. If the Fall has broken his communion with these three realities (though not to the same degree in each case, as we shall suggest), it has not annulled his relation to them. Since man as imago Dei is personal and therefore rational, he can have knowledge of these realities. Sin has removed the reality of true knowledge of God from the experience of unreconciled man,

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[1] Quick (1938), pp. 16f.

since such knowledge consists in communion, and unrighteous men can have no communion with a holy God; but because man is still man and not, say, pig, the possibility of such knowledge remains, contingent on God's redemptive grace. That grace has been given to us in Jesus Christ, which is why we say, with the New Testament writers, that in Christ, through whom we are reconciled and brought back into fellowship with God, we may have true knowledge of God.

Sin also has profoundly distorted the knowledge that we can have of our fellow-men. Enmity and violence have replaced trust and harmony as a general rule in human relations; hence what we may call our inner knowledge of other persons--our knowledge of them in the sense of love, involving communion and a grateful recognition of the particularity and infinite value of each of them--is severely limited. But we would wish to argue that it is not therefore categorically ruled out, as it is with respect to a holy God. This is because other human beings are on the same ontological and moral plane as ourselves, and subject to the same Creator and Redeemer. We are all creatures and, in addition, sinfulness is our common fallen condition; but by divine providence there is also still present to the human race, as God has shown us consummately in Christ, the love that makes inner knowledge between persons possible at least to some extent. If, in our estrangement, we cannot have full communion with each other, nevertheless the reality of love is not altogether beyond our common human experience. God is on another ontological and

moral plane from us, and to have communion with him is not possible without the gift of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. Fullness of love between men also requires God's Spirit and the miracle of new birth, sanctification, and citizenship in God's Kingdom; but because God is gracious and, as providential Spirit, broods over his fallen world, we are not given up to absolute inner isolation from each other. Simply because our love, when we demonstrate it, is imperfect, incomplete, and unsustained, does not mean it is false. Only in Christ, and not by any rationally conceived Utopia, can it be made perfect; but its reality within our fallen existence, limited though it is, is not therefore to be denied.

Human sociality--i.e., our being-in-relation--is guaranteed, moreover, by God's order of creation. This is the ground of the possibility of mutual knowledge both inner and outer. Man in God's image is man and woman in relation, therefore having, as persons (even after the Fall), the potential of communion. Because God is faithful and does not destroy his creation, this potential may to some degree be realized even in the fallen world. Sin may indeed, most of the time, carry our relations far from communion, but it cannot destroy the reality of the relations or the potential of communion, nor can it eradicate the rationality by which the relations are structured into what we call culture. The measure of our inner knowledge of each other as persons rather than merely as rational objects will depend upon our openness (conscious or unconscious) to God's presence in

the world as personal Spirit, and upon the extent of our natural conformity to the ethical structures of creation. The experience of salvation in Christ is decisive here, of course, for it is Jesus who reveals to us the full reality and meaning of personhood (and also of creation) and who provides us with an altogether new possibility of experiencing it. On account of God's faithfulness, however, and of man's inalienable nature as created in the image of God, it would be wrong to say that all people outside of God's historical covenant can have no genuine knowledge of each other as persons, in love and deep mutual recognition, just as it would evidently be wrong to assert that all people of real Christian faith, just because of the presence of the Spirit of Christ within them, always treat each other with love and respect, as persons. Christ has disclosed to us that the fulfilment of our personhood, with all that this means by way of communion with divine and created reality, is God's ultimate intention for the human race; the Church is the field in which this intention may indeed be effectively and deliberately, though imperfectly, expressed; yet here below, until the Kingdom comes in plenitude, God's intention is far from being realized, even in the case of reconciled man "walking according to the Spirit": "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (KJV I Corinthians 13:12) Thus we conclude, firstly, that because God and man are both personal, and because true knowledge between persons means communion and involves self-

giving and receiving in love, the Fall has had drastic and deleterious effects on the extent and quality of human knowledge of God and of fellow human beings; but, secondly, that because God is God (infinite, holy, and gracious Spirit) and man is man (finite and unholy embodied soul, created in God's likeness), these effects are not, in the respective cases of knowledge, identical, though the basic pattern of alienation they display is necessarily similar. We will consider later, in another perspective, a further feature pertaining to our inner knowledge of other minds;[1] but before doing so we must investigate the nature of our knowledge of non-personal material reality.

V.4

The epistemological doctrine of Descartes.

The doctrine of the imago Dei provides the theological grounds for claiming that the epistemological dilemma of Descartes is an illusion due to his abstraction of the question of knowledge from the question of being, or, as we put it earlier, his abstraction of reason from its personal context. Man is inalienably connected to the material world and therefore immediately and truly aware of its existence and able really to know it, because, as created in God's image, he has been given the task of being God's representative in that world and of exercising lordship over it. Knowledge is the condition of

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[1] See below, pp. 284 f.

carrying out this task. As made in God's image and given this charge, man is a personal being, hence rational; his rationality is the organ of his responsibility to God and for creation. Language is the tool of this rationality, the gift whereby his relation to God may be expressed and his supremacy over the rest of creation assured and made manifest. This is clearly brought out in the first three chapters of Genesis, where, in the first place, God and man relate to each other by speech, and, in the second place, man is shown to have the freedom, authority, and power to name the beasts.[1] As the highest creatures after man, animals may be taken to be representative of the rest of creation. The freedom, authority, and power to name them are pictured here as inhering in man: not, however, in man-in-himself (a concept quite inconceivable to the Hebrews), but in man-as-created-by-God. Man is personal being, i.e., being-having-such-privileges-and-capacities; but personal being itself is being-in-relation-to-the-Creator-God. The exalted status in creation of man-as-made-in-God's-image, of man, that is, who is such that he is able to name, is shown by comparing the Genesis 2 text with a text from the prophet Isaiah, where naming is identified as the quintessential expression of divine power and Lordship:

> To whom then will you compare me,

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[1] Genesis 2:19f. This naming itself, as a part of what is involved in being made in the image of God, reflects the primordial divine activity of naming that is integral to the act of creation out of nothing: Gen. 1:5a, 8a, 10; cf. Isa. 40:25f.

> that I should be like him?
> says the Holy One.
> Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these?
> He who brings out their host by number,
> calling them by name;
> by the greatness of his might
> and because he is strong in power
> not one is missing.[1]

A closer look now at Descartes' epistemological dilemma and the dualism underlying it may enable us to begin to see more precisely the cogency of the imago Dei doctrine in establishing the ground for a coherent theological theory of knowledge, with respect not only to knowledge of God and of other persons but also of the material world. Etienne Gilson argues that Descartes' separation of body and soul arose as he pushed off from Aristotelian Scholasticism and strove to overcome the notion of "substantial forms" and of "real qualities".[2] As a mathematician, Descartes thought in a priori terms and found in the deductive method the only basis for certitude. His desire to extend mathematical explication to the whole of reality led him inevitably to substitute the point of view of the subject for that of the object.[3] Against Thomism, which proceeds a posteriori from things to ideas, Descartes moves from what he calls "clear and distinct ideas" to things. For him, the Scholastic notion of the form of an object that could be thought separately even though it did not subsist separately from its

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[1] Isaiah 40:25f. Cf. Ps. 147:4.

[2] See Gilson (1975), esp. Pt. 2.

[3] Ibid., p. 200.

instantiation in a substance; or the notion of the qualities of an object, such as heaviness, as being real and as existing in relation to the object in the manner of a soul or immaterial substance--notions such as these were not clear and distinct at all but confused, and actually prevented the acquisition of true knowledge. "Je ne suppose," he writes to Mersenne,

> aucunes qualités réelles en la nature, qui soient ajoutées à la substance, comme des petites âmes à leurs corps, et qui en puissent être séparées par la puissance divine;...La principale raison qui me fait rejeter ces qualités réelles est que je ne vois pas que l'esprit humain ait en soi aucune notion ou idée particulière, pour les concevoir..."[1]

These Scholastic notions arose, Descartes believed, from the failure clearly to distinguish body from soul; and this failure itself was the result of a confusion, carried over from the childhood process of learning, between physical impressions and sensations, experienced by the child as being actual realities attached to objects, and the objects themselves.[2] The fall of a heavy object is not explained by a fictive quality called heaviness belonging to the object; a child would experience it like that, but physical science must eliminate this illusion and replace it with the mathematically determinable categories of extension and movement. In his Reply to the Sixth Objection made

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[1] Descartes, Lettre à Mersenne, 26 avril 1643, cited in Gilson (1975), p. 173, note 1.

[2] See Gilson (1975), pp. 162-173; cf. Descartes, The Principles of Philosophy LXVI-LXXII, in The Philosophical Works, Vol. I (1955).

against his Meditations, Descartes reiterates how, by considering physical things, he came to such a radical conclusion:

> ...I observed that nothing at all belonged to the nature or essence of body, except that it was a thing with length, breadth, and depth, admitting of various shapes and various motions. I found also that its shapes and motions were only modes, which no power could make to exist apart from it; and on the other hand that colours, odours, savours, and the rest of such things, were merely sensations existing in my thought, and differing no less from bodies than pain differs from the shape and motion of the instrument which inflicts it. Finally I saw that gravity, hardness, the power of heating, of attracting, and of purging, and all other qualities which we experience in bodies, consisted solely in motion or its absence, and in the configuraton and situation of their parts. [1]

For Descartes, the theoretical foundation for this revolutionary insight is the differentiation of body and soul as two substances, conjoined but essentially distinct: body is physical substance, pure mechanism; soul is thinking substance. Two trains of thought lead him to this metaphysical position, which is the basis of his natural philosophy. The first is his methodological doubt; the second is his scepticism regarding the reliability of the senses. By doubting everything that is not absolutely incontrovertible, Descartes hopes to purge himself of all mere "opinions" and "habits" of thought, among which are the misleading notions of Scholastic Aristotelianism.[2] As is well known, he is able to call into question the existence of everything except himself-as-thinking. The deliverances of his

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[1] Descartes, Reply to Objections VI, in The Philosophical Works, Vol. II (1955), pp. 253f.

[2] Descartes, Meditaton I (1968), p. 95.

senses may be mistaken; he may be dreaming; God may be deceiving him about whatever he thinks he knows: but if he thinks at all, even if it be only to doubt everything that appears to exist, it is clear that he himself must exist.[1]

Descartes employs methodological doubt to go way beyond Aristotle's definition of man as a rational animal. In the end, only thinking remains as an attribute that cannot be detached from him and that is necessarily true. Thinking serves both to prove that he exists and to define who or what he is: he is; and he is a "thing which thinks".[2] We are very far here from the biblical picture of man as a unity of body, soul, and spirit, made in the image of God. Descartes takes to its extreme of abstraction the tendency in Christian theology, inherited from Classical thought, to understand the imago Dei primarily in terms of man's rational nature. For Descartes, the image of God in man consists, first, in the innate idea of God that is to be found in

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[1] Ibid., Meditation II. The closeness of this argument to Augustine's refutation of Academic scepticism is well known (cf. Augustine, De Libero Arbitrio II.3.7; De Trinitate X.10.15-16; De Civitate Dei XI.26; Gilson (1975), Pt. 2, ch. 2; F. C. Copleston (1972), pp. 31ff. Augustine, however, was not using this certainty of his own existence to form the basis of a philosophical system at the centre of which would stand the rational ego of the individual man; his si fallor, sum is simply an example of the certainties we undoubtedly possess, the ultimate reference and ground of which is not the idea of God, as with Descartes (who perceives in this idea the mark of the Creator, the imago Dei--cf. Meditation III), it is the truth, which Augustine first defines philosophically, in terms of immutability and eternity, and then religiously and personally, as God himself, the incarnate Lord and Saviour (De Libero Arbitrio II.12.35-37).

[2] Ibid., Meditation II, pp. 105ff.

his rational intuition,[1] and secondly, in the power of the free will that is able to do a thing or not to do it.[2] There is no notion of the person as we have elucidated it. The very use of the word res (cogitans) to define the essence of man is evidence of this. Of course, cognition is only one activity of the "thing which thinks". This "thing", besides doubting, perceiving, affirming, and denying, also wills and does not will, imagines, and feels.[3] Nevertheless, only the cognitive activity is reliable and able to yield true understanding. The will may err by going beyond what reason understands and so choosing the bad or the false instead of the good and the true;[4] and the imagination, though also a part of thinking and not merely a function of the bodily senses, may err by imagining things that are false, because its capacity to form images is dependent upon the senses that provide the images in the first place. The deliverances of the senses are subject to change, therefore they cannot be clear and distinct, i.e., intelligible. Descartes' Platonism is patent here. In his discussion of how he can know what is the nature of a piece of wax, he declares: "I must therefore agree that I could not even conceive by means of the imagination what this wax is, and that it is my understanding

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[1] Ibid., Meditation III, p. 130.

[2] Ibid., Meditation IV, p. 136.

[3] Ibid., Meditation II, p. 107.

[4] Ibid., Meditation IV, p. 137.

alone which conceives it."[1] As to what the wax thus conceived by the mind actually is, he writes:

> Indeed it is the same which I see, touch, imagine, and which I knew from the start. But, and this is to be noted, the perception of it, or the action by which one perceives it, is not an act of sight, or touch, or of imagination, and has never been, although it seemed so hitherto, but only an intuition of the mind, which may be imperfect and confused, as it was formerly, or else clear and distinct, as it is at present according as my attention directs itself more or less to the elements which it contains and of which it is composed.[2]

Descartes thus distinguishes a confused, sense-based perception of the wax, using the imaginative faculty, from the clear cognition of it derived from pure thought. The cognitive perception alone will yield a true understanding of the wax. This understanding will be in terms of extension, mathematically determined. Anything else that the wax may be imagined, on the basis of sensory impressions, to be, will be subject to change and perceptual error and will not correspond to its real nature. This analysis of the mind's activity brings Descartes back to his starting point, namely, his own identity as a thinking thing. Things--extended things or thinking things--are properly perceived, i.e., known, not by the imagination or the senses but only by the understanding that is in us.

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[1] Ibid., Meditation II, p. 109.

[2] Ibid., pp. 109f.

Confusions in Descartes' use of different conceptions of God.

The thinking subject exists and is able by the exercise of his cognitive faculty to obtain true knowledge of things. The soul and the senses, lodged in the body, are to be separated, and the "I" identified with the former, since it is this "cogito" alone that can be sure of its own existence and of the existence of the world. But now Descartes again takes up his methodological doubt and asks how in fact he can be certain that the clear ideas of things, even of numbers, which he perceives with his mind, come from and correspond to real things outside himself. His "self" (in this context) being his mind, his own body is, again, included in this new thrust of scepticism, which bears this time not on confused but on clear perceptions. It is at this point that the philosopher resorts notoriously to his proof of a good, non-deceiving God as the only possible ground for a firm belief in the existence of a reality external to himself and with which his internal perceptions are in correspondence. Here we wish to make our first direct objection to Descartes' method. Concerning the doubt that such things as he can conceive clearly may be other than as he conceives them, he writes:

> Indeed, if I have judged since that these things can be doubted, it has been for no other reason than because it occurred to me that a God might perhaps have given

> me a nature such that I might make mistakes even concerning the things which seem most obvious to me.[1]

This "preconceived opinion" of the sovereign power of God has constrained him, he says, to admit that such a God might easily have arranged for him to fall into error about even the most apparently certain things (except the reality of his own existence). The influence of late medieval nominalism is obvious here. Such a conception of a deceptive and irrational God could only have arisen in a climate of theological crisis, in which debate about the relation of God's absolute and ordained power--unobjectionable in itself[2]--had opened up vistas of logical and ethical speculation about what a God both free and omnipotent might do or not do.[3] Descartes' quest of a sure foundation for knowledge in an age of intellectual and institutional upheaval has led him to do something very odd: to use this conception of a perverse God as a bulwark for a programme of systematic doubt aimed at the determination of truth.

Wanting now, as he reaches his Third Meditation, to overcome the solipsistic implications of this doubt, Descartes abruptly discards the perverse conception of God and substitutes the traditional Christian conception of a God who is good and perfect

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[1] Ibid., Meditation III, p. 114.

[2] Cf. Aquinas, Summa Theologiae Ia. Q. 19, A. 3; Q. 25, A. 5.

[3] For a concise discussion of the Via Moderna, with which the epistemological current of thought called "nominalism" is associated, see Alister McGrath (1985), pp. 53-63; cf. F. C. Copleston (1972), pp. 227-256.

and who therefore could not be deceitful. "And indeed," he writes,

> as I have no reason to believe that there is a deceitful God, and as, moreover, I have not yet considered the reasons which prove that there is a God at all, the reason for doubting [clearly perceived things] which depends only on this supposition is very slight, and, so to speak, metaphysical.[1]

In our first citation (above, p. 240), he claims that there has been "no other reason" for his doubt of clearly perceived things than this idea of a deceitful God; in our second, he claims that he has "no reason" to believe that there is a deceitful God. Descartes' reasoning here is patently illogical. His methodological supposition, stated in the First Meditation, that anything he has hitherto thought about God's moral character, i.e., that he is supremely good and perfect as well as all-powerful, he will set aside, for the purposes of his investigation, as mere fable, is, by his own later admission, irrational. It may perhaps be conjectured that a method buttressed by an irrational and purely arbitrary supposition will lead to purely arbitrary and irrational conclusions, or at the very least to logical dilemmas, even contradictions.[2]

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[1] Descartes, Meditation III, p. 115.

[2] One such contradiction arises in Meditation VI, where Descartes addresses the problem of the union of the cogito and the body. The cogito, he observes, is not like the pilot of a ship, but is compounded with the body, with which it forms a single whole (p. 159). This whole cannot be thought, but only felt (Gilson, 1975, p. 249); yet Descartes can actually refer to it as "my entire self, in so far as I am composed of body and mind". (Meditation VI, p. 160) The philosopher fails to show how the "I" and the "self" (union of body and soul) are integrated:

We may well ask how Descartes, in his investigation of the foundations of rational knowledge, could have accepted to start from such an irrational notion as that of a Creator God who is an Arch-Deceiver. A citation from his First Meditation provides a clue:

> Nevertheless, I have for a long time had in my mind the belief that there is a God who is all-powerful and by whom I was created and made as I am. And who can give me the assurance that this God has not arranged that there should be no earth, no heaven, no extended body, no figure, no magnitude, or place, and that nevertheless I should have the perception of all these things, and the persuasion that they do not exist other than as I see them?...But perhaps God has not wished me to be deceived in this way, for he is said to be supremely good. However, if it were a contradiction to his goodness to have made me in such a way that I always deceived myself, it would seem also to be contrary to his goodness to allow me to be wrong sometimes, and nevertheless it is beyond doubt that he permits it.[1]

This passage suggests that Descartes' strange move would seem to be based on a supposed parallel between two states of affairs which are in fact not parallel at all. In the first situation, we have a God who acts perversely towards his creature by causing

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at the level of thought, he conceives of body and soul as absolutely distinct; at the level of feeling, he cannot conceive of them separately. Even more embarrassing (since, as a Christian, he believes God to be the author of his entire being), the "clear and distinct" conception of the cogito is merely a part of the larger and unintelligible whole that includes the less excellent--because divisible--entity, the body. The reality of sensation, which requires to be taken seriously for both scientific and theological reasons, forces on Descartes the need to conceptualize the very unity of body and soul that he is elsewhere so intent on denying. This he is unable to do, because his dualistic logic cannot be accommodated to a non-dualistic realism.

[1] Descartes, Meditation I, pp. 98f.

him always to deceive himself; in the second situation, we have a God who has made a creature who sometimes can be wrong: that is, we have a God who, being sovereign, may be said to allow his creature sometimes to make mistakes. The first case depicts, quite simply, a malevolent God; the second depicts a God who has made a creature who, created both finite and free, is capable of erring perceptually and morally. If the reference in this sentence is limited, as seems likely, to perceptual error, and if occasional perceptual error can be perceived to be such only against the background of ordinary perceptual accuracy and can accordingly be corrected by application of other human faculties such as judgment and analysis, we have here an utterly misconceived parallel being drawn between two Gods who are in fact opposites, the one, in hostility, having determined man always to be deceived, the other, in love, having created him to be rational and free.

The illogicality here is flagrant, yet this piece of false reasoning is advanced as the basis for hypothetically positing God as an Arch-Deceiver and then employing this construct to justify an epistemological procedure. A more objectionable move, logically and theologically, could hardly be imagined. Descartes' distrust of the senses seems to be the catalyst for it, along with his peculiarly modern quest for security and power through (certain) knowledge. Yet sensory distortion--which in itself means simply that under certain conditions certain objects appear differently from what they are and need to be determined

for what they _really_ are by the use of other faculties than the perceptual--becomes a major philosophical problem only if one has abandoned the realist conception, basic to the Christian tradition, that knowledge is obtained through a process of engagement of the _whole man_ (body and soul) with his environment, that it is obtainable _in principle_, and that it is beyond the reach of corrosive scepticism, all of this on account of a prior determination by the Creator of both man and the world, according to which the universe is _intelligible_ to that _rational_ creature called to exercise dominion over it.

Although Descartes, when he emerges in the _Third Meditation_ from the spell cast by the idea of a "malin génie", does have recourse to a conception of God apparently more in keeping with that of traditional faith, it must be said that this conception in fact turns out to be just one more notion introduced for epistemological purposes. Without impugning his religious sincerity, we must insist on the distance we are here from Anselm's ontological argument. Anselm is reasoning on the basis of faith in the God whom he knows by revelation. Even if on the surface it appears to be a purely philosophical enterprise, his _a priori_ argument is, in reality, a kind of _a posteriori_ demonstration, from _within_ the sphere of faith, of the _rationality_ of faith seen from that perspective. Descartes' proof of God, on the other hand, makes the "innate" idea of God a function of his philosophical need to establish the possibility of knowledge of the material world. For him, contrary to Anselm,

the world is a deduction made from a concept of divinity, rather than an implication drawn from faith in a personal Creator and Redeemer. By his <u>own</u> method he has reduced the certainty of his <u>own</u> existence to a determination made by his <u>own</u> mind; he has then claimed, perfectly logically, that the very <u>nature</u> of his existence is essentially mental; as a consequence, his "I", epistemologically determined, finds itself marooned in a vacuum, unable to make certain contact with the world; and so finally, in metaphysical desperation, the philosopher brings in the concept of God, pulling it from his mind like a rabbit from a hat, to save himself out of his self-imposed prison.

The whole operation happens in the head, and, of course, Descartes (and Western thought that has taken its cue from him) is not saved at all. The failure of the enterprise is as flagrant as its arbitrariness. Cartesian man is an odd hybrid, the progenitor of compartmentalized modern man with his "divided self". While capable, at one level, of clear thought, at a more comprehensive level (as we showed on p. 242 , note 2), he is an unintelligible entity composed of an isolable cogitating substance of great value, called mind, and of a vacuous extended substance without value, called body, that emits sensations and feelings of which we can have only the most confused ideas. If Descartes had really dared to doubt the cogency of his own

privately determined methodological starting point,[1] or to question the body-soul dualism that appeared to him to be confirmed by it, he might have found his way out of the abstract cul-de-sac of "clear and distinct" ideas and discovered the unitive and profoundly rational concept of the person, a concept available to him already in the Christian tradition and of which, in point of fact, his own individualistic and ego-affirming cogito was a distorted derivative.

V.5

Empiricism, Kant, and the epistemological impasse when the starting point is the subject positing the object.

Within a generation Locke had destroyed the concept of innate ideas, thereby removing Descartes' sole ground for believing it possible to have true knowledge of the world. The prison door was slammed shut and then reinforced by Hume with other kinds of arguments to show that man's "knowledge" of reality was not rational at all but merely a matter of imagination, the habitual association of impressions. Kant, despite his immense effort to overcome Hume, does his philosophical business entirely inside the Cartesian prison, with the difference from Descartes that he quite deliberately wants to

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[1] In Meditation VI, p. 168, he disingenuously claims to reject "all the doubts of these last few days, as hyperbolical or ridiculous, particularly the general uncertainty about sleep". It is difficult to take seriously this apparent disavowal of his method of doubt, since he nowhere questions its efficacy or subjects to criticism the conclusions it has driven him to.

claim that the prison is in fact the residential palace of autonomous man. As in the case of the French philosopher, though in different terms, Kant's subject posits the object.[1] The ability to know is an a priori synthetic mode of ruling and shaping experience; metaphysical consideration of the grounds for the very existence of experience in the first place and of the human ability to know it is excluded in virtue of the demonstrated antinomies involved in such thinking (this is Kant's version of methodological doubt);[2] and Christian revelation in the traditional sense is dismissed as a mere historical-empirical phenomenon, requiring "a thorough-going interpretation of it in a sense agreeing with the universal practical rules of a religion of pure reason."[3] "Behind Kant's epistemology," writes Thielicke,

> lies the ontological premise that it is possible to see reality as self-enclosed finitude and to understand the cosmic nexus without believing in something that embraces it. The premise is that one can bring to light the reality of the world from within, i.e., that it is possible to get at the world of experience from the standpoint of the subject-object relation which lies within it....An attempt is made to make the world the object of knowledge apart from the basis, meaning, and goal of the world as elemental causes and conditions of this knowledge and also as its ultimate goal.[4]

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[1] See Thielicke's trenchant discussion of Anselm, Descartes, and Kant in (1974), Vol. I, pp. 265-285.

[2] Kant (1934), pp. 293-304.

[3] Kant (1960), p. 100.

[4] Thielicke (1974), Vol. I, p. 284.

Kant excludes these, Thielicke observes, for two reasons: first, because he approaches the world from within the subject-object relation; and secondly, because he presents it only in its objectifiable state. We find ourselves once again being offered an abstraction in place of the whole, this time on the basis of a metaphysical stance masquerading as an epistemological principle, i.e., that the whole is indeterminable and so irrelevant to pure reason. By a covert metaphysical fiat, metaphysical reflection is declared to be irrational (Nineteenth and Twentieth Century positivism has, pace Kant, extended the range of the irrational to include moral reflection also). As Thielicke points out, however, this objectifiable state is not the totality of the world but only one of its dimensions:

> The totality cannot be objectifiable because it embraces the subject-object relation. In religious terms, it establishes the miracle of this relation. It builds the bridge which Descartes found in his proof of God.[1]

Kant's doctrine of the unknowability of things-in-themselves is evidence of the failure of all philosophical efforts within the Cartesian framework to attain real knowledge of the material world. If philosophy starts with the subject positing the object, it simply cannot build a bridge back to objective reality as such. The split of philosophy from natural science, along with positivism and its denial of the possibility and/or of the meaningfulness of metaphysics, must inevitably follow,

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[1] Ibid.

consolidating the fact-value dualism alluded to above (V.2).[1] The taproot of this dualism is the Cartesian body-soul doctrine and the methodological doubt by which it is substantiated. Existentially, as Thielicke again reminds us, we constantly reckon with the totality that Kant so vigorously excludes as far as its significance for knowledge is concerned.[2] The experience of reality in human life, and the question about meaning and purpose that is integral to this experience, transcend the objectifiable sphere of being. Kant's epistemological totalitarianism is as irrational a procedure as Descartes' use of methodological doubt to establish truth, in so far as it abstracts the knowing subject from his personal context in the midst of life. The thing-in-itself doctrine manifests this irrationality and is, in a sense, equivalent to the paradox of Descartes' concluding deliberation on the body-soul dichotomy.[3] We must now take a brief look at Kant's doctrine before proceeding farther.

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[1] Cf. Mascall (1980), p. 11; and Brown (1955), pp. 29ff.

[2] Cf. Kant (1934), pp. 303f.

[3] See above, p. 242, note 2.

Kant's doctrine of the thing-in-itself.

Kant places the thing-in-itself in the sphere of the unconditioned, which is the realm of the noumenal as over against the phenomenal. This sphere is real but cognitively unknowable. Its existence is vital for practical reason, which has to do with the unconditioned imperatives of the moral law; but it has no bearing on the cognition of phenomena, that is, of things-as-they-appear-to-us. Science and morality operate respectively in the conditioned and the unconditioned spheres, i.e., in the spheres of natural causality and of freedom. These two orders must be kept separate for the sake of preserving free will. Kant's First Critique makes it clear, however, that their separation is also necessary for another reason, more immediately pertinent to our argument: namely, to insure the possibility that we have <u>real</u> knowledge of objective phenomena. In the final analysis, Kant's doctrine of the thing-in-itself is indispensable to his doctrine of causality, by which he attempts to overcome Hume's sensationalism; it is part and parcel of his <u>a priori</u> synthetic theory of knowledge. "I am only conscious, then," he writes,

> that my imagination places one state before, and the other after; not that the one state antecedes the other in the object. In other words, the objective relation of the successive phenomena remains quite undetermined by means of mere perception. Now in order that this relation may be cognized as determined, the relation between the two states must be so cogitated that it is thereby determined as necessary, which of them must be placed before and which after, and not conversely. But the conception which carries with it a necessity of

> synthetical unity, can be none other than a pure conception of the understanding which does not lie in mere perception; and in this case it is the conception of the relation of cause and effect, the former of which determines the latter in time, as its necessary consequence....It follows that it is only because we subject the sequence of phenomena, and consequently all change, to the law of causality, that experience itself, that is, empirical cognition of phenomena, becomes possible; and consequently, that phenomena themselves, as objects of experience, are possible only by virtue of this law.
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> Our apprehension of the manifold of phenomena is always successive....If phenomena were things in themselves, no man would be able to conjecture from the succession of our representations how this manifold is connected in the object; for we have to do only with our representations. How things may be in themselves, without regard to the representations through which they affect us, is utterly beyond the sphere of our cognition.[1]

Earlier, in his section on the Deduction of the Categories, he had written:

> There are only two possible ways in which synthetical representation and its objects can coincide with and relate necessarily to each other, and, as it were, meet together. Either the object alone makes the representation possible, or the representation alone makes the object possible. In the former case, the relation between them is only empirical, and an a priori representation is impossible....In the latter case--although representation alone...does not produce the object as to its existence, it must nevertheless be a priori determinative in regard to the object, if it is only by means of the representation that we can cognize anything as an object.[2]

We know only our representations, on the basis, first, of the a priori external and internal intuitions of space and time, by means of which the object-as-phenomenon is given; and secondly,

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[1] Ibid., pp. 148-149.

[2] Ibid., pp. 90f.

of the a priori conceptions of the understanding, by means of which the object that corresponds to this intuition is thought. Understanding is the faculty of cognitions, which consist in the determined relation of given representations to an object. An object is defined as "that, in the conception of which the manifold in a given intuition is united." Kant goes on to say:

> Now all union of representations requires unity of consciousness in the synthesis of them. Consequently, it is the unity of consciousness alone that constitutes the possibility of representations relating to an object, and therefore of their objective validity, and of their becoming cognitions, and consequently, the possibility of the existence of the understanding itself....The synthetical unity of consciousness is, therefore, an objective condition of all cognition, which I do not merely require in order to cognize an object, but to which every intuition must necessarily be subject, in order to become an object for me; because in any other way, and without this synthesis, the manifold in intuition could not be united in one consciousness....all my representations in any given intuition must be subject to the condition which alone enables me to connect them, as my representation with the identical self, and so to unite them synthetically in one apperception, by means of the general expression, I think.[1]

In all this (quoted at length to avoid misrepresentation) Kant is saying something very odd. Let us try to see what this is and why he says it. In cognition we have to do only with our representations, which are understood, in principle, to be the product either of the object or of the thinking subject (the synthetical unity of consciousness). As we saw, he rules out the first alternative because it would land him back with Hume, in scepticism. Interestingly, he does take over from Hume the

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[1] Ibid., p. 97.

belief that the manifold of phenomena consists in a series of impressions which in themselves have no intrinsic connectedness. The question is, how do we account for the fact that these come to us as orderly representations? If these successive data, intrinsically unconnected but apparently in causal relation, represented things-in-themselves, then, thinks Kant, Hume would be right after all and we would have no rational ground for knowing that what we have in these representations actually corresponds to objects-out-there. Their apparent causal connectedness would be the work of the thinking-ego, yes (this is Kant's doctrine); but the objects would have no more certain objective reference than do Hume's contiguous successive impressions, which mere habit--and not rational necessity--sets in "causal" association. If, however, we say that the phenomena are representations only of objects-as-they-appear, then we are in a position to say that our representations do correspond to objects-out-there, even if not to objects-in-themselves. Kant's position enables him to claim objective reference for human knowledge (objects-out-there, determined for cognition by the synthetic a priori category of causality), while disclaiming knowledge of anything that goes beyond the bounds of phenomena (things-in-themselves, which are other than our representations and therefore beyond reach of our sensuous intuition). By this doctrine he is seeking both to establish and to limit the

objective validity of sensuous cognition.[1] The trouble is, the doctrine is so convoluted as to be unintelligible. Initially it seems to force itself upon Kant because the conception of an unconditioned noumenon, of a thing-in-itself, is not self-contradictory (it only becomes so if it is illegitimately applied to the phenomenal realm, in which case it gives rise to the antinomies) and so must be accounted for in an analysis of theoretical reason, especially as we are not entitled to maintain that sensibility is the only possible mode of intuition.[2] Kant did not find this easy, and his struggle to give real content to the conception is often in evidence, as the following passage demonstrates:

> But, after all, the possibility of such noumena is quite incomprehensible, and beyond the sphere of phenomena, all is for us a mere void....The conception of a noumenon is therefore merely a limitative conception, and therefore only of negative use. But it is not an arbitrary or fictitious notion, but is connected with the limitation of sensibility, without, however, being capable of presenting us with any positive datum beyond this sphere....the class of noumena have no determinate object corresponding to

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[1] Ibid., p. 188.

[2] Ibid. Cf. Preface to the Second Edition, pp. 13f.

them, and cannot therefore possess objective validity.[1]

We may well ask, Why all the fuss? Could Kant not have found a simpler and more convincing way to establish the limits of speculative reason and the possibility of practical reason within a causally determined universe? The general answer has to do with his adherence to what we have called the Cartesian frame of reference, in which the starting point of epistemology is not the biblical assumption--ultimately grounded on the implications of the doctrine of the imago Dei--that the whole man is essentially and indefeasibly in relation to, i.e., connected with, the material world and therefore able to have knowledge of it as it is, but rather the sceptical assumption, inaugurated by

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[1] Ibid. It is perhaps not insignificant that in the Preface to the Second Edition of the First Critique, when he discusses the "necessary distinction between things as objects of experience, and things as they are in themselves", he stresses the moral value of the distinction for the preservation of human freedom and says nothing about it in relation to perception (pp. 16f.). Its chief use for Kant does in fact seem to be to enable him to resolve the antinomy of freedom (cf. Critique of Practical Reason, 1956, pp. 118ff.). Even here, however, the doctrine seems a forced and unsatisfactory way to go about establishing how the soul may be at one and the same time free (at the noumenal level) and subject to causal necessity (at the phenomenal level). What sense does it make, for example, to talk of moral judgments outside of time and space? Acts of moral volition are ineluctably involved in temporal-spatial existence, as John Silber points out in an introductory essay to Kant's Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, pp. xcvii-ciii. To say anything else seems the grossest form of abstractive intellectualizing, however admirable the motive. Kant's bondage to an updated version of Cartesian dualism yields artificial fruit here, and in the end he succeeds neither in separating his two spheres intelligibly nor in relating them effectively. Cf., for an analytical commentary on the First Critique, Walsh (1975), esp. pp. 159-167; and, for a critique of Kant's philosophical stance, Macmurray (1957), esp. chs. 2 and 3.

Descartes with his methodological doubt and systematized by Hume with his refutation of causality, that the mind is separated from nature and set over against it. The specific answer has to do with a presupposition received uncritically by Kant from Hume, that what reaches us in perception are successions of particular data intrinsically unconnected by any causal necessity. Kant's assertion that we only know representations is taken over directly from the empiricists;[1] his doctrines of the thing-in-itself and of a priori synthetic judgments constitute the cornerstone of his attempt to overcome the solipsistic implications of Humean scepticism. Yet Kant might have saved himself a lot of trouble if he had questioned Hume's assertion that perception as such does not involve reasoning but is "a mere passive admission of the impressions thro' the organs of sensation", a process in which the mind cannot take us beyond what is immediately present to the senses, "either to discover

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[1] See, e.g., Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature I.II.6 (1978 Second Edition), pp. 67f.: "Now since nothing is ever present to the mind but perceptions, and since all ideas are derive'd from something antecedently present to the mind; it follows, that 'tis impossible for us so much as to conceive or form an idea of any thing specifically different from ideas and impressions. Let us fix our attention out of ourselves as much as possible: Let us chace our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe; we never really advance a step beyond ourselves, nor can conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appeared in that narrow compass. This is the universe of the imagination, nor have we any idea but what is there produc'd. The farthest we can go towards a conception of external objects, when suppos'd specifically different from our perceptions, is to form a relative idea of them, without pretending to comprehend the related objects."

the real existence or the relations of objects".[1] Hume fails to see recognition, or connectedness, in perception. This is the empiricist version of Descartes' ego-imprisonment. Kant's entire critical system is an effort to escape from it by establishing (synthetic) a priori grounds for knowledge, yet the effort, though formidable, is misconceived because the basic assumption of the sceptical position that Kant is fighting goes uncriticized. "The error," E. L. Mascall suggests, "was...the simple identification of perception with sensation or, more precisely, the assumption that the sense-datum...is not merely the objectum quo, the medium or instrument, of the act of perception, but is its terminus, its objectum quod. On this assumption, any knowledge of external reality that was held to result from our perceptive experience could be due only to assumption, speculation, or deduction, all of which are in their different ways highly unreliable."[2]

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[1] Ibid., I.III.2, p. 73.

[2] Mascall (1980), p. 11.

V.6

Whitehead's doctrine of perception: "Presentational Immediacy".

It is A. N. Whitehead who has brought the decisive philosophical criticism against this assumption shared by Hume and Kant. He introduces his critique of the empiricist doctrine of perception in the course of constructing his own epistemological theory, which, with Ian Barbour, we may call "critical realism".[1] He argues that there are two closely connected but distinct modes of direct perception of the external world: "Presentational Immediacy" and "Causal Efficacy".[2] The former has to do specifically with sense-perception, as an element constitutive of our experience. Whitehead's main point in this connection is that the world, in its appearance, "discloses itself to be a community of actual things, which are actual in the same sense as we are."[3] Perception involves organic association of symbols and meanings, sense-data and significations. Such a system of "symbolic reference" requires "a ground founded on some community between the natures of symbol and meaning....Thus, for the percipient at least, the perception is an internal relationship between itself and the things

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[1] Barbour (1971), pp. 128-131; 162-174; and chs. 10, 11.

[2] For this discussion, see Whitehead (1927), chs. 1 and 2; and (1946), esp. chs. 3 and 4.

[3] Whitehead (1927), p. 21.

perceived."[1] But, although "the total activity involved in the perception of the symbolic reference must be referred to the percipient,"[2] this does not mean, as it would in Kantian epistemology, that the symbolic reference, as something intelligible, is the product only of the percipient's synthesizing "unity of apperception". An object, says Whitehead, "contributes itself" to our experience, under the threefold combination of spatial extension, spatial perspective, and sense-data, e.g., colour, sound, odour.[3] When we see a blue wall, for example, we do not see mere "impressions": we see the extensiveness and colour of this wall.

> Thus the colour and the spatial perspective are abstract elements, characterizing the concrete way in which the wall enters into our experience. They are therefore relational elements between the 'percipient at that moment', and that other equally actual entity, or set of entities, which we call the 'wall at that moment'. But the mere colour and the mere spatial perspective are very abstract entities, because they are only arrived at by discarding the concrete relationship between the wall-at-that-moment and the percipient-at-that-moment.[4]

It is precisely here, as we have suggested, that the empiricists make a major mistake: they take these abstract entities for the objectum quod of perception, turning the percipient mind into a mere passive screen and the source of the

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[1] Ibid., pp. 8, 9.

[2] Ibid., p. 9.

[3] Ibid., p. 15.

[4] Ibid., pp. 15f.

data into something unknowable. Altogether lost in the process is the organic and active relation between subject and object. In Whitehead's formulation, the world's self-disclosure as a community of actual things

> is effected by the mediation of qualities, such as colours, sounds, tastes, etc., which can with equal truth be described as our sensations or as the qualities of the actual things which we perceive. These qualities are thus relational between the perceiving subject and the perceived things. They can be thus isolated only by abstracting them from their implication in the scheme of spatial relatedness of the perceived things to each other and to the perceiving subject.[1]

In Whitehead's metaphysics, entities are not to be understood in isolation, as passive actual substances with private qualities; rather, "...every actual thing is something by reason of its activity; whereby its nature consists in its relevance to other things, and its individuality consists in its synthesis of other things so far as they are relevant to it."[2] An actual thing is to be envisaged at two levels at once: formally, as existing in the unity of its own total "experience" in space and time; and objectively, as exemplifying at every spatial-temporal occasion only some elements in its formal content. A thing's "objectification"--which is itself a kind of abstraction from its formal unity, though not in the manner of the empiricists or of

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[1] Ibid., pp. 21f.

[2] Ibid., p. 26. We wish to point out here the obvious confirmatory bearing of Whitehead's analysis on our own overall argument and in particular on our earlier analysis of the imago Dei in relational (personal) rather than in qualitative (rational) terms.

the transcendental idealists--is that by which it is always connected to other things, a component of their experience as each of them is of its own. Whitehead's conception of the world is as an interplay of functional activity, in which every concrete individual thing is essentially and dynamically related to every other.

Whitehead's doctrine of perception: "Causal Efficacy".

"Causal Efficacy" is Whitehead's second mode of direct perception of the external world, and it is here that his criticism of Hume and Kant becomes explicit. Hume, he says, takes presentational immediacy to be the only type of perceptive experience, and also denies that it includes any demonstrative factors disclosing a contemporary world of extended actual things.[1] We have already seen one kind of distorting abstraction involved in these assumptions; Whitehead now goes on to identify another false premise on which they rest. It derives from the mechanistic Seventeenth Century understanding of matter as having the property of what he calls simple location.[2] Temporal transition does not affect it and has nothing to do with its character, since a division of time does not cause a division of material. Lapses of time are therefore accidental to it, not

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[1] Ibid., p. 34.

[2] See Whitehead (1946), pp. 62ff.

essential. Nature may accordingly be understood as a succession of instantaneous configurations of matter; the notions of temporal connectedness and of process are absent. In this spatialization of nature we are dealing once again with an abstraction, which Whitehead labels the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness". Its anti-rationalism, notoriously demonstrated by Hume, poses profound problems for induction:

> For, if in the location of configurations of matter throughout a stretch of time there is no inherent reference to any other times, past or future, it immediately follows that nature within any period does not refer to nature at any other period. Accordingly, induction is not based on anything which can be observed as inherent in nature. Thus we cannot look to nature for the justification of our belief in any law such as the law of gravitation. In other words, the order of nature cannot be justified by the mere observation of nature. For there is nothing in the present fact which inherently refers either to the past or to the future. It looks, therefore, as though memory, as well as induction, would fail to find any justification within nature itself.[1]

The materialistic concept of nature underlying this fallacy is neither entirely wrong nor sterile, Whitehead observes.[2] In its proper place, as a methodology in physical science, it has proved very fruitful, as has, we would ourselves insist, the closely related abstracting attitude towards perception that derives from Cartesian dualist metaphysics and Lockean empiricism, whereby bodies are analyzed essentially in mathematical and hence "objective" terms, and the "qualities"

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[1] Ibid., pp. 64f.

[2] Ibid., p. 72.

perceived in them, such as smell or colour, are considered not to belong to them in reality but to be accidental and "subjective", purely the offspring of the mind. In both cases, however, the scientific fruitfulness has been gained at the cost of a coherent and rational overall vision of human life. The methodology has been extended to become a metaphysic and a dogma.[1] Ranges of experience have been overlooked or depreciated as lacking cognitive status. The reductionist distortions introduced by mistaking abstract logical constructions for concrete facts have had grave philosophical, existential, and social consequences, most notably, as we are presently arguing, the epistemological gulf between subject and object and the dichotomy it has resulted in between "fact" and "value". Hume's error here, so important to these developments, was his failure to see that, as Whitehead expresses it, "succession is not pure succession: it is the derivative of state from state, with the later state exhibiting conformity to the antecedent."[2] The mechanistic concept of simple location abstracts from the flow of space-time, as if reality consisted in and could be understood as a series of isolable and self-contained instances. One may legitimately and usefully stop a motion picture and analyze its frames one by one, with certain purposes in mind; but such a procedure could not possibly tell us about the nature of the motion picture as a

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[1] Cf. ibid., pp. 22ff; and Whitehead (1929, Beacon Paperback Edition 1958), p. 27.

[2] Whitehead (1927), p. 35.

whole, nor could it disclose the meaning of each frame, since such meaning could only be derived from knowing the frame's relational place in the sequence. It was Hume's mistake, because of his faulty presupposition, to infer from his atomistic analysis that induction was the result of habitual association and that "wholes" and "meanings" and finally the outside world itself and even the "knower", could really not be known at all; it was Kant's mistake, following from the same presupposition, to maintain that the frames had no inherant knowable meaning but received causal efficacy from the observer-subject's imposed a priori judgments according to fixed categories of thought. But pure succession, writes Whitehead,

> is an abstraction from the irreversible relationship of settled past to derivative present. The notion of pure succession is analogous to the notion of colour. There is no mere colour, but always some particular colour such as red or blue: analogously there is no pure succession, but always some particular relational ground in respect to which the terms succeed each other.[1]

Relationality of all elements in space and time.

There is nothing that "simply happens", just as there is no "simple location";[2] moments--and perceptions--are not isolable units, except for the specific and limited purposes of scientific analysis. Causality is not merely a "way of thinking" about

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 38.

phenomena, based either on habit (Hume) or on categories (Kant). The character of space and time is not just separative, it is also "prehensive", that is, things are <u>together</u> in space and in time, even if they are not contemporaneous.[1]

We wish strongly to emphasize here, with Whitehead, that this relationality of elements in space and in time, which obviously includes the epistemological relationality of knower and world, is <u>primary</u> and <u>essential</u> to the nature of reality. Concerning space, Whitehead writes:

> Accordingly, the prime fact is the prehensive unity of volume, and this unity is mitigated or limited by the separated unities of the innumerable contained parts. We have a prehensive unity, which is yet held apart as an aggregate of contained parts. But the prehensive unity of the volume is not the unity of a mere logical aggregate of parts. The parts form an ordered aggregate, in the sense that each part is something from the standpoint of every other part, and also from the same standpoint every other part, is something in relation to it. Thus if A and B and C are volumes of space, B has an aspect from the standpoint of A, and so has C, and so has the relationship of B and C. This aspect of B from A is of the essence of A. The volumes of space have no independent existence. They are only entities as within the totality; you cannot extract them from their environment without destruction of their very essence. Accordingly, I will say that the aspect of B from A is the <u>mode</u> in which B enters into the composition of A.[2]

What Whitehead says about the prehensive unity of elements in space, he says likewise with respect to moments in time, in terms of the principle of "conformation":

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[1] Whitehead (1946), p. 80.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 81.

> The perception of conformation to the realities in the environment is the primitive element in our external experience. We conform to our bodily organs and to the vague world which lies beyond them. Our primitive perception is that of 'conformation' vaguely, and of the yet vaguer relata 'oneself' and 'another' in the undiscriminated background.[1]

This "conformation", especially obvious and "heavy" at the level of low-grade organisms, is causally operative at higher levels as well; it effectively undermines the Humean and Kantian presupposition of perception as the mere succession of sense-data, either causally unconnected or else causally connectable solely by the cognating activity of the subject. Common emotions such as fear, anger, attraction, and pleasure are intertwined with the primitive functioning of "retreat from" and "expansion towards":

> But 'retreat from' and 'expansion towards', divested of any detailed spatial discrimination, are merely reactions to the way externality is impressing on us its own character. You cannot retreat from mere subjectivity; for subjectivity is what we carry with us....These primitive emotions are accompanied by the clearest recognition of other actual things reacting upon ourselves.[2]

The principle of conformation means that what is already made becomes a determinant of what is in the making, and that what is in the making is a determinant of the immediate future.

> In practice we never doubt the fact of the conformation of the present to the immediate past. It belongs to

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[1] Whitehead (1927), p. 43.

[2] Ibid., p. 45.

> the ultimate texture of experience, with the same evidence as does presentational immediacy.[1]

Isolation of perception as "presentational immediacy", in the manner of the empiricists, leads inevitably to a sense of the meaninglessness of experience, what we might call a kind of existential pointillism. Nothing is connected to anything else; and nothing is going anywhere. Scepticism denies both efficient and final causation, and lands us in a situation of utter irrationality. But, as Whitehead observes, Hume himself tacitly presupposes the very causal efficacy he denies, since he does not question that perceived sense-data are "given" by reason of eyes, ears, and palates functioning in causal efficacy.[2] Thus not only is Hume's explicit presupposition about perception false to experience, but it is actually undermined by his own implicit presupposition. Here Whitehead executes a sort of pincer movement on Hume's position:

> Causal efficacy is the hand of the settled past in the formation of the present. The sense-data must therefore play a double role in perception. In the mode of presentational immediacy they are projected to exhibit the contemporary world in its spatial relations. In the mode of causal efficacy they exhibit the almost instantaneously precedent bodily organs as imposing their characters on the experience in question. We see the picture, and we see it with our eyes; we touch the wood, and we touch it with our hands....For the case of bodily feelings, the two locations are identical.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 46; cf. p. 42.

[2] See ibid., pp. 50f.; cf. Hume (1978), I.I.6.

[3] Ibid., p. 50.

Sense-data received in an act of experience demonstrate that they are given by the causal efficacy of actual bodily organs. It is the environment, which includes the bodily organs, that is primitive; the sense-data are derivative. "For example," writes Whitehead,

> in the case of hearing sound the physical waves have entered the ears, and the agitations of the nerves have excited the brain. The sound is then heard as coming from a certain region in the external world. Thus perception in the mode of causal efficacy discloses that the data in the mode of sense-perception are provided by it. This is the reason why there are such given elements....These sense-data can be conceived as constituting the character of a many-termed relationship between the organisms of the past environment and those of the contemporary world.[1]

Whitehead's analysis is made within the context of a Twentieth Century understanding of space-time in terms of relativity and developmental process. As Newtonian mechanics no longer provide the most comprehensive picture and physical explanation of the operations of nature, so the epistemologies of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century philosophers, founded on methodological doubt, sceptical presuppositions, and abstractive notions of perception, are no longer able to furnish us with an adequate theory of knowledge. Man and the material world cannot be prised apart; soul and body cannot be understood separately from each other; space and time are intertwined; past, present, and future constitute an indivisible continuum in which we are altogether immersed. What Whitehead speaks of as "the bonds of

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[1] Ibid., pp. 52f.

causal efficacy [that] arise from without us" and "the bonds of presentational immediacy [that] arise from within us",[1] are indissociable. There is an "intersection" of the two modes of perception. "The symbols," he insists, "do not create their meaning: the meaning, in the form of actual effective beings reacting upon us, exists for us in its own right. But the symbols discover this meaning for us."[2] Sense-data are not mere impressions suspended in our instantaneous vision. Our active perceptive functioning gives rise to them, and this functioning is conditioned by our own natures. Whitehead concludes decisively: "But our natures must conform to the causal efficacy. Thus the causal efficacy <u>from</u> the past is at least one factor giving our presentational immediacy <u>in</u> the present. The <u>how</u> of our present experience must conform to the <u>what</u> of the past in us."[3] Such an understanding of reality and of our cognitive relation to it makes otiose the whole question of "reality-as-it-is-in-itself". The Cartesian and also the Humean dilemmas, along with the Kantian response, show themselves, as far as their conceptualization is concerned, to be as out of date as the Scholastic problem of substantial forms. If it is true to say, with the Christian tradition, that ego-centred man is in some sense in a prison and alienated from the world around him, this

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 58.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 57.

[3] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 58.

prison is not a cognitive one, as the tradition of subject-centred epistemology has supposed. Knowledge of the environment as it really is is not something elusive, to establish the possibility of which complicated philosophical doctrines and devices are required; rather is it given directly to rational man and open to theoretical and experimental extension, in virtue of the Creator God's determination of Adam as essentially related to nature and destined to exercise dominion over it.

V.7

Polanyi's theory of knowledge: "tacit" and "focal" comprehension.

It is of considerable significance that Michael Polanyi, whose chief concern was the establishment of an epistemology adequate to account for the real achievements of science,[1] should have concentrated his labours on the question of personal knowledge. Such knowledge he calls "tacit"; it is rooted in the body, which is the ultimate instrument of all our thought,[2] and its range extends from perception to scientific discovery and even to the knowledge of other minds; it involves "indwelling", personal commitment, and judgment. He writes:

> We must conclude that the paradigmatic case of scientific knowledge...is the knowledge of an approaching discovery. To hold such knowledge is an

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[1] Cf. Pols, in eds. Langford and Poteat (1968), p. 63.

[2] Polanyi (1966, Anchor Books Edition 1967), p. 15; (1959), p. 44; (1958), p. 60.

> act deeply committed to the conviction that there is something there to be discovered. It is personal, in the sense of involving the personality of him who holds it, and also in the sense of being, as a rule, solitary; but there is no trace in it of self-indulgence. The discoverer is filled with a compelling sense of responsibility for the pursuit of a hidden truth, which demands his services for revealing it. His act of knowing exercises a personal judgment in relating evidence to an external reality, an aspect of which he is seeking to apprehend.[1]

Polanyi holds that the advancement of science consists "in discerning Gestalten that are aspects of reality",[2] and that this process has the same structure as our ordinary perception. Indeed, he claims that the powers of integration that determine these acts of knowledge have the same structure as all other acts of knowledge, such as the learning of skills, the recognition of physiognomies and patterns, the use of tools, the uttering of speech, and the formation of class concepts.[3] While using the findings of Gestalt psychology, he differs from it by insisting on the "active shaping of experience performed in the pursuit of knowledge".[4] Gestalt psychologists rightly saw, says Polanyi, that the process of knowing involves a grasping of disjointed parts into a comprehensive whole; but they took this to be a spontaneous and passive equilibration by the brain of the particulars impressed upon it, rather than the product of the

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[1] Polanyi (1967), pp. 24f.

[2] Polanyi (1946, reissued 1964), p. 11.

[3] Polanyi, in eds. Langford and Poteat (1968), pp. 167, 170; cf. (1967), p. 6.

[4] Polanyi (1967), p. 6.

knower's personal action through the operation of his tacit powers.[1] Sensory perception itself requires effort and is not automatic; sense-data are given, but seeing objects, for example, must be learned.[2] It is on the basis of this insight that Polanyi extends tacit knowing far beyond the rudimentary level of sheer perception:

> Such an effort is a process of tacit integration by which the object is recognized as the meaning of the sense data which constitute its appearance. It is not a process of explicit inference, and hence the question of the ways in which such inference can be conducted does not arise. The same is true for the insoluble question of the way in which the existence of other minds is inferred. It does not arise: for we know other minds, not by explicit inference, but by a tacit process of integration.[3]

Polanyi's theory of knowledge is based primarily on his analysis of comprehension.[4] Comprehension involves two kinds of knowing: subsidiary, or tacit, and focal. This structure of

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[1] Ibid. Cf. Polanyi (1959), pp. 28f; and (1958), pp. 96ff. Polanyi argues that the reason for this limitation in Gestalt psychology is its application to the mental powers of comprehension, of a biological model based ultimately on a mechanical explanation of living functions in terms of physics and chemistry. That biological regulations and perceptual shaping are akin to each other, he does not deny; but he believes that both embody principles not manifest in the realm of inanimate nature. This view is the basis of his stratified understanding of comprehensive entities, of which each succeeding higher one operates according to principles not discoverable in the one or ones beneath it. See (1967), ch. 2; (1959), ch. 2; (1958), Pt. 4.

[2] Polanyi (1958), p. 98; (1968, eds. Langford and Poteat), pp. 169f.

[3] Polanyi (1968, in eds. Langford and Poteat), p. 170.

[4] See esp. (1967), ch. 1; (1959), ch. 1; (1958), chs. 1-6.

knowing may also be expressed in terms of parts and wholes. We attend from particulars, which we know subsidiarily, to wholes, or comprehensive entities, which we know focally. The functional relation between the two components of tacit knowing consists in our knowing the first (subsidiary) only by relying on our awareness of it for attending to the second (focal).[1] "We may say," he writes,

> that when we comprehend a particular set of items as parts of a whole, the focus of our attention is shifted from the hitherto uncomprehended particulars to the understanding of their joint meaning. This shift of attention does not make us lose sight of the particulars, since one can see a whole only by seeing its parts, but it changes altogether the manner in which we are aware of the particulars. We become aware of them now in terms of the whole on which we have fixed our attention.[2] (Author's italics)

Polanyi offers many examples, among them our performance of a skill and our recognition of a physiognomy, where our tacit knowledge, essential for the act of knowing, is far more than we could possibly make explicit. Indeed, even explicit or articulate forms of knowledge, such as words, graphs, maps, and symbols in general, contain a necessary component of tacit, hence personal, knowledge, and are not statable in propositions that may be neutrally transferred from one mind to another. Such symbolic objects, even logistic systems, "are never objects of our attention in themselves, but pointers towards the things they

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[1] Polanyi (1967), p. 10.

[2] Polanyi (1959), pp. 29f.

mean."[1] A text, for instance, or a mathematical proof, becomes unintelligible as such, that is, as a rational symbolic structure, the moment we shift our focus from its meaning to its particulars. Hence Polanyi considers to be self-defeating "the striving to remove any occasion for the exercise of personal judgment by a strict formalization of the deductive sciences..."[2] Moreover, no such axiomatization, however useful attempts of this kind may be in the pursuit of greater generality and rigour in the deductive sciences, has ever supplied or could ever supply "a formalized organon for the process of future discovery".[3] The production of knowledge through discovery is man's greatest achievement, and at every level of mentality such production, and the comprehension of it by others, is fundamentally dependent on the tacit powers of the mind.

Knowledge as "personal", transcending the subjective-objective disjunction.

Polanyi is a persuasive opponent of all forms of positivism. Symbolic articulations in a given field of knowledge do not arise through some imaginary impersonal conjunction of elements, nor are they comprehensible apart from the recipient's tacit

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[1] Ibid., p. 30.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 191.

contribution of his own. "Maps, graphs, books, formulae, etc.," he writes,

> offer wonderful opportunities for reorganizing our knowledge from ever new points of view. And this reorganization is itself, as a rule, a tacit performance, similar to that by which we gain intellectual control over our surroundings at the pre-verbal level, and akin therefore also to the process of creative reorganization by which new discoveries are made.
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> So we can explain after all the tremendous intellectual advantage of articulation, without in the least derogating from the supremacy of man's tacit powers....Our whole articulate equipment turns out to be merely a tool-box, a supremely effective instrument for deploying our inarticulate faculties. And we need not hesitate then to conclude that the tacit personal co-efficient of knowledge predominates also in the domain of explicit knowledge and represents therefore at all levels man's ultimate faculty for acquiring and holding knowledge.[1]

The production of explicit knowledge, which presupposes and relies upon extensive tacit knowledge, is only carried out by intending and meaning <u>persons</u>, and only understood by comprehending ones. Nothing is known if we do not know its meaning; and we can only know its meaning as we attend <u>from</u> our own personal tacit knowledge of the "proximal" parts <u>to</u> the "distal" entity that they constitute.[2] "This view," declares Polanyi,

> entails a decisive change in our ideal of knowledge. The participation of the knower in shaping his knowledge, which had hitherto been tolerated only as a flaw--a shortcoming to be eliminated from perfect knowledge--is now recognized as the true guide and master of our cognitive powers....The ideal of a

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[1] Polanyi (1959), pp. 24f.

[2] Polanyi (1967), pp. 10ff.

> knowledge embodied in strictly impersonal statements now appears self-contradictory, meaningless, a fit subject for ridicule. We must learn to accept as our ideal a knowledge that is manifestly personal.[1]

Polanyi's theory of knowledge is realist in that it does not question the knowable existence of objects outside the knower; but it is centred on the knower in that it refuses to credit the possibility of abstract or impersonal knowledge. Against subjectivism, he could agree, in a sense, with Whitehead that we know away from and beyond our own personality;[2] but he would hasten to add that this act of knowing by going out from the self involves by definition a personal indwelling of the object beyond the self, as well as a personal commitment. It is his conception of the personal that, above all else, distinguishes Polanyi's epistemology from Whitehead's and also takes him quite outside the sphere of any form of philosophical idealism:

> ...I think we may distinguish between the personal in us, which actively enters into our commitments, and our subjective states, in which we merely endure our feelings. This distinction establishes the conception of the personal, which is neither subjective nor objective. In so far as the personal submits to requirements acknowledged by itself as independent of itself, it is not subjective; but in so far as it is an

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[1] Polanyi (1959), pp. 26f. The ideal of impersonal scientific knowledge, Polanyi argues elsewhere (1958, p. 169), is an illusion actually made possible only by "the ubiquitous tacit coefficient by which alone we can apply any articulate terms to a subject matter described by them." A scientist can accept an inadequate formulation of his own scientific principles without realizing what is being said, "because he automatically supplements it by his tacit knowledge of what science really is, and thus makes the formulation ring true."

[2] Whitehead (1946), p. 110.

> action guided by individual passions, it is not objective either. It transcends the disjunction between subjective and objective.[1]

The bodily roots of knowledge.

The basis for Polanyi's conception of the personal is his assertion of the bodily roots of all knowledge. Our body, he argues,

> is the only collection of things which we know almost exclusively by relying on our awareness of them for attending to something else. Hence, the unique position of our body in the universe.
>
> But hence also our capacity for assimilating to ourselves things outside, by relying on our awareness of them for attending to something else. When we use a tool or a probe and, above all, when we use language in speech, reading, or writing, we extend our bodily equipment and become more effective and more intelligent beings.

The tacit knowing involved in this, he goes on,

> now appears as an act of <u>indwelling</u> by which we gain access to a new meaning. When exercising a skill we literally dwell in the innumerable muscular acts which contribute to its purpose, a purpose which constitutes their joint meaning. Therefore, since all understanding is tacit knowing, all understanding is achieved by indwelling.[2]

Having established this, he then refers to Dilthey's anti-positivist theory of historical knowledge, which sharply distinguished historiographical from natural science on the basis of the historian's empathetic subjective participation in the object of his research, as contrasted with the natural

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[1] Polanyi (1958), p. 300.

[2] Polanyi (1968, in eds. Langford and Poteat), pp. 159f.

scientist's alleged objectivity. While applauding the insight of this philosophical school, Polanyi maintains that its practitioners "were mistaken in distinguishing indwelling from observation as practised by the natural sciences. The difference is only a matter of degree: indwelling is less deep when observing a star than when understanding men or works of art." And he concludes his remarks with this formidable assertion:

> The theory of tacit knowing establishes a continuous transition from the natural sciences to the study of the humanities. It bridges the gap between the 'I-It' and the 'I-Thou', by rooting them both in the subject's 'I-Me' awareness of his own body, which represents the highest degree of indwelling.[1]

The indwelling of particulars and the tacit power of integration into meaningful wholes.

We can know a thing only from and through our own body, by making sense of bodily experienced clues or particulars to which we are not attending at the moment but on the tacit awareness of which we rely for attending to something else. Tools, probes, and instruments become extensions of our bodies, and, as with the body itself, they appear to us in terms of the entities beyond them on which we are focusing. Similarly, the meaning of words or of theories, which one might call symbolic instruments, is found in the things they designate. Visual perception itself is "another instance of relying on a wide variety of clues, some inside, some outside our body, for attending to their joint

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[1] Ibid., p. 160; cf. (1967), pp. 16f.

meaning which in this case appears to us in terms of the shape, colours, size, position, and other visible features of an object."[1] Polanyi is not attempting to show how sensory experiences or any other states of consciousness arise from neural processes; he insists only on the fact that whenever we have such conscious experiences, "we also have the power of integrating them meaningfully".[2] It is by this tacit power that we are able to have knowledge. We indwell the particulars of a thing, and this indwelling entails an integration of these parts as we attend to the coherent whole that they constitute. This integration Polanyi calls an interiorization, a term, as he writes, that "brings home to us that it is not by looking at things, but by dwelling in them, that we understand their joint meaning."[3]

Being a scientist, Polanyi is certainly not against the analysis of wholes and the specification of particulars. But he strongly opposes the view that only this kind of procedure can tell us what an object really is. He considers it mistaken to believe that, since particulars are more tangible, knowledge of them offers a true conception of things.[4] Intentional analysis of an entity, followed by tacit or explicit reintegration of the

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[1] Ibid., pp. 161f.

[2] Ibid., pp. 162f.

[3] Polanyi (1967), p. 18.

[4] Ibid., p. 19.

components, will lead to a deeper understanding of the entity, but it can never replace tacit knowledge. Indeed, it necessarily presupposes such knowledge. Polanyi gives as an example the mathematical theory of a frog, of which "the meaning...lies in its continued bearing on this still tacitly known frog."[1] Such a theory can be constructed, he argues, "only by relying on prior tacit knowing and can function as a theory only within an act of tacit knowing, which consists in our attending from it to the previously established experience on which it bears."[2] Once again we come round to the key point that the objectivist ideal of eliminating all tacit, or personal, knowing, is self-contradictory.

Polanyi looks upon all knowledge as of the same kind as the knowledge of a problem.[3] "For to see a problem," he writes, "is to see something that is hidden. It is to have an intimation of the coherence of hitherto not comprehended particularities."[4] As we noted earlier, the scientist working towards the discovery of a solution to a problem is not doing anything essentially different from what he does in normal perception. Polanyi uses this insight to claim a solution to the problem posed by Plato in the Meno: either you know what you are looking for, and then

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[1] Ibid., pp. 20f.

[2] Ibid., p. 21; cf. (1968, eds. Langford and Poteat), p. 169.

[3] Ibid., p. 24.

[4] Ibid., p. 21.

there is no problem; or you do not know what you are looking for, and then you cannot expect to find anything.[1] The solution is not, as Plato suggested, that discovery is in fact a remembering of past lives; it consists rather in the intimation of something hidden, which we may yet discover, just as perception consists in the apprehension of something out there, which we can know. Our tacit knowledge in visual perception, which enables us to make immediate and meaningful contact with the world around us, is <u>like</u> what Polanyi calls our "tacit foreknowledge of yet undiscovered things".[2] In pursuing a discovery, he contends,

> we are guided by sensing the presence of a hidden reality toward which our clues are pointing; and the discovery which terminates and satisfies this pursuit is still sustained by the same vision. It claims to have made contact with reality: a reality which, being real, may yet reveal itself to future eyes in an indefinite range of unexpected manifestations.[3]

Relevance of Polanyi's concepts of "indwelling" and "commitment" to our own theological theory of knowledge.

The importance of these insights for our own argument is obvious and bears especially on what we have suggested about a similarity of structure between our knowing of God and our knowing of created reality. If the infinite and personal God revealed in Jesus Christ is Creator of the orderly universe and

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 22.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 23.

[3] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 24.

has made man in his image and given him a task with respect to the rest of creation, then it is to be expected that the special relationship of man with God, involving mutual knowledge in the full personal sense of shared self-giving, receiving, and spiritual communion, will have an extension or at least some kind of equivalent in the relationship of man with his fellows and with the material world. Created reality, as God's work, is coherent, and all the creatures that make it up are bound together in virtue of their single origin in God's will. Human reason is effective as an instrument for the acquisition of knowledge of the rest of creation, from electrons to fellow-persons, because the Creator, intending this to be the case, has fashioned man as he fashioned the other creatures, from the same primordial "dust". This means that a vast range of instinctive, intuitive, tacit knowing, expressing fundamental, pre-cognitive, and active connectedness with created reality in space and time, is structured into the very constitution of rational persons and provides the basis and possibility and also the pattern of the cognition that is necessary for human beings to carry out their God-given task of exercising lordship over nature. Polanyi's epistemological investigation, going beyond Whitehead's into the realm of the personal, furnishes a philosophical analysis that corresponds to the theological picture we are sketching.

Furthermore, if only persons can have knowledge; and if persons can have knowledge only in terms of the whole body-soul entity that each person constitutes, that is, if they can have

only personal knowledge; and if knowledge involves a going out from the self into the other-than-self and a receiving into the self of the other-than-self, then we shall not be surprised to find that what Polanyi calls "commitment" is an integral part of every act of knowing, whether it be directed towards God (in response to revelation), man, or material objects. For Polanyi's thought, indwelling and commitment are correlative aspects of knowing. We need to look more closely at both of them.

To know is to make contact with reality; and to make contact with reality is to discover what is there, as given. Such contact and discovery always involve at once an indwelling of the constituent elements present and a commitment to the whole to be known, whether this be at the rudimentary perceptual level, at the higher level of intellectual inquiry, at the next higher level of communion between human persons, or (as we would wish to add) at the highest level of all, that of communion between man and God. Indwelling and commitment are both personal activities, indeterminate and irreducible to a system of objective rules. Polanyi argues, as we have seen, that the basis for all knowledge is our bodily indwelling of our surroundings. "Our body," he writes, "is always in use as the basic instrument of our intellectual and practical control over our surroundings. Hence in all our waking hours we are subsidiarily aware of our body within our focal knowledge of our surroundings."[1] Our mind

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[1] Polanyi (1959), p. 31.

dwells subsidiarily within our body, providing the tacit knowledge necessary to all cognitive activities. For this reason Polanyi is able to claim that "all kinds of rational knowing involve an existential participation of the knower in the subsidiary particulars known by him as their joint meaning or purpose."[1] What is true for our knowledge of, say, concrete objects or skills is also true for our knowledge of other minds. "We know a face," he writes, "without being able to tell, except quite vaguely, by what particulars we recognize it. And this is also how the mind of man is known. A man's mind can be known only comprehensively, by dwelling within the unspecifiable particulars of its external manifestations."[2] (Author's italics) In order to comprehend another mind, we dwell within these external manifestations; but these manifestations, Polanyi goes on to say, are also that mind's own dwelling place:

> They are the bodily actions of the person whose mind we are observing, actions of which he himself is subsidiarily aware in terms of the intellectual control he exercises over his surroundings. Indeed, we ourselves, facing the person in question, may be what he just now comprehends. He and I may be mutually comprehending each other, by dwelling within one another's external mental manifestations.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 32.

[2] Ibid., p. 33.

[3] Ibid. pp. 33f.

The way of knowing God as structurally paradigmatic of the way of knowing created reality.

Polanyi achieves here what he calls "a continuous transition from the personal knowing of things to the personal meeting and intercourse between equal minds."[1] His analysis reinforces our contention that the way of knowing God, through mutual indwelling by the Spirit on the basis of commitment, is structurally paradigmatic of the way of knowing other creatures, from atomic particles to human persons. God, too, dwells in his manifestations, which are his self-revelation in the incarnate Son and in the Holy Spirit operating charismatically in the Body of Christ (cf. I Cor. 12:7). The Spirit indwells the Church (as, under the Old Covenant, he indwelt the Temple, now replaced by Christ and his Bride), both the corporate Body and its individual members (cf. Jn. 14:17; 17:21, 23; I Cor. 3:16; 6:19); and Christians indwell Christ, by his Spirit and in the Church, his Body. Knowledge of God is given us <u>through</u> these external manifestations and not otherwise. In this sense we may speak of the <u>physicality</u> of our knowledge of God and find in it the ultimate model of our knowledge of created reality, due allowance being made for the fundamental distinction between <u>revelation</u>, providing knowledge of God (and, in the creaturely context, of human persons) and <u>discovery</u>, providing knowledge of created material reality. Polanyi's "continuous transition from the

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 34.

personal knowing of things to the personal meeting and intercourse between equal minds" may thus be extended, we would argue, to the personal knowing of God, except that in our case we are inverting Polanyi's analysis methodologically by showing that the possibility of human knowing of created things and persons is rooted in the ontological reality of man as a creature made in God's image, whereby on the one hand he is by nature in relation to the Triune God and may know him personally through Jesus Christ in the Spirit, and on the other hand he is by nature in relation to created reality and called by his Creator to exercise dominion over it through knowledge. In all instances, true knowledge involves <u>love</u> in various degrees and forms, in the sense of the expression of <u>personal</u> relation between knower and known, consisting simultaneously in the knower's <u>going out from himself</u> towards the known and indwelling him/it, and in his <u>receiving</u> the given reality of the known <u>into himself</u>.

Commitment and the distinction between the "personal" and the "subjective".

The same applies to the other aspect of knowing, i.e., commitment. In this connection Polanyi is at pains to distinguish between the personal and the subjective. We noted this distinction earlier, but we shall do well to consider it again:

> ...commitment is a personal choice, seeking, and eventually accepting, something believed (both by the person incurring the commitment and the writer

> describing it) to be impersonally given, while the subjective is altogether in the nature of a condition to which the person in question is subject.
>
> We observe here a mutual correlation between the personal and the universal within the commitment situation. The scientist pursuing an enquiry ascribes impersonal status to his standards and his claims, because he regards them as impersonally established by science. But his submission to scientific standards for the appraisal and guidance of his efforts is the only sense in which these standards can be said to pre-exist, or even to exist at all, for him. No one can know universal intellectual standards except by acknowledging their jurisdiction over himself as part of the terms on which he holds himself responsible for the pursuit of his mental efforts.[1]

The knower's acknowledgement of the jurisdiction of universal standards over himself is a personal act and cannot be otherwise. "The fiduciary passions which induce a confident utterance about the facts are personal," Polanyi declares emphatically, "because they submit to the facts as universally valid, but when we reflect on this act non-committally its passion is reduced to subjectivity."[2] (Author's italics) This contention radically subverts the traditional aim of epistemology to define truth and falsity in impersonal terms. At the same time, it avoids the muddle of scepticism and of philosophical idealism by assuming that the truth to be discovered exists by itself, independently of us, hidden only by misguided or inadequate approaches to it. Polanyi's theory of knowledge affirms both the existence of truth-reality outside of our own minds, and the falsity of objectivist pretentions. "According to the logic of commitment,"

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[1] Polanyi (1958), pp. 302f.

[2] Ibid., p. 303.

he writes, "truth is something that can be thought of only by believing it."[1] He argues, for example, that the utterance "p is true", can itself be true and a proper sentence only if the speaker presupposes the fiduciary component and mentally prefixes his utterance by "I believe that".[2] He insists that this position is not solipsistic, "since it is based on a belief in an external reality and implies the existence of other persons who can likewise approach the same reality."[3] The speaker is making a confident assertion about p, as a fact; but it is the speaker--this particular person--who is making the assertion. In the framework of commitment, as Polanyi develops it, the knower's personal judgment avoids subjectivity and mere randomness by being completely determined by his responsibility in respect to the situation confronting him:[4]

> Here the personal comes into existence by asserting universal intent, and the universal is constituted by being accepted as the impersonal term of this personal commitment....By trying to say something that is true about a reality believed to be existing independently of our knowing it, all assertions of fact necessarily carry universal intent. Our claim to speak of reality serves thus as the external anchoring of our commitment in making a factual statement....The enquiring scientist's intimations of a hidden reality are personal. They are his own beliefs, which--owing to his originality--as yet he alone holds. Yet they are not a subjective state of mind, but convictions held

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[1] Ibid., p. 305.

[2] Ibid.; cf. ibid., pp. 253ff.

[3] Ibid., p. 316.

[4] Ibid., p. 310.

> with universal intent, and heavy with arduous projects.[1]

Polanyi's theory of personal knowledge, with its rootedness in bodily reality and its correlative aspects of indwelling and commitment, constitutes a massive attack on any kind of dualist epistemology that would divorce man's power to know from his physical being-in-the-world. The Cartesian ideal of clear and certain knowledge to be obtained by an abstract thinking thing and expressed in objective mathematical terms is shown to be nonsense, as are all mechanistic epistemological theories, including behaviourism. We do not know objects by a process of explicit inference from sense data, nor do we know other minds by studying their particular workings; rather, we know objects and minds by a tacit process of integration, and any analysis of an object or of the workings of a mind presupposes a prior and unspecifiable comprehension of the object or the mind as a whole. Our knowledge of these comprehensive entities is located in the meaning of their particulars, not in the particulars themselves. We know a mind, for example, by relying on our subsidiary awareness of its workings--its external manifestations, such as gestures and facial and verbal expressions--for attending focally to their joint meaning.[2] Polanyi distinguishes, as we saw earlier, between two levels of knowing, which he calls

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[1] Ibid., pp. 308, 311.

[2] See (1959), p. 65; and (1968, in eds. Langford and Poteat), pp. 169ff.

respectively the proximal or subsidiary--concerned with particulars--and the distal or focal--concerned with comprehensive meaning. But he does not stop there. He goes on to discern an ontological counterpart to these two terms of tacit knowing, on the basis of which he develops a theory of the hierarchical structure of reality. It is with a short consideration of this theory that we shall close our chapter on epistemology.

Polanyi's theory of a stratified universe; the structural affinity of knowledge and reality.

Polanyi finds a correspondence "between the structure of comprehension and the structure of the comprehensive entity which is its object."[1] He argues that the comprehensive entity which is the object of knowledge comprises two levels of reality, the higher one relating to the entity as a whole and governed by certain operational principles, the lower one (which may itself comprise many sub-levels) relating to particulars of the entity and governed by certain laws or "rules of rightness". These levels are hierarchically ordered, and each is subject to the dual control of the laws governing its own elements and of the principles governing the whole. This insight leads Polanyi to the important conclusion that "the operations of a higher level cannot be accounted for by the laws governing its particulars

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[1] Polanyi (1967), pp. 33f. For this discussion, see (1967), ch. 2; (1959), ch. 2; and (1958), esp. chs. 11, 12.

forming the lower level."[1] He illustrates this theory first with the example of a machine and then extends it to animals and to man himself. Physics and chemistry, he affirms, cannot tell us what a particular machine is, that is, what purpose it serves and how it works or ought to work. The same holds for living organisms. This becomes more obvious as the complexity of the organism increases. Knowledge and meaning, as we noted above, are related to wholes, and any part will have meaning, and so be truly knowable, only as it is so related.[2]

> ...according to the theory of Personal Knowledge, all meaning lies in the comprehension of a set of particulars in terms of a coherent entity--a comprehension which is a personal act that can never be replaced by a formal operation.[3]

Such an act of comprehensive knowing must occur first and be the basis on which any subsequent investigations of particulars are to be conducted, if these are to be meaningful. It is on these grounds that Polanyi argues against the mechanistic conclusions of Cartesianism, by demonstrating that the Laplacean Universal Mind, with its mathematical knowledge of all future configurations of matter as extrapolated from a prior knowledge of the initial positions and velocities of all the atoms of the world at a moment of time and of all the forces acting between them, would lead to no useful knowledge with respect to any

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[1] Ibid., p. 36.

[2] Cf. (1958), pp. 56ff.

[3] Polanyi (1959), p. 49.

object or process, the meaning of which consisted in serving a purpose.[1] The knowledge of atomic data can tell us nothing about the operational principles of higher, more complex levels of reality. Within its own physico-chemical sphere, and in relation to the larger entity of which that sphere is a part, such knowledge is valuable; but in abstraction it is meaningless and without interest.

Polanyi's theory of a stratified universe shows that comprehensive entities consist in a peculiar logical combination of consecutive levels of reality. The lower levels, which obey the laws of inanimate nature, impose restrictions on the upper levels, and an investigation of the laws controlling them, while it cannot throw light on operational principles or explain the reasons for successive steps in an operation, can illuminate the physico-chemical conditions on which the higher levels rely and can disclose the material causes of a machine's or of an organism's failure. Thus the levels are dependently interconnected; nevertheless, the higher levels cannot be logically derived from or explained by the lower. Polanyi insists that the logical structure of the hierarchy "implies that a higher level can come into existence only through a process not manifest in the lower level, a process which thus qualifies as an emergence."[2] He thus generalizes his theory still more and

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[1] Cf. Polanyi (1958), pp. 139ff. and (1959), pp. 49f.

[2] Polanyi (1967), p. 45.

extends it to include an interpretation (not an explanation) of the evolutionary process reaching right up to the emergence of mental/moral persons and of human culture. The basis for this generalization remains his theory of tacit knowledge, as it concerns the conversion of the particular data arising from our impact with and on the world around us, into an intellectual and practical comprehension of their meaning. The process of scientific discovery (or of artistic creation) is both a heuristic model and an expression of these tacit powers. Furthermore, these powers actually display the dynamic structure of reality itself. It is Polanyi's passionate conviction that knowledge and reality have a natural structural affinity. Helmut Kuhn sums this up well, in his discussion of Polanyi's thought:

> Knowledge by its very nature is a process, better still an aspiration directed toward an anticipated goal and at the same time an orderly rise from one level of vision to a higher one. The meaning of this intellectual endeavor consists in the disclosure of reality. But reality, independent though it is of our knowing it, owns a peculiar fitness for becoming known by us. Its own hierarchical structure both parallels and renders possible the cognitive enterprise of man. His intellectual pursuit appears to be prefigured by the stratification of reality.[1]

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[1] Kuhn (1968, in eds. Langford and Poteat), p. 120.

Summary of argument thus far.

It has been our intention in this chapter to explore the relation of the rational and the personal and to defend the thesis that the proper way to understand this relation is not by setting the two categories over against each other in an objective-subjective dialectic but rather by seeing the rational as necessarily included within the more comprehensive category of the personal. We have attempted to work out this argument on the basis of and in reference to the doctrine of the imago Dei, which we take to be the anthropological pole of the doctrine of providence. Our contention that the primordial relation of man to God and to created reality is the ground for the possibility of his having knowledge of both finds--at least with regard to created reality--a striking resonance first in Whitehead's doctrine of perception and then in Polanyi's epistemological theory and in his ontological extension of it to the structure of reality itself. We can know this reality because, by God's will, we are physically an integral part of it and have been called to exercise dominion over it. It is thus reasonable to expect that our rational faculties will be attuned structurally to the world, just as, on the God-ward side of the imago Dei, our existence as persons, as beings-in-communion--exemplified in Jesus Christ and manifest in his communion with his Bride, the Church--is attuned structurally--not in a qualitative but in a relational sense--to the Being-in-communion of the Triune God, our Creator. The

latter correlation--man to God--is the basis of the former--man to created reality; and this ontological relationality is the basis of the possibility of human knowledge.

Furthermore, this relationality illuminates the nature of knowledge, and here again our own argument along Scriptural lines finds a confirmatory echo in Polanyi's doctrine of personal knowledge as consisting in indwelling and commitment. Knowledge, we suggested, whether of God, of other persons, or of material reality, involves our participation and abiding in the other, a giving of ourselves to the other and a receiving of the other into ourselves. It consists in active contemplation of and openness to the other, in a mutual participation which, at the highest levels, may truly be called communion. Polanyi demonstrates that cognition properly so-called arises out of such personal participation. It is our contention that a structural continuum exists not only between the knowing of objects and the knowing of other minds, as Polanyi himself maintains, but even beyond that to the knowing of God himself, in so far as he gives himself to be known in Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is this truth that must underpin any Christian doctrine of providence, as it may be concerned to speak of God's action in and sovereign care for his creation, at the centre of which stands man.

CHAPTER VI

Criticism of two contemporary "non-interventionist" doctrines of providence.

VI.1

Christological basis of the Christian concept of providence.

In I.4 above, referring to points made by Macquarrie and Farmer, we contended that the biblical belief in providence is founded existentially and particularly; it is not a speculative hypothesis worked out by means of general notions about how God relates to the world. The Christian doctrine of providence, we argued, following Barth, is rooted in divine revelation and is no part of a philosophy of history; faith, not rational conjecture, determines its content, shape, and reach. In subsequent sections we have tried to develop this contention in terms of the operative concept of personal relationship, with specific reference to the doctrine of the imago Dei and its implications, especially as these bear on the question of knowledge. We have suggested that no adequate Christian doctrine of providence can be elaborated that has not as its starting point and foundation such a relational and Christologically determined concept. Apart from this starting point and this foundation, there is no reason to believe in a sovereign, caring, purposeful, world-confirming and history-ordering God, i.e., in providence conceived in a Christian manner. This is to say that the category of the

personal, as it is revealed specifically in the Triune God's relation to and engagement with the world, provides the only ground and frame for a genuinely rational Christian concept of providence. Such a concept cannot be read off nature or history per se, as the case of Greek philosophy from Plato to the Stoics gives evidence. Barth puts the matter laconically: "The Christian belief in God's providence is Christian and not general."[1]

Elaborations of notions of how God is related to the world are notoriously open to metaphysical speculation, of both a mythical and a philosophical kind. In his Church Dogmatics, Barth makes the important point that the older Protestant theologians, including Calvin, while of course they presupposed a Christological basis for their respective doctrines of providence, did not draw out the implications of this presupposition or elucidate their doctrines accordingly.[2] They understood God's lordship over all occurrence

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[1] Barth (1960), Vol. III/3.48, p. 33.

[2] The main reason for this was that natural theology as a problem had not been clearly perceived by the Reformers, not even by Calvin, as is evident from the methodologically different ways in which, in the first volume of the Institutes, he discusses Creation and Providence on the one hand and the imago Dei on the other. Philosophical and "natural" understandings of God, carried in the patristic and medieval tradition, still exerted influence on Calvin, especially on his method. In ensuing centuries, as Barth points out, this would give rise, in certain areas of Christian dogmatics, to a kind of general theism, largely devoid of Christian content and coexisting on a par with Christologically oriented considerations.

> as the act of a superior and absolutely omniscient, omnipotent and omnioperative being whose nature and work do of course display such moral qualities as wisdom, righteousness and goodness, etc. But this is all. According to the agreed doctrine of orthodoxy, this empty shell is the object of the Christian belief in providence. It does not seem to have occurred to whole generations of Protestant theologians to ask what this lordship has to do with Jesus Christ, and the knowledge and confession of this lordship, and readiness to subject oneself to it, with faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. How does man really come to trust in this lordship?[1]

This non-Christological orientation of the doctrine of providence, Barth maintains, prepared the way for the subsequent triumphs of a theologia naturalis in both secular and theological determinations of the relation of God to the world, to the point where "belief in history and its immanent demons could replace faith in God's providence..."[2] Our concern in this last chapter will be to scrutinize, from the perspective we have gained in this essay, some contemporary positions of this sort. We shall focus on the work of Gordon Kaufman, and also examine aspects of Maurice Wiles's thought; brief attention will be given to several other writers as well.

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[1] Barth (1960), Vol. III/3.48, p. 31.

[2] Ibid., p. 33.

VI.2

The claim that God's action in the world is general and not specific.

In the first chapter of his published Bampton Lectures for 1986, Maurice Wiles affirms that the time is ripe for a radical new picture of the notion of divine agency in the world; further stretching of the old language is no longer adequate to reflect "the intended changes in sensibility"; a "shift of basic paradigm" is required.[1] Similarly, Gordon Kaufman, in a book of essays published in 1981, asserts:

> It is not justifiable...for a methodologically self-conscious theology simply to be carried by historical momentum. The task of such a theology is not simply reformulation of traditional claims in contemporary idiom; it is, rather, to build from the ground up (so far as that is possible) a conception of the human, of the world (the context of human existence), and of God (the ultimate point of reference for ordering human life), which can make sense of human experience and thought, human life and problems, today.[2]

Theology can no longer be properly understood, he writes in his Preface, "as contemporary retranslation and re-presentation of traditional themes (supposedly authorized by 'divine revelation') but must be viewed as imaginative construction through and through."[3] The fundamental reason for these revolutionary pronouncements is the conviction both men hold, in company with many contemporary theologians, that God does not act <u>particularly</u>

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[1] Wiles (1986), p. 13.

[2] Kaufman (1981), p. 125.

[3] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 12f.

with respect to his world, only generally. The scientific world-view, and the investigative method correlated with it, based on the conception of nature/history as an interlocking and closed nexus of events structured by an immanent causality, rule out, it is asserted, the open-textured and mythological pre-scientific cosmology found in the Bible, where, in addition to general divine sovereignty, occasional specific divine "intervention" is presumed to be a reality.[1]

Kaufman confesses himself unable "to conceive or imagine cosmic purposive activity working in events",[2] by which he means particular events: "Our experience is of a unified and orderly world; in such a world acts of God (in the traditional sense) are not merely improbable or difficult to believe: they are literally inconceivable....talk about such acts is...meaningless."[3] He consequently feels the need to re-think the categories of act and purpose as they pertain to God, starting with general theoretical considerations:

> In our tightly structured world it is necessary to find place for God's activity in the fundamental order of things before it is even possible to speak meaningfully of his acting in particular events....we must first

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[1] Bultmann's programmatic essay, "New Testament and Mythology", published after the Second World War, made this case more forcibly than had ever been done before, though Schleiermacher and D. F. Strauss had both said much the same thing over a hundred years earlier. Cf. Bultmann (1972, ed. Bartsch), Vol. I, pp. 3ff.; Schleiermacher (1928), Section 47; D. F. Strauss (1973), p. 78.

[2] Kaufman (1972), p. 141.

[3] Ibid., pp. 134f.

> learn to speak of his act in and through the structure and movement of the whole.[1]

Maurice Wiles, for his part, conceives of God's sustaining activity as hardly distinguishable from his creative activity, and since "what is indicated by speaking of God as creator is something that is uniformly true of his relation to the world all the time",[2] it follows that God is similarly, i.e., uniformly, related to the ongoing movement of the world and its history. Central to Wiles's conception of God's activity (as also to Kaufman's) is the idea of purposiveness, which he sees as integral to the doctrines of creation and providence. Whereas Kaufman, the systematic theorist, constructs a concept of God's one all-inclusive "act" on the model of human purposive behaviour and in terms of the idea of a single goal,[3] Wiles speaks of an "aspect of the experience of God" as "experience of that which makes ultimate sense of things",[4] i.e., which gives purposiveness to them; and he wants to move from such particular apprehensions of divine purpose to a concept of divine teleology understood in a general and universal manner.[5] "Talk of God's activity," he writes,

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[1] Ibid., p. 142.

[2] Wiles (1974), p. 34.

[3] Kaufman (1972), p. 127.

[4] Wiles (1974), pp. 35, 34.

[5] Ibid., p. 36.

> is, then, to be understood as a way of speaking about those events within the natural order or within human history in which God's purpose finds clear expression or special opportunity. Such a view is not deistic in the most strongly pejorative sense, in that it allows for a continuing relationship of God to the world as source of existence and giver of purpose to the whole. It is deistic in so far as it refrains from claiming any effective causation on the part of God in relation to particular occurrences.[1]

Specific acts of God, Wiles wants to say, are not really that at all; rather, they are merely specific human responses to an occasionally sensed meaning and purposiveness in the universe and in historical events. "It is in the attempt to articulate this way of experiencing life that men have spoken of God as acting in history--a phrase...dangerously misleading if taken too literally."[2]

Kaufman: speech about and experience of God understood as constructs of the imagination.

Having posited that no action of God is different in kind from any other of his actions, and that the notion of specific divine action has a purely subjective basis, Kaufman and Wiles must deal with the problem presented by the opposite claims of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Here we shall look especially at Kaufman's approach. He begins by identifying the whole course of cosmic development as God's deliberate "master act"; he then designates as "sub-acts" the major phases in physical,

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[1] Ibid., p. 38.

[2] Wiles (1976), p. 138.

biological, and human evolution.[1] This device, he claims, "in no way threatens the unity and order of the world as a whole", and is consistent with modern cosmic evolutionary theory.[2] Recognizing that no such purposive divine act can be perceived directly in the cosmos, he devises a doctrine of revelation to explain how his concept might be believable. This doctrine involves a phenomenological description of the emergence and progressive refinement of human consciousness of the divine in the course of history. The description itself is undergirded by an epistemological theory of the imaginative symbolization of this consciousness in religions, of which Kaufman says that Christianity is the highest because in the self-giving love of Jesus Christ we have the worthiest paradigm of the truly human.[3] Thus he focuses his "historicist" doctrine of revelation and his constructed image of God by taking certain moral qualities in Jesus and projecting them onto the universe, a procedure that entails the "demythologization" of Christological texts in the New Testament:

> If Jesus expresses the authentically human, his sort of self-sacrificing love should not be regarded as merely a historical accident: it must be grounded in and expressive of an agape at the deepest levels of

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[1] Kaufman (1972), pp. 135-147.

[2] Ibid., pp. 138f.

[3] Kaufman (1981), p. 145. He readily admits that other paradigms of the "truly human" are on offer, but he himself prefers Jesus Christ because he sees in his love and forgiveness a model of the humane and creative action necessary to overcome estrangement and enmity and to "humanize" existence. Cf. p. 152.

> Reality. From this point of view we can understand why the church felt impelled to say that Jesus was the 'revelation' of God, or even, 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. 1:15).[1]

Central to Kaufman's thought is his conviction that all speech about and experience of God are functions of the constructive powers of the imagination.[2] In a vague sort of way he still wants to maintain that there is a "real" God who constitutes the ultimate referent for the notion of divine "absoluteness", a notion basic to his concept of God because it relativizes all human experience and mental constructs and so provides a safeguard against idolatry.[3] This ultimate referent, however, is unknowable; it is "a mere limiting idea with no content".[4] What we have to do with is rather the "available" God, which is a particular imaginative construct. But, of course, the "real" God is itself only an imaginative construct, a metaphysical point of reference. For religious purposes Kaufman also wants to hold onto what he variously calls "mythic", "anthropomorphic", and "personalistic" imagery for God, even though he rejects any objective basis for such imagery and refuses the "cosmological dualism" between the world and God to which such language conduces.[5] To accomplish this he has

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[1] Ibid. pp. 144f.

[2] Ibid., p. 22.

[3] Ibid., pp. 81ff., 87, 94, 266.

[4] Kaufman (1972), p. 85.

[5] Ibid., pp. 52ff.

recourse to the other key motif in his concept of God (along with "absoluteness"), i.e., "humaneness", which he derives mainly from Christian notions of providence, atonement, and salvation, and from the paradigm of Jesus.[1] "Humaneness" serves him as a sort of sub-concept under which to gather the personalistic imagery necessary if the symbol "God" is to fulfil its primarily practical function and provide a proper object for devotion and an orientation of human life.[2] Recognizing that what believers worship must correspond to something more than "a mere idea or image in their minds",[3] he brings in his evolutionary version of providence and identifies the referent of "God" with "vital cosmic forces" undergirding and humanizing man's existence:

> To the extent that there has been in fact a genuine evolutionary movement through cosmic history toward the production of our humanity, the ancient mythic notions of the will and purposes of God working through time toward the realization of humane ends begin to become intelligible in modern terms.[4]

The notion of God as a divine Person who creates, sustains, loves, and cares for us, "gathers up into itself and focuses for us all those cosmic forces working toward the fully humane existence for which we long."[5] By means of the deliberate application to them of personalistic imagery, these forces are

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[1] Ibid., pp. 39-46.

[2] See, e.g., (1981), pp. 29, 41; (1972), pp. 99-102, 109f.

[3] Kaufman (1972), p. 86.

[4] Kaufman (1981), p. 49.

[5] Ibid., p. 50.

made religiously relevant and capable of receiving our worship. They are grounded in and expressive of "reality" in so far as we hold to be ultimately normative certain possibilities for human life to which they have given rise, such as full self-consciousness, love, and freedom.[1] Kaufman declares rather feebly that we thus have a "symbol/concept" of God "which can claim both metaphysical plausibility and some religious power."[2]

The idolatrous tendency of Kaufman's theology.

It is difficult to see how Kaufman can escape the charge of idolatry that he himself levels against traditional dogmatic theology for its "objectification" and "reification" of God.[3] His recourse to "cosmic forces" in a bid to find an objective metaphysical referent for his "available" God has him first raising to the status of "God" a metaphysical principle contained within the cosmos and in fact identified with its immanent movement. By then applying to this principle religious ("personalistic") imagery and making it the object of human devotion, he moves beyond a kind of evolutionary pantheism to a position of outright idolatry. This would be the case, however, even if he avoided the objectifying idea of God as a "cosmic force", for it is entailed by his theory of knowledge in so far

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[1] Ibid., p. 49.

[2] Ibid., p. 54.

[3] Ibid., pp. 30, 38, 94, 138, 266.

as he seeks to turn conceptual inventions into religious realities. He continues to use words like divine "self-disclosure" because, in the interest of constructing his metaphysical system, he wants to retain the notion of God as fundamentally active being. But this "self-disclosing God" is in reality, for Kaufman, nothing more than a subjective concept, similar to words like "Creator" or "Lord".[1] Such language has no transcendent reference; indeed, no world-transcending reality exists (to claim that it does is to be guilty of "cosmological dualism").

The concept of a "real" God is empty and functions merely as a regulative and relativizing principle.[2] "'God's revelation'", he writes,

> is itself an idea by means of which we explain to ourselves how it is possible that One transcendent of the whole human order (this also is a complex idea) becomes known to those of us in that order. But neither what is called 'God' nor 'God's revelation' are objectively or directly present to us at all. Both are known to us and imagined by us only in and through symbols and images which we ourselves have constructed. 'Revelation' and 'God' are imaginative constructs created by the human mind as it seeks to give our existence the sort of order and meaning which arises when our consciousness and life are focused on an appropriate and adequate object of devotion and loyalty.[3]

He makes this point even more succinctly in his treatise on method: "...it is precisely through the constructive work of the

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[1] Cf. Kaufman (1972), pp. 109f., and (1979), p. 68.

[2] See Kaufman (1972), pp. 41-71, 86.

[3] Kaufman (1968), 1977 Preface, pp. xvif.

human imagination that God--ultimate reality understood as active and beneficent, as 'gracious'--makes himself known."[1] Man reveals God by his own theoretical activity and then sets up this anthropomorphic construction as an object of worship. Kaufman is not saying, with Feuerbach, that this is what religion and theology have always done and now should stop doing; he is saying that the exercise is a necessary and humanizing one, provided it is appropriately demythologized and methodologically controlled and always open to critical assessment. We have to do here, as he says himself approvingly, with "an idealization of the human" carried beyond the empirical reality of humanity:

> Thus, the concept of God, precisely because it was in certain respects an idealization of the human, has made it possible for humanity to stretch and grow in new directions, transforming itself, and its understanding of itself, through history.[2]

As far as his own procedure is concerned, Kaufman fails to show how God-as-cosmic-force and God-as-human-construct are integrated, if the former is conceived as somehow having a reality of its own, beyond human theorizing. Clearly there is a contradiction here. His radical immanentism makes this confusion unavoidable, once he feels it necessary to look about for some sort of "objective referent" to save himself from pure

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[1] Kaufman (1979), p. 68.

[2] Ibid., p. 55.

subjectivism.[1] Again, his procedure is confused even without reference to his notion of "God-as-cosmic-force". As we have seen, he wants to say that a proper concept of God involves the motif of God-as-absolute (as well as that of God-as-humane), and that this motif then will serve in a healthy manner to relativize all other concepts. But this is nonsense, since such a motif, being merely a concept itself, i.e., a human construct, cannot by definition function as an absolute: it is necessarily relative and subject to human manipulation. Its absoluteness cannot be more than linguistic, as void of "reality" as the contentless "real" God to which we referred earlier. As a "limiting" and "relativizing" principle, it is itself limited and relative. To attempt, by the arbitrary device of adding to it personalistic imagery, to turn such a concept into a "God" worthy to receive human worship, is, as he says himself in another connection, "the crassest sort of idolatry", the very thing he claims to avoid by means of his Kantian frame of reference.[2]

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[1] He acknowledges this inescapable "subjectivist trap", but rationalizes it by equating such subjective procedures with "faith", which is understood as a metaphysically groundless commitment to a "good" pattern of life. See (1972), p. 98.

[2] Kaufman (1972), p. 86.

VI.3

Kaufman's theory of knowledge and the influence of Kant.

The Kantian frame of reference is fundamental to the Kaufman-Wiles position on divine "intervention". If Kaufman rejects "cosmological dualism", divine revelation as biblically understood, and the possibility of knowledge of any God other than a humanly constructed one, it is because he largely follows the Kantian epistemological system with its own dualism in the form of a phenomenal/noumenal dichotomy between theoretical reason and its synthetic a priori categories that yield knowledge of the mechanically determined empirical world, and practical reason whose object is the moral law, the law of causality that operates in the intelligible world in freedom from the necessary constraints of natural law.[1] With respect to the phenomenal world Kaufman is closer to Whitehead than to Descartes or Hume, in that he recognizes an integral connection between the perceiving/knowing subject and external reality.[2] Knowledge has its pre-cognitive base in the experience of a "drive" meeting a "resistance", and such primitive encounter is interpreted by emerging thought in terms of "limitation and polar opposition", leading finally to awareness of both self and other. Although

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[1] Kant (1956), pp. 50, 118ff; and above, pp. 251 ff.

[2] This feature of his thought shows a definite advance on Kant, who operated wholly within the Cartesian framework. For Kaufman's epistemological theory, see (1960), pp. 30ff.

the subject is known only in its relation to and limitation by the object, it has the advantage over the object of being known from within as well as from without, so that objects encountered in the world are interpreted in terms of analogies with self-experience. This means that our picture of the structural reality outside ourselves is derived from imaginative projection. Kaufman applies this insight, with its Kantian rootage, as much to philosophical and scientific notions as to myth,[1] and it is the basis of his conviction that "God" is an imaginative construction, and of his opposition to "cosmological dualism" and to the traditional objectifying mode of doing theology.[2] It is through the dual activity of attention and imagination that sensa are taken in, fused with the memory of previous sensa, and transformed into meaningful constructs. Language and a person's particular linguistic system are essential to this progressively more complex and creative constructive activity, which, though genuinely free from bondage to the immediately given, is not to be contrasted with reality but represents rather a continuous gathering up into meaningful unity of lower level sensa and

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[1] He sees the categories of cause and effect and of substance, for example, as derived respectively from the motive out of which an agent acts and from the sense of an enduring self. See (1960), pp. 35f. Although his notion of "projection" appears to derive ultimately from Kant, he does not accept Kant's understanding of causality in terms of a synthetic a priori determination.

[2] Kaufman (1979), pp. 24f.

interpretations.[1] Kaufman observes that the total system of meanings carried in a language that is internalized and participated in by an individual is rather like Kantian a priori categories, in that it constitutes an interpretative network existing prior to the individual, by which he makes sense of his experience; Kaufman diverges from Kant, however, by insisting that any given network is neither necessary nor universal, but is historically conditioned.[2]

With respect to the non-empirical world, Kant's influence on Kaufman becomes even more apparent. The metaphysical enterprise, for Kaufman, consists in the existentially and cognitively vital task of attempting "to see and portray and create explicitly the unity that is implicit in, and necesary to, all of our meaningful experience."[3] This task of unification, though not in itself an empirical procedure, is not merely "subjective", in that, first, its constituents are drawn from the life-history into which we are caught up, and secondly, its reference is to the world, i.e., to reality, as we see it. The mind in its quest for knowledge operates in terms of three ideals, all of which thrust it towards objective validity: unconditional adequacy to givenness; universality, involving language and the transcendence of the egocentric predicament by communication; and unity, arising out

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[1] Kaufman (1960), pp. 43ff.

[2] Ibid., p. 51.

[3] Ibid., p. 100.

of the logical interconnectedness of all things.[1] These ideals are neither Platonic substantial entities nor guarantors of some sort of extra-historical, i.e., extra-subjective, "truth". They are "functional absolutes" that require us to think normatively even while recognizing the historical relativism of our thought. Thus inevitably, if often unconsciously, we "premise our every action and thought on the conviction (perhaps unprovable, but nevertheless inescapable) that our knowledge somehow participates in that which transcends the relativities of our situation."[2] Nevertheless, metaphysics can make no final claim about the "real". Its concepts are symbols, used to express something that transcends their proper denotative meanings; therefore, they must never be taken literally, for that would be to turn them into conditioned objects.[3]

"Regulative principles" in Kant and Kaufman.

What we are dealing with here is Kaufman's version of the Kantian "regulative principles", which are for Kant, with respect to pure reason, a kind of metaphysical equivalent to his principle of the synthetical unity of apperception with respect to understanding.[4] This notion of an "ideal object" is, in

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[1] Ibid., pp. 64-80.

[2] Ibid., p. 86.

[3] Ibid., p. 102.

[4] Cf. Kant (1934), pp. 96ff. and 387ff.

Kant's thought, heuristic, not ostensive, and "forms the transcendental deduction of all speculative ideas, not as constitutive principles of the extension of our cognition beyond the limits of our experience, but as regulative principles of the systematic unity of empirical cognition..."[1] Concerning the ideal object of theology, he writes:

> Thus I say, the conception of a supreme intelligence is a mere idea; that is to say, its objective reality does not consist in the fact that it has an immediate relation to an object (for in this sense we have no means of establishing its objective validity), it is merely a schema constructed according to the necessary conditions of the unity of reason....we cogitate a something, of the real nature of which we have not the least conception, but which we represent to ourselves as standing in a relation to the whole system of phenomena, analogous to that in which phenomena stand to each other.[2]

Speculative reason's transcendental conception of God, Kant argues, is in the strictest sense deistic.[3]

Regulative principles, like the noumenal "thing-in-itself" that we considered earlier (V.5), are limitative and basically negative concepts that function like metaphysical presuppositions, circumscribing what we may claim to know and unifying what we do know. In Kant's system they work most usefully in the sphere of practical reason, in the form of the postulates of freedom, immortality, and God, which the philosopher posits as the ultimate ground of the rationality of

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[1] Ibid., p. 388.

[2] Ibid., pp. 388, 390.

[3] Cf. ibid.

the moral law, understood as free causality. Regulative principles enable empirically bound man to think metaphysically without transgressing the strict epistemological limits established by Kant's transcendental dialectic. But precisely because they do not refer to objectifiable entities and are not demonstrable, there is a tendency to reify them unintentionally by stressing their indispensability and effectiveness in the practical sphere, even while insisting that there is no question here of knowledge. Thus Kant can speak of his anti-speculative critical enterprise as the attempt to "abolish knowledge, to make room for belief",[1] and can declare his postulates of pure practical reason, such as the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, to be "morally necessary" if the highest good, i.e., the coming together of virtue and happiness, is to be possible;[2] and Kaufman, having argued for the "emptiness" of the regulative concept of the "real God", can go on to stress the practical value of the imagined "available God":[3]

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[1] Ibid., Preface to the Second Edition, p. 18.

[2] Kant (1956), pp. 126ff. The determinative principle of Kantian ethics is that if duty requires us to strive for something, it must be possible to attain it. Now the complete harmony of nature (happiness) and morality (virtue) is not attainable in this life; hence immortality and God are necessary postulates of the practical reason, the one enabling endless progess to be made towards the desired end, the other, as the supreme cause of the whole of nature, containing the ground of the exact coincidence of happiness with morality, it having a causality corresponding fully to the moral intention.

[3] Kaufman (1972), p. 86.

> ...it is a mistake to deal with the meaning of this term ['God'] chiefly speculatively and theoretically, asking whether our available referent in fact 'corresponds' to what 'really exists' somewhere 'out there'; the meaning of this term is to be found primarily in its practical import for life, its way of ordering society and the world and the demands it lays on selves and on communities.[1]

God's "reality", in a word, is pragmatically determined and consists in the humanizing potential of the theistic perspective; and this perspective, declares Kaufman in a final grasp at objectivity, corresponds to "how things are".[2]

VI.4

The assumption that the "scientific world-view" makes specific divine intervention in the world impossible.

Rationalistic theism in the Kantian and Kaufmanian manner appears to "de-objectify" the God of the Christian tradition and overcome the so-called "cosmological dualism" and the heteronomy it is said to imply, yet without falling into mere subjectivity. But in fact, pace Kant, the subjectivism of this position is unavoidable and fatally weakens it. "God" is re-objectified anthropologically, in terms of a mental construct, with all the danger this entails of turning man himself, the author of the construct, into the new "God". Kant's "God-postulate" proved to be "rationally necessary" only on the basis of his own ethical presuppositions, and was either dropped by later thinkers or, as

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[1] Ibid., p. 99.

[2] Kaufman (1981), pp. 48f.

an "idea", taken over for other purposes. As for Kaufman's "God-concept", we have seen how his misguided attempt to couple it with worship leads him directly into idolatry, his own disclaimers notwithstanding.

The underlying problem in all this is the assumption, made on the basis of the scientific view of nature, that God cannot "intervene" in the world; and since he cannot intervene, there can be no evidence or certainty of his existence, with the end result that God, however he may be conceptually defined, becomes a mere creature of the moral imagination, necessary, useful, or expendable according to one's philosophy. Kaufman puts the matter clearly:

> ...the problem is that certain logical preconditions of connection, continuity and unity must obtain if there is to be any experience at all (Kant), and precisely these conditions are contradicted by the notion of particular 'acts of God' being performed from time to time in history or nature.[1]

D. F. Strauss, a pioneer of this naturalistic approach, had already written in 1835: "Our modern world has attained a conviction, that all things are linked together by a chain of causes and effects, which suffers no interruption....the totality of things forms a vast circle, which, except that it owes its existence and laws to a superior power, suffers no intrusion from without."[2]

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[1] Kaufman (1972), p. 134.

[2] Strauss (1973), p. 78.

Strauss's idealist form of demythologization, and the existentialist and historicist forms that have prevailed in much modern theology since Bultmann's essay, "New Testament and Mythology",[1] all presuppose this impermeable universe and man's "self-understanding" that goes with it, that is, "the modern conception of human nature as a self-subsistent unity immune from the interference of supernatural powers."[2] It is this presupposition that lies behind Bultmann's notorious assertion that it is impossible in an age of scientific method and technical sophistication to continue to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles.[3] Kaufman assumes this too, as we have seen, though he tends to avoid a specifically existentialist approach in his reinterpretation of biblical language and prefers to adopt, at least in his early work, a rather Wilesian "perspectival" standpoint:

> Neither miracle nor prophecy need be understood as involving violations of natural law or disruptions of the historical process....They are, rather, theological conceptions which designate those events within the natural order and historical process through which men come to see and believe that nature and history are not autonomous and self-contained orders but are the direct expression of purposes which transcend them.[4]

Some years later his view of the traditional conception of "various relatively independent act-events" had hardened, so

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[1] See above, p. 301 , note 1 .

[2] Bultmann (1972, ed. Bartsch), Vol. I, p. 7.

[3] Ibid., p. 5.

[4] Kaufman (1968), p. 308.

that, in comparing it unfavourably to his own "master-act" conception, he could write rather aggressively:

> For here God's act is not a new event that suddenly and without prior conditions rips inexplicably into the fabric of experience, a notion consistent neither with itself nor with the regularity and order that experience must have if it is to be cognizable. Rather, here God's act is viewed as the source of precisely that overarching order itself: it is God's master act that gives the world the structure it has and gives natural and historical processes their direction.[1]

This assumption about God's "non-interference" in natural and historical events is an example of what R. G. Collingwood calls an "absolute presupposition".[2] Such a presupposition never comes in the form of an answer to a question, and so is not a proposition; and it is never propounded or submitted to verification, because "to speak of verifying a presupposition involves supposing that it is a relative presupposition,"[3] and this is precisely what it is not: it is absolute. Therefore it is beyond question. This alone can explain the astonishingly uncritical stance towards it adopted by the theologians we are discussing, who normally pride themselves on their critical perspective. For in fact there is no logical reason why a man who uses electricity (Bultmann's example) should not believe in demons or in the possibility of miracles. The fear, as expressed, for instance, by Kaufman and Wiles, that belief in

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[1] Kaufman (1972), pp. 137f.

[2] Collingwood (1940), pp. 31ff.

[3] Ibid., p. 32.

special divine causation would rule out the possibility of knowledge of the past and make nonsense of the scientific enterprise and of our normal understanding of the relative independence of causation within the world,[1] is groundless and untheological, as we shall try to show shortly. Nor is the issue a matter of finding a place for God in the physical theory of Einstein, Planck, and Heisenberg, more open-textured than that of Newton. The way in which physical reality is structured, and the scientific method by which we investigate this reality, are irrelevant to the question of divine special causation, for the basic reason that we cannot presume to determine speculatively (much less empirically) all the possible modes of a sovereign God's action towards the world he has created. If we abandon the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo, then we become metaphysicians with no strictly Judeo-Christian belief, in which case we will indeed be unable to argue intelligibly for specific divine action; but most "non-interventionist" theologians still want to retain in some form the Christian doctrine of creation, which disqualifies them in advance from ruling out by fiat, from their finite standpoints within God's creation, what the Creator can or cannot do with respect to his world. What we call the "lawfulness" of

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[1] Cf. Kaufmann (1972), pp. 132ff.; Wiles (1974), pp. 37f.; (1986), p. 66; Schleiermacher (1928), Section 47.2; and Tillich (1951), Vol. I, pp. 116ff.; and p. 267: "Miracles cannot be interpreted in terms of a supranatural interference in natural processes. If such an interpretation were true, the manifestation of the ground of being would destroy the structure of being..."

the natural order is a discovery our reason has enabled us to make post hoc about certain fundamental characteristics of physical reality. But, as Donald Mackay points out, God does not create by natural laws but by his word, in a manner inconceivable to us. "By the same token," he goes on,

> if the whole spatio-temporal fabric of events in our drama is of the Divine conceiving and upholding, 'interventions' can hardly be the proper term for those events that stand out as miraculous. What is unique about a miracle is not the fact of divine activity in it but the mode or pattern of that activity. Non-miraculous events are no less dependent for their occurrence upon God's creative power.[1]

The assumption that divine intervention is a heteronomous infringement on human liberty and equality.

In addition to the "scientific" objection to divine "intervention" in the world, there is also a spiritual/psychological reason lying behind the unwillingness of many theologians today even to countenance a doctrine of providence that would allow for specific divine action and thus be in keeping with biblical and Church tradition. This is the

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[1] Mackay (1968), p. 18. The argument is much the same as the one a Christian would make against an opponent's claim that the absence of observable causal precedent for an event, or even of any kind of hidden physical variable at all, implies the non-existence or non-sovereignty of a Creator. Neither epistemological uncertainty nor even ontological indeterminacy requires this conclusion or puts tychē, i.e., meaningless randomness, in the driver's seat of the universe; both may simply be said to be possible modes of operation of a sovereign God. Post-Kantian epistemological thought-patterns, developed on the basis of the Cartesian "ego", often lead to jejune theologizing. Cf. Mackay (1978), ch. 2.

assumption that an "intervening" God must be heteronomous and repressive of human liberty. Freedom understood in the Eighteenth Century sense of "autonomy" and defined along Kantian lines in terms of rational self-determination, is the dominant theological category of post-World War II Western theology, closely allied with an egalitarian standpoint that excludes divine "intervention" because it appears to give favoured treatment to some persons and not to others. Schubert Ogden's demythologization programme, for instance, takes Bultmann's existentialism to its logical conclusion by making Jesus himself and his history into nothing more than a decisively transparent representation of the possibility of understanding authentic human existence in terms of God's unbounded love for man and of man's self-surrender to God.[1] This possibility, he avers, is available in principle to all men as such and in no way depends specifically on some act of God in Jesus Christ. The specificity of Jesus is reduced to his having "revelatory power" to show us what the authentic human possibility is, and this power is effective because we receive and understand his words and deeds in this way. Ogden, who is to Bultmann what D. F. Strauss was to Schleiermacher, ignores the problem that Bultmann, and Schleiermacher over a century before him, had, in their different ways, at least tried to deal with, namely, how, if we reject traditional Christian understanding, are we to explain the

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[1] Ogden (1963), pp. 16f.

singularity of Jesus's relationship to and knowledge of God?[1] Thus he can write nonchalantly, in complete disregard of Christian tradition and of the historical and theological arguments in support of that tradition:

> There is not the slightest evidence that God has acted in Christ in any way different from the way in which he primordially acts in every other event; and even if it could be established that he had, it is clear that such an occurrence would not be of the slightest moment to me as an existing self who must win or lose himself in decision here and now.[2]

Hostility to any form of allegedly "special treatment" also appears in some writers as part of a theodicy, the typical point being that if, with the tradition, we say God intervenes exceptionally in some events (often seemingly trivial ones) and not in others, then we have no defence against the charge that he is unjust for not intervening on occasions of great human suffering and evil such as Auschwitz.[3]

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[1] This is a major weakness in Liberal and neo-Liberal theology and fits in with the methodological critique we will advance later (pp. 360 ff.). Schleiermacher's way of addressing the problem may be found in (1928), Sections 13.1,2; 88.4; 89; 93; 94. In Christ God completed the creation of human nature; hence Christ's perfect God-consciousness was a possibility residing in that nature and grounded in its original constitution, and his appearance was not something absolutely supernatural. It was, however, miraculous in that his ideality and sinlessness could not have come out of the corporate sinful life of fallen man. Jesus was therefore in continuity with the first Adam, yet the beginning of his life also involved a new implanting of God-consciousness and spiritual receptivity.

[2] Ogden (1956), p. 169.

[3] See, e.g., Wiles (1986), pp. 66f.; and Hebblethwaite (1976), pp. 92f. This is a serious question, but it cannot be illuminated in juridical/political terms applied outside of the larger theological categories of sin, judgment, election,

Emphasis on freedom and egalitarianism is the moral corollary of the "impermeable world-system" presupposition we have examined. Behind both convictions stands a certain conception of God in his relation to the world, against which much modern theology is in strong reaction. The Judeo-Christian God of dogmatic tradition is seen as an objectivized authority figure projected by immature and mythically-minded human beings in an attempt to legitimate their positions in the world and shore up their existence with cosmological and soteriological certainties. Consequently, the traditional understanding of theology is, in Kaufman's words, "heteronomous and humanly destructive":

> The traditional claims that the Bible is the 'word of God', or that Jesus is the 'revelation of God', or that the doctrine of the trinity is a 'truth of revelation' are all attempts to legitimize the fundamentally authoritarian character of Christian theology by holding that it is concerned with matters which could not have been discovered by mere human intelligence but which are the indispensable source of true human freedom and salvation.[1]

Kaufman, as we have seen, has come to believe that all such dogmatic claims are imaginative constructs, not something directly revealed or given objectively in a kind of spiritual

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covenant, and faith. The Bible shows us a God who always "intervenes" (i.e., relates dynamically to man) on particular occasions of which the meaning may be found in the universal redemptive purpose to which they point and which they somehow further. Only in theological terms such as these, and not from the starting point of merely ethical categories, is it possible to discuss divine "intervention" intelligibly.

[1] Kaufman (1968), 1977 Preface, p. xv.

perception. The concept of "God", like that of "world", is always constructed with the aid of models drawn from ordinary experience.[1] "God" is not, then, a heteronomous reality over against us and mediated to us by an authoritarian ecclesiastical and theological establishment; "he" is our own construction, necessary to the proper orientation of our lives. Wiles does not go so far as this, though it might be said that in the end, practically speaking, his position comes to much the same thing. He accepts God's objective reality and wishes mainly to stress the uniformity of his relation to the world; only thus, he believes, can our modern insight into the autonomy of nature and man be safeguarded. But as he denies specific acts of God and therefore the reality of objective revelation, it is difficult to locate the grounds for the objectivity of God that he still wishes to affirm.

VI.5

Philosophical critique. The assumption that Kantian "limits" on reason are also limits on God.

We must now extend our earlier criticism of the general position we are scrutinizing. The primary philosophical error involved in thinking of this kind is to assume that the Kantian "off-bounds" sign on the beach of rationalist speculation, which denies man the capacity to obtain, by use of his reason,

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[1] Kaufman (1979), pp. 52f.

knowledge of metaphysical matters such as the existence of God, applies also to God (whether or not we believe he exists), in the sense of denying him the capacity to give us, by revelation, knowledge of his own existence.[1] But this is not a logical assumption. Kant's arguments exclude speculative natural theology as a proof-providing enterprise, but they tell us strictly nothing about the possibility of divine self-revelation, where the initiative lies with God and not with man. The philosopher's rejection of revelation in the traditional dogmatic sense is arbitrary and lacking in the logical force that makes his demonstration of the antinomies an intellectual marvel; it depends not on argument but on an assertion of his private prejudice against "empirical", i.e., historically-based, faith, as distinct from a religion in line with "universal moral dogmas".[2] Here is the root of the modern opposition to "particular divine intervention"; yet despite its aspiration to universality, it is in fact purely subjective and has no ground in reason. On the other hand, one can assert reasonably that a sovereign God, if he exists, could perfectly well arrange to give knowledge of himself to man through some kind of self-disclosing engagement in human history. The basis of the argument against

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[1] This error is surely in part the consequence of an understandable revulsion against the authoritarian aspects of the Church in history, coupled with the methodological egocentricity of post-Cartesian thought and the evidence of its material effectiveness provided by scientific, technological, and political achievements.

[2] See above, pp. 248f.; and Kant (1960), pp. 100f.

revelation is a rationalistic bias functioning as a metaphysic; employing the very kind of a priori speculation for which it harbours such contempt, it posits a man-centred empirical criterion as the epistemologically determinant principle with respect to all possible knowledge, including knowledge of God. But a sovereign God (if he exists) can certainly give knowledge of himself if he so wishes; and though such knowledge will not have the same kind of empirical verifiability as scientific knowledge of the world, it will somehow be made available in terms of the world--since otherwise man could not receive it as knowledge--and it will somehow be experientially, even experimentally, verifiable--but on God's terms, not on man's.[1]

To say "on God's terms, not on man's" immediately raises the hackles of theologians espousing the "non-interventionist" position. This, it seems to us, is where the doctrine of the imago Dei, understood along the lines that we have sketched in this essay, may be helpful in showing the way forward. We have seen how both in the creation narrative of Genesis 1 and in the New Testament depiction of Jesus Christ, the Word become flesh, the imago Dei must be understood personally and relationally, not qualitatively. This means that "God's terms" with respect to man are personal and relational, not impersonal and authoritarian. Now we have seen how non-interventionist theologians, in their opposition to divine heteronomy and their rationalistic

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[1] See below, p. 342.

(mis)understanding of God, are led to stress the uniformity of God's action towards the world. This inevitably takes them down the path towards an impersonal conception of God himself. When at the same time they try to retain the person of Christ as somehow representative and revelatory of God and of the fundamental nature of reality, they find themselves trapped in a contradiction; for the picture of God presented by Christ, whatever one's Christology may be, is nothing if not personal.

One cannot have it both ways. Jesus Christ, as portrayed in the New Testament, is not only the very image of God, he is also the consummate manifestation of man-as-made-in-God's-image. Being both, he is able to be the Saviour of mankind, that is, the One who, by his passion, brings fallen man back into positive relationship with God. This relationship consists in the personal communion--both individual and corporate--of human sons and daughters with the divine Father, made possible in the Son and through the Spirit. There is nothing heteronomous about any of this, either in respect to Christ's redemptive and freely chosen passion or to the communion of man with God that it opens up. Kaufman himself had discerned this, before he decided that "it is no longer acceptable to begin our theological work with an authoritarian starting point, however venerable and revered that foundation may be."[1] Earlier he had written:

> In dialogue I am continuously in a situation in which the <u>new</u> breaks into my field of experience, yet without

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[1] Kaufman (1981), p. 138.

> heteronomously destroying me and my freedom. The concept of revelation, drawn from this root experience, thus makes possible understanding the breaking-in to human history from beyond of new meaning, yet in such a way that the freedom of the men to whom God reveals himself is not disrupted or destroyed....God's revelation...is at once the original and the continuing ground of any genuine relation to the divine being.[1]

The error of abstracting "miracle" from the context of salvation.

The Incarnation, Miracle of miracles, does not "rip into" the causal fabric of the world-order (as the later Kaufman has it), nor does it do violence to human liberty. It did not involve the suspension of "natural laws", though it cannot be accounted for in terms of "natural law". The point is, the naturalistic criterion, used as in the manner of Hume, is not relevant to an understanding of the Incarnation, because God may be said to be operating here in another mode. This mode is that of personal relationship. To employ the naturalistic criterion is therefore to commit a kind of category mistake, as we suggested above.[2] The only <u>responsible</u> perspective on the Incarnation and on biblical miracles in general--that is, the only perspective faithful to the texts in which these are recorded, and able therefore to generate an appropriate hermeneutic--is a <u>theological</u> one; and this can only mean a <u>relational</u> one, i.e., a perspective involving the <u>interaction</u> of

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[1] Kaufman (1968), p. 38.

[2] See p. 321. Cf. Hume (1955), ch. 10.

God and man. The Humean type of criterion is misconceived and therefore unilluminating, as if one were to examine the structure of the Chinese language by imposing a grammatical grid derived from an analysis of geometry.

Ben Meyer rightly focuses this point in terms of salvation:

> In the gospels, at any rate, the supposition of the concrete possibility of miracles is fundamentally grounded in positive openness to a divine act of salvation as the intelligible context of the miraculous. If the salvific context is overlooked, the concrete possibility of miracles evaporates.[1]

Hume's wilful abstraction of miracle from the "salvific context" leads to the same kind of error in understanding as his abstraction (examined in our section on Whitehead) of "impressions" from their subject-object context and of successive moments from the flow of space-time.[2] Biblical miracle occurs in the realm of faith; and faith, understood in Judeo-Christian terms, has to do with the personal relationship of God and man. It is faith that is operating when a person in particular circumstances reaches out to his or her Creator and Redeemer and asks for help or cooperation of some specific kind either by way of prayerful request or of authoritative command in the Lord's name directed to the immediate situation. God may choose to respond in many different manners, of which one is what we call a miracle, where the Creator acts on material nature with creative power. Such an act does not disrupt nature's laws; God is

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[1] Meyer (1979), p. 101.

[2] See above, pp. 260 - 265.

faithful, not capricious, and these laws, which he has decreed, remain altogether in force. What does happen is that the Creator chooses to act on this occasion--even while continuing to sustain the universe in its "normal" causality--in a mode beyond what we call the natural and yet in terms of the natural, that is, physically; and he does so in response to a human act of faith, which always also is an act of spiritual authority done in the Lord's name.[1] Therefore, such an act does not disrupt human nature either, nor encroach on human freedom; on the contrary, it is a divine response to a human initiative--one that is itself a response to a divine initiative--of which the aim is salvific and liberating.

Miracles in the New Testament, quintessentially in the life of Jesus and also in the early Church, are a manifestation of the divine-human relationship, where God by his Spirit acts through the faith of a human person to show his power, mercy, and judgment in response to that person's specific and expressed request or command. Nothing is less heteronomous than a miracle, for in these cases the human agent speaks with God-given authority, truly as a son or daughter of God, acting in free and obedient coordination with the Creator and Redeemer of the world. To talk of miracles as "intrusions" or "authoritarian interferences" is fundamentally to misunderstand what they--and

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[1] Cf., e.g., Ex. 14:13-16, 21; I Kings 17: 20-22; 18:36; Jn. 11:41-43; Acts 3:6-7; 4:29-30; 9:33f., 40; 13:8-11; 16:16-18; 19:11-16.

the gospel--are all about. Miracles demonstrate communion between God and man, effective by grace through faith, and cooperation between the personal God and human persons to bring wholeness--spiritual, psychological, and physical--to those who long to be saved and who sense or realize their need for divine succour. They are dramatic examples of human dominion over the creation, as this Adamic dominion has been restored through Christ and is embraced and exercised by reconciled and faithful men and women. Here we see evidence of the already present eschatological Kingdom of God, where the Lord Jesus Christ reigns in life and those who are his share his glory.[1]

After healing the cripple at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath, Jesus says to the scandalized Pharisees: "My Father is working still, and I am working." (John 5:17) His "works" or "signs" are presented in the Gospel of John as highly focused expressions of God's providence, of which the incarnate Son of God is himself the absolute manifestation. God's providential care continues, even after the initial work of creation has been completed. "If I am not doing the works of my Father," Jesus declares later, "then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." (John 10:37) And Peter's first miracle at the Beautiful Gate shows that this mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son

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[1] See above, pp. 129 f.

has now, with the coming of the Spirit, been extended to the disciples, as Jesus had foretold (Jn. 7:38f.; 17:22f.), so that God's providential work, ordered to his redemptive work of new creation, will be carried on in Jesus's name by the Church, which will do "greater works" than Jesus himself did while in the flesh (Jn. 14:12):

> But Peter said, 'I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.' And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up he stood and walked and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. (Acts 3:6-8)

Such communion and cooperation, for the very reason that it is personal, must be expressed concretely and involve interaction between the two parties. This is why we must say that "non-interventionist" theology, if it still presumes to call itself Christian, is illogical. The Judeo-Christian God <u>by definition</u> acts specifically in history, because his purpose from the beginning, as the whole biblical story of salvation confirms, is to call to himself a human community and with it to rule the rest of creation. The heart of this purpose is fellowship-in-love, as the Trinitarian God shares his Life with men; and fellowship-in-love that is not particular is nothing. The logical implication of this, exhibited precisely in the historical/narrative (as opposed to the philosophical/discursive) character of God's self-revelation in Scripture (<u>pace</u> Kant) and manifested consummately in the Incarnation itself, is that the Judeo-Christian God is determined to enter into verbal and physical relationships with

his human creatures, for the simple reason that men, as personal beings of a human kind, are verbal and physical, so that to know and love them must somehow involve language and flesh. Hence a "god" that does not "intervene" specifically in human affairs cannot be this God, because he cannot love. Love involves personal relation, personal relation involves action, and action is particular, not general.

The illogicality of the "non-interventionist" position.

Now it is perfectly true, as Kaufman maintains, that our concepts of God are imaginative constructs worked out in analogy with human experience. But his assumption that no actual experience-of-the-personal-God-as-he-reveals-himself can lie behind the concepts, is unwarranted, especially in the light of what our earlier examination showed about the emergence of the concept of person as a consequence and corollary of revelation. The biblical self-disclosure of God as the loving Creator-Redeemer wanting to be in covenant relation with men did not correspond to any prior human concept of the nature of God, as Kaufman suggests it must have done;[1] it cut across all prior concepts and either corrected or overturned them. Jesus Christ himself is not a concept, and to the extent that one considers him in any way to be revelatory of God, one has thereby made of philosophical theology a function of revelation and not the other

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[1] Kaufman (1968), 1977 Preface, p. xvii.

way around, as Kaufman would have it. It is perfectly proper to talk of the uniformity of God's action towards the world if one is speaking about a metaphysical principle; but to call such a God the Christian God of love is a nonsense, because the concept of a God who acts uniformly towards every part of his creation and who also wills to be in fellowship with human persons, is unintelligible. A quotation like the following one from Kaufman's God the Problem brings out well the fundamental opposition between a "non-interventionist" conception of providence, based on an extra-biblical understanding of God and of his purpose in creation and salvation, and a Christian conception, rooted in the reality of a divine-human love-relationship experienced by persons in an ongoing and concrete way through Christ in the Holy Spirit:

> It must be admitted that the doctrine of providence here entailed is more austere than the pietistic views often found in Christian circles. God's subordinate acts here are governed largely by his overarching purposes and ultimate objectives, not simply by the immediate needs or the prayerful pleas of his children. This is no God who 'walks with me and talks with me' in close interpersonal communion, giving his full attention to my complaints, miraculously extracting me from difficulties into which I have gotten myself by invading nature and history with ad hoc rescue operations from on high.[1]

And later, in a similarly non-Christian manner, he writes:

> The partner in the dialogue with God is not the individual man but the human species as a whole; and the complex of memories out of which the image or conception of God is formed is not grounded simply in the private experience of the lonely individual: it is,

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[1] Kaufman (1972), p. 146.

> rather, the precipitate of a long cultural history and a gradually cumulating tradition.[1]

In contrast to this we may cite Hans urs von Balthasar:

> For Christianity has shed the light of love over humanity and in this light the unique worth of every individual person is made manifest....For God, in his boundless involvement, has indeed always the individual in mind (though all in community are just as much his preoccupation); and as he moves towards the individual, so he lights up his unique dignity as a person.

And von Balthasar concludes with a warning:

> But should the source of God's gracious involvement fall into oblivion, then sooner or later, the face of the person will become indistinct, and he will sink back once more into mere anonymity.[2]

It is arguable that the rationalist tendency in traditional Western Christian thought, which, with respect to the doctrine of the imago Dei, we discussed in III.3, provided the soil in which the deistic and undifferentiated conception of God's relation to the world could emerge and grow into prominence from the Seventeenth Century onwards. Had the doctrine of providence been more strongly and consciously rooted in the reality and consequent notion of the intimate relationship of God with man as set forth in the first chapter of Genesis and revealed fully and made effectual for us in Jesus Christ, the so-called "cosmological dualism" of the Bible, which in fact knitted God

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[1] Ibid., p. 166. The existence of such a "precipitate", and of conceptions of God arising out of it, is not here being denied. But this "precipitate" is made up of many individual experiences of dialogue with God. The "human species as a whole" is a conceptual abstraction; and no conceptual abstraction can possibly be in dialogue with God.

[2] von Balthasar (1975), pp. 58f.

and the world together dynamically and coherently, might not have given place to the sharp dichotomy of the empirical and the moral/spiritual spheres, with its disregard of the comprehensive category of the personal. It is this dichotomy that rationalistically minded theologians have used as a basis on which to set science and revelation in opposition and to argue for a concept of a non-intervening God whose providence towards all creatures, from sub-atomic particles to human beings, is uniform and impersonal.

We have seen that the logic (and experience) of the Christian gospel points in the opposite direction. In the Old Testament, we are given a picture of a God who discloses his will and purposes in acts and also in words. With the Incarnation, this is expressed in the lapidary phrase, kai ho logos sarx egeneto kai eskēnōsen on ēmin. (John 1:14a; cf. Heb. 1:1f.) Jesus Christ--Emmanouēl--(Matthew 1:23; cf. Isa. 7:14) "walked and talked" with men, the Gospels tell us. After Pentecost God acted through the Holy Spirit--the Spirit of the Father and of Jesus-- who manifested himself in and through the Church in diverse ways, including words of prophecy and revelation and miraculous works of power, as he had done through Jesus during his earthly ministry.[1] Throughout the Bible God's words and acts go together; indeed, the acts without the words could not really

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[1] E.g., Acts 2:22; 3:6-8, 16; 4:29f.; 5:12-16; 8:13, 29, 39; 9:3-7; 10:3-20, 38, 44-46; 11:12; 13:2; 14:8-10, 27; 15:4, 28; 16:7, 16ff.; 18:9; 19:11-17; 20:23; 21:4, 11; 27:23f.; 28:8f.; I Cor. 2:4f.; 12:4-11; Ro. 15:18f.; I Thess. 1:5.

be revelatory, since acts in themselves do not disclose their own significance. James Barr, arguing against a one-sided emphasis on God's acts, writes:

> The acts of God are meaningful because they are set within this frame of verbal communication. God tells us what he is doing, or tells his servants the prophets (Amos 3:7). A God who acted in history would be a mysterious and supra-personal fate if the action was not linked with this verbal communication....All assertions of the personal nature of the God who deals in history make hidden borrowings from the account of this verbal conversation.[1]

Bertil Albrektson makes the same point by showing that the Old Testament narrators do not come to a knowledge of Yahweh's aims by meditating upon past events but through the disclosure prior to the events of God's promises and goal.[2] Not acts in history but words about acts in history reveal God's will and purpose. It is true, as Maurice Wiles says, appealing to Albrektson, that the idea of historical events as divine revelation is common in the ancient Near East;[3] what is not common, as Albrektson points out and Wiles fails to report, is the preponderant place given in the Hebrew Scriptures to divine speaking, through dreams, oracles, and prophetic utterance. This speaking, while not absolutely distinctive in form (in other Near Eastern cultures the deity also speaks to men on occasion), is

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[1] Barr (1966), pp. 77, 78.

[2] Albrektson (1967), p. 119. This exegetical fact alone points up the inadequacy of doctrines of providence based on a metaphysical analysis of the way God is supposed to act generally in the world.

[3] Wiles (1986), p. 8; cf. Albrektson (1967), ch. 6.

strikingly distinctive in content, encompassing a range of specific revelation far beyond anything found in the religious experience of neighbouring peoples.

It should be clear by now that if one reinterprets all of this biblical material in terms of a philosophically unwarranted and theologically cavalier assertion that "such things cannot happen" and that the reports of them are on a par with myth, one cannot responsibly go on calling one's theology "Christian", since in that case the heart of Christianity--i.e., God's love for men as seen in his desire for personal relationship with them, a desire made fully manifest and possible in and through Jesus Christ--will have been abandoned. It is crucial to see the illogicality of the non-interventionist position, the methodological consequences of which we shall be looking at shortly. There is no demonstrable reason why the Judeo-Christian revelation cannot be and is not true. God may very well have acted towards, with, and through men in the way the Bible tells us he has done. If he has in fact done so, then ongoing and concrete interaction between the Creator and his human creature is normative and cannot be exchanged for the "master act" scheme of Kaufman or the Wilesian notion of "responsiveness", whereby man, confronting God's creation,[1] responds more or less adequately to it and grasps (somehow) more or less fully the

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[1] What good grounds might Wiles have, barring revelation, for believing it to be God's creation? Kant, in the First Antinomy, shows us conclusively that he can have none.

divine intention in it.[1] Indeed, Wiles's concept actually presupposes what he wishes to deny, that is, the particularity of God's action towards the world, for the very possibility of having the idea of "divine intention" implies prior specific revelation on God's part. We will discuss this further in VI.7.

What we wish to stress here is the inconsistency of talking about a God acting towards the world, including human beings, at one and the same time uniformly and with loving intentionality. Personal relationship must involve mutual act and response, in word and deed, between parties. It is just such personal relationship between God and man that Christianity is about. The Christian life is a matter of ongoing reciprocal action in the Holy Spirit between God and human persons made in his image and redeemed in Christ: both parties speak, listen, and act, in diverse ways and according to changing circumstances, and will continue to do so for all eternity. This is the Christian gospel. It is the implicate and outworking of the Incarnation, and the essential meaning of redemption. The offer of this communion is available to all, in and through Jesus Christ. In this sense God acts with uniformity, i.e., impartially, towards human beings. The offer is not imposed heteronomously, nor does God play favourites; there is particularity but no "special treatment" (the two are not to be confused). God's salvation, available to all who desire it, will be worked out differently in

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[1] See Wiles (1986), p. 108; and (1976), pp. 137-143.

the life of each person. As in a human family, the father is father equally to all, but with each child he has a special relationship. We are free to enter into communion with the Trinitarian God as little or as deeply as we will, according to the measure of our faith.[1] In this way, and in no other, is it possible to "verify experientially" our knowledge of God:

> So Jesus answered them, 'My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me; if any man's will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. He who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but he who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood...'[2]

"Reason" as the sole basis for authority, resulting in arbitrary interpretation.

Here we must briefly address the question of authority and then examine its connection with certain hermeneutical and methodological issues in the thought of Kaufman and Wiles. John's Gospel stresses that Jesus did not speak on his own authority. Though himself the Son and very Image of God, he

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[1] E.g., Mt. 9:2, 22, 29; 15:28; 17:20; 21:21, with parallels in Mark and Luke; Ro. 12:3; et passim.

[2] John 7:16-18. See above, p. 328; cf. p. 317, where we refer to Kaufman's insistence on the "practical value" of the "available" God. Kaufman's idea and the idea expressed by Jesus in John 7:16-18 are altogether different: in the one case, the human imagination constructs a concept of "God", and this is claimed to be socially useful; in the other case, God's reality is assumed and we are asked to "prove" Jesus's authority and its source in God by practical obedience to God's revealed will--and this "proof", we are assured, will give an experiential knowledge of God.

pointed away from himself to his Father, the God of whom he was the Image. As the sent One, he referred to the Sender, from whom his being as the incarnate Son, his authority, and his message, were all derived. On what authority does Kaufman make his revolutionary proposals?

We have seen that he rejects the traditional way of theologizing as authoritarian. In its place, in keeping with Enlightenment principles of autonomy and criticism, he puts his own reason:[1]

> Though we reject the answers (and even the formulations of the questions) which they [earlier philosophies and theologies] give us, it is just through grappling with such questions and answers that we come to those which we regard as more accurate....His criticism of other positions does not mean that the philosopher is an arrogant and condescending dogmatist who proclaims that he alone has the final truth. The necessity for criticism is implied by our conclusion that the criteria of truth are relative and subjective: in any given moment, the only truth a man can know is that which in fact he knows...[2]

This principle applies as much to the Christian tradition as to anything else:

> The question, then, of who Jesus is (or was) and how we should interpret him theologically must be entirely and explicitly our decision. It is not something predetermined for us by tradition....Our theology must be our own constructive work.[3]

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[1] Cf. Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" (1963, ed. Beck), p. 3: "Sapere aude! 'Have courage to use your own reason!'--that is the motto of enlightenment."

[2] Kaufman (1960), p. 92.

[3] Kaufman (1981), pp. 125f.

It is not that Kaufman thinks it possible or advisable to start exactly from scratch; he recognizes that for much of Western history Jesus

> has been taken to be in some way normative for understanding both who God is and what we humans are, and this import has become constitutive for the very concepts with which we think about these matters.[1]

What he does think, on the basis of his epistemological theory and the "constructivist" method arising from it, is that he has a right and responsibility to reinterpret the tradition freely, according to modern perspectives on reality. He comes up with a kind of scissors-and-paste theology, of which the Christological element is determined by his updated Liberal conviction that to interpret the figure of Jesus Christ rightly we must make a sharp distinction between history and myth in the traditional account of him. Here Kaufman relies on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century historical studies, which enable us to perform this task, he declares, "in a way that earlier generations could not".[2] With respect to the resurrection, for example, we know today that the "alleged appearances" of Jesus after his death, from which the hypothesis of the resurrection was inferred, "were in fact a series of hallucinations produced by the wishful thinking of Jesus' former disciples."[3] The appearances must be

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[1] Ibid., p. 127.

[2] Ibid., pp. 139f. The results of these "historical studies" are, of course, constantly being revised.

[3] Kaufman (1968), p. 422.

"theologically interpreted";[1] when this is done, it will be seen that whereas the crucifixion's significance lies in its own specific character, the significance of the resurrection lies in that "to which it refers", which is "the real facts" of Jesus's life and death and not any alleged facts about a "resurrected body".[2] "Since Christian faith," he writes later,

> depends on belief in the continuity of God's act before, in, and after the death of Jesus, not the continuation of Jesus' personality, I argued that contemporary historical reinterpretation of the reports about Jesus' resurrection, far from being fatal to Christian faith, actually clarifies its real import. For the meaning of the historical event in which faith was born, which is traditionally designated as 'Jesus' resurrection', is that God's work redeeming mankind is effectively continuing, not that there were certain peculiar happenings to a man named Jesus.[3]

The "continuity of God's act" and the "continuation of Jesus' personality" are thus arbitrarily severed from each other, the latter simply being denied, so that we are not surprised to learn that although

> contemporary reconstruction of Jesus' resurrection clarifies the ultimate convictions of Christian faith about God's nature, will, and activity, it completely undermines the traditional basis for hope for individual life after death.[4]

This last conclusion fits with what we saw earlier to be

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[1] Ibid., p. 425.

[2] Ibid., p. 434, note 43.

[3] Ibid., p. 468.

[4] Ibid.

Kaufman's rather Stoic view of particularity and the individual.[1] It does not, as he recognizes, fit with the biblical and traditional view, which, while strongly emphasizing the corporate significance of Jesus's resurrection, lays equal stress on individual resurrection through participation in the risen Christ.[2] Clearly, if one does not believe that God acts specifically in historical situations, or that he truly wishes and is able to "walk and talk" with men and women in personal relationship during this earthly life, one will hardly have any grounds or even inclination to believe that he will somehow have communion with individual human beings in a life after death. What is not clear is how, if neither Jesus nor those who believe in him are raised from the dead, it could still be reasonable to believe in providence in any Christian sense or in God as the living and merciful Father of mankind, "made known in Christ as one who willingly gives of himself for man's sake".[3] Kaufman's distasteful attack on traditional belief in life after death as being in fact unbelief, an expression of men's "lingering desire to establish and preserve themselves, to be their own masters,"[4] does nothing to reassure us that his own irrational form of

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[1] See above, pp. 336 f.

[2] Cf., e.g., Lk. 23:43; Jn. 6:38-40; Ro. 6:5; I Cor. 6:14; 15:12-23; Phil. 3:10-11; I Thess. 4:13-18; I Peter 1:3-5; I Jn. 3:2; Rev. 20:4-15.

[3] Kaufman (1968), p. 469.

[4] Ibid., pp. 469f.

fideism is a more respectable stance. If the man who of all men most passionately believed in God as loving Father, as defender of the weak, as the Almighty who would overthrow evil and establish his Kingdom and share it with his children--if this man, who also publicly declared his belief and gave his life to demonstrate it, ended his career in torment nailed to a cross, rejected alike by men and by God, it seems reasonable to suggest that his faith was misguided and that trust in God as a caring Father is unwarranted. To believe in Jesus's resurrection is not wish-fulfilment; rather is it wish-fulfilment to have "faith" in a "loving Father" if there is no resurrection. It is not those who, as eye-witnesses or as believers in the reports of eye-witnesses, put their faith in the risen Christ, whom we may accuse of wishing to "preserve themselves, to be their own masters"; rather is it those who, like Kaufman, arbitrarily reinterpret the biblical texts and the whole Judeo-Christian tradition, on the basis of nothing more than their private assent to a prevailing empiricist-historicist norm of "truth". If Kaufman appears to be, in theory, dismissive of "the private experience of the lonely individual", in practice he accords him a creative potency and authority that are little short of god-like.

We shall make three futher critiques of this position: hermeneutical, methodological, and theological.

VI.6

Hermeneutical critique.
The problem of the "authoritative" present.

The quotations from Kaufman in the preceding section show his conviction that contemporary understanding of reality is superior to that of past ages. As the modern scientific view of the world is more accurate than earlier mythological views, so, thinks Kaufman, the modern theologian's interpretation of Scripture is more perspicacious and credible than the traditional interpretations, which took for granted the historical and metaphysical reliability of the texts. This view is historicist and is based on the modern consciousness of cultural relativity, as this consciousness is combined with the more dubious assumption that expanding historical and scientific awareness has led and will continue to lead to greater insight into and knowledge of all aspects of reality. D. F. Strauss adumbrated this view in the last century, when he wrote that biblical interpretation will be <u>partial</u> if it insists on seeing only the original signification of the records, <u>impartial</u>

> if it unequivocally acknowledges and openly avows that the matters narrated in these books must be viewed in a light altogether different from that in which they were regarded by the authors themselves. This latter method, however, by no means involves the entire rejection of the religious documents; on the contrary, the essential may be firmly retained, whilst the unessential is unreservedly abandoned.[1]

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[1] Strauss (1973), p. 40.

Strauss's historicism is idealist, in that he uses a Hegelian philosophical schema to argue that it is humanity, not Christ, in which the union of the divine and human natures is embodied.[1] The phenomenal history of the individual, Jesus, in which this idea of the God-man union was focused and made available to faith, is only a starting point for the mind and has, in its historical dress, now become obsolete and inessential, "the faint image of a dream which belongs only to the past, and does not, like the idea, share the permanence of the Spirit which is absolutely present to itself."[2] Although Kaufman would not espouse Strauss's idealism as such, he has incorporated into his own thought key notions in this schema such as the upward evolutionary movement of history, the primacy of humanity over the individual, and the privileged position of the present over the past. Consequently he assumes, as Strauss does, that he is able to discern between the essential and the inessential in the biblical texts and that the first step in this discernment involves shedding everything "supernatural". If his own biblical interpretation is quite different from Strauss's, the premises are strikingly similar; and Kaufman's subsumption of hermeneutics under the governing notion of theology-as-imaginative-construction provides a methodological rationale not

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[1] Ibid., pp. 780f.

[2] Ibid.

only for his own theological inventions but also for those of such a thinker as Strauss.

The assumption of the superiority of the present is a basic flaw in historicist hermeneutics. It is linked with the idea of progressive stages of human development, by which the past is discounted relative to the present. But the future also must be discounted in some sense if the present is really to be superior, so in all such thinking the future is envisaged as either a projection or a perfection of the present. Eric Voegelin, in an illuminating analysis of Enlightenment thinkers such as Helvetius, d'Alembert, and Turgot, who laid the grounds for the historical positivism of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, coins the term "authoritative present" to designate this ideological perspective, which he labels "static" despite its appearance, under the concept of "progress", of dynamic unfolding and change:

> The idea of progress is, indeed, the idea of a static situation insofar as it envisages the future as 'an addition to', or 'an elaboration of' the present....Insofar as the future can bring nothing but a perfection of the values embodied in present civilization, and as the open future of man in history is transformed into a present aim projected into the future, the idea of progress is static....the idea of progress in general does not imply a scientific proposition which can be submitted to verification; it is an element in a doctrinal complex which purports to evoke the idea of an authoritative present.[1]

Kaufman, while affirming that the standpoint of the present transcends every <u>past</u> position in that it takes them all up into

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[1] Voegelin (1975), p. 84.

itself, tries to avoid the charge of absolutizing the present by pointing out that every present is relativized by becoming past in the future.[1] Yet the combined assertion of the supremacy of the present as such (even if this present will be replaced by other presents), and of the insuperable prevalence of historical relativity--the latter assertion being, after all, an affirmation of the unsurpassibility of the contemporary standpoint--vitiates his disavowal of what we might call the imperialism of the present. His position in this respect is similar to that of Ogden, when Ogden defends Bultmann's insistence on the validity of "the scientific world picture" by arguing that what is involved in this insistence is not a particular body of factual judgments concerning the world at any given time, "but rather the method whereby such judgments are arrived at and the general picture of the world which is the necessary correlate of this method."[2] It is assumed that, although contemporary factual judgments may be modified by scientific progress, the method and the accompanying world-view are valid and will remain so; and it is further assumed that therefore they must supersede all earlier epistemological methods and world-views.

If the implicit superiority, as contained in such arguments, of the present over the future, is questionable and necessarily lacks evidential grounds of any sort, the assertion of the

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[1] Kaufman (1960), pp. 122f.

[2] Ogden (1956), pp. 158f.

present's epistemological superiority to the past, on the grounds of its scientific method and of its taking up into itself all earlier positions, is no less dubious. Again, Kaufman is anxious to disavow any systematic "progress theory of the history of thought"; yet this assertion sits unconvincingly with his insistence that we do perform our historical thinking today with more comprehensiveness and adequacy.[1] It may be said that this is the case only if we are operating from an immanentist position from which transcendental reality has been arbitrarily excluded. Historicism does precisely this, but it provides no logical reason for doing so. If, however, we make the reasonable choice to suppose the (neither provable nor disprovable) existence of transcendental reality, including the reality of a personal God who acts in history and has revealed himself definitively in Jesus Christ, then we are bound to say that any historical thinking performed on the basis of a denial of this reality must be less comprehensive and adequate than historical thinking that acknowledges it. Historicism will then be seen to be quite unhistorical in its approach, despite its vaunted stress, as in Kaufman's work, on the ultimacy of the criterion of empirical history. The content of most world-history is inseparably linked with transcendental beliefs, and to operate with the a priori view that all such belief is misguided is by implication to disallow whatever wisdom older cultures might have for us and to

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[1] Kaufman (1960), pp. 122f.

rule out in advance any possible criticism that the past might make of the present. On this view, not the content of history is important, but the process, the fact of change; and this process has led up to the present, which is therefore superior to all pasts and beyond their critical reach. To adopt such an historicist attitude is to refuse to take history seriously.[1]

Having insulated itself from transcendental "interference" and, correspondingly, from criticism arising out of past world-views, historicist immanentism feels itself free to wield its own critical principle. And so Kaufman can write:

> The idea of God, thus, by calling into question everything finite--including every formulation or expression of the idea of God itself--can be a powerful instrument of criticism.[2]

It is God's "absoluteness" that is involved here, as we saw earlier; and we also saw the inherent contradiction of such a notion in so far as it is itself relative, being merely a human construct.[3] Kaufman's idea of God can be an instrument critical of everything except its own presuppositions; but this limitation vitiates its effectiveness and opens the way to the trap of idolatry. In consequence, his criticism of classical Christian theology rings hollow.

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[1] This last point I owe to Oliver O'Donovan, in his "Principles of Political Theology", a series of Lectures delivered at Oxford University, Michaelmas Term 1987: Lecture 2.

[2] Kaufman (1981), p. 87.

[3] See above, pp. 305 , 310 .

Historicist rationalism ruled out by Gadamer's notion of the "fusion of horizons".

Kaufman's historicist presumption to be able to judge past theological prejudices from the high ground of the scientifically-minded present and with the superior criterion of a demythologized viewpoint is thus seen to be hermeneutically as well as theologically naive. We have seen how Kaufman denies all authority to Christian tradition and takes only his own reason to be authoritative. This position assumes without argument the possibility and correctness of abstracting oneself from the tradition in order to be able to evaluate it objectively from outside the distorting pull of its gravity. But one is no more able to do this than to sever oneself psychologically, not to say genetically, from one's parents. Hans-Georg Gadamer's discussion of the historicality of understanding is illuminating here.[1] While authority can become authoritarianism, and tradition, traditionalism, neither, in its strict sense, is irrational, as both Enlightenment and Romantic thought supposed and as Kaufman, heir to these traditions, thinks. Authority has fundamentally to do with knowledge, i.e., with that which can be seen, in principle, to be true and to which one can reasonably assent; and tradition is essentially preservation, which is as much a freely chosen act of reason as renewal or revolution. Gadamer argues

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[1] For this discussion, see Gadamer (1975), II.2.1, esp. pp. 245ff.

that this principle frees us to take a new and perhaps more accurate look at the authority of tradition:

> At the beginning of all historical hermeneutics, then, the abstract antithesis between tradition and historical research, between history and knowledge, must be discarded. The effect of a living tradition and the effect of historical study must constitute a unity, the analysis of which would reveal only a texture of reciprocal relationships. Hence we would do well not to regard historical consciousness as something radically new--as it seems at first--but as a new element within that which has always made up the human relation to the past.[1]

There can be no question of "freeing ourselves" from, say, the Christian tradition when it comes to understanding the biblical texts at its origin. The hermeneutical circle is neither merely formal nor methodological; it describes "an ontological structural element in understanding"; and understanding itself is "the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter".[2] We cannot be without prejudices, declares Gadamer; hence "the really critical question of hermeneutics" is that "of distinguishing the true prejudices, by which we understand, from the false ones by which we misunderstand".[3] Historicism, with its keen historical consciousness, imagines that we can and must set aside our own prejudices and then overleap tradition as well, in order to get inside the skin of earlier writers. But this is neither possible nor desirable.

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[1] Ibid., p. 251.

[2] Ibid., p. 261.

[3] Ibid., p. 266.

Temporal distance, far from being a yawning abyss that we can ignore or, on the other hand, that we cannot get across, "is filled with the continuity of custom and tradition in the light of which all that is handed down presents itself to us."[1] Past texts come to us within the tradition, wherein we too stand; they address us, and understanding begins when we allow ourselves to be so addressed. This means that we suspend in principle the prejudices we inevitably have, thus placing them at risk. Only in this way can they emerge into the light in their intrinsic historicality and undergo criticism from the texts, even as they in turn subject the texts to criticism. "The naivete of so called historicism," writes Gadamer,

> consists in the fact that it does not undertake this reflection, and in trusting to its own methodological approach forgets its own historicality....The true historical object is not an object at all, but the unity of the one and the other, a relationship in which exist both the reality of history and the reality of historical understanding.[2]

We understand an historical "object" from within a situation affected by it. This means that we are connected to it fundamentally. What Gadamer calls "the principle of effective history"[3] rules out the possibility of historical objectivism; the "apparent immediacy" with which we approach an historical object is illusory, since the very questions we ask of it are

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[1] Ibid., pp. 264f.

[2] Ibid., pp. 266f.

[3] Ibid., pp. 267ff.

determined in advance by effective history. We will not ask the right questions if we are not aware of this. The historicist mentality, by ignoring this principle and thinking it can place itself objectively in the situation of a text and then reconstruct its historical horizon, not only deceives itself but disallows the possibility of receiving truth from the text, since it has already appropriated in advance and on its own terms the text's meaning.[1] There are not, as Kaufman maintains there are, two altogether distinct historical horizons, that of our present and that of tradition. "When," writes Gadamer, "our historical consciousness places itself within historical horizons,

> this does not entail passing into alien worlds unconnected in any way with our own, but together they constitute the one great horizon that moves from within and, beyond the frontiers of the present, embraces the historical depths of our self-consciousness....In fact the horizon of the present is being continually formed, in that we have continually to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing is the encounter with the past and the understanding of the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present than there are historical horizons. Understanding, rather, is always the fusion of these horizons which we imagine to exist by themselves.[2]

Historical consciousness distinguishes the horizon of tradition from its own, of course. But it is itself "only something laid over a continuing tradition, and hence it immediately recombines what it has distinguished in order, in the unity of the

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[1] Ibid., p. 270.

[2] Ibid., pp. 271, 273.

historical horizon that it thus acquires, to become again one with itself."[1]

Man's structural connection to time as complementary to his structural connection to space.

Gadamer's hermeneutical insight cuts away the ground from under Kaufman's historicist method of interpretation and his polemic against the authority of Christian tradition. We are ontologically linked with the tradition, and any attempt to dismiss its premises and construct virtually from scratch a revised Christian theology on the basis of "scientific" methodology and of so-called "objective" notions presumed to be "truer" than biblical ones, is conceptually misguided. Of course, a revised metaphysical version of biblical reality can be developed; but it has no philosophical warrant to call itself Christian. Our connection with the past, on the basis of which, in dialogue with the present, our identity may be grasped and our task in life defined as we are borne into the future, is as fundamental as our connection with objects in space, on the basis of which, as we saw in V.4-7, we can have knowledge. This temporal connection, like the spatial one, is inherent in our being made in the image of God, whereby we have been established by our Creator in ineradicable relation with the world, i.e., with space and time, over which we have been mandated to exercise

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[1] Ibid., p. 273.

authority. The structural continuum between us and our spatial environment, by reason of which knowledge and hence dominion are possible, is matched by the structural continuum between us and the past as it is carried to us by tradition.[1] Any hermeneutic that ignores this and presumes to be objectivist will end up by illegitimately distorting the meaning of past texts, through the arbitrary imposition upon them of uncriticized contemporary prejudices. The past cannot be, just as the material world around us cannot be, an object that, as detached subjects, we manipulate as if from outside. We are <u>not</u> detached subjects. We may, of course, have new perspectives on the biblical texts, and this will require us to reformulate our understanding of the truth they contain; but the application to Scripture and Christian tradition of the Cartesian methodology of doubt, on the assumption that it is possible and desirable to rid oneself of all former opinions and "to begin fresh from the foundations",[2] is an illusion, if one imagines, as Kaufman does, that one is thereby clarifying the faith and bringing out, at long last, its inner truth. Such a procedure, which operates on the presupposition that the present can be abstracted from the past,[3] leads to confusion and contradiction, as it did in the case of Descartes himself in the rather different application to which he

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[1] See above, e.g., pp. 232 f.; pp. 262 - 271; and pp. 295 f.

[2] Descartes, <u>Meditations</u> I, p. 95. See above, pp. 236 ff.

[3] Cf. above, V.6, on Whitehead's criticism of Hume's "misplaced concretion" and "presentational immediacy".

put it (cf. V.4). The abstracted elements cannot stand on their own, since their meaning is necessarily bound up with the tradition; and as a result, unavoidably, we find that into their interpretations of Christian doctrine the radical theologians smuggle older theological notions that are altogether dependent on the tradition and without which their "paradigm shifts" could not be sustained.

VI.7

Methodological critique. The myth that a "demythologized Jesus" can reveal to us a loving God.

This last point brings us to our next criticism of the non-interventionist position. "The only God we can know," writes Kaufman in his treatise on method, "....is the God that we, with the help of a long tradition developing before us, construct in our imagination as the ultimate point of reference for all life and thought and reality."[1] Traditional notions and pictures of God and the world "are created primarily to provide orientation in life; to suppose that they represent in any straightforward or one-to-one way 'how things are' is a serious mistake."[2] It is the usefulness of such concepts to human life that counts, not the reference "to some objects to which they are supposed to

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[1] Kaufman (1979), p. 27.

[2] Ibid., p. 32.

'correspond'".[1] The older theological vocabulary cannot be taken over "simply because of its importance in the tradition. It can be used only insofar as it does justice to and makes theologically intelligible our experience, as actually grasped and interpreted by us in the language of modern psychology, physics, art and ordinary life."[2] We have already seen some of the philosophical and hermeneutical problems raised by this "ground up" approach, with its assumption that in theology today traditional interpretative categories, which presuppose an objectively real and self-revealing God, must be replaced by modern ones that suppose all notions of God to be human projections and any real God that may exist to be unknowable. Kaufman sets aside theological objectivism in favour of historicist objectivism. Historicist objectivism, however, is illusory, as we have suggested, and no reasoned warrant is provided for abandoning theological objectivism in the first place. Kaufman's attempt to overcome, firstly, relativism, by absolutizing his immanentist position, and secondly, the authority of tradition, by implicitly positing (in a decidedly authoritarian manner) the "authoritative present", fails by its arbitrariness. We wish now to examine one particular methodological aspect of this arbitrariness, which appears in Wiles's work as much as in Kaufman's, and see how it vitiates the

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., pp. 60f.

authority and coherence of the theological proposals made by these thinkers.

It is on the basis of his non-interventionist and anti-supernaturalist absolute presupposition[1] that Kaufman rules out the traditional Christian understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ. But, as we saw (p. 304), he wants to retain Jesus of Nazareth as "the proper paradigm for grasping the normatively human"; and he wants to go on and say that Jesus, being this paradigm, "can also serve as a concrete model for working out our conception of God".[2] To the extent, therefore, that the qualities he attributes to God are recognizably Christian and personal (we may recall, from p. 306 , that "absoluteness" and "humaneness" are the foci of his elliptical "deity"), they derive from Jesus. But the Jesus they derive from is the demythologized Jesus, "the historical figure whom we can still discern behind the mythic picture".[3] We noted that Kaufman's high view of the scientific method in general and of biblical criticism in particular causes him to think that, the failure of earlier "historical quests" for "the real Jesus" notwithstanding, a naturalistic picture of Jesus can be made out that will contain no admixture of mythical, i.e., supernatural, elements of the kind found in the Bible and in later tradition. Furthermore, his

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[1] See above, p. 320 .

[2] Kaufman (1981), p. 144.

[3] Ibid., p. 137.

view of the epistemological superiority of the present causes him to think that this picture of Jesus will be more accurate than the biblical and traditional one.

We have suggested that Kaufman's confidence in making such assertions is ill-founded. In the New Testament accounts of Jesus, the "natural" and the "supernatural" are so intertwined that any attempt to pry them apart and then to declare the latter to be discardable can only be viewed as the crudest kind of tendentious exegesis. The myth involved here, in fact, is Kaufman's own: it is the notion that the "real Jesus" is <u>not</u> the figure portrayed in the New Testament and believed on in the Church for nearly two thousand years. This is <u>rationalism</u>'s (not reason's) myth; and despite the claims of the historicists, it flies in the face of historical experience and undermines sober historical inquiry.[1]

But there is more to be said. For if the only Jesus available to us is the real Jesus of Scripture and not the mythical Jesus of rationalistic historicism, then it is impossible to abstract from Jesus's life moral qualities considered exemplary while at the same time arbitrarily excluding

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[1] Ben Meyer shows the dilemma of the historicist who has no basis on which to exclude miracle <u>a priori</u> from his investigations but who has nonetheless pledged himself <u>as a historian</u> not to envisage the possibility of miracles. "He accordingly finds himself in a situation which does not allow him, as historian, to come to grips with history, for he cannot know whether or not the possibility he dutifully omits to consider offers the best account of a given constellation of data." (1979), p. 102.

everything "supernatural" from the one single portrait we have of him. The Jesus who meets Kaufman's approval by being self-sacrificing and forgiving is the same Jesus whom, according to Peter's Pentecost sermon reported by Luke, "God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses....God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." (Acts 2:32, 36b). Ben Meyer writes in this connection:

> The resurrection, immediately interpreted as messianic event, was seen as the divine vindication of Jesus. Consequently, it was related from the outset to the history whose climax it formed....Palestinian Christianity was nourished on the memory of Jesus.[1]

If we admire, with Kaufman, Jesus's love and refusal of hatred and violence, and if, with him, we wish to say that this is the ideal for man and that God, too, is somehow like this, the only reason we have for doing so is that God vindicated the One who supremely displayed these qualities by raising him from the dead. It is hardly conceivable that men of the First Century or of any other century would have passionately honoured such qualities and proclaimed them with effectiveness thoughout the world if the man who exemplified them had simply come to a

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[1] Meyer (1979), pp. 66, 69. See ch. 3 of Meyer's book for a careful exposition of the reasons for believing the kerygmatic Christ to be continuous with the figure of Jesus of Nazareth. Meyer insists that the Gospels "intend the past and supply data on Jesus" (p. 74); and that redaction criticism, rightly sensitive to the significance of omissions, transpositions, and additions in the Gospels, "is too often undermined by the mistake of relegating the substance of the material tradition to Christian invention." (p. 74) He also argues strongly that Paul's letters abound with echoes of Palestinian catechesis. (p. 75)

pathetic end on the cross, defeated by the power of the Romans and the Jewish religious establishment. Without the resurrection, the Jesus who manifested and taught the ethics of self-surrendering love would have faded from memory once his followers had died; and his ethics would have faded with him, for they would have been shown to be powerless--and what is powerless cannot last.

We must say, therefore, that Kaufman's scissors-and-paste theological project is irrational. The only ground for his claim that our conception of God must involve "humaneness" is the testimony in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures that such a ("humane") God has revealed himself to men by acting specifically and redemptively in the confines of history. Without this revelation, such an idea of God would not have occurred to Kaufman. But this testimony is precisely what Kaufman repudiates. Therefore his claim lacks cogency. It is perfectly proper to pick and choose elements from a metaphysical or ethical system and attempt to incorporate them into a new system of one's own devising; but such an abstracting procedure is methodologically indefensible when performed on the biblical witness concerning Jesus Christ. This is because Jesus is a historical person, not an idea, and everything doctrinal said about him in Scripture, as well as the Church dogma developed later from the biblical testimony and teaching, is inseparable from the narrated event of his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension; and this event itself is a whole that cannot be

broken up into "mythical" and "historical" bits and pieces without being falsified. Nor can such falsification properly be called "interpretation", for it denies a priori both the basic assumptions and the plain meaning of the event it presumes to "interpret".

The methodological error of treating events in terms of concepts.

"Kerygma and catechesis," writes Meyer,

> instinctively took narrative form, for salvation was conceived as 'event' rather than as 'truth'. The question for preacher and catechist was not 'What is the first principle?' but 'Where does the story begin?'.[1]

It is, at bottom, this reality, presupposing God's concrete interaction with the world, that neither Kaufman nor Wiles can accept. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, salvation is not effected by a philosophical schema or by edifying theological notions abstracted from biblical happenings and interpreted according to the categories of metaphysics or of poetic language.[2] The cross is not, as Wiles would have it, just a

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[1] Ibid., p. 70.

[2] Wiles, in (1982), esp. ch. 2, assimilates theological to poetic language, using the poetics of literary critics such as Philip Wheelwright and Eliseo Vivas. With Tillich (cf. e.g., 1951, Vol. I, pp. 238ff., 177, 271) he says that all divine actions, such as creation, providence, miracles, and incarnation, are symbols. These symbols, like metaphors, disclose existing reality and also create it, in that they fashion our way of seeing it and this changes our relation to it. Wiles's view, in the end, seems to amount to the same thing as Kaufman's: reality is a function of the human imagination. His maintenance of God's

"parable" that "points the human imagination to a vision of God as participant in the continuing conflict with evil, identifying himself at whatever cost with both the perpetrators and the victims of that evil."[1] Nor can the resurrection be understood as a kind of perspectival phenomenon that "symbolizes the conviction that God is not ultimately expendable and that therefore the seeming triumph of evil is not the last word."[2] The cross is without theological significance if the person who suffered it was not precisely the One whom his disciples later claimed him to be; their "vision" is of no consequence if it did and does not correspond to objective and knowable truth about God's act. Likewise the resurrection as merely a "symbol" of the Church's "conviction" about God's triumph over evil is of no theological interest, since any such "conviction" would have only the weakest epistemological status and would be ineffectual to bring about the reconciliation of man to God and, in consequence, of man to man. Human visions and convictions do not save; only God saves; and his salvation is as concrete and specific as are individual human beings in the actual circumstances of their lives. That is why salvation is a matter of divine acts, not of human theorems, opinions, or feelings; and why "truth", in the

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objective reality in principle does not alter this appreciation, for on his own terms there is no possible way we can know that something we may perceive to be God's will or general action in the world really is just that.

[1] Ibid., p. 72.

[2] Ibid.

Fourth Gospel, is located not in propositions but in the very Person of Jesus, the Christ; and why it is joined contextually with the terms "way" and "life", these referring likewise not to some method or discipline but to Jesus himself, who brings us into filial relationship with the Father (Jn.14:6).

Now both Kaufman and Wiles want to retain the semblance of a doctrine of salvation, in the form of immanentist concepts like "humanization" and the "realization of human potentiality", or, with Wiles, "the inspiration of goals or ideals and the vision of genuinely new possibilities".[1] The methodological problem we are seeking to highlight here is that they talk theologically about "salvation", as they talk about God's "humaneness", his "love and forgiveness", or his "purposiveness", while excluding the only reasonable basis for such talk, i.e., God's particular historical engagement with the race of Adam, culminating in the Incarnation of God's Word and the sending of the Holy Spirit after Jesus's ascension, in order to redeem fallen man and restore him to fellowship with his Creator. If the biblical and traditional view is false, then they have no right to retain its deliverances about God's nature and action and use them in remodelled theological paradigms. These deliverances follow, and follow only, from the narrated acts of a personal God who intervenes specifically in human history, not to disrupt the natural order

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[1] Kaufman (1981), pp. 48f.; 166ff.; Wiles (1982), pp. 29, 60.

but to rescue it from the unnaturalness into which sin has brought it.

God's redemptive intervention in historical reality and the presence of his Holy Spirit to the world through the Church have indeed opened up new possibilities to mankind and vastly increased the range and scope of human aspiration and activity; but it is God's redemptive intervention that has done this, not the impersonal movement of "vital cosmic forces" nor a vague human "apprehension of divine purpose".[1] If we even have concepts such as "humanizing cosmic evolution" or "divine purposiveness in history", it is because of God's specific self-revelation and salvation of mankind through his particular chosen people, Israel.[2] Kaufman and Wiles, and non-interventionist thinkers like them, trade on theological notions handed down to them by the Judeo-Christian tradition, while denying both the basis and the authority of that tradition. As long as they insist on calling themselves Christian theologians, they will be caught in contradiction, because any attempt to retain personal conceptions of God, such as that he is loving, purposeful, and forgiving, and that he identifies with man in suffering, must inevitably founder if one rejects--as they do--the revelatory and interventionist nature of the events on which these conceptions depend. Notions of this sort are not immanent in the mind of man

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[1] Kaufman (1981), p. 49; Wiles (1974), pp. 34ff.

[2] See above, p. 341.

nor available outside of the revelatory biblical events. This means that they cannot be abstracted from those events without being travestied. To appropriate them as if they were metaphysical concepts is a self-defeating exercise because they originate in personal divine activity and cannot properly function as elements in a metaphysics. If they <u>are</u> abstracted from their source, they will, as notions, die, like a tree cut off from its roots. No amount of "reconstruction" or "reinterpretation" can salvage them, because the events at their root were just that--<u>events</u>--and not transposable or replaceable human ideas. Abstracted personalistic notions about God resemble second-hand myths and provide an <u>appearance</u> of substance for a hollow theology illegitimately calling itself Christian. As <u>theological</u> conceptions, they lack authority and force, and any system of which they are a part will be fundamentally at odds with itself and incoherent. No house divided against itself can stand.

VI.8

Theological critique.
The doctrine of the Cross in non-interventionist theology.

In the course of making our final critique of the Kaufman-Wiles non-interventionist type of theology, we shall weave together the several strands of this thesis. Kaufman writes:

> The cross, understood as the profoundest symbol of God's being and action, means that God himself suffers for his creation, allowing himself to be 'despised and rejected by men' (Isa. 53:3).[1]

This statement is unintelligible if Jesus was not the incarnate Son of God. How could one who was a man like the rest of us suffer for God or show us that God suffers for us? Kaufman's move of calling the cross a symbol of God's being and action only makes sense to the extent that we tacitly fill it out with the traditional doctrine, i.e., that the cross was the place where the incarnate Son of God took upon himself, for our sake, human sin and divine judgment. No genuinely Christian doctrine of the atonement can say less than this. Kaufman's doctrine of the atonement is a <u>shadow</u>.

So is Wiles's:

> It is through the cross that he [God] is most clearly seen as the God for whom nothing is expendable except himself.[2]

What could this possibly mean if the one who died on the cross was no more than a prophet? How can a prophet's self-sacrifice

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[1] Kaufman (1968), p. 220.

[2] Wiles (1982), p. 72.

show us God's self-sacrifice? Elsewhere Wiles tells us that "the death of Christ exemplifies the love of God"; it is "a demonstration of that which is eternally true about God"; and it "has been remarkably effective as a historical phenomenon in the transformation of human lives", as people have made "an appropriate response to that truth about God".[1] How could these statements be true, or even mean anything, if Christ was not the Son of God incarnate? The only reason why the association of God-talk with the cross makes any sense is that the One who died on the cross was the God-man, Jesus Christ, whom God vindicated as such by raising him from the dead. But both Kaufman and Wiles repudiate the traditional doctrines of the incarnation and the resurrection, because these involve supernatural intervention into human history. Therefore their statements about the cross are meaningless as they stand and have significance only as we supply them tacitly with the excluded traditional content.[2]

We may conclude from this that these theologians have no real doctrine of the cross, only an empty substitute that feeds parasitically on the tradition. This is "linguistic" or "literary" theology: event is translated into "symbol" and "metaphor". We have here a rationalistic perversion of apophatic theology. Indeed, not only the cross and the resurrection are symbols, but Christ himself is a symbol:

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[1] Wiles (1974), pp. 79, 80.

[2] Cf. above, p. 277, note 1.

> ...in his person as a man he [Jesus Christ] became the supreme symbol, and thus the revelation, of God's nature; and in this act of self-giving on the cross he manifested God's disposition and activity of self-sacrificial love toward mankind.[1]

One who is no more than a creature, a man made in the image of God, cannot be a symbol of the Creator, in any strict theological sense: a representation, yes, but not a symbol. He can neither stand for, point towards, nor participate in the divine in any adequate way, because, as creature, he does not partake ontologically of the uncreated divine nature. Only a bearer of the divine, only the very Image of the divine, could intelligibly be called a "symbol" of God. Since Kaufman's Christology excludes this, his statement is unintelligible on its own terms. The revelation of God's nature, we may say in the light of the New Testament, must involve the manifestation of his absolute judgment on sin and of his absolute mercy on the sinner. How could any but God himself manifest this, since it is God's work and not man's? Moreover, the universality of sin rules out any possible idea that a "great man" or a "prophet" might do God's work in God's place. Word and act go together in God's revelation, as we saw earlier;[2] without God's word, God's act is incomprehensible as such. In God's consummate self-revelation in Christ, the Word of God becomes flesh. Here indeed is God's self-giving to man, which becomes self-sacrifice in the

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[1] Kaufman (1968), p. 460.

[2] See above, pp. 338 f.

full sense on the cross. The act is real (not symbolic), revelational, and effective because here Word and Act are absolutely joined; and this conjunction is made comprehensible to us by virtue of the coming of the Spirit, who inspires the subsequent apostolic word that illuminates the prior and equally inspired prophetic word as it finds ultimate fulfilment in the life, death, and resurrection of God's Messiah. "For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy," writes John the Seer. (Revelation 19:10b)

To say that the conjunction of Word and Act in Jesus Christ is made comprehensible to us through the word of the Spirit is also to say that it is made accessible to us, such that we may enter into it personally by faith and so be reconciled and united to God; and to enter into this conjunction means to enter into Christ himself and become a member of his Body. This takes us back to the cross. The New Testament teaches that it is only possible to enter into Christ by dying to the egocentric self and to its world-determined identity, in so far as that identity claims to be basic and ultimate. Determining factors include "world-views", as these are rooted in immanent cultural reality. This reality is understood as fallen, so self-determination on the basis of it, in any epoch, must be essentially false. The truth is in Christ, who comes into historical reality from beyond it. For Kaufman and Wiles, this biblical position is itself false, because they have posited a priori the impossibility and indeed the undesirability of transcendental impingement on

cultural-historical reality. Therefore, there can be no question for them of "dying to self" in any biblical sense. The cross is methodically subordinated to the modern "world-view". Hence the "word of the cross" and the "preaching of Christ crucified" are for them foolishness (mōria) and a stumbling block: to such foolishness--"the foolishness of God", which is also God's wisdom--they prefer "the wisdom of the world". (cf. I Corinthians 1:18-25)

Not Christ but a symbol was crucified, we are told. Now it is not possible to be crucified with a symbol, as Paul writes that he was crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20). How can we personally enter into the "death" and "resurrection" of a symbol? Yet if we do not die to self and enter into Christ, how can we be saved? How can we enter into communion with God our Father? We cannot. Nor, apparently, is it necessary. Indeed, salvation and communion are also symbolical notions, not relational experiences; we must understand them aesthetically and intellectually, in terms of feelings and concepts. It is we who determine their content. In effect, we save ourselves. Kaufman and Wiles abstract from the traditional doctrine of the cross the notion that here God suffered and showed his love for us, but they do this after having first removed, by their reductionist Christology, the rational-theological grounds for thinking this. In response to "God's love", we have nothing to do except to entertain this irrational notion about God which Kaufman and Wiles propose. No real dying is required, either on God's part

(incarnate in Christ) or on man's. And of course no real communion follows. Expiation, forgiveness, and justification are equally notional. Here, truly, we are moving in a world of shadows. "New paradigm" theology is an inversion of traditional Christian doctrine. It demands that we, in our own authority, refashion the apostolic witness from the ground up to suit our natural/cultural perspective on the world; traditional doctrine, conversely, demands of us that, in repentant submission to the authority of Christ, God's Word, we die to self-as-autonomous-authority and enter into God's life, whereby we shall be transformed into the image of Christ.[1] In sum it requires that we ourselves, not the apostolic teaching, be made "new" from the ground up. This involves much suffering because, first, our struggle in Christ against the evil powers of the world is unrelenting and will continue until the Lord's return; and, secondly, the traces of our "old man", dead on the cross with Christ, are painful to eliminate.[2] But of such suffering, especially as it is related to that combined work of the cross and the Spirit which brings about the renewal of the inner man, we find scarcely a word in non-interventionist theology. This is only to be expected, since the cross has been made into a shadow--and not only the cross, but the Spirit too.

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[1] See above, pp. 120 ff.

[2] See above, pp. 134 ff.

The doctrine of the Spirit in non-interventionist theology.

The eschatological reality of the "new creation" (II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15)--God's regenerate people justified, being transformed, and destined to share in Christ's glory--is wholly the work of the Spirit, who makes us participants in Christ, whose work on our behalf was completed at the cross and confirmed at the resurrection. Having discovered that Kaufman and Wiles have no real theology of the cross, we are not surprised to find that their theology of the Spirit is correspondingly weak. Kaufman, predictably, has had little to say about the Spirit since his conversion to the theology of "imaginative construction", as described in the 1977 Preface to his Systematic Theology. As for Wiles, he writes that "speaking of God working by the way of love through the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit" is "a way of speaking of the cumulative effect upon us of all those influences for good that by God's providence are available to us in the world".[1] Most especially, he holds, we are made aware from time to time of "an eternal divine purpose" for the world, and it is this sort of religious experience that gives rise "to talk about grace and about the Holy Spirit" and that justifies traditional religious language.[2] But Wiles insists that in no case of such religious experience--whether it be through Scripture, the sacraments, or prayer--ought we to

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[1] Wiles (1974), p. 96.

[2] Ibid., p. 101.

think that here "some special supernatural causation is to be looked for".[1] This assertion is directly counter to the teaching in the New Testament, where the Spirit is portrayed from the start as an active personal Agent manifesting himself objectively and particularly (but never heteronomously) upon, in, and through Jesus and later the disciples, the members of his Body, the Church. If, as Wiles maintains, there can be no relationship between God and man involving interaction of a personal kind, in word and deed, then, of course, the Holy Spirit, by whom such relationship is made possible, must be reduced to "a way of speaking" about vague feelings of divine purposiveness in the world. Wilesian man is like the "natural man" (psuchikos de anthrōpos) of whom Paul speaks, who "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness (mōria) unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned". (KJV I Corinthians 2:14) The cross being foolishness, it follows that "the things of the Spirit of God" will be foolishness also.

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[1] Ibid., p. 102.

VI.9

Concluding summary remarks.

It is by God's once-for-all act in Christ at the cross that fellowship between the Creator and his prodigal sons and daughters is restored; and it is by God's continuous action in the Church through the Holy Spirit that this fellowship is maintained. If specific divine action in the world cannot occur, then obviously the doctrines of the cross and of the Spirit must be emptied of their objective and relational evangelical meaning and turned into features of what we have called the myth of rationalism.[1] And the same, of course, must be said of all other biblical doctrines. To the extent that we still find in the thought of Kaufman and Wiles a traditional Christian flavour, it is because they themselves (and perhaps their readers too) import into their theological schemas, half-consciously and inconsistently, some of the traditional meaning formally excluded by their presuppositions.[2] These presuppositions, we have argued, are incompatible with those of Scripture. Wiles's "shift of basic paradigm" and Kaufman's "ground up" methodology entail

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[1] See above, p. 363 .

[2] This is to be expected if one thinks, as we do, that Gadamer's hermeneutic, with its stress on the continuum of tradition and the fusion of horizons, corresponds more to the multi-levelled complexity and movement of history than does historicism of the sort we have been looking at, with its assumption of "cultural totalities" and of the epistemological superiority of the present. Cf. Nineham (1976) for an extended exposition of such an historicist view.

doctrines that can no longer properly be called Christian. We make this claim on the basis of our foregoing analysis of the doctrines of the imago Dei and of the Trinity. These we take to be the anthropological and theological poles of a Christian doctrine of providence. Such a doctrine is concerned with God's relation to his created world, of which we are ourselves a part. The heart of the doctrine is the concept of personal relation. It is our contention that any adequate understanding of providence must be rooted in God's self-revelation to the people of Israel, which came to its consummate focus and fulfilment when God the Son actually took flesh and became man. On such a view the eschatological gift of the Spirit to the Church for the sake of the world can then properly be understood as the concrete and all-illuminating expression of God's providence.[1] Herein lies our hope.

To exclude a priori the possibility of specific divine action in space-time reality is to reduce providence to the status of a philosophical concept. This act of reduction itself is without rational warrant, though, of course, it is perfectly rational in principle to hold a view of providence as a philosophical concept, as the Greek and Roman Stoics did. For a metaphysician, such a view may yield interesting results. For a theologian to think this way, however, is, we believe, a disastrous error. This is because the God of the Judeo-Christian

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[1] See above, pp. 131 , 334 .

tradition is personal, the Creator and Redeemer of personal human beings made in his own image. To be personal, we have argued, essentially involves being in relationship with other reality. Loving communion, a reciprocal giving and receiving, is the form this relationship takes between personal beings: absolutely and mysteriously within the Triune Godhead, graciously between God and man. That which is personal is specific, so that the exclusion of specific interaction between God and human beings can only lead progressively to a concept of God as remote, impersonal, conceptual, and finally unknowable. Since, as we contended, the concept of the personal arises from the Judeo-Christian God's revelation of himself as related in love to man, the loss of the concept of this personal God, which must follow on the repudiation of the concept of revelation in the biblical sense, will inevitably have grave social consequences, removing all rational grounds for transcendental hope and reversing the movement towards freedom and human dignity that characterizes societies deeply influenced by the Judeo-Christian tradition. It is ironic indeed that theologians who so cherish the ideals of justice and freedom for all men, should be indifferent to their source in the Scriptures as understood in the traditional sense, that is, as an account of God's gracious and particular intervention into human affairs to redeem mankind from the slavery of sin and death.

And so we bring our discussion to a close. Providence, we believe, can be made an intelligible notion to modern man, split

as he is between self-sufficiency on the one hand and a sense of the darkness and contingency of human life and death on the other: but this can only be done in terms of the grace of God manifest in the Judeo-Christian history of salvation. Apart from that grace and without that personal ground, it must appear a speculative notion with little plausibility or practical force, one that will prove easy prey to fatalistic philosophies of determinism or of chance. Philosophical theology can be useful in elaborating a doctrine of providence to the extent that its primary reference and root remains this grace as it has been and continues to be demonstrated in specific historical divine acts whose intention and effect are to save fallen men and restore them to fellowship with their Creator and with each other. Men thus saved and restored by grace become co-workers with God and potent agents themselves of divine providence within society and the natural world, as they carry out the task of the race of Adam to exercise dominion in the earth. Clearly the Church is at the heart of this enterprise: the Church understood as redeemed and Spirit-filled humanity gathered in Christ to worship and serve the risen Lord, the Lamb whom God provided for our redemption and eternal life.

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