

HANS URS
VON BALTHASAR

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

A THEOLOGICAL
AESTHETICS

I: SEEING THE FORM

IGNATIUS ♦ CROSSROAD

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

Hans Urs von Balthasar

THE GLORY OF THE LORD:
A THEOLOGICAL AESTHETICS

By Hans Urs von Balthasar

VOLUMES OF THE COMPLETE WORK

Edited by Joseph Fessio, S.J., and John Riches

1. *Seeing the Form*
2. *Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles*
3. *Studies in Theological Style: Lay Styles*
4. *The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity*
5. *The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age*
6. *Theology: The Old Covenant*
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THEOLOGIC

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HANS URS VON BALTHASAR

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Translated by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis
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La sombra que hace al alma la lámpara de la hermosura de Dios será otra hermosura al talle y propiedad de aquella hermosura de Dios. . . . Gusta la gloria de Dios en sombra de gloria que hace saber la propiedad y talle de la gloria de Dios.

JUAN DE LA CRUZ

Je puis bien aimer l'obscurité totale; mais si Dieu m'engage dans un état à demi obscur, ce peu d'obscurité qui y est me déplaît, parce que je n'y vois pas le mérite d'une entière obscurité. C'est un défaut, et une marque que je me fais une idole de l'obscurité, séparée de l'ordre de Dieu. Or il ne faut pas adorer que son ordre.

PASCAL

Wodurch sollen wir den erbitterten Geist der Schrift versöhnen? "Meynst du, dass ich Ochsenfleisch essen wolle und Blocksblut trinken?" Weder die dogmatische Gründlichkeit pharisäischer Orthodoxen, noch die dichterische Üppigkeit sadducäischer Freygeister wird die Sendung des Geistes erneuern, der die heiligen Menschen Gottes trieb (εὐχαίτως ἀκαίτως) zu reden und zu schreiben.

HAMANN

FOREWORD

We here attempt to develop a Christian theology in the light of the third transcendental, that is to say: to complement the vision of the true and the good with that of the beautiful (*pulchrum*). The introduction will show how impoverished Christian thinking has been by the growing loss of this perspective which once so strongly informed theology. It is not, therefore, our intent to yield to some whim and force theology into a little travelled side-road, but rather to restore theology to a main artery which it has abandoned. But this is in no sense to imply that the aesthetic perspective ought now to dominate theology in the place of the logical and the ethical. It is true, however, that the transcendentals are inseparable, and that neglecting one can only have a devastating effect on the others. In the name of our general concerns, therefore, we recommend that this attempt—and the present book neither can nor intends to be anything else—not be dismissed *a priori* as ‘aestheticism’, but that the reader first listen to what really is being argued for.

The first volume must make its way slowly toward our actual concerns in an introduction which deals both substantively and historically with the subject. Its main section then treats the question of theological knowledge first as concerning its subjective structure and then with regard to its presuppositions in the theological object. The fact that in this way many things come into view which are normally dealt with by so-called ‘fundamental theology’ should not give the impression that we are here developing a fundamental theology, which would be distinct from and even opposed to dogmatics. The very direction of our reflections will rather endeavour to convince the reader of the inseparability of both aspects of theology.

But even this does not yet appear to be enough to pave the way to our actual concern, which is the confrontation of beauty and revelation in dogmatic theology. As a way into this subject, the second volume provides an historical substantiation and demonstration that, at the same time, complements the first volume. This volume will not give a continuous history

of theological aesthetics, such as Edgar de Bruyne has written for the Middle Ages, but rather a series of monographs on those who have most characteristically moulded theology from Irenaeus to the present time, a series offering a typology of the relationship between beauty and revelation. Formally, such a relationship is infinitely variable, but, taken as a whole, our view shows that there neither has been nor can be any intrinsically great and historically fruitful theology which has not been conceived and born under the constellation of the *kalon* and of *charis*.

The third volume will be devoted in the main to the confrontation between philosophical and theological aesthetics. This volume will have to work out thoroughly many things which in the first volume remained unsubstantiated. We will, therefore, have to: 1. examine the nature of 'glory' (as transcendental beauty) in the context of Western metaphysics (including its poetic, philosophic, and religious manifestations); 2. compare our results with 'glory' in both the Old and the New Testaments; and 3. sketch the manner in which our study leads on into an ecumenical theology (Byzantium—Rome—Wittenberg). By way of an appendix, we will also have to consider the question of Christian art.

If all beauty is objectively located at the intersection of two moments which Thomas calls *species* and *lumen* ('form' and 'splendour'), then the encounter of these is characterized by the two moments of beholding and of being enraptured. The doctrine of the beholding and perceiving (*Wahrnehmen*¹) of the beautiful ('aesthetics' in the sense of the *Critique of Pure Reason*) and the doctrine of the enrapturing power of the beautiful are complementarily structured, since no one can really behold who has not also already been enraptured, and no one can be enraptured who has not already perceived. This holds equally for the theological relationship between faith and grace, since, in giving itself, faith apprehends the form of revelation, while grace has from the outset transported the believer up into God's world. For this reason the first and third volumes of this work constantly refer back to one another.

In order to maintain the right balance, a 'theological aesthetics' should be followed by a 'theological dramatics' and a 'theological logic'. While the first of these has as its object primarily the perception of the divine self-manifestation, the 'dramatics' would have as primary object the content of this perception—which is God's dealings with man—and the 'logic' would define as its object the divine (or more exactly: the human-divine, and

therefore already theological!) *manner of expressing* God's activity. Only then would the *pulchrum* appear in its rightful place within the total ordered structure, namely as the manner in which God's goodness (*bonum*) gives itself and is expressed by God and understood by man as the truth (*verum*). It was not in already articulated sayings that God gave the first commandment of faith to Abraham. What Abraham perceived was the truth of a divine *deed* on his behalf, a deed which became interpreted as a human saying perhaps only centuries later. What we are saying here is not the same as Faust's and Fichte's 'in the beginning was the Deed'—since the drama between God and man is itself already *logos*, meaning, word—but in the sense of a word that happens, a word that possesses one dimension more than the word that is witness.

The overall scope of the present work naturally remains all too Mediterranean. The inclusion of other cultures, especially that of Asia, would have been important and fruitful. But the author's education has not allowed for such an expansion, and a superficial presentation of such material would have been dilettantism. May those qualified come to complete the present fragment.

Hans Urs von Balthasar

PREFACE

The publication in English of the first part of von Balthasar's theological trilogy perhaps justifies a short note on the history of its translation. For many years those interested in the dissemination of Father von Balthasar's ideas had tried in vain to find a publisher willing to underwrite this massive venture. In 1978, at the suggestion of Father Noel O'Donaghue, Dr. Geoffrey Green of T. & T. Clark agreed to look at the possibilities, and approached the present English editor, John Riches. Surprise at being approached by a publisher interested in the undertaking was compounded by the discovery that another American publishing house set up by Father J. Fessio, Ignatius Press, was already engaged in translating the work. Agreement was quickly reached that T. & T. Clark would publish in association with Ignatius Press under the general joint-editorship of Joseph Fessio and John Riches.

An American translator, Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, had already been found for Volume I. John Riches undertook the detailed editing of this translation. In the United Kingdom a strong team of younger theologians, Anglican and Roman Catholic, was soon recruited and this has meant that the publication of the complete work of 'Herrlichkeit' is expected by 1985. It is expected that with the publication of this most extended of von Balthasar's works, English-speaking readers will now be able to gain a more informed understanding of the true richness and the breadth of penetration of his theology.

John Riches
Glasgow, 1982

I. INTRODUCTION

1. POINT OF DEPARTURE AND CONCERNS

Beginning is a problem not only for the thinking person, the philosopher, a problem that remains with him and determines all his subsequent steps; the beginning is also a primal decision which includes all later ones for the person whose life is based on response and decision. God's truth is, indeed, great enough to allow an infinity of approaches and entryways. And it is also free enough subsequently to expand the horizons of one who has chosen too narrow a starting point and to help him to his feet. Whoever confronts the whole truth—not only man's truth and that of the world, but the truth of a God who bestows himself on man, the truth not only of the historical Gospel and of the Church that preserves it, but the truth of the growing Kingdom of God both as it now is in the fulness of God's creation and also in the weakness of the grain that dies in me and in all my brothers, in the night of our present and in the uncertainty of our future: whoever, I say, confronts *such* wholeness of truth desires to choose as his first word one which he will not have to take back, one which he will not afterwards have to correct with violence, but one which is broad enough to foster and include all words to follow, and clear enough to penetrate all the others with its light.

The word with which we embark on this first volume of a series of theological studies is a word with which the philosophical person does not begin, but rather concludes. It is a word that has never possessed a permanent place or an authentic voice in the concert of the exact sciences, and, when it is chosen as a subject for discussion, appears to betray in him who chooses it an idle amateur among such very busy experts. It is, finally, a word from which religion, and theology in particular, have taken their leave and distanced themselves in modern times by a vigorous drawing of the boundaries. In short, this word is untimely in three different senses, and bearing it as one's treasure will not win one anyone's favours; one rather risks finding oneself outside everyone's camp. Yet if the philosopher cannot begin with this word, but can at best conclude with it (always assuming that he has not forgotten it under way), should not the Christian for this very reason perhaps take it as *his* first word? And since the exact sciences no longer have any time to spare for it (nor does theology, in so far as it

increasingly strives to follow the method of the exact sciences and to envelope itself in their atmosphere), precisely for this reason is it perhaps high time to break through *this* kind of exactness, which can only pertain to one particular sector of reality, in order to bring the truth of the whole again into view—truth as a transcendental property of Being, truth which is no abstraction, rather the living bond between God and the world. And finally: since religion in our modern period has renounced that word, it would not be idle to investigate at least this once what countenance (if we can still speak of a ‘countenance’) such a denuded religion may exhibit.

Beauty is the word that shall be our first. Beauty is the last thing which the thinking intellect dares to approach, since only it dances as an uncontained splendour around the double constellation of the true and the good and their inseparable relation to one another. Beauty is the disinterested one, without which the ancient world refused to understand itself, a word which both imperceptibly and yet unmistakably has bid farewell to our new world, a world of interests, leaving it to its own avarice and sadness. No longer loved or fostered by religion, beauty is lifted from its face as a mask, and its absence exposes features on that face which threaten to become incomprehensible to man. We no longer dare to believe in beauty and we make of it a mere appearance in order the more easily to dispose of it. Our situation today shows that beauty demands for itself at least as much courage and decision as do truth and goodness, and she will not allow herself to be separated and banned from her two sisters without taking them along with herself in an act of mysterious vengeance. We can be sure that whoever sneers at her name as if she were the ornament of a bourgeois past—whether he admits it or not—can no longer pray and soon will no longer be able to love. The nineteenth century still held on with passionate frenzy to the fleeing garments of beauty, which are the contours of the ancient world as it dissolves: ‘Helena embraces Faust, her body vanishes, and only her robe and veil remain in his arms. . . . Helena’s garments dissolve into clouds, enveloping Faust. He is raised on high and floats away with the cloud’ (*Faust*, II, Act 3). The world, formerly penetrated by God’s light, now becomes but an appearance and a dream—the Romantic vision—and soon thereafter nothing but music. But where the cloud disperses, naked matter remains as an indigestible symbol of fear and anguish. Since nothing else remains, and yet *something* must be embraced, twentieth-century man is urged to enter this impossible marriage with matter, a union which finally

spoils all man's taste for love. But man cannot bear to live with the object of his impotence, that which remains permanently unmastered. He must either deny it or conceal it in the silence of death.

In a world without beauty—even if people cannot dispense with the word and constantly have it on the tip of their tongues in order to abuse it—in a world which is perhaps not wholly without beauty, but which can no longer see it or reckon with it: in such a world the good also loses its attractiveness, the self-evidence of why it must be carried out. Man stands before the good and asks himself why *it* must be done and not rather its alternative, evil. For this, too, is a possibility, and even the more exciting one: Why not investigate Satan's depths? In a world that no longer has enough confidence in itself to affirm the beautiful, the proofs of the truth have lost their cogency. In other words, syllogisms may still dutifully clatter away like rotary presses or computers which infallibly spew out an exact number of answers by the minute. But the logic of these answers is itself a mechanism which no longer captivates anyone. The very conclusions are no longer conclusive. And if this is how the transcendentals fare because one of them has been banished, what will happen with Being itself? Thomas described Being (*das Sein*) as a 'sure light' for that which exists (*das Seiende*). Will this light not necessarily die out where the very language of light has been forgotten and the mystery of Being is no longer allowed to express itself? What remains is then a mere lump of existence which, even if it claims for itself the freedom proper to spirits, nevertheless remains totally dark and incomprehensible even to itself. The witness borne by Being becomes untrustworthy for the person who can no longer read the language of beauty.

Those words which attempt to convey the beautiful gravitate, first of all, toward the mystery of form (*Gestalt*) or of figure (*Gebilde*). Formosus ('beautiful') comes from *forma* ('shape') and *speciosus* ('comely') from *species* ('likeness'). But this is to raise the question of the 'great radiance from within' which transforms *species* into *speciosa*: the question of *splendour*. We are confronted simultaneously with both the figure and that which shines forth from the figure, making it into a worthy, a love-worthy thing. Similarly we are confronted with both the gathering and uniting of that which had been indifferently scattered—its gathering into the service of the one thing which now manifests and expresses itself—and the outpouring, self-utterance of the one who was able to fashion by himself such a body of expression: by *himself*, I say, meaning 'on his own initiative', and therefore

with pre-eminence, freedom, sovereignty, out of his own interior space, particularity, and essence. Again, we are brought face to face with both interiority and its communication, the soul and its body, free discourse governed by laws and clarity of language.

Such, in short, is the primal phenomenon. Whoever insists that he can neither see it nor read it, or whoever cannot accept it, but rather seeks to ‘break it up’ critically into supposedly prior components,¹ that person falls into the void and, what is worse, he falls into what is opposed to the true and the good. The original of beauty lies not in a disembodied spirit which looks about for a field of expression and, finding one, adjusts it to its own purposes as one would set up a typewriter and begin typing, afterwards to abandon it. Nor is it a spiritless body which somehow ‘throws itself together’ through an inexplicable play of material forces (‘impulses’ would already be too strong), only to fall apart again soon after. Even Plato went behind the primal phenomenon by conceiving of a soul that fell into matter only as a second movement in its existence. This is understandable, since Plato thought he could salvage the unity of what dissolves in death only by locating such unity within a wholly separate (ab-stract and ab-solute) realm of the spirit. Thus in order to uphold the freedom and dignity of the spirit, Plato reduced that which was original to the status of the derivative. In so doing, he became the father of all who have put *allegory* (i.e. discourse about something else) in the place of *symbol* (i.e. a true sign), and also the father of all those who adopt a wholly superfluous and only apparently scientific attitude in order to investigate psychologically how the soul can break out of its interiority and enter the so-called ‘exterior world’, and what the alleged ‘reasons’ for such a migration might be. Aristotle remained loyal to the phenomenon as such; for him, man and world appeared in their given forms. But Aristotle’s limitations also become apparent in his inability either to understand or to construct a promise of human wholeness beyond life on earth. Greek tragedy was the cry of transient existence as it came up against this limit. Only God’s gift from the New Earth and the Flesh that rises to eternal life can quench this question and prevent the reversion to an intensified Platonism which has had such grievous consequences even for Christian theology.

The freedom of the spirit that is at home in itself, therefore, is simultaneous with the ‘keyboard’, which it has appropriated and which allows the spirit self-expression. Such simultaneity is possible because it is the spirit’s native condition always to have gone outside itself in order to be with another. This

ability can only exist in a tension between deliberate choice and spontaneity between a firm rootedness in its own particular field of expression and despite this the spontaneous ability to emerge from the inner depths and to appear in the windows of the specific, individual response. As we proceed from plant to animal to man, we witness a deepening of this interiority, and, at the same time, along with the continuing organic bonds to a body, a deepening in the freedom of the expressive play of forms. We are not speaking here only of mimicry or physiognomics. Through his body, man is in the world. As he expresses himself, he acts and intervenes responsibly in the general situation. He inscribes his deeds indelibly upon the book of history, which, whether he likes it or not, henceforth bears his imprint permanently. Here, at the very latest, man must realize that he is not lord over himself. Neither does he rule his own being in freedom so as to confer form upon himself, nor is he free in his communication. As body, man is a being whose condition it is always to be communicated; indeed, he regains himself only on account of having been communicated. For this reason, man as a whole is not an archetype of Being and of Spirit, rather their image; he is not the primal word, but a response; he is not a speaker, but an expression governed by the laws of beauty, laws which man cannot impose on himself. As a totality of spirit and body, man must make himself into God's mirror and seek to attain to that transcendence and radiance that must be found in the world's substance if it is indeed God's image and likeness—his word and gesture, action and drama. This is the simple reason why man's being, even in its origin, is already form, form which does not curtail the spirit and its freedom but which is identical with them.

When beauty becomes a form which is no longer understood as being identical with Being, spirit, and freedom, we have again entered an age of aestheticism, and realists will then be right in objecting to this kind of beauty. They go about demolishing what has rotted from within, but they cannot replace the power of Being which resides in the conferring of form. But so long as the form remains true—which is to say living, efficacious form—it is a body animated by the spirit, a body whose meaning and whose principle of unity are dictated and imposed by the spirit. The level at which form makes its appearance transcends itself interiorly, or better, it does not so much or so obviously transcend itself as the spirit which is immanent in it manifests itself radiantly through it. Borrowing from Kant, Schiller has described the double dialectic of this sunrise of the spirit's splendour in the beauty of form. At

dawn, heaven and earth are still as one. Earthly things are transfigured and become celestial, while the light of heaven has not yet appeared in all its particularity. Such is the charm of *youth*, in which the spirit plays in the body unselfconsciously. When the sun climbs to the very zenith of midday, heaven and earth are fully separated, but that which is earthly enters heaven's bright light to the extent that the spirit's sovereign freedom scorches and shatters the instrument and the medium of its appearing, and by this destruction proclaims its lordship. This is the age of *dignity*. The second dialectic is directed by the same impetus. Out of an existence fully governed by the aesthetic principle there breaks forth the ethical on account of the spirit's stronger radiance. But the ethical does not then question the legitimacy of beauty, rather does it reveal itself as beauty's inner coordinate axis, which enables beauty to unfold to its full dimensionality as a transcendental attribute of Being. For Schiller, it is precisely the aesthetic which makes the stage a moral institution. Likewise, for Origen, the moral meaning of revelation is not to be found *alongside* its mystical meaning: the spiritual light proceeding from revelation's depths. For Origen, the 'moral meaning' refers to the urgency with which such light penetrates the beholder's very heart, in a manner described by Rilke in his 'Archaic Torso of Apollo': 'There is no place in it which does not see you. You must change your life.' Only the form that stands within this spiritual space—whether the space has been fully crystallized or is only now beginning to define itself—only such form is genuine form, and only it can wholly claim for itself the name of beauty. And, because in this world the spirit is forever confronted by a decision between the abyss of heaven and of hell, the beauty of any form must remain in the twilight of the question as to which of the two masters' glory such form radiates. Nor will the beholder's spirit, enjoying a mysterious empathy with the spirit of what he beholds, remain without influence upon the efficacious reality of the beautiful—whether as the spirit of an individual or as the spirit (*Geist*) and demon (*Ungeist*) of an epoch. Works of art can die as a result of being looked at by too many dull (*geistlos*) eyes, and even the radiance of holiness can, in a way, become blunted when it encounters nothing but hollow indifference. But this remains but an external offence to beauty which may be rectified by purifying the heart and by exhuming what has been buried under ruins. Hölderlin exclaimed in this vein: 'Go down, beauteous Sun. They paid but little heed to thee; they knew thee not, thou holy one. . . . For me thou graciously go'st down and up, O Light! And my

eyes surely recognize thee, Splendour!’ And even if works of art should die, even if the ‘holy Sun’ itself should die, how could the highest beauty die if it were true that its form had attained a living immortality?

What is a person without the form that shapes him, the form that surrounds him inexorably like a coat of armour and which nonetheless is the very thing that bestows suppleness on him and which makes him free of all uncertainty and all paralyzing fears, free for himself and his highest possibilities? What is a person without this? What is a person without a life-form, that is to say, without a form which he has chosen for his life, a form into which and through which to pour out his life, so that his life becomes the soul of the form and the form becomes the expression of his soul? For this is no extraneous form, but rather so intimate a one that it is greatly rewarding to identify oneself with it. Nor is it a forcibly imposed form, rather one which has been bestowed from within and has been freely chosen. Nor, finally, is it an arbitrary form, rather that uniquely personal one which constitutes the very law of the individual. Whoever shatters this form by ignoring it is unworthy of the beauty of Being, and he will be banished from the splendour of solid reality as one who has not passed the test. Thus, while physically he remains alive, such a person decays to expressionlessness and sterility, is like the dry wood which is gathered in the Gospel for burning. But if man is to live in an original form, that form has first to be sighted. One must possess a spiritual eye capable of perceiving (*wahrnehmen*) the forms of existence with awe. (What a word: ‘Perception’ [*Wahr-nehmung*]! And philosophy has twisted it to mean precisely the opposite of what it says: ‘the seeing of what is true!’) We are not speaking here of isolated little ‘acts’ by which, as with a needle, a person can pierce through the desolation of his everyday life, of his sham existence, to reach the Absolute. . . . This will not salvage his lost dignity. We speak, rather, of a life-form which is determined—and, therefore, able—to bestow nobility upon a person’s everyday life itself. To repeat: for this, eyes are needed that are able to perceive the spiritual form. There are ages which are so deeply in love with the primal forms of existence that they seek to express these in all spheres of life and to reflect them, for instance, in the forms of rank and class in society, which for a brief moment in history can express a sublime truth, but which then become hollow and restrictive. *What* these forms intended to express, however, is something which may not be dispensed with if man is not to fall into an undifferentiatedness in which

everything is so wholly indifferent (*das Gleichgültige*) that in the end it is of no consequence (*gleichgültig*) whether it is defined as matter or as spirit.

There have been ages of representation in which it was natural to experience the *kalokagathon* (the 'beautiful-and-good'), so much so that the temptation was always at hand to slide back from the primal form into the derived forms—so rich was the abundance of forms offered. When these secondary forms come to decay and are regarded with suspicion as belonging to an ideology, then it is both easier and more difficult to find one's way back to the origins of form. It is more difficult because our eyes lose their acumen for form and we become accustomed to read things by starting from the bottom and working our way up, rather than by working from the whole to the parts. Our multi-faceted glance is, indeed, suited to the fragmentary and the quantitative: we are the world's and the soul's analysts and no longer have a vision for wholeness. For this reason, psychology (in the contemporary sense of that term) has taken the place of philosophy. For this reason, too, we no longer credit man with the ability to achieve form, whether metaphysically or ethically. But in this valueless openness, the way back to primal form has perhaps been cleared, at least for some. The primal form is not a form among others, but a form which is identical with existence, a form beyond 'open' and 'closed', beyond 'I' and 'Thou' (since it, and it alone, encompasses both), a form which is even beyond autonomy and heteronomy since it unites God and man in an unimaginable intimacy.

And there have been ages in which beauty seems to be everywhere because of the abundance of the forms produced. In such ages, beauty envelops and lets its light play on existence on all sides and heightens its self-assurance; indeed there is a sense in which it demands that man pursue the good by compelling him to be true to the living content whose external forms he represents. There have also been ages, however, in which man feels himself to be so humiliated through the disfigurement and the denial of form, ages in which man feels himself to have been so disfigured *along with* the forms, that he daily experiences the temptation to despair of the dignity of existence and to break off all association with a world which disowns and destroys its own nature as image. The challenge can appear nearly inhuman that we should find our way from this echoless void to the image which the primal Maker of Images has created for us. And, indeed, such a challenge is perhaps only possible for the Christian, and the image which is intended and which, in spite of everything, *can* be constructed is invisible to the world at first for a

time. The image could be that of the Gospel's Humiliated Fool, an image which captivates no one and which nevertheless in a later age breaks forth radiantly from its hidden centre in order to impress itself on the world—as has often been the case. If this holds for our time, then the decisive factor, our 'first word', states that only the few who (as often before) bear the weight of the whole on their shoulders, will receive eyes to behold the primal form of man-in-existence, and that their courage to embrace this primal form will raise everything else into the light along with itself: the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Our first principle must always be the indissolubility of form, and our second the fact that such form is determined by many antecedent conditions. If form is broken down into subdivisions and auxiliary parts for the sake of explanation, this is unfortunately a sign that the true form has not been perceived as such at all. What man is in his totality cannot be 'explained' in terms of the process by which he has become what he is. It makes no difference whether the attempt at 'explanation' takes as its starting-point man's evolutionary pre-history in the realm of plant and animal existence, or the hereditary history of man's ancestors, or the conditioning forces of the cosmos, or, finally, man's own life-history—the elements of his subconscious, or the variety of his shocks, traumas, and instinctual motives. All these dimensions produce material which is then subsumed by the form of man. And, since such material in itself consists of heterogeneous and relatively unnecessary elements, analysis can somehow again extract it from the form without harm. Truly, it would not be worthwhile being human if man were but the amalgamation of such 'material', if the one thing necessary, the irreplaceable pearl, were not a reality for the sake of which we would sell everything else. This precious 'pearl' must have been espied in the first place by an eye that recognizes value, an eye which, being enthralled by the beauty of this unique form, dismisses all else as 'rubbish' in order to acquire the one thing (Mt 13.46, Phil 3.8) which alone is worthy of claiming our life unconditionally, the one thing which lends value to whatever we might be by allowing us to participate in its own intrinsic worth. We can already see on the basis of this brief simile how Gospel and form are 'wed' to one another. For, where in the world can we find something so precious that for it we are prepared without reservation to abandon all else? And surely this unique thing could not be a formless absolute that in the end inexorably dissolves the form of the spiritual 'I' from within. In this sense, we can say that, when all

genuine worldly forms are questioned and discounted, responsibility for that form really lies in the hands of Christians.

What could be stronger than marriage, or what shapes any particular life-form more profoundly than does marriage? And marriage is only true to itself if it is a kind of bracket that both transcends and contains all an individual's cravings to 'break out' of its bonds and to assert himself. Marriage is that indissoluble reality which confronts with an iron hand all existence's tendencies to disintegrate, and it compels the faltering person to grow, beyond himself, into real love by modelling his life on the form enjoined. When they make their promises, the spouses are not relying on themselves—the shifting songs of their own freedom—but rather on the form that chooses them because they have chosen it, the form to which they have committed themselves in their act as persons. As persons, the spouses entrust themselves not only to the beloved 'thou' and to the biological laws of fertility and family; they entrust themselves foremost to a form with which they can wholly identify themselves even in the deepest aspects of their personality because this form extends through all the levels of life—from its biological roots up to the very heights of grace and of life in the Holy Spirit. And now, suddenly, all fruitfulness, all freedom is discovered within the form itself, and the life of a married person can henceforth be understood only in terms of this interior mystery (as Claudel has shown powerfully in his 'Fifth Ode'), which mystery is no longer accessible from the profane sphere of the general. But what are we to say of the person that ignores this form and tramples it underfoot, then to enter into relationships answerable only to his own psychology's principle of 'this far and no further'? He is but quicksand, doomed to certain barrenness. The form of marriage, too, from which derives the beauty of human existence, is today more than ever entrusted to the care of Christians.

For, to be a Christian is precisely a form. How could it be otherwise, since being a Christian is a grace, a possibility of existence opened up to us by God's act of justification, by the God-Man's act of redemption? This is not the formless, general possibility of an alleged freedom, but the exact possibility, appointed by God for every individual in his existence as a member of Christ's body, in his task within the body, in his mission, his charism, his Christian service to the Church and to the world. Considered in all its dimensions, what could be more holistic, indissoluble, and at the same time more clearly contoured than this form of being a Christian? This form

transcends the questionableness of men's own choices and self-evaluation. It transcends, too, the uncertainty and melancholy that are, at bottom, inherent in most life-forms for the simple reason that something entirely different could have been chosen and that what was intended and striven after was never actually attained. But the Christian form is structurally a part of the miracle of the forgiveness of sins, of justification, of holiness, the miracle that transfigures and ennobles the whole sphere of being and which in itself guarantees that a spiritual form will thrive as the greatest of beauties. The image of existence is here illuminated by the archetype of Christ, and set to work by the free might of the Creator Spirit with all the sovereignty of one who need not destroy the natural in order to achieve his supernatural goal. For this reason, however, it is clear that in any age—and most especially in our own—the Christian will realise his mission only if he truly *becomes* this form which has been willed and instituted by Christ. The exterior of this form must express and reflect its interior to the world in a credible manner, and the interior must be confirmed, justified, and made love-worthy in its radiant beauty through the truth of the exterior that manifests it. When it is achieved, Christian form is the most beautiful thing that may be found in the human realm. The simple Christian knows this as he loves his saints among other reasons because the resplendent image of their life is so love-worthy and engaging. But the spiritual force necessary to have an eye for a saint's life is by no means to be taken for granted, and in our time our eyes (like those of Rilke's 'Panther' as he paces his cage) seem to be 'so tired from endlessly counting the bars' that even these most sublime figures of human existence can hardly snatch us from our lethargy.

It is from this standpoint that we must look to our supreme object: the form of divine revelation in salvation-history, leading to Christ and deriving from him. Here, again, a new and sharper vision is required, and there is little hope that we will receive and use such eyes unless we have to some extent learned to see essential forms with our old ones. The supernatural is not there in order to supply that part of our natural capacities we have failed to develop. *Gratia perficit naturam, non supplet*. The same Christian centuries which masterfully knew how to read the natural world's language of forms were the very same ones which possessed eyes trained, first, to perceive the formal quality of revelation by the aid of grace and its illumination and, second (and only then!), to interpret revelation. In fact, God's Incarnation perfects the whole ontology and aesthetics of created Being. The Incarnation uses created

Being at a new depth as a language and a means of expression for the divine Being and essence. Although ever since Luther we have become accustomed to call the Bible ‘God’s Word’, it is not Sacred Scripture which is God’s original language and self-expression, but rather Jesus Christ. As One and Unique, and yet as one who is to be understood only in the context of mankind’s entire history and in the context of the whole created cosmos, Jesus is the Word, the Image, the Expression and the Exegesis of God. Jesus bears witness to God as a man, by using the whole expressional apparatus of human existence from birth to death, including all the stages of life, all the states in life, the solitary and the social situations. He *is* what he expresses—namely, God—but he is not whom he expresses—namely, the Father. This incomparable paradox stands as the fountainhead of the Christian aesthetic, and therefore of all aesthetics! How greatly therefore the power of sight is demanded and presupposed at this point of origin! Surely the Jews were blind at the decisive point, although otherwise they may well have seen in Christ all kinds of correct and important things. And surely we can say, too, that the believing Christian who follows after Christ is perceptive at the same decisive point. But one point alone is not sufficient. The privileged ‘moment’ will always exist when a person falls to his knees to adore the One who says to him: ‘I who am speaking with you—I am He!’ But the Good News cannot be reduced to such moments, since these would readily absorb all else into themselves. There are also the surfaces, time and space, and all those human factors disseminated within them and which essentially belong to what John calls ‘remaining’: the commerce and familiarity with habits and opinions, reaching to what cannot be weighed or measured: a real *life-form*. The spiritual eyes of the disciples were indeed held in check as long as he had not died and risen from the dead, and they required a certain distance not only somehow to ‘believe’ the divine content of Christ’s reality, but to ‘see’ it in its self-evidence. And yet, this content was already to be found expressed in the man Jesus, and, for all its abstraction and contemplation, the retrospective remembering and *anamnesis* of what has been seen—the *conversio ad phantasma* (*verissimum!*)—constitutes the basis of understanding anything. He himself had told them as much beforehand, and the distance which they were to gain was not only the viewer’s natural act of stepping back before a picture, but the very condition for the coming of the Holy Spirit, who was first to impart to them the contemplative glance of faith. The image takes shape in them together with the coming of the Spirit. Now they see the

proportions not only in Christ himself, for they never understood the divine in him as something naked, but rather always as they contemplate the relationship between what is human and visible about him and what is divine and invisible. They see the proportions, rather, in the manner in which Christ is both related to and distinct from the background of salvation-history and of the created cosmos as a whole. They see the form constituted by the Old and New Testaments together. They see here the unique proportion of promise and fulfilment, and the manner in which this proportion itself reveals a gradation of subforms and how it opens up its depths by presenting a multidimensionality peculiar to itself. Or are we of the opinion that there is no connection between natural and Christian proportions, and, therefore, no connection between the ability to see either of them?

It was of this image, seen with the eyes of faith and of faith's insight, that the eye-witnesses rendered, first, an oral and then a written testimony. And, just as the Holy Spirit was in their eyes so that the image should spring into view, so, too, was he in their mouth and in their pen so that the likeness (*Nachbild*) which they drew up of the original image (*Ur-Bild*) should correspond to the vision which God's Holy Spirit himself possesses of God's self-representation in the flesh. We must, then, repeat that Scripture is not the Word itself, but rather the Spirit's testimony concerning the Word, which springs from an indissoluble bond and marriage between the Spirit and those eyewitnesses who were originally invited and admitted to the vision. With such an understanding of Scripture, we can say further that its testimony possesses an inner form which is canonical simply by being such a form, and for this reason we can 'go behind' this form only at the risk of losing both image and Spirit conjointly. Only the final result of the historical developments which lie behind a text—a history never to be adequately reconstructed—may be said to be inspired, not the bits and scraps which philological analysis thinks it can tear loose from the finished totality in order, as it were, to steal up to the form from behind in the hope of enticing it to betray its mystery by exposing its development. Does it not make one suspicious when Biblical philology's first move in its search for an 'understanding' of its texts is to dissect their form into sources, psychological motivations, and the sociological effects of milieu, even before the form has been really contemplated and read for its meaning *as form*? For we can be sure of one thing: we can never again recapture the living totality of form once it has been dissected and sawed into pieces, no matter how informative

the conclusions which this anatomy may bring to light. Anatomy can be practiced only on a dead body, since it is opposed to the movement of life and seeks to pass from the whole to its parts and elements. It is not impossible that certain relations within the canonical form itself may occasionally call for and justify such a procedure. But one should first ask whether such attempts to work back ‘scientifically’ to real or alleged sources are not most useful when they once again demonstrate the indivisibility of the definitively expressed Word. With respect to our scholars, may we not credit the Holy Spirit with a little divine humour, a little divine irony? And would it be wholly erroneous to find some connection between this divine irony and humour and the Gospel’s four-fold form? This would suggest that the unique and divine plasticity of the living, incarnate Word could not be witnessed to other than through this system of perspectives which, although it cannot be further synthesized, compensates for this by offering a stereoscopic vista. And the divine irony would further suggest that the main fruits to be gathered from the very unfruitfulness and failure of the scientific experiment would be the ever clearer exigency of returning to the one thing necessary. We must return to the primary contemplation of what is *really* said, really presented to us, really meant. Regardless of how distasteful this may be to some, we must stress that, in the Christian realm, such contemplation exactly corresponds to the aesthetic contemplation that steadily and patiently beholds those forms which either nature or art offers to its view. Inspiration in its totality is to be grasped only in the form, never in psychology and biography. And, therefore, if any kind of Biblical philology is to be fruitful, it must have its point of departure in form and must lead back to it. Only ‘Scripture’ itself possesses the power and the authority to point authentically to the highest figure that has ever walked upon the earth, a figure in keeping with whose sovereignty it is to create for himself a body by which to express himself. But a body is itself a ‘field’, and it requires another ‘field’ in which to expand, a field part of whose form it must already be if it is to stand in contrast to it. Christ’s existence and his teachings would not be a comprehensible form if it were not for his rootedness in a salvation-history that leads up to him. Both in his union with this history and in his relief from it, Christ becomes for us the image that reveals the invisible God. Even Scripture is not an isolated book, but rather is embedded in the context of everything created, established, and effected by Christ—the total reality constituted by his work and activity in the world. Only in this context is the form of Scripture perceivable.

Only that which has form can snatch one up into a state of rapture. Only through form can the lightning-bolt of eternal beauty flash. There is a moment in which the bursting light of spirit as it makes its appearance completely drenches external form in its rays. From the manner and the measure in which this happens we know whether we are in the presence of ‘sensual’ or of ‘spiritual’ beauty, in the presence of graceful charm or of interior grandeur. But without form, in any event, a person will not be captivated and transported. To be transported, moreover, belongs to the very origin of Christianity. The Apostles were transported by what they saw, heard, and touched—by everything manifested in the form. John especially, but also the others, never tire of describing in ever new ways how Jesus’ figure stands out in his encounters and conversations; how, as the contours of his uniqueness emerge, suddenly and in an indescribable manner the ray of the Unconditional breaks through, casting a person down to adoration and transforming him into a believer and a follower.

How cowardly a flight from the world would the Apostles’ act of forsaking all things in order to follow Christ be if it were not moved by the folly of that enthusiasm which even Plato knew in his own way, and which every person knows who for the sake of beauty gladly becomes a fool without giving it a second thought! How could one hope to understand the least thing about Paul if one did not first acknowledge the fact that in Damascus he had seen the highest beauty, just as the prophets had seen it in the visions that called them forth? That vision then led Paul to sell all else for the sake of the one pearl—to sell all worldly and divine wisdom, all privileges within God’s Holy People—in order to perform his ministry with joy as a ‘poor man of Yahweh’. Both the person who is transported by natural beauty and the one snatched up by the beauty of Christ must appear to the world to be fools, and the world will attempt to explain their state in terms of psychological or even physiological laws (Acts 2.13). But *they* know what they have seen, and they care not one farthing what people may say. They suffer because of their love, and it is only the fact that they have been inflamed by the most sublime of beauties—a beauty crowned with thorns and crucified—that justifies their sharing in that suffering. It is easy to note the differences between the person affected by natural beauty and the one seized by the beauty of Christ; it is less easy to see what they have in common without reducing their experiences to psychological categories. For at this point one must have seen the same thing as they if one is to understand them, and this, therefore, is the point where a

certain esotericism is unavoidable and where the proofs for the truth contemplated necessarily bear the character of a ritual initiation, as the *Symposium* showed long ago. Even so truly a ‘church of the people’ as the Catholic Church does not abolish genuine esotericism. The secret path of the saints is never denied to one who is really willing to follow it. But who in the crowd troubles himself over such a path?

2. THE AESTHETIC MEASURE

As a first attempt to survey the scope of our inquiry, we proceeded from below, without heeding the warning sounded when we crossed the boundary between the realm of nature and that of grace—the boundary between philosophy and theology. The form of the beautiful appeared to us to be so transcendent in itself that it glided with perfect continuity from the natural into the supernatural world. *Charis* refers to the attractive ‘charm’ of the beautiful, but it also means ‘grace’. ‘*Charis* is poured out upon your lips,’ sings the nuptial psalm (44.3). We believe that what is beautiful in this world—being spirit as it makes its appearance—possesses a total dimension that also calls for moral decision. If this is so, then from the beautiful the way must also lead into the religious dimension which itself includes man’s definitive answer to the question about God and, indeed, his answer to the question God poses to *him*. It will be objected that the Word which comes from God places everything human under judgment, no matter how transcendent this human reality may be in itself. Such judgment must not necessarily mean condemnation, but may well be more of a saving act of taking up and transfiguring what is human. But, in any case, the judgment is above all a free declaration on the part of God, not to be eschewed by worldly beings, especially when they are in danger of forgetting the sovereignty of God’s freedom of judgment. Crossing these boundaries so forgetfully, however, belongs to the essence of the beautiful and of aesthetics almost as a necessity. More than either metaphysics or ethics, aesthetics tends toward an immanent self-transfiguration on the part of the world, even if it is only for the moment when the beautiful first catches the eye. And an aesthetic sensibility and its standards will come into play precisely where metaphysics and ethics attempt to achieve a final reconciliation and harmony. Revelation must unmask these incursions by judging them and directing them to their

rightful place, and theology will obediently reflect the judgment passed by revelation.

But does this judgment imply for aesthetics nothing but a limitation, perhaps even the demolition of the bridge between natural and supernatural beauty? Let us first grant that our former approach from below was, on the whole, not incorrect, since the moment does exist in which the spirit that beams forth from within and that is fashioning a form for itself must submit, as ‘spiritual matter’ (ὕλη νοητή), to a higher shaping hand in order to find its own interior law which is to be expressed; and that this in no way violates its spiritual autonomy, but is rather what makes it possible for the spirit to attain such autonomy in the first place. Let us also grant that in the phenomenon of inspiration there exists a moment which the heathen has always sensed but which only the Christian can grasp with all the preciseness of faith. This is the moment when one’s own inspiration mysteriously passes over into inspiration through the genius, the *daimon*, or the indwelling god, a moment when the ‘spirit that contains the god’ (*en-thusiasmos*) obeys a superior command which as such implies form and is able to impose form. If all this is granted, then an inner analogy between both forms or stages of beauty ought not to be immediately dismissed. It must, then, be one of our axioms that from inspiration as a principle of self-formation and self-determination to inspiration as the state of being indwelt by a higher spirit there exists a genuine connecting step. In Christian language we may say that this step leads on into the realm of faith—faith in a supremely personal and freely sovereign Spirit-God. It is a matter of faith that we should not simply give ourselves over to God mystically, as to an Absolute that transcends all worldly forms and relativizes them, not only as to a primal Ground that destroys all of these forms, but that we should at the same time entrust ourselves with the confidence of faith to the *Creator Spiritus*, to the Spirit who from the beginning is a Creator and who, in the end, aims not at a Hindu dissolution of the world through mystical dance, but at creative form, regardless of how much in the form of man and of the world remains to be burnt away as dross. Such creative form, then, is God’s work, and the work of man only in so far as he makes himself available to the divine action without opposition, acceptingly, allowing God to act, concurring in his work.

Such ‘art’ becomes visible in the Christian sphere in the life-forms of the chosen. In its exact sense, prophetic existence is the existence of a person who in faith has been divested of any intent to give himself shape, who

makes himself available as matter for the divine action. From Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the charismatic Judges, the Prophets and the Martyrs of faith, all the way to the forerunner and to the 'Handmaid of the Lord', in whom the feminine and bridal plasticity of the Daughter of Zion is totally recapitulated and who presents to us the highest paradigm of what is meant by the 'art of God' and by 'well-structured sanctity': in each of these cases we confront life in the Holy Spirit, hidden life which is inconspicuous, and yet so conspicuous that its situations, scenes, and encounters receive a sharp, unmistakable profile and exert an archetypal power over the whole history of faith. This is the opposite of what would be expected if a limited individual surrendered himself wholly—to the very core of his person—to that which is essentially Unbounded and Unformed. What we perceive here is a new spiritual form, chiselled on the very stone of existence, a form which unmistakably derives from the form of God's Incarnation. Now, admittedly the divine principle of form must in many ways stand in sharp contrast to the beauty of this world. This contrast notwithstanding, however, if God's will to give form really aims at man as God truly wants to shape him—aims, that is, at the perfecting of that work begun by God's 'hands' in the Garden of Eden—then it appears impossible to deny that there exists an analogy between God's work of formation and the shaping forces of nature and of man as they generate and give birth.

We can post as many question marks and warning signs as we will all along the length and breadth of this analogy, but they will only apply to the ever-present possibility of misusing the analogy, and not to its rightful use. Misuse of the analogy consists in simply subjugating and subordinating God's revelation with its own form, to the laws not only of metaphysics and of private, social, and sociological ethics but also of this-worldly aesthetics, instead of respecting the sovereignty which is manifested clearly enough in God's work. Such misuse occurs the more frequently and extravagantly in aesthetics because worldly aesthetics appears more engaging and compelling than worldly metaphysics or ethics, which both remain inherently problematical. Most people dare not make strong affirmations about the ultimate nature of the world's essence or about the ultimate justice of human actions. But all those who have been once affected inwardly by the worldly beauty of either nature, or of a person's life, or of art, will surely not insist that they have no genuine idea of what beauty is. The beautiful brings with it a self-evidence that en-lightens without mediation. This is why, when we

approach God's revelation with the category of the beautiful, we quite spontaneously bring this category with us in its this-worldly form. It is only when such a this-worldly aesthetics does not fit revelation's transcendent form that we suddenly come to an astonished halt and conscientiously decline to continue on that path. At that point, the application to the sphere of revelation of what we think and know to be beauty will seem to us either a merely 'rhapsodic', unchecked use of the beautiful, which at best betrays a naïve enthusiasm—a misunderstanding which may perhaps be tolerated because of its edifying effects—or, what basically amounts to the same thing, we will forbid ourselves every kind of falsifying and minimizing application of aesthetic categories out of reverence for God's Word, for its awesomeness and its, literally, in-comparable pre-eminence.

There may well have been an historical *kairos*, as Gerhard Nebel felt justified in believing, when human art and Christian revelation met in an encounter which saw the creation of icons, basilicas and Romanesque cathedrals, sculptures and paintings. But since then too many misunderstandings and too many terrible things have occurred for us still to be in a position to insist more on the similarity of the two spheres than on their dissimilarity. Man's habit of calling beautiful only what strikes *him* as such appears insurmountable, at least on earth. And therefore, at least practically speaking, it seems both advisable and necessary to steer clear of the theological application of aesthetic concepts. A theology that makes use of such concepts will sooner or later cease to be a 'theological aesthetics'—that is, the attempt to do aesthetics at the level and with the methods of theology—and deteriorate into an 'aesthetic theology' by betraying and selling out theological substance to the current viewpoints of an inner-worldly theory of beauty.

Regardless of how conspicuously the warning signals against such dangers may be posted—and in this realm they must be written in bold print—the element of danger must not be here allowed to prejudice our theoretical reflections in advance. Even a dangerous road remains a road, perhaps one requiring special equipment and expertise, but one which does not for all that become impassable. The prior theoretical decision which must be made is the following: Are we objectively justified in restricting the beautiful to the area of inner-worldly relationships between 'matter and form', between 'that which appears and the appearance itself', justified in restricting it to the psychic states of imagination and empathy which are certainly required for

the perception and production of such expressional relationships? Or: May we not think of the beautiful as one of the transcendental attributes of Being as such, and thereby ascribe to the beautiful the same range of application and the same inwardly analogous form that we ascribe to the one, the true, the good? The traditional theology of the Church Fathers and even that of high Scholasticism did this unhesitatingly, prompted by a double impulse. First, they possessed a theology of creation which, likewise unhesitatingly, attributed creation's aesthetic values *eminenter* to the creating principle itself. Second, they had a theology of redemption and of creation's perfecting which ascribed to God's highest work the eminent sum of all of creation's values, particularly as concerns the eschatological form of God's work. But this form already begins with the Lord's Resurrection, which for its part pours out its 'sublime splendour' (*kâbôd, doxa, gloria*) over the whole sphere of the Church and of the bestowal of grace. Should this not prompt us to question those theologies which view the veiled form of the economy of the Cross as the only form appropriate for understanding the whole course of salvation-history? Many Fathers, particularly Augustine, were deeply concerned with this question. For the time being, however, we are not concerned with whether they dealt with the problem in the right way. The moot point at the moment is to determine the angle from which to approach our problem, not the particular details of the methodology to be followed. For the reasons mentioned, the Fathers regarded beauty as a transcendental and did theology accordingly. This presupposition left a most profound imprint on the manner and content of their theologizing, since a theology of beauty may be elaborated only in a beautiful manner. The particular nature of one's subject-matter must be reflected first of all in the particular nature of one's method. This holds for the commentaries on the creation and paradise narratives of Theophilus, Irenaeus, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, and Anastasius of Sinai. It also holds for the understanding of *conservatio* as the enduring presence and eventual incarnation of the divine Word in his creation, as we see in Clement, Origen, Methodius, Athanasius, Jerome, Victorinus, and Augustine. And, finally, it may also be said of the economy of the flesh and of the Cross as represented by Ignatius, Hermas, Tertullian, Gregory of Nazianzen, Anthony, Cassian, and Benedict. The happy congruence of subject-matter and methodology is particularly true of the Fathers' doctrine of contemplation, from Origen to Evagrius, Macarius, and Augustine, and down to Gregory the Great and Maximus the Confessor, all of whom teach an

inward and upward ascent that reaches the point where the eternal light transfigures the still veiled earthly forms of salvation. Contemplation here is the flashing anticipation of eschatological illumination, the presaging vision of transparent glory in the form of the Servant. But there are also those Fathers who see the beauty of salvation-history radiating objectively through the veiled form. In this way, Origen sees the Spirit blazing through the letter. Irenaeus recognizes God's highest art in the *oikonomia*: the rightful sequence of the epochs within salvation-history. Cyprian and Hilary see the splendour of love in the moral as well as sacramental and institutional unity of the Church. Leo the Great sees the highest harmony in the choral dance of the Church's feasts, and Evagrius sees the eternal light shining through the purified soul that knows God. Whatever the particular aspects each Father may select and whatever the method he may follow, they are all at one in the explicit recognition and emphasis they give to the aesthetic moment within contemplation, a contemplation indeed that is attentive to just this moment.

Such contemplation, which necessarily contains within itself an 'enthusiastic' moment, is all too often and too easily traced back to the unwarranted influence of Hellenistic spiritual attitudes,² and those who dismiss contemplation as a 'Hellenistic corruption of the Gospel' rejoice that our more modern theology has rid itself of this 'foreign intrusion'. A more serious objection comes from those who point to the anti-artistic currents running through the whole of the Patristic period and breaking out openly in Byzantium's iconoclastic controversies from the time of the Edict of Emperor Leo III (730) to the establishing of the 'Feast of Orthodoxy' under Theodora II (843). We cannot say that the theological arguments proposed in favor of icons always sound very convincing. One such argument draws on Basil the Great's theology of the Trinity, especially on its doctrine concerning the Son's character as image or likeness and the necessary relationship and distinction between original image (*Urbild*) and its likeness (*Abbild*).³ Another argument follows Denys the Areopagite in affirming the necessity of religious symbols for sense-endowed humanity (Denys the Areopagite, who is, after all, the father of the strictest negative theology). Still another of these arguments says that by despising the image one also despises what is being imaged. A fourth argument gives Christ's Incarnation as the basis for the cult of images, since God's humanity in Christ excludes every kind of Docetism. A final and especially unconvincing argument conceives of a mysterious 'indwelling' of the original reality in its image, and then goes on to point to

the miracles occurring in and through icons by reason of their *acheiropoia*—their ‘having fallen from Heaven’, their origin as ‘not having been made by hands’. All of these justifications scarcely measure up to the Old Testament’s ban on images, a ban which was never expressly revoked in the New Testament, or to the marked restraint and dearth of images of the early Christian period. By contrast, we are given much food for thought by the argument of the iconoclast Constantine V, which says that a merely human representation of Christ—unavoidable, since the divine side of his being remains irrepresentable—constitutes an assault upon Christology and must eventually lead to Nestorianism. Constantine’s argument is valid at least by way of a permanent warning against allowing the Image of himself that God made to appear in the world—the Image that is his Son—to be extended without any critical distance whatever into other images which, regardless of all their religious relevance, nonetheless belong to the sphere of aesthetics. In this way iconoclasm may be seen as a corrective to Patristic theology, one which must always come into consideration not, of course, simply as a thesis, but precisely as a warning corrective, particularly when it takes milder forms in the course of the Church’s history. In a more moderate form, iconoclasm played a role in the Carolingian period and in the Cistercian reform and its sharp reaction against Romanesque extravagances, to say nothing of its role in the Reformation. Even today it is again making itself felt in church architecture and in every realm of church art.

Nevertheless, even such a historical reminder cannot go beyond a theoretical and practical call to the constant vigilance required to keep the transcendental beauty of revelation from slipping back into equality with an inner-worldly natural beauty.

Before we broach the question of whether the Fathers spoke adequately concerning the beauty of revelation, and also the question of what form such a discourse would properly have to take, we must, by way of preamble, briefly consider Sacred Scripture, the very source of theology, which, if not in its entirety, for the most part is a poetical book. Here we ought not to insist greatly on the Bible’s external poetic form, since weighty historical arguments could be produced against the theological import of such a form. For instance, it could be argued that the greater part of the Biblical writings derive from an age and a cultural context in which prose in the later sense (such as that of the Greek historians) does not yet even exist. At this time, not

only are songs, hymns, parables, Wisdom sayings, cultic formulas, and prophetic discourse the ordinary manner of handing down a tradition, but so too are juridical pronouncements and poetically sophisticated historical saga, legend, story, and so forth, all of which in the earliest times were governed primarily by mnemotechnical needs. The poetical character of Scripture would, accordingly, have to be interpreted historically in the first place, something which would have surprised neither Hamann nor Herder or their disciples. According to them, poetry was mankind's first and oldest language and expressive form, and the Bible must therefore be considered to be the most reliable and 'most ancient document of the human race'. Another consideration is more serious. We see that, in the general historical sequence and in the divisions of the Hebrew Bible, the 'writings' follow the 'Law' and the 'Prophets' as a third category. Among the writings we have the Psalms, Job, Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes, and, in the canon of the Catholic Church, we also have Ben-Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon. In this third group of writings there emerges spontaneously an unmistakable aesthetic element which is not consciously present in the first two groups. But here it emerges in the context of the objective stance of the 'wise man' as he meditates on the dramatic religious-political history which the Heptateuch, with its appended books, and also the Prophets—wholly integrated into the foregoing histories—unfurl before the beholder. Doubtless the contemplation of the Wisdom literature belongs to a late period for which the powerful drama of the earlier heroic phase and the tragic events of the ripe middle period have definitively entered 'the past'. And we may add that Hellenistic influences surely awakened and fostered the contemplative attitude, as well as the sense for aesthetic values that comes with it. From the Protestant side, one may look somewhat deprecatingly on the documents of this period, even though important ones have been kept in the Protestant canon. From the Jewish side, a Martin Buber may consider them, in so far as they were written in Greek, as but an insignificant addendum to Scripture. Nevertheless, they form an organic part of the canon of the Catholic Church and she, therefore, considers them to be inspired in an unqualified sense. Indeed, because of the contemplative 'caesura' which these books insert between the great action of the Old Testament and the coming action of the New, the Church treasures them as a wholly indispensable link in the economy of revelation.

In the Wisdom books, the Holy Spirit of Scripture reflects on himself. But he takes not only the deeds of the past as the object of his praise (Wis 10-19;

Sir 44-50), but also the splendour of natural creation (Wis 13; Sir 42.15-43; Pss 8, 104, etc.; Job 38f.), the conditions and attitudes of mortal man (Eccl., Job), and above all Wisdom herself, who is conscious of 'praising herself' explicitly (Prov 8.12f.; Sir 24.1f.). The self-contemplation of Sophia is 'glorious praise' (*Rühmung*), and, therefore, in its own way it is just as prophetic and poetical as God's revelation in history, nature, and human life, which she likewise extols. And here the claim that the poetic form of the first two sections of the Old Testament can be explained in purely historical and cultural terms is no longer tenable. This argument now in retrospect becomes questionable. The specifically Biblical form of inspired contemplation casts an aesthetic light backwards (and also forwards) over salvation-history, a light that allows the unique and supernatural dimensions of the 'Law' and the 'Prophets' to shine forth along with their natural poetic form. We are not dealing here with a feeble, belated, and romantic transfiguration of a long-past and heroic 'golden era'. We are witnessing the radiant drawing out into consciousness of the aesthetic dimension which is inherent in this unique dramatic action, a dimension which is the proper object of a theological aesthetics.

'God needs prophets in order to make himself known, and all prophets are necessarily artists. What a prophet has to say can never be said in prose.'⁴ But if all prophets are artists, then surely not all artists are prophets, although all of them may be such in another, more general sense. Thus, the analogy between natural and supernatural aesthetics again emerges, an analogy which gives the divine Spirit the freedom of space to place all human forms of expression at the service of *his* kind of poetics. Scholars are right in their concern for the different literary genres in Scripture and in paying due regard to the general principles of these genres in their interpretations of the texts. But this activity by no means exhausts the question concerning the particular poetics of Scripture. In fact, this question may really be raised only when the other more general considerations have been concluded, and when for the interpretation of *this* inspiration—a particular inspiration, even though it is integrated into the general forms of inspiration—the interpreter himself enjoys an inspiration in accordance with the inspiration of his subject, analogous to the way the divine Sophia interprets and praises herself in the Wisdom books. We must, then, always see clearly where the competence of the philological and archaeological method really lies and where it must be complemented and even surpassed by a special method suited to the

uniqueness of its object. The Fathers frequently exhibit this second element, while the first is often painfully absent; among modern scholars the first element may be found either with or without the second.

The problem may, indeed, be further sharpened by again relativizing historically the complementarity of Biblical sophiology and the sophiology of the Patristic and classical scholastic periods. One would, in this case, relate them both to the common cultural atmosphere of late antiquity, an influence extending at most to the outgoing Middle Ages and which must be expurgated from both the Bible and the history of theology by means of demythologization, in a determined effort to transcend it. But we will then ask: Transcend it in favour of what? In favour, perhaps, of a Harnackian ‘essence of Christianity’ or of a Bultmannian ‘understanding of existence’? But note that from the sophiology of the late Old Testament connecting lines lead directly to Paul, to the author of the Letter to the Hebrews, and to John, all of whom exhibit with regard to Jesus’ life and sufferings a transfiguring, contemplative stance which is similar to the stance of the Wisdom books with regard to the Law and the Prophets. The two late groups in either Testament are in many ways connected by a subterranean bond, a current of Biblical ‘*gnosis*’ which is steeped in the same diffuse atmosphere of late antiquity as are Philo, the early Gnostic mystery texts, hermetic literature, and the beginnings of what would eventually produce Alexandrian Christianity. To excise all this from Scriptural revelation would mean abandoning the historical setting of the Biblical revelation, and would leave only a certain moralism which was non-historical and, therefore, however existential, ultimately ineffective.

3. THE ELIMINATION OF AESTHETICS FROM THEOLOGY: PROTESTANT VERSION

And yet from the very start the Protestant Reformation embarked on just such an operation which it has pursued ever since. Luther began by making the doctrine of justification the very axis of Biblical revelation—the doctrine of justification, that is, as portrayed in Galatians and Romans. He then continued by projecting this axis back into the Old Testament, the Old Testament primarily as conceived in these two letters, a view which is probably the most historically conditioned, most specifically late-Jewish

aspect of all Paul's thought. The choice of this axis was based on not only Luther's personal experience of grace, but stemmed also from his polemical intention to attack everything in Catholicism which—if Kierkegaard's term had already been coined—could be resumed under the heading of the 'aesthetic' emasculation and dulling of the sharp cutting-edge of God's Word. It appeared to Luther that the Death-and-Resurrection dialectic of the Christ-event had been replaced by the non-dialectical schemata of Neo-Platonic aesthetic metaphysics. According to Luther, such 'aesthetic' theologizing saw the world merely as the 'appearance' of the 'non-appearing' God, as a series of stages through which creation approached the Deity ontologically, ethically, and mystically. Life in such a view culminated in the intellectual act of contemplating the supratemporal world of the Ideas. Man was regarded as consisting essentially of soul, and of body almost accidentally. A harmonious analogy between nature and grace was made the all-encompassing principle of Being, a principle called into question only by Augustine. But, in the Reformers' opinion, even Augustine was abandoned by the Middle Ages at the decisive point—abandoned in favour of an analogising semi-Pelagianism that one-sidedly brought the Neo-Platonic Augustine back to life, an Augustine then powerfully reinforced by the doctrines of Denys the Areopagite, who came to dominate both Scholasticism and mysticism.

In the face of all this, Luther wanted to recover the Bible's most important pronouncements, namely: 1) the free sovereignty of the Creator God, whose unfathomable decision to create the world may neither be deduced from or explained by any theory of Ideas, any form of emanation (even of the most subtle kind), any heavenly hierarchies, or any connecting analogies; 2) the even less penetrable turning, through grace, of the saving and redeeming God to the sinner who had turned away from him, and this through Christ's descent to the very heart of rejection and God-forsakenness, from which turning flows forth a salvation that may be grasped only by an act of totally blind surrender in trust; 3) in all of this, the *absconditas Dei sub contrario*—God's absolute veiledness, not only in his predestination, not only in his creation, his historical providence, his Incarnation, but, beyond all of this, his veiledness as he enters the sphere of the sinner's rejection of God, the 'exchange' (Rom 1.23,25) of God's incorruptible splendour and glory for the blasphemous image of the idols. God responds to this unholy 'exchange' by 'abandoning' man, who had turned away from God, to the most abject

perversion (1.26f.), but only then—as the Bridegroom-in-blood of the whore Jerusalem (Ezek 16) and because of his love for her—to take upon himself all her perdition and to restore to her her comely form as his immaculate Bride by means of this inscrutable mystery of love. This mystery is the purpose of the Incarnation; it is then only in the light of this mystery that the Incarnation can be grasped, or rather believed, as the Word’s descent into the Flesh. If we turn things around and ‘philosophize’ about the ‘analogy’ and interior compatibility of flesh and spirit, man and God, then the Mystery of the Cross becomes a mere function of such philosophizing, its true scandal removed (Gal 5.1). In this light, we can understand Luther’s attack on the ‘whore’ Reason, which aesthetically attempts to achieve a harmony between divinity and humanity: ‘If it were a matter of harmonizing, then we wouldn’t keep a single article of faith.’ But can we make God’s ways harmonize with each other? ‘My dear fellow! If God is almighty, how can one make sense out of the fact that he doesn’t punish evil, but rather lets it happen? Either he mustn’t be able to punish and resist every evil, or he mustn’t want to do it. If he doesn’t want to punish it, then surely he’s a rogue; but if he cannot punish it, then he’s not almighty as God ought to be. And now make sense out of this: the highest Wisdom behaves as if it were ignorance, and the highest Might as if it were impotent. You won’t find even a Turk who could make sense out of that! And this is why wise people . . . come to the logical conclusion that there is no God at all.’ And so, ‘the paradox (*Widerspiel*) seems’ to be ‘that there is nothing weaker than his power, nothing more inglorious than his justice, nothing more foolish than his wisdom. When this is preached it is called “heresy”, as you yourselves see. If it is said that only he is just, immediately we come with our works and demand that *they* be considered just, so that Christ and his Kingdom always remain subject to us. All this is done so that the Kingdom that we teach will remain a Kingdom of faith. He is, we are told, the true God, the highest wisdom, power, and justice, but he is these things in such a way that I am not able to see, touch, or grasp him. We hear this every day and we let ourselves think that it is an easy skill to conceive of God in this way. We may think this when we hear it, but when it comes to trying it out and practising it in our heart, then the skill becomes very demanding indeed.’ Let only ‘your heart say: “You have done this and that—you are a sinner.” Then sin, death, the law, and hell will all crash down upon you. Now where is your skill?’ (*Sermon 8 after Trinity*; Torgau, 1531). All the disciples betrayed their crucified Lord, and on the day of Easter ‘they

all sit together as if in hell, with an evil conscience and great fear. . . . Then Christ the Lord comes to them in his love as if he were coming into hell, and says: “You are my brothers!”. . . . Our hearts cannot comprehend this’ (*Sermon on Easter Wednesday*; Wittenberg, 1531).

No harmonising, no skill, no comprehension is permitted. Every form which man tries to impose on revelation in order to achieve an overview that makes comprehension possible—for this is presupposed in beauty—every such form must disintegrate in the face of the ‘contradiction’, the concealment of everything divine under its opposite, the concealment, that is, of all proportions and analogies between God and man in dialectic. This dialectic now places us at a final crossroads. We may decide, on the one hand, that the dialectic is to be understood as the exuberant outpouring of the Gospel’s nuptial love, a love which, in the ‘blessed despair’ of a wholly self-surrendering faith, places all human skill and art at the disposal of the one divine Art. With such a surrender the divine Art can accomplish *sub contrario* (!) what man obstinately and vainly tries to achieve both *sub recto* and *sub contrario*. This is how a Richard of St. Victor understood the dialectic when he said of the ultimate vision of God that it ‘contradicts every kind of human reasoning’ (*Benjamin major* 4. 8) and that God’s mysteries, both in themselves and in the Incarnation, ‘not only transcend the nervous confines of reason’s subtleties, but show them to be utter foolishness’ (*ibid.*, 4. 18). On the other hand—and this is our other alternative—the dialectic may be wrenched loose from the mystery of the love which generates it and be expanded to the proportions of a negation, a cold methodological protest. Once this occurs, the dialectic will necessarily bear the indelible mark of Cain which is basically what transforms evangelism into Protestantism. The negation starts out as an admonition, the warning of a *correctio fraterna*, only to become a fundamental rejection of the other in schism. And the negation will then have to live with a self-perpetuating double curse: first, the splintering Protestantisms following one another in rapid succession will hardly ever be able to find their way back to Luther’s original intuition. (How could they, since the thread of tradition has been severed once for all?) And, second, the many sects will forever have to oscillate between irreconcilable extremes since the dialectic has been turned into a manipulable method.

In terms of our present concerns, the ‘either / or’ of this crossroads is, on the one hand, the radical elimination of aesthetics from theology, and, on the other, a paradoxical ‘aestheticization’ of theology which would again

logically bring about a new and sweeping iconoclastic controversy. The elimination of aesthetics may take the form of the old orthodoxy battling against those forms of religion that express (*sich aussern*) and externalise themselves (*sich veräussern*)—from Melanchthon's *justitia mere imputativa* to the wholesale rejection of all human 'vessels' and 'figures' of grace in Christian liturgy and ceremonies in favour of the pure 'interiority' of faith, a faith which then, nevertheless, somehow sees the work of redemption again as something of a total image and surveys and grasps it as such. Aesthetics may likewise be removed from theology by means of a 'dialectical system' which would conceive of God as exteriorizing himself in nothingness and in that which is his opposite, a God who, therefore, contains his nothingness and his opposite within himself. Jakob Böhme, Schelling, and Hegel elaborated such a view (in a misuse of the mystical tradition). In this way, the Protestant principle unwittingly gives birth again to the old Neo-Platonic *theoria*, which, by means of an aesthetic overview of the whole, is able to reconcile in God himself the final contradictions, now intensified to the extremes of heaven and hell as required by the Christian vision.

No wonder that first Hamann and then Kierkegaard call a halt at this point! By appealing to Luther (and, in Hamann's case, by appealing expressly to the Church Fathers as well), they reject *this* kind of aesthetics from the realm of faith. To enlightened aestheticising reason Hamann opposes this Lutheran formula: 'Let us now hear the sum total of the newest aesthetics, which is also the oldest: Fear God and give Him the honour, for the time of his judgement has come. Adore Him who has made heaven and earth, the sea and all rushing springs.' This formula contains Hamann's *aesthetica in nuce*, since under its guidance he (and, indeed, he alone in the Protestant world) finds a secret way back to the Patristic theology of the nuptial relation between God and the world.⁵ But no one else followed him on his way back to the Fathers. His vision was neglected by German idealism in its entirety, which rather took the road of Hamann's unfaithful disciple Herder, leading to Hegel by way of Schleiermacher. At this late stage, and in spite of the earlier and deeper insight of the second volume of *Either / Or*, Kierkegaard can no longer achieve a meeting of religion and aesthetics. He is impelled to use the concept of 'the aesthetic' to stake out and define a basic attitude which, for the Christian, is unacceptable. The original 'harmony' after which he had strived—the 'equilibrium' between the aesthetic and the ethical—yields in *Stages on Life's Way* to an inexorable succession in which the 'apostle' and

the 'martyr of truth' are sharply distinguished from the 'genius', thereby eradicating from theology all traces of an aesthetic attitude. The enthusiastic impulse which undoubtedly exists in Kierkegaard is employed by him to delineate all the more clearly the distance and total difference existing between the *agape* of Christ and his followers, on the one hand, and human *eros*, on the other. At the same time, this enthusiastic disjunction robs man, as it were from within, of all joy in the aesthetic (see the *Discourses on Love*).

As a theologian, Kierkegaard passed judgment in advance on the renewed dominance of the aesthetic element in the liberal theology of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with their heavy dependence on Schleiermacher and Hegel. Moreover, this was the age in which, for the first time in intellectual history, aesthetics, now sharply distinguished from both logic and ethics, was given a particular value of its own. Many were to proclaim aesthetics, so understood, to be the supreme value of any worldview. After early moves in this direction by Schiller, Schelling, Goethe, and by early German and classical English Romanticism, we first find the view fully developed in Schopenhauer, and then in F. T. Vischer, in the Hegelian Schasler, and to a certain extent in Jakob Burckhardt and the two warring brothers, Strauss and Nietzsche. This process of insulating the aesthetic from logic and ethics (as opposed to its total integration within the one, the true, and the good in the Greeks and in earlier theology) must always be kept in mind if we are to understand rightly the banishment of the aesthetic from the realm of theology by Kierkegaard and the more recent Catholic and Protestant theology which is dependent on him. In France we witness the same drama. Leon Bloy, for instance, in his reaction against the aesthetic Catholicism of Barbey d'Aurevilly and of Huysmans, explodes into the inimitable crudities of his unmasking style. And, with no knowledge of Kierkegaard, Maurice Blondel, in his first *Action* (1891), takes the internal contradiction involved in the aesthetic attitude to life as the starting-point of his argument. In an authentically Kierkegaardian fashion, he then presses on to the 'option' of a religious and positively Christian decision which is henceforth to be the basis and justification of all thought. Psychoanalysis as a philosophy of life then comes along to make the spiritual situation still more critical by proposing, among other things, that Kierkegaard's religious philosophy is but a compensating superstructure erected by him over a basically aesthetic attitude which he could never master. In different ways, Thust, Walter Rehm, and Adorno are proponents of this view. For our

enquiry, it makes no difference basically whether the religious principle (along with the 'anguish' allegedly inherent in it) is considered an ideological protuberance of the aesthetic, or whether the aesthetic is seen as the form which above all is exclusive, opposed to the religious. The determining factor in those who follow Kierkegaard consciously or unconsciously is the opposition they sense between the two realms. The word 'aesthetic' automatically flows from the pens of both Protestant and Catholic writers when they want to describe an attitude which, in the last analysis, they find to be frivolous, merely curious and self-indulgent. And for the champions of an aesthetic world-view, the exact reverse is true: the ethico-religious in general and, in particular that which is positively Christian, is precisely what either clouds or simply destroys the 'right' attitude to life.

Kierkegaard's categories are those of inwardness and religious subjectivity, and they were constructed as a conscious antithesis to Hegel's 'objective spirit'. This antagonism, however, is not a thoroughgoing one, since Hegel's 'spirit' *de facto* includes many Kierkegaardian attributes and could *de jure* include many more. Kierkegaard and Hegel, moreover, are united by the fact that they both take the spirit as point of departure, a choice which forces them both equally to take an anti-dogmatic stance. The result is that all those thinkers who have wanted to interpret Christian reality as an objective historical 'process', intertwined with the historical and cultural directions of the spirit have followed in Hegel's footsteps. On the other hand all those have followed Kierkegaard who, in their protest against the Hegelians, have regarded Christian reality as a process of personal inwardness centered on the decision of the act of faith. The speculative Neo-Hegelianism of the nineteenth century has come to a double end in the twentieth. Nothing could stop historical speculation from becoming the kind of so-called 'exact historical research' which today, along with its philological, archaeological, and cultural-historical annexes, constitutes the greater part of Biblical studies. Towards the end of the First World War, however, this kind of research was forced to make way quite dramatically for the irruption of Kierkegaard, which was contemporaneous with Karl Barth's own irruption and that of the personalistic groups around Scheler, E. Brunner, and Martin Buber.

We will later come to discuss Biblical scientism. But it is already obvious that this approach has not been and will never be the force that restores to theology its lost aesthetic element. The Kierkegaard revival in various ways

had an anti-aesthetic effect on theology. Brunner is a good instance of this. In practice, he develops Kierkegaard's polemical schema of opposites into a methodological theological opposition between contemplative 'mysticism' and prophetic and Biblical faith in the Word (see his *Mysticism and the Word*). Unlike Heiler, who in his chrestomathy on prayer can include in a general typology of prayer both forms, Brunner pits them emphatically against one another. On one side, he groups Schleiermacherian and Catholic types of theology; on the other, genuine Protestant theology. But Bultmann is the best example of this mentality. As he employs it, Biblical scientism dissolves any and every possible form of revelation which is objectivised and historically perceptible. We witness instead a retreat into the absolute and formless inwardness of the decision of faith, achieved through the awareness of the existential *pro me* of the Lord's Death and Resurrection. In all that Bultmann writes there is a deep seriousness which comes from his subjective sense of having been seized, in his case, of having been gripped by Christ. But this is a gravity which, alas, is full of anguish because of its total lack of imagery and form: a real dead-end for Protestantism.

Here we must acknowledge the great service rendered to theology by Karl Barth of having recognized the imminent danger of shipwreck and of having, unaided, put the helm hard over. Barth overcame the either / or between Hegel and Kierkegaard in two ways. Following Hegel, he saw the need for an objectively normed and objectively formed dogmatics, one to which he then himself proceeded to give shape. And yet, following Kierkegaard, he gave to this dogmatics as its content the personal faith-relationship (mediated in the God-Man Jesus Christ) between the revealed creator and redeemer God and man, both as he turns away from God and as he re-turns to him. To be sure, Barth always remains opposed to all institutional aspects of Christianity; for this reason, the form given by him to dogmatics has never been able to take root undialectically in the visible reality of the Church. This form remains actualistic and energetic, and yet it was intended and presented as the *real form* of God's objective act of revelation. Such an intention and manner of presentation both justifies and logically compels Barth, at the conclusion of his treatment of the doctrine of the divine perfections, to restore to God the attribute of 'beauty' for the first time in the history of Protestant theology.

Let us note that, contrary to Kierkegaard's concept of aesthetics, Barth arrives at the content of 'beauty' in a purely theological manner, namely, by contemplating the data of Scripture, especially God's 'glory' (*Herrlichkeit*),

for whose interpretation ‘beauty’ appears to him indispensable as ‘auxiliary concept’. It is really ‘by contemplating’ that Barth arrives at this realization, for he writes: ‘Could we speak of “perception”, could we speak of “revelation”, if in the end we had to do only with an object—an object with neither form nor shape?’ Must we not establish more than just the *factum brutum* of God’s glory in his revelation? Must not rather the question be raised: ‘To what extent is the light of God’s self-revelation really light, and therefore enlightening? To what extent is God convincing and persuasive in that he is present to himself and to others?’ (*Dogmatics* II/1, pp. 732f.). This is the precise point at which Barth goes beyond the naked *pistis* of a Melanchthon to arrive at a *gnosis* inherent to faith itself and comprising its own interior spiritual dimension. Thus he can say of God that he is beautiful, ‘beautiful in a manner proper to him and to him alone, beautiful as the unattainable Primal Beauty, but. . . , precisely for this reason, beautiful not only as a fact, not only as a force, but rather: as a fact and as a force in the manner in which he asserts himself as the one who arouses *pleasure* (*Wohlgefallen*), creates desire (*Begehren*) for himself, and rewards with *delight* (*Genuss*). . . , the one who as God is both *lovely* and *lovelyworthy*.’⁶ Barth is here very conscious of hearkening ‘back to the Church’s preReformation tradition’. He makes reference to Augustine’s *Confessions* and to the Areopagite, regrets that ‘the Reformation and Protestant orthodoxy have wholly ignored’ this concept. And Barth points out that ‘not even Schleiermacher, from whom we should have expected much in this area, made any significant contribution.’ But neither the fact that more recent Catholic theology again takes the concept of beauty seriously, nor the fact that the liberal Protestant tradition misuses it, keep Barth from re-introducing it in *his* theology, albeit with evident care and precautions. ‘Much too much would have to be deleted,’ he continues, ‘which in the Bible is clearly and loudly proclaimed, if we were to attempt to deny the legitimacy of the concept of beauty because of some ultra-puritanical earnestness concerning sin.’ And if the very form of his glory—which mere thought can never simply banish—consists ‘not only in awe, thankfulness, admiration, and submission’, but also in joy, pleasure, and delight in God and in his splendour, ‘if the form of his glory is determined precisely by his ability to transport us to joy, and further determined by that joyous rapture itself’: how could we *then* possibly dispense with the concept of the beautiful? ‘Whenever one tries to see and express the matter differently, the

proclamation of God's glory (with the best will in the world and with the greatest earnestness and zeal) will always, even if ever so discreetly, and yet perhaps very dangerously, have something joyless, lustreless and humourless about it—not to say something boring and, finally, unconvincing and unpersuasive. It is here a question of form; and if revelation's quality of beaming forth joy is not adequately appreciated, where exactly then—so important is this question of form!—would be the gladness of the Glad Tidings?' (*ibid.*, p. 739).

In the case of revelation, however, form cannot be separated from content. And so, in conclusion, Barth follows Anselm in calling theology the 'most beautiful of the sciences' because of its object, and he demonstrates the beauty of theology by enumerating the beauty of its contents: 1) The contemplation of God's being, imparting a delight impossible to repress, reveals that the *form*—the fashion and manner—in which God is perfect is *itself perfect*, is perfect form, for is it not 'that wonderful, perpetually puzzling and perpetually clear unity of identity and non-identity, simplicity and multiplicity, interiority and exteriority, a unity of God himself and the fulness of what he is as God'? 2) The contemplation of the Trinity reveals that here Hegel's principles of truth and beauty are fulfilled and more than fulfilled as the identity of identity and non-identity, 'of movement and peace'. 'Strictly speaking, it is this that makes God's power and sovereignty enlightening, convincing, and persuasive.' Once we deny God's threefoldness, 'we immediately are left with a lustreless and joyless (and also humourless!)—in short, an uncomely God.' 3) Theology finally exhibits its beauty in its contemplation of the Incarnation. As a preliminary, we see that the eternal Son, as the image of the Father, already 'within the Trinity represents God's beauty in a particular manner'. This reaches its culmination when, as true man, the Son makes the image a reality and incorporates created man into it by 'the exchange of *locus* and predicates' that takes place between the Redeemer and the redeemed. God's Incarnation does not occur 'through tension, dialectic, paradox, and contradiction. It is not God, but rather the errors of our manner of thinking about God that are to be blamed if we conceive of the Incarnation in such a way.' We must, rather, look for guidance in the reality of the Chalcedonian formula 'unmixed and unchanged, but also inseparable and undivided' (pp. 741-749). And this leads on to Barth's last point: To the unity of his humiliation and exaltation, God brings his own form and proper beauty. Isaiah's phrase, 'He had neither form

nor beauty', determines the precise locus from which God's unique beauty radiates: 'If we seek Christ's beauty in a glory which is not that of the Crucified, we are doomed to seek in vain.' 'In this self-revelation, God's beauty embraces death as well as life, fear as well as joy, what we call 'ugly' as well as what we call 'beautiful' (p. 750).

At this point, too, Barth's dogmatics represents a decisive breakthrough. If his call to return to pre-Reformation theology inspires such trust, it is because he claims for his theology only those elements of Patristic and Scholastic thought which can be justified from revelation itself and which, accordingly, are not suspect of any undue Platonizing. In any event, we must not fail to note that Barth was aware that the delineations of an authentic theological aesthetics which he offered had no roots within the realm of Protestant theology, and that, in order to give such a theological aesthetics a home within his own theology, Barth himself had to cut his actualism back sufficiently to make room alongside it for the concept of authentic objective form. In addition, it was perhaps necessary to let the first stage of Barth's thought die away—a phase whose inner form lay in the overpowering and uncompromising rhetoric of Luther and the Reformation with its emphasis on the scandal and offence of the Gospel—in order to await the second stage, which as interior form attained the tranquil, attentive contemplation (*theoria*) of revelation which from volume to volume of the *Dogmatics* increasingly withdraws from polemics and concentrates its efforts on making positive statements. We can leave aside the question whether Barth in this way does justice to Luther's most profound concerns, whether he is as justified as Luther in concluding his section on the beauty of God and his revelation with an evocation of the Song of Solomon. It is more important to establish the fact that, at least for the time being, Barth with his contemplation of the objective revelation has not succeeded in really shaping and transforming Protestant theology. Up to the present, and very probably for a long time to come, Protestant theology continues in dutiful subservience to Bultmann's dualism of criticism, on the one hand, and existential, imageless inwardness, on the other.

Contemporary Protestant theology nowhere deals with the beautiful as a theological category. For the time being, the only question posed by Protestants is that concerning the relationship between revelation and this-worldly beauty—certainly a justified question, but not a sufficient one. To this question one significant Protestant voice has offered a highly original

answer.

4. A PROTESTANT THEOLOGICAL AESTHETICS

Although its roots lay deep in Scripture, Luther's approach was actualistic and, therefore, basically anti-contemplative. He had wanted to penetrate to the heart of the event of redemption—to the very act whereby the Redeemer takes my sins upon himself as he passes through the hell of God-forsakenness and enters into the very heart of sin. The unfathomable happening whereby my guilt passes over to him—the 'lightning-flash' of such an exchange—could be expressed only in the paradox of the *Simul (justus et peccator)*. This event could not and must not be allowed to gain any breadth or permanence in the world. The hiddenness *sub contraria specie*, 'under a form which contradicts our thought and comprehension' (*Lecture on the Letter to the Romans*, 1515-1516, on 8.26), transforms God, even in his mercy, into the hidden God which Calvin then radicalizes into the God of double predestination, the God of whom we can have absolutely no image or vision. Only an hypostasis of the believers' consciousness of their election can produce the single image acceptable to Calvin. This hypostasized image of election then allows the believer something like a 'contemplative' state in which he can rest. But such a construction is contradictory and, as Karl Barth has strikingly shown, it is wholly foreign to Biblical revelation. And so we are left only with Luther's *exaiphnēs*, the lightning-like event which excludes every kind of contemplative vision. Thus it was only logical that Protestantism should exclude the genuinely contemplative and aesthetic books of Scripture from its canon, even though the exclusion was not radical enough. From among the remaining books, the Protestant instinct focussed on those which are particularly actualistic, such as Galatians and Romans, while the Pauline contemplation of the letters from captivity has always been suspected of being in some way inauthentic. Only the *theologia crucis*—the theology of God's mercy under the 'alien form' of the most merciless of judgments—was seen by Luther to be acceptable in the present age. And he over-hastily identified the *theologia gloriae* with the theology of the coming age and its vision—as if the concept of *doxa* (kâbôd, gloria) were not, already in this age, a fundamental concept of the economy of both the Old and the New Testaments. But the Lutheran congregation also sings: 'See the

splendour of inward Christian lives!’ The banished *doxa* makes a mighty comeback in Pietism and Idealism. We have only to think of the late Fichte.

In our time, *Gerhard Nebel* has attempted to develop a fundamentally Protestant aesthetics in his book *The Event of the Beautiful*.² Nebel writes the work in the hope that the concept of ‘“event”. . . might play in a Biblical Reformation ontology . . . the same role that “substance” plays in Thomistic-Aristotelian metaphysics’ (p. 17). ‘The beautiful demands of man a confrontation. . . . The aesthetic is transformed into the beautiful when the object is consumed in the flame of the event. To be beautiful is, therefore, the act in which the beautiful offers itself as a sacrifice to itself and, therefore, to Another, to a higher Being’ (p. 19). For the Greeks, the beautiful meant the presence of God, but not as a static presence, since his epiphany was always something of a ‘breakthrough, a caesura, a hammer-blow, a transformation’. For this reason the statement may be ventured: ‘Hellas stood under the same God as we—under the same wrath, even if perhaps not under the same grace. . . . Because the triune God was also the Lord of the Hellenes, we are able to understand their tragedy, their temples and their philosophy. Nor can the continuing attraction of Greek art be dismissed simply by appealing to the otherness of God’ (p. 22). In the course of his enquiry, Nebel expressly opposes to the ‘static analogy of being’ what he calls an ‘analogy of event’: the possibility that the true God of grace could, in his freedom, make an appearance within beauty’s genuine quality as event. Such ‘analogy of event’ contains for theology and aesthetics the same inherent (analogous) protest against either of them becoming transmuted into science and theory. Even the analogy itself cannot be made use of. Neither the statement that ‘Yahweh appears in the beautiful’ nor that ‘Apollo can sustain and heal’ (p. 31) is valid. The beautiful can never stand as a bridge on its own, since in itself, like everything else, it stands under wrath. But this also means that the beautiful cannot from its own resources offer itself and man a closed world in which restlessness finds peace (p. 33). Myth, which is part of beauty, opens up the realm of the ‘powers’, but it is only through God that we can discern whether they belong to the ‘prince of this world’ or whether they are transparent to ‘the One who overcomes the world’. Or, to put it in another way, myth opens up the realm of ‘Being’, which for the Greeks, and also for Heidegger, is ‘full of divine powers’, but which stands in the same ambiguity of being either a transparency of the living God or the idolatrous image that disfigures him. Genuine beauty, moreover, is always a ‘favour’—something freely given: ‘If

we see man as the author of the beautiful . . . we lapse into the mainstream of modern titanism. . . . We forget that we can be free only when as servants we are the recipients of favour' (p. 48). The interpretation of the beautiful must spiral upwards, toward the divinely-wrought event. If we cling to what is below, we will possess the beautiful only in its aesthetic 'fallenness'. The 'polarities' of form and matter, shape and content, make sense only in the realm of handmade artifacts; Aristotle 'develops his conceptions on the model of the artisan. The question of form and matter can be discarded because, once we confine the problem to them, we soon experience the tedium of a metaphysics of substance' (p. 53) and, aesthetically, the boredom of academic canons: 'artistry, the museum, Hellenism'. The beautiful has its native atmosphere in the tragic myth, in the strife of the gods—from Troy and Thebes all the way to Worms!—and even in the myth-less form of tragic human existence. The beautiful may take refuge (*sich flüchten*) and seem almost to disappear (*sich verflüchtigen*) in a mystical 'All and Nothing'; it may become an 'abstract infinity' and fascinate aesthetes under the form of 'religion'; but the 'peace' attained in this way will be only a compensation and not a 'victory'. The Greek *agon* may belong to the worldly form of beauty, but at the same time we must affirm that 'the beautiful brings into the foreground the cosmos' background of peace' (p. 79). The beautiful can be the divine epiphany of that peace, although this does not imply that this peace is thereby bestowed immediately and actually. Why should Christ not condescend to put on mythical masks, including the mask of the beautiful? 'The sap of myth overflows into this super-myth,' and this 'opens up the possibility of Christian art. The beautiful can be put at the service of Christ, however, only because the god of myths is more than himself. . . . In fact, it belongs to the fulness of beauty to be more than beautiful' (pp. 82-83). Of the consciousness of guilt that begins to emerge in Greek tragedy, Nebel says (this, interestingly, was also Hamann's view) 'that Apollo can become a mask for Yahweh': 'Once we recognise this, we cannot help re-stating the question of natural theology—or better, of the theology of creation—from this perspective' (pp. 110-111). Why is the beautiful both 'the quiet *and* the sorrow of the gods' (Rehm)? Sorrow haunts the blissful quiet of Olympus because the gods long to be mortal, to be human. In the beautiful, man not only transfigures himself and becomes as the gods, but the gods too show their need of man in a mysterious exchange that Plato's Diotima describes in the *Symposium*. 'Man is the mood of God, and surely this is not only a feeling

of jubilation, but also a dread of the end, a sorrowing over man's transitoriness' (p. 114). Once this circle is closed, the beautiful becomes autarchic: the creature deifies itself in demonic fashion and the beautiful becomes the very 'manifestation of the god of this world' (p. 129). But if the circle remains open, as in the age of Christian art, then it can serve for the manifestation of the living God, who came down as Saviour to let man share his divine nature.

In Israel, art never succeeds. 'Architecture', observes Nebel, is but the 'sign of a wound in Israel's relationship with God'. The Temple immediately becomes the sanctuary of idols. But, as an anticipation of the Incarnation, Israel did have the angel of Yahweh—himself 'an event consisting of purest fire, always conveying or announcing things at the edge of men's conceiving and casting the person he addressed down on his face'. To be sure, by contrast with the epiphanies of the Greek gods, the event of Yahweh's manifestation in his angel is not something demanded by his nature; it stems from a freedom expressed in the prohibition of images. Yahweh remains surrounded by darkness, and the hero Samson is the demolisher of the mythical 'pillars': the night of the East against the light of the West (pp. 129-134). The Bible certainly contains 'poetry of the highest sort', poetry with great lyrical and epic-mythical force. But if we look in the Bible for poetry—and find it—by our very quest we fail to encounter God's Word. 'And yet! . . .' (p. 137): We do have the splendour of creation and of Paradise, and something of this glory shines through again in all historical revelation. 'There is a distant similarity between those who are struck by Yahweh and by Apollo, but it is a similarity such as we find affirmed by cautious proponents of the *analogia entis*: for here the extent of what God and his creatures have in common is so limited and that which separates them is so overwhelming that the gulf between Reformation theology and Thomism is closed' (p. 139). In the chapter entitled '*Analogia Pulchri*', Nebel attempts to build a narrow bridge. He rejects the *analogia entis* particularly in our time, in which, he believes, 'Being' has become an irreplaceable magical word 'as the up-dated, non-mythical vestige of myth'. Even when the 'Scholastic banalities concerning the *ens formale*' are avoided and Being is conceived of as plenitude, as 'the God who pours himself out in epiphanies', as 'the power that ceaselessly becomes event, the infinite power that both makes itself finite and retrieves itself from the finite—even in this case (says Nebel), rare enough in our day, the Being of Being can be Non-Being, just as much as

Being, provided, of course, that we are judging from the standpoint of Christian faith'.⁸ Must we, therefore, also subscribe unconditionally to Nebel's following statement? He affirms: 'Being is not itself the Source (*Ursprung*), but the issue of the Source (*Entsprungenes*). It is not divine but creaturely, not holy and whole (*heilig*) but maimed. . . . If this fulness of Being which embraces both event and form were unbroken Being, then Israel would be a lie, and if it were naked Non-Being, then Greek culture and civilization would be a deception not worth bothering about' (p. 146). Despite the fact that Nebel here proceeds with such care to avoid 'inadmissible contaminations', he still concludes too brusquely from its commixture with Nothingness that Being must have an exclusively 'creaturely' character. Even Thomas Aquinas would not have come to such an easy conclusion. By virtue of their existence within this Being that emanates from God and which enables them to share in God's absolute Being, creatures are the unforgettable and inescapable locus of his (hidden) manifestations. Once this is accepted, Nebel's statement can then be seen to be true at an even deeper level: 'The *daimon* of the beautiful must be brought into relation with the triune God. It must be given its place within the Bible. We cannot spare ourselves such an integration by appealing to the ready-made argument that theology and philosophy are simply different, that God belongs to theology, since he is only to be grasped by faith, and that Being belongs to philosophy since it may be attained by the efforts of our thought. . . . If we are in earnest, we will see that the truth is one, just as God is one and Adam is one' (p. 148).

We must, therefore, make room for the *daimon* that irrupts in the event of the beautiful. What exactly is this *daimon*? 'Reality cannot be exhausted either mythically or Biblically merely with the double affirmation of man's interior space and of the exteriority of the creating and redeeming God. The phenomena compel us to establish the existence of an intermediate realm proper to the *daimon* of the beautiful, a realm which for centuries now has been progressively restricted, suppressed, and finally even denied. The history of the modern world lies just as much in the ruination and abolition of this daimonic *intermundium* as it does in the de-Christianization of public life and culture.' 'Yahweh's jealousy and Israel's history would be incomprehensible if the *baalim* were mere phantoms.' What would be the meaning of Elijah's struggle, or of Jesus' acts of exorcism, or of Paul's real acceptance of cosmic forces, if all of this were but subjective imaginings?

And surely we must include ‘Rilke’s obviously incredible angel’ in such a world of *daimons*?

Nebel avoids the trap of identifying the *daimon* with the Christian *demon*, a trap into which the Church Fathers not infrequently fell in the heat of their polemical situation. Nebel recognises that the beauty both of nature and of art makes a claim to wholeness and thereby discloses the wholeness of Being—yes, the *wholeness* of it, but only as the goodness of God’s most excellent work.

“And he saw that it was good.” God’s splendid pleasure in the work of his hands: Should not the beautiful be the *modus* of creation, forever prompting God to self-satisfaction? Should not the beauty of the beautiful be that in his creatures which gives God reason for self-acclaim? Should God’s affirmation of his creation not be repeated in us in the event of the beautiful. . . without this in the least negating the corruption of our being or our dependence on Christ’s redemptive deed? . . . Is not our every encounter with the beautiful . . . tantamount to an assent to creation, either bestowed on us or drawn from us?

And now Nebel proceeds finely along strict Lutheran lines:

In his encounter with the beautiful, as in every manifestation of love, man enters God’s situation, but not the situation of the achievement of his own, but as a gift of God. . . In the work of art, man witnesses to creation’s well-wrought structure as it encounters him. But the work of art is by no means . . . itself an instance of integral, well-wrought creation, since it is not beyond the fall into which every creature plunges. Art, however, reminds us of creation’s “golden purity” and of God’s applause for himself.

‘Creation’ is here ‘understood as an act and the result of that act’. Creation, that is, is seen as the event in its result. By “well-wrought” he means not the final structure as, say, nature’s being meaningfully ordered to man. He means something far deeper, something like God’s ‘surprise’ and

amazement at the power of Being, the highly concentrated and tense density of Being, the smiling confidence, as it were, of what a minute before had been nothing. We could almost say that the beautiful is a result of the divine might as it goes beyond the strictly required measure, and that, accordingly, the beautiful constitutes a super-abundance, a mere by-product. However: We may not suppose that God calls into being anything but what will cause him joy. Something of God’s own splendour passes over into his creatures (pp. 149 -156).

Everything that still remains to be said can in no way weaken these fundamental affirmations. To be sure, God ‘repents’ of his creation, and this ‘repentance’ is henceforth impressed on the world as part of its character. Splendour and glory are proper to Paradise, and Paradise is no more. We have an eschatological hope for the New Heaven and the New Earth. But

daimonic beauty is concerned with the present moment, with making it eternal. Daimonic beauty, therefore, conflicts with the beauty acceptable to faith, which can be only protological or eschatological. But is there only conflict and opposition between daimonic beauty and faith, or may we not also say that, 'unlike faith, Paradise is a powerful force in all men in so far as they are men. . . . Moreover, while faith has been forged onto an historical fact, the beautiful is not required to squeeze through such a narrow pass.' Shall we say that God bestows the beautiful only as Creator, and not as the God of the covenant and of faithfulness? 'And yet we see that a rudiment of the covenant may be discovered in the beautiful, provided our gaze is informed by the vision of faith. The beautiful is creation in its wholesome integrity, and such creation was intended to be the locus for the covenant between Yahweh and Adam. Where the co-ordinates of myth intersect, the vertical points to the covenant, to the divine Thou' (pp. 158-159). The beautiful, in this case, would be seen 'not as salvation (*das Heil*), but as wholeness (*das Heile*). . . , as that density which enlightens, conferring peace and authenticity of existence: in a word, as the purity and freedom from anxiety of a passage from Mozart'. But even on such a view, the beautiful is conceived not as a *state*, but as an *event*: as the revelation of the paradisaical and eschatological possibilities present in the midst of a sinful world. 'This is why poetry never constitutes a world in itself, but rather is always an irruption into the world of prose' (pp. 160-161).

In reality, we are not redeemed by momentary flashes of the paradisaical element, rather by the 'solid, diamond-hard historical *fact*, by its crassness and lethality. In its extremity, this fact is death itself. But death must be undergone, and the fact of the Resurrection, undiluted by any mythical conception, must be set up over against the fact of death. Like Hamann, Nebel locates language, beyond the merely poetical and mythical sphere, in the sphere of the facticity of historical revelation. Through language, man ventures forth to obedience and disobedience. Here we encounter something definitive, and this is why the fact of revelation, constituted by God's Word and man's answer, remains permanently unsurpassable. Nothing beautiful, on the other hand, is unsurpassable. 'By its very nature and purpose, every beautiful thing points away from itself to some other beauty, since, if we remain too long with one thing, its depth soon vanishes. . . . As is always the case in the mythical sphere, the time of first encounter has a peculiar dignity about it, a special power to open up depths. But, by staring at the beautiful,

we conceal it.' But, 'the very sense of language is prayer' (pp. 171-174). The feast of beauty takes us only as far as the threshold, then it must 'become extinguished so that the terrible and tremendous may occur': the dying and the rising with Christ. At most, the feast can again resume as the ministry that proclaims this tremendous event. And here Nebel can infuse a Christian instead of the usual mythical sense into Rilke's phrase: 'For beauty is nothing but the beginning of the terrible.' The criterion of Christian art is now seen to be whether, in the *analogia* *eventus pulchri et Christi*, the event of the beautiful becomes a pointer to the event of Christ. It goes without saying that there can be no simple recipe for getting this right. Neither distortion nor elegance, neither Romanticism nor Classicism, neither poetry and music as temporal arts nor sculpture, painting, and architecture as spatial arts can claim a fundamental pre-eminence. Beyond this, it remains true that 'style is a matter of historical destiny' and does not reside within the sphere of an individual's choice. In Christian antiquity and in the Middle Ages, accordingly, there may have been 'styles of proclamation'. But 'if we want to glorify Christ crucified in a later age, we are thrown back on the styles of Neo-Paganism, or rather (since this too has gone into decline), we have to adopt the styles of the wilderness.' The art of proclamation can be no more reconstructed than can the 'Empire' or a demolished cathedral (pp. 195-196).

What is to tell us, however, that in the desert of our boredom and of our anguished emptiness God can no longer make events occur—make them come to pass from the outside and from above, freely disposing of things and carrying us off in the blink of an eye? Who is to tell us that mankind, even as it swears right and left by its varieties of Hegelianism, progressivism, and success—despite all the historical demonstrations of the 'world spirit'—could not suddenly be gripped by the Spirit of God and then be transported home to that which alone merits the name of 'Time', the event that comes impetuously to claim us for itself (p. 253)?

It is significant that Gerhard Nebel concludes by consigning the beautiful to the region of 'intoxication' and dreams. While Idealism had preferred to speak of the 'imagination', these newer and stronger concepts bear the stamp of Nietzsche, George, and Freud.

Dreams belong to the night, and it is no coincidence that man sleeps and dreams at night. Every night we lose our relationship to Christ, bestowed on us during the day. We leave it behind and step into the realm of irresponsibility and myth, of horrible plights or of unsuspected pleasures. Without dreams we could not experience the beautiful, . . . nor could we survive without paying the honour due to the nocturnal and chthonic aspects of creation. Night and earth are honoured

when they are allowed to stand in polar tension against day and heaven. In creation, however, the night and all nocturnal forces are what was passed over and left to lie excluded at God's left hand. . . . The beautiful knows nothing of fact; it knows only polarity and balance. It cannot, therefore, acknowledge night's disadvantage in creation. The *daimon* of the beautiful is intent on bringing night and woman into a position which creation has denied them. The beautiful is a celebration of the night and it attempts to exalt that which is weaker by the standards of creation. We know not whether to take fright at the arrogance that wars against the Creator's designs or to extol the gallantry of the beautiful (pp. 304-309).

Nebel's theological aesthetics is, by a long way, the best that the Lutheran tradition could produce without denying itself. His work dwarfs all the timid attempts at dealing with the terrible duel to the death between Christ and Apollo (or Dionysos), attempts that squeamishly skirt the conflict rather than see it through. This is an instance when we ought least of all to ignore the 'corrective' which, according to Kierkegaard, Protestantism supplies to the Catholic Church. And, it must be said, in this aesthetics, as in Luther's theology, we should also pay careful attention to the positive emphases. We will be forced to part company with them only when their fraternal warning becomes a door-slamming, separatist negation. It is evident that, from the standpoint of Protestantism, beauty has to be transferred wholly to the sphere of event. For from the Protestant perspective, any kind of regularity, of immanence which is seen as a perduring, inherent *qualitas*, as Being-in-repose, as *habitus*, as something that can be manipulated, is already by that very fact identified with demonic corruption. In this sense, we can understand Nebel's endless invectives against the bourgeois and snobbish manipulation of beauty and art proper to the museum. We can understand, too, his introduction of analogy (with due emphasis on the greater dissimilarity) into the event of worldly and divine revelation. He even rejects Thomas' characterization of beauty as *splendour* for being too static. Perhaps this 'No!' is more like Karl Barth's than like Luther's, not only a post-Scholastic negation but also a post-Liberal one which was bound to have its effects on ecclesiology and even on Christology.

But the theological and Biblical seriousness of this exploration of the question of beauty ought to serve as an example for the Catholic inquirer, even though he will develop differently the interior dimensions of the beautiful—as it shines forth from revelation—due to his differently structured concept of revelation, Incarnation, and Church. It is not coincidental, for instance, that Nebel nowhere speaks either of Christ's character as image or, therefore, of the trinitarian depth of revelation. Nor is it surprising that Nebel

automatically consigns all Marian elements to the category of the mythical and the chthonic, a sphere in which without question he also places Dante's Beatrice.

Our real purpose here, however, is not to place a Protestant and a Catholic aesthetics side by side as varieties of Christian aesthetics. This is not why we have surveyed Nebel's analysis of 'event' in this introductory chapter. We have done so to show how, in spite of all his efforts to escape from categories of his time, Nebel remains caught up and (pre-)determined by them. To be sure, Nebel contrasts genuine beauty with the Kierkegaardian concept of the aesthetic which he sees as a hollow decadent form. But then, in a most unambiguous way, he proceeds to set up a polarity between even genuine beauty and the reality of God's revelation, restricting all possible contents of beauty to the sphere of creation. Here the beautiful is at home, and its structure may be determined by reference to man's natural and creaturely experience of beauty. The structure of the beautiful comprises the following elements: the irruption of the *daimon*, of 'the' god, of the mythical world within the dialectic of the gods' peace and their sorrow, in the realm of 'intoxication' and dreams. The culminating age of beauty was Greece, or, at any event, pre-Christian and extra-Biblical cultures. It is only through God's 'favour' and the 'favour' of his Christ that something like the entry of mythical beauty into the sphere of Christendom was possible. Such beauty is the blazing forth of the primal, protological, and eschatological splendour of creation even in this age of death, in which redeemed man is admitted to participation in God's act of praising himself in his creation.⁹

Outside this frame of reference, a truly great Protestant aesthetics dealing with Biblical revelation has never been possible. Hamann himself, whom we will discuss later on, by and large follows this model. So does the Kierkegaard of *Either/Or* and the Karl Barth who, in Mozart, can hear redeemed creation and liberated man as they pour out their praise. And all of them warn us against overstepping the established boundaries, saying that, if we attempt this nonetheless, we are doomed either to naïve banalities or to irrelevant abstractions.

But, with his usual openness, Nebel makes the following confession:

Whoever lays store by wide horizons, finely proportioned spaces, heroic lives, manners, the brilliance and abundance of forms, by the retreat into a mythical world will feel repelled by Protestantism. Luther destroyed the golden chambers of myth and set up an indigent hut in their place. Whoever loves beauty will, like Winckelmann, freeze in the barns of the Reformation and

go over to Rome. I admit that I, too, have been overwhelmed at times by Winckelmann's longing, and I wrote this book in order to come to terms with it (p. 188).

Should we not ask, however, whether Winckelmann really did 'go over to Rome'? And should we not, further, ask whether restricting the beautiful to the sphere of tragic myth—a restriction which then logically leads to a tragic opposition between this mythical world and Christ's revelation—does not forever fix the mythical as a hermetically closed category, precisely in opposition to revelation?

The assumption throughout is that the world of the beautiful originally belongs to man, and that it is he who determines its content and boundaries. The native country of the beautiful would then be the world or, at most, 'Being' itself, but only in so far as Being is not divine but 'creaturely'. In scholastic terms, therefore, we would say that beauty is an attribute of 'predicated' and not of 'transcendental Being'. In this event, the decision has implicitly been taken that beauty is not a 'transcendental' like oneness, truth, and goodness, or, what amounts to the same thing, that beauty need not be predicated of God in its proper sense. But if beauty is conceived of transcendently, then its definition must be derived from God himself. Furthermore, what we know to be most proper to God—his self-revelation in history and in the Incarnation—must now become for us the very apex and archetype of beauty in the world, whether men see it or not. Such was the mind of the Church Fathers, indeed of all great Catholic theology, and it remains to be proven whether in this the Fathers and the mainstream of Catholic tradition were acting under a Hellenistic, extra-Biblical influence, thereby surrendering to a 'foreign god'. Is it really only a matter of metaphor when theology contemplates and describes as *ars divina* the divine *oikonomia* that begins with the creation, unfolds throughout the salvation-history of the Old and the New Covenants, and is consummated in the Resurrection? Can we here speak of God's 'art' only 'improperly', in a perhaps dangerous application of images from the human realm? Or should we not rather consider this 'art' of God's to be precisely the transcendent archetype of all worldly and human beauty?

This is more than a purely verbal dispute, as is proven by the effects produced by the elimination of aesthetics from theology and from the whole Christian life. As we have shown, such elimination has meant, broadly, the expulsion of contemplation from the act of faith, the exclusion of 'seeing' from 'hearing', the removal of the *inchoatio visionis* from the *fides*, and the

relegation of the Christian to the old age which is passing away, while all elements of *doxa* and the *theologoumena* related to it are placed in the new age which is accessible only in hope. A final effect is the destruction of the figure of salvation which to the eyes of faith results from the constellation of both Testaments: the Patristic *latet-patet* that does again attain to sharp contours in Luther's manner of relating the 'law' and the 'Gospel', but not without suffering great losses in its self-evidence as an image.

It is here that our initial decisions are taken. We will have to set them out more fully at the end of the introduction. Before we do this, however, we must pursue to their conclusion the themes already raised.

5. THE ELIMINATION OF AESTHETICS FROM THEOLOGY: CATHOLIC VERSION

Theology is the only science which can have transcendental beauty as its object, provided, that is, we may posit such an object in the first place. A philosophy which is specifically distinguished from theology in the narrower sense can envisage the absolute only as *principium et finis mundi*—as the limiting concept of a worldly ontology—and can, consequently, make only the most formal statements about it. But such a sharp contradistinction was introduced late in Christian times (Augustine still knows nothing of it), and is wholly without basis either before or outside the Biblical era. In Greece, philosophy is one with theology. Affirmations concerning the beauty of God or the gods and the radiant energy of the divine sphere, of the world of ideas, the cosmic Logos, and the spiritual light emanating from the One, are meant both theologically and philosophically, and there is no possibility of separating the two senses. Man philosophises in a transport of awe, illumined by the light of eternal Being as it shines forth in the world.

Once the Word of the living and free God resounds in the realm of history, however, sooner or later a distinction has to be made. Here we see Paul take the first step when he declares that all are without excuse who could not find this living God from the evidence of the created world, and that the gods previously discovered or invented (*gefunden-erfunden*) had been perverse substitutions of mere non-entities or even of demons for the true God. Subsequently, complementing Paul, Justin takes a line of thought which could have also been derived from the Apostle, when he affirms that, while

the heathen can possess fragments of revelation, the Biblical revelation contains the Logos in its entirety. Thus it is allowed that pagan philosophical theology can have as its driving force, side by side with a perverse fanaticism, a genuine enthusiasm, if one that seeks to go beyond itself, and which, as it matures, may become inwardly transparent to Biblical revelation or which may be made to acquire a Christian transparency.

We face an entirely different situation when the wholly abstract and ahistorical question is asked as to how far human understanding can go without positive revelation. This is a problem which was raised sharply only with the rise of modern rationalism. For the Christian, such a statement of the problem remains abstract and purely theoretical, and this has the immediate practical result that philosophy, understood in this way, is for the Christian a science that lacks the driving force of enthusiasm. Philosophical *thaumazein* can be at work and illumine the inner eye only when its object is the single most love-worthy ultimate reality—when, in a word, *eros* can break through to the point where it issues in theological utterance. Pre-Christian theology is fulfilled by being absorbed into Christian theology. But even if it should be humiliated and reduced to being the ‘forecourt’ of theology, pre-Christian theology cannot be impelled by any but the theological *eros*, which gives it an orientation beyond itself.

In Anselm, the *intelligere* always remains wholly at the service of the *credere*, even if he brackets the *credere* methodologically in order to allow the act of *intelligere* room to unfold. For the most part, we could say that Thomas Aquinas does not differ essentially from Anselm, since for him, too, the normative tradition of thought remains the integrated philosophical and theological method common to both the Platonic-Aristotelian and the Augustinian-Dionysian streams. We can say the same of Nicholas of Cusa, whose mode of thought is influenced by the speculative unity of Proclus and the mystical unity of Eckhart. Only with Descartes does philosophy become dependent on the scientific ideal of the rising natural sciences, thereby beginning its rift with theology. And only from this point onwards do philosophers become eager to experiment with the question of what reason can accomplish without the aid of revelation and what the possibilities are for a pure nature without grace.

Only the greatest thinkers of the time still attempt to bridge the widening gap between the two pillars with a daring arch that reaches from the newest mathematical physics all the way to theology, an arch which compels the two

disciplines to regain their congruence, their harmony, and even their identity. In Pascal we confront a *congruence* that overarches all abysses. In him, the strongest diastasis between geometric truth and the truth of the heart only serves to sharpen the goad that prods the thinking and believing person (of whom Pascal is the best example) to bring both poles to unity in himself. Pascal is the man of inner chasms and oppositions *par excellence*. In him, not only is the shudder of fear caused by exterior, quantitative abysses overridden, but, at a much deeper level, the irreconcilable contradictions of his being are transcended by the all-embracing cosmic law of the God-Man Christ, who brings everything into unity. With Leibniz, on the other hand, we encounter a *harmony* of the two disciplines. He expressly couples together not only the moral and the mathematical-physical aspects of the universe, but the latter with the theological aspects as well. He does this by taking Augustine's *pondus amoris* very seriously and, consequently, by establishing a unity between the quantifiable pull of gravity and the free love-force of spiritual entelechy, a unity even between the free creative act of the free God and the necessity of producing the best possible world, a necessity which bears on God's wisdom in its goodness: The more 'real' and 'pregnant' an idea is in God, the more it presses on into existence.¹⁰ This 'law of harmony' spans even the abyss between 'the physical realm of nature and the moral realm of grace, that is, the abyss between God, considered as architect of the machinery of the cosmos, and God considered as monarch of the divine kingdom of spirits'.¹¹ Leibniz bridges the abyss with his intermediary concept of 'power', a concept which he says is equivalent to the entelechy of the ancients, and he rightly reproaches the Cartesians for paying no heed to this category. Indeed, by starting off with Descartes one could arrive only at Spinoza's unmediated unity of 'geometry' and 'spirit'. Spinoza, in fact, and not Leibniz, was to serve subsequent thinkers (from Herder to Hegel) as the model of a theology that can also embrace philosophy. But the overextended *identity* of this model is rightly suspected of atheism (Jacobi) and is abandoned by serious theologians. Against Hegel, Staudenmaier again held up the figure of John Scotus Eriugena, whom he considered to be the father of speculation in the West, and by so doing he hoped to shake the foundations of Hegelianism. Deutinger, on the contrary, following Drey, tried to demonstrate the theological (really Augustinian) roots of all idealistic systems, and so to elevate theology to the rank of all-embracing authority. But his efforts proved fruitless, since, from an historically understood

illuminism, they necessarily led (by way of Molitor's *Philosophy of History* and then Bautain) to a traditionalism that destroys all philosophy. The eventual condemnation of such traditionalism was inevitable. The other possibility, equally close at hand, was the rationalism of Hermes, likewise condemned, which came to consider the act of faith which is the foundation of all reason, as part of the natural structure of reason, a position already taken by strict philosophical idealism.

The middle of the last century then saw the end of all those great theological systems which still followed the great examples we have cited and clung in spite of all to the model of the ancient unity between philosophy and theology, bypassing the modern understanding of 'faith' and 'knowledge'. This is also the time at which the Hegelian 'centre' falls apart into a materialistic left and a spiritualistic right, the point after which theology is both declared and declares itself to be a 'specialization' among others. Catholic theology was, it is true, still to produce and, indeed, still today produces great achievements. Nevertheless, apart from the substance of faith which continues to be handed down, Catholic theology, too, came to be characterized to a large extent by the ideal of specialization which has led it to claim its place among the other 'fields' of today's academic world, an arrangement which theology is increasingly ready to accept. But in accepting this, it also accepts the dire consequences of the fact that ever since Luther and Jansen, on the one hand, and Descartes, on the other, theology has defined itself by contrast with philosophy, in spite of all the efforts to the contrary which we have just reviewed. The distinction is formulated at its deadliest by Lessing, when he says that theology is a science of 'accidental historical truths', while philosophy deals with 'necessary truths of reason'. There is no doubt that Christianity is a religion bound to historical facts. But it is a totally different matter to assert that theological facts are 'accidental historical truths' and that Christianity, therefore, may be subsumed under the historical sciences. With their conception of the Logos of history, the Fathers and High Scholasticism would never have accepted such a view. Nowadays, however, the emphasis of both general interest and of research has been transferred to the historical aspect of theology, and this shift profoundly affects all theology's individual disciplines. Fundamental theology seeks to prove the authentic historicity of God's revelation in Christ, and it attempts to secure, by means of historically demonstrable characteristics (*notae*), the Church's prerogative to interpret revelation. The study of the 'sources' of

revelation, and particularly Biblical studies with all its annexes, has become strictly historical to an almost unacceptable degree and, at least for a time, has seized the lead in theology, even over dogmatics. Many ‘Scriptural proofs’ must now remain in suspension until Biblical studies have decided what the meaning and applicability of the texts might be. Dogmatics itself is practised ever more strongly as history of dogma. Theological ethics is losing its all too philosophical character and is now understood to be the historical encounter with the Word of God in an ever-changing historical situation. In addition, Catholic understanding of the Bible today adopts with relish the categories of Protestant Biblical criticism and, in so doing, distinguishes sharply the atemporal thought of the Greeks from the temporal thought of the Hebrews. The result is that much in the New Testament and in the early Church instead of being attributed as previously to Hellenistic influence is now traced back to the Judaic tradition.

Historical theological research is scientifically exact research as presently understood in the ‘human sciences’ (*Geisteswissenschaft*), not as in the natural sciences. But such research can establish only what Augustine calls the *historia* and Origen the *littera*. The properly theological dimension, however, begins only with the *intellectus* (Augustine), the *spiritus* (Origen), the content of revelation, precisely God’s theo-logy discerned in and through human history: what the ancients call the *sensus spiritualis* and the *intellectus fidei*, which can indeed be fostered by a comprehensive understanding of history, but which can in no way be extracted from history by ‘exact scientific method’ (*exaktwissenschaftlich*). This we can see from the fact that, in spite of their very imperfect understanding of the *littera*, the ancients, by contrast with the moderns, had in many regards a far deeper knowledge of the *spiritus*. True theology begins only at the point where ‘exact historical science’ passes over into the science of faith proper—a ‘science’ which presupposes the act of faith as its locus of understanding. To regard such theology as a genuine science is fully in accord with St. Thomas.¹² But, St. Thomas, however, attributed the character of a ‘science’ to theology, only in virtue of a concept of science which is unique and only analogously the equivalent of the other sciences, including philosophy. Theology’s exceptional position is seen by him to be founded on its participation through grace—directly in the personal act of faith but mediately by virtue of the authentic pattern of faith presented by the Church—in the intuitive saving knowledge of God himself and of the Church Triumphant. Only in this

dimension is the vision of the distinctively theological ‘form’ and its specific beauty possible. Only here can that act be accomplished which the Augustinian tradition describes as *fruitio*: the act which alone can open up the theological content of such ‘form’ and which, in particular, constitutes an eschatological anticipation that occurs within faith and is demanded by faith.

Few among today’s ‘exact’ Biblical scholars, however, make any room at all in their Biblical science for the *fruitio* of the *sensus spiritualis*, to say nothing of assigning to it the place of honour. I say ‘place of honour’ because this act is the central act of theology as a science. According to an unformulated but generally accepted opinion, this act is either banished from ‘scientific’ theology into the realm of unscientific ‘spirituality’, or it must remain suspended until ‘exact’ research has passed its more or less definitive judgment concerning the historical meanings and contexts of the *littera*.

There have, of course, been various reactions against an exaggerated scientism of the *littera*, reactions which key in to the great and unmistakable exegetical tradition of all ages.¹³ In these cases, echoes of the ancient traditions of theological aesthetics have been preserved; but such works remain marginal. We are entitled to expect the investigation of the ‘letter’ to contribute much to a future ‘science of faith’. But this does not alter the fact that we have not yet begun to make use of these new insights for faith. In fact, we may say that, as far as real theological work is concerned, we are still getting our breath back. In the interim, our task must be to draw for dogmatics whatever conclusions are possible from the new findings. At the same time, we should foster the fertile aspects of historical science, while containing its tendency to usurp unlawful territory.

If this tendency were to be given full rein, the authentic concept of theology as a science would perforce transfer its centre imperceptibly down to the level of the other sciences. This would inevitably result in a new Judaism in which only the ‘doctors of the law’ could interpret God’s Word reliably, while the ‘simple man’ (*‘am ha-arez*) would at best remain a dilettante in his understanding of the faith.

But perhaps we may voice once more our suspicion that, judged by today’s scientific ideals, nearly all the truly great and historically influential Christian theologies have been dilettantish, fashioned as they were by ‘amateurs’ (lovers!) and ‘enthusiasts’. Or are we to insist that the Fathers of the Church reached the apex of theology only when they conformed more or less with the requirements of modern exactness and expressed themselves in polemical

definitions, but not when they indulged in free rhapsodies, ‘confessions’, and ‘enarrations’, as was so often the case? Although there were indeed some Fathers who could combine both styles (such as Gregory of Nazianzen in his dogmatic discourses), more often the styles are found separately, and, when weighed on the scales, the rich substance—the inner sanctum of theology, so to speak—lies rather on the side of rhapsody than on the form of discourse which externalizes itself in distinctions and definitions. Is Ignatius of Antioch a theologian? Is Origen a theologian in his homilies and commentaries? Is Ambrose in his interpretation of Luke? And Augustine in his non-polemical writings? And the Victorines? And Rupert von Deutz? Bonaventure in his shorter writings? And what are we to make of Denys the Areopagite’s hierarchies, or of John of the Cross, the Doctor of the Church?

On the other hand, however, we may ask what the Chalcedonian formula with all its precision, achieved at such pains, might be if not a point of departure, a methodological and heuristic principle for a Christology that must then be developed from it? And would it not be true to say of the greater number of the Church’s canons and definitions that they are not so much themselves theology as the solid guidelines that point the way for elaborating a theology, the guidelines that form the basis for a correct understanding and interpretation of the divine revelation? The same holds on another level for that form of theology that develops according to a strict scholarly (scholastic) form, based on a principle of its own and yet drawing on the scientific form of the other sciences. In this case, we have only to remind ourselves that the transition from the scholarly to the free spiritual form must be fluid—assuming, that is, that the transition from the *habitus fidei vivae* to the unfolding, self-bestowing *donum Spiritus Sancti intelligentiae et scientiae* can also only be an imperceptible one. The point here is not that the *habitus acquisitus scientiae* ought to be left behind and transcended by a *habitus infusus* and the *donum Spiritus*. The point is that these latter ought to be allowed to develop and unfold in the very midst of the most stringent scientific form. Only in this way can the shaping power and the genius of the human spirit, for their part, be transformed by the shaping power of the Holy Spirit. The work of Aquinas, and also that of Anselm, Bonaventure, and Albert the Great, radiates the beauty of a human power of shaping and structuring which has been supernaturally in-formed in this manner. It makes no difference whether or not they are expressly speaking of the beautiful, or even whether or not they are conscious of the aesthetic moment as they

methodologically order and elucidate their material. Native human intelligence and the historical *kairos* apart, they would not enjoy such a shaping power nor, therefore, such an overpowering historical influence, if their talents had not themselves been transformed through and through by the Spirit's shaping power: if, that is to say, these theologians were not in a Christian sense ecstasies, had not been caught up and drawn into the unity of enthusiasm and holiness.

This is not to deny that this *habitus*, which alone is proportionate to the theological object, can also be at work in the (preliminary) field of exact historical research as understood in the human sciences. Not only *can* the infused *habitus* be at work here; in the long run, it *must* be active in this field if the work is to bear theological fruit. Even when the neutral results of Christian or non-Christian research (excavations, papyrus finds, and so on) influence our image of revelation—even then, as the *spolia Aegyptiorum* that now become the possession of God's Holy People, these results have to be submitted to the form of theological thinking if they are to be theologically relevant. They have, that is, to be submitted to that particular *eros* of theological enquiry which, although related intrinsically to the *eros* of human enquiry, cannot be identified with it, since what gives it life is not primarily the inspiration of the *daimon* but rather of the Holy Spirit.

6. FROM AN AESTHETIC THEOLOGY TO A THEOLOGICAL AESTHETICS

In order to gain a more precise notion of what the concerns of a *theological aesthetics* may be, we shall have to distinguish it carefully from that with which at first we might be led to confuse it, namely, an *aesthetic theology*. The word 'aesthetic', in the latter expression, will inevitably be understood in the worldly, limited, and, therefore, pejorative sense. Even a glance at the whole tenor of the Bible will confirm our suspicion not only that 'aesthetic', in this sense, is not one of the supreme Biblical values, but that it cannot seriously be considered as a Biblical value at all.

The endeavour to understand the Scriptures as a whole in terms of the concept 'art' (and, therefore, of a beauty of human proportions) may be given its place within intellectual history almost *a priori*. It can be located in the period which marks the demise of the great attempts to see Biblical revelation

once again within the total form of a theology that organically includes philosophy (Nicholas of Cusa, Marsilio Ficino, Böhme, Leibniz, Spinoza, Schelling), a demise brought about by their lateness in the history of the West and by the ever-growing autonomy of the sciences and of philosophy. At this point, the *pulchrum*, too, is lifted from the unreflected position within a totality which it had enjoyed from the days of the Greeks and is made into a separate 'object' with a separate science of its own. This transformation can be detected as early as the Renaissance, but later on it emerges in full force with Bruno and Shaftesbury to produce a great impact on Germany.

In the age of German Idealism, an attempt had to be made to bring together the theory of beauty, which by now had become self-conscious, with Christian revelation, and, beyond this, to identify the two if at all possible. The drive to achieve such a reconciliation derived, on the one hand, from the humanistic (hellenic-asiatic) sense of tradition which wanted to preserve the Christian reality as one of the lasting possessions of mankind's heritage. At the same time, others set out very consciously to provide the Christian religion with new garments thus making it again presentable and relevant after it had been denuded by the iconoclasm of Luther and Calvin and had had to take refuge in naked pietistic interiority. The confrontation of the Bible with an aesthetics which had become so self-conscious served, if for nothing else, at least to bring about a crisis. The question now has to be faced whether the aesthetic element, which in Idealism and Romanticism appears as wholly secularized, could not be purified and salvaged by a consideration of its historical origins, or: whether now the only alternative left is to abandon the aesthetic totally, a way which we have investigated in the previous sections on the elimination of aesthetics from theology. That a theology deprived of aesthetics is far from satisfactory should have become obvious by now. And so we must ask which way is to be taken. Should we go the way of Karl Barth, who rediscovers the inner beauty of theology and revelation itself? Or (and this is perhaps implicitly included in Barth's position), may it not be that we have a real and inescapable obligation to probe the possibility of there being a genuine relationship between theological beauty and the beauty of the world and—in spite of all the dangers inherent in such an undertaking—to probe the feasibility of a genuine encounter between divine revelation and antiquity?

At the threshold of modern times there stands a uniquely tragic figure in the

history of the question that engages us here. I say ‘tragic’ because in this figure all lines seem to converge—the concerns of strict Lutheranism, of classical education and culture, and of the construction of a theological aesthetics that would embrace them both in a genuine encounter—and yet, despite these convergences he remains a figure out of joint with his times. *Johann Georg Hamann*, whom we will consider at length in our typology of theological aesthetics, was alone in seeing that the real problem was how to construct a theory of beauty (*Aesthetica in nuce*) in such a way that, in it, the total aspiration of worldly and pagan beauty is fulfilled while all glory is at the same time given to God in Jesus Christ. Hamann’s unremitting consideration of this problem is more than just the unmastered coming together in him of two different orientations in intellectual history, which is how Unger and his school understood him. It is more than a problem of character, which is how his contemporaries, and Goethe in particular, branded his concerns. It is also far more than what Kierkegaard not only strived after, but actually achieved for Christian thought in his existential dialectic between the aesthetic-religious and the ethical-religious. Kierkegaard stands at the end of Idealism. He had known Schelling and Hegel and can, therefore, react to them only in a polemical fashion. Hamann stands at the beginning of Idealism, a point at which all hopes are still permitted. If his literary gifts and style had been different, he could have become the intellectual and spiritual father of his age. He could also have inculcated into this age in an authentic manner that synthesis which it strived after in every way it could and which in nearly every way it failed to achieve. With the relentless sword of his thought, Hamann warded off the false synthesis that entrapped all of his friends, who then became his intellectual enemies: Shaftesbury and Hume; Lessing; Mendelssohn; Kant; J. A. Starck; finally, his friend Herder, who had become for him the embodied hope for the future; and, last of all, Jacobi, who so greatly disappointed him. By then it was too late for Hamann to put down new roots again in Catholic Munster. The struggle against the Enlightenment and the liberation achieved by Klopstock and the Sturm und Drang movement opened up an initial horizon. Now the beautiful could be regarded as being the primal nature of the world itself, in its sensualness and even in all its sensuousness and eroticism. Man may be said to be closest to God when he creates life. But the Christian both knows and feels that nature has been alienated from its origin. God’s Word no longer speaks through all beings, and where a veil lies over God’s face the

splendour of nature is also veiled. What we are used to calling ‘aesthetic’ is as tinged with the vanity and unreality of original sin as is (enlightened) reason. Only Christ and God’s Word in him in the form of suffering (the hiddenness *sub contrario*), the historical word of Scripture reveals anew God’s glory. Both Judaism and paganism are oriented towards this Word, and it brings them both to fulfilment by revealing, through the mystery of its own lowliness, the primal splendour of the love of a God who humiliates himself. This is the true *coincidentia oppositorum* that enkindles not only faith, but also the enthusiasm proper to it: ‘One and the same proof both of the most glorious majesty and the most radical self-emptying! One and the same wonder exhibits, on the one hand, such infinite stillness that God seems equated with nothingness and one must either conscientiously deny his existence or be no more than adumb ox. But, on the other hand, this same wonder possesses such infinite power that it fulfils all things and one is at a loss as to how to escape the intimate ardour of its activity.’¹⁴ Hamann sees *glory as kenosis* as being proper not only to the God who became Man, but even before that to the Creator who, by creating, penetrates into nothingness—proper, also, to the Holy Spirit, who conceals himself ‘under all kinds of rags and tatters’,¹⁵ ‘under the rubbish’¹⁶ of the letter of Scripture, in such a way that ‘truly enlightened and enthusiastic eyes are needed—a friend’s eyes, armed with jealousy, the eyes of a confidant and of a lover too’—so as to ‘recognize the rays of heavenly splendour dressed in such a disguise. . . . What is sublime in Caesar’s style is its casualness.’¹⁷ Hamann learned to find the *sheblimini* (‘Sit at my right hand’: i.e. the ‘exaltation’ or ‘transfiguration’) in Golgotha. Only thus can he speak in all seriousness of the ‘aesthetic obedience of the Cross.’¹⁸ For Hamann, the folly of the Cross is manifested vicariously, as it were, in the folly of the Pythian priestess,¹⁹ in the foolishness and ignorance of Socrates,²⁰ and in the ‘*moron* of Homer’s gods’, which is precisely the ‘wonder-ful aspect of Homer’s muse’.²¹ Now, it is in the folly of the cross that Hamann finds access to the primal beauty of our existence,²² to the archetypal power of the genuine, creating Word, and, finally, access to the innermost, mysterious core of all reality: the bridal unity of Christ, the God-Logos, with his fallen and dismembered Body which, in death, he again takes home to himself: ‘The unity of the Head, as well as the disjunction of the Body . . . is the mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven from its genesis to the apocalypse. It is the focal point of all parables and types in the

entire universe—the *histoire generale* and the *chronique scandaleuse* of all ages.’²³

But to whom could Hamaan have sold such an aesthetics at that late hour? Everyone respected him; no one understood his concerns. His light was extinguished, not only by being outshone by the brilliance of Weimar, then entering its own noonday—the Weimar for which his only disciple, Herder, had deserted him: his light was extinguished in himself, in the smothering darkness of his own expression, which became increasingly more compressed and compacted to the point of incomprehensibility. The times abandoned him, and another century and a half was required until Ebner, Buber, and Haecker rediscovered his theology of language. The times belonged to his disciple, whose theory of language Hamaan had corrected with biting irony, treating it as if it were no more than a schoolboy composition.²⁴

Johann Gottfried Herder was a poet and a theologian. As a philosopher, however, he attempted to produce the indispensable bridge between poetry and theology: namely, a philosophy of nature and history and a religious psychology. He was a poet primarily because of his religious sensibility and enthusiasm, and he sought to be a true theologian by exercising his vocation as an original poet. Both theoretically and in their historical origins, poetry and theology perfectly coincide. Only by taking this point of identity as one’s point of departure will one understand what individuality, poetry, and theology really are. Herder’s enemy is the Enlightenment, arid reason with its dead concepts. Such ‘reason’ kills the soul, which in its living essence consists of feeling, sensibility, the will, and deed. Later on, this arch-enemy will be resurrected in modified form by the classicism of a Weimar that parted company with Herder and by the formalism of Kant, who was the subject of Herder’s last attacks. Herder’s ‘soul’ already is defined by the indivisible unity of a surging ‘force’ and the ‘image’ that it pours forth. By taking up Herder’s thoughts and expressions and elaborating them philosophically, Idealism and Romanticism (Fichte, Friedrich Schlegel, Schleiermacher, Schelling, Görres, the Grimm brothers, and countless others after them) came to celebrate this unity as the ‘(power of) imagination’ (*Einbildungskraft*). This is the equipment with which Herder approaches the Bible. Over the course of his life (from the ‘Song to Cyrus’, written when he was eighteen years old, to the Old Testament and the Apocalypse and, finally, to the last writings on the Synoptics, on John, and on the spirit of

Christianity), Herder interpreted the Bible almost in its entirety. Throughout his work, he always had two basic principles before him: The first of these is that the Bible—whose oldest sections are at the same time the ‘oldest charter of mankind’—is, as a whole, poetry, and may, therefore, be reconstructed only as a world of images. And, second, as the most ancient and at the same time purest document of mankind, the Bible stands in sharp contrast with all other human religion and poetry which have derived from it. Many influences may be detected as feeding into these simple theses. A Rousseauistic optimism about natural origins is allied to a Christian Spinozism for which closeness to nature means closeness to God. Further influences are: a philologist’s and archaeologist’s joy of discovery at the finds in the Near East; the work of the English bishop, Robert Lowth, *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum* (1768), edited and commented by Michaelis, of Gottingen, a work which Herder never tires of mentioning; the influence of Hamann, and so on. But it was left to Herder’s genius to draw all this together and to establish the standpoint that was to determine the course of theology and, to a great extent, also of poetry for a whole century.

For Herder, man is the image and the likeness of God: that is the goal of the poem of creation. As man and woman, the human being is ‘a moving image’.²⁵ How should man understand himself other than in images through which he can flow forth and represent himself—if, indeed, God’s Holy Spirit animates man by its inspiration? In the image man can then see, at the same time, his own self and his eternal origin: in his imaged ‘I’ he can see the absolute divine ‘I’. Allegorism is, for Herder, itself a form of deadly rationalism, since behind the image it seeks for a second, hidden meaning. Speaking of the Apocalypse, for instance, he says it is ‘an old wives’ tale to believe that a special key is needed’ to unlock its meaning, or that ‘the key has been lost.’ ‘I know of not a single mystical or typical saying in the entire book’. The *images* say it all, and these derive from the Spirit and mean to be seen and interpreted in the Spirit. The first rule of the interpreter must be ‘not to explain anything which does not speak itself, not to make an image mean what it does not mean . . . in itself. To this end, we see that in the whole book only the contours have been drawn. The only thing we see is the context from which the image was taken and the forms it puts on in order to be understood.’²⁶ The angel of the Apocalypse ‘neither speaks nor conceals, but merely points in images (*sēmanei*). The images must, therefore, have had meaning and been intelligible in themselves.’²⁷ True exegesis means: to

move to the point where the image (*das Bild*), in the Spirit, becomes transparent of him who made the image (*der Bildende*), and this ‘maker of images’ is God and man in unity. For such exegesis historical expertise is, of course, needed; but to a far greater extent there is required the divining power of imaginative reconstruction (*Nachvollzug*)—that youth of the heart which is able to feel at one with the historical and eternal youth of mankind. We may say that the dimension of the inspiring and revealing Spirit is ‘supernatural’, and rightly so, since it opens up our path to God. But of what could images possibly speak if not of man—of man in his true essence as primal image, as image that has been plunged in the darkness of guilt and again made radiant by grace? The first part of the *Alteste Urkunde*, the interpretation of the creation narrative, remains the crowning point of Herder’s exegesis. The sequence of the seven days of creation (with the emergence of light before the sun, with the first tenuous contours distinguishing light and dark, heaven and earth, and all creatures of the air, the water, and the land) is understood by Herder as God’s manner of ‘teaching us under the dawn’, as ‘the image of the coming day’ from the first flicker of light to the sun’s zenith: ‘God’s most ancient and most glorious revelation appears to you each morning as a fact, as God’s great work in nature! . . . Ordering and separating! Magnificence! Sublimity! both begun and completed . . . the tender face of the Godhead! Revelation! The apparition of what was unseen!’²⁸ And, at the same time, ‘God in nature’. ‘But what is creation?’ Creation is not primarily the ‘thronging of individual and isolated creatures’; it is that whole which is God’s living self-expression and his ‘hymn’, the ‘daily morning song’ which glorifies him and in which he glorifies himself. ‘Light is the first thing: his revelation, in which everything else can be seen and understood as that which it truly is: God’s apparition.’ A ‘philosophy of beholding, of the power of conviction of the sign and of experience’ is more important and closer to our origins (*ursprünglicher*) than any ‘demonstration’, which can only remain ‘an interchange of words and of the relations between certain concepts’. ‘Conviction and certainty must be found either in the things themselves— . . . in the integral, untouched feeling of the depths within the things themselves—or nowhere at all.’ ‘As it reveals itself, the human soul sees images! Are these images? Are they things? Is the soul dreaming or is all of this outside of it? And what does “outside of it” mean? What does it mean “to be a thing”? Existence! Presence! Who can point out, who can teach or explain these things?—The light! Light which, as model, is the most revealing

demonstration of God. . . . Light is the language that proceeds from the throne of God!’²⁹ ‘Image and sensibility (*Empfindung*)’³⁰ correspond to one another at the primal level, just as abstract thought and its expression—the arbitrary letter—correspond to each other at the fallen level of alienation. But the power of inspiration is capable of reading again the original ‘natural-supernatural’ hieroglyph through the alienating forms of ‘philosophy’ and ‘philology’. Even the mythical world of Southwest Asia, from the *Zend Avesta* all the way to Egypt and Greece—the intricate complex to which Herder gives the name of original ‘*gnosis*’—is for him already derivative in comparison with the tranquil simplicity and truth of the Bible, whose historical and, at the same time, ‘natural’ language of images would, in the spirit of Herder, have to be characterized as being the origin of all myth and, indeed, as being both primal myth and super-myth.³¹ For, in revelation (*Offenbarung*), God is really manifest (*offenbar*), while myth remains ‘a dance perpetually circling around the altar of the unknown God.’ ‘Revelation’ is ‘re-vealed (i.e. “un-veiled”) mystery’, and the Bible knows of no other kind of mystery.³² However, re-velation (*Enthüllung*) only occurs through signs, in the Incarnation by means of which God became man. This is why Christ is the summit and quintessence of all revelation (*Offenbarung*)—of God’s revelation as well as man’s. Man, in turn, is himself the quintessence of creation’s character as image, and it is for this reason that Christ calls himself the ‘Son of Man’, ‘meaning by this a simple and pure man. Purified of all dross, his religion can only be termed a religion of purest human goodness, a religion for man’—humanness itself.³³ The Bible calls Christ the ‘splendour, the luminous image of God’s glory’, and by this is meant ‘the special character (*Gepräge*) of the thing that is imaged’. And the other terms for Christ—‘*Logos, Eikon, Apaugasma, Hyios, Protogonos, Monogenes*’—all mean the same thing: namely, that the Godhead has now expressed itself purely and simply.

The spark of divinity, the inner ‘I’, never quite becomes a wholly living thing for us. The fatherly Godhead who educates us as children, therefore, condescended to us. He (who is incomprehensible) condescended, in order to make himself comprehensible by coming down to us (who are but flickering shadows). How could he do this other than by dealing with humans in a human way? Yes, in an Image of our own images! And the Godhead did not choose a likeness other than ourselves, neither from the things in heaven above nor on earth below. It chose that which is most intimately understood, that which is holiest, most spiritual, most effective and deepest: It chose God’s own image in the human soul—Thought! Word! Will! Deed! Love!

(We see here now, even before *Faust*, Herder is attempting to translate the word *Logos* ‘into his beloved German’.) ‘This interior power to image and to represent is indeed divine; it is God’s name in us. Without it everything looked at externally is dead and barren; but in it is to be found the cosmos, the invisible and eternal power of the Creator of which the senses provide only a likeness, a foretaste and a paradigm.’³⁴ Christ’s whole life as a man—his actions, his preaching, his suffering, his Resurrection—is a pure expression of God. Christ’s life is the highest form of religious ‘sculpture’; it consists not only of image and word, but exhibits a tangible corporeality as well.³⁵ We may here remark parenthetically how, for Herder, the transition from Christ to Winckelmann and to Greece in general always appears to be possible without further ado, in contrast to Goethe and, especially, to Schiller. We note too how Herder always integrates Greek philosophy and religion into the wider context of Near Eastern cultures, a perspective which then enables him to operate beyond the tensions between Jewish and Greek culture and between Christianity and Hellenism. Herder knows nothing of ‘aesthetic melancholy’. He sees only a process whereby that which is relatively concealed is illumined and becomes relatively revealed. Mankind—its history and its religion—can only be one, regardless of climatic and national diversity, precisely in order to remain loyal to its *truth as image*. (Even Judaism does not escape from this principle!) Read correctly, however, the Bible is the manifestation of all the beauty and truth scattered throughout humanity. Not only is the Bible this for Herder: it is also *nothing but* this. When Herder reads the Bible, even the miracle and Resurrection narratives in the New Testament, he refuses to see in it anything but the highest possibilities of man as such. For him, the Resurrection narratives are the proclamation of man’s eternity and immortality, a proclamation which necessarily has had to be cast in a particular historical form, which is to say: ‘mythically’. As a spirit, man has triumphed over time and over death, which in the Old Testament is mythically imaged as *sheol*.³⁶ The particular miracle is but the universal miracle become image. Thus above all the miracle of the Spirit’s bestowal at Pentecost, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, enthusiasm and inspiration, are all but the manifestation of what is naturally proper to the human spirit, or, in any event, the manifestation of what *ought* to be and *could* be proper to man. In his *Spirit of Christianity*, Herder develops the concept of *pneuma* in Scripture in all its breadth, a theme which Schleiermacher, Möhler, and Staudenmaier imitated him in exploring. In this,

Herder pays particular attention to the organic inter-connectedness of divine inspiration and man's capacity to be inspired. He rejects 'the base mentality of darker times' which supposed that 'a person driven by the Spirit should be like the pipe of an organ through which the wind blows—a hollow machine deprived of all its own thoughts.'³⁷ To such 'de-spiriting' is then attributed all manner of Christian self-alienation: allegorism and *gnosis*, dogmatism, sacramentalism, and scholasticism, but also orthodox Protestant Biblicism and a subjectivistic fanaticism that distorts true enthusiasm in the opposite sense. But with Shaftesbury, and against the 'Enlightened', Herder adamantly insists that,

without a passionate enthusiasm (*Begeisterung*), there would have been neither Christ, nor the Apostles, nor Christianity itself. . . . What we praise in Socrates—that he called philosophy down from heaven to the earth—holds still more of Christ with regard to religion. When he taught men to acknowledge God as the Father of their race, when he taught them to activate the divinity of their own nature and to love each other as brothers: was not Christ's enthusiasm in these instances purely human? . . . Thus the words "indwelling", "inspiration", "breath", are gently restored to their true sense. . . which is that, since it is through men that the Godhead bestowed the noblest benefits on men, he also gave them to be born as men with excellent endowments, with superior powers: men of God. . . . No wild and stormy upheaval is to be found here, rather an awakening, a fostering, an impulse, an instruction. . . . The support which they enjoyed stretched from the most joyful kind of enthusiasm to the calmest diligence and the wisest reflectiveness. The power of God worked *through their spirit*.³⁸

When on the Feast of Pentecost everyone hears disciples speak in his own native tongue, this means that they are speaking with that authenticity of the human spirit which can never be possessed by a person who has received neither spirit nor genius.³⁹ An essay entitled 'Enthusiasm, Illumination, and Revelation' develops this identity between fundamental Biblical concepts and natural concepts, and therefore, again, the identity between art (or culture) and religion. Hence Goethe at all periods of his development could find again in Herder *his* 'confession of faith' and could declare himself to be, in Herder's sense of the term, 'perhaps the only true Christian'. The amphibolies of the late work *God* are well-known, a work in which Herder turns his back on Jacobi and declares himself for Spinoza—a Spinoza, of course, that he has brought into harmony with his own understanding of Christianity. Herder's ambiguities in this work are but one expression of the great amphiboly between pantheism and Christianity that pervades the whole age, from Fichte and Schelling to Hegel: the fluid identification of the natural and the supernatural which both 'humanized' Christianity and failed to hear

its true message. And we must ask ourselves at this point whether, instead of these aesthetic harmonies, we would not prefer to hear the trenchant antitheses of a Schiller and, later, of a Marx and a Kierkegaard. . . .

A second example, one which we can examine more briefly, is *Rene de Chateaubriand*. His *Genie du Christianisme* (1802) derives from spiritual and intellectual sources similar to those which produced Herder's aesthetic Christianity: the struggle against Voltairian enlightenment, for the rehabilitation of feeling and the imagination. Chateaubriand's main work was repeatedly translated into German. In the sixty-six-volume edition of his complete works (1827-1838) it appeared as *Genius des Christentums*, but elsewhere it also bore the titles *Geist des Christentums* and *Die Schönheiten des Christentums* (1803, 1828, 1844, 1856, 1857).⁴⁰ But, while Herder and German classical and Romantic idealism after him posit an identity (no matter how variously understood) between aesthetic humanism and Christianity, Chateaubriand, as a Catholic, must preserve the difference in levels (*Gefälle*) between Christian revelation and beauty. Geniality is not itself the heart of Christianity, rather the worldly expression through which Christianity manifests itself in culture. And it is not only possible, but also permitted and desirable, to find one's way from this expression back to the essence of Christianity. In other words, Chateaubriand is not, like Herder, an aesthetic theologian, but an aesthetic apologist, and for an entire century the outpourings of Church apologetics in France will take him as their model. Only the great Christian literary figures—Bloy and Péguy, Claudel and Bernanos, and *not* clerical writers—would bring about drastic changes in this area.

Like Herder, Chateaubriand takes his stance in human wholeness. Enough of petty dogmatic and rationalistic-apologetical squabbles! Why not simply see what *is*? Why not see what has radiated out into history from the presence within it of the Christian mystery? Why not recognize the essential reality by its fruits? Why not approach Christianity where it has become incarnate in culture? Admittedly, this is possible only for the person who grasps the fact of Christianity from the very depths and fulness of his being as subject, with a heart that longs to believe, to hope, and to love. Christianity may, of course, be considered in two ways. We first have 'Christianity in itself (*proprement dit*), namely, its dogmas, its doctrine, and its cult. Under "cult" also come its works of charity and its moral and political institutions.' Besides this view,

we also have Christianity's radiant force, which Chateaubriand calls 'the poetics of the Christian reality',—'or the effect of this religion on poetry, the fine arts, eloquence, history, philosophy, and literature in general. This influence leads us to consider the transformations brought about by Christianity in human passions and the development of the human spirit.' This distinction, however, does not reveal the plan of the work, but only the difference of levels on which it is based. The standpoint of the *Genie*, from beginning to end, remains the lower plane: the criterion of truth (of both divine and total human truth, as well as of supernatural and natural truth) is *beauty*—not only beauty's harmoniousness with man as such, but the harmony that beauty and only beauty produces and develops in man.

An apology of Christianity in which we would show the reader nothing but the beauty of this religion: Could such an apology prove erroneous if what it means to demonstrate—both in that which is closest to us and in those things farthest from us—is the ubiquitousness of God's majesty, the marvels of Providence, the effect, attraction, and benefits of the dogmas, doctrine, and cult of Jesus Christ?⁴¹

Chateaubriand enumerates a long series of writers who have anticipated him in this method, from Justin, Arnobius, Lactantius, Origen, and Augustine to Pascal, François de Sales, and Fénelon. 'Would Ambrose have been able to present the Church with St. Augustine if he had not employed all the attractions of the art of preaching? And how was Augustine himself able to soar up to the "City of God" other than on the wings of the imagination?' 'The poetical apology for religion reaches uninterruptedly from Julian's time to our own.' Chateaubriand here makes reference to Fleury's *De grandiloquentia et suavitate Psalmorum* and to Lowth's *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum*. And the Song of Solomon (which Hamann and Herder had also translated!) is quoted as being God's own defence of this method. It is Chateaubriand's intent '*de porter un grand coup au coeur et de frapper vivement l'imagination*'.⁴² This he does in four books, of which the first and the last transfer our focus of concern from *poésie* to the particular form of Christianity, in order to discover the immanent poetics proper to Christianity. The two middle books proceed in the reverse, from Christianity to poetry and the cultural effects of religion. Both viewpoints are defined with the greatest rigour.

The first book shows the beauty (*charme*) of the Christian mysteries, the appropriateness of the supernatural for human nature. Redemption,

Incarnation, the sacraments, faith, hope, love, the moral law, the doctrine of man's fallen state, the prospect of eternal life: all of these exactly correspond to what nature of itself requires without itself being able to provide it.

The second book immediately proceeds to consider Christian poetry, and proves that it is precisely Christianity which has led to the highest poetical inspiration. Among many others, Dante, Tasso, Milton, and Racine demonstrate the fruitfulness of Christian dogmas. In Christianity the passions are not exterminated, but rather ennobled, the mysteries of Christianity nourish the human need for the miraculous just as much and even more than does the pagan world of myths.

The third book shows the effect of Christianity on music, painting, architecture, philosophy, the natural and moral sciences, history, and eloquence, and concludes with a hymn to the 'harmonies of the Christian religion'.

The fourth book ascends again to the forms through which the Church manifests itself in the world. It then breaks into a veritable rhapsody on the liturgy and all its decorative embellishments: the cycle of feasts, the Ritual of the Dead, the monumental graves. The book concludes by extolling the clergy, the missions, the orders of chivalry, and, finally, the whole beneficial effect which the visible Church has had on humanity.

In order to appraise Chateaubriand's work correctly, we must first set aside everything in his book which is conditioned by the Romantic ambience of the times and by the author's own amateurish maladroitness (something which Chateaubriand senses himself), his lapses in good taste. Once we get beyond all this and are able to perceive Chateaubriand's basic conception, we will have to say that while in this work an important perspective has been sensed, it has nevertheless been sensed only to be misunderstood. The standard of beauty by which revelation and the Church are measured in the first and fourth books is the standard of beauty of the other two books—a criterion and a measure of this-worldly, human, and cultural beauty, appropriate for the effects of Christianity but not valid for the essence of Christianity itself. The 'beauty' which is supposed to serve as criterion for the latter is set too low by Chateaubriand. In his work, the world of revelation does not bring with itself its own criterion and its own beauty, a criterion and a beauty *by which* man, the world, and culture could measure themselves. The point of reference lies, at best, in the harmony *between* nature and supernature, but for the most part it is to be found *in* nature, in its own satisfaction and development.

Chateaubriand's points of view are all correct and possible in a Christian sense, but they are not sufficient. For this reason, an apologetics based solely on them bypasses the central concerns of Christianity and cannot be effective in the long run, as history was to prove almost at once. But we must add, particularly with regard to France, that Chateaubriand's suggestions ought to have been taken more deeply to heart and that the delicate and somewhat hazy intuitions that stirred him ought to have been brought more energetically to the light. Instead, France plunged for a full half-century into a religious-political integralism which was hopeless and sterile in a way quite different from Chateaubriand's own unfruitfulness. Such an integralism could only be superseded by an equally unprincipled laicism which was to deaden the heart of the nation.

More than either Herder or Chateaubriand, it was the inspired theologian from Lucerne, *Alois G  gler*, who brought Romantic aesthetic theology to its perfection. G  gler, who died all too young, was the leader of the Romantic school in Lucerne, which anticipated the flourishing of Romanticism in T  bingen by a decade. He had been a disciple of Sailer and of Zimmer in Land-shut. Himself a poet and an admirer of Herder, he took up the latter's insights and in his principal work, *The Sacred Art; or, the Art of the Hebrews* (1814-1836),⁴³ endowed Herder's theology with 'the single feature on which the perfection of the statue depended', a feature which Herder was himself unable to provide 'because of a certain unbelief on his part' (I, Vorrede, pp. v—vi). This is the objective that G  gler announces in the first volume, which is where he stands most strongly under Herder's spell. Later on, the influence of Fichte, Novalis, Schelling, Baader, and, last of all, of Molitor and Daub eclipses that of Herder even as G  gler grows in his own knowledge of exegesis. But, though in many ways he later deepened his point of departure in Herder, G  gler never rejected it.

The basic structure of *The Sacred Art* is simple. God's revelation in his creation is natural as to its results, but supernatural and miraculous as to its divine depth. To the sensorium (*Gem  t*) or sensitivity that perceives this holy depth—a depth in which God is present in all beings and in which he manifests himself—the world appears as God's impassioning and enrapturing work of art. In their art, all peoples bear some witness to this primal experience. But, while in these the divine light becomes refracted into colours, only the Hebrews were able to preserve for themselves the greatest

transparency for the light (I, p. 12f.). The 'national element' in them never became distanced from its source and origin (I, p. 35). Man is a horizon between an interior world of mystery (which, with Novalis, Gugler initially calls the 'holy night'; I, pp. 30, 301, 310) and the exterior sphere of the senses—the 'day-world'. In this 'day-world', spirit, reason, and understanding reign supreme, while 'fantasy, freedom, and conscience' constitute the point through which the 'unfathomable soul' (*das unergrundliche Gemut*) enters into the world of light (I, p. 85). Phantasy is the 'middle point', 'the truly genial faculty' (I, p. 86) standing between 'worshipful piety, seclusion, and an orientation to eternity' and a 'moral activity directed towards the world outside' (II, pp. 170-172). Only the Hebrews did not misuse fantasy by externalising and profaning their interior worship with flat images of the day. Only they were able to persevere in the sanctuary of an 'adoring silence' (I, p. 298).

Now, it may well be that all art, particularly the highest art of all peoples, is religious, which is to say that it seeks to communicate the experience of the holy (I, p. 34). But, in most instances, such art has in some way 'dammed up the flow of the divine river, producing 'stagnant lakes' and even 'gloomy swamps' and 'works of putrefaction' and 'desiccation' (I, pp. 38-39; V, p. 105). God is there, but either as an 'unmoved rock in the depths of nature' (I, p. 45) or fragmented into the many facets of 'mythology' (I, p. 78), which is the proper medium of worldly beauty, that beauty which the Greeks developed to its height (II, p. 78). Mythology represents for Gugler 'the pervasive falling away from pure infinity and the thoroughgoing deification of nature and of man' (I, p. 143; III, p. 47), and in it only sporadic 'flashes of lightning' can still break through from the true source (I, p. 97). In Promethean fashion, the 'holy eternal fire . . . was brought down into the realm of the senses' (I, p. 92). With all its 'innumerable allegorical cosmogonies' (I, p. 274), Gnosticism is but a consequence and a variant of the mythical world-view. This is why Paul says that the pagans did not want to acknowledge the revealed God, but rather 'turned him into and confused him with nature' (IV, p. 134). Like Hamann and Herder, G gler also sees Greek culture as being wholly oriented toward the East—as a branch on the trunk of the Orient (I, pp. 27, 122, 141-150). And it is his view that if the East had already turned religion into *gnosis*, then Greek externalising of religion in sensuous art and philosophy was but a variation of Eastern religion and not a properly Western characteristic to be contrasted with the introversion of the

East.

What gives G gler's theology its decisive character is that he sees the relationship between Biblical revelation and extra-Biblical art as being a relationship between what is original and what is already in decline, between the proper order of reality and a progressive alienation from that reality. Genuine inspiration and enthusiasm, therefore, is that bestowed by the Holy Spirit—prophetic inspiration as opposed to the decadent forms of clairvoyance and the like.⁴⁴ In the same way, the only genuine miracle is the Biblical miracle, as opposed to the decadent forms of white and black magic (II, pp. 267f.), and true 'wisdom' is that of the Wisdom Books, as opposed to man's decadent forms of self-reflection in 'philosophy' (III, pp. 139-295). The advantages of such a conception are, first of all, the 'redeemability' of all that is outside the Bible as it is taken into the reality of revelation in Christ; second, the consequent applicability (albeit with all caution) of the universal phenomena of life, nature, and history to our interpretation of revelation properly so called; and, third, the avoidance of an isolationist historical 'positivism' of Biblical revelation in favour of a view of the relationship to God that sees it as having been already established in the very essence of all created reason and nature, even though its presence and reality have somehow been 'buried alive'. G gler naturally stresses the historical element very strongly: true prophecy means fulness of time, conferring meaning within duration as such, while the myths presuppose and reveal a time which is both cyclical and empty (IV, pp. 162-185, esp. 168-169; II, pp. 78-93). But for G gler, just as for Herder, history means primarily the diversification of human totality and even a 'dynamic totality' (II, p. 73; III, p. 23; IV, Prologue, p. xix). History, in this view, is not very different from the essence of the work of art, which always means to be 'visible totality'. Hebrew history, furthermore, is simply seen to be the truth and manifestness of *all* of history (II, p. 83), just as Christianity is the adequate and real fulfillment of all religion (II, pp. 162, 198). The Bible itself describes an arc between the departure and the return. Genesis is the childhood of man, never wholly lost, which flashes through history time and again (III, p. 247). Exodus is man's adolescence, the time of the great miracles when everything appears to the now reflective consciousness as an explicit wonder, while for the child a wonder is still the natural course of things (III, pp. 267-300). Law, sacrifices, and prophecy represent a consciousness which is both adult and fragmented, while the New Covenant and the Age of the Church can progressively

dispense with particular miracles, since, in its fulfilment, everything has again become 'substantial wonder' and the division between what *is* and what *should* be has, in Christ, been fundamentally bridged (III, pp. 298-299; IV, pp. 178f.; V, pp. 206-208). This fulness at the same time fulfills both history and nature; it does not, as does the Enlightenment, make positive historical facts merely superfluous, rather it re-constitutes them as 'transfigured history', as we can already see in Hebraic poetry and wisdom (I, p. 349). All prophecy demands a vision of history's totality (I, pp. 364-365), but even the Law must be historical and prophetic if it is to be an expression of the divine, eternal Law (II, p. 79). This is why Hebraic nationalism as a whole, as opposed to all the closed nationalisms of the pagans, must be open to the totality of historical salvation, which means a nationhood oriented to the Church (II, pp. 80, 159).

From this perspective we can clearly see what art means for G gler, what holy (Biblical) art can and must be in his opinion, and, therefore, what is demanded by the interpretation of holy art (exegesis).

In the atmosphere of Romanticism, art is understood as being the expression of an interior feeling of infiniteness and as the exteriorization of the experience of God in the affections. In the atmosphere of Idealism, on the other hand, art is seen as the total dependence of the finite 'I' on the infinite 'I'. 'All true awareness', writes G gler, 'is comprehended in the divine awareness; moreover, art produces such awareness in a real manner only by awaking and developing it in those spirits which slumber in the human soul. For this reason, then, the works of art come to be included among the divine creations' (I, p. 66). Primary importance is given by G gler to the interior infinity of feeling and receptiveness, since 'the river banks are much too narrow' for the waves of the stream of life 'to be able to spend their force fully on its surface' (I, p. 80). In music, the process of 'ordering and dissolving' goes on uninterruptedly; and this is why music is 'so close to the Highest that it must be regarded as the first and last of all arts' (I, p. 113). For this reason, too, 'a genuine theory of art must depict the general disposition of artists. This interior disposition is, indeed, present in a living way in their works, but, precisely in order to safeguard the integrity of the life presented in these works, the artists' conceptual foundations appear in them in a veiled form' (I, p. 42). A genuine theory of art is the conscious exteriorization of the inner fulness in the 'form' which must, of course, never be lacking, since art may only be found where a 'living entity' mediates between pure life and

lived life (I, pp. 61-62, 72). But form is the language of the ‘spirit’, and our ultimate concern is for what is actually being mediated, even though the mediating agent may be permanently present. Education (*Bildung*) does not come about through the amassing of materials; it is the growing process of being in-formed by the primal form or archetype (*Urbild*) itself. ‘Erudition’ is, literally, the process whereby ‘a person strives to extract or to draw out (*eruiere*) spiritual and divine life from all the hidden places where it lies concealed. In this way, man is ‘filled, animated, and “made erudite” by the divine life he extracts’ (I, p. 54). Art’s fruitful womb is the soul’s attunedness to God (*die Gestimmtheit des Gemütes*). This ‘being attuned’ means that

man is encompassed and determined by God. In so far as it passes over into consciousness, this state of being determined by God will then be seen to be a sensorium that perceives divine things, a living commerce between God and man, a real *spiritual* equating of the two, or a “tuning”. . . . This “tuning” (*Stimmung*) is . . . the living process whereby the tuner (*der Bestimmende*) and the tuned (*der Bestimmte*) are made equal. To be so tuned means, then, that the relationship of a thing to its element has been raised to the level of actuality and effectiveness. When the relationships of a string of the instrument to the different resonances of the air have been established in being by tightening the string, and so forth, then the string is tuned.

This is how God brought creation into accord (*Stimmen*) with himself, and this, too, is the only way in which ‘otherwise mute creation received a voice (*Stimme*) and a language’. So man has been tuned by God’s breath to reflect and express the attuned-ness (*Gestimmtheit*) of matter and spirit, nature and God. ‘History is the never-fading tuning (*Stimmung*) of all nature and life in search of eternal harmony. . . . The compatibility and relationship between the eternal being of things and their cycle of birth and death . . . can be conceived only in terms of this tuning (*Stimmung*)’ (II, pp. 177-180). All this reaches its perfection in the Christian revelation of the Trinity: ‘The Father appears as the force that draws us, Christ as the medium, and the Spirit in us is God’s very tuning of us itself’ (*ibid.*, p. 197). The ‘anointing’ that the Spirit pours over us is ‘like a divine instinct’ which ‘opens up and transfigures everything’ for the Christian. It is like a ‘sweetness which, once tasted, never allows us to look back: the bride’s longing for the Lamb which constantly grows louder and more urgent’. All historical revelation has this as its goal: the touching of the very core of man, the interior ‘world of mankind’s heart by the divine tuning’. With this theory, Gügler throws a great arch, from the spiritual *harmonia* of Pythagorean Platonism to the ardent intimacy of religious Romanticism (Schleiermacher). In so doing, he also brings to bear

the essential themes of Catholic spirituality, for instance, from the *Theotimus* of François de Sales.

For the ‘art of the Hebrews’, the result of this theory of art is that, precisely because they are so close to the interior and divine (night-)world, they are not bent upon the exteriorization of fantasy or upon the full development (*Ausbildung*) of symbols. Their art is necessarily and consciously inchoative, ‘their language ever remains caught up in the pangs of lively creativity.’ ‘The Hebrew never quite dares to venture outside his silent centre—the affective soul (*Gemüt*). His painting and his music remain awkward and subordinate to his art of language as an appendix and decoration’ (I, p. 338). But this ‘indigence on the part of the Hebrews’ (I, p. 336) is but a proof of the fact that this people ‘never wholly abandoned the realm of the infinite’ (I, p. 283). ‘The Hebrews held fast to the undetermined Source in their innermost hearts, and they sought to prevent all over-hastiness in the course of mankind’s life and education.’ ‘If they are to reach the sublime peak of nobility that is proper to them, architecture, sculpture, and painting already presuppose a divine or sublime reality which has been perceived and defined at least in a negative manner’ (I, pp. 331-333). In other words, the optimal measure of worldly art is not the optimal measure of divine revelation. If, for instance, we decide that Greek art is the paragon of art, then ‘holy art’ must be regarded either as a *super-art* or as a kind of *pre-art* which necessarily remains at the rudimentary stage from which art, properly so called, will subsequently emerge. In this connection, Gügler, along with Herder, gives Biblical aesthetics as a whole a protological orientation, that is to say, he orients it to its genesis—the origin which has either been lost or preserved in some way. This is why, at least in the first volumes, the relationship remains unclear between Christianity and what F. Schlegel and Hegel call ‘romantic’ art, by this meaning post-Christian, Western art. The affinity of this art of infinity and spiritual wholeness with Christian reality in its perfection is, indeed, clear. God’s perfect Incarnation in Christ and the raising (*Aufhebung*) of history and of the hidden presence of eternity into the holy Kingdom of the Church are certainly the perfection of God’s art. But the exact relationship of God’s art to the post-Christian art of mankind remains unclear (I, pp. 211-213, 302, 308, 368f.). This all the more because, especially in the last volumes as he develops his position, Gügler sees the relationship between the Old and the New Covenants as being one of promise and fulfilment. This relationship, however, is understood Platonically as being a relationship of

word (coming essentially from the outside and from above) to *light* (which breaks forth primarily from within; IV, pp. 123, 148f.). In this manner, Christ appears as a 'word of light' (IV, p. 133), even as an interior 'food of light' (IV, p. 149), while the prophetic 'elucidation' (*Erklären*) of the Old Covenant leads, by its very essence, to the 'transfiguration' (*Verklären*) of the New Testament (IV, p. 119; V, p. 238) to a 'theology of Tabor' (IV, p. 142).

From this, it is easy to see what exegesis can and must be. Exegesis is the progressive returning of everything history has formed back to the original Light (IV, p. 141) and the interpretation of it by reference to this origin. Such exegesis is possible only from the perspective of a total overview of salvation-history and of all God's revelation (IV, pp. xix—xxi, 128-129), an overview too of Christ's totality (V, pp. 190f.) and above all, of a living interior contemplation of the divine life—a disposition which is simply assumed (I, pp. 24, 49, 314). The interpretation of art presupposes an awareness of what art is. The point of access to the artist's genuine inspiration must be an inspiration akin to the artist's (I, p. 41). Scholarly enquiry must become contemplation (I, p. 315). But it is indeed the scholar's business 'to dust off the old statue, the painting of heaven and of earth, before the adequate contemplation and the interior enjoyment of these can begin' (I, p. 19). Gügler had harsh words to say about theology's lack of spirit: 'The multiplication of conceptual distinctions has led to the emergence of the different theological sciences from the total life of the divine in mankind and these sciences have grown strong. . . . They have lost sight of the universal and have been cut off from the living root. . . . How many manuals of dogmatic and moral theology could we pick up without finding in them any inkling of religion? How far histories of the Church are from the heavenly flame that should penetrate everything with its light! In our many theologies, we find everything except what their name calls for. They resemble the dead heaps of stones that were left over after the destruction of the holy Temple. The soul which God fills has shut itself off, and those who have the key of knowledge, instead of going into the soul, clutter the entrance to it with all kinds of vain trifles' (I, pp. 322-323). After the excessively poetical prologue to the first volume, Gügler was himself increasingly concerned to match up to the seriousness of scholarly investigation. To this end, he strove always to elucidate Scripture's central ideas in the light of the totality of revelation and, particularly, in the light of the relationship between the Old and the New Covenants.

The limitations and dangers of his method are not only his, but those of his age. There are two that are interrelated. The first of these dangers and limitations is the Neo-Platonic and Idealist philosophy of identity in the manner of a Fichte and a Schelling, which, in spite of all the precautions taken, may always be detected in the background of G  gler's train of thought, particularly in the later volumes. This philosophy refers to the original identity of 'light and eye' (IV, p. 155f.), of object and subject (V, p. 165), of truth and knowledge (V, p. 196), all of this intensified to the extreme of something like a total Christ-*gnosis*: from the 'thought of light that established all beings absolutely' to the 'language and perception of light' ('He saw that it was good'); from the 'creation of time' to the 'flesh of light' for the fallen world in the *kenosis* of the Word and back to a 'full transfiguration' (V, pp. 241-242). Intimately related to such philosophical monism is the typically Romantic equation of the nature / spirit relationship with the relationship between nature and supernature (grace, revelation).⁴⁵ In G  gler, this equation takes the form of a certain Augustinian illuminism. The created spirit, according to this illuminism, is nothing but an eye (IV, p. 132) or an ear (V, pp. 70-71). Its real content is a light and a word that come from God. In the same sense (and here G  gler certainly hits upon something both profound and accurate), predestination—God's primal idea of each human being—is equated with true freedom and self-determination (V, pp. 42, 125). Furthermore, in true Romantic fashion, nature is without any mediation taken to be the 'Body of Christ', and its mysterious forces are entrusted to a 'divine magic' (the word is very cautiously used) in the context of some kind of 'total sacramentality'.

Even if it remains fragmentary, G  gler's theology belongs to the most significant achievements of Catholic Romanticism. G  gler's work announces powerfully the aesthetic concerns of theology, while being unable to carry this interest through to a successful conclusion. This is due, first, to G  gler's early death, then to the fact that publication of his work was spread over a period of twenty years, and, at an interior level, to the fluctuating nature of G  gler's thought which led him from Herder to Idealist theosophy by way of Romantic poetry. Finally responsible was the fact that G  gler never achieved a very clear definition of his underlying concept of art. In particular, while he makes it perfectly clear that he is using it analogously, he fails to provide an adequate account of his analogical method. Nor was this possible on the basis of the schema of Romantic categories. The collapse of Idealist Catholic

theology during the period of the solemn condemnations in the middle of the last century saw too the disappearance from view of G gler's concerns. Even if they knew of G gler's concerns, our contemporaries would dismiss them with the same quick irony as they do Herder and Chateaubriand. And yet, these concerns rightly persist and must again be brought to life even if, admittedly, this must be done in a different way.

Romantic theology ultimately failed because of a deep theological inadequacy, namely, that it did not sufficiently distinguish between creation and revelation, or, to formulate it in the terms of our enquiry, we can say that Romantic theology foundered on a kind of aesthetic and religious monism. Then, around the middle of the last century, Romantic theology succumbed to the crushing blows of Neo-Thomism and of official condemnations. On the other side of this 'demarcation-line' a new world began. After the few trenchant dissociations necessary to every beginning, this 'new world' again took its bearings from the basic intuitions of the common Tradition. Just as Idealism had its roots in Plotinus and Augustine, so, too, did Thomism itself, at least when it sought to grow beyond strict scholastic requirements and develop a universal perspective. This was true of *Matthias Joseph Scheeben*, the greatest German theologian to-date since the time of Romanticism. Scheeben brought the Thomism of the schools to Germany from Rome, but he expounded it in a way which made it possible for the concerns of the previous age to come to life again, even if in a different form.

As with the other theologians we have reviewed, we here introduce Scheeben only by way of an example and as a milestone. In Catholic theology, Scheeben signals the turning from an Idealist, aesthetic theology to a theology which, to begin with at least, is meant to be strictly positive and 'scientific' even in its speculation. But Scheeben's aesthetic inclinations were so strong and penetrating that he too gave this theological 'science' a thoroughly aesthetic shape both as regards its form and its contents. In this way, Scheeben did us the service of replacing the 'aesthetic theology' of Romanticism with the outlines of a methodically founded 'theological aesthetics'. We can only regret the fact that Scheeben's method is based on a primary negation which we will examine first. Historically, we can understand this limitation and even see that it could not be avoided. Moreover, it was not *this* limitation which prevented the aesthetic element of Scheeben's theology from being sufficiently innovative and influential.

Scheeben's work unfolds consistently and steadily from his *Natur und*

Gnade (1861, along with his new edition of Casini's *Quid est homo* in 1862), through his *Herrlichkeiten der göttlichen Gnade* (1862), to the *Mysterien des Christentums* (1865) and the unfinished *Dogmatik* (I, 1873; II, 1878-1880; III, 1882-1887).⁴⁶ Now and then, throughout the development of this work, some changes are made in content, but even this occurs only in order to maintain the course taken with greater exactness. Scheeben's basic intuition is very simple. A negative, polemical thesis serves as its foundation and as the springboard from which to attain a total religious-aesthetic outlook.

As against Romantic theology, Scheeben defends with unrelenting sharpness the separation between nature and supernature, a defence supported by a comprehensive use of heresiology. In the first place, says Scheeben, supernature is not a moment in nature by which God brings it to perfection, a complement to nature which causes nature to pass from potency to act, or a medicine that 'cures' nature of the disease of having its back to God by making it con-vert to him. Nor can nature claim to 'strive positively' after supernature or assert 'certain rights to it'. This would constitute 'an internal contradiction' (N, II, § 2, p. 49). All connecting lines that could naturally lead from below into the Realm above are severed by Scheeben. To achieve this end, which was also served by his new edition of Casini, Scheeben established a closed realm of *natura pura*, free of conceptual contradictions, a realm intended as a 'self-enclosed order of life' (*ibid.*, pp. 53-54; cf. D. III, § 177, p. 462). The Resurrection of the Flesh is a mystery of Christ and, therefore, strictly supernatural. Consequently, a purely natural anthropology may be constructed only in such a way that man's moral and religious 'transfiguration' is conceived (Platonically) as a gradual extrication of the spirit from its material subjection, with the consequent affirmation of man's natural death: 'For the spirit in so far as its activity is limited (by its association with the body) such transfiguration is indeed in a certain sense unnatural. If the spirit can become free in no other manner, then it must attain to its natural perfection by the dissolution of the total nature' (N, II, § 1, p. 40). 'In this respect, the natural state of the soul that has been separated from the body—released from it as from a dark shell—and which can now expand its spiritual powers fully, may be said already to be a state of transfiguration' (M, § 92, pp. 629-630). Such a passage makes clear why Scheeben does not content himself with the adjective 'supernatural' but introduces of necessity the substantive 'supernature' into theological language (N, I, § 4, pp. 21f.). All appearances must be destroyed that might make of grace simply a modal

‘supplement’ to nature. The world of grace is the world of God himself in so far as he reveals himself to created nature, thereby granting it a share in his own substance and nature. The creature partakes of this nature ‘as of a second, higher nature, as it were, or as of a supernature’ (N, III, § 1, pp. 63-64). Grace bestows on us not only a new external dignity, but . . . in some way it gives us the beginning of ‘a new substance’ (N, III, § 2, p. 76), ‘a new, higher nature’ (H, I, § 10, p. 38), which ‘pulls us free from the limitations of nature’. Man takes ‘a new step on the ladder of beings’ (*ibid.*, pp. 39-40). God’s revelation of himself, according to Scheeben, means the transporting of man from his own immanent and finite sphere into the divine, transcendental, and infinite sphere, an experience such as is portrayed, for instance, by the well-known Renaissance woodcut which shows a man piercing the sphere of the world with his head and gaping with astonishment at the mysteries beyond the world.

The *Glories of Divine Grace* (which is the very telling title of the second book, a panegyric) are the quintessence of beauty because they are ‘supernatural’. This word occurs incessantly in Scheeben’s early writings, often in every line. Since the ‘glories of grace’ are the glories of God himself, they are infinitely superior and more sublime (*erhaben*) than natural beauty and dignity. For the creature, this substantial superiority (*Erhabenheit*) means an ‘elevation’ (*Erhebung*) which is both ontological and experiential and aesthetic. ‘The *beauty*. . . of the Catholic faith lies precisely in the fact that, in the mysteries of grace, it displays before us an immeasurably exalted *elevation* of our nature’ (H. ‘Vorwort’, p. 1). We constantly encounter the expression ‘how much the more’ that denotes this going beyond nature. But here it is not only a matter of the upward movement. The content of this ‘supernature’ is also at stake. The mysteries of grace are ‘not merely particular truths which lie beyond the natural order. They are a stupendous order all its own, a higher celestial world, a mystical cosmos’ (D, I, § 4, n. 33) which, ‘in its beauty and brilliance, infinitely surpasses everything that reason can attain in its highest flight’ (M, I, § 4, p. 16). It is ‘like stars that together form a marvellous system of their own’ (*ibid.*, p. 19) and which ‘intensify and illumine each other reciprocally and join together to make a marvellous system’ (M, XV, § 104, p. 707). This beauty is God’s substantial beauty itself, a beauty described by Scheeben in a chapter on the doctrine of God (D, I, § 85, pp. 589f.). Scheeben is fond of speaking of this beauty in the same breath as the divine ‘goodness’ (as *kalokagathia*). As the object of the

divine pleasure, God's beauty is described by Scheeben as being God's 'dignity' and 'holiness', and in its appearance it is described as the divine 'glory' (D, I, § 104, pp. 733f.). It is, further, the beauty created by God's substantial beauty as it communicates and pours itself out, for God's beauty creates the beautiful things which he wishes to love (H, II, § 9, p. 105). The created beauty is the object of God's glance; but, in the present, we can only believe in such beauty, not see it. By 'transposing our eye' to God's point of view, however, we can even now begin to see it, and, in eternity, we will behold this beauty openly with God (M, XI, § 104, p. 172). Theology is 'the dawn of the light of contemplation' (M, XI, § 108, p. 731). And Sacred Scripture itself, which shows us this supernatural cosmos in a veiled way, is 'a work of art objectively placed before man's eyes: a painting and a drama of divine wisdom.' A genuinely theological exegesis which is inspired by the Holy Spirit and which keeps Scripture's integrity in sight leads us further than a 'purely philological consideration', although we must also avoid 'confusing the poetry of the Holy Spirit with human poetry, so as not to turn into mere fictions the facts contained in the literal sense (D, I, § 17, n. 240-244). Finally, for the person who has the vision of faith, the world as a whole is 'the expression of a divine idea. . . , an artistic idea,. . . the imitative execution (*Nachbildung*) of the ideal that God himself is'. In this way, 'both in its wholeness and in its parts, the world is a likeness (*Abbild*) of God's beauty and glory' (D, II, § 134, n. 119f.; cf. § 144, n. 281). It is not the world, however, but 'the organic and practical workings of faith's mysteries' that Scheeben describes 'with amazing architectonic dexterity' (Grabmann; N, 'Einleitung', p. XXIX), and, in so doing, Scheeben invites the reader to consider God's plan of the world 'as a work of creative, universal architectonics' (D, III, § 268, n. 1385). It is the 'attraction of the mystery' which should 'fill us with inexpressible delight' (M, I, § i, p. 4). Our wonderment should be directed to the creature which has been transfigured by grace, above all others to Christ and Mary. We must begin from above, from the heights, in order then to see how the divine beauty gradually penetrates and elevates all depths of reality. Thus it should not surprise us to learn that Scheeben had begun as a writer with the book *Marienblüten* (Marian Blossoms, 1860), and that, even in the midst of his work on dogma at the end of his life and stimulated by A. von Thimus' profound work, *Die harmonikale Symbolik des Altertums* (*The Harmonic Symbolism of Antiquity*, 1868-1876), he busied himself with number mysticism and with music, and

even started on a work entitled *Die Zahlengesetze der Harmonik in Ton, Licht und Kosmos* (*The Numerical Laws of Harmony in Sound, Light, and the Cosmos*; N, 'Einleitung', p. xxxv).

The initial antithesis directed against the Romantic confusion of nature and supernature results, first of all, in a certain sealing off of the supernatural cosmos of mysteries. The 'dark side' of these mysteries consists precisely in the fact that everything in them can be described only in terms of 'light in light'. The enthusiasm for such a closed world produces a merely abstract edification which in the *Glories* soon becomes wearisome.⁴⁷ Grace is seen here from above, at first without reference to the Church and the sacraments—regarded as the beauty of the soul in itself with nothing of the deadly drama of real existence. Scheeben's enthusiastic portrayals of virginity also make a slightly dualistic impression (H, III, § 9, p. 271; D, I, § 122, n. 1019f. and *passim*), like so many things in this age of *émigration intérieure*.

Nevertheless, Scheeben was able to make up in a second round for the losses incurred in the first. If we survey his work as a totality we have to be thankful for the initial clarity of his conceptual distinctions which later allows him to proceed without the least danger to treat of the very profound interpenetration of both realms, a task on which he had already embarked at the conclusion of his book *Nature and Grace* and which from that point on becomes increasingly important. As soon as Scheeben passes from formal considerations to the content of the mysteries, we see that the creature's 'elevation' into God occurs as a result of a preceding descent and ingress on God's part, an interpenetration of nature and grace which receives from Scheeben the name of 'marriage' from the very beginning. As he proceeds he introduces and develops the concept in every aspect of dogmatic theology. His theology thus becomes one great doctrine of *eros*, to an extent that far surpasses anything attained in this respect by past theology. To faith, God is Trinity, an interior fruitfulness that pours itself out. In Christ's hypostatic union, it pours itself out into the creation which had been prepared for just this. Made ready *by* Christ's grace *for* Christ's grace, moreover, creation reaches its epitome in Mary's bridal motherhood. This is the centre from which every aspect of the Church and of Christianity must be interpreted, down to the very nature of the world and of formal ontology. God's plan for the world is the 'glorification' and 'transfiguration' of nature in its servanthood (*Dienstbarkeit*). Theology therefore, is not out to demolish philosophy and its concepts, but to 'transfigure' them (M, XI, § 106, p. 728; §

108, p. 746). Though we cannot simply affirm the Scotist view that Christ would have become man even without the fall, nevertheless God's espousal of the world in Christ must never be conceived as a mere 'means to the end' (of redemption). God's 'marriage' with the world is, rather, the 'highest idea' (M, V, § 62, p. 388), the 'point of departure and criterion' of the 'supernatural organism' (M, IX, § 92, p. 633). For every creature this is the supernatural, freely given 'ideal', an ideal which is necessary because it is really conferred, an ideal which is the 'principle and goal' of all participation in God (N, IV, p. 195).

The uniqueness of Scheeben's conception consists in the fact that the vision of faith allows him to grasp certain fundamental laws of Being in such a vital manner that he is then able to illumine faith's mystery from the standpoint of ontology. Moreover, he does this by avoiding in theology every formalistic application of philosophical concepts; rather, he 'transfigures' these concepts in the way we have discussed. Consequently, he refuses, for instance, to countenance the theologically mostly sterile opposition between 'physical' and 'moral' such as is debated by Banezians and Molinists, because what he saw in the vision of faith cautioned him against such a statement of the question. He can, therefore, silence both the critics who object to his thinking too much in images—an 'obvious' philosophical deficiency (Preface to D, II, § 2, pp. x—xi)—and those critics who hold his all too marked harmonizing tendencies against him. His very real achievements allow him to maintain, untroubled by such criticisms, the thesis that true theological aesthetics proves itself to be such precisely through its sober and consistent loyalty to its subject-matter (*Sachgerechtigkeit*): 'A scientific elucidation carried out in the spirit of Sacred Scripture and of Tradition brings to light ideas which are not only more solid and better grounded but, precisely because they are such, are also much more beautiful and sublime than all the aspirations which pious feelings can muster' (Preface to D, III, § i, pp. vi—vii).

At the heart of Scheeben's understanding of things lies the notion of the 'in-formation' of nature by grace, nature thus being considered to behave as *materia*. This in-formation, however, is understood as a divine 'begetting' in the 'womb' of nature. Matter-and-form, a philosophical pair of concepts, is deepened and 'transfigured' by Scheeben into the bride / bridegroom relationship. Such a relationship is already found in the natural relationship of spirit and body and in their fusing together to form *one* being. As opposed to

‘pure creation’, the engendering and shaping power from above needs the ‘womb of matter’ which is to be elevated and spiritualized; and the spirit itself needs this ‘womb’ in order to reveal its engendering life-force (D, III, § 241a, n. 809f.). Scheeben is aware of the limits of the spirit-body / man-woman analogy. But for him it is important that Paul uses this analogy not to establish the autonomy of two human hypostases, but in the sense of the sexual difference between that which engenders from above and that which conceives, bears, and gives birth from below. Such an understanding of the analogy is presupposed in order that the creaturely ‘likeness’ (*Abbild*) might correspond to the supernatural archetype (*Urbild*) Christ / Mary, Christ / Church, and, in Christ himself, to the relationship between his two natures. All of this means that it is not the relations of persons separated from their physical aspect that are decisive; decisive, rather, are precisely the ‘physical’ relationships which ‘carry’ the personal relationships ontically. And these ‘physical’ relationships—mediated, to be sure, by the personal aspect—are then ‘transfigured’ and raised to their highest truth in the relationship between nature and grace.

This principle may also be developed by starting from the top with the doctrine of God and of the Trinity and working down.

The more profound concept of sanctity rests on the fact that the proper life of the will in its innermost power and fulness of energy does not simply consist of orienting and directing the will to that which is objectively good and beautiful on the basis of a certain acknowledgement of the worth of the objectively good and beautiful and with the aim of conforming the will to them. Rather the proper life of the will consists in its. . . *transformation into* the objectively good and beautiful, a transformation which, in the case of our will, appears to be partly the root and source . . . of its striving, but partly also the goal and perfection of this . . . striving. Such transformation would appear to be as it were the very soul or *forma* of all of the will’s further activity. In other words, the life of the will consists of love in so far as love, being a delight in that which is objectively good and beautiful, binds the lover to this object, steeping him in it and moulding him into it. Love so penetrates and fills the lover with the object of his love that lover and object as it were grow together, and the objectively good and beautiful is like a principle immanent in the lover himself, impelling him to act and strive and making him overflow with joy and bliss. (D, I, § 104, n. 657)

This principle provides the key to Scheeben’s doctrine of grace and faith. Actual grace is more than just a (moral) ‘invitation and encouragement’ on the part of the object, nor is it a mere ‘physical impulsion’. Actual grace is what Thomas, following Augustine, describes as *pondus* (an image related to the Biblical *kâbôd* and *gloria*, as Scheeben significantly points out): it is the ‘dynamic and energetic or drastic and elastic’ influence (D, III, § 288, n. 135)

which moves ‘the will as an energy and a “fertilization” immanent in the will’s deepest recesses—a *forma*, a *spiritus*, and a *virtus voluntatis* that proceed from the inside to the exterior’ (*ibid.*, n. 139). Grace is an ‘ethico-genetic’ influence, a description which ‘points to an analogy between grace and begetting’ and ‘teaches us from the outset to think of the inspiration of the affections and of the whole interior disposition of the *liberum arbitrium* on the analogy of the fructifying seed or of the enkindling spark’, as opposed to the notion of a moral efficacy which merely disposes, or of a physical efficacy which merely ‘runs parallel’ to natural inclinations in an artificial manner (*ibid.*, n. 141). ‘In the realm of grace, the Fathers know of no divine activity other than in the form of *illuminatio* and *inspiratio*.’ The two doctrines Scheeben rejects fall short of Patristic doctrine because the interior and physical aspect may be conceived only personally, and the personal aspect may be conceived only physically. Turning to the (supernatural) object means to have already been touched and moved from within by its life. And the will can only proceed to its decisions (as a ‘partitive, generative function’) if it has first assumed a ‘conceptive’ and feminine attitude with regard to grace (D, III, § 288, n. 155).

The analysis of the act of faith also proceeds along these lines. As early as Scheeben’s first book we can read: ‘If, in the matter of what is owed to divine truth, the spirit follows not only the judgment of reason but the light and pull of divine truth itself, surrendering to this truth and becoming united to it, then the spirit is truly and immediately founded upon divine truth as such’ (N, III, § 5, p. 145; *cf.* M, X, § 105, p. 721). His dogmatics finds a basis for this structure in the act of natural faith itself, which exhibits a logic very different from that of a conclusion drawn by reason. The logic of the act of natural faith derives from the esteem accorded the dignity of the person speaking and from our desire to model ourselves on this person in trust. To this, supernatural faith adds the ‘power of attraction which the object exerts on reason by means of the light of grace’, a light which already contains the judgement of trust-worthiness (*Glaubwürdigkeit*) and which, therefore, already constitutes the ‘seed and impulse, or the running start,. . . the paving of the way, and initiation’ of the very assent of faith (D, I, § 38, n. 648-651; *cf.* 691). For Scheeben this structure is the foundation for true ‘transcendental knowledge’ (*ibid.*, n. 717). It, too, again exhibits the character of a ‘marriage with God’, in so far as the grace proper to faith is (in the of baptism) infused into the neophyte as into the womb of an incipient grace of faith; and his

natural insight and willingness, already prepared and opened up by grace, are then ‘transfigured’ by the anointing of the Holy Spirit (*ibid.*, n. 796-801). The bridal relationship between faith and a reason which is fructified by faith as in conception then becomes the basis for the whole theological enterprise. Not only must reason be elevated in order for it to think within the province of faith; ‘faith itself can in no way develop and display its content without the aid of reason; this is why faith must place its content in the womb of reason, there to foster it and allow it to grow’ (M, XI, § 109, p. 758f.; D, I, § 53, n. 993). This elevation and fructification is, again, both ontic and personal-spiritual, the latter denoting the illumination and living inspiration of reason. For Scheeben, such illumination and inspiration of reason is the *conditio sine qua non* of a true theology (M, XI, § 108, esp. 746; D, I, § 54, n. 997f.), just as the Spirit, illuminating and inspiring in an ever-actual manner, is the soul of Scripture, Tradition, and the Church (D, I, § 16, n. 225f.). And so, in the last analysis, Christian ‘wisdom’ is seen to have a Marian character, just as Mariology has a ‘sapiential’ character (M, XI, § 109, p. 760f.; D, III, § 274, n. 1541f.).

Grace and faith are thus but forms of the expression of God’s central *conubium* with mankind (and, through it, with the whole world) in the Incarnation, which has among its conditions the mystery of Mary’s maternal womb. In his Christology, Scheeben greatly emphasizes the Patristic analogy of the organic union of body and soul, and he rejects as misleading the Scholastic description of Christ’s humanity as being an *instrumentum conjunctum* (D, III, § 253, n. 1097; *cf.* 1083). At the same time, he again uses the analogy of ‘marriage’ to describe the ‘participation of Christ’s humanity—organically founded and efficacious—in God’s own power and efficacy’. This analogy is then extended also to the efficacy of the Sacraments. The Scholastic formula for the Incarnation has been a cautious and rather bald one: *terminatio substantialis per hypostasim Verbi*. In order to enhance this formulation, Scheeben reintroduced the older concept of the *informatio* of humanity by the divine Word, since this description of the Incarnation seemed to him to be ‘more plastic and, at the same time, deeper and richer’ than the Scholastic one, *informatio* being understood as a ‘reciprocal’ ‘insubistence’ (D, II, § 223, n. 396-401). As far as Christ’s human nature is concerned, this means that its ‘natural’ reality has a wholly ‘supernatural’ foundation. And for Christ’s total person the reverse holds: the supernatural miracle of two natures constituting one person is ‘natural’ in the sense that in

this union all nature's organic, moral, and matrimonial relationships find their highest form and fulfilment and indeed their ultimate ground. Furthermore, on account of every creature's association with Christ as Head, all such relationships also attain their proper locus and point of reference in creation from the union of two natures in Christ (D, III, § 239, n. 717g; D, II, § 224, n. 430f.). At this point, we witness a total healing of the sharp fracture with which Scheeben's theology had begun. Some readers, particularly Protestants, will even be of the opinion that Scheeben's analogies with nature have now been given undue weight and been raised to the function of absolute paradigms for the unifications brought about by grace. In this context it is significant that, in his theological anthropology, Scheeben—alone among modern theologians—exercises meticulous care in his treatment of the sexual analogy in relation to nature and supernature, emphasizing as much as possible the truly personal fatherhood and motherhood of the engendering human being with regard to the child engendered;⁴⁸ this in order to allow the physical-organic and the ethical-personal aspects to interpenetrate as perfectly as possible both at the level of nature and of supernature. And if, in the realm of nature, the 'physical' appears as inferior (that which man has in common with animals), and the 'moral' as superior—that which is proper to man—this apparent or real order of things is transformed (*aufgehoben*) by supernature when it underscores the 'physical' character of *eros* (D, II, § 240b, n. 756-760; § 244, n. 878, n. 906). The proof of this is provided by the constant interrelation of the three aspects of the one *conubium*: God / humanity, Christ / Mary, two natures in one Christ, from which derived all other aspects of doctrine concerning the Church, redemption, justification, and grace.

Let us note one last feature. Scheeben proposes a Christian theology of sacrifice which strongly rejects the Baroque theory of 'destruction' and returns to the wholly personal and spiritual concept of sacrifice of the Fathers, especially of Augustine. In this, too, Scheeben brings Romantic theology to perfection. The sense of sacrifice is not destruction, but 'transfiguration' through love: the outpouring of the *gloria Dei* over the whole substance of the creature, which by sacrificing and surrendering itself makes room in itself for the divine fire. Hence we have the genial idea whereby in Christ's Resurrection Scheeben sees God's descending and consuming fire. By the same token, he posits the Cross and the Resurrection (and, therefore, Christ's whole eternal transfigured existence in heaven) as

two phases of the one single and redeeming act of sacrifice. In this way he also finds a new approach to the elucidation of the 'sacrifice' of the Mass (D, III, § 270, n. 1421; § 271, n. 1472-1475, 1482; § 272, n. 1499-1507). By seeing the Cross itself as a 'glorious splendour', with its splendour flooding every aspect of the Incarnation with its rays, and by considering the Cross to be not a 'means', but a 'representation' of God's love and essence (M, v, § 64, pp. 410-415), Scheeben's theology takes a thoroughly Johannine turn, and his doctrine of the 'marriage' between God and man reveals thereby its properly Biblical roots. It is a theology of the divine *eros* which transfigures itself, drawing humanity into this process. In this way, it is truly and in the highest sense and degree a theology of the 'glories of divine grace', which is the title of one of his main works. 'Glory' (*Herrlichkeit*) here has the sense of God's power to illumine, the sense of the 'lordliness' (*Herr* = 'Lord') with which God takes to himself the creature's 'womb' in order to fructify it. It also points to the sense in which God's goal and purpose is absolutely contained in himself and requires nothing external for its realisation, so that by contrast with natural sexual union whose fruit is independent of the parents, God is his own father, mother and child, all in one.

In Scheeben, this fire of *eros* tends to consume everything in sight. Theologically, it is of great significance that he dares to make the luminous mystery of predetermination the summary of all other mysteries: 'Predestination means sheer light' (M, X, § 103, pp. 701f.). Scheeben's total theological picture, conceived as it is in the spirit of the Greek Fathers, is completed when he describes the irreducible core of hell as being a 'negative transfiguration' (M, IX, § 97, pp. 661f.), and even more when he demonstrates from Scripture the universal tendency of redemption, 'whereas a truly restrictive expression never occurs' (D, III, § 266, n. 1351).

The only thing that we can take exception to in Scheeben is a certain ahistoricity in his theological design. This trait is intimately connected with the polemical and negative impulse with which he began. His standpoint is grace, which means that the sin and fallenness of worldly existence are seen to be realities only very indirectly. The instant that humanity is elevated as a bride to be united with and transfigured in God, it will naturally appear in the image of Mary. But this *conubium* has as its background the harlotry of Sion, the Bride, whom Ezekiel brands precisely as the *magna meretrix* (Ezek 16) and in comparison with whom the two sinful sisters, Samaria (heresy) and Sodom (accursed paganism), will appear justified. This aspect of revelation,

which is Biblical, Patristic, and again Lutheran, is lacking in Scheeben. How could we, however, understand the ‘beauty’ of the Cross without the abysmal darkness into which the Crucified plunges?

Scheeben is here only meant to be representative of the way in which an (all too) ‘aesthetic’ theology, which originated in Herder and then dominated Romanticism, may possibly be refined and made credible as a theological aesthetics. By this we mean a theology which does not primarily work with the extra-theological categories of a worldly philosophical aesthetics (above all poetry), but which develops its theory of beauty from the data of revelation itself with genuinely theological methods. It is, therefore, not necessary that, as generally occurs in our century, theology renounce aesthetics, whether unconsciously or consciously, whether out of weakness or forgetfulness or even a false scientific attitude. For if it were, theology would have to give up a good part—if not the best part—of itself.

7. THE TASK AND THE STRUCTURE OF A THEOLOGICAL AESTHETICS

From everything we have reviewed, it now becomes possible to determine tentatively what the task and structure of a theological aesthetics should be. We now know in what direction its object is to be sought and in what way the investigation of this object is to be carried out. But we also know the ways in which such an inquiry may by no means be undertaken. We are, then, both spurred on and warned.

Our point of departure was very much a layman’s insight into the beautiful. For the present, however, it would be incorrect for us to go beyond this unreflected concept lest we should prejudice our inquiry either philosophically or theologically. We may, however, without prejudice distinguish and relate to each other, albeit in a very preliminary way, two elements in the beautiful which have traditionally controlled every aesthetic and which, with Thomas Aquinas, we could term *species* (or *forma*) and *lumen* (or *splendor*)—form (*Gestalt*) and splendour (*Glanz*). As form, the beautiful can be materially grasped and even subjected to numerical calculation as a relationship of numbers, harmony, and the laws of Being. Protestant aesthetics has wholly misunderstood this dimension and even

denounced it as heretical, locating then the total essence of beauty in the event in which the light irrupts. Admittedly, form would not be beautiful unless it were fundamentally a sign and appearing of a depth and a fulness that, in themselves and in an abstract sense, remain beyond both our reach and our vision. In this way, the soul manifests itself in the body in various degrees of relationship which Kant and Schiller have described in a strict sense as beauty and as 'the sublime' in the sense of gracefulness and dignity. In this way, too, the Spirit appears in history in a concealed manner; and, in a manner still more concealed due to his infinite freedom and superiority to the world, God manifests himself in his creation and in the order of salvation. Psychologically, the effect of beautiful forms on the soul may be described in a great variety of ways. But a true grasp of this effect will not be attained unless one brings to bear logical and ethical concepts, concepts of truth and value: in a word, concepts drawn from a comprehensive doctrine of Being. The form as it appears to us is beautiful only because the delight that it arouses in us is founded upon the fact that, in it, the truth and goodness of the depths of reality itself are manifested and bestowed, and this manifestation and bestowal reveal themselves to us as being something infinitely and inexhaustibly valuable and fascinating. The appearance of the form, as revelation of the depths, is an indissoluble union of two things. It is the real presence of the depths, of the whole of reality, *and* it is a real pointing beyond itself to these depths. In different periods of intellectual history, to be sure, one or the other of these aspects may be emphasized: on the one hand, classical perfection (*Vollendung*: the form which contains the depths), on the other, Romantic boundlessness, infinity (*Unendlichkeit*: the form that transcends itself by pointing beyond to the depths). Be this as it may, however, both aspects are inseparable from one another, and together they constitute the fundamental configuraton of Being. We 'behold' the form; but, if we really behold it, it is not as a detached form, rather in its unity with the depths that make their appearance in it. We see form as the splendour, as the glory of Being. We are 'enraptured' by our contemplation of these depths and are 'transported' to them. But, so long as we are dealing with the beautiful, this never happens in such a way that we leave the (horizontal) form behind us in order to plunge (vertically) into the naked depths.

When it comes to confronting this structure, (in which we encounter all Being both objectively and subjectively), with the contents of Christian theology, it should be clear from the outset that there can be no question of a

univocal transposition and application of categories. This must be so because the living God is neither an ‘existent’ (subordinate to Being) nor ‘Being’ itself, as it manifests and reveals itself essentially in everything that makes its appearance in form. Protestant theology, therefore, has been wholly right consistently to reject the application to Biblical revelation of the schema inherited from pre-Christian, and especially Greek, philosophy, a schema that distinguished between a ‘ground of Being’ and an ‘appearance of Being’. But we have already shown elsewhere⁴⁹ that this schema exhibits different analogical gradations even in the worldly realm, since the expressions of a free spirit (namely, as word and creative deed) are structured differently from those of organic and sub-spiritual nature, and yet they are not thereby excluded from the schema. But, again to use the analogy in a supereminent sense, what is the creation, reconciliation, and redemption effected by the triune God if not his revelation in and to the world and man? Not a deed that would leave its doer in the background unknown and untouched, but a genuine self-representation on his part, a genuine unfolding of himself in the worldly stuff of nature, man, and history—an event which in a supereminent sense may be called an ‘appearance’ or ‘epiphany’. *Quia per incarnati Verbi mysterium nova mentis nostrae oculis lux tuae claritatis infulsit: ut dum visibiliter Deum cognoscimus, per hunc in invisibilium amorem rapiamur*⁵⁰ (Christmas Preface). We should note that in this classical text there is no express reference to ‘faith’, but to the two things which implicitly contain it:

1. to the ‘eyes of our mind’ which are struck by a ‘new light’ from God which then enables them to know visibly—contemplatively (*visibiliter*): an object which is actually ‘God’, but God as ‘mediated’ (*per*) by the ‘sacramental form of the mystery’ (*mysterium*) of the ‘enfleshed Word’.

2. to a ‘mediating’ (second *per*) vision which occasions a ‘rapture’ and a ‘transport’ (*rapiamur*) to an ‘eros-love’ (*amor*) for those ‘things unseen’ (*invisibilia*) which had announced themselves by appearing in the visibleness and revelation of the Incarnation.

In the first point, the emphasis is given to a certain seeing, looking, or ‘beholding’, and not to any ‘hearing’ or ‘believing’. ‘Hearing’ is present only implicitly in the reference to the ‘Word’ become man, just as ‘believing’ is implied in that what is seen is the mystery that points to the invisible God. But the all-encompassing act that contains within itself the hearing and the believing is a *perception* (*Wahrnehmung*), in the strong sense of a ‘taking to oneself’ (*nehmen*)⁵¹ of something true (*Wahres*) which is offering itself. For

this particular perception of truth, of course, a 'new light' is expressly required which illumines this particular form, a light which at the same time breaks forth from within the form itself. In this way, the 'new light' will at the same time make seeing the form possible and be itself seen along with the form. The *splendour* of the mystery which offers itself in such a way cannot, for this reason, be equated with the other kinds of aesthetic radiance which we encounter in the world. This does not mean, however, that that mysterious *splendour* and this aesthetic radiance are beyond any and every comparison. That we are at all able to speak here of 'seeing' (and not exclusively and categorically of 'hearing') shows that, in spite of all concealment, there is nonetheless something to be seen and grasped (*cognoscimus*). It shows, therefore, that man is not merely addressed in a total mystery, as if he were compelled to accept obediently in blind and naked faith something hidden from him, but that something is 'offered' to man by God, indeed offered in such a way that man can see it, understand it, make it his own, and live from it in keeping with his human nature.

It is only on this condition that man himself can truly realize what is described in the second point, rather than merely let it *be realized* in him in a passive way. For it is not said explicitly that the *mysterium Christi*, being the *lux tuae claritatis*, is the appearance of God's *amor invisibilis*. This is rather presupposed, while the text goes on straight away to speak of the event whereby man is transported because of having seen the *Deus invisibilis* in a human way. There is a good reason why the word used here is *amor* (ἔρω) and not *caritas*. For what is at stake here is the movement effected by seeing what God has shown. This is a movement of the entire person, leading away from himself through the vision towards the invisible God, a movement, furthermore, which the word 'faith' describes only imperfectly, although it is in this movement that faith has its proper 'setting in life' (*Sitz im Leben*). The transport of the soul, however, must here again be understood in a strictly theological way. In other words, it must be understood not as a merely psychological response to something beautiful in a worldly sense which has been encountered through vision, but as the movement of man's whole being away from himself and towards God through Christ, a movement founded on the divine light of grace in the mystery of Christ. But the whole truth of this mystery is that the movement which God (who is the object that is seen in Christ and who enraptures man) effects in man (even in his unwillingness and recalcitrance, due to sin) is co-effected willingly by man through his

Christian *eros* and, indeed, on account of the fact that the divine Spirit enthuses and in-spires man to collaboration.

We ought at this point to recall the Areopagite's apology for employing the word *eros* in Christian theology, as well as his emphatic protestation that he is not using it 'in contradiction to Sacred Scripture'. In the opinion of Denys, *eros* captures the sense of the transport of man's being as such far better than does *agape*, and this constitutes for Denys an aesthetic as well as a soteriological statement. For man's transport to God does not stop at the Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic *ἡνωθῆναι ὡς ἐρωόμενον* but grounds the latter in an antecedent and con-descending divine *ekstasis* in which God is drawn out of himself by *eros* into creation, revelation, and Incarnation. But we must listen to the whole passage:

And the divine Eros also brings rapture, not allowing them that are touched by it to belong to themselves, but only to the objects of their love. . . . And hence the great Paul, constrained by the divine Eros, and having received a share in its ecstatic power, says, with inspired utterance: 'I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me.' These are the words of a true lover, of one who (as he himself states) was beside himself (out of his senses!) and unto God (2 Cor 5. 13), not possessing a life of his own (2 Cor 5. 15) but the life of his Beloved, a life surrounded on all sides by an ardent love. And we must dare to affirm (for this is the truth) that the Creator of the Universe himself, in his beautiful and good Eros towards the Universe, is, through his excessive erotic Goodness, transported outside of himself, in his providential activities towards all things that have being, and is overcome by the sweet spell of Goodness, Love, and Eros. In this manner, he is drawn from his transcendent throne above all things to dwell within the heart of all things in accordance with his super-essential and ecstatic power whereby he nonetheless does not leave himself behind. This is why those who know about God call him 'zealous', because he is vehement in his manifold and beneficent Eros towards all beings, and he spurs them on to search for him zealously with a yearning eros, thus showing himself zealous for love inasmuch as the things that are desired are considered worthy of zeal and inasmuch as he allows himself to be affected by the zeal of all beings for which he cares. In short, both to possess eros and to love erotically belong to everything Good and Beautiful, and eros has its primal roots in the Beautiful and the Good: eros exists and comes into being only through the Beautiful and the Good.⁵²

Delete from this text, if you will, everything which appears too Neo-Platonic. One will nonetheless have to acknowledge that its substance is genuinely Biblical and consistent with the most authentic covenant-theology of either Testament, a theology that sees the jealous and consuming love of the divine Bridegroom doing its work in his bride in order to raise her up, invite her, and bring her home to the very same answering love. All divine revelation is impregnated with an element of 'enthusiasm' (in the theological sense). Nothing can be done for the person who cannot detect such an element in the Prophets and the 'teachers of wisdom', in Paul and in John, to mention only

these. Nor can anything be done for the person who persists in denying the fact that all of this quenches and more than fulfils the human longing for love and beauty, a longing which, previous to and outside the sphere of revelation, exhausted itself in impotent and distorted sketches of such a desperately needed and yet unimaginable fulfilment. For how else are we to understand both the religious and aesthetic enthusiasms of extra-Biblical religions with all their empty systems of divine epiphanies and avatars? Quite apart from the distortions and confusions inherent to them, these systems would otherwise remain at the stage of ineffective rhetoric which is the most man's religious *eros* can attain to once one excludes God's redemptive grace. Only the mysteries and sacraments of Christ's revelation effect what they signify (*Trid. Can. de sacr.*, 6-8; Dz. 849-851).

Because God actually effects that which he reveals in the sign, and because in God's order of salvation Plato's idealistic *imago-metaphysics* and Aristotle's realistic *causa-et-finis* metaphysics actually come together on a higher plane, we can never approach Christian *eros* and Christian beauty from a merely Platonic tradition and expect to interpret them adequately. The enthusiasm which is inherent to the Christian faith is not merely idealistic; it is, rather, an enthusiasm which derives from and is appropriate to actual, realistic Being. This is why God's Word constantly brings the false kind of enthusiasm which hovers about suspended on aestheticist and idealistic proleptical illusions back down to the level of sobriety and truth (1 Thess 5.6-8; 1 Pet 1.13; 4.7; 2 Tim 4.5; Mt 24.42; 25.13; 26.41; Rev 3.2f.; 16.15; etc.). But the Word calls us no less persistently out of the profanity of a worldly life to a 'pneumatic' existence spent 'in spiritual psalms, hymns, odes, singing through grace to God in your hearts' (Col 3.16)—in a word, to that world of prayer in which the Colossians are admonished 'to be watchful in thanksgiving' (4.2). The 'glory' of Christian transfiguration is in no way less resplendent than the transfiguring glory of worldly beauty, but the fact is that the glory of Christ unites splendour and radiance with solid reality, as we see pre-eminently in the Resurrection and its anticipation through faith in Christian life.

As Karl Barth has rightly seen, this law extends to the inclusion in Christian beauty of even the Cross and everything else which a worldly aesthetics (even of a realistic kind) discards as no longer bearable. This inclusiveness is not only of the type proposed by a Platonic theory of beauty, which knows how to employ the shadows and the contradictions as stylistic

elements of art; it embraces the most abysmal ugliness of sin and hell by virtue of the condescension of divine love, which has brought even sin and hell into that divine art for which there is no human analogue.

The conclusion to be drawn from all this is that, just as we can never attain to the living God in any way except through his Son become man, but in this Son we can really attain to God in himself, so, too, we ought never to speak of God's beauty without reference to the form and manner of appearing which he exhibits in salvation-history. The beauty and glory which are proper to God may be inferred and 'read' off from God's epiphany and its incomprehensible glory which is worthy of God himself. But in trying to perceive God's own beauty and glory from the beauty of his manner of appearing, we must neither simply *equate* the two—since we are to be transported *per hunc (Deum visibilem)* in invisibilium amorem—nor ought we to attempt to discover God's beauty by a mere causal inference from the beauty of God's epiphany, for such an inference would *leave this epiphany behind*. We must, rather, make good our *excessus* to God himself with a *theologia negativa* which never detaches itself from its basis in a *theologia positiva: dum visibiliter cognoscimus*. When later on we analyse the Areopagite and John of the Cross—the two theologians who relied most consistently on the apophatic method—we will see that they never divorced it from the cataphatic approach. They could exalt the vertical to such a degree only because they never let go of the horizontal. For this reason they can be considered the two most decidedly aesthetic theologians of Christian history.

God's attribute of beauty can certainly also be examined in the context of a doctrine of the divine attributes. Besides examining God's beauty as manifested by God's actions in his creation, his beauty would also be deduced from the harmony of his essential attributes, and particularly from the Trinity. But such a doctrine of God and the Trinity really speaks to us only when and as long as the θεολογία, a does not become detached from the οἰκονομία, but rather lets its every formulation and stage of reflection be accompanied and supported by the latter's vivid discernibility.

If this is so, then theological aesthetics must properly be developed in two phases, which are:

1. *The theory of vision* (or fundamental theology): 'aesthetics' in the Kantian sense as a theory about the perception of the form of God's self-revelation.
2. *The theory of rapture* (or dogmatic theology): 'aesthetics' as a theory

about the incarnation of God's glory and the consequent elevation of man to participate in that glory.

Using the concept 'aesthetics' in this double sense might appear to be a playful fancy. But a little reflection will dispell such an impression, since no theological perception is possible outside the *lux tuae claritatis* and outside the grace that allows us to see, a grace which already belongs objectively to rapture and which subjectively may be said at least to initiate man's transport to God. In theology, there are no 'bare facts' which, in the name of an alleged objectivity of detachment, disinterestedness and impartiality, one could establish like any other worldly facts, without oneself being (both objectively and subjectively) gripped so as to participate in the divine nature (*participatio divinae naturae*). For the object with which we are concerned is man's participation in God which, from God's perspective, is actualized as 'revelation' (culminating in Christ's Godmanhood) and which, from man's perspective, is actualized as 'faith' (culminating in participation in Christ's Godmanhood). This double and reciprocal *ekstasis*—God's 'venturing forth' to man and man's to God—constitutes the very content of dogmatics, which may thus rightly be presented as a theory of rapture: the *admirabile commercium et conubium* between God and man in Christ as Head and Body.

If this is correct, then it has far-reaching methodological implications. For it would follow that fundamental theology and dogmatic theology—the theory of vision and the theory of rapture—are, in the last analysis, inseparable. To be sure, there is a road which the human spirit takes as it seeks for the Christian truth (*intellectus quaerens fidem*), and this search may be fostered by variously showing and making visible in an appropriate way the form of God's revelation, which conceals itself from the eyes of the world and of history *sub contrario*, as Luther has it. As we have said, however, this road itself already stands in the rays of the divine light, a light which, in an objective sense, makes the form visible and which, in a subjective sense, clarifies and illumines the searching spirit, thus training it in an act and a *habitus* which will become perfect faith once the vision has itself been perfected. In 'dogmatics', moreover, this developing (*wachsende*) and now adult (*erwachsene*) faith continues to grow (*wachst*) as a *fides quaerens intellectum*. But this continued growth is not to be thought of as a leap from the *praeambula fidei* of fundamental theology and the evidence it provides, as from a springboard which is then left behind—a leap to pure fiducial faith. Rather, the facts of revelation are perceived initially in the light of grace, and

faith grows in such a way that it allows the self-evidence of these facts—an evidence that itself was ‘enrapturing’ from the outset—to continue to unfold according to its own laws and principles. In this manner, through the growth of the mysteries of faith, for which I can provide no evidence of my own, the image in which God initially appeared and illumined me deepens and acquires traits that reveal new and even deeper aspects of its rightness. What I cannot verify in itself (*in propriis causis*) may nevertheless be verified indirectly in the understanding of faith by the manner in which it is reflected and echoed in the form of revelation. Although he can elsewhere distinguish very clearly between ‘faith’ and ‘vision’, Paul, in the *locus classicus* of his theological aesthetics, nevertheless speaks of a ‘vision of the Lord’s splendour with unveiled face’, through which ‘we are transformed into the same image’ (2 Cor 3. 18). Paul thus unites vision and rapture as a single process.

We shall have to keep the unity constantly in mind as we deal separately in what follows with fundamental theology and dogmatic theology. Apologetics secretly (though knowingly, to be sure) carries with it all dogmatic theology as it sets out to convey and to make plausible to one who does not yet believe the image of divine revelation. This image really becomes plausible, however, only for the person who sees the true contours of its total form dawn before the eyes of his spirit. As dogmatic reflection progresses, such a person will still have frequently to correct, clarify, and focus these contours. But he ought not to and must not for a single moment abandon them.

II. THE SUBJECTIVE EVIDENCE

A. THE LIGHT OF FAITH

1. PISTIS AND GNOSIS

The two great theologies which conclude the New Testament corpus—the Pauline and the Johannine—have given rise to an interpretation of Christian existence primarily in terms of faith, so much so that, in the subsequent tradition, to be a Christian and to be a believer are simply synonymous. Such an equation presupposes that faith does not primarily mean the subjective act of faith (*fides qua*), but that faith always includes the whole substance toward which this act is directed (*fides quae*), by which the act can be understood and justified. This orientation to the objective content of faith is found as early as Paul (Rom 10.8; Gal 1.23; 3.2, 5; 6.10; etc.); what it does is to bring out something which also runs through the Old Testament: that the act of faith is dependent on God's antecedent revelation, which both promises and fulfils. This turning to the objective, precisely in Paul and John, thus refers not simply to one isolated human act among others, but rather to that total disposition, that total condition wherein man, through the power of grace, responds to God's revelatory address.

In the Old Testament, the human modes of response to God were first expressed by different concepts in a roundabout and inclusory manner. These concepts gradually came to converge on the central notion of 'faith' as a response to God, a faith which listens, obeys, yields, hopes, and trusts.¹ It is characteristic of this concept, which expresses the correct total attitude of man, that from the outset it is associated with and directly implies in a most unproblematic manner the concept of the knowledge and the recognition of God. It is associated with it because God's giving himself to be recognised and man's familiar and intimate knowledge of God, which is based upon that gift, are the condition for man's being able to trust God and to deliver himself over to him with fidelity, in faith and in hope. And the concept of faith itself implies the concept of the knowledge of God because the element of experience (which is founded primarily on God's historical leading of his people through grace, and only secondarily on the individual's personal

experience of piety—since the latter is rooted in the former) in this knowledge already includes the act of faith within itself so positively that the refusal of faith can automatically be considered hard-heartedness, open infidelity and ‘adultery’. God wants to be recognised; he must be known. This is why the Prophets (especially Hosea) insist on an immediate acknowledgement of God, on a realisation of his reality. This is why they point to the demands and promises of the Covenant as signs of his presence to the people. And yet, they promise fulness of realisation only for the Messianic era, when God will turn all hearts toward himself and infuse into them a sense for his reality. In keeping with the double character of the eschatological promise, this can happen both by God’s judgment (through which the obdurate are to ‘experience God’s might in their own bodies and thus come to understanding and recognition’²) or by his saving acts of redemption—his fidelity which men can now experience for themselves. It is to this that the theodicy of the Psalms always points. The faith which the Psalms demand, in the sense of endurance and perseverance, is founded on an experiential knowledge of God’s fidelity and justice which is anticipated with certainty and which can, therefore, be called ‘knowledge’ in the full sense of the word: ‘I know that Yahweh takes up the cause of the wretched and the rights of the poor’ (Ps 140.13); ‘I know that God is at my side’ (Ps 56.10); ‘Now I know that God helps his anointed’ (Ps 20.7); ‘Yes, I know that Yahweh is great, that our Lord surpasses all gods’ (Ps 135.5); ‘I know that your judgments are just and that you have humbled me in faithfulness’ (Ps 119.75).³ Here it is in the end of no account whether the trust of faith is founded wholly on the historical Covenant (given in the midst of God’s saving deeds during the wandering in the desert), or whether, within that Covenant, it rests on a personal experience of having been saved, or whether very simply, hovering between these types of experience, it is founded on the promise of God seized and clung to even in the darkness of suffering (as in Job 19.25: ‘I know that my advocate lives’).

In the Synoptics, faith is predominantly something in which the disciple of Jesus is trained and which is mediated to him by the one who can himself perform it perfectly and supremely: once again, this ‘training’ is in man’s act of total self-surrender to God, an act in which every promise will be fulfilled experientially. Much in Jesus’ education in faith is simply an encouragement to embark on the venture of letting go of self, as if he meant to say: ‘Give me your hand and you’ll see it can be done. Do not reflect (for this is being “two-

souled”), do not doubt (for this is being “of little faith”); just hand yourself over!’ In this Jesus is less the object of faith (this comes only with John) than the one with whom, through whom, and in whom one can accomplish the act. The miracles which he performs or has his disciples perform, the certainty of being heard which he promises prayers made in faith, the equally certain failure experienced by the unbeliever (like Peter when he sinks into the waves, or the disciples who do not believe the women’s announcement of the Resurrection)—all these may be regarded as special graces of the Messianic era, as a leaping over (while the Bridegroom is present) the night-filled period of perseverance and visionless prayer. But because of the interconnectedness of faith and experienced fulfilment, it is nevertheless characteristic of all Christian faith.

No more than the Old does the New Testament shy away from uniting ‘faith’ and ‘knowing’ in one and the same total human act—on one condition, that is, which is directed against gnosticism: that increase of ‘knowledge’ should not weaken faith, but, on the contrary, strengthen it. There can be no question of a believer, on earth, ever outgrowing an attitude of faith; but, through a deeper knowledge of God and his revelation in Christ, he can only grow the more deeply in his faith.

And yet, for Paul man can understand himself only when he believes, which is to say only when he knows himself to be pilgrimaging from his justification by Christ’s death and Resurrection to Christ’s return. And yet the fact that existence is thus suspended between these two points does not in any way lead Paul to question the certainty and reliability of his Christian knowledge, which he desires to share with all believers. No one speaks more uninhibitedly of ‘knowing’ where the ‘mysteries of faith’ are involved: ‘If we die with Christ, so too do we trust (= believe) that we shall also live with him, knowing that the Christ who has been raised from the dead dies no more’ (Rom 6.8f.); ‘knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also’ (2 Cor 4.14); ‘We know that, if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we will receive a house built by God’ (2 Cor 5.1), and so forth. Now, this is a dialectical knowledge about the love of Christ, which surpasses all knowledge (Eph 3.19), a knowledge that one knows nothing, except that by loving God one is known by God (1 Cor 8.2f.). None of this means that there is not also a genuine Christian knowledge (1 Cor 8.7), a science and a wisdom (1 Cor 2.6f.; 12.8) that comes from the Spirit of God and of Christ dwelling within us. Paul constantly refers to the knowledge of salvation

which he takes for granted in those he addresses: they know what Paul has proclaimed to them as certain truth, but they also know what knowledge of faith the Spirit opens up in them. The latter knowledge possesses the same certainty which Christian hope has for Paul, a certainty based not on the human understanding's own power of conviction, but on the manifest evidence of divine truth. In other words, this certainty is founded not on having grasped, but on having been grasped.⁴

In John, faith and knowledge are almost more intimately and inseparably intertwined. Although he speaks of 'signs' (σημεῖα) from which faith can 'read' its own rightness, these signs are for him to such an extent the immediate epiphany of the thing itself—Christ's divinity—that the faith resulting from the σημεῖον is for him tantamount to a 'vision' of Christ's glory and of God's glory in Christ. But this 'vision' never leaves faith behind, but only deepens it. Both aspects can, therefore, simply be placed alongside each other: 'We believe and know that you are the holy one of God!' (Jn 6.69). Or faith can appear as being the initiation and the way to Christian knowledge: 'Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him: If you abide in my word . . . you will know the truth' (8.31f.). 'If you do not want to believe me, then believe the works, that you may know once and for all that the Father is in me and I am in the Father' (10.38). Or, conversely, faith can proceed from knowledge, which makes just as much sense, since the knowledge of Christ's divinity engenders an attitude of adoring acceptance of everything that proceeds from him. 'Now we know that you know all things, . . . and this is why we believe that you have come forth from God' (16.30). 'They have recognised that I have come forth from you, and they have believed' (17.8). 'We have known and have believed the love which God has for us' (1 Jn 4.16). All of this is, for John, grounded in the trinitarian relationship. Whoever receives Jesus' witness in truth—that is to say, as it is—sees that Jesus does not 'seek his own honour', does not 'speak of himself' or 'on his own authority', that it is, therefore, God to whom Jesus is pointing and who bears witness to himself in the witness of Jesus. The relationship between Father and Son—that is the truth, and it goes without saying that one can get an insight into it only if one is oneself 'from God', if one does not 'seek one's own honour' and 'abides' in the 'truth' which is the Word of God which both testifies and is testified to (8.13-58). Here the circumincession of *pistis* and *gnosis* becomes fully manifest, because it is only through faith in Christ's divinity that one can gain access to this sphere of truth within the

Godhead, in which one learns to see and understand the very essence of truth. But this truth is known as something which essentially redounds to the glory of God and which presupposes the renunciation of one's own honour and of the evidence which is based on oneself. Thus in John Jesus can equally say, both: 'Believe in God and believe in me!' and 'If you knew me, you would also know the Father; henceforth you do know him and have seen him. . . . He who sees me, sees the Father' (14.1,7,9). This is seeing and knowing precisely in the Johannine and not the Judaic sense (*cf* 6.30): it is a vision of glory (1.14 etc.) which in faith can only be progressive: 'Do you believe? . . . You shall see greater things than these' (1.50).⁵

It is not here our concern to develop the theological relationship between *pistis* and *gnosis* in detail, nor to establish the essence of *gnosis* in the Old and New Testaments in order to guard against the kinds of misunderstandings to which it may easily give rise. For the time being, it will suffice if we secure for *gnosis* the place which belongs to it in virtue of its outstanding importance and certainty. The texts show clearly that Biblical *gnosis* does not, or, at least, does not only, lie in the 'fore-court' of faith, in the sense of the *praeambula fidei*, which cast a sufficient natural or even supernatural light for men to venture on the act of faith. Precisely in Paul and John such an interpretation would overlook the essential—the interior understanding of faith, the insight into the mystery of faith itself. All the texts, including those from Wisdom literature, make it evident that such an insight cannot be meant to be understood rationalistically, in the sense of a progressive or even asymptotically approximated substitution of *gnosis* for *pistis*. But, on the other hand, the formula *fides quaerens intellectum* does not fully correspond to what we find in the Scriptures. Here we do not find the *gnosis* of faith presented as searching and tentative (which would make it somehow uncertain), but rather as solid and all-encompassing at bottom, a knowledge which needs no further instruction so long as it remains faithful to the principle which enlightens it (1 Jn 2.20,27). The *quaerens* remains, and rightly, because faith interiorly strives away from the believer on into the light of God and to the evidence to be found in God alone; but the *quaerens* must be complemented by an *inveniens* which is compatible with the earthly state of the believer.

The theology of the great Alexandrians devoted itself particularly to restoring this Biblical *gnosis*, by which *pistis* is perfected to its place of honour. Louis

Bouyer has recently shown how little innovation the Alexandrians made in this respect and how uninterrupted the chain is that leads to them starting with the Apostolic Fathers and passing through Justin and Irenaeus.⁶ With the Alexandrians we can filter out all secondary harmonies that have their origin in what was perhaps too exaggerated a terminological dependence on Greek philosophy and mysticism. Our only interest is the Biblical concerns which they preserved. Both Clement and Origen see the perfect Christian as a gnostic who, in the Gospel sense, ‘understands’ his faith interiorly. This understanding is not a luxury for the intellectually gifted, but rather corresponds to an imperative contained objectively within the act of faith. The contrast between ‘pistics’ and ‘gnostics’ is basically that between, on the one hand, the Christian who, by ‘bare faith’ (ψιλή πίστις), relates in a purely external manner to the content of faith (who, therefore, does not progress beyond a faith based solely on authority, which primarily means obedience to the ecclesial kerygma), and, on the other hand, the Christian who energetically strives to appropriate interiorly what he believes and, in so doing, sees the essential content of faith unfold before his vision (θεωρία). The gnostic Christian does not outgrow the proclamation of the Church, but in the kerygma he finds, revealing himself, the Logos, who, in the most comprehensive sense, ‘enlightens’ the believer ever more clearly and, indeed, draws him, as John was drawn, to his breast ever more intimately and unites him interiorly with himself (*Commentary on John* 32.20-21). In his humanity and its symbolic character, the Logos then lets the light of the divine nature with its truth and beauty (τὸ ἴδιον κάλλος: *ibid.* 10.12)—the very glory of the Father—illumine the gnostic ever more brightly. To say that for the gnostic the earthly veil enveloping revelation has become transparent means equally that in the letter he sees the Spirit, in the Old he sees the New Testament, and in the latter the promised eternity; in Jesus’ humanity he sees his divinity, and in the Son, through the Spirit, he sees the Father. What is here involved is, therefore, nothing other than the turning of faith to its own interior authenticity,⁷ as faith in a proposition (‘belief that Christ’) becomes faith in a person (‘believing Christ’).

In Clement it is the same. Christ appears as the pedagogue and teacher who leads men to the Father, and *pistis* entrusts itself to him in order to be led to the light through pure grace, and yet also through ζήτησις—the efforts of thought, asceticism and love. True to Johannine theology, this light is bestowed objectively in the illumining grace of baptism or in the ‘anointing by the

Spirit'; but it must be developed by the believer in himself as Christ leads him by the hand. Faith is the foundation, *gnosis* is the edifice built upon it. The former is the Alpha, the latter the Omega (Strom. VII. 55.5; III, 41.1). The interior movement of faith to *gnosis* is justified by reference to the Trinity: 'There is no *gnosis* without *pistis*, and there is no *pistis* without *gnosis*, just as there is no Father without the Son' (V. 1.3; I. 326. 8f.). Thus, Clement rejects both the heretical *gnosis* (which strives to go beyond the Son to a knowledge of the Father) and the comfortable faith of the churchly '*pistics*' (who think that the Son's kerygma suffices). Truly to find the Father in the Son is to open up the sphere of absolute trinitarian truth, and of the knowledge in which we grow more deeply the more we entrust ourselves to the Son in faith and allow ourselves to be drawn into his innermost disposition. Christ turns to men, and says: 'I give you the Logos, the *gnosis* of God; I give myself wholly to you. For I am he, and this is what God wills. The Son is the accord and harmony of the Father. . . . You are images, but not wholly similar images; and I want to bring you back to the primal image, in order that you may become like me. I want to anoint you with the oil of faith which will deliver you from corruptibility and show you unveiled the very form of justice which leads you up to God' (Protr. 120.3-5).

Alexandrian theology of *gnosis* can be misinterpreted in two ways. First of all, it can be construed as 'knowing' in the modern sense: either in the Hegelian sense of an elevation 'to the idea of the absolute', or in the theological sense of a 'rational exposition of faith'. Both senses are excluded by Scriptural usage, nor was either the intention of the Alexandrians.⁸ Or Alexandrian theology of *gnosis* could also be misinterpreted to mean experience of God in the narrower mystical sense, which would do justice neither to the universal character of *gnosis* in Scripture nor to the intention of the Alexandrians—unless we understand 'mysticism' (as sometimes happens today) in so general a sense that it embraces any actualisation of the truth of faith by a living faith which is afire with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Both in John and Paul as well as in Clement and Origen, the *gnosis* of faith can be clarified by the concept of *θεωρία*, meaning steadfast, illumining contemplation—provided *θεωρία* is taken along with its theological prerequisites: incorporation into Christ through faith and sacraments; participation in the Holy Spirit, who introduces us to the fulness of truth; revelatory will of the heavenly Father, who through Word and Spirit already now, within the veil of faith, wants to grant us a share in his own triune truth.

From these first considerations we can already see how unsatisfactory those theologies are which, by a process of abstract isolation, disengage the Christian act of faith from all elements of insight and understanding and then proceed to analyse it in this purified form. Such a disengagement is a disincarnating of the act of faith from the real context of a man's life and spiritual development in which he encounters God. It can only lead to a super-naturalistic rationalism which will always fail to achieve a synthesis in spite of all subsequent efforts to recapture the element of *gnosis* and again to assign it a place within the *analysis fidei*. The theological current which sought to structure the act of faith in this abstract manner was an understandable and certainly justified reaction to the simplifications of Romanticism and Idealism. These schools (not only in their liberal Protestant, but also in their Catholic form) based all (natural) *ratio* on a (supernatural?) light, whether the light of the intuition of God, or of immediate perception, or of religious feeling and faith understood in a corresponding way. Thus, between faith and (absolute or religious) knowing in the sense of theology and philosophy there came to exist only a difference of degree. Modernism developed Idealist simplifications even further on the basis of psychology, sociology and a philosophy of life, and thus provoked an even stronger reaction.

The clear elaboration of the abstract structural elements in supernatural Christian faith has subsequently become such an unchallenged part of theology's storehouse that without any risk we can today venture to reintegrate those elements into the total meaning of faith in Scripture. Such an integration is not only of theological and theoretical interest; it is a vital question for Christianity today, which can only commend itself to the surrounding world if it first regards itself as being worthy of belief. And it will only do this if faith, for Christians, does not first and last mean 'holding certain propositions to be true' which are incomprehensible to human reason and must be accepted only out of obedience to authority. While fully upholding the transcendence of divine revelation—nay, precisely because of it—faith must bring man to an understanding of what God is in truth, and in so doing it will also (coincidentally, as it were) bring him to an understanding of himself. Idealist thinking lacked the personal categories of Scripture, which prevent God's knowledge from becoming human knowledge by a total omission of God's gift of himself in revelation and which always remind man of his creatureliness and interiorly make him understand why it is that he can

receive God's truth and appropriate it to himself only through obedient humility and the distance of faith. In so far as God's revelation appears as his free favour, which merits the name *gratia* not only by its exterior gratuitousness but by its interior quality, and in so far as for John and the Alexandrians in an eminent way, but also for Paul, the content of this self-revelation of God's bears the name of *doxa* (majestic glory, *kâbôd*), to that extent the analogy suggests itself between aesthetic and theological revealed reality and its reception. This, then, already means that the element of authority, on which theological faith is based as its ultimate motive and formal object, must possess a wholly peculiar colouring attributable to God alone, and this quality clearly distinguishes the divine authority even from the ecclesial authority which proclaims and exacts it. The divine authority belongs to the divine *doxa* as it manifests itself; indeed, authority and *doxa* are but one in so far as in both of them God's divinity approaches the believer. In this sense we can say that such a revelation of glory needs no justification but itself: God's Logos is the identity of God's free Word and of God's Reason; and, if the believer cannot at times penetrate the inner reasonableness of the free Word, nevertheless, from the sole fact that it is God speaking, he knows directly that his Word is Reason itself. Every aspect of this Word, moreover, which encounters the believer, every part of it which he grasps, is wholly bathed in the light of this divine reason and must needs reflect it. The mystery of God proclaimed by the Church is his *doxa* become visible, and a beam of it, to be sure, falls on the ecclesial authority and proclamation, authenticating them. But the divine mystery, being the very glory of God, at the same time is majestically exalted above the serving office which mediates it: 'We do not proclaim ourselves, but Christ Jesus as the Kyrios, and ourselves as your slaves for the sake of Jesus. For the God who has said: "Let the light shine forth out of the darkness"—he it is that has shone in our hearts (of slaves), in order (through us) to make shine forth the *gnosis* of God's *doxa*, which lies on the face of Christ' (2 Cor 4.5f.).

In this respect ecclesial authority is incorporated as one element in that glorious authority which as a whole manifests itself as divine. On this basis it is possible to offer an account of the act of faith which takes ecclesial authority as its guide. For, as we know, the act of faith is the total attitude of concrete man toward God (and toward the Church only for the sake of God), man's answer to God's wholly personal turning toward man. The witness which God bears to himself in Jesus Christ—incarnate God who died on the

cross and rose from the grave—and which is identical with the witness of Christ's life, is for God of a qualitatively different kind than the official witness that the Church's kerygma bears to this triune witness. It is by the latter that man's faith must be tested and justified.

2. DELINEATING THE FORM OF FAITH

We started our enquiry by positing a unity between seeing (knowing) and believing, and this is something which will require more detailed exposition. Nevertheless, what we have already seen is enough to establish the existence of this unity in such a way that attempts to undermine it by further definition of the terms cannot be admitted. Hence, if one proposes a more limited meaning of the terms 'knowing' and 'seeing' such that faith is now incompatible with it and by definition excludes it (knowledge being defined as *resolutio in principia evidentia intellectus*), then even though such a definition may be of quite fundamental importance in clarifying what faith is, it will have nothing to do with *the* knowing and *the* seeing which in Scripture are attributed to faith itself. If, *per contra*, faith is presented as nothing but the acceptance of truth on the basis of authoritative witness, then, even though in less obvious a way, our understanding of the unity of faith and knowledge will be similarly prejudiced unless the acceptance of such witness is shown to be properly understood as itself a kind of knowledge instead of being regarded as merely an act which requires a certain preliminary knowledge (*praeambula fidei*) as its possibility and basis.

To offer an account of the act whereby man responds and corresponds to the divine revelation means further that one has to render intelligible in a manner appropriate to its object the ultimately right, total attitude of man to God. This, therefore, excludes two extremes. The first extreme is to portray this act as a paradox or a dialectical contradiction which destroys all human intellectual modes and in which the only valid guide is the *credo quia absurdum*, in the sense that faith can be understood only as the death of all human logic (this seen as the repetition of the death on the cross of the divine Logos himself, who rises only as the Crucified). Here the death of logic can be understood either in Kierkegaard's subjective, existential sense or in Hegel's objective sense, which makes the death of the Logos to be the very law of being and which, consequently, dissolves faith into pure (Johannine)

gnosis. The other excluded extreme would be to make man's ultimate attitude intelligible in terms of worldly and natural thought-categories: this is the rationalistic *resolutio* (analysis) *fidei* into a 'scientifically' comprehensible structure. If Christian faith is man's ultimate attitude as brought about and shaped by the object of revelation, then it follows that this attitude is as unfathomable to natural reason as the very mystery of God in Christ. A thoroughgoing *analysis* of faith is, therefore, a contradiction in terms, since it would annul precisely the act which it seeks to posit. Faith-analysis is just as impossible as psychoanalysis—so long, that is, as by *psyche* we mean that depth of man and his destiny where man stands before God himself and where he can understand and explain himself only in the light of the Word which God speaks to him. These two excluded extremes, moreover, always coincide in the end, both objectively and historically: the dialectic of contradiction becomes a higher rational knowing, and this in turn must disguise itself in at least a dialectic of existence if it is not to degenerate into a mystery-less rationalistic flatness.

Man's ultimate attitude in response to God's self-revelation can stand only in the most intimate connection with that other ultimate attitude of man which is the philosophic. This connection is by nature much more intimate than it appears to be from a glance at the armistices and non-aggression pacts concluded between 'philosophy' and 'theology' within the Christian *universitas litterarum*. In this context, theology clearly takes over functions which in the pre- and non-Christian world belonged to philosophy. To be sure, there is equally in the non-Christian world a tension between the field of myth and that of the *logos*. Myth represents positive revelation coming from the divine; the *logos* turns the critical light of thought onto this positively, and either assimilates it interiorly or rejects it as an uncritical preliminary stage. But Plato's attitude toward myth is much less simple than this. The least that it shows is that religious philosophy, if it understands itself, cannot dispense with the concept of revelation, whether it takes the myth of the self-revealing God as such seriously in a philosophical sense or strips it of its mythical manner of expression in order to retain a 'philosophical revelation' and an answering 'philosophical faith'. On the whole, nevertheless, philosophy and theology outside the Christian world constitute a perfect, even if volatile, unity, and this could not be otherwise, if as a philosopher one considers that there cannot be two ultimate truths about the world and man, nor, therefore, two ultimate attitudes of man toward the final reality.

The moment in history when philosophy begins to detach itself through self-revelation from mythical revelation marks a deepening of human understanding which was decisive for human history: man realizes that in myth (through which the divine assumed at first a positive shape for him) or behind myth he is touching the horizon of the unconditional—he realizes that in the existent (which could also be different than it is) he is touching Being itself in all its universality and necessity. This moment is critical: the ‘gods of Greece’ threaten to pale before the fascination of the Idea and the Concept; philosophy threatens to impose itself as the enlightened religion of the wise. But if for the moment we leave the historical aspect of this crisis to one side (and it was a crisis which gained a much greater relevance because of the appearance of Christianity) and concentrate on the substantive question itself, then we will see there is no reason to go beyond the unity of myth and *logos*, which Plato upheld and which was taken up again and further developed in the German world by Holderlin, Schelling, and Heidegger. The attempt to go beyond Plato’s unity might possibly take two different directions. First, in a Christian sense, Biblical revelation, as the sole valid manifestation of God, would put an end to all myths and, at the same time, take over every revelatory function which philosophy (continuing the mythical function) had still allowed to Being itself. Or, in a rationalistic sense, philosophy would in itself put an end to the mythical by dissolving it allegorically into mere illustrative material, as the Neo-Platonists did, without allowing Being as such a true revelatory character: Being becomes the classificatory concept for all encountered existents. Since historically speaking the road to the rationalization of reality (the elimination from it of all traces of revelation) had already been trod by the Greeks themselves, Christian thought took to this easier road with predilection. In so doing, it made a neat distribution of competencies between theology and philosophy, but at the price that philosophy, now deprived of the power and position of its real task, was debased to being an arsenal of concepts for theology: for it was to theology that the final, decisive insight into reality now fell. Man can neither subjectively achieve two ultimate attitudes, nor can he objectively manage to keep apart two sciences of the ultimate. The danger of this parallelism is equally great for both sides: for philosophy, whose *eros* can be a living principle only so long as it can strive for the unconditionally Ultimate, True, Good, and Beautiful, and which necessarily atrophies into formalism when its power and legitimacy to do this are contested; and for theology, which, once

it loses from within itself a genuine doctrine of wisdom, is reduced to the level of a positivistic science of the historical facts of revelation: that is to say to a doctrine of a particular existent whose absolute distinctiveness from all other existents can scarcely still be made evident. Christian revelation will, it is true, empty the myths of the 'world's archons' of all power, replacing them with the glory of God's true epiphany, just as the distance between myth and Biblical revelation can be so emphasized that its original meaning and content is reversed. But this does not alter the fact that Biblical revelation occurs in the same formal anthropological *locus* where the mythopoeic imagination designed its images of the eternal. And, to be sure, the living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will likewise exhaust all philosophical theories about God, world and man even to the reversal of their meaning and content; but this too occurs precisely at the point where man once looked out over the last horizon of Being, the point where he struggled with the meaning of that ultimate reality which gives meaning to all existence.

In other words, the formal object of theology (and, therefore, also of the act of faith) lies at the very heart of the formal object of philosophy (along with the mythology which belongs to it). Out of those mysterious depths the formal object of theology breaks forth as the self-revelation of the mystery of Being itself; such a revelation cannot be deduced from what the creaturely understanding of itself can read of the mystery of Being, nor, even in the manifestness of the mystery of God, can such revelation be grasped by this intellect without the divine illumination of grace. Nevertheless, the self-revelation of God, who is absolute Being, can only be the fulfilment of man's entire philosophical-mythological questioning as well. As such it is an answer to men's questions which comes to us in God's revealing Word (who becomes history and flesh) and which is, therefore, to be heard in a particular existent. But it is no less a Word from God, an intelligence concerning Being itself and thus, at the same time, philosophy. As the highest personal authority of the self-revealing God (to whom 'every created intellect is wholly subject' as to its Lord, Vatic. I, Dz. 1789), this intelligence challenges man essentially in his act of faith and brings philosophical knowledge, along with its *eros*, to its interior goal.

Once this much is granted—and the greatest Christian thinkers (including Origen, Augustine, Anselm and Thomas Aquinas) consistently understand the *intellectus fidei* as including this interior completion of the philosophical act in theology—then we may indeed make a clear distinction

methodologically between the field of what man can attain on the basis of the light of his own reason and what has become accessible to him on the basis of revelation alone. This will be necessary, but will no longer lead to that dangerous paralysis and barrenness of both forms of knowledge which is otherwise unavoidable. And the theological vision of Being which remains bound to 'myth' (that is, to the existing form of revelation in Biblical salvation-history) as its *locus* of insight will then remind man the philosopher that ultimate knowledge cannot, for him, lie in turning away from that which is concretely finite (a movement which seems so natural!), but in turning towards the phenomenal existent (*conversio ad phantasma*) as the only place where the mystery of Being will shine forth for him who himself exists bodily and spiritually. The theological vision of Being will do still more: because of that final securing of reality which the believer who encounters God in Christ experiences, the theological vision makes it possible for the first time for the philosophical act of encounter with Being to occur in all its depth. It is only the man who has encountered the living God in the particular form of revelation chosen by him who can really find God in all things and, thus, who can truly and constantly philosophise. And, because it is the declaration of eternal life for the world, this form of revelation gains universal significance and determines all aspects of the formal object of philosophy. The correctness of such an integrated vision can also be seen from the philosophianic or contemplative attitude of faith which has its beginnings in the Bible, where it emerges in the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament and, in the New Testament, is realised especially in Paul and John: God's Word is itself shot through with human contemplation, which contains within itself the truly philosophical act. No wonder, then, if all Christian theology claims to be a contemplating reflection of faith, which does not, however, proceed in an exclusively or primarily abstracting manner, but on the contrary (through the 'gifts of the Holy Spirit') experiences and perceives the meaning of Being hidden in the concreteness of revelation.

It is only now that we have clarified the relationship between the two formal objects that we can correctly raise the question of the lineaments of Christian faith. Let us start with the aporetic statement that God, the very ground of Being, reveals himself once and for all in a positive-historical, spatio-temporal form. Philosophy has the tendency to relativise mythical (relative) once-ness, and to perceive God's Being uniformly through *all* existents. Theology checks this tendency by absolutising the mythical

tendency. For, to the unity, singularity and once-ness of God in the interior disclosure of his person theology conjoins the singularity and uniqueness of a (salvation-) history and, finally, of one single person within this history. The mystery of I-Thou within the Godhead must find its epiphany in an I-Thou mystery between God and man; in this way, myth is both fulfilled and surpassed.

This Christian form of revelation may then be 'read' in two ways. According to the first of these, we may see in it the historical signs and the manifestations of an acting God. These signs are witnesses of the highest personal urgency which of themselves prove themselves to be signs of God, and which mean to be read and understood as such: Israel's Covenant-history, the charismatic leadership of the prophets, the miracles and prophecies, and finally Christ as the fulfiller beyond all expectation. The signs are understood; what they point and witness to is believed: the invisible divine mysteries behind the signs (the redemption of the world through the Cross and Resurrection, the Eucharist and the sacraments, eschatology, above all the mystery of the triune God). The signs, being legible, testify to this and demand this faith. In their credibility they each support themselves and each other reciprocally. Whoever distrusts their demonstration of the divine authority speaking through them would be acting contrary to the laws of human discernment, both of theoretical reason (which has here received evidence of credibility) and of practical reason (which orders that one should entrust oneself to a trustworthy witness). Thus understood, the rationality of faith rests totally on the persuasive character of the revelatory signs, their power to convince man's reason: the credibility of the witnesses is verifiable, as is the imperative to believe a credible witness. But in this way the divine witness becomes one (exceptional) case among others; the divine quality does not leap into prominence, neither on the side of insight or vision nor on the side of faith. This is an anthropological theory of faith which dispenses with the philosophical dimension, the faith-theory of positive theology as developed primarily by the Baroque scholasticism and Neo-Scholasticism of the Jesuits.

But there is another way of 'reading' the form of revelation, one which from the start focusses attention on the formal object of faith: God's eternal truth as he is in himself and as he witnesses to himself in revelation. But this eternal truth is the inwardness of absolute Being, the mystery of its life and love which is the manifestation of the depth of philosophy's formal object.

This is why this theory of faith tends to build on the foundation, first, of the spiritual subject's cognitive dynamism and, second, on the luminous and illuminating character proper to absolute Being. Such a view explains what is specifically Christian by raising it above the valid object of philosophy, and, so far as it embraces historical facts by integrating them into the final dynamism of cognition. Here we encounter Alexandrian and Augustinian illuminism. Being is light, and this light is its Word (Logos) which shines into the mind, a Word that is already received by the natural creaturely intellect as a kind of grace and revelation: practically all that is then needed to extract the theology of faith from philosophy is to translate the general philosophical theory of knowledge into the Christian trinitarian mode, and to see Christ as the redeeming illuminator of the mind and revealer of the Father. For all the important differences which divide Thomas Aquinas and Augustine on particular issues they nevertheless both agree as to the two foundations of theology. In the first place, for both the dynamism of the cognitive spirit is determined by its innermost disposition to press on to the vision of God, so much so that God's self-revelation and the elevation and grace required for the perception of his inner mysteries appear as the final stage in the perfecting of the structure of the created mind. And, secondly, they both see God's active deed of self-revelation as the bestowal of the innermost light of Being: faith endows the mind with a new light (*lumen fidei*) which does not yet allow what is thus revealed to be seen in its own first principles, but which becomes comprehensible only when it is seen as the beginning of just such a vision (*inchoatio visionis beatae*). We must also include in this second approach those modern theologians (Blondel, Scheuer, Maréchal, Rousselot) who in a moderate way take their departure from the subjective dynamism of cognition and act, and who then argue to the interior appropriateness and reasonableness of the transcendent faith-act, made possible by the light of grace, from the 'restless heart' of man, from its need and emptiness (Masure), and from its unlimited expectations. This view is taken to extremes in Modernism, which dissolves the objective facts of revelation into mere functions of the interior subjective dynamism of revelation between God and the soul, and which regards these facts as valid for the believer only in so far and as long as they effectively support and foster this dynamism. The advantage of this view over the former lies in the fact that, in it, what is positive history appears from the first to be integrated into the overall exchange between the self-revealing God and the believing

soul. The appearance of externality and heteronomy is removed. The act of faith, in its very roots, is both 'supernatural' (because sustained by the light of grace) and 'natural' (as the perfect fulfilment of all spiritual aspirations); both founded objectively upon God's revelatory act and established subjectively and existentially, since everything now is construed in terms of the spirit's dynamic orientation to its formal object. The question remains whether on such a view the objective foundation of the specifically Christian fact is as successful as the subjective foundation, and whether this whole orientation is not constantly threatened by a secret and, occasionally, even by an open bondage to philosophy which makes the internal standard of the striving spirit, even where it is conceived only as 'emptiness' or 'void', as *cor inquietum*, *potentia oboedientialis*, and so on, nevertheless to be somehow the measure of revelation itself. The darkness of faith, its dependence on God's authority, may indeed still be affirmed; but such a faith is by nature impelled toward experience, toward an anticipatory mystical vision which already half enjoys the light of the eschatological *visio beata*. This is basically the path followed by Garrigou-Lagrange in his transposition from Thomas to John of the Cross. But, in a different sense, this is also the way of Origen and the Augustine of the early religious writings, since in them all the historical-positive aspects of revelation from the outset tend to dissolve (spiritually and allegorically) into the elements of an enlightened Christian supernatural 'philosophy'.

Each of these approaches grasps but one side of Christian faith, and of the insight and vision which belongs to it. For the first of these, insight rests on the evidential force of the credibility of the signs of revelation, which demand and elicit the act of faith. (This evidence may either be incorporated into the act of faith or remain outside it, in such a way that faith must base itself solely on the authority of the witness.) For the second approach, insight rests essentially on the foundations of faith itself: faith perceives God's light, mediated, to be sure, by signs and witnesses, and yet even now with that secret immediacy which will one day emerge openly in the eternal vision. In the first approach God's historical witnesses do not really stand within the light of divine Being: they merely point to it. In the second approach they become so transparent to this light that in the sign only the signified is of interest, and in the historical only that which is valid for eternity.

These two tendencies ought to be brought together; but this can occur only if they are purged of a common deficiency. Both are wont to call the

historical facts of revelation ‘signs’, and to think of them as ‘pointers’ (quite capable ones, to be sure) to something mysterious which lies behind them and which must be believed. For, so the argument goes, if the mystery were visible as such in the signs themselves, then faith would be abolished. This concept of ‘sign’ can, if at all, be justified only so long as God’s revelation is considered under the aspect of its truth and goodness. Faith must be true, that is, it must be given to the true and real revelation of the God who, because of his own truthfulness (*veracitas*) possesses true authority and can endow the apostolic and ecclesial witnesses of this his authority with sufficient marks of truthfulness and, therefore, of credibility. What such thinking about the truth still lacks (especially since the interior truth of what is believed may not yet be manifested to the believer) is made up for by the aspect of goodness. *Mihi adhaerere Deo bonum est*: in an Augustinian and Thomistic sense, the creature experiences its innermost fulfilment and the quieting of its unrest when, in a transcending manner, it abandons itself to the gravitational pull of its love for God (a love which is established in the very foundation of its nature: *amor pondus*), and, borne by God’s grace, becomes perfected by the self-surrender to God of its loving faith. From Augustine to Bernard, Bonaventure and Thomas, this love, rooted in nature and borne by grace, is seen to be the innermost light of Being itself, since even Thomas, the Aristotelian, knows the *cognitio per inclinationem et connaturalitatem* which in a spiritual being bespeaks the luminous rightness of its striving.

But with both these ways we still remain within a parallelism of ostensive sign and signified interior light. This dualism can be abolished only by introducing as well the thought-forms and categories of the beautiful. The beautiful is above all a *form*, and the light does not fall on this form from above and from outside, rather it breaks forth from the form’s interior. *Species* and *lumen* in beauty are one, if the *species* truly merits that name (which does not designate any form whatever, but pleasing, radiant form). Visible form not only ‘points’ to an invisible, unfathomable mystery; form is the apparition of this mystery, and reveals it while, naturally, at the same time protecting and veiling it. Both natural and artistic form has an exterior which appears and an interior depth, both of which, however, are not separable in the form itself. The content (*Gehalt*) does not lie behind the form (*Gestalt*), but within it. Whoever is not capable of seeing and ‘reading’ the form will, by the same token, fail to perceive the content. Whoever is not illumined by the form will see no light in the content either.

We must here understand that, by thus appealing to aesthetic reason (in union with theoretical and practical reason), we are not taking sides with ‘Greek’ thought as opposed to Hebraic and Biblical thought. The perception of form is a universal human phenomenon, and we are not here concerned with giving precedence to one manner of perception over others—to (Greek) seeing over (allegedly Hebraic) hearing; we will have to deal with this later. For the time being, we are concerned only with the phenomenon of form and of its perception in the most general sense. Seen in this way, Israel’s Covenant- and salvation-history, both globally and in its details, will be seen to have at least as impressive a form as a Greek myth, to say nothing of the form of Christ and of his divine and human existence and mission. Nor is it now our concern to ask in what (epistemological) manner form is perceived—what, for instance, the significance of ‘intuition’ is for human perception. It is enough to accept that the aesthetic ‘seeing of form’ is a fact beyond reasonable doubt.

For the moment the essential thing is to realize that, without aesthetic knowledge, neither theoretical nor practical reason can attain to their total completion. If the *verum* lacks that *splendor* which for Thomas is the distinctive mark of the beautiful, then the knowledge of truth remains both pragmatic and formalistic. The only concern of such knowledge will then merely be the verification of correct facts and laws, whether the latter are laws of being or laws of thought, categories and ideas. But if the *bonum* lacks that *voluptas* which for Augustine is the mark of its beauty, then the relationship to the good remains both utilitarian and hedonistic: in this case the good will involve merely the satisfaction of a need by means of some value or object, whether it is founded objectively on the thing itself giving satisfaction or subjectively on the person seeking it. Only the apprehension of an expressive form in the thing can give it that depth-dimension between its ground and its manifestation which, as the real *locus* of beauty, now also opens up the ontological *locus* of the truth of being, and frees the striver, allowing him to achieve the spiritual distance that makes a beauty rich in form desirable in its being-in-itself (and not only in its being-for-me), and only thus worth striving after. This is what Kant somewhat misleadingly calls the ‘disinterestedness of the beautiful’: the evidence that here an essential depth has risen up into the appearance, has appeared *to me*, and that I can neither reduce this appearing form theoretically into a mere fact or a ruling principle—and thus gain control over it—, nor can I through my efforts

acquire it for personal use. In the luminous form of the beautiful the being of the existent becomes perceivable as nowhere else, and this is why an aesthetic element must be associated with all spiritual perception as with all spiritual striving. The quality of 'being-in-itself' which belongs to the beautiful, the demand the beautiful itself makes to be allowed to be what it is, the demand, therefore, that we renounce our attempts to control and manipulate it, in order truly to be able to be happy by enjoying it: all of this is, in the natural realm, the foundation and foreshadowing of what in the realm of revelation and grace will be the attitude of faith.

These preliminary conclusions bring us straight to the very centre of Christian revelation—the Word of God become flesh, Jesus Christ, God and man—and so we are led unreservedly to affirm that here we have a true form placed before the sight of man. Whatever else we might say about God's hiddenness, his 'guising' (Luther), his 'incognito' (Kierkegaard) in Christ—we will have to deal with this later—the fundamental thing is that here we have before us a genuine, 'legible' form, and not merely a sign or an assemblage of signs. Christ can work and produce signs (σημεῖα), and these signs will stand in a significant relationship to him. But he himself is more and other than merely a sign. It is not as if one could, by means of rational inquiry and argument, recognize him to be a (perfect? religious? inspired?) man and then, following the pointers provided by this rational knowledge, move to the conclusion that he is God's Son and himself God. The witness of the Gospels, and John's in particular, has it rather this way: Christ is recognized in his form only when his form has been seen and understood to be the form of the God-man, and this, of course, at once demands and already presupposes faith in his divinity. The figure which Jesus presents to the beholder is such that it can be 'read' as a figure at all only when what appears of him is . . . what should we say here: 'seen as' or is it 'believed to be' the emergence of the personal (triune) depths of God? Provisionally, then, we can say that just as a natural form—a flower, for instance—can be seen for what it is only when it is perceived and 'received' as the appearance of a certain depth of life, so, too, Jesus' form can be seen for what it is only when it is grasped and accepted as the appearance of a divine depth transcending all worldly nature. Moreover, in view of the nature of the reality involved, the human beholder can be brought to such perception only by the grace of God, that is, by a participation in this same depth that makes him proportionate to the wholly new dimension of a form-phenomenon which comprises within

itself both God and world.

Christian thought has always known that Jesus Christ is the central form of revelation, around which all other elements in the revelation of our salvation crystallize and are grouped. But this centrality of Christ's figure has not perhaps been heeded emphatically enough in teaching about faith. According to Schiller, beauty is 'freedom in its appearing' (*erscheinende Freiheit*), a phrase which also permits and indeed demands interpretation in an ontic sense. The freedom, however, that appears in Christ is that of the God whom nothing can compel, who is absolute and sufficient in himself, but who nonetheless, of his free graciousness, binds himself to his creature in the hypostatic union forever and indissolubly, with the purpose of making his appearance and offering himself to view in the creature. The God whom we know now and for all eternity is Emmanuel, God with us and for us, the God who shows and bestows himself: because he shows and bestows *himself*, we can know this God not only 'economically' from the outside, but may also possess him 'theologically' from within and just as he is. Consequently, we are not proclaiming a new doctrine when we say that this God who reveals himself in Christ is not only the material total object of theology, but also the formal object and motive of faith; we are but taking the *auctoritas Dei revelantis* in all its indissoluble concrete reality. To the God who witnesses to himself and in whom we believe there belong not only the divinity of Jesus Christ but, equally, his humanity. In the one Christ the Father renders witness to himself through the Holy Spirit, and the one Christ, in the indivisible form he sets before us, witnesses to the Father in the Holy Spirit. Here, too, content and form are inseparable.

'Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.' And anyone who in whatever way attempts to come to God bypassing Christ is not true to the witness of the Trinity and, therefore, to faith itself. In Jesus' finitude, and in everything that is given with and which pertains to his form, we hold the infinite. As we pass through Jesus' finitude and enter into its depths we encounter and find the Infinite, or rather, we are transported and found by the Infinite. Indeed, through the mysterious dialectic whereby Jesus' external, spatially and temporally conditioned finitude is transcended (which is the condition for the coming of the Holy Spirit), but transcended in such a way that it is replaced by the 'eternal finitude' of Jesus' resurrected flesh, all that is interior, invisible, spiritual and divine becomes accessible to us. If there were no such thing as the resurrection of the flesh, then the truth

would lie with gnosticism and every form of idealism down to Schopenhauer and Hegel, for whom the finite must literally perish if it is to become spiritual and infinite. But the resurrection of the flesh vindicates the poets in a definitive sense: the aesthetic scheme of things, which allows us to possess the infinite within the finitude of form (however it is seen, understood or grasped spiritually) is right. The decision, therefore, lies between the conflicting parties of myth and revelation.

3. ELEMENTS OF THE FORM OF FAITH

We shall be well-advised, then, to look again more deeply at the elements contained in faith seen thus as the theological act of perception. This time we will proceed in the opposite order following the order of the ontic foundations of faith. This is at the same time the trinitarian order of things, since ‘no one comes to me unless the Father draws him’ (Jn 6.44), and it is only the Father’s light shed on the Son that leads the believer into the unitive encounter with him which is the work of the Holy Spirit. In these considerations also we must keep in the front of our minds the interpenetration of philosophy and theology (in the first stage), of myth and revelation (in the second), and of the Christian and non-Christian experience of God (‘mysticism’). For the time being we are considering all of this from the point of view of subjective evidence, that is, of the evidential force of the form of revelation as it impinges on the believing subject; we must wait until later to deal with the objective form of revelation. Since, however, the subjective is totally dependent on the objective evidence, many things will have to remain provisional until we deal with the latter thematically

a. God’s Witness in Us

‘If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; and such is God’s testimony, that he has given for his Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. He who does not believe God, has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne to his Son’ (1 Jn 5.9-10).

God’s testimony is here described as both interior and external. It witnesses to Christ as Son of God, and thus is external: it is the verification by God of Christ’s witness to God. But in so far as God’s witness is greater

than men's, it is interior to the believer himself and, to the extent that he believes, it becomes identical with his faith. Faith is the light of God becoming luminous in man, for, in his triune intimacy, God is known only by God. This was the sense in which the Fathers and High Scholasticism spoke of the *lumen fidei*, and the first thing we must deal with is this light, in which we believe God and which constitutes the innermost ground (*causa, motivum, fundamentum*) of our faith. We must take this subject first because, although God's witness in itself is, to be sure, indivisible and unified, and his light, kindled in the hearts of men, centrally illumines the incarnate Son, it can nevertheless happen that this illumined object is, in fact, not sighted, without the interior light necessarily becoming extinguished for all that. It could be the case (God alone can distinguish here) that God's true light also falls upon figures of the human imagination (myths) and speculation (philosophies), and that this light can lead through them and their partial truth to the God of revelation.

God's light, which 'shines in our hearts' (2 Cor 4.6), shines so that we may know the Son; but it also shines through him who makes the radiance of this light possible by dying in the world God's death of love and by purging through his atonement the darkness in our hearts. Thus is it portrayed in John's prologue. It is God's light as 'life', 'grace', 'truth', all of which are housed in the Son and come 'into the world' through the Son, who, being God's 'Word', is 'with God' and is 'God'. To 'receive' him means both to receive God's 'Word' (faith) and to become 'God's children' after being admitted to God's 'life, grace and truth', that is, having been 'born of God'. Both these things constitute 'seeing the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father'.

All this is certainly not speaking of faith as a merely 'ontological' process, that is to say, of the elevation of the selfsame personal reality from the 'natural' to the 'supernatural' order, as those theologians of the faith-act like to represent it who, on the one hand, simply transfer the psychology of the purely human belief in testimony onto Christian faith and, on the other hand (quite logically from the act of faith) exclude the certain rational grounds of credibility itself and consign them to its 'forecourt'. Thomas Aquinas rightly derives the specification of human acts from their formal object, which means here that Christian faith, being God's witness in us, can be understood only as the answer to this interior and intimate self-witnessing of the God who opens up the secrets of his Heart as he gives himself to humanity. This is a first and

most formal affirmation, and one which must precede all those particular modalities which are related to man's concrete condition: his sinful turning away from God, his blindness and obstinacy, and finally, those things which grace works in him—his conversion, his breaking, his humbling and his exaltation. Faith is participation in the free self-disclosure of God's interior life and light, just as the spiritual nature of the creature means participation in the unveiledness of all reality, which in one way or another must also include the divine reality. The created spirit does not 'deduce' this reality (in which God is included in whatever way) from indications and logical premises; as spirit, it is from the very start already set in the light of this reality, at the same time thinking from within it and directing its thought toward it. With Claudel we can say that, within this intuitive knowledge of being, God is 'given in the mode of absence': *super omnia quae praeter ipsum sunt et concipi possunt, ineffabiliter excelsus* (Dz 1782). But given to the spirit he nonetheless is as *omnium principium et finis* (Dz 1785). When the spirit attains to real Being it necessarily touches God, the source and ground of all Being. The spirit's horizon is not confined to worldly being (*ens univocum*), but extends to absolute Being (*ens analogum*), and only in this light can it think, will, and love; only in this light of Being does it possess language as the power to know and to name existents. Otherwise no proof of God could ever be formulated, or be in any way conclusive, even if such a proof can lead no further than this highest light of Being and its transcendental attributes, and not into the very Heart of God, who can disclose his inner Being only in freedom. Now, Being is not an existent and object-like reality, but rather the *locus* where all that is existent can become luminous object, because in the light of Being everything is seen, without this light ever itself being turned into something given or brought to a standstill. For this very reason, the philosophic act connotes for existent, thinking man both a boundless felicity, a final grounding, and a threat to his whole existence, which can conceive of itself only as infinite. In the single word *ekstasis* Heidegger found, already joined, the two necessarily connected aspects of the philosophic act: the dread (*Ent-setzen*) and fear of the finite spirit that, by thinking, discovers in itself the opening up of infinity, and the rapture (*Ent-zücken*) at sighting the fulness of this fountain which bestows itself and gathers men into itself.

It is only here in the innermost sanctum of the spirit that the deeper and higher light of the self-disclosing God can shine out of the light of Being.

And this dispels the philosopher's objection that with the rise of Christian theology there has been a regress from Being back to the existent. Being itself here unveils its final countenance, which for us receives the name of trinitarian love; only with this final mystery does light fall at last on that other mystery: why there is Being at all and why it enters our horizon as light and truth and goodness and beauty. The philosophic act (which every person, however implicitly, makes) now confronts in the depth of Being the still deeper depth of the divine light. By the mere fact of disclosing itself, this deepest of depths exhibits its freedom. If the existent can be free, how could the very wellspring of Being be freedomless? The very fact that its free light reveals itself already means that it must free the person in whom such radiance appears to participate in the divine freedom. This light bestows on him the freedom to answer and, along with it, the possibility of rejection: it effects belief in the believer and leaves him the freedom of unbelief. This is the possibility of 'making God out to be a liar'. The act of faith, which fulfils and surpasses the philosophic act, is no longer dependent on the dialectic of *ekstasis*, because when Being is confronted as love the threat which infinity poses to finitude vanishes. In his incarnation God has taken this threat on himself. The finite spirit's giving of itself into the abyss of this love, because it lives from this same love, is indeed a renunciation of all finite securities—even spiritual ones—but it occurs within that handing over of self which is free from anxiety regarding its destiny in God.

Looking back from the stand-point of Christian faith we can, in an analogous sense, also speak of that ecstatic opening up of the spirit to the light of Being as 'faith'. And, in fact, the philosophy of late antiquity (represented by Philo, Plotinus, Proclus, Denys and Maximus) spoke of the act which surpasses all knowledge of the existent and confronts absolute Being as *pistis*. With Jaspers we can speak of this act, which gains all things only by letting go of all things, as 'philosophic faith', something Lao Tzu knew particularly well.⁹ The difference between this and Christian faith emerges most clearly when God's light falls upon historical myth (or concept) or upon historical revelation. Philosophic faith from the outset takes a necessarily critical stance towards every finite mythical form. But Christian faith rediscovers its own light in the form of Christian revelation, or acquires it from this form in the first place. And yet the mature Aquinas does not hesitate to compare, even in Christian faith, the relationship between external historical revelation and the interior illumination of grace to that between the

senses and reason. It is not simply that the latter is ‘empty’ for him without the senses, but rather, in the fulness of unity, it contains what has burgeoned through the senses:

Sic patet, quod fides ex duabus partibus est ex Deo, scilicet ex parte interioris luminis, quod inducit ad assensum, et ex parte eorum, quae exterius proponuntur, quae ex divina revelatione initium sumpserunt; et haec se habent ad cognitionem fidei sicut accepta per sensum ad cognitionem principiorum. . . . Unde sicut cognitio principiorum accipitur a sensu, et tamen lumen, quo principia cognoscuntur, est innatum, ita fides est ex auditu, et tamen habitus fidei est infusus (Boet De Trin., q 3 a I ad 4).

The young Thomas exaggerated this comparison, borrowed from twelfth-century tradition,¹⁰ in a Platonizing way by saying that ‘the articles of faith enlighten’ the believer and theology ‘directly (*per se noti*) through the light of faith’, in the same way that ‘the natural principles of understanding are by nature innate. . . . The science (of theology) develops from these principles and also includes the universal (natural) principles. It possesses no means to prove them, but only to defend them against detractors, just as no artist can prove the axioms of his art’ (Sent, prol q I a 3 q Ia 2 ad 2). But Thomas would soon (3 Sent d 24 a 2 sol I ad 2) and then regularly correct himself by stating that the comparison of the two lights is only an analogy, since the articles of faith cannot exhibit their internal evidence, which only God knows. Nevertheless, in keeping with its essence, the light of faith remains for him a habituation, an assimilation, a participation in the vision of himself which God has, and this imparts to the light of faith that peculiar certainty which transcends all earthly sciences.

The same view is expressed earlier by Albert when he distinguishes between a ‘certainty of interior insight’ and a ‘certainty *secundum pietatem*’. The latter

is above *ratio* and draws its certainty not from the principles of reason, but rather from a light which resembles the First Truth. It is simple and, so to speak, opens the eyes to the vision of the First Truth. . . . This is the certainty that derives from the light of faith, which suffuses consciousness and convinces one affectively of the truth of what is to be believed. . . . And thus, a saint who is also a mathematician would rather deny that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles than deny the truth of faith.¹¹

Thomas continues the same ontic-intellectual explanation of this knowledge by means of the distinction between *affectus* and *pietas*, which he received from the tradition of Augustine and Bernard. This is not at all a question of

irrational feeling, not even of feeling as understood by Schleiermacher and late Modernism, nor a question of mere 'religious sensibility, but of something far deeper'¹²: the ontological empowering of the human spirit by *quoddam spirituale esse* (Virt comm, a 10c) to grasp the interior mysteries of God. Time and again Thomas speaks of the growth of an intellectual relation and proportion to these mysteries which is fundamental not only for their perception but even for the very desire to strive for them (Ver, q 14 a 2; ia 2ae q 16 a 4c). For natural wisdom, as the earthly form of bliss, the self-evident principles of reason are, consequently, implanted in man as the seed of contemplative and active wisdom. But the blessedness of eternal life is implanted in us in the first place by the infused light of faith, in so far as this light is understood comprehensively to mean the attitude that contains both hope and love and, indeed, already presupposes hope and love as the impulse of the heart (3 d 23 q 2 a 5 ad 4). Love will then be seen to be the first to open its eyes, the first to want to believe everything about him which the Beloved offers her. Faith is the dark *inchoatio visionis*. Together with love and hope, faith constitutes the conscious side of grace in so far as grace is the ontological assimilation to God's being. Faith knows in its own way because of a *connaturalitas*, an essential kinship, which Thomas himself and, even more emphatically, Eckhart portray as the gracious insertion of the creature into the trinitarian act of begetting and giving birth ('co-naissance' with the Son from the Father). For Thomas, neither Christian doctrine nor the miracles that attest to it would say anything to man without the *interior instinctus et attractus doctrinae* (In John, c 614 n 7; c 151 5 n 5; In Rom, c 816), which he also calls *inspiratio interna* and *experimentum*. This is but a new formulation of the Augustinian *trahi* (being drawn by love's gravitational pull), which for Thomas now becomes the gravitational pull of Being itself.

The ontological ascendancy God enjoys in the heart and spirit of man precludes faith being defined in terms of a *desiderium naturale intellectus* or any postulate of reason which would be to 'measure' the divine by the human (cf. 2a 2ae q 7 a 2 ad 2). It is not that we demand grace in virtue of our peculiar dynamism; it is grace which both claims and expropriates us. The ascendancy of grace in us is what compels us, and it is also what bestows absolute authority on God in us. Considered in this first aspect, fundamental to all others, the *auctoritas Dei revelantis* is revelation as it witnesses to itself in us. We never could or should believe an historical existent on the basis of divine testimony if we did not believe it by virtue of the witness of God's

being to itself which shines out for us in the interior light of grace. The Son of God, who in history witnesses to God and is witnessed to by God, convinces us only because we have God's witness in ourselves: 'That man is drawn to God who delights in truth, who delights in blessedness, who delights in justice, who delights in life eternal, for all these things are Christ' (Augustine, In Joh, tr 26, c 9 n 4; likewise Origen in the first book of his Commentary on John). In the light of God's revelation, man is set squarely before God's nature as God, and God's infinite ascendancy—the sovereignty of the divine nature—strikes him with the force of the greatest immediacy. What is here metaphorically called the 'light of Being' (in its divine depth) can, therefore, also receive from Augustine the name of 'Word'. We speak of the enlightening instruction of the *Magister interior*, which is the theological *a priori* serving as foundation for all other instruction from outside, whether from the sphere of the Church or of history. This is the *sensorium*, conferred in revelation itself, which perceives what revelation means, not in the general but in the unique sense of God becoming manifest. In his dialogue with Plotinus, Augustine goes on to place the primary stress on the heart's humility, which is the first thing which the divine Word of Light teaches and effects in his beholder and listener. If we can speak here of an 'aesthetic' experience of the awesome glory of divine being, we still do not mean it in the sense of a mere perception or a delightful vision. What is implied here from the very beginning is our wholesale submission to the sovereignty of this Word and Light, and only this submission can demonstrate our connaturality with God, effected by grace. The Christian theologian and every Christian who pursues his faith spiritually will, therefore, have a zeal and passion for God's divinity (*Quis ut Deus?*) as their innermost attitude to the vision, rather than simply pressing on to vision and to blissful repose. In the theological *a priori*, knowledge about the quality of the divine is found imbedded in the attitude of faith toward the sovereign Light. This attitude is expressed in the fact that the receiver is *a priori* ready to consider and recognise that every command issuing from the Light in its incomprehensible freedom is an expression of the deepest necessity on the part of the Light. In this highest authoritative quality of the light of revelation is rooted—more deeply than we usually assume—everything in theology which is treated under the head of *intellectus fidei* and of the *convenientia* of individual dogmas and of the dogmas in their interrelatedness. In the last analysis, this is not a vague 'appropriateness' which would also leave room for other

diametrically opposed solutions; rather, it is the recognition that in the apparently non-necessary elements of revelation's historical data there is also revealed the rightness of the divine dispositions and decisions as the expression of the divine Being itself. Leaving open other possibilities, which are always God's prerogative *de potentia absoluta*, is in this context but faith's act of homage to the divine freedom, which is manifested together with the divine necessity; but such openness is in no way a calling into question of the theological necessity.

This state of things is best explained by analogy with aesthetic judgment, which registers with admiration the aesthetic necessity in the free creations of art: that they must be just so and not otherwise. Could not Bach have equally chosen a different third theme for a triple fugue, and have interwoven it with the other two in just as necessary a manner? We may answer yes in order to pay greater tribute to Bach's genius. But, aesthetically speaking, that would mean nothing. The study of aesthetic necessity starts with the strict givenness of the completed work. We are not yet speaking here of God's work in creation, reconciliation and redemption. But if we are to speak of it correctly later on, we must from the start register the quality of our encounter with the self-revealing God. This quality derives from the very being of God, and cannot simply be 'read off' or deduced from the existent aspects of his work within world and history. God's being, which is the sustaining depth of all creaturely being, can manifest itself essentially not only or primarily in the spiritual creature's encounter with the existent, viz. in sense perception and in rational judgment; God's being can encounter us centrally only from within the *a priori* of spiritual being itself—as the deepening of the spiritual being worked by grace. It is the light of Being that enables us to know all existents, though we never behold Being itself as an object; at the same time, however, we *do* behold Being in everything existent, since anything we know can be known only in the light of Being and from the viewpoint of Being. And this light is both deepened and elevated in the *lumen fidei* as Origen, Augustine, and Thomas understood it. It is not as if it were already the vision of the thing itself—an intuition of God and the divine mysteries, or an inner understanding of why the object of faith must be as it is and not otherwise: such an intuition is reserved for eternal life. Nevertheless, through grace eternal life has already begun and, thus, a faith which abandons itself to the light is already now *quaedam inchoatio visionis*. It is this alone which makes it possible for the believer to submit to an external authority. For, correctly

understood, the infused *lumen fidei* in him, to whose illumination he submits, is not any more ‘heteronomous’ than the light of rational nature, which is innate in him: for even this light (as *lumen intellectus agentis*) is not properly speaking man’s own light, but rather his openness to the light of Being itself which illumines him.

A number of points follow from this, all of which must be duly considered at the beginning of our theological work.

1. It follows for the internal development of *theology* that this light, and no other, must control and give evidence of itself in every branch of theological speculation no matter how detailed. This is possible only so long as the Christian thinker continually renews, in a living way, his own primal act of *a priori* faith—that obedient surrender to the radiant light in which alone by faith and not by vision he partakes in the wisdom of the self-revealing God. The more obediently he thinks, the more accurately will he see. Because the light of faith proportions his whole being as a man (including, therefore, his intellect) in such a way that it can receive the Mystery, he may be said to think correctly when, by virtue of the proportioning light of faith, he conforms the proportions of his own thought and work to the proportions of the object of faith which are determined by God. These proportions are not simply aesthetic relations within the creaturely form of revelation, and even less aesthetic relations found in human thought as it imposes order on discrete experience. Rather, they are the expression of a sublime relationship God has to himself, the dynamic identity of the trinitarian light. This light, which is the formal object of theology, must make itself visible in all of theology’s material developments and articulations. Only then do we have a guarantee that a natural (philosophical) intellect can feel itself affected by theology and the revelation it brings.

2. Such *gnosis* which grows out of *pistis* is pre-eminently a matter for the Christian saint, who has made the deep-rooted act of faith and obedience to God’s inner light the norm of his whole existence. This is why the ‘theology of the saints’ will develop above all in the direction in which the *lumen fidei* unfolds and takes concrete form. Augustine and Bernard usually describe this dimension with the categories of the voluntative and the affective, as opposed to the purely intellectual and the theoretical, but this is only partly accurate. What an older theology so designated, for want of other categories, may be more correctly understood using the more central categories of the existential and the personal, which allow one to see the act of faith at its roots as the

attitude and behaviour of the *total* person as determined by God and his revelation of grace. If we retain the disjunction between will and intellect, then in the psychology of faith, will appears as that element which compensates for the lack of sufficient intellectual evidence (Gardeil), which is an unsatisfactory state of affairs where both faculties are concerned. Only when by 'will' and 'affect' we understand the engagement of the person in all his depth—only then does intellectual faith become a genuine answer to God's disclosure of his depth as person; for God too does not primarily communicate 'truths' about himself, but rather bestows *himself* as absolute truth and love. This is why the deepening and revitalisation of the person which occurs within the act of faith (as a living act which includes love and hope) has been described by Thomas, along with the whole tradition, as the unfolding of the living Spirit of God in the spirit of man. The 'gifts of the Holy Spirit', bestowed seminally by grace, lead the believer to an ever deeper awareness and experience both of the presence within him of God's being and of the depth of the divine truth, goodness, and beauty in the mystery of God. This experience is usually referred to as Christian *mysticism*, in the most general sense of the term. Elsewhere¹³ I have shown that this mysticism is not yet identical with the ecclesial charisms (particular vocations and gifts), though these normally presuppose the development of 'mysticism' in its general sense. While particular charismatic vocations of individuals within the community can in no way be derived from the general grace of faith, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and even infused contemplation in all its forms and degrees, basically refer to nothing more than the unfolding of the light of faith, love and hope, infused from the outset along with grace.

In developing the notion of *raisons du coeur*, Pascal continued in the same direction as Augustine and Bernard, while at the same time he began to give this tradition more a personal than an affective bent. What he calls 'heart' is the central organ of the person, something which is not contrasted with the intellect but which serves as common foundation both for the intellect and all other particular faculties. Newman perfected this tradition by understanding the central act of 'realisation' not in an anti-intellectualistic sense but as the deepening of a merely notional apprehension into an experiential apperception by the whole person. After all that has been said, it should be evident that precisely the ever deeper experience of the eternally incomprehensible God leads the believer into a special Christian *gnosis*, one, however, which by the same token becomes an ever more central *pistis*—an

ever more total surrender to the ever stronger ascendancy of the free and sovereign God, indeed (as John of the Cross conceives it) an ever more radical abandonment of all our private, natural evidence and reasons for belief into the hands of God's undivided and singular evidence.

3. In the camp of liberal theology, and of the psychology and philosophy of religion, the theory of the *lumen fidei* confronts the concept of the *religious a priori*. This concept need not be rejected; it must only be understood correctly. There is a natural religious *a priori*, given with the essence of the creature as such, which coincides with its ability to understand all existents in the light of Being, which is analogous to and points to God. Provided it does not get caught up in detailed analysis of partial aspects of Being, natural ontology is very largely always also a form of natural theology. When we spoke of a theological *a priori*, however, we did not mean this, but rather the ontological and epistemological elevation and illumination of this *a priori* by the light of the interior fullness of God's life as he reveals himself. But this manifestation of God does not dawn only on those who expressly call themselves Christians, but basically on all men. This is so because all are called to the vision of God in eternal life and, therefore, however secretly, all are placed by God's grace in an interior relationship to this light of revelation. Therefore, many aspects of what in non-Christian spheres is called the 'religious *a priori*' and is described in religious experiences must, in fact, be shot through with elements of grace. Scientific verifications cannot determine to what extent this applies either in general or in specific cases, and it is thus possible that in this area philosophy claims many things as its proper object which secretly cross over into the realm of theology; and that in consequence, religious philosophy claims to dispense with Christianity by regarding its specific data as but one instance of the universal manifestation of God in all men and all history. As a matter of fact, as Christians we may not only freely admit but ought to expect that that interior religious light which falls from God-seeking souls on the historical forms of non-Biblical religions may be the same light that shines in the hearts of believers. Why should a mythical religion, a religious-philosophical system, or a mystical path to finding God, struck by this interior light, not be able to reflect it back to the person who has the light in himself? Why should he not be brought closer to God by means of such images and forms, which in themselves stem from man? And what is more: Why could the founders of religions, religious reformers, poets, thinkers, and mystics not have conceived their religious achievements

(whether of a personal or a social nature) at least in part under the influence of this theological, aprioristic light? Christian thought has here no serious objection to raise. We could even go so far as to discover in the constructions of non-Christian religion, philosophy and art elements which more or less explicitly indicate an attitude of obedience toward the light of the self-revealing God. These constructions are distinct from the Christian reality in the sense that, even though they could be the testimonies of religious persons—even, latently, of believers—they nonetheless cannot be God's immediate self-witness in historical form and, pre-eminently, in Christ, who, as a historical form, demands faith for himself: this is something which no religious founder or thinker or artist could ever or will ever do as long as he understands himself to be obedient to the eternal Light. Only the founder's or thinker's disciples will, in accordance with the laws of the mythical imagination, introduce such a faith-element into the myth their master had created. Likewise, the pointer to the divine light which the wise man, teacher, or mystagogue was able to give by virtue of his own experience will be reinterpreted by his disciples as a pointer to his own person. We must consider, moreover, what a difficult subjective judgment it is to distinguish an aesthetic inspiration, with its compulsion to form, from a religious inspiration and its compulsion to issue commands and take up the task of renewal, and we must also remember that it is even harder to distinguish the inspiring element of a religious experience of universal Being from the immediate experience of God. With this in mind, we must make allowances for the great religious originators in so far as they considered themselves to be vessels of revelation, prophets, and chosen ones, and even 'incarnations' of the divine Light. And with the multitudes that followed them we must be similarly indulgent: Why should they not, through the religious configurations which have been fashioned from the divine Light, find a way to that same Light which they feel within themselves confusedly and amorphously? In the great 'rites controversy' concerning Malabarese and Chinese usages and religious concepts, what was at stake among the Christian missionaries was not mere externalities, but precisely the question under consideration here. The name of 'natural religion' was being given in oversimplified fashion to the forms of religion that were encountered. Natural religions they were, judging from their external form; but even as such it seemed that one could 'baptise' some of their most essential elements.

Such 'baptisms' have been constantly repeated throughout Christian

intellectual history, but in their regard we should consider several things:

1. The expressive form of God's genuine light can become excessively obscured, and often only a glimmer of it breaks through, while much of the rest must be attributed to the sinner's perverted heart, his pride and his lust.

2. The sheer delight in myth and its aesthetically self-contained form can smother God's light.

3. The crowning luminosity experienced with some forms can also derive from the ungodly spirit of this world and of the underworld.

4. Precisely at the point where man ought to submerge himself in an attitude of pure self-surrender and abandonment toward God, the whole enterprise still somehow retains the character of a technique that is learned and mastered; in this manner, the place of redemption by God is taken by a titanic kind of self-redemption.

5. Figures and forms which were originally designed with the purest of intentions can be pressed into service by spiritual and worldly powers and given quite different values. And, above all:

6. An originally pure intuition of the self-bestowing divine Light may be incorporated into a purely natural schema which lies below the level of the intuition itself, with the result, for instance, that in order to cross over to the divine sphere the creature must abandon its own limits—and, therefore, itself—with the consequence that God, the Limitless, by the very fact that he *is*, now comes to signify the annihilation and the death of all worldly limits and forms. The number of such obfuscations of the inspiring light is endless, and to those who have confronted the Christian form they suggest strongly how greatly the divine light of faith remains internally related to a divine form of revelation; this so that on the plane of revelation the light of faith and the form of revelation may together constitute that synthesis which according to Aquinas corresponds, on the plane of natural perception, to the encounter of the senses and the light of the intellect. If the ontological light of the active intellect can become objectified only by turning to the phantasm, God's supreme light can become objectified only when it falls, not on any random worldly phenomenon (not even the depository where the soul gathers up its interior experience), but on *the* phenomenon which God's light has fashioned for itself in order truly to make its appearance *there* and not elsewhere. Such a 'form of forms' will have to justify its privileged character. As God's own appearance, it will have to stand in sharp contrast to all other creations of the religious imagination, no matter how sublime and enrapturing these may be.

God himself will have to assign it a distinctive place in the theatre of appearances, and this not only by himself shaping this form into an objectively unassailable and unmistakeable figure, but by creating out of it and its surrounding forms a total configuration, which is both inconceivable and irreducible. The witness which God gives of his Son is embodied not only by Christ himself, but also by the salvation-history and redemptive *kairos* which lead to Christ and flow out from him.

By being that historical existent who, in his (human) positivity, makes present the Being of God for the world in an unsurpassable manner, Christ becomes the measure, both in judgment and in redemption, of all other religious forms in mankind. This judgment and this redemption are internal to him, and secured by virtue of his very existence. He himself does not judge: he redeems; but the very fact that he is there means judgment for all worldly forms (Jn 3.17-19; 5.29f.; 8.15f.; 12.47f.).

b. God's Witness in History

It is in the cosmos of natural kinds that the fulness of the Being of the world must needs unfold and manifest itself, and man is the being in which this fulness becomes fulfilled and comes into its own. This is precisely the reason why God's absolute fulness of Being can choose man as the being and the vessel in which to reveal his own inner fulness to the world. God's 'turning to the creature as phenomenon' (*conversio Dei ad phantasma creaturae*) is so emphatically the very meaning of the interior perfection of all life and all form in the world that this 'turning' or *conversio* is necessarily anticipated in all attempts at a religious conception of the world. The locus of its actual realisation remains beyond reach because it is beyond the power of human imagination to arrive at it. Both myths and philosophies limit themselves to God's 'manifestations' within the sphere of the world and of mankind, or else the world and man are themselves devalued to the status of a mere 'manifestation' of God. The union of the infinite and the finite can, at most, be presented dialectically as a self-abolishing process. For faith, this union becomes earnest reality only when in the Infinite and the One there is revealed the mystery of the Trinity, and this is revealed at the point, and only there, where what is impossible in worldly terms is done by God. In the form of Christ offered to us, the interior light of grace and faith confronts its only

valid verification, because here and only here a form becomes visible in which everything makes sense for the light that beholds it; but it is evident that only God can make it make sense, and therefore it is only the light of faith that can confirm that it does make sense.

The revelation of Biblical salvation-history is a form set before mankind's eyes, implanted in the midst of mankind's historical evolution: it is a form which every passer-by must perceive, a sphinxlike, divine enigma which he must decipher. The contour-lines have been drawn with such mastery that not the smallest detail can be altered. The weights have been poised in such a way that their balance extends to infinity, and they resist any displacement. God's art in the midst of history is irreproachable, and any criticism of his masterpiece immediately rebounds on the faultfinder. The mere light of reason clearly does not suffice to illumine this work, and it can be irrefutably established that anyone who seeks to comprehend it with this light cannot do it justice. But the light of God which faith has sees the form as it is, and, indeed, it can demonstrate that the evidence of the thing's rightness emerges from the thing itself and sheds its light outwards from it. In this light it can be proven that here what is involved is not at all a projection of the mythopoeic religious imagination, but rather the masterpiece of the divine fantasy, which puts all human fantasy to naught.

The decisive thing is that this form presents itself as the revelation of the inner depth of God. What is more, it does this essentially not by means of verbal claims (which could possibly have been composed and put in its mouth subsequently by disciples eager to deify their master), but by the very shape of its existence, by the impeccable mutual reflection between word and existence and therein, at a deeper level, by the irrefutable and yet indissoluble unity of the active-passive testimony: the witness the Son bears to the Father and, *through it*, the one the Father bears to the Son. By holding this figure before men, and in full consciousness of what he is doing, Christ dares to proclaim that the individual existence which he is, is at the same time the valid expression and the word of God's very Being: 'Whoever believes in me believes not in me, but in him who sent me; and whoever sees me sees him who sent me' (Jn 12.44-45). Since we are now dealing with the evidential force of the form on the subject we ought not for the time being to speak of the proclamation contained in this form. What is important for our present purpose is to point out that the evidence of the light of faith shines forth from the object of faith as objective evidence.

Not that it is the power of the interior light which provides the historical form with the necessary ‘backbone’ to stand upright. It is, by contrast, myth which lives from the power of those who invent it and believe in it, and thus constitutes what is perhaps a wholly justified objectivation of religious-aesthetic passion. It is not man’s love for God that has set before itself an image of God so as to be able by this means to love God better: the image offers itself as something that could not have been invented by man—an image that can be read and understood and, therefore, believed only as an invention of God’s love.

The central question of so-called ‘apologetics’ or ‘fundamental theology’ is, thus, the question of perceiving form—an aesthetic problem. To have ignored this fact has stunted the growth of this branch of theology over the past hundred years. For fundamental theology, the heart of the matter should be the question: ‘How does God’s revelation confront man in history? How is it perceived?’ But under the influence of a modern rationalistic concept of science, the question shifted ever more from its proper centre to the margin, to be re-stated in this manner: ‘Here we encounter a man who claims to be God, and who, on the basis of this claim, demands that we should believe many truths he utters which cannot be verified by reason. What basis acceptable to reason can we give to his authoritative claims?’ Anyone asking the question in this way has really already forfeited an answer, because he is at once enmeshed in an insoluble dilemma. On the one hand, he can believe on the basis of sufficient rational certainty; but then he is not believing on the basis of divine authority, and his faith is not Christian faith. Or, on the other hand, he can achieve faith by renouncing all rational certainty and believing on the basis of mere probability; but then his faith is not really rational. This is the kind of apologetics that distinguishes between a *content* to be believed which remains opaque to reason and the ‘*signs*’ that plead for the rightness of this content, signs which, alas, prove either too much or too little. How strange it is that such an apologetics does not see the form which God so conspicuously sets before us. . . . For Christ cannot be considered one ‘sign’ among other signs (at least not as understood in this kind of apologetics); the dimmest idea of what a form is should serve as warning against such leveling.

Nor does it help in any significant way to bring in the perspective of the good in order to escape the dilemmas posed by this way of putting the question. To be sure, the older theology of the Church Fathers and of

scholasticism invoked the good, but always within their total vision and not in the denuded form in which the good appears in modern times. Augustine, for instance, says that we believe in Christ because he both is and brings us goodness itself, and that by clinging to Christ we attain to light and happiness. Likewise, Thomas bases faith on the *appetitus boni repromissi*—that ‘being drawn’ by the good which is man’s absolute fulfilment (De ver. 14, a. 1). This opens up the dimension of the existential: the truth of revelation is verified by human existence as it comes to its own truth and its own proper condition through its leaving behind a state of corruption. And yet this does not necessarily force us to say that this perspective is subjective and that it makes revelation to be a function of the believing self. Such a danger, it is true, is never far off when the existential dimension is played off against the ‘historical-critical’ dimension (which occurs when the modern scientific concept of truth is accepted for theology) and the result is a ‘Christ of faith’ versus an ‘historical Jesus’. This tragic dialectic, into which Protestant theology has largely fallen, lacks exactly the same thing as the rationalistic school of Catholic apologetics: namely, the dimension of aesthetic contemplation. The figure which confronts us in Holy Scripture is more and more dissected in ‘historical-critical’ fashion until all that is left of what was once a living organism is a dead heap of flesh, blood and bones. In the field of theology this means at every step the same inability to perceive form which a mechanistic biology and psychology reveal with regard to the unitive phenomenon of a living being. Nothing expresses more unequivocally the profound failure of these theologies than their deeply anguished, joyless and cheerless tone: torn between knowing and believing, they are no longer able to see anything, nor can they, therefore, be convincing in any visible way. Both tendencies remain fettered by Kantian formalism, for which nothing exists but the ‘material’ of the senses which is then ordered and assimilated by categorical forms or by ideas.

In contrast to all this, Pierre Rousselot took a great step forward when in 1910 he began to develop his theory concerning the ‘eyes of faith’.¹⁴ The catchword ‘eyes’, chosen for the title of Rousselot’s articles, is borrowed from the Fathers, particularly Augustine, and hearkens back to the Biblical conception of faith. In itself the word indicates that there is something there for faith to see and, indeed, that Christian faith essentially consists in an ability to see what God chooses to show and which cannot be seen without faith. Behind Rousselot there stand both Thomas Aquinas¹⁵ and Blondel with

their conception of the spirit's dynamism, opening out to the fulness of Being. Only because of an antecedent knowledge of Being can man think rationally and will and love freely. The spirit that knows Being always knows and loves more than he can contain in logical formulas and proofs: the spirit is active, synthetic power that goes straight to the real and that transcends all merely conceptual forms even as it posits them. If it is a matter of interpreting God's supernatural revelation in history from the available signs, then the spirit searching for meaning requires a higher light of grace in order to synthesise the signs. If the spirit is to see and understand the facts as indicators of revelation, then it must receive as well the faculty to see what the signs are intended to express: it must include in anticipatory fashion that point of convergence which makes the signs comprehensible. Allowing that this point of convergence is supernatural and that it lies in the sphere of the properly divine, then it is clear that the spirit searching for the meaning of these signs will totally (not merely partly) fail to find it as long as it seeks for the point of unity in the realm of the natural. It will simply not be able to decipher the significance of the signs. The light of grace comes to the aid of this natural inability; it strengthens and deepens the power of sight. It does not provide new clues or compensate for the inadequacy of the 'scientific' arguments; rather, it bestows vision and makes the eye proportionate to what is being shown. Under the influence of Newman, whom he much admired, and his *illative sense*, Rousselot liked to characterize his method as induction. As in Newman, so too in Rousselot: from the convergence of the evidence the conclusion results as something suddenly seen. Just as in the inductive process the universal law is suddenly seen in a particular case or in a group of cases, so too do the signs of revelation crystallise about a centre which becomes visible in the light of faith. The act of faith is, thus, rational precisely at the moment that it is made truly as an act *of faith*. The extent to which an individual believer can justify his vision rationally and reflectively is secondary. The act of faith does not derive its central rationality from a previous exercise of naked reason: this could not be the case, since its rationality really emerges only in the act of faith itself. This whole dynamism can occur only within man's total orientation toward God, that is to say, within an existential framework that engages reason no less than the will, freedom or love. Grace converts man and enables him to tread this existential path to God, and grace confers on such a wayfarer a sense for God and his revelation in history. The interior light of faith and the external historical

revelation confront, recognise, and strengthen one another. For Rousselot it is important that the active synthesis of the signs of revelation and the light that makes them possible are both really inscribed in the *appetitus entis*. This means that what is seen in Christ can be essentially 'read' and understood both from the spirit's perspective of self-realisation in its striving toward God as he is in himself, but also, by the same token, as the genuine expression of divine Being.

The lasting influence of Rousselot's breakthrough is familiar to us. Although many aspects of his total construction have been improved upon and given a different emphasis, his model has become authoritative.¹⁶ In this context we should merely note that, even though moving in the right direction, Rousselot, in his manner of expression and thought-habits, still remains too close to the Kantianism he is trying to surpass. He, too, speaks of 'signs' instead of 'form'. For him, too, the synthetic power remains onesidedly a part of the subjective dynamism, borne by grace. He does not sufficiently attribute this synthesis to the efficacy of the objective evidence of the form of revelation. It is, indeed, right to say that this objective evidence can enlighten only a spirit prepared for and proportionate to it, and to assert that the subjective conditions of the possibility of such illumination can be described in Kantian categories. But the active-constructive synthetic power ought not to be overestimated to the detriment of God's own power, which expresses and imposes itself in its historical witness. In the Gospel, the strength of the disciples' belief is wholly borne and effected by the person of Jesus, the locus of revelation. Here we no longer detect the slightest trace of a creative, myth-projecting capacity on the part of man. The discoverability of the objective, synthetic point is reduced to nil, while Jesus' non-inventability, his overwhelming originality has become infinite and of itself demands assent and effects submission.

We stand here at the opposite pole from the modernistic tendency which, as we have said, represents an exaggeration of the subjective-existential light of faith, as described by Thomas. In no way can it be said (as it might perhaps appear for a moment even with Thomas) that the articles of faith provide, so to speak, only the 'material element' (just as the sensual provides material for the spirit to process), while the light of faith potentially and implicitly contains within itself the whole substance of faith, which it brings forth with the articles of faith acting as a catalyst. It is much truer to say that the readiness of the interior light is wholly oriented toward the objective form

of revelation (toward *this* form, be it noted, and not toward the fully formulated individual tenets of dogma) so as to arrive at its content. For modernism, dogmas are but crystallised forms of the existential faith-relationship to God, forms of vital religious intuitions and needs, valid as long as they foster the existential reality, but harmful once the life has gone out of them and they have stiffened into dead formulae. This process of stiffening can be posited in this way only because the life that generated the forms is sought for in the religious subject himself, while this life is also thought of as having produced the dogmas, just as the mythopoeic religious fantasy has invented forms of religion and, after exhausting them, has transcended them and left them behind. A theology that demands that demythologisation of the Gospel presupposes in its ideology that whatever there is of form in the Gospel possesses the same limited structure as the mythical form of any other man-made religion: thus, the content of revelation that lies concealed behind the mythical form possesses just as hidden a subjective evidence as that of the believing subject, and, therefore, the hidden subject which is believed in will always be on the verge of itself turning into the subject that does the believing, thus vanishing within it. The whole orientation of modernism's vitalistic philosophy and the outlook of Protestant existential theology are both children of one and the same spirit and century.

Reflection on the aesthetic act can help us further here, provided we grasp it in all its breadth and depth. At first, the science of art may appear to be a material collection of those things that generally pass for beautiful, while the subjective judgment of taste on what is beautiful seems subject to the most extreme variations. The young especially experience this subjective aspect with particular intensity and tend to generalise it. Since they have not yet acquired objective criteria for the evaluation of works of art, and because they have not yet learned to distinguish by seeing and listening, they compensate with the 'enthusiasm' proper to their age. They find themselves in or transport themselves to a state of mind, an interior 'vibration', which transfigures nature, art, friendship and love in their sight, and which communicates the experience of the beautiful like a drug whose effect, as experience shows, quickly disappears. People who cling to this view of the subjective nature of taste's judgment have remained immature adolescents. By developing his soul according to the images of the objectively beautiful, the maturing person gradually learns to acquire the art of discrimination, that is, the art of perceiving what is beautiful in itself. In the process of their

development, the subjective elements of perception (which, doubtless, include state of mind and fantasy) more and more pass into the service of objective perception. Even in the case of a masterpiece, the mature observer of art can without difficulty give an objective and largely conceptual basis for his judgment. This is why the *Einbildungskraft* ('imagination') which primarily projects from within toward the exterior, ought rather to be called *Ausbildungskraft* ('power-to-externalise-images'), whereas the process of *Ausbildung* ('education', 'formation', 'development'), in which the objective content of images is assimilated from the outside toward the interior, ought rather to be called *Einbildung* ('imaging' or 'imagining', that is, interiorising external images).

The philosophical view of things, too, seems to be strongest at an early age because of youth's impulse toward totality of vision: this is natural, because it is in one's youth that the eye first perceives in all its freshness the emerging wonder of Being. But, while preserving its youthful *thaumazein*, the philosophical vision must slowly move away from its all-encompassing feeling and be trained in the disciplined contemplation of the Being of existents. Because the light of faith as the ability to encounter God's divineness is, on the one hand, bestowed and infused as grace, but, on the other hand, is infused into the spirit's central *a priori* and, therefore, is a thing which basically conforms to human structure and, as such, acts within the context of the sensual in its perception of reality: for these reasons we can say that the believer indeed possesses in advance the fundamental possibility of believing which has been implanted in him; but this possibility does not exempt him from the human effort of searching with a probing gaze for the correct form of what he is to believe and, having found it, from the effort of integrating it existentially into his very self. The synthetic power of the active 'faculty' of believing (as *habitus* and *virtus fidei*) does not reside primarily in the believer himself, but in God, who indwells him even as he reveals himself and in whose light and act the believer participates. The believer experiences this alien reality precisely in his encounter with the form of faith in history, in which God for the first time really confronts him as concrete reality. For the Christian, the power that in the first place makes his synthesising act possible resides in Jesus Christ ('a power went out from him. . .'), in whom the Christian can believe only in such a way that Jesus Christ helps his unbelief. It is not that Christ simply facilitates the *initium fidei* by his prompting; rather he bestows faith on the believer in such a way that the centre permanently

remains in Christ—and not only the centre of the object, without which the act could not come to be, but also the centre of the act, without which the object could never be attained. God can be known only by God. Faith, along with love and hope, is infused divine life in us, which cannot be detached from God's eternal life (as in the order of creation), but which draws back and incorporates into this life the creature that had become detached. We can now finally see with total clarity that the aspect of act (what we have called the 'theological *a priori*' of the light of faith) and the aspect of object (beholding Christ as the epiphany of God) can, indeed, be distinguished, but never divorced from one another. Every person outside Christianity who receives a share in this interior light of faith receives it only by the objective mediation of Christ's atoning life, death and Resurrection. In the same way, and indeed *a fortiori*, every believing Christian becomes conscious of his faith (even subjectively) and is secured in it only as he gazes on Christ Jesus. As long as he continues to treat 'his' faith as his own possibility, he still does not believe at all, but is perhaps still debating whether he ought to risk the leap of faith. He will dare take this leap only when the evidential force of Jesus' credibility as the very appearance of God so gains ground over the believer's own 'possibility' that what in him cannot attain to full realisation finally becomes real event by his self-abandonment to Jesus Christ, who alone can help his unbelief. For these reasons, it is not permissible simply to exclude this objective structure of faith, which for every Christian belongs to the very content of faith, from the analysis of faith's conscious aspect, in order then to describe this aspect as a purely psychological process.

It can be objected that the light of faith is itself a mystery of faith, since it is a participation in the divine nature and truth, an ontic elevation of man and an orientation to the very vision of God; that, therefore, the light of faith penetrates not at all or very inadequately into the sphere of consciousness. (This has been the objection especially of the Jesuit school, against Thomas' foundation of faith in the light of faith.) The answer from the Augustinian-Thomistic perspective would have to be based on the analogy between the light of reason and the light of faith, and would assert that the *lumen fidei* (in the same way as the light of the *intellectus agens*) as such never can nor will become objectified, but that it shines forth only in the realisation of either the act of faith or the act of knowledge when it is objectively oriented. But this is where faith and knowledge part ways. In the act of knowledge what shines forth at the *conversio ad phantasma* is the light of being, an 'aptitude'

possessed by the *intellectus agens* as such. But in man's turning to Christ what shines forth is not man's own aptitude for faith, but rather Christ's aptitude to give to the inept a share in his own light and power. The light of being envelops both subject and object, and, in the act of cognition, it becomes the overarching identity between the two. The light of faith stems from the object which, revealing itself to the subject, draws it out beyond itself (otherwise it would not be faith) into the sphere of the object. We must here beware of vitalistic comparisons, which suggest that, in the act of faith, subject and object 'float' together in a common medium of 'divine life'. We must, rather, never lose from sight the permanent onesidedness, fundamental to the process of Christian revelation, of God's act whereby he grants us participation in his being, which is his act in Jesus Christ, who can be approached only with personal categories. This should not be interpreted in the extreme extrinsicist Protestant sense, as if faith and the justification proper to it remain 'external' to man and can be 'imputed' to him only juridically. The participation bestowed by God, rather, is highly efficacious; God achieves what he will, just as he achieved it in the miracles of the Gospel: the blind really see, the deaf really hear, the dead really rise and live. But he who is spiritually dead rises to the life of God in him. 'In him' here means that he lives, but only by virtue of the fact that God lives in him. He lives subjectively because the objective God, who he is not, lives in him.

What convinces man about this objective nature of faith is that God appears to him externally, in history. The believer cannot dissolve this objective form by assimilating it into himself in an interior, existential sense, nor can he ever succeed in rarefying the Jesus of history into a mere Christ of faith. For these reasons, by exercising himself in extroversion to God's historical form, he must allow himself to be initiated to the fundamental extroversion of faith's attitude toward God. This is not in any way to suggest that he should take an 'historical-critical' stance with regard to the historical form, and then a pietistic-interiorist stance with regard to faith's content. For the Jesus of history is, precisely, not a mere sign, but a form, and, indeed, *the* definitive and determinant form of God in the world, one which is distinguished from all other worldly forms and aesthetic images by the fact that Jesus' form is the Primal Image—the Archetype itself—that 'has life in itself' (Jn 5.26); and that, solely in itself and through itself, communicates to the partaker the Being here in question. We should never tire of reminding ourselves that, from a Christian standpoint, there is no possibility of

distinguishing between God's act of revelation and the content of this revelation, for this revelation is inseparably both the interior life of God and the form of Jesus Christ. For the Word of God is *both* the divinity which expresses and reveals itself in the Trinity's eternity and in the economy of time *and* the man Jesus Christ, who is the Incarnation of that divinity. He is Word as 'flesh', a 'flesh' which in its human totality and in the life-figure in which it exists is the concrete presentation of this Word.

But we must take care not to characterise this state of affairs as a pure paradox for reason, thus locating the nucleus of Christianity in pure invisibility. The perception of inner-worldly spiritual form offers us an analogy which is all the more significant as the self-transcendence of man which occurs in it is already necessarily penetrated by a hidden religious and even theological *a priori*. That is to say that in this respect such self-transcendence is not simply unknown to man. Let us take the example of a youth who is greatly enthused by the teachings of Lao Tzu. To experience such enthusiasm he must already have grasped something of those teachings, at least by intuition. A grammatical understanding of the sayings is not enough. Insight begins concurrently at either extreme, with the almost irrational and very interior experience of being touched and with an external exaltation expressed in his mood: both things derive from what Kierkegaard has called the 'aesthetic stage'. If, after being stimulated in this way, he truly wants to make the doctrine his own, he will next attempt to go beyond mere empathy in order to recreate in himself the truth that is presented. To accomplish this, he will have to some extent to take it on trust, a trust which derives not only from what he has already grasped of it by means of the constructive power of his imagination and intellect but from his person. He understands that, in order to understand, he must recreate the truth in himself in a living manner. This is how he becomes a 'disciple'. He commits himself and entrusts himself to the 'way'. And he will soon come to a fork in the road, having to choose one of two courses. On the one hand, he may understand the doctrine as a release of his own potentialities, and the master as a Socratic midwife who helps him attain to his own real self. Genius, of whatever order, will then be seen as the highest realisation of the human nature which all, including the disciple, fully hold in common, and, as he stands in wonderment before this work of genius, he will be overpowered by the exalted feeling of being human, and exclaim: 'How marvellous we are!' Or, on the contrary, he may recognise in the master's doctrine what is by

nature superior to him, what he is lacking, the thing which exposes him in all his impotence, and he will then expect from the master and his teaching powers not available to him. Just in such a way, many Hindu seekers for wisdom are convinced that it is only by the mediation of a *guru*, whose higher powers they cannot and will not dispense with, that they will be able to attain to the reality held out by their teacher's doctrine. In this case it is not only a question of changing one's life at the instance of an external nudge or the stimulation of another's example. The objective now is to transcend oneself through the power of the master and of his teachings and in conjunction with these. Now Kierkegaard, as we know, orders the stages of existence in such a way that from the aesthetic and romantic anticipation of totality we move on to the ethical stage, where the subject seriously grapples with existence and learns, on the one hand, the self-transcending fidelity of matrimony, and, on the other, the fact that no one can represent the individual before God (Socrates can be only a 'midwife'). In the religious stage, where total solitude with God prevails, the individual finally confronts Jesus Christ. But it is significant that from these stages there is wanting the analogy before indicated, and, as a consequence, also the essential form-quality of Christianity is lacking. On the decisive point there can be only opposition between Socrates and Christ, because Socrates can only point to a truth which he is not, while Christ is the truth and, therefore, can of himself communicate it. In his *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* Hamann had, by contrast, elaborated the positive analogy between Socrates and Christ. Because through his faith and love Socrates—perfectly and to the point of folly—subordinated his existence to the *daimon* within him, he can be an intimation of Christ: he points to the divine by himself being a highway for the divine. The same could be said of Buddha or Lao Tzu. It is from their lived doctrine that Zen developed, the essence of which is to give practical training in how to transcend one's own consciousness, how to make the finite spirit a vessel of the infinite Spirit—a flute through which inspiration wafts—, how to educate the spirit to renounce its own designs in order that the infinite designs may be realised through it. Obviously, we here enter an extremely dangerous twilight zone which everywhere hovers about the concrete historical forms of such doctrines and practices. For when doctrine (first in the master, then in the disciple) becomes a technique, there is present a self-destroying paradox: intentional effort is exercised to achieve the repression of all intention, which, with or without a teacher, amounts to a self-motivated storming of the realm

of grace. In Hofmannsthal we read:

Cherub and haughty lord our spirit is—
Dwells not in us, but in some upper star
Appoints his chair and leaves us fatherless:

Yet He is fire within our deepest core—
So I divined when the same dream I found—
And holds great converse with those fires afar,

And lives in me as I live in my hand.

Here the *daimon* remains, precisely, ‘our spirit’, and the poem bears the significant title ‘A Dream of Great Magic’.¹⁷ Nonetheless, this ambiguity clings to our parable only as a matter of fact and not necessarily, and we here present it as a real parable and not as a middle stage on the path to Christianity. The point of the parable, and this goes beyond Kierkegaard, is that it belongs to the very form of human existence, and is therefore inwardly appropriate and comprehensible to man, for him to commit his own existence to the following of a person (and a teaching) which to him appear to be transparent to God. We mean this not only in the usual manner in which the analogy is formulated, namely, that one subscribes to the doctrine of a man who describes that way of salvation which has proved itself beneficial and effective for him. Rather, we understand the analogy in the real sense that the doctrine only points to the nature of the ‘saint’ as filled by God and as bearing God within him, the ‘saint’ who, as such, becomes for his disciples a kind of sacrament. Even philosophy cannot dismiss *a limine* the possibility that absolute Being can become visible in one privileged existent, without, if it so dismisses it, either falling below the level of (‘natural’) religion or dissolving that possibility in a scholastic, rationalistic manner. Porphyry perceived such a possibility in his teacher, Plotinus, and affirmed it even in his own thought, albeit with the tendency (so stigmatised by Augustine) to let the ‘sacramental’ degenerate into the ‘theurgic’. This borderline case of natural religion demands from Christians the keenest discernment of spirits; but discernment presupposes, besides its No, also a possible Yes.

How can *this* figure of faith still be distinguished from the Christian figure? By the Word of God, by God’s witness in Christ Jesus; by the quality of this Word as one which bears witness to itself; by the fact that it cannot be

mistaken for anything else, of which we will treat later on; by the fact that here it is not the case of a man 'transparent to God' who proclaims the wisdom he has learned, but that from this man's mouth divine authority speaks in the I-form. It would not be difficult to prove that, through such usurpation, the 'God-filled' subject would contradict himself and be untrue to his religious experience. The form presenting itself in Jesus, then, is structurally a fundamentally different one. At the point of closest similarity we find the sharpest distinction. The man who is placed before the phenomenon of Christ sees both things at the same time—the proximity and the distance. These belong to the contour of this figure, and they are utterly visible to the unprejudiced glance. If a person lacks such a vision, then some other person who does see can demonstrate exactly where it is that the person in question has failed to see the object. He will show that the other is expressing a 'view' (*Ansicht*) concerning Christ precisely because he lacks the 'sight' (*Sicht*) to see him. When one fixes one's glance on the figure of Christ, can one really place him next to Buddha and Socrates as another 'teacher of wisdom'? One should do this only if at the same time one realises the much greater distance that separates him from them.

The analogy with the disciple of Lao Tzu can also help to disarm a related objection. Seeing a form, so the argument goes, presupposes that we can gain an overall sight of the form. Its contour, its relief, the relationship between its proportions and its weights, its colours and its sounds—all of this must be displayed equally before the perceiving sense-organ and the spiritual faculty. For instance, if in a musical motif one single sound remains inaudible, a judgment about this 'sound-figure' immediately becomes impossible. How, then, can we speak of the 'form of Christ' when most things about him—the essential: his divinity and all the mysteries connected with it—remain hidden and unfathomable in their internal depths of meaning?

We must begin by replying that the first and pre-eminent intention of the self-revealing God is, precisely, really to reveal himself, really to become comprehensible to the world as far as is possible. If his first intention were to make those who believe in him assent to a number of impenetrable truths, this would surely be unworthy of God and it would contradict the very concept of revelation. To be sure, if God is to become manifest in his nature as God, then a necessary part of this manifestation is his eternal incomprehensibility: *si comprehendis, non est Deus*. But here 'incomprehensibility' does not mean a negative determination of what one

does not know, but rather a positive and almost ‘seen’ and understood property of him whom one knows. The more a great work of art is known and grasped, the more concretely are we dazzled by its ‘ungraspable’ genius. We never outgrow something which we acknowledge to stand above us by its very nature. And this will in no way be different for us even when we contemplate God in the beatific vision, since then we will see that God is forever the greater.

Even the figure of a person whom we love and know well permanently remains for us too wonderful to exhaust by description, and, if we truly are lovers, we would be incensed if someone offered an account of the loved person which resolved all mysteries about him. How well we think we understand Goethe, for instance, when his figure is evoked before our mind’s eye, and yet, at the same time, how well we know the great mystery which envelops him. . . . How much more must this hold for the figure in whom God wills to bare himself to us! We do not deceive ourselves (because God does not want to deceive us) if we think and assert that we can interpret correctly the contours of this figure—that we understand what this figure is meant to express. He has himself sufficiently given us to understand that his figure is comprehensible, and he has invited men to grapple with it earnestly with the purpose of understanding it. He has offered himself to the gaze of mankind from every possible angle, and this gesture of self-disclosure, which nevertheless has nothing in common with self-advertisement, was part of his fundamental mission to manifest and explain God to man (Jn 1.18). A surprising thing: nowhere does Jesus demand of his disciples that they believe things which are simply inaccessible to their understanding. In his existence they are to find an entry even to God’s trinitarian nature. Even the Resurrection of the flesh is intended to become plausible for them by the mediation of Jesus’ whole glory, and that not only on Tabor or in the apparitions of the resurrected Lord. Even the wholly unapparent mystery of the Eucharist is now to be perceived by them as most fitting, indeed as a ‘necessity of faith’ (in Anselm’s sense), beheld at the point where his promises, his conduct as Good Shepherd, and his voluntary sacrificial death all converge. Later on we will discuss the relationship between the invisible mysteries and those which can be beheld through faith in Christ. For the time being, however, let us only say that, for the invisible mysteries, faith’s assent is required only in so far as they stand in organic continuity with the perceived form of revelation, since thus these mysteries find a place of

indirect spiritual visibility within that perceived figure.

With Christ it is not as if in his mystery only certain isolated aspects became disclosed, while others (and supposedly greater ones) simply remained in the dark. He wants to make both himself and the Father known, not partially but entirely, which means in the essential articulations of divine Being. The disciples might not, for the time being, grasp many things; but the Holy Spirit of the Father will initiate them into *all* of truth (Jn 16.13). They might understand nothing at the foot of the Cross, but afterwards they do, when there is communicated to them the Spirit who fathoms all things, even the depths of divinity (1 Cor 2.10). By virtue of this anointing with the Spirit, the disciples come to 'know all things': they have been 'taught concerning all things' and 'need no further instruction' (1 Jn 2.20, 27). By virtue of the anointing they will, for instance, be able to discern whether a spirit comes from God or not. Although a Christian cannot 'see' the Holy Spirit, he is able to ascertain with compelling evidence that a saint does and says certain things and words in the Holy Spirit, and in this he can distinguish the Holy Spirit from a merely natural or demonic spirit.

This is to say that a genuine perception of form is possible even in the knowledge of faith, which does not openly behold God's mysteries in themselves. Within this perception we can distinguish two elements which belong together: the apprehension of a wholly unique quality, to be ascribed particularly to the supernatural origin of the light of faith, and the apprehension of an interior rightness (which is precisely where this quality of uniqueness proves and manifests itself), that is, of the objective, demonstrable beauty of all proportions. Although the relationships within this form are intertwined with unprecedented complexity, nevertheless it continually opens out to our gaze: we always find our ground again since one aspect of the form always points to and supports the others. We can choose a few of its dimensions almost at random. For instance: the relationship, in Jesus, between him and the Father; the distance of the man, the nearness and unity of the Son; the relationship between lord and servant, exaltation and humiliation: of exaltation in humiliation and humility in exaltation; the ever-new relationship between promise and fulfilment and, through it, of judgment and grace, rejection and election; the relationship between master and disciple, which is one of total redemptive representation by Christ through grace, and yet, also one of co-presence and of being taken into account with Christ in the redemption through grace; the meaning of an innocence which

does not become distanced, but rather takes all guilt upon itself; the relationship between a justice that puts all things in their place and calls them by their right name and a mercy that takes everything from its place and gives it a radically greater value; the relationship between joy and suffering, between freedom from care and asceticism; the meaning of history, which both obediently fulfils and is itself triumphantly transcended. . . . We will come to see that these relationships and meanings come together to build but one faultless and yet effortless equilibrium: they had all been harmonised into a sovereign unity before we ever perceived them. The strange aprioristic certainty dawns on us that in this cosmos of revelation we can always press forward with our investigations and discover new connections and proportions, but that, nevertheless, we will nowhere find any sort of inconsistency, any lack of balance or any miscalculation. The believer not only believes this; he knows it unconditionally. He has read this from the phenomenon before him, and Jesus himself consciously evoked this perspective: 'Which of you can convict me of any sin?' (Jn 8.46). Of a sin: of one insufficiency or one objective structural error which would bring to nought his claim to being the revealer of the Father.

Here we can and must bring up again the question of the *praeambula fidei*. Is the form we have described in this manner perceived before (*prae*) the act of faith occurs? Or does it suffice to say that the rightness of what is perceived is contained in the act of faith itself as an inner-logical prerequisite for the self-surrender of faith? The Apostles are doubtless right when they say that they believe because they have recognised and because they know (Jn 16.30); but 'not flesh and blood' has revealed this to them, 'but my Father in heaven' (Mt 16.17). The temporal *prae* must be understood dynamically: it is the incipient understanding of the form of revelation, a form which cannot be overlooked by natural-historical man since it presents a constant stumbling-block for him that demands explanation. Natural reason can confirm a great number of the proportions and harmonies we have described, even though at this preliminary stage the only unquestionable fact is that here 'something real is happening', wherever the real key to the puzzle may actually lie. Moreover, reason will confirm that here 'religious things are happening': God is at stake, and it is evident that Jesus is truly pious and not a man who, by his statements about himself and by his sayings, is guilty of *hybris*. The re-presentation or re-duplication of the form of revelation in the human spirit is sketchy, inchoate, and finally imperfectible. By its very

essence, this re-presentation cannot be concluded. And so the spirit must venture the solution of faith γυμναστικῶς, that is, by exercising itself like an athlete through hypothetical questioning: What shape would the figure take once it is assented to in a Christian manner? Would the form then exhibit its full transparency? Would everything then concur harmoniously? Is there perhaps no other hypothesis at all that would solve our calculations? Reason cannot insert the keystone unless it itself provide it through the act of faith. Reason cannot contemplate the phenomenon as it were from the outside and the inside at the same time. To want to see the stained-glass window from the inside is already to believe. Superficially considered, this faith can appear to the spirit accustomed to psychological deductions to be its own achievement. But once it truly realises the act of faith, the spirit immediately understands that this act is grace—a being drawn by God, an overcoming of its own impotence by the power of Christ, an overcoming also of all subjective, self-projective anticipations of human thought and imagination by the wholly different clarity and evidence that stems from the thing itself.

c. Witness, Exterior and Interior

There is a moment when the interior light of the ‘eyes of faith’ becomes one with the exterior light that shines from Christ, and this occurs because man’s thirst, as he strives and seeks after God, is quenched as he finds repose in the revealed form of the Son: ‘We have found. . . .’ (Jn 1.45). ‘To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God’ (Jn 6.68f.). He who can show us the Father ‘satisfies us’ (Jn 14.8). The Apostle’s remark, true as it is, remains naïve because unconsciously it is still a Jewish demand for signs, while the revealed form has long fulfilled and more than fulfilled every demand: a superabundant light beams forth from it before which every subjective kind of seeking must lay down its arms: ‘“You are looking at him: he who is speaking with you is he.” “I believe, Lord,” the man cried out, and fell down before him’ (Jn 9.37f.). Man’s thirst is stilled where God manifests himself through the man Christ, where man’s giving of himself is surpassed by the divine acceptance, and where the witness that man gives through faith is taken up by the witness that God gives to himself in Christ and which, henceforth, is the ‘greater witness’ which God ‘gives to his Son’ in the heart

of the believer (1 Jn 5.9f.) and which ‘shines’ there (2 Cor 4.6).

The believer cannot consider his answer to the light of God’s witness to be a second, autonomous word existing alongside Christ’s word, even though it is true that the believer never yet felt himself taken so seriously as a person and so fulfilled as when he spoke this word. He knows that both he and the word of faith he gives in reply are taken up into the trinitarian witness (Jn 5.36f.; 8.16ff.). The moment he begins to see with the eyes of faith he knows that, at a deeper level, he is one seen by God (Jn 1.46ff.; 1 Cor 8.3; 13.12; Gal 4.9; Phil 3.12). The moment he commits himself to this his greatest act, he knows that he is one who is ‘enacted’ by God (Eph 2.10; Jn 6.29). Here we ought to discuss the *fides Christi*,¹⁸ that is, the archetypal covenant-fidelity which in Christ God shows to man and which, in Christ as the revealed form, is manifested as man’s highest covenant-fidelity towards God. This is a stance of such boundless self-surrender and such obedient willingness (‘I always do what is pleasing to him,’ Jn 8.29) that the Father’s good pleasure can become manifested in it in unlimited fashion (Mt 17.5). This is why Christ, as the reciprocal witness between Father and Son, is the subsisting covenant, and the believer who speaks his Yes into this reciprocal Yes discovers himself to have been already present within the object of his faith. He finds his own light of faith as a reality within the light of Christ, a reality, significantly, not in a mythical projection and objectivation, but rather in the archetypal character (*Urbildlichkeit*) which alone makes possible the believer’s own faith as an image (*Nachbild*) of itself. This once again demonstrates that for him the light of faith has its source in the object of faith alone and that this light is the witness which is transmitted to the believer and by means of which God witnesses to himself in Christ.

The encounter of the subject and object of faith must, consequently, be first of all described in personal categories, but these must then immediately become transpersonal, since the object is resolvable only in the light of the trinitarian relationships.

Theology has always seen clearly that, in its very vitality, the self-surrender of faith is rooted in love. (‘Dead faith’ is a residue, the result of the dissolution of faith and, as such, inadequate as a model for faith.) ‘What does it mean to believe in him? To love while believing, to give oneself to him while believing, to enter into him while believing, and to be incorporated into his members’ (Augustine, *In John*, tr. 29. 6). ‘He believes in Christ who loves Christ, for, if one believes without hope or love, one might believe that Christ

exists but one does not believe in Christ' (*Serm*, 144.2). The heart of faith is the encounter of person with person, just as Abraham, as the father of all believers, encountered God and clung to him over and above every rite and dogma, by the simple surrender of his whole being, by the offering of all plans and all human certainties and, in the sacrifice of Isaac, by giving up every imagined insight into the ways and promises of God. The rest comes later, as Paul will show, and still has to be seen in the context of that first encounter (Rom 4). This encounter is the simplest thing imaginable, since it neither consists of parts nor is it difficult and complicated. Nothing is simpler for man than the act of love, which in this case can indeed dispense with every precaution and care since the self-surrender to the person one adores is at the same time self-surrender to the promise of eternal bliss and, as such, is an act which could never be surpassed by a greater or a better. When one's beloved is none other than God, the ego's experience of losing the ground under its feet as a result of genuine love is none other than the beatific shudder of self-surrender which every believer is basically disposed to experience and which the mystic actually experiences already here on earth. This is the experience of leaving one's own house in a dark night, and of the arrow that burns like lightning through the very heart and bores deep into the centre of the ego, there to implant the Thou.¹⁹

All theoretical and practical difficulties of faith as an intellectual act are solved once the deeper level of love is reached. But not *any* love is here meant, as, for instance, that between two humans, which must become demonic if it is absolutised, as the case of a finite creature surrendering both himself and his eternal salvation to another finite creature, but in an infinite manner. Nor even do we mean the philosophical love of the creature for God, a love which Thomas portrays as an ontological gravitational pull like that of the part for the whole or of the finite for the infinite. Outside Christianity there is no way of understanding how this supremacy of the whole does not necessarily entail the shattering of finite form through an act by which personal consciousness surrenders and sacrifices itself like a drop that is lost in the ocean of Nirvana. The level of love we allude to can only be that of Christian love, which is founded on Christ's hypostatic union and which joins together what in human terms is eternally incompatible: love for one existent is conjoined with love for Being itself. The manifestness of Being as absolute is revealed to us as substantial love by the existent that is the man Christ—the man Christ whom we love. In this way worldly Being, too, is revealed as

having an interior structure likewise founded on love, as Augustine tried to demonstrate in the second part of his *De Trinitate*. In this manner, the philosophical act of intellectual-ecstatic eros that Plotinus directs to Primal Being is fulfilled in the Christian act of love by being elevated and incorporated into the Trinity's Being-as-Love. Philosophical love according to nature is stifled and almost choked by spite, isolation, and despair as a result of the cosmic fall through sin. But such natural love is not only restored by the love of God appearing in Christ, not only authenticated in its mortal risk and freed of all suspiciousness: through Christ's trinitarian form natural philosophical love is transcended in a sense which structurally is just as unique and philosophically unattainable as is the hypostatic union itself, which is the foundation of the Christian believer. Philosophically, the act whereby the finite person entrusts himself to the infinite light of Being can indeed possess the character of infinite recognition and trust manifested toward the maternal-protective power of nature and toward the mystery of the ground of Being, which in incomprehensible goodness and beauty sheds its light in and over all beings. This act is awesome and the greatest Christian thinkers have always recognised it despite its rejection as heresy by others more apologetically motivated. But such an act can never become an act of personal love. Between the personal love of two finite beings and the love shown the ground of Being, which both is the foundation of all beings and remains incomprehensibly superior to them, there can at best be established only a kind of monistic-pantheistic connection which must then be regarded as the most positive attainable conception of natural, philosophical religion and mysticism. As Christians it is too easy for us to say that pantheism is false. In so doing we overlook the fact that what Christians have to say is not something *less* than pantheism as a systematic conception, but that it must take the step *beyond* pantheism which can be prompted only by God's free revelation and which delivers the pantheistic conception from its interior contradiction.

A Christianity which interprets the personal love between God and man in Christ exclusively on the model of worldly-personal love between existents would sink below the level of pantheism. Such a vulgarisation of Christianity made Scheler require a synthesis between the God of metaphysics and that of personal religion: 'The true God is not as empty and stiff as the God of metaphysics. The true God is not as narrow and living as the God of mere faith.'²⁰ But, in a genuine Christian sense, there should be no such thing as

this ‘mere faith’, because even in faith’s contemplation of the form of Christ there is necessarily revealed to every believer (whether implicitly or explicitly) that the eternal Father in his relation to the Son—the trinitarian God who reveals himself in the Son—is not an ‘existent’ who, along with creatures, falls univocally under the category of personality: it becomes obvious to the believer that the analogy’s ever greater dissimilarity also cuts through the concept of person. Even the simplest formulation of the mystery of trinitarian Being makes this sufficiently evident, and this mystery retains its force within every individual aspect of Christology: it does not allow us to consider the divine person in which God and man are hypostatically united as in some sense ‘detaching’ itself from the essential unity of the Trinity during the span of its earthly existence. ‘I and the Father are one. Whoever sees me, sees the Father.’ And though we must not in turn interpret this in modalist fashion (in the relation of persons between Christ and the Father in the Holy Spirit there is truly revealed a clear personal relationship within the divine life), what is shown to us is that the limitless and all-embracing breadth of the trinitarian Father has replaced and far surpassed the compass of the philosophico-mystical Ungrounded Principle. To be sure, many who have grasped this difficulty have too quickly sought to clothe their answer in Neo-Platonist concepts—from Origen and Marius Victorinus, Scotus Eriugena and Eckhart, to Nicolas of Cusa’s *De non aliud* and *De dato patris luminum*, and, finally, down to Bohme and Hegel. But this can in no way diminish the legitimate urgency of grasping truly and immediately, within faith’s personal love-encounter, the ultimate transpersonal and trinitarian reality. The pantheistic *Tat tvam asi*,²¹ which identifies subject and object in their depths, can be resolved only by virtue of the unity between God and man in the Son, who is both the *ars divina mundi* and the quintessence of actual creation (see Book III of Nicolas of Cusa’s *Docta Ignorantia*), and by virtue of the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from this incarnate Son in his unity with the Father. The Holy Spirit is, in identity, *both* the Spirit of God’s objective revelation in Christ and of the objectivation of the existential Christ-form in the form of the Church—her offices, charisms and sacraments—and the Spirit of Christian subjectivity as faith, hope, and love, and it is in this Spirit alone that we can say ‘Kyrios Jesus’ (1 Cor 12.13). This identity—not the immediate identity of the believer with Christ, since faith makes just the opposite obvious—the identity of the Spirit dwelling in Christ and shining forth from him with the Spirit who opens up the recalcitrant sinner so as to unite him,

against his sinful will and beyond it, with Christ and, in Christ, with the Father: this identity of God's Spirit, uniting subject and object (whether it is understood more as the work of the person of the Spirit or of the whole trinitarian spiritual God), is the very foundational possibility which cannot be absent from any conscious and psychological act of faith and which cannot be excluded from the consciousness of the act of faith as being unimportant or irrelevant. 'In your light we see light.'

The extent to which God's transpersonal and trinitarian work of revelation respects and perfects the creature's personality is shown by the fact that freedom is apportioned to the Holy Spirit. Precisely at the moment when he unites man with Christ, the Holy Spirit bestows freedom on him: he elevates man's restricted, creaturely freedom to the level of a liberated, mighty, divine freedom, in order then to entrust this grace-gift of freedom to the believer as a freedom truly his own and truly to be exercised by him. For this reason, in such a handing over of freedom there is the moment when the human assent is awaited, the moment when the individual can also refuse this assent and instead choose unbelief. In revelation, seeing and being seen are realised by both sides wholly without compulsion. Just as Jesus as God freely gives himself to whom he wills to be seen (and, after the Resurrection, this extends also to his transfigured humanity), so, too, does he give to the person standing before him the freedom of seeing him.

This aspect of revelation, to be sure, holds mysteries far deeper that cannot here be discussed further. The individual, for instance, does not stand before revelation as an isolated entity, and if, as we have said, this individual sees himself and his assent really prefigured and vicariously represented by Christ, then this holds in still greater measure for the Church's social reality as the Bride of Christ: her free consent to the bridal union can be presupposed only in so far as it is immediately taken up into a greater reality. This is what occurs in the consenting function of real vicarious representation of all those who believe with love, with Mary at their head as mother and bride. These implications, stemming from the consent of every believing Christian, are so necessary and they so condition even his simplest act of faith that their demonstration by church dogmatics coincides precisely with the theological analysis of the conditions for the possibility of theological knowledge itself. In this sense, dogmatics may be described as the act of faith coming to understand itself. In so far as the content of the *kerygma*, precisely as the doctrine of the Easter event, is nothing other than the transposition into words

of Jesus, the Word made flesh who dies and rises for us, and in so far as faith is nothing but the believer's whole existence as buried and as rising along with this Word of God, then the fully understood act of faith, by its very essence, presupposes dogmatics in order to understand itself. But such dogmatics is not an analysis that the believer himself elaborates on the basis of his own subjectivity: as a participation in Jesus' historical life, death and Resurrection, faith always derives from the object of faith and, therefore, faith, even in its subjective dimension, can be understood only by an objective representation of its object. Now, this relationship of the believing subject to the object of faith, in order to be understood, must include the social aspect: mankind as a whole and the Church, consisting of a variety of members. In the same way, this relationship presupposes the identity of the Holy Spirit as the foundational medium for the community of life, death and resurrection, and this medium can be neither intrapersonal nor interpersonal (neither of these could be a foundation for participation), but only trinitarian and transpersonal. The subjective act of faith, which could never have constructed the trinitarian mystery by its own self-reflection, at once acknowledges this mystery, perceived within the objective *kerygma*, as being the ultimate condition for faith's own possibility and, indeed, as the ultimate ground of meaning for the reality of faith. All other conditions—the incarnation of the Word, his death and Resurrection, the Church, its structures, the Christian life—are but means that make possible the trinitarian depth and breadth of faith. All other conditions are contained within the movement and the event of the Lord's death and Resurrection; the trinitarian aspect alone encompasses every event of salvation-history as its essential ground and goal. To use an aesthetic analogy: every beautiful form is perceived as the expression, frangible within space and time, of a more than temporal beauty, and this supratemporal beauty is able both to contain and to vindicate the death of the beautiful, because death, too, belongs to the form in which immortal beauty becomes manifest, and it is dying which in the end truly impresses immortal beauty upon the spirit that contemplates it.

d. Form and Sign

The form of Jesus Christ does not stand in isolation before the gaze of the believer. On the contrary: in an inextricable manner, Christ's form is

imbedded into a context of truths which constitute the content of Jesus' preaching and which, in a variety of ways, situate this preaching both historically and dogmatically. It is equally placed within a context of events which partly condition Jesus' historical person and which are partly conditioned and prompted by it; it is a context of mediating ecclesial realities which claim to have been caused by him and whose intention is to lead men back to him as their proper origin. The form of Jesus offers itself to view only within these contexts, which for the eyes of faith are not separable from himself since they stand in a most intimate ontological connection with the form that is beheld. A statue can be placed anywhere; a symphony can be performed in any concert-hall; a poem of Goethe's can be understood and enjoyed without any knowledge of its biographical context. The form of Jesus, however, cannot be detached from the place in space and time in which it stands. He is what he is only by fulfilling, on the one hand, all the promises that point to him, and, on the other, by himself making promises which he will at some time fulfil. To the horizontal power with which he encompasses all time and rules all space 'even to the ends of the earth', centering world history on himself, there corresponds the vertical power with which he makes the Father visible and with which he makes present, in his witness concerning the Father, the Father's witness to him. This double, crosslike pattern, in which his form reaches out beyond itself and which is precisely what makes him to be what he is, demands that a person who sees him come to understand him within this spiritual space which he has encompassed.

1. There are signs all about him. These either point to him (such as the existence of the People of Israel with its prophetic and messianic understanding of itself) and, as such, find their meaning in him, or they derive from him (such as his own words concerning his own power and mystery) and depend exclusively on him for their power as signs and for their credibility. The signs that point to him prophetically do not need to be believed, since whoever really sees will likewise perceive their congruence with his form. The signs that derive from him, on the other hand, are of two kinds. First, there are the miracles that, as such, are manifest signs (σημεῖα) of his divine power and which make that power visible, provided they are really read as signs of his *divine* power and the beholding eye is clear and sharp enough to detect the objective, unequivocal connections. Then there are the words by which he expresses invisible realities which must be believed in the narrower and stricter sense since, precisely, they can be verified for us

only by *his* word.

In the Christian faith, therefore, not everything may be treated as belonging to the same level or as operating according to the same model. Rather, we have to distinguish clearly between faith in Christ as the messenger, the delegate, the Son of God, and faith in those words of his which express unverifiable mysteries (such as the Eucharist) and which we receive from him in faith because we, as the disciples say, have known with faith or have believed with certain knowledge that he is the Son of God who has words of eternal life. These two things do not stand on an equal footing. The first faith is the one which contains everything that follows; it is that act of beholding the form of Jesus which at the same instant both achieves insight and is overpowered by what is incomprehensibly greater: it achieves the insight that it is to this man that we must accord full credit regarding his love, his hope and his reliability in keeping his own word. One may isolate, if one likes, the abstract elements in this unified personal act and order them into a logical progression; but by so doing no definitive clarification will have been attained. The power of the act lies in the unity of the elements, a unity in which the light of recognition ('You are the one!') at once elicits the light of loving surrender ('Rabboni!'). In this latter light, along with the recognition of his absolute superiority in the realm of truth, goodness, and beauty, there is already included that spiritual credit which we usually call 'faith' in the narrower sense.

We believe the mysteries of which he speaks precisely because he is who he is, because what we must see in order to be able to believe has been sufficiently made visible in his form and figure. Indeed, he sees to it that none of his mysteries remain wholly invisible, that, because of its connection with his visible figure, each of these mysteries also enters the realm of visibility in some manner. This is true, above all, of the mystery of his divine, trinitarian origin. The theophany of the baptism at the Jordan and that on Mount Tabor are the manifestation, through his bodily visibility, of his dignity as eternal Son of God, of his relationship to the Father, whose voice is heard and points to him, and of his relationship to the Spirit, who descends upon him or envelops him with light as God's *doxa*. But what here is manifested to eye and ear in a special form becomes, for one who has eyes to see, just as apparent through Jesus' everyday form: the witness of his life and words cannot be read correctly unless his relationship to Father and Spirit is seen as the essence of what Christ's witness manifests. For the perception of

this relationship he expressly demands, not only faith, but also the power to see proper to the eyes of the spirit. The *ratio theologica* could deduce this truth even from the hypostatic union: if this person who is here living as a man among men is a divine person, and if the divine persons are identical in their essence, then it is impossible that at the incarnation of the one (and only the one!) person the others do not somehow enter the realm of visibility *concomitanter*. In the same way, we cannot say that the fulness of the Spirit present in the Church, or in a given saint or charismatic, is an object only of faith and not also of perception, regardless of whether this fulness of the Spirit is expressed by miraculous deeds of a directly physical or moral nature or ‘only’ by ordinary behaviour, in the life-form of an individual or of the Church as a whole. No one can deny that something of this special presence of the Spirit becomes detectible and visible, and it is likewise evident that in this the Holy Spirit’s presence is ascertained not substantially but through his effects. A third observation is that, in order truly to perceive him as the Holy Spirit—and not as some other human spirit endowed with ‘higher’, occult faculties—one must possess a certain specific knowledge of the Holy Spirit. The question is, rather, whether the person who has recognised him in his effects does not truly know, perceive, and see him in these effects as he does in his unmistakable manifestations, and, indeed, whether in the perception of total form he does not have the evidence (or at least can have it) that this form could not be understood other than through this presupposition. The gift of the discernment of spirits, which is the appropriate organ of perception for the Spirit, does not stop short at suppositions or mere probabilities, nor is it primarily a gift bestowed solely on the chosen few (1 Cor 12.10). Rather, it is the faculty, given with the maturity of faith (Heb 5.14), which enables one to read the manifestations of the Spirit objectively, as they are in themselves.

The other realm which remains closed to earthly man as such is the New Aeon of the Resurrection. But, in Christ, even this becomes more than just a mere object of faith: in Christ, this new age, too, enters the sphere of visibility. This can be described as pure grace, because we would have had to believe his Resurrection on the basis of his promise even if on the third day he had ascended immediately to the Father, without appearing to the disciples during forty days, and later on also to Paul. The manifestation of the New Aeon in the midst of the Old (and, thus, the interior participation of the Old in the New) is not solely a matter of faith, which from certain ‘signs’ (light phenomena, for instance) can conclude that it is probable that Christ has

risen. As the Resurrection accounts portray it, what is involved is the objective perception of his visible presence, which, to be sure, by its new ontological mode, brings with it a new kind of evidential force. This new evidentiality is no longer fragmentary, insufficient for human capacities; rather, it is a superabundant evidence that stretches the human faculties to breaking point and which can be perceived by man in its manner of being in glory only because grace accommodates man's limited being to that evidence. This alone can explain why the disciples not only respond with doubt and unbelief to the women's tidings of Resurrection (Mk 16.11, 13, 14; Lk 24.11), but that they 'doubt' the reality of Christ even when he is bodily present before them (Mt 28. 17): 'They were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit' (Lk 24.37). Indeed, 'for sheer joy and astonishment they still could not believe' (Lk 24.41) in the evidence of the hands and the feet they were seeing and touching, so that he is compelled to eat their own food ahead of them in order thus to 'tone down', as it were, the excessive clarity of the evidence, transposing it to the level of their power of comprehension. But once they have finally assented to the manifestly visible, audible, tactile evidence before them, this assent which has been wrested from their spirit comes to be termed 'faith'. This is the fulness of that faith in himself which Christ has already consistently demanded, a faith which to Christ had seemed to be no more of a 'risk' or an excessive 'imposition' on man than the faith which he now expects to receive as the Risen One. Note well that 'faith' is the word still used even with regard to the apparitions of the risen Christ. This is clear proof of the fact that the disciples' faith before the Resurrection (as well as the faith of those to whom it is not given to see the risen Christ corporeally, but have to believe on the basis of the apostolic witness) is no mere assenting to the probability of a proposition, but rather the same loving surrender of one's own person, along with its evidence, into the hands of the divine Person who possesses and encompasses within himself the gravitational center of all evidence.

This holds fundamentally, too, for all the mysteries which lie between Christ's divine origin and his eschatological glory, and with these it is even less necessary that we men comprehend their inner manner of occurrence, since it ought to be sufficient for us to entrust ourselves to his word. They all derive their measure of visibility from Christ's total form; they belong to the expression of this form, and they both receive light from it and, in turn, shed a new and deeper light on that form. Such is the mystery of the Eucharist,

whose interior realisation no one is capable of ‘seeing’. How can earthly eating and drinking among brothers become, not only a ‘parable’ but a vessel which truly contains a *manducatio spiritualis*: such an invisible happening nonetheless stands at the point of intersection of several lines, which, taking their departure from more evident points, demonstrate to faith that their meeting point is ‘right’ and wholly appropriate and, further, they confer on that point of intersection a theological necessity which in the end appears indispensable. Something similar can be said of baptism and the other sacraments, particularly penance. All the sacraments have their initial, visible life-form in the earthly form of Christ’s mission itself. They are distilled from herbs, as it were, which we first held physically in our hands. If afterwards we are no longer able to perceive sensually in the distilled essence the herbs’ original form, nevertheless we do know whence the essence is derived: indeed, from its fragrance and taste we clearly see it betray its origin. The person who has been able to see and read the Cross not as a purely material event, but as the fulfilment of Christ’s whole interior life-form, will find it quite a natural and almost an expected thing that the result of this event—in which the world’s guilt has been borne, atoned for and erased—should now also be applied by an efficacious sacramental sign to the sinner who enters into and confesses the redemption through the Cross.

The reciprocity, mutual adjustment and concordance among the mysteries demand the contemplation of faith, which, where it assumes technical and rational conceptual form becomes the *ratio theologica*. It is the task of this *ratio* to bear witness to the inner harmony of the mysteries, to their necessity, always presupposing the sovereign freedom of God’s revelation. The beauty of theology lies in its allowing this inner harmony of the forms in which divine truth makes its appearance to shine forth, and this beauty has always enraptured theology’s greatest figures. But in this spiritual intuition and contemplation we ought not to overlook the analogy of the forms of evidence which we previously demonstrated. We should not give the impression that what is involved here is a merely functional beauty, solely constituted by and shining from the *relationships* among points which, in themselves, are mysterious and invisible. The central form of evidence, on which all else depends, is the perception of Jesus Christ’s objective form as God, a form which is not ‘believed’ but rather ‘seen’, however much we continue believing in Christ. From this form there shines forth God’s objective glory; it is the definitive *kâbôd* which is sent out and called to overshadow the

tabernacle of the entire creation. All the harmonies discovered by theological enquiry radiate from this glory, and, in so far as they are objectively and scientifically grounded, bear witness to that glory.

2. What is true of the mysteries which we believe by relying on Christ's word is true in greater measure of the two 'signs' of Christ's person and mission which apologetics treats as having a special position: miracles and prophecies. For this reason, what needs saying about them has in fact already been said.

They both cut straight across the contrast that is made between apologetics and dogmatics; they possess their true unity only as these two are held together and, therefore, render questionable any sharp distinction between them. In so far as they draw the outsider's attention to the form of Christ, and in so far as they, as exterior signs, call attention to the form's interior 'harmony', they belong to apologetics or fundamental theology, which must show the objective paths to the reality of revelation. But in so far as the whole interior connection between form and sign, that is to say, in so far as the true form of the sign can be perceived only when the connection is read and understood in the sense of revelation itself, which is to say already within the context of faith, to that extent both of them belong to dogmatic theology, as especially John underlines in his theology of the σημεία, and as is also made clear by the Synoptics' repeated expressions about the 'seeing and yet not seeing'. In this way, everything in the form of Christ which moves from the centre of apperception to the periphery is both a concession on God's part to those standing outside and also something which makes access to the central mystery more difficult, for it brings with it the danger of non-recognition and scandal, since everything parabolic can be interpreted correctly only from its proper centre. For the person who believes 'from the centre', Christ's miracles are not primarily a subjective facilitation of faith—something he scarcely needs; they are, rather, the light of a glory which, already seen spiritually, is now poured out on the realm of the senses as well. Such a person has no difficulty interpreting the miracle in the sense meant by the Lord: he has learned how to read correctly, and he does not cling to the written sign but rather, through the sign, is able to read the spiritual content. Whoever has to rely on the sign if he is to find his way to the centre stands at the crossroads of faith: either he must entrust himself to light that irrupts from the centre and, going straight through the sign, plunge into the light, or, stopping short at the sign, he will fail to see both the sign and the centre.

Augustine, among others, developed the analogy of ‘reading’ in a most vivid manner: ‘Our Lord Jesus Christ intended us to understand spiritually all those things he did physically. He did not work miracles for the sake of miracles, but rather so that what he did would appear to be marvellous to those who saw it, and true to those who understood it. If someone, not knowing how to read, looks at the beautifully executed handwriting in a book, he may indeed praise the writer’s hand and admire the beauty of the letters, but he will not know what these letters mean or what they point to. He praises with his eyes but does not understand with his spirit. Someone else, on the other hand, both praises the work of art and understands its sense: he is the one who not only sees (anyone can do this), but who also reads, which can be done only if one has learned how. . . . Such should we become in the school of Christ.’²² Learning how to read is not learning to conjecture what the letters mean, but coming to know their meaning with certainty.

This is why Thomas speaks repeatedly of an evidential force of the signs, which for him is objective even though, at the same time, the light of faith is required, at least for fallen man, for the perception of this objective reality. This qualification is made in view of the statement of the Epistle of James that says that even the demons believe and tremble. According to Thomas, the devil possesses a stronger natural understanding, which compels him to submit to the evidence before him and ‘read’ the divinity of Christ in his signs: *daemonum fides est quodammodo coacta ex signorum evidentia*, . . . *coguntur ad credendum ex perspicacitate naturalis intellectus*.²³ Thus, they do not ‘believe willingly’ (*non voluntate assentiunt*), ‘but because of the compelling evidence of the signs, in which the truth of what believers believe is demonstrated (*convincitur*), even though those signs do not manifest what is believed in such a way that we could say the demons have a direct contemplation (*visionem*) of the things believed.’²⁴ But human knowledge is not intuitive and comes about in a way which is not any less certain for being symbolical: the truth becomes visible in the signs alone; at this level, however, the truth is not judged by the natural intellect, but rather is rendered intelligible by the light of faith in its correct relationship to the revealing God. It is precisely Thomas, the Aristotelian, who will lay much stress on the function of the sensual signs as a *certum experimentum* for the fact that God has spoken.²⁵ For him, therefore, it is one of the essential functions of theology to rehearse descriptively all the *prodigia* of historical revelation.²⁶ On the other hand, however, Thomas has no intention of making the nature of

the signs wholly autonomous for apologetical purposes, as if all by themselves they could produce a proof of the truth of revelation and impose on man a kind of natural evidence. In Thomas, as in Augustine, the signs become cognitive elements only in their relation to the intelligible aspect discovered in them, that is, in their relation to the supernatural, spiritual revelation which requires the light of faith to be perceived. Thus, along with Blondel, we can speak of miracle as an ‘expressive sign’ (*symbole expressif*),²⁷ the more so because, for Thomas, the genuine miracle is always a sign of God’s supernatural operation and self-witness,²⁸ and the nexus between God and the mystery of faith, which cannot for the time being consist in truth becoming intrinsically evident, is established *per argumentum divinae virtutis*.²⁹ The experience of divine power and sovereignty, however, is always an encounter with the real and living God, who witnesses to himself as being unrepeatable and unique. This experience, therefore, cannot be measured by a merely natural idea of God, if its claim to credibility is to be upheld. If it is to be understood at all, such an experience must be seen in its relation to the act of God’s living and historical self-witness in his revelation. ‘And if apologetics cannot treat of the facts of revelation without giving some justification of the concept of revelation at least externally and in general, apologetics will certainly not venture to construct such a concept of revelation from rational ideas or from a contemplation of essences. Especially since it is oriented to the historical facts of revelation, apologetics will have to abide by the real historical claim of Christianity to be the divine revelation.’³⁰

As a sign of the living God, a miracle always possesses a spiritual, divine sense, whereas, when read exclusively in its mere material unusualness, it will at best point to hidden praeternatural causes. The miracles of Jesus, however, or miracles worked in the name of Jesus, bear within themselves—in the happening itself and in its whole spiritual context—an evident connection with the truth of God. Their credibility is neither the content of the act of faith, nor does it lie this side of faith, in the realm of pure reason alone. The credibility of miracles ‘appears simply as a companion of the act of revelation that takes place in the sign: *ipsa credibilitas revelationis sese revelantis, ut credibilitas, non revelatur, sed manifestatur*.’³¹

The same holds for prophecies pointing to Christ. Later on we will deal with these more in detail; but here we can only briefly indicate their proper place within revelation. Nowhere else perhaps does theological reason have

to be so aesthetic as in considering the relationship between the Old and the New Testament: nowhere else does it so have to exercise its faculty for detecting proportion, measure of proximity and distance, balance, centre of gravity, preponderance of motifs. . . . An older apologetics, which already has its genesis in the New Testament and which soon begins to develop in writings such as the *Letter of Barnabas* and Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, stops short at the literal level of prophecy in a way that today in the light of Old Testament Biblical research no longer appears to us cogent. Even if it be true that Jesus consciously took up and 'fulfilled' certain Old Testament passages, nevertheless it is often questionable whether the 'fulfilled' text objectively, in itself—not to say subjectively, in the mind of the writer—possesses an interior relationship to the coming Messiah. At the most we can point to a certain harmony between the Old and the New Testament which, in a general and all-encompassing way, is the theological presupposition for the application of individual texts—a harmony emphasised by all deeper Biblical theology, particularly since Origen. It is not the texts which conclusively prove the presence of the harmony: the texts become transparent and intelligible *because* of the existing harmony.³² Old and New Testaments come together to compose the total form of revelation. In this form, the Old Testament's broad world of images unfolds, by way of prefigurement, the compressed fulfilment of the New Testament. The Old puts all its energy into pointing forward to the New, but at the same time it merges positively into its own fulfilment in the New. This total figure is, at one and the same time, absolutely accommodated to the form of the world and of man (since it communicates, within time, the unity of the divine truth and reality, making these pedagogically accessible by means of analogies and approximations) *and* absolutely divine (since only God can invent and produce from above analogies and approximations for his own vertical revelation). This is why the total structure, Old-New Testament, acquires such an eminent character as sign: it can be read historically, and yet it is only theologically and in faith that it can truly be understood.

But here we ought not to think that all the Old Testament does is to provide the New with an arsenal of analogies and typical situations—a collection of tubes of paint which the divine painter uses to produce his masterpiece, an alphabet or a lexicon with which the divine poet constructs his poem. The unity lies at a much deeper level, at the point where the Old Testament, in its very basis and in all its phases, is an interior progress toward Christ and, at

the decisive moment, an encounter with Christ in the dialectic of election and rejection: this is the place, consequently, where the Old Testament, interiorly and from the divine perspective, is already secretly required and shaped by the New, down to the dialectic of election and rejection interior to the Old Testament.³³ But, again, it cannot be said that this historical form, in which revelation is ordered, is itself revealed as far as its content is concerned: it ‘appears’ along with and at the same time as revelation and is a form of its incarnation in the world and in man, which is to say the form of its entrance into and dissemination within the space of history. Whoever dissects the historical aspect of revelation by means of the ‘historical-critical’ method, in order to be left with the content that fills revelation as sole interior kernel, will in turn have no eyes to perceive the beauty and the evidence peculiar to this form. But for the person who can see it constitutes such a moment of light that the greatest contemplatives among the theologians never tired of gazing at this form so as to marvel, in its historical horizontality, at the Word descending vertically from God. This evidential power can so mesmerise its admirer that there is a danger that he may forget the existential drama which belongs to salvation-history—the tragic clash between the two Testaments—in his delight in its purely aesthetic contemplation. For no well-wrought image has been placed in the Bible solely for the sake of aesthetic contemplation: images and analogies are there to kindle life and decision (1 Cor 10.6-13).

This is already true of the way in which the Lord himself exhorts men to read Moses and the Prophets in his own light (Jn 5. 39f.); all faith in the Old Testament is a training for faith in Christ (Acts 7, Heb 11), and, therefore, it is only Christ who is the key to the puzzles of the ancient Scripture (Acts 8.26f.). Such a vision is, in an especially emphatic sense, a *videre in speculo et aenigmate* (1 Cor 13.12), while turning one’s gaze away from the images to look to Christ’s truth is a ‘beholding, with unveiled face, the splendour of the Lord’ (2 Cor 3. 18), although even this direct vision is still a ‘looking in the mirror’ compared to the vision promised for the end of time. The reciprocal reflections between Old and New Testament give the mirror the greatest transparency, because promise and fulfilment confirm and clarify one another in a crescendo that cannot be rationally deciphered. For this reason, many an older exegete often explained the transformation of the Christian into the image of the Lord ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν (ibid.) as meaning the transition from the glory of one Testament to the glory of the other.

3. The last point, namely the relationship between ‘ecclesial faith’ and faith in Christ, must also be treated in terms of the same understanding of the relationship between sign and form. Here especial care should be exercised lest faith in signs should obscure God’s form of revelation as it becomes visible to the believer. In her official representatives—the Apostles and their successors—Christ’s Church has been commissioned to proclaim Christ’s doctrine to all peoples authoritatively, and in the end Christ’s doctrine is nothing other than the doctrine about Christ, who is the quintessence of the law and of the truth of God. This proclamation, this *kerygma*, is the normal way for men to come into contact with the form of revelation: *fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Christi* (Rom 10.17). Paul’s words here are not altogether unambiguous: judging from the context, *auditus* here seems to designate the Apostles’ preaching—the word which resounds within the Church (*cf.* 10.14f.); but, as the act of hearing, it further refers to the Word of Christ itself, attained through the preaching. *Per verbum Christi* can mean that the preaching is done because of Christ’s command or by means of Christ’s Word, so that Christ’s Word is either the cause or the content of the preaching. But in either case it is clear that it is not the preaching itself that is believed, but, through it, the Word of Christ, which is what is heard through the *kerygma*, whether directly or indirectly. Even though the Church is thus officially entrusted with the proclamation, the believer nevertheless does not believe in the Church but, rather, accepts her authoritative witness concerning Christ in order to believe in Christ with the support of this accredited witness. Nowhere do the messengers of the faith demand that the believers make an act of faith in them: for, both in the Old and in the New Testament, faith means to subject oneself wholly—intellect, will, and heart—to the God who has already totally given himself to us. The battle which the Apostle fights to ‘punish every disobedience’ and to ‘destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought of reason captive to obey Christ’: this battle is not waged with the ‘power of the flesh’ but with ‘power unto God’ (2 Cor 10.3ff.). This means that the Church, in her representatives, subjects no one to herself, but rather to God, to whom alone the act of faith can properly be directed. The authority bestowed on the Apostles and their successors stems directly from Christ and is derived from Christ’s own authority. Nevertheless, the witness borne by the Apostles and their successors possesses only an ostensive, transitory character, and it is *solely* as a transitory witness that it can be incorporated in the content of what

must be believed. In so far as this content is the total form of Christ, it also includes the commission given by Christ to the Apostles and the total visible-invisible reality that is the Church founded by him and proceeding from him. It is in this sense that we are to understand the *Credo Ecclesiam* of the Apostles' Creed, not in the sense that the Church represents Christ and that it is to her as proper subject that the act of faith is directed. As we have just noted, such a view is contradicted by the purely official character of the proclaimer and of the proclamation itself, while the act of faith is essentially existential, that is to say, it requires the believer to surrender his total reality as a sacrifice of obedience.

For this reason, everything which the Church's *magisterium* elaborates into an infallible proclamation of dogmas and definitions in the form of conceptual and verbal interpretations and formulations of doctrine can be only a means of presenting to men God's revelation in Christ the more deeply and clearly, thus making it a light in men's hearts. The individual 'articles of faith' in their verbal and conceptual form which are normative in the Church are paths by which faith reaches the person of Christ and, through him, the triune personal God.³⁴ The mediation of the ecclesial *magisterium* and of the external signs of credibility constitutes but a 'condition'; the sole authentic motive for Christian faith is God's uncreated act of revelation, the internal Word of God, with which the believer's spirit comes into living contact in a most simple act which unites him directly with the Primal Truth (*Urwahrheit*).³⁵

The conceptual and verbal form of the ecclesial dogma ought always to take the form of God's Word as its archetype (*Urbild*), and it does this by receiving upon itself the impress of the interior proportions of God's Word, by not admitting into its doctrine and proclamation any proportions other than those already given. In the same way, the primal form (*Urgestalt*) that emerges from God's darkness remains a solitary one and can be truly understood only in connection with this background. This means that the primal form can never be adequately and exhaustively reproduced by any rational construction (*Gebilde*), such as a confession of faith consisting of propositions or a manual of dogma. In the form of the Biblical revelation, the ever-greater Being of God can be apprehended as that form is perceived; this cannot be said in the same way of the derived image of revelation which the Church elaborates as dogma (*das kirchlich-dogmatische Nachbild*), at least not when the latter is taken, not as an index pointing to revelation, but as an

autonomous form (*Eigengestalt*) in its own right.

The same thing could be stated in a different way. We would, thus, say that the ecclesial *magisterium* can represent Christ's truth only from the standpoint of doctrine and not of life, while in Christ doctrine and life are identical. This identity is unique in its very essence because it depends directly on the hypostatic union. In so far as the Church is made up of human beings, she can imitate that unique identity only by means of a dualism. Thus we have, on the one hand, the infallible doctrine residing in the apostolic office of Peter, and, on the other, the holiness of life within the (Marian) Church of the saints. Even though, in the Church, both re-presentations of Christ are intimately bound up with one another and exist only as continually oriented toward and pointing to one another, nevertheless, neither of them can replace the other and claim solely for itself the re-presentation of the whole Christ. The teaching Church can set forth the truth; she cannot force believers to accept it in their hearts. With regard to the form of revelation which the Church holds out, the individual is free to obey or not to obey.

The official, authoritative *kerygma* remains a pointer to revelation. Therefore, the believer does not actually believe in propositions of faith, but in what these express and in everything that the living God is in Christ Jesus. For this reason, it is possible that an authentic faith can reach the living God even through insufficiently formulated, or even, in certain cases, erroneous propositions of faith, if God so disposes. The believer's intention is directed towards God, and God's grace can complete whatever aspect of the accurate and objective form of revelation remains obscured, through no fault of his own, for a person within or outside the Church or even Christianity. God's unmediated manifestness in Christ and also in his Church is one thing: the adequate verbal formulation of this manifestation through Christ himself and through his Church, is quite another.³⁶ It is thus conceivable that a person could reach, not only God, but the true reality of his revelation in Christ and in the essence of the Church even while holding, through no fault of his own, the erroneous opinion that the official formulation in dogma is not an adequate expression of this reality. In order to sustain such a dissociation he would, naturally, have to ignore totally—and again through no fault of his own, as can be the case, for instance, in Protestantism—the intrinsic nexus which exists between the word of revelation and its ecclesially binding expression.

If the ecclesial office of authority is primarily one of 'service' or 'ministry'

and, therefore, a pointer to the Lord of the Church, then the ecclesial life that comes from Christ in the Holy Spirit is not only a personal, but, at the same time, a social life, a community of love, oriented toward the Head and nourished by the interchange between the members of the one Body. This interior life of the Church is, as a totality, again a pointer to the fountain of this life—the fulness of Christ and of God in Christ. But, because this divine life is truly lived and expressed in the life of the Church, the Church, as the ‘Body of Christ’, participates intimately in the ‘formedness’ of Christ, and the living, divine Spirit, who expresses himself in this life, becomes more immediately ‘visible’ and conspicuous than in the mere *magisterium* as such, in spite of the fact that both things emphatically belong together. But while the *magisterium* essentially exercises a function of service toward the social body of the Church, this body is not subordinate to the *magisterium* in equal measure: the body is subordinate to its Head, and to the *magisterium* only in so far as such subordination gives concrete expression to the Lord’s obedience in love. The *magisterium* is a means; the life of the Church is an end. And, in turn, it is the end of the Church’s life to embody ever more in the world the form of the Son, to the glorification of the Father, and to make visible the Son’s form to a world that does not believe. Thus, the individual Christian, as a member of the Church, really comes under the law of Christ’s form: he is to embody for the world the evidence of the ‘rightness’ (*Richtigkeit*) of Christ’s truth, which has dawned on him first of all, and this he will do as far as possible (in the ‘analogy of faith’) with the aid of the grace of holiness and mission which has been bestowed on him.

Here we must remember that all Christian grace is grace according to the Christ-form; it derives from the hypostatic union and participates, precisely as grace, in something of this union’s archetypal form: in Christ the Son we, too, become sons of God, and in his brotherhood with us we become brothers to one another according to his model. This means that something of the mystery of the hypostatic union can and must be made visible in concrete form to the world through a Christian life lived in an exemplary way. It goes without saying that this will succeed only when, in the sense of faith and in the obedience of faith, we avoid every ethical or mystical confusion between the member and the Head, every identification that abolishes the distance between them. Such avoidance is readily possible through the continual contemplation of the objective form of revelation, to which the subjective light of faith, hope, and love constantly refers the Christian. The authentic

saint is always the one who confuses himself the least with Christ and who, therefore, can most convincingly be transparent to Christ.

At the end of this chapter on the light of faith, the reader will ask himself the question whether we have confined ourselves to our theme or whether we have not, rather, anticipated our later theme concerning the object of faith in a way which raises serious questions. But it is impossible to speak of Christian faith other than by dealing with both light and form (*lumen et species*) at the same time. It is true that the possibility exists—and we have acknowledged it—that the light of faith may fall on an object not fully adequate to this light and that, by means of such an object (but leaving aside all its inadequacies), the light of faith may indeed attain its proper goal to some extent. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the light of faith is only externally determined by its object. It is rather determined in an interior sense by its adequate object, not only because Christ has, by his suffering, earned us our access to the Father, but, more deeply, because Christ, as divine Son become man and as both the Word and Light of the Father, effects our faith, love, and hope in God by his presence and by his Holy Spirit in us. For this reason, the light of faith cannot for a moment be thought of or even experienced as a merely immanent reality in our soul, but solely as the radiance resulting from the presence in us of a *lumen increatum*, a *gratia increata*, without our ever being able to abstract from God's Incarnation when considering this light and this grace. Now, if this light and this grace possess the form of Christ, then what is luminous about them is also determined by the objective form, and there is no possibility, for reasons of religious interiority, of dismantling this synthesis instituted by God. What God has spoken to me interiorly as his illumining and grace-bearing Word possesses, not by chance but essentially, the form which Jesus Christ himself has in the public forum of history, even if his truth, as objective form, becomes visible only to the eyes of faith. It is impossible to dissect the objective Christ into a form, whose sole property it is to 'appear' externally, and a formless light which is what remains for the religious interiority. The whole mystery of Christianity, that which distinguishes it radically from every other religious project, is that the form does not stand in opposition to infinite light, for the reason that God has himself instituted and confirmed such form. And although, being finite and worldly, this form must die just as every other beautiful thing on earth must die, nevertheless it does not go down into the realm of formlessness, leaving

behind an infinite tragic longing, but, rather, it rises up to God *as form*, as the form which now, in God himself, has definitively become one with the divine Word and Light which God has intended for and bestowed upon the world. The form itself must participate in the process of death and Resurrection, and thus it becomes coextensive with God's Light-Word. This makes the Christian principle the superabundant and unsurpassable principle of every aesthetics; Christianity becomes *the* aesthetic religion *par excellence*.

Such a structure calls, in the first place, for a radical objectivity: in the subject himself the light of faith is truly a light only if man looks away from himself and, renouncing his own evidence, entrusts himself to the Source that, as a result of grace, stands wide-open before him. But he is capable of achieving such interior self-transcendence perfectly and without a secret mystical identification, only if he recognises the Source of the Light in the form of Jesus Christ, as this form reveals itself to him within the sphere of the Church. Interior self-renunciation (*Entselbstung*, literally 'unselving') has not only its effect, but its basis and constant verification in self-renunciation for the purpose of serving the world—serving the historical Christ, whom I encounter through the Church and in her, and, if I have understood the Gospel, also in every neighbour and in every situation in the world. This objectivism, which is proper to the Catholic principle (as opposed to Protestant interiority and every form of non-Christian mysticism), is the result of taking seriously the *ekstasis* of love, its going out of itself: only in this way can man achieve an act of serious love which corresponds to God's own act of taking love seriously—the act of the divine Eros which goes out of itself in order to become man and die on the Cross for the world (Denys, *Div. Nom.*, IV, 13). The only enthusiasm to be taken seriously is filled with that God who is no other than he who loved the world so much that he preferred it to his only Son. The power of an enthusiasm that shatters all fetters reaches its end and proper goal, not when it tears all forms to shreds in Dionysian fashion or dances them away in the manner of the Hindus—thus finding in death itself its final shackle—but when it can transvaluate death itself into life and shattering force. To do this the Christian need not wait until his physical death, but must begin his work at once; already in baptism he has died radically and had risen unto God, and he then spends the rest of his life training himself in this reality and living it out. In so doing he will experience the fact (and this concept of 'Christian experience' will be the subject of our next chapter) that his worldly form does indeed decay and pass

away, but that the light of Christ bestows on him a Christ-like form ever anew. As a human being with body and soul he is, through Christ, hidden and safe in God.

The God who becomes man in order to die and to rise is the only glory of God's that is manifested in the world; Christ is God's total *doxa*, which dwells within him 'corporeally' (Col 2.9), and from Christ's indissoluble form his glory sheds its light on the cosmos. Thus, this radiance must be, inseparably, both a spiritual light and a structured form: inseparably, Holy Spirit and ecclesial norm. Both of these, in their unity, mediate Christ, who mediates God; but no one of these three centres can, for all that, be regarded as the 'intermediary' in a legal sense: for the Spirit is Christ's and the Father's in unity, and the Church is Christ's Body in unity, and Christ himself is one in essence with the Father. To be sure, only faith, through its light, is able to discover this radiant transparency of God's manifestation in Christ and in the Church. Where, for other unenlightened eyes, there seem to stand intermediary figures as obstacles, there precisely it is that faith perceives its own light within the form of revelation. Indeed, stated more fully and exactly: it is precisely in looking at the form of revelation that faith becomes luminous to itself and understands the genuine *ekstasis* of love demanded by God: 'In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins' (1 Jn 4.10). This is precisely the light that God has implanted in the world and that is capable of awakening in me faith in God. And if God, in anticipation, infused into me a longing for true love, so as to draw me to it (Jn 6.44), he did this only that I might recognise it when it emerges before my eyes in corporeal form. The light of faith is an echo of God's love, which, in the fidelity of the man Christ went 'to the very limits' of love. In this way, Christ did not annul everything in the Old Testament that depended on law and on form; rather, his achievement was to make these things transparent to the light of love and to live them as the expression of the Old Testament's covenant-fidelity (*fides* in the fullest sense), now brought to perfection.³⁷ In this sense, the *fides quae* of the Christian is the *fides qua* of Christ as he faces the Father, and even the Christian's *fides qua* lives from the radiance of this light of Christ, which we can characterise as the Christian's archetypal *fides* and which shapes the totality of his form by making the whole man into an adequate answer to God's Word.

B. THE EXPERIENCE OF FAITH

1. EXPERIENCE AND MEDIATION

a. Theological Analysis of Existence

What we have just said now makes it possible to go on and raise, with full theological justification—*sine ira et studio*—, the question of the experience of faith. Regardless how problematic the concept of experience has become in the history of theology, in heresiology, in Catholic and Protestant theology and, finally, in polemical theology, it nevertheless remains indispensable when faith is understood as the encounter of the whole person with God. And it is precisely the whole man that God desires to have before him. He wants for his Word the response of the whole man. God wants man not only with his intellect (which would, in any case, have to be sacrificed to a truth which is not self-evident), but, from the outset, also with his will; he wants man not only with his soul, but also and equally with his body. With regard to faith it is always good to impress upon oneself the fact that the faith of the New Testament, in this connection also, must not fall behind but, rather, surpass the faith of the Old Testament. For this reason, here too the *fides ex auditu* (*praedicantium*) is not the exclusive model for faith (the ‘ex’ expresses only the manner of access to faith); such an absolute model is to be found only in the act of existence of Jesus Christ himself, through which he wanted to become, and in fact did become, the ἀρχηγός καὶ τελειωτὴς τῆς πίστεως (Heb 12.2).

It is possible that the analysis of the ‘light of faith’, taken from the theological tradition, could in itself still give the impression that in faith we are dealing with a particular and isolated act of man, an act which, moreover, because of its specific ‘supernaturality’, can only be characterised when seen from below in primarily negative terms, in terms that is of the ‘opacity’ of the object of faith. This is an impression which we have constantly tried to dispel in the previous section; and now, by further introducing the concept of experience, we intend to eliminate this false notion altogether. And indeed

the theme of the present work can be seen through to the end only if this concept is sustained in the theological realm. For whatever else is true, the beautiful requires the reaction of the whole man, even though it is initially perceived by means of only one or more sense-faculties. In the end, however, all our senses are engaged when the interior space of a beautiful musical composition or painting opens itself to us and captivates us: the whole person then enters into a state of vibration and becomes responsive space, the 'sounding box' of the event of beauty occurring within him. This all the more so where human eros is concerned, and yet more in the encounter with the divine eros! And yet in the latter case what is involved is not at all 'vibrations of cosmic sympathy', but rather the transport of a divine συμ-πάθεια, effected and given shape by God. And it becomes clear at once that faith in the full Christian sense can be nothing other than this: to make the whole man a space that responds to the divine content. Faith attunes man to this sound; it confers on man the ability to react precisely to this divine experiment, preparing him to be a violin that receives just this touch of the bow, to serve as material for just this house to be built, to provide the rhyme for just this verse being composed. This was the reaction already envisaged when the Covenant was made on Sinai: 'Be holy, because I am holy.' In the New Covenant it cannot, therefore, be a *cura posterior*, whereas, by contrast, the concern of the former Covenant would have been to produce a docile intellect which accepts a faith that proposes and holds as true a certain number of dogmas. The first concern is also the last: how man can come to correspond totally to God according to the archetype of Christ and in imitation of him.

With this the whole splendour and the whole difficulty of the Christian experience of faith lie open before us. If faith is the attunement and adaptation of the whole of existence to God, then we could just as well call faith obedience, for such indeed it is. But let us not forget the strict obedience exacted even by worldly beauty both from the creating artist and from the re-creating admirer who contemplates and enjoys it. The artist has an idea which must be realised and which accepts no excuses until the creator has expended his last energies in the service of this coming-into-reality. Service of the beautiful can constitute the hardest kind of asceticism, and so it has always been with the greatest creators. But all the vital acts of renunciation demanded by the inexorable Muse were directed by the enrapturing impulse to help her enter visibility by engaging all one's psychic and bodily powers in the task. Like many others before them, Spitteler (in his *Prometheus*) and

Claudel (in his *La Muse qui est la Grace*) developed the analogy between aesthetic creation and religious faith. In faith, however, man is at one and the same time artist and artifact. Thus, obedience is not opposed to the beautiful. The work of art itself corresponds in strictest fashion to a law that Georg Simmel has called the 'law of individuality', which really is a law and not mere roving freedom. This law exacts its necessity from itself, and subjects to it each of its parts. The fact that this law is not imposed on the individual from without, but is developed from the deepest centre of his being, does not simply eliminate its character as law in favour of a total autonomy. Thus, natural beauty as found in individual forms obeys a generic and a universal life which manifests itself and takes form through the individual form. And even the total life of the cosmos (as *Natura naturans ET naturata*) is not simply autonomous, but copies the highest divine and archetypal ideas. In this way, even in the natural realm, to which man also belongs in so far as he possesses natural and spiritual beauty and is a creating spirit, we find no absolute autonomy, since even in the realm of free creation the law of gradation, that relates the ideal and the real, freedom and obligation, exercises its power.

This is the more true when the realm of archetypes—the world of ideas, which is the *Logos* of God—becomes man and, along with the archetype of man, represents in himself the archetype of the entire cosmos as well. The only thing that can correspond to his (literally) 'trans-posing' beauty, a beauty, moreover, which exacts imitation, is a pliancy of the whole man which places one's entire existence at his disposal as malleable material to be shaped into his image. However, the archetype which, in Christ, came forth from God cannot, by definition, be unearthed from the depths of man, not even by the most penetrating analysis, neither as a 'lost image which must be restored' (Plotinus) nor as a 'hidden archetype which must be made conscious' (Jung). No matter where such long-buried human ideals are dug up and then displayed in mankind's museums after having been thoroughly cleansed and restored, in no case will they be the image which the free God has sent out from himself into the world: 'This is my beloved Son. Listen to him!' The experience of human totality and human depths is not, therefore, the way which opens up to the Christian experience of faith, even though this human depth and totality is subsequently put at the service of the Christian experience and, what is more, has already been incorporated by God himself into the image of the man Christ. If experience—and we will return to this—

even in a worldly sense is not a *state* but an *event* (and the very form of the word points to this with the prefix *ex-*³⁸), it follows that it is not man's entry (*Einfahren*) into himself, into his best and highest possibilities, which can become an experience (*Erfahrung*), but, rather, it is his act of entering into the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who is naturally inaccessible to him, which becomes the experience that alone can claim for itself his undivided obedience.³⁹

At the outset, then, we can raise the question on which theologians have placed such stress: Can a person know anything about his own faith? Or, in other words: Can (Christian) faith be an object of experience? Augustine unreservedly answered in the affirmative: the believer knows that, in Christ, he has recognised and assented to the Son of God. 'If there is faith in us, we will see him' (De Trin. 13c 1 n. 3). And Thomas, too, followed Augustine in this: within human reason, faith is *ut forma intelligibilis* (Ver. 8, 3 ad 7), *per interiorem actum cordis*. *Nullus enim fidem se habere scit, nisi per hoc quod se credere percipit* (Ia 87, 2 ad i). But what they both here point to is a psychological datum. For Augustine, the other data of consciousness are in like manner perceived directly by the interior vision, and Thomas confirms this accordingly (for instance, a *habitus* is perceived by its acts). And so theologians in fact went on to ask: Is what is recognised here more than a psychological fact, more than something belonging to human nature? Is it something specifically supernatural, something effected by God? In the post-Cartesian context in which this question was asked, a certain hesitation in answering is understandable. For Suarez and many of his followers (particularly of the Jesuit school, which sharply separates psychological-natural objects from supernatural ones, which cannot be experienced) reflection on the act of faith can attain only to a conjectural certainty. The tendency is here very strong to affirm that Christian faith cannot be known, but must itself likewise be believed. Only a palpable submission to the Church's rule of faith guarantees the presence of a solid, though external, criterion. Such minimalism, however, does not in turn appear to correspond sufficiently to the Church's own faith-consciousness, as, for instance, when from an adult neophyte, about to be baptised, the Church expects a confession of faith as an undisputable fact and reality. Immediately following the confession of faith, this same faith is, in the sacrament, definitively established, brought to completion and made to be interiorly luminous (φωτισμός).

In our context, such a question is far from idle because it shows clearly the relationship between faith and experience. The way to a solution is indicated by the fact that Thomas, who rejects an experiential certainty of our being in a state of grace, must logically limit the certainty of faith to the *fides informis*,⁴⁰ to which he adds the natural certainty found in submission to the Church's norm of faith. Although here something is said that is beyond what Suarez would admit—namely, the *donum infusum*—nevertheless the way for a double limitation is opened. Both the will's psychological act of believing what the Church presents as dogma and the *donum infusum* as such constitute but the point of departure for what Old and New Testaments call 'faith' in the fullest sense. The neophyte's confession of faith, too, which humanly speaking is entirely sincere, is only the entry into a living relationship in the covenant with God; only life itself will demonstrate whether the person takes this covenant seriously, and whether to his own truth and will he seriously prefers the truth of God, which is expressed in God's will and law. The Prophets frequently enough proved to the people of Israel, who presumed that for the most part they existed in a covenant-relationship with God, that in their actual existence they had broken the fidelity and faith of that Covenant. In this sense, the (psychological) testing of faith remains questionable both initially and also later on: for who can say to himself that he is living in accordance with the law of the Covenant, which in the New Testament is Christ himself? In other words, even if I knew that *God* had granted me faith as an infused gift, I could never be certain that *I* had received this faith in the manner God expects of me. But the second point is more important: if faith is the freely given participation in the perfect covenant-fidelity of Jesus Christ, then this faith does not really belong to me in its origin and in its centre, but to God in Christ. He is the mother-plant, so to speak, and I am only a shoot from it, and I cannot clasp faith's supernatural reality to myself as if it were something belonging to me as a possession. In faith and through it, rather, I am made open and dispossessed of self. The 'psychological' element of which I could become certain is the least interesting and characteristic side of faith. The important thing is the movement away from myself, the preference of what is other and greater, and precisely the person who has been expropriated for God does not want to become fully secure with regard to this Other and Greater.

Seen from this perspective, Christian experience can mean only the progressive growth of one's own existence into Christ's existence, on the

basis of Christ's continuing action in taking shape in the believer: 'until Christ has taken shape in you' (Gal 4.19).

This can, in the first place, be observed and ascertained on a purely human level: for instance, any disciple whatsoever trains and adapts himself to his master's manner of thinking, and growing in this way he has the living experience of what it is to exist within this manner of thought and life. But once it has been determined that the point in Christ Jesus which explains his life-form does not lie within the purely human sphere and structure, but that everything about him rings true only when one accepts his own presupposition of being the Son of God: then the initiation of our life into this supernatural form becomes, at the same time, an initiation (and, therefore, an experience) within the realm of God's own reality, and hence it finally becomes the process by which this reality takes shape in the believer. However, the rightness of the form of revelation, initially 'seen' in faith—the form to which the believer surrenders and entrusts himself—is *confirmed within this existence of self-surrender as being true and correct, and this gives the believer a new form of Christian certitude which can be called 'Christian experience'*.

The classical text for this is 2 Cor 13.3-9, which speaks of the *experimentum* of the truth of faith, in the double sense of 'test of endurance' and of 'proof' (δοκιμή). The Corinthians seek a proof for the fact that God's Spirit is really speaking through Paul; Paul appears to them to be too much a 'weakling' (10.10) for this. Paul threatens to come to them with God's condemnation, which would demonstrate and prove God's power in him, if they do not beforehand bring themselves to see and understand the mystery of his having been authentically tested in the faith, and they can do this only if they themselves can pass the test as true believers. To do this, however, means to understand the mystery of Christ in faith: he is the one who 'lives in the power of God' precisely because 'he was crucified in weakness'; and, furthermore, it means acknowledging this mystery to be normative for the existence both of Paul and of the community. The whole power of Paul's manner of proof lies in the fact that he 'does not commend himself', which means that he does not 'measure himself' by his own standard or 'compare himself' with himself (10.12). In other words, the point is that Paul does not develop his proof on the psychological level: it cannot be conducted at this level because here it would risk turning into a 'boasting beyond limit' on the part of the religious subject, and it would thus prove to be the opposite of

faith. 'For it is not the man who commends himself that stands the test, but the man whom the Lord commends' (by making him conform fully to himself, his weakness, and his strength: 10.18). In this sense, Paul did not commend himself as such, but himself only as a 'servant of God' with a total destiny ('through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments', and so on) which demonstrates the extent to which the form of Christ has become a reality in his life.

This much granted, it is not difficult to understand 2 Cor 13.3 ff.:

You desire proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful in you. For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. Thus, we too are weak in him, but in dealing with you we are vivified with him by the power of God. Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves! Or have you not experienced the fact that Jesus Christ is [mighty and living] in you? Then, indeed, you would fail to meet the test! At the very least, I hope you will [by all means] experience the fact that we have not failed the test [that is to say, when Paul comes to them with the threatened condemnation from God and they will have to experience in their own bodies Christ's power in him]. But we pray that God may spare you this dire pass—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. . . . For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong.

In this way, for Paul the experience of faith is a conclusive proof as long as it proceeds from faith and is conducted on the standard of faith: it is a living demonstration of the rightness of the fundamental premise that in the believer's weakness Christ can show himself to be strong. And this does not simply mean that as the feeble creature 'decreases' the strong God can 'increase' in it; what is meant is that in this process the fundamental law of Christ becomes implanted in man: to be strong in God through weakness. One last thought is necessary for the full power of the proof as intended by Paul. Christ shows himself to be 'strong' in Paul by the fact that he has appointed Paul to his apostolic office. It is his office which is the strong element in Paul because by subordinating his life to his office, Paul does not serve himself but rather Christ's mandate and, therefore, Christ himself. But Paul does not divorce his office from the living, pneumatic power of Christ in the Church: the 'mere office', the judgment which he could by all rights exercise in Corinth, is mentioned only as a threat and as a possibility whose enforcement Paul reserves for the most extreme cases.

From this perspective the whole theological analysis of Christian existence could be developed in all its rich interconnections and gradations, but we would always have to return to the point from which we had taken our

departure: Christian existence is *demonstrated* and proven as an existence that ‘rings true’ because it is an existence in faith, which is to say in the continuous act of surrender to him who has first surrendered himself for us. Turning away from self is the very foundation of faith and, thus, also the goal of what is to be proven; this is why the highest Christian experience and gnosis can never surpass this faith, but only strengthen it and demonstrate its rightness. There is no possibility here that this analysis of existence could imperceptibly turn into a closed-off ‘understanding of self’ from which Christ, the actual object of faith, could then be excluded, secretly and innocuously, to be replaced, at most, by an ‘historical (*historisch*) Jesus’ who would be a purely historical (*geschichtlich*) ‘occasion’ for this existence.⁴¹ The whole power of the proof lies, rather, in the principle ‘It is not I that live, but Christ lives in me’—in the objective, unsurpassable fact that the whole sphere of the ego has been overridden by the sphere of Christ: ‘That I may know him and [experience in myself] the power of *his* Resurrection and become a partaker in *his* body, receiving the very form of *his* death, and if (εἰ πως) possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I run after it so as to grasp it, because Christ Jesus has already grasped me’ (Phil 3.10ff.).

Everything is poised in the suspension resulting from having let go of self, in an existence lived as uninterrupted flight to the goal. The person ‘impelled’ by the Spirit (Rom 8.14) can no longer be judged from the standpoint which he has abandoned (1 Cor 2.14f.): he cannot even judge himself any more (2 Cor 4.3). The logical consequences of this for the formulation of Christian experience are very far-reaching; they bear directly on the problem of Christian hope, which cannot be solved by a static approach. Bergson’s problem emerges here again at the theological level: the flight itself cannot be caught in a series of static frames as in a film, however fast these may succeed one another. The goal of salvation is *grasped* in flight, because the flight can be understood only through its goal; but it is grasped only *in flight* and not in itself, and, therefore, it cannot be translated into a static ‘certainty of salvation’. ‘I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my salvation, *in keeping with* my eager expectation and hope that I shall not be at all ashamed, but with the triumphant trust that now as always Christ will assert himself gloriously in my body, whether by life or by death’ (Phil 1.19f.). We could call this statement an expression of ‘certainty of salvation’, but one which is neither

personal in a private sense (since being dispossessed into apostleship, Paul is no longer a private person but an *anima ecclesiastica*), nor simply totalitarian (in the sense of a systematic doctrine of *apokatastasis*): it is a certainty in flight, guaranteed by the Holy Spirit who buoys up the flyer because the latter, as a pneumatic, has entrusted and delivered himself over to the Spirit. And even this self-abandonment is never a deed and an accomplishment of the person, but his permitting the condition of already having been retrieved by Christ.

This is experience in the most all-inclusive sense of the word: insight acquired by travelling to a place.⁴² This experience can be acquired in no way other than by having it, and only he can have it who surrenders himself to the movement of the journey: the person who actualises his faith and exists as a believer. Here lies the transition from the ‘psychic’, who has the Spirit only ‘theoretically’ but does not actualise it, to the ‘pneumatic’ who makes room for the Spirit in himself. The former does not ‘receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because a discerning judgment about them can only be made spiritually’ (1 Cor 2.14). This is why dogma (that is, the doctrine concerning Christ as the Son of God who dies and rises for us and in us) can be developed only on the model of the pneumatic and can be understood in its total truth only by him. Christian dogmatics unfolds in the medium of faith, and for Paul this means a faith lived in one’s existence: here is to be found the proof of dogma, its coherence, as well as its objective intelligibility and its subjective comprehensibility. In this sense, experience naturally does not have the least thing in common with ‘feeling’ (in Schleiermacher’s sense) or with modern irrationality, because that towards which existence is ‘travelling’ and has always ‘travelled’ (or *been made* to travel!) through God’s grace is the objective, trinitarian reality of God, who has ‘first’ (see Rom 5.8) had mercy on us.

But if dogma becomes demonstrable, and is in fact demonstrated, within the sphere of pneumatic existence, then the ‘perfect’ Christian is also the perfect proof of the truth of Christianity: in the Christian’s existential transparency, Christianity becomes comprehensible both in itself and to the world and itself exhibits a spiritual transparency. The saint is the apology for the Christian religion. He is holy, however, because he allows Christ to live in him, and it is in Christ that he ‘glories’. For a closed anthropological ethics there will always be something scandalous about the openness with which

Paul demonstrates the nature of Christian sanctity by pointing to himself (with the ultimate aim of demonstrating the dogmatic truth) and with which he undertakes, before the Church and before the whole world, an analysis of his own existence. But such openness is nothing other than the precisely and obediently reflected splendour, at the ecclesial level, of Christ's unique claim to be in himself, in his living existence, the truth of God. This apparent *hybris* can be resolved only in a Christian sense, by the fact that Christ 'seeks not his own honour, but the honour of him who sent him', and it is not himself that Paul demonstrates, but rather the existence of Christ within Paul's life, which life has become wholly identified with his office and his ministry. By the fact that he exhibits in himself what existence in the Christian office is (an existence wholly bound up within the vocation, from his mother's womb, to be an apostle of Christ), even Paul's self-awareness and his insight into his own uniqueness belong to the manner in which he follows Christ. It is a matter of vocation *as* office, expropriation *as* function.⁴³

The distinctive factor in Paul's Christian experience is, doubtless, rooted in the vision at Damascus, which he was convinced added him to the number of the first apostles. And yet, we ought not to be concerned for the time being with this peculiarity in his experience because what it, at most, contributes to Paul's self-understanding is that it legitimises his claim to be an apostle. As far as Christian existence is concerned, however, it in no way raises him above the level of other Christians. The archetypal vision of Christ has its place somehow among the charisms (*quosdam autem apostolos*), which differentiate according to its functions a possession of the Spirit that is common to all. But the experiential character as such is not proper to this differentiation, but is the common possession of the whole Church. This shared element can be called 'faith', but it can also be called 'possession of the Spirit', and, because the Spirit is the Spirit of God and of Christ, it can also be called 'love'. From the standpoint of love (1 Cor 13) the charisms are criticised, ordered, rendered intelligible, just as everything functional and ministerial in the Church is to be measured by the Christ-life lived by Christians. It is love that believes and hopes (1 Cor 13.7). Love is the central characteristic of the flight between the Old and the New Aeon, between the old man who dies daily and the new man who daily rises in and for Christ. Love alone mediates gnosis, the authentic Christian gnosis (1 Cor 8.1ff.). Because love 'edifies', through it there arises the edifice which alone is worth knowing and which, in turn, cannot be recognised by anything other than by

love. But this love does not have knowledge of itself or of its own work, but of the fulness of Christ (Eph 4.13, 16).

Nevertheless, the flight away from self to God is not a 'forgetting of self' (Phil 3. 13) in the sense that man thereby loses himself. Rather, in the experience of the Spirit there is bestowed on man the deepest possible experience of himself: for the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of revelation which illuminates the human spirit, in which it is immanent, by telling man what he is. In its cry from the spirit ('Abba, Father!'), 'the Spirit itself testifies to our spirit that we are children of God', and from this living witness Paul draws the implication: 'If children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ' (Rom 8.17). Here too, then, within the most interior Christian consciousness, we see dogma developing out of experience, an experience which is not at all a psychological experience (in the sense of liberal or modernistic theology), but one which is a 'dogmatic' experience from the outset since the witness which the Spirit speaks to us in our interior can never be interpreted as a soliloquy on the part of the child of God. For the fact that we are children of God is attested to by the Spirit in us only at the same time that he shows us the condition from which we have come: we have been delivered from slavery to sin and to the devil, from a state of decay induced by a world which is itself decayed, a world out of which (and this is the most evident thing!) we could never have delivered ourselves. Indeed, we could not even ascribe to ourselves the power of the longing to escape from this state of decay: it is the Spirit who, from within man and the world, groans to God with unspeakable sighs and, by so doing, first of all makes man and his world aware of their fallenness and decay. It is possible that this interior dialogue of the Spirit could appear to approach too closely the Hegelian dialectic between finite and infinite spirit, though one which attributes to this dialectic (which nonetheless remains a dialectic between identical spirits) a certain personal and dialogical character; the impression could thus arise that this dialogue serves as basis for a pure theology of experience. In this case, however, our dependency on the historical Christ, dead and risen, would always remain in force: Christ's claim to be the *Kyrios* cannot be interchanged for anything else, and for Paul this claim is not distinguishable by one hair's breadth from the claim of the 'historical Jesus'.

Looking back from this vantage-point, we must put a large question-mark against anything which passes for an analysis of religious existence outside Christianity. Such analysis will necessarily lack the objective ground which

makes possible and illuminates the religious character of existence as a 'flight', and, therefore, it will also fail to achieve a proper self-understanding of such an experience of having been cast into the world (*Geworfenheit*). Such an analysis could be relevant only if it occurred within a constantly sustained abstraction, a condition that renounces all ultimate interpretation—something which could hardly be required of it precisely since it is a *philosophical* analysis. On the other hand, elements from such analyses can be useful for a theology of Christian experience to the extent that this theology can judge those elements (1 Cor 2.15): whether as a characterisation of the existence unto death of the Old Aeon, along with all its experiences and values, or to show how the death of Christ effects a 'silencing' of this world's powers which is manifested at least indirectly in all existence. Thus, every instance of 'self-consciousness' on the part of man in fact contains some (theological) points of contact for the Christian message. As a matter of fact, everything which the Epistle to the Romans says about the sinner's condition and his self-condemnation (chs. 1-3, ch. 7) is said on the basis of both a very strong theological *a priori* and of an unmasking of the universal human conscience. Something very similar occurs, for instance, when, in his *City of God*, Augustine puts the 'city of the world' under blinding theological lights, and yet conducts his analysis relying almost entirely on quotations from Roman writers.

b. The Experience of the Logos

If we pass from Paul to John, who constitutes the second classical instance of a New Testament theology of experience, we leave a spiritual world which is impetuous and agitated almost in a violent sense and enter the calm of what 'abides'. Paul's fundamental experience is that of being snatched up by Christ's *dynamis* from one aeon and being transferred to the other. Paul overwhelms us because he has himself been overwhelmed. Damascus is a flash of lightning and remains such for the rest of the Apostle's life. John, on the other hand, has been marked out ever since his first meeting with Jesus at the Jordan: ' "Come and see!" And they went along and saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day' (1.39). To be sure, John too is one transported by love; but he is so profoundly at rest in this movement that, for him, it becomes the very presence of eternity—'fulfilled eschatology'. It is

impossible to overlook the parallel to the aesthetic mode of experience if we consider the statement at the beginning of the First Epistle, a passage which formulates concisely what has occurred in the Gospel: 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life. . . .' (1 Jn 1.1).

After so many clarifications, we do not need again to repeat the warning against taking the word and the concept 'aesthetic' in a devalued modern sense emptied of meaning. Nor need we insist on the danger of taking as a solid foundation the inner-worldly, philosophical structure of the aesthetic and of measuring theological realities by it without any transposition. Rather, we are presuming that the reader has been disposed to accept both of these correctives and that he remains mindful of them. What we can now say is that, in general, and particularly in the First Epistle, Johannine theology is aesthetic, and this in two respects. In the first place, for John the divine glory appears 'in the flesh' within one individual, absolutely privileged, finite form, and no philosophical, religious, or mystical possibility is foreseen that could in any sense surpass, spiritualise or otherwise refine this form. Secondly, in this form absolute Being itself makes its appearance. We cannot here avoid the philosophical term 'Being' because it alone gives full weight to the inner-worldly, aesthetic phenomenon, and because the Johannine affirmation concerning Christ and God occurs, theologically speaking, precisely in the same locus where the philosophico-mythical affirmation concerning the human experience of the world and God takes place. To say this is not in any way to hint at historical 'influences' on John, whether gnostic or derived from the philosophico-religious systems of Hellenistic thought; rather, such 'influences' would appear to be highly questionable. And even if such a stimulus did come to John from gnostic speculations (which he certainly was aware of since he rejects them), what it did was to provoke in him a very different kind of affirmation. As against gnostic aestheticism, which delighted in 'bottomless fables' and did not take God's Incarnation seriously—indeed, found it a total impossibility given the gnostic world-view—we have the affirmation of God's taking on a definitive form in man, an event which, to the degrading game with all that belongs to the senses, juxtaposes the unsurpassable seriousness of a *sensatio* of the divine beauty. The numerous paradoxes of the Johannine theology of experience, which cannot be resolved by rational means, are all the expression, not of a dialectic of

concepts, but of a reposing in the (supra-philosophical) contemplation of Being in the beloved Thou, which is at once God and man and which is worthy of all possible believing and adoring love. In this Thou God is visible and present; in him all the heart's unrest due to sin is transcended. Because he surrenders his life for his own, his existence is a love that atones for everything, brings everything to rest and transfigures it with eternal light.

The aesthetic experience is the union of the greatest possible concreteness of the individual form and the greatest possible universality of its meaning or of the epiphany within it of the mystery of Being. The most powerful experience of it outside of Christianity, furthermore, connects this epiphany with place and time, with a *kairos*, a happening: in the appearance of a god the divine has approached men and become manifest to them. John does not dissociate himself from this *kairos*: he himself has lived and experienced it, and he wants to proclaim it and witness to it in order to bring into communion with this *kairos* all who have not heard or seen or touched. For the *kairos* remains the universally valid norm, and 'every spirit' which does not 'confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh . . . is not of God' (1 Jn 4.2f.).

In the first place, we can and must say that in the Christian understanding of the *kairos* all impersonal or only half-personal categories of myth and philosophy have become wholly personal. The meaning of the verbs φανεροῦν, φανεροῦσθαι ('to shine forth', 'to reveal or re-present oneself'), which John so likes to use, is far-removed from any merely ontological interpretation and has been transposed into the sphere of a personal self-manifestation on the part of the eternal and loving God: the Son's becoming man is the love of the Father, indeed, of the whole God, now become manifest. For, as he gives his life for the world, the Son is God's love at work fully expressing itself (1 Jn 4.9f.). The very form in flesh and blood, therefore, is, as such, the pure light of divine love pouring itself out: in Christ the *species* and the *lumen* coincide—as manifest, personal love. But what is most peculiar to John is that he does not stop at the personal aspect, but rather identifies it with the ontological aspect. This self-diffusing love is *the* Light, *the* Truth, and both of these refer to the same thing: the reality which, to its very foundation, is transparent both to itself and to all who come to behold it. This aspect of Biblical revelation emerges in its definitive form only with John. John's categories of the 'knowledge of God' must, indeed, be traced back to Old Testament forms of thought;⁴⁴ but within the covenant-

relationship the person of Yahweh so emphatically remains ‘the Other’ that he was permanently conceived of as ‘he who is absolutely’, but not as the one who occupies the locus of Being. Hegel pointed to this and saw in it the new and definitive character of the New Testament: in the Incarnation God is, at the same time, Himself and his Self’s Other, and it is only in this way that God reveals himself as absolute Being. This is what John saw, and he firmly came to grasp it in his contemplation of the Son of God; but, precisely because he understood the revelation of Being as personal, he drew back from going beyond the form to attain an absolute knowledge as Hegel did later. For John, a love that believes is itself unsurpassable gnosis. What philosophical ontology sees as the immanence of Being in every existent (while accepting that there is a permanent ontological difference) remains for John the free, gracious, loving indwelling of God in man and, based upon it, of man in God. R. Schnackenburg has rightly stressed the central importance of ‘formulas of reciprocal immanence’ in John (1 Jn 3.24; 4.13, 15f.; Jn 14.20; 17.21, 23, 26), for which ‘no real parallels can be produced from non-Christian literature.’⁴⁵ Neither Jewish piety nor the piety of Hellenistic philosophy offer any models for these formulas in John, nor does even gnosticism. John is not ‘mystical’, if by this one understands extraordinary experiences of union with God, since for him this union is open to all men. ‘On the other hand, such an intimate reciprocal union with Christ takes place that we could indeed speak of a “mysticism of Being”.’⁴⁶

Now we can see the so-called Johannine dualism of light and darkness in a new light. For, if this unity of the ontological and the personal is preserved, then we cannot at bottom speak of two ‘realms’ (in the extreme sense of Persian Manichaeism); but, rather, good and evil relate to one another as Being and Non-Being, or more exactly, as the Being (of man) in the Being (of God)—and outside that Being. This vantage-point should make us stop seeing in such a negative light the Fathers’ borrowing of a Neo-Platonic ontology for their interpretation of the Biblical reality, as usually happens in Protestant quarters. St. John’s ‘darkness’ is, in actual fact, an existence lived in total withdrawal from God’s light, life and love. The devil’s personality as the leader of a counter-kingdom hardly features in John: the ‘spirit’ of opposition to God decides that the ‘anointing of the divine Spirit’, the ‘seed’ of God in man and the consequent ‘being begotten of God’ will be replaced by the self-sufficient, self-deifying emptiness of an ego that ‘seeks its own glory’.

Like Paul, the Christian lives an existence in faith, faith being understood as a living handing over of self to God. For John, such self-surrender to the incarnate Beloved is simply one and the same thing as love. Faith underscores the movement of self-renunciation in this love, the movement whereby the Beloved himself, along with all his being and mentality, become one's very own law. For this reason, in John the act of continual contemplation of the Beloved is inextricably an 'aesthetic' and an 'ethical' act: to see him as he is not only presupposes the readiness to renounce everything of one's own, but actually requires such readiness at every instant. Seen with the eyes of faith, bliss and sacrificial self-abandonment are identical. This is precisely why the act of faith can be described and maintained only by means of the paradox which it also exhibits in John. On the one hand, what is inalienable is kept inalienably; on the other hand, one must be held in suspense in the constant danger of not being oneself able to guarantee 'abiding' in the Beloved. At the foundation of the act of faith, as understood by John, there lies, even at the psychological level, the irresolvable paradox of knowing oneself (as love) in the movement towards the Beloved (a knowledge which includes the experience of God and of self) and, yet, of not being allowed to reflect upon oneself, for such a looking in the mirror of the self would incur the loss of love. For 'truth', as John understands it, is to be found in the unconditional abandonment of what is one's own for the sake of the Beloved. Such truth, therefore, does not reside merely in the supratemporal validity of a 'proposition'; rather, it touches the supratemporal itself existentially—the eternity of God, in which it participates by making room for it within itself. Hence, a faith that loves is an experience of the eternal. And, thus, the loss of such a faith becomes an insoluble riddle. When a loss of this kind involves others, we can say: 'They were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us' (1 Jn 2.19). But, when we ourselves are concerned, recourse can be had only to the urgent exhortation to 'abide'. *'If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father'* (1 Jn 2.24): what has been heard is the Son's command to love, which is entrusted to the believer's free movement of love; but this command is the Son himself and, therefore, possesses eternity and gives a share in eternity to the act which embraces him, the Son.

The ethical component in this warning ought not to make us forget the aesthetic aspect of loving contemplation. In the experience of worldly beauty

the moment is eternity. The form, containing eternity, of the beautiful object communicates something of its supratemporality to the condition of the person who experiences it in contemplation. Nevertheless, the ‘sorrow of the gods’ (*Göttertrauer*) wafts about the beautiful form, for it must die, and the state of being blissfully enraptured always includes a knowledge of its tragic contradiction: both the act and the object contain within themselves the death that contradicts their very content. In John there can be no talk of the ‘sorrow of the gods’, for the Beloved who dies dies out of love; his death is not a limitation, but the mighty expression of his love (Jn 10.18). Therefore, the believer does not contain death in himself as ‘anguish’ (as with worldly beauty) but, rather, if he really believes, he has already left anguish behind (1 Jn 4.17f.). And yet there remains a certain trembling on the part of a freedom that surrenders itself—a tremor over whether it is really giving itself, over whether it has really taken the law of the Beloved upon itself, over whether it has attained to a faith that is love. . . . John approves of this form of anguish, but, contrary to the Gnostics, he requires the confession of sins and exhorts his children not to sin, to beware of idols, to love not in words but in deed and in truth (1 Jn 1.8; 2.1; 5.21; 3.18). But in spite of this, John seeks to calm this incipient unrest of the heart by outbidding it, for ‘whenever our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything’ (1 Jn 3.20; cf. Jn 21.17).

But this quieting of the heart by the fact that God is greater nevertheless has as its premise that we have pledged ourselves to the law of love. It is not as simple as saying that God, who is not bound to any relation and who is from the outset unattainable makes it his (one-sided) task to establish the correct relationship with man. If this were all that was to be said, then Christian experience would be nothing other than what, since Luther, has been called in many different variations the ‘experience of grace’ (at the same time as personal sinfulness remains) and ‘certainty of salvation’ (within and because of one’s state of being totally lost). Then the only criterion of true experience is the consciousness of having received grace. John would admit such a formulation only in connection with his own central criterion: ‘Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth. *By this* we shall know that we are of the truth, and can reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything’, namely this above all: that we love him, that is, that we *want* to love him in spite of our failures (1 Jn 3.18ff.). This is why Jean

Mouroux is right to stress again and again the structured, composite character of Christian experience, which can never be fastened onto a single content or state, a sensual or spiritual perception, a feeling or a particular experience: Christian experience, rather, implies a progressive entrance of the believing person into the total reality of faith and the progressive 'realisation' of this reality. Pascal, Kierkegaard, and Newman understood Christian experience in no other way. The best justification for this are the criteria of experience that in John continually circle around each other, always pointing one to the other. And the impossibility of ordering John's different aspects at the theoretico-theological level into a manageable system (although each aspect can in itself be rigorously demonstrated from the form of revelation) points us in the direction of another level of synthesis, that of Christian experience as the fruit of a faith lived in obedience to God.

This, the level of experience, is even in ordinary life the realm where all life's irreconcilable aspects become integrated. The recalcitrance and drudgery of everyday existence induce us to flee into a sphere of illusion where we think we are going to come face to face with the beautiful in distilled form. And yet we know that it is only the overcoming of workaday rigours and perseverance in them that will hew out the precious stone which has to emerge from the rough block of our existence. The really beautiful shines from the place where the real has itself acquired form, where the seductive opposition between illusion and disillusion has been transcended. The totality of existence remains a mystery, but one the form of whose appearance is not a strange enigma for the experienced person who has been tested by existence; for him it is a luminous space which he has embraced. By having experienced existence the person who has thus become wise now understands something of the mystery of Being.

Here, too, philosophy (this time as 'philosophy of life') in John becomes transparent to a Christian gnosis. The fact that the man wise in a worldly sense does not shy away from speaking about the law of Being, to which he submits and molds himself, throws light on why John, as lover, speaks so much about law and command, since for him 'pliancy' (or submissiveness) is a criterion for love. That it is 'law' follows necessarily from our sinfulness: law is the stern countenance which love shows the person who does not yet possess it. For John does not know any command other than love's, which integrates all the commandments. It is with such a presupposition as this that we must listen to these words: 'By this we may be sure that we know him, if

we keep his commandments. He who says “I know him” but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God [as God’s love for man and man’s love for God] is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked’ (1 Jn 2.3-6). This is a ‘walking after’ him in the course of which the following of God’s commandment imperceptibly becomes transformed into a following of Christ’s existence. But the point is that Christ is not another ‘existent’, but the very appearance of Being itself. For this reason the ‘commandment’ can go forth only from Being—from the Father himself. ‘This is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who keep his commandments abide in him, and he in them’ (1 Jn 3.23f.). Christ is the visibleness of the Father, and my brother is the visibleness of Christ; this is why Christian brotherly love is the proof through experience of the fact that we love God (1 Jn 4.20f.). But this ascending movement rests on a movement of descent and may even be said to be its completion: the person who loves comes from God toward his brother: he is ‘born of God’ (1 Jn 2.29; 3.9; 4.7; 5.1, 4, 18) and, through grace, together with the Son, he descends as a perfect fruit from the generative ground of the Father’s Being. This is why he has the Spirit. ‘By this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us’ (1 Jn 3.24), but we possess and know this Spirit only in so far as we recognise the Son as the form of God, and we do this only if we walk according to his commandment, which is to say only if we grant him the ascendancy in us in deed. This ‘in so far’ is then proposed by John as an infallible criterion: the person anointed with the Spirit is free of error and knows all things (1 Jn 2.20, 27). In order to complete the picture only one more dimension is needed—the sacramental, which for John remains most intimately bound to Jesus’ corporeality in spite of all his ecclesiological realism. Water and blood are the bodily aspect of the Spirit that flows forth from Jesus; they constitute the ontic aspect, adapted to man, of that reciprocal interpenetration of Being which makes the relationship between Christ and the Church an extension of the trinitarian ontic-personal Being-in-one-another (Jn 17).

Such a thought-structure puts Johannine experience beyond both ‘eschatology’ and ‘mysticism’. Biblical mysticism can never intend to abolish the eschatological boundary between the aeons and by definition, it remains a mysticism proper to the state of faith. Conversely, John’s

interpretation of revelation (Christ as the appearance of absolute Being as such) transcends any view which sees it as a mere prelude to the future return of Christ. Such a forward movement is not abolished, because faith awaits and hopes for this return (1 Jn 2.28; 4.17), but it is 'overtaken' by the certainty of 'already having' what we ask for (1 Jn 5.15), of 'already possessing eternal life' (1 Jn 5.13), of 'already having overcome the world' (1 Jn 5.4f.). This is, in fact, the only possibility within a form of thought which understands faith not primarily in the negative sense of a 'not yet', but primarily in the positive sense of an opening up and abandonment of self into the hands of a truth which is both present and absolute—a faith which, furthermore, is unhesitatingly described as a certain knowledge: 'We know that we have been brought out of death into life' (1 Jn 3.14). 'We know that he hears us' (1 Jn 5.14). 'We know that anyone born of God does not sin' (1 Jn 5. 18). 'We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is the truth; and we are in him who is the truth, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life' (1 Jn 5.20).

c. Christian Attunement

Christian experience was seen as being able to be determined from two directions. First of all, it can be grasped in relation to a totality of life which integrates within itself all the individual acts of faith, love, and also of feeling, and such integration then allows the truthfulness of what is believed to emerge and come to prevail. But, because the attitude of faith in its integrity means a readiness for and an openness to another form which actively approaches us from the side of God, Christian experience can also be viewed in terms of the power peculiar to what is believed which impresses itself upon the believer. Only this power can explain the transformation that takes place in the believing person and his total condition which results from it. Such was the structure of the existential proof for Christianity in Paul, whose existence is understandable only as the *phanerosis* (2 Cor 4.2) of Christ's death and Resurrection, and likewise in John, in whom what is believed and what is experienced determine Christian existence by exerting an indissolubly reciprocal influence. The first element alone cannot provide a conclusive proof because, in a Christian sense, it cannot be isolated for its own sake (as a pure 'psychological' experience of existence) and because—

even though unbelief constantly attempts to prove the contrary—the first element of integrating totality cannot be made comprehensible without the second element, namely the power of the object of faith. This is why the ‘psychics’, according to Paul, can never understand what belongs to the spirit, while the ‘pneumatics’ understand everything and are judged by no one, even though they are constantly being condemned by the ‘psychics’ as faulty existences which seem to lack precisely that element which is, in fact, the blind spot in the eye of the ‘psychic’: *in iis qui pereunt est opertum* (2 Cor 4.3).

Both elements connote totality—both the believer’s offering of himself to God and the impressing of the Christ-form by God upon the believer. A person does not stake his life for *one* article of faith, but for Jesus Christ and his indivisible truth, which shines forth from each individual article. And God does not impress upon the believer only one trait of his Son’s, but rather his indivisible essential image, even though this image appears in each soul differentiated by personal and charismatic particulars. Constant contemplation of the whole Christ, through the Holy Spirit, transforms the beholder as a whole into the image of Christ (2 Cor 3. 18). This holistic encounter from the outset both transcends every individual act of self-giving which springs from faith, hope and love and grounds it in a totality of both the subject and the object, in such a way that we are here both entitled and compelled to speak of a Christian ‘attunement’ to or ‘consonance’ with God. In saying this, as is here evident, we are not referring primarily to a ‘feeling’ considered as a third act which is mostly below the level of spirit and distinct from the spiritual acts of the intellect and the will (we refer here to acts of the emotions, of the affectivity, of the irrational sensibility: greed, hate, joy, and fear), but primarily to the heart of human wholeness, where all man’s faculties (*potentiae*) appear rooted in the unity of his *forma substantialis*, regardless whether these faculties are of a spiritual, a sensitive, or a vegetative kind.

This is not the place to develop a speculative psychological theory of the soul, even though to do so would be important for our present questions. Distinguishing the soul’s faculties from one another and from the soul itself should not make us forget their reciprocal compenetration, and the way in which they are themselves penetrated by the soul which acts and suffers through them. Indeed distinctions of this kind, such as are drawn by Thomas Aquinas, should always be ventured only for the sake of the better

understanding of the underlying unity. What is termed ‘feeling’, in contradistinction to intellect and will, lies neither ‘beside’ nor ‘beneath’ the spiritual faculties. This is evident already from the fact that animals are not men from whom intellect and will have been removed; rather, animals exhibit a totality analogous to man’s, but one which has not advanced to the degree of spiritual reflection attained by man—the bud of a water-lily, so to speak, that has remained below water-level. In man we can distinguish between, on the one hand, predominantly sub-spiritual acts or states (whether the specific acts of the sense organs or those of the *sensus communis*, or the acts and states of the soul’s total disposition) and, on the other hand, acts that predominantly belong to the whole person and into which the expressions of the sensitive-vegetative sphere are incorporated without however being able to lay claim to a monopoly of feeling over all else. Otherwise, feeling and disposition would be primarily subhuman and we could no longer understand why Sacred Scripture characterises the ‘heart’ and even the ‘bowels’ (σπλάγχνα, from which is derived σπλαγχνίζεσθαι, ‘to have mercy’) as the seat both of man’s deepest personal reactions and of God’s own most profound attitude with regard to the world. It is not by means of one isolated faculty that man is open, in knowledge and in love, to the Thou, to things and to God: it is *as a whole* (through all his faculties) that man is attuned to total reality, and no one has shown this more profoundly and more thoroughly than Thomas Aquinas.

According to Thomas, what is involved here is an attunement to Being as a whole, and this ontological disposition is, in the living and sentient being, an *a priori* concordance (*consensus* as *cum-sentire*, ‘to feel with’, here prior to the *assentire*, ‘to assent to’). In the animal this occurs instinctively, but in man this accord is from the outset bound up with a certain spiritual delectation (Ia IIae 15, ic and ad 3). The inclination to the ‘thing itself’ (*inclinatio ad rem ipsam*), evoked by a most intimate kinship with it, is characterised as a ‘feeling’ or ‘sensing’—an experiential contact—in so far as the feeler is by his nature attuned to what is felt and, therefore, as-sents and con-sents to it (*accipit nomen sensus, quasi experientiam quandam sumens de re cui inhaeret, inquantum complacet sibi in ea. Ibid., c*). This ontological concordance, therefore, and the affirmation and joy in Being which are implied by it, lie at a much deeper level than the *delectatio* which naturally accompanies all the individual spiritual acts which are ordered to their proper object and which proceed from the storehouse of that primal and original

consonance, whether this natural *delectatio* consists of spiritual or of sensuous delight and joy, depending on its specific acts and their objects.

Such attunement to Being on the part of the feeling and experiencing subject is, consequently, also prior to the distinction between active and passive experience: in the reciprocity which is founded on openness to reality there is contained both the receptivity to extraneous impression and the expressing of the self onto the extraneous. Thus, the fundamental act of feeling (the 'primal feeling') consists of the consent (*con-sensus*) both to suffer extraneous impressions and to act upon the extraneous, and both of these are equally the cause of primal joy. By comparison with this most profound level of reality, the opposition between (joyful) desire and defensive fear is itself secondary: for this opposition has to do with particular existents, with particular proportions or disproportions between subject and object; it does not directly touch the relationship to Being (in its particular instances). But God is not a particular existent; rather, he reveals himself out of and within the depths of Being, which in its totality points to God as to its ground. For this reason what has been said above applies first of all to God, in a way which is, of course, conditioned by the analogy of Being between God and the creature: the creature is radically ordered to God, who does not need the creature in order to be, and the creature gives its assent to God and to whatever God, in his freedom, may mete out to it. The creature is ontologically resonant to God and for God; it is this in its totality and prior to any differentiation of its faculties into spiritual and sensuous, active and passive. At no level can God be considered a creature, nor does he possess a common Being with creatures. This is why this primal attunement to him is not an intuition in the epistemological sense, nor is it the result of a purely logical inference from the finite to the infinite. The non-fixability of this primal experience is but the noetic reflection of the ontic indeterminateness of Being in its totality over against God. Being as such, and everything it entails, continually directs us to the inaccessible Fount.

The multiple aberrations of the theology of experience and of life derive in every case from the fact that feeling is too exclusively thought of as an isolated act alongside the intellect and the will, and too little understood as the integration of the person's whole life. Consequently, the criteria for the God-relationship are based too exclusively on individual emotional states and pay little attention to the event by which man's total constitution and disposition, which are the foundation for everything else, can be experienced

in and through individual emotional states. The Scriptural arguments that oppose a pure theology of feeling lie ready to hand; but the very same arguments can equally be applied to defeat a theology that would attempt to establish man's rightful relationship to God simply on isolated acts of faith and love, instead of anchoring it within man's total disposition towards the living God.

Now, true to his nature as God, and especially in his historical revelation, God possesses the full initiative in the creature's relationship to him. It is God who says who he is and how one should properly relate to him. For these reasons, in the creature's primary aprioristic structure, which the grace of revelation then draws out to light and brings to its own full reality, passivity has precedence over activity. But this passivity, if it is rightly understood, will be seen to be that of a being which from the outset is active in its very receptivity, but a being whose fundamental act consists precisely in its ability to receive. However, the verb 'to feel' and the noun 'feeling' are used indifferently to refer either to an active or a passive attitude and, therefore, even in the expression the 'absolute feeling of dependency' (*schlechthiniges Abhängigkeitsgefühl*), the decisive factor does not emerge. For this reason it is better to use the words 'to apprehend' and 'apprehension' because these convey more exactly the notion of having been touched from the outside and from above.⁴⁷ Once again, as the creature's permanent and most interior disposition, this 'apprehending' is not an isolated act having a place alongside other acts, and this is why it can in no way be excluded from the acts of reason, since it is their foundation and very possibility. The relationship to the creature's essential foundation (which, as such, is an assent to Being and to God and, therefore, constitutes ontological joy) will have to be the criterion for all 'discernment of spirits' whenever religious and Christian 'feeling' is involved. The question is always as follows: Does the joy of an act (or the sadness of an act) positively point to the joy of Being? Or, no matter how seductively an act may strongly and obviously be experienced as an act of joy, could it not in reality be an act that veils and clouds the joy of Being?

Since our main concern here is theology, these preliminary considerations will have to suffice.⁴⁸ We now proceed to the distinctively Christian fact. This fact is that God, in the form of his Son, has sacrificed himself to the world, and that he bestows the Holy Spirit on those whom he has chosen and who respond to his call, in such a way that they are enabled to understand and

apprehend all that belongs to the Son and to the entire triune God. As a result, religious experience acquires two dimensions that are intimately related and which delimit religious experience in a new way. Along with the ontic order that orients man and the form of revelation to one another, the grace of the Holy Spirit creates the faculty that can apprehend this form, the faculty that can relish it and find its joy in it, that can understand it and sense its interior truth and rightness. Supported in this manner, however, man can and must consciously take his stance before the form of revelation and its storehouse of mysteries: he must accustom himself to live within it, and he must attune his whole person to it. Both things, the ontic and the experiential dimensions, go together, and (as we have said in connection with the light of faith) this unity henceforth deepens the ‘in-formation’ of the whole person, thereby allowing the aesthetic side of Christian experience truly to emerge. Before the beautiful—no, not really *before* but *within* the beautiful—the whole person quivers. He not only ‘finds’ the beautiful moving; rather, he experiences himself as being moved and possessed by it. The more total this experience is, the less does a person seek and enjoy only the delight that comes through the senses or even through any act of his own; the less also does he reflect on his own acts and states. Such a person has been taken up wholesale into the reality of the beautiful and is now fully subordinate to it, determined by it, animated by it. In so far as such experiences are sublime moments and elevations of existence and are also experienced and valued as such; in so far as the beautiful, as such, exercises its function of total integration and can be made intelligible only as the completion of the edifice comprised of the transcendental attributes of Being: to this extent it borders on the religious, as mythical religion proves at all its levels and as Christian revelation can overwhelmingly demonstrate by the fact that it fulfils and surpasses all myths. By contrast with all philosophical and mythical religious schemata, appeal is here made not only to man’s interior sensibility. Rather, this sensibility is seen within the context of the total human *elan*—not only in connection with man’s spiritual nature, but also in the essential connection with man’s organic and corporeal nature—and this not as a ‘concession’ to the multitude who cannot soar to purely spiritual experiences, but as the perfecting of the divine work of creation, which designed man to be an indissoluble unity of body and soul and which desires to bring him to perfection as such.

1. Let us begin with the action of grace, which is both an ontological elevation and transformation of man and the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit in him. Supernatural participation in the divine nature creates (this is only another word for it) a new connaturality of the soul with divine things, and this con-naturality, in turn, as a modification of the purely natural relationship between God and the creature, is immediately translated into a new inclination and readiness. Not that the creature's ontological advancement to the sphere of God is, as such, adequately transmitted to the creature's consciousness; rather the structure of human thought remains the same, but the stand-point of the whole person's being—from which one thinks, wills, and perceives—has been changed. The effects on the sphere of consciousness are indirect and successive, corresponding to the readiness with which the free person assents to this new inclination which has been bestowed upon him and made available to him, the readiness with which he allows this inclination to take root in him and permits it to have its effects on the clearly perceived and psychologically graspable personal sphere. Thus, no sharp line can be drawn where the infused virtues with their vital centre in *caritas*, begin to unfold consciously as the 'gifts of the Holy Spirit'. Ontologically, these gifts are already contained in the gift of grace itself and in the new inclination and readiness that are bestowed with it. But it is up to the believer and the lover to allow this inclination to gain an ever increasing ascendancy in his life of faith.

In the theology of the Church Fathers both these acts fundamentally coincide: man's conversion to God and the entrance into the faith of the Church through baptism. When one turns away from one's fallenness in and to the world, in order now to contemplate the divine values, love awakens, and this love in turn confers a new ability to see God and his infinite love. The story of Augustine's conversion is the story of a sensibility that exchanges a fleshly for a divine love: 'For every person that turns to God, the delight (*delectatio*) and the pleasures (*deliciae*) are transformed: for they are not withdrawn, but rather interchanged.'⁴⁹ The Fathers sensed intuitively that this transformation does not occur primarily by a striving on the part of man, but by a decisive and free act on the part of God. For this reason, the Fathers saw that the sacramental acts of baptism and Eucharist, while of course primarily ontic, were also in addition noetic: being a 'new birth', baptism is at the same time an 'illumination', and the Eucharist is a union with Christ which at the same time is an 'intoxication'.⁵⁰ Even when the dimension of

consciousness develops in apparent independence of the sacramental dimension, the former is the complement of the latter when understood in a Christian sense. What is more, the conscious aspect is indebted to the sacramental aspect as to its very foundation, in the same way as the Holy Spirit, who unfolds his Spirit in man, is the Spirit of Christ in the Church and operates in the individual as being an ecclesial member of Christ.

The love which is infused in man by the Holy Spirit present within him bestows on man the sensorium with which to perceive God, bestows also the taste for God and, so to speak, an understanding for God's own taste. We mention this as yet without reference to the doctrine of the individual 'spiritual senses', to be discussed later. Here we simply speak of the participation of man's entire sensitivity in the manner in which God himself experiences the divine. The central concept for this is the theological principle of *sapientia* as an experience of the *sapor divinus*, something that has come to us from the Fathers (Cyprian, Origen, Macarius, Diadochus, Augustine) and which was then developed particularly by the Bernardine school. This new sensorium is infused into the natural sensorium and yet is not one with it: for all that it is bestowed on man *as his own* (and increasingly so as he is the more unselfed), it equally is his only as a gift. This is a consciousness into which man must gradually be initiated by the Spirit himself by means of an alternation of 'consolation' and 'desolation' through which he is to learn experientially not to attribute to himself the gift of the Spirit and, above all, to learn to transfer this gift more and more from the realm of the senses to the very centre of the person, there to immerse himself. What we speak of here, then, is a transformation of feeling which takes place under the permanent norm of a passive readiness to participate in the Holy Spirit's own manner of feeling.

Thomas describes the gifts as follows: the Spirit steers the experience, and his gift is the *dispositio* that makes one be fully docile to his guidance. The gifts are in us *ab inspiratione divina*; they are an *instinctus divinus* and also an *instinctus interior* which makes us be guided by a principle higher than our own reason (Ia IIae. 68. 1 c). But this higher reality is not something foreign to us, for by its inspiration it awakens and inclines our own deepest love to the absolute Love that comes to meet us from the depths of Being itself, a Love that addresses each of us personally: *Spiritus Sanctus sic nos ad agendum inclinatur, ut nos voluntarie agere faciat, in quantum nos amatores Dei instituit* (C. Gent. IV. 22). The inspiration, therefore, descends upon

believing man from the heights of the absolute as the absolute genius which is essentially superior to man in every respect. And yet, at the same time, the inspiration rises from man's own most intimate depths: it is the person himself who loves and tastes God, and not an alien principle that does this through the person. As Paul says, such a person is one 'impelled by the Spirit' (Rom 8.4; Gal 5.18) and, as such, is not 'under the law'; but this is so because the Spirit, which cannot be captured by any law and which 'blows where it wills' (Jn 3.8), is a 'Spirit of sonship' which makes us 'children of God' and thus incorporates us into the divine law of the Son of God (Rom 8.14f.). The Son, in turn, into whom we are incorporated and with whom we become co-heirs of the Father, is the incarnate Son who suffers, rises up and lives on in the Church, and we receive his Spirit only if we enter into the form of his revelation. Once again, all aspirations of a natural aesthetics are here fulfilled and more than fulfilled: this is the inviolate circle of the beautiful that arises between the inspiration from above (and from within) and the attachment to the form from which the light of inspiration must come forth if we are to recognise as beautiful what we have beheld. Already in a natural aesthetics the process of artistic creativity (and in some sense also its 'repetition' in the enjoyment of art) is founded upon a mysterious obedience: in the last analysis, the inspired artist does not follow his own idea, but rather allows something ungraspable to cast its rays upon him. To art belongs not only the master's skill—the ability to translate a vision into sensual form—but also the ability not to obstruct either the illumining action of the idea or, so to speak, the idea's 'generation' and 'incarnation' in the mind of the artist. Externally the artist may choose to appear haughty, but interiorly he must be a humbly receptive womb for the 'conception'. Only if he knows how to be quiet will the *anima* sing in him.

The concept of attunement (*Stimmung*) embraces both the aesthetic and the theological elements. An existence is envisaged which is like an instrument tuned by the Spirit: at the breath of the Spirit, the instrument like the Aeolian harp rings out in tune. This is an attunement (*Gestimmtsein*) which is a concordance (*Ubereinstimmung*) with the rhythm of God himself, and therefore an assent (*Zustimmung*) not only to God's Being, but to his free act of willing which is always being breathed by God upon man. And finally in virtue of this pliancy it is the order (*das Stimmen*) within man himself—his Augustinian *rectitudo*—which make him to be himself the work of the divine Artist. But the instrument has no need to bother himself about this.

2. This attunement to God is not immediate, but mediated in two respects. First, man does not see God directly, but through the medium of his own intentional human acts. And, second, on his own initiative God has chosen to use the mediation of the creaturely in order to express himself by becoming man. The first item constitutes a limitation much regretted by a mysticism that strives upwards to attain immediacy; but this viewpoint often overlooks the fact that God himself has transformed the sense of this limitation by having converted and continuing to convert its obstructing aspects for the Christian into a means of furtherance and transmission (as the wire transmits the current). God has become man, and he will never again lay aside this humanity; the Son's humanity, and everything in the reality of the Church and of the cosmos that flows forth and will eternally flow forth from it, will forever be our open access to the Father. The Spirit of sonship and of the seven gifts is, in a definitive sense, the Spirit not only of the Father, but also of the Son who became man and of his bride, the Church. The *filioque* here shows its full bearing within the sphere of aesthetic theology. The 'formless' Father is not the terminus of all the world's ways in the sense that, after reaching him, the 'formed' Son has been surpassed. In the resurrected Christ, with him and through him, we receive that Spirit which is breathed forth by both the Father and the Son.

The Church, moreover, is formed by the Son from the blood of his heart and the thoughts of his heart. Even in her visible aspects, the Church is the work of the Son's hands, regardless of how tainted and dusty she may become in her contact with sinners. The word of Scripture and the form of the sacraments, both administered by the Church, are not only light from the light of Christ, but form from the form of Christ. In the Church, light and form are inseparable, even if their present structure and connection hold only for the Church's period of sojourn in the world. The vessels that enclose their precious and eternal content derive, in the last analysis, from the same Inventor who provided the content. In so doing he may have made use of as many time-conditioned elements as he deemed fit (he did, after all, become man!); and yet, he has the power to confer a universal historical relevance upon what is strictly situated within one moment of history.

This demands that the Christian be attuned not only to God, but equally to Christ and to the Church. Our feeling and our experience of God have their correct measure in Christ's own feeling and experience of God, in the manner that he himself allowed God to apportion *his* experience of God, the manner

in which he allowed himself to have experience which was determined and filtered through obedience. Ἐμαθεν ἄφ' ὧν ἔπαθεν τὴν ὑπακοήν: he learned obedience through what he suffered (Heb 5.8), but he suffered it also out of obedience, in order that it might become something experienced and learned by man. The measure of nearness to God and distance from God apportioned to him by God was determined in a soteriological sense: such an apportioned experience already possesses a form, and it is this spiritual form which determines everything material about his life and about the institution that grows from the centre of his life.

It is from this reality that Christian feeling receives its christological measure, as given by Paul: *Hoc sentite in vobis quod et in Christo Jesu*. What is here involved is not only an objectless and intentionless disposition (*Stimmung*), but rather a deliberate attunement of self (*sich-Einstimmen*) to the accord (*Stimmen*) existing between Christ and his mandate from the Father, in the context of salvation-history's assent (*Zu-stimmung*), which the Holy Spirit is in Christ and effects in him. We speak, therefore, primarily of an empathy (*Mitfühlen*) with the Son who renounces the form of God and chooses the form of humiliation; we speak of a sense for the path taken by Christ which leads him to the Cross; we speak of a sensorium for Christ's 'instinct of obedience' which, in him, needs no human justification since, like a very precise translation, this instinct gives expression to an eternal love for the Father which is in keeping with Christ's nature as God. Nowhere but here will man find a way in to the 'feeling' of God. And this is not intended as a goal for exceptional times or for times of intensive spiritual training, found side by side with the more normal longer periods of relaxation when one is allowed 'just to be human'. This model is meant to be the Christian's normal disposition and 'pitch' (*Gestimmtheit*). And, what is even more difficult: this normal disposition does not exist in a purely human opposition to the disposition of the joyful and trusting ascent to God, but rather—as improbable as this may sound—the two coincide fundamentally. This christological unity of dispositions may then be attuned in a variety of ways in the believing person: times of predominant suffering may alternate with times of predominant joy; times of consolation with times of desolation; times of felt nearness to God with times of felt distance from God; times of exuberance with times of dejection. All of these are but variations of the Christian's one fundamental disposition, which derives its real—and not only its supposed or contrived—unity from the disposition of Christ.

Now, the disposition of Christ is the disposition of one who has become expropriated for God and for man: his subjectivity coincides with his mission (this is the truth of the ‘functional Christology’ of Karl Barth and Oscar Cullmann). There is in him no unaffected residue of subjectivity which has not been assumed into his task as redeemer: everything down to the foundation of his person has been put at the disposal of his ministry and made available for his work. For this reason, in him the exalted feeling of his filial mission can coincide with the most extreme feeling of humiliation of the servant of Yahweh. None of this can be accounted for or made credible by purely psychological reasoning, because it attains to (even psychological) transparency only in the light of the *assumptio humanae naturae in personam divinam*. This is why the Christian who has been expropriated to become a member of Christ is not even himself in a position to understand his Christian disposition by means of human psychology, much less to explain it to others. When he begins to come to grips with his expropriation, he can only marvel at how his most intimate condition and disposition have in fact been transposed to a sphere which to him is unknown and unaccustomed.⁵¹ His innermost disposition, which until then had seemed to him to be the most private thing a person possesses, can henceforth be conceivable to him only in light of the dogma of God’s Incarnation. But this dogma is precisely not an external ‘other’ over against the Christian; the Christian has been incorporated into the dogma down to the very foundation of his self and in every fibre and vibration of his sensibility: to be sure, it is ‘he’ who still lives, but he is no longer an autonomous ego since Christ has begun to live in him. And, of course, this holds not merely for his total disposition, but just as much for his acts of knowing and willing; otherwise, the transition from the seventh to the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans with its abruptness and its scorn of all psychology would be simply incomprehensible.

Even more emphatically than the communication of all human disposition with Being as a whole, the new Christian sensibility lies beyond activity and passivity. That this sensibility is primarily passive has to do with its supernatural character: it is a feeling that is bestowed as gift, and therefore more the im-pressing of a superior human and divine feeling *upon* the believer than his spontaneous reproducing of such a feeling. But the same Holy Spirit who generates this impression in the soul is antecedently present within it to welcome the impression and help it to become the ex-pression of the soul itself. And this divinely active nature of the Spirit in his immanence

is itself, in turn, the expression of his divine particularity as the third Person: it is the Spirit's special property to overarch all seemingly unbridgeable chasms and oppositions (between person and person). The Spirit does this as the one Spirit of two Persons, as the passive procession which expresses and is God's highest activity, as that ungraspable Third and Perfecter who lies 'beyond' the Logos and the whole sphere of the Logos. Nevertheless, he is Spirit and Radiance only in the transfiguring whirlpool of love of the mystery of the divine expression which lies between Father and Son, Ground and Image. The disposition which the Spirit is and which he bestows plays, eternally and inexhaustibly, about this form of the divine love: it emerges perpetually from within it and plunges back into it again.

But if the Church is the body and the bride of Christ, then her own disposition⁵² can be only an outflow and a reflection of Christ's and, in so far as she is Christ's prolongation into the world and the means by which he unites and incorporates the world to himself, her own disposition is but a fluid transition which has no law or particular significance of its own. One can, for this reason, demand of Christ's members that their minds should be determined by a *sentire cum Ecclesia*, but, by definition, this must be identical with *hoc sentire quod et in Christo Jesu*. The feeling of the Church has its measure in the feeling of Christ and, therefore, feeling with the Church also has its measure there. To the extent that the Church is the objective reality that transcends the individual subject, even, that is, the believer who has received grace, we are justified in postulating the self-transcendence and self-denial of the individual as he is taken up into the Church's manner of feeling. The Church is the canon not only in external things and regulations, but equally in internal operations. We must here note, however, that the identity of the objective and the subjective elements in the Church must be sought where it really exists: namely, not in the average views of the mass of sinners that populates the Church, but rather where, according to the Church's prayer, the *forma Christi* best comes to prevail and best becomes impressed on the form of the Church—in Mary, in the saints, in all those who have consciously made their own form to wane so as to yield the primacy in themselves to the form of the Church: *ut per haec sacrosancta mysteria in Illius inveniamur forma, in quo tecum est nostra substantia* (Secret of the First Christmas Mass). The being-in-God of our substance occurs in the form of Christ, and the realisation of this reciprocal indwelling is the holiness of a Church that has become a reality and the transformation of the individual

soul into an *anima ecclesiastica*. And this, in turn, means nothing other than the progressive expropriation of the self that reaches to the most intimately personal level: it reaches the extreme that the individual receives (in the *analogia fidei*, Rom 12.6) precisely what is most personal to him (his charism) as apportioned by something which is more than personal. What is precisely his most intimate love-relationship bursts to become a participation in the one canonical love-relationship between God and the world: the bridal mystery between the ‘Lamb that was slain’ and the ‘bride of the Lamb’ (Rev 13.8; 19.7). No matter how strongly and urgently the individual lover may feel and know himself to be called, addressed, chosen, and overwhelmed by God’s grace, one of the chief criteria for the authenticity of his feelings will be his expropriation into the totality of the Church and, through her, of the world, even within the mystery (*arcanum*) of the divine eros. Just as for Christ himself (Mt 25.40) and for his disciples (1 Cor 13; 1 Jn 3.17; 4.20 etc.) love of neighbour is the essential criterion for the love of God, so too does love of neighbour have to find its model in the ecclesial love of Christ’s members for one another and in the primacy given to the total perspective over the individual’s point of view. This criterion proves itself even in the separation from the world of the contemplative cloister: here the believer can only offer himself to the divine Bridegroom in a manner which embraces fully his own attitude and disposition by letting himself be robbed of every privilege of personal intimacy by this God, wholly and always anew, for the sake of the Church and of the world, so that, as Carmel understands it in the sense of the great Teresa and of the little Thérèse, he may do his ‘work as love in the heart of the Church, my Mother’.

d. Remarks on the History and Criticism of Christian Experience

The reality of the experience of faith has determined the history of Christian spirituality in ever new ways, but it has also frequently driven spirituality to extremes from which the ecclesial magisterium has had to take its distance. This critique of the extremes is not a rejection of the concern itself, but, so to speak, only a part, now become audible, of the continuous and silent self-criticism of the concept of Christian experience—a criticism which is already part and parcel of the inner dialectic of the concept itself. For here we can be concerned only with an experience *of faith*, which is to say only with the

experiencing of something which is essentially hidden and which is present only through mediation, and this fact characterises not only the ‘initial’ or the ‘average’ experience of faith, but all faith-experience, even the mystical.

Experience of faith, moreover, implies that the object of faith offers itself precisely when and in so far as the person renounces his own ability to grasp and to comprehend, and surrenders and delivers himself over to what is to be believed. This is why the believer cannot desire, without contradiction, to register this self-surrender as such in a psychological manner, not even in the unique case in which the ‘object’—God himself in his revelational self-surrender—wants to indwell both the person that surrenders and his act of faith. And if God’s revelation is, further, mediated by the Incarnation of the Son and his presence through grace in the Church, the believer, in his surrender to the Church and to the Son, cannot, in turn, so wish to live, feel and experience the subjectivity of the Church and of the Son as if it were his own. The believer has already given his own subjectivity up to the Church and to Christ, not in order to find himself again magnified in them, but in order to place himself—with all his understanding, willing and experiencing—at the disposal of that Greater Thing which he is not. And if here it is again true that the Church and Christ are not simply that other which stands over against one, but rather the all-encompassing reality into which the individual is incorporated, then—even without as yet making any reference to Cross and death—the individual cannot make the claim or nourish the expectation that the experience had by that which is all-encompassing and whole will coincide with the experience of him who is only a part of the whole. But it must be noted that, in the unique case of the revelation in Christ in the Church, no comparison really applies, not even that of the ‘part and the whole’ (or of the ‘member and the body’). And the analogy between the divine person (who contains in himself and brings with himself the tri-personal divine life) and the human person who surrenders to him in love and in faith, is wholly incomparable. Now, by ‘act of faith’ and surrender what is meant in the Bible and in reality is an act of self-surrendering love to God. For this reason, it is not erroneous to say that the lover in all things renounces what is his own and desires to clear all available space in himself for the beloved; the lover, therefore, embraces as his own the experience which is the beloved’s and, on the contrary, he no longer desires to have *within himself* what a non-lover would call ‘his own experience’, but to have it only *in the beloved*. Nor, again, is it erroneous to say that, in a Christian sense, the believer can have

‘objective’ experiences in Christ and in the Church which need not be consciously perceived by him in a subjective and psychological sense. These experiences have already been ‘consigned’ by the believer to Christ and to the Church in a manner similar to that in which the form of God, which belonged to the Son as his very own, was ‘consigned’ to the Father during the time of his pilgrimage in the form of a slave. This objectivism based on love as a renunciation of self-enjoyment is the opposite of an objectivism based on insufficient love and on a deficient readiness of faith. Love’s objectivism is the result of a determined attitude of faith which is taken seriously by God and stripped of all guarantees which are rooted in the subject.

If this is true, then such an objectivism of faith is precisely not something for beginners, nor for those who hesitate in their uncertainty, but for those who are practised and experienced in faith and in love’s renunciation: such objectivism belongs to this experience and is, in a certain way, sustained and understood by it. By contrast to the consolations of beginners in faith and love, this objectivism is the ‘solid food’ of the mature. The structure of the Biblical experience of God is here once again demonstrated, and within a new dialectic. And it is the Biblical experience of God that we will take as our starting-point when we now consider the historical dialectic of the experience of faith.

In Scripture

For man in the Old Testament, the only possible encounter with God is one which involves the whole person. The Jew does not distinguish here between spirit and sensibility, soul and body. He is approached and summoned by God as a whole person, and it is as a whole person that he must answer. In this positive or negative, successful or mistaken answer, he experiences God as either gracious or wrathful. To be sure, only the positive answer is intended by God, since he desires the Covenant and unification with man: ‘to know God’, therefore, has all the spiritual-bodily urgency and intimacy of the relationship between a man and his wife. This is a knowledge of life, of presence and intimate exchange, and not an enquiring speculation into the being of God and the content of his decrees. But since the Covenant with God is inevitable, a person in covenant with him has a choice only between a positive and a negative experience. If he does not want to experience God’s

grace, he will come to know God's wrath under the form of a curse which will have its effect on his entire existence in the direst manner (Lev 26.14-40; Deut 28.15-68), in just as palpable and felt a manner as the promised blessings. Both the good and the dire promises always conclude with the same refrain: 'Then you will know that I am Yahweh' (Is 60.16; Ez 6.7; 13.14; 16.23; *cf* Ps 59.14 and all of Ps 107). These are signs both of salvation and of perdition, and through his bodily experience of them man comes to know God's might and God's dealings with him. What at first was the experience of the people as a whole (which individuals, such as Korah and his followers, represented as types) becomes individualised in the course of time. The sufferings of a Jeremiah are very perceptible and evident signs of his election and mission. The sufferings of Job can be understood only as God's very special manner of working out his salvation and not, as his friends see it according to the general wisdom of the world, as a case of someone having to make reparation for his sins. It would be too simple to dismiss as the 'childhood phase' of religion everything in the Old Testament that is perceived by the senses and which is characteristic of the Jew's whole relationship to God, and to see all this as superseded by the spiritualising mode of the New Testament. The best aspects of it are not surpassable: these are the earnestness and also the joy of the whole man's encounter with God, of his seeing, hearing and touching God as, for instance, in the psalms. Here the pious believer encounters God in the temple on Mount Zion, and on his long pilgrimage and ascent to the sanctuary he already rejoices anticipating and longing for this wholly concrete encounter.

At this point we will make a parenthetical remark that is important for what will follow. There are in the Bible—both in the Old and in the New Testament—numerous encounters with the God of revelation which we will deal with in the next chapter and which we will call archetypal. These are theophanies in which God is experienced with the senses in a purely human manner—in natural phenomena, in dreams and prophetic or apocalyptic visions, in angelic apparitions, in miracles of many kinds. These are forms of seeing God which Jesus opposes to the God-experience of faith in his reproach to Thomas: 'Blessed are they who do not see and yet believe.' These archetypal encounters with God are not what is meant here, or, if they are, then only to the extent that they conform to the other forms of encounter. But, in anticipation, we can already recall the fact that the 'eye-witnesses' understood their experiences of God to be of a kind that did not separate them

from the community of faith, but rather which bound them to it the more intimately. Their special gift was given them only to establish firmly and nourish the total experience of God and heighten its 'visibleness', a feature which this experience does not simply dispense with. In this respect, the theophany-experiences can here be included as an integral part of Biblical religion. The transitions are fluid, and it is quite possible—and not at all abnormal—that the people's faith-experiences occurred in such an irrefutably concrete way that their subsequent literary expression (based on stories handed down by tradition) constructed out of them a sense-perceived theophany.

In the New Testament things are somewhat different, and this for two reasons. God has now appeared in a man and, since part of what it is to perceive a man is that one sees, hears, and touches him, those who had to do with him may be said to have seen, heard, and touched the Word of life. It is customary to consign this experience to the category of extraordinary eyewitness, a privilege not enjoyed later on. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ remains the way to the Father precisely as one who has become man and, therefore, this seeing, hearing, and touching must unconditionally form part of the normal faith-relationship with him. The First Epistle of John, through its 'eye-witness', invites the next generation into the communion of faith, and, in so doing, it in no way establishes a distance between this second generation and the eye-witnesses, but rather introduces them into an experience which is the same as far as faith is concerned.

The second characteristic is the assimilation of the experience of faith into the fundamental experience of the Word become man—an experience of renunciation, of obedience and of suffering, a vicarious 'tasting of death' (Heb 2.9). In this way, the interior conformation of his 'brothers' (2.11f., 17) and 'children' (2.13f.) to his own experience will occur through suffering, which is precisely the basic meaning of the Biblical concept of experience used here: *πειράζειν* means 'to (at)tempt' in the double sense of 'making the attempt' (and, therefore, to 'test', 'prove', 'examine') and of 'leading into temptation' (into a situation of trial). Thus, the one who has been tempted is one (ap)proved, and Jesus 'can help those who are being tempted (tested) because he himself has suffered and has been tempted (and, thus, tested)' (Heb 2.18; cf. 4.15). In the following of Christ, therefore, the believer will primarily have to be intent on the experiment (*πειρά*, Heb 11.36) of suffering.

But this distinctively Christian (and, behind it, distinctively Biblical)

characteristic must not make us forget that every religious experience of mankind unites the double human and superhuman elements, and that the Biblical concept of experience quite expressly picks up this double element. On the one hand, a human dimension is present here: experience is then the result of having lived long or suffered intensely. Only he has knowledge who has struggled through something; he has learned what reality is. Ever since Aeschylus, the play of words between μάθος and πάθος runs through Greek literature.⁵³ It points above all to the necessity of suffering for man's education: only he has true knowledge who has gained experience at his own expense. Into this primary meaning there is then introduced a second, religious-mystical sense, which is contained already in Aristotle's famous statement concerning initiation into the mysteries: τοὺς τελουμένους οὐ μαθεῖν δεῖ ἀλλὰ παθεῖν⁵⁴ and which again is found later on in Denys' θεῖα παθεῖν.⁵⁵ Philo, who influenced the Epistle to the Hebrews in many ways, is familiar with both meanings: the natural knowledge that comes through experience and mystical knowledge, which the following passage illustrates: 'God bestows heavenly wisdom from above on those spirits which are well-ordered and which are eager for contemplation. And by seeing, tasting, and feeling in a strong way, they acquire knowledge of what they experience (ἔμαθον μὲν ὁ ἔπαθον), but they do not know whence it derives these.'⁵⁶ We must not forget how much of the Old Testament's experience of God enters into the background of such Philonic formulas. But, whether outside Biblical revelation or in the Old Testament or in Philo, both sides of human experience—the inner-worldly, pedagogical aspect and the religious or mystical aspect of faith—do not simply stand over against one another wholly unrelated. The statement of Sirach, ὃς οὐκ ἐπειράθη ὀλίγα οἶδεν, 'he who has not been tempted (who is inexperienced) knows few things' (34.10), if one thinks of Job, will be seen to embrace both realms.

This saying deserves all the more thought because it could subsequently be applied to Christ, the one tested by suffering (Heb 5.8). The meaning here cannot be that Christ, who is portrayed as the radiance of God's glory and as sublime over all the angels, was to attain perfection only through a pedagogic suffering, nor that he had to participate in a mystical initiation (for the author speaks of τελείωσις, 2.10; 5.9). Nevertheless, 'it was fitting for him' (ἔπρεπεν αὐτῷ) to be consecrated as redeemer in no way other than by his experience of suffering, in order that, from the heart of the communion of human experience, he might present his brethren to the Father and 'lead them back to

glory'. This is the full experience that the Son of God had to have, the experience of being human to the point of standing 'under the spell and the anguish of death'. As God he must *suffer* man and *learn* man, so that, together with him and led by him (ἀρχηγός, 2.10), man might experience God through his own suffering. But, even though the direction of the experience here seems to be reversed, nevertheless it is common to both God and man at a deeper level, because the Son of God, by means of this 'having to experience', places himself precisely under the law that applies to man and under the common lot of 'flesh and blood' (2.13).

Now the structure of Christian experience becomes transparent and may be summarised in two syllogisms:

1. Only through the experience of suffering does man acquire true knowledge of God and of himself. Christ, moreover, is true man. Therefore, he too acquires knowledge of God and man through the experience of suffering.

2. Christ is exemplary man (ἀρχηγός), also in his experience. Christ's exemplary experience becomes a law for whoever follows after him. Therefore, when he comes to know God and himself through the experience of suffering, the follower of Christ experiences something of Christ's own experience.

The dialectic between reversed experience (because Christ, who is God, learns what is human, and man learns what is divine) and experience in the same direction (because only a creature can learn something it does not yet know) will run through the history of Christian experience. In so doing, however, it will again and again demonstrate the fact that even the most vital and profound Christian experience cannot simply be understood with the categories of psychology, and this is so because Christ himself is the primary subject, and man participates in Christ's archetypal experience only by being raised outside of himself through sharing in grace and faith and, besides, by virtue of the inversion discussed above.

In the Fathers

Experience lies at the centre of Saint *Irenaeus*' theology. It is primarily the experience of the Old Testament extended to the whole order of salvation. Not only does experience tell man what it is to be with God or to be far from

God (that it is infinitely better to be with God); greatest emphasis goes to a second aspect that reveals the pedagogical thinking of the Greeks: it is the great grace of the economy of salvation to establish man firmly in the new experience of the nearness of God by having him experience the remoteness of God. Note well that the experience that man has in his own body is that of good and evil, and that, for Irenaeus, the experience of God is mediated by this experience of self.

Man has received experience of good and evil. It is good to obey God, and to believe in him, and to keep his commandment, and this is the life of man. Contrariwise, it is evil not to obey God, and this is the death of man. Since God, therefore, gave to man such large-mindedness, man came to know both the good of obedience and the evil of disobedience, that the eye of the spirit, receiving its own experience of both, may with judgment make choice of the better things, and that it may never become indolent or neglectful of God's command; and, perceiving in his own body that it is an evil thing which deprives him of life, man may never even attempt it. . . . Wherefore he was endowed with a double perception which mediates the experience of both things, that he may make choice of the better things with understanding. But how, if he had no knowledge of the contrary, could he have had insight into that which is good? For the perception of facts is surer and less open to doubt than the mere surmise based on opinion. For just as the tongue receives experience of sweet and bitter by means of tasting, and the eye discriminates between black and white by means of vision, and the ear recognises the distinctions of sound by hearing; so also does the spirit, receiving through the experience of the opposite an insight into what is good, become more tenacious in its preservation and in obedience to God. . . . But if anyone does shun the knowledge of both these kinds of things and the experience of this twofold perception, he unawares kills the human being in himself (*C. Haer.* IV, 39, i).

Irenaeus' fundamental thought is then developed in all directions. Man's essence is to *experience*, that is to say, by contrast to the natural perfection of the gnostics, which is given from the outset, to be a person in the temporal process of becoming, one in need of God, one who receives and is therefore a believer (IV. 20. 6; IV. ii. 2; IV. 38. i): 'Thus does man advance forward slowly and softly, and he is elevated up to the Perfect, that is, he attains closest proximity to the Immutable' (IV. 38. 3). 'Man is fashioned into his image and likeness after he has attained the experience of good and evil' (IV. 38. 5). The last experience which he must make is that of death and of the end, so that, 'attaining to the resurrection from the dead, he may experience in his own body what it is that he is being freed from, and so he may always remain thankful to God for the gift of incorruptibility. . . . Thus he will come to know himself in his mortality and impotence and, having been instructed, he will perceive how great God is. For the glory of man is God' (III. 20. 2). The experience of grace, moreover, is bestowed on us only because Christ 'endured all things for our sake, so that we, having been educated by all of

this, may in the future act with all prudence' (IV. 37. 7): without the experience of sin and of death that Christ had we never would have attained to the experience of life in God (III. 18. 7; III. 19. i). 'He became the Son of Man that he might accustom man to receive God and that he might accustom God to dwell in man' (III. 20. 2).

The peculiarly bold feature of Irenaeus, which is something that leads from the Biblical experience of God to the coming difficulty of spiritual theology, is his 'systematic' interpretation of the Bible's twofold eschatological promise as an experience with two phases which occur one after the other in time. This interpretation derives both from the Biblical and the Greek thought that man really possesses only what he has experienced—and here 'experience' once again connotes *both* the slow and laborious appropriation, in time, of what God is in truth (for man), *and* the experience of this truth about God.

It must here suffice merely to indicate the two roads that were forged in the Patristic Age from this point. Both roads, philosophically speaking, are variations of Platonism—the only great metaphysics which asserted its form in the Patristic period, and particularly in the Alexandria of Origen. It was *Origen* who pointed to the first road when, in the *Peri Archon*, he gave an account in Neo-Platonic terms of the experience of an existence removed from God. He derives this existence from the dissatisfaction with God, anterior to the world, experienced by the spirits living in unity with the divine Logos (λόγος τῆς θεῖας ἀγάπης καὶ θεωρίας, II. 8. 3, according to the Second Anathema of 543): as a result of this cooling the spirit then developed into an 'individual soul'. It logically follows from this that every time one is touched by divine grace a remembrance of that lost origin is awakened, something like an experience of what was in the beginning and what will be again in the end. After this, it is a question of theological taste to what extent the Platonic element is allowed to dominate, that is, to what extent the spiritual experience of grace on the way of purification and illumination, in the process of the soul's interiorisation and unification through contemplation, is understood and, thus, presented as the restored experience of self on the part of man's true spiritual being, which awakens from self-forgetfulness and insensibility. In Origen himself, his whole attention is captured by the objective word of Scripture. On the other hand, the praxis of Christian life takes place within the pale of confession (*martyrion*) and of the understanding of the Word (*gnosis*), so that little room remains for a theology of experience.

Things are different in the (Origenistic) monastic theology of *Evagrius*, in which the interest is directed to the gradual approximation to God and the realisation of the unmediated (ἀμέσως) vision of God in prayer and contemplation. For him, prayer is *the* theological act par excellence (*De Oratione*, ch. 60, 83-84, 86).⁵⁷ But this act is the extrication of the spirit alienated from God from its sensual nature, and its restoration to its full and bright transparency in God. Thus, what is involved here is not an *ekstasis* to a Thou, but an *enstasis* to the God present within the spirit, by transcending all sensual and spiritual forms which are found in the memory or which are conjured up by the demon. Because the negation of the sensual leads to the positing of the spiritual, Evagrius can praise the sensorium (αἴσθησις) for the spiritual (*op. cit.*, cs. 28 and 41) and equate ‘spiritual sensibility’ with *apatheia* (*Cent. Gnost.*, I, 37).⁵⁸ But, because the one who prays strives to go beyond all forms and every definable state, he can at the same time praise ‘perfect *anaesthesia*’, or ‘feelinglessness’ (*De Orat.*, 120), as the highest state of prayer. For the light of God, in which we see everything that has form, is itself formless (*ibid.*, 67.72; *Cent.*, I, 35), and only he who has been wholly freed from form can behold the face of the Father (*De Orat.*, 114). In this way, Evagrius can take up Origen’s doctrine of the five spiritual senses and, as in the *Mirror for Nuns*, praise the virginal eyes that will see the Lord, the virginal ears that hear his Word, the virginal mouth that kisses the Bridegroom, the virginal hands that embrace him (55).⁵⁹ And yet, at the same time, he can transcend every sensual and even spiritual perception for the sake of that pure primal Light that is above all certainty (πληροφορία, *De Orat.*, 80) and consolation (*ibid.*, 93) and constitutes the blessedness beyond all joy (*ibid.*, last chapter—153). And yet, on the other hand, how easily this technique of defence against all disturbances and diabolical illusions, executed with dazzling intelligence, can lead precisely to a sophisticated practice of self-observation and experimentation with oneself, is shown by the chapters from the *Praktikos* that deal with the ‘eight vicious thoughts’!⁶⁰

From this point the transition to the second road is near to hand. One needs only to interpret the Platonic conception of the fall of the spirit into the soul (as a change in its ‘state’ or κατάστασις, as Evagrius says) in the sense that the same spirit ‘perceives’ or ‘feels’ spiritually what it perceives and feels sensually in its fallen state, and we have the other interpretation. Here, too, the spiritual act of experiencing can be contrasted with the sensual and passible act of experiencing in such a way that they mutually exclude one

another. Nonetheless, the fact that both modes of experience-bound feeling are rooted in the same spiritual subject creates an analogy and a transition which quite approximates the (likewise Origenistic) doctrine of the ‘spiritual senses’. Man, however, will learn how to distinguish sensual from spiritual feeling only through manifold spiritual experience. For this reason, in this school the doctrine of the discernment of spirits, based on the experiences and perceptions themselves, will be given a central position. Two classics of the theology of experience dominate this school of thought: the author of the *Macarius Homilies* (whom Dorries has thought to identify as Symeon of Mesopotamia, though probably for insufficient reasons⁶¹) and Diadochus of Photice. The first of these, a towering figure in the history of spirituality, will have to detain us at some length. It is not our concern here to enter into the intricacies of the literary problem so as to clarify it; but, even before we have a critical edition of the whole corpus of his writings (of which Dorries has already provided us with a succinct appraisal), it is not impossible to offer a reliable theological judgment concerning the world-view of this great unknown, not least since Werner Jaeger demonstrated the lines that lead to him from Gregory of Nyssa.⁶²

Pseudo-Macarius stands out in sharp relief against the background of an enthusiastic-spiritualistic movement which was inclined to heresy and was summarily condemned by an ecclesiastical synod (that of Side, about 390) on the basis of certain propositions (and fragments of sentences) taken greatly out of context. In exactly the same way, Bonaventure was later to stand out against the background of the Franciscan spirituals, Eckhart against the background of a mounting tide of pantheism, and Fenelon against the background of Molinistic quietism. In his very personal and subtle doctrine there is nothing that could not be interpreted in an orthodox sense, but many things which were in fact misinterpreted given the vulgarisations of his surroundings (against which he clearly declares himself). The movement that was condemned at Side deserved it. But, read in context and rightly understood, the propositions of Macarius that were brought forth on this occasion, vulgarised and deformed, will be seen not to have deserved it. Two observations must serve to sketch the situation for us: 1. ‘Vulgar’ Messalianism has a Gnostic-Manichaean background: two (positive) powers—God-Light and Satan-Darkness—rule in the soul and fight for it. Whoever possesses the holy Pneuma (through baptism, renunciation of the world, and constant prayer) belongs to the Kingdom of Light. Macarius responds to this

with a genuinely Platonic-Alexandrian global vision: the soul, alienated from God by sin and fallen into a state of darkness, is returned to the glory of the light by the Son of God who comes down for this purpose. For the time being this occurs interiorly and spiritually, in the *eschaton* it also occurs corporeally. 2. ‘Vulgar’ Messalianism tends towards an experience of the Pneuma which is physical and static. Macarius combats this incessantly in all his writings, and this from the heart of his manifestly authentic and very nuanced mystical experience. Macarius’ mystical experience exhibits the following characteristics: a) It admits the possible and even frequently renewed fall of a person endowed with the Spirit who has had the ‘experience’ of the Spirit. b) It thus in no way regards an isolated experience of the Spirit as a criterion for being solidly grounded in the good, but it rather demands a constant battle through prayer and mortification in order that the good in us may be helped to victory. c) It regards as wholly real the interior (mystical) prayer-experiences both of participating in a sphere of total salvation and of being set back again into a sphere of concupiscence. d) In a few rare cases, it holds the victory (i.e. the uprooting of all concupiscence) as possible already here below, but this victory, like every partial victory, is to be ascribed solely to the grace of God, which alone can crown man’s incessant struggle with success.

The dogmatic presupposition of this spirituality is the Origenistic and Evagrian adage ὁ λόγος παχύνεται, later reduced to a formula by Gregory of Nazianzen and commented on by Maximus the Confessor: ‘the divine Logos’, which in itself is pure weightless light, ‘becomes condensed’ and materialised, takes on worldly weight, opacity, corporeality, and sensitivity.⁶³ But, while for the more radical Origenists this ‘condensation’ (Incarnation) of the Logos is only an occasion for man to join him on the way to spiritualisation, for Macarius this event whereby God participates in the realm of the senses in Christ is the positive expression of his love: through the sensual, we are to come to know God’s spiritual love.

In his goodness the unbounded and unfathomable God made himself small (ἐσμίκρυνεν). He clothed himself with the members of this body and gathered himself up from all the expanses of his inaccessible glory. Because of his kindness and his friendship towards man, he transformed himself (μεταμορφούμενος) and took on flesh. He mingles⁶⁴ with holy, believing souls who are pleasing to him and, according to the statement of Paul, he becomes “one spirit” with them (1 Cor 6.17): soul, so to speak, becomes soul, essence becomes essence, so that the soul can walk in newness of life and come to perceive (αἰσθῆσθαι⁶⁵) immortal life.

If the Logos was able to create out of nothing, how much easier is it for him to condescend and transform himself into anything he will. 'He makes himself corporeal for holy souls in so far as they can grasp him, so that the invisible may be seen by them and the impalpable may be touched according to the soul's delicate nature. They are to taste his sweetness and by their very experience (αὐτῇ πείρᾳ) realise, to their bliss, the loveliness of the inexpressible ecstasy of his light. When he so wills he becomes fire, which consumes every evil passion coming to the soul from the outside for it is written: "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12.29). When he so wills he becomes an inexpressible, ineffable calm, so that the soul will refresh itself in the repose of God. When he so wills he becomes a joy and a peace that sustain and protect the soul' (*Homilies* 4. 10f.). He himself is 'the heavenly Jerusalem, the City of Light'. For Macarius, the Kingdom of God and the Church consist entirely of the graces flowing from the unity of Christ. All of this may sound pre-Monophysite, but it is only Alexandrian, and in Macarius it acquires the new note of 'true experience and perception' (4. 12) which makes him describe Christianity so enthusiastically as 'real food and drink' (4. 12; 12. 14-17; 14. 3f-; 17. 13).

As probably nowhere else in all Eastern theology, this 'experience' of Christ is primarily an experience of the Passion, a lived stigmatisation: 'To some the sign of the Cross appeared as a splendour of light, and it impressed itself on the interior man' (8. 3). Indeed: the person truly chosen to receive the very form of Christ is one 'who considers himself to be the most outcast among all sinners. This thought is implanted in him as if it were a part of his nature. The more he penetrates into the knowledge of God, the more ignorant does he consider himself to be' (16. 12; cf. D 227ff.). He attains to humility as it ought to be only through being despised, persecuted, and scorned, just as the Lord humbled himself in the midst of all (26. 25). Thus, self-abasement is not only the imitation of the God who condescends in a manner beyond all understanding ('Just as neither the higher nor the lower worlds can grasp the greatness of God and his incomprehensible Being, so neither can the heavenly nor the earthly worlds comprehend the smallness of God and the manner in which he has made himself small', 32. 7): it is the mystery of the vulnerable Heart of God ('When Adam fell, it can be said that God wept at the sight of Adam. . . . When Adam died in the presence of God, the Creator wept over him, and angels, powers, heaven, and earth mourned his fall', 30. 7. 'As a farmer grieves over an empty field, so does the Lord mourn an empty

heart which brings forth no fruit', 32. 11). The older phrase 'to sadden grace', which goes back to Eph 4.30 (*cf Diognetus*, 11. 7), is used frequently (4. 27).

For Macarius, as we see, human-sensual religious experience and sensibility rest on an antecedent foundation determined by the theology of revelation: religious experience is the sensorium with which the soul perceives God, an instrument restored by grace and steeled by the suffering of God in Christ. As many texts show, this is the essentially bridal mystery of reciprocal empathy. To be sure, the bride is wounded (5. 5f.), but only on account of the wounds of the Bridegroom. In this way, all the great images provided by the theological tradition are here applied in a personal and existential sense. The image of Christ's descent into hell, for instance, in order to return the lost Adam and his whole race to heaven, is applied to the individual: he himself is hell and, far from God, he experiences himself to be such. 'Your heart is a burial chamber and a grave.' The torrent of hell flows in you; you are 'submerged in the waves; you have drowned and are dead', and Christ is the diver that comes to take you up from your own depths (11. 10ff.). Something similar is done with the great theological image of the exodus out of Egypt and through the desert: 'These are mysteries of the soul which truly occur in the person who strives to go into the Promised Land: he has been redeemed from the kingdom of death, has received the pledge from God and comes to share in the Holy Spirit' (*Homilies* 47. 14). Likewise the raising of Lazarus: 'Recognise interiorly that you bear within yourself the same wounds, the same stench of putrefaction, the same darkness. For all of us are children of a darkened race. . . . He alone came and cured the incurable wound in our soul' (30. 8). Likewise the story of Paradise: 'Pay close attention to your heart, and there too you will find a paradise: the Word of the Lord; your delight in it: the partaking of the Holy Spirit; the serpent: concupiscence writhing about. . . .' (D 94).

It is an Alexandrian characteristic, and one which is dogmatically incontestable, to view the spiritual creature as called by grace to the vision of God and as therefore having a choice only between dwelling in the sphere of God or in the sphere of godlessness, which is demonic. Both these things, moreover, are an experience of man as a whole, and, starting from this affirmation, Macarius has a tendency to emphasise greatly the conscious aspects of the life of grace. And, even if he sees in baptism an objective, non-experienced initial grace (D 236), he tends to regard it only as the point of departure, as it were, for the gradually intensifying experiences of grace (D

263f.; 309f.). In the same way, he regards the bare word of salvation as the indispensable beginning of all salvific activity (D 732). Grace is a challenge to one's total existence: the truth of one's faith hangs on whether a person loves God in deed (D 226) more than the world and whether he seeks the Kingdom of God first (*Homilies* 48.1ff.). The second letter offers a choice between defining Christianity according to its pure form or—and this is impossible!—according to its average realisation. Now, the pure form is (in true Cappadocian style!) man's absolute effort to correspond to grace, and, without there being any apparent proportion, this effort receives from above—from God's absolute freedom—the answer that will raise it up. Thus, the man who prays has a twofold 'experience': that God becomes palpable in his grace, and that there exists no relationship between man's effort and his perception of God. To be sure, he experiences a transport into the sphere of God and of total purity (*Homilies* 8. 3); he receives a 'foretaste of God and yet can again be oppressed by the adversary' (16. 3): consolation should not make one carefree. 'Farmers who have acquired experience from long practice are not wholly carefree when they have an abundant harvest. They brace themselves for times of hunger and want. And when they suffer hunger and want they do not, on the other hand, abandon hope. For they know that things will again be different. So it is also in the spiritual life' (16. 3). The alternation of consolation and desolation, of rapture and seeming rejection, is God's great educative process by which he seeks to detach us from our desire to hold on to what we have. What is demanded of us is the struggle, the fidelity, the effort ever directed towards God (*Homilies* 4. 5; 31. 3). And if the true Christians' consciousness of being the last of sinners seems to them to be ineradicably implanted in their very flesh, this too is a grace and God can on his own dispose things differently. The souls who are

considered worthy only of a little grace and who receive only a little drop from the abyssal ocean, perceive that they . . . are astonished at God's unexpected and strange manner of acting. . . . Grace illuminates them and brings them peace. . . . After a short time, however, everything changes in such a way that [the same person] really views himself as the greatest sinner among all men. Then again at other moments he appears to himself to be a powerful ruler or a mighty friend of the King. And yet again at other times he has the impression of being weak and poor as a beggar. Then your reason is totally nonplussed as to why things are now this way and now that. . . . Trust God as your guide. Let your soul continue in communion with God, just as a bride enjoys communion with her bridegroom (*Homilies* 38. 4f.).

What Manichaeism takes to be two realms is in reality the two aeons between which redeemed man sways. In his heart—and not only 'according to his

knowledge, but in deed and in truth’—he has already risen with Christ and has been glorified and experiences something of the heavenly Kingdom. But this interior glory will burst forth exteriorly only in the *eschaton*. He has an unshakeable trust, a certainty (*plērophoria*) and a ‘taste’ (14. 2f. and *passim*), so much so that when he does enter heaven he will not at all feel like a stranger, but will find himself quite at home (17. 3). And yet, he does not have a certainty of salvation (16. 12); and, if he does consider himself definitively saved, this will only be to his perdition (15. 37f.; 16. 12; 27. 6; D 84). His most authentic experience is this: that he ought not to rely on his own experience and that he must allow himself to be educated to the ‘correct combination of mildness and severity, wisdom and discernment, word and deed, total trust in the Lord and mistrust in oneself’ (16. 9). Thus, his experience is both supernatural (he perceives the divine) and natural (through this perception he learns to rely on God and not on his perceptions, cf. 29. 6).

‘Not his action, but his longing builds man up to be the Church’ (D 96). He himself cannot gather up his heart which is strewn over the face of the world; only the incarnate Logos can do it, and the unity thus bestowed is not man himself, but the Church (24. 2; 43. 1; 36. 1f.). Christ is the unity (as Logos and as Origenistic world of ideas), and if the soul clings to him in perfect love it becomes a partaker in that unity. Therefore, this soul is also the true pneumatic Church, whose visible form, although it cannot be bypassed, nevertheless remains bound to multiplicity. For Macarius (D 260f. as for the *Liber Graduum*, h 14, Kmosko, pp. 325f.), the earthly Church is the ‘symbol’ of the heavenly. For it, as for Christology, the principle holds that the sensual image that appears is the occasion of and the passageway to the true spiritual essence.

If we now turn to *Diadochus of Photice* we will see that the horizon narrows, and this for three reasons. First of all, Diadochus is a strict Chalcedonian. He was one of the subscribers to the definition of 451, and this for him rules out any possibility of using a Christology of metamorphosis as a basis for his theology of experience. Secondly, even though he is closely associated to monastic circles and is strongly influenced by Evagrius, he is a bishop. As such, he places decided emphasis on the objective grace of baptism, which fundamentally delivers the soul from the domination of the devil and makes it a dwelling-place for God—hence his tenacious polemic against the thesis of vulgarised Messalianism that says that the soul can at the same time be both the abode of God and of the demons. Thirdly, the

‘experience’ of God, of which he speaks on each page of his *One Hundred Gnostic Chapters*,⁶⁶ is clearly his own personal mystical experience. No less than his disciples and the Messalians, Diadochus regards such mystical experience as the way to the perfect love of God and to the experiential vision of God, which are but the ‘normal’ developments of a vital Christian life. But, at the same time, one has the impression that this experience is a unique and extraordinary gift of grace. With his subtle observations concerning the ‘spirits’ and their discernment, Diadochus appears to be more orthodox than the often adventurous speculations of Macarius. And yet, in Diadochus we are closer to the total absorption of ‘faith’ into the experience of faith. He comes dangerously close to subscribing to the Messalian principle that says that the greater the experience, the greater the grace.⁶⁷ One can exonerate Diadochus by pointing to the inseparability between experiential mysticism proper and the ordinary spiritual ‘experience’ of believers and then interpret this ordinary experience in the sense of Newman’s ‘realised assents’, and this is supported by many a feature in Diadochus’ thought: an authentic, living faith is measured by its degree of realisation (c. 20); ‘whoever is not active in love does not have even the faith he seems to have’ (21). But, in this way even baptism is but a starting-point: it restores the (objective) ‘image’ of God, while the (subjective) ‘likeness’ comes only through conscious ‘realisation’ ἐν πολλῇ αἰσθήσει, just as a painter sketches an image and only afterwards supplies the colours which will complete the portrait’s perfect likeness (89). According to Diadochus, ‘at baptism grace hides in the depths of the *nous*, and its presence is concealed even from the ability of the *nous* to perceive.’ But then, to the extent that the soul advances, God’s gift ‘communicates its sweetness to the spirit’ (77). Now, this is precisely what Macarius also had said.

The point of contention between the two, which Diadochus so strongly stresses and which could make their polemic appear to be a ‘battle between true and false mysticism in the fifth century’,⁶⁸ is not so much to be found where one might want to look for it: in the opposition between the objective faith of the Church and the subjective experience of faith. Rather, we should seek their real difference in the fact that Macarius personifies a spirituality corresponding to his Alexandrian dogmatics, while Diadochus must reconcile a thoroughly Alexandrian spirituality (which emphasises the element of experience even more than Evagrius and Macarius: the Fathers know of no other spirituality!) with a Chalcedonian dogmatics for which it is ill-fitted.

Chalcedon is strictly adhered to (*Sermo* 3. 5, 6): the ‘density of the human nature’ (πυκνότης) and its ‘truth’ may not ‘be altered’ by the ‘irradiation’ of the Godhead. But there can no longer be any question of the divine nature having become ‘condensed’ so as to become perceptible to the senses.⁶⁹ With Chalcedon, man receives his own *physis* and his own spiritual centre. He is no longer a spirit ‘grown cold’ which has fallen from the gnostic *plērôma* of primitive Christology, a spirit whose Christian experience coincides with its re-ascending to the ‘higher Jerusalem’ of universal unity in the Logos, as we find in Macarius’ conception of the soul and of the Church. Here lies the true difference between them. For Macarius, the authentic (mystical) realisation of the grace of baptism is an ascent out of the *regio dissimilitudinis*—which is also the region of contrariety, of the *dyas* and of *dipsychia*, of the ‘both-and’ and, therefore, of the inimical co-existence of God and devil—into the region of ever greater unity through love, which is the quintessence of all God’s gifts (*charisma maximum*), and which ordinarily is attainable here below only fleetingly and not as a permanent condition (something the Messalians strove to achieve). In Diadochus the mystical experience is the same, but his image of man is different. This is why he so likes to speak of the *theotokos* (of the heart, of the soul, of the spirit), of the depth of nature into which the grace of baptism descends (77) in order to dwell as sole inhabitant (80), ‘so that Satan is no longer able to remain in the soul’s depths’ (82). For this, too, Diadochus has a ‘proof from experience’: ‘this is why we feel our longing for God welling up, so to say, from the innermost depths of our heart’ (79), while the demonically perverted will in us can only ‘float by like dark clouds over the regions of our heart’ (81). The person who, through prayer, keeps the depths of the heart pure will be able to purge away, with an intense feeling, all the filth that covers the surface of the soul’ (59). This prayer is the ‘Jesus prayer’, which consists in keeping continually awake in me the memory of God (μνήμη occurs very frequently) by that ‘work’ which corresponds to the ‘spirit’s need for activity’ and which keeps it enthralled (59). It is above all the realisation of the cry of ‘Abba, Father!’ that, through his grace, the Holy Spirit utters in us—a ‘crying out along with the Spirit’, a ‘holding on to grace itself’, just as the small child clings to his mother as she speaks to him (61, with reference to Rom 8. 15, 26). Thus, as long as the believer holds fast to the thoughtful remembrance (*anamnesis, memoria*) of God and keeps it watchful by clinging to it in the face of all temptations, this remembering realises the immediacy to the ‘Ground’ both in a Platonic and in a Christian

sense. In this way, the Spirit of God is at the centre and everything contrary to God has been banished to the periphery. Diadochus also expressed this knowledge in a second and rather unsatisfactory way when he interpreted the dualism in Romans 7 between the carnal and the spiritual man anthropologically as a dualism between ‘soul’ and ‘body’. (The Messalians referred to this passage in Romans with great relish.) Expelled from the depths of the soul, the demon retains some power over man on account of the bodily passions (τὰ πάθη, 82). ‘Through the exhalations of the body, so to speak, he makes rise up in the spirit the lustful miasma of irrational pleasures’ (76). ‘Flesh’, therefore, means ‘body’ (82, at the end); the body thus becomes the seat of concupiscence, and, as in Augustine, man stands between two kinds of *delectatio*, the sensual and the spiritual (82). The devil, then, makes himself present in the spirit by means of the body which the soul inhabits: the place of the ‘theological’ κρᾶσις between the two principles of good and evil, envisioned by the Messalians (for which the aid of the Stoic theory of the κρᾶσις δι’ ὅλων had to be enlisted, combined with the Neoplatonic-Origenistic-Cappadocian analogy of the immaculate light which is present even in filthy places), is here taken by the ‘anthropological’ σύγκρᾶσις of soul and body, which explains and mediates the unity of the two principles (83). To be sure, in company with Scripture and with Evagrius, Diadochus knows that this twofoldness (66. 86f.) stems from an original fall (ροπή 88, ὀλισθος 29) which has introduced into us a ‘double knowledge’ and a ‘double sensation’ (24, 25, 29, 44, 55, 56). The five bodily senses are not evil; rather, their multiplicity corresponds to the body’s needs. But, on the other hand, the soul has but one sense of spiritual sensation which is oriented to God and his love, and this sense was split by Adam’s disobedience into a double pleasure, one higher and the other lower (29). ‘Feeling (αἴσθησις) is an exact tasting by the spirit of the things that are perceived’ (30). Something of this original feeling for God is given to the believer at the beginning of his spiritual life to set him on his way, so that ἐν πάσῃ αἰσθήσει καὶ πληροφορία, with an all embracing feeling of bliss in the sweetness of God, he may acquire an exact knowledge (εἰδέναι ἐν ἀκριβεῖ ἐπιγνώσει) of the prize of victory which is promised to the believer throughout all the efforts of self-denial (90).

This is the place where the paramount doctrine of the discernment of spirits comes to the fore, and it operates simultaneously at several different levels. The ‘sense for spirits’ effects: 1) an experiential knowledge of the

opposition between the divine and the demonic spirit; 2) man's experience of himself; 3) the experience of God's ways and his manner of educating man. What Diadochus has to say in this connection is classical and has not subsequently been surpassed, not even by the 'rules for the discernment of spirits' of the Ignatian *Exercises*. With Evagrius as teacher, it is evident that Diadochus has nevertheless drawn everything essential from his own experience. From Macarius he has taken the general characterisation of the two *pneumata* or 'winds' (c. 75; cf. Macarius, *Homilies* 2. 3f.) and their different manner of blowing: the north wind is gentle and brings calm, fine weather; the south wind is heavy and brings occluding clouds and 'demonic fogs'. After this introduction to his 'doctrine of spirits', Diadochus begins his polemic against the Messalians' view of the co-existence in the soul of the two πρόσωπα (c. 76f.). We must indeed ask what exactly πρόσωπον means in Macarius. He uses the concept to describe the two 'elements' of nature and grace, of the Old and New Covenant (PG 34. 737A), the two 'aspects' of the Church (as a gathering of believers and a gathering of individual souls: 756A), the two 'aspects' of all things (one divine and one human: 681 A); elsewhere it simply means 'example' (640A, 792A). It is, therefore, improbable that in the two passages to which objection was made (628B and 684D)⁷⁰ the word should suddenly mean 'persons'. The translation 'two parties' or 'two factors' gets the sense.⁷¹ It is the spirits of Augustine's two Cities (*Homilies* 17. 4) which struggle for the same soul: *cupiditas* and *caritas*. Diadochus begins with a simple rhythm: experience of consolation (in the beginner), of desolation (in the struggles of the advanced), of consolation (in the perfect). In the middle period one uses violence on oneself (*agere contra*, force oneself to love, act as if one possessed love, persevere in the memory of the love that was once experienced but now is not felt, and so forth: c. 90, 93). Thus, between an 'introductory joy' and a 'perfected joy' there is a 'sadness dear to God'. The soul would never enter into the struggles in which it is 'tested' if an initial joy did not summon it (c. 60). With this, the whole difference between the first and the perfected experience of joy is already expressed: the first joy is an initial experience of the Ground of Being, but still not by far its full realisation, comparable to the winter sun, which warms those exposed to it only on one side (88). This is why that first joy can easily be imitated by the evil enemy, especially if the soul reflects upon it and glories 'in the experience (πείρα) of its own sense of perception (αἴσθησις)' (33): the transition from spiritual to sensual pleasure here is

imperceptible. For this reason, the soul must be steeled by the withdrawal of feeling, which can be of two kinds: withdrawal on the basis of infidelity or as a pedagogical measure (87): the difference between both experiences and the manner of behaviour are presented in a clear and subtle way. The soul must be taught, by an alternation of consolation and desolation, to transfer its joy more and more from the periphery to its innermost depths—must be taught to establish itself in ‘hope’ (69) which lies at a provisional point midway between the periphery and the depths. The consolations become interiorised (73). Chapter 85 then expands the threefold schema to a fivefold schema and recapitulates Diadochus’ entire theology of experience:

1. The first step (baptism) is the unfelt grace which ‘hides its own presence’.

2. ‘When the whole man turns (converts) to the Lord, grace manifests its presence to the heart by an ineffable feeling.’

3. ‘Then grace again permits the soul to regress by allowing the devil’s darts to reach the soul’s most profound sensibility, so that it will seek God with greater fervour and humility.’

4. If the person is then obedient to grace and if he prays unceasingly to the Lord, ‘the fire of grace extends outward to the exterior senses’, and the temptations can no longer penetrate to the centre of the person.

5. When the fighter has finally become thoroughly poor, ‘then grace illuminates his whole nature by a perception of the depths.’ But even then temptations can always be permitted in order that (as Macarius also says) the impression might not be given that ‘our freedom has been wholly subjected to the bonds of grace’, and also so that ‘the person will always continue to make progress in spiritual experience (πεῖρα)’. Thus, even *apatheia* is described, not as a state beyond all temptation, but as a state of invincibility to temptation (98).

This then gets to the heart of the matter: the way of spiritual experience goes from an indefinite feeling of presence (ἄρρητός τις αἴσθησις παρουσίας, as Gregory of Nyssa had said before), via dramatic intermediary steps, to an experience of the depths (βαθύτερα αἴσθησις) which must be purified, tested and freed of dross both by the experiences of the night imposed by God and by the more human experiences of alternating spirits and moods. Diadochus understands this way of the faithful Christian *eros* (14, 19, 74) as a new martyrdom turned inwards (90, 94). His theology of experience, which includes many other splendid features which we have not discussed,

constitutes one of the high points of Patristic literature. Without parting company with orthodoxy, Diadochus already anticipated the questions and solutions later posed by hesychasm.⁷²

Only one more name will now be mentioned in conclusion, that of *Maximus the Confessor*. His position is partly determined by Evagrius, who for him is more the theologian and mystic of the direct ascent over all forms to the formlessness of God than the keen mystical psychologist of experience. But his position is even more strongly influenced by Denys, for whom the Godhead is found beyond all human experience (οὐδὲ αἰσθάνεται οὔτε αἰσθητή ἐστίν: *Myst. Theol.* 4). Thinking more powerfully in terms of dogmatic content than do Evagrius or Diadochus, Maximus is less concerned with an immediate experience of the divine presence and consolation than he is with the total movement of temporal existence beyond itself, towards the aeon of eternity which is its final goal and in which it again rejoins its own origin.

Within this theological experience of the whole of existence Maximus can indeed speak of *πεῖρα*: there is a *πεῖρα* of the sensibility which man should not have had (*Q. ad Thal.* 412C); a *πεῖρα* of the good which strengthens man more than plain faith (*ibid.*, 280D, 281B) and which teaches him to discern what is right (*ibid.*, 252D; *cf.* 256A, 257C, 621C; *Cent. Gnost.* 1.22; 1092BC; *Ambigua*: PG 91. 1085A); finally, a mystical *πεῖρα* beyond all νόησις (PG 91. 9A; 657C; 660B; 676B; 680C), a μακαρία τοῦ Λόγου ἀφή (*Ambigua*, 1132C). On the other hand, Maximus can also speak of spiritual αἰσθητήρια (*Q. ad Thal.* 36; 90. 381B), of αἴσθησις νοερά (*Exp. Or. dom.* 90. 877C), of αἴσθησις θεῖα (precisely during participation in the liturgy: *Mystag.* 700B, in spite of 704A and C), and he proposes a mystical paradox: τῆς ὑπὲρ αἴσθησιν μυστικῶς αἰσθήσεται γνώσεως (*Cent. Gnost.* 2. 74; 90. 1160A).

Nevertheless, in a concluding text all of this is found under the heading of οἰκονομία. There is twofold religious knowledge. The first kind is a 'relationship to' (σχετικός) which must make use of the mediation of concepts and thoughts, and this knowledge is appropriate to the earthly life and arouses in man the longing (ἔφεσις) for unmediated possession. The other kind of knowledge is 'a realisation in unmediated experience which is beyond all concepts and thought' and, as such, it is 'fulness of perception' (μόνη τῇ πείρᾳ κατ' ἐνέργειαν . . . ὅλη αἴσθησις) which surpasses all concepts. For conceptual thought and unmediated experience are mutually

exclusive (*Q. ad Thal.* 60; PG 90. 621C-623B).

The experiential dimension in Maximus depends on the seriousness with which faith is taken. Faith without deeds and without love is only a sham. But the person who keeps Christ's commandments receives Christ within himself and allows Christ to live in him—since, according to Origen, Christ is himself his own commandment (*Lib. Ascet.* 34; PG 90. 940B). But if Christ lives in the soul, then, along with him, there are also found hidden there all treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and 'these become manifest to the heart in the measure that an individual has been purified by keeping the commandments' (*Cap. de Carit.* IV. 70). And this, then, is what is meant by seeing God (*ibid.*, 72). Whoever sells everything earthly, whoever no longer has any hatred in himself to oppose to love, 'that person sees Christ, who dwells in him by the grace of holy baptism' (*ibid.*, 73; *cf.* 76f.). It is not on this, however, that the emphasis is placed, but rather on the spirit's return home to its supra-mundane origin, a return which is the constant goal of all striving through praxis and gnosis. Mystical experience is the coming-into-consciousness and the emergence of this transcendence of the spirit, a transcendence that bears within itself all that is immanent and which in an unknowable manner (ἄγνώστως) casts itself (προσβολή) at the unknowable God. This is an Areopagitic trait. But Maximus, who always thinks constructively, takes his Alexandrian inheritance up into this ascent by unifying the soul's faculties and acts in progressive syntheses of the theoretical and practical reason, and by bringing this (now surpassed) dualism of the created spirit closer to the intradivine unity of the true and the good (*Mystag.* 5; PG 91, 673-680).⁷³

Henceforth, the history of Byzantine mysticism will be a pendulum swinging between the Origenistic and Macarian motifs (faith must become an interior light and a realised experience) and the Areopagitic motifs (God is unexperienceable; faith is, at most, man's all-inclusive act in which he transcends all his knowledge and feeling). As late as Gregory Palamas both motifs are still to be found existing alongside each other.⁷⁴

In the Middle Ages

It is not here possible to do more than to rough in a few lines. The Middle Ages reconstructed the Fathers' theology of experience on its own account.

And in two respects it went beyond the Fathers: in its exploration of the dogmatic implications of the subject and in its critical delimiting of it.⁷⁵ These two tasks have yet to be concluded, as is demonstrated by Jean Mouroux's book and by the continuing controversy over the nature of Christian mysticism. A. Leonard deplores the fact that the 'authentically experiential aspect of theology has been little developed because of the exaggerations of which Protestantism, Modernism and the sects have been guilty'.⁷⁶

Even though *Augustine* seems consciously to avoid the word *experientia*, his theology bears the strong stamp of experience, as does that of all great converts from Paul to Newman. The *Confessions*, among other things, are the narrative of the existential reverberation of Christian truth in his soul. This echo, moreover, sets up sympathetic vibrations in Augustine's own innermost religious disposition, which first expressed its brokenness in Manichaeism, then its infinite longing for purification and illumination and the encounter with the highest beauty in NeoPlatonism, and which finally found superabundant fulfilment in the countenance of the Incarnate and humiliated Son of God. Even the preliminary Manichaean and Neo-Platonic stages interest Augustine much more for their existential than their theoretical and dogmatic import. He is less interested in whether Plotinus is right than in whether he, Augustine, can realise Plotinus' ecstasy. This is why, even later, he will always understand the Platonic elements in his own theory of knowledge in an existential sense: God's irradiating light is for him a revelation of the personal Word and, thus, an address, an utterance.⁷⁷ Paul Ludwig Landsberg is, thus, right⁷⁸ when he states that 'spiritual sensibility' in Augustine is not simply something demanded of him by the tradition but, rather, the necessary expression of an original religious experience. To be sure, Augustine is here dependent on Plato's unmediated vision of truth (*Republic* 7); and yet, on the crucial points, Augustine is actually negating and surpassing this position. For he is not at all concerned with the contemplation of ideas, but rather with the experience of a most vital reality, and this experience requires for its expression that to the eye of the soul (*oculus mentis*) there be added the ear of the soul and the touch of the soul. The sensual leaps forth where the Christian principle can be expressed only anti-Platonically.

With *Gregory the Great* we are already on the way to the medieval doctrine of the spiritual senses. Gregory carries on the tradition both of the

Greeks (which he had from Cassian) and of Augustine. In faith which is set in the old aeon he sees a transparency to the contemplative experience of God in the new aeon: through wisdom and the gifts of the Spirit, the soul tastes the sweetness of God. All of this is found within a dynamic theology of longing as he experiences his exile here below and the homeland above which has yet to be reached.⁷⁹

In *Anselm* we find at first the same apportioning of faith (conceptual knowledge) to this world and experience (*experientia*)⁸⁰ to the beyond, as in the decisive passage in Maximus. But then he proceeds along the lines of monastic theology: 'Whoever does not believe will experience (*experietur*) nothing, and whoever has not experienced anything will also perceive nothing. As high as experience towers over hearsay, so high does the knowledge of an experienced person surpass the knowledge of the hearer.' One should not, therefore, begin one's search until on the firm basis of faith one has attained a proven pattern of moral behavior (*gravitas morum*) and tested wisdom (*sapientia*).⁸¹

With *Bernard* and his school this *sapientia*, as the 'truth savoured through experience', becomes the very core of all of spiritual theology. *Est enim sapiens cui quaecumque sapiunt prout sunt*.⁸² This sentence, later repeated innumerable times, is the foundation of what, for Bernard, is normal Christian spirituality, which for him is wholly based on the principles of the First Epistle of John: God is love, and for this reason the possession of love is the presupposition for the knowledge of God. But only God is capable of giving love: it is the Holy Spirit's gift of grace.⁸³ The Cistercian theory of love as a principle of knowledge, which later became so famous, has here its origin, and it cannot be claimed that this theory adds anything to what John had said. Love as lived faith is for us here below the organ for the vision of God which takes the place of vision face to face. The vision of God has its truth and its confirmation in fraternal love, and it produces the *fiducia* (= παρρησία, πληροφορία) which is so essential for Bernard and his disciples. This being the 'normal' way, so to speak, for the loving Christian, the word *experientia*, while not sharply distinguished from *fiducia*, is reserved for the rarer moments of mystical encounter with God, particularly in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*: it is a *breve momentum et experimentum rarum*.⁸⁴ But it is only experience which allows us to understand the meaning of the text; to the unexperienced it will say nothing.⁸⁵ *Nec scientia, sed*

*conscientia comprehendit.*⁸⁶ Gilson has with full reason set Bernard's theology of experience in its Patristic context—from Origen and Gregory of Nyssa to Maximus and Augustine—as the self-knowledge of the spirit belonging to God, as the realisation of its 'likeness' to God over and beyond man's merely natural and sacramental character as God's 'image', as an ascent out of the *regio dissimilitudinis* and into the heavenly homeland of the spirit, and as the *excessus* and *ekstasis* of creaturely love to divine love.

Bernard's friend, *William of St. Thierry*, is the classical proponent of medieval theology of experience. His creative energy is manifested by the fact that he seeks to combine in strict unity both sources of his formation—the Greek Fathers and Augustine. His anthropology (*De natura corporis et animae*⁸⁷) is, as regards the speculative doctrine of the soul, constructed from excerpts from Gregory of Nyssa's *De hominis opificio*, which he knew through Scotus Eriugena's translation, and excerpts from the *De statu animae* of Claudianus Mamertus, who conveys Augustine's trinitarian theory of the soul. It is precisely in the combination of these sources that William's decisive contribution emerges. According to the Greeks, the baptised soul which strives to realise in itself the transition from being God's 'image' to being his 'likeness', is capable of beholding God's primal, uncreated Light within its, the soul's, own interiority, within the light that has been bestowed and created within it. To be sure, Gregory of Nyssa does not at all understand this vision as being static; rather, it is realised only through the longing of a love that is constantly going out of itself to find the infinite beauty. This is a feature that determines everything in Denys, for whom the 'nonvision' of *ekstasis* is the only vision possible. In Augustine, however, the soul is an image of the Trinity in its very structure—memory (as the foundation), intellect, and will (love). In the baptised, the Holy Spirit becomes infused, along with grace, into the soul as the gift of the Father and of the Son: the archetype (*Urbild*) enters the image (*Abbild*). Thus, the soul's understanding of itself (as the soul of a Christian believer, naturally) can become an understanding of its own quality as image (*Abbildlichkeit*), precisely to the extent that the Holy Spirit becomes the very 'soul' of the soul's self-transcending longing for God. When, through the indwelling of God's Spirit, the gravitational pull (*Schwerkewicht*) of love in the soul becomes God's preponderance (*Ubergewicht*) within it, then the *ekstasis* of love becomes the soul's feeling of God's presence within it. William's conclusion, which represents his own contribution, clinches his argument: the trinitarian Spirit is

infused, by grace, into the trinitarian soul's 'willing-striving-loving', and it is this which sustains all knowledge of the Logos and constitutes the ground of the creature. Only in this way can we understand at the level of speculation why, in William, love can be said to be the principle that underlies the knowledge of God. For Gregory of Nyssa (as also for Denys) the structure we have described cannot fundamentally be surpassed even by the *visio beata* in heaven;⁸⁸ for William this is, at least, the structure of the knowledge of God on earth.

The soul is conscious of somehow being the image of its Creator. It is also conscious of the fact that it is his image when it acknowledges the illumining light in him and the illumined light in itself. And there is more. The three things that it finds within itself—memory, intellect, and will—appear to it somehow to constitute the image of the supreme Tri-unity. . . . In its fully developed activity, each of these three faculties includes the others. . . . The soul, moreover, is conscious of the fact that these realities, these relationships constitute its real being. And here the voice of God begins to resound in its ears. Truth radiates in it, and with great attention it perceives the Word of the Lord: 'I and the Father' and my love 'are' not three, but 'one'—one single God. And you likewise, reasonable spirit, intellect and love of yourself: you are but one human being, created in the image of your Creator. . . . Come closer to the form that gives you form. . . . Its shape will become all the more deeply impressed into your substance as a greater preponderance of love will have made you adhere to that shape. . . . To strive after God means to fashion oneself after him. However, what the soul brings to its God derives not from itself, but from him who draws it to himself. O truly blessed soul! When it prays it is not itself which is praying, but the Holy Spirit who prays in its stead, as the Apostle says, and the Spirit makes his unspeakable sighs to be heard in the soul. When it speaks, it is again the Spirit speaking, and through it he makes words be heard which have a hidden sense. . . . God is the life of the soul, just as the soul is the life of the body; he is its breath, and the soul sighs only after him, as the body sighs for air.⁸⁹

For these reasons, William has placed 'feeling' (*sentire*) and 'tasting' (*gustare*) at the centre of his spiritual doctrine. For him, too, *sapientia* consists in finding a taste for God, and its seat is the *mens* or νοῦς, the innermost ground of the soul. With the tasting of God comes the vision of God: *gustate et videte* (Ps 33.9). This is then developed in a christological and ecclesial sense:

The Body of Christ is the universal Church, both of the Old and the New Testaments. In the 'head' of this Body—its uppermost and oldest part—there are four senses: the eyes [which are the Angels because of the depth of their vision], the ears [which are the Patriarchs in whom we see obedience radiate], the nose [the Prophets, who smelled from afar the things to come], and the sense of touch, which is the commonly shared sense [of the people]. Before the arrival of the Mediator these senses languished because one sense was still lacking—the sense of taste, without which the Body could not live. . . . This sense produces that blissful sensation which the soul feels in its very foundations. This special feeling, proper only to taste, allows the soul to distinguish between the sensations it receives. . . . Now the sense of taste is located where the

head is connected to the body, and this is the place of him who, through his Incarnation, was placed 'a little lower' than the Angels, than Moses and Elias, than the Patriarchs and the Prophets. . . . It is Christ who has 'tasted all things' and, thus, made them savoury for us, by reason of the interior taste of his divinity—that *sapor* through which he became *sapientia* for us (1 Cor 1.30). Because he possesses life in himself and communicates it to the Body, he has been the author of joy both for himself and for the Angels, . . . and, together with life, he has 'infused joy into the Body.'

Christ bestows this taste on us by interpreting for us the Scriptures and the mysteries (sacraments) of God.

We do not only understand these mysteries: we touch them, probe them, so to speak, with the hand of experience; and this can happen only through a sort of sense of consciousness (*sensus conscientiae*) and through a well-trained experience (*experientia*) which understands (*intelligentis*) and, what is more, reads in its own interior (*intus in seipsa legentis*), feeling God's goodness and power.⁹⁰

The variations on this theme are almost endless, especially in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*; and yet, the basic thought always remains the same. For William, it is an *inspirata experientia*,⁹¹ one which, as it feels God, offers a supreme certainty (*per sensum certissimae experientiae*)⁹² and which, therefore, to the extent that this is possible for faith here below, already contains the vision of God. In this process, understanding passes over into love and love into understanding.⁹³ 'See, he stands before the door!' exults the bride. ' "See!" refers to the tasting.' The wall is what still separates, namely, sin, but 'in my God I jump over the wall' (Ps 17.30).⁹⁴ For the love with which the bride loves is already the Beloved: '*Amor ipse, hoc est quod Tu es: Spiritus Sanctus tuus, o Pater, qui a te procedit et Filio, cum quo tu et Filius unum es. Cui cum meretur affici amori, amor humanus divinus quodammodo affiitur.*'⁹⁵

We do not here need to follow any further the development of the doctrine of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and of the 'wisdom that savours': the road would lead us to the other Cistercians, to the Victorines, to Rupert of Deutz, Adam Scotus and Hildegard of Bingen. The texts are legion; in their vitality and in the fantasy of their ever-new formulations, they witness to the fact that we find ourselves here in the very sanctuary of medieval piety. Everywhere these texts speak of joy, of the certainty of faith, of an abandonment to God's love which trusts because it has experienced, of a 'certain sweetness of the divine inspiration',⁹⁶ an 'anticipated tasting of the divine sweetness',⁹⁷ an introduction to the heavenly vision by means of the wisdom that savours.

Nevertheless, it is evident that the criterion of subjective evidence cannot hold its own for long when it is taken out of the context of the monastic and contemplative life and placed in the cool and rational air of the schools and their atmosphere of distinctions. Landgraf has vividly described this process of decay, and it is significant that he does this by tracing through the development of the idea of the 'knowability of one's own state of grace'.⁹⁸ With Abelard there is a turning to psychology: it is one's own conscience that tells one whether one is a slave or a son. In Bernard, on the contrary, there is a rejection of all certainty; there are only indirect signs. In Peter Cantor (commenting on 1 Jn 4.7) we see the attempt to distinguish between a *certitudo viae* and a *certitudo patriae*; the former is, indeed, a *cognitio per experientiam*, which is certain, to be sure, but which is yet only conjectured and cannot be further explained. Stephen Langton distinguishes the *conscientia notitiae* from a *conscientia experientiae* (or *sentire experimento*), which is not 'real knowledge' but mediates only a probable knowledge. Elsewhere in Langton we read that, at the beginning of love, no one knows whether he has it, and, as it grows, one can know about this love *per experientiam*; and yet, says Langton, it would be more correct to say that real knowledge can come only through private revelation. Godfrey of Poitiers equates *experiri* with *conjecturari* or *vehementer opinari*. Many may have feelings of consolation, but these do not all necessarily come from the Holy Spirit. For Praepositinus, 'knowledge' here means 'faith'. But, on the other hand, he, no more than Peter of Capua and the circle around Odo of Ourscamp, would not deny that at the highest degree of *caritas* a *perfectio certitudinis* is possible which casts out fear. J. Auer has traced the history of this problem further.⁹⁹ The Franciscans mediate between monastic and scholastic theology in the sense that they reject a speculative knowledge and certainty but, in turn, affirm an affective knowledge and certainty which, however, are not infallible. Albert and Thomas, on the other hand, reject every immediate experience of the state of grace without a special revelation; only indirectly and through certain signs can the state of grace be supposed to exist.

It is important to notice that the discussion has here been totally shifted and concentrated on the *I*, while the objective evidence of Christian truth has been disregarded. By its predominantly negative decision, scholasticism rejected in advance the Protestant concentration of the evidence on the subjective certainty of salvation. The way the question was put, furthermore, slipped on

to the psychological plane and, thus, experience itself was conceived directly and statically in a way which no longer takes into account or even sees the lively totality of Christian experience in Macarius and Diadochus. Both not only *would* have given, but in fact *did* give a resounding No! to the question as stated by early and high scholasticism.

The wider horizon still remains open in the theology of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as developed with equal devotion by Dominicans, Franciscans, and secular theologians. Now, in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the gifts were most popularly considered to be dispositions and aids given with baptism and infused together with the virtues—dispositions and aids from which the Christian life of the virtues then developed. But Thomas reverses this order. Even though he, too, considers the gifts to be already given in essence with grace, he makes their activation and actualisation dependent on the progress and degree of development of the virtues. This shift is characteristic. A certain Platonising trend of thought will conceive the gifts as *aptitudines receptionum a fonte gratiae*—as the passivity with regard to God infused by baptism: *Sapere enim et degustare spirituales delicias ac sapes magis est recipere ac influi quam efflui, similiter et intelligere spiritualia ac divina (intelligere inquam intellectu qui est donum) magis videtur illuminari sive lumen recipere quam lumen huiusmodi intellectu agere vel effluere* (William of Auvergne).¹⁰⁰ ‘Mystical experience’, therefore, basically begins at baptism. Thomas, however, separates mystical experience from baptism by introducing the sphere of the activity proper to the created spirit, and he thus makes room for an autonomous and even Christian psychology. It is only from the latter that he develops, slowly and carefully, the sphere of the ‘gifts’ as the sphere of ‘mysticism’, as a new adaptation of the finite spirit to the inspiration of the infinite Spirit.¹⁰¹ This adaptation, moreover, is fundamentally necessary to salvation,¹⁰² even if its development and perfecting remain open as it were upwards, in the direction of mystical experiences.

In this way Thomas established a balance between monastic and scholastic theology, but, in so doing, he assigned a very definite place to experience as a criterion, which at the high points of its history—in Diadochus and William of St. Thierry—had seemed to absorb all else in itself: according to Thomas, the place of experience is that of a Christian love that has gone through trials and has been confirmed. In the theologians of experience we have mentioned, the element of experience threatened to swallow up the whole of objective

dogmatics and the act of faith oriented towards it, something which had not been the case in John, who is the very archetype of a Christian theology of experience. The 'beauty' of God that enraptured these theologians and whose flame they felt burning in themselves cannot be measured by this flame itself, even when it is experienced as a burning and insatiable longing (ἔφεςις). This is why already Maximus was perfectly right to subsume the dualism between a yearning love and faith in the supreme synthesis of a Christian attitude. Moreover, a Platonising theology of experience has the tendency to make the objective image of God's appearance in salvation-history, with Christ as its centre, become too quickly a transparency of the 'formless' light of divine glory; it has the tendency to dwell too much on the interior experience of how the Holy Spirit takes over command in one's own spirit and to pay too little attention to the historical form of God's glory, on which every interior spirit remains dependent. Against this absorption of the objective evidence by the interior experience (which to this day remains the tragedy of Protestantism), the Catholic theology of experience has forged three weapons.

1. In the first place we must take note of the care with which Thomas uses the concepts *experimentum* and *quasi-experimentum*, and of the breadth of the meaning he allows these. For him, wisdom as a gift of the Spirit is founded upon an ontological kinship of the child of God with God. Here he invokes the Areopagite's saying: *patiendo divina didicit divina*, and the Apostle's: 'The anointing will teach you all things.' 'Wisdom has in itself a certain self-sufficiency of knowledge, so that it possesses within itself a certainty concerning great and marvellous things which are unknown to others, and it can judge all things. . . . This sufficiency derives, in some, from research and learning, coupled with a liveliness of intellect. . . . But in others it derives from a certain kinship with the divine',¹⁰³ from a certain *compassio sive connaturalitas* through which the Christian who lives his faith understands the things of God even without having learned them.¹⁰⁴ This is perfected in the theology of the *missiones*, that is, of the sending of the divine persons of the Son and of the Holy Spirit into the soul of the grace-filled person, who thereby acquires a participation through grace in the life of the Trinity. 'Just as the Holy Spirit penetrates invisibly into the human spirit through the gift of love, so, too, the Son through the gift of wisdom, whereby he himself becomes manifested to us as the goal of our return to God.' This relationship to the Son and to the Spirit does not have to become conscious in an actual

sense; a *cognitio habitualis* suffices, ‘even though the gift received is in itself sufficient to lead (*sufficienter ductivum*) to a knowledge of the Person that is coming’.¹⁰⁵ For, in this whole context, Thomas distinguishes God’s gifts at the creature’s going forth from God (these are the gifts of nature) from God’s gifts at the creature’s return to God (these are the gifts of grace)—gifts by which the trinitarian God is to be grasped by man as he is in himself. At this point, the relation of the creature to the divine person is one of possessing and holding. ‘A divine person can only be possessed by us either for full enjoyment (*ad fructum perfectum*)—and this occurs in heavenly glory—or according to an imperfect enjoyment, as occurs with sanctifying grace, or, more exactly, by means of what unites us with the person we are to enjoy. . . . This is why the Holy Spirit is called the “pledge of our inheritance”. . . and knowledge of him is, therefore, *quasi experimentalis*.’¹⁰⁶ The same is said of the Son: whoever receives him with love as the Word of God, to him the Son is sent so as to be ‘known and perceived; for perception connotes a certain experimental knowledge’.¹⁰⁷ Thus, Thomas does not shy away from speaking about an ‘affective or experiential knowledge of the divine goodness and will’ whereby a person ‘experiences (*experitur*) in himself the taste of divine sweetness and pleasure in the divine will’.¹⁰⁸ At this point we should, as well, repeat everything we have said concerning the act of faith as founded on connaturality.¹⁰⁹ But it is even more important to note that here Thomas is but completing, in the supernatural realm, his theory of natural being and knowledge, since for him all knowledge presupposes an ultimate connaturality between knower and known, and this not only where worldly beings are involved but also as between God and creature.¹¹⁰ Christian experience confirms the axiom *gratia supponit et elevat naturam*, even while preserving the radical newness of divine revelation. From this starting-point modern theologians can also develop a theory of Christian experience.¹¹¹

2. A particular trait of the scholastic theology of the gifts must still receive special mention: the relationship of the gifts to the total corporeal-spiritual object. This trait was to be found earlier in Diadochus (and, in his own way, even in Gregory of Nyssa), when he describes in poetic words the ‘divinisation’ even of the irascible and concupiscible elements—the manner in which these are made useful by the love of God: it was on such a chariot [of passions] that Elijah rode up to heaven! (c. 62; for the ἐπιθυμία, see *Visio* R 18¹¹²). For John of Salisbury (*De septem septenis*) all the powers of the

soul, even the imagination, are divinely in-formed by the seven gifts.¹¹³ At the beginning of his *Summa*, Praepositinus describes his theory of the gifts brilliantly when he portrays them as the seven winds on which God ‘rides’ into the soul and over which he alone has power. And so Praepositinus sees the *ratio* as being informed by ‘wisdom’ and ‘understanding’, the irascible and concupiscible soul as informed by ‘counsel’ and ‘knowledge’, and the affections by ‘fortitude’, ‘piety’ and ‘fear’.¹¹⁴ For Philip the Chancellor, these *passiones* participate in the gifts to the extent that they are anchored in the spiritual soul: *gustare* belongs to the desiring faculty, *adhaerere* to the ‘wrathful’ faculty, *cognoscere* to the rational soul—and all three of them together constitute the *experimentum*. William of Auvergne concludes that the gifts of the Holy Spirit make all things transparent to God—even the external things of this world; for this reason, one comes to recognise their religious significance both in nature and in art. Even the invisible powers of the sacraments somehow become experienceable, and all ecclesial institutions, their ministers and ceremonies, the parables and the prophecies—all reveal their divine meaning.¹¹⁵ This is important, because in this way the total structure of Christian perception becomes visible: it is the whole man who has to respond to the whole form of revelation as it appears within the whole of the created world, and it is God who empowers him to give such a response.

3. Christian experience (*experientia*) had been situated by Macarius, Diadochus, Gregory, Bernard, William and their followers in the realm of mysticism. Now, the extrication of Christian experience from this context, or, better, the delimitation of a mode of experience which is ‘mystical’ in the narrower sense over against the experience of ‘ordinary’ faith, could have resulted in the definitive separation of both spheres, with no element of experience at all being allowed to ‘ordinary faith’. Yet this did not happen until modern times. In spite of everything, the late Middle Ages and even Baroque spirituality still think from an undivided centre. What, in a more modern sense, is called ‘mystical’ experience, at that time was still viewed as the particular unfolding of the general and, so to speak, ‘normal’ experience of the Christian who is seriously seeking to live his faith. This holds not only for the spirituality that mystics like Suso and Tauler preached from the pulpit, but (with even greater influence) for the spirituality of Ignatius of Loyola, who, speaking out of what undoubtedly was a most intimate mystical

experience and hearkening back to Evagrius, Diadochus, Cassian, and the Cistercians,¹¹⁶ sets up his ‘rules for the discernment of spirits’ as criteria for every Christian who is ardently seeking for God’s will. What we have here is the experience of being ‘moved’ and ‘driven’ (*Exercises*, n. 6) by various spirits, an experience which, on the one hand, can to some extent be interpreted by considering the individual state, but which reveals its full meaning only when seen in a sequence of states directed towards a single goal, such as had been portrayed especially by Diadochus. In this respect the privileged weeks of the Exercises are to be considered as a kind of concentration of the whole of Christian existence. This is so because, first, what is involved is the decisive choice of life according to God’s will and, second, because the sequence of the four weeks represents a sketch, as it were, of the Christian’s path to perfection. For this reason, Ignatius assigns the ‘rules for discernment’ for beginners to the ‘first’ week, and to the ‘second’ week those for the advanced who already exhibit in part authentic mystical traits. Ignatius always kept awake within himself—and desired for his followers—the particular Christian sensibility, which for him is, inseparably, both natural and grace-given; this is why he constantly prayed for the gift of tears, which he prized no less than the Desert Fathers. The ‘attunement’ of man to the mysteries of salvation plays the greatest of roles in the *Spiritual Exercises*: man’s disposition is to ‘correspond’ and be harmonised, and this correspondence must be prayed for (ns. 48, 55, 65, 193, 199, 203, 221); however, as far as possible, it must be created and acquired by man himself (74, 79, 80, 129, 195, 206, 229) so that, in his spiritual-sensual totality, man may come to experience and realise the contemplated mystery by ‘applying his five senses’ to it (121-125). Likewise, all experience (of any kind, whether of consolation or desolation) is regarded as a sign from God that must be attended to, ‘and one must be particularly attentive and persevere in repose when one has felt greater interior movements and greater spiritual relish’ (227), ‘for it is not much knowledge that satisfies the soul, but tasting and feeling things from within’ (2). This total attunement to revelation is subservient to the goal of coming to understand God’s being and will in order then to correspond to him. For this reason, we can no more speak here of a religion of feeling than we can of a rationalistic religion: the aim is that higher middle way which we can call ‘existential Christianity’,¹¹⁷ and this is precisely the goal of our whole study.

Keeping to this higher middle way is difficult, and after an initial

inclination toward the theology of experience (Francis Borgia, and later Baltazar Alvarez) the opposite tendency towards rationalism (Rodriguez) was hardly avoidable. Lallemant stressed with reserve, and Surin with passion, the inalienable rights of total experience, and they pointed to the courage necessary to persevere in it.

The critique of Christian experience has been conducted in the most pertinent way precisely by those who have had the deepest experience. From the greater breadth of their own experience they have been able to detect the provisional character of a more superficial experience. In this context, it is less important whether the fundamental experience was, as in John of the Cross, the transformation of one's whole being into the living fire of love or, as in Francis de Sales, a quiet, expectant attitude that permeates all more superficial experiences of happiness or, as in Fenelon, that ascetical renunciation of all self-enjoyment, that finding of gratification in God alone, that state of indifference to which he wanted to give the name of *amour pur* and which he thus consciously linked with the ἀπάθεια of the Fathers.^{[118](#)}

We can sum up this stage of our enquiry as follows. We have seen that the history of the Christian concept of experience took its departure from the unreflected unity between mystical experience and 'ordinary' experience. We have also seen that reflection on this unquestioned unity (which began seriously only in modern times) led to delimiting particular mystical phenomena within the experience of faith. Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to conclude that, because of this separating off of the particular from the general, the general has been robbed of all authentic Christian experience and could, therefore, be assigned to the realm of pure psychology. We can and must draw the boundary between, on the one hand, those who, as qualified witnesses, are mystics by vocation, and, on the other hand, the rest of believers. In this sense the Jesuit tendency, as represented by Poulain and Richtstätter, is quite justified. But in so doing we must not overlook the analogy, and even a certain continuity, that exists between both kinds of experience. Precisely because mystical experience remains an experience within faith and because faith in Christ is already a genuine and objective encounter of the whole man with the Incarnate God, there exists a 'radical homogeneity' between mystical experience and faith. Mystical experience is

an experience which prolongs another experience by deepening, purifying, clarifying, transcending, and crowning it. . . . Only if the integral Christian experience can be shown, if not

to initiate, then surely to prepare for mystical experience, can it be proven that the latter is not a degenerative phenomenon. Only if Christian experience does not stand over against mystical experience in heterogeneous fashion will authentic Christian living not be undervalued or mystical experience overvalued. This way of stating the question is of decisive importance. Despite all that is said in Scripture and the tradition of the Fathers, Christian experience has not been sufficiently investigated in itself because it was simply confounded with mystical experience; in consequence men sought either to rediscover in normal Christian life an experience of the mystical type (so the heretics) or to deny its existence (so the Catholics).

But, as Baroque spirituality has demonstrated, this last solution leads to a secret re-introduction—one which dogmatically is not sufficiently founded—of mystical elements into the piety of believers (discernment of spirits, discernment of vocations, role of experience in the theology of faith and of grace), and it also ‘leads to a casuistry of the spiritual life’ or to a ‘description of Christian life according to a mystical model, but one which is an impoverished imitation. The true value of the mystical superstructure will be clarified only when the sustaining foundation—integral Christian experience—has first been established.’¹¹⁹ The full Christian experience, however, is not an individual experience which may be isolated from all else; it is, unconditionally, an experience within the context of the Church. It is ‘a personal history which is imbedded in the greater history of the Church—a spiritual becoming which is incarnate and is lived within the Church’s own process of becoming. It is the effort to develop what has been given, to discover what is hidden, the effort to attain to oneself by attaining, through the Church and within her, to the mystery of Christ, the Saviour.’¹²⁰

This is precisely the point where the whole difficulty we have been examining is transcended, and we shall be able to return to it again only if it is first measured as a participation in an archetypal experience which, precisely, is not the ‘mystical’ experience (since this is not the foundation of ordinary Christian faith): the archetypal experience is the encounter with God of the Bible, which is what lays out the foundation and the condition for all Christian experience. This experience, too, is not an experience beyond faith; the ‘eye-witnesses’, precisely as such, are also archetypal witnesses of Christian faith. And it is because they are both things simultaneously—eye-witnesses and witnesses of faith—that they are, without question, the ‘foundation’ upon which all Christian faith is built (Eph 2.20).

2. ARCHETYPAL EXPERIENCE

a. The Archetype as Model

The Biblical experience of God in both the Old and the New Testaments is characterised as a whole by the fact that the essentially 'invisible' (Jn 1.18) and 'unapproachable' (1 Tim 6.16) God enters the sphere of creaturely visibleness, not by means of intermediary beings, but in himself. He who is formless takes form in the world and in history, and can be encountered and experienced by the whole man in this form which he himself has chosen and put on. This structure of Biblical revelation should neither be sold short nor overplayed. It could be sold short by the view that the God who reveals himself in creation and in salvation-history is not really God himself, but, rather, that, as the Gnostics held, he remains in his higher world and deals with creation only through intermediary beings. And it could be overplayed by the view that all that God has instituted for our salvation, culminating in his Incarnation, is in the end only something preliminary which must finally be transcended by either a mystical or an eschatologico-celestial immediacy that would surpass and make superfluous the form of salvation, or, put concretely, the humanity of Jesus Christ. This last danger is not so far removed from the Platonising currents of Christian spirituality as one would hope or want to believe: the impulsive search for an 'immediate' vision of God that would no longer be mediated by the Son of Man, that is, by the whole of God's form in the world, is the conscious or unconscious basis for many eschatological speculations. The attempt to construct a Christian theological aesthetics, however, stands or falls with the rejection of such tendencies. The perception of God, who is imperceivable in himself and yet has become perceivable through his free grace, is realised when God comes into the world and, yes, *becomes world*. His allowing us to participate in his Godhead, which is above the world, precisely in this and no other way, occurs not in a second process, but in the one and only process. This is the *admirabile commercium et conubium*. In God's condescendence lies man's exaltation. The Incarnation is the eschaton and, as such, is unsurpassable. Whoever strives to go beyond this, whoever deems that the Father is still not visible enough in the Son, has not given sufficient thought to the fact that the Father has revealed himself in the Son, the 'radiance of his glory and the expressive image (*Ausbild*) of his being', the 'total heir' not only of his historical revelation, but of his entire 'universe' (Heb 1.3). Nor has he sufficiently pondered the fact that, after this Word, who is the Alpha and the

Omega, the Father has nothing further to communicate to the world, neither in the present aeon nor in the aeon to come. He has not considered that, as Irenaeus often repeats, the Son is *the* visibleness of *the* Invisible One, and that this paradox, with the simultaneity it expresses, remains the *non plus ultra* of revelation.

For this paradox there exists only the aesthetic analogy whereby the given form definitively remains the locus for the theophany of the gods. In this Schelling is right as against Hegel. But Irenaeus and Diadochus are also right as against every tendency to portray the *visio facialis* as something lying beyond the Incarnation.

‘I shall be refreshed with the vision of your glory’ (Ps 16.15). The Prophet speaks thus not because the divine nature itself has a definite face and form, but because in the form and in the glory of the Son the formless Father will reveal himself to us. For this is why it has pleased God to make his Logos enter the human form through the Incarnation—while he himself, to be sure (how could he not?) remained in his almighty glory—so that man, beholding the condensed form of that glorified flesh (for form sees form), might be enabled, after his purification is completed, to see the beauty of the Resurrection as it manifests God (Diadochus, *Visio* R 21).

The visibleness of the Father in the (transfigured) Son is, for (transfigured) man, no more ‘indirect’ than is, on a philosophical level, the contemplation of Being within the existent. To see Being elsewhere, to see it *as* an existent, would contradict the essence of cognition itself.

Working back from this eschatological point, God’s total revelation to the world must be considered to be homogeneous from beginning to end, a revelation which substantially remains the same through all modal changes. The basis of all this is the revelation of the creation, which is neither surpassed nor made superfluous for all the revelation of grace and glory. To think otherwise would be to adopt a gnostic and Marcionite cast of mind; God then would contradict himself and as Redeemer would destroy what he had set up as Creator. The world is the stage which has been set up for the encounter of the whole God with the whole man—‘stage’ not as an empty space, but as the sphere of collaboration of the two-sided form which unites in the encounter. This is why the mighty, Incarnate Word is the ‘total heir’ through whom the universe is sustained, explained, and justified (Heb 1.3). By not crushing and surpassing the form of the world with his revelation, but, rather, by taking it up and perfecting it, God honours his creature, honours himself in it as its Creator: the Son honours the Father and the Father the Son. The christological form as such is, absolutely, the form of the encounter

between God and man. This encounter bears the form of the Incarnation, already in the Old Testament and still in the Resurrection. For this reason (and not on account of a subjective theology of experience), this encounter also has the form of a totally human encounter with the God who has become man.

Christ, the full and perfect man, has in his own totality the experience of what God is. He is, with body and soul, the embodiment of this experience. And, as God-become-man who reveals God to man, Christ, even as God, has the experience of what man is:¹²¹ man, that is to say, both as God wanted him to be and also as he at the same time recapitulates in himself everything living in the world which is forgetful of God. Men are invited and, in their own way, initiated into this highest archetypal experience. This archetype is both things at once: the inimitable and what must be imitated. It determines both itself and what is alien to itself, without both things being able to come under one common head. Thus, at the same time Christ determines both himself (what may and should be called his attitude towards God, or his *fides* in the Old Testament sense¹²²) and the faith of his disciples. On the other hand, he determines the Christian faith which corresponds to this reciprocity between Christ and the Church, and the faith of the Old Testament which is oriented towards it. Finally, he determines the experience of God of both the Old and the New Aeons. The measure which is applied is the christological—the measure of God's Incarnation. This is why, for all the distance between man and God and for all the proximity of discipleship, what is at stake is man as a whole, his realisation beyond himself in the God-Man, who does not present to man an unreachable and eccentric possibility of being human, but, rather, the very measure whereby God measures man.

Because this Christ-measure is and remains God's measure, an overall view of the relationship between Christ and his disciples, Christ and the Church (and each individual within her), Christ and the Old Testament, is not possible. Such a view would again presuppose their subsumption under a common head. We can only accept this measure as we find ourselves measured by it. For our problem this means the following. Christ is the archetypal relationship of man to God, a relationship measured only by itself, and he is this as a true historical man. For this reason, Christ introduces into his archetypal manner of being a measure, a portion of the world and of world-history which we know as the sphere of the Biblical experience of God. This sphere, as the locus of the historical encounter with the God-Man

(both as promised and as present), is a sphere that participates in the archetypal nature of Christ (merely participates, because the archetype of the God-Man can be participated in only as itself being unpartakable) which, as such, including Christ as centre, must become archetypally and, therefore, unpartakably exemplary for the sphere of Church history.¹²³ The levels of imitation appear in Paul, and here imitation at each step indicates the inviolable difference between levels; but it also indicates that the imitating level always imitates the *whole* of the imitated level. Thus, Jesus' archetypal experience of God is a 'super-faith' which is one with the vision of the Father. The God-experience of the disciples as eye-witnesses is an imitation which, indissolubly, consists of faith in Christ (and, with Christ, in God) and of a total human vision of Christ (and, in Christ, of the Father in the Holy Spirit). The Church's experience of God (and again, at a stage lower, the God-experience of each individual within her) is an imitating participation in this archetypal unity between faith and vision that we find in the eye-witnesses through the apostolic and ecclesial *kerygma*: 'That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life. . . , this we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ' (1 Jn 1.1ff.). Thus, it is not as simple as saying (Jn 20.29 notwithstanding) that the Apostles possessed actual vision in addition to their faith, while we have naked faith without the vision. Rather, at our own level and through the eyewitnesses' communication of their (relatively and dependently) archetypal experience, we imitate the total structure of their Christ-experience (and, hence, of their God-experience with Christ).

This becomes fully intelligible only when we consider the fact that the God-experience of the incarnate Son is the experience of the Mediator and, hence, an experience which must be mediated: taken in itself it is not and could not be finally comprehensible. In consequence, the God-experience of Christ's witnesses (to whom the Old Testament Prophets also belong) is not, in turn, comprehensible in itself, but only in their function as witnesses, as ones sent out to the Church and to the world, as the foundation on whose functional experience the existence in faith of the coming Church can be built up. Neither of the archetypal forms of the encounter with God are, properly, self-contained, no more than is the Old Testament form of that encounter. 'Now these things happened to them as archetypal symbols (τυπικῶς), and

they were written down for our instruction' (1 Cor 10.11). 'All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas,. . . all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's' (1 Cor 3.21ff.). The meaning of the archetypal experience is in each case inclusive. The measure of being included in the original Christ-experience is at the same time the measure of the apostolic mission: the more a person participates (*teilnimmt*), the more must he (and can he), in turn, communicate (*teilgeben*), not out of a gratuitous generosity, but in virtue of the intrinsic teleology of his experience. In this way there arises a lively unity of descent and ascent: 'normal' ecclesial faith can be understood only in an ascending movement as the participation in the archetypal faith of the Apostles and in the total structure of experience within the sphere of Sacred Scripture. But the faith of the Apostles can be understood only as a function of the faith of the Church: the testimony of the eyewitnesses finds its reason for being in the Church; for the sake of the Church the eye-witnesses were expropriated, to be made the 'lowest of all' and the 'foundation' (Eph 2.20), and they were thus put in the 'last place' (1 Cor 4.9). It is the law of the 'Body of Christ' that rules here between the 'superior' and the 'lowermost' members (1 Cor 12.21-26).

The testimony of the eye-witnesses must, thus, be considered from two perspectives. First of all, in itself. Here we have archetypal experience at different levels: Old Testament experience; Christ's own experience of God; the experience of the Apostles and, in a privileged position, the experience of the Mother of the Lord; then the experience of the Church in so far as she is the bride and the body of Christ; finally, the experience of that special participation in the sphere of eye-witness to which the appearances to Paul make a sort of transition and which is constituted by the mystical vocations in the Church. The experiences of God in the Biblical sphere are an integral part of the objective form of faith. Neither the Prophets nor the Apostles are mere 'extras' in the cast; in their own place, they belong to God's appearance in the world; and yet we cannot say that, for this reason, faith has itself as object. God's exchanges and dialogue with man (who is always particular and non-interchangeable) within the human and historical situation of Jesus Christ can be understood and contemplated only historically and concretely in place and time, in the unrepeatability of my personal situation. It is theologically impossible, in the interests of a 'universal' concept, to abstract from the historical persons with whom the historical Christ associated.

Secondly, however, the testimony of the eye-witnesses must be considered

from the viewpoint of the inclusion of ecclesial faith, that is, with consideration of the manner in which every Christian believer is represented in the situation of concrete and fully human encounter. Once again, this raises the question of the total human character of faith, practically speaking, that is, of the sensory character of faith. Do the bodily senses participate in Christian religious knowledge, for the reason that the objective form of faith is ‘God in the flesh’—something which, precisely, requires such a sensory encounter? The senses will have to be differentiated, and investigated with regard to their theological significance. What does it mean, for the life of faith, to ‘see’ in a Christian manner, to ‘hear’, ‘touch’, ‘taste’ in a Christian manner? While in the foregoing chapter we spoke of experience (αἴσθησις, *peĩra*, *experimentum*) only in a general sense, we must now raise the question of the ‘spiritual senses’. Both viewpoints are central to a theological aesthetics. For the moment they can be dealt with only from the side of the subjective evidence (even if, as is evident, this cannot be done without constant reference to the object, all the more since in Christ subject and object coincide); nevertheless, the full range of the question will be revealed only when the objective evidence is treated thematically in the second part.

b. General Reflections on Archetypal Experience

It was, above all, Cajetan who emphasised the fact that an archetypal experience of the God who reveals himself is necessary for faith. This in a commentary on the passage where Saint Thomas says that a prophet ‘has supreme certainty concerning those things which the prophetic Spirit expressly infuses into him, and also concerning the fact that these things are revealed to him by God. . . . For if he did not have such certainty, then neither would the faith which is based on the pronouncements of the Prophets have any full certainty’ (IIa IIae 171, 5). Cajetan turns this into a general law of revelation:

It is necessary for mankind—with that necessity of gentle disposing with which the divine wisdom orders all things—that some persons receive such a revelation from God concerning the things to be believed, that they possess a self-evident certainty (*quod certi fuerint evidenter*) that God has revealed these things, and that others may be taught by them as students are taught by their teachers. For it is natural for man to learn from other men. . . . Otherwise, the Church would not possess in herself any certainty about what ought to be believed—that is to say, if she did not have within herself any witnesses.^{[124](#)}

If in Aquinas' text certainty and faith are contrasted with one another, this corresponds to a concept of faith which has been scholastically defined. But if we were to speak the language of Scripture, then we would rather have to speak of an analogy of faith in the archetypal and the imitative experience of faith, an analogy whereby what is 'evident' in the eye-witness does not constrain his act of faith, but rather perfects it. The same thing occurs in the special case of mystical experience within the Church: even in its mystical heights it remains an experience of faith, one which lends to faith the transparency of vision. Into this law of analogy there can then be incorporated what Thomas posits as a fundamental principle: the assent of faith proceeds not *ex visione credentis, sed a visione ejus cui creditor*.¹²⁵ Here he is, first of all, thinking of God himself, and, at the most, of Christ and the Prophets; but we should think no less of the archetypal experience of the Apostles, and of the stamp they have left on the normative faith-experience of the Church as such. For this reason, the definition of faith of Heb 11.1 (*fides sperandarum substantia rerum argumentum non apparentium*) cannot simply be interpreted in a univocal sense, as is usually the case, all the less since ὑπόστασις and ἐλέγχος here can mean something far more concrete than is admitted by the scholastic definition of ecclesial faith, and since the 'vision of faith' of the Patriarchs and the Prophets which is described immediately afterwards belongs to the archetypal experience (Heb 11.27 says concerning Moses, the seer of God: τὸν ἀόρατον ὡς ὁρῶν ἐκαρτέρησεν).

Tradition emerges here as the reality through which the archetypal experience is connected to the imitative experience—the reception of the substance of faith 'by the followers and servants of the Logos, who were initiated without mediation (ἀμέσως) into the knowledge of the real'.¹²⁶ This immediacy means, above all, *sensoriness*, though it remains an open question which sense or senses in particular are involved in the appearance. Naturally, only the three named by the First Epistle of John—hearing, seeing, touching—have a pre-eminent rank. And if we set the sense of touch aside for the moment as being especially reserved for the experience of the Apostles, then we do not need to argue over whether precedence goes to hearing or seeing. We can only observe (following Rom 10.17: *fides ex auditu*) that hearing must be assigned particularly to imitative faith, while then seeing is more properly assigned to archetypal faith (as the word 'eye-witness' already implies). Furthermore, within archetypal experience we can assign hearing (in the Prophets, but also in the Law) predominantly to the Old Testament,

and seeing (of the Word of the flesh) predominantly to the New Testament. Finally, in an all-inclusive view, we can ascribe hearing to earthly faith in its every form and seeing to realised 'faith' in the new aeon. But all these assignations have something precarious and inexact about them, and very often they are made on the basis of theological prejudices, the worst of which is (with Luther) to want to admit only the ear as a theological sense-organ, or another prejudice (here it is not clear whether this is based on ethnic or theological considerations!) which would assign 'seeing' to the Greek or even the pagan religious experience in general, while 'hearing' supposedly corresponds to the Biblical or the Semitic experience of God (forgetting that these two are themselves two separate entities). There is of course some truth in all these distinctions and separations, but a good deal more that is straightforwardly misleading. At this stage one point may be made: even if sight is the chief sense and expresses man's innermost longing, nevertheless a living person is known primarily by his word. Thus, the revealed religion of the living God is a religion of the word, which does not preclude the fact that God's becoming visible remains even in the Bible—from the Old to the New Testament, and from Jesus' first appearance to his Second Coming—a fundamental human measure for the depth and integral completeness of revelation. Since we are here examining the sensoriness of archetypal experience in general, we will for the time being refer to the senses without distinction. The accent, naturally, falls on sight, which is at once, and by way of complement, joined by a hearing which is immediate and not mediated by tradition, and which is accompanied by the particular evidence of sensory touch in just as human and immediate a manner (as well as by the two last senses—smell and taste—to which the Church's worship and the liturgical meal are especially related).

This allowed, we can now make three main points about the Biblical experience of God.

1. The witness of Scripture is that the God who reveals himself is perceived in a manner at once sensory and objective. For this and for all that will follow we here refer to the important and in its way unique study by Markus Barth entitled *Der Augenzeuge*¹²⁷ which, cutting imperturbably through all 'interpretations' and 'hypotheses', simply takes up the Biblical facts and interprets them as they mean to be interpreted. His first observation must not be overlooked: namely, that the God of the Bible is an invisible God, already

in the Old Testament but even more in the New. No one has ever seen God (Jn 1.18; 6.46; 1 Jn 4.12); he dwells in inaccessible light (1 Tim 6.16) and cannot be seen (Col 1.15; 1 Tim 1.17; Heb n. 27). 'But all these assertions are found in the context of the affirmation that this invisible God has appeared in Jesus Christ. The full import of God's transcendence comes to light only on the basis of and in connection with his condescension.'¹²⁸ This, then, is not primarily a philosophical assertion, but rather an affirmation of exact theology. Similarly, God's holiness is not spoken of abstractly on the basis of his 'otherness, his sovereignty over the world, his fearsomeness, etc.', but in the context of his relationship with his creatures and, indeed, of his communicating what is unique about his holiness.¹²⁹ God's invisibility and his visibleness in his historical revelation are not connected by a natural necessity that he reveal himself: such is the relation that exists in inner-worldly aesthetics and mythology between 'ground' and 'form'. This general relation is surpassed in a singular and wholly underived manner, and only in this way does it yield the foundation for a theological aesthetics. But if we can speak of a *theological* aesthetics it is only because it is *on his own initiative* and independently of man's particular anthropological structure that God takes form and allows himself to be seen, heard, and touched.

We see this demonstrated best of all in the manner in which the appearances of the risen Christ are portrayed: Jesus appears with a corporeality that runs counter to all possible attitudes, expectations, hopes, or fears of the disciples and which compels them to surrender. When their seeing and hearing do not suffice, they must, in addition, touch; and when even this is not sufficient to awaken their faith, they have to set food and drink before the Risen One, which he proceeds to eat before their eyes. Something similar occurs in the overpowering fulness of glory on Tabor, or with the dazzling light of the appearance outside Damascus, which outshines the midday sun and knocks Paul down from his horse and blinds him. The subjective conditions and states of mind, both in the Old and the New Testament, can vary greatly: perceptions by day or by night, when awake or while sleeping, in visions, nocturnal apparitions, dreams, ecstasies, or 'in the spirit': it is not the different states that are decisive—not even with the Prophets. Rather, everywhere 'it is uniformly shown that the vision of the witness in question presupposes or is accompanied by an objective event from the side of God. . . , and that the experience is not to be thought of as a subjective imagining or as something produced by man.'¹³⁰ The proofs which

those undergoing these experiences bring forth (and must bring forth) are of the most diverse kinds: accompanying miracles, fulfilled prophecies, the quality and authority of the Word of the Lord which they have to pass on; but this is not the important thing; what is important, rather, is the fact substantiated by both internal and external arguments, the fact to which their report gives expression; again the manner in which they report it corroborates authentically that what has been perceived is not something imagined, but something objective. God is acting on his own initiative. Compared to this, all considerations about the psychology of seeing, hearing, and perceiving are wholly secondary and trifling.¹³¹ The manner of the description makes it clear that those giving the reports aim at ‘the greatest possible clarity, sobriety, and comprehensibility’, ‘by contrast with the complicated conceptual cosmos in which the gods of the mystery religions appear and are seen’.¹³² It is precisely this sobriety which underscores the miraculous character of the self-manifestation of the invisible: man as such does nothing to bring it about; his situation is effected and determined by the object he perceives, and for this very reason the *ability* of certain persons to see or to hear is not a possibility which is grounded in themselves and which sets them apart. Moreover for the Apostles, all theophanous events surrounding Jesus are a simple consequence of his will, which freely chooses to gather them around himself, to be with them, and to have them partake of his own higher reality. The same holds for the visions of the Old Testament and of the Apocalypse, as well as for other experiences of God: the accent always falls on what is being shown. And if now and then there is some marginal comment concerning the feelings or attitude of a seer during his vision, this is portrayed exactly in the restrained proportion demanded by the objective event: such is the case with Isaiah’s feeling of impurity, when he must be purified with a glowing coal for the sake of his mission; so, too, the perplexity of Daniel, to whom the meaning of what he has seen must be explained; so, too, finally, the situation of the seer on Patmos, where he falls down as one dead only to be touched by the Logos, who says to him: ‘I was dead and now I live for all eternity’ (Rev 1.18).

This absolute determination (and, hence, also concordance) effected by the object of faith is an essential component of an aesthetics of revelation. In this we can see both an opposition to an inner-worldly aesthetics and a surpassing of it which perfects it, since the truly beautiful is not magically ‘conjured up’ from man’s emotive states, but, rather, surrenders itself on its own initiative

with a graciousness that man cannot grasp. Here lies the ‘point of contact’ between natural and supernatural *charis*.

2. The second overall characteristic is that the Biblical perception of God cannot be spiritualised. Once again, this may be developed in relation to the most important of all perceptions—that of the risen Christ, with a view to which all earlier experiences of God had occurred. Everything depends on the effects of hearing, seeing and, especially, touching the Word of Life, all of which culminates with the placing of the fingers in the wound on the side: ‘A spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have’ (Lk 24.39). The crucial point is this ‘flesh and bones’; there is no lack of ‘spirit’ in other religious world-views. The distinctive Christian factor is that here we not only ‘start from’ the corporeal and the sensory as from some religious material on which we can then perform the necessary abstractions; rather, we abide in the seeing, hearing, touching, the savouring and eating of this flesh and blood, which has borne and taken away the sin of the world. From Valentinus to Bultmann this flesh and blood has been spiritualised and demythologised. This has occurred, for one, in the name of the history of religions, which shows how the rough-hewn and naïve reports of theophanies in the Old Testament (a man waits on God at table, a man engages in a wrestling-match with God, for decades men follow the form of God as cloud and fire through the desert, and so on) gradually became spiritualised till one comes to the late Jewish view that God is and remains essentially invisible and cannot be seen even by the highest angels. Under a Christian label, this has occurred in the name of an economy of salvation which, with the Alexandrians, affirms that the Old Testament is characterised by sensory symbolic signs, while the New Testament transposes these to the level of spiritual truth. The order of salvation, so the argument continues, which was bound to space and time and the senses, has now been abolished, and this liberation of the Christian allegedly constitutes the true freedom of the Christian person. Or a rather similar move can be made in terms of ecclesial economy; this argument says that a provisional sensory perception was granted to the Apostles only in order that they themselves and, later on, the Christians who no longer perceive, should grow beyond that original perception into a faith that does not see and which no longer asks for any sign: ‘Do you believe because you have seen? Blessed are they who do not see and yet believe.’ For the Alexandrians and for all who adhere to them (and who, in the end, does not?),

every corporeal element of the history of salvation is a ‘symbol’ for the Spirit; and the strength of this Platonising vision lies in its habit of sensing everywhere, through the form that appears, the reality of life and of spirit which reveals itself in it. In the organised Church, the Alexandrian vision sees the living organism of the heavenly Bride of Christ; in the material sacraments it sees the personal activity of the Logos; and in the letter of the Scripture, both of the Old and the New Testaments, it sees the divine Logos himself. But this Platonist aesthetics remains ambiguous, because within it we find, alongside the contemplation of the beautiful in its corporeality, the contrary tendency of an eros that ascends from all incarnate forms in order to attain to the ‘beautiful in itself’. As a result, in the Christian transposition of such an aesthetics quite frequently the anti-incarnational element has ‘asserted itself’, leading to a misuse of the statement just quoted and which Jesus directed to a Thomas who was clamoring for vision. Mystical theology, both as it stems from Evagrius and his followers and from the side of Augustine, has always striven towards a ‘vision’ of the formless God in his inaccessible light, and in clear terms has warned anyone training himself in *theoria* against all visions, auditions, and so forth, which possess form. For Evagrius, who holds the theory of extreme Origenism that everything with worldly form in fact represents a fall from the Primal Light, it is logical to consider every form which arises in contemplation as a deceptive tactic on the part of the demons. According to Diadochus, it is better to reject these forms even if perchance they should occasionally come from God (*Cent. c.* 36, 38), and this rule still holds good for Thomas, Eckhart, and even John of the Cross. It receives support from the Platonising mystical psychology of Augustine,¹³³ who describes a three-stage progression both in natural and in supernatural perceptions: external-corporeal perceptions, interior perceptions of the fantasy, and purely spiritual perceptions. Here the greatest psychological interest, but also the greatest theological suspicion, is directed to the second realm—the seemingly inexhaustible fountainhead of deception which is man’s imagination. Only the intuition of spiritual truth is considered reliable both by philosophy and by Christian theology, whether this intuition is the self-contemplation of the soul (as already in Evagrius) or the supernatural radiance of God’s light in the light of the soul. In his treatise on prophecy, the Aristotelian Thomas defends himself as best he can against the unqualified ascendancy of this Platonising mystical theory¹³⁴ Nonetheless, the manner in which the whole theology of Christian mysticism has belittled

the form of Biblical vision, taken as a whole, constitutes an alarming fact which is not to be overlooked. In view of this history, we ought not to marvel if the period of the de-fantatising of faith was succeeded by a radical period of the de-mythologising of all sensory God-experience in the Bible, a move which had its beginnings with the Reformers, was then taken up by Liberal and Idealist theology and finally perfected by existential theology. Referring to Bultmann's interpretation of Jesus' words to Thomas, Markus Barth rightly remarks:

Bultmann's conception rests on the thesis that visible miracles (signs) are only a concession to man's weakness, and that the appearances of the risen Christ are, likewise, a concession to the weakness of the Apostles. But . . . even in the Old Testament the visible appearance of God [is] not something temporary—a means to an end or a mere concession—but rather. . . the fulfilment of Israel's ultimate and supreme hope.

If, in the story of Thomas, Bultmann sees 'a characteristic critique of the evaluation of the Easter events' which 'can claim only a symbolic value', then 'we must ask whether those who practise such de-mythologisation do not also declare the testimony of the resurrection and even the resurrection itself to be merely symbolic',¹³⁵ whether these are not being spiritualised into a purely existential event, whereby, in true gnostic and Alexandrian fashion, the corporeal and historical event is wholly being neglected. What is historical and real is sensory, whether it is perceived directly through the human senses or whether it is witnessed to as having been perceived. The *proton pseudos*, the 'primal lie', of theology and spirituality is the naïve or reflected equation (or confusion) of the human 'spirit' with the Holy Spirit, of 'abstraction' with the resurrection of the flesh, which corresponds to the tendency in Alexandrian theology to identify the Biblical 'flesh' with the Platonic 'body'.

The archetypal God-experience of the Bible is more than a material metaphor for the higher experience of God which pertains to 'pure faith', where 'pure' connotes 'purified from the sensory'. Even 2 Cor 5.16 must by no means be interpreted in this way, for 'to know (or to judge) Christ according to the flesh' is here used as precisely the opposite of the knowledge of him 'who died and *rose* for us', as the opposite of the 'new creature' that is not a pure spirit, but that has been determined and transformed by Christ in both body and soul. In the same way, Paul had been called, chosen, armed, and sent out by the risen Christ, and suddenly he saw himself transformed—along with the whole of his corporeal and historical existence—into a visible

image of Christ. John, who concludes the theology of the New Testament, no longer even speaks of a spiritualistic misunderstanding. Even the vision of the Son's pre-existence with the Father emerges only in function of his Incarnation. And John softens the strong contrast we find in the Synoptics and in Paul between mortal life before the Cross and glorious life after Easter: from the transfigured body of Christ he looks backwards to his mortal body and everywhere in it he already finds the glory of God. Suffering and death, the entrance of Light into darkness, the descent of the Love that endures to the end: this whole corporeal event is for John already the definitive culmination of revelation; it already discloses to him the glory of the God who has appeared in flesh, a glory which nothing can surpass.

Once again the comparison with inner-worldly aesthetics is suggested: sensory beauty is not surpassable. It is already spiritualised in itself, but in the measure to which the spirit has been corporealised within it. Between both realms there obtains analogy and not identity; but this is an interior analogy that has been effected by the reality itself.

3. Finally, the Biblical experience of God is always proleptic: it is a foretokening and an anticipation of an eschatological experience of God. Again in an analogous manner, this holds for the different levels of revelation, something which the Biblical theology of the Fathers realised very precisely. The Old Testament experience of God as a whole lies within the framework of the promise to Israel of the End. Even after the entry into the Promised Land, even after the establishment of the Kingdom, even after the building of Solomon's temple, even after the return from the Exile, this promise is further and further postponed, and it thus expands to dimensions that in the end make it impossible for the human imagination to reconcile all that promise's individual aspects. Christ, 'God with us', the Incarnate Word, is the fulfilment of the unimaginable. God himself is seen, heard and touched by men; he associates with them in a human way, dies for them, and gives himself to them as their food and drink. All this is a fulfilled eschatology, and yet again it is not. In a manner which cannot be surpassed, or taken back, or voided of value, the Christ-event is fulfilled incomprehensibly and is brought back to itself: it is an anticipation of that which is eternal and definitive and which, as such, becomes a sensory presence during the forty days between Easter and the Ascension—now as the fulfilment of that total promise which encompasses both the Old Testament and the mortal life of Jesus, a promise

which is the temporal economy that is set over against the eternal economy. Nevertheless, these forty days point ahead to two things. First, they anticipate the Kingdom of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus sends from the Father in a simultaneously visible and invisible way as he himself disappears as a sensory presence—the Holy Spirit, who will *be* the exegesis of the mortal-immortal ‘Head’ within the ‘Body’ of the Church and, thus, also the continuation and the perfecting of the Incarnation of the Word in mankind and in the cosmos. And, second, the forty days point to the Kingdom of the Father (1 Cor 15.24, 28), which will dawn with the ‘return’ and the ‘re-appearance’ both of the Son who is endowed with the radiance of the Father’s might and of his Bride, who comes down to earth from heaven ‘in the brilliance of God’s glory’ (Rev 21.11).

We may indeed say that, compared with the last epiphany, all earlier ones were a relative hiddenness, and that, also compared with each following epiphany, every preceding phase may be considered a concealment. Along this graduated path the higher revelation need not always be the more external, for there are roads that lead from the outside into the inner depths, from a random and profane manifestness to a visibleness that by its very nature presupposes an intimate group of chosen persons who have been made worthy of it. This is what we have in the experiences of Jesus in the Gospel that involve the three disciples (Mount Tabor and the Mount of Olives) and in the appearances of the risen Christ before the Twelve. But this interiorisation has its place within a perception which is both deeper in itself and understood more deeply and which, again, is oriented apostolically to the ecclesial kerygma and, eschatologically and proleptically, to the equivalent appearance of Jesus before ‘all the peoples of the earth’ (Rev 1.7).

What this eschatological and anticipatory character means is that the Biblical experiences of God enter with one another into a relationship of analogy which is comparable (but not identical) with the relationship, discussed in the previous section, between the archetypal Biblical sphere and the imitative ecclesial sphere. Old and New Testament, for instance, again relate to one another as the dependent image and the archetype which Israel’s teleology strives for, while the anticipation of the definitive vision in the forty days establishes a relationship which can no longer be grasped with the categories of archetype and image. Even if, seen from the standpoint of Christ, the form in which God appeared in the flesh has become definitive and insurpassable, yet, from the standpoint of the disciples receiving the

experience, this definitive content, in spite of its total manifestness, still remains veiled from them because of the temporality of their senses. Finally, from this perspective, the ecclesial vision can be seen to occupy a central position between the Biblical and the eschatological vision, and it is this that Paul describes as the essence of the Church's contemplation of the image of Christ, by which we are transformed into the same image, 'from glory to glory' (2 Cor 3. 18). For Paul, this contemplation of the image of Christ is both theoretical and practical: it is the im-pressing of the form upon the memory and the understanding (γνώσις) of the believers, so that it will determine all the more deeply their life, which must come to bear the form of Christ. The relative invisibility of the Head has its ground in the divine economy, to the end that he might become visible in the body of the Church ('it is good for you that I go', Jn 16.7); the person who truly lives through Christ's Holy Spirit sees Christ ('the world will see me no more, but you will see me, because I live and you also live', Jn 14.19).

This proleptic character of all perceptions of God in Holy Scripture should not lead us to conclude that these perceptions appear unsatisfactory to the person receiving them. We would, rather, have to affirm the contrary: if this perception can point ahead objectively it is because it is subjectively experienced to be more than fulfilling, and its superabundant character derives from the fact that, in this life, sinful man is and remains wholly inadequate for it. The many statements made concerning Moses' dealings with Yahweh, in the different redactions and in the disharmonies these exhibit (Moses first deals with God as with a friend, face to face, as opposed to the rest of men, who see God only in visionary dreams or in prophetic enigmas; but then he sees him only 'from behind', concealed in the dark cloud, since no man can see the face of God. . . .), are precisely intended to express, not the unfulfilled nature of Moses' vision of God, but to communicate, from different directions and from the standpoint of different theologies, the highest experience which grace can bestow on mortal man on earth. Something similar is true of Paul and his enraptured vision of 'ineffable things' (2 Cor 12.4), the character of which and the distinction of which from the eschatological vision have never been settled by Christian theology. In these and all other Biblical experiences of God, the element that impels the subject forward lies, precisely, in the superabundance of their content, as compared with man's limited capacity to grasp it; and the longing which they awaken and leave behind is not the yearning for something more

which would be something different, but the longing for the Always-More that resides in what has already been bestowed.

This third characteristic of archetypal Biblical aesthetics may, in this respect, also be compared with the perception of what is beautiful in the world. We cannot say that the difference between them lies in the fact that worldly beauty bestows a fulness that quenches the heart of the beholder and makes him repose in his vision, while the beauty of divine revelation causes a holy unrest in the person contemplating it which points beyond itself to something else, for instance, to the practical aspects of the Church's life or to the Christian mission to one's neighbour. Rather, a merely self-gratifying absorption of the beholder in what he beholds falls, even at the worldly level, below the threshold of true beauty. The experience of sublime beauty is overwhelming and can be enrapturing and crushing. The poverty and uncomeliness of eros were known to Plato. The true admirer of sublime feminine beauty willingly goes into banishment in the service of courtly love, in order to become worthier of the grace of restful possession. In all mythical beauty there is a moment of fear; in every act of grasping a sublime work of art there is experienced an unattainable majesty, and this experience is a part of aesthetic enjoyment and the dangerous locus where the magnificence of the beautiful demands for itself something like adoration. The author of the Book of Wisdom shows gentle forbearance for those who are overpowered by the world's most sublime beauty (Wis 13.6f.). Eros contains a promise (described not only by pagans such as Shelley and Keats, but also by Christians such as Claudel) which is always pointing beyond the sentiment that sighs 'Abide a while, thou art so beautiful!' and which, therefore, if it is not transposed onto the Christian level, must condemn itself to eternal melancholy and self-consumption. This total structure of beauty can be redeemed only if the risen Lover is again met at the other side of death (and beyond all melancholy yearning for the Kingdom of Death, as portrayed by the Greek myths, but also by Mary Magdalen, Jn 20.11)—the risen Lover who does not disappoint with his blessed *Noli me tangere* and with his withdrawal at the Ascension, the Lover who leaves no shadow of sorrow behind him, but who snatches up the loving and adoring heart and carries it away with him: where your treasure, where your darling is, there also is your heart. Not a single shadow of melancholy darkens Christ's Ascension, and the visionlessness of the intervening period has something about it of the blissful transport of a lover for her beloved, something of the gladsome

ecstasy of those who 'live no longer for themselves but for him who died and rose for their sake' (2 Cor 5. 15).

c. Jesus' Experience of God

If we wish to describe the testimony of the Biblical eyewitnesses, then we must concentrate above all on the hierarchies and the gradations which we find within the Bible. It is impossible to speak of Jesus' experience of God as if it were located between the experience of the Prophets and that of the Apostles: as 'standing over all' (Jn 3.31). Jesus' experience furnishes the form that conditions all other experiences, both before and after it. To speak of it means to speak of the unutterable reality which is behind and above all that is utterable and which is what gives the latter its utterability. It means to contemplate the mystery of the God-Man not in the margins, but in its very centre; and only from this centre may we venture to make utterances that are dogmatically balanced.

The Biblical statements on the subject, especially Saint John's affirmations, set Jesus' experience of God wholly apart from the God-experiences of all the others, even of grace-filled men who have received a mission. The fact that no one has ever seen God, except his only-begotten Son (Jn 1.18), is affirmed not without a certain irony towards Moses, who is mentioned in the previous verse and to whom is ascribed the highest of all God-experiences in the Old Testament. It is a question of origin, which at first sets aside all questions of analogy as less important:

He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth belongs to the earth, and from the earth he speaks.

He who comes from heaven is above all. He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. He who receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.

For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for it is not by measure that he gives [him] his Spirit (Jn 3.31-34).

Here we must concentrate not so much on the word 'sent', for missions had been given also to the Prophets and to the Baptist, who is here speaking; rather, we must note the direction of Christ's 'coming', his origin from God and from heaven. Unlike prophetic persons, Jesus does not encounter a divine form of revelation. Because he comes from the Father, he himself *is* the form of God's revelation. He is this form as the one who 'comes' from the Father

and, precisely for this reason, as the one who ‘returns’ to the Father (this return is perhaps already expressed in the accusative phrase εἰς τὸν κόλπον of Jn 1.18; see also 6.61f.; 8.14; 16.28). These two articulations of his coming and his going constitute the whole essence of the Son, and between them there is in reality, for John, no third period of repose where the Son has arrived and sojourns in the world, which we could properly speak about in isolation from the twofold movement we have noted. Then, too, John makes no statements about the Son’s condition ‘before’ and ‘after’ that are distinct from and that disregard this double movement; but the ‘coming from’ and the ‘going to’, naturally, always contain the eternity of the Son in the Father and with the Father and, therefore, also his divinity. All the statements, moreover, have as their thematic object the going forth of the Son from the Father as one sent (which presupposes his divinity); all of them focus on God’s manner of constituting the object of revelation and concentrate on what, by using aesthetic categories, we could call the objective relationship between ground and form, content and shape, idea and appearance—and, in so doing, we are fully aware of the fact that these categories provide only hints from below. Such an indication is intended to make one thing plain, namely, that we can speak of Jesus’ experience of God only in the context of the christological movement: his Incarnation and his reality as man are the result of his mandate as one sent from above, from the Father, and the proof for this will be found in the ‘Spirit’, *that* is to say in his return to the Father. The Spirit is not bestowed on him as on a being that first is a creature and derives ‘from the earth’; it is conferred ‘without measure’ on him as on the one who comes from above.

The statements concerning Jesus’ experience of God, therefore, should not be understood in the sense that, in his ‘exegesis’ of God (Jn 1.18), Jesus makes utterances about what he saw and heard in God ‘before’ his Incarnation; rather, he is speaking about what he, as the only one who comes from God, has experienced of God in his coming and in his going. These experiences, consequently, are inseparably divine and human. They are not first divine, only later to be translated into human terms: this would constitute the Platonic doctrine of pre-existence and *anamnesis*; but John comes from the Old Testament and not from Plato. And in the Old Testament things are so disposed that men encounter theophanies in which, in their own way, they see, hear, and touch God. But Jesus is the *theophany* itself, which now extends all the way to the Incarnation; and it is only for this reason that the

God who is seen, heard, and touched in the man Jesus is, at the same time, the Man who sees, hears, and touches God. Contemplating man is drawn into the circular movement of a revelation that goes out from God and returns to him. This is the chief difference between the experience of God in the Old and in the New Testament, and it prompts John to assert that no one but Jesus has ever seen or heard God.¹³⁶

Now, as the Word of the Father that has come to us, Jesus is a man with body and soul and with all the experience proper to man. From this it follows that two things are true. On the one hand, in the existence and experience of this man God ‘puts himself into words’ and interprets himself for us (Jn 1.18): in this man’s hearing, seeing, touching, speaking, living, and suffering God associates intimately with man. And, on the other hand, by involvement in Jesus’ hearing, seeing, touching, speaking, living, and suffering it is man who associates intimately with God. Something is being affirmed here both about God and about man—first about God and then about man. ‘The question whether God wills to be and can be perceived by the senses—the question as to whether he is at all audible, visible, and palpable—is decided and answered by the fact that it is affirmed of Jesus Christ that he heard and saw the Father (God) (Jn 3.11, 32; 5.19; 6.46; 8.38). He is in the bosom of the Father (1.18). . . . In God, who is Spirit, there is found a hearing, a seeing, a being together; God himself hears himself, sees himself, and is one with himself. Quite apart from everything that a man supposedly or really heard, saw, and touched, the question concerning God’s audibleness, visibleness, and corporeal unity is settled by the allusion to the unity between Father and Son’ (M. Barth).¹³⁷ This unity between the Father and the Incarnate Son must include the divinity of the Son as the condition of its possibility, and it, therefore, constitutes a sensory experience which the divine person of the Son has of the Father—an experience which belongs to the self-utterance of the Father in his Incarnate Son. The christological experience of God thus presents two aspects: the *experientia Dei incarnati* as a subjective genitive,¹³⁸ and therefore posteriorly as an objective genitive. And the identity of these two aspects is a mystery of the hypostatic union: on this mystery, as on the ultimate foundation of revelation, rest all experiences of God derived from it and all faith in revelation. The dynamic character of Christ’s human vision of God—that is, its functional character as mission—warns us against interpreting Christ’s experience of God in an idealist sense as irrational feeling or supra-rational intuition. Even when he calls the will of the Father

his 'food' (Jn 4.32) what is meant is not a self-gratifying contemplation which satisfies him; for immediately afterwards we read: 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work' (4.34). It is the same with his hearing (5.30; 14.24; 17.8), which has its measure in what the Son has to say to the world (8.26). Likewise with his seeing (8.38). It is always a hearing, speaking, and acting from God as the centre, in contrast to merely 'speaking for oneself' (5.30; 7.17; 12.40; 14.10), and this is itself a contrast which has clear roots in prophetic language.¹³⁹ But in the Jesus of John it is surpassed in so far as Jesus understands himself to *be* the Word that has gone forth. He is one with the Father (10.30); he always has the Father with him (8.20); and everything that the Father does is shown to him in order that he may likewise do it (5.17, 19).

More and more the man Jesus understands and learns to understand himself for what he is: as the Word of the Father directed to the world, in whose mission is contained the destiny of the grain of wheat, which is to die for the world and thus to bring forth fruit. And as he does so Jesus experiences God, not in an 'objectivised' vision which is separated from his own reality, but rather in his humility, which does not reflect on itself (and does not seek its own honour, 5.41f.), which opens itself up wholly to God and which in its own functionality experiences the reality of the God who sends him forth, disposes over him, and begets him eternally out of himself. This is why, for him, humility, poverty, and simplicity will always be the conditions for his being able to make others partakers of his experience of God (Mt 5.3-8; 6.22; 11.25, 29; Lk 11.34). But this impoverishment and self-emptying of the heart that beholds God should not, in the case of Christian discipleship, be understood in the general sense of the history of religions, namely, that the creature must annihilate itself in order to become a passageway for God. Rather, what is involved here is the coming-to-be of the fact that, beyond all these gradations, is rooted in the trinitarian mystery: that the permeability of Christ's humanity is the expression of its *assumptio* by the Logos, which 'annihilates' itself (Phil 2.7) precisely in this humility and, revealing through it the glory of the Father, is witnessed to by the Father himself, is endowed with power, is honoured and glorified (8.50). For these reasons it has to be that Jesus' experience of God, simultaneously, is the fruit of uttermost humility and has as its fruit the highest possible 'self-consciousness', provided we purify this concept of all the dross that can cling to it as a result of human self-reflection. All these statements, therefore,

presuppose the trinitarian mystery: only this mystery keeps these assertions from foundering to the right or to the left—either in the direction of a pantheistic (Eutychian) mysticism in which self-consciousness and God-consciousness coincide, or in the direction of an Old Testament (Nestorian) schema in which Christ's humanity could experience the indwelling Father and the inspiring Spirit only as other than itself.

Nevertheless, the Son allows us to partake in this absolutely singular experience of God, which stands 'above all others', and this is already demonstrated by the striking plural forms in Jn 3.11 and 9.4: 'Truly, truly, I (!) say to you: we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen.' 'We must work the works of him who sent us [variant: me], while it is day.' Here Jesus is certainly not referring either to the Old Testament or to the Baptist: in the task given to him he can include only his chosen ones, and this is a task which is common both to himself and to the Church and which, therefore, also presupposes an understanding and a 'seeing' common to them both—in Jesus archetypally and in the disciples by way of imitation. This inclusive transition from the incommunicable (ἀμέθεκτον) to its communication follows necessarily from the whole structure of Christ's relationship to God: that such a structure exists is already grace, which in its very nature includes the communication of the unique. The transition lies in the fact that the man Christ sees God *as* one who is seen (sent) by God and that, therefore, whoever sees him sees the Father—provided that one sees him as he must be seen and as he intends to be seen: as the Word of the Father. This ability to see what he is in reality is (as became evident in our discussion of the analysis of faith) the vision, bestowed on man by grace, that everything human in Christ is a word, an image, a representation, and an expression of the Father; indeed, only when seen in this way can it be interiorly understood. At this point it suddenly becomes clear that the disciples' eyewitness, fundamentally important as it is (because it involves a human seeing, hearing, and touching of a genuine humanity), nevertheless remains secondary because, even in the eyewitness, what gives the truly illuminating vision for what is here expressing itself is faith, which may also be possessed by the Christian who does not see Christ with the senses, on the basis of the apostolic witness. The question whether the sensory material on which this faith exercises its synthesising activity is directly present to the human senses, or whether it is elaborated by the narration of the eyewitnesses, is both relevant and irrelevant. We shall return to this later. For the time we

continue with Christ's archetypal vision of God.

The man Christ is, at one and the same time, a genuine human being and a human being who has been assumed into God. As genuine man he is not a super-man, but rather the perfection of creatureliness in its proper ontological and cognitive distance from the Creator, the perfection also of the Old Testament covenant-relationship between the chosen people, the chosen individual, and the God of the Covenant. In this sense Christ possesses archetypal faith¹⁴⁰ and the hiddenness of the relation to God which it implies. This relationship is more drastically hidden because of Christ's atoning assumption of the *conditio peccatoris*, which determines the existence of the Redeemer, not only during the days of the Passion but from the first moment of his Incarnation. But, as a man assumed into God, Christ necessarily participates in the self-consciousness of the eternal Son in his eternal procession from the Father and his return to him, and this becomes reflected in the human self-consciousness of Christ to the extent that he experiences this self-consciousness of the Son *interius intimo suo* and that he possesses it by opening himself to it. But because, in the third place, he is genuine man *only* as assumed man, he understands even his genuinely human experience of God as an expression and function of his divine person; just as, in turn, he becomes conscious of this divine person only in the functional movement of his mission, in such a way that the humility with which he opens himself to the divine is at the same time an expression of the divine will to *kenosis*. Accordingly, the God-Man's experience as creature is, as such, an expression and a function of his trinitarian experience. In other words, his experience of distance from God, which in him constitutes the archetypal *fides*, is as such the expression of God's experience of himself within the Trinity in the distance of distinction between Person and Person.¹⁴¹

A reflection of this in the Biblical experience of God is the mutuality of vision between God and man, which Augustine has summarized in the formula *videntem videre*. In the Old Testament, whoever has experienced a theophany or visited God in his temple in order to 'see' him, has first been seen by God. For man, 'to stand before the face of God' means both things. '*Panim* has not only the passive meaning of the "look" that one presents when one's countenance is radiant, ashamed, and so on; it also has the active meaning of the "gaze" that one directs at someone or something with a friendly, angry, or other attitude. . . . Therefore, to come before the face of God means to come before his gaze, to appear before him.'¹⁴² Thus, Hagar

describes God's appearance in the desert as that of a 'God of vision', and she interprets this name as meaning 'here have I looked after him who had espied me' (Gen 16.13). To recognise him only as he disappears ('to see from behind') is characteristic of the Old Testament (Jg 13.20f.; Ex 33. 18F.; 34.6f.; cf. Tob 12); it is against this background that we should understand Jesus' words to Nathanael (Jn 1.48-51) and Paul's corresponding statements (1 Cor 13.12; 8.3; 2 Cor 5.11; Phil 3.12): man's vision of God is like an echo of the antecedent and foundational event of being seen by God—so much an echo that man's longing to see God can come to rest in the consciousness of being seen by God and can renounce any self-vision which is divorced from this being-seen-by-God or rather, may come to understand that his vision of God is included in his being seen by God. In christological terms this universal Biblical structure at the very least means that the *visio immediata* which Christ has of the Father (that is, of God) may fluctuate between the mode of manifestness (which befits the Son as his 'glory') and the mode of 'concealment' (which befits the Servant of Yahweh in the hiddenness of his Passion). Analogously to the manner of the just man in the Old Testament, who sees God during his pilgrimage to the Temple, the second mode here is derived from the first: a living faith is content to stand before the face of the God who sees, whether or not one sees him oneself.

Furthermore, it is significant that Jesus' statements about his own seeing and hearing God or 'divine things' always are put in the past-tense: he bears witness to what he has seen (Jn 3.11; 6.46; 8.38), what he has heard (8.26, 40), what the Father has taught him (8.28) and given him to do (12.49f.). This past form does not, in general, indicate an isolated pre-existence on Christ's part, but rather the fact that he, proclaiming the Word of the Father, is always coming *from* the vision of the Father, that he always has this vision 'at his back', as it were, while he is in the process of accomplishing his mission; and it also means, as was demonstrated previously, that he is always on his way back to the Father. As coming from the Father, he is always caught up in the act of the Word's Incarnation, in the transposition of vision into existence and of contemplation into action. As returning to the Father, he forever is an act of handing man over to God, he is obedience and the accomplishment of the New and eternal Covenant. He himself is this Covenant in his twofold movement from God to man and from man to God; for this reason Christ, at the very centre, is the covenant-experience. In other words, Christ is the experience of the perfect correspondence between God and man, which rests

on God's free initiative and, therefore, always leaves to God the priority of vision.

By way of summary, we can now draw three conclusions concerning Jesus' archetypal experience of God in the context of those experiences which have been moulded by him.

1. As Word of God, Jesus bears witness to what he—as only Son resting in the bosom of the Father—has seen and heard of the Father and to what the Father has commissioned and taught to him. For this Word he demands the faith of men.

2. But he is the Word which has become flesh and is always becoming flesh. As such, he witnesses to what he says with himself—with his whole existence—so that the experience of God which he has had can, in turn, be repeated bodily, by virtue of his total bodily existence, by those persons who associate with him and believe in him. This existence understands itself functionally, as a ministry to the Word of God, a service to him who does not seek his own honour, a service even unto death on the Cross. For just this reason, the experience of this existence on the part of the eyewitnesses cannot be an object of self-gratifying contemplation, but can only be had through the imitation of discipleship, which means by being conformed to Christ's functional attitude: the role of the eyewitnesses is directly and necessarily functionalised for the sake of the community of all believers; it is witness, and it is 'blessed' (Mt 13.16), only in terms of such witnessing. Nonetheless, in his association with Christ, man is truly seen, addressed, and touched sensorily in Christ by God himself, and so, in turn, he too can see, address, and touch God in Christ. 'The perceivable Son who has been sent is not less truly or less genuinely God than is the Father: he is the true God in his revelation. Through Jesus Christ, the Father hears, sees, and touches man: he does this by hearing man's prayer, by seeing him in his distress, and by allowing him to lie on his breast. Through Jesus Christ, on the other hand, the true God is heard, seen, and touched as God's voice rings out audibly, as his glory is seen, and as man rests on Jesus' breast and can be in him.'¹⁴³

3. Jesus' experience of God is offered to man as an experience which comes down from the Father (Jn 6.38), which has the heavenly glory both 'at its back' and proleptically ahead of it (Jn 17.5). Jesus' experience of God, therefore, refers even believing man, according to his own *prolepsis*, to the imminent ascent to the Father (6.62; cf 3.12f.). Thus, an experience of God is communicated which does not come to rest in itself, but is dynamic and

open-ended.

d. The Old Testament Experience of God

The experience of God in the Old Testament is under way to Christ: this is what is common to all its multiplicity, which cannot be reduced to any simple formula. Its multi-layeredness derives from the fact that, as the basis of the New and eternal Covenant, it must 1) in advance contain the structure of this New Covenant within itself in an implicit but complete form, including what concerns the experience of God in the Covenant; but it must also 2) retain its provisional character with regard to Christ. And this, in turn, implies two things: a) the Old Testament relates to the New in the same way as what is 'fleshly' relates to what is 'spiritual' and as the sensory *typos* relates to the supra-sensory *antitypos* (which, thus, surpasses the *typos*). But, in its progression, the Old Testament b) is nevertheless an 'education' and, thus, an 'approximation' to the fulfilment. In this almost inextricable dialectic a literary aspect is added to the theological which is intimately bound to the latter. The Old Testament experiences of God stretch from a period characterised by the mythical manner of experience and expression, through the relatively 'enlightened' time of the Kings (to which admittedly the Prophets and their experiential statements belong also), to the period of the apocalypses, in which, once again, it is usually only with difficulty that we can distinguish between a genuinely visionary experience and literary elaboration. In addition, many of the theophany-narratives, especially of the first period, seem to have undergone a marked literary evolution, and this in two directions: first, in the direction of a de-mythologisation and an adaptation to a later stage of faith in Yahweh in which we usually find in the same narrative various superimposed layers of religious experience; and second, in the almost reverse direction of a possible 'sensualisation' of certain religious experiences that originally were primarily 'spiritual', and this occurs by way of literary amplification and the addition of artistic detail, as in the exodus from Egypt, the wandering through the desert, and the conquest of the Promised Land. In other places it is also possible that originally literary motifs were incorporated into the historical context and, thus, raised to the level of existential testimonies of a total—and hence also sensual—encounter with God.

In the midst of all of these disparate viewpoints and criteria for judgment, a few things may nevertheless be affirmed with certainty.¹⁴⁴

If the Old Testament experience of God was intended as the training of a chosen people for their encounter with God in human form, then this propaedeutic could not primarily and onesidedly have consisted in communicating as spiritualised as possible a concept of the living God, but rather a concept of him which, along with the true freedom of God, had to impress on man God's total lordship over true historical man, who is inseparably corporeal and spiritual. For this reason, it is hardly advisable to start one-sidedly with the prohibition of images (whose historical reasons and origins have to date not been fully clarified); it would be better to observe how, slowly but ever more strongly, out of the immanent and nature-like image of God that dominates the religion of the Patriarchs, there begin to gleam the features of the living, free, and transcendent God. In this process, the sensory images are not rejected but incorporated. Even in the Psalms, Yahweh remains a God who dwells on high, who comes down to earth and again goes up; he remains the God who dwells within the great phenomena of nature, who conceals himself in the storm-clouds, speaks in the thunder, manifests himself in the lightning, comes riding on the winds, and makes his grace drop down in the dew and the rain. The theophanies in the so-called 'aetiological legends' of Genesis are carefully recorded as the sensory point of departure for the history of the people and its election; without God's grandiose appearances in Exodus the 'myth' of the people would be unthinkable. Even if God who speaks from the cloud on Sinai is, to be sure, a God of the living word, of the mastering command, and of the unheard-of promise, nevertheless one cannot say that, on this account, 'hearing the word' is the sole foundation for this religion. At least as much is seen as is heard, and it is not so much 'private revelations' (as is chiefly the case in the stories of the Patriarchs) that become the basis for the cult, but revelations to the whole people, even if these are apportioned to smaller groups of witnesses: Moses alone goes into the cloud for forty days and brings down the law of the Covenant; but he also climbs the holy mountain with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of Israel's elders in order there to bow in adoration, to contemplate the face of God, and to eat and drink before him (Ex 24.1-2, 9-11), that is, to celebrate the cultic meal of the Covenant. And from below, the whole people see the glory of Yahweh—a consuming flame over the peak of the mountain (24.17). Then, in the period of foundation, God lives habitually

among the children of Israel in the visible pillar of cloud and of fire, and obedience to God is expressed equally in visibly following after him or remaining where they are, depending on whether the cloud rises above the tent, thus giving the signal to break camp, or itself remains still. What survives later on from this time of foundation is not a consuming nostalgia for the God who now no longer appears: rather, the visibleness of the cult in the visible Temple is experienced as being the validly equivalent prolongation of God's visibleness in the midst of the people. This must be understood literally: the wholly human association of the Old Testament men of piety with the present God of the Covenant (as for instance in many psalms) derives, without any essential break, from the primitive stage of religion with its naturelike experience of God's presence in natural phenomena, tribal history, and the cult; but this primitive phase went through a process of deepening which can only be described very one-sidedly with the word 'spiritualisation', and which was a process leading to the Incarnation of God's Word. For such an encounter with God—characterised as it is by fulness of humanity and which, thus, is both sensory and spiritual—the 'ideology of the kings' hardly offers a satisfactory explanation; and, of course, an individualistic mysticism does so even less. The universal laws of cultic purity and impurity draw the whole of the Israelite's everyday life into his relationship with God: here one can no longer distinguish between a sacral and a profane sphere, because everything—even the sphere of sexuality, of the family, of sickness and death, and of the relationship with the members of one's tribe and with outsiders—appears as affected and regulated by the holiness of the present God of the Covenant. Nor can one derive all of this from the general concepts of *mana* and *tabu*, of the history of religions (they are the basis, but not the thing itself), nor can it simply be dismissed by viewing it in terms of its later development into a mere Pharisaic legalism. The living reality which is in the middle, between the beginning and the end, is something which points forward, with a peculiar urgency, to God's imminent Incarnation: it is a reality within which man as a whole is claimed by God for himself and is made a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven—a reality in which, therefore, for him even the slightest distinction between the sacral and the profane must cease to exist. All the writings of the New Testament will bear witness in the most varied ways to the total sacrality of Christian existence. In the Old Testament, the sacral, as it penetrates into everyday life, rests wholly on a grace instituted by God. No

matter how many analogies may exist outside Israel for priestly legislation such as this—these analogies belong to the patrimony of categories found in any historical and social existence—in Israel everything stands under the sign of the God who disposes, pardons, and judges with sovereignty, the God who has no equal and in the light of whom alone Jesus Christ will be comprehensible. It is not the ‘palpability’ of the relationship to God that Christ will criticise in the Old Testament, but solely the magical and moralistic abuse of this God who has exposed himself to such misuse by entering into the Covenant with Israel the sinner. And his criticism will be sustained by that divine deed in which God, now really in a wholesale and unsurpassable manner, delivers himself bodily into the hands of sinners and into the hour of darkness and guarantees, with the very substance of his own body, that the sprinkling with the blood of the Covenant and the ritual meal of the Covenant will take place.

To this should be added a further consideration. The Old Testament is a time of revelation. It is not only the books that relate the revelation-experience of the people of Israel that, as canonical, are normative, but, quite particularly, also their content. For this reason, the great theophanies that were granted to individuals, such as Elijah and the Prophets of Scripture, are not private revelations, but, in the same sense as the Law and the words of God communicated by the Prophets, they are manifest to all Israel and binding for the Church. No matter how dramatically many of the Prophets struggled with the lack of faith and stubbornness of the people, no matter how greatly the legitimacy of their experiences of God was contested during their lifetime, these divine experiences had to be considered as universally binding as soon as their authenticity was proven. The great visionaries of the Old Testament were eyewitnesses to the God who was seen, heard, and touched in the same way as were the Apostles in the New. In the Old Testament there was no conclusion to the time of revelation, and thus someone could always again be chosen from the people to become such an eyewitness. And thus it follows that this ability to see the living God was always fundamentally possible in Israel and it, therefore, continually applied to all the people: it is the people as a whole that was God’s Covenant-partner, and the individuals who were permitted to see and hear him sensorily were representatives of the people. Israel’s archetypal experience of God, which is the foundation for the canonicity of the Old Testament writings even for the Church, is precisely for this reason an experience which, in its entirety,

cannot be surpassed, even if it is ‘only’ typical when considered in relation to the experience of God in the New Testament.

This implies two things. First, it means that the great sensory visions of the Prophets could and had to be reckoned by the people as their own experiences of God. In this respect it means that there was ultimately no opposition between these unique moments when the Prophets penetrated into the reality above the world and the people’s habitual everyday experiences of God in the Law and in the cycle of feasts. The fact that these experiences were the experiences of individuals could only call to mind their proleptic character and whet the people’s sensibility for the often-repeated prophecy: ‘All flesh shall see God.’¹⁴⁵ All Israel’s different experiences of God find their unity in the coming of God: ‘The future determines the present. The God who is to come is proclaimed and adored as the God who has already come. The God who will appear and who will be seen is already doing before men’s eyes works which manifest his might and his will, his glory and his grace’: Israel’s present experience of God is the anticipation of the experience which is to come.¹⁴⁶ In the last analysis, even the prohibition of images and the ever increasing awareness of God’s essential invisibility serve to keep this eschatological dimension open.

But this also implies that these great archetypal experiences of God, which in their structure are an anticipated Christology, are not, for all their proleptic character, to be classified as merely a lower stage which leads on up to Christian experience. Their very sensoriness and their celestial symbolism is something that cannot be surpassed by the New Testament; the seer of the Apocalypse was fully conscious of this. His visions may be distinguished from those of Ezekiel and Daniel by the fact that they are a ‘revelation through Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants [the Prophets of the primitive Church]’ (Rev 1.1). Nonetheless, the vision on Patmos is still the recapitulation of all the sensory experience of God in the Old Testament—the gathering up of this harvest, common to both Testaments, into the conclusion of Christian revelation. The symbols and images of the Apocalypse, with their unique importance in the history of the world, are not to be surpassed in the present aeon by even the most sublime experience of God, nor are they something which in the New Aeon of the Resurrection, of the new heaven and the new earth we will simply have left behind, since we will contemplate them in their eternal fulfilment for all eternity. This is why the prophet of the Apocalypse placed the Old and New

Covenants on the same step before the throne of God: there is no hierarchy among the twenty-four elders, nor between the two witnesses, nor is there any sequence imposed on the names of the twelve tribes or of the twelve Apostles, which are written on the gates and on the foundation-stones of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The solidarity in their experience of God that, in Israel, unites the privileged seers of God with the ordinary people, belongs to the archetypal structure of Israel's experience of God. As such, this solidarity is not without consequences for the Church's experience of God in the New Testament. Considered from the standpoint of its canonicity (archetypicity), it is evident that this structure cannot simply be reproduced in the Church. Rather, in this regard, there are private revelations in the New Testament which, as such, are not canonical in the sense that they are not binding for the whole Church. We must also bear in mind that in the Old Testament there was no infallible official institution for the reason that historical revelation was still in process and no one could pass judgment on it by comprehending its totality. It is only logical, then, that private revelations in the Church should be subject to the approval of the magisterial and pastoral office. But here we must not forget that the hierarchy is a successor to the Apostles with respect to the authority of their office but not with respect to their archetypal role as eyewitnesses. This archetypal witness, therefore, is something which can be imitated only in its realisation by the whole Church, and, thus, here something of the archetypal structure of the Old Testament has been maintained (as was necessarily to be expected).

The Old Testament experience of God has myth at its back and, ahead of it, the Incarnation of God. In this way, this experience has behind it the inner-worldly, aesthetic relationship between 'ground' and 'form', and is moving towards the definitive form of theological aesthetics. The transition is a difficult, variegated process in which time and again equivocal elements must be replaced by counter-elements which themselves cannot yet be considered definitive. The messianic age is described in sensory fashion, and rightly so, for it will mean the Incarnation of God's Word and the resurrection of all flesh. But in the interim the manner of representing this sensory dimension must be de-sensorised and the sense for God's immateriality must be awakened. While the *Hymn to the Sun of Amenophis IV* remains wholly within the mythical realm, praising Ra as the unmediated appearance of God, Psalm 19 has learned to make the leap from the glory of God in the stars to

his glory in the Law, which is a spiritual sun and challenges the whole man to an experience of another kind. The great hymn in praise of the Law (Ps 119) shows the extent to which this realisation has progressed: God's manifestness and presence in his word and in his commands has acquired a concreteness that claims man for itself not only along with his faith and his understanding, but even with his very senses. Here man sees, hears, touches, tastes, and savours the Word. At this point we are no longer very far from the Song of Songs in which eros, as it ascends towards spiritualisation, encounters the faith of the Covenant as it descends to become corporeal.

e. The Marian Experience of God

At the point where all roads meet which lead from the Old Testament to the New we encounter the Marian experience of God, at once so rich and so secret that it almost escapes description. But it is also so important that time and again it shines through as the background for what is manifest. In Mary, Zion passes over into the Church; in her, the Word passes over into flesh; in her, the Head passes over into the body. She is the place of superabundant fruitfulness.

The Incarnation of the Word occurs in the faith of the Virgin. She relies not so much on the appearance of the angel as wholly on his word, which is a Word from God. The future tense 'thou wilt conceive' contains a promise to Israel, and her maidenhood is the faith of Zion. The lightning-flash of the miracle has no counterpart in her human experience; this experience begins afterwards, as a temporal echo of that miracle. It begins with a blind sense of touch, with the bodily sensing of a presence (αἴσθησις παρουσίας τινος, in the words of Gregory of Nyssa and of Diadochus)—the sense of touch as the fundamental, unerring sense—and this experience intensifies first within its own particular kind before it extends to embrace also the experience of seeing and hearing which comes with the birth. The gradual separation into two of the one natural consciousness of the body at that stage when the mother's consciousness still embraces both bodies, is like an imitation, within the economy of salvation, of the mystery of the Trinity, and, no less, like an imitation (the first and closest imitation) of the mystery of the two natures in the one Person. The mother is still both herself and her child.

And her feeling of the child still wholly encompasses within itself her

being felt by the child—just as the believer’s vision of God presupposed his being seen by God. Seen in the light of Mary’s simple experience of motherhood, which in her has become a function of the archetypal act of faith, all closed consciousness of self and all closed experience of self become problematic: the experience of self must open out, through faith, to an experience that encompasses both oneself and the other—oneself and the burgeoning Word of God, which at first seems to be growing in the self until in this growth it becomes evident that it is rather the other way around and that it is the self that is contained in the Word of God. And yet this reversal does not occur by virtue of any sudden break, because even the first phase was already a function of faith, which from the outset is God’s almighty Word in man; but at that stage faith was still not felt in all its true dimensions. This state of non-feeling is not a guilt which is gradually atoned for; it is nature, which is good in its radical otherness to God and which is intended to experience the goodness of God by submitting to the patient process of becoming (Irenaeus).

The experience of the *thou* both among men and between God and man grows up out of the realm of the body and the senses into the sphere of the spirit; but in such a way that an original relationship of spirit (man-wife relationship in marriage, or, in virginity, the assent of the virgin to God) is the prerequisite for this growth. Between the spiritual presupposition and the beginnings of the physical process comes the lightning-bolt of miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit (at the natural level, in the infusion of the immortal soul into the act of the parents, and, at the supernatural level, in the generation of the Word of God in the womb of the Virgin). This act of overshadowing by the Holy Spirit stands beyond the dichotomies of ‘physical’ and ‘personal’, of ‘corporeal’ and ‘spiritual’. For this reason, with the overshadowing of the Virgin begin the mysteries of the Mystical Body, which are above all mysteries of the Holy Spirit, generated in the womb of the virginal Church.

In other words, because of the physical connection between mother and child, fresh problems arise concerning the relationship between the experience of Mary, the experience of the Church, and the experience of each individual member of the Church. The Platonic relationship between an archetype (in the heaven of ideas) and a copy clearly distinguished from it becomes questionable. There is now a fluid transition from archetypal experience to imitative experience. This is so, first of all, because Mary’s

faith, which is the basis for her experience of motherhood, remains the same as the faith of Abraham and the faith of all Christians. In the second place, this is so also because Mary, by bearing and giving birth to her Son, the Head of the Church, encloses all Christians within herself and brings them forth from herself along with their experience of faith, and this in a relationship with them which is somehow physical. The archetype, by its very nature, has a maternal form and under its 'protective mantle' it embraces the progeny that will imitate it. This is also where the proleptic element of all the experience of God in the Old Testament reaches its superabundant culmination: Mary's physico-personal experience of the Child who is her God and her Redeemer is unreservedly open to Christianity. Mary's whole experience, as it develops from its earliest beginnings, is an experience for others—for all. It is an expropriated experience for the benefit of all, the experience not only of being dispossessed of her Child (beginning when he was twelve years old, continuing through his public life, and culminating in his Passion and in the founding of the Church), but of being dispossessed of experience itself, as if the Mother must increasingly renounce everything vitally personal to her for the sake of the Church, in the end to be left like a plundered tree with nothing but her naked faith ('Behold, there is your son!'). Progressively, every shade of personal intimacy is taken from her, to be increasingly applied to the good of the Church and of Christians, to be bestowed on these together with the grace of Christ, a grace which is both human and divine and which is, therefore, replete with Christ's human experiences of God.

In an ecclesial sense, therefore, it is hardly surprising that, in Mary, believers possess experiences which they have not enjoyed personally, but which have been communicated to them by grace. If this applies to all the baptised, then especially so to those who, in imitation of the Mother of the Lord, have placed their lives as vessels exclusively at the disposal of the Word of God. Mary's experience of God has her virginity as its foundation—her exclusive bodily and spiritual readiness for God. Thus, it is already an experience of God on the basis of an antecedent dispossession of a fundamental human experience. If this is the basis, then, in turn, it enters as an integral condition into the manner in which the Marian experience is apportioned in the Church. Here we have left far behind us the level of psychological criteria: the Christian does not find the measure of his Christian experience in what he may have personally experienced and

suffered, but, far beyond this, in the extent to which he has made room in himself for the archetypal Christian experiences, among which Mary's experience of motherhood holds an important place.

The whole of Marian experience stands in a functional relationship to Christology and, hence, to ecclesiology; but this is where it can be seen most clearly that, within the sphere of revelation, the functional does not jeopardise or abolish the personal, but rather perfects it. A human mother, with all her maternal feelings and experiences, joys and especially sorrows, is taken into God's service in order to bear the mystery of the Incarnate God and the Redeemer of the world. Everything about her faith will, therefore, become incarnate in her natural and, at the same time, graced motherhood; everything will be drenched in the blood of human experience, down to the very foundations of the body, of the womb. The eyewitness of the Apostles, being male, cannot reach to these subterranean depths. It begins much later, when Christ is a grown man among men. The experience of the Church as Bride of Christ and, yes, as ever-new Mother of Christ (Mt 12.50), must reach more deeply, back to the secret beginnings of the Incarnation. But, because Mary is a human mother, these experiences of the Church need not have anything extravagant about them: they are brought into the Church in a wholly natural way.

The physical substratum of spiritual solidarity in the Church (which derives not only from the Eucharist, but also from the physical unity of Mother and Child) re-enforces a trait which we noted earlier in the Old Testament: the experience which one member has can be considered by the others as belonging to them. In Moses, the whole people was in the cloud. In Samson, Gideon, and Samuel the whole people was tested and confirmed in its faith. In Job and in the servant of Yahweh, the whole people recognises its own suffering through faith. It seems to each that somehow, in the best part of himself, he himself is Job, or the *'ebed* (servant), or the singer of this or that psalm, expressing his own experience of faith. Ever since Mary laid the foundation for the Church, this solidarity of experience has become much tighter. It is now almost a matter of indifference whose lot it is to be graced with an archetypal experience: certainly, this person has been singled out in a privileged sense, but, precisely for this reason, he belongs all the more intimately to the community and to each individual within it. The despoiling and exploiting of saints in the Church is a general Catholic custom. And yet, this mystical communism is dependent on the fact that in the first place

individuals receive things which are kept from the rest. It is not through the levelling-down of privileges (as Protestantism practised on Mary, while retaining and occasionally over-stressing the privileges of the Apostles) that the 'Communion of Saints' is built up and fostered, but rather by the distinguishing of different vocations, which only in their interconnectedness yield a qualitatively integrated unity.

The Marian experience of motherhood in the flesh, which is an experience of faith, as such remains unique, and is not, therefore, a reproducible mystery of grace. Nevertheless, this uniqueness is open to all. It is open from within, from the womb of the Church, whence Christ's grace cannot radiate without traversing the experience of the womb. And it is also open from without, because this Marian experience condenses into a visible figure: in the figure of the mother, as God has shaped it in its destiny of faith, those who have eyes to see may 'read' the mystery of the experience. This 'legibility' (which becomes an occasion for the multiplicity of the portrayals of Mary) itself belongs to the archetypal nature of the Marian experience. This because Mary was intended to form an integral, indissoluble group of figures, as it were, with the Son who was to assume, before the whole world, a form for the eyes of faith.

f. The Apostles' Eyewitness

The Apostles are the founders of the Church, officially chosen and called by the Lord, whose first function will be to be eyewitnesses. They are drawn into living community with the Messiah, a relationship in which they will enjoy with this man, who is 'God among us', a commerce that is fully human, that engages both their senses and their spirit. They are 'those with him' (Mk 5.40; cf 2.26; 14.67f.; 16.10; Mt 16.51, etc.), 'those who accompany him' (Acts 1.6, 21), 'those around him' (Lk 22.49, etc.). This is what they are, and they will grow more and more into this way of life in the course of Jesus' life. They constitute the original cell of God's community with man, which had been promised and is now being realised. All those coming after them who wish to have community with God must become a part of this original cell (1 Jn 1.3). There are many others who come to the Lord, only to go away again, many others who stay with him a while only then to leave him, or simply others who have a loose connection with him without any particular calling.

By contrast, the Apostles enjoy a community with Jesus which has precise contours, a community which he has consciously established and maintained, which is founded on the definitive life-long renunciation of all else: it is something wholly formed, distinctive in shape. And yet it is not something magical imposed from above, since the son of perdition will indeed fall away; rather, it is the realisation of the covenant-partnership between God and man. Form is so dominant here that the gap left by Judas Iscariot is not filled by Paul, who had been called by the Lord in a most personal way, but rather by one who is offered by the Church to the Holy Spirit for his decision, one who is thus to complete the numerical form.

Eyewitness, in turn, has as such a fundamental form: it is an association with the Lord in his public life, in his Passion, and in his death which is the communal, human, and realistic experience of God which continues and fulfils the Old Testament's promise of an earthly God-with-us. But this phase comes to an end with Jesus' death; the Apostles' senses, accustomed to his existence, now fall into the void; there is no longer anything there to see, to hear, to touch; the Apostles' whole human experience breaks off with the *triduum mortis*, then to resume anew, without any traceable continuity, with Christ's Resurrection, at a place whose distance from the point of disruption can be known and measured only by God; and now, during the forty days, the association with the Lord will be experienced with wholly new senses. The eyewitness of the Apostles draws all its force from this last phase, to be sure; otherwise they could hardly bear witness to anything more than an extraordinary man who was prophetically gifted and who performed miracles. But it draws its force not, indeed, solely from the witness of the Resurrection, but from the fact that the man who appeared to them was *the same* whom they had known previously from long association and whom they had seen suffer and die. Seeing him, hearing him, touching him, observing how he eats, the proof of the wounds: all of this receives its full significance only in that light.

The manner in which the Apostles, as believing Israelites, associated with the Lord on earth belongs fundamentally to the Old Testament. It is the Old Covenant experiencing the fulfilment of Israel (Lk 2.30ff.), and its senses are praised as blessed for this reason (Mt 12.16f.). Consequently, it is a seeing, a hearing, and a touching in the *krisis* which was peculiar to the Old Testament: to have eyes to see and yet not see, to have ears to hear and yet not hear; and yet, by a miracle of the Lord, they are delivered from their

blindness, deafness, muteness, from this state of being bowed down to the ground, and they are raised up so as to perceive the glory of Israel. The disciples are, indeed, at first always obstinate and unreceptive like the people; they are lacking in understanding, of little faith, without the courage to believe, thirsting for miracles, ambitious, true representatives of their race. The form of the Word is a form which is appropriate in this situation even in an external sense: first of all, parables ('without parables he did not speak to them', Mt 13.34) which the people and the disciples ought to hear and understand, but which are nonetheless not understood; secondly, the parables find their exegesis in the miracle of apostolic grace: the objective Holy Spirit of the New Covenant, which is infused into the Holy Spirit subjectively promised to the Apostles. Here, too, we have the fulfilment of the form of the Word in the Old Testament: it is a word of scandal and judgment directed to the multitude—there is no other way in which the promise is given—and an esoteric word directed to the few, to those who belong to the 'remnant', who as such become 'sealed signs in Israel' (Is 8.16ff.). The seal is opened only by the risen Christ, and he thus releases the real understanding for the sense-bound parables of the didactic and prophetic phase and for the sensory mystery of suffering in the Passion and the death. Until Jesus' death, the Spirit rests on him alone; he alone is 'God-with-us', even if the Apostles, by a lightning-flash of grace, do grasp something of the reality (Mt 16.17). It is only after he has breathed on them as the Risen One and, on the basis of their now common possession of the Spirit, after he has explained to them the Scriptures and his own destiny on earth, that they understand what they have seen, heard, and touched, and that they can now also bear witness to it.

This community of life on earth can, in retrospect, only be seen in a certain twilight. The Apostles understood within the limits of an Old Testament faith that had not yet been crucified and buried. But how were they supposed to understand what could only become comprehensible through death and Resurrection? To Peter Jesus says: 'What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand.' And to all: 'Do you understand what I have done to you?' (Jn 13.7, 12). And then referring not only to the betrayal, but also to the Eucharist related to it, and also to the feet-washing which is in turn related to the Eucharist: 'I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he' (Jn 13.19). These references to past and future occur frequently in the Gospel (Jn 2.22; 7.39; 14.29; 16.4); they show that there is an element of analogy in the Apostles'

eyewitness which is essential for its credibility: the Apostles experienced things which they had to accept in their naked factualness, things whose real interpretation was to come only later. It is only subsequently that experience and understanding come together to form one convincing total picture; this is why the Apostles could only subsequently discover the other analogies between the Old and New Testaments and then incorporate them in their testimony. Their faith begins in the material and the external and then becomes interiorised, while Mary's faith and her experience of faith begin in her innermost being and gradually attain external form.

In their earthly association with the Lord, the difficulty for the Apostles is not sensory experience, but rather a faith adequate to *this* faith-object and capable of perceiving it fully. They do indeed have senses, but not yet spiritual senses. In this they are a permanent archetype of the apostolic Church with her *fides ex auditu*, a Church which indeed manages the *auditus* but often enough stops there. Thus much depends, in the meantime, on this external presence and affirmation; and the Lord can interpret this 'good will' benevolently: 'You are those who have continued with me in my trials' (Lk 22.28), and in these *πειρασμοί* of Christ the Apostles gain an initial and still wholly human experience (*πειρα*) of faith: what it means to be with him. This experience becomes a Christian experience when, in the Passion, the Shepherd is slain and the flock is dispersed (Mt 26.31), whereby every purely human and allegedly Christian communion with him is unmasked: the Shepherd is slain, and the sheep are shown for what they are, as slaying wolves. It is only through this revealing, clarifying trial (*πειρασμός*) that they will be reunited again in a new and definitive way. The Apostles were also, and especially, to bear witness to this fact and this experience: Peter to his betrayal, the others to their flight of denial, even John to his slumber during the temptation that decided everything.

But now, the analogy between the pre-Easter and the post-Easter testimony (comparable to the analogy between testimony in the Old and the New Testament) signifies the decisive step forward: the leaving behind of the old, which had served as basis, in order to become established in the new. *Paul* is the eyewitness of this step forward, since he not only had to defend his eyewitness arduously in itself, but his eyewitness in this matter against the privileges of the original Apostles. Whoever disregards the element of analogy in the Apostles' witness, will hold unswervingly to the testimony of

the other Apostles and will with them consider Paul's credentials as an eyewitness to be secondary, if not altogether doubtful.¹⁴⁷ But his legitimacy stands under the protection of Scriptural inspiration and thus remains unassailable. This is of the highest theological interest. Paul's witness to the Resurrection dispenses with the 'analogy' between witness to Christ's earthly existence and witness to the Resurrection; he is a witness *only* to Jesus' Resurrection. For Paul, the identity of the risen Christ with the Jesus who suffered and died lies in the vitality exhibited by the *Kyrios*. Because he is the new man, he was also the old. If this holds for Paul and if it is to this that he witnesses, the same does not necessarily apply to the others. For Paul there is no other legitimation than that of his own turning from the Old to the New Covenant and to the new man, his *conversio morum*, the fact that in all things he shows himself to be a servant of God (2 Cor 6.4), the fact that his existence has been so transformed that it has become an incontestable mirroring of the image of Christ. Paul proves himself to be one who has seen essentially by letting himself be seen and by being, in fact, seen. He gives himself wholly over to seeing, hearing, and touching: by the grace of God, in him a Christian has been formed who is not a ghost, but who has flesh and bones. Paul cuts right through the analogy that runs across the testimony of Peter and the others, and this cannot be his work, since he himself is the work of the grace of the Risen One.

This means that, with such an archetypal experience, Paul straddles the boundary between the apostolic and the ecclesial era. He fights for his inclusion in the apostolic era, and the Lord himself gives the warrant for this inclusion; and yet his experience of Christ bears essential features of the ecclesial era, namely, that of private revelation and its confirmation by personal sanctity. He shares this transitional character with the whole period of the Acts of the Apostles: this is the period of archetypal Church history. This is certainly so, on the one hand, because this is the span of time in which Christ's original eyewitnesses lived; Protestant theology has always emphasised this aspect, and attempted to close the narrative of Acts off within itself as representing an archetypal age.¹⁴⁸ And yet Paul falls outside these limits, while still dominating in a central way the events in the Acts of the Apostles. For, on the other hand, this period of history is more than just the time-span in which the original eyewitnesses lived; it is the privileged space in which the Holy Spirit became visible, audible, and palpable: it is the expansion of the explosion that occurred on Pentecost. Paul is a witness to

the *Kyrios* who is the Spirit (2 Cor 3.16f.). Alongside the Petrine and Jacobean proofs from tradition he places ‘the proof (or the demonstration) from Spirit and power’ (1 Cor 2.4), and he conducts this proof—which as such exhibits the structure of the coming history of the Church—in an exemplary form which is modelled on the proof given by the Johannine Christ of the truth of his own affirmations.¹⁴⁹

The cogency of this proof lies in the trinitarian structure of grace. Paul’s existence and teaching must prove that, beyond the fleshly experience of the fleshly Christ, there is a pneumatic experience of him which does not ‘spiritualise’ him in the human sense, but rather shows him to be the one who has truly risen with his body. Freedom is the name which Paul gives to this experience; but freedom as he himself interprets it and as can only be correctly understood in this trinitarian light. It is the immense interior space of God himself which opens up (1 Cor 2.11), not only objectively in our dying and rising with Christ, but also subjectively, since the Spirit is given to us ‘that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God’ (1 Cor 2.12), gifts which fleshly man cannot fathom and which he rejects as folly since they can only be understood pneumatically. Lest it appear that this is simply an open invitation to enthusiasm, Paul insists that the Spirit who ‘impels’ the children of God (Rom 8.14) impels them solely according to the law and the command of Christ, which is to say according to Christ’s selfless, self-forgetting love. In this love the ‘Spirit’ manifests himself, inseparably, as the one who comes from and is sent by Christ and as the risen Son who in this Spirit reveals himself as *Kyrios*. This makes Christianity no longer now a religion bound to space and time, but a religion of the freedom of God himself, a freedom in which God’s whole manifestation in Christ has been, not watered-down, but rather spiritualised. This truth is so powerful that it does not keep Paul from asserting that the Incarnate and crucified Jesus is identical with this *Kyrios*, nor does it keep him from accepting and handing on the tradition of the Twelve, for instance, in what concerns the sacraments; but all this occurs now no longer at the level of a historicity which is fleshly and limited by time and space, but within the new dimension which has been opened up by the Resurrection and the Ascension. If the experience of the Twelve travels a path that runs from the depths to the heights—the path from ‘flesh’ to ‘spirit’—then Paul’s experience runs in a reverse direction: it is the Spirit which, as Spirit of love, builds up the Body of the Lord—the Church—in accordance with his command. The Christian authentication is real enough

to call back all wayward enthusiasm into the order established by Christ and to channel a grace that blows where it will into the form of the charisms, which are dispensed and assigned to each by the risen Lord and by the Spirit himself: this is a finiteness which derives from infinity.

Paul was too conscious of the uniqueness of his archetypal experience of Christ for him to see its continuation in the Church other than as a permanent model. But what in him is distinct from the experience of the first Apostles, namely, the mystical element, will continue in the Church in various degrees, thus establishing within the Church, at the appropriate level, something like an exemplary typology.

g. The Church and the Christian

The question in what sense we can ascribe an archetypal experience to the Church as such as contrasted with the individual Christian will, to a large extent, depend on the other question (which cannot be dealt with here¹⁵⁰) in what sense the Church can be thought to be a subject. Now, such a subject cannot exist outside of or alongside the believers that constitute it; and so, we can explain the Church's quasi-personal unity only on the basis of the spiritual character of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ and of God. For it is in virtue of this character that the Spirit unites individual persons by elevating them interiorly, to the extent that this spiritual character is poured out creatively from Christ's generative Passion (and Resurrection) over the creatureliness that stands over against it. For us, however, this ground for the Church's unity becomes concrete only in the Church's members, and, since certain of these members possess archetypal experiences which they deposit in the common treasury of the *Communio Sanctorum* for the common use, nothing keeps us from ascribing such an experience to the Church herself. The archetypal experience of individual members, however, is but a privileged participation in Christ's all-sustaining experience of God. And Christ makes the Church as a whole participate in this experience, uniting each member of the Church directly to himself and yet, at the same time, mediating between individual members and uniting them to himself through others. He is the sole author of all ecclesial works, and yet, at the same time, through the different charisms and at different levels, he bestows on the members of the Church the grace of being co-workers with him (2 Cor 2.7;

4.1).

The main question, therefore, is: In what manner is the archetypal Christian experience incorporated into the Church so that the members who are not graced with it can nevertheless participate in it? This question gives expression to one part of the proleptic character of all archetypal experience, while another part, together with all the other Christian and Biblical experiences, points forward to the Second Coming of the Lord. The question raised cannot be answered in one way only; rather it here becomes evident how multi-layered the Church's total reality is. At least four different relationships may be identified between Biblical and archetypal experience, on the one hand, and ordinary Christian experience in the Church, on the other; naturally, these relationships, in their total reality, thoroughly interpenetrate one another and constantly overlap, but they are presented by the New Testament separately as different modes of access. First, there is the eyewitness of the Twelve, of which Peter is representative and which is embodied in the Petrine tradition of the Church. Then there is the unique eyewitness of Paul, whose life-work and written legacy outstrip that of all the others (1 Cor 15.10) and flow into the Church in a current of tradition all its own. Thirdly, there is the equally special (ocular, aural, and tactile) witness of the Beloved Disciple, who at the same time is the conscious perfecter of Old Testament prophecy and who, through both these functions, lends the faith of the Church a particular colouration. Finally, at a level which is deeper and closer to the centre, there is the experience of the Lord's Mother, which wholly passes over into the Church and renders the Church fruitful.

Only when we see and abide by this fourfold tradition of archetypal experience in the Church in all its differentiation can we proceed to raise the other question which is implicit in it, namely, the question of what we are to make of mystical experience within the Church. This experience, too, on the one hand, participates in the Biblical archetypes, since it is its essence also to experience what the others 'only believe'. On the other hand, mystical experience does not attain to the dignity and authority of the Biblical archetypes of Old and New Testaments, from which it derives and by which it must be canonised, even though at the same time it is also an expression of the incalculable manner in which the Holy Spirit of Christ and of the Church freely distributes his graces.

1. *Petrine Tradition.* The manner in which the Petrine writings convey their

eyewitness to the Church revolves around two central points: the kerygma and its realisation in Christian life.

As he nears his death (2 Pet 1.15), Peter is zealously concerned that those who would follow should not forget his witness. He is himself 'a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in his *doxa*, that is to be revealed' (1 Pet 5.1); but Peter, as an 'eyewitness', has already seen this glory proleptically on Tabor, where he 'clearly heard from heaven' the voice of the Father that spoke of the Son (2 Pet 1.17f.). For Peter, the earlier light of prophecy has wholly entered into this light; taken in itself, the prophetic light was a groping, as it were, for what was to come, given in view of the Church (1 Pet 1.11f.). But seen together with the vision on Tabor, the light of prophecy becomes 'all the more reliable' both for the Apostles and for the Church (2 Pet 1.19; *cf* 3.2), which receives it together with the apostolic kerygma. 'What has now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven', this is the truth by which the Church must abide, so much so that even 'the angels long to look into these things' (1 Pet 1.12), things which are not completed and surpassed by angelic revelation, for instance, but, on the contrary, things which fulfil the vision of the angels (*cf* Eph 3.10). By the power of the Spirit, Peter reports in his apostolic kerygma what he has seen, and the Church participates in his vision and experience by listening to this truth obediently.

Through obedience the community becomes a 'flock' (1 Pet 5.3), first a flock of the 'elders' and, through them, of the 'supreme Shepherd' (1 Pet 5.4): this is why the community's obedience is a 'consecration through obedience to the truth . . . of God's Word', which is the Gospel and which is to blossom in all as an 'imperishable seed', lived out in a tender love for the brethren (1 Pet 1.22-25) and in voluntary submission even to secular authority. Through the realisation of the kerygma in themselves they will become conformed to Christ's own destiny, thus making of their life an existential priestly ministry (1 Pet 2.5, 9) and thereby making Christ visible to the world (1 Pet 2.12). The sacrament (of baptism) which they have received contains ontologically within itself Christ's death and redemptive descent into hell (1 Pet 3. 18-22; 4.6); to realise its content means to break with sin and to suffer according to the flesh (1 Pet 4.1f.). For this reason, the archetype of Christ in Peter has a certain tendency to become a moral example or be reduced to such (1 Pet 2.21): the believer possesses the truth in its hierarchical proclamation; his firm conviction concerning this truth (2 Pet

1.12) leads to his alienation from the world (1 Pet 1.1, 17; 2.11) and to his unjust persecution (1 Pet 2.18f.; 3.9, 13-17; 4.12-19). But through this his destiny the believer ‘experiences’ his ‘annexation’ to Christ and his ‘inbuilding’ into him (1 Pet 2.4f.). All of this interconnectedness is evident and can even be made evident to others (1 Pet 3. 15). Christians should ‘arm themselves with the same thought’ (1 Pet 4.1) as was Christ’s when he suffered: for he bestows the same ‘hope’ for glory and, what is more, the ‘Spirit of glory’, invisible and unfelt, already now rests on suffering believers (1 Pet 4.13f.). The ‘tasting of the sweetness of the Lord’, mentioned in connection with conversion and baptism, is a reference to the psalms (34.9) and refers to the grace of being a Christian which has been communicated to us.

Compared to the vision of the Apostles, the faith of the Church is decidedly non-visionary: ‘Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him’ (1 Pet 1.8). Because of this non-vision, ‘unspeakable and transfigured joy’ is promised to the faith of the Church. But Peter strives to be a good shepherd according to the Lord’s command, and he exhorts the hierarchy to tend the flock with the attitude of Christ, the supreme Shepherd, and so to be a ‘*typos* for the flock’, a model which impresses its form and makes the archetype visible. For doing this they are promised a crown of glory (1 Pet 5.2ff.). In preaching, what is at stake is ‘arming, strengthening, fortifying, and confirming’ the people on behalf of God (1 Pet 5.10). This is, strictly and exclusively, the perspective of the hierarchical tradition, which through kerygma and sacraments incorporates the Apostles’ eyewitness into the Church, and which, for the rest, locates the actuality of Christ as archetype in the moral realisation of the proclaimed creed. In this, the Church is the fulfilment of the Old Testament’s ‘holy people’, ‘chosen race’ and ‘royal priesthood’ (Ex 19.5f.; Is 43.20f.), in the consciousness that, previously being ‘not-a-people’, it has been chosen to be ‘the People’ (Hos 1.6-9; 2.3, 25). In the Petrine tradition, a certain absence of New Testament prophecy is compensated for by relying on apocryphal apocalyptic literature (2 Peter, Jude).

2. *Pauline Tradition.* While the Petrine eyewitness is conveyed to the Church and incorporated into it horizontally, at the level of history—the apostolic succession rests on the horizontal continuity (starting at Caesarea Philippi)—the Pauline eyewitness proceeds vertically ‘from heaven’ (Acts 22.6; 26.13),

and his 'Gospel' comes through revelation from God without the mediation of any man (Gal 1.1, 11f.). Even if Paul in everything (including his own self-sacrifice: Acts 21) attempts to establish his links with the apostolic tradition of the Twelve and to preserve it by all available means, nonetheless he is 'foisted on' the original Apostles without having been chosen by them; his vertical intrusion precludes every possibility of the charism reserved for him being continued horizontally in the Church. The Pauline tradition, on the other hand, will mean the continued fostering of Paul's view of revelation; but, on the other hand, it will also mean the ever-new and unforeseen vertical irruption of new charisms in the history of the Church. In his (discontinuous) tradition are to be found the great charisms of mission which suddenly visit and fructify the Church, the great conversions (from Augustine to Newman), the great visions which are 'ineffable' in themselves (2 Cor 12.4) and yet are poured out over the Church in words inspired by the Spirit.

For Paul, the Church as a whole has a much more emphatically vertical extension and structure than for Peter. The Head appears to him from 'above'; he sees him articulating and ordering the Mystical Body from above, from where he 'fills all things' (Eph 4.10f.), and the Mystical Body grows upwards towards him, the perfect Man (Eph 4.13). However, this is not only a striving upwards, but already in a hidden way it is a state of being above now (Eph 2.6; Col 3.1ff.) which eschatologically has only to 'appear'. Our mother is the 'Jerusalem above; we are not children of the slave but of the free woman' (Gal 4.26, 31). Whoever would cling merely to the horizontal succession coming from the Old Testament must keep the whole Law: he is separated from Christ and has forfeited grace (Gal 5.3f.). To keep the Law upwards, from below, is impossible, but whoever possesses the Spirit from above—love itself—has 'fulfilled the whole Law' (Gal 5.14).

While Peter exhorts his followers to be good shepherds and examples to the flock, Paul knows from the outset that he is a 'spectacle' for angels and men; in his existence may be plainly read what man is, seen from above; even as one who is crucified with Christ and who daily dies with him, he is in the eyes of all a living anticipation of the eschatological promise. He not only shows, he infuses his vision and his certainty of salvation into the Church; irresistibly he draws the community into his joy, his *parrhesia*, his zeal, his prayer, his catholic love. He works through contagion. Even when, in a Petrine sense, he had to distinguish between himself and the others, he acts as a binding force by receiving within himself and saying 'we' instead of 'I'.^{[151](#)}

This is the identity, at once bestowed and striven for, between official apostleship and personal sanctity—sanctity *as* a charge that depersonalises and ecclesialises the person, the charge to be the light of the Church by consuming oneself for all. Because this is a pure grace, however, there is no reason why the Holy Spirit could not repeat such missions and special archetypal experiences during the course of the Church's history. Even after Paul, such missions and experiences will naturally have submission to Peter as a sign of their authenticity, but they will derive no less from the 'Jerusalem above' and make it present to the senses by witness of word and of life.

The vertical Pauline Church received its first interpretation in the 'Platonism' of the Epistle to the Hebrews. We have come now, not to Mount Sinai (cf. Gal 4.24), 'but to Mount Zion, to the *Civitas Dei Viventis*, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven' (Heb 12:18, 22-23). It is from here that God's Word now resounds, no longer as a temporal word but as definitive for all eternity, and its acceptance must, therefore, also be definitive (Heb 12.25f.). We must cling to the painful discipline of the 'Father of spirits' 'so as to come to share in his holiness'; if we do not 'withdraw' from the grace of his discipline (Heb 12.9-10, 15), we will be following Jesus the High Priest 'through the curtain of his flesh' (Heb 10.20) into the truth which is beyond the 'shadowy images' (Heb 8.5) and the 'symbols of the present time' (Heb 9.9). For the author of the Epistle, the curtain of Christ's flesh no longer conceals, as did the temple veil of the Old Testament; rather, in the place where Christ, 'by virtue of his eternal Spirit, has offered himself to God as a spotless sacrifice', there, in a Platonic-Christian contemplation, the heavenly is already seen in the events of the flesh. Even if we 'do not yet see everything in subjection to him, we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death' (Heb 2.8f.); thus, in Christ's humiliation and exaltation, we see the full dimension of the redemptive process, and ourselves taken up in it. We do indeed believe (Heb 11.1) and in this sense we do not yet see; but, at the same time, in the temporal shadows of the Old Testament we have learned to see the definitive eschatological archetype. To be sure, this gnosis is a permanent ethical demand that we urgently strive after Christ as his disciples. But, at the same time, it means becoming adults in the divine doctrine: it is the need for solid food that lies beyond the milk of infants; it is progress beyond merely

listening to the kerygma, rather to its interior assimilation. As such, it is 'illumination', a 'tasting (γεύεσθαι) of the heavenly gift', a 'partaking of the holy Pneuma', a 'perceiving of the beauty of God's Word and of the powers of the age to come' (Heb 6.3-6). The beginner is still 'inexperienced' (ἄπειρος) in true speech, but the one who has been perfected possesses 'well-trained perceptive faculties' (αἰσθητήρια γεγυμνασμένα) to distinguish the beautiful from the ugly (Heb 5. 13 f.).

These 'spiritual senses', which will be taken up by Origen, are functions of a faith which has received vision and knowledge, a faith which can now read the form of revelation in the Bible—both vertically (the spiritual in the sensory) and horizontally (the New Testament in the Old). This transposition of Paul's thought will enjoy the greatest historical success; we may say that this is a kind of Pauline mysticism for everyone, one which by-passes the whole realm of special charisms and replaces them with a contemplation of revelation which is generally accessible and even strictly required of every Christian as he progresses. As in all the writings of the New Testament, this is never an aesthetic contemplation for its own sake: it is impelled by the zeal for a faith-filled discipleship and immediately leads to it. It is contemplation along the way of hasty pilgrimage to the great Sabbath rest, a contemplation fully conscious of its proleptic character (Heb 4.1-10).

3. The *Johannine tradition* is two-pronged depending on whether we are speaking of the Epistles or the Apocalypse. But, to the extent that from both of these one total figure results, the Johannine conclusion to the New Testament constitutes something like a synthesis of the Petrine and Pauline elements: the earthly and the prophetic-heavenly tradition, along with contemplative vision, merge into one stream. In John, however, we find neither the Petrine contrast between the proclaimers who have seen and the hearers who have not seen, nor the Pauline contrast between the 'I' which imitates Christ and the others who imitate Paul. In John's Epistles there is only the immediate admittance of the 'we' that is addressed to the seeing community of the 'we' who speak. To be sure, later on the 'I' of the Apostle is singled out from this speaking 'we'; but this occurs only in order to integrate everyone more intimately into the common 'we'. And then, John also includes himself in the 'we' that is addressed when he censures or exhorts ('If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth', 1 Jn 1.6). John speaks from the

standpoint of the clearly remembered direct vision of Jesus, and not, like the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who is not an eyewitness, from the standpoint of faith's contemplation. But John's direct vision is not, like Peter's eyewitness, purely historical, but in itself it is already contemplative, and on this basis his vision may flow over without any distance or alteration into the contemplation of faith of his followers. In John there is no need even for the 'spiritual senses'; here the opposition between corporeal and spiritual senses is unthinkable and superfluous, since from the very outset John has heard, seen, and touched the Word of Life with his bodily senses. John, who is par excellence the one who has been expropriated for love, simply confers his eyewitness on the whole Church, unaware of any problems this might cause, simply assuming that in love everything is possible, even the identification of others' eyes, ears, and hands with one's own. In a peculiar way he retains all his incomparable apostolic dignity within this *traditio*: above all, it is the dizzy exaltation of his love that elevates him from all others into the sphere of the archetype.

To this manner of communication (closely related to the Marian mode) there is joined the prophetic-apocalyptic dimension, which is in sharp contrast to it. This is a vision, not of what has occurred, but of what 'will soon come to pass'; it is a 'witness to the Word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ—to all that was shown in visions' (Rev 1.2) and it designates itself expressly as 'prophecy'. John addresses the community as a prophetic seer: not in the name of the Christ in whom Peter greets them, nor in the name of the Christ whom Paul has seen in Damascus, but, precisely, in the name of the Christ of the Apocalypse, the Ruler of the kings of the earth, who is preparing to come upon the clouds in union with his enthroned Father and the seven spirits who stand before his throne (Rev 1.4f., 7). This time John does not stand together with the original Apostles, but with his 'brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus Christ. . . . For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy' (Rev 19.10). The revealing Angel is only 'a fellow servant with you and your brethren the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book' (Rev 22.9).

The revealer is the Angel, sent 'by God, the Lord of the spirits of the prophets' (Rev 22.6), sent 'by Jesus to you [the prophets] with this testimony for the churches' (Rev 22.16), sent from Jesus Christ to his servant, John (Rev 1.1). Even if the angelic world is thus engaged as a mediator, yet, in a mysterious way, it is also at the same time part of the revelation. John is to

write down ‘the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and of the seven golden lampstands. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. To the angel of the church in Ephesus write’ (Rev 1.20-2.1). Within the context, these angels to whom he must successively write are in heaven in the hand of the Son of Man, whether one considers them the leaders of the earthly communities or not. And not only the heads of the seven communities (which are the Church) abide in heaven, but the communities themselves do, as the seven lampstands. As star-angels they doubtless ‘see’ God, and as lampstands they at least stand before his face and are seen by him. John’s prophetic vision is in this quite distinct from the ecstasy of Paul, who is transported from the earth to God to see the unspeakable. John, too, is transported in the Spirit (Rev 1.10), but in heaven he again finds the reality of earth, only from the perspective of heaven; in heaven he finds the reality of faith on earth, not only as a reality that is seen but as a reality that also sees. This reality, which in heaven openly is seen and sees, is what time and again is proclaimed as what is ‘soon to come’. Much of what John sees has its reality simultaneously in heaven and on earth. It is not merely something on earth which is observed and directed from heaven; it is something which in itself is enacted in heaven. A prophetic and visionary confirmation is here given to the dogmatic statement of the Epistles to the Galatians and to the Hebrews that we have not come into an earthly but a heavenly Church, into the City of the living God and his angels. A mysterious concreteness is here attained by the Pauline *παρορησία*—the ability to come and stand openly before God, the state of being ‘blessed with every pneumatic blessing in the heavenly places,. . . chosen that we should stand holy and blameless before his face’ (Eph 1.3f.), our existence as ‘members of the household’ of God (Eph 2.19).

The angels of the churches and the lampstands of the churches are part of the earthly Church that is to be found in heaven, there seen by God. This is the only way of understanding Mt 18.10: ‘See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven’, and, significantly enough, for this there are no Jewish parallels since, for contemporary Judaism, not even the highest angels could see the face of God (Strack-Billerbeck I, pp. 783f.). This is a distinctively New Testament statement. Of course, one can point to parallels in the history of religions according to which ‘every person possesses in heaven a double for his earthly existence’,¹⁵² a belief to which Acts 12.15

doubtless alludes when the servant Rhoda does not open up the door to Peter, believing it was his angel. Van der Leeuw has provided us with analogies from all forms of religion—from the primitive forms of the ‘external soul’ to the Egyptian *Ka*, to the belief in *Doppelgänger* and protective spirits, to the Platonic *anamnesis* and all the way to German mysticism and idealism.¹⁵³ But what interests us here are the Biblical statements. Christ’s prophetic words: ‘You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man’ (Jn 1.51), were indeed at times interpreted in this sense by showing parallels in rabbinic texts¹⁵⁴: ‘engraved in the heights’ there is the ‘heavenly image’ of Jacob (Israel), while below Jacob is sleeping by the ladder in his earthly existence; ‘ascending, the angels found his image, and descending they found him below, sleeping.’ Thus, the angels mediated between the simultaneously heavenly and earthly reality of Israel. Applied to Jesus, John’s words would then mean that what is promised to the disciples is the vision (ὄψεσθε) of the unification (ascending and descending) of Christ’s heavenly glory with his fleshly form on earth. Whether or not one rejects this interpretation,¹⁵⁵ the Johannine Christology of pre-existence nonetheless points in this direction. But Matthew’s statement, on the other hand, tends to indicate a vicarious vision on the part of the angel to whom is assigned the ‘little one’ on earth: the little ones are not to be despised because their reality rises up even to the open vision of God, which is implied in the vision already given them, even if they do not perceive it with their earthly consciousness. The inspiration and guidance that comes to them from the vision of their angel binds their existence below with their existence above, according to the Church’s measure:

Behold! Jerusalem and Zion embrace like two sisters, the one coming from Heaven
And the other in Exile, washing in the river Khobar the linen used in sacrifices,
And the earthly Church raises her tower-crowned head towards her royal Consort! . . .
And, just as the sun’s eruptions
Reverberate on earth in the form of droughts and springtides,
So, too, from the sublimest Angel who beholds Thee down to the pebble on the path, and from
one end of Thy creation to the other,
The continuum never ceases, not any more than from soul to body.
The unspeakable soar of the Seraphim expands through the Nine orders of Spirits,. . .
And among
All Thy creatures and all the way to Thee there is a liquid bond¹⁵⁶

The poet, here speaking in both a cosmic and an ecclesiological sense, borrows an image from Denys the Areopagite around which Erik Peterson

also constructed his treatise *On the Angels*.¹⁵⁷ For him, too, the Church is essentially on her way from the earthly Jerusalem which she has left behind to the heavenly Polis. Her whole existence, her whole liturgy is the anticipation here below, through faith, of what the angels accomplish above through their vision: indeed, the Church does this together with the angels. According to Peterson, the meaning of the monk's 'angel-like' existence is to join, as far as possible, one's angel here on earth so as to share in his vision of God. For him, an angel is, in the last analysis, the very idea and instantiation of pure adoration and love, of the state in which one pours oneself out wholly in praise of God.¹⁵⁸ In the earthly Church, man lives on the longing to allow himself to be wholly shaped and inflamed by this pure form.

All this can serve as an illustration for a permanently mysterious connection between vision above and faith here below, something which (since we should not force the texts) we can at least call a 'prophetic' contact. Faith, as such, has its locus, its 'homeland', and its shelter within the vision of the angels in heaven, and the inspiration that comes to faith from this vision is both a kind of knowledge, entrusted to God, of the truthfulness, experience and understanding of the mystery, and a state of being instinctively guided by the good Spirit. Faith is not an object of ordinary intuition, but of Johannine-apocalyptic prophecy. According to John, this faith is a 'testimony', so much so that it approximates the martyrdom or 'witness' of blood. At the moment of his greatest suffering, Stephen sees heaven open and the Son of Man standing at God's right hand (Acts 7.56). His prophetic witness to the Church is a blood-witness for the Church. Something similar is in general the case in the Apocalypse. Here too John is anti-gnostic: he is not at all concerned with devaluing the Church's earthly form, not even with lowering its rank to that of a merely Platonic-symbolic regime; rather, John insists on the full incarnational unfolding of the earthly Church's reality, from the blood-witness to the crucified Jesus to the heavenly vision of his glory by the angels. This is what, as apocalyptic prophet, he inserts into the experience of the Church.

4. *Marian Tradition*. The threefold archetypal experience of Christ, which is conferred by the Apostles on the Church for its use, remains permanently sustained and undergirded by the Marian experience of Christ, which in its depth and simplicity is quite beyond the power of words. But the Marian

experience existed prior to the apostolic experience, and it thus wholly conditions it, for Mary, as Mother of the Head, is also Mother of the Body. It was already shown how greatly her womanly experience begins with the *tactus*—sensing by touching—and then unfolds from it only to return to it, to the point of developing a spiritual perception and sense of touch for all that pertains to her Son. Because of her immaculate nature, she always feels and senses that which is insurpassably truthful, which in the transition from faith into vision needs no corrective and which, consequently, even in its earthly concealment and constriction already possesses its definitive form. Here we discover almost an indifference with regard to heaven and earth, an overcoming also of the tension within the Church between the immaculate Church and the Church of sinners. Seldom has anyone spoken of this more sublimely than Charles Péguy in his *Tapisserie de Notre Dame*. He celebrates not only the Marian measure, but also the Christian's incorporation, through prayer, into this measure, which, by virtue of its total rightness, bestows every grace but cannot endure any violation of justice:

Maitresse de la voie et du raccordement,
O miroir de justice et de justesse d'âme,
Vous seule vous savez, ô grande notre Dame,
Ce que c'est que la halte et le recueillement. . . . [159](#)

Who is to say how this final rightness of the Christian answer to the Word of God, how this final accommodation in God's covenant with the world in Jesus Christ, this final concordance reached in Mary between the descending grace which calls to her and the ascending grace in her which answers the call, how this final gift of the Son to his Mother is made to flow out and to circulate throughout the Church? Who is to say how it comes through the Marian Church to each individual believer, all the more as he strives to shape his life as an imitation and an image in conformity with the Church's nature and commandments? Here what is most efficacious is what goes most unnoticed. At certain moments the believer may marvel at the fact that he really believes, that he can do it with such naturalness, that, in spite of all the dialectic he detects in his existence between his grace-filled and his sinful self, he does not for all that suffer from a hidden schizophrenia, but that, rather, everything can occur within a lived unity and a sheltered repose. He feels the grace that sustains him and forms him and keeps him together, and it

could be that in the midst of this he becomes aware of the fact that this is not only a bestowed grace, but an answering grace, an assent with a definite shape that stems from the ancient Zion—indeed, from the first mysterious covenant-sacrifice which Abraham offered to Yah-weh in the night (Gen 15.7-21), a grace which all the Prophets' invectives presupposed as the horizon for a spotless covenant-fidelity, a grace described in sensory terms in the Song of Songs, raised to the level of the New Covenant by Paul's theology of marriage, a grace posited by John as perfect love and from the standpoint of which he thinks out Christian principles (1 Jn 2.5; 4.17f.). Where should a sinner find the confidence necessary to know himself as one incorporated into this perfection, which not only hovers above him as an unfulfilable law but holds him up maternally, which is not only bestowed on him by the grace of the divine Judge but is given him in actual reality as his very own, a perfection which he cannot ascribe to himself personally and to be admitted into which is, once again, a grace? Where is a sinner to find the necessary confidence if not from the immaculate Mother and Bride of the Lord, who is the gift that has been distributed throughout the whole Church? Here, too, nothing can be spiritualised, as if the external, visible, hierarchical Church were but a symbolic scaffolding in which such a grace cannot be found—as if one had then to grope one's way back to a spiritual Church in order there to find the Marian reality. For the mother's experience is bodily and spiritual, inseparably; it is even an experience which begins with the bodily and remains housed within it irrevocably. Because Mary is bodily the Mother of the Lord, the Bride-Church must be bodily and visible, and her visible sacraments and institutions must be an occasion for the spiritual experience of Christ and of God.

All four archetypal experiences converge in the Church. They do not hover over the Church as unattainable ideas, but, rather, each in its own way and by means of a real continuity and communication of what is peculiar to it, these archetypal experiences are the very foundation of the life-form of believing man. By virtue of the fact that all four of them converge in the Church, they at the same time allow the Old Testament form of experience to pass over into themselves. And in both respects—as archetypes of the New and the Old Testament—they remain proleptic *as* archetypes: in spite of all the ways in which the Old Testament expectation finds fulfilment in the New Covenant, in spite of the fulfilment of both Testaments in the Bride-Church that finally appears—a fulfilment that automatically makes all the bride's witnesses

superfluous (Jn 3.29; 2 Cor 11.1)—all this remains provisional and points beyond itself to the eschatological vision.

We must now consider the particular character of this structure of Christian faith, which is founded upon and nourished by archetypal experiences, and which, grasping, yet does not grasp and which grasps most profoundly precisely by not grasping. We will do this by taking our lead from the concept of the ‘spiritual senses’, the paradox of which gives expression to the oscillating centre of the interim period between the Incarnation and the Second Coming and, at the same time, provides the synthesis between the last two chapters—that is, between spiritual ‘experience’ and archetypal ‘sensation’. Being such an oscillating centre, these constitute the final word on the specificity of the subjective evidence with regard to the Christian object, and as such they are the warrant of one of the pillars upon which rests a Christian doctrine of perception.

3. THE SPIRITUAL SENSES

a. Aporetic of the Spiritual Senses

The whole range of questions concerning the subjective evidence of revelation culminates in a final central area of discussion in which the ‘spiritual senses’ are to be found. Faith appeared as the token of a total human vision and, indeed, as its hidden beginning, in the sense that God’s human and sensory appearance in Christ could be reciprocated only by a hidden perception and response on the part of man. Furthermore, it was only in this way that the faith of the New Testament could fulfil that of the Old. Perception, as a fully human act of encounter, necessarily had not only to include the senses, but to emphasise them, for it is only through the senses and in them that man perceives and acquires a sensibility for the reality of the world and of Being. And, what is more, in Christianity God appears to man right in the midst of worldly reality. The centre of this act of encounter must, therefore, lie where the profane human senses, making possible the act of faith, become ‘spiritual’, and where faith becomes ‘sensory’ in order to be human. But is this not an impossibility or a play of words, since, on the one hand, sensibility cannot by definition perceive anything spiritual and since, on the other hand, when the object of faith is abandoned to the senses in this

fashion, Christianity sinks to the level of a mythical religion? The archetypal experiences of the Biblical sphere (until now considered in themselves) prove the contrary, and their archetypal character simply demands the extension of their relevance to the Christian faith. Is it not, again, a sign of the weakness of this faith that it remains so bound to historical concreteness as not to be capable of the liberating rapture of spiritual, much less mystical abstraction? Here we must note that we should not speak simply of sensibility, but of 'spiritual' sensibility. Only thus does the paradox of the object of our inquiry emerge, a paradox which is especially evident when we speak of the Resurrection of Christ and of all flesh. In the Christian sphere, the death and the burial of God within this sensory world correspond to conceptual and mystical abstraction: man's senses and his reason are equally affected by them, and 'naked faith' is in this respect a total death of natural man. But once the Christian has risen with Christ and ascended to the Father, then, with body and spirit, he has become a 'spiritual man' and henceforth—in so far as he is a believer—he has not only a spiritual intellect and will, but also a spiritual heart, a spiritual imagination and spiritual senses. It is obvious that we cannot treat this reality psychologically, but only theologically, since it is the subjective echo of the objective fact of faith, which as such is not subject to any worldly science. But it is just as obvious that, because it effects the real Christian person in the midst of the real historical order of his world and his salvation, this reality must also possess an authentic possibility of expression and its own peculiar evidence, always presupposing the presence of faith.

For man in his full reality, 'experience', as an immediate perception of reality, is to be found at both extremes of his being, so to speak: in the senses, which are wholly immersed in the worldly element that offers itself to them and flows in through them, and (for certain persons) in the mystical ground of the soul, which can perceive God's presence directly without the mediation of discursive thought. The difficulty lies in the fact that these two extremes in man cannot be connected other than by that which separates them: by that centre of the spiritual person which as reason and freedom can only be attained and constituted by establishing a distance between abstract being and the being which is immersed, not only in the senses, but—in a different and unique way—also in God, who can be perceived not by self-identification with him but in the personal distance of adoration and spiritual childhood. The experience of the senses, however, appears to be hopelessly worldly, and

mystical experience, on the contrary, hopelessly unworldly and non-sensory. It may be that the aesthetic experience (which, for instance, can produce a poetic work) gives the impression that it achieves an encounter and, indeed, an identity of both extremes within itself; but this can happen only by provisionally excluding and suspending in some way the centre which really exists in man, by anticipating in a dreamlike pre-existence what man's religious potential to be whole in reality intends, longs, and hopes for. To accept this aesthetic experience as *the* model for Christian experience would mean reducing Christianity to the level of an aesthetic-mythical religion. Our only alternative, therefore, is to begin with the Christian reality itself, and to ask whether something like a 'spiritual sensibility', which would unite the apparently contradictory extremes, is possible and of what it consists. We can begin with the history of Christian spiritual theology, and ask of it whether it knows of such a thing as 'spiritual sensibility' and, if so, how we are to understand it.

The 'spiritual senses' were dealt with in an original fashion in three *loci classici* of this history, and from these privileged moments impulses went out that exerted great influence through the ages. Since these classical passages have been abundantly described, here a mere sketch will suffice. We will investigate only the manner in which the question was posed and the direction in which a solution was sought. Does this history offer us a way into the question which concerns us, or does it not?

1. It was *Origen* who, so to speak, 'invented' the doctrine of the 'five spiritual senses' and developed it in his own way on the basis of his Platonic-Biblical system. In this he had occasional followers in the Patristic period, but none of them ever again attained to his speculative power. A few trickles flowed into the Middle Ages, which, with its habit of systematising all scattered theological statements, admitted these also and somehow or other canalised them, until with Bonaventure this straitened water-course suddenly swells up again to become a mighty river. His synthesis, too, has its followers who are more copyists than anything else. The stream once again silts up. Only with the *Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola do we reach a third independent and fruitful treatment of the doctrine, which has continuing influence despite many unfavourable circumstances, not least the disputes among his interpreters.

Taking as his basis a few Scriptural texts (notably Prov 2.5 in the

Septuagint version: αἰσθησιν θεῖαν εὐρήσεις, Heb 5.14: αἰσθητήρια γεγυμνασμένα, and some texts from the Song of Songs), Origen¹⁶⁰ constructed the doctrine that there exists ‘a general sense for the divine’ (θεῖα τις γενικῇ αἰσθησις) which is subdivided into several kinds (εἶδη): ‘a sense of sight to contemplate supernatural things such as the Cherubim and Seraphim; a sense of hearing which perceives voices that do not resound in the exterior air; a sense of taste that can savour the “bread that came down from heaven for the life of the world”; a sense of smell that perceives what Paul thus describes: “We are a fragrance of Christ for God”; and a sense of touch, whereby John says that he has “touched the Word of Life with his hands” ’ (C. Cels. I, 48; Koetschau 1.98).

There are, therefore, ‘two kinds of senses in us: the one kind is mortal, corruptible, human; the other kind is immortal, spiritual (*intellectuale*),. . . divine’. In this passage what Scripture calls the ‘heart’ is also reduced to the ‘spiritual’: to see God with a pure heart means ‘to see him and know him in the spirit (*mente*)’ (Peri Archon I, i, 9; Koetschau 5, pp. 26f.). Such intellectualistic language should not mislead us into interpreting Origen in a rationalistic sense, nor indeed to interpret him mystically as did Evagrius. In the background, rather, there looms here that doctrine of the fall through sin according to which the soul, along with its sensibility, is the very spirit which fell from its heavenly union with God. Accordingly, the five individual sensory senses are but the fall and scattering into the material of an original and richly abundant capacity to perceive God and divine things. According to Origen, these divine things can never be reduced to a mystical unity without modes, but, rather, they possess a fulness and a glory that far transcend the lower fulness and glory, of which material multiplicity is only a distant reflection and likeness (C. Cels. 4. 74; Koetschau 1.344). If both sensibilities are thus, ontically as well as noetically, but different states (καταστάσεις) of the one and only sensibility, it nevertheless follows that, in a Platonic sense, they cannot both be actual at the same time: Adam’s spiritual eye for God is closed by his fall through sin, while at that moment his sensory eye opens (C. Cels. 7. 39; Koetschau 2. 190).¹⁶¹ And yet again we ought not to press this either / or, since we cannot simply systematize the Christian and Biblical Origen to make him conform with the Platonic Origen. The world and matter are not evil; only the free will can be evil. For this reason, the material state as a whole remains a good likeness and an indicator for the upward-striving spirit; and in Christ, in whose flesh there is nothing evil, the lower sensibility

unqualifiedly points the way to the heavenly sensibility. To be sure, however, only he can see, hear, touch, taste and smell Christ whose spiritual senses, for their part, are alive: only he, that is, who is able to perceive Christ as the true Light, as the Word of the Father, as the Bread of Life, as the fragrant spikenard of the Bridegroom who hastens to come (*Cant. Comm.* 2; Baerens 8. 167f.; *ibid.* 1. Baerens 8, 103f.).

How should we interpret Origen? It will not do to go in the intellectual direction, because the distinguishing qualities of the ‘spiritual senses’ are manifestly far more than mere paraphrases for the act of ‘spiritual’ cognition. Nor can we go in the mystical direction, as Karl Rahner wants (supporting himself here with the inauthentic texts of the *Commentary on the Psalms*), because then the opposition between the specifically mystical mode of experience and that of an ordinary living faith would have to be explicated in a wholly different way. Even though the form of expression in which Origen clothes his concepts occasionally may be purely Platonic and dualistic, it nonetheless represents another sort of dualism, the Christian and Biblical dualism of Saint Paul when he distinguishes between the fleshly and the pneumatic man. And it is decisive that the object of the ‘spiritual senses’ is not the *Deus nudus*, but the whole of the ‘upper world’ which, in Christ, has descended to earth and manifests itself in the fulness of the cosmos of Sacred Scripture: this is where Origen’s spiritual senses are openly exercised and it is from here, therefore, that they should be interpreted even if this again brings us back to our first question what they actually are.

In spite of an occasional mention of the spiritual organs and senses (*Cent.* 2. 80 and especially *Cent.* 3. 35), in Evagrius everything is absorbed into an inescapable mystical reduction to unity. And Diadochus, too, expressly allows for only *one* spiritual sense—the mystical sense for God.¹⁶² But Origen’s five senses again emerge in the Pseudo-Macarius,¹⁶³ who indeed takes up and gives his own account of many other Origenistic themes. Origen had repeatedly said that every Christian virtue contains two elements within itself: one more active and acquired, the other more passive and bestowed by grace from above, and, without at all interpreting this encounter in a Pelagian sense, for Origen nonetheless the ‘infused’ gift was God’s answer to man’s striving. Macarius takes up this idea and applies it to the senses: ‘If the five spiritual senses (πέντε λογικαὶ αἰσθήεις) receive grace from above and the sanctification of the Spirit, then they truly are wise virgins. . . . But if they rely exclusively on their own nature, then they show themselves to be foolish

and are proven to be children of the world' (*Hom.* 4. 7; PG 34. 477B). This text clearly shows that a dualistic interpretation is impossible: for it is the same senses which first are earthly and then become heavenly through the infusion of grace. We have here to do with a 'change and exchange of states (*κατάστασις*)' by virtue of imitating Christ, who 'came to change, transform, and renew our nature, to create anew and to mingle with his divine Spirit our soul, which had been laid waste by the passions following the first sin. He came to create a new *nous*, a new *psyche*, new eyes, new ears, a new spiritual tongue, in short, new men from those who believed in him' (*Hom.* 44.1; PG 34. 780A). It is in Christ's grace, therefore, in his dying and rising, that the 'old man' is created anew and that the old fleshly senses become spiritual.

2. The second, medieval phase¹⁶⁴ is characterised as a whole by the fact that—as scholastic psychology becomes more firmly based on philosophy—the spiritual senses are more and more unequivocally interpreted as the expression of the mystical and intuitive experience of God. Karl Rahner's second study shows clearly that this is the direction our river takes. In William of St. Thierry, the seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling of the soul that loves God is the expression for the experience of the presence of the hidden Beloved, who reveals himself in his *sapor* to *sapientia*. William will not say any more than we presented in the chapter on Christian experience. The (Augustinian) *mens*, as apex of the soul (*principale mentis, caput animae*), is that innermost central capacity whereby we can touch and feel God and, above all, whereby we can, in dark immediacy, savour him in his exquisiteness. As later the great Teresa, so too William recognises a direct hearing of spiritual words from the Logos even at the highest stages of mysticism.¹⁶⁵ But, for William, all statements concerning the senses remain anchored to the Dionysian mystical psychology of 'knowing through unknowing', as it was interpreted by the circle around Bernard: 'In what concerns God, the sensorium of the spirit's foundation is love. It is through love that the spirit feels whatever of God it feels through the Spirit of life. But this Spirit is the Holy Spirit, and it is through him that every lover loves whatever is truly worthy of love' (*Spec. fid.* 390D-1A).¹⁶⁶

For William of Auxerre there is essentially only one spiritual sense which in heaven refreshes itself with God (*sapere*), but this one sense can do this in various ways and, thus, different spiritual senses may be distinguished.¹⁶⁷ In Alexander of Hales the doctrine is incorporated into the edifice of scholastic

psychology: the *sensus spiritualis* now totally becomes an *actus virtutis intellectivae* whose perceptive activity is described as a ‘spiritual sense’ by analogy with sensory perception and which, according to the manner that it grasps its object, may also be divided into five senses.¹⁶⁸ In Albert this interior sensory perception is understood from the mystical viewpoint,¹⁶⁹ and so it remains in *Bonaventure*. For him, the ‘spiritual senses’ are the acts of the human intellect and will as they grasp God in contemplation—acts which have been restored (*refecti*), facilitated (*expediti*) and brought to perfection (*perfecti*) by the triple infused *habitus* of the ‘virtues’, the ‘gifts of the Holy Spirit’ and the ‘beatitudes’.¹⁷⁰ We should note here that the ‘spiritual senses’ do not constitute a second higher faculty alongside the corporeal senses. The more subtle divisions into intellect and will, theological virtues and infused gifts and beatitudes, are here of less interest than the assertion that the object of these spiritual acts of sensory experience is the Word of God in his economy, as *Verbum increatum* (hearing and seeing), *inspiratum* (smelling) and *incarnatum* (tasting and touching). Faithful to the Dionysian and Bernardian tradition, Bonaventure describes the act as the *ekstasis* of love (of the ‘will’) beyond all intellective and conceptual experiences of God, an act in which God is made out by sense in the encounter and in the unification of a dark immediacy. (In Bonaventure, this *ekstasis* is contrasted to the *raptus*, which is a momentary and wholly exceptional participation in the open vision of God such as Paul experienced, by contrast with Moses’ experience in the dark cloud.)

With very slight alterations, Bonaventure’s conception is handed down through Hugo Ripelin¹⁷¹ and the *Centiloquium*,¹⁷² and developed at length by Rudolph of Biberach.¹⁷³ The doctrine lives on in Bernardine of Siena, Peter of Ailly, Gerson and Herpff,¹⁷⁴ but without any real vitality, since the tendency of mysticism toward a unity without modes runs directly counter to a diversification of the highest act and state into different modes of perception; and perhaps it also lacks vitality because the thorough-going systematizations of High Scholasticism are not convincing in the long run on account of their artificiality. Besides, in Albert and Bonaventure the ‘spiritual senses’ disappear into the inaccessible heights of contemplative mysticism, thus losing their general theological interest.

3. At the beginning of modern times we encounter the *Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola*. As is well known, on the evening of each day of meditation, the

Exercises call for the retreatant to ‘apply his senses’ to the mystery of faith under consideration (Nrs. 121, 133, 227).¹⁷⁵ In the context of the *Exercises* this sort of prayer accomplishes two things.

First of all, a meditation mentioned more or less in passing not with the senses but on the senses: ‘If someone wishes to imitate Christ our Lord in the use of his senses, let him commend himself to His divine Majesty and consider each individual sense. Likewise if he wishes to imitate our Lady in the use of his senses.’ At its conclusion this exercise passes over into prayer to God and to Mary that they may grant the grace of this assimilation. For Ignatius this practice belongs not so much to prayer itself, but expressly to the preparatory exercises which are intended to elaborate the ‘form, manner, and training’ for prayer (238). The practice trains us ‘to use our senses in the image of the senses of the new Adam and the new Eve. . . . [It is] our surrender to the order of the incarnation’, ‘in relation to the manner in which, in the 5th Exercise of the 1st Week, our senses are to go through the fire of hell (65-71), and in the 5th Exercise of the 1st Day of the 2nd Week, they are to be born anew into the “infinite sweetness and kindness of the Godhead”’.¹⁷⁶

In the second place, the application of the senses effects the ‘composition of place’ (47) which precedes every meditation, that is, the sensory and imaginative representation of the mystery to be considered. This could be a concrete scene from the life of Jesus, and in this case one will actually sketch for oneself the spatial context of the event and make present the episode itself after it has been read: one will see the persons involved, hear them speak, and follow their actions. Or it could be a more abstract and universal truth, as for instance the state (κατάστασις) of being a sinner. In this instance, too, the ‘vision of the imagination’ is no less engaged: it will, for example, make present to itself ‘how my soul is imprisoned in this mortal body and how the whole person is as banished among irrational beasts in this earthly valley’ (47). Alongside this imaginative stance with regard to the object of salvation there is also an adaptation of the affections to the situation which we mentioned earlier and which consists in attuning oneself, with all one’s mental powers, including the sensory, to the particular affective atmosphere surrounding the object under consideration. This conscious and active self-attunement (74, 78ff., 130) has its passive counterpart in the second preparation for meditation—the prayer for the particular grace needed for *this* meditation, which is where the process of attunement by God belongs: ‘If the

meditation deals with the resurrection, then you must pray for joy with the joyful Christ. If it deals with suffering, then you must pray for suffering, tears, and tortures with the tormented Christ' (48). Here we see that the normal meditation is initially an external, imaginative act that involves looking, being present, and even entering into the drama. (The instructions for considering the Christmas mystery read: 'I make myself into a worthless servant, just as if I were present there, a servant who marvels at [the holy Persons], contemplates them and serves them in their needs with the greatest possible devotion and reverence', 114). But from the outset such a meditation is also, unconditionally, an interior realisation of the objective mystery of salvation which transforms even the sensory disposition, and this mystery possesses its exemplary subjective disposition in the holy Persons, especially in the Son of God and his Mother.

These two prescriptions that precede the 'application of the senses' in the *Exercises* effectively determine the theological meaning of this application. But let us first review the main texts. As has already been said, the 'application of the senses' occurs as the final exercise of the day, which began with more discursive meditations and then went on to repetitive meditations which, from all the material, selected and dwelled on those points 'in which I felt greater consolation or desolation, or a greater sentiment in the (Holy) Spirit' (62). This experiential 'feeling' (*sentir*) of the mystery of faith is what carries greatest weight for Ignatius, 'for it is not much knowledge which fills the soul and satisfies it, but feeling and tasting things from within' (2).¹⁷⁷ Everything is directed towards this realisation, and, since what must be realised is, objectively, God's worldly and corporeal form, it cannot be realised—precisely in its full perfection—other than in a total human way, in the encounter of the corporeal sinner who has been granted grace with the God who has corporeally become man. In the 1st Week, the presence of sin (hell), which has become real in the whole man, must first be realised with all five senses: 'With the eyes of the imagination I see the glowing fire. With my ears I hear the weeping and the howling and the shrieking. With the olfactory sense I smell smoke, sulphur, filth, and rotting things. With the sense of taste I taste bitter things, such as tears, sadness, and the worm of conscience. With the sense of touch I feel how the glowing fire envelops souls' (66-70). And, correspondingly, at the end of the 1st day of the 2nd Week, during which the Incarnation had been considered, we read the following: 'With the eyes of the imagination we should here look at the persons. With our hearing we should

perceive how they are speaking or could speak. With the senses of smell and taste we should smell and taste the infinite sweetness and loveliness of the Godhead. With our sense of touch we should embrace and kiss the place where these persons have set their foot and where they come to rest' (122-125). At first sight we can see that in this 'application of the senses' a fact is being set forth for our acceptance which had not been theoretically founded: that this sensibility must become all-embracing, and extend from the concreteness of the simple happenings in the Gospel to a point where the Godhead itself becomes concrete by being experienced. This occurs negatively in the experience of the divine absence, which is a consuming sadness and a worm which devours from within, and positively in the divine presence, which is a sweetness and a fragrance.

The interpreters were confronted with this fact, and it is no wonder that they went in two opposite directions. The first school, starting with contemporaries and acquaintances of the Saint, who knew him as the great mystic, interpreted the 'application of the senses' according to Bonaventure, that is to say, mystically. Juan de Polanco interprets it as follows: beginners may practise the 'application of the senses' with the ordinary 'senses of the imagination', 'but it can also be understood by the spiritual senses of the higher reason', and it is in this way that the experienced will practise it. For clarification Polanco refers to Bonaventure's *Itinerarium* and recapitulates its doctrine in detail.¹⁷⁸ Jeronimo Nadal does something similar.¹⁷⁹ In his well-known *Commentary on the Exercises*, Achille Gagliardi takes the application of the senses to be a higher form of prayer than discursive meditation, because it proceeds *per quemdam quasi intuitum illius [materiae] tanquam praesentis*.¹⁸⁰ Gagliardi stresses the act of re-presentation or 'making present': *est modus simillimus ipsimet reali praesentiae per sensus externos*. At the same time, however, he emphasizes the fact that this kind of re-presentation presupposes serious thoughtful meditation and, above all, love, which presses on to intimate knowledge and as such has the power to *rem quasi praesentem facere*.¹⁸¹

The official *Directorium* which General Aquaviva edited in 1599 takes the opposite direction. The 'application of the senses', it is here claimed, is an exercise to relieve tension in the evening; it is easy, especially for those endowed with imagination. But at the same time it served as a 'slow initiation' to higher forms of prayer. And the opposite is also true: 'When the soul has already been sated with the knowledge of higher things and is aglow

with piety, it likes to descend to things that may be known by the senses so as there to find its nourishment,. . . for even the tiniest thing excites it to love and consolation.’¹⁸² In more recent times General Roothan has expressed similar views.¹⁸³ A certain historical justification cannot be denied to this interpretation, since it is certain that Ignatius did not draw on Bonaventure, but rather, as he himself relates, he became immersed in the *Life of Christ* of the German Carthusian, Ludolph of Saxony, in which he found the following:

If you wish to derive fruit from these meditations, set aside all your worries and cares. With the affections of the heart make present to yourself, in a loving and delectable way, everything the Lord Jesus said and did, just as present as if you were hearing it with your ears and seeing it with your eyes. Then all of it becomes sweet because you are thinking of it and, what is more, tasting it with longing. And even when it is related in the past tense, you should consider it all as if it were occurring today. . . . Go into the Holy Land, kiss with a burning spirit the soil upon which the good Jesus stood. Make present to yourself how he spoke and went about with his disciples and with sinners, how he speaks and preaches, how he walks and rests, sleeps and watches, eats and performs miracles. Inscribe into your very heart his attitudes and his actions.¹⁸⁴

But this text in Ludolph, in turn, is a quotation from the *Meditationes Vitae Christi* which circulated under Bonaventure’s name and which, in fact, reflect a naïve and deeply affective kind of medieval contemplation which became more and more widespread from the time of Bernard and Francis and which was given full reign in Bonaventure’s minor spiritual writings. Even though here the ‘spiritual senses’ are not explicitly mentioned, nevertheless something spiritual is attained with the corporeal senses and the imagination, something which clearly aims at making the mystery present, even if at a more modest level than that of actual mystical experience. In this way, the real problem of the spiritual senses is posed to Ignatius and, beyond him, to Bonaventure and the Middle Ages. In the interpretations of Ignatius the problem emerges as an either / or between the corporeal senses and the mystical sensibility, but both of these seem to be included by Ignatius and they certainly were to be found as living realities in the author of the *Exercises* himself, without their mutually suppressing or jeopardising one another. Something similar was true of Bonaventure and, as was shown, also of Origen. A mysticism of radical union is necessarily alien to the ‘spiritual senses’, but it is likewise alien to the Christian way as such. Spiritual senses, in the sense of Christian mysticism, presuppose devout bodily senses which are capable of undergoing Christian transformation by coming to resemble the sensibility of Christ and of Mary.

In a Christian sense, there is something like a centre which must be accepted as a fact even before it is fully understood speculatively. The reality of this centre may be evoked above all from the cadences of the Church's greatest theologians. Here we offer a text from Augustine and another from Thomas which will stand as typical of many others. In the *Confessions* we read:

But what do I love, O God, when I love Thee? Not the beauty of a body nor the rhythm of moving time. Not the splendour of the light, which is so dear to the eyes. Not the sweet melodies in the world of sounds of all kinds. Not the fragrance of flowers, balms and spices. Not manna and not honey; not the bodily members which are so treasured by carnal embrace. None of this do I love when I love my God. And yet I do love a light and a sound and a fragrance and a delicacy and an embrace, when I love my God, who is light and sound and fragrance and delicacy and embrace to my interior man. There my soul receives a radiance that no space can grasp; there something resounds which no time can take away; there something gives a fragrance which no wind can dissipate; there something is savoured which no satiety can make bitter; there something is embraced which can occasion no ennui. This is what I love when I love my God (X. 6).

While Augustine here speaks with God alone and does not expressly mention the figure of Christ, Thomas Aquinas gives the following commentary on the Christ-hymn of the Epistle to the Philippians:

'Feel this (*hoc sentite*) in yourselves which is in Christ Jesus.' He also says: Humble yourselves. He, therefore, says 'feel', meaning that we should grasp experientially (*experimento*) what occurred in Christ Jesus. Note, however that we are to feel this in five different ways, namely, by way of the five senses. First of all, we see his love so that, thus being illumined, we may put on his own form. 'They will see the King with their eyes in his finery' (Is 33. 17). 'And we all, with unveiled face, behold the glory of the Lord' (2 Cor 3. 18). Secondly, we hear his wisdom in order to be made blissful by it: 'Blessed are your vassals! And blessed these your servants who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom!' (1 Kg 10.8). 'He obeyed me when he heard me with his ears' (Ps 17.45). Thirdly, we perceive the fragrance of the graces of his liberal goodness that we may hasten after him: 'Draw me after you. We will run after the fragrance of your anointing oils' (Cant 1.3). Fourthly, we taste the sweetness of his graciousness, that we may forevermore rejoice in God. 'Taste and see the sweetness of the Lord!' (Ps 33.9). Fifthly, we touch his power in order to be healed by it. 'If I only touch the hem of his garment, I shall be healed' (Mt. 9.11) (*In Phil.* 2.12).¹⁸⁵

In order to justify these assertions, we must above all take the theological anthropology of the Bible seriously and persevere in it in spite of all the objections advanced by systematic philosophy. The Bible locates man's 'essence' not primarily in what distinguishes him from other existing beings, but in his concrete and indivisible wholeness. It is an abstracting thought-process which first projects onto Being the conceptual laws of the distinction

of species and specific difference. When this happens, the Platonic image of man automatically emerges and comes to dominate the whole of anthropology as a silent *a priori*, and this holds even for the Aristotelian and scholastic correctives to Platonism. We will now allow four influential thinkers of our time—a theologian, a religious phenomenologist, a philosopher, and a poet—to delineate for us the main concerns of a Christian anthropology.

b. The Spirit and the Senses

In his *Church Dogmatics* III/2 (1948), *Karl Barth* offers a thorough treatment of Biblical anthropology. The Biblical version of man must necessarily appear defective to the philosopher. It is apparently unsystematic but ‘everywhere in their statements we have a much more fundamental and truly systematic treatment than appears at first sight’ (433);¹⁸⁶ moreover, man is not examined ‘in himself’ (*an sich*), but, from the outset, in his ‘vital act’ and engagedness. Now, for Barth, these things are not only the strength, but the very warrant for the truth of Biblical anthropology. The Bible has no ‘abstract interest in the rational nature of man, in his sensible and (in the narrower sense) rational perceptive capacity’. To pay an ‘abstract attention’ ‘necessarily means inattention when measured by our task. . . . What interests the Bible, and therefore ourselves, in dealing with the matter’ is the question concerning ‘the man who meets his God and stands before his God, the man who finds God and to whom God is present’ (402). Now this Biblical man is the one that has been found by God and has been chosen to be a partner of his Covenant, and he cannot understand himself except from this perspective. This relationship attains its final perfection in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, who is not only ‘God with us’ and ‘Man for God’ (55-71), but also ‘Man for other Men’ (203-222). In this archetypal ‘being-for’, Christ also reveals the ‘essence’ and the ‘humanity’ of man; that is, Christ reveals the natural constitution given to man by God at the creation which makes him ‘capable of entering into covenant with God’ (224) and which is ‘already presupposed’ for the partnership with God (223). In this ‘correspondence and similarity’ between the creation and the Covenant only one thing can be meant: man’s situation of being-with-others, the ‘I and Thou’ which assumes a more specialised and corporeal form as ‘man and woman’, which in Gen

1.27 we see added immediately to the 'image and likeness' as an explicitation of it. In this way a preliminary decision has been made which increasingly establishes a critical distance between a Biblical anthropology and all modern humanisms since the Renaissance, including the humanism of Goethe and the great Idealists and the humanism of Nietzsche. Whenever an 'essence' of man is sought which is anterior to his being-with and even in opposition to it, then by this very fact one is already in the process of interchanging man and his Creator, and in this or some other manner, whether spiritualistically or materialistically, one is already raising the soul (the spirit) to being the creator of its own corporeal world (229-242). With Barth, then, we must profoundly deplore the fact that the Patristic and scholastic anthropology strayed away from this first of all Biblical premises concerning human reality and let itself be inspired by an abstract Greek concept of essence. 'The humanity of each and every man consists in the determination of man's being as a being with others, or rather with the other man' (243).

'I am as Thou art': this does not mean, however, that the Thou is the cause or even the substance of the I, but, rather, that the I attains to itself only in its encounter with the Thou. The Being of man is 'a being in which one man looks the other in the eye' (250). We see the Thou with real bodily eyes, and indeed not as a thing but in all its exceptionalness and particularity as person in the midst of the cosmos. . . . The fundamental human sense of the eye and its act of seeing is precisely the fact that this happens thus, that this 'other' becomes visible to oneself as person and is seen by one as person. All seeing is inhuman if it does not comprise this kind of seeing. 'But this is only the one half. When one man looks the other in the eye, it takes place automatically that he lets the other look him in the eye:. . . that man *himself* should be visible to the other person' (250). 'Being in encounter is Being in the openness of the one to the other and for the other': this is the specifically human 'moment' (*Augen-blick* = a glance of the eyes), the reciprocal 'discovery', the 'root-formation of all humanity' (252). The same thing applies to hearing: 'Being in encounter consists in the fact that there is mutual speech and hearing' (252), and it is therefore a 'linguistic event': reciprocal expression and appeal in affirmation and demand, in making oneself heard and in oneself hearing.¹⁸⁷ The same, again, may be said of the reciprocal being-for-one-another of mutual assistance, of helping and letting oneself be helped. All three determinations are, inseparably, an event of the soul and of the body, and man is human to the extent that this occurs. 'Humanity is not

an ideal nor its exercise a virtue' but nothing other than the realistic accomplishment of being human itself, of the 'primitive factuality of our situation' (264). Barth then develops all this magnificently when, as the final determination of this human event, he adds the whole quality and disposition expressed by the word 'gladly'—that spontaneity and joy, that liberality and spiritual freedom (such as the Greeks knew, 282) in which, as in the 'lesser mystery' of the creation, is foreshadowed the 'great mystery' of divine grace in the Covenant between God and man (265).

Such a condition of 'fellow-humanity' (*Mitmenschlichkeit*) is fully concretised corporeally in the difference and in the for-one-another of man and woman (285-319). With seriousness and humour Barth demonstrates (290) how this essential truth has not been sufficiently accounted for by either ancient humanism, or the monastic humanism of the Middle Ages, or the humanism of modern times, which is limited to relation between males, despite all its eroticism. (The best image for this are the secularised scriptoria and monk's cells of Goethe and Nietzsche.) He also shows how neither Gen 2.18f. nor the Song of Songs are concerned primarily with sexual relations and the begetting of children, but rather with the spiritual-corporeal being-together and being-for-one-another of man and woman. This, in turn, is the mystery that foreshadows the union of Yahweh and Israel, which is so prominently portrayed as a marriage-covenant (and then also as Israel's adultery) and which is finally fulfilled in the relationship between Christ and the Church (301). This entire relationship is inseparably spiritual and corporeal, both as between persons and as between God and man, and this is developed in all directions on the basis of 1 Cor 6.12-20, 2 Cor 11.2f., 1 Cor 11.1-16 and Eph 5.22-33. We need not here rehearse every nuance of Barth's anthropology, especially not that aspect of it which does not tolerate any relation (from the lower to the higher) between the social construct (*Bild*) and the revealed archetype of the Covenant. This doctrine, peculiar to Barth, need not detain us here because for him the total human image is founded on God's covenantal intention, to such an extent that, outside this archetype, the properly human cannot, in the last analysis, either understand itself¹⁸⁸ or be made theologically comprehensible.¹⁸⁹ The exclusion of the philosophical dimension from Barth's theology takes its toll in two respects: he fails to include the social element in the nature common to all men (and this nature is, indeed, more than mere 'reciprocity'); and he fails also to include the religious element in the 'all-embracing' reality of Being, with the result that

both our neighbour and God can be conceived only under the sign of ‘the other’. But these deficiencies are of little consequence for the analysis of man’s spiritual-corporeal nature, which is what concerns us and which now follows.

Neither the I-Thou relationship, nor the relationship between man and woman, nor that between God and Israel, nor between Christ and the Church, can be understood in a purely spiritual sense. What is at stake is always man as a spiritual-corporeal reality in the concrete process of living. This is evident in Jesus himself, the archetypal ‘whole man’, who does not ‘exist as the union of two parts or two “substances”, he is the one whole man, embodied soul and besouled body’. It is as such that he is

born and lives, suffers, and dies and is raised again. Between His death and His resurrection there is a transformation,. . . but the body does not remain behind nor does the soul depart. As the same whole man, soul and body, He rises as He died. . . . There is no logic here which is not as such physics, no cure of souls which is not as such bound up with cure of bodies. The man who is called by Him and who takes his part in His way and work as a recipient and fellow-worker does not only receive something to consider and to will and to feel; he enters into bodily contact and fellowship. The man who comes to hear of the Kingdom of God comes also to taste it. He comes to eat and drink bodily, so that it again becomes apparent that in this bodily eating and drinking he has to do with nothing less than the hidden—in our terminology, “inner” or “spiritual”—savouring and tasting of the heavenly bread and the powers of the world to come. To believe in Him is to be on the way to the same whole manhood which is His own mystery (327f.).

Thus it makes no difference whether it is said that he delivered ‘himself for our sins’, or that he laid down ‘his soul’ as a ransom for many, or ‘his body’. His soul (or his ‘spirit’) lives fully, with all its freedom, in his senses and emotions; it is convulsed, made indignant, angry, sad, afflicted unto death and the life of his body until the very end, and still more in the Resurrection, fully participates in all the mysteries of his soul. Moreover, the hierarchy between soul and body is preserved: what is interior and superior lives and is expressed in what is inferior and exterior (332). For its part, this tranquil order rests on Christ’s possession of the Holy Spirit and is an expression of his having come from God and of his reposing in the Father’s mission. The hypostatic union is in him the supereminent archetype of the analogous order between soul and body.

Biblical man, too, has his corporeal-psychic totality in the fact that he receives the ‘Spirit’ (of Sonship) from God not as a state but as an event:¹⁹⁰ already the fact of being created (when God breathes the spirit into him)

determines man and orients him toward the grace of the Covenant. The (Biblical) spirit is the dialogical principle which is bestowed on man from the outset, coming from God and therefore leading back to God. As such a being, man is corporeal and psychic, soul of his body, 'heaven' of his 'earth' (351f.), 'representation of the whole created reality' (352). The body is an inspirited frame, a world which opens out to the world, an organising soul which, since it exists in encounter, is not a soul for itself outside the body but which nonetheless, as the *soul* of the body, is a subject with freedom that reflects on itself (353, 374f.). But, for Barth, the soul does not lose its sensibility even in its reflection on itself. In scholastic terms, the soul cannot attain to *reflexio completa* (or *abstractio*) without a *conversio* (*per phantasma*) *ad rem*, and here the *res* is the other—God and neighbour. 'This act in which my soul is at once subject and object [is] also wholly a corporeal act,' for

I do not exist without also being this material body. . . . Without having some command and making some use of them, I cannot be aware of objects different from myself. And without being aware of objects different from myself, I cannot distinguish myself from others as the object identical with myself, and cannot therefore recognise myself as a subject. . . . It may well be true that this act of knowledge is not seeing, hearing, or smelling or any perception communicated by my physical senses, but an inner experience of myself. Yet it is just as true that this experience . . . is also external and a moment in the history of my material body (375).

Hence we have the following radically anti-Platonic formula: 'If the body is not organic body but purely material body when it is without soul, so the soul is not soul, but only the possibility of soul when it is without body' (378). And this is proven biblically: it is not the body alone that dies, but man himself, which naturally does not mean that the 'possibility of a soul' (that is of a 'besouling' principle) becomes as nothing, no more than the matter of a corpse is nothing.

The total, living person is a free spiritual subject which exists with others in a material cosmos as a percipient being. 'Perception is an undivided act, in which awareness makes thinking possible and thinking awareness.' These two aspects do not at all simply correspond to soul and body. It is 'certainly not only my body, but also my soul which has awareness, and it is certainly not only my soul but also my body which thinks. . . . The situation is rather that man as soul of his *body* is empowered for awareness, and as *soul* of his body for thought' (400). But man has both of these things only in so far as he is a *spirit*, that is in so far as he has been created and called by God to

partnership with God, and this means that in the two-fold-yet-single manner described, man perceives ‘God first and foremost, but because God, therefore and therewith another in general’ (400).

Man may sense and think many things but fundamentally a perceiving man is the God-perceiving man. . . . Man perceives and receives into self-consciousness particular things—the action and inaction of his fellow men, the relations and events of nature and history, the outward and inward sides of the created world around him. But these are important and necessary for man, only because God does not usually meet him immediately but mediately in His works, deeds, and ordinances, and because the history of God’s traffic with him takes place in the sphere of the created world and of the world of objects distinct from God. . . . First and last and all the time his perception has properly only one object, of which everything else gives positive or negative witness. . . . God is the object and content in virtue of which and in relation to which his nature is a rational nature (402).

Here at last we may see where all these long quotations have been leading; and here it also becomes evident how Karl Barth differs on this matter from the viewpoint of his son, Markus Barth, which we examined earlier. To the latter, the most important aspect of sensory experiences of God and the Bible was the exceptional distinction of eye-witness, whereby the Old Testament Prophets, but particularly the Apostles of Christ, closed ranks with the God of revelation to form a group representing archetypal Biblical authority through experience. For Karl Barth, on the other hand, the most significant aspect is not at all the exceptional nature of eye-witness, but rather the commonly shared human element, which is not primarily archetypal but exemplary:

It is thus that the representative men of the Bible perceive. . . . As they obviously have the special capacity to perceive God and His witnesses, they also have the general capacity. . . . If there is also in the biblical sphere a purely general perception. . . these are deficiency phenomena, . . . an awareness and thinking which is basically darkened, false, and corrupt. Of course, this exists. Percipient man in the Bible is concretely sinful man, the man who would like to escape perception of God. . . (403).

He has eyes so as not to see and ears so as not to hear. But if he once perceives as he ought in the act of his ‘external perception’, then he encounters God and stands and walks before him. If he thinks as he ought then he allows to come into him also the God who, through perception, had announced himself to be there for him. Both things—sensory perception and spiritual thinking—are constantly considered in their unity. The perception of the representative persons in the Bible classifies them neither as ‘pure empiricists’ nor as ‘pure thinkers’. ‘They live wholly with their eyes and ears and at the same time in the faith of their hearts. They are always wholly and

at the same time engaged in awareness and thought. It is for this reason that they are so seldom of use and of so little value from the standpoint of a pure empiricism or pure philosophy.’ The split between the senses and the spirit rests on sin. It makes the relationship of human perception to all its objects and contents both improper and abnormal.

Man cannot change into a being to whom it is natural to perceive in this divided way. Nor can he prevent intending and missing unity, and reaching out for it, in all his dividedness. Biblical man, the prophet, and the apostle, reveal to us something of what natural perception is, for their awareness and thinking obviously take place in a single act. . . . We have only to consider what is meant by the context when the biblical ‘See’ is uttered, or what the Old Testament understands by a ‘seer’, or how comprehensive is the biblical ‘Hear’, which certainly speaks of an act of awareness effected by the bodily ear. . . . Where, then, is that which is purely of the soul or purely of the body? . . . When biblical man perceives, when he (*properly and normally*)¹⁹¹ perceives God in all that he perceives. . . he is the open place in which God is present in His witnesses and takes up His habitation. His awareness then attains his goal and is itself a thinking. His body stands wholly at the service of his soul. His thinking arises from his awareness, and is itself simply a completed seeing and hearing (405f.).

The same relationship is again illustrated with regard to sensual desiring and spiritual willing (406-416): here, too, we find a distinction within a single undivided act; here, too, a single criterion governs both desire and will in the relationship with the living God who reveals himself, as Augustine’s ethics clearly requires. Whenever man

desires, he begins to notice that he is unable to satisfy himself. . . . But here it becomes evident that genuine and proper desiring can only be desiring of God. . . . In the created world, man with all his neediness is always also the lord and master who knows how to make use of created things. Towards them he is not capable of genuine desiring—or only when he has apprehended that even in his desiring of created things he can first and last desire only their Creator. But in relation to the Creator, there is no self-satisfaction. . . . It may be thus seen that just because he can desire and love God he can desire and love in general. . . . In practice, he can and will always desire and love God Himself only in such another, in His witnesses, as the God who is active, visible, audible, and tangible in His works. . . . That is why everything that occurs between Him and man occurs with such realism. That is why the Bible speaks so anthropomorphically of God’s speech and conduct, His coming and going, His action and inaction, His heart and eyes, His arms and hands and feet (412f.).

By such sensory perceiving and desiring man is raised above himself and becomes free for God and through God. We can thus understand why, in the Bible, soul and breath, soul and blood, can be so intimately related, why the soul can ‘yearn’ and ‘be sated’, ‘hunger’ and ‘be refreshed’ (377), why the ‘flesh pines for the living God’ or ‘longs for him like arid land without water’. In the same way, human bones can ‘tremble’ or ‘exult’, the Prophets’

bowels ‘quiver’, Job’s entrails ‘seethe without rest’ and, in Lamentations, they ‘burn’. The same thing explains why, even in the New Testament, the word ‘bowels’ means the same thing as ‘mercy’. So, too, the ‘heart’ is made to be the very centre of man, and this naturally means the bodily heart as well, not only as the ‘seat or centre of the spiritual and the psychic forces’, but as the quintessence and crossroads of man’s total corporeal and spiritual realities. ‘ “With all one’s heart” is necessarily identical with “with all one’s soul” and, thus, also with “with all your strength”.’

Romano Guardini faces the same question in his small book *Die Sinne und die religiöse Erkenntnis* (*The Senses and Religious Knowledge*, 1950). But he speaks as a theologian only indirectly; his immediate focus is that of the religious phenomenologist and the critic of modern culture. On the latter plane he observes that the capacity for spiritual knowledge has ‘largely been lost’ to man in the course of cultural history. Seeing has become a matter of observing and verifying to which is afterwards added the activity of an abstract intellect as it orders and elaborates what is perceived (62).¹⁹² Rilke’s ‘activity without image’ is especially characteristic of our times; the life formed in accordance with nature’s great images, with the natural symbols which shape existence, is becoming more and more alien and insubstantial for man because of technology. ‘We no longer exist in images. Concepts have taken the place of images that can be contemplated. Machines have taken the place of embodied images, and segments of time the place of living rhythms.’ There is talk of progress; ‘but whoever looks beneath the surface knows what nonsense that is. Truly, if he follows this road man can only become sick because his interior being can

. . . live only on images’ (63ff.). ‘This dislocation into abstract conceptuality and sensualistic corporeality must be overcome so that the living human reality can again emerge’ (73). Karl Barth had expressly pointed to the primitives’ image of the world, in which ‘nothing is represented as totally material and nothing as purely spiritual’ and which ‘maintains or anticipates the vision’ which ‘was unfortunately lost by the so-called “higher” religious worldviews with their various abstractions’.¹⁹³ Guardini repeats this allusion to ‘primitive peoples, for whom all empirical affirmations are integrated with religious affirmations. . . . Only later is the ominous reversal achieved whereby cultural acts such as knowing, acting, and creating detach themselves from this context and the religious act becomes an act in itself. . . . What formerly had been the first datum now becomes a conclusion’ (35).

Guardini explains by reference to the eye what perception really ought to be. The eye is justified by what is to be seen, and this is not a chaos of ‘secondary sense-qualities’, but rather ‘forms’ which express themselves so as to be perceived.

But form is not only corporeal. It means laws of proportion, a functional context, a developmental form, an essential image, value-figure—and all of this both spiritually and materially. The purely material thing does not exist; the body is from the outset determined spiritually. And this spiritual element is not subsequently added to the sensory datum, for instance by the work of the intellect; it is grasped by the eye at once, even if indeterminately and imperfectly at first.

The eye *sees* the life of plants in their kind of coloration, in the manner of their movements as brought about by air and contact. The eye *sees* the vitality of the animal. In man, it *sees* (and does not ‘infer’) the soul in its gestures, expressions and actions; indeed, it sees the soul even before the body, and the body only in the soul. ‘Seeing is an encounter with reality, and the eye is simply man himself as he can be confronted by reality in its forms which are related to the light’ (18-22). The eye is not only an instrument that the living man can use; it is man’s life itself. Man lives in his seeing just as he lives in his hearing, his

speaking, his doing; and, thus, all the problems of his life return as he engages in seeing. . . . No theory of sight can be constructed which does not take into account the existence of man. And this will not prejudice subjectively the noetic state of things; on the contrary it is only in this way that it really emerges, and everything else is artificial.

On the one hand, when he considers objects, the beholder enters the ‘field of forces belonging to an entity’ which acts in its own way and which demands or compels decision, opposition or surrender. On the other hand, in and of himself the beholder is someone who, in his seeing, wants either to ‘dominate’ and ‘conquer’ or to serve and let himself be determined by the truth. There is a manner of approaching the world which is wholly controlled by the idea of ‘energy saving’ and whereby, from the outset, things are all brought under the same category, to be beheld accordingly.

Thus, the eye moves ‘from corporeal form all the way to that height to which Augustine refers when he speaks of the “eye of the soul”, which sees above itself the “unchanging light” of the idea’. (And the same holds good of all the human senses, for instance the hand’s action of grasping, 52f.) ‘The bodily eye, moreover, constitutes the material, so to speak, out of which the Holy Spirit means to create that eye which is to behold God “face to face” ’ (53). ‘The roots of the eye lie in the heart—in the innermost . . . stance adopted toward other persons and existence as a whole. Finally, the eye sees from the heart. This is what Augustine meant when he said that love alone is capable of seeing’ (33).

Now we can understand how, by referring to Rom 1.18f., Guardini can demand of the eye and the senses that they see and perceive God. It is not God's unmediated essence that he means, but God's eternal power and glory, which are expressed in his works. 'It would seem that both rationalism and a certain narrow religiosity are afraid of this reality: the former, because it seeks to confine the religious within the non-binding sphere of 'mere faith'; and the latter, because it is fearful of drawing God into the world' (28). And yet, just as we clearly see that a tool found by chance is not an object of nature but something produced by man, so, too, does the religious eye see in things that they derive from God. To be sure, this 'vision', like 'all sensory perception, is continually accompanied or shot through by a process of thinking that compares, distinguishes, orders, and illumines', a process that may be described as a drawing of conclusions (30). But the more God of himself wills to appear, the further he advances from creation, through the Old Testament, toward the New Covenant, the more directly does he want to be understood and perceived in his epiphany by man in a fully human manner (41-47). In the Old Testament there are epiphanies which are out of the ordinary, but also such as belong to everyday life: the psalms are full of them and cannot be otherwise understood even by those who pray them today. Thus, in the New Covenant something parallel and, indeed, something superior may from the outset be expected. 'What becomes of epiphanies once the Lord has returned to the Father?' asks Guardini, and he answers only with a few select allusions: the face of the saint (such as Stephen, who in death sees the heavens open: 'They saw that his face was like the face of an angel', Acts 6.15), the power of the ecclesial kerygma in the Holy Spirit, the liturgy concerning which Christ expects that in its signs—bread and wine, the water of baptism, and others—we should recognise his presence. There is 'nothing fanatical or miraculous' intended in all this, 'but rather something wholly normal—"normal", of course, in the order of grace, which is precisely that of the incarnation' (55). 'It is a free decision of the Lord of the liturgy that the "sign" should be not only an indication, but also a revelation' (59). In all this we ought never to forget that what we are dealing with here is basically the whole charismatic dimension which constitutes 'an essential part of Christian existence', thus being 'normal' in a Christian sense, while our fall into rationalistic cerebralism and monotony can in a Christian sense by no means be considered normal (60f.).¹⁹⁴

In a brilliant diptych composed of two constructive surveys (*Wort und*

Bild, 1952, and *Die Sinne und das Wort*, 1956), *Gustav Siewerth* has illuminated from a philosophical standpoint the network of relationships that we are concerned with here. His main purpose is to show how words are rooted in images—and, hence, to show the sensory basis of words—and to save them from being watered down by abstractions and being irresponsibly squandered at the hands of modernity. For Siewerth, this can be shown only by an examination of the event of the philosophical act itself.

The arc of cognition goes from the senses to the memory to the imagination, to the synthetic intellect (*logos*) and to reason: each of these acts is the basis for the next and is, in turn, itself grounded in it. The senses (Modern German *Sinne*, from the Old German *sin* = ‘way’, ‘road’) are the sphere that is open to the world.

Openness is the essence of the senses. . . . Therefore, what the senses perceive or see does not prompt them to a renewed exercise of their awareness, because in their openness they are always alert and expecting some manifestation. Forms and sounds do not therefore, awaken sight and hearing,. . . but rather emerge as colours and tones within the open landscape of the eye, where sight is always seeing, and in the open sphere of hearing, where the ear is always hearing.¹⁹⁵

‘This is why Thomas says that the senses do not “learn”, but act rather “as someone who had learned from the outset”.’¹⁹⁶ Whatever has light and colour emerges in the darkness of objectless seeing; whatever is sonorous emerges in the silence of objectless hearing. But the eye does not see its own seeing, but only the things themselves. ‘Thus, the seeing is always at the same time the object seen, and the senses are what is perceived in the openness of their “paths” to the world.’ The German ‘blicken’ (to look) is derived from ‘blinken’ to blink. ‘The look is the illumining lightning of an appearance. . . . “*Anschauung*” (perception) is both the act of seeing and the objectivity of what is perceived. . . . “*Ansehen*” (looking at, respect) refers both to my seeing and to the respect due to an important thing or person.’¹⁹⁷ This combination of subjective and objective aspects of perception holds also for the senses. ‘A sensation is both my feeling and what is offered to me in feeling. . . . The probing touch stimulates in its interior the life of an object always “in touch” with itself.’ And the same holds for smell and taste. As the ‘most spiritual of the senses’ (Thomas), the eye is wholly present to things, outside of itself ecstatically, and, as such, it is the crown of the ‘tree of the senses’. Touch (and, close to it, taste and smell) is the ‘root of the senses’ (Thomas) because, through it, what is living feels itself even as it feels other

things. Hearing, finally, is the ‘centre or heart of sensory energy’, because within its open space of silence there enters both the ‘clamour’ that overcomes and captivates the hearer and the ‘sonority’ of ‘ordered harmony’ that ‘stirs up the hearing heart within itself’ and ‘bewitches it with the play of invisible beings’.¹⁹⁸

But if we can call an ‘image of the world’ whatever comes to us on the road of the senses, this is only because ‘in each image an existent manifests itself to us.’ Essential forms shape themselves from and in the receptive foundation of matter; they develop and, as a formed image, have their existence in matter. As such, they ‘emerge’, ‘re-present themselves’ and ‘appear’, and for an individual being this constitutes both its ‘revealing’ and—since it is delivered over to something alien—its ‘veiling’ and appearance.¹⁹⁹ To this dimension of depth in what appears there corresponds, in the perceiver (*Wahrnehmender*), the intimate depth of memory that sustains the senses and which, preserving (*verwährend*) within itself the images it has admitted, allows them to perdure (*währen*) and have their life (*gewahren*) within itself by becoming aware (*gewahren*) of them ‘from the memory of their origin’.²⁰⁰ The images can become impressed on the potential of the space that contains them (the ‘imagination’), within which a world begins to take shape in the interplay between the image-power of vision and that of the object seen, in the recognition that remembers, in distinguishing what is different and in uniting it, in selection and reunification. ‘Our senses are essentially the open heart of man; they are the paths on which the heart’s willing love (*mögende Liebe*) confronts things and beings and thus comes to power and riches, that is, to an actualised capacity (*Vermögen*). This ready willingness (*Mögen*) is forever waiting to conceive through the essential and perduring character of Being, that is, of God, man and nature.’²⁰¹

Such a proposition affirms two new things. First, the heart (in the openness of the senses) is itself in its own way an enveloping womb (just as the *materia* had been for essential forms). Secondly, true conception takes place only when Being itself is received.

‘Vision (sensory knowledge) has in itself moved out to the open and, thus, into that which is other. Awakened to itself by the light, vision has strayed from its origins and become “lost” in the other and, hence, in the exteriority of spatial extension. . . . It is a characteristic of space to be at the same time interior and exterior.’²⁰² ‘Space is the operation of the form of nature as it

extends into what is other, especially the openness of nature and of a life that sees.’²⁰³ Therefore, ‘to take something into oneself’ does not mean ‘to “make it subjective”, but rather to concentrate one’s vision on the depth of Being manifesting itself in the image. It means, in other words, to empty oneself out more deeply to the stream of light of the real. It means to receive the “ground and foundation” which is in Being itself.’²⁰⁴ Vision, therefore, does not come as something ‘alien and external’ to a nature thus illuminated. Vision is itself the foundation of light and of Being. But this foundation, which was poured out as it unfolded, cannot be reached by following its reflection backwards, but rather as ‘the native light of the spirit, born from life and expectant of life’. And when ‘reality finds its way to itself, it becomes life that sees.’²⁰⁵

The images, however, may be gathered up (*logos*) and understood as the figure (*Gebild*) of essential depth (as *typos* = something ‘stamped with shape’) only in the primal light of Being. If in the senses the heart opened up to the world, now in the open heart reason opens up to Being. ‘Reason perceives Being, or better: Reason is the power of Being that subsists by ruling and from whose ground all beings and things proceeded; reason fills up the empty receptive perception of the spirit and brings it along with things into the light of truth. . . . Just as the senses see, hear, and feel in the openness of the world and the things in it, so, too, reason sees, hears, and feels in the foundation of Being, which rules, weaves, and breathes life. But reason’s synthesising perception is not something alongside the senses.’²⁰⁶ ‘The primal light of the knowledge of Being is this ontological movement of the foundation of Being’—in which Being effects itself in the other by making itself possible, produces its totality in what are only parts and, in its forming activity, always gives rise to something similar to itself—‘in which the essential image is always seen in its foundational unity and is illumined by it’.²⁰⁷ That neither reason nor Being are God is shown by the fact that Being always effects itself in the other and that, therefore, reason can perceive Being only by ‘gazing on nothingness’, whose ‘non-Being reason forms within itself. Being itself proceeds from the One that is nowhere to be demonstrated and is always on its way to this One, and the invisible origin shines only in the night of all images, in the ‘glance that mirrors’ (*speculatio*).²⁰⁸

The word (as the reality to which Siewerth is pointing) exists in a threefold equilibrium. In the first place, he speaks of an equilibrium between essence (and, within essence, of Being) which expresses itself in images and life

which expresses itself in utterances (scream, call, gesture, and so on). The word is laden with this double depth, and it is only in the swaying between impression and expression, between the penetration of things into the knower and the exteriorisation of the knower into things, that the word is what it can and must be: the ‘shaper of meaning’ (*Sinn-bildend*).²⁰⁹ As such, the word exists in an equilibrium between the efforts to circumscribe and order firmly a unified whole, on the one hand, and the ‘remembered depth’ of Being, on the other. Within this equilibrium, the word is at the same time indication (*verweisend*) and interpretation (*bedeutend*).²¹⁰ At this point it is most important to remember that hearing had previously been understood as the very centre of the tree of the senses, with vision being in the heights and tactile feeling in the depths. This means that both the ‘beheld’ image and the ‘felt’ life enter into the word, and that both these dimensions participate in the character of the word, necessarily and intimately.²¹¹ Consequently, the word should not be exclusively related to hearing, nor the image to sight or sensation and touch exclusively related to the root-senses, and this does away with a host of false problems in theology (particularly Protestant theology). Within this poised relief, that stresses both indication and interpretation, the word is both the thing itself (just as the scream is ‘ontologically the manifested image of life as it announces itself in immediacy’²¹²), and the image and sign that have entered the space of freedom and stand at its disposal. Freedom, therefore, can abuse the word in the most corrupting way,²¹³ especially when the images are no longer seen by man in relation to their foundation, but have become an essenceless kaleidoscope and lost all expressive power for the ‘ravaged heart’ without sensory energy.²¹⁴ But the freedom of the word which we touched on above already and forever envelops the essential images themselves as they arise, and this constitutes the beautiful. What appears is beautiful to the extent that the essential ground ‘unifies all parts around a centre and dominates, disposes, and plays in the multiplicity of the elements.’ ‘The beautiful is a radiance from the depths of Being. It is always a disposing that unifies within a freedom that breathes. The figure of nature possesses such “weaving” freedom only in the openness of its own landscape, in its coexistence with other essential images, or in the emergence of Being’s sovereignty.’²¹⁵

Poised between exterior and interior, oscillating between representation and apparition,²¹⁶ the word must, in the third place, bear within itself this

openness and coexistence. The last equilibrium to which Siewerth points in conclusion is that between the human and the divine word. The oscillating character of the human word as event, this repleteness in his being which is concentrated in the very centre of man—a fulness which can both succeed and fail—show how it is that God could reveal himself in word and as word, and finally in his Son, who is God’s Word and assumes the image and the face of a human being. Here there is no longer any question of holding up earthly images into the night of the imageless, but of the veritable ‘collision’ (*sym-bolon*) of eternity and time: Christ’s Word, which he speaks and which he is, lives in ‘the force of archetypal light and illumination’. The fact that we do not see this ‘collision’ here below ‘is rooted in the veiling of faith’. But on the day when we see face to face, our vision will receive nothing other than what is already now occurring before our veiled eyes.²¹⁷

We cannot here consider *Paul Claudel’s* immense work in its entirety; we will focus on only one portion of it, and even this only to the extent that it completes our investigation. The programmatic book *L’Art Poétique* (1903-1904)²¹⁸ will remain in the background as seminal groundwork; we will concentrate on the essay ‘La Sensation du Divin’ (1933)²¹⁹—the (sensory) ‘perception of the divine’—which develops in a more defined and rigorous manner the themes suggested by the earlier work. *L’Art Poétique* proceeds from the basic experience of creatureliness: existence as the reality of not being God, as the oscillation of relationships, as coexistence through abandonment to the other, as knowledge of the First Cause through one’s limits. The later essay, however, proceeds from the fundamental experience of conversion (1886), as the compelling claim made on one’s whole being by an order from God. But it is important to realise that, like all great converts, Claudel is not in the least interested in the distinction between nature and grace. He thinks from the standpoint of what Karl Barth called ‘the real man’. For this reason, Claudel’s ontological foundation already contains in itself the whole drama of distance from God (ontological flight) and nearness to God (the impossibility of being without God); the experience of the grace of conversion only intensifies and explicates what had been previously portrayed as an experience of Being.

Claudel sees something very positive in Denys’ statement that we know of God that he is and what he is not.²²⁰ For we, who know that he is, are what he is not. We are ‘called to replace, to represent in one role or other him who is absolutely’. If, then, the foundation of our being is to be what he is not, it

follows that we can only do this together, as an integral world, each of us in community even with regard to those who are ‘born together’, because each one is what all others are not. ‘God’s light must shine in perfect darkness.’²²¹ Claudel’s first tract had shown how, for creatures, their original and essential community with one another because of their common not-being-God is an ontological completion and, hence, also an ontological knowledge (*connaissance* from *co-naissance*). It had shown too how on the basis of Being and of finite essential form, there develop at the same time the sensation of being oneself and the sensation of the limitation of being alien, both of those taking shape as life, sensibility, reason, and conscience. In the second tract the application to God is made: God sees us in himself and, therefore, as beings that are seen, God calls us to vision. God calls us into being with a particular ‘name’, and, ‘in order to respond to him, the soul makes use precisely of the word that had been directed to it.’²²² How should the soul not, after all, be capable ‘of hearing something of this essential name which the divine Lover incessantly both whispers to her and demands from her’? The soul does it unconsciously, but it can also, in the end, do it consciously. ‘And, for this, it does not have to exercise this or that sensory or spiritual organ; responding to the divine advances, it must itself dispose its being in a particular attitude.’²²³ This attitude is the relinquishing of flight, the gladly acknowledged peace of the blissful humility of not being God, the light that invades the soul precisely from out of this darkness, the nourishment it receives from infinite Being, whose scent and tracks creatures can sense like a herd in the fog.

But there is more. In becoming man, has not God himself come over to the side of non-being, ‘putting it on’, so to speak, not exteriorly, but from within?

In so doing, does he not bring all his rights along with him, and the fulness of his inheritance as a Son of equal rank with his Father? Will not the reality draw the title after itself, and will not the usage imply the right? Will not the inspiration require the respiration? Will the Word cease to be with God because it is with us? ‘Whatever I see in my Father’, says John (8.38), ‘*loquor*: that I speak.’ Well, then, do it! Actualise in time what I bear witness to in the bottom of your being with words that cannot perish! . . . Will not the Heart of Jesus, poised between time and the Primal Ground, make itself for us the interpreter of eternity and the instrument of our resurrection, ever anew every moment?²²⁴

And, with reference to the Father, Claudel continues: ‘Jacob, the supplanter’, kneeling in his disguise before his blind father,

is the divine thief who is secretly acting for us. *De facto* he is the second-born, but *de jure* he is the first. And when the Father addresses him: 'My Son!' he assumes responsibility for answering in us: '*Adsum!*' In order to deceive this Father, who has forgotten how to see and is now only capable of touching, he covered his hands with the hide of a strangled kid-goat. 'The hands, the hands', says the Patriarch twice, 'are Esau's, but the voice, the voice is Jacob's.' In this voice he perceives something like an echo of Abel's. This voice, which is the very breath of the Word. . . . The whole Bible is full of blind patriarchs, and there is no doubt that it was the news of his father's blindness that encouraged the prodigal son to turn his steps towards home.

This is the darkness of which Denys speaks, for 'it is darkness that abolishes boundaries.' 'In order to know Being, we have to bring our own being into a relationship with him which precedes the dawn—*Ante luciferum*.'²²⁵

The Eucharist, in particular, is the adaptation of our being to God by the descent of the Word into our senses, indeed, into our substance, which is something even below the senses. Not only does Spirit speak to spirit, but Flesh speaks to flesh. 'Our flesh has ceased being an obstacle; it has become a means and a mediation. It has ceased being a veil to become a perception.' It must, like it or not, learn to taste, to taste how God tastes—God himself, our means of sustenance, who has now become 'accessible to our bodily organs'. Through the 'sense of Christ' (1 Cor 2.16) there is implanted in us the 'sense for God'.²²⁶

After this introduction begins the examination of the sensory perception of God. Once again, the two premises are posited, one philosophical and one theological:

1. The body is a work of the soul, its expression and its extension in matter. Through the body the soul experiences the world and has a shaping effect upon the world.

The senses are the product and the external form of our interior faculties and of that need which shapes the depths of our being in conformity to something outside us in order that we might perceive it and receive its impress. The correct way of coming to know the soul, therefore, is to consider the body and, from the external organs of perception, to draw conclusions as to the internally operating forces which use the senses and direct them after they have created them for themselves.²²⁷

2. The theological application follows in the next sentence.

The incarnate Word willed to place himself in the hands of a greedy mob which, so to speak, harried him and held him in its power and reconnoitred him with every means at its disposal, according to the expression of Saint John: "What was from the beginning, what we heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have examined, what our hands have touched of the Word of Life." Likewise, he willed in his compassion to do the very same for our interior senses, to

make himself available to their grasp and hold himself in readiness for them. And he willed to become flesh not only for a short time and for a few men, but for all epochs and all men. Not Thomas alone, but an innumerable host of the deaf and the blind after him exclaims: 'As for me, say what you will! Unless I touch him I will not believe!' He did not come to let himself be grasped (*comprendre*) but to let himself be probed (*constater*). . . . He turns to our senses, that is, to the different forms of our interior sensibility (*sens intime*), to our sense for sense itself.^{[228](#)}

Philosophically what was said was that it is the spirit-soul which hears, sees, and tastes; but in its nothingness and relativity it creates for itself the material organs necessary for perception. Nevertheless, the God who became man begins with the external senses and moves back to the interior senses, awakening in the world that deep sensorium for himself, the non-worldly one, which had been dulled by sin. Claudel's approach presupposes that, through the correct use of the external senses, we can encounter God in everything in the world. It presupposes this even as it integrates it into the higher dimension that it seeks to demonstrate. Claudel, in fact, is not thinking (as is Bonaventure, in Rahner's interpretation) of a naked mystical sense, so to speak. What the poet means is what his title says: he is thinking of a supernatural and, at the same time, sensory perceptive faculty that can sense the specific quality of the divine Essence because it is founded upon God's Incarnation and upon the Eucharist. According to Claudel, man ought to resemble the book in the Apocalypse which is 'written inside and out',^{[229](#)} or those symbolic animals, also found in John, 'who are full of eyes inside and out'.^{[230](#)}

Claudel often dealt with the subject of the sensory-spiritual olfactory sense.^{[231](#)} Odour is for him the precious 'essence' distilled from a being's self-consumption, the incense and therefore the anointing. Fragrance is what confers on Being a sign of its presence, its radiance, its intoxication in the 'breaking of the ointment-jar' of love. Sound is both a word spoken for faith from the darkness of an alien person and 'the music of the divine harmony on the ground of our being',^{[232](#)} the musical score of life according to the divine calling, to be read from the sheet of our existence.^{[233](#)}

Claudel deals in most detail with sight, to undo the impression that vision means only the objective consideration of a thing. In colours and varying shadows, light fights its way to the eye. The eye, for its part, is the finite spirit's need to see transformed into an organ—the spark of light that God has infused into the spirit so that it will organise the darkness around itself into a living form.^{[234](#)} Vision is inside and outside looking into one another in an

encounter which is a struggle, a reciprocal influence. ‘We not only look at how the world exists; by seeing it we “exist it” ’²³⁵ and are awakened by it to the form of light and of spirit, ‘so that man can realise in his very foundations all those possibilities of differentiation that are the expression of his person, and so that he may learn to let this his essential difference over all the things that surround him move over them as an instrument of knowledge (*co-naissance*)’.²³⁶

God, however, is the quintessential seer; he creates by making beings emerge before his sight, ‘and what owes its being to vision is itself a corresponding vision and an eye turned to its cause. Every being, in fact, is in itself a particular translation of His creative glance, and the realisation in time of the form prescribed for its obedience, that is, for its operation, and of the symbol necessary for it to be significant. This form is the concrete expression and, at the same time, the means to knowledge which the particular being has of the general.’ Thus, everything that has form has its centre in the responding gaze which the creature directs at the creating gaze of God, and ‘our entire religious life is our *attention* to the particular *intention* God had when he called us into existence’²³⁷ with that new name which he bestowed on us in his Son.

The poet describes the spiritual sense of touch first of all in the manner of the mystics, as the soul’s experience of being touched by God. But the creature as such (precisely when it would most like to escape from God’s hand) feels the pressure of this hand; and it is the creature which has received grace that, analogously to Mary, really feels how an ‘undesired lodger has moved in, one who does not hesitate to rearrange the chairs according to his taste, to drive nails into the walls and, if necessary, even to saw up the furniture when he is cold and needs a fire’. Thomas is allowed to touch this guest: ‘God opens himself up and guides the Apostle’s hand into the innermost junctures of his action and even to his throbbing heart.’²³⁸

The poet had spoken of taste at the very beginning, and he often comes back to it in his work at large in order to bring before the senses the particular and unique nature of the experience of another being—a beloved body, for instance. He reminds us of the taste (*sapor*) of the salt of wisdom, the taste of the Mother of the Lord, who is like the flame and the distillation of all creation, and who, in her soaring to God, communicates to us the taste of God himself.²³⁹

The agreement that emerges from four thinkers of such different temperament is striking. In his own way, each of them conceives man as a sensory-spiritual totality and understands man's two distinctive functions from the standpoint of a common centre in which the living person stands in a relationship of contact and interchange with the real, living God. All four insist on justifying sensory knowledge preeminently by proceeding from the higher to the lower and from the interior to the exterior—regardless of the fact that, in themselves, the senses constitute the 'exterior' and the 'inferior' and, as such, are the empirical basis for all spiritual thinking and willing and the vehicle which sets these in motion. An important question is raised concerning the manner in which the specific qualities of the senses become differentiated from the soul's unified capacity to sense, and concerning the reason why those qualities take on these forms, which are apparently wholly underived, and no others. But this question can be answered only by starting with what is given, by way of a careful process of ordering (as Siewerth especially has done) and by continually pointing upwards to the unity that had released these differences. 'For a long time yet we shall be forbidden to go any further, to return to the wellsprings of sensory experience, to the "switchboard" or central exchange where is first elaborated that "wave" which is destined to nourish the different organs of the periphery.'²⁴⁰ What is strange is how thoroughly a missing sense can be replaced by other more developed senses, and how, on the other hand, animals, with their senses, are capable of perceiving more, both in quantity and in focus.

From these analyses we would like to emphasize three points for the purposes of our inquiry:

1. It is with both body and soul that the living human being experiences the world and, consequently, also God. As Barth and Siewerth stress, man is not an isolated 'soul' which must work its way to reality by inferring it from phenomena. Man always finds himself within the real, and the most real reality is the Thou—his fellow-man and the God who created him and who is calling him. Both are present together; and even if, as a child of Adam, man is always fleeing from this encounter with God, fleeing into the abstractions of the spirit and into the spiritlessness of dulled senses, man cannot escape his hounding God who from the outset has tracked him down and brought him to a halt.

2. God brings man to a halt by confronting him through his Incarnation in the midst of the sphere of the senses. God confronts man as the neighbour

that no one can avoid, and yet also as the Lord and Master before whom man must bow—precisely because man can see, touch, hear, and eat him. Flesh speaks to flesh; the Word chose this unmistakable language in order to overtake and encounter from below the sinner who had lost his spirit.

3. But this, the Word's, flesh encounters man as God's *exinanitio* or 'self-emptying'. This Servant is comprehensible only as the Lord who came down for our sake. Everything about his sensibility and carnality breathes the Spirit, breathes too the Spirit's humiliation. It is senses that perceive God's humility sensually. It is senses that see what God had to do in order to become visible. It is senses that hear what God's Word had to undertake in order to become audible to sensual ears. Thus, all the senses perceive the non-sensual sensually. This is why they are also ready to go through the death of the senses which essentially awaits everything sensual—ready to deny themselves (for they understand, yes, really understand, that God is The Supersensual!)—in order to let God be what he is in himself. But in the very midst of this self-renunciation they possess, in the phenomenon of the Incarnate God, the warrant of their own inconceivable resurrection.

The senses are the exteriorisation of the soul, and Christ is the exteriorisation of God. But if the soul exhibits its poverty in not being able to attain to itself except through what is other than itself, nevertheless it also demonstrates at the same time (and, in a hidden way, even earlier) that in the very outpouring of its indigence the soul is an image of the God who, according to Denys, has poured himself out outside himself through eros, even as Creator, the God who has proven this perfectly in the Incarnation. Hence, at a deeper level, the poverty of Being and of its sensibility reveals the sole treasure Being contains, which is nothing other than—love.

c. Mysticism within the Church

It is only at this point that we can properly treat of mysticism, the final experience of faith within the Church which is still in some way archetypal. This is not the place to discuss mysticism in detail; we intend only to define its position within systematic theology. A first approach to mystical experience was made when we discussed Pauline experience, which was seen as the transition from the eyewitness of the Twelve to so-called 'private revelation' which is continued within the sphere of the Church. But John too

pointed us along the road since to those coming after him he entrusted his own particular eyewitness, without any emphatic distancing, inviting them to join him in his seeing, hearing, and touching. Notably in his apocalyptic experience John experienced and described himself as a New Testament prophet among the other prophets, his brothers. In Paul, too, the Church is seen as built on the foundation of the Apostles and of the New Testament prophets. The latter are naturally not simply conceived to be the continuation of Old Testament prophecy, but rather the qualified witnesses and signs of Christ's new Holy Spirit, fully present and active throughout Christ's Church.

It makes here little difference whether we assign or deny the name of 'mysticism' to charisms in the primitive Church; the name is not found in Scripture, and for this reason the real question is what content it is given when it is introduced into the vocabulary of the Church. It goes without saying that, *if* it is introduced, we have to assign to it a meaning derived from Christian theology and consonant with the Bible, a meaning which would necessarily have to set the term apart from its general usage in the history of religions. Certain analogies can, of course, exist between the general and the Christian meaning, but an absolute difference separates them in essential points. If such a presupposition is consciously maintained, then the use of the term is permissible within Christian theology.

First, a formal assertion to define our framework. The fact that revelation is concluded by the death of the last Apostle cannot mean that God's revelatory activity—the eventful-ness of his self-disclosure—is a thing of the past and that all that is possible now is a retrospective reflection which elaborates the past revelation. One could almost affirm the contrary: that is, that the preparations are now over and that the main part of the drama can begin. The Spirit of the Father and the Son has been poured out over all the world, to the end that the Father's work of creation and the Son's work of reconciliation, both raised to the final trinitarian potency, can now show themselves to the world in their full form and impress themselves upon it with their full power. The Christ-form, to which the Old Testament and the Apostolic period belong, is historically unsurpassable; but, as we have seen many times, the Christ-form attains to its plastic fulness only through the dimension of the Holy Spirit—and this means also through the Church.

If this is true, then there is no reason why the Church's participation in the fulness of revelation, as it took shape in the Biblical period, should not also be a participation in the prophetic and charismatic experiences of Biblical

man. It is the opposite which seems improbable, not to say contradictory. It is clear, however, that such participation can no longer be archetypal in the Biblical sense, since essentially and by definition it no longer moves within the second, but the third trinitarian dimension, namely, within the explicitation and interiorisation of the revelation of the Logos by the divine Spirit. But, within his infinite means of explicitation, this Spirit is free to make use also of the Biblical modes of archetypal experience in order to demonstrate in the Church of all centuries the continual reality of revelation—not as something past, but as something present.

From this very formal affirmation we can immediately draw our first concrete conclusion. The participation in the archetypal experiences of the Bible by those coming later must fundamentally be determined by two things. First, it is determined by the object participated in: this means that it will be a genuine ecclesial participation in the most varied forms of the experiential and sensory experience of God in the Bible, with all the breadth of prophetic and other Old Testament experiences, of earthly eyewitness in the New Testament, and also of the eyewitness of the Resurrection borne to the world, such as the Twelve, Paul, Stephen, and many others experienced it. But, second, it is determined by the participant himself: this means that it will be a participation in the Holy Spirit of the Church, which, understood in all her depth as the fulness of Christ, is an aspect of the perfected total archetype. For this reason, the participant's experience will be immanent to the Church and subject to her, and it must therefore be an experience in the *Holy Spirit*, in the sense of the New Testament whereby the Spirit is substantially the Spirit of the love of the Father and the Son.

This is what Paul means when, in addressing the Corinthians, he establishes all charisms in the New Testament on the foundation of differentiated membership in the Mystical Body (1 Cor 12) and, hence, on Christian love (1 Cor 13). Consequently, this is the reason why, in the Church, 'merely' functional charisms and prophecy neither can nor should any longer be adequately distinguished from 'merely' personal mysticism. In other words, a mysticism of the charisms should not be separated from a mysticism of the *Dona Spiritus Sancti*.²⁴¹ Indeed, we can now assert the following: the 'mystically' (charismatically) endowed member of the Church will be able and will have to make his special mission known and accepted in the Church precisely in the measure that he does not stand opposed to the Church (in the sense of the Biblical archetypes), but rather demonstrates that

he is vitally integrated into the communion of love of all the members, this communion constituting the total ecclesial archetype. If this is so, then the fellow-members of this communion—and, among these, first of all the guiding members, that is, the clergy—have the duty of paying attention to the charismatic experiences of individual members and of using them in the whole Church—within the community and beyond it—according to the particular nature of each experience. Some experiences point outwards, and they should be recognised as such for them to have an effect. Other experiences point inwards; they exert their force and their effect even without being registered externally. But we cannot therefore simply assign the first of these to the realm of the charisms, while confining the latter simply to the realm of the *Dona Spiritus Sancti*. There are mystical *dona* (such as ‘knowledge’, ‘fortitude’, ‘counsel’) which are clearly intended to have an external effect as well, while there are charisms (such as participation in the Passion, resulting in the charisms of extraordinary intercession and vicarious suffering) that have a wholly or predominantly invisible efficacy. What really occurs here can be perceived only when one frees oneself from the dead hand of the distinctions of the schools and keeps one’s eyes fixed on the mutuality and interpenetration, which are far more important than the fact that conceptual distinctions can be made.

Only so can we also get away from the fateful move in these questions which has been customary since the time of the Fathers (as a reaction against Montanism), and particularly since Augustine, whereby everything having to do with the senses and the imagination in mystical experiences is held to be fundamentally questionable in the extreme. This has occurred not only when such experiences were taken abstractly in themselves and considered as detached from the background of ecclesial love which authenticates them: here the negative judgment must be justified. But the same attitude has prevailed even when they are judged within the sustaining context of the Church where they are rejected as being insignificant and dangerous, because they distract us from love and lead us to abuses. The inexorable teaching of John of the Cross on this subject is well known. What has happened here is that a prior decision has been made—against the charisms and for mysticism alone, against anything sensory in the ascent to God and unqualifiedly for the experience of God in the immediacy of ‘naked faith’. The charismatic would then have to reject everything sensory and imaginative, regardless of whether it has been merely contrived by man, inspired by the devil, or derived from

God himself. The bond that connects ecclesial mysticism (the charisms) with its Biblical archetypes is here mercilessly severed, and there is retained only the mysticism of the *dona* of the Holy Spirit as third trinitarian dimension. But such radicalism has its nemesis in the fact that this mysticism wholly loses the ecclesial dimension of mission; it becomes essentially a mysticism of the individual, an experience between the believer and God alone which requires the violent measures just described if it is to be preserved in all its purity. This, however, yields the paradox that it is precisely the charisms (which supposedly can 'function' even without sanctifying grace and love) which require and maintain their basis in a love that serves selflessly, while a mysticism without 'function' and aiming solely at theological love stands in danger of degenerating into a private affair. Let us only add that the verdict passed by the tradition of Augustine and John of the Cross plays into the hands of all those who, as thorough sceptics or psychologists or as mere 'practitioners' of pastoral care, and in the name of 'pure faith' or of 'plain common-sense', would like to do away with all mystical elements in the Church as being an irrelevant private concern.

In terms of practical psychology, it is understandable that every precaution must be taken in view of the great damage caused by the opposite extreme of a naïve acceptance of all charisms. This attitude uncritically accepts as genuine every alleged or authentic vision, audition, stigmatisation, and so on; that is to say, it is taken as a raw fact with no integral connection with the total Church and broadcast as such. Against these abuses the great saints we have mentioned have rightly protested, for such an attitude again confuses the dimensions of Biblical revelation with those of the Church, and the result is an eventual sliding into areas that are subject not only to a general psychology of religion, but often even to magic.

After rejecting both kinds of degeneration, what remains as a centre of balance is the reciprocal tension existing between the charisms and the gifts of the Spirit, the latter being understood as the experiential perfecting and transcending of the vital theological virtues. On both sides (in so far as they are at all distinguishable) there are transitions from the 'normal' life of faith to a properly speaking mystical life. From the side of the 'gifts' this is generally understood and granted. Here we must only add what was said in the previous chapter concerning the spiritual senses: that the ecclesial experience of faith participates 'normally' in the Biblical archetypes; that the senses are transformed through the Christian's death and resurrection; that a

perception of God and of divine things by means of the total corporeal and psychic organism constitutes an archetypal (protological) 'normalcy', so to speak. A truly living Christian experience of faith includes (according to Ignatius of Loyola, for instance) a certain experience of both nearness to God and distance from God, of consolation and desolation, a sense for God's will for me here and now, a *sapor* for the divine wisdom (Bernard), a *cognitio per connaturalitatem* (Thomas), and yet none of this need yet be given the name of 'mysticism' in the strong sense of the word. Along these paths breakthroughs to new depths of experience may take place which are perceived by the subject undergoing them as a qualitative leap; but this leap may in fact be occurring more on the psychological plane than at the much more decisive level of the objective life of grace. The genuine believer who has identified himself with the attitude of faith will, obeying the essence of what he is, not emphasise the elements of experience to the detriment of the central element of faith. As an attitude, faith is the surrender of one's own experience to the experience of Christ, and Christ's experience is one of kenotic humiliation and self-renunciation, a reality which, as we have seen, rests on the foundation of Christ's hypostatic consciousness as Redeemer. For this reason, in 'mysticism' every deeper experience (*Erfahrung*) of God will be a deeper entering into (*Einfahren*) the 'non-experience' of faith, into the loving renunciation of experience, all the way into the depths of the 'Dark Nights' of John of the Cross, which constitute the real mystical training for the ultimate renunciations. But these 'nights' are precisely an 'experience of non-experience', or an experience of the negative, privative mode of experience, as a participation in the total archetypal experience of the Old and New Testaments. We must only take care not to raise the expressly mystical experiences of a John of the Cross to the status of a standard and model for every ecclesial experience of faith, nor to level out the analogies to be found along the paths of faith which God ordains for the Christian. The creative power of the Holy Spirit, which allows us to participate in the primal experience of Christ Jesus in different degrees and modalities, is, for its part, unlimited, and the love which 'does not seek its own', the love which, of all the Spirit's gifts, is the 'incomparably superior way', always so arranges things that in following Christ the divine gifts are possessed more in the manner of a privation, of their being stored up in heaven, of their surrender for the sake of all others than by holding them in one's own hands.

But the same thing cannot be said of the charisms—the other side that

concerns us. For these are not for the individual to give away, but to administer them as gifts, as a function in the household of the Mystical Body. Here, too, there doubtless are 'unmystical', somehow natural charisms, of which Peter and Paul enumerate a few, for instance, almsgiving and hospitality. Others belong to actual ecclesial offices and consist of the special means, given by the Spirit, which correspond to those offices. Others are charismatic in the strict sense, and it is these primarily that were at issue in Corinth. Their character as *gratis datum* is objective, as is stressed by the whole theological tradition, and even the person receiving them as a grace must himself see them only in terms of their social function. Now, such immediate participation by a member of the Church in the objective corpus of revelation can take many forms: it could be a sensory seeing, hearing, or touching of a part of the supernatural reality of revelation (and this is where stigmatisation and other forms of participation in the Lord's Passion or in any other mystery of redemption have their place), or a knowledge of a particular aspect of the truth of revelation which is perhaps all too forgotten or too little regarded at present by the majority of the ecclesial community. Whatever the specific form of immediate participation, however, in every case it is not the individual undergoing the experience who is the goal of the divine action, but the Church as a whole, for here the grace of the charism stands in a functional relationship to the ecclesial task. And regardless of how personal the individual has felt his experience to be, he must nevertheless deprive himself of it for the sake of the Church; he must pass it on even if it will thereby appear to him to have been lost and even if this should at times seem to him to be a sort of profanation. His experience was as of one expropriated, and so, too, he must administer it as one expropriated.

This is the ecclesial manner in which mystical experience participates in the proleptic character of all archetypal experience of revelation. It has its origin essentially within the total sphere of the Church (as the fulness of Christ) and returns again to this total ecclesial sphere. The individual with his experience is ever an expropriated member of the whole and must feel and behave accordingly. Because of her high regard for charismatic grace (a regard which is justified but not without its dangers), the Church may single out for public honour an individual member, either during his lifetime or posthumously. But the charismatic must not be misled by this. Indeed, if he has understood and accepted Christ's grace deeply enough, he will always look at such a show of honour as a misunderstanding, for grace was not

intended at all for this member but for the Church as a whole, through the mediation of his service.

Ecclesial mysticism is proleptically oriented toward the totality of the Church. For this reason, it is also necessarily eschatological—an experiential realisation of the Jerusalem above, whose citizens we are and which will appear on the Last Day. In this respect, all mysticism, even the darkest mysticism of the Cross, is anticipatory glory, δόξα, transport to the beauty of the New Age. The dark night is conferred only as a grace between two experiences of consolation: an initial one, which is still superficial because it has not yet known death, and a second one which has been purified by suffering and made to conform to the Resurrection. The impotence of the Cross, as an ecclesial participation, is objectively always the expression of the superabundant might of Christ, to whom all *exousia* in heaven and on earth belong. This holds even for that strictly objective vision proper to the Prophets and to the Apocalypse which might be said to be a vision that merely observes and reports. This vision, too, is given by ‘the faithful witness of Jesus Christ’ ‘to his servant John’, to be communicated to the community, then to conclude in an eschatological vision of the glory of the victorious Lamb and of his Bride. The beauty of the New Age, of the heavenly world, which has been infused into the earthly world’s economy of grace from the beginning and through all ages, and which at the end ‘will have fermented the whole dough’—this beauty is offered to the mystic as a total human experience which possesses archetypal immediacy. This is not a naked and abstract celestial world, but the world of the Resurrection, a world that penetrates redeemed creation through and through with the power of the resurrected Son and brings it to rise up together with him.

In terms of objective theology, this provides the reason why ecclesial mysticism admits not only spiritual, but also sensory experiences. This dimension of the Resurrection runs directly against the grain of the temporal course of our history, and we cannot, therefore, possibly find a place for it within the system of the ‘Old World’. But it does not follow that everything sensory within ecclesial mysticism must therefore be declared *a priori* to be ‘purely subjective’ and, hence, that the stigma of non-objectivity must, in the opinion of such a judge, be attached to this mysticism. The adaptation of the Christian senses of a believer on earth to the mysteries of the Kingdom of God remains for us a mystery, but it must not be dismissed *a priori* as being impossible. The apparitions of the risen Christ to the Apostles were objective,

even if they were not capable of seeing the fulness of his glory. There is then in principle no reason why the same, in essence, may not be true of mystical visions. The decisive factor is that the object, on its own initiative, takes shape (*sich ein-bildet*) in the spirit and the senses of the mystic in a form that appropriately expresses and reveals it, and that, in so doing, the object can very well bring into play the mystic's own imagination (*Einbildungskraft* = 'power to create images'). The suspicions traditionally harboured against such objectivity derive (quite apart from precautionary measures stemming from pastoral concerns) from a Platonic presupposition that the divine world is 'purely spiritual' and can therefore express itself to us humans in sensory images only very inadequately and ambiguously. The risen Lord is free enough to express himself in an adequate, objective form, and to convey this form just as objectively to the persons meant to encounter him. All the same, the encounter of this expressive form with the Christian senses can have a stormy history: implied within the offer of the form is a demand to the senses to renounce all their accustomed objects in order to be conformed to the New Age, and this renunciation can be practised existentially in the 'dark night(s)' of Saint John of the Cross, with the result that the necessary proportioning of the mortal senses to their immortal object is intensified and sharpened.

And so we see the particular nature of ecclesial mysticism sufficiently situated within our present context. Such mysticism stands as a whole within the sphere of the manifold freedom of the Holy Spirit, who breathes forth his life, however, within the sphere of the Biblical and ecclesial tradition. For this mysticism there is no possible schema according to which the phenomena could be developed and classified. Each of them (we speak here only of authentic ones) falls down from heaven vertically. But, despite this comet-like character, they immediately blend into the landscape of tradition, there to lend new life to the Biblical message, to bridge over the supposed distances between the time of revelation and the present time, to act as a sign for the actuality and the loving proximity of the true World to this our visionless existence. Often an answer from heaven is given to the open questions of an epoch, questions that men cannot come to grips with. New seeds are thus implanted in the Church which will then develop fruitfully for centuries.

Nothing could be less true than the idea (particularly widespread today) that the time of the Church is a closed epoch of naked, visionless faith. This view, which stems from a pinched faith, goes on to say that the fewer the

irruptions from the side of the New Age, the more wholesome, meritorious, and secure will be the unfolding of an existence in faith. If it is true that neither the Church nor the Christian should ever aspire to mystical graces—as if the form of revelation set before the eyes of the world did not suffice!—nevertheless it is just as true that God never limits himself minimalistically to only what is strictly sufficient, because the eternal Beauty always pours itself out in a superabundant irradiation that is beyond every demand and expectation.

d. Integration

If, by way of recapitulation, we now wish to see the individual elements of subjective theological perception in their interrelatedness, we must in the first place eschew any attempt to construct a system, whether openly or secretly. This not only because faith must remain faith and cannot become open vision, but above all because the self-revealing God remains sovereign in his every mode of manifestation and the Lord of that manifestation. Not only is the primary fact of his revelation, over against all created nature, a decision of his freedom; beyond this, every single element of this revelation retains this characteristic, no matter how clearly such a decision is seen to follow. Nowhere does theological aesthetics descend to the level of an inner-worldly aesthetics.

Just as man's original faith is his answer as evoked by the freedom of the self-revealing God, so it is also with everything about faith that bears the character of experience. It is always the free, gracious God who continues to deal with the people even after the sealing of the Covenant with Abraham and on Sinai. It is always the free, gracious Christ who continues to associate with his disciples and the people even after he has fully become man. With an ungraspable graciousness that is daily renewed, Christ does not utterly shrink away from an unbelieving and perverse generation (Mt 17.17); day after day he again confronts them and, even after his Resurrection, instead of returning to the invisible realm of the Father, he again offers himself to his disciples, who are incredulous for sheer joy. Thomas could have given his office as eyewitness as an excuse for his demand; but, when his wish is granted him, even he must collapse and acknowledge the pure freedom of grace. And in the Church things are not otherwise. We may not, in the interests of a pure

actualism, cast doubts on the continual offer of Christ's presentation in the Mass, of his grace in the Sacraments, of his effective action in the preached word, but no more may we, in the interests of the element of continuity, obscure the other more important element of God's self-actualisation in the Church. Despite the general guarantee that the Apostles and their successors are authorised and competent to proclaim the teaching of Jesus, it is still always something of a miracle that the very eternal Word of God can become embodied in the stammering of men. The mere symbolism of the world of signs does not simply compel the event. Guardini often used to make the point with regard to the liturgy, and we know how emphatically Augustine—to say nothing of Origen—said this of the Eucharist. The same holds for private prayer: with what freedom the Lord comes and goes! How greatly God's whole manner of educating us through prayer is oriented precisely to imparting to the praying person this most important knowledge and experience: namely, that no achievement, no amount of training, no prescribed attitude can force God to come to us! But even here this freedom in no way stands in opposition to the simple guarantee of his grace. Because this grace is promised and given, the praying person ought indeed to trust even in aridity and in absence of experience. He must learn to pare away more and more the preliminary subjectivity of his states of mind, to be left with an ever purer faith. And yet, by the same token, this purification of subjective attitudes is the way in which he is to encounter the real Lord and God in a fully human manner and with less and less danger. God will enter precisely by the door which allows him full freedom of action.

Thus, all subjective evidence must remain exhaustively open to this freedom of the objective evidence of revelation. To be a recipient of revelation means more and more the act of renunciation which gives God the space in which to become incarnate and to offer himself as he will. Only in this way is the sphere of the 'spiritual senses' given its proper place, and only thus does the integration of the archetypal Biblical experience and the 'ordinary' experience of faith become possible. Even the archetypal experiences appear to us extremely varied: those of the Old Testament were different from those of the New, and in the Old Testament itself we saw a whole range of sensory presentations of God. In the New Testament we observed a process of simplification that reduced these to four fundamental types, all of which then converged and flowed into the Church's treasury, whether individually or in combination. And the Holy Spirit is still free

enough to create new and unheard-of marvels for each individual believer from the material of such exemplary experiences. For this reason, what here still remains to be said will be offered by way of open-ended hints that allow God all his freedom. We will simply juxtapose five standpoints.

1. If Christ is God's epiphany in the world, then by the very nature of that epiphany, provision has been made to insure that this emergence of the divine glory does not occur only before a few chosen ones (while all others remain submerged in the darkness of a 'naked faith' in propositions), but precisely, really and truly, before the whole world. This is true even to the extent that the disciples that are sent out might almost be said to be only the rays which the sun sends out from its own brightness, so that what becomes visible in this radiance is not the ray itself but the one that radiates. If Christ is the image of all images, it is impossible that he should not affect all the world's images by his presence, arranging them around himself. There is no such thing as an isolated image; every image appears against a background of fellow-images. It impresses and expresses itself upon the world. In its interior form it reveals its belonging to a community of forms and its creative power to give shape to a world about itself. Goethe, for instance, brings with him a whole epoch which both influences him and is itself influenced by him. But what Christ brings with him is not primarily his historical environment, but the world of creation and of redemption as a whole. His form imparts to the things of the world the right distance (from him and each other) and the right proximity (to him and each other). The believer does not *believe* all of this; he *sees* it. He is allowed to see it when he believes and, in a definite, dark, and distorted way, even when he refuses to accept the evidence of faith. This his sensory environment, in which he lives and with which he is apparently wholly familiar, is through and through determined by the central image and event of Christ, so that, by a thousand open and hidden paths, his wholly real and corporeal sense-experiences bring him into contact with that central point. In this he stands in the same space and in the shared time of creation as the Prophets and the Apostles, and here it is almost a matter of indifference whether he possesses the sensory contemporaneity of the eyewitness: he stands in the world which has been determined and established by the appearance of God and which is oriented to that appearance. The reality of creation as a whole has become a monstrosity of God's real presence. The believer may complain about the darkness of faith and may even be

disquieted by the image of revelation in its concealment and opacity. Nevertheless, he can in faith cling to what he is given to see: the displacement and magnetic reorienting of the images of the world by the image of God in their midst. Here palpable and manifest evidence can occur at any time and in ever-new ways. In this manner, however, the Lord of the images of the world always retains his freedom both to conceal himself among these images (as if he himself were a worldly image among other worldly images, and would thus be demanding a naked faith in himself) or then again to step out from among them and outshine all other worldly images, and this too would be perceived by faith, but by a faith that understands, experiences, and, to that extent, already sees.

2. But Christ is not distinct from other worldly contours as himself a bare and isolated configuration. To the individual he appears within the total image of the Church, which is the community of faith that both is now a living reality and that once lived as an historical reality. The Church is the more immediate space in which his form shines. Not only is the Church illuminated by him like the images of the world; rather, suffused by his light, the Church actively radiates him onto the world. This is something we will discuss in the second part of this inquiry. Here we are concerned primarily with the subjective integration. In this respect we must clarify the manner in which the Church, as a spiritual and sensory reality, mediates really between the believer's spiritual senses and the form of Christ. She does this as a single community of real human beings which has believed uninterruptedly, and already as such she sustains the individual. She does it, furthermore, as an apostolic community into which the archetypal experiences of the Prophets and the Apostles which have been incorporated as a 'foundation' (Eph 2.20): a real and vital relationship connects the contemporary experience of faith with the archetypal experience existing in the space of history. Paul and the mystics within the Church who have come after him, in so far as they are ecclesially accredited, constitute an even narrower chain which twines round the first, essential chain. But beneath this empirical continuity another more mysterious continuity holds sway which is no less evident to the Catholic believer: the continuity between Mary's spiritual experiences in the body and the Church's maternal experience. A mother explains the world to her child; she shows him what there is to be seen and how it should be regarded; she not only teaches him the words of the language, but infuses reality into each

word so that the word will emerge from the image and lead back to it. In the same way the Church, basing herself first and last on the experience of the Lord's Mother in the flesh, who was the Believer pure and simple, can teach her children the Word of God and communicate to them from the heart of her motherly and bridal experience not only its meaning, but its taste, its smell, and its whole incarnational concreteness. The terrible havoc which the 'historical-critical method' is today wreaking in the world of faith is possible only in a spiritual sphere from which the Church's Marian dimension has been banished and which has, therefore, forsaken all spiritual senses and their ecclesial communication. This devastation is spreading not only over the whole theological realm; it is penetrating even the area of philosophy. Here the world is becoming imageless and valueless; it is a heap of 'facts' which no longer say anything and in which an equally imageless and formless naked existence is freezing and anguishing unto death. The philosophy and the theology of the image stand and fall together, and when the *image* of woman has vanished from the theological realm, an exclusively masculine, imageless conceptuality and thought-technique takes over, and then faith finds itself banished from the world and confined to the realm of the paradoxical and the absurd. What is at stake here is not the sentimental mediation of a Madonna cult, but the far deeper vision of the real uniqueness of the Bride of Christ as God's People in the world, the vision of Mary's really efficacious and archetypal significance—between Zion and the Church—for man's adequate answer to the God who surrenders to him. As an individual, I can respond correctly only within the context of this unified and total answer: and this total answer is all-embracing and feminine and, for this reason, it is especially adapted to the sensory realm. She who is called blessed because of her faith has, through faith and in faith, attained to the inseparably unified experience of bridal motherhood.

3. Within the space of the Mother-Church, the features and gestures of Christ reach all believing generations as the sensory gestures of the liturgy, which includes both Sacrament and Word. This Word ever anew proves itself efficacious as what it is (1 Thess 2.13): not only as the Word of God, but as the Word of the Incarnate God, the Word which is substantiated by the flesh and blood of Christ. Christ's sensuous existence must necessarily accompany the appearance of his Word. And the Sacrament here is more than an Old Testament rite, even if here too we are dealing with an essentially symbolic

reality: namely, the thing itself in a veiled form that reveals it. The unprecedented hardness and exacting nature of the corporeal form of the sacraments, which simply demand to be enacted, call forth not only naked faith, but also the equally hard historical truth to which they owe their origin. Those who realise this stand in no danger of a sacramental holiness-through-works, for the sensory character of the event confronts them directly with the event which is made present *hic et nunc* in the sacraments. The image compels them to enter into the act by revealing to them the act which both instituted the image and is contained in the image. It is here that the full weight of the sacrament lies and not, as many today understand it in aestheticist fashion, in the encounter between the sacramental symbols and the 'great archetypes of the psyche',²⁴² even though it may be quite true that the sacramental images as such are not indifferent, are not merely an 'ornament external to the mystery' or a 'temporary paedagogical expedient'. But, even if these images derive their symbolic language for man from the creation, in which God instructs man through essential images, nevertheless the correspondence between water and redemption, between oil and the Holy Spirit, between the laying on of hands and the conferring of the Spirit, derives its fittingness wholly from above, as instituted by the love of Christ, and this is shown even by the choice of images. Then, in maternal fashion, the Church can enhance this correspondence, adding fire and wax, the fragrance of incense and the gesture of kneeling, the colour of her vestments as a sensory and spiritual indication of mood, sounds to represent the all-penetrating harmony of the confession of faith. In these ways the Church moulds the κόσμος αἰσθητός in conformity to the κόσμος νοητός of the reality of faith. These enhancements remain variable; they in no way claim divine institution and, lying below the images instituted by God, they always need our experiential sensibility to direct them upwards into the sphere of the experience of faith. There should be no confusion here. And, nevertheless, the Lord of the Church, as he reveals and makes himself present, remains free, if it so pleases him, to manifest himself and bring himself closer to man even through the aesthetic symbols and the ostensive images of the world.

4. There is *one* image, however, which stands wholly by itself and which is like no other image instituted by the Son of Man, who bore and atoned for the guilt of all men on the Cross: this is the image of the fellow-man we encounter. In his plight and guilt, our fellow-man as we encounter him is in

every case our neighbour, and this neighbour of man's is Christ. In his neighbour man encounters his Redeemer with all his bodily senses, in just as concrete, unprecedented, and archetypal a manner as the Apostles when they 'found the Messiah' (Jn 1.41). Here all the loose threads of faith come together to form the perfect weave. For in faith I know that I have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, and I know therefore that you equally have been redeemed and that in you faith compels me to see, to respect, and to anticipate in action the supremely real image which the triune God has of you. In our neighbour faith is at each instant tested through the senses, and, if it is authenticated as faith, it immediately receives its sensory corroboration. For, according to John, love that is practised contains the ability to demonstrate itself as the truth. But such love bears its proof in itself in sensory fashion only in so far as it understands itself to exist in obedience to the God who laid down his life for us. If it is love at all (and not a hidden egotism of whatever form), it bears within itself in sensory fashion the quintessence of dogmatics. In his love for his neighbour, the Christian definitively receives his Christian senses, which, of course, are none 'other' than his bodily senses, but these senses in so far as they have been formed according to the form of Christ. Whether or not Christ's historical form thereby becomes explicit to the lover is less important; love itself has this form within itself and communicates it. In a Christian sense, love is not 'act without image'; on the contrary, love is what creates image and bestows shape absolutely. Love is the creative power of God himself which has been infused into man by virtue of God's Incarnation. This is why, in the light of the divine ideas, love can read the world of forms and, in particular, man correctly. Outside of this light, man remains an incomprehensible and contradictory hieroglyph. Cross and Resurrection, understood as the love and the glory of God, bleeding to death and forsaken, render man decipherable.

5. After all that has been said, the question of the encounter with the Lord in prayer and contemplation should no longer disturb us. To his presence through faith there corresponds, in a most obvious and consistent fashion, his total concrete presence. Here too he still has freedom to act as he will; no 'application of the senses' can compel his coming, but nor should it stop at the sensory facts in order to find its delight in them. The little which here occurs with full consciousness significantly enough stands in the pure service of love. And love does not want to 'imagine' or conjure up anything; it obeys

only the reality of the Lord's love. This was the point made by Marechal when he set out to show the convergence in one central point of both sides of the *applicatio sensuum*—the ordinary human fantasy and the mystics' experience of being touched directly by God.²⁴³ Hugo Rahner points us in a similar direction.²⁴⁴ It is not necessary to determine at what psychological level the realisation of revelation as image is achieved in prayer. Both from the side of the Lord of prayer and from that of the person praying everything remains possible—from the greatest concreteness to the most subtle transparency. It is possible for images to be present only in order to be transcended and annulled, and for modes of sensory experience to be there only in order to be rejected and to be used as signals pointing to a suprasensory reality they themselves cannot convey. For our senses, together with images and thoughts, must die with Christ and descend to the underworld in order then to rise unto the Father in an unspeakable manner which is both sensory and suprasensory. 'Then I heard without sounds, then I saw without light, then I smelled where no odour rose, then I tasted what was not there, then I felt where nothing was to be grasped', says the bride of the Song of Songs in Eckhart.²⁴⁵ These are not self-destroying paradoxes; it is, rather, the participation in a history whose content is God's *kenosis* to the world and the world's to God. And yet it is our own senses and, with them, our spirit, our whole person that, dying with Christ, rise unto the Father: *et in carne mea videbo Deum meum, quem visurus sum ego ipse, et oculi mei conspecturi sunt, et non alius*.²⁴⁶

III. THE OBJECTIVE EVIDENCE

A. THE NEED FOR AN OBJECTIVE FORM OF REVELATION

Everything said up to this point was intended to lead in to what now follows. To have anticipated our present concerns was not without its dangers. For if the subjective ability to experience finds the reason and justification for its existence in an experienceable object, then without this object that experiential ability can by no means be demonstrated in its totality nor indeed be made comprehensible. For this reason, in the course of our inquiry we have time and again pointed to this object by way of anticipation; but our object can be correctly understood only when it has been made visible in itself. Even our anthropological considerations did not have their meaning in themselves, as would be the case, for instance, if the religious object were limited to 'God in himself'. If we were to approach our object in this manner, then human understanding and human sensibility could possibly be discussed in connection with the apprehension of the object; but presumably they would be considered only in negative fashion, by showing their inadequacy and by striving in practice to eliminate them. In this view, the innermost or outermost 'apex of the soul' could perhaps be considered adequate, since this 'apex' would, in some ecstatic manner, correspond to the formlessness of the divine abyss. Such correspondence would best take place in a system of identities in which *Brahman* and *Atman* confront one another in their sameness; and from this point of identity a certain positive function could then be salvaged for the conceptual and sensory faculty, since even the world of multiplicity, the *regio dissimilitudinis*, could be understood only as the objective-subjective mode of appearing of what in itself is identical and one.

But if God is the infinitely free agent who, in his freedom, invents a world and, also in his freedom, creates that world; and if, on top of this, he is the triune God who in Jesus Christ becomes man, then there are three interconnected reasons why God's revelation must possess an objective form.

1. If God is infinitely free, if he is thus infinite subjectivity which can in no sense be identical with the human religious subject, then a revelation of God may occur ever so interiorly in the subject and, nonetheless, God will remain

interior intimo meo. Even in his manifestness God remains transcendent and, therefore, he is not simply ‘someone who is seen’ but, rather, he is also always someone who, in man’s interior vision and experience is believed, someone to whom one must surrender much more unconditionally than a human I surrenders to a human Thou, since in this case there at least exists a communication in human nature and, therefore, the I somehow knows the Thou as something interior to itself. Such a communion in nature and personality does not exist between God and creature, and this is why even the most intimate self-disclosure of God in the soul has a ‘form’, even if it is spiritual: the form of experiences, sensations, illuminations, which as such are not the self-disclosing God himself. But this first standpoint remains abstract for us because, in the concrete, we have always already made some contact with God as we approach him through the worldly and material creation, knowing nothing of a pure communication between two interiorities.

2. If God has first of all revealed himself as a Creator, and if this creation is necessarily (and, therefore, in an objective sense, permanently and inalienably) a manifestation of God, it follows that this manifestation takes its form from the form of the world itself. It is the Being of things—and not something alongside it or behind it—which is the revelation of God’s eternal and omnipotent Being. Paul stated it with unsurpassable precision: ‘Whatever can be known about God is manifest in them, for God himself has revealed it to them. For since the creation of the world, what is invisible of God—I mean God’s eternal power and divinity—has become visible, intelligible through the things he has made’ (Rom 1. 19f.). τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, like τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ later on, is not to be taken as referring to a ‘part’ of God or a partial aspect of God that may be isolated objectively, no more than are expressions like τὸ χρηστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ (Rom 2.4), τὸ μωρὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ (1 Cor 1.25), and to τὸ δυνατὸν αὐτοῦ (Rom 9.22). In each case God in his entirety is meant, seen from one particular standpoint. Thus, Paul is not saying that basically only one ‘part’ of God is knowable, or that only one aspect of him is ‘invisible’; rather, the ‘vision’ of the invisible God through the mediation of creatures allows us to ‘grasp’ his divine Being, different though it is from all creatures, and his eternal might, which is revealed in his act of creation.¹ This divinity of the Invisible, which radiates in the visibleness of Being of the world, is then immediately called ‘glory’ (*Herrlichkeit*) or ‘sublimeness’ (*Hehrlichkeit*: Schlier), δόξα, ‘God’s intransitoriness’ (1.23). To be sure, this

is the glory of *God* and not of the world, since it is precisely such confusion that at once leads to the terrible fall which results from confusing God's glory with the 'likeness' (ὁμοίωμα) of the 'form' (εἰκών) 'of transitory man and of birds and quadrupeds and reptiles'. The text does not specify the precise nature of the analogy between man or beast and their form, on the one hand, and that between cosmos and creating Godhead, on the other. But the answer is there implicitly: everything which is said of God—his divinity, his eternal might and glory, his power as Creator—consistently underscores the ever-greater difference between him and creatures. However, this does not preclude God's δόξα from radiating and 'being seen' (καθορᾶται) in and through the form of the world.

The revelation of the triune God in Christ is not simply, to be sure, the prolongation or the intensification of the revelation in the creation; but, in their essence, they are so far from contradicting one another that, considered from the standpoint of God's ultimate plan, the revelation in the creation is seen to have occurred for the sake of the revelation in Christ, serving as the preparation that made it possible. Beyond all creaturely hopes and expectations, moreover, the revelation in Christ was to bring together in one divine and human Head everything heavenly and earthly, which is thus endowed by grace with a crown the radiance of whose glory, belonging to the *Kyrios* of the world, was to shed its rays over the whole of creation. In this way the form of the world itself, which as such already was the revelation of the divine δόξα, in Christ and in the Holy Spirit poured out through him becomes a temple which, like the tabernacle and Solomon's edifice, harbours within and above itself the *kâbôd* of God.

3. Thus we see that the form of the revelation in Christ is in the first place characterised indirectly in its form-quality as the perfection of the form of the world. This occurs directly only when it comes to be seen in faith as the appearing of the triune God. The proper and most intimate form-quality of Christ's revelation comes to light only in Christ's divinity, that is to say, in the relationship in him between the two natures and, precisely in this connection, in his relationship to the Father in the Holy Spirit. Now, what makes its appearance in Christ in no way presents itself as a *phainomenon* of the One as opposed to the Many, but as the becoming visible and experienceable of the God who in himself is triune. The form of revelation, therefore, is not appearance as the limitation (πέρας) of an infinite non-form (ἄπειρον), but the appearance of an infinitely determined super-form. And,

what is more important: the form of revelation does not present itself as an independent image of God, standing over against what is imaged, but as a unique, hypostatic union between archetype and image. In the form of revelation, what is image is of no interest in isolation and for itself (the man Jesus), but only in so far as in this image (Christ!) God portrays himself—indeed, in so far as this man himself is God. Qualitatively intensified, here again the statement applies to the effect that ‘God’s invisibleness has become visible for the rational spirit’ (Rom 1.20), and, what is more, the intensification is so unprecedented that those who see and yet do not see are ‘inexcusable’ (Rom 1.20 = Jn 15.22). To be sure, reading this form is something as unique as the form itself. Nonetheless, if this form really is the crowning recapitulation of everything in heaven and on earth, then it also is the form of all forms and the measure of all measures, just as for this reason it is the glory of all glories of creation as well.

Like all other words that are applied to Christ and his revelation, the word ‘form’ too must be used with care, which means that its abstract and general conceptual content must be held *in suspenso* in view of the uniqueness of this particular application. What is crucial here is not the word, but the thing itself, and it is this which we intend to clarify in what follows. The ‘thing’ in this case is one which presents itself as definitive, even if it emerges in different modes of appearance (as an active, suffering, dying man, and as a man who rose bodily in glory) and even if it is apprehended by perceiving man in different states—here by faith, hereafter by vision.

Instead of speaking of the ‘form of revelation’ we could also, with the same qualifications, speak of the ‘revelation-body’ in view of the fact that, on the one hand, ‘the whole *plērôma* of the Godhead dwells corporeally in Christ’ (σωματικῶς), that is to say, in the way that a spirit inhabits a body or that God’s Spirit of glory dwells in the old temple (Jesus speaks of ‘the temple of his body’, Jn 2.21); and, in view of the fact that, on the other hand, the Church is described as the Body of Christ (Eph 1.23; Col 1.18, 24) in so far as Christ’s fulness is fulfilled in her. And none of this can be understood in a purely figurative sense, since Christ’s corporeal body is and remains the point of union (Eph 2.16) while all other ‘religion’ compared with his corporality remains at best a ‘shadow’ (Col 2.17).

B. THE FORM OF REVELATION

1. AS FACT

The subjective unity of faith and vision in the Christian life would perforce remain incomprehensible if it could not be elucidated in terms of a unity in the objective revelation which demands and conditions it. It is a unity which is essentially unique and unrepeatable and which must necessarily remain such because the unique God can express himself in his ultimate totality and depth only once in a unique manner. The revelation of the Old Testament and, behind it, the rather different revelation of creation, could occur ‘many times’ and in ‘many ways’ because, after all, that revelation was only underway to the total ‘Word’ which ‘God has spoken to us at the end of days in his Son’. He could be ‘established as total heir’ because he not only possesses historical facticity as did the Old Testament revelations, but is at the same time ‘the mighty Word’ through which God ‘sustains the creation’. Thus, besides history itself, the Son inherits the essential ‘words’ of creatures, which are word only in virtue of his being the Word and which are the radiant glory of God only because he, the Son, is the ‘radiant splendour of his glory’ (ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης) and the ‘impression’ and ‘ex-expression’ of his reality as God (χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ). He could not be the point of intersection of all partial words of history and of all individual words of Being if he were merely either the ‘factual’ man Jesus or the supra-historical, all-sustaining Logos. That he is more than this is shown by the passage in Heb 1.1ff. that characterises him as the redeemer who ‘purifies’ the world ‘from its sins’ and who, for this reason, ‘has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high’. He is the point of intersection of historical words and of the words of Being precisely as the unity of eternal Son and temporal man.

As ‘radiance’ (actively as the act of radiating itself, or passively as what is radiated), ἀπαύγασμα has its origin first of all in the notion of the *logos* or *sophia*. The Book of Wisdom (7.25f.) makes this expression parallel to others: ‘She (wisdom) is the breath of the divine might, the purest emanation

of the glory of the Almighty,. . . the radiance (reflection) of the eternal light, the immaculate mirror of the active God, an image of his excellence.’ The impersonality and fluidity of these comparisons receive from the illustrative term χαρακτήρ a certain stability and contour: the exact impress, the stamp of the seal, the facsimile of the original overcomes all suspicion of pantheism and implies a reciprocity of persons, but always in the sphere of the divine nature (ὑπόστασις). Both formulas—flowing radiance and impressed form—complement each other in giving expression to the mystery of the beautiful: the form that unites them both is the Primal Beauty, concerning which one does not yet know whether it is above or within the world. But here the text does not even admit a conceptual distinction: that man, who has been established as the total heir, is at the same time the one in whom God created the universe. He descends simultaneously from the ‘prophets’ and the ‘fathers’ and from the Father, whose ‘Son’ he is. As the ‘Word of Omnipotence’ he has always been the heir, and yet he is ‘appointed’ heir. He both possesses the ‘name’ and ‘obtains’ it (Heb 1.4). He is the one who is begotten in an eternal ‘today’ (v. 5) and who, therefore, does his work ‘only once’, ‘once and for all’ in time (ἐφάπαξ, 7.27; 9.12; 10.10). The decisive fact is that no separations and distinctions are made in the form of his radiance as to what he is as man and what he is as God; we have only the assertion that he can be the radiant expression of God which he is as man only because, as God, he is equal in substance to the Father in the bosom of the Trinity, and yet we can grasp this his eternal glory only because he receives it as man and is endowed with it.

The statements of Scripture never go beyond this assertion of his unity. All Johannine statements coincide with it, even the assertion concerning the ‘glory of the only Son from the Father’, which nonetheless becomes visible only in the ‘Word who is Flesh’ (*vidimus*, Jn 1.14), even the assertion concerning ‘the glory which I had with thee before the world was made’, for even this glory, being eternal, is the Father’s answer to his temporal glorification by the Son (Jn 17.5, 1). Biblically, a doctrine of the ‘Trinity in itself’ can be justified only as the (indispensable) background for the doctrine of the Incarnation. We do not need to prove that, for Paul, ‘Son of God’ *a fortiori* always means the Incarnate Word in whose light and glory God’s trinitarian fulness becomes present and fills redeemed creation with its glory. The ‘image’, the ‘splendour’ to which ‘we look in order to be transformed into the same image, from splendour to splendour’, radiates from the

Incarnate Lord. He is the Spirit, he is the access to the Father and his ‘precise image’, and even the most intimate subjective ‘illumination’ of God ‘in our hearts’ occurs only in virtue of the fact that ‘the knowledge of the glory of God shines forth from the face of Christ’, or, what amounts to the same thing, in virtue of the fact that the ‘radiance of the Gospel’ is seen and understood ‘because of the glory of Christ’ (2 Cor 3.18-4.6).

And so it is fitting to remember in this context what we said earlier when we discussed the question of subjective evidence: in relation to the central phenomenon of revelation we can by no means speak of ‘signs’ which, according to their nature, point beyond themselves to something ‘signified’. Jesus the Man, in his visibleness, is not a sign pointing beyond himself to an invisible ‘Christ of faith’—whether this view is nuanced more in a Platonising Catholic sense or in a criticistic Protestant manner. The image and expression of God, according to the Biblical assertion, is the indivisible God-man: man, in so far as God radiates from him; God, in so far as he appears in the man Jesus. What is seen, heard, and touched is the ‘Word of Life’ (1 Jn 1.1), naturally not in contradistinction to the man Jesus, but precisely in the total structure which is the core and the nodule of all Johannine writings. This axis will be thrown off-center as soon as the relationship between *apaugasma* and *charackter* is shifted in favour of a consideration of final causes; in this event, the humanity of Christ is no longer the ‘expression’, but rather becomes the ‘instrument’—the *instrumentum conjunctum* or the *causa instrumentalis*—by means of which ‘someone else’ strives for and attains to ‘something else’. A similar distortion occurs when, on the basis of Platonic presuppositions, the world of matter is regarded as a concealment of the spiritual, and anything earthly as a concealment of the heavenly, and when in consequence what in the Gospel is truly the humiliation of God by his condescension to a human existence is no longer given its proper place within the Christian mystery for now: everything corporeal about Christ is simply regarded as an image that still conceals, and which stimulates us to seek and understand the spiritual element in him, and both things together become an occasion and a springboard from which we soar to the divine. Not only everything sacramental and institutional about the Church, but Christ’s whole humanity thus becomes all too clearly something for those ‘simple’ Christians who need material crutches, while the advanced and the perfect can dispense with the symbol, whose spiritual core they have been able to reach. A successive

unveiling of the spiritual by stripping away all the surrounding layers of matter appears as the way of perfection, difficult to distinguish from an Asiatic or Neo-Platonic mysticism, and at the end we find the intuitive vision of the pure and absolute spirit, which is no longer moderated or mediated by any creaturely veil whatsoever. It can be argued that this Platonic and idealistic mode of expression is nothing more than a paraphrase of the words of Scripture that say that we 'will see God as he is' (1 Jn 3.2; Dz 1647), that we will see him no longer 'in a mirror and in riddles', but 'face to face' (1 Cor 13.12): *manifeste*, Dz 574; *clare*, Dz 693; *visione intuitiva, faciali, nulla mediante creatura in ratione objecti visi, immediate, nude, clare, aperte*, Dz 530. We must not, nevertheless, forget that the eschatological Jerusalem has no other temple but God *and the Lamb*, that it is not illuminated by sun or moon, but by the glory of God, 'and its lamp was *the Lamb*' (Rev 21.22f.). Moreover, the whole City is entrusted, not to God, but to the Lamb, and it 'comes down in the splendour of God's glory' (21.9f.) only as the Bride of the Lamb. In its twelvefold structure it shows itself to have been entirely founded by the Lamb, and it shelters only those who 'are written in the Lamb's book of life' (21.14; 21.27). And even when John speaks of the vision of God's face and of God as the light of his worshippers, once again God is mentioned together with the Lamb, who sits together with him on the throne (22.1, 3ff.). The glory of God is nowhere, not for a single instant, separated from the Lamb, nor is the light of the Trinity divorced from the light of Christ, the Incarnate Son, in whom alone the cosmos is recapitulated and elevated to the rank of the bridal City. Thus, the definitive structure is none other than the one which is already now a reality, in spite of the transition from the *spes* to the *res*. This structure will necessarily be misunderstood if on earth the man Jesus is taken to be only a means to an end (*instrumentum*); but if this structure is already here the very centre of the entire form of God's self-expression, then it will remain such even in eternity.

At the end of the *City of God*, Augustine attained a wonderful balance between the vision of God in the heart and the vision of his glory in the transfigured cosmos with the transfigured bodily senses. If things were such, says Augustine, that a suprasensual reality could be perceived only by spiritual vision, and that a corporeal reality could be perceived only by the bodily senses, then the Platonists would be right: 'The spirit could grasp neither the supra-sensual through the body nor the corporeal through itself. It

would then be established that God could not possibly be seen even with the eyes of a spiritual body. And yet, such petty rationalism is mocked by true reason and the authoritative words of the Prophets', which say that all flesh shall see the glory of God. 'If it is evident that the spirit can see corporeal realities, should the power of the spiritual body then not extend to the point where it can perceive spiritual realities corporeally?' Each of us has an interior experience of our corporeal life; but we perceive a corporeal life external to us through the mediation of our bodily senses, for we see whether or not a body is alive. 'Thus, it may indeed be and it is quite credible that some day, in the new heaven and the new earth, we will see the corporeal reality of the world in a new manner: I mean in such a way that, wherever we turn our eyes, we will see with dazzling clarity—by means of the bodies which we bear and which we see—the omnipresent God who also rules over all corporeal reality. And this will not merely be in the manner in which we now see and know God's invisible being in the works of creation, in a mirror only, enigmatically and fragmentarily. . . . Rather, it will occur in the same manner as we now perceive the living human beings among whom we live and who occasion movements proper to life: as soon as we catch sight of them we not only surmise that they are alive, but we see that they live (although we cannot see their life without their bodies, while beyond all doubt we do behold their life by the mediation of their bodies). In just this way will we, by means of our own body, behold the incorporeal God who rules over all, wherever the spiritual rays of our bodily eyes fall' (*Civ. Dei* XXII, 29). This is a commentary on the text of the Apocalypse which, in order to be perfect, lacks only the christological aspect, which is what must supply the permanent foundation for this entire doctrine concerning the manner in which the divine δόξα has its expression in the total cosmos.

From this eschatological digression we now return to our central concern. No matter how much dynamic movement the form of revelation may be thought to contain, this form is more than a Platonic economy of symbolic signs which point beyond themselves to a spiritual reality—even if the dynamism of this expressive form leads us down into the depths of the Passion, the Death and Hades itself, and then up to the heights of an Ascension which withdraws the sensory image from our senses for our greater good. For this reason, the form of revelation is unconditionally more than what Protestant dialectics of whatever kind admits—whether, with Luther, we speak of the 'disguise' of the Word, or, with Kierkegaard, we

understand his 'incognito' as a *latere sub contrario* (and, therefore, as the crucifixion of the human senses), or as an alienation from self in the Hegelian sense. The modality which God's expressive image attains because of the sin of the world (its character of scandal and judgment) does not abolish its revelatory and, therefore, expressive character; indeed, to the very end, it presupposes it. To the very shattering of the image of eternal life on the Cross, through and beyond all paradox, it remains *revelation*, indeed a revelation which is intensified to the utmost; it remains the supreme self-expression of this eternal life.

In this final intensification not only are we shown that God is love; at the same time it becomes manifest that, in the revelation of his love in flesh and blood, and in the sacrifice of these for the life of the world, God has committed himself unsurpassably and beyond all return. Whoever has been able to read the image of the Son who bled to death on the Cross will not then be really 'surprised' by the prolongation of this commitment in the Eucharist. The Eucharist will be regarded by such a person only as a dimension emerging from that first commitment. Nor, in this context, can the resurrection of the flesh and the eternal marriage-feast of the Lamb and his Bride give cause for wonder: all of it is already included in the self-commitment of God, who with divine freedom, but also with divine consistency, has fashioned for himself in his creation a body through which to reveal his glory.

2. AS REVELATION IN HIDDENNESS

The form of revelation corresponding to and conditioning the Biblical unity between knowledge (vision) and faith (nonvision) must, as form, from the outset span a threefold tension: (1) the inner-worldly tension between the manifestness of the body and the hiddenness of the spirit; (2) the tension, rooted in creation, between the cosmos (as image and expression of a free God who in no way is compelled to create) and God himself; and (3) the tension, rooted in the order of grace and redemption, between the sinner who has turned away from God and the God who reveals himself as redeemer in the concealment of the Cross.

These three orders cannot be reduced to one another or deduced from one another. Hence we should listen seriously to warnings against deriving the

aesthetic character of the other two orders from the first order, which is the basis for what we are familiarly accustomed to term 'the aesthetic dimension'. Nevertheless, important analogies do exist which exhibit the internal relations which obtain between the three orders. The first order cannot be fully understood without the second, and the second in turn has its concrete existence only in union with the third. Finally, the third order makes plain that the other two exist only for its sake and that it constitutes their ultimate foundation and rationality.

a. In the Revelation of Being

The order of body and spirit in the world, or, more broadly, the order of external appearance in the material sphere and of an inwardness that appears (whether it be man's free rational spirit, or the animal soul, or the life-principle of plants, or an indefinable element of spontaneity in matter), establishes the mystery of beauty in an irresolvable paradox. For, what is manifested in a given manifestation is always, at the same time, the non-manifest. The soul expresses and represents itself in the living organism, and yet, precisely in so doing, it has its being 'behind' the manifestation and, through this manifestation, it builds for itself a cell, a husk, a containing cavity.² To beauty belong not only the 'measure, number and weight' of the organised material, but also the 'energy' of the organising agent, which expresses itself in form without losing itself to the external, and the 'glory' proper to being free and, still more deeply, proper to the ability to squander oneself in love. Along with the seen surface of the manifestation there is perceived the nonmanifested depth: it is only this which lends the phenomenon of the beautiful its enrapturing and overwhelming character, just as it is only this that insures the truth and goodness of the existent. This holds both for the beauty of nature and the beauty of art, and for the latter even in those abstract constructions which reduce the dimension of depth to a minimum by attempting to express everything at the horizontal level of surface, colour, and rhythm. For even such constellations as these may be seen in a thousand different ways by the eye, that by virtue of its own power is able to perceive the relationships of form in one of many different ways. This shows that even here there come into play phenomena of interior subjective expression, for instance, phenomena of intentionality (what the

artist ‘wanted to say’) and of simple subjective disposition. One can seek in various ways to come to know the intention and disposition of someone who expresses himself on a surface: through objective information concerning what he meant to say, through subjective empathy, which proceeds from the data of the work itself, or finally through a loving comprehension of the artist’s whole person. With works of art we can debate whether an investigation that goes beyond the data of the work, to busy itself with the person of the artist, his biography and psychology, contributes to the aesthetic understanding of the work or, on the contrary, detracts from it, seducing us from the contemplation of art into a consideration of other areas—for instance, sociology and cultural theory. This not least because we cannot assume that the work of art is intended in its author’s mind, simply, to be an expression of himself. Quite the contrary, it is more often the expression of a world-view which the artist proposes as objective and valid for others as well. It is this world-view, and not himself, that he wants to fashion and make worthy of belief. For this reason, the artist will conceal himself in his work as much as he will reveal himself. To be sure, in so far as he gives shape to *his* worldview, the artist reveals something of himself; but in so far as, at a deeper level, he desires to manifest the world as he has understood it, he becomes unimportant to himself and treats himself as a mere medium which as such does not strive to reach any prominence. Looking ahead to the next step, one could object that in God’s case it is different because, when God creates, he can represent only himself since he is identical with each of his possible ‘world-views’ (or possible worlds). This is true, and to that extent every possible world will be according to God’s image and likeness and point to its author. On the other hand, however, in God the distances between work and creator are infinite; no natural bridge mediates between them, no ready-made system of expressions of an organic-spiritual kind provides a grammar, as it were, in terms of which an individual work could be spelled out and understood. Nor can the general ‘concept’ of Being (*analogia entis*) be regarded as such a grammar. It is the art of this artist, rather, that in the worldly form which he has invented as his image and likeness, he has on his own initiative also placed and conferred that expressive and revelatory power which allows us to look from this particular surface and understand this particular and unique depth. In other words, the Deistic concept of creation must be overcome, according to which God produces a finished work in the manner of an artist in this world—say, of a Rembrandt or a Bach—and the

work then has within it everything necessary for it to point to its author and be interpreted. Artistic beauty here provides only a one-sided analogy, in so far as God is certainly free to create and remains free both while creating and after having created. But the analogy from natural beauty is needed to complete the picture, because in this case the necessary, internal, and living relationship between the expressive form and the self-expressing life-principle is the presupposition for the understanding of natural beauty. God's accompanying, sustaining, and life-giving activity, his fidelity which is wholly adapted to his creatures and which cannot 'let them fall' from his hand, his love for what he has created, which is amply attested to in the creation itself and in the revelation of the Word (*nihil odisti eorum quae fecisti*), his commitment to the extreme point possible to God: all this permits the creature to entrust itself, to the point of self-sacrifice, to the depths of the form of the world.

What this first step was intended to illustrate was the concealment to be found in every worldly revelation. In order to read even a form within the world, we must see something invisible as well, and we do in fact see it. In a flower, a certain interior reality opens its eye and reveals something beyond and more profound than a form which delights us by its proportion and colour. In the rhythm of the form of plants—from seed to full growth, from bud to fruit—there is manifested an essence, and to reduce the laws of this essence to mere utilitarian principles would be blasphemous. And in the totality of beings, as they ascend and maintain their equilibrium, there is revealed a mystery of Being which it would be even more blasphemous and blind to interpret by reducing it to a neutral 'existence'.³ As especially the Romantics and many German Idealists deeply knew, we are initiated into these mysteries because we ourselves are spirit in nature and because all the expressive laws of the macrocosm are at work in ourselves. But, contrariwise, the spirit with its clarity of vision is not initiated into all the depths of the womb-like night of the world-soul and of the *natura naturans*. In order to 'understand' the forms of nature, the spirit must give up its own light and entrust itself to the loving intimations (*Ahndungen*) which only lead us with certainty when the intellect for a time renounces its argumentativeness. *Anima* begins to sing when she feels alone and thinks that *Animus*, her noisy husband, has left the house. But poets and lovers know how to overhear *Anima* and to induce her to sing. By a strangely contradictory cunning they are able to be both things at once: the persona which has again become

involuntary and spontaneous, which is permeable to and receptive of the deep meaning of things, and the calculating persona that, by means of its art of verse, sound, and colour, lays for the fearful deer a trap in which it is caught, panting and unharmed. Thus, the artist is at once wise and ignorant: he knows profounder depths because before them he assumes an attitude of docile ignorance, and yet, technically, he commands the surface of artistic expression because he knows how to transform it into an expression of the sacred unknown. The same occurs with lovers if they do not linger in the antechamber of enamoured infatuation: that is, if they see their beloved in a wholly different way from others because the beloved's profound interior self is manifested to them in all its utterances and appears as that which is really precious and worthy of love. Every gift, every word speaks of this, and every reply they give contains their whole self. Exterior exchanges are only bridges by which the souls pass over into one another. In their act of begetting they receive from nature the deepest confirmation of their bold venture: by giving themselves to one another they are giving far more than they know or are able, but not more than they actually want to express, that is to say, themselves, indeed the fertile possibilities of themselves, which reach out beyond their own selves to a new life. In this way, here too the standard of individual nature has been surpassed. The lover does not give himself in order to fulfil himself or in order to become conscious of his own depths; he trusts in a nature which, to be sure, is in him but which nonetheless transcends him. The gesture which he makes is his own deepest gesture, but at the same time it is more than his gesture, because, through his individuality and even through his spiritual personality, the nature in him speaks and expresses itself. This law is at work not only in 'first love' or in the sexual act; it leaves its impress on the family and everything belonging to it; in short, it characterises all human life, which is a 'play' of 'representations' that are precisely most lively when, in the game of life, man assumes the most serious ethical responsibilities. Granted that it is *he* who is everywhere the focus of meaning; and yet it is not he, but a law of life and of the world which he represents, whose expression he is without his being able to equate himself with it, a law in whose affirmation he takes shelter, knowing that he will be acting best of all when he allows this great law to operate unobstructed through him. This could be the law of 'nature', which surpasses and contains all forms of social and individual human activity. Or, in a more comprehensive sense, it could be the law of reality, of the Being of the world

as such, which reveals itself in everything ordered by the law of nature all the more enigmatically because of the fundamental puzzle about why it exists at all.

The important thing in all this is that, at the level of total humanity, we can speak of a knowledge worthy of man only where we do not preliminarily bracket out ‘the substratum of unknowing’ (as the so-called ‘exact sciences’ attempt to do), but, rather, very expressly include this dimension of mystery. For it is only in this way that the figure which lies at the heart of the matter becomes legible as a figure of reality. This is a fact which in Hegel is attested to in a hundred different ways and variations, his final dissolution of it into a divine omniscience notwithstanding. Science and progressive research into mystery can very well be justified even when one recognises the fundamental nature of the mystery-zone of Being, and, the higher the degree of Being, the more this knowledge becomes deepened and concretised, precisely as the domain of mystery becomes the more flooded with light. It is only when such progress rests on the presupposition that the mystery of Being may be fundamentally dissolved by progressive stages (something which at best becomes plausible in terms of the materialistic hypothesis) that the blindness sets in which is no longer capable of seeing the objective phenomenon.

Even in the case of the tension in inner-worldly knowledge we can speak in terms of ‘knowledge’ and ‘faith’. This has the advantage of showing that faith in God (at the second step) and Christian faith (at the third) in no way present a radically new phenomenon. The faith of the second and third steps, in its tension with religious and Christian knowledge, only fulfils on a higher level the structure of all human knowing. The Church Fathers always stressed this point when they said, here following the wisdom of the Greeks, that all knowledge had to begin with a natural faith and, indeed, that in life’s most elementary things a certain trusting ‘faith’ in nature, its laws, and providence, remains the basis for all human conduct.⁴ On the other hand, as against the rationalism of the Arians, the Cappadocians in particular emphasised the fact that it is not only God who is unknowable in his being; every being, they argued, even the smallest creature, may be grasped only through its utterances.⁵ It is to have recourse to a violent solution—which in addition closes our eyes to the deeper reality—if, in the manner of Kant and his followers, we construct a concept of knowledge and science by first bracketing out the unknowable: our concept will then be necessarily finite and necessarily rationalistic. If our ruling idea is limited to what the cognitive

subject is able to construe, then we wholly lose the phenomenon of objective self-manifestation, the self-revelation of the object from the heart of its own depths, and everything runs aground in shallow functionalism. A true science of living nature as, for instance, Goethe strived for in his morphology, or even a science of man's cultural utterances, cannot be developed along such lines. Yet precisely these sciences are needed if theology, as the science of 'faith', is not to persist in its abstraction and isolation from the 'exact' sciences. In the same way, it follows from what we have said, that a 'supernatural' piety, oriented to God's historical revelation, cannot be such unless it is mediated by a 'natural' piety, which at this level presupposes and includes a 'piety of nature' and a 'piety of Being'.

b. In the Revelation of the Word

We will now, largely for reasons of order, mention the second step; this is not the place to discuss it thematically. The creation is the expression of God in a mode which is unique because God and creation are unique, and this mode constitutes the fundamental theme of all philosophy. For the multiplicity of beings in space and time points in every respect to the unity which is presupposed in and over them—in so far as each of these is one and yet all of them form natural kinds in groups of beings of ever greater universality. Nothing is more incomprehensible than this dissection of the one into individual and generic unity: it is precisely in this not-being-one of both that true unity reveals and conceals itself. Above all, it is the not-being-one which separates beings and human existence that, as the most extreme enigma of Being itself, points beyond itself to identity. This sounds abstract, but it can and must also be demonstrated to be the fundamental existential experience of everything that lives. What is being pointed to as identity is such as to forbid every attempt to deduce the dyad from the monad, for we will never ever come to understand how a monad that really deserves this name needed, for the sake of its own unity, to go out of itself into duality. In other words, by its very being creation shows that it is not necessary. Creaturely beings, thrown into existence, reveal themselves in obedience to a natural necessity; but God creates freely. Thus all contingency does indeed reveal him unmistakably as the free Creator, but also conceals him to a deeper degree precisely on account of the fact that we can nowhere make any firm

deduction. Natural theology can only take the form of allowing all creaturely Being to become an indicative utterance about God (since everything derives from him and may thus bear his image and trace). But this positive, cataphatic theology must finally lead to a comprehensive negative (apophatic) theology. This may, in this way, be required *a priori*, and *a posteriori* it may be demonstrated on the basis of the speculative world-views of all peoples. Finally, the same thing can be shown on the basis of what, simplifying, could be called the ‘natural theology’ of the Bible: here we refer especially to the contemplation of the world in Wisdom literature, which emphasises in the strongest way the revelatory character of the created world but, by the same token, also the vanity of the world, that is to say, the non-existence of a sustaining bridge leading from the meaning of the world to the meaning of God. The wisdom, which at certain moments shines forth so brilliantly, in the last analysis (Job 28, Bar 3.29ff.) remains hidden from man. The world’s sense and counter-sense remain inconclusively opposed (Qoh 3), and the wisdom of the world remains resignation. The step beyond it arrives at the prayer for the grace of a wisdom proper to God alone, but this step no longer belongs to natural religion. Taken in itself and abstractly, natural religion abides by the ‘cipher-code’ of the world’s Being, which is the only word it receives from God. ‘Taken abstractly’ because as we have already seen, the creation’s passive character as reflection is necessarily linked to an active splendour (ἀπαύγασμα) on the part of God, a will to reveal himself which is, therefore, already a factual manifestness. We will never be able to determine exactly the extent to which this splendour, given with creation itself, coincides objectively with what Christian theology calls ‘supernatural revelation’, which, at least for Adam, was not yet a specifically distinct revelation given in the form of words. A distinction is possible only from the standpoint of intention, and in this sense the first word was directed to man as a creature that had come forth from God, and the second word addresses him personally as a child of God’s grace and calls him home to the heart of God. We know nothing of a humanexistence placed nakedly before the ‘cipher-codes’ of existence and which is thus fundamentally incapable of perceiving anything of the call of God’s Word.

Nonetheless, we should not pass over the creaturely phase too quickly in our haste to reach the phase of the revelation of grace and the Word, which is higher and, therefore, alone supposed to be important. It is as creature that man first comes to know the ever-greater and, thus, ever-more-hidden God as

his Lord. This unique relationship of revelation and concealment is inscribed in his very Being. For man, this is not a positive law from whose opacity he could appeal to the order of Being itself. If he rebels against it he will attack only himself. To be sure, the revelation of the Word is much more than just the awakening of an order of Being which had been forgotten due to sin. But it is always this in part, and therefore it always points to a zone of necessity behind which the creature cannot reach. Consequently, in the particular non-Evidence of Christian faith there always emerges something which, with the necessary qualifications, may be called the evidence of the Creator who reveals himself in concealment as the beginning and end of all the world's paths (Dz 1785).

Whether or not God is evident to the created spirit is a disputed question of scholastic theology which was answered in the negative so as to exclude an intuition of divine Being. But this negative decision was given with the qualification that every human intellect, in every act of cognition, implicitly knows God and, therefore, also strives for God implicitly with a natural love (Thomas, *De Ver.* 22, 2c and ad 1). This quality of 'being enfolded' in man's mental acts is nothing other than God's manner of being manifest in the creature: revealed in ever-greater concealment. Once the spiritual creature realises the content of the concept 'God', it immediately becomes evident that God can be evident to him in his knowing and loving only in such a way that, as the free cause of all that is, God must withdraw more and more from a comprehension within the finite object and the finite structure of spirit. *Si comprehendis non est Deus*. The mystery of Being, which is manifest, invites the creaturely spirit to move away from and beyond itself and entrust and surrender itself to that mystery. If this were not so, then the intuition of Being (in the first theoretical and practical principles) would be nothing other than the apprehension of finite, creaturely Being without its relation to the absolute, which in every respect would be absurd and self-contradictory. This means that the evidence itself points to and indicates the nature of *the analogia entis* within itself. But this does not imply that the finite spirit can wholly comprehend the analogy of Being, or that the spirit can measure in itself the relationship between finite and infinite Being. On the contrary, what is implied is that the finite spirit finds itself directed by the analogy of Being beyond itself (since, as spirit, it is, after all, finite Being) towards what can be 'given' to its evidence only in the mode of non-evidence. Thus, the finite spirit experiences itself as encompassed by and destined for another; it

experiences its 'absolute dependency' (in Augustine's and Schleiermacher's sense) without being able to grasp what it is that it depends on; it experiences that all its petty thought is the content of an infinite thought which towers over it just as infinitely (*cogitor ergo sum*: 'I am thought, therefore I am'); it experiences, finally, that its entire personality cannot take one step into freedom or slavery without being an image of a free archetype which cannot be grasped because it is absolute and infinite.

Many objections could be raised against the expression 'natural faith', and it has, in fact, been abused in many different senses, especially by a pseudo-Christian traditionalism and agnosticism of both Catholic and Protestant vintage. But it can have a quite proper sense when it is regarded as an interior dimension of man's natural 'knowledge of God'. This knowledge does not begin where the evidence and the intuition of Being (into the *prima principia*) end; rather, it makes visible the creaturely rationality which takes us beyond ourselves and is proper to this evidence. This relationality does not imply that here the light is simply extinguished as the night of transcendence begins, which might then equally be seen as nothingness. Nor does it, on the other hand, imply as it were a 'more subtle' cognitive and conative transcendental faculty, which could in the last analysis be conceived and described as a form of *potentia naturalis*. Beyond these two related dangers, what it implies, rather, is that natural finite reason is directed to an infinite freedom by which created reason knows itself to be posited and before which it must persevere in an attitude of primary obedience that is beyond all demands, longings, and enterprises. This is the manner in which God's Word really touches the creature at the most intimate point of its self-transcending Being. But it does not do so as a word that responds to questions that are raised, because in this case it would be a word that is already structured and arranged in anticipation of the question. It is a word addressed to the primary 'indifference' of the *Ecce Ancilla*.

c. In the Revelation of Man

What, with respect to the form of revelation, is the original meaning of the revelation of grace, specifically as contrasted to the revelation of creation? The revelation of grace is not the establishment of a new form within the created world; it is but a new manner of God's presence in the form of the

world, a new intimacy in our union with him, an intimacy to which the child of God has access and in which he participates. God's 'voice', addressing Adam in paradise, is not one sensory phenomenon among others but rather God's presence through grace in the voices of nature and of the heart.⁶ The very Being of the world opens up its depths and shines forth with all the splendour of its origin: the countenance of the archetype becomes transparent in the medium which images it. From Adam's *fides naturalis* the way leads, without break or stumble, to his *fides super-naturalis*: this is certainly a *fides ex auditu*, but which comes, however, not from a word that is spoken to him externally, but rather *per inspirationem internam*, in which God does not show himself unveiled in his essence, but in a 'sign of his essence, a spiritual radiance of his wisdom' by which he intimately instructs the first man beyond all his natural knowledge of God (Thomas, *De Ver.* 18, 3). Here aesthetic and religious inspiration stand in unbroken continuity, because the natural inspiration coming from the Being of the world is the locus and the vessel of God's inspiration by grace. From this we must conclude that it is man's fall through sin and his alienation from the immediate interior voice of things and of God in them that are to blame for the disjunction between both inspirations and for the fact that, because of man's deafness, the *locutio interna* had to become a *locutio externa*—that is, a word from God which is spoken to man from outside, which in the Old Testament is the word of the law and of prophecy and, in the New Testament, the Incarnate and ecclesial Word. Accordingly, the 'exteriorisation' of the revelation of grace in an historical revelation of Word and Flesh retains something of the penitential character proper to a return to God, and this penitential character is evident to mankind at large when it sees itself constrained to submit its authentic or alleged interior inspirations to the authority of an external inspiration.

This is true notwithstanding the fact that man cannot subvert the plans of God and that God can use the havoc wrought by man to produce works that are all the more astounding and victorious. Thus, 'positive' revelation, beginning with the original promise at the expulsion from paradise, and passing through Noah, Abraham, Moses all the way to Christ and his Church, is not a substitute for revelation or an emergency measure on God's part, but rather it is, unconditionally, the interior and organic fulfilment of God's original plan, even if its ultimate form in this world is the Cross and the glorifying light of the Holy Spirit that falls on the Cross.

Nevertheless, the *locutio interna* and *externa* of salvation-history may not

simply be juxtaposed without any mediation. In the passage to which we have referred, Thomas expressly points to the fact that the original revelation of the word (to the Prophets and the Apostles) is interior, and that it is then proclaimed by them in an external, human way. What Abraham heard and followed as God's voice was a call from the depths of the heart, and the experience of God enjoyed by the Patriarchs as well as by Moses and even by the Prophets was of the same kind. This is shown clearly by the manner in which Israel's form of religion in its priestly, legal, prophetic, and state institutions and events grew out of the culture of the times—even with regards to prophecy. It is only contemplation which, in retrospect, unambiguously projects the supernatural revelation which manifests itself *within* the natural form into a particular form of revelation which has its place alongside the natural form. The possibility of isolated nature miracles in the Old Testament notwithstanding, this is fully justified considering the fact that a particular supernatural will of God is attested to throughout all the positive institutional and prophetic injunctions. The injunctions issued by Moses or some other leader of the people can with full reason be proclaimed as coming from God. This way of presenting it, however, gives salvation-history a certain miraculous character, both as a whole and especially in its external aspects, something which has not always proven advantageous to the faith of Israel and of Christians. The essential miracle that is God's interior guidance was often projected into the images of external miracles which were portrayed as more and more marvellous (for instance, the exodus from Egypt and the wanderings in the desert). Such manner of portrayal could make the pious believer of later centuries come to feel the lack, in his own real present, of similar miraculous testimonies on the part of Yahweh, could finally evoke in him a feeling of being forsaken by God. And it was only through great struggles and conflicts of conscience that the poetization and external heroicization of the earlier periods of Israel's founding could be overcome by the strenuous interiorization practised by Israel's pious believers and the *anawim Yahweh*; only thus was the authentic faith of Abraham, Moses, and Elijah recovered and made to prevail. In short, even in the Old Testament period revelation is much more 'incarnate' than the average believer of the Old and the New Testaments would be willing to grant: 'the Word of God is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it' (Deut 30. 14; Rom 10.8). What the Jews learned in a late stage of their religious history, this the Christians of today also learn for themselves under

the pressure of critical Bible studies. In spite of its tendency to glorify Israel's heroic period, late Jewish Wisdom literature carried through this turning to the interior reality of God's dealings with great thoroughness: God's Word is a wisdom that is bestowed on the person who prays with humility. This is a wisdom, moreover, which is objectively at work in the cosmos no less than in history and which does not limit itself in deistic fashion to the wise ordering of the created world. Rather, it is the presence of the creating and graciously providential God in all worldly form. What is classified in a literary sense as the 'personification' of God's Word, Wisdom, and Spirit in the world is, in a theological sense, faith's living awareness that God personally indwells the world and, in particular, the chosen people—the conviction that, by God's turning to redeem Israel and, through Israel, the world, the more general reality, grounded in creation, of God's concealed self-revelation in the form of the world receives an unprecedented compression and intensification.

The presence of the living and gracious God fulfils the form of the creaturely reality of man. The tension between 'institution' and 'event' is first of all a universally human and universally historical tension, and for this reason it permeates even the Old and New Testaments. But the living God is present in such a way that what is human must adapt itself to his essential living holiness and must orient and model itself on it. Hence the emphasis in the first place on judgement, since it not only manifests God's sublime transcendence and omnipotence over all that is worldly but, to precisely the same extent, makes known his immanence within the human, which God fills by establishing it and orienting it towards himself. The Prophets' word of judgment is predominantly a socio-ethical and socio-political word. The manner of man's life is purified and rectified by the fire of God's indwelling Word. We can already begin to see here the basic form of the New Testament: man's right relationship to God has its measure in his right relationship to the world, to his neighbour. The *doxa* of the gracious God who descends on the sanctuary of creation is, in essence, the man who has been conformed to God. *Gloria Dei vivens homo*: all Irenaeus' theology would have to be developed from this starting-point.⁷

Thus, the faith of Israel is indeed a wholly personal fidelity to the faithful and present God; but, precisely as such, it is a faith that experiences its own truth in the truth of the believing man. The faith which is confirmed in God is also confirmed humanly, in the world, and this unity of both confirmations characterises the man who is 'just' in the Old Testament sense. Initially,

therefore, it is not paradoxical, but wholly normal, for the just man to want to see an earthly 'reward' for his fidelity to faith. He cannot renounce this 'reward', for the sake of the very form of his faith, because the revelation that comes to him is not that of a worldless God, but rather that of the Creator of heaven and earth, by whose gracious judgment (*Gericht*) all things attain to their interior rightness (*Richtigkeit*). Supernatural as it is, the faith of Israel implies the whole sphere of natural and created law (*Recht*).⁸ The faith of Israel, therefore, is not a 'dogmatic' faith which 'holds true' certain mysteries that by nature cannot be seen. Rather, it is a faith which always sees, perceives, and verifies within the obedience of faith, even and especially when, because of its disobedience, Israel must suffer the punishment with which it had been clearly threatened. Here it finds the classical example of the rightness of its faith, not only for itself but, according to its self-understanding, for all peoples.

Nevertheless, this verification occurs and yet does not occur. The wise man experiences God's assistance, but Job, the just man, cries out to a God who treats him unjustly. Faith believes in the visibility of Providence; but does it also see it? It believes that *in the end* the evil man will be punished and the good man rewarded. But when will this 'in the end' be realised? And, in faith's interiorization, what is the meaning of 'the good man', 'the just man'? Are not all sinners? Does not the hope of Israel thus go beyond the form of its own faith? Does it not hope for a day of the Lord that will make everything credible by bringing it into the light and judging it? Israel thus hopes in an eschatological verification of its own fidelity which does not, after all, see: *videbit omnis caro salutare Dei* (Is 40.5, Lk 4.6). The whole ascending period of God's revelation in Israel is also the time of an ever greater concealment of God, in spite of the ever greater evidence pointing to a revelation which is truly unique and different from all other religions. Perhaps it is more in the meditation that reflects on history—but here quite really—that the 'childhood of Israel' emerges as a luminous, unambiguous time. Already the period of the Judges is more confused, and the period of the Kings is deeply problematic both externally and in essence. Israel is never surer of its God than when it appears to have been forsaken by him in exile. The return which appears to fulfil the promises is everything but fulfilment, and, while interiorly the Holy Spirit is bringing the canon of the Scriptures to maturity, externally the kingdom is disintegrating even before Christ's coming, so that Yahweh's faithful ones can understand themselves only as

the ‘remnant’ which survives what spiritually has already fallen into decay. While he is quite comprehensible in his revelation and even demands the understanding of faith, the God of Israel proves himself in history to be ever more incomprehensible and, as such, he exhibits himself ever more truly as who he is. And only the most living kind of faith, sustained by revelation, is capable of knowing him in precisely this form of revelation as the true and living God.

In Jesus Christ, God’s revelation in concealment reaches perfection, and this not only in the events of the Passion but in the Incarnation itself—already in the very fact that the Word becomes flesh. This is an inconceivable paradox on which all the paradoxes of creation and of salvation-history converge. For, to be sure, what is fulfilled superabundantly in the Incarnation is what creation had begun: God’s expressing and representing himself, the infinite and free Spirit’s creating for himself an expressive body in which he can, first of all, manifest himself but, even better, in which he can conceal himself as ‘the one who is ineffably exalted above everything which is outside him and which can be conceived’ (Dz 1782). And there is likewise fulfilled in a superabundant manner what God himself had introduced into Israel: the fact that, in his own Word, spoken into history and into the heart of the people, he explains himself to them ever more deeply and abandons himself to them ever more defencelessly, and that precisely in this manner he reveals himself more and more as he who remains inconceivably concealed. All particular considerations aside, the Incarnation of the Word means the most extreme manifestness within the deepest concealment. It is manifestness because here God is explained to man by no means other than himself—not primarily through words and instruction, but by his own being and life. What is most familiar to man is suddenly turned for him into a word and a teaching about God: how could he *not* understand! But it is concealment because the translation of God’s absolutely unique, absolute, and infinite Being into the ever more dissimilar, almost arbitrary and hopelessly relativised reality of one individual man in the crowd from the outset appears to be an undertaking condemned to failure. For, if ‘man’ is truly to become the language of God,⁹ this cannot occur by straining man’s nature toward the super-human, or by his wishing to stand out by becoming greater, more splendid, more renowned and stupendous than all others. He will have to be a man like everyone because he will be man for everyone, and he will exhibit his uniqueness precisely through his ordinariness: ‘He will not wrangle or cry aloud, nor will

anyone hear his voice in the busy streets' (Is 42.2 = Mt 12.19). The insignificant must be the appearance of what is most significant. We could understand it better if the hiddenness of this 'flesh' were supposed to represent the silence of the Word, God's pure concealment. But no: precisely this hiddenness is to be the speech in which God desires to make himself known definitively and insurpassably, beyond misunderstanding or confusion with any other human word. Already here, in anticipation, we can sense something of the trinitarian character of this revelation: if things are really to be this way, then there must be Three in God who reveal themselves. The Son reveals God in the form of a servant, but the Holy Spirit, being the glory of God, illumines the servant's form and lets its glory be seen. But this is not enough. If in the simple human word the Son had not said more than a man can say, if in his witness to the Father he had not also had the support of the Father's witness to him (as the Father's Word), then the Son's transfiguration by the Holy Spirit could not have made shine forth anything more than what already was manifest in the Son's humanity. The interior and necessary reciprocal ordering of these aspects of the form of revelation to one another (their theological three-dimensional plasticity, one could almost say) will form part of their evidential force for the eyes of faith. It would therefore not be enough to want to solve the paradoxes of Christ's form at the level of character: he who was at once so humble and so arrogant and self-certain; he who was at once meek and obedient as a lamb and angrily zealous for God's cause, so abrupt that he would walk away from his opponents; he who was so unassuming and yet so all-embracing in his demands. . . . These tensions may indeed reveal dimensions of his humanity; but they can be understood and resolved only as functions of the trinitarian dimensions. Although only the Son of God is man, his humanity necessarily becomes the expression of the total triune essence of God; only thus can he be the manifestness of absolute Being.

Here we once again encounter the difficulty of the revelation in the Word. This revelation, as we saw, does not have its place *alongside* the revelation in the creation, as if it competed with it, but *within* it. In the same way, the revelation in the Incarnation has its place within the revelation of God's Being in man, who, as God's image and likeness, conceals God even as he reveals him. In this instance this means that, in Christ, man is disclosed along with God. This is so because God does not use human nature like an external instrument in order to articulate, from the outside and from above, the

Wholly Other which God is; rather, God takes on man's nature as his own and expresses himself from within it through the expressive structures of that nature's essence. Thus the interiority in this expressive relationship derives from the fact that it is the Creator who is at work, and that he does not misuse his own creation for a purpose alien to it, but rather, by his becoming man, he could only honour it and crown it and bring it to its own most intimate perfection. In abstract language we could say that it is Being itself (and not an existent among others) which, in this existent that is man, has found for itself a definitive expression. Here we must be mindful of the fact that God, as absolute Being as opposed to all finite existents, is indeed the 'Wholly Other'; but, precisely for this reason, he is also the 'Not-Other' (*Non-Aliud*), as Nicholas of Cusa says. God is able, therefore, to reveal in Christ at once God and man, and this not in alternation, as is often suggested simplistically, but simultaneously. Yet this occurs in such a way that the relativity of the human (as creaturely) does not appear to be oppressed and violated by the simultaneous absoluteness of the divine.

Nonetheless, if it is to be grasped objectively for what it shows itself to be, the Christ-form demands of those who encounter it that they accompany Christ through all its dimensions: indeed, the Incarnation took place precisely to make it possible that men should thus accompany and be carried along by him. Because this man is *seen* for what he shows himself to be, he must also (if he is to be understood and not remain a senseless puzzle) be *heard* as the Word of the Father, as God's decisive utterance which recapitulates the whole revelation of the Word by drawing it together in a definitive form (Heb 1.1ff.). When man realises inwardly and humanly what it is that *this* man expresses, he realises that to understand him, he must believe him. And, what is more, he experiences this not as a vague eventuality, but with compelling force.

It is only after one has seen the dialectic of revelation and concealment in the sensory form of the 'Incarnation as such' that one should go on to grapple with the particular modality of this sensory form, which springs from the reality of sin, divine wrath, atonement, and redemption. If the particular mode is taken to be the substance, then everything dissolves into a pure dialectic of contradictions: the form is destroyed and faith becomes the pure opacity of the *credo quia absurdum*. Our task, rather, consists in coming, with John, to see his 'formlessness' (*non est species ei neque decor . . . quasi absconditus vultus ejus*) as a mode of his glory because a mode of his 'love to the end', to

discover in his deformity (*Ungestalt*) the mystery of transcendental form (*Ubergestalt*). His bearing of the world's sin (Jn 1.29), his being made sin for us (2 Cor 5.21) is understandable only as a function of the glory of love, before and after and, therefore, also during his descent into darkness: what we have before us is pure glory, and even though it is really a concealment and really an entering into darkness (embracing even the descent into hell), it is always but a function of its opposite. What is more, for the believer who sees it is the appearance of the opposite: *latens ET APPARENS sub contrario* (quae sub his figuris vere latitas). If the Cross radically puts an end to all worldly aesthetics, then precisely this end marks the decisive emergence of the divine aesthetic, but in saying this we must not forget that even worldly aesthetics cannot exclude the element of the ugly, of the tragically fragmented, of the demonic, but must come to terms with these. Every aesthetic which simply seeks to ignore these nocturnal sides of existence can itself from the outset be ignored as a sort of aestheticism. It is not only the limitation and precariousness of all beautiful form which intimately belongs to the phenomenon of beauty, but also fragmentation itself, because it is only through being fragmented that the beautiful really reveals the meaning of the eschatological promise it contains. The point of these remarks is not to tailor the Cross and the *kenosis* of God to the proportions and laws of a natural aesthetic. Nevertheless, the form which gives expression to the meaning of a radically sinful existence which yet stands under the sign of the hope for redemption is already, as such, mysteriously related, beyond itself, to the form of the Redeemer, and this form, in turn, takes the modalities of fallen existence upon itself so as to transvalue them by redemptive suffering. This became evident when we dealt earlier with subjective sensibility: the earthly senses must die to themselves in order to rise up again as spiritual senses, and thus the ultimate standard is not to be found in the former but in the latter.

This last twist of the problem of concealment in revelation now shows where this whole dialectic was leading. The basic form of 'ever-greater dissimilarity however great the similarity' (*in tanta similitudine major dissimilitudo*, Dz 432) is irrevocable; but it can vary from being a philosophical 'negative theology'—in which God's Being remains infinitely hidden and unfathomable over and beyond all analogous utterances about him—all the way to being a 'negative theology' within the theology of revelation, in which God 'appears' unreservedly and, therefore, even in his ever-greater incomprehensibility really comes into the foreground and into

the form that appears. God's incomprehensibility is now no longer a mere deficiency in knowledge, but the positive manner in which God determines the knowledge of faith: this is the overpowering and overwhelming inconceivability of the fact that God has loved us so much that he surrendered his only Son for us, the fact that the God of plenitude has poured himself out, not only into creation, but emptied himself into the modalities of an existence determined by sin, corrupted by death and alienated from God. This is the concealment that appears in his self-revelation; this is the ungraspability of God, which becomes graspable because it is grasped.

We must note carefully that this characteristic of the God who shows his incomprehensibility in his self-revelation belongs to the objective evidence of the form of revelation, which means that it is above all not conditioned by the darkness of earthly faith. Thus, this characteristic will not be lost to the form of revelation even in the vision of God face to face; on the contrary, it is precisely in the beatific vision that God's ever-greater incomprehensibility will necessarily have to constitute the supreme content of the vision, despite the real grasp of God which will be bestowed. It would be ridiculous—and would run in the face of all religious experience of God—to interpret the *visio facialis* as a *comprehensio* (κατάληψις) in the sense of worldly science or even of philosophy: the axiom *si comprehendis non est Deus* is as true in heaven as on earth, only there it is transformed from the *spes* to the *res*. To see God *sicuti est* means precisely this. This is also the proper place for our vision of God's *kenosis* in salvation-history, which we will come to see in the light of God's δόξα. And it is precisely in this light that the *kenosis* will emerge to view as what it is in reality: not as God's 'self-alienation' (as if the God who is comprehensible in himself were here doing something incomprehensible and thereby himself became incomprehensible—or vice-versa), but as the appearance, conditioned by the world's guilt, of the God who in himself is incomprehensible in his love for the world. Thus there is no contradiction where the *visio facialis* is concerned in saying that in this vision, we will see the God who always remains ungraspable in spite of the fact that he is grasped. In the same way, there is no contradiction if, looking back from the vision of heaven to faith on earth, we say that, in its own way, faith itself is a seeing and an understanding of the mystery of faith, though the mystery is not thereby robbed of its character as mystery.

C. CHRIST THE CENTRE OF THE FORM OF REVELATION

1. PLAUSIBILITY

The expression the ‘centre of the form of revelation’ does not refer to a particular section of this form however central which, in order to be read as form, would then essentially need to be filled out by other more peripheral aspects. What the phrase is intended to denote is, rather, the reality which lends the form its total coherence and comprehensibility, the ‘wherefore’ to which all particular aspects have to be referred if they are to be understood. The fact that Christ is this centre—and not, for instance, merely the beginning, the initiator of an historical form which then develops autonomously—is rooted in the particular character of the Christian religion and in its difference from all other religions. Judaism has no such centre: neither Abraham, nor Moses, nor one of the Prophets, is the figure around which everything else is ordered. Christ, by contrast, is the form because he is the content. This holds absolutely, for he is the only Son of the Father, and whatever he establishes and institutes has its meaning only through him, is dependent only on him and is kept vital only by him. If for a single moment we were to look away from him and attempt to consider and understand the Church as an autonomous form, the Church would not have the slightest plausibility. It would be plausible neither as a religious institution (for its sacraments and the *diakonia* belonging to them are ‘bearable’ only as modes by which the living *Kyrios* is present) nor as an historical power for order and culture in the sense of the *Action Française* and of the German Catholic Nazis. On the contrary, seen in this way it loses all credibility, and for this reason the Church Fathers often compared the Church’s light with the light of the moon, borrowed from the sun and showing its relativity most clearly in its phases. The plausibility of Christianity stands and falls with Christ’s, something which has in essence always been acknowledged. For even the doctrine of the *notae Ecclesiae* has never seriously been intended to be taken in isolation from Christology: the *notae* are the properties which are exacted

by Christ's promises and which can be discovered in history as the fulfilment of Christ and as proofs of his living power.

To support such an edifice, the foundation must be of indestructible solidity. It must not be constructed in such a way that on it only probabilities can be erected: it must offer hard evidence, and not subjective but objective evidence. At this crossroads many will be inclined to part ways with us, and for this reason we must render a precise account of what we mean by 'objective evidence'. It is the kind of evidence that emerges and sheds its light from the phenomenon itself, and not the sort of evidence that is recognised in the process of satisfying the subject's needs. The form that we encounter historically is convincing in itself because the light by which it illumines us radiates from the form itself and proves itself with compelling force to be just such a light that springs from the object itself. Naturally, this does not mean that the form must enlighten just *anyone*, or that this someone must not fulfil and bring along prerequisites which are just as specific as, for instance, those expected (in a wholly different field) from an atomic physicist if he is to understand certain formulas of his science, or from an art historian if he is to recognise the quality of a Teniers and tell it apart from counterfeits. As is clear from these examples, the subjective conditions can be varied and sophisticated; but no one will ever argue that it is a person's formation that actually produces the law of physics or the beauty and value of the work of art. The fact that Christ 'says nothing to me' in no way prejudices the fact that, in and of himself, Christ says everything to everyone. And what is involved here is not, as in individual sciences, the mere technical adaptation to the thought-patterns and conceptual dialect of this particular branch of knowledge. What is at stake, rather, is the correspondence of human existence as a whole to the form of Christ. Not only intellectual but also existential prerequisites must be fulfilled in order that the form that makes its claim on one's total existence may also find a hearing in this total existence. So much must be granted at once to the so-called 'method of immanence' of Blondel and his followers and, today, to the school of Bultmann.

But this is also where we encounter a sharp divide. The subjective condition of the possibility of seeing an object for what it is (a condition which can be very far-reaching) ought never ever to intrude upon the constitution of the object's objective evidence, or simply to condition this evidence and thus be substituted for it. In theology, even the most existential form of Kantianism must distort and thus fail to see the phenomenon. Not

even the scholastic axiom *quidquid recipitur, secundum modum recipientis recipitur* (which in modern terminology would mean that the object requires a categorical or existential prior understanding) can blunt this assertion. For, if Christ is what he claims to be, then he cannot be so dependent on subjective conditions as to be hindered by these from making himself wholly understandable to man nor, contrariwise, can man, without his grace, supply the sufficient conditions of receiving him with full understanding. The prior understanding is fundamentally not something which the subject applies as a contribution to Christian knowledge: it is something which arises necessarily from the simple and objective fact that God becomes man and, to this extent, corresponds to the universal human forms of existence and of thought. But, within these universal forms, God can make known that which he specifically is only on his own initiative.

There will be time later to say and take to heart many things concerning the facilitating manner in which Christ's Gospel—that is, Christ's form—can and should be presented and proclaimed by the Church to each age, including our own. All this has its quite proper importance, especially in keeping us from turning relative forms and patterns of thought from the past of the Church's history into screens that hide the form of Christ. But in respect of our present discussion of the central core of the form of revelation such considerations are wholly unimportant and irrelevant. If the form of Christ itself is what it shows itself to be *of itself*, then no particular age or culture can of itself be privileged in respect of this phenomenon. The decisively illumining factor must lie in the phenomenon itself, and this in two senses. First, in the sense that the figure which Christ forms has in itself an interior rightness and evidential power such as we find—in another, wholly worldly realm—in a work of art or in a mathematical principle. And, second, in the sense that this rightness, which resides within the reality of the thing itself, also possesses the power to illumine the perceiving person by its own radiant light, and this not simply intellectually but in a manner which transforms man's existence. Now, the evidential power (which is, admittedly, of a very special kind) lies in the phenomenon itself and demands a theological act of seeing the form. But it would be insufficient to limit this evidence, as has become customary nowadays, to the power of the grace that transforms existence and produces faith. This is usually the result of opposing a Jesus of history, who is perceived with anything but overwhelming clarity, to a Christ of the community's and the individual's faith. To this we will have to return later.

But here we must say at least the following: such an either / or misses precisely the point which is here at stake and which alone can provide the bridge between the 'historical-critical method' of an obstinate historical scientism (to which apparently only the theologians cling any more and which understandably can never attain to vision since it is already methodologically blind) and the way of faith which, because of the definition of faith it presupposes, is in no better position to attain to real vision. The 'historical-critical' destruction of the form put forward by the Evangelists, for instance, only makes sense as an exercise if one supposes that faith (and the Evangelists are believers along with the whole primitive community) as such can only be subjective and cannot correspond to any objective evidence. And it is indeed fully consistent with this view that the 'historical-critical' researchers are quite incapable of perceiving the objective form which the Gospels propose: this is because, on the basis of the same prejudice, they do not even bother to look but, in advance, posit an objective and unknown *x* as motivation for the proposed form. This much only lest the impression should arise that the 'historical-critical' method is the only 'scientific' method, and lest the description of a form (which, it has been shown, cannot be constructed as a whole out of parts) should be dismissed *a priori* as unscientific popular theology. What unscientific bunglers Burckhardt, Wölfflin and the great portrayers of historical forms must then have been!

The first prerequisite for understanding is to accept what is given just as it offers itself. If certain excisions are practised on the Gospel from the outset, the integrity of the phenomenon is lost and it has already become incomprehensible. The Gospel presents Christ's form in such a way that 'flesh' and 'spirit', Incarnation to the point of suffering and death, and resurrected life are all interrelated down to the smallest details. If the Resurrection is excised, then not only certain things but simply everything about Jesus' earthly life becomes incomprehensible. Or if we understand the Risen Lord as merely the 'Christ of faith', without an interior identity with the Jesus of history, then once again the whole form becomes incomprehensible. The first, earthly form is legible only if we see that it is to be wholly 'used up' in death and resurrection. But death and resurrection (which constitute a strict ideal unity) are comprehensible only if they are understood as the transformation of this earthly form by God's power, and not as the form's spiritualisation and apotheosis. Neither the one nor the other half is the 'Word of God', but both halves together, and both together only to

the extent that the Word is understood from the outset as the bearer of the Spirit, and the Spirit as the spiritualiser and transfigurer of the Word and, thus, as the Spirit both of the Word and of the one who has spoken (sent) the Word. Or if the trinitarian dimension is excluded from the objective form of revelation, then again everything becomes incomprehensible. Not the smallest plausible interconnection is then retained, because each element is plausible only within the wholeness of the image. We must now develop this in more detail.

2. MEASURE AND FORM

One thing is measured by another; but if what is measured and what measures (or vice-versa) is a part or an aspect of a whole, then we can say that the whole is measured by itself. Only if parts or aspects of a whole are measured by each other can they together produce a form. Form consists only of parts or aspects that are distributed and adapted (*pro-portio*) to one another, but in such a way that the parts do not have their ultimate measure from themselves, but from the whole that is, at the same time, both the distributor and the ultimate consumer of its own measuring. And other forms may be held up as a measure to such a form, in order to see whether they are in harmony with one another or not. But the insertion of a form which is complete in itself into a larger context cannot touch, much less destroy, that form in itself, even if it does not harmonise. Measure is not bound to matter and quantity, as the virtue of moderation shows, which doubtless rises above the bodily even if, as ‘temperance’, it is rooted in the body. There is measure also in what is purely psychic and spiritual, and it is not less verifiable than material measure.

If we were to speak of measure and form in the case of Christ, surely this could not be in the sense that he could be measured with an alien standard from without: if he is the ‘Unique One’, then no universal and external measure suffices to measure him; essentially he can be measured only by himself. To apply an alien standard would mean to go against his own utterances about himself. It is a secondary question to ask how his measure relates to the other measures of the world surrounding him, the world into which he entered and of which, as man, he is a part. The question may be asked adequately only if we do not lose sight of the fact that he claims

himself to be the measure for all other worldly and human measures, and that consequently he cannot subject himself definitively (as anything more than a trial) to any overarching human measure.

If he measures himself by himself (and there can be no question of anything else), then he causes one aspect of himself to be measured by another in order to demonstrate their harmony or 'being-in-tune' with one another. 'To tune' (*stimmen*, as a transitive verb) comes from the vocabulary of music, and it means to give to a string the correct pitch of sound (which, once again, is a matter of reciprocity). 'To be in tune' (*stimmen*, as an intransitive verb), on the other hand, is the result of having been tuned. 'Disposition' (*Stimmung*), or 'pitch' of mood, shows that the concept can also be applied to the psychic sphere. A person, too, can or cannot be 'in tune' or possess the correct 'pitch' of disposition for a certain event. When the concept is used Christologically it refers primarily to the concordance (*Übereinstimmung*) between Christ's mission and his existence. To his mission belongs his teaching, but, as well as this, his life's task as a whole, which makes him undergo his suffering in conformity with his utterances. In his own view, there is between his mission and his existence a perfect concordance: these two things 'are in tune' with one another, and no one can accuse him of any disharmony (*Unstimmigkeit*, Jn 8.46). The fact that no one can do this proves that, in his view, others besides himself can also perceive and judge the concordance of which we speak—at least up to a certain point. They have enough vision at least to allow them the negative ability to ascertain the absence of every disharmony.

Now, with Christ this concordance between his task and his existence may be traced back to the fact that he does not do his own will but that of the Father, that he has not therefore given himself his task but rather accepted it in obedience. Thus what we have is not just a particularly impressive instance of harmony between 'idea' and 'existence', between 'ideality' and 'reality'; rather, what occurs is that the living God claims for his service Christ's whole human existence, along with both its ideality and its reality. The mandated task is divine, its execution human, and the proportion of perfect 'attunement' prevailing between them is both human and divine.

But with this we have not yet unambiguously gone beyond the level, say, of a simple prophet or perhaps even of the figure of a Greek god that could be considered as the perfect earthly representation of a 'divine' principle. The prophet is a mere human being who for a longer or shorter period of time

stands in the service of God as having been especially chosen. And even when a prophet—as in the case of Hosea or Jeremiah—must place whole areas of his intimate personal life at the disposal of the task he has been given, even so there can be no question of his identifying himself with his task. The Greek god, on the other hand, may be the apparition of the divine both in stone or in verse, but he can never quite attain to human life itself. In Jesus, the presupposition for his actions and attitudes (even before this is expressly formulated by John) is the fact that, as man, he is identical with the task given him by the Father. And this does not mean that he is identical with one task among others—as is the case with the Prophets—but identical with the total task which encompasses and replaces all others. The whole direction of his existence progresses towards a death which is not only awaited, reckoned with, affirmed and longed for, but a death which is understood to be the quintessence of his mission to redeem the world. His increasing failures, his isolation, the scandal which he is, do not compel him to adopt a new strategy; rather, they slowly disclose the real meaning that was there from the beginning. Nowhere is there a break or a re-orientation; these can be found at most in the slow change of attitude on the part of the leaders of the people. And if at the beginning of his ministry, in his manner of addressing and inviting the people of God, there may be detected a tone of hope, this is the sound of the truth of the divine call itself, which does not simply put a brave face on things (while internally it has already given up all hope) but which possesses the spiritual sound of the grace of God himself—a sound that, nevertheless, has nothing of utopian expectations about it, hopes which the disappointing course of events would then have to call to order. If Christ's steady and serene onward progress to his own destruction were the subsequent construction of his disciples, then this construction would possess such super-human religious genius as to surpass by far that of its model. They would not only have had to place in his mouth (uninventable) sayings which nobody understood when they were uttered, but they would also have had to give poetic shape to a whole existence to go along with the sayings—an existence which not only harmonises with those sayings, but which could be shown to possess such accord only by reference to the death and Resurrection that followed. In order to prophesy retrospectively in this manner, the disciples would have needed to possess a theological Christology so perfect that we cannot suppose them to have had it at that time, other than in the form of an inspiration by the Spirit. But this inspiration itself would have had to

share the nature of human poetry, for God's Holy Spirit cannot be troubled to transfigure and establish order in something which does not correspond to any historical truth.

What the Synoptics unambiguously insinuate by Jesus' behaviour and, beyond this, what they say expressly with words, is that Jesus identified his existence with his universal mandate from God, and that without hesitation he threw this existence into the balance. This affirmation receives only a fuller formulation in John, without its essential structure being changed. No attempt (such as Jewish theology is keen to make) to distinguish a prophetic Old Testament Jesus behind the Synoptics from a deified Jesus in Paul and John has ever fully succeeded. The texts simply will not allow such a distinction, or such a philological massacre would be required to achieve it that the total spiritual form, which becomes clear and transparent if the identification is granted, would degenerate into a puzzle full of contradictions.

One way of meeting the problem would be to advance the extreme eschatological thesis. This requires that Jesus' own expectation of the Kingdom simply was not fulfilled and that the first believers twice had to re-interpret this bankruptcy: first as Resurrection (which is seen as the dawning of the Kingdom), and then as a merely spiritual resurrection in faith in view of the fact that the Parousia had not occurred. This would then allow us to dismiss Jesus as a poor visionary who lived and died in good faith, and to exonerate (likewise on psychological grounds) the community which both was deceived and continues to deceive itself enthusiastically. Now, as a human being, Jesus is doubtless a person on whom his task makes inconceivably excessive demands. But does this necessarily make him an unbalanced eccentric? Can he really be classified in this psychic category if one keeps in mind, not only his influence on world-history, but also the serene equilibrium of his doctrine? To be sure, if we follow the eschatological theory we can portray the Sermon on the Mount, for instance, as a utopian ethics for the interim period until the coming of the Kingdom. By the same token, all later Christian ethics can then be pilloried as a diluted adaptation of what is historically impossible to what is possible for man. (This judgment, however, would mean that Christian ethics is a betrayal of Jesus' original idea.) But, in following this trend of thought, how can we overlook the fact that this ethics nowhere presents itself as an interim measure? That would surely have needed saying! From the outset, in fact, it

appears as established on the foundation of Jesus' divine mission, on the guarantee of its implementability as insured by Jesus' commitment of himself. The rock-like hardness of each of his sayings derives from the fact that each of them coincides with the totality of his existence: it lies in the phenomenon that he does not only 'remain true to his word' and is ready to die for it, but that he himself is this Word, which from the beginning reckoned with the particular kind of death proper to his existence—and it was precisely with this that we could not and should not have reckoned in terms of the eschatological thesis. In this the thesis contradicts the phenomenon.

John makes explicit what was implied in the Synoptics from the outset: that in Jesus there is not only a factual 'concordance' between his existence and his divine mission, but that *de jure* he himself is this concordance and that, therefore, he represents it for all men. This makes Jesus the essential 'rightness' between God and man, and hence the norm and the form of what Paul calls the *justitia Dei*, no matter how many other aspects this concept may bring together. Until Christ's coming, the norm by which to measure human works could only be the law, and by this norm they were always necessarily found to be inadequate. But Christ not only meets all that the law requires of man; beyond this, he is the identity between the divine demand and the human fulfilment. Thus, he is not only one who is wholly adequate: he is the measure itself. This is why he has 'become God's justice for us' (1 Cor 1.30), 'so that in him we might become the justice of God' (2 Cor 5.21), and this 'by the faith of Jesus Christ' (Rom 3.22), which is what all the law's measures pointed to from the outset. What Paul makes explicit here may already be wholly found in the claims of the Jesus of the Synoptics (*cf.* Mt 5.10 and 11!) in the *exousia* that he claims for himself, which he sovereignly communicates as his own to his followers and which, according to his listeners, is the power with which he speaks (Mk 1.22, 27; 7.29; Lk 4.32, 36). In addition to other meanings relating to man's justification and derived from its primary sense, *justitia Dei* above all means the rightness (*Richtigkeit, justesse*) of everything pertaining to God, and this 'rightness' can, by its very nature, only be *shown*, since there exists no measure by which it could itself be measured. For one long moment this rightness could and should be regarded as a static order suggested and even demanded by the existence of the Mediator between God and man and by the unsurpassable and incontrovertible result of his action. Only then would this static order, this firm and not fluid measure between God and the world, be shown in its

interior to be living, dynamic, dramatic—an event whose subject is God and which subsequently, within God's subjectivity, allows man too to 'happen' before God.

This dynamism of event, attested to by the phenomenon of the historical Jesus, has always been characterised by an intersecting double movement: as the 'descent' of God into the 'flesh' and as the 'ascent' of the flesh into the spirit. 'Flesh' here means earthly man, and 'spirit' means God's sphere and his manner of existence. The event whereby God's Word descends to 'make its tent' in the 'flesh' (Jn 1.14) and God's fulness 'takes up its abode corporeally' in it (Col 1.19; 2.9) is already the assumption and insertion of the 'flesh' into the fulness and the glory of God. The exchange (*commercium*) and the marriage (*conubium*) can only occur simultaneously from both sides, but not indeed in a reciprocal action comparable to a contract between partners, since 'God is only one' (Gal 3.20) and it is he who brings man to himself. Man is 'his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them' (Eph 2.10).

Even this dynamic measure which Christ represents can be demonstrated from nowhere other than itself. How could it be otherwise, since it is God himself—the Unmeasurable who can be measured only by himself—who makes himself present here? A created state is something tranquil, opposed to act and event, and as such it appears inadequate to portray the event of God's turning to us in Christ. But the event itself possesses Being and presupposes Being and, moreover, the event of God's gracious turning to us in Christ is not real only for a given moment but is bestowed definitively, with a permanent reality. It follows from this that the dynamic measure always reveals a final, static order, albeit one which may be known only because it reveals itself. The dynamism lies with the ever-deeper event of the Word's Incarnation, in its descent to the most extreme physical and spiritual suffering, to which the *memoriale passionis*—the Eucharist—belongs. God's entrance is signalled by the beginning of Christ's public activity, with the double *exousia* it exhibits: the prophetic 'power of the word' and the 'power of miracles' (Lk 24.19). God himself resounds and acts through the prophetic task of this man. The man charged with this task is, body and soul, a vessel that has surrendered itself to this divine activity: he is a 'temple' (Jn 2.20f.), a 'holy one of God' (Jn 6.69), indeed the 'Messiah' (Mk 8.29). And yet it is precisely this power of God, manifesting itself at first in all its irresistibility, which begins to meet with ever greater resistance and becomes submerged, as

it were, in the flesh of its bearer and his impotence—as though the power had been shown only in order to make the impotence the more credible, and this not by way of make-believe but as an incomprehensible reality: the fact that he did not prevail against the superior power of the world that rejected him. The disciples are dragged down with him in this fall. From the beginning they had persuaded themselves that he could do things quite differently if he wished; but now they must learn that he cannot change them because he does not will to do so. And he does not will it because God does not will it, because, through Christ's prophetic word and miracles, God wishes now no longer to reveal the judging God but rather wishes to descend into the judged human flesh whose suffering and death is everything but make-believe. *This* is what Incarnation is, no longer now as a state but as an event, or, if you wish, as the dynamic and eventful measuring of one's own static reality. In this history of the historical Jesus, God submerges himself in the creature to the utmost. He takes the creature's measure with the yardstick of divinity and with it he also measures, not actually his eternal Godhead, but rather his eternal relationship to man and to the world. And yet in a sense he also measures his eternal Godhead which does not persist in a stance of playful indifference to all possible worlds, but has eternally decided on this one world, the length, breadth and depth of which he has measured and traversed 'once and for all' (ἐφ' ἁπλᾶς) by his descent into death. 'The Word became flesh', accordingly, has the following dy-meaning: the Word which in the beginning rang out prophetically to its hearers in the Old Testament, from the outside and from above (Sermon on the Mount), henceforth becomes a Word which speaks and is expressed through Christ's flesh, and which, becoming muted by the density of flesh, resounds all the louder. It becomes muted to the point that the whole man, having become the speech of God, not only speaks God's Word with body and soul, but *is* that Word.¹⁰ And this occurs not in a language sealed hermetically by the muteness and which has thus become incomprehensible, but in the language of suffering and death, one which at last is universally understood and which is uttered not out of constraint but out of love, not out of resignation but out of obedience. This language is not purely human, as is always the case with the guilty; it is the final and conclusive sentence of a discourse which God himself began and which to the last word may not be interrupted or altered. It is the same Jesus Christ always speaking, and the transition from the first to the last sentence is undetectable. Only the centres of gravity change, but always within the same

field. For it is just as ‘paradoxical’ that a man should claim divine authority for himself, that he should forgive sins and raise the dead, as it is for this super-human man, in whom God speaks and acts, to end up as the most common criminal, abandoned by the might of the Father, on which he relied and called in obedience and about which he affirmed that it always heard him (Jn 11.42).

Such an exhaustive taking possession of man on the part of God (embracing all the dimensions of human God-forsakenness, such as only God can know) is already as such an adaptation of man to the measure of God. For, in this act of taking possession, man is not a merely passive vessel; he is what God has willed him to be: one who responds to the Word, one who corresponds to God’s speech. By being dynamically inhabited by God, man is brought to attunement (*Stimmen*) by God: he possesses a voice (*Stimme*), and the right voice at that. He does not stammer and babble; he speaks with God. Even in the most extreme human breakdown he does not fail in God’s sight; down to the finest detail he says what God wants to hear from him. No false tone can trouble this dialogue; everything said and done is wholly proportioned: it fits like a glove. Nothing is first ‘tried on’ (by the Evangelists, for instance, or by the transfiguring faith of the Church), only later to be fully harmonised. Who—and following which standard or model—could harmonise the paradox of the God-Man if it did not already harmonise on its own? Who could add a single inch to his human stature? This adequation of man to God is the movement already contained in God’s movement: the exaltation of man to the right hand of God, the servant’s elevation to being *Kyrios* of the world, the transfiguration of the suffering and dying one into God’s resurrecting immortality. Once again, we do not here have two images alongside each other, as in a diptych consisting of two complementary halves. Faith (especially Johannine faith) is able to see both aspects as a unity—God’s *kenosis* in the Synoptics and the Pauline *doxa* of the Risen One. The descent of God’s love to the Cross is already its very glorification. Not, of course, as if the Resurrection no longer needed to take place; but the Resurrection, as the glorification of the Son by the Father, is already contained by virtue of its total truth in the glorification of the Father by the Son. What faith here sees as one is not a pious contemplation but objective evidence. God’s measures and forms may not be split up: the measured form which he proposes is perfect from the outset, even if it is subjected to a temporal course of events (which itself can only be

meaningful) and, like a statue, must be walked around in order to be seen as a whole. Nor can we say that the measuring of this form, as contemplated by man, falls into two parts and that the Cross is legible only as a contradiction of Being. On the contrary, we can understand this form (which, in a worldly sense, we can never see all at once because God himself is within it) to the extent that it becomes plausible for us as the abolition of the essential contradiction between God and a godless world. It would be profoundly ungrateful and unworthy of faith if we were to assert that we cannot decipher the document that God has placed before us to read.

We have a prior understanding of inspiration, in which man can become the vessel of God's truth or of a super-human vision. We also have a prior understanding of man's misery and mortality, in which the cipher 'man' appears definitively inscribed. In Jesus Christ God takes possession of both these dimensions, not only to lead them beyond themselves to the absolute but also so as to bring together the two divergent extremes, to join them into one single figure. By so doing God shows that he does not do violence to man, but that, rather, by becoming man, he perfects man in his most human aspect, whether this refers to the heights or the depths of man. And, by the very fact that man's extremes are joined, everything that lies in-between is rounded off. Nothing needs to be left out, nothing needs to be abstracted, as in non-Christian mysticisms and practices. And yet, such a rounded and perfected humanity can occur only by virtue of the divine indwelling: in the union of the infinitely greatest with the infinitely smallest, a union which both Nicholas of Cusa and Pascal regarded as the figure defined by Christ, who thus becomes the figure that concludes and completes the universe.

In consequence we can properly call this double act of measurement that descends and ascends both form and figure, and Paul likewise can apply the concept of form (μορφή) to Christ—and to the Christ-form which is to take shape in us (Gal 4.19)—in its proper and not its analogous sense. The interior attunement, proportion, and harmony between God and man in Christ-form raises it to the level of an archetype, not only of all religious and ethical, contemplative and active behaviour, but equally of the beautiful, regardless whether this is agreeable or not to the person with a creative aesthetic sensibility and regardless of all the questions that may be raised concerning the 'aesthetic imitation' involved in following such an archetype.¹¹ For this beautiful object is revelation: it is the beauty of God that appears in man and the beauty of man which is to be found in God and in God alone. This is not a

beauty which draws things into unity in accordance with an abstract scheme of 'infinity and perfection', 'emanation and encapsulation', but in the precise and unique mode of the Incarnation. What perfection and infinity really are for man, what emanation and encapsulation, self-surrender and being caught up really are, what 'transfiguration', 'deification', 'immortality' really are and what all the great words of aesthetics signify: it is in the Christ-form that all of it has its measure and its true context.

And this is not because to everything there is applied a measure which is unattainable by ordinary man and, therefore, alien and inappropriate as it must at first almost inevitably appear. The God-Man, in fact, is only a particular individual and not a matter of universal human significance; not something which can be generalised. By becoming man, God does not speak to himself; he speaks to the world. Christ is this speech of God which addresses itself to us all. We are addressed not only from outside, but are affected in our very selves, in our intimate nature; and, in so far as Christ is our brother and has responded to God from within our own nature, all of us have already responded with him. By the Incarnation we have been transferred into the sphere of the dialogical, out of the sphere of sin which is the monological, out into the 'marvellous light' of the Word. We already participate in the sphere where things are fundamentally right and attuned and where, therefore, if we so will it, things can be similarly right for us as well. With the appearance of Christ, the Church is already posited: that is to say, his appearance is the measure which God applies to the world, the measure which God has already communicated to the world, bestowed on the world, as a measure of grace and not of judgment, as a freely conferred measure which no one can arrogate to himself but which is given in such a way that anyone so desiring can take it to himself.

There is one last aspect that must never be lost from sight. The 'image' of God that Christ concretises for us has its own dynamism which means that here we have someone who can speak and act with divine power and also suffer and die with human impotence. This does not make it into an image of fragmentation but of unification, because the one speaking with God's power and suffering with man's impotence does both things in accordance with an identical disposition: he does both things out of obedience. But how can a man who is genuinely a man presume to speak in the name of God without arrogance? Are there not statements in the Gospel ('Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away') that must appear to the

naturally pious mind to be shot through with the shudder of *hybris*? Not only the Greek but also the Jew must be shaken to the foundations of their truly authentic piety by such words, and whoever would cry out ‘Blasphemy!’ at hearing them would be fully justified—except in the case of Christ. In a religious sense such claims are ‘unbearable’. For look closely: it is not the naked God who is uttering such words, but a man, even if God is supposed to be speaking from him. He cannot shift to God the responsibility for what he is saying. He must answer for it as a man because he said it as a man. For this there can only be *one* justification: that this man is acting out of obedience; that he is the most profoundly obedient of all precisely as he makes divine claims for himself. But, emphatically and decisively, this is possible solely because this man, who is obeying even as he ‘makes’ himself into a God, is a God who is obeying even as he makes himself into a man. For the former, taken by itself, would clearly be *hybris* and impossible to comprehend in terms of human obedience. For the surest thing that can be said of man is that he is not God. Thus, he must already be obedient even as God, and his human obedience unto death must be the epiphany of a divine—that is, a trinitarian—obedience. In the Son of Man there appears not God alone; necessarily, there also appears the inner-trinitarian event of his procession; there appears the triune God, who, as God, can command absolutely and obey absolutely and, as the Spirit of love, can be the unity of both.

[God’s] speaking and activity and work *ad extra* consist in the fact that He gives to the world created by Him, to man, a part in the history in which He is God, that there is primarily in the work of creation a reflection, in the antithesis of Creator and creature an image and likeness, and in the twofoldness of the existence of man [as man and woman] a reflection of this likeness of the inner life of God Himself. And then supremely and finally (at the goal and end of His whole activity as established at its beginning) they consist in the fact that God Himself becomes a man amongst men and for men in His mode of being as the One who is obedient in humility. In the work of reconciliation of the world with God the inward divine relationship between the One who rules and commands in majesty and the One who obeys in humility is identical with the very different relationship between God and one of His creatures, a man.¹²

Translating this into the aesthetic mode we could say that, if God did not in himself possess form, no form could ever arise between him and man: *finiti ad infinitum nulla proportio*. What would occur, rather, is what *must* occur in all non-Christian mysticism: the finite is absorbed by the infinite and the non-identical is crushed by identity. In the non-Christian realm, therefore, consistent religion (in its mystical form) is in a state of unresolvable conflict with aesthetics (which then also includes religious and political myths), and

this conflict can in the last resort be terminated only by a de-mythologisation of religion and, consequently, also by the dying away of religion, for man cannot live without an interior image (*Inbild*). Only Christianity can unite both things, because the appearance of the triune God can occur only within form. This form is unique, not graspable by worldly vision, evident only to the eyes of faith and yet, precisely as such, it is truly form, in spite of the vast infinity of the dimensions that are opened up. It is not a vision of the form of God himself, but the appearance of this form in the previously described identity (of the hypostatic union), as an identity of the obedient one and of his obedience in both natures. And this is more than merely image and likeness: it is the concealed epiphany of the thing itself in the medium of the relationship between God and creature.

The relationship between God and creature in this way comes to participate in the natural indissolubility of the love between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. Just as the divine Persons do not confront one another as autonomous beings but, in God's one concrete nature, are forever one divine Being, so too, in Christ, the covenant between God and creature as a covenant of free partners is forever surpassed and indissolubly established, in anticipation, upon the hypostatic union. Both the trinitarian union and the hypostatic union, in their own ways, give to free love an ontological and substantial form; and they make this substance, to its very foundation, something permeated and shaped by love. This becomes most striking for us in the Eucharist: in it the whole substantial Christ offers himself to the world as the gift of the Father, and he establishes the Christian's total life of faith upon the physico-sacramental 'eating and drinking' of his Flesh and Blood.

3. QUALITY

The measure which Christ represents and embodies is qualitatively different from every other measure. This fact need not be deduced; it may be read off the phenomenon itself. To be sure, for this an 'eye for quality' is required, analogous to the eye of the connoisseur which can infallibly distinguish art from kitsch, excellent quality from average or merely good quality. In a certain sense such an 'eye' may be acquired (Heb 5.14), but in essence it must be bestowed along with the phenomenon itself, since the latter is unique of its kind for which reason its interior constitution cannot be known by being

compared to other phenomena. What, as the grace of faith, illumines the subject that approaches the phenomenon has to be the objective light that indwells it—its objective and radiant rightness. The illumined subject then—and ever increasingly—learns how emphatically that light derives from the object and indwells it, and, in the light of the object, it learns also to distinguish it from all other objects. This discernment is but the perception of the manner in which the God-given form distinguishes and sets itself apart from all others. Christ does not have to be set up as our judge in a distinct act: this is what he is by virtue of his own quality.

The coming-into-view of the objective quality, the growing sense that perceives Christ's incomparability, is developed in four directions.

1. It develops as a contemplation that gains insight into the proportions, connections, and balances proper to the form whereby the continuing resistance of these structures to all destructive analysis and reflection constitutes a spiritual experience for the believer. And yet, this first verification remains, so to speak, within the 'flatness' of the contemplative regard.

2. It develops as the verification of the form of faith in existence. It is here that the form's existential power (the Pauline *dynamis* and *energeia*) first emerges and manifests its autonomous vitality.

3. It develops as the form's self-differentiation from all other worldly religious forms. For one who has acquired vision, this self-differentiation acquires objective evidential force as can be shown.

4. From this demonstrability there automatically results the possibility of offering an objective proof of: a) the fact that the form is simply missed by all who do not perceive it, and why this is; b) how and in what respect the form is overlooked by such people; and c) in what non-culpable blindness or the culpable self-blinding of those who take offence consist. The one who sees grasps from his vision that the objective evidence of this form does not exclude the possibility and the reality of scandal, but, on the contrary, necessarily requires it, and this is something he can show.

We will now follow each of these four directions in turn.

a. The Form Unfolds Itself

To do justice to this heading we would have to rehearse all Christian thought,

not only dogmatics and theological speculation, but also and especially the contemplation of all saints, lovers and believers whatsoever. This is a world withdrawn for the most part from the eyes of the world, a world which has its 'radiance from within' and which, along with its contemplated object, necessarily dispenses with external radiance—the purely worldly power of persuasion.

This is the first criterion for the authenticity of the self-revealing form: that it does not do violence. If it did, then it would share something of the nature of mathematical proofs and evidences, in which personal freedom and decision have no place. The kind of evidential power with which God manifests himself must be of the highest kind, precisely in virtue of the fact that it allows freedom because it makes men free. And it wants to overpower a lover that answers in freedom only in its own way—by the evidential power of love—and this cannot be otherwise if love belongs to the very meaning of the form, indeed, if love is precisely what constitutes this meaning. 'To convince' (*überzeugen*)—that is, to give such testimony (*Zeugnis*) about oneself that it always remains 'above' (*über*) every objection: this is an undertaking which can only be justified in love's struggle for love. Pascal is the Christian thinker who has best seen and thought out the dimension of hiddenness in Christian evidence and who has best understood its necessity; for him the loss of this dimension already betrays the absence of Christian evidence. 'Perfect clarity would please reason but harm the will. The proud man must be humbled.'¹³ 'We make an idol out of truth itself, for outside love truth is not God: it becomes his image and an idol which one ought neither to love nor to adore.'¹⁴ 'Because God is hidden, any religion which does not say that God is hidden is not a true religion, nor does any religion give instruction if it does not give the reason for this hiddenness. Our religion does all this: *Vere tu es Deus absconditus*.'¹⁵ 'If the world existed only in order to instruct man concerning God, then his divinity would irrefutably shine forth from the world on all sides. As it is, however, the world has its existence only through Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ, in order to instruct man concerning his fallenness and his redemption. Therefore, everything in the world reflects proofs of these two truths.'¹⁶ 'Just as Jesus Christ remained unknown among men, so too his truth is in no way outwardly distinguished from other generally expressed opinions. So, too, the Eucharist in the midst of ordinary bread.'¹⁷

If Christ had come only to sanctify, then the whole of Scripture and all other things would aim at this and it would be easy to convince unbelievers. And if Christ had come only to blind us, then all his behaviour would be opaque and we would have no means of convincing unbelievers. But, as Isaiah says (8.14), he came *in sanctificationem et in scandalum*, and so we cannot convince unbelievers nor can they convince us; but it is precisely in this way that we convince them, since what we are saying is, indeed, that his whole behaviour is not designed to persuade anyone one way or the other.¹⁸

Thus we see that Pascal does not want the hiddenness of God's truth in the image of Christ spoken of as if everything within it dissolved into self-destructive paradoxes; but he wants even less to entertain the idea of a manifestness which does not communicate the specific twofold mystery of the divine hiddenness as such and of God's concealment in the sinner's redemption in particular. This mystery does not manifest itself in a neutral fashion, but in virtue of grace and for the sake of love. Only in this manner can Pascal develop his contemplation of the 'mystery of Jesus', which gathers up and 'entraps' within itself all the evidences of God and of creation: it is a mystery which radiates not only the true qualities of the true and living God (as opposed to the 'God of the philosophers'), but which brings to light above all the true dimensions of man—both his *grandeur* and his *misère*. If we read Pascal as we should, it becomes clear that he does not so much unfold his image of Christ from the vantage of a prior anthropological understanding of these dimensions; rather, he attains to these very dimensions only from within his contemplation of Christ, or, to be more precise, from within his contemplation of the event attested to by Christ's life and death.

We may say that, in this, Pascal strikes a balance midway between Augustine and Luther. He lays aside the remnants of a Platonic *theoria* characteristic of the early Augustine but does not abandon authentic Christian *theoria* in favour of a mere *latere sub contrario*. He recognises a form of evidence which corresponds exactly to the law governing the object that becomes evident: this law is the manifestation of God's hiddenness in Jesus Christ. All other kinds of evidence then become concentrically ordered round this centre; indeed, this centre resolves all paradoxes concerning the Being of man and of the world which would otherwise remain unresolvable. We could say that, in actual fact, all great Christian contemplation has developed according to the law which Pascal here formulates; we could say, as well, that it has always been the characteristic of such contemplation—as it works through all the kinds of evidence and properties that gradually unfold—to let itself be constantly determined by the form of evidence proper to its object.

‘In your light we see light’—even if your light must assume the mode of darkness!

The Christ of Mark is a stupendous event, but one which, as such, seeks hiddenness and wants to have its mystery preserved. In John he does not even need this any more because what is stupendous about him—his dazzling *doxa*—itself possesses the mode of hiddenness and requires eyes which have adapted to it to be perceived. In Mark, the hiddenness is a sheath enclosing a core of light; in John, the self-concealment of the Light is its revelation: love’s way to its end. Between the two lies a process of appropriation and contemplation: and both these things are the same, something which the ‘theologians of event’ have never been ready to understand. Christian contemplation is the opposite of distanced consideration of an image: as Paul says, it is the metamorphosis of the beholder into the image he beholds (2 Cor 3.18), the ‘realisation’ of what the image expresses (Newman). This is possible only by giving up one’s own standards and being assimilated to the dimensions of the image. Christian life is not a second movement subsequent to contemplation, a practical corollary to *theoria*. For *theoria* can occur only as we spread out our existence under the image offered by God, which has shone within our darkness as God’s light (2 Cor 4.6). The image unfolds *into* the one contemplating it, and it opens out its consequences in his life. It is not I who draw my consequences from what I have seen; if I have really seen it in itself, it is the object of my vision which draws out its implications in me. Again we are at the juncture where Paul undertakes the move from seeing to being seen by God, from seeking to having always been found, the reversal that contains the πίστις Ἰησοῦ (Rom 3.26; Gal 3.22). Christ’s hiddenness can radiate only from my own hiddenness, wrought by him, just as in Mark, initially, only that person can truly recognise the Messiah who knows how to keep his secret.

The form which inscribes itself in the living centre of my being becomes my salvation by becoming my judgment. From this form I learn, I read, it is drummed into me what is fear of God and what is sin. The order of this form, imposing itself ever more inexorably, passes judgment on my formless disorder. The metamorphosis of which Paul speaks (Rom 12.2; 2 Cor 3.18; Phil 3.21) is above all an assumption of form, the receiving of Christ’s form in us (Gal 4.19), the character and the impress in us of the only valid image of God. This occurs the more im-pressively, in the literal sense, the less resistance the impress of the image encounters. Mary’s *Ecce Ancilla* is the

supreme instance. For this reason the Christ-form attains here the greatest splendour within the greatest simplicity and hiddenness. Mary keeps all the words in her heart and ponders them (Lk 2.19, 51), not as something foreign to her but as what 'happens to her' (*fiat mihi*, Lk 1.37). She also undergoes a judgment which will lead her to the Cross itself, and these are things disposed and decided upon by the one form. Allowing the Word its way in me is not an action, and is not, therefore, an accomplishment and a work; it is contemplative obedience that of its own passes over into the Passion in accordance with the law of the image which leaves its impress on it.

At this point we ought properly to discuss the proving of the Christ-form as it occurs in its self-unfolding within an obedient existence. 'Proving' here means that at no moment does contemplation detect a mistake in the construction and the proportions of the image, or that, if such a mistake is suspected, it will at once be shown to have been because of a defect in one's own vision. We could be inclined to attribute this contemplative 'accord' to the naïve enthusiasm of the contemplating believer, to whom everything to do with Christ appears wonderful *a priori*. But those more familiar with the contemplation of the saints or even of the Church Fathers will see here something different. To be sure, there are 'harmonisations' which strike us as naïve, for instance, solving exegetical difficulties by means of allegory, or projecting the image of Christ with undue haste into situations in the Old Testament. Too cheap an admiration is possible, the result of not having looked long enough into the reality before one. But, notwithstanding the watchword of the historical-critical method not to let oneself be enthused by anything, the believing exegete and theologian will not be able to keep from being attentive to the manner in which the form of Christ proves itself in every dimension. The interrelatedness of the different aspects is such that, while each aspect, taken in isolation, could be considered questionable, nonetheless the balances that dominate the whole do not allow the definitive elimination of any one aspect. If nonetheless essential portions are excluded, what is left is such a paltry construction (such as Renan's historical Jesus, or Harnack's, or even Bultmann's) that its academic provenance may be detected at a distance, and then one is still left with the problem of explaining how so slight a kernel could become such a full-powered and seamless form as is the Christ of the Gospels. In this resulting form, it might be possible to try to explain certain inconsistencies by philological enquiry, by distinguishing different sources and layers, the different character of the

documents, and so on. But even then one has still not accounted for—or rather, has not seen or recognised—that tension-laden and supremely plausible total form that is yielded when all these aspects are taken together.

The complexity of the aspects makes for a *lectio difficilior* which passes the test precisely as such, while all the oversimplifying suggestions cancel one another out. The clue lies neither simply in ‘imminent expectation’ nor simply in ‘realised eschatology’, neither simply in Jewish ritualism nor simply in subsequent Hellenistic sacramentalisation, neither in a purely spiritual ethical messianism nor in a purely political messianism, neither in faith as the self-trust Jesus awakens in us as we look and pray to God nor in faith as the mere acceptance of his taking our place. . . . And we could go on and on. To ‘historical-critical reason’ the different aspects may appear to be contradictory; but to the eyes of faith, these ‘sharper senses’, their interdependence becomes evident. Contemplative prayer is nourished by this vision, as is theology, and, indeed, as is historical-critical exegesis itself, which, fascinated (why *fascinated*?) by the fiercely disputed object, cannot in the end turn away from it.

The complexity of the form is the expression of a unity which can never be seen all at once and which is perceived only in its self-expression. This expressive complexity is also evident from the fact that the Christian as he contemplates can always consider a given aspect of the faith-object (he can, for instance, abide in a long and patient contemplation of the Passion) without ever losing from sight the unity of the whole mystery. In the Passion he finds all Jesus’ verbal proclamation as in a dynamic nucleus: here he has the Father who reveals himself; here he has the Spirit; here the sacraments (as John sees); here the origin of the Church, both in a spiritual and invisible sense and also made visible in symbolic figures that speak for themselves: Jesus is exchanged for Barabbas; he is crucified between the two thieves, who are so different and yet belong together; the profoundly revealing roles played by pagans, Jews, and Christians; the balance between supreme justice and supreme injustice, between the deepest concealment and the utmost revelation of God. . . . Is all of this pre-arranged and cleverly thought out? For its part, the contemplation of two millennia finds an ever-greater unity and a fulness evermore imposing in its interrelatedness. How could all this have been fabricated by the clever mystifications of a few isolated individuals? Here again, it is the aesthetic analogy which helps us. The inspiration of a great work of art is impenetrable and the result it achieves is

not fully analysable. Inspiration resists analysis in the sense that while the latter can indeed point out the proportion and harmony of the parts, it can never synthesise the whole given simply the parts, and it is this whole which remains ungraspable in its patent beauty. Moreover, just as, in contemplating the beautiful, the glance wanders back from the object itself to become lost in the depths of the genial subject, at a level beyond mere psychology, in the place where the mystery of reality itself has been revealed to the rare eye of the artist—so too, Christ's particular kind of unity requires a glance that traces a course back into the very mystery of God, who manifests his 'mystery, more dazzling than the light', by this stroke of 'Christological genius': he is both himself and yet also another; he is both triune and hypostatic. This is a mystery of the divine freedom, which, as in the work of art, coincides with supreme necessity.

The necessary freedom of Christ's form may also be described as the quality of effortlessness exhibited by its self-representation. Here is someone who knows how to do things without having 'learned' them, someone who neither possesses a 'technique' nor teaches it, someone who does not know how to do things in an athletic sense—with the superiority of the trained expert over the amateur: for his 'art' is the humility and the lowliness and everything else proclaimed blessed by the Beatitudes. And this humility is not (as Nietzsche suspected) a ruse for small people: this humility emerges from the most magnanimous, audacious, and valiant of souls, who obeys not out of instinct but out of love for the Father, and who 'learns' to do this as a human being for our sake (Heb 5.8). The unity which Christ himself represents is the opposite of a synthesis of what men imagine to be the best of man and God. This unity is in no sense the result of a simple addition and accumulation; rather, it is a unity which thought alone cannot produce, a unity of the most unpretentious humanity with the one and only divine sonship (which always 'does what pleases the Father'), a 'simplicity' (Mt 6.22) which Paul contrasts to 'carnal wisdom' (2 Cor 1.12) and which he even regards as the offspring of 'poverty' (2 Cor 8.2). It is the unreflected gift of self which in no way throws light on itself (2 Cor 9.11, 13), an obedience which has no thought for itself (Eph 6.5) and, finally, the love of a bride which never considers itself but always looks to the Beloved (2 Cor 11.3).

In this simplicity of the Son of Man all the supposed contradictions in his image are surpassed and balanced, and what to the historical-critical philologists appear to be combined elements (because they do not see the

point of unity) can only be seen as the tremendous unfolding under enormous tension of an unapproachable centre which is itself unmoved and which, in its simplicity, appears to be what is most imitable and, at the same time, the least imitable of all.¹⁹ The simplicity involved here is that with which all of us must begin, complicated and reflecting beings that we are, a simplicity which would be easy child's play if only we were children, a simplicity sought after by all the great religious techniques of Asia and which can never be attained by them for the very reason that they are techniques and that they aim at God by bypassing man. Christ's simplicity is so simple that it can only be lived and realised on the basis of God's simplicity, in which this one unique person participates. How could such a one, in the infinite freedom of his simplicity, not utter the sublimest words and do the highest deeds *in humility*, even when and precisely when they lead him into the deepest abysses of shame and humiliation? This simplicity may be called 'love' provided we do not restrict the concept to our sphere of finite subjects as they feel drawn to one another and show one another signs and works of love. For all this still speaks of duality, while that simplicity lives in a centre which in its humility and awe has bridged the duality between God and man; it lives in a transparency in which God's Word and God's human expression have become indistinguishable.

If this is the Logos that comes to us from God, in which and for which we have been created, then its contemplation in us can only be infinite. Now, it is always *this* unity which is revealed to us in every intellectual act of opening and 'breaking the bread' of the Logos (Origen)—not a purely divine or a purely human unity, but always a human-and-divine unity. Thus, Christian contemplation becomes an ever deeper and richer living from Christ and into Christ, and progressively both the living triune God and the whole of creation as recapitulated in Christ enter into this life, not, however, in the rarefied space where ideal contents are beheld in abstract purity, but within the shaping (*Einbildung*) of the image (*Bild*) of Christ in the contemplative subject. For the theological imagination (*Einbildungskraft* = 'power to shape an image') lies with Christ, who is at once the image (*Bild*) and the power (*Kraft*) of God.

b. The Inherent Power of the Form

We now focus on this unity of image and power. Taken by itself, the image remains two-dimensional; the power which the New Testament describes as *dynamis* and as 'Holy Spirit' gives the image as such a plastic depth and a vital force which imposes itself and takes root in the life of believers. Both things are but one: the plasticity of the form of the 'historical Jesus' and his power to impress himself in the form of the 'Christ of faith'. Should one attempt to retain only the second element and reject the first, then the Word and the Spirit would no longer be the same God and, therefore, neither of them would be God: the first would be 'religious genius' and the second, at best, 'enthusiasm'. John is thus right when his reflections lead him first to gather up the fulness of the Spirit and concentrate it on the Logos (Jn 1.32f.; 3.34) and then, beginning with the Resurrection, to see this fulness as radiating from the Spirit himself (Jn 20.22), indeed as the essential proof of the divinity of the image of the Logos and of his reunion with the Father who had sent him (Jn 14.16, 20, 25f.; 16.7, 13ff.). The Spirit witnesses practically—that is, in deeds—to the rightness of God's 'exegesis' by the Son (Jn 1.18). The dimension extending from the Jesus of history to the Christ of the *kerygma* of faith and of the written Gospel is the dimension of objectivization by the testimony of the Spirit, but this dimension is at the same time traversed by the eyewitnesses themselves who are doing the writing: 'He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he *knows* that he tells the truth' (Jn 19.35). But he knows yet more: he knows that the objectivized form can, in a material sense, be only a selection from the historical events (Jn 20.30); he knows that, by attempting to reproduce the Word with words, one could flounder in a false infinity of words ('the world itself could not contain the books that could be written', Jn 21.25), but that the partial form selected by the Spirit is adequate not only to effect faith in the fact that 'Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God', but also to procure 'life in his name' (Jn 20.31). The First Epistle of John declares this life to be original participation and full initiation. The anointing by the Spirit 'teaches us about everything' (1 Jn 2.20, 27). The universality of faith communicated by the Spirit finds its correspondence. It does not limp hopelessly behind: it does not open up only partial aspects; it creates a concordance between the 'simplicity' of Christ and the 'simplicity' of faith, in which everything is deposited which is at work in Christ, who is the unity of the whole.

For Paul, the historical Jesus is himself without question full of *dynamis*: it is not only the 'power of his Resurrection' (Phil 3.10) which is active in

Christians, and especially in Paul (2 Cor 4.7, 10; 12.9), but already the 'power of the Cross' (1 Cor 1.18, 24). This dynamism that radiates from Christ is the 'Spirit of God' that proceeds from Christ, the Spirit that fills up and energises absolutely everything in the Church, the Spirit that bestows on 'form' (μόρφωσις), and particularly on the Gospel (Rom 1.16), an interior vitality (2 Tim 3.5), the intrinsic power needed for it to impose itself both on the individual who attains justification (Rom 1.17) and on the apostolic preaching (Rom 15.19), which is where God's power wants to reveal itself by contrast to human weakness (2 Cor 4.7; 12.9f.) while yet strengthening the whole apostle that he may effect a mighty work. *Dynamis* fills the believing Christian in every possible manner (Col 1.11; Eph 3.7, 20), even in the mode of 'works of power' whereby the transition from the physical to the moral 'miracle' remains fluid (1 Cor 12.10, 28f.; Gal 3.5). These confirmations of the Spirit are the same as with the Lord himself (Mt 7.22; 11.20f.; 13.54, 58; Lk 10.13; 19.37; Acts 2.22; Heb 2.4). Now, Paul always takes this divine power in a trinitarian sense: it is the power of the Father who confers grace and awakens from death; it is the power of the Son who has his way and shows himself to be alive; it is a power which, as such and in distinction from Father and Son, bears the traits of its own hypostasis. Nevertheless, in a very decisive manner this power remains for Paul bound to the Incarnate Lord who has now been glorified. Through him salvation has not only been effected morally, but has been physically infused into humanity: his fulness is spiritually poured into the 'body', whether this be the Church or the universe. In all his apostolic work of formation, Paul knows that he is both held captive and sustained by this power of Christ. For this he needs no written gospels which he would then interpret; hardly a word of Christ is ever quoted by him. He writes his Epistles twenty years before the Gospels are composed, and philologically these Epistles do not constitute an intermediate stage leading to the Gospels; rather, what they demonstrate is the inconceivable freedom with which the verbal form of the Christ-story may be transposed both by the Church and by man. Paul is himself the living process of this transposition, the word-wrought phenomenon of the Spirit's outpouring in superabundant fulness (ὑπερπερισσεύειν, Rom 5.20; 2 Cor 7.4; ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ, Eph 3.20; 1 Thess 3.10; 5.13). All this carries him to the limit of being misunderstood and yet finally accepted and sanctioned (2 Pet 3.15f.). From the purely philological viewpoint, these Epistles present the appearance of a creative chaos, a fertile power run wild, since every sentence is a vessel that

overflows infinitely at the content to be expressed. And yet everything is order, reason, even (in Corinth) an authoritative instruction which is sober and incisive. World literature has never again combined these extremes in this manner, or with such playful ease. Only certain aesthetic comparisons are possible which, within their immanent sphere, reflect something of Paul's transcendental spiritual charisms.

We know the turn that the relationship between word (history) and spirit (Church) took in Alexandrian theology: it becomes the relationship between 'letter' (*historia*) and 'Spirit', which for Origen together express the dimensions of the Logos. The letter and the flesh, taken in themselves alone, are useless; they come to life in their openness, in their becoming transparent to the Spirit and by the Spirit. Historical factuality need not and ought not to be clung to in its material completeness and fidelity, for many things in the *historia* have been put there by the Spirit for the spirit. This does not mean that the historical Jesus is a myth that must or could be dissolved into spirit; but it does mean that the historical Jesus becomes *our* Lord only in the dimension of the Spirit, in which his unrepeatable deeds become fulfilled for each of us and in each of us. His words 'have their effect now and always will so have it'; 'they are always full and are filled anew daily and are never filled in excess' (*Ser. in Matt.* 54). In the process whereby this flesh 'becomes spirit', the Logos becomes 'for me', 'for what good is it to me if the Word comes into the world but I do not participate in it?' (*Hom. in Jer.* 9. i). 'To me the sign [given to Ahab]—my Lord Jesus Christ "in the heights and in the depths"—is unprofitable if the mystery of his heights and depths does not occur in me' (*Frag. in 1 Cor.*; Cat. Cramer V. 66). In intention, such 'de-letterisation' on Origen's part is the same as modern de-mythologisation. What Origen calls *pneuma* the latter calls 'authentic existence', and what Origen calls *gnosis* (of *pistis*) the latter calls the realisation in faith of what was actually intended by revelation. But Origen sees the connection between the historical letter and the spirit. Against Celsus' disdain for the historical Jesus, Origen holds fast to the wonderful nexus that would have the mighty tree of the Church's faith grow out of this insignificant beginning and that sees the Spirit of God himself as providing the 'proof of the Spirit and of power' precisely for the 'folly' of this hidden life in the flesh and of this disgraceful death (*C. Cels.* 1.2; 1.62; and *passim*). For all his radical Biblical criticism, Origen does not overlook the form which stretches precisely between the letter and the spirit.

The Spirit is not the Word, and yet it also is the Spirit of the Word. But it does not proceed only from the Word but, simultaneously, also from the Father (Jn 15.26), who is God 'before' the Word. He is at once the Spirit of the Utterable and the Unutterable. He explains the Word by showing it as it proceeds from what is eternally beyond the Word. He transfigures both realities in their unity, since he is the unity of both and witnesses to this fact. Thus, he is at once the Spirit of form and formation and a Spirit of love and enthusiasm. In this incomprehensible unity he is the locus of the beauty of God. He is sober in order to show forth very precisely what is and to allow it to be seen; and he is intoxication and intoxicates because the raptures of love are the ultimate objectivity which must be seen and experienced. The Gospel and the Church are not Dionysian; they stand out for their soberness and banish the fanatical enthusiast to the sects.²⁰ But an opponent of enthusiasm such as Ronald Knox has arguably more than a little underestimated the Song of Songs and its fulfilment in the New Testament and in every authentic Christian theology. How could Christianity have become such a universal power if it had always been as sullen as today's humourless and anguished Protestantism, or as grumpy as the super-organised and super-scholasticised Catholicism about us? If this were the face of Christ stamped by the Holy Spirit on Veronica's cloth, then we could really ask whether this is indeed the triune Spirit of God. The tension between precision and enthusiasm which is the Holy Spirit's must be accepted as he offers it; the saints were able to do it. Their enthusiasm is kindled, precisely, by the precision of the image of Jesus drawn by the Spirit, and this enthusiasm, in turn, expresses with precision, for all others to see, the fact of having been grasped by this image. It is not dry manuals (full as these may be of unquestionable truths) that express with plausibility for the world the truth of Christ's Gospel; it is the existence of the saints who have been grasped by Christ's Holy Spirit. And Christ himself foresaw no other kind of apologetics (Jn 13. 35).

The Holy Spirit is a reality which is ignored by the philologists and the philosophers of comparative religion, or which is at least 'provisionally bracketed' by them. The horizon of the scientists cannot admit the question as to why the wind of world-history blew precisely into *this* sail,²¹ or why it did not choose another formula, just as historically insignificant, but that objectively and historically perhaps was quite close to it. (The work of Strack-Billerbeck, for instance, is an immense mausoleum containing the bones of such formulae; likewise Hennecke and the books of the Mandaeans

and the Gnostics.) It is an accident of history that the favourable constellation, the historical *kairos* exalted this particular form. But what is certain is that whoever excludes the dimension of the Holy Spirit (the real Spirit, not an imagined one) from the phenomenon will not be able to understand it as it understands itself: as the grain of mustard that *has within itself* the ability to grow taller than all the other bushes in the garden. But, if one makes this excision, from what perspective is it that one intends to understand the phenomenon better than it understands itself? From the perspective of the general philosophy of religion? Or from the perspective of a (modern?) self-understanding of our own which cannot admit the form stamped upon history because this form 'no longer says anything' to that self-understanding? In reality, this form reaches into our very present; it does not cease with the Church of the Martyrs or with Constantine. The Word is fulfilled and continues to fulfil itself daily. The claim of this Word as a claim of the historical Jesus and of the Christ of faith today is always one and the same claim. It is the same 'eye like flames of fire', the same 'voice like the roar of mighty waters'.

c. The Uniqueness of the Form

In our earlier treatment of subjective evidence we referred to the truth that God is free to use even the forms of human religiosity in his approach to those who seek him. To accept this does not however mean to fall prey to relativism in questions of the philosophy of religion. For we are here speaking of two very different things. On the one hand, we have a construct which can be seen as a prolongation of religious man, a religious enterprise that climbs up toward the divine and, at the journey's summit, plunges into the sun of supraterritorial transfiguration and even into the light of revelation: this is what we perceive, or think we perceive, in Buddha and other saints of India. On the other hand, we have a construct that from the outset presents itself in quite contrary terms, as something descending from God with a message and clashing sharply with human sensibilities. To be sure, Israel's prophets also came from God and were not 'ascenders', and even Mohammed is something of a prophet, so that in this connection Jesus would have to be placed in the category of founders of prophetic (as opposed to mystical) religions.

But in reflecting on the typological approach itself we are prompted to ask: Is the uniqueness of Jesus' form reason enough to exempt him from such typological classification? Does the latter contradict his uniqueness? Three different perspectives must be considered:

1. The form of Christ is inseparable from the Old Testament; together they constitute the one historical revelation in a diptych of type and antitype, promise and fulfilment. Within this unique system of order, Christ's form is indeed related to an overall order, but we cannot therefore say that Christ's form is subordinated to that order; for the point is precisely that promise and fulfilment are not neutral parts of a whole from which something univocal could be abstracted; promise, as such, has its truth in fulfilment. In so far as the promise, precisely, is not itself the fulfilled truth, it does indeed participate, but only participate, in the uniqueness of the fulfilment. For this reason, it can and must also participate (as we shall see under 3 below) in other 'ideal-typical' structures (van der Leeuw).

2. In so far as Christ is supposed to recapitulate in himself everything in heaven and on earth, he is also the image of all images in creation and history, and to that extent he fulfils the partial truths contained in the religious myths of all peoples. These myths, moreover, and indeed all forms of religion whatever, can be grouped under certain categories of religious phenomenology. It is, therefore, also to be expected that the content of these categories (provided they exist) will find itself taken up and transcended in the form that fulfils it. The question remains open and will be dealt with later.

3. Now, if the man Jesus was (and had to be, in order truly to be human) a man in time, and therefore a man of his time and of his historical epoch, then the first two perspectives must be compatible with the fact that, at least at a certain level, he is accessible to the historical system of categories and to the typological manner of approach. Granted that the message which he brings from God is really that of the Only-begotten in the bosom of the Father (whom no one but him has seen, Jn 1.18); granted, therefore, that this is the unique message which cannot be relativised: nonetheless, it belongs to his human reality that he brings 'the rule of God' in the same way as the founder of any religion founds his religion—to be precise, within a specific *kairos*, in this case the *kairos* determined by Jerusalem, Hellenism, and Rome. We could make the point more sharply by saying that it would not be contradictory to think of the star of Bethlehem as standing in a horoscopic situation. We could then enlarge on this by saying that the Church Fathers

were certainly right to exclude fate when it is not only the Lord of history, but the Lord of the stars themselves who appears. But this thought does not exclude the fact that, if this Lord truly becomes man, then he too enters into a horoscopic *kairos*, provided, of course, that such a thing can be accepted as true. The moment of Christ's coming, in any event, was a constellation within world-history, since he not only 'makes' history but becomes and *is* history. This is supported by what we said under our first head: Israel, which in relation to Jesus appears first as a promise, grows historically to the full stature of its form as promise and, therefore, learns only on the historical road and through growth to see and understand itself as just such a form. But that is to say that Israel can grow into its own unique form only by starting from the general religious structures of mankind, as indeed is shown increasingly powerfully by research in the history of religions. All the essential categories of Israel's religion are also categories of its religious environment, with which it has in common certain ideal types both initially and also in the end. There are things which it has in common with all nomadic peoples, and others it shares with the settled peasant population; things which can and must be interpreted in light of, on the one hand, Mesopotamia or on the other, Egypt. Its charismatic leadership is not without analogies, nor, more strikingly, is its priesthood and its later kingship. Even its prophecy grows out of a more general phenomenon, perhaps related to a certain ecstatic-mantic movement in Syria and Palestine, 'whose origins probably lie outside that area, perhaps in the mantic enthusiasm of Thrace and Asia Minor'.²² Israel's religion of promise in this way brings to Christ the general religious heritage of all mankind, and it does this in spite of its own growing distinctiveness, which develops out of a growing appreciation of the incomparability of Israel's mission. Thus, by fulfilling in himself Israel's message of promise, Christ at the same time makes historical contact, through Israel, with mankind's religious forms, and in this way, too, he fulfils not only Israel's expectation but the longing of all peoples. All this, however, serves to point up afresh the way in which Christ stands under a particular historical sign, in the Near East, in the general context of the Semitic people which embraces all their distinctive patterns of thought and self-expression, even if, as may appear, this position between East and West can be considered privileged both in a geographic and in a horoscopic sense.

These three aspects can only be brought together by a theological thought always in movement, which rises from one level of consideration to the other.

In developing these three aspects we spoke in aprioristic theological fashion, exposing the conditions of the possibility of understanding the Word of God: they demand a uniqueness *within* general historical determinateness, and see this paradox as mediated by a salvation-history that moves from the universal to the theologically particular and unique. What at the one level is enlightening (the similarity of Biblical religion with the surrounding cultural religions, and so forth, something which methodologically is both acceptable and necessary) has its dangers at another level, encouraging a blindness for the particularity of the revealed religion and for its uniqueness which sets it apart from all others. But the fact is that true uniqueness in the end can be seen only by the believing eye, and, therefore, everything that constitutes this uniqueness can, for the non-believing eye, be subjected to the historical-critical method. Does this occur with or without good reason?

If it is true that the Word truly became ‘flesh’, man, world-history; if the Word nowhere encounters us nakedly but always in an envelopment of ‘flesh’; then we shall have to grant that the uniqueness of the form cannot be ascertained ‘scientifically’. Everything about it can be viewed—and dissolved—phenomenologically as belonging to a set of ideal types, always provided that the researcher, as van der Leeuw expressly requires, practises a suspension of judgment (*epoch*?). And yet, theologically, the question remains whether such phenomenology can make the phenomenon of a ‘unique’ form visible (always supposing that such a form exists), and the question must in advance be answered negatively. For, within the whole network of historical relationships, such a form would continually have to be discerned and marked out as the real point of reference, and, in order to be perceived as what it is, such a form would constantly demand the entrance of its beholder into faith—into a faith which has been at least tentatively ‘advanced’ (like money on credit), but a faith which is something different from a ‘methodological participation’ (within the methodological *epoche*) for the sake of phenomenological understanding.^{[23](#)}

Before we turn finally to consider the relationship between the different images of God of the history of religion and the uniqueness of God’s image in Christ, we must make explicit the question which remained open in the second point above. The question is: Can we grasp typologically and categorically even what different peoples, at the summit of their religions, take to be a divine revelation? Or better: Even if in the experience of such a revelation a role is certainly played by the particular character of a culture, a

people, an age, an individual, does not the real event occurring actually escape all comparative classification? Is it not in every instance something absolutely unique, since it represents a ray from the very abyss of the mystery of Being, and as such it proclaims the uniqueness and incomparableness of the latter? And if a given people then brings such a unique expression of Being to the full maturity of a valid symbolic form (in stele, myth, or dramatic action), what right do we have to relativise this construct from the perspective of any typology whatever, thus necessarily robbing it of its believing soul? Walter F. Otto,²⁴ Martin Buber²⁵ and Erich Przywara²⁶ turned in indignation against the cynicism of the Jungian method of therapy, which evacuates and degrades to the level of mere psychic archetypes man's relation to the authentic images of Being, indeed, images of God. These archetypes can then be dealt with 'therapeutically', since allegedly they are nothing more than structures of the collective unconscious. In the highest and most significant sense, 'form' can be understood only as a revelation of the mystery of Being: ultimate meaning emerges only where this mystery fills and indwells the form. The gods cannot be interpreted as the personifications of human and cosmic forces which could just as well be given abstract names. As concrete forms, they are radiant, unique images and unveilings of Being, of human existence within experienced Being, of 'regions' of Being which cannot be divided by arbitrary borderlines. Within finite contours, these images validly encompass and embody the fulness of the universe. A Michelangelo, a Goethe, a Keats must still have seen such gods with their inner eye; many of their figures presuppose such encounters. And we must ask ourselves whether the inability of the modern heart to encounter gods—with the resultant withering up of human religions—is altogether to Christianity's advantage. The derision of the gods by Christian apologists, even by the great Augustine, is not indeed in every respect a glorious chapter of the Church's history. To be sure, it is true that Augustine used crude methods only against what was itself crude deception and ridiculous abuse; against serious opponents such as Varro, Porphyry, Plotinus, and Apuleius he fought with very different weapons, and in the end he considered it almost a verbal dispute whether the angels and the *daimones* (which he took to be cosmic powers) should be called 'gods'. What is the 'angel of Yahweh' in the Old Testament? What is the meaning of this radiant power, this passing face of the one without countenance, this flaming radiance of his might and his presence, glorious and terrible as he wrestles with man near the River Jabbok

(Gen 32.25-33) or when he seeks to kill Moses (whereupon his wife circumcises their son and with the foreskin touches Moses' member, saying: 'Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!' And so Yahweh let him alone; Ex 4.24ff.)? A primitive myth crying out for de-mythologisation? Or, rather, is it a tremendous experience of God in revealed forms which (as is usually the case in the 'religion of the fathers') cannot be interpreted completely as 'gods' nor completely as 'angels'? The most insignificant of questions is that concerning the role played here by the 'imagination': for, although theophanies are certainly shaped within the imagination, what does this fact prove for or against them?

The psalmists still see God as standing in the midst of the gods; and when the Second Isaiah victoriously proclaims their vanity he does so in the sense of Paul's 'silencing' of the cosmic powers: those divine powers neither compete with the Lord nor do they any longer dominate man in such a way as to rob him of his freedom to cling to the one Lord, his Redeemer. In his *Book of Hours* Rilke portrayed a God who 'inherits' Christianity. Hölderlin and the late Schelling, but also Hopkins, show us a Christ who 'inherits' the gods of paganism: that is to say, 'inherits' the splendour of the theophanies which now passes over to him, who is the sole Heir and the Wholly Other. Hopkins in particular can see a primeval landscape in a 'Christo-phanic' manner without making a μετάρβασις as such. An elementary pedagogical caveat, of course, warns us against fusing Christ with Dionysos or Apollo and making a cosmic religion out of Christianity. But, by so doing, we would only have underestimated the gradient leading from this kind of promise to its fulfilment in Christ. In what concerns Christ's authentic heritage, Greek and Russian theology as a rule have a far better understanding than the West. Behind Alyosha and his *starets* the tradition stretches out for a thousand years or more.²⁷ And from Maximus there are lines that lead to his translator Scotus Eriugena, to Gerhoh von Reichersberg, the Victorines, Bonaventure and Nicholas of Cusa, Leibniz, Böhme and Baader, all of whom know that it is not only the Church which inherits the ancient patrimony of humanistic learning, but that the Messiah himself inherits the interior realities of the religions of all peoples, in so far as these contain theophanies and not demonologies.

Only thus can we pose the question concerning the uniqueness of Christ's form meaningfully, over and above all the unique aspects of other theophanies. If Christ is to be *the* Unique One, then, when we look at his

form, what must happen is that all other forms, in spite of their qualitative difference and even opposition, come more and more to exhibit related characteristics, while he, who had seemed to be related to them and capable of being classified under the same general categories, now appears in ever greater isolation, incapable of being reduced to anything whatever. To anyone who stops short at the features held in common one would have to prove that he has not really seen what is there, that he has not really perceived the heart of the matter. We now suggest four different directions in which an indication may be sought how this progressive isolation takes place. Many of these points have already been discussed, but are here repeated now from a different perspective.

1. The other founders of religions are wise men who point men to a 'way' (Dhammapada, Tao) which they have found or which has been revealed to them. Jesus, on the other hand, from the outset presents *himself* as the way. The way to which the other founders point can be a simple doctrine of dying to the world and rising again in God. But it can also be the myth of a god who dies and rises, descends and again ascends. But in no case can the historical founder identify himself with the myth. At most, he may in a fairly obvious way later come to be seen by his disciples as an incarnation of the god he had proclaimed. Valentinus is an extraordinary creator of myths whose structures can still fascinate us today; and yet he himself is not Achamoth or the *Logos* that delivers her. Jesus, by contrast, draws the form of his teaching and the form of his life together into a strict identity, not only to the point of his death—as a pledge and a demonstration of love (Jn 15.1 3)—but even of the Resurrection itself: thus he identifies the mythical figure with the historical figure, and this not as an afterthought, but in such a way that the eschatological school is quite right when it says that Jesus' whole doctrine stands and falls with this one trump-card of a transcendence that irrupts into history. Ought we to say that this irrupting transcendence is not verifiable for mortal man, that it is a pure construct of faith? In this case we would have to delete the Apostles' *kerygma* concerning the Resurrection and, at the same time, follow Albert Schweitzer in seeing the cry of the dying Christ on the Cross as his confession of total failure. We have already shown, however, how in this event the whole figure would simply collapse leaving not so much as a discernible fragment of human wisdom but only the historical witness of a perfect fool. In actual fact, however, the uniqueness with which the form of Christ confronts us is the identity between myth and historical

reality. At first this might seem to amount to breaking the magic of the ‘gods of Greece’, whereas what occurs is that reality, by entering the eschatological dimension, is now plunged into the radiance of God’s glory.

2. In order to give credibility to the mission of other founders, it is essential to describe in detail the moment of their decisive conversion, enlightenment, and rapture. They toiled and were rewarded; they knocked and the door was opened to them. They were earthly and were initiated into heavenly mysteries. And now they can and must initiate others to the same revelation. Even the Prophets of the Old Testament become prophets at a specific moment, as a result of a special call which may take the form of a vision that imposes a mission. From this perspective it is understandable that Christ’s baptism and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him have at times been equated with such experiences of being sent. But to do so is already to enter fully the realm of Gnostic Christology, and the ‘Spirit’ which comes to animate Jesus at a specific moment will logically leave him again at the Cross. In this event, we will again be at a loss to understand the historical form of Christ or of Johannine Christology, which portrays him as the only one who has descended from heaven, who has come down from above (Jn 3.13; 8.23) and contrasts him to all others, who are from below. The attempt could be made to interpret John’s portrayal as a mythical Gnostic schema superimposed on the historical Jesus. To this we would have to reply that the infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke support John and, what is more important, that John is in full harmony with the manner in which Jesus’ preaching presupposes an identification of his teaching with his entire existence, something impossible if a conversion-experience were involved. The consequence of this identification may be seen most clearly in the fact that, precisely when the very Son of the Father is the man Jesus, the death and Resurrection of Jesus are removed from the sphere of human and worldly destiny and elevated to become the expression of divine love. When Tammuz, Adonis, Attis, or Baldur die, this is ‘destiny’, and the divine power that awakens them from the dead proves to be stronger than destiny. But ‘only Christianity has made death itself to be salvation. All other “saviour” religions preach life out of death; the Gospel of the Cross proclaims salvation *in* death. Here total powerlessness becomes the highest unfolding of power, and utter disaster becomes salvation.’²⁸ What occurs is not the crowning of a human drama with divine victory: rather the drama of human dissolution as a whole becomes an expression of eternal love.

3. The myths of bringers of salvation are primarily naturalistic, and are therefore, at best, protological and eschatological. The deed of Christ, by contrast, is meant to be understood historically. As such, it indeed fulfils Israel's religion, which thinks in historical terms, and through such fulfilment it incorporates and embraces the myths of cosmic transformation found in other peoples. In its attempt to express Yahweh's incisive action as judge, Israel itself had occasionally made use of old mythical images. But the centre of Biblical religion remains nonetheless historical. In this it is set apart from cosmic myths and mystical systems which fundamentally could only choose either to negate the Being of the world as such for the sake of the divine Being (thus locating salvation in the abolition of the illusion of the world), or to make visible anew, through all the confusion and forgetfulness wrought by man, the primal divine law that permeates the world's Being (the *Tao*, or the *Rta* of the Vedas, or the *Logos* and *Nomos* of the pre-Socratics and of the Plato of the *Laws*). Even Celsus will still hold up this Λόγος ἀληθής to Christians as being the Νόμος ἀρχαῖος.²⁹ It is possible to see this cosmic law as indwelt by a salvific law (either with the rhythms of the vegetative realm or patterned after it); in this case the cosmic law is itself essentially salvation. But this either / or of negation and transfiguration cannot be successfully overcome until the structure of 'the present aeon' has been gripped in the vice of history and lifted from its hinges. Once again, the decisive element here is the fact that God's transforming deed of salvation is, at the same time, the deed of a man who has sacrificed himself out of love for us all, and that this deed makes itself present in the community not only as a sacramental event which hiddenly transforms the world but as an immediate and urgent moral demand. It is selfless love of neighbour which, in virtue of the imitation of Christ and by his power, lifts the world from its hinges. Love of neighbour works and suffers in imitation of Christ and, therefore, in expectation of him who 'is to come again'; but Christ does not return out of compliance with a pre-established cosmological pattern (as is the case with the saviour in Mazdaism): he comes, rather, 'like a thief in the night', which means with all the freedom of a love that transcends cosmic laws.³⁰ What is negated by Christ is not the Being of the world, but its decadent mode of existence in alienation from God. It is not that an eternally present cosmic law is now brought to consciousness in a new way by Christ; rather, out of the freedom of God's love a mode of salvation is created by which all is safeguarded in God. To unite these two things more than a myth is required (even a Gnostic

one) and more than a religious ethic: what is required is precisely that Christ-form which we have characterised by saying that it could not be invented by man.

4. From the image of existence and of the world, let us now turn to the image of God. The other founders are caught up in the dialectic between God and the world, between the One and what is Other (the Many). Possible solutions are: a) to remain midway between the One and the Many (the way of Mohammed); b) to abolish the Many for the sake of the One (the way of all forms of non-Christian mysticism, including Sufism); c) to incorporate the One into the Many (the way of polytheism and pantheism). Even Israel foresees an eschatological time when God will indwell a sanctified world. God's trinitarian nature, which is revealed in Christ and is in itself an ungraspable light, enlightens the relationship between God and man in a wholly new manner which cannot be confused with any of the others. The possibilities that open up with this revelation avoid the unsatisfactory elements of the other Ways and are inexhaustible. The Son who is both the Word of the Father and a hypostasis, allows man to have a foreshadowing glance into the depths of God, and this glance enlightens man as to how God, at the same time, can be the One and Only (in his spiritual nature) *and* eternal love, without a shadow of that selfishness which weighs down on the other religions in the form of *fatum* or of *necessitas*. The revelation of God's trinitarian nature further shows us how the world can be justified as the Other and the Many without its having to appear as a necessity for God's unity, which somehow has to return to itself after having been scattered. The otherness of creatures is essentially justified by the otherness that exists within the identity of God himself: the reality of the God-Man is inconceivable apart from the reality of Father and Son, and the creation, which derives from the freedom of God and can claim no necessity for its own existence, is nonetheless justified in its existence because it is an expression of trinitarian love: it is a gift of the Father to the Son, a gift which the Son then returns to the Father and which is transfigured by the Holy Spirit as the love between the Father and the Son. It is in this sense, and only in this sense, that the cosmos becomes a *diffusio bonitatis divinae*. Looking back from this standpoint on any other system, the doctrine of the Trinity appears as the only possible theodicy of the world, in the light of which we clearly come to see the inadequacy of any other theodicy (and this is said *a priori*). And the doctrine applies universally, starting with the formal foundation of

creaturely existence and ultimately embracing every individual content and perfection. Thus the Son's free act of incarnation intrinsically perfects the free creation which was already established ontologically in the Trinity in a twofold manner, according to both essence and existence. And thus, too, it is guaranteed that all the consequences of the Incarnation, the bestowing of grace, justification, man's elevation to participate in the divine nature can occur without any danger or loss to man's creaturely nature as he freely follows. The trinitarian interpretation of human existence, the cosmos, and world-history (in which, from the incomprehensible mystery, a light pours out that makes things comprehensible) provides man's intellect and will to love with a progressive satisfaction of the most exalted kind which derives from the very heart of the ever-greater mystery of Being. For what can quench man's longings more than the following twofold certitude: I need not fear that I will ever understand God and thus come to exhaust him, but his eternal incomprehensibility is for me a source of eternally overflowing insight and love (γνῶναι τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν τῆς γνώσεως ἀγάπην, Eph 3.19).

These four approaches allow us to sight the uniqueness of Christ's form. This form, to summarize, does not appear as something relatively unique, as might be said of the creations of the other great founders. Qualitatively set apart from them, the Christ-form appears absolutely unique; but, on the basis of its own particular form, the Christ-form relates to itself as the ultimate centre the relative uniqueness of all other forms and images of the world, whatever the realm they derive from. This relatedness of all myths and religious conceptions, indeed of everything in the world of man which can be and is an authentic revelation of God, to the centre of God's Incarnation necessarily has two sides: it is fulfilment through judgment. Now, the Bible emphasises primarily the aspect of judgment—witness the line from the Mosaic prohibition of images, through the Prophets, the Psalms, and the Wisdom Books, all the way to the Paul of the first chapter of Romans—and this is in keeping with the essence of Holy Scripture as God's taking possession of both man and history: the stage must be cleared and room must be made for the one absolute truth. But it is not necessarily a contradiction of the Biblical tendency when theologians of history such as Justin, Clement and Eusebius, Alan de Lille and Nicholas of Cusa, Schelling and Hegel, and artists such as Calderon in his ecclesiastical mystery-plays, all want to illumine the mythical world by relating it to Christ. Calderon succeeded in

portraying convincingly the fact that Christ is not only the true Isaac and Boaz, but also the true Jason and Hercules, the true Amor with the human soul, Psyche, the true Theseus with the Minotaur, the true Orpheus with Eurydice, who represents humanity. These literal illuminations were surpassed by the philosophers, who expanded them to include an understanding of the interior workings of myths and of their limits. Theologians necessarily had to treat this kind of ‘enlightenment’ more carefully, since there can be no question of any straightforward progression in enlightenment but only of a veiled manner of relating myth to a centre which is itself veiled.

Even as it points to Christ, myth remains in the world of images and it is impossible for it to transcend itself on its own and thus attain to Christ. This constitutes the ‘aesthetic’ character of myth, in the narrow critical sense in which the term is used nowadays: myth with its infinite fulness of meaning, which yet, on its own, cannot possibly translate image into word; with its atmosphere of the ‘silence and sorrow of the gods’³¹ in which the mythical as such is steeped and whose internal limits Hegel sensed so keenly. But it would be a mistake to seek to illumine this mute fulness of meaning by attempting to conceptualise it, since what it lacks, to use Kierkegaardian language, is ‘existence’. This is why Plato and Aristotle did not abolish myth from within, even though they transcended it. Both things, myth as well as concept, await the God-Man in order to come into their own. Clearly such realisation could not occur without judgment being passed on the closed and tragic nature of aesthetic existence. It is also obvious, however, that the transfiguration of the God-Man who died under the judgment of the Cross also transfigures the mythical (as Wolfram von den Steinen has shown for the early Middle Ages³²), and this should be readily understood whenever the philosophical concept itself is enlisted as an *ancilla theologiae*. Proceeding on this awareness, Christian art has at all times—most profusely in the Baroque period—made use of myth, and it is the task of Christian theological taste to identify and maintain the appropriate measures and limits.

d. The Form’s Hiddenness and Its Misapprehension

There is a negative proof both of the uniqueness of the form and of the theory here developed concerning the form-quality of the Christian principle,

namely the demonstration that anyone who rejects the form of Christ has objectively misapprehended it, either in whole or in part. Not only has he not contributed the necessary subjective enthusiasm for the form (which he can only do if the form has first convinced him), but it can be objectively proven to him that, in considering the form, he has overlooked essential aspects of it or hastened past them and, since this form is the Word of God, has failed to hear what is being said. A Christian who objectively confirms this objective misapprehension of the form is not thereby entitled to make a value-judgment concerning the disposition of his fellow human being who fails to see the form of Christ, for there may be many reasons (besides personal guilt) why Christ's form has not been perceived. For instance, a person might simply not have encountered it in the historical realm, or perhaps he has been presented only with a distorted and disfigured image of it. But, in spite of being well-advised not to judge (Mt 7.1; 1 Cor 4.5), that Christian nonetheless has the possibility of knowing that, in faith, his own vision of the form objectively encompasses the vision of his fellow-man who does not see: *Animalis homo non percipit ea. . . , et non potest intelligere. . . , spiritualis autem judicat omnia, et ipse a nemine judicatur* ('The natural [psychic] man does not perceive these things. . . , and he is not able to understand them. . . . But the spiritual [pneumatic] man judges all things, and is himself to be judged by no one,' 1 Cor 2.14f.). Even if the Christian neither can nor should judge the subjective act that fails to grasp the form, he can still see that the other person has objectively missed the mark, as is shown by the many words occurring in the New Testament with the prefix παρα: παραβαίνειν (to pass alongside, to trespass: Mt 15.2; Acts 1.25); παράβασις (transgression: Rom 2.23, etc.); παραδιδόναι (to hand over, to betray: Mt 10.17, etc.); παραθεωρεῖσθαι (to overlook: Acts 6.1); παραιτεῖσθαι (to withdraw, to beg off as being excused: Lk 14.18f.; Acts 25.11; 1 Tim 4.7, etc.); παρακούειν (to mishear something, to be disobedient: Mt 18.17; Mk 5.36); παρακοή (disobedience: Rom 5.19; 2 Cor 10.6; Heb 2.2); παραλογίζεσθαι (to disappoint, to deceive: Col 2.4; Jas 1.22); παρανομεῖν (to act outside the law, to transgress it: Acts 23.3); παραπίπτειν (to fall alongside, to sin: Heb 6.6); παράπτωμα (sin: Mt 6.14 and *passim*); παραπορεύεσθαι (to pass alongside: Mk 9.30, etc.); παραφρονεῖν (to think alongside, to be irrational: 2 Cor 11.23); παραφρονία (unreason: 2 Pet 2.16); παρεισάγειν (to bring in on the side, to smuggle in: Gal 2.4; 2 Pet 2.1); παρεισθύνειν (to slip in unnoticed; Jude 4); παρεισέρχεσθαι (to enter on the side, to sneak in: Rom 5.20; Gal 2.4); παρενοχλεῖν (to burden on the side, to

importune: Acts 15.19, etc.).

Scripture constantly reckons with such failures at every level of thought, attitude, and action. Here we are concerned only with the failure to see or the misapprehension of the central form of Christ; and, in a situation where there is an explicit confrontation with Christ, such failure to see him cannot be exempt from a certain kind of guilt: it can come about through entanglement in a collective rejection of Christ or through personal refusal resulting from malice or weakness. The decisive failure to see recorded in Scripture is Israel's, and this failure is imputed to the leaders of the people, who are blind leaders of the blind (Mt 15.14). Blindness, 'groping about at bright midday' (Deut 28.29), and deafness were long considered to be the real punishment from God: they are at once disobedience and punishment for disobedience (Is 6.9f.; 42.18f.; Mt 13.14; Jn 12.40; Acts 28.26f.). It is the frightful reality of not seeing what—after all the preparations made in the Old Testament, down to John the Baptist—*had* to be seen, the attitude which from the beginning defined Israel's hardness of heart: 'Your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead brass' (Is 48.4; Jer 7.26). In his discourses Jesus refers to this characteristic of Israel's obstinacy which has been 'from the beginning' (Mt 23.32-36), and which thus becomes 'for ever and ever': 'Behold, your house will be abandoned to its fate; for I tell you, from now on you will not see me again' (Mt 23.38f.). The Lord's parables proceed from this paradigmatic failure to see: they confront it face to face and bear its stamp. This is why the very form of the parables is intended to exacerbate blindness: they are words of decision, of scandal, of judgment, precisely because they could also be words of salvation for Israel. For this reason it makes little difference whether in Mt 13.12f. the word *t'va* is translated as 'because' or as 'so that': 'But from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because (ἰὼν) seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.' And the more they themselves think they see, the blinder they become and the more inexcusable (Rom 2.19). The Biblical concept of 'making blind' (with all its variations) can have meaning only if it is related to something which is objectively visible, something which could and would have to be seen in the appropriate circumstances. The French expression *cela crève les yeux* here acquires an unsuspected impact: what dazzles to the point of blinding is precisely what is most perfectly evident and which is met with violent negation (*cf.* Rom 1.20ff.).

This is important for our understanding of scandal. It is not the object's invisibility which creates uncertainty and finally results in a failure to see on the part of the subject. It is, rather, the prior judgment we make that the thing in question *cannot* be what it claims to be which is responsible. The true scandal is the arrogant attitude that opposes one's subjective opinion to the objective evidence. If the prejudice is of long standing, the rejection of the evidence can occur 'in good faith' and the sin of scandal then dates from much earlier. The man here claiming to be the Messiah in no way fits the pre-conceived model which can allegedly be drawn from the Scriptures. The images presented by Scripture appear to be much closer to another much more earthly conception. And, thus, the point at which Jewish claims to a superior knowledge detached themselves from an obedience that remained open to God is deeply hidden in the past. That is the point where the faith that makes room for all expansions of divine fulfilment degenerates into a private knowledge of how things should be.

The prerequisite for sighting the form of Jesus is faith in God, in the very general sense that a person must make space for divine omnipotence—all the space this form needs in order to unfold fully: space between heaven and earth, God and world, Old and New Age. And if, in order to be able to unfold, the form requires such breadth from the beholder, then the latter must allow himself to be stretched until the required space has been created within him. A whole symphony cannot be recorded on a tape that is too short. Naturally, the image of Christ cannot be fully 'taken in' as can a painting; its dimensions are objectively infinite, and no finite spirit can traverse them. The advance 'credit' of faith, therefore, is required if the image is to be allowed its proper proportions. It is, nevertheless, an image and a form, the Image of all images and the Form of all forms and, as such, it possesses an evidential power of its own which it itself communicates.

This evidence may be best demonstrated negatively, by pointing out where it is that every failure to see the form exactly fails. Something of this method was explained in the last section, where we saw how Christ's image may be distinguished from the forms of all other founders of religions. Here everything depended on the perception of the whole form and on the interrelatedness of its various aspects. Once these aspects are taken in isolation from one another the form has already disappeared; and even if each aspect hereby gains a sort of hyperclarity that makes it more apt for 'scientific' elaboration, nevertheless the spiritual bond among them is sadly

missing. In order to see that each individual aspect in truth receives its full meaning only by its overall relationship to the whole, that 'art of total vision' is required of which we have so often spoken. From one arm the archaeologist can reconstruct the whole statue, and the palaeologist can reconstruct the whole animal from a single tooth. A musicologist should be able to tell, from a single fugue motif, whether it was intended as a part of a double or a triple fugue, and to guess at the rhythmical structure that the second or third theme must have had. Everyone who has listened to Bach knows that, in the classical fugue, the rhythmical arrangement is oppositional: the first theme is slow and reposeful, the second runs along swiftly, and the third contains a rhythmical hammering; and every hearer knows that this varied thematic construction is determined by the rationale of the fugue's total architecture. Something similar occurs with the Gospel. The eschatological theme, taken on its own, is incomprehensible without the cadence of Christ's suffering. The vertical form of the Son of God who descends from the Father and goes back to him would be illegible without the horizontal form of historical fulfilment and of the mission entrusted to the Apostles. The evangelical ethic of love of neighbour receives its meaning from the living archetype of Christ, which is not only a model but at the same time (yet not only) the anticipation that makes imitation possible. Every element calls for the other, and the more penetrating the gaze of the beholder, the more he will discover harmony on all sides. If one essential element should be broken off (Christ's eternal divine sonship, for instance), all the proportions will be distorted and falsified. It is here that the problem of heresy has its roots: *hairesis*, the selective disjoining of parts. Heresy is able to analyse individual parts more exactly in themselves, and, in certain cases, where the wholeness of vision is lacking, heresy can call attention to what is missing or has been omitted (provided that here, too, the lacuna is not denied or has not simply been plastered over). But heresy can never make a whole with the parts that have been stolen.

Looking past Christ, failing to see him is something that can occur in various ways, but all these ways have this in common, that the gaze cannot withstand looking at the form of Christ himself. It is impossible to look into his eyes and maintain that one does not see him. There is, first of all, the possibility of erecting a screen before his image, and then being convinced or convincing oneself that it cannot be removed. A modern example of this is the 'historical-critical method', which supposedly can go only as far as the

testimonies of faith in Christ and which then sees these testimonies as a screen hiding the historical Jesus. Or one can place before the image all sorts of historico-religious schemas (such as the myths of the ‘salvation-bearer’³³), or simply a system of categories under which one assumes, perhaps in good faith, that the phenomenon will be subsumed. For very many who refuse to take a look for themselves (but, astoundingly, also for many an earnest seeker), the screen of the Church ‘as it unfortunately happens to be’ suffices for them to excuse themselves from looking at Christ. Or perhaps it is Christians who put them off—Christians in general or a certain number of them one knows and by which one judges all Christianity, or perhaps it is a single individual who has disappointed one for life. For Nietzsche, for instance, it is enough that these redeemed ‘do not look more redeemed’, although it must be added that this profoundly sincere soul left the form of Christ himself almost totally out of his polemic. Whole periods of salvation-history, such as German Idealism and Classicism, seem to have been content with a pitifully faded image of Christ, accepted, it would appear, as if by tacit convention. At that time almost no one looked at Christ face to face, and for half a century or so it would seem that many things had simply disappeared from the text of the Gospels, and this not only for the philosophers and the poets but also for the theologians. People survived on second-hand presentations, on authorised compromises such as Schleiermacher’s, who himself seems to have read the text through two or three pairs of spectacles. Even in the Catholic restoration it is not Christ himself who is contemplated, but rather the remotely derived cultural effects of Christianity: the ‘harmonious disposition’ found in the Church (Chateaubriand), the reliability of the primitive tradition, the poetic and mystical character of the Middle Ages. . . . In polemics and apologetics alike we largely find the same blinking eyes and batting eyelashes. This stems perhaps from a certain modesty that prevents courtly and bourgeois eras from speaking directly about what is most immediate: the preference to refer to it indirectly, in the reflection of custom and piety. But such ‘modesty’ quickly becomes a pretext for forgetfulness, a pretext for obstructing the paths to the essential. Often, too, we encounter an inability to speak impartially about the thing itself; instead we find the tendency to preach *cum studio* or *cum ira* from the outset, in the irritating tone of the revivalist which can only be countered with exasperated self-defence. What, however, can be the meaning of ‘impartially’ here? It cannot refer to the *epoch*? (or bracketing) of one’s own existence, which is

precisely what Christ intends to reach and what he addresses and which must answer him if it is to catch sight of what Christ intends. Pascal and Kierkegaard were able to speak both existentially and impartially because they both stood under Christ's fiery glance, which forbade them to engage in any digressive rhetoric and simply charged them to stand firm. They are both doubtless great artists of the word who, in this regard, placed all their art in the service of Christ's truth. As much could be said for Newman in his prayers, and, at certain times, for given poems of Brentano and Verlaine, but much more frequently for the poems of Eichendorff. The same, finally, may also be said of Hamann's early *Biblische Betrachtungen* ('Biblical Meditations'), written in just a few weeks.

Most of those who approach the centre prefer to remain silent, but the manner in which they do this makes evident that they have indeed been stricken. In their existence an order is reflected that becomes a proclamation without words (1 Pet 3.1). This form that images order has something secret and yet clearly sublime about it: the centre of gravity of life has been shifted to Christ ('I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me'), and the form of one's own existence becomes incomprehensible except as a function of the Christ-form.

Looking past and failing to see the form is something which can remain externally ambiguous: some can look past an image which consists of pure prejudices to gaze into a mysterious sphere where, unseen yet intuited only by the heart, the true form stands. And this finally brings us to the two decisive questions: 1) How does the evidential force of the Christ-form relate to its hiddenness? and 2) How do man's guilt and the blindness that comes with it relate to this same hiddenness?

1. The first question faces us with the problem whether Jesus intended to conceal or to reveal himself. The Gospels exhibit both motifs; but how are we to reconcile them? In Mark the problem is at its most confusing. Here the two motifs are found not only alongside each other, but sharply and dialectically opposed to one another, so that we have to look forward to John to see how they can be united in one single figure. Mark is aware of a 'messianic secret'³⁴ which Jesus wants to preserve by every means possible. In a manner both impressive and threatening, Jesus commands the evil spirits that recognise him to keep silent (Mk 1.34; 3.12). Even as he heals him, Jesus replies with wrath (ὀργισθεὶς, according to a well-attested reading, cf. Mk 3.5) to the leper who had asked to be cured; 'he sternly charged him and

threw him out, saying: “See that you say nothing to anyone!” ’ (Mk 1.42f.). After raising up the daughter of Jairus, he charges all those standing round to say nothing (Mk 5.43), and the same occurs at the healing of the deaf and dumb man (Mk 7.35). Before healing many of the sick, he takes them aside, or outside the city gates (Mk 7.33; 8.23), and instructs them to go home without entering the town again (Mk 8.26; *cf.* 5.19). Even more important is the fact that, to those of his disciples who recognise that he is the Messiah, he gives the same stern command (ἐπιτιμᾶν) to speak to no one about him (Mk 8.30). Nor are they allowed to divulge anything of the appearance on Mount Tabor before his Resurrection (Mk 9.9). Related to this is his urge to go apart by himself: just as he has lived in the wilderness among wild beasts (Mk 1.12f.), so too he evades the multitude that seeks him by going ‘elsewhere’ (Mk 1.38). He escapes into a heathen region (Mk 5.1; 7.24) and there enters a house, and he desires that ‘no one should know about it.’ Together with his disciples he evades the crowd and retreats to a ‘desolate place’ (ἔρημος τόπος, Mk 6.31; 1.45).

These commands to be silent are of no avail, and this for three main reasons. Partly it is because the injunctions are not obeyed: ‘the more he charged them to tell no one, the more zealously they proclaimed it’ (Mk 7.36; 1.45; *cf.* Mt 9.30f.: ‘ “See that no one knows it!” But they went away and spread his fame through all that district’). Partly, however, it was because they could hardly be obeyed, since the miracles to which they refer are public and at times even wrought in the midst of great multitudes of people (Mk 5.21-43; 7.32; 8.22). And partly, finally, it was because those injunctions appear to contradict the intrinsic meaning of the sign of salvation itself and do, in fact, contradict it in the present form of our text. Such is the case, for instance, when the person cured is, on the one hand, supposed to keep silent and, on the other, supposed to show himself to the priests and, ‘as a testimony to them’ (Mk 1.44), offer the Mosaic sacrifice of purification. Another example is the situation in which the miracle to be kept secret elicits from the people authentic praise of God (Mk 7.37). The tendency to conceal his messianic character stands in Christ in sharp opposition to the contrary tendency to proclaim his divine mission to the chosen people. The first tendency is contradicted by the sermons that arouse wonderment and the numerous miracles intended to produce even greater astonishment and which doubtless proclaim the arrival of the messianic time. And yet, this first tendency to keep the secret is just as much determined by Christ’s mission as

is the second tendency; in no sense is it merely a virtuous show of modesty.

In the need to remain hidden there is a kind of constraint;³⁵ hiddenness is not sought for its own sake, but in order to make possible another, more important thing which is where his true manifestation necessarily lies. He must fulfil the messianic prophecies, but not in the way the Jews conceived and interpreted them. This is all the more difficult as it is not only a question of his message, but of his person—his flesh and blood (all want to touch him)—and yet he is not to be confused with a mere miracle-worker or magician. To be sure, behind the constant recurrence of this motif in Mark there is also the belief of the primitive Christian community that only the risen Christ could be understood and proclaimed without danger of misunderstanding. But this belief is already to be seen in Jesus' whole attitude. He himself is given the seemingly contradictory task of being manifest and hidden at the same time. 'The more he proclaims and heals, the more clearly does he become God's revealer and revelation; and it is precisely this clear revelation of his might and of his word which may not radiate wholly unconcealed, for he is the Son of Man, hidden in both his divine and his human mode.'³⁶ This hiddenness itself, however, is once again dialectical: it is the manifestation of God's incomprehensibility, a manifestation which is misunderstood by sinners and which must conceal its own need to become manifest if it is to become manifest at all.

Thus, until the truth about his identity becomes inescapable, Jesus had to unfold his messianic reality and glory by constantly, as it were, avoiding the Jewish concept of the Messiah. One initial expression for this seemingly contradictory aspect of his mission is the theological notion of the messianic secret, which is almost totally restricted to Mark and which was probably added by him in many places by way of a leitmotiv. Another expression for this is the different affective states in which especially the miracles are performed. We note the 'anger' (Mk 1.41) we already perceived in his response to the leper who said: 'If you will, you can heal me.' Then there is the way in which he 'looks around at them with anger and compassionate sorrow (συνλυπούμενος) over the hardness of their hearts', this in the case of the man with the withered hand and, particularly, in connection with those who 'were on the watch' to see whether Christ would cure him on the Sabbath (Mk 3.5): here we see Christ performing a miracle in the very face of the sin of scandal. We recall, too, his 'sighing' at the cure of the deaf and dumb man (Mk 7.37) and, soon after, when the Pharisees ask a sign of him

and he refuses it and leaves them standing there (Mk 8.12), we note the threatening way he confronts them, literally his ‘breathing anger’ or ‘spitting threats’ at them (ἐμβριμησάμενος, Mk 1.43; ἐνεβριμήθη, Mt 9.30), and this attitude recurs twice in John when Christ is at the grave of Lazarus: ‘He became furious within himself’ (Jn 11.33, 38), like a captive animal over its impotence. Then, in Mk 9.19, we find the disgust he expresses at still having to put up with this fickle and faithless generation. All of this may, with Lohmeyer, be described as the ‘fury of a divine being at being surrounded by the wretchedness and misery of man’,³⁷ as the ‘sign of a being with a divine nature who is confined within human limits’.³⁸ Equally, the question how long all this must be borne ‘speaks of divine wrath and human lament, and the unfathomable fact of these two things being united constitutes the mystery of the one speaking here’.³⁹ And yet, something more is involved here, and it is the fact that he who is absolutely free now stands under the destiny (of the sinful world) that surrounds him, and that his sovereign activity is interiorly touched by a contrary force which transforms it into suffering: it is as if God could no longer do what he wants, because his good actions elicit sin. As he acts he must do violence to himself in order still to act divinely even as he acts differently than he would like. This concealment of the divine will is the manifestation of that violence which sin inflicts on God. There can be no question here of ἀπάθεια in Jesus’ feelings and acts; his feelings and acts, rather, have a ‘pathetic’ form, which is to say the form of suffering: the sinless one has been ‘made to be sin’ (2 Cor 5.21).

Having said this, we have already anticipated what we find in John. What in Mark still appeared to be an external contradiction between manifestation and secrecy, has in John deepened to become the interior working through in suffering of the contradiction of an infinite revealing love that immerses itself in a world of sin. From the outset, this love is a light in a darkness which does not comprehend it (Jn 1.5), does not recognise it (Jn 1.10), does not receive it (Jn 1.11). Emphasis here falls on ‘from the outset’: it is a drama which is beyond the dramatic on account of its ‘always having known’ (Jn 2.25; 6.64; 18.4), so that the end—death—is already found in the beginning. The Son’s situation is that of having been given away by the Father (Jn 3.16), which nonetheless makes it impossible for him to entrust himself to men (Jn 2. 24). His is a love which, in its fatigue, preaches and works miracles (Jn 4.6), in the peculiar tension between the fact that his hour has not yet come and the fact that the hour (of suffering) has already come for Mary and therefore also

for him (Jn 2.4f.). For the light to be in the darkness always means that the love of God pours itself out extravagantly in the midst of dire need, as is evident in the miracle of the bread (Jn 6.5-13): concretely, it means that God gives of himself in the midst of unbelief, of grumbling, of covert and open threats of death. The discourse of promise reveals the inner state of Passion: he offers himself (as food and drink) to the very limit of indignity, of throwing himself at people. His is a love that breaks out of its security into defencelessness, and that yet immediately (and by the same token) must threaten as a judgment ('Unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man. . .'), a love which rejects those it had impulsively drawn to itself just as abruptly: 'Will you also go away?' (Jn 6.53, 67). In like manner, his discourses in Jerusalem are a constant provocation in every possible direction, and their effect is soon felt: those who are accused of lusting for murder (Jn 7.19; 8.40; 10.32f.) and of adultery against God (Jn 8.42) themselves, in turn, accuse him of premeditated suicide (Jn 8.22), madness (Jn 10.20) and possession (Jn 7.20; 8.48f., 52). We have, too, his explicit gesture of self-withdrawal and self-concealment (Jn 6.15; 8.59; 10.39; 11.54), and his pointedly remaining hidden (Jn 7.10) in response to his unbelieving brothers' proverbial plea that 'no man works in secret if he seeks to be known openly' (Jn 7.4). But, for John, all this is already a love which gives itself unto the darkness and which reveals its glory precisely in this way, to the point where Judas is confronted with the Eucharist, where Jesus' soul is 'shaken in its depths' (Jn 13.21f.). What is portrayed by the Synoptics as the inner drama of the Lord's unopposable will as it exists in the midst of opposition is portrayed by John as the Son's will, which from the outset has entered by suffering into the Father's will to deliver him over ('not to do my own will', Jn 6.38). Only for an instant do we perceive, as by a flash of lightning, the drama of the attuning of these two wills: this occurs at the Son's 'consternation' in the temple when he considers his Passion ('What shall I say?' Jn 12.27).

The hiddenness of the Christ-form, which we have just traced in two of the Gospels, was never invalidated, not even by the transfiguration resulting from Easter and Pentecost, from the reality of the Spirit and of the Church. Rather, such hiddenness belongs essentially to the object which is being transfigured and exalted. For it belongs to the verification of the truth and truthfulness of a Christ who 'does not seek his own glorification' (Jn 5.41; 7.18; 8.50), and the Father seeks and effects this glorification of the Son for this very reason and in so far as the Son does not seek it himself (Jn 8.50). Thus, there is an

intrinsic logical evidence in the resulting fact that this glory of the Son can be seen only by him who believes, that is, by him who does not seek his own honour (Jn 5.40-44), and that the person for whom it becomes visible sees the evidence for the Son's divine mission shining forth precisely from his hiddenness. If this trait were lacking, then the one contemplating Christ would be greatly unsettled because what, for him, is the decisive criterion of authenticity would be missing. Whatever the case, he would not have been granted the vision of the revelation of the ever-greater God, nor of the revelation of the world's redemption, which cannot occur by means of a spectacular theophany that dazzles human misery with divine splendour, but only in the mystery of a love that, by suffering, withstands all the insults inflicted upon it and all the world's burden it must bear. Seen alongside the path chosen by God, every other possibility, devised by the cleverest human speculation or fancy, will always inevitably turn out to be yet another superficial banality.

It could be objected, however, that this hiddenness of God in Christ is covered over and obfuscated by the form of hiddenness of the Church, which is of a quite different kind and not pleasing to God. For many, this argument possesses a certain power of conviction and, thus, dispenses them from faith. They overlook the fact, however, that the form of the Church consists of Jews and Gentiles and, in any event, always of sinners, and that it neither can nor desires to enter into competition with the form of Christ. In the present aeon, it is unthinkable to conceive of a church which would be nothing but the Body of Christ, that is, which in everything would be the expression of its Head's animating power and in nothing the expression of its own resistance to this power: in this case, it would no longer need daily penance, daily confession of sins and sorrow, preaching, admonition, ecclesial discipline. One can, indeed, desire the Church to acquire a 'more redeemed' appearance, especially if one includes oneself in this desire. But it can only be a matter of a relative more or less, as will surely be conceded by all those ecclesial experiments and projects that have made new beginnings in their pursuit of Church reform.

2. The other question concerned hiddenness and guilt. If one fails to see the form of Jesus it is not because the objective evidence is insufficient, but because of the guilt of a 'darkness' which does not see, recognise, or receive the Light. And it is men's guilt which first forces the Son to reveal himself to the world under the mode of hiddenness. Thus, the guilt is not excused by the

hiddenness; rather, the latter becomes the judgment of guilt. The hiddenness is the objective proof that the guilty have not wanted to see. But, because the form of hiddenness is at the same time a form of suffering, guilt intentionally looks away from this its mirror, for there is here nothing gratifying or edifying to behold, but only something contemptible (Is 53.2f.). The last thing that guilt could acknowledge is the fact that precisely such an image is the perfect objectivation of itself, a self-portrait whose similarity and even identity necessarily overwhelms the unprejudiced beholder, and does so the more, the more he contemplates it. In Christ's hiddenness guilt should come to acknowledge the irrefutable demonstration of its own fallenness and dispossession, and this in a new kind of fittingness, 'rightness', which is no less evident than the one considered earlier. Already as an *image* (and not only as δύναμις—power given through grace), the image of hiddenness has the double function of confronting guilt both with its culpable self-concealment and its exposure by grace. Guilt flees from both things, for it is unwilling to admit either that it hides the truth and, therefore, is a lie, or that God can convict it of its own untruth.

In order to see the form of the Redeemer, therefore, a turning is necessary: a turning away from one's own image and a turning to the image of God. And here lies the whole problem of the representation of Jesus in images, particularly of his suffering. The turning or 'con-version' is the prerequisite, not only for 'being able' to endure this image and look at it, but the prerequisite for being able to see at all what it expresses objectively. Such conversion can take place only in the individual; only individuals can be affected by crucifixes on walls or at street corners. Consequently, the question can at least be raised whether the crucifix can be, so to speak, the 'official' image of Christ for the whole community, or whether the latter, as a corporate body, should not have as its symbolic image, rather, the glorified *Kyrios*, as was the case in the ancient Church. The coming to prominence of the image of the suffering Christ in the Gothic Age is closely connected with the privatisation of devotion, the need for interiority and the striving for contemplation that followed an age of external representation which, in part, abused the image of glorification in order to achieve an earthly anticipation of the eschatological Kingdom. Nevertheless, the problem of the image of the suffering Christ, which shows forth the hiddenness of God and the sinner's ruinous condition and exhorts to conversion, has its limits in the essence of the community's worship, which as such is directly oriented to the memorial

of Christ's suffering. It is in this *anamnesis* (1 Cor 11.24), this *memoria passionis*, that the Church achieves her own true self. This occurs, naturally, to the extent that the Church consists of nothing but sinners who gather together and celebrate the memorial Meal in common, becoming a 'church' only through communion in this memorial. The Church exists in no other form. Thus, we here stand beyond the tension between individual and community. The Church is always a personal reality, and it is this *persona Ecclesiae* which contemplates God's image of hiddenness—and must contemplate it, since the Church is the adequate subject for whose sake this image was designed in the first place. The Church is the sinful woman who has undergone conversion once and for all and who, nevertheless, must still be converted anew every day.⁴⁰ As such, the Church has not only to 'believe' the image of hiddenness, but to contemplate it. To persevere in contemplation before this image is for her 'the one thing necessary' (Lk 10.41), because the spiritual power of the image will then 'transform [her] into the same image' (2 Cor 3. 18). Precisely here, where God conceals himself, contemplation becomes an essential dimension of the Christian faith. On Mount Tabor a restful contemplation of Christ's supreme glory is denied the disciples; here, however, the ray of divinity is so withdrawn that the human eye is indeed able to see, but only in order to be wounded the more deeply by this concealed light—if, that is, the eye really sees and perseveres in seeing.

Not only the suffering Lord, but also the Jesus of the hidden and public life, is concealed for the sake of the sinner, and every encounter of the sinner with him as Redeemer is portrayed in the Gospel as a contemplation of his form that occurs because of a conversion brought about by grace. Especially in John, the moment of faith coincides with the vision of the form, or, in a better formulation: the form is already perceived; it is already present completely in the soul, but still in the darkness, as it were, and the only thing needed is for the light to unveil itself, to identify itself with the 'I' that reveals itself, and what is already known and possessed objectively is transformed into a subjective possession. 'Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you" ' (Jn 9.37). 'I who speak with you am he' (Jn 4.26; cf. 20.16, 27). John's whole Gospel represents the unfolding of this contemplative dimension of faith: here, for the Church, contemplation is grounded and given over to her; here is also to be found the permanent justification for the purely contemplative form of life in the Church, a life-form which indissolubly unites the aesthetics of faith with the mystery of

suffering. This is the bridal mystery between Christ and the Church which, in this one image, exacts both the continual contemplation of the 'bleeding Head so wounded' and the existential unification whereby the Bride becomes one with the Bridegroom.

The negative proof of this truth lies not in a pure unbelief which has perhaps never perceived the image, but rather in the negation from within vision itself, that is, in apostasy. The apostate has seen, and then denied what he has seen. Through and through, he remains branded by the image he rejects: with terrible power this image leaves its imprint on his whole existence, which blazes brilliantly in the fire of denial. Wherever the fugitive may turn his glance he is met by the 'eyes like flames of fire', he hears the 'voice like the roar of mighty waters', he feels the 'sharp two-edged sword from His mouth', and he hides in vain from the 'face like the sun blazing with full strength' (Rev 1.14ff.).

D. THE MEDIATION OF THE FORM

1. THE MEDIATION OF SCRIPTURE

When the Son came into the world, his form in various ways became intertwined with the interrelated forms of his immediate and more distant historical context and with the given forms of the world of nature and of salvation-history. In the last chapter we abstracted as far as possible from this network of contexts in which the Christ-form is inserted, in order to let it shine forth in all its uniqueness. But even so we had to note the contrast between the Christ-form and other forms—that qualitative distance which results precisely from vital proximity. We must now focus on this interconnectedness, taking as our perspective the Christian conviction that the Son of God did not come to astound the world, all the while himself remaining within a splendid isolation, but rather that ‘I came to cast fire upon the world; and would that it were already kindled!’ (Lk 12.49). His form is in the world in order to impress itself upon it and to continue to shape it: everything depends on this event; and, therefore, it is not only difficult but impossible to consider and grasp the shaping form purely in itself, *before* its act of shaping. We see what this form *is* from what it *does*.

Part of what the form *is* is provided by its attestation, and this attestation is not, as might be thought, merely external or posterior to it; rather, it belongs to the very structure of the form itself. If Christ is the Son of the living God, then both the witness of the Father and the witness of the Holy Spirit (with the two of whom he, as second Person of God, constitutes the one and only personal God) are interior to his being and, therefore, to his form. The same is true of the witness of salvation-history, whose promises he fulfils, and even of the witness of the cosmos, the essence and existence of which he wholly justifies and which he brings to its own innermost idea and destination; anchoring it in his very being in a manner not merely external but properly internal to him. This fourfold attestation which, in part, is the foundation of his form (even though none of the four are identical with his person), belongs to what he is, and thus it would seem more appropriate to deal with it first.

But all these testimonies which contribute to the Christ-form witness not to an 'image' set up to be looked at, but to a deed that occurs and that reveals its figure in its effects. The shaping force can be considered both in its exercise (*in fieri*) and in its result (*in facto esse*); neither of the two can be wholly adequately detached from the other because there can be no result that is separable from the action that occasions it. The Christian is a Christian only to the extent that Christ never ceases to affirm himself in him vitally through his grace and through the participation he gives in his form. On the other hand, whatever in the exercise of his shaping deed may be perceived to have form already belongs to the result: this is already the beginning of Christ's assuming form in the world, even if at first this occurs in forms none of which possess a significance which is complete and autonomous in itself, forms which are thus ordered to Christ's assuming form in mankind and in the individual person. These entities, possessing form and mediating the shaping deed, are particularly difficult to describe because, on the one hand, they are the Christ-form itself, but, on the other hand, in their communication to the world, they are thus already necessarily affected in their very form by the world that receives them. This conclusion is either denied by Protestant theology or falsely interpreted (often by the same theologians), in the sense that the element of human mediation in these mediating forms is regarded as something external and alien to the Christ-form, something which, therefore, serves only to obscure it. But this cannot possibly be all there is to say, because in that event the shaping power of Christ as he communicates himself to the world would either be drastically underestimated or from the outset subjected to a tragic futility which would imply the failure of his mission. However, we must never forget that, even in the forms that mediate him, Christ himself is and remains the appearance of the God who does not appear, and that the mediating forms, too, are likewise vehicles of the non-appearing power and efficacy of the gracious God. From the form itself we may never calculate the depth of the divine graces and judgments; indeed, the forms themselves constantly point to this fact.

Christ's mediating form is multiple not only in its result, but in its very exercise, and yet this multiplicity can ever give expression only to the one form. This unfolding of the form in multiplicity can be explained in terms of the old doctrine of the *corpus triforme*, for in this connection 'body' has broadly the sense of a human form in the world. The physical 'body' which the Son of God received from the Virgin Mary, and which was the form of

the 'historical Jesus', was the Body of the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world. For this, this body had already been formed as an instrument of universal redemption. The fact of his being so formed becomes apparent at the institution of the Eucharist 'in the night when he was betrayed': the Flesh that suffers and bears is, at the same time, the Flesh that gives thanks to the love of the Father who gives him away; it is the Flesh that is placed as an atonement in all traitors, and as such—as the Flesh of divine love—it has already transcended the destiny of man's necessary death and, mysteriously, it is one with the risen paschal Body, in which is openly manifested the hidden reality in the flesh of the historical Jesus: the necessity of suffering and being given away for all. Looking back in the light of the Passion and the Eucharist of Christ's flesh as it accomplishes redemption we can see what the form of the historical Jesus had been; just as, looking forward we begin to understand what the form of the 'Christ of faith' would be: a witnessing Scripture and community, both in strictest unity. In a manner that to us appears somewhat to oversimplify and to be open to misunderstanding, the Alexandrian doctrine of the *corpus triforme* spoke of God's incarnate Word as having a 'body of Scripture' (a scriptural form) and a 'body of the Church' (an ecclesial form). For, precisely as the Logos of the Father, as the Word of the Old Testament, it was wholly proper for him, in his assumption of worldly form, to select for himself a body of Scripture: thus, it would make the fulness of its reality as Word and as Meaning flow forth not only in the silent sacramental form of the Eucharist, but also in the verbal form of a sacred Scripture. Here it already becomes evident that Eucharist and Scripture belong most intimately together, that they can only be different aspects of the same thing, and this, furthermore, justifies the practice of the Church, as she remembers her Lord, of celebrating her liturgical memorial as Christ's becoming present both in the Word and the eucharistic Sacrament. But for this very reason it also becomes evident that the form of both word and sacrament points beyond itself to the form of the Church, which is where they must be fulfilled, just as the form of the Church must be understood not only as a 'result' but, prior to that, as an event and as the power of the Christ-form as it expresses and impresses itself: wherever the community is gathered in its eucharistic memorial listening to the Word, there an event called 'church' occurs in virtue of the fact that the Lord becomes present in the assembly, testifying to himself and manifesting himself within it. Eucharist would make no sense unless it were enjoyed by men; thus, it is transitory,

related to an external purpose and thus a purely mediating form. Likewise, the Logos' body of Scripture has no meaning in itself, but only as the vehicle that impresses the Christ-form in the hearts of men, as a 'sacrament' of the Holy Spirit which effects what Scripture signifies. But precisely in so far as *this* Christ-form of the Church mediates and communicates itself *as* Church, the Church receives her Lord in such a mediating form that she herself essentially remains a mediating form, notwithstanding the sense in which it can be seen as a result which is something it shares with and derives from the risen Christ. The Church is not something which is self-enclosed in the world and alongside the world; she is the light of Christ flooding into a history and a creation which still do not appear redeemed; she is a participation in Christ's bearing the guilt of the world, and at the same time the celebrating proclamation that he has already borne all the world's guilt. In the present age of the world, the Church as a whole is still essentially provisional: that is, she looks and points forwards to the perfect embodiment of the Christ-form in the whole of creation, forwards to an event which will conclude with the eschatological Parousia, with the Judgment (understood as the adjusting and re-directing of the world by Christ towards Christ), with the New Heaven, and the New Earth. The Church is underway to this event; indeed, as Christ's mystical *parousia*, she is already its inception. With her form, the Church stands between the Christ-form of humiliation and hiddenness and the still not visible Christ-form of glory, which does not yet appear in the Church (Col 3.3 f.). This means that precisely the Church's aspect as visible form will have to pass away along with all other worldly form (1 Cor 7.31).

It is thus obvious that these mediating Christ-forms do not stand alongside each other as of equal value. They are intertwined with one another and partially overlap. The Church is the outworking of the risen Christ (in whom the suffering form of redemption has become glorified) through the form of Scripture and the form of the Sacrament. But the risen Christ, moreover, can be separated only very inadequately from the reality of Scripture (as God sees it) and of the Eucharist, even though the relationship in each of these two instances is quite different. The Eucharist is a pure 'mystery of faith'. The only thing which can be perceived in it is the symbol of eating and drinking; no subjective experience can be produced as a criterion for its objective truth. This is why, in the context of a theological doctrine of perception and vision, the Eucharist can be dealt with only marginally. We already dealt with the risen Body when we considered the eyewitness of the Apostles, who by their

testimony establish the truth of Scripture and of the Church on this reality of the Resurrection.

Here we shall treat only of Sacred Scripture and the Church, both of which, in spite of the differences between them, have two things in common: they are both perceptible expressions of the Christ-form (*corpora Christi*), but equally in both men share in their communication and formation. Although they both bear witness to the vitality and power of the risen Lord, their testimony differs from those we will discuss in Section E by the fact that it is mediated through a human medium and, to that extent, can be considered to be modified and perhaps also obscured by it. The testimony borne to the Son by the Father and the Holy Spirit can have nothing opaque about it, likewise also the testimony of (salvation-)history and of the cosmos, because what these decidedly give witness to is, precisely, something not shaped by history itself and by the cosmos itself. Rather, it is Christ who, through his existence that fills all things, compels history and cosmos to bear a witness that is beyond their will to expression. On the other hand, all divine inspiration notwithstanding, Scripture is written by men and sinners. And, notwithstanding everything that can be said about her mysterious character as 'Body' and 'Bride' of Christ, the Church is populated and shaped by men and sinners. To what extent do these media communicate the Christ-form intact?

In earlier times, before the awakening of the historical sense of the Enlightenment and the rise of Biblical criticism, both these media were regarded as being radically distinct from one another. The Bible was more or less considered to be a book fallen from heaven, infallible even as regards its literary manner of expression. The Church, on the contrary, was thought to remain untouched by the distortions and mutilations of men only as regards her divinely instituted skeletal structures. Since that time the standpoint has shifted. We now see the Biblical word as being imbedded in temporal history, as affected through and through by very far-ranging human relativities, but in such a way that, in spite of all appearances, God's absolute Word to mankind becomes expressed within this fully human medium. Something similar holds for the Church, the relativity of whose form is far more glaring to us moderns than to our ancestors. Thus, Scripture and Church have been approximated to one another. The institution of the Scripture has come to be seen in connection with the institution of the Church and as one of its 'constitutive elements'^{[41](#)}, and the inspiration of Scripture has come to be understood as a special ecclesial charism, differing in its positivity from the 'negative

assistance' that the Holy Spirit gives the ecclesial magisterium when it interprets authoritatively a revelation which has already occurred and been concluded. Considered in this way, Scripture belongs, along with the sacraments, to the Church's salvific elements instituted by God, but Scripture nevertheless differs from the sacraments to the extent that the spiritual collaboration of men (as 'secondary authors') co-determines the original form of Scripture far more profoundly.

a. Faith and the Becoming of the Image

From the earliest days Holy Scripture has been regarded and extolled as a masterpiece of God which bears on its forehead the seal of its author. This not only with regard to its validity and authority, nor only on account of its power to impose itself, but also because of the form that it comprises. The impression this form made on the early centuries was so strong that a tendency prevailed to consider the human author as a secretary of God, one who was, of course, free and intelligent but who basically simply wrote down what was dictated to him. Historical Biblical research has forever disposed of such a conception. Not only has it exposed philologically the layers of human workings and re-workings, of slow and complex composition; with this it has demonstrated theologically how strongly the results of this work are determined and coloured by human viewpoints and perspectives, and above all by ecclesial Christian faith. This discovery has profoundly shaken Protestant research; Catholic research however, while needing to re-think some things, does not see any occasion for a fundamental crisis.

In spite of isolated precursors such as Richard Simon, historical Biblical research was predominantly a child of the nonbelieving Enlightenment (Reimarus, Lessing), which directed its theses polemically against an uncritical belief in the Bible. They undertook to remove the layers that faith had painted over so as to expose beneath them the authentic historical figure of Jesus. The 'historical Jesus' thus exposed presented the most varied faces, all of which more or less corresponded to modern expectations or ideals: while the Jesus of faith no longer speaks to today's man, the historical Jesus, on the contrary, was supposed to address him directly. In 1892, in an important work which received little attention at the time, Martin Kahler distinguished the 'so-called historical (*historisch*) Jesus' from the 'historic

(*geschichtlich*) Biblical Christ'. In so doing, Kähler turned away decisively from Enlightenment research into the life of Jesus—a research which sought to deal only with pure facts of the past—and in the end he consciously turned to that image of Christ which alone is significant: the image shaped by faith and which faith alone knows. For Kähler, 'historic' (*geschichtlich*) denotes that aspect of an event that possesses authentic and permanent meaning for faith, that aspect which, in addition, 'evokes the irrefutable impression of fulness of reality'.⁴² This second characteristic is decisive for us: not only is the historical Jesus of no significance in the religious sense; compared with the Christ of faith, he is pale and unreal and not credible as a form. This is shown irrefutably by the series of images of Jesus sketched by historical research, including Bultmann's *Jesus*, whereby it is interesting that Bultmann is the new editor of Harnack. Bultmann's methodology admittedly does not go beyond Kähler; it is unable either to unite or wholly to separate the two figures which Kähler had juxtaposed. By this tragic dualism Bultmann's methodology remains the perfect expression of Protestant anthropology as such. What the 'whore reason' accomplishes apart from faith is both indispensable and unacceptable. In Kantian fashion, Bultmann paves for faith a path whereby it criticises and limits itself and, thus, admits its inability to come to see the object of faith, namely, an 'historical Christ'. The dualism that thus arises between history (*Historie*) and contemporaneity (*Geschichte*) is truly tragic. First, it is tragic for theology itself, which is now coming close to giving up altogether the fact of God's Incarnation: henceforth theology can be founded only on the sole absolute remaining to it, namely, faith's self-understanding. And this dualism is also tragic for the Church's proclamation and mission, which cannot interpret such retrogression other than as an act of self-forsaking on the part of Christianity. The possibility of an evolution beyond Bultmann, similar to the manner in which Idealism evolved beyond Kant, is highly questionable: Idealism entailed the abandonment of the fundamental principle of the Reformation, while today, in a Christian sense, the only question can be whether we can regain the salvific significance of the historical facts. The argument concerning Bultmann's theological exegesis is much less an argument about the result of research than an argument about the theological presuppositions of the exegetical method. It is not even the method itself which needs to be questioned.

What is important in the first place is the radical and definitive self-annulment of 'research into the life of Jesus', as that research was practised

from Reimarus to Wrede, including their biographer Albert Schweitzer (1906): the ruling presupposition here was that only the historical-critical outlook, unprejudiced by faith, was in any position to see the truth of what happened at that time in Palestine. A consideration of the presuppositions, now generally accepted, that govern a science dealing with spiritual and artistic works would have necessarily convinced the theologians of the naïveté of such a methodological conception (even though here we are clearly in the realm of analogy). A work of art can be grasped objectively only within a certain subjectivity which corresponds to the work, and an analysis of its objective structure presupposes that such a realisation of its content has at least occurred at some time even if such a moment has passed. In more general terms we can say that colours, sounds, scents exist only in the sense organs that perceive them, and because this variegated world as a whole arises in living beings and spirits, we may say that the world can unfold and exhibit its objectivity precisely in the medium of subjects.⁴³ In the end it comes to much the same, therefore, whether, as a naïve realist, one attributes to all these sense qualities an existence in themselves or whether one mourns the non-existence of such an *in se* in the name of a ‘pure subjectivity’ of the world in its qualitative multiplicity. Protestant theology’s sense of shock at the ‘non-existence’ of a credible historical Jesus before and apart from faith resembles the shock experienced by the naïve realist at the nonexistence of the world in which he had ‘believed’. The same un-philosophical shock then impels this theology to see ‘faith’ as purely subjective. This comparison should not be developed further because it would then necessarily become a false one. We cannot say, for instance: ‘Behind secondary sense qualities there lie the quantitative impulses of matter as the objective cause of secondary qualities, and in the same way theology acknowledges, behind the beautiful Christ-form of faith, an objective causality working through certain historical circumstances: a prophet by the name of Jesus who triggered these effects of faith.’ The analogy cannot be sustained for the simple reason that here we are no longer moving in the sphere of the physical and the physiological, but in that of spiritual understanding and formation. Hence, the manner in which the ecclesial faith of the primitive community refers back to the historical events that occasion it is the testimony of people who themselves clearly see the connection between cause and effect and who responsibly bear witness to it once they have understood it. Will we take seriously this reference which faith itself makes to the historical event? It

seems we must, if, that is, we scrutinize critically the sources accessible to us and are willing to hear the *kerygma* of the primitive Church for what it claims to be: a testimony about the man Jesus Christ, who died and rose for us. But taking this testimony seriously will necessarily lead to the automatic dissolution of the dualistic Protestant position which considers faith and reason to be irreconcilable and does not want to see that, in the theological domain, it is faith alone that can guarantee the full objective ('rational') knowledge of things as they really are.

At this point we are in a position to consider accurately the problem of the medium of Holy Scripture as it is posed today. While for an older theology Scripture was seen to be God's Word to the Church, for more recent theology it is primarily the expression of faith's reflection on historical revelation. It is possible, however, to see both things in their unity, and indeed not as if the one viewpoint could be brought into harmony with the other only by force and artifice, but in such a way that, with that evidential force which is proper to the theological outlook, both things come together to build a 'necessary' unity of form. To see this and to make it evident may be allowed to be the proper task of Catholic theology; when Protestant theology takes to this work it can hardly do so without approximating the Catholic principle. What has to be seen is the fact that divine revelation has been received into the womb of human faith, a faith effected by the grace of revelation itself. Divine revelation wants to be received, borne and brought into the world by this womb. Nowhere does this become more impressively clear than in the textual history of the Old Testament, where the Word of God is carried in a millennial pregnancy by the believing meditation of the people: slowly and steadily it is thought through and illumined to its very depths and its existential implications fully grasped. In the Old Testament one Word of God is joined to another and together they bear a new Word of God, and all of this without prejudice to the 'inspiration' of the Prophets and the meditation of the pious, but also without prejudice to the divine dispositions that fall vertically and descend into the *καίτοι* of the history of the Covenant. These are, indeed, dispositions and exhortations from God which, to be at all understood and received, greatly relied upon the prayerful meditation that preceded them. The situation of Moses, who led Israel in the name of God, and the chronic unbelief of the people during its wandering in the desert, were also the object of faith's subsequent meditation. We see the record of this not only in Deuteronomy, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, but also in

the early books of the Pentateuch. Only in the medium of this contemplation by faith can the Word of God at all teach the people what it means and wants to express. For this reason, it is 'naïve realism' to imagine the covenant-partnership as the simple encounter of a speaking and a listening person, a commanding and an obeying person, whereby the listening and obeying person is the people and the individual within it. God is not a partner in this limited human sense: 'God is one alone' (Gal 3.20); and if, according to Paul, this is expressed only imperfectly in the Old Testament, nonetheless it is expressed perfectly in Jesus Christ, who is the same Word of God, but now in the form of an historical man. The perfection of a partnership with God is precisely expressed in the fact that the Word of God no longer stands before us and alongside us, but has truly been implanted into us (Jer 31.31 f.; Ez 36.26f.). And we ought not to understand this in the way the likewise 'naïve realism' of Catholic theologians would have it, that is, that this implantation of the Word of God in us occurs only in a 'second movement', after God's objective deeds of salvation in Christ had occurred 'in a first movement' (*in actu primo*), 'in themselves' and 'for us', but had not yet been wrought 'in us'. Such a conception contradicts precisely the principle of the Incarnation as understood especially by the Greek Fathers. In spite of the highly privileged character of Mary's figure and mission, she remains the archetype of the Church precisely as the hearer of the Word whom her Son declared blessed (Mt 11.28): the hearer who also knows how to keep and guard, nourish and bear the Word and who, even after she has given it birth, continues to ponder it in her heart (Lk 2.19, 51). Precisely as the feminine womb of God's Word, Mary is the believing and remembering womb of the Church, who as the 'Bride' of Christ not only receives the seed of Christ but, in an absolute sense, the 'seed who is Christ'. Thus what we have just seen with reference to the Old Testament is just as clear in the New; indeed, it occurs in the Old Testament solely for the sake of its perfect fulfilment in the New. It was not, in fact, the 'Israel after the flesh' but the Israel of God—that of the believers and the obeyers, of the spiritually poor and of those full of hope in the Kingdom of God—which faithfully carried God's Word within itself and allowed it to mature into that figure which, perfected only a little before Jesus, it achieved as 'Old Testament'. God's Word, from the outset, wants to be fruitful in the fruitfulness of the believing person. In the very form in which it addresses man, the Word of God already wants to include the form of man's answer to God.

This is why, in one sense, it is perfectly correct to say that the form of the historical Jesus (his preaching, for instance), which is discovered by the historico-critical method, is not and cannot be a form that is complete in itself and that satisfies faith: for it to unfold fully, it needs the sphere of ecclesial faith which really opens up only with Jesus' death and Resurrection. And it is also correct to say that only the Church's faith in the Resurrection—faith *in* the Resurrection and faith *as* resurrection—possesses the adequate 'eyes of faith' that can read accurately the legible form that began to take shape during Jesus' time on earth: this can occur only in the light of that total form which was already intended from the beginning and which was to unfold fully only in the medium of the Church's faith. But for this very same reason, however, it is not true to say that what are involved here are subjective projections of the later stage back onto the earlier stage; this is not true because the outlines of Jesus' earthly form could not have been filled out and completed in any way other than in the fully realised form of the Christ of faith. In the same way, a poet who has the total vision of his poetic work before his eyes can begin with rough drafts and verse fragments which can be correctly interpreted only if one knows their final form. Or we recall how Mozart could write out the violin part on its own for an entire symphonic movement because he had the whole orchestra in his ear. This is not the place to rehearse the historico-critical proof for this; it will suffice for us to affirm *a priori* that, theologically, things cannot be otherwise.

The purity and clarity with which the Word of God presents itself in the world is in direct proportion to the transparency and purity of the medium of faith that receives it and from which it creates its own form. To be sure, here we can first of all point to Christ's humanity as the purest of vessels that was the perfect expressive body for the Logos-Spirit. But even this vessel, in order to come into being, first had to repose and acquire form within the vessel that was Mary, and Mary's character as vessel is constituted essentially by her faith: *prius concepit mente*. The fleshly and personal relationship between Christ and Mary, however, was from the outset intended to lead into the universal and social relationships between Christ and the Church; and if Mary bore Christ in faith, it was also in faith that the Church bore Scripture. Scripture is the Word of God and not the word of the Church, but it is a Word which the Church, by her meditation in faith, carries in her womb and really brings forth, giving it birth in the world. This is an event that is accomplished within the sphere of the Church's own coming into

being, in that first generation that formed the world around Christ, a generation that includes those who had seen and heard Christ at first hand and which itself belongs to the period of revelation: thus, it is called to bear forth, from the generative power of God's Word, that definitive form of divine revelation which will remain canonical for all time thereafter. Without going into the specific theological justification for it⁴⁴—here we are interested only in the problem of form—we must lay great stress on the fact that all objective theology can be developed only from a medium that embraces in unity both the living historical Christ and the faith of the Church: Christ, who can be what he wants and ought to be only in the faith of the Church; and the Church, who comes to be what she can and must be only *ev Xqicttco*. Because it contains Christ, this medium is no modernistic subjectivity, but rather an objective medium given by grace whose objectivity is demonstrated by the birth of the canon of Scripture. The Church's *memoria*, reflecting on which she creates Scripture and brings it forth from herself, is not in the end a subjective memory but a memory that hearkens back to the objective interpretation of the whole of revelation by the risen spiritual Christ ('Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee. . . . Then they remembered his words' Lk 24.6ff. 'This is what I meant while I was still with you. . . . Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. . . . You are witnesses of these things' Lk 24.44-48). Scripture is not a self-reflection on the part of the Church, but a faith that goes back interiorly and a tradition that goes back exteriorly. It is the testimony about something that dwells within the Church but is not the Church herself, no more than the seed in the woman's womb derives from any source other than the man. Mary's faith does not generate the form of Jesus; rather, this form is given as a gift to her faith. Nor does the Church's faith generate the form of Scripture; rather, the Holy Spirit uses the Church's formative energies in order to give full shape within her to the image of faith that has been bestowed on the Church.

Now, the difficulty is as follows. Mary bears the personal Christ as the revelation of the Father. The Church, however, as she brings the Scripture forth from herself, does not produce revelation itself but rather the authentic testimony of revelation. And yet, is not even this testimony Christ himself in the Church? As the word of Scripture, does not this taking on of form itself belong to Christ's complete form in this present age, indeed, even beyond this passing age with respect to the Spirit that forms those words (Lk 21.33; Jn 6.63, 68)? Is not Scripture Christ's authentic interpretation by his own

Holy Spirit, who works freely not only from above but also freely within God's free children, within God's free Church as a whole? Seen thus, as the creative and interpretative light that falls on Christ from Christ's Spirit in the Church, Scripture belongs to the Christ-form itself and is an expression of Christ's fulness and glory, even if, at the same time (because of the letter's 'servant-form', so stressed by Hamann) Scripture attests to and actually shows Christ's own humiliated form through *its* form of humiliation. The tension between letter and spirit in Scripture, that was the constant theme of Origen's theological work, is unique and cannot find its explanation in general literary considerations, but finally only in Christology, which sees the purpose of Christ's corporeality as being the manifestation of the hidden God, even though for many reasons (creatureliness, bodiliness, sinfulness) Christ's corporeality can reveal God only at the same time as it conceals him. In so far as Scripture is an externalised form, placed publicly before all the world, concealment and disclosure obviously and necessarily go hand in hand. In Jesus' corporeality, unbelief was no more able to see his form than it was able to recognise Jesus' Spirit within the letter of Scripture. Nevertheless, according to Origen, there is a difference between the physical body and the body of Scripture, since the former is a body of lowliness that bore sin, while the latter is a testimony concerning a paschal faith in the Risen One: the body of Scripture is, thus, a garment that has an inherent tendency to assume the brightness and transparency of Jesus' clothing on Tabor.

It is a garment that cannot adequately be separated from the form itself.⁴⁵ Only in this disclosure in concealment is revelation present and accessible to the Church. Every attempt to grasp the 'body' behind the form of the image is futile, for the reason that we possess the Son only through the Holy Spirit, and the Father only through the Son. The form of Scripture is deliberately loose and perspectival, so that we will not cling to it and take the garment to be the body itself. Four Gospels, none less valuable than the others; four perspectives on the ungraspable mystery, the result of a stereoscopy which could almost be called artful. This simple means can give to deeds, words, and situations an infinite relief, and the attempt to level this relief into a two-dimensionality (with the aid of source-theories and form-critical analyses) almost always entails a heavy loss. Often, it is only the investigation of a text that can produce the perspective involved or at least help to deepen it; but the fact that research demonstrates that a given redaction belongs to an older

layer of composition does not mean that preference should automatically be given that redaction. Another context for a given word of Jesus can also be objective and meaningful as revelation. The demonstration of a certain intention on the part of the hagiographer cannot be played off against the intention of the Holy Spirit. We know this from Old Testament exegesis: a new interpretation of a text, often simply by inserting it into a new context, can attest to a deeper reflection on the total meaning of salvation-history and, to that extent, this insight can help us to see objectively more deeply into the matter. No matter whether the power that radiates from a particular text increases or decreases, the 'loosening up' of the text by means of the critical method has in general brought with it an invaluable theological gain since, with the heightened perspectivism that is its result, wholly new dimensions for the theological perception of the object are opened up in the drapery of Scripture's garment, as it were. Many an exegete in the past, seeing Scripture as a flat painting before him, was often tempted to take it for revelation itself rather than the testimony concerning revelation. For us, a most essential gap has opened up between the testimony and that to which it points, and this in such a way that the testimony is seen to belong unconditionally to the thing it attests as an actual part of it, while the thing itself, as that which is attested, essentially transcends the testimony. Scripture is not something like a magic and sacramental icon within which the thing—grace itself—lies substantially hidden and imprisoned. And the Church does not bring the Scripture forth as her last offspring: the real fruitfulness of the Church is the bearing of souls for Christ, a labour which she began in the apostolic period and will continue unremittingly until the end of the world. Here is the main connecting line, the handing over of virginal fruitfulness from Mary to the Church. Scripture is indeed a sign of the 'conclusion' in the developing revelation, but only in the sense that, being henceforth the canonical image of revelation, Scripture makes possible and guarantees the uninterrupted birth of the Church, the continuing impregnations of the souls of believers by the Logos. Scripture and Sacrament belong together and constitute the continual and unattenuated presence of revelation in the Church's every age. Although Christ could, and in fact had to, institute the sacraments without mediation, Scripture could be completed only at the end of the apostolic age: this is so because the portrait of Christ first had to be meditated upon by believers since many of its features could come to light only through this meditation and since not only *Christus Caput* but *Totus Christus Caput et Membra* belongs to the total

objective image of God's revelation for the world and in the world.

Once this is grasped, the full futility becomes apparent of the efforts of those exegetes—whether they are believers or not—who strive to achieve something like a 'neutral' photograph and tape-recording of the historical Jesus. Taking photographs is a physical event, and the equipment can by its nature capture nothing other than what is offered to it physically, even if this is the features of a human face. The writing of history, on the other hand, asks questions about meaning, and essentially it cannot obtain any more meaning than it itself is ready to deposit and invest in anticipation. What historiography is prepared to give in this case is revealed by the different clichés of its respective portraits of Jesus. These portraits mostly brush over what is precisely the essential feature: the claim of Jesus that runs through all his words and deeds and which is a challenge to Jesus-historians to be less niggardly with the range of meaning they allow the text.

In what concerns the Old Testament, it has come increasingly to be realised that the insights of meditation on revelation cannot simply be set out and accounted for in terms of cultural and religious 'development', but that the essential question concerns *what* is here developing. What is developing is beyond doubt that unique reality for which there is no analogue in other cultures and which—if speak of development we indeed must—in the course of its unfolding exhibits itself precisely as unique, which means that it must have been such already in its more elusive beginnings. What is true for Old Testament exegesis may be considered applicable to that of the New Testament. Everything that is subsequent (even if all Scripture comes after the historical event!) points back powerfully to the creative origin; Paul, who only wants to know a spiritual Christ, is here a case in point, no less than the Gospels and even the Apocalypse. Within this dynamism, Scripture remains a medium, a testimony, and a mediation. It is not Scripture which is the sacrament of God, but rather Christ. True as it is that Jesus' flesh and blood are the sacraments of grace from which we can never abstract in gnostic fashion; true as it is that the letter remains and cannot be watered down pneumatically or allegorically; nevertheless it is just as true that 'the flesh profits nothing', no more than the letter. So much is of course quite correct in Protestant theology's assertion that mere historical 'facts' cannot constitute salvation. But the event of salvation reaches all the way from God down to the flesh and to the very foundations of human history. It embraces even the very letter of Scripture and effects its miracles of grace always anew, not only

as ‘occasioned’ by the letter but *through* this objectivised and canonical image of revelation, even though the event remains quite free to occur by overflowing the canonical image, whose function is in any case always only one of pointing to the true form.

b. Image and Canon

By the end of the apostolic age, Scripture had become the normative and arbitrating image of revelation in the Church, by which the truth of faith was to be measured (κάνων τῆς πίστεως, κάνων τῆς ἀληθείας) and for which by the middle of the fourth century the terms ‘canon’ and ‘canonical’ had become standard. Paul introduced the term into the Christian sphere, but obviously for him it referred not to Scripture itself but to the event of salvation that Scripture manifests as the canon for Christians: Christ’s death and crucifixion for this world, man’s new creation in Christ, freedom from and freedom to (Gal 6.16), grace itself, therefore, but also the mission that is bestowed as grace and which is itself a grace, the mission which has its own proper measure: μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος (2 Cor 10.13). Scripture is an expression of the fact that this unified double guiding principle of grace and mission has been given to the Church, and Scripture objectivises this divine measure given to it by the Church in faith and presents it to successive generations. As it looks again and again to this image, the Church as a whole—not only the individual believer but the teaching Church as such—acquires a proper awareness of the divine measure of grace and mission. For ecclesial faith the *conversio ad Scripturam* is the indispensable *conversio ad phantasma* (‘turning to the objectively manifested image’), and in so doing faith always receives new illumination as to what is to be believed, what is to be done and an insight into both (*intellectus fidei*). This ‘phantasm’, surely, is of a very special, indeed wholly peculiar nature, so that the whole process cannot simply be accounted for as a special case of the human and philosophical knowledge of the truth. Nevertheless, the principle *nihil in intellectu quod non fuerit in sensu—nisi intellectus ipse* has here its theological analogy: theological truth is not ‘abstracted’ from Scripture in a kind of theological sensualism where the task of theology is simply to order and clarify particular passages and concepts in Scripture. Rather, abstraction always presupposes a great deal more, namely, a *facultas entis*, an ability to

perceive Being itself, as it is manifested in the images, a Being whose unbounded reality must be open if the images are to be at all interpreted as what they are—manifestations of Being. For this reason, the Church cannot be ‘under’ the Scripture as if Scripture were something like a ceiling through which only the Church could penetrate to attain to the divine truth to be found above it. As Bride and Body of Christ, the Church cannot possibly have above herself any superior ‘court’ other than her Bridegroom and, in him, the triune God. The Church bears Christ within herself as the Living Holy One within the temple that she is. In order to know Christ, the Church must but question her own Spirit, which is the common Spirit of Christ and of the Church. But she does not possess this her Lord other than as her incarnate saviour and blood-bridegroom. Therefore, an essential part of her self-consciousness as the bride who has been redeemed and washed in blood is her awareness of the event of salvation-history, which through the centuries can remain fresh and present for her only through its objectivation as Scripture.

An image is no more than an image, which is to say not a substitute for the living reality that it represents and always presupposes. An image, thus, has significance only in so far as it succeeds in making present the forms and proportions of the original, which it never tends to replace with its own standards. For us this means that, while Scripture does indeed have a form, this form is of theological relevance only in so far as it is an indication and a testimony of the form of revelation of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. As we have already said on several occasions Scripture does not stand over against this form of revelation by way of imitation as a second, autonomous form, complete in itself: for Scripture itself belongs to the sphere of revelation and, being the normative testimony, it is itself a part of revelation. For this very reason Scripture cannot claim for itself a form which can be understood and apprehended in itself. Whoever hypostasises Scripture, turning it into such an autonomous form, wholly misses the point of its proclamation. Nonetheless, for all its historical contingency, Scripture’s form is authentic precisely in so far as it is the measure chosen by God himself and intended to communicate the measure of the historical order of salvation. This measure of Scripture, moreover, cannot be accounted for by philological and literary methods, nor in terms of an inner-worldly aesthetics, seeing Scripture’s literary and ‘well-wrought form’, its artistic composition, the balance of its parts, as the criteria for the fact that God is its author, and that it

reproduces ‘in a worthy manner’ the well-wrought form of God’s Incarnation. This is simply not the case, and here we cannot fail to hear the pertinent objections of Pascal, Luther, Hamann, and Kierkegaard. The all-decisive proportion is that obtaining between the form of revelation and the form of Scripture, and precisely this proportion can never be the object of literary scrutiny. And yet it does not lie hidden in an irrational abyss, but rather is accessible to the ‘eyes of faith’ and created for them so that in every age this proportion presents itself ever anew to faith’s existential contemplation and conversion as being the true proportion instituted by God. Nor is it a coincidence that the poetic element, so strong in the Old Testament canon almost to the point of predominating (it pervades the Wisdom Books no less than the Prophets, but also large portions of the so-called historical books and the books of the law), recedes in the New Testament. The existential and symbolic character of the whole Old Testament permitted and required such a poetic form; the New Testament’s character of fulfilment, however, transcends it the more its proclamation becomes central and essential: now only the most sober style will serve. Elsewhere we will discuss the concluding images of the Apocalypse, which expressly takes up and fulfills the Old Testament’s prophetic and apocalyptic images. The Apocalypse is in any case such a marvellous conclusion precisely because it announces the eternal relevance both of the Old Testament as such (twice twelve elders before God’s throne) and of its prophetic form of existence: ‘The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’ (Rev 19.10).

To the view of a purely literary analysis the writings especially of the New Testament fall apart into a collection of diverse forms of literature which coexist alongside each other without any particular intrinsic relationship and which together do not form a rounded whole. Even the dissecting of a Gospel into its original constitutive parts, whether alleged or real, may perhaps show the final redaction as an artificial and not always credible unification of disparate elements. The point is that the unity and inner necessity both of the whole and of individual segments of the canon lie at a very different level, which is nevertheless not adequately described simply as the level of the invisible divine *dynamis* and of the *pneuma*; for all Scripture has a christological form, and by asserting itself powerfully into the history of the Church and of mankind Scripture gives shape to lives that bear the form of Christ. ‘We all, with unveiled face, reflect (κατοπτριζόμενοι) the glory of the Lord, and thus we are transformed into his image from [his] glory to [our]

glory, and this through the Spirit of the Lord' (2 Cor 3.18). The medial character of earthly prophetic knowledge remains valid for Paul even in the New Testament (1 Cor 13.12), and it is reinforced by the fact that ecclesial faith receives the Scripture as a reflecting image.

But to talk of a 'mirror' that merely reflects the rays it receives would here be inadequate. Even if we should not attribute to Scripture a sacramental and eucharistic structure in the strict sense, as Origen usually seems to do, we must still maintain the closest kind of connection between Scripture and Sacrament. Scripture not only reminds us, in a psychological sense, that all actual Christian grace is mediated by the incarnate God and bears his permanent stamp; it also reminds us of this in a theological sense, which is to say that it serves the Spirit as a vehicle through which it constantly actualises, with grace and as grace, this total historical form of the revelation of salvation. So much so that the canonicity of Scripture may be said to hold for the believing person who seeks Christ something like an infallible promise that he will indeed encounter Christ here in a theological remembering which through grace makes Christ present. It is the book itself which is meant when at the conclusion of the Apocalypse the Lord says: 'I, Jesus, have sent my angel to make known to you these revelations that concern the churches. . . . Let him who is thirsty come; let him who desires take the water of life without price' (Rev 22.16f.). And the book, as it is, cannot be changed. Either to add to or to take away from it would mean to suffer the loss of the promise of salvation it contains (Rev 22.18f.).

But since it is the Spirit of God which wields this instrument, the centre of gravity of the letter lies in the spirit itself, in its Christological sense, which is precisely the sense of the event of the dying and rising of Christ in so far as it becomes an event for us and in us (as Henri de Lubac has tirelessly shown in a series of increasingly comprehensive studies⁴⁶). For this reason, what is required is not only the christological transformation and transposition of the entire Old Testament if it is to retain its living salvific meaning for us, but also the transposition of the 'literal sense' to the level of its own spiritual depth which, as Bultmann correctly asserts with the entire Christian tradition, is nothing other than 'the Christ-event existentially for me'—but 'for me' who am a Christian only in the Church and through the Church, and 'for me' who am a Christian only in faith and in anticipation of the eschaton. Thus at the root of true Scriptural interpretation there lies the transition from the Old to the New Testament, which is far more than merely the fulfilment of the

promise, the definitive form of what was provisional, the manifestation of what was hidden, the transition and the correspondence from type to antitype: what is involved, rather, is that radically new re-creation of all meaning through the death of God's Logos. In so far as Scripture is the 'body of the Logos' and not only the unparticipating testimony to his death and Resurrection, the transition in Scripture from the *littera* to the *spiritus* is a participation in the event of salvation, and without this participation the letter's becoming spirit would be unthinkable in a Christian sense. For here 'spirit' refers not to some kind of abstraction, but rather to that universalisation of past history by means of a positive assumption of time up into God's eternity whereby the incarnate Logos wholly becomes Pneuma: the free, almighty, all-present reality of spirit (2 Cor 3.17f.). How could we participate in this spiritual meaning other than by dying and rising along with Christ, just as he takes his Church, his Mystical Body (and, with it, every individual believer), along with himself to the Cross, transferring her with himself into the New Age? With a great wealth of examples, de Lubac shows how this transposition to the 'spirit' which the *Kyrios* is opens up the dimension of the traditional 'senses of Scripture' (allegory, tropology, anagogy), deepening their strictly dogmatic sense. These are the ways, present everywhere in the whole tradition, in which an older theology met today's existential concerns, with a prudence and a thoroughness that are indeed astounding. Today's philological theology is chronically fearful of what it considers an 'extravagant whimsicality' of interpretation; it does not see what spiritual spaces the Scripture of the living Spirit opens up. The criterion for the correct use of Scripture lies in the fact that all these infinite spaces of contemplation are filled with the medium of Scripture. Scripture is not merely the literal point of departure and the occasion for freely roaming spiritual fantasy (as the individual use of philologically untenable allegories might often lead one to suppose); rather, with its own spiritual proportions, Scripture governs the attempts of Christian meditation and contemplation to model themselves on revelation. In a purely literary sense, Scripture does not possess a particular form of its own of any great theological relevance; nor, for example, do the literary accomplishments of certain books or parts of books secure for them a higher theological significance. Hence our attention is directed past this external form to the theological centres of gravity of its content. All this explains the predilection of the Fathers and of the medieval commentators for a book such as the Song of Songs, in which they saw the

celebration of the all-transforming mystery of God and of the world, of Christ and of the Church, from the perspective of love. Preference for a book which does not, materially speaking, appear to deserve it can be justified by that book's proximity to the centre of the total form which one hopes to attain within it. Allegories about the tent of the Covenant, Noah's ark, the high priest's garments, and especially those about the Exodus from Egypt, about the struggles to acquire the Promised Land, can, when considered in the context of the New Testament, lead to the vision of the most fundamental and essential truth within the image that typifies it. The older contemplators of Scripture possessed the art of seeing the total form within individual forms and of bringing it to light from within them. But this naturally presupposes an understanding of totality that is spiritual and not literary and philological; that one accomplishes in the obedience of faith the decisive step from word to spirit, from earthly form to resurrected form; and that, in so doing, one relinquishes all abstract short-hand formulas about the 'essence' of Scripture or the 'essence' of the Synoptic, Johannine, or Pauline principles (for in the realm of Scripture there are no legitimate abstractions) and keeps one's eyes set on that universal concrete reality which is Christ himself, universalised in the Holy Spirit and witnessed to by Scripture. If one really has within one's vision this living and divine form which sovereignly stamps its shape on the world then there is no danger that one will stultify in an 'aesthetic' contemplation of dead images and have to be awakened from this stupor by an ethical actualism that destroys all images: this form, which is spirit, more than sufficiently provides for actualisation.

It is true, of course, that certain dangers appear to threaten the medieval and, in part, even the Patristic contemplation of Scripture, dangers deriving from the tremendous influence exercised by Denys with his stress on negative theology—an influence which steadily increased in the Middle Ages. This negative theology at first sight appears to threaten most centrally what we have here been calling 'pneumatic form', that is, the transposition of God's economy with the world to the mode of the resurrection and of the Holy Spirit. For even this final form-quality must be transcended if the contemplating spirit is to attain to God himself, who is wholly formless and modeless. Nevertheless, as we will show in detail in the second volume of this work, one would fundamentally misunderstand Denys, who is perhaps the strongest 'aesthetic' theologian in the history of theology, if one did not see at the very centre of his affirmations the great balance, maintained

throughout the whole corpus of his works, between symbolic and mystical theology: for Denys, the Formless One shines forth only from what has form, the Wordless One speaks only through the word, and the Mystery which creates all orders, while itself transcending them all, radiates only from the *taxis* of the hierarchical order of both the world and the Church. Denys' theological mysticism is Christian and ecclesial precisely because he does not, as does, for instance, Evagrius Ponticus, press on towards the borderlands of Buddhism where finitude and form threaten to become merely negative concepts to be abolished. Denys shows the mystery of the divine abyss to be the mystery of fruitful divine eros, which out of a sovereignly free goodness brings forth from itself all the orders of creation and redemption in order to make them transcend themselves ecstatically and erotically so as to become blessed in their union with God. All the diffused Neo-Platonic pathos that may pervade this feeling about the world need in no way destroy its fundamental Christian form. We cannot deny the fact that such an insertion of the Christian reality into Neo-Platonic categories can constitute a stylisation that poses a threat to certain essential elements of authentic salvation-history. We will later on deal with this question of style, which is a question not only of literary but, above all, of theological taste. Judgments of taste can vary according to the presuppositions that each individual brings to bear. For this reason, an unorthodox Areopagitism can imperceptibly begin to grow out of an orthodox one. We can point to the places where German mysticism and Renaissance theology definitively crossed the limits of the form of Scripture. The spiritual character of the Scriptural image and the endless range of interpretability stemming from it require that the limits of still admissible perspectivism be variable both for the individual and for historical periods. This is one of the points (there are other very different ones) that make it evident that the canonical validity of Scripture does not exclude, but rather includes an ecclesial teaching authority.

The canonical image of revelation is 'closed' because an intensification of God's gift of himself to the world beyond that given in Jesus Christ is an intrinsic impossibility. But, precisely because of this divine unsurpassability, the image of this reality remains for all historical time open to ever deeper comprehension and penetration. Nevertheless, we cannot say that the first Christians understood it only fragmentarily and that successive generations attained to a more complete understanding and an increasingly better grasp of it. Rather, for eyes that have been illumined by faith, the image in its totality

is simple and visible at a glance ('You have the anointing of the Spirit and you know everything', 1 Jn 2.20), and the superabundant fulness is not a threat but rather the description of this simplicity. This is why we must indeed say that, despite all the unpredictability of the *καίτοι*, we cannot expect for the image of Scripture any decisive displacement of the centres of gravity or any shifting of the proportions—even if, in the course of the history of the Church and of mankind, the image does undergo something like a development.

The image, or rather the Christian understanding of the image in the development of dogma and spirituality, may perhaps appear externally to grow somewhat fitfully, but interiorly and essentially its growth is unconditionally organic. An individual aspect of the image's total complex can come to be focussed upon more sharply, mostly by work of the Holy Spirit who bestows a charism for just this, or by means of theology, which by its reflecting on particular concepts and connections attains to greater clarity, or by a political situation in the Church herself which makes magisterial clarification necessary. In every case, this spotlighting of a detail always concerns and has consequences for the whole. Even if it does not become apparent at once, this occurs infallibly in the course of time, and it can be one of theology's foremost tasks to show up the implications of this focussing on a particular aspect (for instance in the proclamation of dogma).

One can see here at once the dangers of ecclesial vitality. In the historical realm, the transitions between idea and ideology are essentially fluid. What could at one time gain acceptance as an authentic interpretation can subsequently be shown to be an obfuscation, and what appears to be a timely translation of biblical truth can contain hidden elements of a flight from the inexorable radicalness of this truth. In order to counter such aberrations, which are always a possibility, the canonical image of Scripture sheds its light inerrantly over the whole Church, the believing people and the magisterium, and this image of Scripture at all times allows us to test later developments and conclusions against its original form. This is no rigid image, since it unites within itself a double vitality, both human and divine. It tells a story and tells it in a mode which is itself historical, a mode in which one can follow the stages of appropriation, reflection, and incipient theology, and it is an instrument of the Holy Spirit who continues to generate and who, through this humanly active form, impresses the form of Christ pneumatically upon mankind.

As the historical record of a highly dynamic process of becoming, Scripture, as we can see today much more clearly, is qualified and able to generate and to direct a new dynamic process of becoming by the light of its own form. Scripture, whether of the Old or of the New Testament, contains theologies which are variously stratified and superimposed and which certainly enter as a whole into the canonical form and which yet, even as such, witness to the legitimacy of human experiments with form, which cannot all be reduced to the same abstract concept. Not only do various forms of thought and expression have a place alongside each other in the Bible; even forms which historically become obsolete have a place there behind and within one another, in such a way that the older forms do not simply appear as surpassed and abolished by the newer forms. In this manner, a construction which is so rich in perspectives can and should—in its total fulness, and without its being reduced in an abstracting and ‘enlightened’ manner to a few ‘fundamental thoughts’—become the guiding criterion for a new abundance of ecclesial thought which is still incalculable in temporal and historical terms. This is possible only because the fulness of the Bible crystallises concentrically around a human and divine centre, a centre which is indeed expressed in Scripture and everywhere flooded by its light, but which essentially transcends Scripture and rests within itself as a sovereign reality. This centre which transcends Scripture, both as image and as force, has the power to organise the millennial history of thought and to effect within this history an ‘evolution homogene’ (Marin-Sola).

This ecclesial kerygma has to follow this image of power in every form of instruction: the magisterial pronouncement, the homily, preaching, catechesis. It cannot have any objective other than to make this image visible. Thus, it need not produce a theological form of its own, even if it goes without saying that many problems of form will arise at the practical, organisational, and psychological levels. But all these have but a ministerial relationship to the primal form, which is what is to be rendered visible. This is seen most clearly in individual proclamations of the magisterium which, occasioned by practical pastoral concerns, spotlight a partial aspect of Christian doctrine more sharply and formulate it more clearly so as to protect it against errors or false formulations. Finely honed, therefore, as the linguistic form of an ecclesial definition, a conciliar canon and the like may be, this carefully cultivated form is not intended to be admired and esteemed in itself; it stands only in the service of the form of Christ, which it is

intended to protect and preserve. For reasons of pastoral praxis it must strive for the greatest possible clarity, always bearing in mind the Church's historical and theological situation to which the formulation is being addressed. But this clarity is not in competition with the form and formulation of Scripture. It replaces nothing, nor does it claim to express better, more comprehensively and in a more modern way what the Bible has uttered in an awkward, fragmentary, purely unscientific, and popular manner which is essentially conditioned by time and, hence, in need of reform. Magisterial pronouncements operate at another level: they interpret revelation, they do not lay its foundations. They do not aim at constructing a system of utterances which eventually would come to replace Scripture either in whole or in part. This can be seen quite clearly from the fact that these proclamations, once collected into a handbook, do not yield an aesthetic 'form' and that in such juxtaposition they create an even more fragmentary impression than when considered in themselves. Nor are they intended to constitute an autonomous form. They all point to something else, something different from themselves, something which is essentially superior to themselves and which lies at the level of divine revelation. Only at this level do we find the reality which has the power of convincing. Every ecclesial pronouncement receives its whole power of conviction from the charge for which not the Church, but Christ alone is responsible—the charge, namely, to bear his word, his work, his reality to all lands and times.

Nor should we think to find in theology the autonomous form which is absent from magisterial assertions, even though theology's task is indeed to harmonise both Scripture and the pronouncements of the ecclesial magisterium into an interrelated system which is as coherent as possible. Thus, theology's task involves, on the one hand, the interpretation of Scripture in the spirit of today's Church, and, on the other hand, the demonstration of the legitimacy of the magisterial kerygma from Scripture and Tradition. This mandate would seem to confer on theology a license to unite and, if necessary, to reconcile both Scripture and magisterium, with their 'purely positive' propositions, in the higher synthesis of the *ratio theologica*. This would, then, appear to be a license to give shape to the definitive and conclusive form. But there is, of course, no question of this at all. To be sure, we cannot simply reduce theology to the level of the mere practical servant of the ecclesial kerygma, although such a ministerial position with respect to the whole of the Church is its by right and in no way

dishonours it. But it must at the same time be seen as a meditative act of homage to the Lord of the Church, precisely to the extent that theology does not allow itself to be restricted to a merely practical function aimed at producing certain results. One whole aspect of theology—that aspect which demands the hearing and meditating of the Word of God—belongs to the one necessary deed performed by Mary at Bethany. It gives an account of what it has heard and understood. The attainment of the greatest possible clarity in its conceptual distinctions as well as the greatest possible depth of intuition is for theology an end in itself, beyond any practical intentions and obligations relating to the Church's proclamation; it is an act of adoration before Christ in the name of the Bride-Church.

This means that theology must be as open as possible in three different directions: 1) existentially, towards the accomplishment in one's life of what has been heard and understood, since only the saint who does what he thinks and intuits is a Christian theologian in the full sense of the word; 2) ecclesialogically, towards the full sweep of the Church's thinking, even if such depersonalisation imposes on the individual scholar an ascetical renunciation of his own opinions and fancies; 3) meditatively, towards the total act of prayer and contemplation of the praying, contemplative Church, since a conceptually technical theology can thrive only on the maternal soil of its own contemplation and the transitions from the one form to the other (think only of Augustine, the Victorines and the whole twelfth century in general) are fluid and must remain such. For this reason, a theologian can indeed strive to achieve 'beauty of form' in his theology, not, however, in order to repose in the form and seduce others to that repose, but rather in order both to serve the Church and to pay homage to her Lord. Thus in this way all theological form is, by the mediation of the canonical image of Scripture, reduced to the form of the Lord himself.

2. THE MEDIUM OF THE CHURCH

a. Form and Transparency

In what now follows we will discuss the Church only in so far as she can be and intends to be a medium of God's form of revelation in Christ. This is probably to pose the decisive question beyond which there is theologically

speaking probably nothing more that can be asked of the Church. The Church may present herself as an object of inquiry to the historian, to the religious or profane sociologist or to many other specialists. Considered from the viewpoint of the Gospel, however, the Church has no other form than this relative form, whose function is to point to the supreme form of revelation. This is not necessarily immediately obvious for, if the Church is considered the work of Christ (which she is and which she understands herself to be), the analogy of human creation shows that, where a particular work is concerned, not everything and perhaps not even the main thing has been said when one comes to know the life and purpose of the artist. The work itself, where it has truly succeeded, possesses an objective, autonomous form and a meaning which is quite independent of its creator. This holds not only for technical works, in which the agent mostly remains anonymous since he has from the outset subordinated his personal spirit to a greater objective context that aims at a final product; it is true also of personal works such as a poem or a symphony, whose interior harmony is something quite different from the subjective 'aptitudes', from the knowledge and ability of its author. Perhaps the author's divining power lies in his ability to gather up great objective cosmic connections which remain concealed from lesser spirits and to bring them to actuality in an adequate symbolic form. Why then should not the Church similarly possess a form of its own, one initiated and perhaps even intended by its author, Christ, but equally one which could, as it were, grow beyond Christ's form out into the history of the world, like the 'grain of mustard' that becomes a tree (Mt 13.31f.) and like the believer who 'will perform greater works' than Jesus himself (Jn 14.12)?

Such a thing is plainly impossible where the relationship between Christ and the Church is concerned. For the Church is not created from the union of subjective genius with objective world-spirit, but, as the Church of Christ, she is created purely from the being of Christ himself. So much is suggested by the Johannine symbol of 'water and blood' flowing from the wound in Jesus' side which an older theology interpreted as applying to baptism and the Eucharist as the life-principles of the Church. And the same is indicated by the use Paul makes of the image of Eve's origin from Adam's rib (1 Cor 11.8; Eph 5.25-33), which retains its character as an image in so far as the 'rib', even though it is Adam's corporal and animated substance, nevertheless is not his 'spirit' and his person, whereas the Church proceeds from Christ's innermost personal reality, at once 'Body' and 'Bride'. The image of the first

human couple is illuminating in so far as in both instances what is at stake is a living generation without union of partners. But, since in the case of Adam God is the actual creator, Eve's personality does not derive from Adam but from God. Because, by contrast, Christ is at the same time God and man, the 'personality' of the Church as the new Eve can indeed derive from him, in so far as he is one with the Father in the Holy Spirit. It follows from this that the Church cannot claim for herself an autonomous form, even if she can be distinguished from Christ by analogy with the wife's distinction from her husband. When man and wife, however, are seen as two self-enclosed persons who stand over against one another and complement each other's natures, then the image cannot be applied to Christ and the Church. Whatever the Church may possess by way of 'personality' and 'nature' she has from Christ, whose 'fulness' she is because he has poured his own fulness into her, so that the Church is nothing other than Christ's own fulness (Eph 1.23). This holds not only for the invisible life-principle—Christ's Holy Spirit who fills the Church and her members (Rom 8.9; 1 Cor 6.19); it holds also for the visible offices and ministries which mould the Church in the service of a love that edifies interiorly (Eph 4.10-16). The building-up of this Body by means of the different offices is, therefore, correctly described as a dynamic process which is completed when the Christ-form (which in the Head is always archetypally perfected) has also become implanted in the Body. 'The point is not that *we*, the members of Christ's Body, *become* the "perfect man", either as individuals or as a group; what is meant, rather, is that *we*, in the movement towards unity in faith and knowledge, *attain* to Christ, the Head.'⁴⁷ In other words, the already existing form of the 'perfect man' is carried through to perfection in the form of the Church as it develops.

Nor should we in any way think of the Church's institutional elements as being something like a timeless visible scaffolding within which the living cells come and go—a skeleton, outside destiny and time, which would also constitute the Church's visibleness and principle of form before the world. Such a conception of the Church, if indeed it could be called such, would in no way be transparent to Christ: this would, indeed, be the last kind of thing one could expect of Christ, who abolished the old ritualism and formalism (Epistle to the Hebrews, Epistle to the Romans). The institutional element in the Church is not absolute (and, hence, not comprehensible in itself); it is relative to love, and the love of the Church, in turn, is not absolute, as if it ever reached perfection: rather, it consists of a steady progress towards an

eschatological form which at present is in process of becoming. 'Not that I have already attained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has already made me his own' (Phil 3.12).

Such a self-understanding on the part of the Church demands of her that she see herself more deeply as a medium, as a system of relations, whose form becomes comprehensible when it brings together in a coherent manner the elements that the medium must communicate and unite. That the Church, in order to do this, must unite what appear to be contrary properties should cause no surprise, since her Lord and Head, Christ himself, brought these same properties together, not by happy chance, but according to the structure of his own being: namely, the perfect transparency with which God reveals himself in him and the likewise exhaustive transparency with which he reveals man as such—Adam as 'God's creation' (*plasma*, Irenaeus)—and this without detracting from his own absolutely distinctive uniqueness, which reflects and unites in itself both God's absolute uniqueness and the universal validity of the 'Son of Man'. The Church is not Christ, but she can claim for herself and for the world no other figure than the figure of Christ, which leaves its stamp in her and shapes her through and through as the soul shapes the body. In this, the element of structure, which emerges as the institutional element in the Church, is at the service of the highest possible similarity to the archetype itself. For that element mediates between, on the one hand, the individual's impotence to imitate Christ's unique unity and, on his own, to make it take root in himself, *and*, on the other hand, Christ's omnipotence, whereby he can at once be God and man, suffering and glorified, Word and Sacrament. In a manner which is comprehensible only from the divine viewpoint, it mediates between, on the one hand, the distance of the servant of Christ who in his office performs only a service and can, therefore, in no way be identified with the powers conferred on him (2 Cor 4.5; 5.20), *and*, on the other hand, the personal love of an individual member of the community, a love which can reveal itself most purely and effectively precisely on the basis of the ecclesial offices, functions, and charisms. If in this way what is most resistant in the Church has been made credible in its ability to be transparent to Christ, then no more obstacles can be opposed to her character as medium.

But like Christ, whose form she bears, she has to mediate between God and the world. Thus, her credibility will grow the more she is transparent to God (just as in Christ everything, down to the smallest detail, is transparent to the

Father) and, at the same time, transparent to the world for God (just as Christ's Incarnation goes to the limits of realism, to the point that no one other than Christ can represent man and display man's being so well before God). This means that in the Church, as with Christ himself, all historical positivity can and must lose its fortuitous character for the world (just as a work of art justifies itself in spite of its fortuitous uniqueness by appealing to its aesthetic necessity) by virtue of the fact that this positivity is made credible as the plausible expression of the God who reveals himself in Christ and, in turn, of man who reveals himself by responding to God through the Church and through Christ.

With such a programme, which seeks to trace the positive facts of history back to their ground in theological necessity, we could be coming dangerously close to the programme of the Enlightenment. For, what else did the theology of the Enlightenment hope to achieve but to uproot from Scripture and dogma everything considered to be purely positive, or at least to erode it to the point where it would lose its form as 'accidental historical truth'? And what else did a Wessenberg hope to accomplish but to simplify everything in the cult and in the catechism to the point where it would become a generally intelligible expression of the religious relationship between God and man? The difference between the Enlightenment and the undertaking we are here proposing can once more be clarified by reference to the guiding concept of a theological aesthetic. The Enlightenment excludes all positivities in rationalistic fashion and its thought aims at universal logical concepts, and the consequence of this is that the Enlightenment likewise subsumes supernatural revelation as a whole under a universal ('natural') conception of revelation which, whether consciously or unconsciously, necessarily dissolves Christology itself. If, however, we want to perceive the true form which God has set before us, then nothing may be excluded from it on logical grounds; for only the whole can be understood in all its profound significance by aesthetic-theological contemplation. Christ is the *Ecce homo* as he is, namely, as the one who came to be from the Holy Spirit and from Mary and as the one who was subject to the actions of men; and, in thus being the *Ecce homo*, he is also the *Ecce Deus*.

The analysis of the Christ-form and, therefore, by extension, of the form of the Church in their relations to God and the world is not, therefore, meant as a rationalistic dissolution which would destroy the form, rendering it superfluous as soon as one has arrived at the concept which the form

expresses in images. Rather, it is solely in this image and form that the 'concept' of God and of man becomes truly concrete for us; the idea becomes radiant only in this *conversio ad phantasma*, in this turning to the image which is Christ (and, with him, the Church). In this way, in virtue of its analysability, the form acquires a double synthetic power and function: first, a subjective power and function, since from the form we can always read off what God and man truly are, and then an objective power and function, since the form conducts this demonstration in strict unity. What is demonstrated to be the true God at the same time reveals to us the image of true man, and vice versa. At first glance this seems an absolute paradox and a proposition which can be at home only within a dialectic that destroys all vision. For, how could one and the same operation be the adequate expression of mutually opposed poles, one absolute and the other relative? Christ's image of revelation (and consequently also the Church's) in its unity makes visible not only the two poles, but even the possibility of this double visibleness. This means that in Christ as primary instance (and in the Church as secondary instance) one can here see, through one and the same attitude and operation, how the two poles become visible in their unity. It is wholly conceivable and plausible that this man Jesus, the goal of whose existence is to help men attain to God, should give expression through his existence to God's love for us, in which God's being and heart open up to us; and that he should give expression likewise to God's will to save man's actions and very being; and that this being of God, revealed to us in this way, should be one with his will to save us, that is to say, one with the image he has of us and which he wishes to realise in us. Hence, all of this can also become plausible for the Church and in the Church, if, that is, she is nothing other than what she is supposed to be: the imprint of Christ's form in the medium of those who have followed after him and whom he has called his own.

If the form presented by Christ can be grasped by analysis and synthesis (*intellectu dividente et componente*), then that form must also *be able* to be grasped wherever it is impressed on other men by Christ and his Spirit by virtue of the power of the same divine revelation—provided, that is, that this power of God does not encounter a sinful power of opposition, whether human or diabolical, which works against God's creative power to frustrate it. But in one specific instance such opposition appears perfectly abolished—in the instance of Mary, virgin and mother—and in her two things become visible: first, that here is to be found the archetype of a Church that con-forms

to Christ, and, second, that Christian sanctity is 'Christ-bearing', 'Christophorous' in essence and actualisation. To the extent that the Church is Marian, she is a pure form which is immediately legible and comprehensible; and to the extent that a person becomes Marian (or 'Christophorous', which is the same), the Christian reality becomes just as simply legible and comprehensible in him. On the Marian model we could demonstrate both the transferability of the Christ-form and the manner of this transference, but we cannot here go into detail because this would involve us in developing a whole Mariology. Still, from what we have said, the great significance that Mariology has within a theological aesthetic can again be appreciated in a way which is proof against Protestant objections: in the first place it is by no means the case that Mary's form replaces that of Christ; rather, Mary's form, as faithful image, reveals Christ's form as sole archetype both in its specificity and in its divine creative, forming power. Nor is Mary's form isolated from that of all other Christians, since she is precisely the model of our 'being formed in the likeness of Christ' (Rom 8.29; Phil 3.10, 21). Hence, the image of her interior reality stands before the eyes of Christians and should stand before their eyes whenever the conditions for their becoming conformed to Christ are being considered.

These conditions, which at the same time are naturally those of Christian 'sanctity', lead into the mystery of the 'co-operation' which is both possible and necessary between God and creature, between Christ and his followers. In no person does Christ's image become impressed as a result of that person's power, but equally it never occurs without the person's will and cooperation. This collaboration, however, cannot consist in the fact that here two people are working alongside and with one another, for instance as a master painter sketches a painting and executes the chief strokes and then leaves secondary aspects to his apprentices, whose work he supervises and touches up if necessary. Nowhere do God and man work together on the same plane. Rather, the Marian *Ecce ancilla Domini* points to the distance between Lord and Handmaid, a distance expressed in the fact that in all things it is the Lord who commands and the Handmaid who obeys. This creaturely and Christian obedience characterises all existence: it embraces even death, indeed death on the Cross; it renounces all private ideas and objections in order to accept the entire workplan from the Lord's hands and to place all one's own energies, both bodily and spiritual, at its disposal. This obedience is in this respect the opposite of a passivity that forsakes real co-

operation so as to 'let God do what he will': the handmaid, rather, adopts an attitude of constant expectancy, awaiting the least sign from her mistress (Ps 122.2). With all the powers available to her, she is always at the ready to be engaged in this or any other way, or even, if it should be the Lord's will, to be passed over, forgotten, neglected in a corner. Her 'waiting for the Lord' is her permanent attitude, which according to Christ's last parables suffices as Christian attitude provided it is truly lived out: this 'watchful waiting', this 'active readiness' is the wet clay in which alone the Christ-form can become impressed. But since this attitude does not disrupt or intrude its own designs, plans, or well-meant ideas, it is also the indispensable prerequisite of human matter's (which here includes all active powers of the spirit, the will, and the imagination) truly being able to receive the image of the form.

Mary's life must be regarded as the prototype of what the *ars Dei* can fashion from a human material which puts up no resistance to him. It is feminine life which, in any case more than masculine life, awaits being shaped by the man, the bridegroom, Christ, and God. It is a virginal life which desires no other formative principle but God and the fruit which God gives it to bear, to give birth to, to nourish and to rear. It is at the same time a maternal and a bridal life whose power of surrender reaches from the physical to the highest spiritual level. In all this it is simply a life that lets God dispose of it as he will. From that life Christ chiselled the form he needed: unsparingly he took it, used it and squandered it to the limit, and then, with the greatest consideration, he honoured it and glorified it. The situations of this life are inimitable, unforgettable, both unique and universally valid, universally significant. The three cycles of the Rosary offer these situations to the *anamnesis* of the Church and of Christians, in strictest unity of form with the life of Christ. And, in fact, Mary's life possesses no detached form of its own; it is the most intimate possible accompaniment of the Christ-form; it stands in the shadow and in the light of Christ's form alone. But Mary's form is not simply outshone by the form of Christ; rather, precisely because Christ exploits Mary, precisely because she bears the Cross with him, her form is inundated in a light radiating from him.

For this reason, Mary's life must necessarily be misunderstood when (like the form of a purely 'historical Jesus') it is read in dissociation from the mystery enveloping it. Mary's life participates in the hiddenness and ordinariness of Christ's own life, indeed, as its feminine accompaniment, 'veiled because of the angels' (1 Cor 11.10). Indeed, Mary's life is seemingly

even more insignificant than Christ's, unaccompanied as it is by visible miraculous operations, mystical phenomena, and human recognition and rejection. Even more than Christ's, Mary's life stands in the *chiaroscuro* of grace and faith. Glorification comes only posthumously. As a total form that includes this posthumous glorification—in the New Age and, by prophetic anticipation, in the praise of the 'lowly Handmaid by all generations' (Lk 1.48)—Mary's life, in turn, is comprehensible only within this *doxa* that is accessible to faith alone. This is why, in Mary's train, all the extensions of Christ in the Church of the saints stand under this law of *chiaroscuro*. Many figures yield on earth a very clear symbolic image, especially those figures who are manifestly intended to point the way for entire sections of the Church, entire epochs or regions or communities. They acquire a kind of secondary archetypicity which, however, never quite dispenses with hiddenness. The face of others is essentially turned to a hiddenness which allows only momentary rays to escape lightning-like, permitting us almost accidentally to see, surmise, suspect what a rich life is here concealed from all eyes as it turns its gaze inward. Certain charisms, answered prayers, or other helpful signs indicate that here a great living power is at work, but withdrawn from inspection. Only enough is manifested to assure us that the hand which is being offered in the dark may be grasped with full trust.

The image of Mary is incontestable, and even to non-believers it represents a treasure of inviolable beauty, even when it is understood not as an image of faith but only as a sublime symbol interpreted according to universal human categories. Mary's image radiates with the evidential power which comes from having been created and shaped by the form of revelation, something which in essence would also be an attribute of the Church if she were nothing but the 'Bride without wrinkle or stain', which is the only thing Christ ever intended her to be. This is the only image of the Church offered in the Gospel; nowhere is there any suggestion of those forms determined by compromise which arise in the Church as she falls into the hands of sinners, is formed and administered by sinners. For this reason, no appeal to the alleged realism of her Founder can ever justify those mixed forms to which sinful man has made his own contribution, since these forms can only obscure to the point of unrecognisability the form of Christ's Church. To be sure, among her possessions there are sacraments for sinners, but these sacraments themselves are of an exalted holiness: they contain a sublime light and their correct application has nothing to do with sin. Paul can only weep

over the deformations of the Church wrought by sinners, even when, because of their great number, these seem to have the preponderance and the right on their side (Phil 2.21; 3.18). In this state of distress he offers his own Christ-form as a type and points at the same time to those who follow his example (Phil 3.17; 1 Cor 4.16), just as he walks following the example of Christ (1 Cor 11.1).

While Paul weeps over the Gospel's wicked servants, Peter weeps over himself. Both weep over the same thing, namely, the failure of the institutional Church. They weep over the gap which yawns in the Church between person and office, whereas Christ wanted to impress upon the Church his own identity. When he conferred his office on Peter, Christ exhorted Peter to follow him to the Cross, so that in the institutional Church the mission laid on the believer should be one with his surrender of his life; such identity would not have been Peter's ethical achievement, but rather an incomprehensible grace from the Lord. This 'Follow me!' (Jn 21.19), however, rings out only after Peter has already denied him three times (not counting the other times when Peter resisted the Lord and his Cross and was described by him as 'Satan'); the conferral of office follows immediately after the *anamnesis* of Peter's guilt (Jn 21.17). This guilt is known to the Lord even if it is not explicitly mentioned here, and Christ establishes the Petrine form upon this simultaneity, which is peculiar to institutional authority, of humiliation and elevation to office. This simultaneity is the mode in which the Lord's identity can (subsequently) still take hold in the guilty Peter. It is an imitation beyond and despite failure which is marvellously represented in Peter's crucifixion with feet uppermost: it is the Cross, but in mirror-image, which is the definitive symbol of the hierarchical situation. In virtue of this dialectic the Church's institutional aspect comes under the concealment of the Marian veil (1 Cor 11.5, 10), which is the 'sign of man's dominion', of the man who is Christ, as the conclusion of John's Gospel makes particularly clear: 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?' (Jn 21.22). The image of a hierarchical *diakonia* in the Church is justifiable in a Christian sense only by reference to this continual humiliation of the ecclesial institutional office by the Head who rules the Church, this continual act, occurring all through the Gospel, whereby the *Kyrios* makes his servant Peter stoop low: what appears to be the highest place is constantly turning out to be really the lowest place to which he has been shown (Lk 14.7; 22.26f.; 1 Cor 4.9).

Thus the Church's institutional aspect also receives the ability to follow Christ and, therefore, to image him to the world, but only, as is made quite clear, after an initial estrangement. Yet the fact that this occurs subsequently should not be taken to mean that the concept of institution as such contradicts the reality of Christ and, hence, needs something like a special absolution from him. Institution belongs to the existence of man in the world as an aspect of his social nature; it is not any more or any less tainted with original sin than the rest of human nature. The law of Moses, too, is an institution, and Christ fulfils it. What in the Gospel is in need of special absolution is the abuse of institution: twisting it for purposes of worldly power out of fear of the Cross (Jn 18.10f.), puffing oneself up by appealing to the special grace of office (Lk 22.33), masking fear of and flight from suffering as love for the Lord (Mt 16.22f.), making oneself at home in transfigured heights (Mk 9.5: 'Master, it is a delight for us to be here'), eagerly awaiting a reward for one's merits (Mt 19.27). For these and similar things Jesus had to pray expressly, against Satan's demand that the wheat be sifted here and now ('Simon, Simon!', Lk 22.31f.). Jesus thus strengthens Peter's faith and brings him back to discipleship, which especially for him means following Christ to the last place—to the Cross and to death.

The extent to which the institutional office, essentially and most intimately, entails humiliation can be seen from a brief glance at Paul, who emptied the cup of his office to the dregs. As an Apostle, Paul considers himself 'aborted' (1 Cor 15.8). He is never quite taken seriously, nor is he ever recognised by those who are *λίαν ἀπόστολοι* (2 Cor 11.5). He is 'feared' by them and soon after they 'send him off' (Acts 9.26, 30). His whole life long he is persecuted by 'false brothers' who 'lie in wait' for him (Gal 2.4) and severely impede his work. He is criticised by many communities and is never quite accepted by them (2 Cor 11). In the end, he is compelled by James, by submitting to a Judaising custom during the Easter feast in Jerusalem, to make a kind of public disavowal of 'his' gospel of freedom. On this occasion, he is delivered over to the Jews who, in turn, pass him on to the Gentiles, whose prisoner he remains for years, finally abandoned by all his 'friends', moving to his death with only the Lord for company (2 Tim 4.10-18). Throughout all these humiliations Paul naturally struggles to preserve his 'honour' as an Apostle; but in so doing he does not boast of an office different from his existence as a means of gaining authority. Rather, he derives all his 'honour' from the unity of (Christ's) strength and weakness, of the Cross and the power of the

Resurrection (2 Cor 13.1-10): he desires to glory only in the Cross (Gal 6.14), but in the Cross of the Lord who has risen forever. Here Paul is the precise anatomy, we may even say the precise vivisection, not only of the Christian in general but of the hierarchical Christian who holds office in the Church, and this Pauline existence makes the form of the office-holder credible, and hence also the form of the institutional element in the Church as such. Mere psychology will never bring one to a proper understanding of Paul; the more one analyses him in this way the more obvious one's error which can lead to the most embarrassing commonplaces (Holzner). Paul's existence is a theology of the apostolic person on whom an institutional office has been conferred; he provides the living justification, sealed in his blood, that something of the kind can be lived. Paul is an image displayed before the whole world, an image before which spirits must divide just as inevitably as they must before the image of Christ himself. And here we must again say what we said regarding the image of Christ: whoever does not understand Paul's image as Paul himself understands it and wants it understood, to him it can be shown that he has simply misinterpreted the image. This one model, moreover, suffices to show what Jesus, in his prayer for Peter, prayed for for the person engaged in *diakonia*. If this model had been adhered to no further apology for the Church's institutional aspect would have been needed: here the institution is what it should be—a means for the preservation and the intensification of the relationship between the Head and the members, a channel (corresponding to God's Incarnation) through which the Head may work in the members in a living manner, that is to say, in a mode that is mediated through living persons and which yet remains pure, unmuddled and unobstructed by sinners.

There is simply no other way to justify the form of the institutional Church, to render plausible before the world, that is, not only the fact of its existence but also its mode and reason for being. All other ways would only lead to the view that this ecclesial form is a *minus malum* (a 'lesser evil'), a form of adaptation or concession permitted for the benefit of sinners; and it would thus simply lose its credibility as something established by Christ, the only-begotten Son, who has communicated God to us. The classical myth for this form of interpretation is Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor, who seeks to make the current form of the Church plausible to the imprisoned Christ as a necessary and, therefore, philanthropic falsification of Christ's true intentions. The institution, which is to say the hierarchy, here relieves the

great mass of the people in the Church of their responsibility; they cannot bear such responsibility, the myth continues, because the inner logic of the Lord's demands can be lived only by the chosen few and essentially exceeds the abilities of the mass. The mass cannot itself think; the pope thinks in its place. It has not the personal freedom to make decisions; the hierarchy decides for it. The norms of the Sermon on the Mount are replaced by the standards of a submissive observance of the Church's precepts: living the Gospel is replaced by 'religious practices'. In this way everyone is satisfied: the clergy enjoys the spiritual position of power conferred on it and the laity enjoys the resulting exoneration and, in anticipation, the fruits of the spiritual 'life-insurance' for heaven which has been accorded to it. By means of this terrible and rightly immortal satire on the 'concessionary form' of the Church, Ivan Karamazov seeks to prove two things: how humanly attractive in its logic such a human form of religion can be, and at the same time what a mockery it makes of everything that is Christian. The resultant shock when this is shown is expressed by the fact that this kind of proposal is put in the mouth of the Grand Inquisitor, precisely that figure in the history of the Church who is the least plausible in a Christian sense. This form of humanism is thus unmasked as being the anti-Christian principle itself and, in Dostoyevsky's sense, that means that it is also the anti-human principle pure and simple.

This is not the place to write a history of the Church from the standpoint of the discrediting of Christ's intentions. If such a project were undertaken, one would constantly have to take into account the particular historical *kairos*, which did not necessarily regard certain transformations in the Church with the same severity we do today, as obfuscations or falsifications of the Church's original conception. Such is the case because a given historical *kairos*, through the specific form conditioned by time, was often in a position to perceive the original idea more forcefully than we do, and because what we are today accustomed to interpret and to devalue as an 'ideology' still succeeded at that time in being a transparent garment of the true faith. And yet, applying today's standards of faith to the historical (including the present) and ideological concessionary forms can have its justification and necessity. For the fact is that we ourselves possess no other valid standards by which to test Christian realities in the forms in which they become manifest, and the use of these standards can help us clarify in a decisive manner our own Christian self-understanding.

In what follows we will limit ourselves to taking certain central realities and showing in these instances the possibility and the manner of tracing the institutional form of the Church back to the form of Christ. These central realities will be: 1) the Eucharistic cult as birthplace and centre of the Church; 2) the other sacramental events, especially baptism and confession; 3) the Catholic faith in its relationship to kerygma and dogma; 4) the Church's proclamation.

b. The Eucharistic Cult

The mystery of the Church is born when Jesus freely exercises the power he has to 'lay down his life and take it up again' (Jn 10.8), when he exercises this power by giving to this surrender 'for his friends' (Jn 15.13) the form of a meal, of eating and drinking his Flesh and Blood (Jn 6.55), an act whereby he fills his friends with his own substance—body and soul, divinity and humanity. Granted the mystery of Jesus' inseparably divine and human reality, this act of love that 'loves to the end' (Jn 13.1) exhibits a compelling and transparent logic. It is the fulfilment of his own love not as a merely personal and extravagant outpouring of self; rather, the power he has to give his life for others is bestowed on him by the Father that he may achieve this giving of self as a mandate from the Father (Jn 10.17). In this surrender of himself the Son is the substantiated love of God given to the world, a love which in this handing over of self becomes 'glorified' and 'gives thanks' to itself (is eucharist): the Father to the Son and, in visible and audible form (Jn 17), the Son to the Father.

For Christ the meal is the sealing of his corporeal death: flesh that is consumed, blood that is spilled. The supper and the Cross together constitute the 'hour' for which he had come (Jn 12.27f.). The insertion of the content of the Cross into the form of the supper is at the same time a sign of the sovereign freedom of his self-surrender (since he is not amorphously torn asunder like Orpheus by the Maenads, but by his dissolution gives shape to the decisive form) and a sign of the permanent validity of this form for the Church, since the form—the meal—is a social act intended to constitute the interior form itself of the Church. For this very reason this supper is the consummation of all sacral and cultic meals of mankind, which has always realised the naturally mysterious character of eating and drinking (as essential

communion with the cosmos and, through it, with divinity) and has consequently assigned a cultic form to this sign: as a meal of joy (or of victory) on solemn occasions in family, tribe, or state; as a memorial meal of mourning in cases of death; as a meal that seals contracts and alliances; finally, as a sacrificial meal that concludes the offering of plants or animals.

In the eucharistic surrender of Jesus' humanity the point is reached where, through this flesh, the triune God has been put at man's disposal in this final readiness on God's part to be taken and incorporated into men. Applied to the Church this means that, in the end, every exercise of the ecclesial reality is a realization (in Newman's sense) of this event, which had occurred before the Church had come to be: the ecclesial cult is, in essence, a *memoriale passionis Domini*. This cult is a meditation in retrospect on the event which in the first place constitutes the Church, the outpouring of the bodily-spiritual reality of Jesus as Son of the Father, his release from the confinement of his earthly individuality into the social reality of the Church, which arises only from Jesus' outpouring of self. Hence, the memory of the event of Jesus' self-surrender is a remembering (*anamnesis*, 1 Cor 11.24f.) that recalls the birth of the Church. In other words, it is a memorial that consciously establishes contemporaneity with the act whereby the Church becomes herself. In so far as this birth occurred once and for all (ἐφ' ἅπαρ) it is a remembering of a past event and, thus, a true memorial meal commemorating a death. But since this man who died is no longer dead, but lives (Acts 25.19) and has promised to come again, it is a memorial meal that looks to the future, when he will return (1 Cor 11.26; Lk 22. 18) to transform the memorial meal of the death definitively into the eternal banquet of joy (Mt 26.29; Lk 22.30). Finally, however, in so far as all Jesus' earthly activity has been taken up and made present in the risen Saviour, what had occurred once and for all can and must become present here and now. The meal of the Church, whereby the Church comes to be, is the very same as the meal of suffering whereby Jesus surrendered himself unto death; but it is also the same as the eschatological meal, only sacramentally veiled.

The presentation of the event of the Church's coming-to-be is the centre that gives meaning and legitimacy to the memorial meal of hope, and this actualisation, since it is accomplished in obedience to Christ's charge, is the encounter between a primary act of Christ himself (he comes to be, makes himself present) and a secondary act of the Church, which is taken up into this act of Christ's: in its remembering, celebrating, and obeying, the Church

recalls and presents to itself the Lord Christ made present in her midst. The power of any human community as it celebrates the memory of a great dead person, already has about it a certain power to call them back to life. Many religions, and even large portions of the Old Testament itself, know of no other kind of immortality. And we should not underestimate the community-building power of such remembering: it is one of the human realities that carry a general power of conviction and which Jesus in a wonderful way fulfils and more than fulfils. The Beloved who died for us becomes alive and present for us in the midst of our remembering (*in meam commemorationem*). And this to the end not only that he may stand in our midst in order to let himself be seen and touched; not only that he may eat a fish and a honeycomb before our very eyes; but in order to partake with us a common meal (Rev 3.20) in which he is himself both the host and the food that is served. The accent that renders the Eucharist comprehensible falls on the real presence, in which the living Christ makes himself present to the Church by means of his deed of power; but this deed of power by no means neglects the realisation of the community which, as it realises him by remembering him, also realises itself. *Anamnesis* is always a breakthrough to objective truth by virtue of a subjective truthfulness whereby we overcome and transcend ourselves. In her confession of her fallenness and alienation (*Confiteor!*), the Church breaks through and discovers her own true reality as she obeys Christ ('Do this. . . .') and encounters Christ and herself in Christ, and in Christ the Father in the Holy Spirit.

Everything else must be related to this centre if it is to be comprehensible. To do this is at the same time practical ecclesial theology and proclamation.

1. The accent must fall on this encounter of Christ and the Church in the act of the meal: this is where the centre of gravity lies, and not in the miracle of 'transubstantiation' considered in isolation. 'Transubstantiation' is a road to the goal, just as Christ in the Last Supper did not intend to offer his disciples a magical demonstration of his omnipotence but, rather, the proof of his love to the end. Thus, the true sacramental sign in the Eucharist is the event of eating and drinking (which is the only thing that gives bread and wine their meaning as human symbols). What is important for the Church is not that something is to be found on the table of the altar, but that by consuming this nourishment the Church becomes what she can and ought to be. Mass without communion (something impossible for the celebrant as representative of the community) is impossible and meaningless for the

Church as such; the concession extended in this respect to individual members of the community must, therefore, be made clear to them as such.

2. The accent falls on the constitutive event occurring between Christ and the Church (which always has its concrete expression in a gathered community). It does not fall on the celebrant, who is nothing more than the delegate of Christ and of the community. Christ alone is priest in the full sense (ἱερεὺς), since through his self-surrender he has surpassed and abolished the whole former cult of priest and temple. Henceforth he is the sole High Priest, and his liturgy encompasses the surrender of his life for the world in obedience to the Father. He thus fundamentally transcends the opposition between the sacred and the profane, even if in the earthly realm of the present interim period the tension between the Old and the New Age, between the Church and the world, cannot yet be resolved. The hierarchical ministry can, in this context, be nothing other than an ecclesial diaconate (ministry of service), which spends itself in giving service to Christ and to the Church and in itself remains wholly unobtrusive, even if its office is to make possible the reciprocal coming-into-presence of Christ and the community in accordance with the charge laid on it by Christ.

3. It is according to these respective emphases (which alone can make the event plausible for believers and in a certain sense even for those who do not yet believe) that all the various liturgical particulars have to be regulated and, in accordance with the simple rules of theological aesthetics, formed. It is evident that the mystery itself cannot be ‘explained’, neither the ‘transubstantiation’ of bread and wine into Flesh and Blood nor the other far more important happening which can analogously be called the ‘transubstantiation’ of Christ’s Flesh and Blood into the organism of the Church (and of Christians as her members). What is important is not that we know *how* God does it, but that we know *that* and *why* he does it. It is on this that the stress must fall in the formation of liturgy, and no human hypotheses which press in from the side-lines should be allowed to obscure the total image.

The Eucharistic cult arises from a *kairos* in which the cultic liturgies of highly developed cultures were in process of being spiritualised and intellectualised. Even the externality of the Jewish temple cult was experienced as embarrassing and unreligious (Qumran). The Christian cult, however, is based not on this (demythologising) spiritualisation, but on a wholly different kind of spiritualisation, made possible only by God, which at the same time is more spiritual than anything men can devise and which

nonetheless salvages the bodily and corporeal element in the cult of highly developed cultures and insures its continued existence in a world that is ever more desacralised, disembodied and technicised. What is at stake is always the Incarnation; the embodiment of love and the self-surrender of God's Son even unto death and unto the cultic meal of the Eucharist constitutes an image which cannot in any way be affected either by the tastes of a particular time or by any kind of demythologisation. This somewhat anthropocentric analysis ought not to be overlooked, no matter how great this concern for positive liturgy. And likewise the theocentric analysis; the Eucharist is directed to God the Father. It is the Son who gives thanks in this self-surrender, and the Church gives thanks with him and through him. The Father's love becomes evident in the fact that he gives us and trusts us with this food, who as sinners have been sanctified by his Son. The Cross reveals the Father's love for us. The Mass is a liturgy centred on the Father. The Son takes everything back to the Father in order thereby to make God plausible to us. And the more soberly the Eucharist is celebrated—without superfluous ornamentation, but also without hyperliturgical rigidity—as, for instance, the first Christians celebrated it—the more comprehensible the event becomes, the more legible the figure.

c. The Sacramental Form

The previous discussion has already given us an insight into the fundamental law which governs all sacramental form in the Church. It is that, in everything the Church, as the steward of the sacraments, does to give visible form, the manner and the measure of this form-giving is determined by the event which is to be made present in that form and which is itself the archetypal form of all revelation and, hence, also the primal sacrament. Nothing in the Church—not even the Church herself—can lay claim to an autonomous form that would compete with the Christ-form or even replace it. Nor is it as if through the sacraments a 'formless' grace, so to speak, were mediated for which the Church, as administrator of the sacraments, had to invent a fitting and adequate form starting from nothing. The fundamental figure of grace is Jesus Christ himself, and all sacramental forms are grounded in his form in a most concrete sense. The ecclesial and social shape that the form of the sacraments comes to have can occur only by constant

reference to Christ, the fundamental form. There can be no *res (gratia)* which would not, in Christ, already be *res et sacramentum*. For this reason, every ecclesial *sacramentum* must adhere both interiorly and exteriorly to this archetype, which is both double and single. Both the ecclesiological and the personal-charismatic, missionary aspects (the two interwoven into one unique form) are, in every case, the expression of the christological aspect of each sacrament, in which also the aspects of communicated grace and of eschatological orientation (in themselves imageless and formless) are drawn into the form. All sacraments (and in this they are like the Eucharist) are a saving act that God performs in Christ Jesus for the ecclesial believer. They are distinguished from one another by the manner of this saving action, which is not primarily specified by man's universal sociological situations and the context in which the believer finds himself, but by the ways in which Christ has brought us his salvation, which are the ways of his life in human form.

He it is who in every case gives form. In matrimony, for instance, it is not the human event of a covenant entered into by husband and wife that specifies a grace which in itself is undifferentiated. Rather, this is effected by the nuptial relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church, which in turn is the perfection of the Old Testament marriage relationship between Yah-weh and the people. The christological form is infused into the human form, and the first of these determines the form of the sacrament. That a final analysis of this form in a theological and anthropological sense is both possible and necessary does not contradict our assertion. A fundamental bridal and covenantal relationship exists between God and the world as such (compare the covenant with Noah) which from all time has arisen from the Logos' mediation at the creation and from the Spirit's hovering over the abyss. This fundamental relationship makes man, in the reciprocity of husband and wife, an image and a likeness of God: of the God who, in his eternal trinitarian mystery, already possesses within himself a nuptial form. But this final resolution of the image into a network of universal divine and creaturely relationships should occur, as we have shown, only simultaneously with the synthesis in Jesus Christ: 'For in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,. . . all things were created through him and for him, and he is before all things and in him all things hold together' (Col 1.16f.).

The main text of Pauline baptismal theology makes particularly evident this creative and moulding form of the sacrament which derives from Christ.

According to Paul, we ‘have grown into the likeness of his death (σύμφυτοι γεγόναμεν τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ), that we may also grow into the likeness of his Resurrection’ (Rom 6.5). This ‘likeness’ or *homoiōma* connotes more than mere abstract similarity, for it contains in itself an element of form. Plato uses *homoiōma* together with *eikōn* (Phaedr. 250b) when he is describing the relationship of earthly imitative things to their heavenly archetypes. And the Septuagint employs the term even more emphatically in the sense of form, reproduction, image. In the New Testament it means ‘imitation’ (Rom 5.14) and, especially in Christology, also ‘form’: Christ appears in the ‘form of sinful flesh’ (Rom 8.3), in such a way, of course, that the element of dissimilarity is always in the background, excluding every possibility of sinfulness in Christ. We see something similar in Phil 2.7, where Christ takes on the form (μυρφή) of a slave and enters into the form of man (ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος), again with the nuance that here one who in himself is not man becomes by this con-formation like us in all things that pertain to the human form (cf. Heb 4.15: καθ’ ὁμοιότητα κατὰ πάντα). Rom 6.5, however, does not speak of his taking on our form but of our taking on his, and in fact not his form as such but the ‘form of his likeness’. Indeed, according to Rom 6.3, we have not simply been ‘baptised into his death’, but ‘towards his death’, ‘in the direction of (asis) his death’, and have been ‘buried along with him by a baptism towards his death’. If the ‘likeness’ were nothing more than either the ceremony of immersion into the water or our own moral dying with Christ (which is what the ceremony means and is what somehow is morally experienced by us), then the relationship between archetype and image would remain merely external and exemplary—as external as in a doctrine of the Eucharist for which the bread and the wine are nothing more than the symbol of the Body and Blood of Christ. By *homoiōma*, however, Paul doubtless wishes to say more than this, namely, the process whereby the thing itself impresses its form on us on its own initiative. The ‘thing’ is the dying of Jesus Christ as a historical reality; the ‘impressing of its form’ is its actualisation in the sacrament of baptism. The ceremony of immersion, which attempts to show this in sensible form, and the death and new life experienced by the catechumen certainly belong here, but only in so far as both these things come under the impress of the objectively actualised death of Christ himself. If *homoiōma* were the sacramental death of the catechumen himself, then the σύμφυτοι would make no sense. The sacramental death lies precisely in the σύμφυτοι, which, from

the dative case it takes (τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ), requires an objective content; it is in being con-formed to this content that the catechumen undergoes sacramental death. This interpretation of the school of Marialaach (Casel, Stricker), to which Heinrich Schlier adheres for exegetical reasons, is the only one fully justified by the texts.⁴⁸

This image-form, which bears the impress of the archetype of the dying Christ and into which the catechumen is ingrafted with his whole existence, cannot at all be conceived as a separate and self-contained form; it exists only as the sacramentally realised event in which it mediates as form between Christ and man. This form, therefore, is an objective, ecclesial reality established by Christ, the archetype. The water (as a sign of the act of washing and, at the same time, of death by immersion and flooding: 1 Pet 3.20f.; 2 Pet 3.6) is the sacramental pointer to this mediating happening, a pointer which is indissolubly united to the event which is the actual content of the sacrament.

The sense in which the sacramental form is centred on the event which occurs in and through it leads us to see the similar relatedness of everything institutional in the Church to the events which they mediate, though this is not to deny that the institution constitutes a reality in its own right relative to the individual subject. But the event is nevertheless always aimed at the individual subject, who must discern the mediating, symbolic character of the form mediating the event if his conformation to Christ is to occur meaningfully and fittingly. A sacrament is an ecclesial gesture that Jesus Christ directs to man. In order to be understandable, this gesture clothes itself in a generally intelligible cosmic image (the elements) or human image (laying on of hands, the act of man forgiving man). But the image's universally intelligible symbolic content is itself only a pointer to Christ's corporeal and spiritual gesture, a gesture which the believer understands, both because of the pointer given by the earthly image and because of Christ's unique symbolic power as God and man.

From this it is clear that the baptism of infants is inadequate as a model for the sacramental event. To say that the entrance into God's Kingdom occurs unconsciously—that is, in such a way that the subject involved neither perceives nor understands Christ's gesture—is a fact so conspicuously alien to Scripture (and to the baptismal practice of the Old Testament and of John) that it must without question be regarded as an exception. The decision for infant-baptism was perhaps the most portentous decision in the entire history

of the Church (and that, long before Constantine). This is so not only because infant-baptism obscures the normal image of the personal encounter with Christ and the decision for Christ that take place in every sacrament (thus making of it *merely* an *opus operatum*),⁴⁹ but also because all Christian existence is henceforth grounded upon a *fact* which is quasi-natural because it is not initially ratified by the subject. The subsequent ratification of this fact at the age of discretion always has something dubious and not quite plausible about it, since no decision whatever can now undo what has been done (*signum indelebile*). The sole theological justification could be found in the fact 'that Christ died for us while we were still sinners' (Rom 5.8) without obtaining our prior consent, something which is all the more true of the mystery of predestination 'before the foundation of the world' (Eph 1.4). If we were to justify successfully the incorporation of an infant into the visible Church on the grounds of this universal cosmic perspective, we would also by the same token have to bring to light the universal cosmic character of the Church and its responsibility towards all humanity; the reception of the sacraments before the age of reason would then have to be seen in the light of this responsibility. However, even so there are elements unaccounted for in this train of thought which cannot be overlooked.

The sacrament of penance has the advantage that its sacramental figure does not lend itself to any such erosion. For here the acts of the penitent cannot be lacking, cannot be provided by any proxy, cannot be made up for later on. In the sacrament of penance the heart of the matter is, precisely, the sinner's 'conversion' and his personal turning to the reign of God as it comes to him in Christ. Here the full form of the sacramental event is made evident, plausible, visible. For all these reasons this is the sacrament which could be taken as the model for a general doctrine of the sacraments, in so far as such a model could be sustained through all the individual sacraments, which are so different and yet interiorly analogous. Spiritually speaking, nothing is more eloquent than the Gospel stories that relate the encounter of sinners with Christ. Every single detail is both credible and indispensable: the fact that their sin must come out into the light whether they want this or not, whether the sinner himself confesses it or Christ draws it from him and confesses it in his place; the fact that embarrassment, contrition, tears of remorse are necessary; finally, the fact that the word of forgiveness, as a seed, is planted into the soul that has been 'plowed up' in this manner. On the other hand, in an interior sense nothing is at the same time more fitting, just, and

compassionate than the fact that this forgiveness from God is linked to one's own forgiveness of one's fellow-man and that, contrariwise, the readmission of the sinner into God's friendship goes hand in hand with the forgiving readmission of that same sinner into the community of those who love. Thus, it is not necessary to wait till the period of the Church before penance receives its social aspect; with the very existence of Christ penance has already received its full sacramental form: Christ is the offended God and the offended neighbour all in one. He is both marked out and known and, as 'Son of Man', anonymous. The Gospel image is not obscured by the fact that absolution is given through Christ's delegate, who is empowered to bestow it in the name of the offended God and of the offended community of saints. This delegate concretises in a sacramental manner both the forgiving God and the forgiving Church, and it is necessary that the form of his image represent both these things in unity. This form, moreover, makes us see that the minister as officebearer (who in his person remains wholly irrelevant in his official function) still may exercise his official service precisely as one who loves: it is truly *this* priest who forgives my sins, not, of course, in the sense that he primarily shows me *his* love but rather that of God and of the Church. Perhaps nowhere does the double resolution of the ecclesial form, in the direction of God and in the direction of man, become more impressively evident than here, as well as the extent to which this form in reality represents nothing other than the focal point, the burning centre of the concrete conformation to one another of sinful humanity and gracious God.⁵⁰

It is not necessary to rehearse the rest of the sacraments in turn; the principle is sufficient. Some of them take man not simply in his totality but in his concrete historical form: as a person growing to maturity who at a given moment has reached the stage of adult responsibility and hence, as if by natural right, is in need of an initiation ceremony. This ceremony—Christian confirmation—is not an amorphous and general divine blessing but the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the candidate, the event whereby Pentecost becomes an event for him. Here, too, this fact makes the universal human situation recede to the level of a secondary occasion for the free God's sovereign action in salvation-history. Likewise, sociologically speaking, marriage and sacred public worship are to be found in every society. But these states and functions, universally exhibited by mankind, are events that offer occasions and signs in which the Christ-event can take sacramental form and come to prevail over the occasion and the sign themselves. To

Christ belongs the mystery of matrimony (Eph 5.32), to him belongs the true eternal priesthood (Heb 5.10), and both things are the shaping form which must henceforth become actualised in the marriage of Christians and in the ecclesial *diakonia* of Christians. The anointing of the sick is also a universally understood sign, a help and a guide to death and to the judgment of the dead, a viaticum for the one departing that consists in the most precious thing the community has to give: prayer and supplication for the forgiveness of sins (Jas 5.14f.). But how different everything becomes when man's ending thus becomes, in Christ, a new beginning and a sacramental expression of being fitted for eternal life, recognition of a capacity for Christian death and resurrection, the form of Christ in the clearest possible expression, human dying as a sign of the dying of God in Christ, which at the same time means the manifestation of eternal life for us!

The sacraments are an essential part of ecclesial aesthetics. Not only does God's invisible grace become visible and graspable in the Christ-form as such, but here, in the sacraments, the Christ-form itself in turn appears before us and impresses its shape upon us in a valid form which is free of all subjective ambiguities. But the sacraments would be radically misunderstood if one attempted in the least way to disjoin them from the Christ-form as *instrumenta separata* and ascribe to them an independent meaning and a form of their own. For the same reason, a description of the sacraments would be deficient which characterised their transitional and event-laden symbolic form as a spiritual work of art in itself. This might be done, for instance, in terms of form and matter, whereby the 'matter' would have to provide the somehow necessary symbolic sign for the form that is here expressing itself. But this would also be inadequate because the symbolic rites for individual sacraments have either developed historically or are the same for several sacraments (laying on of hands, anointing). We must constantly keep in mind the sacraments' character as mediating between Christ and man: both together belong to the figure. The 'matter' that is to be formed is man himself in his concrete situation: as a person who is to enter into God's Kingdom; as a person who is to be washed, nourished, anointed; as a human sinner to whom the great absolution of the Cross must ever anew be applied and who is to undertake the decision of Christian maturity, Christian matrimony, ecclesial ministry; as a person who stands before the gates of eternity. In this person a process of formation is at work whose form is Christ himself. The happening has an external and, hence, sensible and symbolic side: the water

of baptism is important because it really washes, and so on. But we ought not to exaggerate the symbolism of the elements as such, statically considered; the *continere gratiam* (Dz 849) should not have to suffer on this account.

In the sacraments, all their theological form-quality and all the splendour of grace they contain derive from Christ, from the triune God in him. Only in this way are they religiously plausible and require no demythologisation and demagicalisation. Their theological understanding and their liturgical execution will be most adequate when they make evident in the most incisive and sober way the gesture of Christ that comes to man through them.

d. Faith and Dogma

Does faith in Christ have a credible form? Is faith not the aspect of Catholic Christianity most radically opposed to the individual's personal commitment to God and man—something like a knot elaborately tied by the Church which becomes less unravellable with each new proclamation of dogma? Among any other religions it seems possible to achieve a sort of religious tolerance based on an analysis that describes and resolves the faith-content of each creed in a way which yields a basis of common understanding. With Catholicism this seems to be impossible. *This* form of faith resists comprehension, though this occurs at different levels for different people. For some even the faith of Paul and John (as contrasted with a generally intelligible surrender in trust to God) is itself already a dogmatic propositional faith (*dass-Glaube*) that something is so: for instance, 'I believe *that* the man Jesus is God.' For others the unacceptable element begins where the faith-relationship with God is transferred to ecclesial authority, which decrees that certain things have to be believed. It is, in fact, difficult to sustain an uninterrupted vision that goes from the form of Jesus to the expression it finds in the attitude of faith. It is important to open the door in such a way that one can see through the whole flight of rooms at a single glance. This is what we will now briefly attempt to do.

The success of this attempt will depend on whether or not we walk hand in hand with the Gospel, that is, whether we start precisely where it starts, and then follow its directions until we leave it where it itself leaves us. Although everything we shall consider is in fact an unbroken stream, we will divide it into stages for the sake of seeing the unity of the parts in the whole. The

danger of many detailed studies is that they concentrate on the oppositions and are unable to portray the relief of the whole, failing to see that the different aspects belong together precisely in their variety and that, together, they yield the plastic image of Christian faith.

1. Jesus began by 'proclaiming the Good News from God': 'The Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel' (Mk 1.14f.). This is the same message that Matthew puts in the mouth of the Baptist (Mt 3.2; cf. 4.17). Jesus appeals to this same preaching on the part of the Baptist, a proclamation which the leaders of the people should have believed, particularly since they saw how tax-collectors and prostitutes were converting in faith (Mt 21.32). There is a continuity between the Baptist's proclamation and that of Jesus, no less than between the proclamation of Moses and the Prophets and that of Jesus. 'If you believed Moses you would also believe in me,' says the Jesus of John. He interprets the law in such a way that one comes to understand its core and essence, which is justice (*κρίσις*, *mishpat*), mercy (*ἔλεος*, *hesed*), and fidelity (*πίστις*, *emeth*: Mt 23.23). The Sermon on the Mount offers a compendium of his manner of interpretation: the law and its fulfilment are considered in the light of the Prophets' piety ('Beatitudes'). All external works lay bare the heart; they expose the earnestness of one's love for God and neighbour which the Torah demands, and, in Christ's interpretation, this means the earnestness with which one allows God's being, power, providential goodness, compassionate fidelity, and incorruptible justice to gain the ascendancy in one's own existence over and above all one's own egotistic and formalistic standards. It is in this sense that *πίστις Θεοῦ* (Mk 11.22) is demanded: the courage and the trust that allow God absolute pre-eminence in all his dispositions and decisions, since this is a God who from the beginning proved his covenant-fidelity (*πίστις*) to Israel, with the result that human trust is the secure and justified answer to God's sustaining act. But, since this faith of Israel is only the manifestation of the right creaturely relationship to God (who, by definition, is always right, always sustains, always leads), Jesus' demand here does not go beyond what is humanly evident. It is the demand that we take seriously the fact that God is absolute unity and that, therefore, the *πίστις Θεοῦ* demands from man a unity in his self-surrender which is proportionate to God: unity, innocence, simplicity, unanimity (Mt 6.11; 10.16; Phil 2.15; 1 Pet 1.22) are diametrically opposed to duplicity of soul (Jas 1.8; 4.8), to smallness of faith and to lukewarmness (Mt 6.30; 8.26; 14.31; 16.8; 17.20; Lk 12.28; cf. 1 Thess 5.14).

2. Jesus is there in order to initiate man into this faith. There are cases in which Jesus confirms the presence of such faith, often with wonderment (Mt 8.10; 15.28). But for the most part Jesus is there to educate men to this faith. He makes a strange link—which appears to approach identity—between real full faith and God’s omnipotence. For the person who reaches the point where he trusts God absolutely, who allows God total ascendancy in himself, who lets God be the ‘all’ in his ‘nothing’—for this person the relationship is wholly reversed: now *he* has power over God. God can do all things in him (because he puts up no resistance), and therefore he can do all things in God. This is the context of the sayings about the faith that moves mountains and for which ‘nothing is impossible’ (Mt 17.20 = 21.21), sayings which, when applied to the prayer of petition, reveal the paradoxical unity of the will of God with the will of man in faith (Mt 21.22; Mk 11.23f.: ‘Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received, and it will be yours’). This ability of man to find wholeness in faith is precisely not a mystical dissolution, but is demanded in a positive sense in order to enable God to accomplish his divine work in man. It is here that the role faith plays in Jesus’ miracles becomes manifest. Faith is not only a necessary condition of the miracles’ occurrence (Mk 6.5); it is in an exact sense the measure of the miraculous deed itself. Again and again the assurance is uttered: ‘may it happen according to your faith’ (Mt 8. 13: ‘Be it done for you as you have believed’; Mt 9.29: ‘According to your faith be it done to you’; Mt 9.2: ‘When Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven” ’; Mt 9.22: ‘Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well’; Mk 2.5; 5.34; 10.52; Lk 5.20; 7.50; 8.48; 17.19; 18.42; cf. Lk 8.50: ‘Do not fear; only believe, and she shall be well’; and also Acts 14.9f.: ‘Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, said in a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet!” ’). The great number of these testimonies points with certainty to a central element in Jesus’ proclamation. Some have been of the opinion that in these cases Jesus comes closely to the figure of a religious magician or of one of those Hindu gurus who, because of their relationship with God, are able to accomplish supernatural things and, by a hypnotic power, can draw others too into this religious ‘faculty’ of theirs, initiating disciples into their art. It is obviously possible here to see similarities especially with Zen Buddhism and its learnable art of total non-voluntariness, whereby the absolute works through the passive person who, precisely as such and in the same mysterious reversal, receives from God

everything he wants. If we consider that in the case of Jesus there can never be any question of an impersonal absolute, but only of the living God of Israel, then we see that with Jesus everything takes place on the personal level. But, on the other hand, we must admit that the parallels are in no sense misleading. Even though, in a Christian sense, no identity of being can be intended, nevertheless the question does revolve around an identity—an identity of wills, of the human will surrendering to God's loving will to save man. Seen in this way the sayings of Jesus we have quoted do not constitute an embarrassment, as it were the 'pudenda' of the proclamation of faith, but, on the contrary, are the very thing which is at stake for Jesus.

3. Jesus lives out this reality for his disciples in order to show them that it is possible and imitable. He sleeps in the midst of the storm on the lake because he is 'simplicity' in his whole being and has totally entrusted himself to his provident Father, because he possesses the attitude which he afterwards finds lacking in the disciples: 'Where is your faith?' (Lk 8.25 par.). He helps his disciples to do what he himself is capable of doing: he calls Peter out of the boat and reproaches his 'doubt' as 'little faith' (Mt 14.29f.). By calling Peter to come to him Jesus sustains him: he assumes the responsibility of the risk and extends to him the necessary force. Likewise, in Mk 9.22f., he brings the father of the possessed boy into his own 'power': ' "If you can do anything, have pity on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." ' When Jesus demands anything he himself makes it possible. To the 'half-hearted' he extends his hand so that he will dare take the leap into total faith: 'I believe, Lord; help my unbelief!' (Mk 9.24). It is not—by any means!—that he replaces human powerlessness with his own power; rather, by means of his power, he helps powerless man attain to his own power. Thus, at the same time it becomes clear that faith is a grace of God: an ability bestowed by God (Mt 16.17; 11.25). None of what has yet to be said will detract from this assertion. At this level the consciousness of the disciples and of the people predominates: 'He can do it! And so we must cling to him. He does not only demand; he himself has the ability. And not only does he have the ability; he shows us how, indeed, he communicates the ability to us. This makes him the road to God.' In the context of religious phenomenology, this does not yet necessarily (within Israel's particular context) take us beyond the phenomenon of a teacher who wields divine powers—a phenomenon which is attested in cases other than Jesus. From this standpoint, Kierkegaard's either / or between Socrates (who

can only perform the service of spiritual midwife) and Jesus is not wholly convincing. And we can ask ourselves whether even Peter's confession ('You are the Anointed One of God', Mk 8.29; Lk 9.21; 'You are the Holy One of God', Jn 6.69) has necessarily to take us beyond this level.

4. Because he makes the turning to love complete, this is where John fits into the overall picture, not in chronological order of authors but of insight. This man Jesus, who knows how to love, lives for me; with his whole existence he is there in order to communicate to me this power, in God and unto God. Because he does not do it for himself, moreover, because he does not 'seek his own honour' and does it for the Father and for me, his power and his existence are themselves love. What is more, because in his power he is one with the Father, what we have before us is the love of God which has appeared and been made visible in this man. Now the 'Son of the living God' (Mt 16.16) is called the 'only-beloved and the only-begotten of the Father' (Jn 1.18). The transition from one to the other is not a 'transfiguration' effected by the enthusiastic love of the disciples, but rather the illumination by love of a reality which was unquestionably there from the outset (this against Martin Buber's 'two modes of believing'). Once granted that this man (and without any doubt he is a man) is the substantial love of God the Father (the covenant-God of Israel) turning to us, then all John's utterances about faith follow automatically. Then Jesus can summarize (the Father and the Son, who are one God), saying: 'Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me' (Jn 14.1). In a long series of texts Jesus can demand faith in himself (which occurs only once in the Synoptics at Mt 18.6 which in view of Mk 9.42 is probably not original), and John can, without further ado, read the life and death of the Son of God, the surrender of his life for the life of the world, as being the love of God himself, a love which teaches us to respond with our own love by means of our unconditional and loving self-surrender to it. By so teaching us, the love of God realises faith in us. But as much was already contained in Jesus' question to the blind men in Matthew: ' "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord" ' (Mt 9.28).

5. To this Paul essentially adds nothing except the painful and blissful experience of the convert: 'what I cannot do of my own, that I can do in Christ.' The leap into the sphere of Christ (a leap which itself is the grace of being 'transplanted' by God) occurs because of the hand stretched out by 'him who loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal 2.20), he who so

‘strengthens’ me that I am able to ‘do all things’ in him (Phil 4.13). Henceforth this is an ability ‘in Christ’, in the reality of his Resurrection, which in fact embraces within itself the quintessence of all earthly reality and delivers mundane reality from self-glorification, enabling it to be con-formed to the crucified, dead, buried, and risen Saviour. This is in strict unity with the logic of the Gospel; nothing would be more preposterous and dangerous than to make a sharp division between Paul’s conception of faith and that of the Synoptics (and, hence, also of James). For in that case Pauline faith would be in danger of running aground as an impenetrable dialectic whose expression would then indeed be the *simul justus et peccator*, which Paul came nowhere near to expressing as such. Paul’s statement to the effect that ‘what I cannot do of my own and in myself, that I can do through Christ and in Christ’ can never be substituted for by the quite different proposition that, ‘since I cannot of my own do anything but sin, Jesus can do everything in my place and, thus, I am justified in him.’ In this second formulation there is no longer any kind of intelligible connection between faith as a fundamental act of the creature (which every religious person can understand) and Christian faith proper. Yet throughout the Synoptic proclamation a continuity is maintained with the Old Testament and the order of creation (Acts 9.15f.; 17.22f.), and there is no reason to speak of two modes of faith. The only thing that might be misleading in this context is the manner in which Paul identifies works with the law, on the one hand, and grace with the Gospel, on the other. We should never lose sight of the temporally-conditioned historical and polemical intention of this parallelising, if we are to see (1) that the accretions that have grown around the law are in any case not the genuine form of Jewish religiosity, which Paul relates especially to Abraham, and (2) that the ‘faith of Abraham’ has the same formal structure as the ‘faith of Christ’.

6. The whole structure of faith (namely, that one can absolutely trust the God who has given us his Son as his Word) is proclaimed by the Apostles and their successors as the Good News. The Apostles’ word of proclamation (*kerygma*) demands faith, not for itself, however, but solely for God, just as they, being delegated and empowered by God, do not proclaim their own word but, rather, God’s Word (1 Thess 2.13; Gal 1.11). To believe the Gospel, to believe the Word, to believe the apostolic preaching (Acts 2.44; 4.4; 8.12; 15.7, etc.) is referred quite precisely to the divine subject (to believe in Jesus as the Son of God: Acts 8.37; 19.4; to believe in the Lord: Acts 9.42; 16.31; 22.19, etc.). To be sure, ‘faith comes from hearing’ the

Apostles' kerygma (Rom 10.17; 1 Cor 3.5; 15.1f., 11). The apostolic word demands a decision for and obedience to the Word on the part of those who hear it. This is why unbelief is disobedience (Rom 2.8; 10.16; 11.30ff.; 15.31), as it is a part of the apostolic authority not only to preach but to 'take every thought captive to obey Christ' and likewise, in the case of 'those who fully believe', 'to punish every disobedience' (2 Cor 10.5f.). There exists an authentic apostolic authority which, within the Church (that is, among those who believe of their own free will) can even intervene in the consciences of individuals, there to establish order. Nevertheless, the act of faith is directed not to the Church as a detached object; rather, this act includes the Church as object solely in so far as she mediates faith in the Lord. Through her preaching, she invites man to adhere to her own faith: to become believers first of all *through* the Church, then *in* her and *with* her (to the extent that she herself believes). Once the person who has been exteriorly struck by the kerygma comes to understand interiorly what the Church is in faith, once he sees her as the 'Body of Christ' and as the Communion of Saints, then, to the extent (and *only* to the extent) that Christ lives in her as total sacrament, the Church will become for the believer a co-object of faith.

7. The kerygma as such is already dogma: it demands of a general faith in God that it make the decision to become a special faith in God's self-revelation and self-surrender to man in Jesus Christ. This demand has meaning only if Jesus Christ is the only Son of the Father. This dogma, which expresses the fundamental form of Christian faith, can and must be variously secured and formulated in the course of the Church's reflection in faith, as it is prompted by erroneous historical interpretations and attacks: this buttressing and development must be carried out in the interests of the dogma itself (christologically), of its presuppositions in the image of God (doctrine of the Trinity), and of its consequences (ecclesiologically). Around the dogma there develops 'dogmatics', which is to say the numerous affirmations that explain, defend, and illustrate the dogmatic centre always more adequately. All these assertions, however, must at any moment be able to be traced back to *the* dogma—the fundamental form that appears in the Gospel. The way this is done will, of course, take on different guises depending on the competence ascribed to 'church dogmatics' and to the organ for the proclamation of the faith that stands behind it; but there can be no doubt as to the possibility and the necessity for such an analysis. Here we may leave aside the question how far 'tradition' is constitutive or only interpretive,

while for the question how far Scripture only witnesses to the form of revelation or is one of its constitutive elements, we refer the reader to the previous chapter. Here it must suffice to recall the maxim that everything is admissible which is adequate for clarifying the interior form of revelation in its proportions and articulations, while everything contrary to this clarification is inadmissible, regardless how good the intentions may be from which it derives. Although Scripture is not identical with revelation, but is rather the testimony about revelation established by God, still, in spite of the purely chance nature of its historical conditioning, Scripture is normative for the interior form of the revelation which expresses itself in it. The Church's pneumatic eye is able to read this form in Scripture, and to this extent the *pneuma* of Scripture is the *norma normans* for the entire form of ecclesial dogmatics. We say the *pneuma* and not simply the letter, even though this, of course, means the *pneuma* within the letter. Hence, too, what we intend is the spiritual, contemplative sense and not simply philology, but certainly a spiritual sense which is embedded in philology. Eyes of faith are required, which alone are able to perceive the form of faith, but supported by eyes which are able to read history critically. Only when both aspects are found in their hierarchical unity will they correspond adequately to the phenomenon being offered; and this double sense, in so far as it belongs to the Church, is the principle of dogmatics as the interpretation of revelation.

The form of faith throughout Scripture is the human answer, elicited by God, to the form of revelation, which is a single form which is merely intensified from the Old to the New Testament. Since the Word of God, in which one believes, becomes man, to distinguish two different kinds of faith can only be misleading. Rather, it is significant that both the beginning and the end of the New Testament revelation quite expressly make the connection with Israel's form of faith, as established in Abraham and interiorised in the Prophets. We have already shown this in relation to the Synoptics. But even the later so-called Epistle to the Hebrews, as it reaches out to embrace the thought-forms of Hellenistic Platonism, does so by means of a grand historical recapitulation of the whole of Old Testament faith. This faith (as in the Old Testament, in Peter, and in James) is here closely linked to expectation, to patience, to constancy, to an existence located in God which endures to the end. The faith of the ancients, founded on God's invisibility and on hope in him, was a reception of God's 'witness' (Heb 11.2) in every dimension, both as a present that fulfils and a future that promises. As such,

the faith of the ancients proleptically contained within itself the form of Christian faith, which precisely for this reason completes within itself, by fulfilling it historically and eschatologically, the promiseladen form of the ancient faith. In the 'Apocalypse' faith again becomes wholly fidelity to the Incarnate Logos which endures all temptation. The Logos himself is the *testis fidelis* (Rev 1.5; 3.14; 19.11), and, hence, the believer himself must be *fidelis usque ad mortem* (Rev 2.10). The King of Kings triumphs in the company of the chosen *fideles* (Rev 17.14). The very words of revelation are *fidelissima verba* (Rev 21.5; 22.6). The very foundations of all dogmatic 'faith in. . .', as Paul knows it and as apostolic preaching must exact it, is here made transparent. This foundation is the reciprocal *fidelitas* of God and of his people which is what already the Old Testament meant by 'faith'; it is also the trust (*Trauen*) of the Bride who surrenders to her Bridegroom in their definitive espousal (*Trauung*).

e. Proclamation and the Other Ecclesial Forms

The most important aspects of proclamation have already been dealt with implicitly in what we have said about faith. The apostolic proclamation, which must remain the archetype of all subsequent preaching in the Church, is 'ministry to the Word' (Acts 6.4). This means, in turn, that the Church's preaching does not possess its own form existing alongside and in competition with the form of the Word. The ministry consists in allowing God's Word, here and now, to make its own form prevail in those who hear it. As we showed by taking the example of Mary and the Saints, however, service does not mean passivity, but rather the engagement of all human powers—including those of the intellect and of the creative faculty—as handmaidenly matter in which the Word can impress and express its form. The matter involved here, naturally, is one which attracts no attention to itself and does not construct an 'intermediary form', because the actual matter of the Word is the hearts of men which must be touched and converted. The art of Christian preaching and rhetoric, therefore, must undergo the same critical judgment as all other Christian art. They must constantly open themselves to the question whether they devote all their energies to making the Word of God present, or whether instead they are constructing a form of their own which steals in as an intermediary reality to be contemplated in its own right

and perhaps even to be admired. To do this would be to dull the force of God's Word.

We can make a distinction between the word of proclamation addressed to the unprepared and the unbelieving and that addressed to those who already believe. In Paul's preaching to the first group we clearly detect an attempt to 'establish contact' with the general religious world-view of his hearers, which then becomes a springboard for the proclamation of Christ. This need not be seen as a 'concessionary form' of preaching, as if it had to begin with something alien to it before being able to move on to its actual concerns. For Paul the 'order of nature' by no means stands outside Christ, but is founded in and made possible by him; by the same token the hearers of the proclamation, without knowing it, already stand within the sphere of Christ's lordship and are being persuaded to move towards something which they already are and have from the standpoint of Christ.⁵¹

Here, too, the mode of address is not first external, moving, with a sudden leap, to an internal mode; rather, what takes place is an *anamnesis* in the theological (and not the Platonic) sense. We can see this clearly in the case of preaching inside the Church, since the preaching of the Word has its *Sitz im Leben* precisely at the point where the Church takes its origin from Christ in the eucharistic *anamnesis* of the liturgy. The Church arises in a single act which at one and the same time is both proclamation and sacrament, from a single origin which is at the same time Word and Flesh. If one could at one and the same time preach and do the eucharistic 'deed' (*hoc facite*), this reality would be perfectly expressed. John's intention in Christ's farewell discourses is to present the Eucharist to us as Word, or better, both things as a strict unity. Since time imposes a constraint that precludes exterior simultaneity, the actualisation of Jesus as the Word who is God precedes his actualisation as the Word who is Flesh. The Word is then primarily conceived as being that action of God which brings us into the truth by leading us out of our fallenness and concealment by conviction (ἐλέγχειν) and judgment (κρίνειν), into the manifest openness of truth.⁵² Yet this function of the Word in no way falls behind the sacramental function in either rank or importance (as could at least be suggested by the unhappy phrase 'ante-communion' or 'preparation for the Mass' to refer to the Liturgy of the Word). One might almost more easily affirm the contrary, since without the Word and the Spirit the Flesh 'would avail nothing'. The distinction made in apostolic preaching between preaching to those outside and those inside disappears in a church

where infant-baptism is practised, because those who stand within the sphere of the Church must always be asked whether they have really ratified their baptism as a dying in Christ (Rom 6), since it is only by so doing that they become true believers. In any case, a word from God that originates from the same source as the Eucharist ('in the night on which he was betrayed', 1 Cor 11.23) is a word from the Cross (1 Cor 1.18), a word that has the cruciformity of God's Word as its own content and as the 'power of God' (ibid.), a word that precisely for this reason has the same 'weakness and lowliness' for its form. The preacher has feelings of 'weakness and of much fear and trembling', and his preaching cannot therefore consist in 'plausible words of wisdom' but 'in the demonstration of [God's] Spirit and power' (1 Cor 2.3f.). 'For power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Cor 12.9), not indeed in the sense that the preacher should preach feebly in order that Christ may be strong in his word, but rather in the sense that 'when I am weak, then *I* am strong' (2 Cor 12.10); for, although 'we are weak in him, in dealing with you we shall live with him by the power of God' (2 Cor 13.4), even if this life becomes visible (2 Cor 13.9) not so much in the apostle and preacher himself as in the community he has reached and built up (2 Cor 12.19). The preacher is 'authenticated' when he proves 'that Christ is in him' (2 Cor 13.5), and since the community asks for such proof (2 Cor 13.3), he can provide it by the fact that the mystery of the Cross (power through weakness) is not communicated to others 'over his head', as it were, but lives within him (2 Cor 12.9f.).

Paul knows no other 'form' of preaching, nor does Jesus (Mt 10). This is precisely the form of Christ himself, but it can be expressed in the preaching only if it has previously taken shape in the existential faith of the preacher. Where this occurs, then there is no longer any danger that the preacher will preach himself. In the act of preaching he is a 'servant of the Word', which is not his but God's Word, with the same power which God's revelation in Christ possessed directly. This is why Paul can describe the apostolic preaching as a 'word of salvation' (Acts 13.26), a 'word of grace' (Acts 14.3; 20.32), a 'word of life' (Phil 2.16), a 'word of reconciliation' (2 Cor 5.19), 'and these genitives imply more than just a word "about" salvation, "about" grace, life, reconciliation. . . . The Word is not merely and above all an historical report which tells of reconciliation, salvation, and grace as it would of any historical event. No! This Word, rather, *generates*: it creates and effects "salvation", "grace", "reconciliation".'⁵³ The Word of God itself, however, gains its power for us from Christ's existence, and thus it requires

the existence of the preacher as its ecclesial medium. If the preacher is living his faith, then he will not need to become artificially attuned to the 'wavelength' of his audience, as it were, seeking to 'adapt' himself to its style (or, if this occurs, it will only be in a very secondary sense). For a preacher who lives his faith knows where man truly stands—against what background of weak faith, impotence, and darkness he listens to the Word of God. By living a Christian existence, the preacher will succeed both in relating his preaching to God's Word and to believing and sinful man, and it is precisely in terms of such an analysis that the word of his preaching becomes credible in a Christian sense. It is precisely through this 'dissolution' of all private artistry that preaching acquires Christian 'style', just as the Eucharistic liturgy acquires its own authentic style when it does not attempt to stage an aesthetic performance for the congregation with pretensions to originality or style, but rather unites in its celebration the two poles that are to be brought together: the Lord who gives himself and the community that hungers for him.

Thus, the style of preaching and of the celebration of the sacraments is decided simultaneously. Both are but two aspects of the same reality: the making present in our remembrancing of the Lord who became man for us and gives himself to us as word and food; and neither preaching nor sacramental celebration looks at the historical event from an objectivising distance: rather, by the power of the risen and living Christ, they make the event present as event. Christ does not need to have himself 'represented' by a man; he is mighty enough to use man to speak himself, to touch hearts in his unmistakable divine-human way, just as he acts as God and as man in the eucharistic event. To put it differently, this will best succeed if the preacher avoids basing his preaching, consciously or unconsciously, on a schematic account of Christianity of his own devising. Of course, behind dogma as formulated by the Church there is always a particular theology, and numerous theologies of various strains shape Christian revelation into particular thought-structures which the theological eye can more or less survey and identify according to style. But it is a sore trial for the Christian hearer when, instead of revelation itself, he encounters what is obviously a theological construction. Theology should assist in making the preaching transparent of the revelation itself and not intrude between them as an end in itself. This would be tantamount to hindering the hearer from a true and direct hearing of the Word, and obstructing what Kierkegaard calls 'contemporaneity'. Preaching is not a theology course for the laity, nor for the same reason is it a

transposition of revelation into a merely natural or Christian ethics. Preaching stands or falls with the question ‘concerning the architecture, the christocentric structural principle of the proclamation’.⁵⁴ ‘For this reason, preaching always has explicitly supernatural presuppositions, namely, supernatural understanding and the Holy Spirit; but it has very few natural presuppositions. . . . The Spirit will be effective in our word only if we give him space in us, and this means suppressing ourselves.’⁵⁵ This alone makes our word of proclamation plausible as the Word of God.

It would be tempting and fruitful to review all other forms of ecclesial existence in this way to show their character as expressions of the form of Christ—as a medium that is intended to receive and fundamentally can receive the Christ-form, but which also, because of man’s recalcitrance, puts up resistance to the form’s creative power and hence obscures the image to the point where it is unrecognisable.

1. Such a resolution of the Christ-form into ecclesial form would have to be developed first of all with respect to the hierarchical ministry itself. It would then become evident that this office as such is, in Christ’s Church, purely a medium for mediating him, a medium created and fashioned substantially from the love of Christ and which in the person holding the office is a graced fulfilment of his personal discipleship. By this fulfilment through grace the Lord of the Church makes a person capable of exercising in the Church a ministry which bears the form of Christ. An astounding thing then occurs: the minister’s distance from his Lord comes into bold relief at the same time as he is joined instrumentally to the Lord’s action. The reality involved is not comprehensible in a Christian sense if only the distance is emphasised, that is the *opus operatum in Christo* in spite of the unworthiness and sinfulness of the priest. In a Christian sense, what is here at stake can be understood only when we see both discipleship and the conferring of office as a single figure which, as such, guarantees through Christ’s grace the *repraesentatio Christi*, the making present of Christ, who is the only true minister.⁵⁶ In this way the opposition in the Church between the hierarchy and the laity would be, not indeed abolished, but delivered of its rigour and made credible in a Christian sense, and it would then be plausible to trace the ever-recurring stumbling block of this opposition back, not to the institution itself, but to its exercise at the hands of sinners.

2. A further resolution would deal with the sphere of canon law, which looks back to the jurisdictional power of the Apostles and their successors

and poses the intricate problem of ecclesial obedience. It is evident that a purely anthropological analysis is not sufficient: that is, by regarding obedience purely as a subordination of the individual to a socially necessary ecclesial discipline, which must be all the more demanding since the goods of unity in faith and in love cannot otherwise be preserved and actualised. Christian obedience must be the manifestation of Christ's unique redemptive obedience to the Father. The element of coercion that emerges particularly in the sphere of canon law must rest upon the far deeper willingness of the Christian to belong to the Church and upon the freedom of the Christian that is thereby effected, a freedom for which Christ, by his obedience, has freed us. From outside what will receive greatest attention is the sociological resolution: some will be inclined to treasure certain cultural and aesthetic values in the 'style' of Catholicism, while others will stigmatise its degenerate forms as traditionalism, integralism, and so forth. The view from the outside must be overcome theologically by showing that Christ also wanted to impress the form of his obedience on his Church. The obedience of the religious life, undertaken with total freewill for the sake of Christ, becomes meaningful and credible only in this way. But the dualism between the obedience of the laity with respect to the hierarchy (and to the whole sphere of law which the hierarchy establishes by its mandate from Christ⁵⁷) and the obedience of the religious life can be bridged in spite of all the real differences in their structures, since both forms of obedience come to be seen as credible in so far as they are constituted by the free obedience to Christ in the mediation of the person representing Christ as either ecclesiastical or religious superior.

3. Ecclesiastical discipline and ecclesial obedience constitute one aspect of the total Christian life in the Church in so far as this life is a 'form', and the structural principle that applies to the part applies just as much to the whole. In the first place the same principle that constitutes the hierarchical office with its jurisdiction establishes the religious life as a whole. Although for each of the evangelical counsels, too, there can exist an anthropological resolution (since they have a counterpart in most highly developed religions and thus exhibit themselves as conformed to man), the counsels attain their Christian meaning through the creative power of Christ's form in those who are called to discipleship and who respond to this call. Poverty is the commandment to leave everything in order to acquire the one pearl that is Christ; it is the renunciation of all worldly shaping power in order to become

a pure bridal ‘matrix’ that receives the creative imprint of the Bridegroom, of his mentality and life-form. With virginity it is the same: its particular form of discipleship must be read in Mary. It means an exclusive consecration of man’s total corporeal and spiritual vitality and fruitfulness to the end of receiving maternally within oneself the one form of God’s Word made man, then to foster it, give it birth and accompany its own growth and the course of its life. The anthropological resolution can here be accomplished with clarity only with respect to the Christian archetype: the miracle of virginal fertility is too evident for it to find a sufficiently plausible image in popular myths and vital forms. And it can only be made opaque by *a priori* philosophical judgments (for instance, that reproduction and individuality are evil and therefore to be abolished by self-denial) and erotic obfuscations. The form of life of the counsels, moreover, is the formal (representative) and public living out in the Church of a precept of life which applies to all Christians. The ‘spirit’ of Christ’s counsels (which give expression to his own Spirit and life-form) must also be expressed in the lives of those who own property, are married and dispose of their own persons (1 Cor 7). In this sense, the religious life is not only an expression of Christ, but a co-operation that partakes of Christ’s transforming power as it shapes the Church of the laity. This can be seen clearly when the meaning of the Christ-form is manifested as the love of God for the world and as man’s perfect love for God and his brother. This meaning, which is the primary structure underlying the Christ-form, can and must also be the meaning of all ecclesial life-forms, and this in turn implies two things. The first of these is that any particular form (such as sacramental and hierarchical structure, ecclesiastical discipline, the life of the counsels, and so on) is Christian only in so far and as long as it makes Christian love concrete and visible. And the second thing is that, even in an existential sense, this ecclesial love is not simply autonomous human love, but rather the love of Christ as the Holy Spirit impresses it upon the Church. In the last analysis, therefore, it is the trinitarian love of the Son for the Father and, hence, also of the Father for the Son.

4. One last area which we will here only refer to in passing (since it will be dealt with at greater length in the second and third volumes) is theology, which, at its very core, is an event that gives form. On the one hand, its task is to make evident the logical interconnection and necessity of the historical and accidental aspects of revelation. On the other hand, and in close relation to this first task, theology deepens *pistis* into *gnosis* so far as this is possible

on earth, and it does this through a contemplative penetration of the depths of individual facts.⁵⁸ Since the Gospel itself constantly calls for an understanding of what is believed, the theological undertaking is at least in principle possible, and can be developed in obedience to Christ: it does not at all have to be a rebellion of the intellectuals, an eating of the forbidden fruit of knowledge. Nevertheless, from different sides certain measures are imposed on the theological enterprise. It cannot merely be a disinterested consideration without any connection to Christian praxis. From this standpoint the measure applied to theology is the clarification of the structure of Christian faith for the Church as a whole and for her proclamation, and also for the individual in his Christian meditation and existence. Furthermore, theology also has a measure in the communication of the charism of faith and knowledge by Christ through the Holy Spirit (ἀναλογία τῆς πίστεως, Rom 12.6), and it cannot rise above this analogy which has been assigned to it. This is evidenced especially in the fact that this assignation is differentiated according to particular callings and takes place in various ways; for this reason, a purely univocal theology beyond these assignations is not possible. Theology has an eschatological measure in faith itself, which can only reflect the decisive articulations of the truth of revelation but cannot see them in themselves (*per speculum, in aenigmate*); theology, therefore, can be called a ‘science’ only by analogy to the other sciences.⁵⁹ These three limitations of theology’s scope do not prevent God’s Word from being glorified in the Christian theologies, and it is above all Origen who best understood and exemplified this. Theology attains to its form as a figure drawn up by God himself and it can, therefore, pass back and forth from the realm of pure logical exactness into an experience which radiates from the archetype—an experience which leads to contemplation and can become truly mystical: this fact confirms rather than questions its character as form. The convergence of the aesthetic and the mystical in the great mystical theologies—from Gregory of Nyssa and Denys the Areopagite to Bernard of Clairvaux, William of St.-Thierry, the greater Mechtild, and all the way to John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila—is striking and can only be explained by affirming that what in God is formless and ineffable is offered as a super-form which fascinates and transports man, eliciting from man and claiming for itself the answer of man’s shaping powers. The dangers involved are evident, but they need not make a successful outcome impossible. Besides, the personal existential dimension is never lacking in great classical theology; *sapientia* has always

been related to *sapor*, and the personal appropriation of Christian truth in one's existence has always been regarded as an indispensable criterion for the manifestation of the truth. Theology's authentic form radiates precisely from this equilibrium between the personal effort to acquire the *intellectus fidei* and the participation, bestowed as gift, in the object of faith within one's life-experience. Indeed, as radiant form, the authentic form of theology is the fruit of precisely this union. A non-existential theology, therefore, remains unworthy of belief because it is not capable of making anything really visible.⁶⁰

We will now offer some concluding remarks on this whole chapter on the 'mediation of the form'. Together with the following chapter on the 'attestation of the form' it forms a unity and it could also have been included in this later chapter under the title of 'the testimony of the Holy Spirit'. For, in their power to express Christ, both Sacred Scripture and the holy Church together constitute the work of the Holy Spirit. *Ille me clarificabit* (Jn 16.14); *ille testimonium perhibebit de me* (Jn 15.26). If we classify both forms—Scripture and the Church—under the head of 'attestation' (as we not only can but must do), then their indispensability for the understanding of the principal form will be clearly seen. Scripture not only gives a kind of 'ideal portrait' of the historical Jesus; it reveals in a form apprehensible by the world the fact that he is the Word of God. Jesus needs this dimension, prepared by the Spirit, in order there to take root and develop his reality, which is both ideal and real. Nor is the Church merely an historical effect of Christ; she is his 'fulness' and his bridal 'Body'; whatever there is in her of Christian reality, he *is* as he expresses himself to mankind and impresses himself upon mankind through the power of the Holy Spirit. So understood, both dimensions will have to be at least mentioned in the next chapter, for then they will constitute a part of that theological landscape which surrounds the central form and which cannot be banished from it either exteriorly or interiorly. In the present chapter we anticipated the dimensions of Scripture and the Church because, as media for the manifestation of Christ, they could be suspected of being opaque and unreliable. If they were merely a human work then they would inevitably be both opaque and unreliable, even granting the divinity of Christ. In so far as they were human, they would obscure his form, and only in so far as Christ could prevail in them against the human work would they be helpless to obstruct his power. But if they are a work undertaken by God, then it is at least possible that in conjunction with

Christ, the principal form, they are so complemented as to yield one total form. And it would also be possible that the structure of the principal form should become delineated in them—more strongly in Scripture, less so in the Church. The delineation would be stronger in Scripture because, in spite of all human work of redaction and the obfuscations and relativisations caused by it, Scripture is positively inspired by the Holy Spirit as its ‘primary author’. And the delineation would be weaker in the Church because in her even those structures instituted by Christ are altogether exposed to human abuse, and because infallibility in the preservation and interpretation of the foundations of revelation is guaranteed only on the basis of an *assistentia negativa* (which precludes any substantial error). But this is not to deny the fact that in the Church there can and always do exist true prophecy, true sanctity and the charisms, and an attestation of Christ that is immediately evident, as for instance, through martyrdom. In this way the form of Christ, which in itself is hidden from the world (*mundus eum non cognovit*, Jn 1.10; 14.17), can become so dazzling in the testimony of Christians that its beauty and rightness will be visible and evident—in the same manner as an old and half-faded parchment suddenly becomes legible and is suddenly deciphered, as by a miracle. Beneath the double servant form of a Church that is herself truly sinful and is darkened by sinners there shines the glory of Christ’s love, not only like a little dot of love representing an individual man, but in such a way that Christ’s love, starting from this point, moves out to justify the whole, including the Scripture and including the Church in her institutional form.

The perception of the Christ-form through the media of Scripture and the Church is a revelation which objectively points us beyond itself. Only by a delusion could an apostle of Christ be taken to be a god (Acts 14.11f.). The experience is objectively ecstatic, because in a book Christ’s Spirit becomes visible, and Christ’s power can be seen in a ‘man who is as weak as you yourselves are’ (Acts 14.15). The form which both these things present is relative in its essence. But at this point we would have to develop the theme not only of ‘form’, but of joy’ and ‘delight’, not only of perception but of ecstasy. At the very beginning we said that a doctrine of perception always includes implicitly a doctrine of ecstasy, and vice versa. For, even in the realm of worldly beauty, form cannot really be perceived without the beholder being taken up into it. The beautiful is never a mere flat surface; it always has heights and depths. ‘Whoever sees me, sees the Father’ (Jn 14.9);

‘whoever sees me, sees him who sent me’ (Jn 12.45). We will deal at greater length with this enrapturing element in the third volume, where we will examine the predominantly ‘dogmatic’ side of theology: the objective taking up of the graced person beyond the merely creaturely world into the divine world of God’s nature. The media of Scripture and of the Church, however, cannot be understood in their form without this objective ecstasy, this objective enthusiasm. By making present (‘transporting’) the form of Christ within Scripture and the Church, the Spirit at the same time makes man present (‘transports’ him) within them and, through them, to Christ. This is what the Fathers called the *admirabile commercium et conubium*.

E. THE ATTESTATION OF THE FORM

1. THE TESTIMONY OF THE FATHER

The form of Jesus, as form, is not attested from outside but from within. This means that it is the attestation which in the first place establishes it as the form it is, namely, as the manifestation of God, as the Word of God, as God's testimony about himself. John, who developed this theology of witness most explicitly, distinguishes four dimensions of attestation. First, the testimony of the Father, which he renders to the Son but also in the Son—in his word and in his work. Second, the testimony of the Old Testament: that of Abraham, of Moses, of the Prophets, and, finally, of John the Baptist, who is the living voice that recapitulates the whole history of revelation. Third, the testimony of works, that is, of the power given to the Son by the Father—power over the cosmos, over the 'powers', over the angels, over death and all the consequences of the body's fallenness, and as extreme instance these works include the raisings effected by Jesus and also his own Resurrection. Fourth, the testimony of the Holy Spirit, which for John is intimately related to the sacramental testimony of 'water and blood'—of baptism and the Eucharist. These testimonies do not all hold the same rank. The testimony of the Father (which becomes expressed in the third testimony, that of Jesus' works) 'stands higher than that of John' and, therefore, higher than that of the Old Testament as a whole (Jn 5.36), for the latter does not go into constituting the form of Jesus in the same sense as the witness of the Father and, in its own way, as the witness of the Spirit: water and blood, which bear witness together with the Spirit (1 Jn 5.6), stem from Jesus himself and are therefore in some sense a part of him (Jn 19.34; 'This is he who came by water and blood', 1 Jn 5.6). And yet the testimony of the Father and that of the Spirit are also in a certain order: in his Son the Father witnesses first of all to himself, and Jesus' testimony therefore bears witness to the Father; the Spirit, by contrast, witnesses retrospectively to the Son who had lived on earth (Jn 15.26), developing what has been given. The witness of the Father constitutes the form (εἶδος) of the Son as such; the witness of the Spirit constitutes his

glory (δόξα).

The peculiar manner in which the Father and the form (εἶδος) are related by Jn 5.37f. can serve as a point of departure for understanding the Father's testimony. 'The Father who sent me has himself borne witness to me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen; and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe him whom he has sent.' In what sense can John speak of the Father's 'form' and juxtapose it to his voice (φωνή) and to his Logos? Can God, who indeed is invisible and has never been seen by anyone (Jn 1.18), nevertheless be seen as a form in the same way that his voice and his word can be heard? Jesus' utterance to the Jews is unambiguously a word of reproach: they *should* have seen the form and they would have been able to do so had they believed in Jesus. This can be connected to the passages of Scripture that attest a vision of God's *eidos*. After his wrestling-match with the angel of Yahweh, Jacob witnesses that he has 'seen God face to face' (Gen 32.31), and concerning Moses we have the testimony from God himself that he did not reveal himself to Moses as he had to the other prophets, in dreams and enigmas, but 'with him I speak mouth to mouth, with clear evidence (ἐν εἰδει) and not in riddles (οὐ δι' ἀνιγμμάτων), and he has beheld God's form (Septuagint: δόξα)' (Num 12.7f.). However Jesus' allusion can only be a linguistic reminiscence, since he is certainly not expecting of the Jews that they, surpassing all prophetic vision, should partake in Moses' vision of the form of God. Nor is there any reason to suppose an allusion to the theophanies of the 'religion of the fathers', which were never a possibility open to everyone and in any event belong to another period. But if we consider Jn 5.37 in conjunction with Jn 14.9 and Jn 12.45, the meaning at once becomes clear: whoever sees Jesus, sees the Father, for Jesus is himself the Father's assumption of form, the Father's *eidos*. He is this with a concentration and an exclusiveness that does not preclude the Old Testament believer's already being able to hear and see God, in so far as divine revelation was moving on to its definitive form in Jesus. Jesus wants to say that the fact that the Jews are not able to see and hear God in him proves that they had never (πώποτε) encountered him at all, either in the law or in the Prophets.

Πίστις and εἶδος are here far from being in tension with one another; in fact, they actually require and include one another, and this casts light on their alleged opposition in Paul. The point is that the 'vision in a mirror and in riddles' (1 Cor 13.12) nevertheless refers to real seeing (the kind of vision

typical for the prophetic manner of knowing, which of course is opposed to the three abiding virtues⁶¹), and the contrast of πίστις and εἶδος in 2 Cor 5.7 should not be interpreted as implying an opposition between ‘naked faith’ (in Christ) and an otherworldly vision of his form; rather, as the context suggests, it should be seen as denoting the inability of vision to grasp the whole Christian form here on earth and the fact that this form will attain full development only in the other world (as suggested by the contrast of ‘tent’ and ‘house’ in 2 Cor 5.1).⁶²

Before going further and entering into a discussion which is of decisive importance for our whole undertaking, we must again recall our first presupposition. To engage in theological aesthetics does not mean to transpose the categories of a realm essentially foreign to theology (as, for instance, the Greek religious understanding of the world) uncritically into the sphere of Christian revelation. The fundamental principle of a theological aesthetics, rather, is the fact that, just as this revelation is absolute truth and goodness, so also is it absolute beauty; but this assertion would be meaningless if every transposition and application to revelation of human categories from the realms of logic, ethics (‘pragmatics’), and aesthetics, if every analogical application of these categories, were simply forbidden. And why should the validity of such analogies be recognised in practice by scholarship for the first two fields (such recognition is always given in practice, even when it is rejected in theory) while being refused *a limine* for the third field? The constant concern of Protestant scholarship is to prove that the essence of Biblical revelation cannot be reduced to the system of categories of the non-Biblical religious understanding of the world and of existence, whether to the original religion of Canaan or to the highly developed religions of Egypt, Iran, and Mesopotamia, nor, more especially, to the religion of Ancient Greece. But the result of this vigorous refusal is that the common elements and their significance are overlooked historically and denied theoretically, while so much store is set by the specifically distinctive element in Biblical religion that it is expected to yield the entire form all by itself. By extracting the substance held in common one may indeed retain the specific difference, but this now becomes wholly unsubstantial. Once the ‘Greek understanding of the world’ is labeled ‘aesthetic’, then the only qualifier remaining for Biblical revelation is ‘non-aesthetic’. This has devastating consequences for the whole of theology. For now everything in man’s religious thought and representation having to do

with images has to be categorised as ‘mythical’ and, hence, eliminated from the theological interpretation of Scripture. As a result, the only thing retained is what is wholly unperceivable and non-conceptual, and this in the context of an eschatological actualism that renders God’s Incarnation superfluous. To be sure, when the Bible uses the schemas of human world-views it does so in part to judge man’s desire to absolutise particulars which stems from original sin. But to an equal extent it does so in order to surpass and thus bring to perfection the inchoative element contained in schemas devised by man (σχήματι εύρεθες ώς άνθρωπος: Phil 2.7). The fact that here and there a word like είδος or μορφή is not used by Scripture in the specifically Greek sense does not by a long way prove that the Biblical and the Greek meanings have nothing in common.⁶³ The discovery that the ‘revealer’ in John ‘speaks the language of myth’ does not always call for demythologising, since this language is nothing other than the common fund of images understood by every human being.⁶⁴

This principle of theological aesthetics had to be recalled before going on to consider the Son in the testimony of the Father (and this at the same time means in his witnessing to the Father) as the *eidos* or form of God and, thus, as the aesthetic model of all beauty. Nor should we forget that the rejection of a trinitarian doctrine as formulated by the Councils very often makes Protestantism in its perplexity oscillate between a practically ditheistic language and a modalistic interpretation of the Trinity. Unity of nature, distinction of persons: this formula, which wards off both dangers, reminds us above all that in Christ the one, concrete, divine nature becomes revealed and manifested in the world, precisely where this revelation is given as a sending and a being sent, a remaining in the background and a coming into the foreground, a remaining above and a descending and re-ascending. God’s nature reveals itself in this twofoldness, and this in turn points further to a selfhood which is also in the line of distinctions: it points to a third Reality which unites the Sender and the Sent in a vital way. The one God, who is invisible by nature, appears, but not in the manner to which we are accustomed with worldly reality, namely, that the same being, identical to itself (which may be a person), appears while not appearing and enters visibility while at the same time remaining a ground that rests in itself. Rather, the one invisible God appears in such a way that this polarity reveals itself to us as a personal relationship within God’s very nature. *This* is where God is an absolute mystery for us, precisely in his revelation. The absolute

mystery does not lie in the fact that God becomes manifest to us in a manner analogous to the way worldly beings become manifest to us. Nor does it lie in the fact that he becomes manifest to us while retaining his freedom: ordinary persons can do this by ‘bearing witness’ to themselves, that is, by requiring trust and ‘faith’ from the other person. It lies in the fact that his self-revelation of Being and of nature presents itself as a relationship which, in itself, is (tri-)personal. This is what is absolutely incomprehensible to us, that in God relation-to-self and relation-to-other, eternal repose-in-self and eternal striving and loving can be identical. And this not at all in the sense that opposite poles, which cannot within the world be reconciled, are here made to be identical in an obscure dialectical or monistic manner. Rather, what occurs is that the incomprehensible mystery—the identity of which we speak—itself appears and becomes visible within God’s manner of becoming manifest. This event cannot be reduced to any worldly categories of beauty, although it makes use precisely of the double vessel offered by the world—form and its proper glory, on the one hand, love and its glory, on the other—in order to make itself present. Thus, the categories of aesthetics are not simply annihilated, but rather raised above themselves in an incomprehensibly positive way (*non destruit, sed elevat, extollit, perficit naturam*) in order to contain something which is infinitely greater than themselves.

We have shown elsewhere⁶⁵ that every created being is a manifestation of itself (the more intensively the higher it ranks): the representation of its own depths, the surface of its own ground, the word from its essential core; and upon this essential movement of being (from its interior to the exterior) are founded the good, the true, and the beautiful. Every act of appearing is at the same time an illumination of a being’s ground and a measuring of its own dimensions. Both things—light and measure—are correlative, and the ground is ground only in the manifestation, and there can be manifestation only as a manifestation of the ground. The illuminated space ‘between’ the ground and its appearing is the measure, and when this light becomes reflected the measure becomes a word expressive of the being’s nature which gathers itself up and reads itself (*intellegentia*), making itself into a value and a communicable gift. Thus, the light of Being becomes the source of bliss and the measure of Being becomes the source of truth. Now it is of course true that this movement of Being between ground and manifestation is not rounded and complete in itself, but rather occurs only in the straining of

beings beyond themselves: something becomes true in itself only in so far as it is true for others, and something becomes good and worthy in itself only in so far as it is worthy of being striven for by others. And yet each being becomes true and good for others only because, in this state of openness and interchange, it becomes a reality in itself and for itself. The functionality of truth and the usefulness of goodness receive their reciprocal movement from their own self-apprehension (*Eigenbegriff*): this is so because the reciprocity of ground and manifestation, on the one hand, and the intrinsic worth of a being for itself and in itself, on the other, cannot be jeopardised by any event occurring between beings, but can only be more deeply grounded by it. But why, then, does the ground appear at all? To ask this implies the desire to investigate the question of why Being exists at all. All (functional) necessity, all (ethical) exigencies, and all constraints founded on the first two are posterior and do not qualify as ground of the ground. With the ground's appearing and returning to itself we are beyond all constraints: we are in the freedom where the self gives and receives itself, events that are an eternal open mystery to itself and must remain such. All answers derived from the *necessity of being* must always be transcended by the eternal wonder of *being allowed to be*. No manifestation can ever account for and be founded on itself; it always points to the ground that is manifested. But the ground wants to be itself only in so far as it becomes manifest. Thus, the light and the measure existing between the ground and its appearing are the most manifest and, at the same time, the most mysterious reality of all: Being as grace, as gratuitousness, as beauty, as love.

This is not an attempt to offer a deduction of the Trinity, but it is something that must be kept in mind if, beyond everything philosophy can conceive, the relationship between Father and Son is indeed revealed through the Son. The Father is ground; the Son is manifestation. The Father is content, the Son form—in the unique way shown by revelation. Here, too, there is no ground without manifestation, no content without form. In the beautiful these two things are but one; they rest in one another; and whoever would perceive beauty must perceive this interrelation ever more deeply: 'That you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father' (Jn 10.38; cf. 14.10, 20). As ground, the ground is 'greater' than the form that represents it and that proceeds from it (Jn 14.28); and yet they are 'one' (Jn 10.30; 17.22), and neither of them can be or be thought of without the other. What is at stake here is the acknowledgement of this interrelation

(Jn 10.38), for whoever would know Jesus without the Father would know nothing: ‘You know neither me nor my Father; if you knew me, you would know my Father also’ (Jn 8. 19). The Son is the ‘exegesis’ of the Father (Jn 1.18), and here ἐξηγέομαι (‘make manifest’) includes both elements: the narration and the representation, the personal aspect and the ontological aspect. As manifestation (φανεροῦν, Jn 17.6, 26), as open proclamation (ἐπαγγέλειν, Jn 16.25), as a making known (γνωρίζειν, Jn 17.26), this ‘exegesis’ can express something which is forever definitive and yet ever new and which intensifies dynamically, so that even in eternal life it remains unconcluded. The Son’s expression of the Father in form is intimately related to the praise and ‘glorification’ (δοξάζειν) which, in turn, is closely connected to the act that ascribes to the Father his true worth and honours (τιμᾶν) him as exalted Lord—in the same way that figure and splendour, form and light are one in the beautiful.

But already the danger looms of understanding the Son’s act of revelation—by giving form and glorifying—as his own activity and no longer, as he himself affirms, as the activity of the Father in him, of the Father who expresses and glorifies himself in the Son’s form and word. There is no personal statement on the Son’s part that is not at the same time a statement of the one divine nature! It is God himself who reveals and glorifies himself when the appearing Son glorifies the non-appearing Father—the Father who appears in the Son. This assertion of the identity of nature between Father and Son leads us without fail, if we pursue its personal aspects, to the existential paradox of the Son, in whose servant form is manifested—really manifested—the Father’s form of lordship. This is why, to the last, the Son does not do his will (Jn 4.34; 6.38) but acts solely at the Father’s command (Jn 10.18), accomplishes the Father’s own work, does not teach his own doctrine but that of the Father (Jn 7.16; 14.10, 24), tells only of what he has seen in his Father (Jn 3. II; 8.38), can only do what he sees the Father doing (Jn 5.19), can only undertake what the Father has given him to say and to make known in the manner the Father has commanded (Jn 12.49f.). If this line is followed exclusively, however, it would yield on the part of the Son a kind of re-duplicating mimicry of the Father—a tendency which in the form of a Hellenising Arianism has long threatened dogma. This tendency would obliterate the relation of expression within God’s being. The reciprocal movement is introduced by the assertion that, in the form of humiliation of the Son who does nothing but obey, the Father expresses his paternal lordship

and glory, not as in an alien realm of expression but as in his very own. It is the Father who has given it to the Son to have life in himself (Jn 5.26), to surrender this life on his own initiative and—something which reveals the divine power even more clearly—to take it up again to himself (Jn 10.18). He can bestow this life on others who will not be lost for all eternity and whom no one will snatch from his hand; and the power that accomplishes this is, indeed, the power of the Father, but in the oneness of Father and Son (Jn 10.28f.). To give life, to raise up on the Last Day (Jn 6.39f., 44, 54), to confer a share in his power to judge (Rev 2.26ff.)—these things are the expression of an unlimited power of judgment which the Father has given to the Son as his own, ‘that all may honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him’ (Jn 5.22f.). Once again this line of thought, which in the Son sees the making present of the Father’s attributes, would lead to an Arian subordinationism and ditheism if one should fail to see and understand both sides as aspects of one and the same thing. But it is not (only) as if the Son first became a servant in order to show by his obedience the Father’s lordly dominion over him, and then became the Lord in order to show in himself God’s same divinity from the other side, as it were, by way of completion. (This is basically how the hymn of Phil 2.5-11 describes it.) Rather, following the presuppositions we have established, it must be that the humiliation itself is already in essence the glorification of the Father and, hence, also of the Son himself, as John’s statements underline and confirm (Jn 3.14f.; 12.28f.; 17.4f.; 18.6), and the Son’s external glorification through his Resurrection can only ratify the extent to which a love that goes unto death has already glorified itself interiorly.

Only the identity of nature between Father and Son, in union with their personal opposition (which is expressed in the opposition of God and man), can make the expressive relationship between God and man an expressive relationship in God himself. It is along this line that we are now to read the decisive statements concerning the Son’s attestation by the Father. By virtue of this attestation the Son emerges as the authentically accredited interpretation of God. It is evident that such an accreditation can of necessity take place only within itself. For the aesthetically blind three stars in their tourist guide may witness to the fact that here there is something to be seen; for the aesthetically deaf, the recommendation of an (accredited) opera guide can help them to recognize *Così fan tutte* as a magnificent opera. But who is

authorised to accredit the ‘authenticity’ of a work such as Mantegna’s or Mozart’s? Not even another great artist would be, since, as artist, he would at best be on the same level as they. Only the work itself can attest its own claim to validity. This is why John mentions the testimonies of the Old Testament and of the Baptist only marginally; they are to be regarded only as homages to the One who is unique. The Jews and even the disciples demand that the interior witness become an exterior one (Jn 2.18; 14.8); and they are referred to the expressive form: Jesus’ attitude of humility demonstrates that he does not glorify himself but that, rather, Another is glorifying himself in the power that is expressed in Jesus’ words and works. It is this that does not have to be believed, but can rather be seen and known. And this acknowledgement of the form contains Jesus’ interior knowledge of the Father (Jn 7.27ff.; 8.19), so much so that, ‘if I said, “I do not know him,” I should be a liar like you,’ (Jn 8.55), and with this the legibility of the form of Jesus would be destroyed. It is then, precisely the interior witness that accredits Jesus’ form; in this unique case, in which the relationship of ground to form is a personal one, we have a witness that the Father both expresses in the form of the Son and addresses to the Son as person. Both are one. Whoever is able to read the form will at the same time understand the witness which the Father interiorly gives to the Son. Whoever is able to hear the Son as Logos of the Father—as the witness to himself which the Father exhibits to the world—that person will also be listening to the interior dialogue between Father and Son wherein the Father utters his entire divinity, his power, and his love to the Son. The Father accredits the Son’s words and works as stemming from himself, the Father; by so doing he also accredits the Son’s form of humiliation and obedience as an authentic expression of the divine nature. But only God can express God authentically. Thus, the ‘ontological difference’ in the first verse of John’s prologue (‘the Word was with God, the Word was God’) immediately indicates the total reality at stake here: it is, so to speak, the act of putting on those eyeglasses that allow us to perceive the phenomenon in a stereoscopic and plastic fashion.

For the Son it is absolutely the same thing to hear God’s Word (Jn 8.47), to hear God’s truth (Jn 8.40), and himself to be this Word and this Truth (Jn 1.1; 14.6). No word or truth can be more authentic than this. This authenticity can be seen in the manner in which Jesus represents himself. For this reason it is not dialectical and invisible, and the paradoxical statements he utters concerning this are mutually contradictory only when considered very

superficially: 'If I bear witness to myself, my testimony is not true' (Jn 5.31); 'even if I do bear witness to myself, my testimony is true' (Jn 8.14). 'I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true' (Jn 8.15f.). Seen from within, these statements are not dialectical but plainly reconcilable. And so he continues: 'For I am not alone, but I and he who sent me' (Jn 8.16); 'he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him' (Jn 8.29). His remark to the Jews that, according to Jewish law, the testimony of two witnesses is sufficient (Deut 17.6; Job 8.17) is exoteric, for here it is not the case of two separate, finite persons. But the remark thus points us to the esoteric dimension where the one God bears two personal testimonies. Here Jesus is saying that he bears witness to himself and that, besides, the Father bears witness to him (Jn 8.18). He bears witness to himself in so far as every form, by revealing its content, also reveals itself as form. But he bears witness to himself only in so far as he bears witness to the Father (Jn 17.6f.), who in the Son bears witness to himself. Therefore, the truth is both the Father in himself and the expressive relationship between Father and Son as well as, finally, the Son in himself, in so far as he is the Word and the Expression of the Father.

For this relationship the only appropriate term is the Johannine key-word 'love', which in the course of the Gospel radiates ever more brightly. At first everything is seen as God's incomprehensible love for the world, expressed in the self-surrender of the Son (Jn 3.16). Then precisely this surrender of the Son becomes manifest as the love of the Father for the Son (Jn 3.35; 5.20; 10.17), then as the love of the Son for mankind (Jn 11.5; 13.1), then as the communication to man of the love between Father and Son in the person of the Spirit and as the response of man, in the Spirit, to Father and Son (Jn 13-17). And all the leading words—truth, honour, glorification—receive this nuance of love. This is a love that originates in the Father's deed of surrender for the world and is expressed in the Son's deed of surrender, of the outpouring of his life for the life of the world. In the Son's deed of self-outpouring it is no longer only the love of the Father which is expressed (a love at whose disposal the Son obediently puts himself); nor is it only the love of the Son which is expressed (of the Son who alone became man and who alone can die). What is expressed is the indivisible essential love of God himself. The surrender of this love's essence assumes the expressive form of a 'going to the extreme' (Jn 13.1), into darkness (Jn 1.5, 11), like the water of an eternal fountain (Jn 4.10, 13f.; 7.38) that is poured out until it becomes

itself an eternal thirst (Jn 19.28). With this the Greek axiom of the *bonum diffusivum sui* is fulfilled beyond anything conceivable and is raised to a potency which surpasses all human imagining. This raising of potency, which cannot be arrived at by any amount of speculation, can be known from the fact that what are essentially creaturely dispositions before God now become manifested in all their divine archetypicity. Just as the ability to die now becomes an expression of a distinctly divine love, so too the creature's prayer to God now becomes the expression of the intra-divine relationship of the Son to the Father. Just as with love, so with prayer in John: the more we approach the Passion, the more does Jesus' prayer become clear, open, manifest: from the prayer at the grave of Lazarus (Jn 11.41), which is already an expressly public act, to the prayer in the temple (Jn 12.27), to the official liturgical prayer of farewell (Jn 17). Here Jesus is manifested as substantial intra-divine prayer, so much so that any accidental, individual prayer of intercession becomes superfluous (Jn 16.26f.). In this form of prayer the content of prayer itself and of revelation receives its ultimate explanation: the unity of essence and love is uttered in a way that surpasses all exterior attestation. The witness of Jesus is no longer a mere assertion *that* things are so (as was necessary with the unbelieving Jews): it is an open interior space (Mt 11.27) which shows forth the existent reality itself. With this there disappears the 'voice' of the Father, which in its exteriority still remains somehow unintegrated and which in the Gospel is occasionally heard 'above' Jesus and beside him: at the baptism in the Jordan (Mt 3.17 par.), at the transfiguration on Tabor (Mt 17.5 par.) and, in John, at the temple before the Passion, this time as a public confirmation of God's own definitive decision to suffer, which anticipates all human plots to entrap him (Jn 12.28). From Chapter 13 onwards such a voice is no longer conceivable: with Jesus' entrance into his Passion, with God's final humanisation, Jesus' humanity is so radically divinised that, in itself, this humanity expresses everything which the Father can say to the Son and to the world (Heb 1.2). The voice of the Father, which is audible externally and sensorily to bystanders, is a concessionary form of God's Word, which retains a somewhat Old Testament character; and it is not for nothing that, in this connection, we twice read the Baptist's statement 'I did not know him' (Jn 1.30, 33), and that the voice in the temple remains wholly or partly incomprehensible for the bystanders (Jn 12.29). The Father's voice becomes fully credible when it is wholly incarnated in the Son, when φωνή and λόγος coincide.

The understanding of the form of revelation wherein the Father witnesses to himself presupposes at its highest level what every understanding of form presupposes at the worldly level: an interior communication from which alone the objective order of the form can begin to radiate. If a person has read or written only historical-critical studies about Goethe's *Faust*, the work itself, as it is in actuality, will probably never be seen by him, or, at best, only before or after undertaking those studies. In order to experience its form, a person must become interior to the work, must enter into its spell and radiant space, must attain to the state in which alone the work becomes manifest in its being-in-itself. This holds not only for works of art or the beauties of nature; to an even greater extent it holds for the encounter with a human Thou (M. Scheler, M. Buber). For this reason, most supremely and at a qualitatively different level, it holds likewise for the encounter with the form of God as it becomes manifest (Jn 5.37f.). By being one with Jesus his own will come to know Jesus' oneness with the Father, and it is for this inclusion of his chosen ones within the holy interior space of trinitarian prayer that Jesus prays (Jn 17.9f.). He does this before he has effected this oneness by his suffering, because precisely the Passion is something which happens in the Son on authority from and as a work of the Father. By his prayer and his suffering, the Son brings his disciples—and, through them, all mankind—into the interior space of the Trinity. For them he asks and effects this loving oneness (Jn 17.11, 21ff, 26), and this will also communicate to them *gnosis* as a knowing and a seeing of the truth in the form (Jn 17.7f., 24f.). Love—indeed, love that partakes in God's love—is the warrant of objective knowledge in the realm of trinitarian revelation. What such participation looks like when it is lived out is portrayed in the First Epistle of John, which no less than John's Gospel revolves around God's form in Christ, but in this case from the perspective of the community. The manner of the form's presentation, objective and inviolable, has now become dogma. A finished work of art must be left as it is: we may not chisel away a bit more at a work of Michelangelo's, nor may we compose and add a couple of measures to a fugue of Bach's. In the same way, we must allow the form of God to be just as it is. By contemplating it, we can interpret its meaning unboundedly, but only provided we take our departure from God's manifest intention. This is precisely what the Gnostics do not do, and John for this reason refuses them both *gnosis* and *agape* (which is already *koinonia*, 'communion'). False interpretations will come and go, but the form remains. And the art is to

remain with, to abide in (μένειν) the form.

2. THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORY

a. Figura: The Old Testament

The Father's testimony is necessary to Jesus; his own testimony is the Father's testimony's becoming visible. The testimony of history—that is, of the Old Testament—is not necessary to Jesus; he does not need it, rather, he uses it only for men's sakes. 'You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony that I receive is from man; but I say this that you may be saved' (Jn 5.33f.; cf. 2.25). As the one who fulfils God's story with man, Jesus is not dependent on that story: history points to Jesus, not Jesus to history. In so far as it points to him, however, history belongs to Jesus internally and can be understood only through him. But he must fulfil and perfect the Father's earthly work with the same obedience with which he serves the Father (and him alone): he must bring to their conclusion the law and the Prophets which 'bear witness to me' (Jn 5.39). In so doing, Jesus constitutes one form with the history of the Old Testament.

Everything here depends on our catching sight of the theological essence of this unique form, which can have no analogies. The fact that the Son of God allows himself to be conjoined in one form with his human prehistory is not primarily a general historical fact, in virtue of which every man, in spite of his irreducible individuality, is a product of his forebears, his people, his epoch and his environment. Jesus is this as well, in so far as he is a genuine man; but already the sign of the virgin birth calls our attention to the fact that he cannot be these things in the same sense as those begotten of an earthly father. Rather, the act of his subjection to the common historical conditioning is also the act of his free Incarnation by the Holy Spirit: as one who is not 'thrown' into existence (*ein Ungeworfener*), he enters the condition of those thrown into existence (*die Geworfenen*) and accepts the testimony of history on which he was by no means dependent. Liberal theology cannot see this unique relationship: either it stresses (in Marcionite fashion) Jesus' transcendence of the Old Testament and removes the Jewish 'eggshells' as the exterior garment of the human gospel, easily slipped off (Harnack, Bultmann); or, in its preoccupation with analogies and interior historical

connections and correspondences, it minimalises and quantifies this transcendence, which is what the greater part of contemporary scholarship does. The uniqueness of the relationship can be seen only in faith, theologically, and even then it cannot be brought into neat formulas because this uniqueness is itself the mystery of faith. We must lightly reproach perhaps already the apostolic age, but certainly the post-apostolic age (Letter of Barnabas) and, thus, the Patristic theology of salvation-history, for having underestimated these distinctions. For, it is easy enough to simplify Jesus' relationship to the Old Testament and to give it prominence by comparing specific deeds of Jesus and events from his life with words and events of the Old Testament (it is difficult to say to what extent already Jesus himself used this procedure). But such examples actually relate to the thing itself as illustrations relate to a text; and it is the text that concerns us.

The problem of the relationship between continuity and discontinuity was the central problem of the primitive Church, which necessitated the first Council. Its decision was basically Pauline, that is, it opted for a theology of discontinuity, but not without giving secondary consideration to historical continuity, represented and argued for by James and his party. It is no surprise that the kerygma to the Jews stresses historical continuity, all the more so since Paul, in his preaching and instruction to the Gentiles, stresses the total Biblical context of Jesus' figure far more than we would have expected. Should we attribute this to his own particular formation, or rather to the kerygmatic need to present Jesus' form to the world—as an historical and theological form—within the frame of reference within which it can be understood, if not solely, then at least more adequately, sharply and completely? Whoever accepts Jesus must also accept the unity of the Old and the New Testaments. He must know about Abraham and the promise of faith. He must grasp the essence of the law, not only so that he knows what he should keep to but also so that he knows what Jesus has freed him from. In Judaism he has the 'manifestation in form (μόρφωσις) of true knowledge and divine truth' (Rom 2.20); but he 'has' this manifestation in form only in so far as he has the archetypal form; he has the promise only in so far as he has the fulfilment. By no means does the Gentile gain access to Christ only by way of Judaism, which was history's path to Jesus. It was against this all-too-obvious view that the Council of the Apostles decided. Nevertheless, the Gentile, who until now had lived in the 'godless' world without a tradition of salvation-history (Eph 2.12), receives the promise along with the fulfilment,

both things in a total form—at once historical and theological—in which the promise concerns him only in so far as it is the promise fulfilled in Christ.

This gives us a way into the difficult question concerning the theological meaning of the Old Testament for Christians. We say ‘difficult’ because, in order to be able to constitute one total form with Christ, the Old Testament must participate in his singularity (and in this the relationship of proximity and distance between the Old and the New Testament participates), while, on the other hand, Christ’s uniqueness—the qualitative newness that he brings—must stand in contrast to the Old Testament, which is thus lowered to another level of theological reality. In this matter, in fact, we will not be able to see our way clear without the aid of ontological categories. The ‘Being’ or reality that Christ brings is nowadays termed ‘eschatological’ by preference; an older theology called it ‘participation in the divine nature’ or simply ‘grace’, and the Bible describes it as ‘entrance into the *Civitas Dei Viventis*—the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem’ (Heb 12.22). This ontological reality, existentially speaking, is something different from the first covenant’s existence in expectant and hopeful faith, which in turn is, existentially, something different from existence in the aeon of sin, without faith or hope. Existence in the Old Testament is, in its innermost essence, a transition from no participation at all to fulness of participation. If we were to apply Kierkegaard’s categories, we could say that Abraham’s existence is ‘ethical’ as opposed to ‘aesthetic’ pagan existence, but that the Old Testament is still the ‘aesthetic’ as compared to Christian existence, which alone is where the final, eschatological decision between heaven and hell is reached. This ‘aesthetic’ character of Old Testament as compared to Christian existence was expressed by all classical Biblical exegesis in Christianity through its practice of looking on the Old Testament as the *figura* (τύπος) of the New. In this theology of type and antitype, of figure and reality, we can detect influence from Platonic thought, or at least Platonic language; but we cannot here mistake the fact that the Fathers and, hence, the Middle Ages, while using the philosophical language available to them, really did intend the theological relationship, which they clearly grasped. For they understood very well that all faith in the Old Testament, living as it does towards its fulfilment (whether prophetically, messianically or eschatologically), could understand and justify itself only on the other side of the leap into the New Testament. In the same way, the paradox of Christian eschatology makes it clear enough that an existence lived wholly in faith in Christ must wait (in

hell's 'antechamber') for the Christ-event, until it can attain its own interior fulfilment (Heb 11.13, 39f.). On the other hand, however, we must take care not to introduce Platonic considerations into our understanding, in the sense that we might be inclined to say: 'At the level of existence every human life is equally insignificant and equally precious before God; only at the level of essence can the one thing be an image and a *figura* for the other.' The case of the Israelites in the desert, for instance, to which Paul refers (1 Cor 10.1ff.), considered in itself is the case of a people to whom God gave his grace but who nevertheless became disobedient and were punished by God for it; thus, this example was 'written down for [the] instruction [of us Christians], upon whom the end of the ages has come' (1 Cor 10.11). But for Paul, in fact, this subordinate clause, concerning the arrival of the end of the ages, is of primary importance; and therefore the things that occurred to the Jews during their trek in the desert can be described as having happened figuratively, *τυπικῶς* (1 Cor 10.11; cf. v. 6: *τύποι*). Even the disobedience and the terrible punishments that befell the people belong to the 'figure' and, hence, also to the 'object-lesson for Christians': this because the Jews could not live and were not granted to live, at the end of the ages, the Christian's eschatological existence which is oriented to the heavens opened by Christ. Modern theologians often interpret the exegesis of the ancients superficially, as if in the Old Testament they saw nothing but a kind of picture-book wherein one can read correspondences between the left and the right side of the page, between the type-image and the antitype-image, and thus obtain a confirmation of Christian truth. What is here involved at a deeper level, in fact, is the relationship (which cannot be realised philosophically) between one ('ethical') existence and another ('ethical') existence, but in which the first of these, theologically speaking, relates to the second in an 'aesthetic' manner.

Thus, all its religious seriousness notwithstanding, and in spite even of its prohibition of images, the Old Testament is marked out as an 'aesthetic' religion by contrast to Christianity. 'Everything that happened to them was figural, figurative.' Indeed, despite all the parallels and connections which we may find in the history of religions, we will understand even the prohibition of images in a theologically correct way only if we comply with the expected renunciation of our own religious aesthetics and discover God's own intention for salvation-history: namely, that he himself was to become his people's Builder of figures and that, in his own divine way, he was to prepare

the Master Figure, the Image par excellence (2 Cor 4.4).

To understand the Biblical meaning of τύπος (*figura*) neither philosophical analogies nor etymological derivations suffice, helpful as these may be. To be sure, sensory reality, in a Platonic sense, is an impoverished world of shadows as compared to the ideal, and the reality of the Old Testament, as compared to the Christian reality, does stand under the shadow of Hades, which is abolished only with Christ. But this comparison of Platonic and Old Testament reality is no more than an analogy, for Abraham's faith is already, substantially, the true faith and, in a hidden sense, is even the Christian faith (Jn 8.56; Heb 11.10, 26): this so much so that the Apocalypse can place the Twelve of the Old Testament in the same row as the Twelve of the New Testament before God's throne. The etymology circles about the meaning from all sides: τύπος (from τύπτω, 'to strike', 'to press in') is the impression or imprint left by a stroke, the trace, the mark (as of nails), the piece of sculpture, the stamp, and hence the image, the form and figure, the pattern and model, the prototype. *Figura* (from *figo*: 'to give shape by moulding with the hand') stresses in the first place more the external contour, the beautiful construct, the appearing image (for instance, of the dead who manifest themselves); this sense can then be extended to mean a figure of speech, a form of presentation, and so on. This may provide a stepping-stone to the unique significance of the concepts in salvation-history. What is important in the first place is the promise's character as image as compared to the fulfilment's character as reality: There is a dimension to the fulfilment which is lacking in the image, a dimension which, precisely, does not derive its reality from the image. When this image or type is called a 'prototype' this is not done in the sense of an archetype or model from which a copy would later be made. 'Prototype' is here meant in the unique sense that the image or type comes 'before' the reality as a first (*protos*) sketch, as a foreboding and an intuition. We say that here this meaning is unique because in every other case the image or type comes ontologically after the reality which it copies. This characteristic is proper to the Biblical image only in so far (here again in a unique way) as the later reality that fulfils it is the ontological ground for the earlier images: 'Before Abraham was, I am' (Jn 8.58). Thus, the actual temporal descent is founded on a reversed relationship. Consequently, the second element is the theological distinction of levels between shadowy outline and fulfilled form. And the form is fulfilled because it is eschatological, because it makes the leap from the Old to the New Age,

through the death of the old sinful world and on to resurrection into God and to a new divine world. The 'figure' cannot take this leap but can only prefigure it, in an existence that presses beyond the boundaries of the Old Age without nevertheless being able to leave it altogether, in an anticipation of what is to come which, in order to be such, must already in advance live on the grace of what is to come, even though this grace cannot yet, as for Christians, be a fully present reality. This second element is often either wholly overlooked or at least underestimated by the Fathers of the Church, since they believed that, with the categories of hiddenness and openness, they had sufficiently described the relationship between the two Testaments. Thus, they conceded to the just of the Old Testament, especially the Prophets, an immediate participation in the grace of the New Testament. In this view, the Prophets look down the ages and already see the coming salvation more or less as it is in itself, and they conceal it in concepts and words adequate to their time only because the time for its open proclamation has not arrived. This theory, however, contradicts not only the linguistic and conceptual data but (at least if it is taken as a rule) also the theological structure of the Old Testament, whose character as image makes it quite impossible for it to construct the coming reality from itself by way of anticipation.

If we inquire after the meaning of so puzzling a category of theological aesthetics as is the identification of the Old Testament existence with a *figura*, the answer will not primarily be found where it is usually sought, namely, in a preparatory 'education of the human race' for Christ. This is not to deny the existence of such an education which we shall discuss shortly. In the meantime, however, the first thing that must be said is that the God-Man, as a form in the midst of creation, *cannot* be an isolated entity without historical connections (Gnosticism, for instance, thought it could think of him in this way—as a sort of aerolith); rather, the God-Man must constitute a genuine composite form together with human history and must become comprehensible within this form: this is what Irenaeus argued against the Gnostics. However, he can enter into such unity only within a qualified history; by no means can this occur within the theologically amorphous mass of 'the heathen'. The history with which he can constitute one form must rise above the rest of history and must bear a stamp that points to him while originating in him. Without yet actually being the type, this stamp or imprint characterises the theological *typos*, by contrast to the Church and the Christian within her which, as we saw, possess no form of revelation proper

to themselves, no form which could be separated and distinguished from Christ—since, as Augustine says, what is Christian about the Christian is Christ himself.⁶⁶ Not so with the Old Testament, for here what is essential is the fact that the type cannot be reduced to the antitype, and this is the basis for the total form of salvation-history.

The aesthetic character of historical existence in the Old Testament has important implications for exegesis: although Old Testament existence must necessarily understand itself historically (and not in a purely mystical and, hence, ahistorical manner), still, within this self-understanding, it can interpret itself in images. In other words, it is much less necessary than with the New Testament to determine what in the Old might be historical in individual details or what there might be of mythical material (derived from the general vision of the historical situation) which has been subsequently clothed in historical dress so as to secure the resultant image a place within the actual total history of the people. The most important thing with the Old Testament, rather, is that it understands and explains itself as an incomprehensible historical movement forward that sets Israel apart from the paths of all other peoples and impels Israel towards an ever more incomprehensible historical destination. This historical existence of Israel, half-way between paganism and Christianity, objectivises itself in images of unforgettable vividness and colour (regardless of how many of these images could individually be considered ‘historical’ in the modern sense). And it is in such self-objectivation in images that Israel understands itself most adequately and profoundly. Indeed, this does not occur without that inspiration from above which is not only poetico-prophetic and literary, but which, following P. Benoit’s suggestion, could be termed a ‘dramatic inspiration’ which elicits the actions themselves.⁶⁷

In this ‘pilgrimage’ from a theologically amorphous paganism to the full form of Christ, Israel is now harnessed, now released in a watchful expectation which has no place where to rest its head. The History of Religions school wants to find this repose for Israel in the place where it itself would so much have liked to find it: in the surrounding religions and cultures. Everything ‘corporeal’ in Israel seems somehow able to be traced back to such origins; only the spirit which animates all of these materialisations in Israel will never accept it: never. The older exegesis of the Fathers, on the contrary, sought to integrate Israel into the Church by anticipation, as if the ‘true Israel’ had never been anything but the ‘wandering

Civitas Dei’ on earth, that *Ecclesia ab Abel* which Christ the Bridegroom comes to seek on earth to bring her home to heaven. Both these interpretations are a threat to the figural dimension in the Old Testament as such, a dimension that remains itself, indissolubly, in spite of all progress on the part of revelation, in spite of all attempts to take up the old themes of revelation in order to deepen them and bring them closer to the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount. This remains so until the *figura* is confronted by the one and only Son of God with the decision of dying with him, thus rending the veil of the figure from top to bottom. For the New Age that Christ brings can no longer be a figure in the same sense: it still has form, even a provisional form; but Christ’s hypostatic union embraces both the transitory earthly form and the imperishable heavenly form.

Even grace is but a figure of glory, for it is not the end to be reached. Grace was prefigured by the law, and it itself prefigures glory; it is not only the figure of glory, however, but its principle and its cause. . . . Everything which does not arrive at charity is a figure. . . . But charity is not a figurative precept. To say that Christ came in order to abolish the figures and bring charity, but that he brought only the figure of charity: this would be unbearable. . . . The religion of the Jews was formed according to a likeness of the truth of the Messiah; and the truth of the Messiah was recognised from the religion of the Jews, which was its figure. With the Jews the truth was only figurative; in heaven it is manifest, in the Church it is concealed, but it is recognised by its relationship to the *figura* (Pascal).⁶⁸

Thus, we see that the whole Old Testament is a ‘likeness’, similar to the way in which the parables of the Gospel (all of them located prior to the Cross and the Resurrection) were likenesses: they are images underway which demand that we move on—and this is faith—but which make a clinging to the image itself possible—and this is scandal. Israel is an image, but an image that exacts decision: it is legible to faith but illegible to unbelief. It is legible to faith in the sense that in the image the truth finds its confirmation, while the puzzle of Israel, in the absence of faith, remains a puzzle both to itself and to all others. This is the heart of the matter, and not primarily whether certain particular Old Testament texts and words literally or almost literally foretell particular deeds or situations in the life of Jesus. The Lord himself may have singled out specific texts as referring to himself, and other parables were welcomed by the disciples in order to illustrate the character of fulfilment of Jesus’ religion as compared to the Old Testament. But the essential point is that Israel as a whole and existentially is an image and a figure which cannot interpret itself. It is a sphinx’s riddle which cannot be solved without Oedipus. Most recent research on Old Testament messianism tends to

confirm this. The ‘prophetic element’ of Israel lies in the fact that Israel, throughout the Old Testament, is at work on an image which, in spite of all borrowings from an historical model of an earlier time, can less and less be interpreted in terms of its earlier history—an image which, by its own internal logic, becomes more and more fractured into elements which can no longer be synthesised, unless it be at a fundamentally new level which Israel can only hope for but cannot itself construct.

b. Myth and Prophecy

Until now only the Scandinavian school of Mowinckel, Pedersen, Engnell, Widengren, Nyburg and Bentzen has succeeded in relating the Old Testament’s figural existence to a unified, essential figure, one that is admittedly perhaps too clearly defined to do justice to the multiplicity of the strands of tradition. For this school everything crystallises around a central image which, strange to say, can nowhere be clearly supported by texts but which, once presupposed, orders the most contradictory elements magnetically and, in addition, describes a surprisingly new and simple arc running from the total ancient world-view to Christianity. The fundamental manner, the theory goes, in which all ancient peoples experienced existence was conjointly mythical, religious, and political, and this mode of experience expressed itself not so much in a ‘thought’-form as in a cultic form—‘cult’ understood in the comprehensive sense of a celebration that both represents and effects reality. Originally, creation and time are vertical events: God is at war with chaos (‘abyss’, ‘ocean’, ‘primal serpent’, ‘foe’) and, in triumphing over it, God secures the world. As God’s representative, (primal) man is established over the world as king. The king (of Egypt, Sumeria, Babylon, Iran, the Hittites, Canaan) represents God to the people and the people to God. His ‘time’ is the time of the people and, at the same time, the time of salvation. In cultic mode, the rites for the new year (with their allusions to the battle of the sun with darkness, of vegetation with death) renew for the incoming year the guarantee of salvation. This is done by representing God’s primal battle in a cultic drama of the king fighting his foes: the play includes the descent into the kingdom of darkness, victory over the powers, ascent (*ascendit Deus!*) and enthronement. As ‘God on earth’ or as ‘God’s adoptive son’ (in Israel), the king, as the primal man, always originates from the

primal age (*ante luciferum genui te*). The king is the bringer of salvation, the 'messiah' (this concept at first without any eschatological nuance) made present and consecrated ever anew in the cultic drama. In Israel, the sagas of the exodus from Egypt and of the trek in the wilderness were incorporated into the ritual, as was later also the story of David's victories (the ark in the hands of the Philistines and its return). Certain of the king's psalms of lament possibly belong to the ritual as well, to that stage of the representation of the battle that shows the king in the domain of the powers of the underworld. The scholars disagree as to whether the songs of the suffering *ebed* Yahweh can be included within the cultic context: whether, that is, the 'servant' (whoever he may be) has been conceived on the model of the fighting king who represents his people (and, thus, on the model of a political leader in the return from Babylon) or on the model of a prophet (Jeremiah, say, or the Isaiah of the folk saga). This distinction vanishes, however, once we see that the king of primitive times was simply 'the great man' (as he was called in Sumeria)—king, priest, and prophet in one, who as such celebrated the cultic drama. Interestingly, long before these Biblical investigations began, Paul Claudel established a link between Chinese culture and the form of Christ. He has the Emperor of the Middle Kingdom execute a cultic battle with the demonic powers of the underworld by means of his descent of substitution into Hades and his re-ascent as one marked by leprosy (the possibility of a leprosy of substitution has also been advanced in connection with the *ebed* in Is 53). In this way, the Emperor expiates for his kingdom and inaugurates a new age of salvation. In Claudel's symbolist manner, *Le repos du septième jour* (1896) attempts to portray cultically the Christian event of salvation in a mythical image that encompasses all existence, from politics to mysticism. It offers a kind of model for what the Scandinavian scholars attempt to extrapolate from the texts of the Old Testament. There can scarcely be any doubt that for Israel, too, before the end of the exile (in which, to use Mowinckel's words, 'experience' is changed into 'hope'), as for all ancient peoples, time was a religious 'time of salvation' with a predominantly vertical character to which the term 'cyclical' can be applied only misleadingly, since the period of salvation is ever present and is a representation of the total (vertical) mystery of salvation between God and the world. This may have been a particular emphasis of the change to a monarchy. Samuel's misgivings and the anti-monarchical circles that voiced them were so strong because the concept of a king was inseparable from the

whole 'ideology of kingship' and, as many psalms and prophetic texts prove irrefutably, this ideology did in fact come into Israel along with the kings. But how far and how deep could this ideology penetrate in Israel? Not having been able seriously to dominate pre-monarchic Israel, is not this ideology again called in question by classical prophecy, which completes the move to eschatology? To incorporate the later forms of messianism—namely, the *ebed* of Second Isaiah and the 'son of man' of late Judaism (in Daniel, in 4 Ezra and in the Apocalypse of Enoch)—into the older, wholly outmoded ideology of kingship by a kind of temporal regression: such incorporation can succeed without anachronism only if the concept of myth, as embodied and realised by this ideology, is used in a very diluted sense. The 'servant of God', in any case, is not simply the king as a mythical figure who accomplishes a dramatic act; rather, he is a person who truly suffers and whose historical destiny is at the same time understood and hymned prophetically (with a view to his return). Divine traits are not attributed to the 'servant' as they are to the mythical king. As for the figure of the 'son of man', his origin from God can once again be seen in the context of a 'rebirth of myth' and of Iranian speculation on the *anthropos* and on primal man. By contrast to the 'servant', however, the 'son of man' is no longer an historical figure, but stands within an apocalyptic framework. The visionary 'today' within which he is seen is in no sense any longer the mythical 'today' of the cultic drama.

The conclusion of all this is that we *can* systematise the reality of the Old Testament by referring it to one point of convergence in the past; we then obtain a comprehensible and complete picture, a myth which becomes astoundingly plastic through its successive stages, a myth that belonged to Israel as its own and which, taken as an image, would be a striking prefiguration of Christ. Type and antitype would then correspond to one another in a way incomparably more clear than that provided by the laborious mosaic of texts which first the Evangelists and then the Church Fathers pieced together as 'messianic prophecies', which then related to Christ's life and mission. For now the mythical and the Christian bearers of salvation would confront each other in one complete image. The mythical saviour is the manifestation of God in the world, is the son of God (by nature in Egypt and Babylon, by adoption in Israel), elemental man, at once personal and collective (head and mystical body), king, prophet, and priest in one person, and as one who suffers as a substitute he is priest and sacrificial lamb. In the

world he fights God's battle with the hostile powers of the abyss; he suffers (in the primitive liturgy), even dies (in the *ebed-songs*), descends to the underworld (in the drama) and ascends again to receive the homage of the whole world. The sacraments are not absent (*cf.* the 'sacramental drink from the sacred wellspring' in Ps 110, the outpouring of 'water' and 'spirit' in Is 44.3 on the occasion of the messiah's return). Even the Christian vision of the two ages is already present, since purely vertical (cyclical) time is broken through eschatologically in the Prophets, to enter the new age that the messiah brings, which is not something that was always valid and is now merely renewed, but 'something *absolutely* new'. The *ebed-songs* may indeed make use of the older mythical form and even of the concept of the world's new creation; but what is here involved is 'not only the cultic repetition of the "old" reality of creation, of the exodus from Egypt. The new reality is something greater than what we could experience in the old feast. . . . This conception of a "new thing" in Second Isaiah has its correspondence in the eschatology of the New Testament.'⁶⁹

Given such a complete mythical Christology the relationship between the Old and the New Testament becomes, beyond all expectation, a relationship between image and reality. But scholarship must be careful not to establish between them a causal connection, since this belongs strictly to the dimension of faith:

We can establish historically that Jesus of Nazareth took the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah as the programme of his life's work: that in these words of the Old Testament he heard God's plan for his life. But our personal assent to the fact that in so doing Jesus saw things correctly, that what was there being proclaimed was indeed God's plan for his life is something which can only be grounded in faith in him as the Messiah and in God as his Lord and the giver of his mission.⁷⁰

It ought to be enough for scholarship for it to verify the fact that Israel's conceptions of the messiah have 'their roots outside the Old Testament', in the common religious heritage of ancient humanity. In Israel's incorporation of the myth a certain weakening of the myth itself may be noted: the king is only an adoptive son of God (although, as such, he can be named 'god'), while in the cultic drama the king does not really die. The *ebed*, then, does die, but he no longer bears divine traits. The apocalyptic son of man is once again mythical, but he is expected only eschatologically. 'The ancient conceptions of the God-King become the material for the formation of Christology, as early as the New Testament. . . . The aspect of suffering taken

from Is 53 is combined with the conception of the son of man from heaven', in such a way 'that Jesus again unifies all the aspects of the notion of the primal man and, in the story of his humiliation and exaltation, again brings to bear the whole mythology of the ancient East. . . . Not all myth can be cast on the rubbish heap of theology.'⁷¹

One thing is characteristic of the dazzling construction of this 'total typology', which may be said to deploy, as it were, an ethnological system of categories for the appearance of every possible redeemer and salvation-bearer. This is the fact that the point of convergence, by reference to which the typological image truly becomes visible and, hence, compelling, lies within the sacral 'primal age' in which the cultures surrounding Israel remain cultically fixed and to which Israel becomes oriented back through the ideology of kingship. What is attractive here (by contrast to textual mosaics made up of isolated messianic texts, which always seem so laborious and forced) is not only the completeness of the image, but its universal validity. This would allow Christ to appear as the fulfiller not only of Israel's longings, but of the longings of all nations. But would this not constitute a blatant provocation of those concerned with questions of demythologisation? Even if mythical promise and historical fulfilment run on distinct levels, does not their very comparability lie precisely in the 'archetypical' category of the salvation-bearer, so that the fulfilment, in so far as it fulfils just such a typical image, must be integrated and subordinated to the image itself? And there is more: through this procedure is not the specific character of the Old Testament either fundamentally denied or robbed of its proper meaning? For the imaged form, which thus illuminates the relation of Old and New, does not result from a mediating movement that runs from the myth to the history that fulfils it; it is, rather, the contrary: the image is the product of a return to the myth. But this is tantamount to a falsification of history, for Israel's centre of gravity quite certainly lies in its unceasing forward movement, so much so that the whole construction of the feast of Yahweh's enthronement for the new year's ritual is nothing more than an unverifiable and ingenious hypothesis.

Israel's distinctive character is to be found in the mediating movement between, on the one hand, the myth which lies behind it and which it must time and again repel and deny (particularly in the form of Canaan's fertility cults) in order to remain faithful to its own idea, and, on the other hand, that second point of convergence in the future towards which Israel is striving

ever more clearly without, nevertheless, being able to anticipate it or construct it in actual imaged form. Israel's history is the upward movement from the level of myth as type to the level of Christ as antitype, and this movement is the historical transposition of mythical existence into Christian existence. This transposition, however, can be achieved in no other way than by breaking up and, in fact, shattering the mythical image of totality conceived by this understanding of reality and of the world, on behalf of a new totality which lies in the point of convergence in the future. This new totality requires far vaster dimensions than those afforded by myth and, hence, it cannot even be anticipated in terms of the myth. In this sense the young Hegel is basically right when he portrays the Old Testament as the period of irreconcilables, of sharp opposition between a thesis and an antithesis whose synthesis cannot yet be foreseen (this even though Hegel did not understand much of the specific historical realities involved). The categories of a greater whole are being prepared by a work of expansion, but in such a way that this work cannot bring the contours of the future form together to form an image; rather, the future archetype is to be the absolutely creative unification of what in itself cannot be united. This is the decisive factor, and this is also the *martyrion* of history. Three of the Baptist's sayings should be seen in their unity: 'He who is coming after me is mightier than I' (Mt 3.11) and 'I did not know who he was' (Jn 1.33). 'Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?' (Lk 7.19f.). There is in all Israel a continual dynamism of transcendence that dissolves images but which is not drawn forward and guided by an ideal leading image in the future. On the other hand, this dynamism is conscious of not dissolving images in a negative, revolutionary sense (although this too may emerge after the rejection of the Messiah), but that it is, rather, engaged in the positive work of preparing the fragments of an image-to-be.

Of the major contributions to this mediation there is, first, the dissolution of the mythical experience of time, which occurs early on, and its slow replacement by a 'linear' time of salvation-history. Gerhard von Rad has painstakingly described the phases of this interchange. Like that of other peoples, Israel's original experience of time too was filled concretely with temporal events and, thus, followed the cycles of nature. Israel's yearly cycle, too, was shaped by sacred feasts and times. But then these originally agrarian feasts are 'historicised' and the different phases of God's salvific activity, of which the feasts are a cultic reminder, are connected to an historical

happening. 'Israel's faith began to be no longer founded on one single event—even if that event had the stature and importance of the exodus from Egypt, celebrated in the feast of the Passover; but neither was it founded on multiple events with little or no connection between them. Rather, the faith of Israel began to perceive a series of successive facts.' This faith began to 'order the traditions which at first were isolated in the cult into a sequence of events': this constitutes an 'epochal step' which breaks through the 'conception of mythical simultaneity' and comes to understand and describe God's saving actions towards his people ever more clearly as a 'history of God'. 'Only at this point did history really become irreversible.' By the same token, however, the magic actualisation of the cultic drama of the primitive period becomes remote. 'A critical manner of thinking is awakened that has learned to select and arrange—or to reject—materials from the fulness of the tradition.' The consequence was the 'loss of the naïvete of cultic actualisation', something evident, for instance, in the paraenesis of Deuteronomy.⁷²

The first historicisation is followed by the second, that of the great Prophets. The conception of a natural *καὶρός*, which the wise man with his experience of life must know, gives way at a higher level to the conception of a supernatural *καὶρός*: this is a knowledge of the historical situation and of its mastering by detecting and grasping God's decision within it. Every prophet stands in a new *καὶρός* and, therefore, brings a new message; the same prophet in a changed situation will have to decide differently than he had before. Obedience does not at first look beyond this absolute and this *eschaton* of salvation that in each case must be grasped at the present moment. And the reversal of perspective effected by the great Prophets is at the service of this actualisation: the 'goods' and assurances of salvation (the promise to the fathers, the exodus, the covenant on Sinai, the promise to David, the idea of Zion), which had apparently been guaranteed in the past, must now be transferred to the impending future. And this takes place not only by portraying Sinai, as does Deuteronomy, as a present situation of utmost urgency; rather, what had sunk to the level of mere historical chronicle and had seen its power diluted by a series of catastrophes is now re-established in a new and intenser mode as that reality towards which the people is even now moving as to its salvation: this salvation God will now establish anew, as if for the first time, *if* the people weathers the historical situation as God intends. This 'if' is occasionally (from Jeremiah's time

onwards) transcended to the point where it becomes the definitiveness of God's already having decided: do what it may, the greater part of Israel *has* been rejected; but a 'remnant' will be saved. Here the mythical tradition has been transcended, thanks to a charismatic vision that perceives the will of God in the decisive dovetailing of politics and obedience to God, of 'flesh' and 'spirit'. This new-won understanding of time can provide the lead for a tremendous transposition such as this: the event in the past which laid the basis for salvation becomes an image that guides Israel in its progress toward the true fulfilment—the new Zion (Is 1.26), the new David (Is 11.1), the new Covenant (Jer 31.31f.), the new Exodus (Deut—Is 40.3f.; 43.16f.), and so forth. But this 'present' eschatology, or eschatology of imminent expectation, which is awaiting God's decisive deed—the decisive transformation and the judgment—now, contains a theological element of such weight that it bursts the dimension of internal historicity and produces from within itself the doctrine of the two ages, in the eschatological sense it would later acquire.

After the exile, the tradition of the great prophets dies out, the newly erected temple cannot be the promised fulfilment. But the dimension of the eschatological as a step beyond time into the absolute has been opened up. This dimension, however, can be realised only by a double form of de-historicisation the two parts of which are intimately connected: on the one hand, an ethico-spiritual de-temporalisation of the historical values located in time (covenant, law, kingdom, priesthood, and liturgy), and on the other hand the apocalyptic de-temporalisation of the New Age, which in its totality is to be found in God, which is already coming, and which is contemplated as a 'mystery' by the visionary anticipation of certain elect ('Enoch', 'Daniel', 'Ezra', and so on), and can be communicated by them in coded language. This brings with it a transformation of the image of the messiah: both the expected political saviour from the House of David, and the suffering servant of God from the time of the exile, were to come from within Israel, from the people itself. By contrast, the apocalyptic messiah, the 'son of man' whom Daniel sees approaching, comes from above, from the glorious splendour of God, from the New World that lies ready and complete in God.

With mysterious logic Israel's dynamism produces spiritual forms from within itself that succeed and displace one another: one form results from another but is at the same time irreconcilable with all the preceding. Previously we saw that a total image could be constructed only in retrospect, by reference to a (hypothetical) mythical unity in the 'primal epoch' (*Urzeit*).

So, too, the creation of a new unity out of the different and mutually irreconcilable forms demands a radical crossing of the limits of the Old Testament. The history of the Chosen People does not only have the meaning of God educating humanity existentially to Christ; its task is also to unfold Christ's dimensions one by one, but these are dimensions that remain mutually irreconcilable within the Old Testament and which, therefore, can never—not even fragmentarily—produce an anticipated sketch of what is to come. The salvation-bearer of the early period—based on the ideology of kingship—is both an individual person and a collective, both the representative of God to the people and of the people to God: he is a kind of total sacrament, one who can perform both ethical and sacramental (mythico-magical) cultic acts. But as soon as the mythical sphere is transcended in earnest, this pre-existential (and, in Kierkegaard's sense, 'aesthetic') synthesis is no longer possible. The terrible personal suffering of the servant of God in the Book of Consolation of Israel is something totally different from the cultic and mimetic suffering of the royal ideology. And, the 'coming from heaven' of the 'son of man' in Daniel, conceived as it is as a serious possibility, is something totally different from the divine sonship of the mythical king. The ethico-political actualism of the Prophets, which admittedly presupposes the mythical period as its past, is nevertheless irreconcilable with it since this actualism at the same time presupposes an experience of God of a new kind: the experience of a God who commands and creates freely and sovereignly, who cannot be inserted into a calendar of feasts, who has the power to burst open and relativize the closed religious world of myth and to transform it into reality at a wholly different level. This prophetic concept of God emerges as the most exalted and living reality which could be attained by a pre-Christian religion. But, in a very strange way, prophecy breaks off and produces from itself this last period that interiorly remains so ambiguous. On the one hand we witness in it a decay and a petrification into legalism, sapientialism, apocalypticism. On the other hand we also see an ascent to a final distance which is what made possible the final redaction of the Sacred Scriptures: an interiorisation that leads to the contemplation of God's 'great deeds' in nature and history; an abstraction and a universalisation that lead to a total theology and a unified conception of history; and, above all, the radicalization of the whole reality of a New Age which can be sighted but not grasped in itself and which, therefore, is totally misconstrued—witness the apocalyptic calculations, the lifelessness and lack

of historical perspective, and the almost lascivious curiosity with which the pseudonymous authors set out to spy on the divine mysteries. How could the 'son of man' in Daniel at the same time be the son of David? How could the glory of God in Ezekiel, which returns at the time of salvation, be one with the suffering servant of God in the Book of Consolation? How could the *kairos*-theology which the Prophets unconditionally demand be one with the contemplation of the wise men, which is wholly divorced from time? And how are we to harmonise Job's dealings with God, the almost Buddhist resignation of Qoheleth, and the ardent eroticism of the Canticle within this total form, which in every direction is pulled apart by intolerable tensions? Qumran's Book of Battles can be taken as an illustration of where such attempts at a synthesis can lead: for this book, the eschatological battle of the apocalypse must—with perfect logic!—be reconcilable with the realism of the holy wars of the periods of the Exodus, the Judges, and the Kings, and the divine battle on the 'Day of Yahweh', in which Israel will participate, must be both a mythico-sacro-cultic act and a prophetic and apocalyptic act; but this union results in a terrible vision of grotesque proportion, which is worse than all other known conceptions of 'holy wars' and crusades. No! The elements that Israel successively bears and gives to the world are, humanly considered, absolutely disparate and demonstrably irreconcilable. They constitute a chain of forms which are impressive and dramatic in the extreme, forms of a religious and ethical earnestness not to be found anywhere else in human history. But this succession of forms cannot itself produce the *one* form; rather, with all the urgency which the fragment of a form possesses, the succession of forms demands a transcendent fulfilment within this second prophetic perspective oriented to the future. Here we are tempted to recall Goethe's famous 'Lines on Seeing Schiller's Skull', and to transpose them from the sphere of the contemplation of nature to that of the contemplation of salvation-history:

But none can love the withered husk, though even
A glorious noble kernel it contained.
To me, an adept, was the writing given
Which not to all its holy sense explained. . . .
What mystic joy I felt! What rapt devotion!
That form, how pregnant with a godlike trace!
A look, how did it whirl me toward that ocean

Whose rolling billows mightier shapes embrace!
Mysterious vessel! Oracle how dear!
Even to grasp thee is my hand too base,
Except to steal thee from thy prison here
With pious purpose, and devoutly go
Back to the air, free thoughts, and sunlight clear.
What greater gain in life can man e'er know
Than when God-Nature will to him explain
How she to Spirit makes what's Solid flow,
And does what's Spirit-Born Solid maintain.⁷³

The analogy from sub-human nature to salvation-history is not an idle one, for in both cases what is involved is 'heightened forms' which flow from one another according to a mysterious logic. They do this, however, by qualitative leaps that exclude every attempt at quantification and that, for the total fulfilment of their meaning, require one definitive leap that establishes a final distance between itself and the whole succession of previous leaps. Both the dimension of form and that of the leap within genuine continuity are thus 'fulfilled', both in the first Adam who ascends from nature and in the second Adam who ascends from salvation-history. Both ascend at the same time as they descend from above, from God. And the ascending forms of salvation-history are just as arresting and unique as the results of the great mutations in the animal kingdom, just as convincing as the form of fish and bird, of horse and lion. Human attempts at combining forms in either realm can only produce the hybrid beings of fable, which could not possibly exist. That from all this the form of man should arise: who could have deduced as much from the preparations of the *natura naturans*? Who could fathom nature's mystery of dissolution and preservation, when it 'to Spirit makes what's Solid flow, / And does what's Spirit-Born Solid maintain'? In Israel's progressive evolution, however, we are not dealing simply with 'preparatory stages' which are surpassed by later stages and 'dissolved' into spirit; rather, what is involved is a 'fanning out' (as in the realm of nature) whereby all the forms subsist alongside each other as a qualitative totality. Fish are not 'surpassed' by birds, nor birds by mammals. So, too, the 'sacramental' quality of the primitive ideology of kingship is not surpassed by the 'spiritual' quality of the Prophets, and the 'prophetic' element is not surpassed by the apolitical character of wisdom literature. Nor is Solomon's regal glory in any sense

merely a 'preparatory stage' for the formlessness of the servant of God, or the rigorous letter of the law a preparatory stage for the ethical actualism of the Prophets. Both things are simultaneously true: that the finiteness of each image brings forth the next and, nevertheless, because all typical images are finite, that each image will in its own place be indispensable for the coming antitype.

Historical philological scholarship will always attempt to understand the qualitative transition from the Old to the New Testament in terms of the *general* categories of 'continuity' and 'discontinuity'. Such research will tend to take one of two directions. On the one hand, it can describe the transition to Jesus as one of the many transitions in the prophetic history of Israel, a transition which requires a new reading of the ancient texts and a new understanding of the received traditions and concepts. Or, on the other hand, such scholarship can see the connection in a merely external manner: as the dressing up of what is fundamentally new in traditional forms, possibly also as the legitimation of Jesus' unprecedented new claims by appealing to old legitimations. But in either case the actual form that emerges from the Old and the New Testaments, together, is not yet seen, since it emerges in virtue of the fact that all that has developed in the Old Testament as a succession of forms can, in the New Testament, be simultaneously enveloped in a unity at another level. If anywhere, this is where a theological seeing of form is required, and traditional Christian theology has, for the most part, exercised this vision, although its philological methods in this connection have mostly been very insufficient and unsatisfactory. The analogies and allegories of this theology were convincing only because, beneath the poor philological demonstration, there existed a perception of a far more evident kind which was 'awakened' by those indications, as it were, only by way of confirmation.

The previously mentioned analogy between the first and the second Adam can also help us answer the difficult question whether the New Testament is dependent on the Old. Is the man Adam dependent on the animals? Yes, in so far as in his nature the whole animal kingdom is both really and ideally implied. Yes, again, in so far as he has been established to rule freely over nature and to use it to the glory of God. But this is a dependence of a very special kind, because what it primarily shows is man's freedom and, hence, his independence. This is why, in John, Jesus can say that he is not dependent on the witness of the Old Testament. This witness is borne him in so far as he

is the fulfiller—and this is not an external but an internal relationship. Within this interiority, however, the relationship is wholly irreversible: it cannot be reduced to the same level. To attempt to describe it more closely is to meet the same difficulty we encountered at the beginning of the chapter, namely that of making clear the difference of levels.

Paul is aware of the difference between *littera* and *spiritus* (2 Cor 4.6f.), but these concepts are meant more in a symbolic sense, since in the Old Testament, too, we find the Holy Spirit, and the letter in the New. ‘Letter’ and ‘spirit’ presuppose the more limited understanding of the Bible of late Judaism, in which the events of a living history have become a written book. John speaks of ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’ (Jn 6.63), but here, too, these terms are meant only symbolically since, precisely in the context of the discourse of the promise, Christ’s life-giving Flesh is the focal point, and John throughout attributes to Abraham, Moses, and the Prophets a spiritual faith. Nor does the distinction of the two ages significantly help since its origins are in Judaism and it is merely borrowed by the New Testament. The use of type (or antitype, as the case may be) is more pertinent, but it is exposed either to the danger of looking at the Old and the New Testaments as two realities in image form which may be compared on the same level of appearance, or at least to the danger of conceiving the Old Testament as an image closed within itself. This would mean, however, interpreting the Old Testament retrospectively, by referring it back to myth, and, hence, we would be in danger of reducing the New Testament, too, to this level. We could attempt, however, to avoid this danger by interpreting Christ’s appearance as that of the divine and infinite reality of grace, compared to which everything else is reduced to being only an analogous (because only a creaturely) finite reality. But if we did this we would have wholly misunderstood the factor that distinguishes the revelation of God in the Old Testament from the pagan religions. For Paul, Abraham’s faith is not simply the symbol of a universal human attitude, but something historically singled out and delimited by the promise, something which only as such can also serve as principle and basis for the hidden faith of the Gentiles or for their subsequent coming to believe. Nothing remains but to see the figural reality of the Old Testament as a reality singled out from the ‘imagelessness’ of the rest of sinful humanity and prophetically oriented toward Christ—a reality which cannot be anchored in itself but which possesses its *eidos* only as a transition and a mediation between the first and the second Adam. The fact that it does not possess a

finished *eidos* of its own makes this people into history's witness to something higher, and precisely as such it becomes an object-lesson that educates men to this higher reality. This is what Paul means by τύπος and τυπικῶς. Hence, a veil will always cover Israel's understanding of itself so long as it attempts (or someone else attempts) to read the idea of Israel as constituting an *eidos* of its own; but 'when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed' (2 Cor 3.16), and the eyes of faith see—see in a truly objective manner—the actual reality of the *typos*.

c. Seeing the Unseen

It is in virtue of this transitional character of its *eidos* that the Old Testament in the end mediates between myth and Christ, two realities which could not have come together in any other way. Myth had mediated magically between God and the world by means of the form of a 'primal man' who was king, priest, and prophet all at once. And the anticipation of salvation which lay at the heart of the mythic system could be fulfilled in Christ because Israel had emptied this system of its treasury of magic images and had shattered it, leaving only fragments. Seen in this way, the world of myth (by contrast with Israel's figural reality) can be characterised as archetypal: the mythical world in this sense is nothing but created man himself (as *homo naturaliter religiosus et areligiosus, pius et magicus*) who as such cannot prescribe any possible future revelation. The prescription lies only in God, who does not want to redeem his creation by abolishing and destroying it. And here Irenaeus' theology of history enters in, which has God's covenant begin in practice with Adam (and Noah) and sees Christ appear by mediation of Israel as the one who fulfils all creation.

Mythical time was vertical time between God and the world: this salvific relationship of social and individual man to God was seen so much as the one thing necessary that all sense for the horizontal progression of time was disregarded. Christian time, in turn, as 'eschatological' time, is also wholly vertical time: salvation has descended vertically from God and, through the Resurrection and ascension of the Head of mankind, it has opened up to man in a new way the vertical path into eternity. This alone counts, and, in keeping with the logic of revelation, the extension of the history of the Church is but the patient expectation of the manifestation (*parousia*) of what

already is a hidden presence (*parousia*).

However: while myth represented this relationship between God and the world in a great liturgical drama which was in its entirety a magico-sacramental actualisation, Christ's drama remains invisible to the world. Its attestation by eyewitnesses does not in itself mean that the world or even the Church can see it. 'You will seek me and you will not find me; where I am you cannot come' (Jn 7.34). 'A little while, and you will see me no more' (Jn 16.16). 'From now on you will not see me again' (Mt 23.39). The hiddenness in God not only of Christ but of those who, through faith, have died and risen with him (Col 3.3)—the hiddenness of those who, through faith, have passed over to the world of the New Age—belongs to the form of Christian existence, whose eschatological dimension is in this way essentially different from the 'time of the end' in the Old Testament and from the eager curiosity for revelations exhibited by the different apocalypses. Even the Christian Apocalypse at the conclusion of the Scriptures changes little of this: it is quite without curiosity; it does open up a dimension between eternity and world history, but only through the mediation of visions, which always have a degree of unreality about them.

Nevertheless, the decisive drama is played out vertically between God and the world—in the invisible, unfathomable mystery of judgment and grace. The form of Christ is the revelation of this final dramatic action between God and the world. It appears in the world with such a plenitude of meanings, with such an accumulation of all possible religious forms between heaven and earth, that Christ, as divine and as worldly-divine synthesis, necessarily has on man the effect of an overwhelming superabundance and, hence, of a darkness from excess of light. This eschatological accumulation of all absolutes would seem to be a pure contradiction if it were not refracted through an historical prism—the prism of the Old Testament. Within the temporality proper to the Old Testament and to it alone—which is an understanding and a possession of time brought about and fulfilled by God—the eschatologically compressed moment of the ἐφάπαξ is broken down into fragments perceivable to man. The time of revelation is the relationship of God to the world in Christ, now transposed to the horizontal plane, and this transposition is the impressing of form upon the continuity of time. Neither the cyclical time of mythical culture nor the empty linear extension of modern historical time—secularised, void of faith, and determined by 'progress'—have in themselves a form, nor can they. But the time of the Old

Testament—moving on toward the New Testament, which is the coming to man of eternity—does attain to an authentic form, the only one existing in world history, because within the Old Testament the relationship between time and eternity becomes visible.

This becoming visible of the mystery through time presupposes two things. In the first place, it implies that the world is not understood as a sub-personal and emanative ‘apparition’ and self-representation of God but as his free creation, for only on this condition will a medium be at God’s disposal within which to trace his self-revelation. And, secondly, it implies that, precisely on the basis of such an image of God, the temporal extension unfolds into moments which theologically are not identical with one another, since at *this* point in time God has wrought *these* acts of self-revelation in history. The specific character of the Old Testament begins with this relationship to time which may very well be a relationship of the cultic actualisation of those ‘great deeds’ at one time wrought by God; but this in no way compromises the temporality of the *in illo tempore*. This makes possible a memory and a hope directed to the future. This also makes prophecy possible as a knowledge, derived from God, concerning the *kairos* fulfilled by God.

If these two conditions are satisfied it is possible to impress upon the continuum of time a form that reflects eternity. This, of course, is not meant as the empty interrelationship of two realities within an empty time-span, but as the created relationship of being and essence between the two poles within the extension of points in time. The decisive thing here is that the temporal relationship of the Old to the New Testament not only *represents* the relationship of time to eternity, but *bears* it within itself in the manner of a sacrament that contains and communicates what it symbolises in the likeness of what is seen. This ‘sacramental’ possibility is possessed by the Old Testament in virtue of the grace of the New: because the Word to which Israel should listen is the one that will come in flesh.

We can, therefore, say that theological aesthetics culminates in the christological form (taking this word seriously) of salvation-history, in so far as here, upon the medium of man’s historical existence, God inscribes his authentic sign with his own hand. This is a signature which is legible in all world history, as it is God’s living Spirit that, throughout the ages, ensures its visibility; not least by neither annihilating the former People of God nor allowing it to dissolve after it rejected Christ, but rather by preserving its presence together with all its enigmatic reality throughout the course of

history. Here, if anywhere, it is true that ‘God works in a mysterious way.’ Or perhaps it would be clearer to say that God first creates from the twisted system of the world’s sin the five-line staff upon which Christ’s melody can be written down for men to hear and understand. Because the Old and the New Testaments, together, constitute God’s *one* revelation, the Old Testament possesses the same ‘rightness’ or truth as the New: here there is identity, not analogy, and for this reason alone those transpositions can fully succeed which must be made from the Old to the New Testament—the passage from type to reality, from letter to spirit. This essential rightness allows the Church to make use of the narratives, prophecies, prayers, and meditations of the Old Testament as the ‘linguistic body’ of her own liturgy, and this would not be possible if the Christian at prayer had constantly to be making corrections and adjustments. At an even more essential level, Christ himself spoke against the background of the Old Testament situation and made it his own, in order by it (both in proximity to and distance from it) to express and demonstrate his own prophetic and messianic message: a mythical or religious-philosophical system would have been wholly inadequate to serve this purpose. Thus, the Old and New Testaments form the indispensable relational system, the geometric field of co-ordinates, the supernatural table of categories, the necessary historical canvas upon which alone the intended figure could be drawn. It goes without saying that this preparatory system could not be produced from natural archetypes of the psyche, but from divine actions with man. It is God’s actions which are found at the very outset, and not thoughts and words of man. Even the most inspired of these words are but the result and the reflection of these original deeds, decisions, interventions, judgments, and gracious acts of God. These deeds of God are the light of the rightness which falls on a perverted world, and it is in this light that the Old Testament increasingly thinks and finds understanding. It is a divine light and, therefore, not essentially different from the light that will become incarnate in human nature.

This light makes the invisible visible in three dimensions. First, there becomes visible what man and the world are and mean, not for themselves but for God. Further, there becomes visible what the last destiny of man and the world is to be before God and through God. Finally, this transference from the human to the divine viewpoint makes visible what God himself is for the world. These three manifestations, which we will now discuss, do not refer to revelation as such but, more precisely, to the historical witness-form

which is exhibited in virtue of the conjunction of Old and New Testaments on the stage of world history.

1. What the world is before God is determined by what man is before God—by God's assessment and evaluation of man. This is the uninterrupted theme of the Old Testament, inexorably sustained with a realism and a naturalism, with a technique of unveiling which is unparalleled in world literature. Never has man spoken so much against himself; never has he attained to this elevated outlook over himself from which to see himself in all his infinite smallness and nothingness before God, in all his perversity and stubbornness in the face of the divine will and promise, in his inability to help himself by his own means—unless these very means are provided and offered by the grace of God. And, what is even more astounding: through all this self-deprecation on the part of man there can be detected no impulse of self-destruction, what one would expect, for instance, if, by a disintegration of his being along the 'nether road', man attempted to attain what he could not reach by self-exaltation. What we encounter, rather, is the constant awareness of the inevitability of being human, a consciousness of the only possibility granted and left open to man by which he can become whole which is the willing act of letting God dispose over one. Man is not thereby diminished; he is flooded by a sober light, visible nowhere else in the world; the light of a physician in which every contour, every gradation of value emerges with inexorable precision, without, however, there being any discernable bitter existentialist will to self-unmasking. On the contrary, a superior and wise gentleness runs through this millennial cure which is a kind of weaning, a treatment for addiction. This is, in fact, a real weaning away from myth, which in all its dimensions is man's attempt to advance and exhibit his own 'glory': man as a wholly divine or semi-divine being who enthrones himself in the person of the king and beholds himself as such and who by means of religious magic confronts and defeats the powers of destiny and of death, whereas the cosmos is now centred on this divine-human, political-individual glory as its reflection. 'Investigation of the cultures and religions of Israel's neighbours shows us that in Israel a wholly unique de-mythologisation took place.'⁷⁴ Through many different phases and in many different ways the result of our inquiry is always the same: namely, that every honour that man had arrogated to himself is taken from him, and that this judging light that falls on man floods him as the essential prerequisite for—indeed, as already the beginning of—his healing. It is a light that radiates from the centre of the

historical existence of man and the people, a light which, at that centre, forces them to come to a decision, to make a confession. As an historical light, however, it stretches backwards and forwards: as the light of truth it brings past history into its sphere and demands that past history be interpreted in his same light ('historicisation' of history: *Historisierung der Geschichte*); and it projects God's decision concerning man, God's confession to man, into the future, from which alone we can expect the justification for this judgment in the present.

Therefore, although the Old Testament must be understood as a covenant of God's grace with man, and although the Old Testament may grasp this grace ever more deeply, the more God's judgment on man brings him to self-knowledge in faith, the more the Old Testament understands that it itself is predominantly a judgment, in the most comprehensive sense of the word, and that as such it must yield to and be surpassed by a 'new covenant' (Jer 31. 31). Judgment means the disclosure of God's view of man, the unveiling of the standards that God applies to man and to the world. As such, judgment (*Gericht*) means 'breaking man in' (*Abrichtung*) according to these standards, which he too can now see; it means his being oriented (*Ausrichtung*) towards God, but this orientation makes sense only if it is completed by an orientation towards that salvation which God alone can confer on man. In man as we see him in the Old Testament we can see, portrayed in history, how man appears to God; but we can also see that man does not correspond to God's idea of man. Even (and especially) what God has chosen is time and again rejected; none of the chosen is wholly satisfactory (that is, if he does not altogether fail), to say nothing of the people as a whole. None of God's servants—much less the kings—receive from God the honour which should have been man's according to God's plan for creation: everything points to a new order which is what imparts any meaning to the order of judgment. God's *doxa* descends on all sides upon the world; only in man it does not dwell. And if occasionally (in a sudden fit of self-glorification on the part of Israel which does not harmonize with the basic tenor of its religion) glory is ascribed to the 'great' figures of the past (Sir 44-50), this occurs only marginally and as if by misunderstanding (as, for instance, with the unbounded praise of Solomon, which goes beyond anything historically admissible and points to an ideal type): the centre of gravity rests on the rejections of the historical people by the great prophets and on the promise of a totally new order of covenant which God alone will institute.

It is only in Jesus Christ that the light of judgment radiates fully as the light of grace. The judgment now no longer dominates in the light itself: the light is without darkness (1 Jn 1.5), has not been sent and has not come to judge (Jn 3.17; 12.47), and all judgment is transferred to it precisely in so far as it is a light that does not judge (Jn 5.22) since, being raised up, it orients all things towards itself (Jn 3.14f.; 8.28; 12.32). God's *doxa* dwells within the exalted Christ (Jn 1.14; 2.11) because, to the end, he does not seek his own honour and can, therefore, be the One honoured by God (Jn 5.43f; 7.18; 8.49-50). All the Old Testament's realism is perfected in him; he is the utterly demythologised man, the humiliated one, rejected and crucified by men, and God's honour and sacredness radiate precisely from one who has been so dishonoured and desecrated.

History makes this leap from judged man to judging man visible. The true man, however, cannot be the man who relates primarily to himself and has found his measure in himself. The true man is the one 'the Father consecrated and sent into the world' (Jn 10.36), who has found and received his grace through God, who does not relate to himself, but to God as his Father. In the Old Testament God measured man with his own divine measure, but in the New Testament the divine measure itself became man: and these two measurements with the same measure can be seen in history. But with this God himself enters into visibility—as the hidden God who will not let himself be abused by man for his own self-glorification and who becomes visible in truth only in this *No!* that judges man. Time and again he appears in the Old Testament as a no-sayer, to the point where he seems to destroy what he himself had set up and to reject what he himself had chosen. All these noes have their purpose ultimately in his definitive yes (2 Cor I. 19f.); all the apophases of the Old Testament in the Christian cataphasis, which is such because the definitive rejection of all sinners in the One crucified and abandoned by God is transformed into the definitive calling of all for the sake of this One (Rom 5.15-21; 11.28-32). With this God himself has become manifest in man: manifest as the God who is hidden in his freedom; it is his hiddenness itself which is no longer hidden, but manifest.

2. The clarity and sharpness of judgment of the Old Testament—which even there can be understood as grace—is manifested in an extreme sign which can neither be misunderstood nor overlooked: this sign is Israel's eschatology. The times are past when theologians could, with a tone of regret, speak seriously of Israel's strangely and markedly underdeveloped and

retrograde conceptions of the beyond—this in contrast to the surrounding cultures. As if this great refusal on Israel's part to pass beyond the limits of death was not one of the most important and positive data of the ancient revelation! True, Israel shares its representations of Hades with other cultures, in so far, that is, as they are 'representations'; but, significantly, these cultures never confine themselves to a conception which is as negative and void of consolation as is Israel's. The other cultures fill out their representations of Hades either ethically (with imagined judgments of the dead and just punishments and rewards) or cosmologically and mythically (with images of the relationship of heaven and earth, of the end of the world, of the transmigration of souls or their transformation into spirit, of graded planetarian ascents, and so forth)—in order, in this way, to give a more satisfactory shape to their eschatology. Israel is allowed none of this. It must persevere before death's threshold where it is faced with an incomprehensible contradiction: Israel is to believe in God, to entrust itself to God, indeed to hope in God—and yet, it must not expect anything from the other side of death. In all this the question of eternal life, indeed, of simple survival after death, does not even remain open; it remains closed and sealed. And yet Israel does not really chafe because of this question; it accepts this situation as an absolute barrier and begins to think and pose questions only on this side of the forbidden line. 'Should we not see this theological vacuum, which Israel zealously struggled to keep free from any sacral concepts, as one of the greatest theological enigmas in the Old Testament?'⁷⁵ It is true that, because of Hellenisation, on the one hand, and the moralisation of Torah piety in the last pre-Christian centuries, on the other hand, Israel came to be influenced by universal religious conceptions of punishment and reward in the beyond and, consequently, also by conceptions of heavenly or hellish places and states. Indeed, this phenomenon cannot be judged purely negatively, since apocalypticism brought with it the idea of a new age which already awaits man in God, and this idea implies for man something like an eternal destiny. But this late ethics and mysticism, as a whole, remain shadowy and visionary and in no way exhibit the weight of reality which classical Israel possessed down to the time of the Prophets. The eschatological *non liquet* cannot be explained as an archaism; it can also permeate the most personal psalms of the pious, and these psalms cannot be placed, as fragments of a cultic drama, in the mouth of the king who temporarily descends to the underworld—no more than the songs of the *ebed*-Yahweh can be attributed to him. Any

attempt to explain more would explain away the uniqueness involved.

This barrier, so strikingly implanted and guarded, will be removed only by Christ as he descends into hell and rises from the dead. For this reason, the concept 'eschatological' is used in a very different sense in the Old and the New Testament, and the open eschatology of the New Testament points Old Testament eschatology—even in its boldest vistas and hopes—back to the waiting-room before the closed door. To be sure, we do have anticipations, such as the rapture of Enoch or, even more strikingly, that of Elijah, the great visions by which the Prophets were called and transported before God's throne. But these momentary breakthroughs and lightning flashes only weight down the more heavily upon the dread darkness. Everything must be so disposed that Christ's Resurrection and the access to the Father it effects appear as the absolutely new creation, as the opening up of the gates which were closed forever—and this not only for enraptured visionaries and apocalypticists, but for mortal man here below. The miracle whereby, in Christ, one has left death behind one ('You have died!' 'You have risen in Christ!', Col 3.3, 1) is something absolutely incomprehensible for the Old Testament, for as a whole it always lived staring death in the face. And this wholly de-mythicised existence before death can help Christian eschatology to appear within history: the leap from the Old to the New Testament is defined by the taking on of form by that which was eschatologically formless.

This is where the assertions concerning the transitory character of the Old Testament have their theological locus: it is not transitory as revelation, but it reveals transitoriness; indeed, within the revelation which itself is imperishable—*verba mea non transibunt*—the Old Testament 'represents' that transition which is an aspect and a function of 'making all things new'. This representation casts light on the whole existential pre-cursoriness of the Old Testament of which we spoke at the outset: it bears the character of image not at the level of essence but at the level of historical, indeed, theological existence. The whole Old Testament not only produces provisional images which are anticipated images of Christ, but in its entirety it must remain before the barrier of death, where it 'hardens' into a total image, so that 'all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect' (Heb 11.39f.). Theologically, this imaged quality of the Old Testament's order of existence represents an insoluble puzzle, since in typology what is involved is an imaged quality

which is not only exterior, but so interior that even the form of faith itself, of the sacraments themselves, of the grace that is conferred, remains branded with a *quasi* which both Origen and Augustine affirm. What is the meaning of John's baptism 'for the forgiveness of sins' (Lk 3.3)? Does it forgive sins or does it not? And what is the faith of Abraham, imputed to him for his justification (Gen 15.6; Rom 4.3)? Does it really justify or does it not? It cannot justify in the New Testament sense, according to which grace is the *inchoatio vitae aeternae*; otherwise we would have to conclude that, theologically, the concept of *sheol* is incorrect, or that it lags behind the actual reality itself. We have no choice, therefore, but to characterise all Old Testament existence—including its faith, its hope, and its 'beyond'—as an existence *in typo*. Thus, it is a foreshadowing of Christian existence, but at the same time it is the reality whereby all human existence assumes a form oriented towards Christ. With this, however, Christian existence exhibits another ambiguity: for it is now seen to stand in the shadow cast by Christ's eschatological light and, thus, also in the shadow of his death and Resurrection, without having any formal centre of its own. Its centre lies in Christ, the incarnate God who will come to judge; it lies in the very centre of Christ himself, enclosed by both his humiliation and by his form of glory. While Christian existence moves beyond itself towards a Christ who is coming to complete history, at the same time it rests on the reality of the Christ who is incarnate and present in the Church.⁷⁶ The Old Testament, too, possesses no centre in any one of its phases, nor is its form to be found in a movement which runs both backwards and forwards in time. The road backwards would lead to myth, but myth here represents only a constructed point of convergence that is in fact disavowed by the total movement of Israel's history: to polarise Israel on such a myth would mean to run directly against the current of its thought and very being. Even those texts that are rooted in an early mythical period are vigorously drawn into the forward movement and are gradually embedded into contexts that ever more clearly delineate Israel's salvation-history. In the end, it is impossible to say at what level of their 'remarkable multi-layeredness' they can be interpreted 'correctly'. For their interpretation itself is in flux, in the same flux which characterises the essence of all Israel. 'Yet the same exegetical process holds true in principle for all Old Testament texts—even those where it cannot be so closely observed. For the field within which all these texts are interpreted extends from the time when the events they contain were first recorded to

their final interpretation in the light of the saving event of Christ's coming.'⁷⁷ It is not the Christian interpretation that overtakes the reality of the Old Testament; God himself overtakes the Old Testament when he applies the measure of Christ already to pre-Christian times, and it is to this that the Old Testament bears witness before God and before history.

3. The manner in which the Old Testament must represent judgment so that, by comparison, the New Testament will be able to shine forth as the light of superabundant grace—the manner in which the Old Testament must come to a halt at a barrier that proclaims man's finitude so that God, in Christ, will be able to step over this barrier historically and visibly: this, in the last analysis, is the manner whereby an intra-divine mystery enters visibility. A one-sidedly intra-historical interpretation could explain the series of steps leading to Christ merely as the 'education of the human race', or, more incisively, it could interpret the relationship between Old and New Testament as the process whereby the law of Being becomes manifest: as does the young Hegel, who sees in the New Testament the law that synthesizes all the unconcluded antitheses of the Old Testament. But such an interpretation is far from exhausting the revelational power of this historical form. It is God himself who is interpreting himself in this form—not the God of an idealist world-process, but the God of supreme freedom and supreme love: the God who reveals himself as the freest of all by constructing the whole form of salvation-history on the basis of an election which he is not bound to make and by then developing all the articulations of this salvation-history in the interplay between this divine freedom and the freedom of man (who remains obdurate). This God is so free that he can reject the election that had apparently been definitive, breaking the scaled covenant and replacing it with a new one. The very first person to be chosen must encounter on Mount Moriah this God who is free to the point of contradiction. But this is also the God who is free only as a lover who suffers more than anyone else at the ruination of his chosen form: a God who, along with his untouchable sovereignty, does not draw back from revealing to the lascivious whore Jerusalem his form of suffering—the face of a lover who is not only humiliated, but who assents to this humiliation and even humiliates himself. He rejects her—he must reject her; that is his right as the holy God. But he cannot reject her; he must run after her, undeserving as she is, and bring her home with humiliating pledges and promises, and he is not ashamed of this humiliation. It is only when we come directly from these scenes

between Israel and Yahweh that we will realise the extent of what God is determined to reveal and confide about himself in the New Testament. For man's abuse of these concessions which love makes, his abuse of this fidelity and renewed election in the midst of the most justified of all rejections, his abuse of the step God's love takes beyond the Old Testament is a certainty from the outset. Disclosing the New Age in the midst of the Old Age belonging to sinners can only lead to a catastrophe for God himself, but—'so much did God love the world' (Jn 3.16). We see, therefore, that Yahweh's double visage in the Old Testament is actually a most single and unified reality, and neither of the two aspects would be in any way comprehensible and bearable without the other. The Manichaean and Marcionist caricature of two gods (a god of power who dominates the Old Testament and a god of love who reveals himself in the New Testament) is so diametrically opposed to the entire structure of the form of revelation that Irenaeus had no trouble whatsoever in demolishing this demonic contrivance. But the dualists were right at least in this respect: in the tension, which amounts almost to self-contradiction, between the exaltedness of the free God and the humiliation of the loving God what opens up is the very interior space of the heart of divinity itself. And it is not so much in the names of the divine energies emanating from God and shaping history (his *kâbôd*, his *dabar*, his *hokmah*), but rather in the tragic history of God with his unfaithful people that is prefigured the immanent Trinity which becomes fully manifest in the Incarnation of God's Son.

It is impossible to rationalise this vitality of God, which at the same time is demonstrated and hidden in the tensions of salvation-history, nor is it possible to distribute the periods of world-history among the three divine Persons. To assign the Old Testament to the Father and the New Testament to the Son means sending the Holy Spirit away empty. One could make an equally good case for attributing the Old Testament to the Son (because in it the Word of God prevails) and the New Covenant of the risen spiritual Man and of the Church to the Spirit; in this what remains for the Father would be the order of creation and the time from Adam to Abraham. But this is all arbitrary artifice. The one trinitarian God is the Lord of history who makes his triunity known in an ever more eventful manner. It is only in the New Testament that the face of the Father is really unveiled by Christ. Only the Son knows the Father, and he to whom the Son wishes to reveal him (Mt 11.27). And, in turn, no one knows the Son except the person whom the

Father draws (Jn 6.44) and whom the Spirit teaches (Jn 16.13). The Old Testament, however, bears witness to the fact that in God something akin to a drama is played out between the sovereignty of his judgment and the humiliation whereby he allows himself to be judged, and that these two voices in God are both united and kept distinct by a third, ineffable voice. Israel is forbidden to have any image of God because God wanted to image himself in a singular way in the history of his covenant with Israel. No divine image of the mythical religions—even those that had a conception of the dying and rising of God—approaches even in a distant way this image, painted with the very colours of Israel's history. And the features of this image already take on a human visibility: in Hosea's marriage with a whore man is to embody—and, hence, experience in his own way—a divine experience. And Isaiah is not only to experience in his own person the failure of the whole divine undertaking; beyond this, Jeremiah is to represent and *be* the locus of the clash between God and his people. He 'bears God's suffering and at the same time that of his people'.⁷⁸ Here we can already see what, in the New Testament and at a new level, will be the self-representation of the trinitarian mystery of God in man alive—that is, man as essentially related to God and as existing with God in history. Only in this form of self-representation in historical man does the mystery of the Trinity attain for us to that relevance which it ought always to retain as the revelation of absolute and utmost love. An image of God which could be abstracted from God's intervention in historical event and which could be contemplated statically for its own sake ought not and can not be offered to us—not even in the vision of God of eternal life.

The testimony of the Old Testament is the testimony time bears to eternity, which with Christ enters into time. This is a testimony that constitutes one intelligible form with what it attests, and without this total form the testimony itself would remain impenetrable. For the eyes of faith, the 'riddle of Israel' does not exist, not even the riddle of Israel's continued existence until the Last Judgment. The figure is legible, but only on Christian presuppositions. Israel and Christianity together form one single figure, carved in bold relief from the block of world-history—a figure whose higher centre is the God-Man, just as he is the higher centre between the two thieves, both of whom bear witness to him even as they are both touched by his outstretched arms and, together with him, form a crucified trinity. In the figure of the two Testaments, which are really but one Testament, time attains theological

form: time becomes the clay from which God creates a measure of revelation for eternal life: *quia (tempus) non tantum dicit mensuram durationis, sed etiam egressionis* (Bonaventure), and this *egressio* from the outset also implies the *regressus*.⁷⁹

What we have done here is to examine the total testimony of history, as Scripture offers it to us, from the standpoint of the concept of form. But to all who contemplate and love this form, it has always appeared as the most glorious drama and the most perfect harmony possible in the world. The concept for the relationship between the Old and the New Testament which the tradition of the Fathers coined and modified unceasingly—is that of συμφωνία, *consonantia*, ‘consonance’,⁸⁰ described by Augustine as a concert of beauty (*concinere, consonare, concitare*⁸¹) which surpasses the harmony of the spheres because in the latter only an inner-worldly melody resounds. What is involved here, however, is not a consonance of two equivalent sounds, but the transition, contained in the testimony, from figure to archetype. And even this transition does not occur in the sense that a higher reality ‘snatches up’ a lower reality to itself, but, rather, in the sense that the figure dies and rises together with the archetype. The Fathers and the medieval contemplatives never tire of celebrating the *delectatio* of this manner of considering Scripture, and they find in it a foretaste of eternal bliss. This kind of Scriptural meditation, moreover, was always practised in the context of an existence that longed for the vision of God and that was constantly dying to this world in order to rise up with Christ unto God.⁸² In this, the great contemplatives are but realising in themselves the movement of all history, which bears witness to Christ merely by dying to itself and tending towards a form which transcends it. Into this symphony Protestantism introduced the sound of shattering fragments; but, even as it crushes the earthen vessel for the sake of the spiritual fruit it contains, Protestantism envisages the same sacrifice, to which, however, it does not dare to ascribe the predicate of beauty. For Protestantism beauty remains eschatological; but if the *eschaton* which is Christ has appeared in the midst of history, and if the rays of his Resurrection already begin to brighten that history, then we should be permitted to speak of Christian beauty even here below.

3. THE TESTIMONY OF THE COSMOS

Christ is the creating Father's first and last thought concerning the world and, as such, Christ gives the cosmos its conclusive form, in which the world's fragmentariness receives a head and the forest of heathen columns (to use Claudel's image) arches up toward the Christian keystone. In this sense, the testimony of the cosmos will have to be a testimony of glorification. The testimony of the Church and of salvation-history, too, is glorification, because they both receive their final form only from Christ and must bear witness to him as their Lord. But they have both entered into an historical and existential dialogue with Christ, and it is only through the unforeseeable outcome of the conversation (which revolves principally around the Passion: Lk 9.31), and only after the defeat of all the resistance put up by both synagogue and Church, that the form of Christ can triumph in them. The cosmos, on the other hand, was from all time conceived and created for him (Col 1.16), and as such it must from the outset acknowledge him as its Lord. This holds not only for the subhuman world, but also for the 'forces and powers' that rule the world as intelligences, and for the angels, that with Christ's appearance become wholly 'his angels' and the expression of his lordliness. Its variety within the history of salvation notwithstanding, the testimony of the cosmos attests to a single truth: ὅτι Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός: 'that Jesus Christ is Lord' (Phil 2.11). At its centre we find the miracle, which, as a soteriological deed, is always the self-witness of the Κύριος and of the power and glory proper only to himself; but, within this self-witness, there is included the testimony of the world's submission to its Lord. This submission is the willingness of matter to receive and express the saving signs of grace (σημεῖα), to let itself be bodily permeated by God, first in the anticipation of Christ's Resurrection and then in the full fruition of the gift in the general resurrection. The cosmos' submission to Christ also entails the subjection of the 'forces and powers' who sense the Lord's sovereignty from the first moment of his appearance and must acknowledge it grudgingly. This submission, finally is the overcoming also of the heavenly intelligences which, likewise 'bending the knee', profess the *doxa* of the incarnate and risen Lord. The miracle encompasses all three testimonies and cannot be assigned to any one of them exclusively. It is in each case the irruption of the New Age into the Old. The miracle is not only or primarily a manifestation of Christ's power over dead nature, for the miracle is necessarily located within the salvific and dialogical dealings of the Redeemer with man. His miraculous act is, therefore, a clarification of his own living form and of the

manner in which this form is communicated to the human partner, sinful and sick as he is. But precisely as such it is a sign of his lordliness also over the world of the 'forces and powers', because, as eschatological Lord of the cosmos, he sets himself over the realms in which they hold sway.

a. The Powers and the Miraculous

It is impossible to extricate the figure of Jesus in the Gospel from its confrontation with the 'powers'. Jesus is in conflict with these powers just as much as he is with men. Nor can the motif of the cosmic powers be excluded from the rest of the New Testament: it dominates Paul's Epistles, the Catholic Epistles, and the Apocalypse; as such, this theme evidently points to a totally indispensable aspect of the event of salvation. To excise this theme by resolute de-mythologisation would mean transforming the rich depth of the Biblical understanding of the world and of salvation into a flat and moralising enlightenment. In his understanding of the world, modern man shows himself to be at least as naïve as the man with a mythical image of the world: what the latter at least holds on to through his intuition and imagistic representation the former has lost as a result of his all-destructive rationalisms. Modern man no longer has even the ability to see the reality which, in man's understanding of himself and of the world, was at first expressed by images and myths and later on by an intuitive description of the cosmic potencies—what Idealism and Romanticism called the 'world of spirits'. Here the Idealist categories may be found to be by no means the most inadequate, just as it is those forms of thought which have their life in the historical *kairos* (which is where the beautiful also dwells, halfway between all-divinising *mythos* and all-desecrating *ratio*) that often come closest to the truth.

It may of course well be that the family tree of the Biblical 'forces and powers' in the end takes us back to the mythical divine theophanies and presences, and that the Old Testament's 'angel of Yahweh', who stands for Yahweh himself, originally was his cosmomorphic and anthropomorphic manifestation. It may also be that the gods of the ancient Orient in some instances pass over almost without discontinuity to become Biblical angels, especially when these are presented as angels of the stars, of the peoples, or as angels that preside over and move the kingdoms and the regions of the

cosmos. And yet Heinrich Schlier is right when he warns us against short-circuiting the problem with an easy either / or: ‘This phenomenon cannot be grasped with only *one* of the traditional and conventional concepts since it evades all previous conceptions.’ ‘According to the New Testament, the “powers” are certainly a category of personal beings’; however, they appear not only as individuals but ‘also as exemplars of a genus’, as ‘exemplars of the demonic’, ‘representatives of a collective (Mk 5.9)’. In this they are ‘beings of power’, and here ‘being’ (*Wesen*) is to be understood at the same time ‘in its substantive and in its verbal sense’: ‘Not only do they have power, might, force, but they *are* power, might, force’; ‘they exist (*wesen*) as power.’⁸³ This is a power, moreover, which, although deriving from God, did not remain a power in God and through God since it did not remain subject to God; it wanted to become autonomous power, and as such it makes both the world and man fall prey to itself. Malady of the individual here takes the form of decadence, of decay (whether spiritual or physical is secondary, since here the borderlines are ‘wholly fluid’): nature is taken by the ‘powers’ into subjection that it may be experienced as divine; historical life above all is made subject, and the ‘powers’ become embodied in its ‘great powers and in power-ideologies’ of all kinds; the religious sphere, finally, is made subject, and here the ‘powers’ produce (and express themselves in) the gods of the pagans, the abuse of the law on the part of the Jews, and the heresies of the Christians. The enfeeblement and decadence of the world demonstrate the totally overpowering and ‘blindly enrapturing force’ of these potencies (1 Cor 12.2), among which Scripture reckons realities, such as ‘sin’ and ‘death’, which we would prefer to call abstract. Both in whole and in part the world and existence emerge as simultaneously ‘seductive and threatening’, as a ‘temptation’, as an illusion and a lie that conceal. And all of this comes with the full ‘pressure of inevitability, like a whole atmosphere that weighs us down’ (Eph 2.2; Rev 13).

The extent to which these powers—radiating innumerable from a single central point: the ‘prince of this world’ (Jn 14.30)—dominate and determine the whole of existence will be realised only by the Christian who has learnt from what it is that Christ’s victory over the world has delivered him (Jn 16.33). He can read it off the form of Christ’s destiny, infallibly guaranteed him by the fact of his ‘coming into the world’ (Jn 1.10): the power of darkness (Lk 22.53) becomes manifest in this progression towards ruination at the hands of murderers (Jn 8.40; 10.32). Chaos is reflected in the most

sublime of forms. There can be no question here of Christ's giving some shape to these 'powers'; they can only be banished, can only be robbed of their force and their efficacy, can only be silenced (καταργεῖν), 'disarmed', 'openly pilloried' (Col 2.15), subjected to the lordship of Christ by being unmasked and having their threatening and opaque masquerade brought out into the light. Their devouring, all-rending nature is left to devour and rend itself apart (Rev 18.9; 19.20f.; 20.9).

If it is true that this disarming occurs on the Cross, which thus becomes the locus of triumph over the world (Col 2.15), then, in respect of the powers, the whole way from the crib to the cross is already a triumphal procession. Just as Jesus appears to men as the humiliated and scorned servant, to the same extent he appears from the outset to the powers as the one who reigns in glory. With Jesus the end of their world has come for the powers. The first act of his messianic activity is his confrontation with Satan in the desert, where all is decided in advance: he is 'tempted', and he thereby 'tastes'—because of the 'flesh and blood he has in common' with his brothers—what it means to be subject to the powers and to live under the weight of the Kingdom of Death, which glorifies itself demonically (Heb 2.9-18). 'All the kingdoms of the world with their *doxa*' (Mt 4.8) are shown and offered to him; but in the tempting 'tasting' of temptation, which belongs intrinsically to his being 'like his brethren in every respect' (Heb 2.17), he experiences the essence of the illusion of power and rejects it by pointing to the glory of the one and only God. *Doxa* stands against *doxa*, beauty from below against beauty from above: beauty as entanglement and as a decadent, seduced sliding into the power of lust and the lust for power stands against the beauty of the adoration and service (Mt 4.10) of the one God of glory, whereby the servant not only experiences glory but is himself wrapt about with glory: 'Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him' (Mt 4.11).

From that point on Jesus' coming into the world is a coming in judgment over the powers, a coming in 'fulness of power' (ἐξουσία) which is expressed right from his first encounter with the powers in man. In the very first chapter of Mark Jesus enters the synagogue and teaches like one who has power. There is a man there who is possessed by an unclean spirit. 'And he cried out: "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God" ' (Mk 1.24). And the possessed man of Gerasa will cry out: 'What have you to do with us, O Son

of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?’ (Mt 8.29). Jesus receives this testimony, but does not accept it: ‘Be silent and come out of him!’ (Mk 1.25). ‘Whenever the unclean spirits beheld him, they fell down before him and cried out: “You are the Son of God.” And he strictly ordered them not to make him known’ (Mk 3.11f.). This is the involuntary testimony of a hell that is beginning ‘before its time’, of the power which is cast down from the illusion of eternal perdurance (‘the moment is eternity!’) into time (Rev 12.9), where in ‘fetters’ (Jude 6) it must contemplate its coming ruin. It is a testimony, too, with regard to ‘Jesus’ fulness of power at the end of time, a power with which through his miracles and cures he robs the ‘powers’ of their strength.

The miracles of the Gospel as a whole, in fact, are signs of the fulness of power at the end of time, and as such they are primarily directed against the ‘powers and dominations’, the ‘archons of this world’. In the healing of disease and possession, in the raising from the dead, in the subjecting of the cosmic forces unleashed by the ‘powers’ (night, storm, waves—Mk 4.39: ‘He awoke and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea: “Peace! Be still!” ’ cf. Mk 6.45ff.), and in the relieving of material care and need by the multiplication of loaves he is concerned primarily not with acts of social concern, but rather with the epiphany of the messianic fulness of power over the ‘powers’. This Isaiah had promised, and his promise is fulfilled today (Lk 4.18f.); such signs did God build into the prophecy that began with Elijah and Elisha and to which Jesus points in the passage as referring to himself (Lk 4.24-27). This confrontation between demonic power over the world and eschatological fulness of power deriving from God is a definitive reality which can in no way be further de-mythologised. The Old Testament had de-mythologised the gods of the pagans into this demonic power over the world and in this way had showed it to be as ‘nothing’ (Is 44.6f.) and a ‘demon’ (Ps 96.5, LXX; Ep. Jer), and Paul too stops here (1 Cor 10.19f.). The miracles of the Gospel and, consequently, those of the Acts of the Apostles are, so to speak, the normal equipment of one sent by God, since he is to free the world from its subjection to the ‘powers’ and restore within it the order of God. The miracles are not to be read as ‘disruptions’ of the natural order but rather as signs of its restoration, which fundamentally occurs when Christ appears. In him becomes visible what man is: ‘crowned by God with glory and honour, everything is placed under his feet’ (Heb 2.7f.).

The Bible has never shown any interest in so-called ‘natural laws’. In the

Old Testament the world is what God has set before himself, that wherein he reveals his power and his glory. Psalms, hymns, wisdom songs praise the world only in so far as its beautiful structure reveals this power and glory of God. Israel is allowed to see this *kâbôd* of God in his creation, while the eyes of the heathen are darkened and they put their own idols in place of this clear manifestness (Wis 13f.; Rom 1.18f.). The prohibition of images gives expression to Israel's zeal for God's own *kâbôd* in the world, which is not to be obscured or misdirected by any autonomous glory on the part of creatures. Israel, as having received full power from God, wholly restores God's *kâbôd* in the world; of this the miraculous deeds are a testimony. From the standpoint of later cosmological thought we could indeed say that the concept of the 'miraculous sign' (σημεῖον) is naïve in the Old Testament, since for it everything in nature was a miraculous sign of the greatness and glory of God. And, thus, the ancient Christian concept of miracle—Augustine's, for instance—is also naïve, since it consciously and deliberately makes the Old Testament concept its own and understands all God's 'great deeds' in the world as miracles, which no longer appear as such only to those who are corrupted by sin and who in their dullness have grown accustomed to the miraculous in daily life: these must be shaken from their stupor by 'unusual' and 'startling' miracles such as raisings from the dead. And even though St. Thomas Aquinas' scientific concept of miracle represents a considerable advance by comparison with the naïve religious concept, nevertheless the centre of gravity of the New Testament's intention lies in the latter. The primary concern is not to show that Christ has power over the natural laws, but that he has power over the 'powers'. In so far as the order of coercion established by the powers is expressed in the destiny and the course of the natural laws, and in so far as the powers make their own structure out of the structure of the world created by God, the messianic miracle also cuts across 'nature' in the modern, abstract sense. And yet, by emphasising this abstract element the danger arises that the element of the messianic *exousia* will not remain in focus, as it should. The yogi, too, has power over matter and over the body. There are techniques (with religious implications as to the nature of the world) which can make things similar to the miracles of the Gospel happen. As soon as this parallel is considered it immediately threatens to take the upper hand. Jesus' miracles, to which the Gospels give such an uncomfortably strong emphasis—almost as if Jesus' messianic legitimacy stood or fell with them—coalesce into a single demonstration of his spiritual

strength and of the power of his religious concentration. Are they not, then, by their very essence something merely ‘praeternatural’, and hence to be consigned basically to the same intra-cosmic realm as other similar non-Christian phenomena?

The intention of the Gospel contradicts such a parallelism. The miracles, rather, belong to an indissoluble whole which, as such, is the epiphany of the living God of Abraham, who glorifies himself and is also the God of Jesus. This God, however, is not a cosmic but an historical God, not a God who glorifies himself in the cycles of nature and in the associated myths, but in his free salvific deeds. From within history Israel looks out into the cosmos and sees in it the glory of this free and sovereign God of the covenant. The Son of the Father, sent by him into the world, is, in person, the glory of God descending into the world and taking form. The *kâbôd* that ‘overshadows’ Mary—who then enters into the temple with the child (Lk 1.35; 2.21-38)—is the same as that which overshadowed the tent and the temple as a cloud of splendour and darkness (Ex 40.35 = Lk 2.32). To see Jesus means to see—along with Simeon (Lk 2.30, 32) and John (Jn 1.14)—the glory radiating from the Father.⁸⁴ Thus, in his totality, he is the ‘sign (σημεῖον) of salvation and glory’ with which John notably comes to grips. In John it becomes clear ‘that the concepts σημεῖα and ῥήματα (λόγοι) both qualify each other: σημεῖον is not a mere demonstration, but a spoken directive, a symbol; ῥῆμα is not teaching in the sense of the communication of a set of ideas, but is the occurrence of the Word, the event of the address.’⁸⁵ In his totality, Jesus is the sign that is meant to be read and which can be understood (in faith), and the total form of this sign appears concentrated in the central event of the *kenosis*, in the ‘*semeion* of Jonah’ (Lk 11.29f. par). ‘Jesus refuses to give a sign in proof of his authority, such as would enable men to recognise him without risk, without committing themselves to him’,⁸⁶ for if the whole form is not read then the partial form of the miracle, which can be understood correctly only as belonging to the whole, must necessarily be misinterpreted.

This provides the basis for the whole dialectic, which is readily enough intelligible, of Jesus’ working and not working miracles in the Gospel. He works them where faith is found and where they can be recognised as what they claim to be. But he does not work them precisely where a yogi would have worked them without hesitation. If faith receives a miracle, unbelief also sees it as a bystander and *could* itself, in the abstract, come to faith because of it. The ‘work’ is in itself strong enough to have this effect (Jn 10.38). But

man's reluctance to accept the total form holds him back even in the face of the evidence provided by the facts of the miracle, as is shown with irony in the extended discussion concerning the man born blind (Jn 9.1-41; 10.21). Using this miracle for a starting point, Jesus instructs his listeners by placing the miracles worked by him in the total context of revelation. To the Jews' question concerning the Messiah he first proposes his word as proof, attested by the 'works' (miracles) performed in the name of the Father: the Jews can believe neither thing because they do not 'hear'. To hear would mean, at the same time, to perceive Jesus' word as the Word of the Father and to understand Jesus' deeds as the work of the Father, for they are 'performed with the power of my Father' (Jn 10.32), indeed they are 'the works of my Father' (Jn 10.37), which not only confirm the oneness of Father and Son externally (Jn 10.38) but actually express it.⁸⁷ The glorification of both Father and Son is but one glorification: the death of Lazarus serves 'for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it' (Jn 11.4). Here we must remember what was said earlier about the relationship between sign and form in general: the 'sign' which the Jews demanded (1 Cor 1.22) was a detached sign, comprehensible in itself, which could be known neutrally and taken as an index for a content independent of the sign itself, which or in which one would then have to believe. But the sign which Jesus is, by contrast, and which he works only in connection with his total revelation, is essentially not an indication but the thing itself. He brings about resurrection because he is Resurrection itself (Jn 11.25). He bestows light to the eyes because he himself is the light of the world (Jn 8.12). He gives the bread because he is the bread of life (Jn 6.35). He purifies his chosen ones by pouring water over them (Jn 13.6) because he is himself the flowing water of God (Jn 4.13f.; 7.37f.). If the 'thing itself' is the Incarnation of the Logos, then it is not enough when Origen says that the Redeemer 'worked even the symbols of his own spiritual deeds' (ὁ καὶ σύμβολα ποιήσας τῶν ἰδίων πνευματικῶν πράξεων σωτὴρ ἡμῶν: *In Mt.* 16. 20; Kl. 545)—unless, that is, 'symbol' is here understood in the full sense of a sacramental reality which corporeally contains the spiritual truth in the sensible image and likeness. But in the Old Age this sacramental reality remains essentially concealed, and only occasional eschatological rays, as it were, escape from it: not everyone is simply healed and not everyone receives bread. Thus, this sacramental reality belongs to the total knowable sign only by being subordinated to the Word which speaks and interprets. It is this Word which must primarily be

believed (Jn 10.38), and indeed in the authentic sense whereby one can believe only in God: ‘He who believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. . . . The Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak’ (Jn 12.44, 49).

The miracles of the New Testament do, of course, possess in the first instance an external reality in their appearance whereby they are signs in the ordinary sense of a pointer to a higher power that effects them; this power can then come to be seen as being divine when the indispensable connection has to be admitted that exists between the sign and the word Jesus preaches. In this sense, as the Lord himself suggests, they are occasions of faith even when taken for themselves. However, because they must be seen together with the word if one is to understand what it is their witness points to, miraculous signs constitute, together with the word, that unified form, which receives its life from within and which is visible to the humble spirit which has made itself ready for faith—a form which is more than a merely external composite of different marks and signals. The testimony of the miraculous exists as it is integrated within the sacramental form of the God-Man, who ‘interprets’ and represents God to us through the visibleness of his being and his actions as man. And this does not occur in the manner of a mythical, ahistorical theophany, but precisely as the event of divine history with man whereby a ‘new creation’ (2 Cor 5.17) breaks through the old creation, which had been subject to the powers.⁸⁸

b. The Form of Glory and the Angels

The flesh (which is to say the human form: μορφή) that the Son of God assumed (λάβών, Phil 2.7) is wholly the instrument of God’s saving deed for the world; starting from this relationship a functional Christology can be constructed (Karl Barth, Cullmann). This *morphē* of Christ is the instrument through which God wills to glorify himself in the world. But such glorification occurs precisely through God’s humbling himself to become man. Therefore, Christ’s *morphē* exists within a tension unique to it which is intelligible only in a christological sense: it is an emptying out (κένωσις) of the form proper to God (μορφή Θεοῦ), and hence presents itself primarily as its opposite and as the uttermost concealment of this divine form; but it is equally the bringing near and making visible of the divine form, since the

humiliation (ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτόν) and the submission even to the Cross (ὕπηκοος μέχρι θανάτου . . . σταυροῦ) are precisely the human realisation of the divine disposition of Jesus Christ. We ought not here, moreover, to speak of an opaque christological dialect that destroys all form; rather, its structure is truly visible to faith, so overpowering is it for man's spirit and sentiment to realise that the most glorious aspect of God's glory is precisely this divine disposition that becomes manifest in Christ's condescension.

Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain which tradition has probably erroneously identified with Tabor shows clearly the structure involved here: it shows that the Son of Man's form in his humiliation is a function of his glorified form. It is this that the transfiguration makes visible, and not primarily an anticipation of the eschatological manner of existence after the Resurrection. The risen Christ is the man who was raised to God's right hand after having suffered. But the transfigured Christ is the God who reveals himself by condescending to become man. It is to this that the traditional elements of the event of transfiguration point: the high mountain common to theophanies (such as Moses and Elijah had seen on Sinai and on Horeb: this is why they appear here together with Christ); the dazzling white garments usually worn by heavenly apparitions (such as the angels of the Resurrection); the face like the sun, an attribute of the divinity (Ps 84. 12) and of the glorified Lord (Rev 1.16); the bright overshadowing cloud, a traditional image of the divine glory: God himself is known to appear in the cloud and as cloud (Ex 16.10; 24.18); then there is the voice which speaks from the cloud (Deut 5.19), and the three 'booths' that Peter wants to erect and which recall the Feast of Tabernacles, which itself reminds us of the fact that God's glory has pitched its tent among men. But the theophany does not rest in itself. The voice addresses the disciples: 'Listen to him!' In this way the 'beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased' is expressly identified by the voice as the servant of God in Isaiah, who enters into his vicarious suffering (Is 42.1): this quotation constitutes a *leitmotiv* which accompanies Jesus' whole life (Mt 3.17; quoted in whole by Mt 12.18-21 par.). Correspondingly, the dialogue between the transfigured Old and New Testaments revolves around the imminent suffering (Lk 9.31), and in Matthew the whole theophany is framed by two prophecies of Christ's suffering. What we have before us is the very glory of God on its way to the Passion.

For the disciples the transfiguration is a 'metamorphosis' (the word which is used in Mk 9.3) from the servant-form that is seen into the form of God

which ordinarily goes unseen. But what at a deeper level is made visible is the reverse metamorphosis which lies at the foundation of the other: that of the divine form into the form of servant. It will teach the disciples to read and understand the servant-form as the very form of God. Everything about Jesus which appears to be his 'nature' must now be interpreted by the disciples' faith as the action and love *of God*. This 'art of faith' reaches perfection in John's Gospel, which does not report the Transfiguration as a separate event, and John is fully aware of the hermeneutic in which he is here engaging. For him Jesus' whole life and death are one 'transfiguration', that is, the love of God glorifying itself.⁸⁹ To the eyes of John's faith and love it is precisely God's humiliation which appears as his exaltation: in the erection of the Cross he sees the implanting of God's sign of victory over the world. Even the Pauline opposition between *kenosis* and exaltation because of the obedience on the Cross is surpassed in John by an indissoluble unity: John's 'going up' is but the rendering visible of a dimension of the event which had been present all along: see Jn 1.51; 3.13; 6.62; 20.17 (here note the present tense of ἀναβαίνω; the verses that follow—20.19f.—presuppose as present not only the Ascension, but even Pentecost). Indeed, we can say that, with the Passion and the Resurrection, Jesus' divine form comes wholly to permeate the human form and to make it transparent in its functionality as love. The Gnostics sensed something of this mystery but, while coming very close to the truth, they disfigured the mystery and reversed its sense: this because they did not take the expressive form—the suffering flesh—seriously and, thus, were totally blind not only to the man Jesus but to the love of God in all the depth of its reality. It was precisely John who had to struggle against this fundamental mistake. In this, Johannine symbolism has a genuinely Biblical and not a mythical, Hellenistic basis: the creaturely form (to its utmost hiddenness under the form of contradiction) is, by virtue of its being affected by God, transparent to the love of God himself. To the gaze of answering love, the concealment is already the unveiling.⁹⁰

This is why through the mysteries of humiliation and servitude, and even of the Cross, we catch a glimpse of the mysteries of Solomon's bridal Song, through the mysteries of the divine *agape* a glimpse of the mysteries of the divine *eros*. Jesus' metamorphosis before his disciples on the mountain is the revelation of the Bridegroom just as he is before the eyes of the Church. The splendour of the garments is discussed to avoid all possibility of error, something that Origen interprets as the concealing letter becoming

transparent to reveal the unveiled Spirit who is Logos. And yet, the Bridegroom shows himself physically naked before the world only as the man of sorrows on the Cross, and the sinner must endure this nakedness resulting from the tearing off of his garments. What the sinner encounters here, along with the sight of the divine love, is the sight of his own shame. And only a gaze such as that of the virginal John could here contemplate the two unveilings as one: the unveiling of the Song of Songs, whereby he shows himself bodily in the ardour of *eros*, and the unveiling of the love of the triune God, who suffers in just as bodily a manner. Unheard-of balancing of corporeal love: in the face of the Cross, love is sobered to its very marrow before God's *agape*, which clothes itself in the language of the body; and, in the face of this intoxicating language of flesh and blood that gives itself by being poured out, love is lifted above itself and elevated into the eternal, in order there, as creaturely *eros*, to be the tent and dwelling-place of the divine love! Love is dispossessed in order to become the expression of something higher. What is involved is a double, reciprocal dispossession: of God into the human form and of man into the divine form, and this double dispossession contains the most concrete possible life: the life of man, which attains its form by letting itself be shattered to become the form of God; the life of God, that gains man for itself by renouncing its own form and, obedient unto death, pouring itself into the form of existence unto death. As the point of intersection of these two self-surrendering lives, Christ on the Cross and in glory is the ultimate form in which God and the world meet.

This had to be said if the testimony of the cosmos is to be understood aright. The world has to surrender its most sublime fruit in sacrifice so that God may at the same time consume and fulfil it. The world must be ordered concentrically around the new centre inserted into it from above. This is a submission which lies in the world's essence as creature, but which is actually an overtaxing of its being (in a *potentia oboedientialis* that it has, not in itself, but in God): as a result, the world can come to contain and express things which are quite simply beyond it. Signs of such an overtaxing of the world's native abilities are its mourning and convulsion at the death of Jesus: this presence at the death of the Lord of the universe cannot be borne by the world of itself, but only at the service of the eschatological prophecies. What the world 'darkly feels' is negligible compared to its ability to surrender itself to become an expressive body for its Creator. And if the world wholly belongs to the Incarnation, then it must wholly die with the Son of God in the

night of God-forsakenness in order to rise with him wholly in the definitive form which God confers on it. Already on Golgotha the world conforms to the apocalyptic laws; at the resurrection of the flesh it will have (and will be able) to conform to those of the Kingdom of God. The same royal power, the same divine *kâbôd*, is expressed in the dominion over creation as over the cosmic ‘powers’, and at the Resurrection what takes place is a simultaneous victory over both: the resurrected body is nowhere conceived in terms of a merely gnostic *restitutio in integrum* of creation’s slavery to the ‘powers’. Until far into the day of Easter (especially in Mark) we witness both in creation and in the ‘powers’ the same ‘horrified’ astonishment, the same anguished paralysis before the inconceivable event that has rocked the foundations of creation.

At this point we must speak of the angels. In the Old Testament the angels, as mediating beings, played a role that constantly grew in a gnoseological direction: to the mind of late Judaism and of Paul it was they that mediated the covenant on Sinai. In the New Testament, however, the angels can only recede to become the accompanying servants of the Son of Man on earth. In a fundamental sense, mediation is no longer necessary when the Son has the Father with him (Jn 8.16; 16.32), when he himself dwells in the bosom of the Father (Jn 1.18), and when he acts in accordance with his own seeing, hearing, and touching of the Father (Jn 3.II; 8.26, 38) and by virtue of his own fulness of power, which he has received directly from the Father (Jn 5.22). Nevertheless, the angels are indispensable because, in the first place, they belong to the heavenly glory of the Son of Man and, secondly and above all, because they make visible the social character of the Kingdom of Heaven, into which the cosmos is to be transformed. It is simply erroneous—and this impression should on no account arise—to conceive of the Kingdom that the Son comes to found and which he surely embodies in its totality (as *autobasileia*) as a solitary place within the Absolute, a place which is empty until populated by those who follow the Son and rise with him and then come to build a community in God. This place in God, rather, to which are brought those who have been redeemed on earth, is from its very inception ‘the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem’ with its ‘countless hosts of angels, the festal gathering of the first-born’ (Heb 12.22f.). Unlike the ‘powers’ on the earth and in the cosmic heaven (Col 1.20), these angels do not need to be overcome and subjected in the battle of suffering; but, by completing his work of redemption, the Son, who stands over them as God, is also raised

above them all as the 'one who ascends' (Heb 1.4-14), and by the same token they are engaged in his retinue: 'Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?' (Heb 1.14).

This is a testimony of the living Kingdom of Heaven that belongs to the form of glory of the Son of Man: 'You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man' (Jn 1.51). But this statement, that doubtless connects with Jacob's vision (in which the ascending is also named before the descending), is nowhere fulfilled in John; thus, we will have to suppose that he himself took the received image (which may have reached him from a context of eschatological images) as the theophany of God himself, as the *doxa* of the Father in the Son. In the Synoptics, too, the angels are always absent whenever Jesus speaks and acts in the fulness of his own power. Jesus never looks to angels for guidance, not even in his servant-form. He could have asked the Father to send them when he was taken prisoner, but he does not do it (Mt 26.53). Nor does he ever appear in the company of angels, as if they completed his heavenly form (in the way that the two thieves complete his crucified form); what the angels do is accompany his course as the living splendour that witnesses to it. In Luke they appear over the crib as the splendour of the descent, and after the Ascension has taken place as the splendour of the ascent. At the empty tomb they are the splendour of the Resurrection, which radiates back into the Old Age from the empty grave. After his temptation and victory over the demonic powers, the angels approach Jesus as his servants (Mt 4.11), in order to witness to his triumph. Only in Luke, once again, does a comforting angel appear on the Mount of Olives: here, as his hold loosens on his experienced connection with the Father, as the suffering servant wholly descends into the depths of human weakness, the almost Old Testament service of mediation as man enters into the heart of suffering becomes plausible. The vision promised in John is directly fulfilled only in the eschatological image of the Son of Man returning from heaven 'with his angels' (Mt 25.31); it is eschatological because at the same time it is apocalyptic: John's Revelation finally permits us a glance into the community of angels and men that constitutes the Jerusalem on high.

The genuflection of the cosmos before the *Kyrios* holds also for the angels: for the mysteries of God's descent into the flesh and Cross wholly transcend them. It is in their contemplation of these mysteries that the angels learn the full extent of the depths of God (Eph 3.10), as Gregory of Nyssa portrays it:

It is truly through the Church that the powers in the heavenly places come to know the many-coloured wisdom of God, that wisdom which effects its great wonders through what is its opposite. . . . Previously they had known a simple and uniform divine wisdom. . . . In its might, the divine nature had produced the whole of creation; it had made everything that is beautiful, jetting up from the wellspring of all beauty. But it is through the Church that the heavenly powers will now be instructed concerning the variegated aspect of wisdom, which consists in the unification of contraries: they now see how the Word becomes Flesh, how Life becomes commingled with Death, how our wounds are healed by his ulcers, how the force of the Enemy is vanquished by the weakness of the Cross, how the Invisible becomes manifest in the Flesh. . . . Through the Church, the friends of the Bridegroom have learned all of these many-hued and not simple things. Their heart has been touched by them, since it came to recognise in mystery the new tell-tale of the wisdom of God. Dare I say it? Perhaps the angels, as they beheld in the Bride the beauty of the Bridegroom, have come to marvel at him who is invisible and incomprehensible to all. He, whom no one has seen or can see, has made the Church into his Body, has formed the Church into his image, so that, by turning to her, the friends of the Bridegroom have perhaps seen the Invisible more clearly in her.⁹¹

The bridal mystery of the ‘wondrous exchange of contraries’ which the angels contemplate has, in fact, made the angels the friends of the Bridegroom, thus making them participate in the mystery. Heaven is not what hovers untouched above the mysteries of the flesh: through the Incarnation of the Son heaven receives a share in that covenant between Agape and Eros which, even though it is the centre of all, nevertheless ought not to be equated with the erotic myth of the *ἱερὸς γάμος*. Myth has no vision for the sin of the world and for the humiliation of divine love even unto death. But this self-surrendering love of God is precisely the mystery ‘into which the angels long to look’ (1 Pet 1.12). And so, in the end, what is involved is a reciprocal vicarious vision: just as the angels of the little ones on earth always behold the face of the Father for them in heaven (Mt 18.10), so, too, men on earth behold for the angels the beauty of the God who has concealed himself in flesh.

F. ESCHATOLOGICAL REDUCTION

The mythical understanding of the world sees the whole world as a sacred theophany. In an eschatological sense, this is also what the world is for Christian faith. If the cosmos as a whole has been created in the image of God that appears—in the First-Born of creation, through him and for him—and if this First-Born indwells the world as its Head through the Church, then in the last analysis the world is a ‘body’ of God, who represents and expresses himself in this body, on the basis of the principle not of pantheistic but of hypostatic union. If the first Adam is lord of the world only as simultaneously being its fruit, then in the second Adam this genuine quality of being fruit and originating from within is surpassed by the free act of his Incarnation. While the first Adam remains open and accessible to the forces of the formless chaos by reason of his being the fruit of the world, the second Adam has from the outset vanquished these forces of chaos through the freedom of his love. That which is itself formless must submit to his shaping power, and rebellion itself must bend the knee with the rest of the cosmos. But in his definitive form he takes up into himself all the forms of creation. The form which he stamps upon the world is not tyrannical; it bestows completeness and perfection beyond anything imaginable. This holds for the forms of nature, concerning which we cannot say (as in medieval eschatology) that they will at some time simply disappear, leaving a vacuum between pure matter and man, who is a microcosmic fruit of nature. To be sure, it is only in man that nature raises its countenance into the region of eternity; and yet, the same *natura naturans* that in the end gives rise to man is also the *natura naturata*, and the whole plenitude of forms that the imagination of the divine nature has brought forth belongs analytically to the nature of man. The same holds in greater measure for the creations of man in his cultural development: they too—they especially!—belong to him as the images which he has produced out of himself then to impress them upon the world and which have a continued existence in man by reason of their birth even when they have perished in time. The same, finally, holds to a supreme degree for the creations in the realm of grace: these are shapings of sanctity

from the human material of faith and obedience, vessels of the divine Potter for both glory and shame, for wrath and for mercy (Jer 18.6; Rom 9.21), vessels which, within the scope of mercy, can collaborate in their own formation to become a 'vessel useful to the Master' (2 Tim 2.21) by accepting on the potter's wheel the shaping pressure of his thumb; these are shapings of the charisms and offices in the Church, of the whole temporal economy of the Kingdom of God in pilgrimage, none of which, in so far as they stand under the shaping power of the God-Man, will have been in vain. Some of these are more subject than others to the law of transience. Some are offices which can exist only within temporality, but their innermost shaping principle, being a mission of Christ, already derives from eternity. Other offices and functions grow, at their summit, into what is invisible for the time being, and the contours of this invisible reality are anticipated by them in faith. Formless and senseless in the eyes of the world, these latter charisms and offices are wholly oriented to a form in eternity, and they develop links and organs that they are already beginning to move and activate within the sphere of the invisible. Thus, the total form of the world stands in a transition whose process cannot be followed starting from time, for the temporal 'form of this world is passing away' (1 Cor 7.31), 'heaven and earth pass away' (Mt 24.35); they are 'stored up for fire' and will 'pass away with hissing haste, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up' (2 Pet 3.7, 10). This is a destroying fire for everything which is purely temporal, but a fire which tests, purifies, and preserves everything which is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3.12-15). What is saved is man, 'but as through fire'—man either with or without what he has created, depending on whether it was built on rock or on sand (Mt 7.24-27). Structures as such—as 'objective spirit'—have no claim on entry to the Kingdom of Heaven. This holds for all structures, including even the very sanctuary of the Church and the hierarchy established by Christ himself.

The Middle Ages carved the disintegration of temporal forms as the central image over the doors of its churches. In the face of Christ's unique form, the icon of the Last Judgment levels all earthly forms: not only the worldly crowns but also the mitres and tiaras roll in the dust. The gesture of division which the Judge of the World makes pierces 'to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow' (Heb 4.12). From a mankind that has been levelled without exceptions only the intercessors are marked out, kneeling

near the throne, embodying the *doxa* of the love of the crucified Judge: Mary for the New, the Baptist for the Old Testament. It is by passing under this image that the Christian people enter and leave the cathedral: it is a wonderful symbolic picture of the eschatological form of the world that is aware of its own transitoriness.

The Judgment is the affair of the Son of Man alone (Mt 25.31f.), and it can take place only in the face-to-face confrontation of man with the crucified Lord: 'Every eye will (have to) see him, everyone who pierced him' (Rev 1.7; cf. Zech 12.10; Jn 19.37). This is a confrontation in which the tough husk of a sinful life will dissolve, while man realises, in an inescapable and inexorable vision, what he has done to Christ, what should have been (and was not) the form of his Christian life, where it is that now, no longer through meritorious but through imposed repentance, he will be melted down and be made pliable for the only form in which he can enter the Kingdom of the Father; this is the 'form of Christ' (Gal 4.19), since from now on Jesus Christ will be 'publicly portrayed as crucified before [everyone's] eyes' (Gal 3.1). This is that dimension of judgment which is called 'the purifying fire': the existential event whereby definitive form is given, which should never be forgotten as accompanying the Judge's act of sentencing. It is an essentially solitary process in which the creature is alone with the God who became man for her, and every contention between man and man—all questions of reciprocal rights or violation of rights, everything we still owe one another, everything that has made us guilty in our relations with one another, all reproaches, all claims, all expectations of redress which we continue to harbour: all of this is thrown back onto the one-to-one relationship between Christ and myself. He is the universal neighbour with whom I must fight out every dispute: Christ, my crucified Neighbour. And until I have paid the last penny of my own pretended justice (Mt 18.30, 34) I shall not be released from this 're-training programme'.

Of course, whatever in the Church has already on earth withstood this judgment on justice in the name of love, whatever has attained to the love of Christ, will not come into judgment since it already stands on the side of the love that judges: 'Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?' (1 Cor 6.2). But in this judgment the saints constitute no tribunal of their own; they are but the glory of Christ, who 'will come together with all his saints' (Zech 14.5), the 'epiphany of his *parousia*' (2 Thess 2.8). They are that part of his Bride, the Church, that is filled with nothing but Christ's fulness, that

part which cannot utter an opinion of its own, one that would be contrary to his opinion as Judge. Some part of the judged man who has known God will always stand on the side of the Judge and will judge the sinner along with him. The sinner, thus divided to the division of joints and marrow, will fall apart into a right and a left side. Something in himself will accuse that part of him that has not loved God, and that ‘something’ will find refuge in the Judge, so that, with himself as accuser, he stands alone and has no recourse but to flee to his Judge (Augustine). Something in him has already been claimed for itself by the Church’s consciousness; this more-than-individual element in him belongs to the Church and has from the outset forced his narrow self open that it may participate in the consciousness of Christ’s Bride.⁹² But this supra-personal element of belonging to the Church is of no consolation to him now in the event of judgment; rather, it makes his solitude the more keen. And the self which did not want to transcend itself and pass over into the love of the Church must now join the judge in condemning itself—must now tear itself to pieces and be thrown into the fire.

The Bride of the Lamb does not go up from earth to heaven; together with Christ she comes ‘down from heaven from God’ (Rev 21.10). The wonderful geometry of her beauty is properly to be called ‘uranometry’: the measure, form, and splendour of heaven. And surely it is ‘granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen signifies the righteous deeds of the saints’ (Rev 19.8), and these deeds derive from the ‘camp of the saints’ and the ‘beloved City, surrounded’ during the extreme distress (Rev 20.9). The gates of the City bear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel and the foundation-stones of its walls the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb (Rev 21.13f.), and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it (Rev 21.24). But all of this is but the adornment of her whom the ‘Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world’ (Rev 13.8), has by his death formed into his Bride. A new heaven and a new earth come to be, but only because ‘I make all things new’ (Is 43. 19) and because the old things have really ‘passed away’ (2 Cor 5.17).

ΧΑΙΡΕ ΜΑΡΙΑ Η ΜΗΤΗΡ ΤΟΥ ΦΩΤΟΣ

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End Notes

Foreword

¹ *Wahr-nehmen* is deliberately separated by von Balthasar into the two words constituting the compound *wahrnehmen* in order to indicate the etymological meaning of the word: 'to take to be true'. (Tr.) [Back to text.](#)

I. Introduction

¹ With the pretence of 'wanting to get behind it' genetically. [Back to text.](#)

² E.g. Ronald Knox's *Enthusiasm*. [Back to text.](#)

³ See F. X. Funk, 'Ein angebliches Wort Basilius des Grossen über die Bildverehrung.' *TQ* 70 (1888), p. 297f. [Back to text.](#)

⁴ F. Medicus, *Grundfragen der Ästhetik* (Jena, 1907), p. 14. [Back to text.](#)

⁵ See the study of Hamann in vol. 2.2, and also my article 'Hamanns theologische Ästhetik,' in the *Festschrift für Alois Dempf*. [Back to text.](#)

⁶ The two words attempt to translate the double meaning of the single German word *liebenswürdig*. (Tr.) [Back to text.](#)

⁷ *Das Ereignis des Schönen* (Klett, 1953). Nebels attempt is not isolated. We must consider him in connection with Walter Otto's great achievements. Without falling into Hegelian syntheses, Otto's mature skill in interpreting Greek antiquity and mythology in general has overcome the polemical situation (i.e. Greece versus Christ) created by Heyse, Schiller, Goethe, the middle Hölderlin, Nietzsche, F. G. Jünger, and others. There are again important similarities to Schelling in his last period. [Back to text.](#)

⁸ Let us note that, in his last works, Gustav Siewerth wholly complies with this proviso. The same is true of Ferdinand Ulrich. [Back to text.](#)

⁹ The aesthetic myth of Christianity in the early Middle Ages becomes the exclusive measure of Biblical revelation in Wolfram von den Steinens *Welt des Mittelalters*. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁰ *De rerum originatione radicali*, 1697 (ed. Erdmann, 1840, pp. 147-148). [Back to text.](#)

¹¹ *Monadologie*, 87 (*ibid.*, p. 712). [Back to text.](#)

¹² See M.-D. Chenu's *La théologie comme science au XIII^e siècle* (1943¹), and his *Introduction à l'étude de S. Thomas d'Aquin* (1950). [Back to text.](#)

¹³ See, for instance, J. Schildenbergers *Vom Geheimnis des Gotteswortes* (1950), and above all the works of Henri de Lubac on the fourfold meaning of Scripture, most importantly his *Histoire et Esprit* (1950) and his volumes on the history of exegesis, *Exégèse médiévale* (beginning in 1959), with abundant bibliographies. See also E. Przywara's *Alter und Neuer Bund* (1956). [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴ *Aesthetica*, ed. Nadler, 2, p. 204. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵ *Biblische Betrachtungen*, Nadler, 1, p. 5. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1, p. 97. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷ *Kleeblatt hellenistischer Briefe*, 2; Nadler, 2, p. 171. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸ *Zwey Scherflein*, 1; Nadler, 3, p. 234. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹ *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten*, Nadler, 2, pp. 70-71. [Back to text.](#)

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74. [Back to text.](#)

²¹ *Fünf Hirtenbriefe*, 5; Nadler, 2, p. 367. [Back to text.](#)

²² *Zweifel und Einfälle*, Nadler, 3, pp. 191-192; *Konxompax*, Nadler, 3, p. 217f. [Back to text.](#)

²³ *Konxompax*, Nadler, 3, p. 226. [Back to text.](#)

²⁴ *Philologische Einfälle und Zweifel*, Nadler, 3, pp. 35-53. [Back to text.](#)

²⁵ *Älteste Urkunde I*, 6; *Hieroglyphe* (ed. Cotta, 3, p. 271). [Back to text.](#)

²⁶ *Maran Atha*, Vorrede (Cotta, 8, pp. 5-6). [Back to text.](#)

²⁷ *Ibid.* 1. pp. 8-9. [Back to text.](#)

²⁸ *Älteste Urkunde*, I, 3 (Cotta, 3, p. 228f). [Back to text.](#)

²⁹ *Ibid.* I, 4 (Cotta, 3, p. 239f). [Back to text.](#)

³⁰ *Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, I, 1 (Cotta, 1, p. 19). [Back to text.](#)

³¹ Cf. the derivation of myth in the fragment 'Von Entstehung und Fortpflanzung der ersten Religionsbegriffe' (Cotta, 5, pp. 76-82; cf. pp. 86-88). On the opposition between mythical *gnosis* and Judaism, see *Älteste Urkunde*, II, 4 (*Morgenländische Philosophie*, Cotta, 4, pp. 156f). [Back to text.](#)

³² *Von Religion, Lehrmeinungen und Gebräuchen*, VI, 9 (Cotta, II, p. 238). [Back to text.](#)

³³ *Ibid.*, V (Cotta, II, p. 259). [Back to text.](#)

³⁴ *Erläuterungen zum Neuen Testament aus einer neu eröffneten morgenländischen Quelle*, I, 1 (Cotta 7, pp. 19-20). [Back to text.](#)

³⁵ See the essay 'Plastik' (Cotta, 25, pp. 21-109). [Back to text.](#)

³⁶ *Von der Auferstehung als Glauben, Geschichte und Lehre* (Cotta, 9, p. 325f, esp. p. 371). [Back to text.](#)

³⁷ *Vom Geist des Christentums*, VI: 'Entgeistung', 1 (Cotta, II, p. 47). [Back to text.](#)

³⁸ *Ibid.* (Cotta II, p. 43 and pp. 58-59). [Back to text.](#)

³⁹ *Vom ersten Augurium des Christentums* (Cotta, 11, p. 103f). [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁰ H. Fromm, *Bibliographic deutscher Übersetzungen aus dem Französischen* (1950), II, pp. 62-66. [Back to text.](#)

⁴¹ *Défense du Génie du Christianisme*. Similar comments in the *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* (crit. ed. by Maurice Levaillant, II, p. 39f). [Back to text.](#)

⁴² 'To deliver a great blow to the heart, to strike the imagination vividly.' (Tr.) [Back to text.](#)

⁴³ The work remained unfinished. What had already been written was edited and published posthumously by Gugler's friend Widmer, who was also the editor of Sailer's complete works. Our quotations bear the following symbols: I = *Die heilige Kunst*, Landshut, 1814; II = *Die heilige Kunst: Darstellung der Bücher des Alten Testaments*, 1. Hälfte, Lucerne (place of publication likewise for all the following), 1817; III = 2. Hälfte, 1818. IV = *Fortsetzung der heiligen Kunst: Darstellung der Bücher des Neuen Testaments*, 1. Hälfte (*Nachgelassene Schriften*, 3), 1828; V = 2. Hälfte in 2 Abteilungen (*Nachgelassene Schriften*, 4), 1836. With regard to its contents and the literary influences which affected it, the work still remains wholly unresearched. Of great biographical and documentary interest, but theologically wholly unsatisfactory, is J. L. Schiffmann's *Lebensgeschichte Alois Guglers* (Augsburg, 1833). See also K. Werner, *Geschichte der (deutschen) katholischen Theologie seit dem trienter Konzil* (Cotta, 1866), pp. 362-370. Guglers influence on Möhler is unmistakable. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁴ I, pp. 335ff (as general category of mankind); V, pp. 8, 183f, 213-246; also his whole interpretation of prophecy in III, pp. 295-518. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁵ See, for instance, II, pp. 88, 131: 'If we examine our knowledge more closely, we will see that it leads us back to faith.' [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁶ Our quotations use the following symbols: N = *Natur und Gnade* and H

= *Herrlichkeiten*, both of these quoted from the new editions of Grabmann and Grosche (1941). M = *Mysterien* and D = *Dogmatik*, both quoted from the original editions. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁷ ‘O, what awe and respect do we Christians not owe our soul! With what care must we not protect this pure mirror of divinity, so that not even the tiniest speck of dust should spot it, to say nothing of the dirty filth of carnal lust. . . .’ (H, III, § 9, p. 267). [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁸ D, II, § 151, esp. n. 481-482. Cf. in this connection the meaning attributed to Mary’s marriage in D, III, § 275, n. 1575f. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁹ *Wahrheit*, vol. 1 (Benziger, 1947), ch. 3. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁰ ‘Because through the mystery of the incarnate Word the new light of your brightness has shone onto the eyes of our mind; that knowing God visibly, we might be snatched up by this into the love of invisible things.’ (Tr.) [Back to text.](#)

⁵¹ ‘Perception’, from *per* = ‘thoroughly’ and *capere* = ‘seize, take’, German *nehmen* (Tr.) [Back to text.](#)

⁵² *The Divine Names*, IV, 13. Trans. by C.E. Rolt (London: SPCK, 1940), pp. 105-106. Translation slightly altered. (Tr.) [Back to text.](#)

II. The Subjective Evidence

¹ TDNT, art. ποτεύω. [Back to text.](#)

² J. Botterweck, *Gott erkennen* (Bonn, 1951), p. 73. [Back to text.](#)

³ *Ibid.* p. 81. [Back to text.](#)

⁴ For this whole issue in Paul, see Dupont, *Gnosis* (1949) and J. Mouroux, ‘Remarques sur la foi dans S. Paul’, *Rev. Apolog.* LXV (1937), pp. 129f. and 281f. [Back to text.](#)

⁵ Huby, ‘La connaissance de foi dans S. Jean’, *RSR* (1931), XXI, pp. 385-421. [Back to text.](#)

⁶ *La Spiritualite du Nouveau Testament et des Peres* (1960), pp. 262-314. [Back to text.](#)

⁷ This is why, even with vision, faith does not pass away: “Ὅταν ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλειον τῆς πίστεως τὸ ἐκ μέρους καταργηθήσεται τῆς διὰ εἶδους πίστεως πολλῶ διαφερούσης. . . .” (*Commentary on John X.* 43; Preuschen, p. 222). [Back to text.](#)

⁸ Völker rejected this misunderstanding with both energy and success in:

Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes (1931), pp. 81-85, and *Der wahre Gnostiker nach Clemens Alexandrinus* (1952), pp. 375f. [Back to text.](#)

⁹ But two things must be considered. The philosophic faith intended here has nothing to do with the *fides naturalis* of more recent fundamental theologians, who by this term designate the natural and purely rational faith which (possibly) is produced by the historical signs of Christian revelation. Furthermore, the ‘philosophic faith’ of both late antiquity and of the modern period indirectly stands in the light of the Biblical revelation which has already taken place; in part, such ‘faith’ may be seen as a warding off or secularization of revelation. But it is possible that, precisely in the light of Christian revelation, the light of Being can itself shine much brighter and deeper, and that what we can call God’s revelation, his grace and his favour, can enter the philosophers’ consciousness in a wholly different and new manner, so that here philosophy—consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, objectively or subjectively—is flooded by the light of Christ and becomes ‘Christian philosophy’. This then gives support to Guardini’s view that, besides pure philosophy (reason alone reflecting only on the truths of reason) and pure theology (Christian faith reflecting on the truths of revelation), a third discipline is possible in which truths of reason, illumined by the light of revelation, are contemplated by a reason that thinks in the light of faith. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁰ M.D. Chenu, *La theologie comme science au XIII^e siècle* (1943²). [Back to text.](#)

¹¹ 3 d 23 a 17 sol (quoted from: Anselm Stolz, ‘Glaubensgnade und Glaubenslicht nach Thomas von Aquin’, *Stud. Anselm.*, 1 [1933], pp. 82-83). [Back to text.](#)

¹² R. Aubert, *Le problème de l’acte de foi*, 2nd ed. (1950), p. 705. [Back to text.](#)

¹³ See my commentary on the charisms in Thomas Aquinas, in the German-Latin edition of his works, vol. 23 (1954), pp. 254-464. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴ ‘Les yeux de la foi’, in: *Rech. Sc. Rel.* 1 (1910), pp. 241-259, 444-475; further articles in the same periodical in 1913 and 1914. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵ Cf. his important work *L’intellectualisme de S. Thomas* (3rd ed., Paris, Beauchesne, 1936), intro. by Léonce de Grandmaison. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶ Cf. Aubert’s historical survey, *op. cit.*, pp. 451f., 587f., 689f. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷ Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Poems and Verse Plays*, ed. Michael Hamburger (New York, Pantheon Books, 1961), p. 39. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸ See 'Fides Christi', in: *Sponsa Verbi: Theologische Skizzen*, Vol. 2 (1961), pp. 45-79. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹ For the personal aspects of faith, see M. Scheler (*Das Ewige im Menschen*, 1954⁴) and especially Jean Mouroux (*Je crois en toi*, 1949). [Back to text.](#)

²⁰ *Das Ewige im Menschen* (1954⁴), p. 138. [Back to text.](#)

²¹ This is a Brahmanic formula which means 'This art thou.' It refers to the unity achieved between the Ego (*Atman*) and the One which underlies the world (*Brahman*). (Translator's note from the Italian edition.) [Back to text.](#)

²² *Serm.* 98, 3 (PL 38, 592). [Back to text.](#)

²³ 2 a 2ae q 5 a 2 ad 1 et ad 2. Other references in Aubert, p. 56, note 28. [Back to text.](#)

²⁴ *De Ver*, 149 ad 4. [Back to text.](#)

²⁵ 3d 23q 2a 2q ia 2 ad 3. [Back to text.](#)

²⁶ 1 *Sent.* prol. a 5; ia q ia 2 ad 2. [Back to text.](#)

²⁷ Art. 'Miracle' in: *Vocab. techn. et crit. de la phil.* I, p. 471. *L'Action* (1893); Paris, PUF, 1973: pp. 395f. [Back to text.](#)

²⁸ Van Hove, *La doctrine du miracle chez Saint Thomas* (Wetteren, 1927), pp. 132f. [Back to text.](#)

²⁹ S. Th. 3a q 43 a 1. [Back to text.](#)

³⁰ G. Söhngen, 'Wunderzeichen und Glaube', in: *Die Einheit der Theologie* (Munich, 1952), p. 283. [Back to text.](#)

³¹ H. Vignon, *De virtutibus infusis* (Rome, 1943), p. 163. [Back to text.](#)

³² See Joseph Coppens, *Les Harmonies des deux Testaments* (Tournai, 1949²), with bibliography. [Back to text.](#)

³³ Cf. 'Die Wurzel Jesse', in: *Sponsa Verbi* (Einsiedeln, 1961), p. 311. [Back to text.](#)

³⁴ J. Mouroux, *Je crois en toi* (1949), pp. 43f. [Back to text.](#)

³⁵ Garrigou-Lagrange, *De Revelatione*, I (Rome, 1931³), p. 512. [Back to text.](#)

³⁶ *Ipsa realitas christiana, Christus scil. et Ecclesia. . . , omnibus per seipsam directe praesentatur in sua specie sensibili . . . at prior haec propositio directa manet imperfecta et confusa. . . . Ideo mysterium*

christianum modo pleniori indirecte (seu mediate) . . . at perfecte proponitur per revelationem mediatam, i.e. Christo per Ecclesiam. Vignon, *op. cit.*, p. 156. [Back to text.](#)

³⁷ ‘Fides Christi’, in: *Sponsa Verbi* (1961), pp. 45-79. [Back to text.](#)

³⁸ Von Balthasar here refers to the form of the word *Erfahrung*, in which the prefix *er-* expresses the concept’s character as event. This does not apply wholly to the Latin *experientia*, whose etymology derives from the adjective *expers*, and hence from the elements *ex* and *pars*. (Tr.) [Back to text.](#)

³⁹ In connection with what follows, see especially Jean Mouroux’s penetrating work, *L’Expérience chrétienne: Introduction à une Théologie* (Aubier, 1952). [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁰ *Sic ipse (Christus) habitat in nobis perfidem informem, et hoc modo nihil prohibet nos cum certitudine scire quod Christus habitet in nobis* (on 2 Cor 13.5). Likewise Cajetan, who speaks of a *certe scire se habere fidem* and a *certitudo experimentalis* (De Gratia, IX, c. 12). [Back to text.](#)

⁴¹ This is a reference to the classical distinction in modern Protestant theology between *Historie*, a mere reconstruction of a past event, and *Geschichte*, an interpretation of history which involves the present and thus becomes contemporary. (Tr.) [Back to text.](#)

⁴² The original explicates the word *Erfahrung* (‘experience’) by reference to *fahren* (‘to travel’), which is its root. (Tr.) [Back to text.](#)

⁴³ More on this in the essay ‘Nachfolge und Amt’, in: *Sponsa Verbi* (1961), pp. 80-148. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁴ E. Boismard, ‘La Connaissance de Dieu dans l’Alliance Nouvelle d’après la 1^{re} Lettre de S. Jean’, in: *Rev. Bibl.* (1949), pp. 365f. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁵ *Die Johannesbriefe* (1953), p. 93. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁷ ‘To feel’ and ‘feeling’ translate *fühlen* and *Gefühl* quite precisely. However, to these von Balthasar here contrasts *spüren* and *Gespür*, which have no precise English equivalent. The words ‘to apprehend’ and ‘apprehension’ will have to do. Even though these words are active concepts, of course, according to their etymology, nevertheless their semantic meaning is generally that of a passive receptivity, which is the nuance the author intends. (Tr.) [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁸ For more exact analyses we again refer the reader to Jean Mouroux, *Expérience chrétienne* (1952), in which, in addition to philosophy and

theology, he also gives due attention to tradition. [Back to text.](#)

⁴⁹ *Enarratio in Psalmos*, 74, n. 1 (PL 36. 946). [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁰ Cyprian, *Ep.* 63, n. 11 (Hartel, pp. 701f). H. Lewy, *Sobria Ebrietas*, 1929. [Back to text.](#)

⁵¹ '[The pilgrim] soon began to sense a noticeable change in his soul. . . . He began to observe with amazement this change [of dispositions] which he had never before noticed, and he thought to himself: What sort of new life will this be which we are now undertaking?' (Ignatius of Loyola, *Autobiography*, ed. B. Schneider, 1955, p. 57). [Back to text.](#)

⁵² On the personality of the Church, see 'Wer ist die Kirche?' in: *Sponsa Verbi* (1961), pp. 148-202. [Back to text.](#)

⁵³ Jean Coste, 'Notion grecque et notion biblique de la "Souffrance éducatrice" à propos d'Hébreux V, 8'; in: *RSR* 43 (1955), pp. 481-523. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁴ A fragment quoted in the *Dion of Synesius of Cyrene* (ed. Terzaghi, 1944), p. 254. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁵ *Div. Nom.* 2, 9; PG 3. 648B. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁶ *De fuga*, 138. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁷ PG 79. 1165f. See the new translation with commentary by Irenaeus Hausherr in: *RAM* 35/36 (1959-60). [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁸ M. Frankenberg, ed., *Evagrius Ponticus* (Abh. Kon. Ges. d. Wis., N.F. XIII, 2), Berlin, 1912. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁹ Gressmann, ed., *Texte und Untersuchungen* 39. 4 (1913), p. 151. Further texts in Hausherr's commentary on the *De Oratione*, c. 28. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁰ PG 40. 1271-1276. [Back to text.](#)

⁶¹ Hermann Dörries, *Symeon von Mesopotamien; Die Überlieferung der messalianischen 'Makarios'-Schriften. Texte und Untersuchungen* 55. 1 (1941). In what follows this source is referred to as D, while the 50 Homilies (PG 34. 449-821) are referred to only by their number. [Back to text.](#)

⁶² *Gregorii Nysseni Op. asc.*, 1952. Likewise, *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature, Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius*, 1954. [Back to text.](#)

⁶³ References in my *Gnostische Centurien des Maximus Confessor*, 1941, pp. 33f.; 2nd ed. in *Kosmische Liturgie*, 1961. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁴ This expression occurs as frequently in Macarius as in Gregory of Nyssa. Dorries points to passages that betray an 'Alexandrian' Christology.

‘Ἐκ δύο φύσεων καὶ ὑποστάσεων ἓν εἶδος’ (D 166) could anticipate the μία φύσις: the emphasis here is not placed on the dogmatic aspect, but on the *eidos*, the form through whose humanity we experience the divine ‘without mediation’. In a very Origenistic mode Macarius says: ‘He did everything in order to represent himself to us as a likeness [of himself]’ (D 341). See the letter on the ability of the Logos to transform all things (D 225): in him the sons of the Spirit see the Godhead—Father, Son and Spirit—corporeally, but also the pure man—obedience, piety nature as it was originally: Christ is both God and man become visible. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁵ The αἴσθησις of the divine is, therefore, a recurrent theme. See Dorries, p. 433ff. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁶ Quoted from the critical edition of his works (ed. des Places, S.J., *Sources Chrétiennes*, 1955). [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁷ See the warning of Fr. Hausherr (‘Les grands courants de la spiritualité orientale’, *Or. Chr. Per.* I, 1935, p. 127, and *Or. Chr. Per.* V, 1939, p. 248) that the central concern of Messalianism must be formulated in this and no other way, because otherwise we would have to number among the Messalians authors who have nothing in common with them. On the other hand, Hausherr’s remark: ‘Applique a Diadoque, ce principe le sauve entièrement’, does not seem to me to be quite so obvious. The reserve shown by M. Rothenhausler with regard to this question (‘Die asketische Lehrschrift des Diadochus von Photike’, in: *Heilige Überlieferung*, 1938) appears justified. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁸ This is the subtitle of the only thorough monograph on Diadochus: Friedrich Dorr, *Diadochus von Photike und die Messalianer*, Freiburg im B., 1937. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁹ See *Visio* 14: God ‘limits himself even while remaining unlimited’: an ‘Origenistic’ formulation, but in the spirit of Chalcedon. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁰ Other passages are negligible because the word πρόσωπον, in the question directed at Macarius, derives from the circle of his listeners (685CD, 765D). [Back to text.](#)

⁷¹ Stiefenhofer, in: *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter*, Munich, 1913. [Back to text.](#)

⁷² Macarius and Diadochus should be considered only as examples of a complete theology of experience. We could also suggest various Egyptian documents that antedate Evagrius, for instance, the letters of Ammonas

(*Patrol. Orient.* 10 [Paris, 1915] and 11 [1916]) and the works of Pachomius (A. Boon, *Pachomiana lat.*, 1932; L. Th. Lefort, *Oeuvres de S. Pachôme*, 1956). [Back to text.](#)

⁷³ See my *Kosmische Liturgie* (Einsiedeln, 1961²), pp. 330-338, and the discussion of a similar text in Evagrius. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁴ Gregory Palamas, *Defense des saints Hesychastes*, trans. J. Meyendorff (Louvain, 1959), II. 1. 29, pp. 280f. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁵ I owe many references to texts on *experientia* to an unpublished work of Dom Miquel, O.S.B. (Paris), and to the article 'Experience' by A. Léonard, O.P, in the *Dict. de Spir.* There is an abundant collection of texts in Karl Boeckl, *Die sieben Gaben des Heiligen Geistes in ihrer Bedeutung für die Mystik nach der Theologie des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts* (Freiburg im B., 1931) and in the pioneering works of Dom Lottin. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁶ *Loc. cit.* [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁷ On all of this, see the chapter on Augustine in the second volume of this work. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁸ *Augustin als Philosoph*, posthumous work. Fr. Klossowski has translated a chapter of it in: *Dieu Vivant* ii (1948), 'Les Sens spirituels chez Saint Augustin', pp. 83-105. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁹ Texts in F. Lieblang, *Grundfragen der mystischen Theologie nach Gregors des Grossen Moralia und Ezechielhomilien* (Freiburg im B., 1934). [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁰ *De Concord.* III (Schmitt 2, p. 277). [Back to text.](#)

⁸¹ *Ep. de incarn. Verbi*, 1 recens. (Schmitt 1, p. 284). [Back to text.](#)

⁸² Bernard, *Sermo de div.* 18. 1 (PL 183. 587). [Back to text.](#)

⁸³ E. Gilson, *La theologie mystique de S. Bernard* (Paris, 1947), pp. 35-38. [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁴ *In Cant. sermo* 85 (PL 183. 1194C), a number of similar refs. in *De diligendo Deo* (PL 182. 986-998). [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, *sermo* 1 (789C); 3. 1 (794); 22. 2 (878C). [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁶ *De Convers.* 25 (PL 182. 848B). [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁷ PL 180. 695-725. [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁸ See my *Presence et Pensee*, Paris, 1942. [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁹ *De natura corporis et animae*, 721B-722C. [Back to text.](#)

⁹⁰ *De natura et dignitate amoris*, 35-37, ed. Davy (1953), pp. 112-116. [Back to text.](#)

- ⁹¹ *Commentaire sur le Cantique*, ed. Davy (1958), n. 46. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁹² N. 45. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁹³ N. 103. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁹⁴ N. 127. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁹⁵ N. 83. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁹⁶ Abbot Absalom, *Sermo* 35 (PL 211. 205). [Back to text.](#)
- ⁹⁷ William of Auxerre, *Summa Aurea* (1500), f 181^{ra}. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁹⁸ *Scholastik* 20 (1949), pp. 39-58; *Dogmengeschichte der Frühscholastik*, I, 2 (Regensburg, 1953), pp. 57-74. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁹⁹ *Die Entwicklung der Gnadenlehre in der Hochscholastik mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Kard. Matteo d'Acquasparta* (Freib. th. Stud. 62, 1942). [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁰⁰ *De virtutibus*, c. 11 (*Opera*, Paris-Orleans, 1674), p. 143; given in this place as his earlier option. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁰¹ Ia IIae. 68. 1. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁰² Ia IIae. 68. 2. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁰³ 3 d 35 q 2 a 1 sol 1. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁰⁴ IIa IIae. 45. 2. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁰⁵ Id 15 q 4 a 1 sol, ad 1. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁰⁶ Id 14 q 2 a 2 sol, ad 2, ad 3. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁰⁷ I a 43. 5 ad 2. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁰⁸ IIa IIae. 97. 2 ad 2; see 1 a 1, 6 ad 3. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹⁰⁹ See above, pp. 160f. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹¹⁰ See the works of P. Rousselot, Gustav Siewerth and K. Rahner. [Back to text.](#)
- ¹¹¹ Blondel, *L'Action* (Paris, 1893; PUF 1973). Here, through the total human experience and through the discernment of spirits, the theological *a priori* and the *vérité expérimentale* of the rightness of faith are finally discovered (p. 452). In connection with this, see particularly: Yves de Moncheuil's introduction to his Blondel anthology (*Pages religieuses*, Paris, 1942); all Cardinal Newman's 'empirical' theology; Léonce de Grandmaison, *La religion personnelle* (Paris, 1930²); A. Lemonnyer, O.P, *Notre vie divine* (Paris, 1936); Karl Adam, *Glaube und Glaubenswissenschaft* (Rottenburg, 1920; enlarged in 1923). [Back to text.](#)
- ¹¹² Des Places' translation ('passions') misses the meaning. [Back to text.](#)

¹¹³ PL 199. 954D. [Back to text.](#)

¹¹⁴ Clm 6935, fol. 1f. For extensive details concerning the opinions of the schools, see Dom O. Lottin, 'Nature des Dons du S. Esprit', in: *Psychologie et Morale aux 12^e et 13^e siècles*, III, 2/1, pp. 329-456. [Back to text.](#)

¹¹⁵ *De virtutibus* (1674), p. 152. See Noel Valors, *Guillaume d'Auvergne* (1880), pp. 266f. [Back to text.](#)

¹¹⁶ There are a great number of Patristic parallels in Peter Vogt, *Christliche Aszetik im Lichte der ignatianischen Exerzitien*, vol. III, 2 (1921), pp. 107-248. [Back to text.](#)

¹¹⁷ On this, see especially: Fr. Wulf, ed., *Ignatius von Loyola: Seine geistliche Gestalt und sein Vermächtnis* (1956), in particular the contributions of A. Haas, H. Rahner, H. Bacht and the essay of K. Rahner, 'Die ignatianische Logik der existentiellen Erkenntnis', pp. 345-405. [Back to text.](#)

¹¹⁸ Jeanne-Lydie Gore, *La notion d'indifference chez Fenelon et ses sources* (Paris, 1956). [Back to text.](#)

¹¹⁹ Jean Mouroux, *L'Expérience Chrétienne* (Paris, 1952), pp. 55f. [Back to text.](#)

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 214. [Back to text.](#)

¹²¹ We may say this on the basis of the *communicatio idiomatum*. The sixth-century Church even approved the so-called 'Theopaschitic' formula: 'One of the Trinity has suffered.' [Back to text.](#)

¹²² See 'Fides Christi', in: *Sponsa Verbi* (Einsiedeln, 1961). [Back to text.](#)

¹²³ This is an exact transposition to the Christian dimension of Proclus' doctrine of categories, which rotates around the central concept of ἀμεθέκτως μετεχόμενον ('unpartakably partaken'). Already Denys the Areopagite anticipated this Christian translation, in the relationship both between God and the angels and between the heavenly and the ecclesial hierarchy. Both instances imply the aesthetic (indissoluble) concept of the reality of the symbol. [Back to text.](#)

¹²⁴ *Comment. in Ila Ilae*, Leonine edition, X, p. 374b. [Back to text.](#)

¹²⁵ 1 a 12. 133^m; *C. Gent.* 3. 154 init. [Back to text.](#)

¹²⁶ Maximus, *Ambigua*, PG 91. 1304D. [Back to text.](#)

¹²⁷ *Eine Untersuchung über die Wahrnehmung des Menschensohnes durch die Apostel* (Zürich: Evang. Verlag, 1946), quoted in what follows as MB. [Back to text.](#)

¹²⁸ MB, p. 72. [Back to text.](#)

¹²⁹ MB, p. 209. [Back to text.](#)

¹³⁰ MB, p. 65. [Back to text.](#)

¹³¹ MB, p. 107, 114f. [Back to text.](#)

¹³² MB, p. 108. [Back to text.](#)

¹³³ *De Genesi ad litt.* 1. 12. [Back to text.](#)

¹³⁴ In his gradation of the imagination's prophetic vision (which is accompanied by the light of spiritual interpretation). See my commentary on *IIa IIae*, q 174 (vol. 23 of the Latin-German edition of Thomas, 1954, pp. 351f.). [Back to text.](#)

¹³⁵ MB, p. 340. [Back to text.](#)

¹³⁶ Lyder Brun, 'Die Gottesschau des johanneischen Christus', in: *Symbolae Osloenses* V (1927), pp. 1-22. [Back to text.](#)

¹³⁷ MB, p. 38. [Back to text.](#)

¹³⁸ See 'Fides Christi', in: *Sponsa Verbi* (Einsiedeln, 1961), pp. 45-79. [Back to text.](#)

¹³⁹ A. Schlatter, *Die Sprache und Heimat des vierten Evangelisten* (1902), p. 85; Jer 49.14; Is 21.10; 28.22; Ez 33.30, and so forth. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴⁰ 'Fides Christi', in: *Sponsa Verbi* (1961). [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴¹ And this must suffice. Whoever would say more will either judge Christ's experience of God by the laws of ordinary human psychology, which cannot grasp the hypostatic union; or, starting abstractly from Christ's vision of God, he will no longer make Christ's human psyche credible; or, finally, he will no longer be able to unite Christ's different *scientiae* into one unified life of the soul. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴² MB, p. 71. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴³ MB, p. 41. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴⁴ W. Baudissin, 'Gottschau in der alttestamentlichen Religion', in: *Arch. f. Rel. Wiss.* 18 (1915), pp. 173f. F. Notscher, *Das Angesicht Gottes schauen nach biblischer und babylonischer Auffassung* (Würzburg, 1924). R. Bultmann, 'Untersuchungen zum Johannesevangelium, Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε', in: *ZNW* 29 (1930), pp. 169f. E. Fascher, '*Deus Invisibilis*', in: *Marb. Theol. Stud.* I (1931), pp. 47f. O. Samuel, 'Lass mich deine Herrlichkeit sehen', in: *Evang. Theol.* 2 (1935), pp. 275f. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴⁵ The texts in MB, pp. 68f. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴⁶ MB, p. 69. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴⁷ Thus Paul Gächter, *Petrus und seine Zeit* (Innsbruck-Vienna-Munich, 1958), 9: 'The Limits of Paul's Apostleship' (pp. 338-450), not lacking in theological enormities. For Gächter, Paul did not furnish a proof for his apostleship. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴⁸ For instance Markus Barth, *loc. cit.*, pp. 136ff. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴⁹ More on this in the second part of this volume. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵⁰ See 'Wer ist die Kirche?', in: *Sponsa Verbi* (1961). [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵¹ See *ibid.* [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵² J. Schniewind, entry for 'Matthaus' in: *Neues Göttinger Bibelwerk*, 2 (1950). [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵³ G. van der Leeuw, 'External Soul, Schutzgeist und der ägyptische Ka', in: *Zeitschrift äg. Sprache*. See also his *Phänomenologie der Religion* (Tübingen, 1933), secs. 42-44. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵⁴ H. Odeberg, *The Fourth Gospel* (Uppsala, 1929), pp. 33f. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵⁵ H. Windisch, 'Angelophanien um den Menschensohn auf Erden', in: *ZNW* 30 (1931), p. 216. But see Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Göttingen, 1941), pp. 74f. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵⁶ P. Claudel, *Cinq grandes Odes* (Paris, NRF, 1936), 2nd Ode, pp. 51ff. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵⁷ *Theologische Traktate* (Munich, 1951), pp. 323-408. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 375. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵⁹ *Oeuvres poétiques complètes (Pléiade, 1941)*, p. 698: 'O Lady of the way, and of reconciliation, / O mirror of justice and precision of soul, / You alone know, O great our Lady, / What is detainment and what recollection.' [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶⁰ See especially: Karl Rahner, 'Le début d'une doctrine des cinq sens spirituels chez Origène', in: *RAM* 13 (1932), pp. 113-145. Here all the texts are gathered and interpreted. Rahner's work is dated only in the sense that he bases his interpretation on those parts of the *Commentary on the Psalms* which I have since demonstrated belong to Evagrius ('Die Hiera des Evagrius', in: *ZKTh* 63 [1939], pp. 86-100, 181-189). See more recently: Joseph-Marie Rondeau, 'Le commentaire sur les Psaumes d'Evagre le Pontique', in: *Or. Chr. Per.* 26 (1960), pp. 307-348. Origen's main texts are to be found in my anthology *Geist und Feuer* (Salzburg, 1953²), pp. 307-363. Other Patristic texts in Rahner. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶¹ Further texts in *Geist und Feuer*; text, pp. 621f. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶² On this see G. Horn, 'Les sens de l'esprit d'après Diadoque de Photice', in: *RAM* 8 (1927), pp. 402-419. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶³ Texts in K. Rahner, *loc. cit.*, p. 143. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶⁴ Karl Rahner, 'La doctrine des "sens spirituels" au moyen-âge, en particulier chez S. Bonaventure', in *RAM* 14 (1933), pp. 263-299. Also more recently: J. Walsh, S.J., 'Guillaume de St. Thierry et les sens spirituels', in: *RAM* 35 (1959), pp. 27-42. Dom P. Doyere, O.S.B., 'S. Gertrude et les sens spirituels', in: *RAM* 36 (1960), pp. 429-446. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶⁵ See J. Walsh, *op. cit.*, p. 33. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶⁶ In the Augustinian *Imago Trinitatis*, the ground of memory is ordered to the Father, reason to the Son, and the will to the Holy Spirit. Thus, faith corresponds to the first, the attempt to understand faith corresponds to the second, and the experience of faith's reality to the third. Only thus does the Bernardian doctrine of *amor-intellectus* become wholly comprehensible in a theological sense. See O. Brooke, O.S.B., 'The Trinitarian Aspect of the Ascent of the Soul to God in the Theology of William of St. Thierry', in: *RThAM* (1959), pp. 85-127. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶⁷ *Summa* I. 4 (Paris, 1500), fol. 300f. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶⁸ *Summa* II. q. 70 (ed. Quaracchi, m. 3, no. 381f.). [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶⁹ 3 *Sent.* d. 13. a 4 (ed. Borgnet 28, p. 240). *De coel. hier.* 15. 5 (Borgnet 14, p. 414). [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷⁰ The chief texts are: *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum* 4. 3 (Quaracchi V, p. 306); *Breviloquium* 5. 6 (Quaracchi V, p. 259f.); 3 *Sent.* d. 13 (Quaracchi III, pp. 291f.); the others in K. Rahner. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷¹ *Compendium theologiae veritatis* 5. 56 (in the Borgnet edition of Albert: 34. 191; in the Vives edition of Bonaventure: 8. 196). [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷² Third Part, sect. 46 (Bonaventure-Vives 418). [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷³ *De 7 donis Spiritus Sancti* 1.3 and 2.7 (Vives 7. 590; 637). *De 7 itineribus aeternitatis* (de 4 itin. 4. 2; *loc. cit.* 443; de 6 itin. 1-6; *loc. cit.* 464-472). [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷⁴ K. Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp. 293f. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷⁵ For what follows, see: M. Olphe-Gaillard, S.J., 'Les sens spirituels dans l'histoire de la spiritualité', in: *Nos Sens et Dieu* (Etudes Carmelitaines, 1954, pp. 179-193, with an historical survey). J. Marechal, S.J., 'Applications des Sens', in: *Dict. Spir.* I (1937), pp. 810-828. Marechal, *Etudes sur la psychologie des mystiques* II (1937), pp. 365-382. Hugo Rahner, S.J., 'Die

Anwendung der Sinne in der Betrachtungsmethode des hl. Ignatius von Loyola', in: *ZKTh* 79 (1957), pp. 434-456 (with a longer bibliography). [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷⁶ See E. Przywara, *Theologie der Exerzitien* I (Freiburg, 1938), pp. 137f. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷⁷ H. Pinard de la Boullaye, 'Sentir, sentimiento y sentido dans le style de S. Ignace', in: *Archivum hist. Soc. Jesu* 25 (1956), pp. 416-430. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷⁸ *Monumenta Ignatiana*, Ser. II, vol. 2 (1955), pp. 300-303. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷⁹ *Monumenta Nadal* IV (1905), pp. 677f. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸⁰ *Commentarii in Exercitia* 2. 2 (ed. Brugge, 1882), p. 23. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23f. Marechal also refers to Suarez, De Ponte and Surin as going in the same direction. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸² *Directorium* 20. 4 (*Mon. Ign.* II. 2. 681). [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸³ In his commentary on the *Exercises*, 2nd Week, 5th Meditation, Nota 29. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸⁴ Ludolphus de Saxonia, *Vita Jesu Christi* (ed. Rigollot, Paris, 1870), p. 9. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸⁵ Thomas is here consciously hearkening back to Origen by referring to Origen's *Hom. 3. 7 in Leviticum* (see 3 *Sent.* d 13; *expos, textus*; ed. Moos, Paris, 1932, no. 160). Peter Lombard had remarked that four of the five senses are in the head, which is Christ, and only the sense of touch is in the body—the Communion of Saints. This led Thomas to distinguish as follows: in so far as the spiritual senses are named after the specific acts of the bodily senses, they are active in all the saints; but, in so far as the sense of touch alone is indispensable and the others signify the fulness of perfection, only the sense of touch is present in the body as necessary to salvation, while the fulness of all grace resides in Christ alone. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸⁶ We will simply give within the body of the text the page numbers referring to the English edition of *Church Dogmatics* III/2. (Publisher's note.) [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸⁷ The original is extremely compressed: *gegenseitige Aussprache und Ansprache in Ausspruch und Anspruch, Sichvernehmenlassen und selber Vernehmen*. (Tr.) [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸⁸ This is the meaning of the long preparatory chapter 'The Phenomena of the Human', pp. 71-132. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸⁹ See the chapter 'Real Man', pp. 132-202. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹⁰ See the chapter ‘The Spirit as Basis of Soul and Body’, pp. 344-366. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹¹ Parenthesis mine. (H.U.vB.) [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹² The numbers in parentheses within the text refer to the pages in Guardini's work. (Publisher's note) [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹³ Karl Barth, *op. cit.*, p. 519. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹⁴ Guardini has countless times called our attention to all these things. From his abundant writings we indicate the following almost at random: ‘Litur-gische Symbolik’, in: *Vom Geist der Liturgie* (Freiburg, 1918); *Heilige Zeichen* (Mainz, 1933). A great deal is to be found in his collection *In Spiegel und Gleichnis* (Mainz, 1932²); *Vom lebendigen Gott* (Mainz, 1936); *Besinnung vor der Feier der Hl. Messe* (Mainz, 1939); *Grundlegung der Bildungslehre* (Würzburg, 1928), in which he deals with image and image-formation; *Über das Wesen des Kunstwerks* (Tübingen, 1947); *Die Situation des Menschen* (‘Akademikervorträge’, Munich, 1953: ‘Über das Schwinden der Bilder’); *Die Offenbarung, ihr Wesen und ihre Formen* (Würzburg, 1940); *Jesus Christus II* (Würzburg, 1940, pp. 149f.: ‘Die Epiphanie’); *Wunder und Zeichen* (Würzburg, 1959). [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹⁵ *Die Sinne und das Wort* (=SW), pp. 8f. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹⁶ *Wort und Bild* (=WB), p. 14. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹⁷ SW, pp. 10f. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹⁸ SW, pp. 12-19. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹⁹ SW, pp. 19-22. [Back to text.](#)

²⁰⁰ WB, pp. 15f. [Back to text.](#)

²⁰¹ WB, p. 25. [Back to text.](#)

²⁰² WB, p. 13. On this, see G. Siewerth, ‘Die transzendente Struktur des Raumes’, in: Hans André, *Natur und Mysterium* (Einsiedeln, 1959). [Back to text.](#)

²⁰³ WB, p. 14. [Back to text.](#)

²⁰⁴ WB, p. 15. [Back to text.](#)

²⁰⁵ WB, pp. 11 f. [Back to text.](#)

²⁰⁶ SW, p. 36. [Back to text.](#)

²⁰⁷ WB, p. 21. [Back to text.](#)

²⁰⁸ WB, pp. 21-24. [Back to text.](#)

²⁰⁹ WB, pp. 27-30. [Back to text.](#)

²¹⁰ WB, pp. 24f. [Back to text.](#)

²¹¹ SW, p. 38. [Back to text.](#)

²¹² WB, p. 28. We are astonished already to find in Maximus the Confessor an attempt to interpret the five senses as the sensory unfolding of the five ‘faculties of the soul’: the eye is the organ and sensory root of contemplation (*theoria*), the ear the sensory organ of practical reason; smell appears as ordered to the irascible soul, taste to the concupiscible soul, and touch as ordered to the vital foundation of the soul. *Ambigua*, PG 91, 1248BC. [Back to text.](#)

²¹³ WB, pp. 33f. [Back to text.](#)

²¹⁴ SW, pp. 23f., 32-35. [Back to text.](#)

²¹⁵ SW, pp. 28f. [Back to text.](#)

²¹⁶ WB, p. 25. [Back to text.](#)

²¹⁷ WB, pp. 49ff. [Back to text.](#)

²¹⁸ Ed. Mercure de France (12th ed.), Paris, 1939. [Back to text.](#)

²¹⁹ In: *Presence et Prophetie* (Fribourg, L.U.F., 1942), pp. 49-126. [Back to text.](#)

²²⁰ For what follows, see Claudel, ‘Sur la presence de Dieu’, in: *Presence et Prophetie*, pp. 11-46. [Back to text.](#)

²²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 12f. [Back to text.](#)

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 28. [Back to text.](#)

²²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 17f. [Back to text.](#)

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40. [Back to text.](#)

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-48. [Back to text.](#)

²²⁶ ‘Sensation du Divin’, in: *Nos Sens et Dieu; Etudes Carmélitaines*, XXXIII (Bruges, 1954), pp. 54-60. [Back to text.](#)

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60f. [Back to text.](#)

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 61f. [Back to text.](#)

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 63. [Back to text.](#)

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 77. [Back to text.](#)

²³¹ Especially in *La Cantate a Trois Voix* (Paris, 1943) and in *Conversations dans le Loir-et-Cher* (Paris, 1957). [Back to text.](#)

²³² ‘Sensation du Divin’, p. 71. [Back to text.](#)

²³³ ‘Non impediās musicam’, in: *Les Aventures de Sophie* (Paris, 1937), pp. 211f. [Back to text.](#)

²³⁴ ‘La Sensation du Divin’, p. 84. [Back to text.](#)

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93. [Back to text.](#)

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 95. [Back to text.](#)

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 97. [Back to text.](#)

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 116. [Back to text.](#)

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 124f. [Back to text.](#)

²⁴⁰ Claudel, *L’Art Poétique*, p. 111. [Back to text.](#)

²⁴¹ This is what we tried to establish, much against the stream of a strong tradition, in our commentary on the *Treatise on Prophecy of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Latin-German edition of the works of Thomas, vol. 23). [Back to text.](#)

²⁴² *Nos Sens et Dieu; Etudes Carmélitaines* (Bruges, 1954), p. 167. [Back to text.](#)

²⁴³ *Etudes sur la psychologie des mystiques II* (1937), p. 376. [Back to text.](#)

²⁴⁴ ‘Die Anwendung der Sinne. . .’, in: *ZKTh* (1957), p. 452. [Back to text.](#)

²⁴⁵ Ed. F. Pfeifer (1857), II, p. 597. [Back to text.](#)

²⁴⁶ Job 19.26f. LXX. [Back to text.](#)

III. The Objective Evidence

¹ In the passage from Rom 1.19f., even if τοῖς ποιήμασι is taken as a dative of indirect object (‘for cognitive creatures’), the κτίσις κόσμου would still be the ontological medium and the meaning would remain the same. [Back to text.](#)

² J. Gebser, *Ursprung und Gegenwart* (1949), pp. 443f. [Back to text.](#)

³ Hans Andér has provided a most marvellous analysis of all this in his trilogy (O. Muller Verlag) and in *Natur und Mystrium* (Einsiedeln, Johannes Verlag, 1959). [Back to text.](#)

⁴ Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.*, I, 5.8. [Back to text.](#)

⁵ Cf. my study on Gregory of Nyssa, *Présence et Pensée* (Paris, 1942). [Back to text.](#)

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *De Ver.*, q 18 a 3. [Back to text.](#)

⁷ Cf. the chapter on Irenaeus in the second volume of this work. [Back to text.](#)

⁸ Cf. ‘Die Implikationen des Wortes’, in: *Verbum Caro* (Einsiedeln, 1960),

pp. 48-72. [Back to text.](#)

⁹ Cf. 'Gott redet als Mensch', in: *Verbum Caro* (Einsiedeln, 1960), pp. 73-99. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁰ On this cf. *ibid.*, 457. [Back to text.](#)

¹¹ This argument is pursued in the third volume of this work. [Back to text.](#)

¹² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV, Pt. I, sec. 59, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1956), p. 203. [Back to text.](#)

¹³ *Pensées*, (ed. Chevalier), no. 596. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 597. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 598. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 602. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 638. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 637. [Back to text.](#)

¹⁹ Cf. 'Nachfolge und Amt', in: *Sponsa Verbi* (Einsiedeln, 1961), pp. 80-147. [Back to text.](#)

²⁰ H. Lewy, *Sobria Ebrietas* (Giessen, 1929). [Back to text.](#)

²¹ 'When the ship spreads its oars in the shape of the Cross / and with both sail-beams makes a lap for the wind; / when it thus deploys the Cross, / then the path lies open for its course. // O pure womb of the sail, image of our Redeemer's body, / who was full of the Spirit without having encompassed or enclosed him! / Through the Spirit which dwells in linen sails / life is given to those souls in which The Soul dwells.' Ephraem, *Hymn. de fide* 18, vv. 8 and 10. E. Beck (CSCO), vol. 155 (1955), p. 54. [Back to text.](#)

²² Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, II (Munich, 1960), p. 22, ET., p. 8. [Back to text.](#)

²³ Gerhard van der Leeuw, *Phänomenologie der Religion* (Tübingen, 1933), p. 652. For criticism, see Jan Hermelink, *Verstehen und Bezeugen: Der theologische Ertrag der "Phänomenologie der Religion" von G. van der Leeuw* (1960). [Back to text.](#)

²⁴ *Theophaneia* (Hamburg, 1956), pp. 19f. [Back to text.](#)

²⁵ *Gottesfinsternis* (Zurich, 1953); *Das Problem des Menschen* (1938). [Back to text.](#)

²⁶ *Mensch: Typologische Anthropologie*, I (1959), pp. 181f. [Back to text.](#)

²⁷ See my *Kosmische Liturgie: Maximus der Bekenner* (Einsiedeln, 1961²). [Back to text.](#)

- ²⁸ G. van der Leeuw, *op. cit.*, p. 94. [Back to text.](#)
- ²⁹ C. Andresen, *Logos und Nomos: Die Polemik des Kelsos wider das Christentum* (1955). [Back to text.](#)
- ³⁰ Henri de Lubac, *Catholicisme* (Paris, 1952⁵), pp. 138-144. [Back to text.](#)
- ³¹ Walter Rehm, *Götterstille und Göttertrauer* (1949). [Back to text.](#)
- ³² *Der Kosmos des Mittelalters* (Bern, 1959). [Back to text.](#)
- ³³ H. Lietzmann, *Der Weltheiland* (Bonn, 1909). [Back to text.](#)
- ³⁴ W. Wrede, *The Messianic Secret* (Cambridge, 1971). [Back to text.](#)
- ³⁵ 'He could no longer openly enter a town' (Mk 1.45); 'he could perform no miracle there' (Mk 6.5). [Back to text.](#)
- ³⁶ E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus* (Göttingen, 1954¹²), p. 48. [Back to text.](#)
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 46. [Back to text.](#)
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 150. [Back to text.](#)
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 187. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴⁰ Cf. 'Casta Meretrix', in: *Sponsa Verbi* (Einsiedeln, 1961). [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴¹ K. Rahner, *Über die Schriftinspiration* (Freiburg, 1958). [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴² *Der sogenannte historische Jesus. . .* (Munich, 1956²), p. 57. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴³ Cf. my *Wahrheit, I* (Einsiedeln, 1946), pp. 58f. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴⁴ For a more detailed discussion, see: K. Rahner, *op. cit.* [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴⁵ Cf. 'Wort, Schrift, Tradition', in: *Verbum Caro* (Einsiedeln, 1960), pp. 11-27. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴⁶ Most recently in his introductions to the editions of Origen in *Sources chrétiennes*, in *Histoire et Esprit* (Paris, 1950), and in *Exégèse médiévale*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1959-1964). [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴⁷ H. Schlier, *Epheserbrief*, p. 201. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴⁸ So, too, J. Schneider, after discussing other opinions in *TWNT*, V. 191-198. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁴⁹ This practice has other immediate consequences, for instance, that in the East communion is given to infants and that the sacrament of maturity—confirmation—is received by those whose age makes them necessarily immature. [Back to text.](#)
- ⁵⁰ See Adrienne von Speyr, *Die Beichte*, 1960 (Eng. ed.: *Confession*). [Back to text.](#)

⁵¹ Cf. 'Die Implikationen des Wortes', in: *Verbum Caro* (Einsiedeln, 1960), pp. 48-72. [Back to text.](#)

⁵² As Heinrich Schlier has splendidly shown in his development of 1 Cor 14, in: *Die Verkündigung im Gottesdienst der Kirche* (Cologne, 1953), pp. 50-68. [Back to text.](#)

⁵³ Franz Xaver Arnold, *Glaubensverkündigung und Glaubensgemeinschaft* (Düsseldorf, 1955), p. 30. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁵ Hermann Volk, *Sonntäglicher Gottesdienst* (1956), pp. 68f. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁶ Cf. 'Nachfolge und Amt', in: *Sponsa Verbi* (Einsiedeln, 1961), pp. 80-147. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁷ Cf. 'Priesterliche Existenz', in: *Sponsa Verbi* (Einsiedeln, 1961), pp. 388-433. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁸ Cf *Das betrachtende Gebet*, 1955 (*On Prayer*), pp. 136-211. [Back to text.](#)

⁵⁹ M.-D. Chenu, *La theologie comme science au 13^e siècle* (Paris, 1943¹). [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁰ Cf. 'Theologie und Heiligkeit', in: *Verbum Caro* (Einsiedeln, 1960). [Back to text.](#)

⁶¹ G. Kittel, *TWNT*, I, pp. 177ff. [Back to text.](#)

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 372. [Back to text.](#)

⁶³ Nor does it prove that both meanings are found in Paul in two separate compartments that barely communicate. See J. Dupont, *Gnosis* (Louvain, 1949). [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁴ See, for instance, Bultmann on Jn 8.14b (*Das Evangelium des Johannes*, Göttingen, 1941, p. 210, ET., p. 280): 'The Evangelist can take over this Gnostic characterisation of the Revealer, because in Gnosticism the Gnostic's knowledge—however much it may have been elaborated mythologically or speculatively—was in a decisive sense a form of self-understanding both as a stranger in the world and as belonging to the divine world.' [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁵ Cf. *Wahrheit*, Part I (Einsiedeln, 1947). [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁶ *De pecc. mer. et rem.*, II, n. 60 (PL 44. 144f.). [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁷ 'Les analogies de l'inspiration', in: *Sacra Pagina* (Paris, 1959), I, pp. 86-99; *Revue Biblique* 67 (1960), p. 177. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁸ *Pensées* (ed. Chevalier), nos. 560, 549, 583, 572. [Back to text.](#)

⁶⁹ A. Bentzen, *Messias, Moses redivivus, Menschensohn* (Zürich, 1948), p. 56. Concerning the *ebed*-Yahweh Bentzen remarks: 'The king of Israel became the servant of all when he stepped forth as a sacrifice of atonement and intercession for them', *ibid.*, p. 71. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42. [Back to text.](#)

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 78 f. [Back to text.](#)

⁷² G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, II (Munich, 1960), pp. 112-125, ET., pp. 99-112. [Back to text.](#)

⁷³ J.W. von Goethe, *Poetical Works*, v. 1, ed. N.H. Dole (Boston, Francis A. Niccolls & Co., 1902), p. 255. Translation slightly adapted. (Publisher's note.) [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁴ G. von Rad, *op. cit.*, II, p. 361, ET., p. 349. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 362, ET., p. 350. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁶ In *Parusia: Hoffnung und Prophetie* (1960), Paul Schütz has convincingly shown how everything depends on our understanding what has happened in history as essentially that which is to be, which is to come for Christians and for the world. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁷ G. von Rad, *op. cit.*, p. 398, ET., p. 384. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 390, 213-220, ET., pp. 376, 202-208. [Back to text.](#)

⁷⁹ 2 *Sent.*, d 2 p 1 a 2 q 3c. On this see: J. Ratzinger, *Die Geschichtstheologie des hl. Bonaventura* (Munich, 1959), p. 143. [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁰ Origen, *In Joh.* 5. 8 (Pr. 105). [Back to text.](#)

⁸¹ *De mor. Eccl. cath.* I. I. 27f., 34 (PL 32. 1322-1326). [Back to text.](#)

⁸² Jean Leclercq, *L'amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu* (Paris, 1957). [Back to text.](#)

⁸³ H. Schlier, *Mächte und Gewalten im Neuen Testament* (Freiburg im Br., 1958), pp. 15-20. [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁴ Rene Laurentin, *Structure et Theologie de Luc I—II* (*Etudes Bibliques*, 1957), pp. 62f., 123f. [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁵ R. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Munich, 1953¹³), p. 79, ET., pp. 113f. [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 88, ET., p. 125. [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁷ A. Vanhoye, 'Opera Jesu donum Patris', in: *Verbum Domini* 36 (1958),

pp. 83-92. [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁸ Gottlieb Söhngen, 'Wunderzeichen und Glaube', in: *Die Einheit in der Theologie* (Munich, 1952), pp. 265-285. [Back to text.](#)

⁸⁹ W. Thüsing, *Die Erhöhung und Verherrlichung Jesu im Johannesevangelium* (Münster, 1959). [Back to text.](#)

⁹⁰ No theologian, not even Origen, has developed this thought more effectively and magnificently than Cyril of Alexandria in his commentaries on Scripture, particularly on John. Cf. Augustin Dupré-La Tour, 'La Doxa du Christ dans les oeuvres exégétiques de S. Cyrille d'Alexandrie', in: *Rech. Sc. Rel.* 1960, pp. 521-543; 1961, pp. 68-94. [Back to text.](#)

⁹¹ *Hom. in Cant.* 8 (PG 44. 948D-949B). [Back to text.](#)

⁹² Cf. 'Wer ist die Kirche?', in: *Sponsa Verbi* (Einsiedeln, 1961). [Back to text.](#)