

ORTHODOXY AND HETERODOXY: THE SITUATION IN THE CHURCH TODAY

A study of the authentic sayings of Jesus reveals that he was not deeply concerned with what we would call religious orthodoxy except in three important matters. He was convinced that man could live a prayer life in terms of intimacy with Israel's God and call him "Father." He was certain that in God's plan for the salvation of his people, he, Jesus, had an important part to play. And he knew that a new age had already been inaugurated, the last age, through a deed of God that was centered on him.¹

As to an orthopraxis as contrasted with an orthodoxy, Jesus seemed to be largely innocent of any concern with it. He was probably an ordinary observant in the tradition of the Pharisees. If he was oriented in the direction of the Essenes—as many hold was the case with the fourth evangelist—it is impossible to discover this from the earliest stratum of Jesus-sayings. One important principle about religious behavior does seem to have been his: that the state of heart was all—"heart" being *lebh* or interior man, heart and mind—compared with which no specific religious behavior was of any conse-

¹ The views embodied in the above paragraph are axiomatic in contemporary critical scholarship. Cf., on the three points singled out: Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1967), who exegetes carefully under fourteen headings Jesus' concept of the kingdom chiefly through the parables, his challenge to discipleship, the new attitude he looked for, and the future element in his teaching; Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), who explores the New Testament titles of Jesus in Palestinian Judaism, Hellenistic Judaism, and the Hellenistic Gentile world, likewise Jesus' self-understanding (as Perrin does not), the earliest kerygma, and the Church's mission in each of the three milieux above; Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (rev. ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963); *ibid.*, *The Prayers of Jesus*, *SBT*, 2d series, 6 (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1967); Hans Conzelmann, art. "Jesus Christus," *RGG*, III (3d ed., 1959), 619-53; James M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, *SBT*, 25 (London: SCM Press, 1959); W. G. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfillment*, *SBT*, 23 (*ibid.*, 1957); for summary reports on many of the above studies and others, cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968).

quence.² For Jesus religion was an ethic rooted in a personal relation with God. The sole *doxa* of his orthodoxy was in the glory given to God by deeds of justice, mercy, and good faith.

A number of important consequences follow from what has just been said. First of all, Jesus presumed to know God as the Jewish people of his day knew him. As between "knowing" and "not knowing" the hidden One of Israel, Jesus was far more sympathetic to the tradition of knowing him. Hence, to conceive the Uitimate in ways proper to the Far East or even to a later Jewish mysticism would provide a difficulty for Jesus. Our best clue to the way in which he might have reacted to another approach to religion or theism than his own was the high premium he put on good will and openness to himself (Mk 3:28 ff; 9:38-41). No one was to be restrained who did a work of divine power in Jesus' name; the only sin beyond forgiveness was slandering the Holy Spirit, that is to say, attributing good deeds to an evil cause whether by rejecting Jesus' eschatological message (Manson) or, if the saying is a church formation, resisting the exalted Lord (Tödt).

The second matter of importance besides theism has just been alluded to, namely, faith in Jesus' own person, which is far less noetic than it is a matter of trust in him. Jesus looks for acknowledgement of the self-evident truth that his words are reliable and his deeds holy. In a word, he is sure that everything about him bespeaks the righteousness of God, not the deceit of the devil or the posturing of the self-accredited teacher.³

The third area of orthodoxy in the authentic teaching of Jesus, besides knowing who God is and who Jesus is, was the matter of whether life has an outcome outside of life itself. Jesus is convinced

² On departures in Jesus' teaching from that of the Pharisees, cf. Pannenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-55; David Flusser, "The Law," *Jesus* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 44-64; Gerhard Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law" in G. Bornkamm *et. al.*, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 58-164.

³ On Jesus' "sovereign freedom" or "authority," cf. Ernst Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus" in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, SBT, 14 (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1964), 41-3; Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), pp. 58-60. Pannenberg, *op. cit.*, sees his claims of intimacy with the Father validated by the resurrection, *passim*.

that it does. The fact that he employs mythical categories like "the end" or "the world to come" is not of major import. Human actions have consequences before his Father. His Father will not be silent forever. He will somehow acknowledge the goodness of the good and the wickedness of the wicked.⁴

We have confined ourselves to the authentic teaching of Jesus because it is evident that the ambit of orthodoxy grew as, first the Jerusalem and Antioch churches, then the Pauline churches and those testified to by the various books of the New Testament, specified various faith-corollaries of God's deed in Christ. The circle of orthodox belief widened as men reflected on what had happened in their midst in a certain time and place. But at the start, Jesus had been a teacher and revealer of his Father; hence faith about Jesus (e.g., as Messiah and Lord) would have to be somehow continuous and consonant with his own teaching.⁵ There can be no Christian orthodoxy in any age which departs notably from Jesus' teaching. Least of all can there be teaching about him which departs notably from what we know about him from his authentic sayings.

The fact is that any Christian community over the ages is likely to experience faith difficulties over these three matters chiefly: who God is, who Jesus is, and what will come of a life of fidelity or infidelity to God as he is known through the teaching of Jesus. Thus, the modern question of orthodoxy happens to be neither a question

⁴ The authentic Jesus-saying about how the Son of man will acknowledge those who acknowledge Jesus before men and deny before the angels of God those who deny him is taken by Fuller to be the Q form, Lk 12:8f. Cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 122-5. Such is also the conviction of Tödt, who holds for five other authentic Son of man sayings [Mt 24:27 par.; Mt 24:37 par. (Q); Lk 17:30; Lk 11:30; Mt 24:44 par. (Q)]. "These sayings are devoid of apocalyptic elaboration, and like Mark 8:38; Luke 12:8 they introduce the Son of man as a sanction for the present and challenge offer of Jesus." Fuller, p. 123; cf. H. E. Tödt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 1965), pp. 224 ff.

⁵ This continuity between the man of Nazareth and the exalted Lord is the matter of greatest concern for proponents of "the new quest." Cf. Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," n.3, *supra*; cf. James M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1959), esp. pp. 111-25; Willi Marxsen, *The Beginnings of Christology: A Study of Its Problems*, Facet Biblical Series, 22 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), esp. pp. 1-21.

of church or sacraments or scriptures but whether a man can say he believes in God, whether he can say he believes in Jesus in any meta-historical sense, in other words as the Christ, and whether he can say he believes in a God before whom human actions have consequences.

If a concerned person finds himself unable to utter the name of God for a season of his life, or say that Jesus is Lord, or affirm that God will judge either in this life or in a life to come, he seems to be beyond the pale of orthodoxy. This may well be the case, as Christian orthodoxy is ordinarily understood, with respect to a minimum core of affirmations. The question before us is, how important is it for the community of believers to take notice of the fact that an individual or a group is temporarily outside this pale? Should the community act when the individual is influential but not when his views are of no great consequence to his fellows? What if the individual is a great lover of his neighbor, a practitioner of *thrēskela* untarnished by the world in the Jamesian sense (Jas 1:17)? Or again, is there a special way in which those who seem to "know God" according to the test of Matthew 25:31-46 and 1 Jn 2:4,6,10; 3:11,23; 4:11 are to be dealt with, even when they cannot enunciate doctrines in the way the community does?

From the lips of Jesus as judge, in the Matthean pericope, we have it that the relief of the needs of the poor is the ultimate test of fidelity to "the Son of Man" (Mt 25:31).⁶ The first Johannine letter says in a variety of ways that God dwells in him who loves his brothers (4:12), understood as fellow-believers; that we know what love is from the fact that Jesus laid down his life for us, which means that we in turn are bound to lay down our lives for our brothers (3:16); that God's command is to give our allegiance to his Son Jesus Christ and love one another as he commanded (3:23). This commandment of allegiance to God's Son is evidently not to be thought of as something in addition to and apart from love for one another, despite the evident exclusiveness of the notion of "brotherhood" for the author of 1 John.

⁶ We take this, with most critics, to be a Church tradition. Cf. Perrin, *op. cit.*, p. 17; Ferdinand Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel. Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum* (FRLANT, 83; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Rupprecht, 1964²), pp. 179-93.

Any Christian concern for orthodoxy and heterodoxy, it appears, needs to be deeply concerned with the test of love. Yet seldom in the Church's history has this been the case, except in terms of the formula that false teaching is a sin against love. The heretic's fulfillment of the gospel precept of charity has never provided him with relief; least of all has he ever been exonerated of heresy because he was so evidently a lover of his brothers. The community's tests, in other words, have always been verbal and ideational. The compassionate deviant from acceptable modes of expression is ostracized or burned—although first it must be maintained that as compassionate he does not exist; the loveless conformist in thought and speech goes free. John Wright of Alma College, Berkeley, in an as yet unpublished paper, refers to the Gnostic strain in the New Testament which views the truth as intrinsically saving. The truth (i.e., the knowledge) that God is communicating, or rather the act of accepting it, is *the* way to honor God—to be "saved."

Professor McEleney's presentation yesterday assumed the various theologies of the communities from which the New Testament books came as normative for faith and practice. This is my assumption because I, like him, am a Catholic. I do not look for a canon within the canon, attractive as that settlement might be. I do not live by the authentic sayings of Jesus only—the first layer of gospel tradition insofar as I can discover it. Yet I need to know all that is meant by the Catholic tradition of the special guidance that is provided by the experience of God's action in Christ as it is recorded by those who had such an experience during the apostolic era.

This experience was historically conditioned, needless to say. Nothing human can escape the influence of language, *mores*, world-view—all that goes by the name of "horizon." It is not in the power of God to remove anything called "revelation" from this condition. The Christian needs to be concerned about those instances in which the interpreters of Jesus close to him in time—and in the New Testament writings that means anything up to one hundred years—present interpretation of him that seems to accord barely with his authentic teaching. The McEleney paper, with its citation of (to me, at least) undeniable apostolic practices of personal abuse, silencing, attribution of teaching to the evil one, and the like, reminds us of the tension

between the spirit of Jesus and that of some of his first-century followers.

We are committed to the apostolic writings as normative, but we are committed to them as normative in all their historical relativity. The Jesus we follow was unfriendly to any notion of idolatry. Hence, it would do little honor to God to absolutize a period of history or a group of men whose understandings were limited like those of all men. We can derive guidance from the apostolic period and its canonical writings only if we agree that the guidance they provide is relative. We do not say "relative, but less relative than that provided by subsequent periods." That proposition would make no sense. The relative guidance provided by the apostolic era is uniquely helpful if we can accept the claim of its literary witnesses that Jesus reposed special trust in his friends.

Jesus, for the believer in him, is a way to know God. How can that be maintained? It comes down to this: that his words and deeds are self-authenticating. Such, ultimately, is the test concerning him provided by the gospels: not the witness provided by the Mosaic books, nor by John the son of Zechariah, nor even by his Father through the power of the "works" he performed. He was, or was not, a truthful speaker; he was, or was not, someone who conformed to his hearer's previously held notion of what that man would be like through whom God chose to act. The ultimate test of whether Jesus was to be trusted as a true speaker sent from God was human experience of him, there being no other test. The ultimate test of whether the apostolic witness to Jesus, culminating in canonical Scripture, was to be trusted as an authentic witness to him was human experience of that witness. When the believer refers to the Spirit of God as speaking to the human spirit, that is his way of describing the experience men have of those who speak in Jesus' name. The case is similar with the community or its spokesmen in any post-apostolic age. Their witness will be credible in the measure that men of good will find it to be in accord with their own experience of the holy, the true.

I trust I will not be accused of introducing some "subjective" norm against which to test what is claimed as a revelation. In proposing human experience I am proposing the only norm there is.

The McEleney paper was admirable in its avoidance of any conclusions in the realms of sociology or the psychology of the unconscious. It is fairly clear to theologians—however inexpert they may be in these disciplines—that ordinary social and personal dynamics are at work in every century, the first one A.D. not excluded. For example: a small and threatened group takes heart from the very unpopularity of its cause; there is no motivation in human life quite as strong as “having God on one’s side”; the ultimate sanction against deviants—by a group that has been declared deviant itself—is to place them under a curse or ban that will bring them to ruin, to nothingness. As the stand of a particular party prevails, there comes the relative ease of suppressing those whose outlooks are different from its own. Conventional wisdom, even and indeed especially in religious matters, is very much a matter of majority and minority positions. There is nothing easier to do than to identify “objective truth” with what the greater number holds. Jesus suffered greatly at the hands of those who such an outlook. His followers should always be more wary of its than they have managed to be.

Yesterday’s morning speaker, I have said, did not spell out the sociological or psychological implications of the New Testament data. He simply provided them for our reflection. But no modern theologian can escape certain conclusions that flow from them. The depth psychologist who explains all martyrdom in terms of a death-wish makes the theologian uneasy. So does the social critic who accounts for the emergence of Christian orthodoxy in terms of the Roman imperial struggle for power. Yet the theologian should make fellow theologians uneasy who does not have before his eyes the personal and social dynamics at work in any era. It is part of his task as a thinker about Jesus and the gospel to remember how both Master and message were culturally conditioned, not only in themselves but also in the reception they received.

I am inclined to think that Rahner is wrong—as Professor McEleney quoted him—in saying that “heresy is only possible among brethren in the Spirit,”⁷ just as I think he is wrong in his claim that

⁷ Karl Rahner, “On Heresy” in *Quaestiones Disputatae*, 11, reprinted in *Inquiries* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), p. 406.

Christianity's "quite definite and very radical attitude to truth" is the reason "why heresy is only really found here."⁸ Unless one chooses to confine the word "heresy" to Christian usage as Rahner does, it must be thought of as describing all verbal or intellectual deviation from a theoretical corpus in possession. Marxism, nationalism, and racism—once the latter two have received anything like a thoroughgoing rationale—all have their heterodoxy and their heretics in the ordinarily accepted sense. It would be comforting to suppose that the Church's love of truth alone made heresies. Unfortunately, the struggle for corporate self-preservation, the fears of certain men that the truth will not prevail except through their efforts, and ordinary patterns of animosity and jealousy seem to be as deeply implicated in religious heterodoxy as in the parallel phenomenon in politics, economics, or psychological theory.

Professor Tracy was acutely conscious of this situation in his remarks. He intimated that the lived experience of men in times past demanded more conformity to an external standard than now. Maturity could be coupled with a larger measure of heteronomy than is the case today. The integrated human being looked to the father, the elder, the teacher in a way that is increasingly less the case. Moreover, the modern empirical spirit that marks all approaches to authorities and orthodoxies leaves nothing immune. It is not reasonable to expect men to live their religious lives or faith lives on terms entirely different from those of their ordinary lives. For those persons to whom history and science are significant, there is but one way to attack a human problem. That is why I think Professor Tracy is neither a rationalist nor an Avernoist when he seems to equate a constructive theology with religious philosophy. Today's man of faith may hold that faith is a gift of God, a mode of knowledge, a mixture of cognitive and conative elements, an acceptance of the non-demonstrable revealed as somehow value-laden and true. Yet even while he employs this religious language he knows that he has no methodology to deal with religious questions different from those he has for other questions. If a life's history has led him to say he wishes to be numbered among the Roman Catholics, he can only

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 403.

explore the truth status of the claims made for his religious tradition in terms of the experience he has had as the historically conscious inquirer he is. There are no other possibilities.

It may be objected against the Tracy position that he has confined himself to theologians only, and to a relatively small number of intellectualists among them at that. In his modest "ground-clearing" operation, enunciating as it does the mere possibility of a foundational theology, he may seem to place on individuals the intolerable burden of their constructing an entire theology for themselves. Actually, it would at first appear, the widescale project needed is a simpler one because most men who hear the gospel are called to be men of faith and not many are called to be theologians, least of all constructive theologians.

Yet the person who has been introduced to theology must also be a man of faith. If he is doing the work of theology, he can only continue at it by way of the religious language and historical methods he is at ease in. Moreover, the ordinary believer, though he could never spell out his *malaise* in the vocabulary of the Tracy exposition, will cease to be a believer—either in any sense or in particular doctrines—as soon as certain faith statements pass beyond the bounds of credibility in his personal history. He may express his state of mind crudely, saying of the divinity of Christ or the reality of eucharistic presence, "I don't think I can buy that any more." What has happened is that a gap has developed between the religious language proposed for his acceptance and the point at which he finds himself in his experience of religious reality. If religion is to continue to be real for him, a vocabulary needs to be devised that will be self-authenticating in his particular faith moment.

Obvious objections to this analysis present themselves. It might be maintained that the ordinary modes of religious language are still available to the great bulk of believers; or again, that the mythic speech of a great tradition like the Christian is still in possession—by mythic meaning the poetic-symbolic expression of truth of which the Bible is composed and from which liturgies, creeds, councils, and catechisms have never much departed. A difficulty, however, is that whereas the literal interpretation of mythic discourse was an endurable aberration over many centuries past, even if at times

barely, it has become positively unendurable over the last one hundred years. The symbolic language of religion is functional so long as it is not self-conscious. Once a *mythos* is known to be mythical it is no longer serviceable, at least not exactly as before.

Obviously I cannot be asking for the replacement of a great religious literature like the New Testament with the pedantry of non-falsifiable fact statements free of any attitudinal component. Equally obviously, however, I am asking for the use of the religious language of the Bible in its pristine religious—that is to say, mythic or symbolic—sense or not at all. A great strain is placed on modern religious faith by the uneasy attempt to use biblical language as if it contained fact statements in the ordinary sense. Worse still, the assumption in possession among the members of a vigilant magisterium is not only that the attempt can be successful but that those who fail to make it are the offenders. Actually, the men whom the problem escapes are the offenders and in their ignorance they can imperil the faith they are trying to preserve. This is not to say that mythic-symbolic language cannot continue in use. It can be useful so long as it is recognized for the kind of language it is.

The problems of religious experience and a self-authenticating language to describe it are intricate and deep. The particular pain of modern Christian orthodoxy comes from the failure of many who uphold it to recognize the basic problem. Meanwhile, the numbers of theologians and ordinary believers are on the increase who dissociate themselves from the prevailing Catholic "orthodoxies" because of their inability to speak religious language in terms of the literal meanings imposed on it.

Professor Dulles has done us the service of spelling out the ways in which five better known Roman Catholic theologians have dealt with the problem (Rahner, Schillebeeckx, Kasper, Dewart, and Atkins). All but the last-named, Atkins, hold posts on theological faculties, one of them, Schillebeeckx, at a Catholic university, the other three at state universities where the confessional stance of theology is assumed. This means that they are influenced not only by their own understanding of Catholic faith—which should in every theologian's case be a liberation and not a constraint—but also that they are to a degree bound by the understandings others may have of

Catholic faith. Dewart alone of the first four seems completely unconcerned about his freedom as a theologian (or philosopher of religion). Rahner and Schillebeeckx in particular give the appearance of being obliged to write obscurely so as to be free to do the work of theology. They elaborate at length on creedal statements and the utterances of recent popes and councils so that they may say ultimately what they mean to say. The gymnastics are perhaps praiseworthy as *tours de force* but one finds oneself losing interest. Links with the past are evidently of importance in a Church that lives by tradition. Still, the point is reached relatively soon at which traditional truth can no longer be spoken in traditional language.

All five theologians cited by Professor Dulles are in some measure committed to the necessity of reconceptualizing in every age since, in Schillebeeckx' phrase, "the vital core of our knowledge in faith is never what is capable of being *fixed* conceptually."⁹ For him, the relation of the two is that this "vital core" exercises a normative influence on concepts. "The real content of human knowing and believing is the ever present *mystery* of promise—the mystery which is not uttered, which is everywhere reaching toward expression but in itself is never thought."¹⁰ If I understand him, he is saying that the Christian is basically apophatic and even aconceptual about his experience of what God has done and, above all, will yet do for him. The Christian tries to express it in every age, all of his expressions being approximations pointing toward the one ineffable mystery. Something like this was attributed to Robert MacIver in his obituary notice in yesterday's newspaper: "The only things we know as immutable truths are the things we do not understand. The only things we understand are mutable and never fully known."¹¹

New concepts which reflect the stream of ongoing human thought, retaining what is valid in earlier expressions, must be used to express supposedly "perennial" concepts, according to Rahner. Kasper insists on the provisionality of all human thought and expression in faith matters, given man's total involvement in history. Dogma is in

⁹ Edward Schillebeeckx, *God and the Future of Man* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964), p. 40.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ "The New York Times," June 10, 1970.

some sense abidingly true, being a human affirmation of God's definite word to man in Jesus Christ. But because the fulfillment of God's promise to man is not yet manifest, "the Church lives precisely through the proclamation of its own provisionality." The believer may, indeed must if he is capable of it, "interpret all Church pronouncements against the background of the situation out of which they arose." Dewart is in the same line if freer still: "The traditional Christian faith can be cast not only in the traditional concepts but also in the novel, emergent concepts that an evolving human experience creates." (All of the foregoing quotations are cited in full in the Dulles paper, *supra*.)

Who in a sense, can quarrel with the reasonableness of the dialectic between the noumenal and the phenomenal in faith statements about experienced divine mystery, who at least that has come to realize the conditionedness of human existence? If one theorizes without examples he is impregnable. Let him say, however, that he believes in the unique divine status of Jesus in terms of what he assumes was the faith of the Jerusalem church—working from the less developed "servant-of-Yahweh" Christology of the earliest layer of gospel tradition and the book of Acts and from the fragmentary witness to it in the Jewish and Syrian Christianity that came to be reckoned heretical—and see how he fares in the faith community. I am not talking of Jesus as divine in no sense. I am talking of a unique dwelling of God in this man, in a way believed in by Christians before John conceived of Jesus as the pre-existent "heavenly man" and Paul and the captivity epistles as the cosmic Christ. It was the latter conception that led straight to Ephesus, Chalcedon, and III Constantinople. What kind of faith in his unique, divine status might the other New Testament Christologies have led to?¹²

The same questions can, I assume, be asked about the memorial meal of Jesus' death and resurrection. Assuming that is was under-

¹² On Jesus as the Prophet, the High Priest, and the Son of Man, cf. Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), pp. 13-107. Cullmann is at times distressingly uncritical but his data are useful. Cf. also Fuller on Palestinian Judaism and the earliest Christology, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-61; 142-81; John Knox, *The Humanity and Divinity of Christ* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1967), pp. 1-18; Pannenberg, *op. cit.*, 191-244.

stood in various ways in the various churches and not simply in the Hellenist-influenced way that emerged—a possibility that the resemblance it bears to other Old Testament symbolisms clearly allows—what are we to think of the emergence of the “maximalism” of the Cyril of Jerusalem—Augustine—IV Lateran Council (anti-Berenarius) reading of the mystery?¹³ Rejecting with the Anselm Atkins of Professor Dulles’ extensive quotation the organic development of dogmas in a single direction, are we not as Catholics committed nonetheless to the highest point the various conceptualizations have ever achieved? The Catholic principle seems to be that the most God could have done for man in any aspect of his coming close to him in Christ, that he did do. But of course that “most” derives from ages when men thought easily of God’s intervention in human affairs. Their supernatural was palpable. The world for them was a book of signs.

Such is not the world we inhabit. If we can conceive of Jesus as uniquely God’s man, we will do so. For us, to be able to say “God” is already something. For many it comprises a total break with the culture. To speak of an individual human being as uniquely in communion with God—indwelt by him—is a faith statement of immense proportions for many. It is not the Chalcedonian statement, which many contemporaries cannot affirm. Were faith in this mystery conceptualized otherwise—expressed otherwise—it might have the adherence of those who are already men of faith in God and Jesus but who are told they may not be of our company.¹⁴ Is the lack one of

¹³ Willi Marxsen writes: “It is not possible . . . to place the various stages of a development alongside each other in order to ask for *the* Lord’s Supper in the New Testament . . . there are various Lord’s Suppers and there is a history of the Lord’s Supper. The different Lord’s Suppers cannot be harmonized, because the various stages of a development cannot be harmonized. What comes out is always a distorted picture.” *The Lord’s Supper as a Christological Problem*, Facet Biblical Series, 25 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 33. Marxsen holds that at the beginning the meal stood as an eschatological event, was then related to what happened only at the consuming of bread and wine, which themselves were then interpreted as the Lord’s body and blood. John Reumann provides a helpful summary of the theories of Hans Lietzmann and R. D. Richardson on eucharistic origins in his introduction as general editor, pp. v-xxiv.

¹⁴ Both Knox and Pannenberg provide Christologies which locate the divine nature of the man Jesus in the perfection of his humanity through his openness in total obedience to God’s action in him. Each credits the Chalce-

faith in them, or of the intellectual struggle needed to give witness to the faith in us?

I am trying to point out how easy it is to get widespread acceptance of the need to reconceptualize and to pass religious judgments anew in every age, and how thorny the path is that leads in that direction. You know how high we have thrown the barriers. It is not simply a matter of God, of Jesus, of the outcome of the life of one who follows Jesus. It is a matter of ministry and papacy, of scripture and sacrament, of Mary and the precise modes of the Spirit's action. None of these is unimportant. Yet we give the appearance of venerating every place that we Christians have been in our human experience of God while not seeming overly sympathetic to those alive today who wish to be someplace—any place—with respect to God and who wish to do it through the man Jesus and an authentic texture in their lives. "Tradition is not wearing your grandfather's hat," someone has said. "It is having a baby." It has something to do with sharing your grandfather's wisdom with your baby, true, but not creating in him a replica of the older man.

If, as Rahner says, statements of the faith must be made in close contact with the actual historical situation, and if revelation is located primarily in the depths of the human spirit as it encounters the mystery of the self-revealing God, then this would seem to be a time for our particular believing community to refrain from making faith-statements. Why? Because our teachers, globally the magisterium, give evidence of not being very close to that actual historical situation. Examine their utterances—not those of the Council which theologians largely framed but their own self-initiated statements—on the present lived-moment of humanity. Whether the question be population, hunger, poverty, war, the search for God, sex, race, or control of the world's resources, they have very little of importance to say. One thinks immediately of a few dozen noble exceptions (Helder Camara, Alfrink, Suenens, Sergio Mendez) or the recent actions of

donian formula with preserving the two chief elements of patristic faith in the era that preceded it, namely the unity of God and man in Jesus Christ and the truth of his humanity and his being God, but at the price of clarity, consistency, and intelligibility (Knox, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100) or "two mutually contradictory elaborations of the two-natures doctrine within the terminology of that doctrine" (Pannenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 292).

the South African and Rhodesian bishops, but the greatest number of the 2500 teachers, including Paul, were better silent on formal matters of faith. They are disqualified because while contemporary with the age they are not in close contact with the actual historical situation.

Rahner's second qualification for faith-statements, that the human spirit speak from its depths of its encounters with the self-revealing God, again indicates that this is meant to be an age of silence about faith. God as self-revealing lets us know something of his gracious deed in Christ. Man must experience God as gracious now, in a continuum with the accounts of his graciousness in the past and the hope of his unknown and entirely new graciousness in the future. Putting it this way, we are led to ask: Is there a widespread consciousness of God as self-revealing among Christians in our time—Christians generally? Are there depths of the human spirit crying out to testify to this experience of God's action? It would seem not. Israel did not hesitate to bemoan the fact at a certain period that there were no prophets. It did not lose faith in Yahweh, but it charged him freely with his silence. The Church has rights no less than those of ancient Israel. Believing in the Spirit, it can nonetheless charge him with being a hidden God. It can abstain from speech until it thinks it has something to say in his name.

The questions on which there has been an eloquent silence are all human questions, most of them ethical questions. Does this presuppose that all truth-claims about God and a relation to him are merely exponential of the human situation, that theology is reductively anthropology? I do not think so. Theology, like faith, engages in transcendental discourse which has an objective referent beyond the human scene. It has no symbolisms at its disposal, however, other than those of the human scene. The only God-language it can speak is the language of men.

Our age is hammering out a self-authenticating speech more or less adequate to its anguish. One must speak it in "talking about things on earth if he is to be believed in talking about the things of heaven" (Jn 3:12). No theologian speaks of the adequacy of human speech or concepts to infinity-in-act. Theologians do speak of sufficient reflective insight into a religious truth-claim to make a judg-

ment on it. The present impasse of our times is that, failing from day to day to speak insightfully or even compassionately about the real world that is, we compound the mischief by speaking in religious language that correlates very low with the religious experience we attempt to express. This is a shortcoming of the believing community generally—not to belabor our long-suffering bishops. The difficulty is, the latter tend not to know how much silence befits them in this age, and out of zeal they tend to reduce to silence the elements that should speak.

Let me be specific. If a Catholic theologian transposes the whole meaning of the Christ-event as he sees it into the key of some philosophical language incomprehensible to any but a small group of peers, he will come to no harm. People will say they cannot understand him, they will buy his books, they will even invite him to address their clergy conferences. But let this theologian try to help large numbers bring their faith to life by taking the received language of religious experience as a Roman Catholic and transpose it even partially into a modern key, and pandemonium breaks loose. The understanding which prevails in magisterial circles is that the faithful are totally naive, their sole mode of religious speech being the literal use of symbolic language. Any departure from this understanding is taken as a threat to faith. Actually, the great threat to faith is the fostering of Ricoeur's "first naivete" at a time in history when only careful attention to the restoration of "second naivete" seems to hold out any hope.

This does not mean that a critical historical consciousness must first negate the tradition in a kind of ground-clearing operation before anything can be constructed. It means that the evident faith-intent of statements like those of Nicaea, Ephesus, and Chalcedon on Christ, Trent on the sacraments, Vatican I and II on the papacy and the episcopacy must be carefully scrutinized. There is a God-active-in-the-world meaning to all of those statements that can and must survive, but it can do so only in terms of serious demythologization. "The symbol gives rise to thought," says Ricoeur, which means in this context that the conciliar statement is a piece of symbolic language that has lost its impact but not beyond all recovery. It is a faith-symbol that can recover meaning only by reflection. Conversely, "And thought is always informed by the symbol," means that the

basing point of reflection is always the sign, which had deep meaning once and under other conditions can have it again.

Who is to do this work of the recovery of second naivete? Members of the believing community. Theologians with respect to the intellectual exploration; poets and myth-makers with respect to the symbols.

The work is very important for the preservation of faith. Someone must be free to write the book on post-Chalcedonian Christology that everyone says is needed but no one has attempted.¹⁵ Really free: free of harassment, free of charges of heresy. Someone must write eucharistic canons that speak of the mystery of this meal in an other than mythical language, as the recent official three do not. Someone must write a creed, a gloria, a plea for forgiveness that will not stick in the throat of modern man. Any fool can take on such a task. The theologian who might be equipped to do it must first be given some assurance that he will not be sacked or badgered in some unseemly way. The faith community has to know it needs his gift or he can never make a contribution.

All of this means that the Roman Catholic Church must change

¹⁵ The one to come closest, perhaps, is Karl Rahner, with reflections such as the following: "Let no one say that nothing more is really possible in this field any longer [the field of Christology]. Something is possible, because something *must* be possible, if it is a matter of the inexhaustible riches of God's presence with us and if we honestly admit that we often find traditional Christology difficult to understand . . . and so have questions to put to its source, the Scriptures.

"For example let us take so central an assertion of the Scriptures as the statement that Jesus is the Messiah and as such has become Lord in the course of his life, death and resurrection. Is it agreed that this assertion has simply been made obsolete by the doctrine of the metaphysical Sonship, as we recognize it and express it in the Chalcedonian declaration and that its only real interest for us now is historical . . . ? Is the Christology of the Acts of the Apostles, which begins from below, with the human experience of Jesus, merely primitive? Or has it something special to say to us which classical Christology does not say with the same clarity? . . . It does indeed follow from the Incarnation of the Word of God through Mary (in the Chalcedonian sense) that he is the 'Mediator' between us and God, *provided*, of course, that the real initiative, in some true sense, of the man Jesus with regard to God is given its *genuine* (anti-monotheistic) meaning, and Christ is not made into a mere 'manifestation' of God himself and ultimately of him alone . . . Such a 'Mediator' would be one in name only." "Current Problems in Christology," *Theological Investigations*, I (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961) 155f. Another attempt that deserves serious notice is Gregory Baum's *Man Becoming* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

its tack if it is to preserve faith and not make its exercise impossible. Assuming that the high-water mark of expression a doctrine has received is, in some sense, the fullness of faith, there should always be room in the Church for Christians who live at the level of faith of their New Testament predecessors. That means that a priesthood and a class of prophetic teachers will provide the leadership, that there will be varieties of christologies, ecclesiologies, expressions of the reality of God.

John Macquarrie in "The New Concilium" praises the Anglican communion for its tolerance of unorthodox and bizarre behavior.¹⁶ It does not prize such eccentricities, he says, but it is patient about them. It knows through its long history, Catholic and Reformed, that faith is not a being but a becoming. Various polities, ministries, liturgies, doctrines are at home in Anglicanism, Macquarrie says. It could even accept the papacy, provided not overmuch were made of it.

The Anglican model may be called defective in virtue of the elements of catholicity and orthodoxy that are missing from it, but it does have all the elements of the faith communities we find testified to in the New Testament. In this sense it is closer to being a catholic and apostolic Church than is the Roman Church, which confines itself to development of a single kind.

What as to heresy? Will the Church never be able to identify an offender against the community's broader faith or, if he is found, will it never be able to act?

It will know him after long reflection, and it will act slowly, if at all.

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¹⁶ "We believe that the best answer to deviant beliefs and practices is not to try to suppress them but to bring them into the open and, by free criticism, to show what is mistaken in them as well as learning something of the truth that is hidden in every error. No doubt there is a risk in this permissiveness, but we believe that it is a risk worth taking if there is to be progress in theological understanding and in the practical application of the faith. Furthermore, it can be argued that willingness to take this risk shows a fundamental confidence in Catholic truth and in the capacity of this truth to survive in the free market of ideas. One may recall the words of St. Irenaeus about the false teachers of his day: *Adversus eos victoria est sententiae eorum manifestatio* (*Adv. Haer.*, I, xxx, 4)." John Macquarrie, "What Still Separates Us from the Catholic Church? 3. An Anglican Reply," in Hans Küng, *Post-Ecumenical Christianity* (New York: Herder and Herder 1970), pp. 49f.