

Presidential Address

THE MILLENNIUM, CHRIST, AND THE ACADEMY: THOUGHTS ON JOHN PAUL II'S CHALLENGE

Pope John Paul II has written in *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*: "Preparing for the year 2000 has become as it were a hermeneutical key of my pontificate" (no. 23).¹ Not unlike St. Louis de Montfort, from whom he takes his papal motto, *totus tuus*, the pope has a keen sensitivity to the "latter times" (Montfort's terms) inaugurated by Jesus the Savior, already devoting a good portion of his first encyclical to the providential significance of his election to the papacy in this millennial anniversary period. The pope is similar to Montfort in another respect: the "latter times," both believe, would be ones in which a clearer revelation of Jesus' Mother Mary in the drama of salvation, and the Holy Spirit's role therein, would take place, through persons called to this mission.²

THE CURRENT OF TRANSFIGURATION

The Great Jubilee of the third millennium impels us to focus upon the eschatological current of grace which is transfiguring history. On behalf of the CTSA, I would like to thank John Paul II for his leadership and guidance in this regard, and for stimulating the remarks which follow. "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven," Ecclesiastes reminds us (3:1). This is our *kairos*, our time. The eschaton is the definitive goal of human and Christian existence. We Christians believe that the Incarnation, inclusively understood as embracing all the mysteries of Jesus, is the prefiguring revelation and inaugural presence of the goal of history and of the cosmos. Echoing Karl Rahner, we may say that the eschaton is Christology extrapolated into its mode of fulfillment.³ When Paul writes that the "fullness of time" has come with Jesus'

¹As the *Third Millennium Draws Near*, *Origins* 24/24 (24 Nov 1994); hereafter *TMA*. Cf. Avery Dulles, "John Paul II and the Advent of the New Millennium," *America* 173 (9 Dec 1995): 9-15.

²John Paul II, *The Redeemer of Man*, nos. 1-7 (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1979); Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*, nos. 35, 36, 49 on the latter times; nos. 216 and 233 for the papal motto (*God Alone: The Collected Writings of St. Louis Mary de Montfort* [Bay Shore NY: Montfort Publications, 1987] 300-301, 303).

³Cf. Karl Rahner, "The Hermeneutics of Eschatological Assertions," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966) 335.

birth from a woman (Gal 4:4), he is witnessing to what he believes is the decisive transfiguration of human existence. It is this transfigurational current, creating the sense of being in history's definitive epoch with a new before and a new after, to which the Great Jubilee looks.⁴

This current is enormously potent and, given certain conditions, enormously dangerous. Rabbinic Judaism thought that the messianism breaking out in the first century of our era nearly destroyed Judaism's survival by its fantastic utopian dreams, energizing the Zealots' rebellion, inviting Rome's wrath, and perhaps even causing the followers of Jesus to derail into exaggerated messianic claims for their rabbi Jesus. We Christians cannot fully agree with the rabbis' judgment about Jesus, but I think we do know enough about history to agree that the eschatological current can become perilous, given certain conditions. The "religions of the book" have their forms of virulent eschatological fundamentalism, and in its secularized form this current has unleashed, in our times, the dreadful horrors of Nazism and Communism, and many other "isms" as well.

This is why many, perhaps even all of us can only enter into the Jubilee celebration with that "second naivete" recommended by Paul Ricoeur.⁵ The pope's eyes are wide open too: "It is certainly not a matter," he writes, "of indulging in a new millenarianism, as occurred in some quarters at the end of the first millennium." The goal is "an increased sensitivity to all that the Spirit is saying to the Church and to the Churches (cf. Rv. 2:7ff), as well as to individuals through charisms meant to serve the whole community" (*TMA*: no. 23). Correspondingly, the pope recommends an acknowledgement of the Church's own past sinfulness as an important dimension of preparation for the Great Jubilee (*ibid.*, no. 33). Because our eyes are wide open, let us take precautions to insure that there are not new outbreaks of violence in the name of Christianity accompanying the Jubilee, particularly against our mother faith Judaism and our Jewish sisters and brothers.

The dangers of a virulent millenarianism burden us with linguistic difficulties: How are we to speak of the millennial celebration? I will follow the pope's lead in generally speaking of the "Great Jubilee" and of the approaching "third millennium," rather than simply of *the* millennium. Is it significant that in the apostolic letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* there seems to be no reference to the controversial chapter 20, verses 4-6 of the book of Revelation? In any case, given the rather notorious history surrounding millennial expectations, we ought to approach this matter with what political philosopher Eric Voegelin calls "theological sweaty feet."⁶

⁴On the notion of an epoch, with a before and an after, see Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. 4, *The Ecumenic Age* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974) chap. 7.

⁵*The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon, 1967) 351-52.

⁶In his famous 1963-1964 Munich lectures, "Hitler and the Germans," lect. 5, forthcoming in his *Collected Works* (Louisiana State University Press). I have given the

THE SCANDAL OF PARTICULARITY

Because the three themes of this paper—the millennial Jubilee, Christ, and the Academy—are organically linked, something I hope to show, we will treat them somewhat simultaneously. But first, a few more initial observations on the theme of the Jubilee.

“The fact that in the fullness of time the eternal Word took on the condition of a creature gives a unique cosmic value to the event which took place in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago,” writes the Pope (*TMA*: no. 3). Appealing to Eph 1:9-10 on God’s plan for the fullness of time, he observes that “the world of creatures appears as a ‘cosmos,’ an ordered universe” because of the Word. Like Athanasius, who argued that the incarnate Word (the *Logos*) saves the world from being “irrational” (*alogos*), the pope suggests that the Incarnation commits Christianity to the confession of an *incarnational* Logocentrism (but not logomonism, nor a docetic logocentrism, which seem to me the targets vulnerable to postmodern critique).⁷ A key implication of the Incarnation is the sanctification of time which it brings: “In Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, time becomes a dimension of God” (*TMA*: no. 10). God expresses a commitment to human historicity.

If I understand this correctly, the Jubilee is a symbol in the strong sense of effecting what it signifies, a part of the history of the effects of the Incarnation. The Jubilee itself, so connected with time as it is, brings to mind the theme of the “scandal of particularity” bound up with the Incarnation. The Incarnation scandalizes because of the provocative tension caused by its bringing into intersection the God who is universal and so seemingly limited to no thing and no time, and yet a God who becomes freely bound to many things and a particular person in a particular time. And through and with this particular person in all his particularity, we believe that all particularity, human and cosmic, is redeemed. For Jesus, while being a unique person, is also the “last Adam” and “first born of all creation” in solidarity with humanity and cosmos (1 Cor 15:45; Col 1:15). Why then? Why Jesus? Why a man? But why this rather unconventional man, whose person and work was so healing and freeing for women, and for other marginalized groups? Why a Jew? Why through the linguistic medium of the Jewish religious heritage? Why keep his memory through sharing bread and wine? Why the unrespectable execution on a cross? Why the first resurrection witness of Mary Magdalene, the apostle of the apostles, and other women? And on the questions can go. The Incarnation means the embrace of such

phrase a somewhat different twist. Readers of Voegelin will see that his linguistic usage has become my vernacular.

⁷Athanasius, *Orations against the Arians*, 1.25 (*The Trinitarian Controversy*, Sources of Early Christian Thought, trans. and ed. William G. Rusch [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980] 88). For logocentrism, see Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996) 138ff.

concrete particularities, if it is not to evaporate into abstractions. It is the way "God has lisped" in accommodating the triunely intersubjective Self to our condition, if I might echo the Reformer John Calvin.⁸ The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, in the rationalistic atmosphere of the academy of the 1930s, wrote of "the contemptuous attitude towards the particular case."⁹ Jesus' person and work is Christianity's "particular case" par excellence. The Great Jubilee would seem to be a barometer of whether we might have that contemptuous attitude, or one more congenial. Why should we celebrate it? Not to do so would say something about our view of the Incarnation's significance, it would seem. But why just now? Don't we celebrate it always? Well, yes the Christian would have to say. But not to single out its specific anniversary would again be to fall into that contemptuous attitude toward the particular, and to allow the Incarnation to evaporate into amorphous generality. But is it not arbitrary, and perhaps a bit silly, to single out 2000? After all, calendographer Dionysius Exiguus miscalculated by around 4 years, it seems.¹⁰ Well, that scandal of particularity entails such bumbling, it seems. In the Incarnation, God becomes vulnerable. Taking on embodied humanity insures that. God becomes vulnerable to our ineptitude. God lisps. We cannot settle for any arbitrary date, for then we would deny the sanctity of particularity. But we may be off in terms of exactness by a few years. Well, we need to get as close as we can, all the while accepting the ambiguity of real history and real historical people. Such is an implication of the Incarnation, it seems.¹¹

This rootedness in history's concreteness is one of the keys to avoiding both sociopolitical indifferentism and the always possible slide into utopian nightmares. Particularly significant, in this regard, is the intriguing manner in which the pope links the Great Jubilee with the tradition of the Old Testament Jubilee Year and its resurfacing in Luke 4, along with the consequent development of the Church's social doctrine (*TMA*: no. 13). When God became time, God

⁸*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.13.1, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 20, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960) 1:121.

⁹*The Blue and Brown Books* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958) 18. Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* is the great example of attending to Christ as the scandal of particularity in recent theology.

¹⁰This sixth century A.D. Scythian monk, "Little Dennis," living in Rome, was the one to redo the calendar of the Roman Empire, now basing it upon the Incarnation (but dating it to the conception—the Annunciation celebrated on March 25—rather than the birth), but miscalculating, since he chose 754 from the foundation of Rome (A.U.C.) as year 1 A.D., but this was too late, since Herod the Great likely died in 750, and hints in Luke would indicate that Jesus was born just before Herod died (Luke 1:5; 3:1, 23). See Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, updated ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993) 166-67; Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) 33.

¹¹The pope is aware of these peculiarities of the historical process; already in *The Redeemer of Man*, no. 1, he wrote that as we approach the Jubilee Year, we do so "without prejudice to all the corrections imposed by chronological exactitude" (5).

became the chief steward of the world's justice; thus, "the jubilee year was meant to restore [God's] social justice . . . [so that] created goods should serve everyone in a just way." "Rather than being "the utopian measure of social justice it is sometimes portrayed as," the Jubilee tradition critiqued both "massive private accumulation of land and related wealth" as well as "large-scale forms of collectivism or nationalization which destroy any meaningful sense of personal or family ownership," the article in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* states.¹²

LEX SPIRITUALITATIS

The coming Jubilee and our preparation for it may appropriately be considered a form of the Church's *lex orandi*. John Paul II in fact suggests that the Jubilee's "primary objective" has to do with spirituality when he writes of the goals of "a true longing for holiness, a deep desire for conversion and personal renewal in a context of ever more intense prayer and of solidarity with one's neighbor, especially the most needy" (*TMA*: no. 42). As such, the Jubilee becomes an example of how spirituality, with the Church's liturgy as spirituality's chief focus, is the matrix of the Church's life in all its forms, the *theologia prima* grounding and uniting all forms of thought and action in the Church. Theology in the school sense, and social justice, when grounded in the *lex spiritualitatis*, themselves become forms of spirituality, that is, expressions of the pneumatic person whose life in all its dimensions is increasingly transfigured by the Spirit of Christ (1 Cor 2:15), in the image of Jesus, the one anointed by the unpredictable Spirit to proclaim the Jubilee Year of the Lord's favor (Lk 4:19). The fact that the pope wants the actual celebration of the year 2000 to climax with a eucharistic congress further underscores this interpretation of the matter (*ibid.*, no. 55).

In order to enter into this experience more fully, the pope recommends that we think of this advance period now as "a new Advent." He also appeals to Paul's image of the "mother in labor" (Rom 8:19-22). The spiritual life is always one of giving birth, and the Jubilee preparation is meant to be an intense experience of this (*ibid.*, no. 23). This combination of images—Advent and maternal labor pains—is suggestive. The liturgical year itself suggests this by placing our annual Advent experience within the liturgical period of the womb-time of Mary. Liturgically we commemorate Jesus' conception with the Feast of the Annunciation; toward the end of her pregnancy period the Church as a whole, in Advent, is invited to participate in her womb-time preparation and expectation. The Jubilee preparation is meant to be like that: a womb-time experience. The Incarnation is the birth experience most in focus with the Jubilee, but intriguingly the pope, by stressing an attunement to God's new historical initiatives (*ibid.*, nos. 17-20), suggests that we not separate Jesus' birth from the Spirit's birthing in the

¹²Christopher J. H. Wright, "Jubilee, Year of," 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 1027, 1029.

wider sense. Included in the latter is a renewed commitment to Vatican II, which is described as "the best preparation for the new millennium."

If the Jubilee preparation is a womb-time experience—a heightened participation in the Advent expectation of the Savior—it is not surprising that this pope, attuned as he is to the Marian dimension of the faith, singles out Mary Theotokos, taking Isaiah 49:15, which refers to the maternal characteristics of Yahweh, and seeing them radiantly displayed in her: "Can a woman forget her infant?" (ibid., no. 27). What might be some of Yahweh's womb-time features most notably expressed by Mary that might enrich our own celebration of the Jubilee? We will have to return to this, but I want to indicate that the womb experience is above all one of participation. Underlying an effective experience of the Jubilee is a participationist epistemology and method.

THE JUBILEE AS BAROMETER: CHRIST AND THE ACADEMY

As we pass on now to our consideration of Christ, we will treat the theme of the theological academy simultaneously, by references to theological styles of knowing in the context of our modern and postmodern cultural horizon. John Paul has asked that we consider 1997 the Christological year of preparation for the Jubilee. He does not artificially separate our focus upon Christ from other dimensions: the Trinity, Jesus' Mother Mary with the saints and martyrs and all the Church, the eucharist, the virtues, ecumenical and justice concerns and dialogue with the world, etc. Hence, the suggestion of this presentation that the Jubilee preparation and celebration be viewed as an example of the *lex orandi*, the holistic matrix of spirituality grounding and energizing our faith in all its dimensions. Such a compact matrix requires polyfocal lenses.

The Pope has decided to begin the three years of preparation with Christ, moving on in 1998 to a special focus upon the Spirit, and in 1999 upon the Father, the year 2000 celebrating the Trinity as a whole. "The Jubilee is deeply charged with Christological significance," he writes (ibid., no. 31). We are now in the midst of the Christological year, which accounts, *gratia felice*, for the prominence of Christology in this address. I would agree that the decision to begin with Christ is contentious. Like many of you, I worry about ignoring or subordinating the Holy Spirit, and I wonder about the configuration our own Church of Rome would have, and what our reception of Vatican II would be like, were we united with the more pneumatological Church of the East. One even wonders if a Reformation would have occurred in the West, had the two lungs of East and West been institutionally united at the time. Effective, institutional unity—a notable Roman characteristic—and Eastern intuition, collegial diversity, imagination, and even a bit of constructive chaos—characteristics of the pneumatological East—such a combination sounds like a recipe for health to many of us.

So, yes, beginning with Christ is contentious. Still, we notice that Rublev's icon of the Trinity, so representative of the best Eastern theology, places Christ in the center. It is simultaneously trinitarian and Christocentric. The Son is

actually portrayed celebrating the Eucharist (blessing the cup), and I take this to indicate an incarnational Christocentrism. It is a fine example of the interchange between the economic and immanent Trinity. Beginning our Jubilee with Christ, then, can be seen as an expression of the axiom that we encounter the triune God in and through the historical economy of Christ. It is not an esoteric spiritual principle, an abstract *Geist*, or even our own inner *spirit*, that we have in mind in pneumatology, but the Holy Spirit of Christ, the Pentecostal Spirit. But let us keep ourselves open to the likely fact that the relationship between Christ and the Spirit is much more subtle and unpredictable than we have yet to imagine.¹³ The Spirit anointed Jesus to proclaim the Jubilee Year, of good news to the poor, release for captives, restored sight to the blind, and freedom for the oppressed (Lk 4:18-19). It is that Jesus we are beginning with.

A way to understand the papal challenge is to view the Jubilee as a barometer of and boost to our own participation in Christ, and from this, as a barometer of and boost to our views of Christ—our Christologies. Here, the *lex orandi* would be indicating the nature of our beliefs, and if we are well disposed, even renewing and developing our beliefs.

REASON OVERSHADOWING REVELATION

A recent article in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* carried the title, "The Millennium Is Coming. So What?" So far as I could tell, the author, a professor and dean at Carnegie Mellon University, saw only the potential commercialization of the year 2000 as holding any significance. I take this to represent the radically secularist viewpoint, a snuffing out of revelation and faith by a secularized reason, and there is no particular reason why we should be surprised by it in these times.¹⁴ If there be any attention to Jesus in this viewpoint, it would be at most a very humanistic one. Christologically this could be likened to a very "low" Christology indeed. Were a self-professed Christian to hold this point of view, one would have to say that the real focus of reverence is a secularized reason rather than Jesus, who simply represents some aspect of this, at best. On the other hand, such views can be dangerous,¹⁵ for they represent and intensify a spiritual void in society, and such voids both generate their opposite extremes and give rise to substitutes which pretend to a transcendental status.

¹³See esp. Gary D. Badcock, *Light of Truth & Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997) 2.

¹⁴I am adapting some models of the relationship between revelation/faith and reason helpfully explored in Robert C. Monk and Joseph D. Stamey, *Exploring Christianity: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984) chap. 7.

¹⁵We need to distinguish between open-souled secularists, who at least suspect transcendence and remain open to the divine Mystery, and closed-souled secularists, who substitute their own gnosis for faith. It is these latter which seem to me particularly dangerous.

Think of the so-called third wave of information technology, or the new fourth wave, or Harold Bloom's elitist gnosis, or Heaven's Gate of San Diego, etc.¹⁶

REVELATION OVERSHADOWING REASON

The extreme contrary to a reason overshadowing revelation and faith is a faith response to revelation which would snuff out reason. Luther had this in mind when he said of the enthusiasts that, with them, everything is *Geist, Geist*. They believe they have "swallowed the Holy Spirit, feathers and all."¹⁷ In Christian circles this would amount to extreme fideism, and were this to be transposed into a Christological register, it would be a form of monophysitism. For all practical purposes, this point of view abolishes the human and historical dimension of the faith, and of Jesus, and it is not hard to see why it might fuel extreme millennialist tendencies. Tertullian became a Montanist, and he could certainly strike out at the role of reason in the service of the faith. These facts seem connected, although I immediately want to register an admiration for much of Tertullian's work, and a further admittance of being unsure about how far we should carry his supposed fideism.

FIDES QUAERENS INTELLECTUM

Typically we have expressed the Church's presiding, classical view of Christ in a shorthand way by saying that, with Jesus, God not only made his presence known *in* a human being, but God actually *became* a particular human being as the man Jesus. The Prologue of John's Gospel confesses that only the Logos became flesh, constituting Jesus the son in a unique sense; in fact, John typically will not refer to others as sons or daughters of God, but as children of God. An author suggested that John could have helped his case if he had referred to the Pauline tradition of the "image of God" as a way of explaining the Incarnation.¹⁸ This would have had the effect of not so singularizing Jesus that he becomes a sort of metaphysical freak, unlike the rest of us who are also "images of God." The fact that the Scriptures constitute a canon indicates that the Johannine Prologue needs to be read in relationship with, and tension with, the Pauline "image" tradition, as well as the synoptics, and this safeguards us against a

¹⁶Cf. Alvin Toffler and Heidi Toffler, *Creating a New Civilization: The Politics of the Third Wave* (Atlanta: Turner Publications, 1995). Alvin Toffler recently spoke of a coming fourth wave, the combining of the cyber and genetic revolutions (C-SPAN 2, 11-28-96, "Cyberspace and Society," Progress and Freedom Foundation). See Harold Bloom, *Omens of Millennium: The Gnosis of Angels, Dreams, and Resurrection* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996).

¹⁷*Against the Heavenly Prophets*, 1, as cited by Badcock, 2; cf. also p. 90, citing Gordon Rupp.

¹⁸Cf. John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 117.

docetic misuse of the Prologue. But it works the other way, too. The others need to be read in tension with John's Prologue. And the Prologue emphatically stammers out in amazement—hence its mixed poetic/narrative form, so often ignored—that this Jesus who is Logos is “unique” (1:14,18).

Athanasius' commentary is apt: “He became human. He did not enter into a human being. It is crucial . . . to recognize this. Otherwise . . . people might . . . suppose that just as in earlier times the Logos ‘came to be’ in each of the saints, so even now he came into residence in a human being . . . If this were the way of it, and all he did was to appear in a human being, there would have been nothing extraordinary [in the Incarnation].”¹⁹ John Paul II, a contemporary “Athanasius” in many respects, echoes those sentiments: “In him the Father has spoken the definitive word about mankind and its history. This is expressed in a concise and powerful way by the Letter to the Hebrews: ‘In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son’ (1:1-2). . . . In Christ [the Father's] pedagogy achieves its purpose: Jesus does not in fact merely speak ‘in the name of God’ like the prophets, but he is God himself speaking in his eternal Word made flesh. Here we touch upon the essential point by which Christianity differs from all the other religions by which man's search for God has been expressed from earliest times” (*TMA*: no. 6). In citing the text from Hebrews, John Paul brings out the eschatological dimension of the Incarnation. History is believed to have entered into its final and definitive “moment,” because God's revelation has reached its definitive, peerless expression.

While the first, more rationalistic option, sketched earlier, might be said to detach the doctrine of the Logos from that of the Father and the Spirit, and the second, fideistic option to detach the Spirit from the Father and Son, the classical view corresponds to a classical, and balanced trinitarianism. The Incarnation is experienced here as the communication of God's triune, interpersonal Subjectivity. In Cardinal Newman's eloquent prose, from a Christmas sermon, which seems very Johannine to me: “The Son of God became the Son a second time, though not a second Son, by becoming man.”²⁰ Not a second Son (Newman), as if God were in need of cloning. But the one and only Son a “second time.” We are now in that second, eschatological time, the time in which God's very self, in its unique interpersonal Subjectivity, is being offered, and in fact is transforming, human history in the Spirit.²¹ And there cannot be a “third time,” so to speak, for

¹⁹*Oration against the Arians*, 3.30, in *The Christological Controversy*, Sources of Early Christian Thought, ed. and trans. Richard A. Norris, Jr. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 88.

²⁰“Christ, the Son of God Made Man,” vol. 6, serm. 5, in *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987) 1213.

²¹See Badcock, 234ff., for some of the difficulties in expressing the triune oneness and community of persons.

then we would be implying that God has only been "teasing" us or playacting.²² Here the radical and compelling power of the Nicene soteriological logic glares at us: God has irrevocably and personally taken on and saved the human and even cosmic condition in all its dimensions. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). Note here how the eschatological dimension is integrally related to this view of the Incarnation. They complicate one another. The definitiveness of the Incarnation inaugurates the definitiveness of human history. The Jubilee is a part of the "afterglow" of this.

This view of Christ corresponds rather well with the "classic" view of theology as faith seeking understanding.²³ Here revelation and faith in the strictly Christian sense occupy the primacy, and must do so, for the offer of an interpersonal, intimate relationship with God in the Incarnation can only be taken up and entered into through an interpersonal exchange, involving risk, commitment, and a willingness to become vulnerable to a God becoming vulnerable for us. This is precisely not the kind of knowledge achieved outside of the interpersonal exchange. Hence the in-built tendency toward its ecclesial shape. It is not the information knowledge of the so-called third wave. This is faith knowledge. And on this view, faith is not inferior to knowledge, as it starts to be viewed at least from the philosopher John Locke on in the West.²⁴ This is the faithful, formative knowing of the Scriptures: Eternal life is to know "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom [he has] sent" (Jn 17:3NRSV). Faith gives rise to knowing, and stimulates it, in the Johannine sense of the *helkein*: the Father draws us into a loving relationship, and in and through this, by the Spirit's power, knowing occurs (Jn 6:44,63). Shakespeare's lines from *Measure for Measure* offer a close analogy: "Love talks with better knowledge, and knowledge with dearer love." Cardinal Bérulle, following John, would say that we must "try to enter by way of reverence and love into the clarity [of this mystery], rather than attempt to enter by clarity into this love."²⁵

John Paul II looks to Mary as the "model of faith which is put into practice" as she "constantly points to her divine Son" (*TMA*: no. 43). She expresses the role of the virtue of faith in approaching this mystery, a faith which inevitably gives rise to a "pondering" and questing which we can call a "reverent use of reason" (Lk 2:19). The pope not surprisingly emphasizes faith in Christ the

²²Hence the "third time" speculation of Joachim of Fiore, which is at least rather blurry on whether the age of the Spirit actually represents a higher stage of revelation, has met with rejection by orthodox Christianity.

²³Anselm, *Proslogion*, preface.

²⁴John Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, bk. 4, chap. 17.

²⁵Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, 3.2.146-47 (Bevington); Pierre de Bérulle, *Discourse on the State and Grandeur of Jesus*, 2, 1 (*Bérulle and the French School*, Classics of Western Spirituality, ed. William M. Thompson, trans. Lowell M. Glendon [New York: Paulist Press, 1989] 115).

Savior as the central virtue in the Christological year of the Jubilee preparation. Linked to this will also be a renewed attentiveness to Scripture (ibid., no. 40): "In order to recognize who Christ truly is, Christians, especially in the course of this year, should turn with renewed interest to the Bible, 'whether it be through the liturgy, rich in the divine word, or through devotional reading, or through instructions suitable for the purpose and other aids'" (ref. to *Dei Verbum*, no. 25). John Paul has a high view of Scripture: "In the revealed text it is the heavenly Father himself who comes to us in love and dwells with us, disclosing to us the nature of his only-begotten Son and his plan of salvation for humanity" (ibid.).

A faith seeking understanding as the mode of knowing appropriate to personal interchange with Jesus possesses an in-built tendency to know him, through participation, on all the levels of his existence: his divinity, through faithful reverence; his humanity, on its many levels: personal and interpersonal; religious, cultural, social and political; the circles of family, friends, apostles, disciples, and so on. This more personal and participatory mode of knowing spontaneously resonates with the mixed genres of Holy Scripture, finding itself led by them to deeper levels of personal and interpersonal exchange. Persons must tell stories because they are not simply abstractions, but dwell in a concrete and usually quite turbulent, even sinful, historical field. Stories are the symbolic form par excellence of our concreteness and spiritual depth, and the narrative is the typical way in which we express the meaning—the plot—of the story.²⁶ The Gospel narratives are not an obstacle course for faith but the typical form through which we are opened out onto the interchange with Jesus in all his richness. Peculiar narratives, they demand a depth of faith that even breaks the form of the narratives, opening them out onto the divine Mystery. And so there is poetry, hymnody, inspired proclamation, eschatological discourse, etc. All of this even gives rise, quite expectedly, to letters, which seek more emphatically to personalize the impact of Jesus' narrative, and to a more analytic style of theology. Think of Paul, John, Hebrews, and beyond. But the point is that a faith which seeks understanding expects such forms and does not treat them as enemies to be eliminated in the service of a quest for a more impersonal, "objective" Jesus. True objectivity comes through the risk of interpersonal, ecclesially shaped exchange. The pope's linking of the Bible and liturgy is most suggestive in this regard. Liturgy, particularly the eucharist, is biblical hermeneutics in action and a supreme teacher of hermeneutics: God and humanity on all their complex levels in mutual participation.

Faith, in this "classic" view, genuinely gives rise to a human process of questing and understanding, for history remains, and the God we are invited to know, we will know through that history. This is why, on this view, the Great Jubilee should not derail into either social indifferentism or millenarian utopian-

²⁶Cf. Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. 5, *In Search of Order* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987) 24-26.

ism. Faith has not abolished reason, as God has not abolished Jesus' humanity, and by co-implication, our humanity, our history, and our world. Faith and reason remain distinct, but not separate, in the image of the Savior, whose divine and human dimensions are likewise distinct but never separate. Such is the Chalcedonian pattern of this perspective. Faith certainly occupies a primacy as reason's ground, like Jesus' divinity surely holds a primacy of being in the hypostatic union. But the primacies ground, they do not abolish, reason and humanity, respectively.

REVELATION AND REASON IN ALTERNATION

We have been speaking of the Jubilee Millennium as a Christological barometer: Differing experiences of Christ give rise to differing experiences of the millennium; differing experiences of the millennium imply and expose differing Christologies at work. The first two views were "outer fringe" to the Christian community. We are exposed to them; it is given to us to live in this time, and it would be a denial of the meaning of history to ignore these challenges and not to learn from them, inasmuch as we are able, without losing our Christian souls. But they are outer fringe, and from our side we seem to sense that. We are on our guard, naturally. Otherwise, the outer would have become inner.

The more crucial debate for us Christians is occurring now in the inner circle between the approach I have just sketched, and another, which, for lack of a better term, I will call "conjunctive." I could have used the term "Nestorian," for we recall that Nestorius put forth what was thought to be a conjunctive Christology. "That which was formed in the womb is not in itself God . . . but since God is within the one who was assumed, the one who was assumed is styled God because of the one who assumed him," wrote Nestorius in his celebrated sermon against the Theotokos teaching in 428.²⁷ This is a Christology of indwelling. I do not want to impugn the motives of Nestorius; and like many of you, I accept with joy the recent agreement between Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Mardinkha IV of the Assyrian Church of the East on current christological understandings between us.²⁸ Because of this, I will use the term "conjunctive" rather than "Nestorian" for the view that follows.

Our modern period has generated significant examples of conjunctive styles of Christology. I suspect that as we enter more fully into what is being called the postmodern period, we will have to come to terms with this blurry Christology more adequately or we will fuel those "outer fringes" I noted a moment ago. I say this because postmodernity seems to me, at least in part, a movement exposing the vulnerabilities of modernity. Conjunctivists like the preposition *in*. "God is *in* the man Jesus," is a typical conjunctivist formulation. Since the

²⁷*The Christological Controversy*, ed. Norris, 130.

²⁸See "Declaration between Catholic Church and Assyrian Church of the East" (11 Nov 1994), in *The Pope Speaks* 40 (1995): 114-16.

category of Jesus' divine-human personal identity is abolished or avoided, there is no compelling reason why the Incarnation cannot be thought to happen multiple times. One might think the epiphany of God in Jesus comparable to Hinduism's avatars. It is perhaps relevant that the notion of the personal and the historical is much less differentiated in Hinduism than in Christianity (which does not mean that Hinduism cannot contribute much wisdom to us). If there is merit in the proposal that the Incarnation, in the classical sense adumbrated earlier, inaugurated a new epoch of personalism (a personal God, by becoming personally incarnate, grounds a personal universe), then perhaps there is also a connection to be drawn between the breakdown of incarnational personalism among conjunctivists and the postmodern vanishing "self."

There is a rather wide range on the conjunctive, Christological spectrum. On the one end it can move toward the more trinitarian and Chalcedonian view among those seeking to preserve as much of the personalism of Christian revelation as they possibly can. But there seems to be an "ontological instability" about this point of view which renders it susceptible to various philosophical and theological winds. Jesus can be variously the fullest expression of God's presence in humanity, the fullest presence for now, the fullest presence so far as an individual may know, an expression co-equal with other expressions (Gautama, Krishna, Jesus' Mother Mary, etc.), and so on.

Accompanying this ontological instability is a cognitive instability, which we can call a conjunctive view of the relationship between revelation(/faith) and reason. There is no clear integration between faith and reason, but a sort of back and forth. At times, revelation and faith seem to take the lead; at other times, reason leads. Not all views of correlation between faith and reason fit this view, but one in which there is no clear primacy of faith, and in which there is no clear integration of reason in the matrix and ground of faith, would. Reason is still more of a spectator, less of a participator, here. Because there is no guiding, grounding reality, we have the cognitive instability that pushes to-and-fro, now toward the classic view, now toward the other. In our modern period, the tendency greatly has been in the adoptionist direction, although I suspect the postmodern period is bringing matters to a head. Perhaps these ontological and cognitive instabilities are to be expected in transitional times. This ontological and cognitive instability would seem to lead to, or at least foster, an instability in the realm of the eschatological as well. But I am much more hesitant here, I admit. It makes for a sort of blurry eschatology—a vacuum, so to speak—which renders it uncritically vulnerable to the latest winds of the day. In the modern period the pressure has been in the humanistic direction, toward a certain immanentization of eschatology. Of course, at a certain point, were we to go too far in the immanent direction, we would lose the eschatological completely. Then it would likely surface in the form of secularized substitutes, which can be very dangerous.

CLASSICAL CHRISTOLOGY'S ABSORPTIVENESS

So we Christians are engaged in a great debate, to some extent between the outer fringe and inner circle, but more especially within the inner circle itself. The classic perspective possesses institutional power, although it is under siege, and this may account for a kind of aggressive resistance to change, even when that change is called for. The issue of Christ is not a secondary one for Christianity; we are touching on our fundamental identity, after all. But the classic position, precisely because it is the position in power, can suffer from institutional rigidity and hence premature closure. What was once a living tradition can shrivel up, and should it do so, it can trail off into the outer fringe of a monophysitism and ecclesial or personal fideism which in practice denies the challenge of history and of our human insertion into that history. When it does this, it should not be too surprised to learn that there are people on the other side who will react in an equally rigid, secularist manner.

My own hope, shared by many, is that the classic view, to which I am personally committed, will be able to absorb as much of the conjunctive perspective as is compatible with our Christian substance.²⁹ The inner positions are the key—they are between the outer extremes, and if anything will be able to mediate between those, it will be these middle positions. So, we are not simply saying to the outer fringe, "So long, and good luck!" But to return to the inner circle, it is the absorptiveness of the positions for one another that seems to me to be the most promising route. Absorption is neither syncretism nor rejection (at least always). It is a way of striving for an always somewhat fragmentary, modest, non-utopian, but still effective and dynamic integration. A blotter can absorb only so much. Absorptiveness is a way of integrating what is congenial to our Christian substance. This has been achieved by our faith in the past, and we are called to it again.

The pull of modernity has been toward a more ample and adequate recognition of the "immanent" dimension of existence. All the Christological views we have sketched have felt this pull, and all have responded. Clearly the conjunctive view has embraced this pull, and one senses that it did so partly in reaction to a classical view which wanted to hold on to what Karl Rahner has described as a rather idealized view of Jesus' humanity.³⁰ But the classical view has reason to embrace much of this pull as well, if it is seriously to confess Jesus' humanity and historicity. This is the story of the "modern trail" in all its phases (early and late) in theology and Christology: the impact of the physical sciences, philoso-

²⁹"Absorptiveness" is a notion I borrow from Eric Voegelin, in his volume on the Renaissance and Reformation, soon to be published in his *Collected Works* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press) vol. 22.

³⁰Karl Rahner, "Christology Today?," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 17, trans. Margaret Kohl (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 24-38.

phy's turn to the subject, and then the growing awareness of human historicity and language, the move toward the psychological and sociological sciences, and then the growing global, and now even ecological, awareness. In Christology this has inevitably generated the explosion of Christologies from below, whether more traditional in the usual sense of historians' sketches of Jesus, or somewhat different through being given a liberationist, feminist, or social-scientific focus, or even sometimes now more global through an attempted dialogue with the other venerable religious traditions.

There was always a certain peril entailed in this which was held in check by many of the thinkers who embraced and continue to embrace these concerns, many of which are so crucially significant. This was made possible by the primacy of a faith in response to revelation, which guided the questing movement. When this guidance deteriorates, the underside quickly shows, namely, the radical relativism which already since Hume is present and felt. The gift of our Christian faith teaches us that human and historical conditionedness must not be confused with human and historical determinedness. The guiding presence of the divine Light, in which we participate, draws us by its beauty, guides us by its truth, and energizes us for action within history by its goodness. In this way it enables the human spirit to transcend deterministic relativism. The guiding role of revelation and faith need not mean we conquer relativism through fideism; it does indicate that human history and experience open out onto a deeper mystery, a mystery which humanists, scientists, and historians at least implicitly affirm when they do not allow themselves to derail into closed ideologies.

The Romantic Movement, a movement within modernity, seems to have been a partial symptom of this underside, as well as a partial corrective—a symptom, since its turn to historicity caused some to move in the simply historicist, relativist direction—a partial corrective, for it was attempting to say a word on behalf of mystery, and the human spirit, and the cognitive role of the affections. Schleiermacher the pietist, Jonathan Edwards, Fénelon, Louis de Montfort, and John Wesley—Romantics all—sought an “affectional transposition of doctrine” (if I may use terms borrowed from Jaroslav Pelikan) which at its best was seeking a more profound retrieval of human and historical experience than had so far been forthcoming in earlier modernity.³¹

If the Romantic Movement was a symptom, what are we to make of postmodernity—an exposed wound? Postmodernity is a shriek. Either we find some way to reunite reason and faith, historicity and transcendence, humanity and God, theology and spirituality, or we trail off into the nihilism Nietzsche predicted, the Nietzsche so rightly attended to by postmodern thinkers, if not always so convincingly interpreted. It is suggestive that both Romanticism and postmodernity share a renewed interest in the spirit and the Holy Spirit. John Wesley,

³¹Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 5, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) chap. 3, “The Theology of the Heart,” esp. 119-30.

Coleridge, and Newman seem symptomatic of today's fascination for pneumatology. This is worth pursuing.

THE JUBILEE AS BOOST: THREE KEY VIRTUES

Let us return now to the theme of the Millennial Jubilee. Let us recall the suggestion that we view it as the Church's *lex orandi* in action, remembering that we somewhat more widely viewed this "law" as the rule of spirituality (in the Pauline sense of a life energized by the Holy Spirit), understanding the Church's sacramental and liturgical life, ordinarily, as the focal moments of this spirituality. This is the living source of the Christian life, the existential and experiential site where the triune God and humanity meet within the Church for service within the world. Spirituality belongs even more to God than to us. Such is an implication of taking the doctrine of the Holy Spirit seriously. It is not simply our so-called subjective response to God. It is deeper than and inclusive of the subject-object differentiation. It is a "source" in two senses: It grounds and it forms our Christian life, such that all that we do, including theology and justice-advocacy, become forms of the Spirit at work, forms of spirituality. Our question is then: How might the Great Jubilee, precisely as the law of spirituality in action, ground and form our concerns about our Savior expressed here? It is my hope that we have already experienced something of this in our exposé of views of Christ, accompanied by their corresponding styles of theological thought. That was the barometer portion of the *lex orandi*: All authentic spirituality ought to be a gauge of where we are in our journey. But spirituality is not only barometer but also boost. Now I offer some few suggestions relevant to that as well. Let us return to Pope John Paul's description of this preparation time for the coming Jubilee as one in which a "mother is in labor." We recall also his special glance to Mary Theotokos: She especially images forth the virtues of the womb-time, virtues expressive of God's own maternal features. Those virtues would seem rather promising. What might some of them be?

"Become participants of the divine nature," 2 Pt 1:4 tells us. This is the rich biblical theme of *koinōnia*, participation. Mary's womb experience was certainly an intense expression of this. The Christian life as a form of participation, and not a spectator sport, challenges theologians and religious educators. Faith is aroused by revelation through participation in revelation. We also normally link this theme with the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit, in part, is God's connecting our experience in its fullness with God's own. It seems plausible to read the new interest in pneumatology, and correspondingly in spirituality (as including justice advocacy), as an attempt to recover the significance of participation in our faith, Church and even sociopolitical experience, and theology and philosophy. Plato's participationist legacy in Western thought and mysticism, contemporary efforts toward a participatory epistemology from marginalized American communities (women, African, Native, and Hispanic, etc.)—all are making key contributions in this regard.

Subject and object are hopelessly split, the drift of much of modernity implies. Otherwise put, we are hopelessly frustrated spectators, for we think we see something, but we know not what it is! Subject and object are hopelessly blended, the drift of much of postmodernity implies. Far from being mere spectators, we are swallowed up into a gnoseological black hole. The womb time virtue of participation is neither hopeless split, nor undecipherable blend. It is union in difference, participatory knowing, knowing through indwelling—faithful, reverent, meditative knowing. But because it is participation and not identity, it makes room for the analytic pause, the reflective moment within the greater shared unity, in which difference can be savored and responded to more adequately. It is even quite congenial with, and has in fact learned much from, the best of modernity and postmodernity.

Participation seems one promising way to view all forms of human and Christian endeavor: personal, intellectual, hermeneutical, ecclesial, doctrinal, social, etc. Following 2 Pt 1:4, participation in God is a way of expressing the gift of our salvation, which helps us grasp the old truth that theology and salvation are intimately linked. The Church's Christological and trinitarian heritage, articulated in devotion and apostolic work, school theology, and creed, is a fruit of participation and depth of participation in Jesus. If the Word truly became flesh for us, God's presence in personal mode for us, it seems appropriate that this would be known in the personal mode of knowing which is participation. That this led the Church to a trinitarian rather than a binitarian articulation of its experience of salvation would seem to have to do with the Spirit as the power of participation who leads us, not to the annihilation of difference between ourselves and God's incarnate Word, but to shared union.

We go where we are lovingly drawn. Here we can make a transition to the theme of noninvasiveness, a second womb-time virtue. Noninvasiveness is the refusal to invade, tear apart, do violence to. It tries to keep the garment seamless, like Jesus' tunic (Jn 19:23). (For obvious reasons, I dedicate this paragraph to Joseph Cardinal Bernardin.) Expectant parents are quite attuned to this. It tries to move along, following the lead, so to speak, of the mystery in question. Our belief in Trinity and salvation are the fruits of such noninvasive participation, the result of attending to the whole mystery of Jesus. It is the Spirit who will teach us all things, the *panta* of John 14:26. "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3). The Spirit leads to the whole. I think our theological methods, the ways we approach Scripture and other key texts and witnesses of the faith, have much to learn from this virtue of noninvasiveness. This promises much in our times which are seeking for the whole, not in a totalistic (Levinas) way, but in one which respects the unfathomable depths of the Divine Mystery.³² Today's interest in the Trinity reflects this interest in the

³²The reference is to Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969, 1979), where "totalistic" carries the pejorative meaning of presuming one can survey and grasp the entire range of reality from a

whole. Where a noninvasive hermeneutics is at work in Christology, it seems that it will lead us to the Trinity, as it led the Church in the past. In this regard, given our emphasis upon the Son and Spirit thus far, it seems appropriate to say a word on behalf of the Father, who reminds us of the mysterious, transcendental dimensions of God. This keeps us reverent, humble, but expectant too, for God also is a Mother, Isaiah teaches (49:15;66:13), as does Jesus in Lk 15:8-10 (the parable of the woman and the lost coin). We are not always just sure where this noninvasiveness will lead us. It led the Church, in a counterintuitive way, to confess the Incarnation in cultures that regarded God as too exalted to engage in such "lispering." Noninvasiveness and radicality, to borrow a little from Karl Rahner here, grow together in direct and not inverse proportion.

Finally, the virtue of criticism from within, or *Innenkritik*. Participation is active. We do not fear too much passivity here. But noninvasiveness can become a dangerous passivity. I would agree. That is why it is a noninvasiveness which flows from participation in the mystery. It refuses to do surgery on the divine mystery of Christ in which it participates, but such participation generates its own critical spirit, much like the kind of critique I think the Gospels are hinting at when they say the Spirit searches and knows all things, better than we do ourselves (Rom 8:26ff.). Teresa of Avila offers us a good example in her *Spiritual Testimonies*, where she writes that "while thinking about whether they who thought it was wrong for [her] to go out to found monasteries might be right, and thinking that I would do better to be always occupied in prayer, I heard the words: 'While one is alive, progress doesn't come from trying to enjoy Me more but by trying to do My will.' . . . I thought that their recommendation would be God's will because of what St. Paul said about the enclosure of women [Tit 2:5; 1 Cor 14:34], of which I was recently told and had even heard before. The Lord said to me: 'Tell them they shouldn't follow just one part of Scripture but that they should look at other parts, and ask them if they can by chance tie my hands.'" ³³ "Look at other parts," she said. I interpret: critique from within the inner meaning, truth, and spirit of revelation. ³⁴ And now she is Teresa, Doctor of the Church. This has much to do with an outstanding participation in the scandalous particularity of Jesus.

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perspective outside of and higher than reality itself, within which we more humbly dwell.

³³No. 15, *Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington DC: ICS, 1976) 1:328.

³⁴See C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Macmillan, Collier Books, 1947), 58-63, for the notion of critiquing from within.