A RAHNER READER

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ily present in every act of the mind. The components of this innocent atheism are: *one the one hand* the subject's continual transcendental dependence on God and the free acceptance of this dependence, especially in the moral act which respects absolutely the demands of conscience—i.e. a transcendental theism 'in the heart's depths'—an *on the other hand* the free rejection the objectified concept of God, i.e. a categorial atheism in the forefront of conscious reflection, a rejection which cannot in itself be regarded as culpable.

Fourth possibility: The transcendental dependence on God is present; objectively it is interpreted falsely or insufficiently correctly in a categorial atheism, and this transcendental dependence on God is itself simultaneously denied in a free action by gravely sinful unfaithfulness to conscience or by an otherwise sinful, false interpretation of existence (as being 'totally absurd' or of no absolute significance, etc). In this case the free denial does not refer merely to the categorial interpretation of man's transcendental nature, but to existence and thus to God himself. Here we have culpable transcendental atheism, which excludes the possibility of salvation as long as it persists.

5. On the Theology of Hope*

Run-of-the-mill Scholastic theology has difficulty in justifying the unique, original, and independent status of hope as a theological virtue. A theological virtue is an attitude freely adopted by a subject endowed with intellect and will yet supported by God's self-bestowal in grace. However the Persons of the Trinity are constituted by only two processions, the procession of knowledge by which the Logos proceeds from the Father and the procession of love through which the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Furthermore, there are only two basic spiritual intentionalities through which the human subject can express his response to God. These are knowledge and love. If then faith corresponds to knowledge and charity to love, what can be the third procession within the Trinity or the third intentionality in the human subject to which the third theological virtue of hope can correspond?

The standard theological manuals endeavor to solve this problem by virtually reducing hope to a transient mode of faith and charity. Hope becomes the provisional form which knowledge and love of God assume during man's earthly journey toward his heavenly salvation. This standard theology of hope, however, suffers from two defects. It ignores the Pauline teaching that hope abides as a distinct and irreducible theologi-

* From *Theological Investigations*, vol. X, pp. 245–59.

cal virtue even in heaven, and it fails to do justice to the special and radical uniqueness of hope even in this life.

This deficiency is a very serious one because faith and love can be seen in their true nature only when they are conceived in the light of the original and independent status of hope. Rahner insists that hope cannot be treated simply as a transient modality of supernatural knowledge and love of God during man's earthly life. Hope is the abiding radical attitude which remains the source and interior ground of all salvific knowledge of God in this life and the next. For hope is the radical attitude which draws us "out of ourselves" into that which is utterly beyond our control. Hope does not disappear in heaven because, as we have already seen, the Beatific Vision is never the comprehension of God but simply the immediate proximity of the Absolute Mystery who freely chooses to communicate his inner life to the blessed. Thus the Beatific Vision must be experienced as a grace which is utterly beyond the control of the blessed in heaven. Far from being simply the reaction of man's free will to his knowledge of God's promises through faith, hope is the inner unifying structure of man's salutary knowledge and love of God during this life. For the theoretical knowledge of God's promises which faith provides is not sufficient to ground the conviction of the individual Christian that the God, who can be the God of grace or wrath, has actually become the God of grace for him individually *by the free and utterly undeducible concession of his efficacious grace.*

This accurate understanding of the role of hope as the unifying source of man's loving surrender to God is urgently needed today. Our age is characterized by its extensive scientific and social planning for the future of the world. It is future-oriented, often in a revolutionary way. The Christian's attitude toward the world, structured by his hope, is also an attitude which is orientated toward the future. The Christian's Absolute Future, however, is the Christ of the Second Coming. Therefore the Christian realizes that the world's Absolute Future is not under the control of even the most perfect human planning. The Absolute Future is the Uncontrollable God to whom men can only commit themselves in hope. Nevertheless, since Christ's Second Coming will be the culmination of the order of creation within the order of grace, the Christian's hope in the Absolute Future should not dampen his enthusiasm for the scientific and social planning which he realizes is required for the successful evolution of God's creation.

On the other hand, however, the Christian's hope in the Absolute Future will be his protection against the fascination of the inner-worldly revolutionary ideologies whose hope to achieve human fulfilment through a secular planned society is doomed to frustration.

Rahner's theology of hope is a further development of the theology of the Beatific Vision which he first worked out in his reflections on the

concept of mystery in Catholic theology. The metaphysics of knowledge which supports it is the familiar metaphysics of love as the lamp of knowledge which Rahner claims is always operative in any genuine knowledge of the world's free Creator. Given Rahner's theology of man's knowledge of the world's free Creator, it follows that man's salutary knowledge and love of God must, of its very nature, be structured by hope.

Although Rahner's reflections on Christ as the world's Absolute Future are an expansion of his earlier reflections on Christology within an evolutionary view of the world, they have also been influenced by the more recent European theology of hope. Rahner's use of his theology of hope as a critique of contemporary secular ideologies will remind his readers of Jürgen Moltmann's Theology of Hope, *inspired by the latter's reaction to the Marxist philosopher, Ernst Bloch. Rahner's introduction of his theology of hope into his later writings on eschatology and political theology follows the same general pattern which a number of other German theologians have followed in their reaction to Bloch's* The Principle of Hope.

A first attempt to penetrate somewhat more deeply into the nature of hope must now be made, and in order to do this we shall take as our starting-point the classic principle of Catholic theology that hope is a special *theological* virtue which must be assigned a place together with and between faith and love.

At first this statement seems to be readily understandable. A theological virtue is an attitude freely adopted by the subject endowed with intellect and will, yet supported by God's self-bestowal in grace. It is an attitude which is related not, as with the moral virtues, to a particular finite moral value which can be defined in 'this-worldly' categories, but bears upon God himself as he is 'in and for himself', and as such becomes, in a direct sense through this act of self-bestowal in grace, our absolute good. In this way, therefore, God becomes radically and effectively 'God for us'. But hope bears precisely upon God in this sense, God who has promised himself to us in this dimension of his nature and who constitutes our absolute future. This seems to be enough to enable us to understand the fact that hope is one of the three theological virtues and why it should be so. In fact, however, not everything is *ipso facto* clear, especially if we are to understand that hope is not merely a preliminary and provisional form of faith and love, not merely faith and love 'on the way' and before they have attained their goal, not merely, therefore, a form conditioned by that situation in human existence in which we are still making pilgrimage and therefore in danger. On the contrary hope is to be thought of as a unique theological virtue in its own right, and one which cannot be reduced to the other two. This, however, is not clear immediately or without further explanation.

In order to recognise the obscurity here we must consider the following factors. In the doctrine of the Trinity we know of *two* 'processions', in other words two modes of mediation through which God as ungenerated (the Father) utters himself and possesses himself in love, so that three modes of subsistence in the one God are constituted, the 'procession' as Word and also as 'breathing forth love'. In conformity with this, in any Christian interpretation of man, we must hold fast, in spite of many contrary tendencies of recent times, to the fact that there are two basic modes of human (transcendental) self-realisation: awareness of, and reflection upon the self through knowledge and through free love, corresponding to the two basic transcendentals *Verum* and *bonum*, in which the one *(unum)* being (*ens*) imposes itself. These two basic transcendentals, then, are such that we cannot at will add any others to them on the same plane. Thus it appears that from what we know both of God and of man it is natural to expect two basic attitudes to be involved in man's right realisation of his own nature, two basic virtues which correspond to this original transcendental duality inherent in man. This is all the more true in view of the fact that a 'divine' or theological virtue is sustained precisely by God's self-bestowal, and the response of the creature who has personal status and is endowed with spiritual faculties to this divine self-bestowal is precisely made possible and effective by the divine self-bestowal itself. Now there are only two such modes or—better—aspects in this *one* divine self-bestowal: the first aspect is constituted by the *Logos* and the second by the divine *Pneuma*. It is precisely through these two aspects that God as ungenerated, God the 'Father' (not, therefore, an abstract divinity!), who is incomprehensible and never loses his incomprehensibility even through his act of divine self-bestowal, imparts himself. Because of this we cannot imagine that the Trinity in the modes of subsistence in the one God implies *ipso facto* that there is also a trinity in the response by which we accept this self-bestowal of the Father in *Logos* and in *Pneuma*. The fact that there is only *one* act of self-bestowal in which the 'Father' imparts himself in *Logos* and *Pneuma* implies that in the response, i.e. the 'theological' virtue, of man which is itself upheld by this divine self-bestowal, only a single act is conceivable with *two* modalities: faith and love, to correspond to the Word and the Love of the Father.

It also seems to be in conformity with this that in the theology of the bible the twofold combination of faith and love is earlier than our threefold combination of faith, hope and love, even though in not a few passages in the New Testament itself ἐλπίς has been inserted between πίστις and ἀγάπη. Thus hope is intended to figure primarily as a mere formal aspect of faith and love taken together, the power and the mode in which man, while still in peril, lovingly yearns for God as the absolute essence of truth as apprehended by his faith, and as the absolute essence of all that is good as the goal of his love, reaching out for him under these

aspects as a salvation that is still to be attained in the future, but is, nevertheless, promised. Hence it is that hope does not figure so very clearly as a distinct attitude in its own right with an independent status of its own and a nature of its own somewhere between faith and love. Nor can we evade the question arising from this merely by pointing out first that hope is appropriate to the nature of this present life considered as a pilgrimage, as provisional, as lived in *statu viatoris*, seeing that later it is to be left behind, abrogated, once we 'possess' God, and second that this is also proper to faith, which ceases and gives way to the vision which is 'face to face'. For in one passage in which he is dealing with all three of the theological virtues which he mentions in 1 Cor 13 Paul ascribes to them a definitive permanence, a μένειν that is absolute. Thus he does not recognise any total abrogation of πίστις or ἐλπίς. On the other hand, however, and *e converso*: If we follow the traditional interpretation, and regard hope as coming to an end with 'possession', just as faith comes to an end with 'vision', then this 'possession' of God would be constituted precisely by a vision and a love which unites, and hope would once more appear as the mere mode in which man for the time being, and in his *statu viatoris* strives for this possession of God as truth and love. Hope as such would be abrogated in a far more radical manner than faith, which is raised to the level of vision. In comparison with faith or vision and with love, whether as still in process of development or in its definitive form, we would constantly be in a position where we could not yet ascribe this status to hope as of the same origin as these other virtues and as 'enduring' like them as that in which the basic fulness of human life is achieved in the attainment of God. Thus at this stage it seems as though we can only construct a triad of divine virtues by postulating an interrelationship of initially disparate concepts which is relatively superficial, and only in such a triad can hope be considered one of the three theological virtues. Now despite all appearances to the contrary this problem is not a question of subtle, and ultimately superfluous playing with concepts. On the contrary, the process of finding the answer to it will bring us perforce to a deeper understanding of the nature of hope, and thereby of man and even of God himself. This is why we have dwelt upon this problem in all its acuteness. But what is the solution to it?

It would certainly be false for us to seek to find a solution to the problem by contesting the statements which have been made, as for instance by holding that ultimately speaking what is being postulated is a third basic power to which hope would correspond as its appropriate virtue. In fact we do not need to conceive of the triad of the theological virtues as such that it necessarily presents us with three virtues together, unified by a strict principle of distinction which is common to them all in the same sense and at the same level, so that they have precisely the *same*

relationship *among themselves*. We do not necessarily need to argue against the correctness of regarding these three virtues as constituting a triad. We do not need to adopt this approach even though 'hope' is regarded as the mid-term and the common factor between the two other virtues. Admittedly in saying this we are assuming that it is not regarded merely as a *transient* modality of the two other virtues and of the 'powers' corresponding to these, but rather as that property which endures in them, and which draws both equally together into one. We must not regard hope merely as standing 'between' the two other virtues. Rather we must think of it as constituting the original and unifying medium between them. If we can show this then we are justified in speaking of a triad, but at the same time we do not have to conclude from its existence that hope must be related to faith and love in precisely the same way as these two are related to each other. Nor is it, ultimately speaking, of decisive importance whether the basic modality of the relationship to God as understood here is that which is called 'hope' in the common parlance of everyday, or whether rather there is something which lies concealed behind this term, but which, nevertheless, this term is used to point to because there is no better one for it.

It is common practice in scholastic theology to replace the vision of this quality of hope which is so obscurely pointed to by the conceptual model according to which hope is dissolved by 'possession', by the 'attainment of the goal'. This conceptual model is drawn from everyday experience, and from the experience of 'hope' at the profane level. Initially, for instance, we 'hope' for a position in life which we have not yet attained to. But once this has been achieved, once we 'have' it, then we no longer need to 'hope', but at most hope to retain that which we have achieved, though in that case we experience or interpret this attitude as something quite different from 'hope'. But what is to be said of precisely *that* basic act in which (it is called theological hope) we reach out towards God? Can we interpret this basic act too as a mere provisional attitude which will be dissolved once we have attained to that state of 'possession' which itself in turn is constituted by 'vision' and unifying 'love'? In that case hope will be abolished as something that belongs to the past, because now there is nothing more that has to be 'hoped for', but rather everything is already in our possession, and we do not even have to fear that we may lose what has been attained to, in other words we do not even have to hope that this will continue permanently. But is this line of thought correct?

In fact, however, it is questionable in the extreme—in other words basically inadequate—to take as our guide the conceptual model of 'possession' in order to understand the definitive consummation of man's life, and on this basis to conceive of hope as that which is merely provisional. This conceptual model in fact distorts the special quality of man's final consummation as consisting in vision and love, and thereby too that basic

modality belonging to this final consummation which is both expressed and concealed at the same time in the term 'hope'. This basic modality only constitutes the authentic nature of *that* theological hope in so far as it is present in the life of the pilgrim here below—and here admittedly it has a certain provisional quality. The act of attaining to God as truth in the 'vision' of God in fact allows for the transcendence of this God as the incomprehensible. The event in which this takes place, inasmuch as it is made possible by the divine self-bestowal, is not the act in which the absolute mystery which is God is finally overcome and solved, but rather the act in which this truly unfathomable mystery in all its finality and its overpowering acuteness is no longer able to be suppressed, but must be sustained and endured as it is in itself without any possibility of escape into that which can be comprehended and so controlled and subordinated to the subject and his own nature as it exists prior to any elevation by grace. The act of attaining to love as love is the response to, and acceptance of, a love which, totally independent of any element in ourselves, is rather freedom in its most radically incalculable form. The intelligibility of this love is not to be found in any prior quality in ourselves which makes us 'worthy to be loved' (even though the love itself does confer this). On the contrary, it always depends totally and eternally on this freedom of God which is based on nothing else than itself alone. In this radical sense the love we are speaking of is, and remains eternally, 'grace'. The 'possession' of God—if in spite of what has been said we may still use this term—is that radical transcendence of self and surrender of self which is entailed in the act of reaching out for truth into the unfathomable mystery, and it is also the radical self-surrender and self-transcendence of that love which cannot charm love from the beloved through any act of self-surrender on its part, but lives totally by the love of that which is beloved as based on nothing else than itself. It is pure act of reception and *as such* sustains the mutual interplay or *commercium* of the love involved, but is not itself upheld by this *commercium*.

These qualities inherent in the response to and acceptance of God as truth and as love have an interior unity and a common source in the one radical attitude which draws us 'out of ourselves' into that which is utterly beyond our control. This 'letting of one's self go' is certainly the essence of man, rightly understood *in the concrete* as already bearing 'grace' within itself. Once he has discovered this nature of his and freely assented to it, man has attained to freedom in the true sense, which consists in realising himself and fulfilling the meaning of his life. And precisely this fulfilment of his nature is that 'outwards from the self' attitude of the finite subject reaching out into the incomprehensibility and incircumscribability of God as truth and as love. In the word 'hope' this one unifying 'outwards from the self' attitude into God as the absolutely uncontrollable finds expression. Hope, therefore, represents this unifying medium between faith or vision and love (still on the way and also, even when it has achieved its 'goal'). *'Hence "hope" does not, in this most ultimate sense, express a modality of faith and love so long as these are at the provisional stage. On the contrary, it is a process of constantly eliminating the provisional in order to make room for the radical and pure uncontrollability of God. It is the continuous process of destroying that which appears, in order that the absolute and ultimate truth may be the intelligible as comprehended, and love may be that which is brought about by our love.* We would like to be those who set up God for ourselves through that which we ourselves do, acting (morally) as free and intelligent beings, and thereby having him as ours to dispose of as we will. But hope is the name of an attitude in which we dare to commit ourselves to that which is radically beyond all human control in both of man's basic dimensions, that, therefore, which is attained to precisely at that point at which the controllable is definitively transcended, i.e. in the ultimate consummation of eternal life. Taken in this sense hope is that which 'endures'. And this means that it also shares in this character of 'enduring' which is involved in the definitive finality of the relationship to absolute truth. Hence Paul can say that faith itself 'endures', even when vision has been attained to. A further point also becomes clear in the light of this, namely that the love of eternity can only rightly be understood if it is thought of as carrying the quality of 'hope', so that we can just as truly speak of a *fides* and *caritas spe formata* as of a *fides* and *spes caritate formata*. Hope implies the one basic character which is the common factor in the mutual interplay of truth and love: the enduring attitude of 'outwards from self' into the uncontrollability of God. Conversely we can say: where hope is achieved as the radical self-submission to the absolute uncontrollable, there alone do we truly understand what, or still better *who* God is. He is that which of its very existence empowers us to make this radical self-commitment to the absolute uncontrollable in the act of knowledge and love. One might almost say our radical self-commitment to the 'absurdity' of truth and love, because both derive their true essence—quite otherwise to what we would have thought at first sight—from the incomprehensibility and uncontrollability of truth and love in themselves.

This means that radically speaking hope is not the modality of the historical process by which we pass through time to that state which is definitive and eternal, but rather the basic modality of the very *attitude to the eternal* which precisely as such sets the true advance towards eternity 'in train'. In the light of this both presumption *and* despair are, at basis, the refusal of the subject to allow himself to be grasped by the uncontrollability and to be drawn out of himself by it. Clearly all that has been said with regard to the ultimate nature of hope does not imply any denial of the fact that it itself, in the *status viatoris* it bears certain properties which can no longer be ascribed to it in the eternal life in which it achieves its

consummation. But these properties—the striving for the finite *within* that process in which the encounter with the provisional is still taking place—conceal more than they unveil the innermost essence of hope. For this encounter, even when we rise above it in our hope for the future, always gives rise to the impression that that which is definitive and final too will one day be possessed in the same way as now we comprehend, dominate and so dispose of the provisional and temporary benefits available to us.

We must now adopt a second approach, and attempt thereby to penetrate still more deeply into the absolute essence of hope. In this we must once more take as our starting-point certain familiar theological data. In this way it will be sought to clarify still further the unique and original nature of hope which, perhaps, even after our first approach, still continues to be understood as a modality of faith and love in *such a way that* it is not sufficiently made clear how faith and love too themselves only appear rightly in their true nature when they are conceived of in the light of the original and independent status of hope.

In the average Catholic theology hope appears almost as an inevitable consequence of faith. Faith is the assent and apprehension not merely of the theoretical statements in which divine revelation is formulated, but also of God's promises which are proclaimed in this revelation, the promises of grace, of forgiveness and of eternal life. Once these promises are apprehended and are present by *faith* itself, then—so the average theology of hope appears unreflectingly to suppose—everything is clear and simple. These promises which are present and apprehended by faith itself considered as *fides historica et dogmatica* apparently set hope in train of themselves. Hope as a reaction on the part of the free will appears to be the simple consequence of the *assensus intellectualis* of faith considered as the act by which revelation is initially accepted, but it is this only provided that this freedom is not used to block the way in an incomprehensible and nonsensical refusal of these promises as theoretically apprehended, to which faith has already given its assent and which it offers to the free will as a subject on which to exercise its power.

This conception of hope, unreflecting for the most part but nonetheless real, is of course only the reflection of a more general theoretical intellectualism, according to which the 'will' is almost reduced to the status of the executive power for attaining to that good which is the *verum* of the intellect as *ipso facto* attained to, and which, therefore, in its original essence as the final consummation of knowledge as such, also signifies its beatitude. In saying this we have no intention of entering into the questions raised in the traditional controversy between Thomism and Scotism, or of supporting an option in favour of will, freedom and love as against 'intellect', if from both points of view the matter is conceived of as a choice between two 'powers'. Both historically speaking and of their real

natures, the factors involved are not so simple. On the contrary, what has just been said is intended to be understood as an indication of a prior and more radical unity of knowledge and will, which the word 'hope' is precisely inteded to represent in its status as a prior medium or common factor between faith and love, and therefore between knowledge and will.

But let us notice in greater detail the misunderstanding indicated above, in which hope is interpreted as a simple consequence of faith. On the one hand what does faith offer in the way of promise if it is understood in the traditional sense of *assensus intellectualis* as put forward by the Council of Trent and the First Vatican Council? And what promise is it, on the other hand, that becomes the object of hope as such? We can and must answer this question in the following terms: in both cases it is far from being precisely the same promise, however much the second too, though not in isolation, may be based upon the first and depend upon it. From this a fresh insight can be obtained into the special quality and radical uniqueness of hope. Faith—viewed more in its 'theoretical' nature (including in this the dogmatic and historical specifications)—can only proclaim the 'metaphysical' kindness and holiness of God, the universal and fundamental meaningfulness of existence, God's universal will to save all men as 'prior' to man's response and conditioned by it, the existence of 'sufficient grace' for all and the existence of 'efficacious grace' for 'those in whom its presence cannot be recognised', so that we can never know precisely to whom this efficacious grace is *de facto* to be attributed. Faith in this sense, therefore, can only express a universal 'promise'. *This* faith as such cannot tell me that God has conferred this efficacious grace precisely on *me* in particular and is thus bringing about my salvation in the concrete.

Now if it were sought to object to this point that it is only through some inexcusable *fault* that a given individual can forfeit salvation in general and so *his* salvation, which is set before him as something that is possible and actually offered to him precisely through this faith and the universal promise of freedom which it contains, then we must rejoin that, without prejudice to the fact of the inexcusable fault on the individual's part, the distinction between 'sufficient' and 'efficacious' grace is prior to this as established *by God himself,* so that the presence or otherwise of this efficacious grace does not simply depend upon his fault. Faith in its theoretical aspects, therefore, cannot overcome this difference which is established by the freedom of choice of God's grace, and so not subject to any influence of ours. It cannot remove this difference according to which there is a distinction between the universal promise and the concrete and particular promise which intends and brings about the salvation of me as a concrete individual through this 'efficacious' grace. Certainly grace as formulated in dogmatic terms only realises its authentic nature and attains its true purpose when it is subsumed and transcended, when the theoreti-

cal promise which is proper to it is transformed into the specific and particular promise in which it is applied to the individual. But this takes place precisely in virtue of the fact that faith is transformed into hope. The free subject recognises that in spite of his freedom, and precisely *in* it he himself is subject to God's control, even though it still remains true that this cannot diminish his personal responsibility before God. Wherever and whenever he exercises his freedom to receive the salvation that is offered to him, this acceptance is itself in turn the effect of the grace of God which as such is unmerited and *'effective'*, not merely 'sufficient'. The will of God is 'prior' to the decision of man in his freedom. And this will of God is as such distinct from God himself and not merely from man, so that it is beyond our powers to discern even so far as theoretical faith is concerned. Does this will of God, even at that level at which it is prior to my free decision, *de facto* represent the ultimate and definitive meaning of existence for me in particular in such a way as to exclude all other possible meanings? This is a question which no-one can answer by turning the fundamental statement of theoretical faith with regard to the general promise of God's will to save all men into an absolute statement. But although such a statement is not possible *theoretically* speaking, and though we cannot achieve any positive knowledge of the meaning of existence or of our salvation in the concrete, nevertheless we must find another way of making this assertion to ourselves, because a positive decision of this kind is necessary for the subject himself who takes the initiative: I must hope.

Hope, then, is an act in which we base ourselves in the concrete upon that which cannot be pointed to in any adequate sense at the theoretical level, that which ultimately speaking is absolutely beyond our power to control, namely upon God who, in himself, can be the God of grace *or* the God of anger, but who in this case is apprehended as the God of grace and under no other aspect. And it is apparent from what has been said that hope in this sense is a basic modality of human existence. Hope, therefore, is not merely a function which follows manifestly from knowledge, including in this the factor of theoretical faith. Certainly it can be demonstrated 'in theory' and 'in principle' that there must be hope. But this does not make hope a secondary function of the insight provided by theoretical faith. For the concrete hope of each individual in particular for *his* salvation is, in a certain sense, authorised even prior to any theoretical judgment precisely by this theoretical insight and by his knowledge of the general promise. But while this is true, still this hope cannot be constituted by these factors alone. They cannot provide the actual *basis* for this concrete hope. This can only be the 'efficacious' will of God to save as applied to the concrete individual case, and it proceeds from God alone and remains hidden in him. This 'basis' is not something that faith provides for hope, but rather something that is grasped solely by hope as

such. As providing the basis for hope the will of God to save in the concrete is only present and attained to in hope itself and as such. It is the hope that is not derived from something other than itself, i.e. from faith, unless indeed we are to understand faith—with Luther—as being itself *fides fiducialis* and as such already including hope within itself. But this would be to obliterate the sound and permanent distinction between theoretical and practical awareness.

Hope, therefore, appears as *that* act in which the uncontrollable is made present as that which sanctifies, blesses and constitutes salvation without losing its character as radically beyond our powers to control, precisely because this salvific future is hoped for but not manipulated or controlled. However true it may be that hope has its basis in the special, but uncontrollable promise of God, it still can and must be said without any cheap attempts at paradox, that it is only hope itself that provides its own basis and in this sense creates that basis. For this special and particular promise takes place only *for* the individual who hopes as such, and only in hope itself as such. Hope alone is the *locus* of God as he who cannot be controlled or manipulated, and so of God as such.

This does not mean that the function of hope as the medium of the theological virtues is removed. The *perichoresis*, the mutual interaction between the three theological virtues by which they condition one another and permeate one another, is not disrupted. But what we have said does, perhaps make plainer that in hope which is irreducibly unique and underived: we only know who God is and who man is when we hope, i.e. when we take as our basis that which is incalculable and uncontrollable as the blessed which as such, and only in this guise, makes itself present to us in hope. The expression 'the incalculable and uncontrollable as the blessed' here is to be taken as the expression of a closer identification, although one that presents it more as having the nature of an event. For he who commits himself to the absolutely incalculable and uncontrollable is committing himself to the blessed one and to salvation. Presumption *and* despair both entail the same basic refusal to commit oneself and so to abandon oneself to the incalculable and the uncontrollable.

This does not mean that the status of Christ as the fundamental promise of hope is done away with in favour of a hope which, by its sheer radical quality, is based upon itself. For precisely this radical quality inherent in the 'outwards from self' movement into the absolute incalculability and uncontrollability of God as our absolute future, is based upon that grace of God which finds its unique historical manifestation in Christ precisely as *crucified*, and thereby as surrendering himself in the most radical sense to the disposing hand of God. It is in this historical manifestation that the grace we are considering here definitively establishes itself in the world. But precisely this takes place in the death of Christ as the most radical act of hope ('into *thy* hands I deliver up my life').

Whatever divisions there may be in human powers, in theory and practice, in knowledge and in free love, they are all subsumed alike in respect of what is common to all and what is peculiar to each of these elements, under the single factor of their common creaturehood and their orientation to God who, in his act of self-bestowal, makes himself the absolute future of man. And to this extent the act of hope stands revealed as the acceptance of this orientation towards the incalculability and uncontrollability of God. This act comprehends and unifies all these divisions even though, in order to be realised in the concrete, it has itself to be distinguished into faith and love. For, even allowing for this, this orientation must come from God and find its consummation in attaining to him.

In order to allay the suspicion that up to now we have been speaking of hope too much in terms of individual salvation, our considerations must now be supplemented by a third line of approach. Certainly it is not possible to include a full treatment of all that contemporary theology and existential ontology has to say with regard to the cosmic and social dimensions of hope, with regard to hope as exercised by the people of God on pilgrimage as such and in the course of its journey, with regard to the exodus which this people is constantly undertaking afresh, quitting all situations which have become 'frozen' and static in all dimensions of human existence.

Let us concentrate simply upon a single small passage in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* (cf. C. IV, No. 35) which has for the most part gone unnoticed. There it is stated with regard to the laity that they should not conceal their eschatological hope in the innermost depths of their hearts (*in interioritate animi*), but should rather give it concrete expression ('exprimant') in the complexities and in the framework (*per structuras*) of secular life (*vitae saecularis*). This admonition is found in the context of the prophetic function of the laity in the Church and in the world. Surely it would be to misunderstand it if we sought to interpret it merely as a moralising conclusion of a secondary kind, following from the nature of that hope which the 'sons' of *the* 'promise' (*ibid.*) could ultimately speaking have lived by even without 'informing' the secular framework of the world with their hope in this way. Contrary to this view, the admonition contains a statement about an element which is essential to hope itself. The process by which this becomes an achieved reality involves a permanent transformation of the framework of secular life. Abstracting for the moment from the fact that 'revolution' is an extremely indeterminate and ambiguous concept, we might go so far as to say that the significance of this admonition is that Christian hope is at basis a continually revolutionary attitude on the part of Christians in the world. If we interpret the significance of Christianity aright, and if Christians themselves have a right understanding of the real

significance of their own commitment, then the position is the diametrical opposite of what is generally thought both within and without the Christian body. The hope that is directed towards the absolute future of God, towards that eschatological salvation which is God himself as absolute, is not entertained in order to justify an attitude of conservatism which, from motives of anxiety, prefers a certain present to an unknown future and so petrifies everything. It is not the 'opium of people' which soothes them in their present circumstances even though these are painful. Rather it is that which commands them, and at the same time empowers them, to have trust enough constantly to undertake anew an exodus out of the present into the future (even within the dimension of this world).

In reality man as physical and as belonging to the historical dimension actually fulfills the ultimately transcendental structures of his own nature not in the abstract 'interiority' of a mere attitude of mind, but in intercourse with the world, the world made up of his own environment and of his fellow men. 'Practice' in the real sense, and as opposed to, and radically different from, theory, is, moreover, not confined solely to the mere execution of what has been planned and so is merely theoretical, but rather consists of an opening of the sphere of action in general and an attitude in which we dare to enter upon that which has not been planned, so that it is only in practice itself that any genuine possibility is given of what we have been bold enough to commit ourselves to. Planning may be necessary and justified in the manipulation of our environment (by technical measures), of the society we live in (by social measures), and of man himself. But all this does not derogate from the element of the unplanned which presses in upon us, and does not reduce it to a mere remnant of the contents of our lives which we have 'not yet' worked out. On the contrary such planning increases the element of that which is unplanned and has the effect of causing it to stand out still more sharply as the outcome of practice itself. Man himself, in the very process of breaking down the factor of the incalculable already present *beforehand* in his life, actually builds up those incalculable factors which are produced by *himself*. Now the effect of these two elements is that in the very act of venturing upon the future which is unforeseen and incalculable in 'this worldly terms' in his practical life as understood here, man realises, and necessarily must realise, his eschatological hope as a commitment 'outwards from self' to that which is incalculable and uncontrollable in an absolute sense. The Christian must, therefore, impress the form of his hope upon the frame-work of the world he lives in. Of course this does not mean for one moment that certain specific and firm structures of the secular world he lives in could ever be such that they could constitute the enduring objective realisation of his eschatological hope (in the sense of being established as this once and for all). On the contrary, every structure of secular life, whether present *or still to come* in the future, is called

in question by hope as that in which we grasp at the incalculable and uncontrollable, and in this process of being called in question, the act of hope is made real in historical and social terms. Admittedly this is not the only way in which this is achieved. The Christian also accepts in the 'form of the world' as it passes over him those factors for which he himself is not responsible, and which he merely has to endure. He accepts these as part of the individual lot of his own personal life in death and in the renunciations which prepare for this, and it is no less true that he makes his hope real and living in this process too. A wildly revolutionary attitude, taken by itself, can be one of two things: either it implies that an absolute value is accorded to the form which the world is about to assume in the immediate future, in which case it is the opposite of hope, namely a form of presumption which only recognises that which can be controlled and manipulated, or which treats that which is not subject to our control or calculations as though it were so. Alternatively this attitude signifies despair, a state in which nothing more is hoped for, and therefore everything is absolutely negated because there is nothing final or definitive, or because nothing of this kind exists at all. But to subject the structures of this world too to constant reappraisal and criticism is *one* of the concrete forms of Christian hope which, as the courage of self-commitment to the incalculable and uncontrollable, must never hold fast to anything in this worldly life in such a way that it is as though without it man would be cast headlong into an absolute void. Hope commands man in the very moment in which, far more clearly than hitherto, he actually becomes the fashioner of his world, not only to let go of that which is taken away from him, but more than this actively to renounce that which, in the light of the limitless future which hope opens up to him, he recognises as provisional, and which, because of this, he can also understand to be dispensable already in this present time.

It is strange that we Christians, who have to achieve the radical commitment of hope in which we venture upon that which is incalculable and uncontrollable in the absolute future, have incurred the suspicion both in the minds of others and in our own that so far as we are concerned the will to guard and preserve is the basic virtue of life. In reality, however, the sole 'tradition' which Christianity precisely as the people of God *on pilgrimage* has acquired on the way is the command to hope in the absolute promise and—in order that thereby this task may not remain at the level merely of a facile ideology of ideas—to set out ever anew from the social structures which have become petrified, old and empty. Precisely *in what* this hope is to be brought to its fulness in the concrete in an exodus which is constantly renewed in this way, precisely *what* the Christian is to hold firm to (for this too is in fact possible)—because his hope also divests the future, even within the temporal dimension, of any false appearance of being the absolute future—this is something which 'theoretic' faith cannot answer as a simple deduction following from its own tenets. This concrete imperative is not merely the result of applying the theory of faith in practice. It would be just as wrong to hold this as to say that faith as such, and by itself, transforms the general promise into that special and particular one which is only realised in the original and underivable act of hope. But this hope summons the Christian and Christianity to venture upon this imperative, underivable in each case, in which they have constantly to decide anew between whether they are to defend the present which they alread possess, or to embark upon the exodus into the unforeseeable future. This is something which hope can do, for hope itself has in fact already all along achieved something which is even greater. In it man has surrendered himself to that which is absolutely and eternally uncontrollable and incalculable by any powers of his. In the power of this greater hope he also possesses the lesser hope, namely the courage to transform the 'framework of secular life', as the Council puts it, and the converse too is no less true. In this lesser hope the greater one is made real.

There remain, therefore, faith, hope and love—these three. But the greatest of these is love. So says Paul. But we could also translate this: 'Faith, hope and love constitute that which is definitive and final.' Perhaps it has been shown that hope is not simply the attitude of one who is weak and at the same time hungering for a fulfilment that has yet to be achieved, but rather the courage to commit oneself in thought and deed to the incomprehensible and the uncontrollable which permeates our existence, and, as the future to which it is open, sustains it. Perhaps it has also been shown that such courage has the power to dare more than what can be arrived at merely by planning and calculations. Perhaps it has been shown that in the final and definitive consummation hope still prevails and endures, because this definitive consummation is God.

6. Unity of the Love of Neighbor and Love of God*

The anonymous Christian makes his act of implicit surrender to God through the categorical knowledge of the world which structures his individual acts. Nevertheless, a basic intentionality, a fundamental option, runs through the categorical acts by which the human subject responds to the people and things which he encounters in his world. His fundamental choice may be to respond *to these people and things* as they deserve. *On the other hand, his fundamental choice may be to subject them to his own egotism and make them simply instruments for his own selfish satisfac-*

* From *Theological Investigations*, vol. VI, pp. 236–38, 245–47.

tion. The first basic choice contains in its perduring intentionality a loving surrender to a transcendent order of truth and value whose ground is God. The second basic choice is the fundamental choice of self, that fundamental rejection of the true order of values which Augustine calls concupiscentia *or self-love.* Concupiscentia *is the contrary of Augustinian* caritas *which is a loving response to the universal order of values and its founder, the Word of God.*

Once we have understood the intentionality of these two fundamental choices of attitude, we can see that genuine love of our neighbor is *implicitly love of God. Furthermore, we can also recognize that our explicit love of our neighbor rather than our implicit love of God holds the primary place in our attention. Thus our conscious love of our neighbor is the explicit act through which our implicit love of God is exercised.*

As many contemporary phenomenologists have done, Rahner has seen in the Augustinian two-fold love the basic exercise of freedom through which the historical human subject chooses himself in his choice of attitude toward the realm of values. Since the realm of values is the realm of truth, the human subject can only choose himself authentically *by loving submission to the order of values. With Augustine, Rahner can say that man's love is the weight by which he is borne wherever he is borne*—amor meus pondus meum. *For response to the realm of values unites man to the world and to God, while refusal of this response separates man from both in selfish isolation. Furthermore, since Rahner holds that the economic Trinity dwells in the justified soul as Uncreated Grace, Rahner can say with Augustine that a genuine response to the realm of values comes from the love of God living and working in his heart.*

Rahner's theology of charity has combined the phenomenological ontology of Heidegger's authentic human subject, who lets the world of being manifest itself through his authentic self-choice, with the metaphysics of the love of God which Rahner inherited from Augustine and Bonaventure.

The tradition of the schools in Catholic theology has already held fast for a long time and this unanimously to the fact that the specific Christian love of neighbour is both in potency and in act a moment of the infused supernatural theological virtue of *caritas* by which we love God in his Spirit for his own sake and in direct community with him. This means, therefore, that the love of neighbour is not merely the preparation, effect, fruit and touchstone of the love of God but is itself an act of this love of God itself; in other words, it is at least an act within that total believing and hoping surrender of man to God which we call love and which alone justifies man, i.e. hands him over to God, because, being supported by the loving self-communication of God in the uncreated grace of the Holy Spirit, it really unites man with God, not as He is recognised by us but as

He is in Himself in His absolute divinity. Three things must not be overlooked in connection with this thesis of scholastic theology which identifies the love of God and neighbour at least in their supernatural potency of the one infused supernatural theological virtue of *caritas*. (1) Scholastic theology does *not* overlook (in principle quite correctly) the fact that such a *caritas* can be also a mere impulse for certain modes of relationship to others by personal love which are not themselves formally acts of charity but merely its *actus imperati* restricting themselves more to a merely human dimension. (2) Scholastic theology, when giving a more precise interpretation of its radical thesis, will presumably often fall short of it, especially when it tries to give reasons for it; it will realise this thesis and will give reasons for it in such a way that it really remains a thesis in words only, and it will not really catch up with the existential, ontological presuppositions of this thesis. (3) If scholastic theology were asked explicitly whether this identity is absolutely valid, it would no doubt answer that every act of charity towards our neighbour is indeed formally, even though perhaps only implicitly, love of God since the act is done after all by definition 'for the sake of God loved with a supernatural love'; but scholastic theology would probably deny that conversely every act of the love of God is formally also a love of neighbour (even though it naturally includes also the *readiness* for this). Above all, most theologians today would still shrink from the proposition which gives our fundamental thesis its ultimate meaning, its real clarity and inescapable character, viz. that wherever a genuine love of man attains its proper nature and its moral absoluteness and depth, it is in addition always so underpinned and heightened by God's saving grace that it is also love of God, whether it be explicitly considered to be such a love by the subject or not.

Yet this is the direction in which the understanding of the thesis of identity as it is meant here leads us, since we hold it to be objectively correct and of basic significance for the Christian self-understanding of the future. What is meant by this requres a more detailed even though unavoidably still very summary explanation.

LOVE AS A REFLECTED AND EXPLICIT MODE OF ACTION AND AS AN UNCONCEPTUALISED TRANSCENDENTAL HORIZON OF ACTION

If we are to keep our ideas clear and avoid the most gross misunderstandings of the envisaged thesis from the very start, it is first of all necessary to distinguish in a human spiritual act between its explicit object represented in a determined concept and category, which is envisaged in a systematic way both by the intellect and will, on the one hand, and the *a priori* formal object, the transcendental horizon or 'space' within which a determined individual object is encountered, on the other hand. The

transcendental horizon is, on the one hand, the subjective possibility for the individual object to show itself at all; it is, as it were, the system of co-ordinates within which the classified object is given its place and which makes it comprehensible. On the other hand, the transcendental horizon is that which is itself given only in the encounter with the object of a concretely historical experience (it itself in transcendental experience), which of course does not mean that this experienced transcendental horizon of the categorised individual experience must be for this reason already systematically, explicitly and objectively represented and named. The latter is, of course, not usually the case. Indeed, even where this transcendental horizon objective knowledge is reflected on and where it is therefore systematised, conceptually represented and named, and hence is itself made the explicit object of knowledge, this happens once more in virtue of this same horizon which as such must once more be given in an unconscious manner. The representation of its concept cannot dispense with this horizon itself in its unconscious exercise.

This distinction being presupposed, it must be said, of course, that not every act of the love of God is also a formal act of love of neighbour, if and in so far as the love of neighbour means an act in which our neighbour is envisaged and loved as the conscious object in its categorised and conceptual representation. If one relates oneself explicitly by prayer, trust and love to God, then this is in *this* sense an act of love of God and not an act of love of neighbour. Moreoever, measured by the object, such an act of love of God has, of course, a higher dignity than an act of reflected love of neighbour. Yet where the whole 'transcendental' depth of interhuman love is realised and represented (which, as has been said, *can* at least be *caritas*, as is quite certain from tradition), there such a love is also necessarily a conscious love of God and has God as its reflex motive (even though this is of course true once more in very different degrees of clarity). In this case our neighbour, and he himself, must then also be really loved and must be the formal object and motive of this love, no matter how one may explain the unity of the two then given motives. (The neighbour, through God's love for him, is 'one' with God, etc.) Yet this still leaves open the other question which also occupies us here, viz. whether all interhuman love, provided only that it has its own moral radicality, is also *caritas* (i.e. love also of God), since it is orientated towards God, not indeed by an explicitly categorised motive but (and this is the question) by its inescapably given transcendental horizon, which is given gratuitously by God's always prevenient saving grace.

The (naturally and supernaturally) transcendental experience of God which is also the necessary presupposition of the historical revelation of the Word and both is and remains its supporting ground, is possible only in and through man who has *already* (in logical priority) experienced the human Thou by his intramundane transcendental experience (of his *a priori* reference to the Thou) and by his categorised experience (of his concrete encounter with the concrete Thou) and who only *in this way* can exercise the (at last) transcendental experience of his reference to the absolute mystery (i.e. God). The classical thesis of scholastic theology (against ontologism and the innate idea of God) which maintains that God can be known only *a posteriori* from the created world, does not ultimately mean to imply (if it is properly understood) that man merely comes upon God like any object given to him purely accidentally (e.g. this flower or Australia) with which he might just as well not be concerned (from the point of view of the *a priori* structure of his knowledge) but it does mean that the transcendentally original *a priori* experience of his original reference to God and thus of God himself (an experience which must in some measure also be objectified in categories) can be made only in an always already achieved going-out into the world which, understood as the world of man, is primarily the people *with whom* he lives. Precisely because the original reference towards God is of a transcendental kind and hence does not fall into any cateogry but is given in the infinite reference of the spirit of man beyond every mere object of his personal and material surroundings, the *original* experience of God (as distinct from his separating representation in an individual concept) is always given in a 'worldly' experience. This, however, is only present originally and totally in the communication with a 'Thou'.

Since every conceptual reflection on the transcendental conditions of the possibility of knowledge and freedom is itself based once more on these same conditions then even the *explicit* religious act in which God becomes the reflex theme of knowledge and love is once more underpinned and taken up by that act which offers a transcendental, inclusive experience of God (of a natural-supernatural kind) and this *by the fact* that this act—in our turning towards the people we live with, and therefore in our explicit communication with them—lets us also experience unreflectedly the transcendental conditions of this act (i.e. the transcendental reference to God and the transcendental openness to the human Thou).

The act of love of neighbour is, therefore, the only categorised and original act in which man attains the whole of reality given to us in categories, with regard to which he fulfils himself perfectly correctly and *in which* he always already makes the transcendental and direct experience of God by grace. The reflected religious act as *such* is and remains secondary in comparison with this. It has indeed, as has already been said, a higher dignity than the reflected act of love of neighbour, if and in so far as the latter is measured by the particular explicit, conceptually represented object of the act in question. Measured by its 'horizon' or its transcendental possibility, it has the same dignity, the same 'draught' and the same radicality as the act of explicit love of neighbour, since both acts

are necessarily supported by the (experienced but unreflected) reference both to God and to the intramundane Thou and this by grace (of the infused *caritas*), i.e. by that on which the explicit acts both of our relationship to God and of our love of neighbour 'for God's sake' reflect. Yet this does not alter the fact that the primary basic act of man who is always already 'in the world' is always an act of the love of his neighbour and *in this* the original love of God is realised in so far as in this basic act are also accepted the conditions of its possibility, one of which is the reference of man to God when supernaturally elevated by grace.

LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR AS THE PRIMARY ACT OF LOVE OF GOD

We are now in a position to give a direct answer to the basic question of our whole reflections. This was the question about the identity of the love of God and the love of neighbour. More exactly, it was the question about whether the love of neighbour understood as *caritas* is ultimately only a secondary moral act (one among many) which more or less proceeds objectively from the love of God as an '*actus imperatus*'. In other words, does the love of neighbour have God for its 'motive' (just as in the explicit love of God) in such a way that this love of neighbour really 'loves' God alone and hence, in accordance with the will of God who is really loved, is well disposed towards its neighbour and does good to him? *Or* is there a more radical unity between the love of God and of neighbour (taken as *caritas*) in such a way that the love of God itself is always also already love of neighbour in which our neighbour is really loved himself? We can now answer: the categorised explicit love of neighbour is the primary act of the love of God. The love of God unreflectedly but really and always intends God in supernatural transcendentality in the love of neighbour as such, and even the explicit love of God is still borne by that opening in trusting love to the whole of reality which takes place in the love of neighbour. It is radically true, i.e. by an ontological and not merely 'moral' or psychological necessity, that whoever does not love the brother whom he 'sees', also cannot love God whom he does not see, and that one can love God whom one does not see only *by* loving one's visible brother lovingly.

XI

Moral Theology

1. A Formal Existential Ethics*

Although Rahner rejects situation ethics as a "massive nominalism," he admits that its impact on Catholic moral theology has been beneficial in many respects. The situationists' attack on universal moral norms has forced the Catholic moralists to reexamine the grounding both of the universal prescriptions of the natural law and of the Church's right to impose universal obligations on the faithful.

Transcendental anthropology can ground a number of natural law prescriptions on the unrevisable a priori structure of conscious human action. Nevertheless, the number of natural law prescriptions which are capable of such transcendental grounding is by no means coextensive with the number of prescriptions which moral theology has traditionally considered to be unrevisable prescriptions of the natural law.

Furthermore, although the Church's essential connection with Christ's salvific and revealing mission justifies her right to impose universal moral obligations, there is more to moral theology than the grounding and clarification of the Church's general moral teaching. The situationists' stress on the importance of individual moral decisions has forced Catholic theologians to admit that the traditional manuals have practically ignored the theology of uniquely individual moral obligations. Moral theologians have been content simply to subsume individual acts under universal laws as typical "cases." They have given practically no consideration to strictly individual commands, manifesting the divine will concerning either individual acts or concrete modalities of acts which, while not constituting a universal law, possess a genuinely obligatory *character for the concrete moral agent to whom they are communicated.*

Transcendental anthropology can readily show how these strictly individual divine commands are possible. The human subject's knowledge of

*From *Theological Investigations*, vol. II, pp. 218-22, 224-29, 231-34.

concrete imperatives of his historical action in the midst of Christian existence. The Christian accepts this Christian responsibility for concrete decision in his historical situation; he takes this responsibility seriously as being obedience to the absolutely binding will of the living God; yet he does not turn this decision into an ideology since, without holding everything to be relative in a quietistic or sceptical way, he always lodges his decision again within the providence of the incontrollable Lord of history, in whose grace the success and failure of this decision can be saved and become availing unto salvation, and who can expect other decisions in conformity to his will from other ages and indeed enable men to take them.

(b) If Christianity is not an ideology—if, in other words, the imperatives and concrete decisions about intramundane actions and positions which Christians may and must have, must not be turned into an ideology—then there must be tolerance among Christians as an expression of the necessary avoidance of particular ideologies in the Church. Such tolerance is necessary because it is not to be expected that this choice of concrete imperatives, this interpretation of the historical moment and the decision for a particular path of history, will always be seen to be the same for all Christians. The struggle between such different decisions will be utterly unavoidable even among Christians; it cannot be avoided by any purely theoretical debates since this would presuppose that, at least in principle, the concrete imperatives for the here and now can be derived from universal principles and from a purely statistical, neutral analysis of the particular situation; such a possibility is a rationalistic error, since every decision for a concrete action adds a non-derivative factor to the *a priori* intuition of essences, viz. the choice of concrete existence from among many possibilities. Precisely because we cannot avoid a struggle, i.e. a real competition between opposite tendencies of realisation beyond the plane of the purely theoretical, there must necessarily be among Christians and in the Church what is meant by tolerance: understanding for the other's position, fairness in battle even when it is conducted seriously, that rare unity in determination with which one fights for one's own position, and the readiness to allow oneself to be defeated and to remain in the totality of the Church which decides differently.

From what has been said above about anonymous Christianity, as being the very opposite to an understanding of Christianity as an ideology, it follows then that there must be a similar attitude of positive tolerance towards non-Christians; this tolerance distinguishes the firmness and missionary zeal of the Faith from the fanaticism which is and must be characteristic of an ideology because only by such fanaticism can an ideology safeguard its strict boundaries against the greater reality surrounding it; Christianity in contrast is of its very nature commanded to look for itself in the other and to trust that it will once more meet itself and its greater fullness in the other.

2. The Christian Future of Man*

As an abiding witness to the world's Absolute Future, the Church is an eschatological community of supernatural faith and hope. The Church's consciousness that she is the definitive community of the Incarnate Word is her assurance that she will continue to exist as an institutional community until the history of God's identification with the world through the Incarnation of the Word reaches its culmination at the Parousia.

The Christian does not believe, however, that only members of the institutional Church can work effectively for the Absolute Future. In his Providence God can use anonymous Christians to achieve his purpose, and the Church's assurance that she will perdure as an institutional community does not mean that she will not be a diaspora Church, a small minority of explicit believers scattered among a secularized population which has little explicit knowledge of Christ or conscious identification with his eschatological community.

Christianity is a religion of the future. It can indeed be understood only in the light of the future which it conceives as an absolute future gradually approaching the individual and humanity as a whole. Its interpretation of the past takes place in and through the progressive unveiling of an approaching future, and the meaning and significance of the present is based on the hopeful openness to the approach of the absolute future. After all, Christianity understands the world within the framework of salvation *history*; this means, however, that properly speaking and in the last analysis it is not a doctrine of a static existence of the world and of man which, remaining always the same, repeats itself in an of-itself-empty period of time, without actually progressing; rather, it is the proclamation of an absolute becoming which does not continue into emptiness but really attains the absolute future, which is indeed already moving *within* it; for, this becoming is so truly distinguished from its yet-to-come future and fulfilment (without implying pantheism, therefore) that the infinite reality of this future is nevertheless already active within it and supports it as an inner constitutive element of this becoming, even though it is independent of this becoming itself (and in this way every form of primitive deism and any merely external relationship of God and the world are

*From *Theological Investigations*, vol. VI, pp. 60-63, 65-68.

eliminated from the very start, and the truth *in* pantheism is preserved). The real nature of man can therefore be defined precisely as the possibility of attaining the absolute future, i.e. not this or that state which is always embraced and thus made relative again by some other and greater future still to come and yet imposed as a task, which would then also be recognised as such a relative future. Christianity, therefore, is the religion of becoming, of history, self-transcendence, and of the future. For Christianity, everything given is something imposed as a task, and everything is understandable only by what is yet to come. The tending towards a still outstanding future has indeed its own measure and a nature behind it which projects a horizon of the possible in front of it, and also a law in accordance with which it takes up position. But since the absolute fullness of the divine reality is the ultimate reason, and since this very God who starts everything by giving himself as the end is the ultimate goal, any understanding of being and nature conforms to reality only if it seeks to understand in the light of that future which unveils the beginning for the first time.

Christianity is the religion of the *absolute* future. We have really already indicated the meaning of this in the previous paragraph. Man (and humanity) is the reality which knowingly and willingly is always ahead of itself, the reality which constitutes itself by projecting its future, or better, by projecting itself (i.e. its nature) towards *it* (or, since it is a question of the projecting of the *absolute* future which *per definitionem* cannot really be planned and formed: lets this future approach him). If this is so, then the decisive question for a metaphysical anthropology will be whether the future, towards which man projects himself, is merely a categorial future, i.e. one whose single and distinct, and therefore spatio-temporally bound elements form this future in combination (possibly planned and manipulated, possibly also always more complex), so that being something finite, it is always still basically encompassed by a further empty future possibility, *or* whether the unsurpassable, infinite future as such comes towards man and hence the possible space of the future and the future in the present become identical.

With regard to this question, Christianity opts for the second possibility: the absolute future is the true and real future of man; *it* is a real possibility for him, it is offered to him, it is something coming towards him, it is the future state and its acceptance is the ultimate task of his existence. Since the only way in which man can be concerned about a feasible future which has a spatio-temporal point and which is constructed out of the partial elements of his world, is by passing beyond it into the basic totality of unbounded possibility, man's intramundane care always contains (at least implicitly, and often perhaps also deliberately pushed aside) the question about the possible encounter with this infinite totality

as such; in short, with the absolute future. Christianity answers this question in the sense that this absolute future is not only the always still absent condition of the possibility of a categorised intramundane planning of, hoping for and attaining of the future, but also becomes as such the communicated, attained future of man itself.

Christianity therefore poses man the *one* question as to how he wants basically to understand himself: as a being only acting *in* the whole but having nothing to do with the whole as such, even through projection towards the whole as an asymptotic horizon is always the condition of the possibility of his knowledge and action; or as a receptively acting being *of* the whole, a being which has something to do even with this condition for his knowledge, action and hope as *such* and which allows this totality, the absolute future itself, to approach it and to become an event for it in the action by which it creates the future within the bounds of this totality. This ultimately is the only question posed by Christianity. It follows from the very nature of the totality of the absolute future that this totality cannot really become the object of a proper classification or of a technical manipulation, but remains the unspeakable mystery which precedes and surpasses all individual cognition and each individual action *on* the world.

A mere glance at the current concepts of Christian dogmatic theology in which this thesis of Christianity as the religion of the absolute future is expressed, will show us that Christianity really understands itself in this way. Absolute future is just another name for what is really meant by 'God'. For the absolute future by its very concept cannot exist as a future which is manufactured out of finite, individual material and by classifiable combination; but it cannot be a merely empty possibility in the sense of being the not-yet-real, even when seen as the end and warrant of the dynamism of the world's and man's movement into the future, or as the sustaining hope; if it is the sustaining ground of the dynamism towards the future, then it must be the absolute fullness of reality. In point of fact the absolute future understood *in this way* is precisely what we call God. Conversely, from what has been said, there follows a twofold conclusion concerning God. Firstly, it follows that he is known precisely *as* the absolute future; in other words, he is not one object among many others with which one is concerned as individual objects within the unbounded system of co-ordinates of knowledge and planning action for the future, but rather is the ground of this whole projection towards the future. Knowledge of God is therefore always included when man projects himself towards the future, especially when man gives no name to this whole but tries to leave it unspecified. Secondly, God—understood as the absolute future—is basically and necessarily the unspeakable mystery, since the original totality of the absolute future, towards which man projects

himself, can never really be expressed in the precise characteristics proper to it by determinations taken from intramundane, classifiable experience; thus he is and remains essentially a mystery, i.e. he is known *as* the essentially transcendent, of whom it is of course said that, understood precisely as this mystery of infinite fullness, he is the self-communicating absolute future of man.

Even though it is the religion of the absolute future, a religion which remains neutral in the face of the individual and collective aims of man and leaves them free, Christianity has an inestimable significance for this movement towards genuine and meaningful earthly goals. Christianity, it is true, does not maintain that only *its* followers can serve this earthly future objectively and with the involvement of the whole man. This would be no more true than to say that it regards itself as the sole genuine bearer of such intramundane aims for the future or that it disputes the fact of having been in quite a few cases an actual obstacle to such efforts on account of the historico-ecclesiastical forms in which it has manifested itself. There are obviously men who—without being manifestly Christians—spend themselves in selfless service for the welfare and social development of man. Christianity, it is true, maintains by its very teaching about the oneness of the love of God and of neighbour that whenever someone serves man and his dignity lovingly and in *absolute* selflessness, he affirms God at least implicitly and also works out his salvation before God by his affirmation of absolute moral values and imperatives . . . but it does not maintain in any sense that this is possible only in someone who is explicitly a Christian.

Nevertheless, Christianity even taken as the thematically explicit religion which sees God as the absolute future, has great significance for intramundane society and its goals. By its hope for an absolute future, Christianity defends man against the temptation of engaging in the justified intramundane efforts for the future with *such* energy that every generation is always sacrificed in favour of the next, so that the future becomes a Moloch before whom the man existing at present is butchered for the sake of some man who is never real and always still to come. Christianity makes it comprehensible why even *that* man preserves his dignity and intangible significance who can no longer make any tangible contribution to the approach to the intramundane future. Christianity lends ultimate radical significance to the work for this intramundane future: it declares in its teaching on the unity of the love of God and of neighbour that the positive relationship to man is an indispensable, essential element and the irreplaceable means for the relationship to God, the absolute future (and 'salvation'). If, however, this man who is to be loved cannot exist except as someone who makes projects with a view to his future, then this means that the love of God understood as the love of neighbour cannot exist without the will to *this* man and hence also to his

intramundane future. This does not ideologise this will or estrange it from itself, but merely makes it explicit in its absolute dignity and in its radical nature as an obligation.

[Christians] believe, however, that God sends himself precisely in this way to men as the absolute future for man, and that he can and must therefore be named and expected by man. This is what they understand by religion. Religion for them is not the solution of those questions arising in this world, as it were functionally, *between* individual realities in their mutual relationships; it is the solution of the question which refers to the *whole* of these many different realities. Since this question will always remain, religion too—Christianity—will always remain, since its nature consists precisely in not confusing the question of the world with the question *in* the world.

This permanent religion will always remain as an institutional religion. Since man must *also* accomplish, in a reflex way, even his transcendental relation to the one totality of his existence, his world and his future, he has to accomplish it also in conceptual categories, in concrete actions, in the social order, briefly: in a Church. He cannot do it in any other way. If, therefore, the religion of the future is to be present always, then it will always be there as a social quantity. This quantity in its historical concreteness will always depend *also* on the profane order of secular society. Since Christianity has no concretely binding view of this profane society and is also incapable of prophesying about it, it cannot make any prediction about the *concrete form* of its own socio-ecclesiological structure of the future.

Since Christianity—however much it knows itself to be the religion which in itself is meant for all men—knows in the *very* nature of things and in its *eschatology* that it will be a controversial and even rejected institution until the dawn of the absolute future itself, this reason alone suffices to prevent it from counting on ecclesiastical and secular society ever becoming even merely materially identified. It itself is after all the socially organised community of free belief in the absolute future, of a belief therefore which is necessarily based on the individual decision of each person. Hence it cannot expect in any way that all men will ever *in actual fact* belong to it. Since the earthly future of mankind, however, tends more and more towards a social organisation of mankind as one and as a whole, and not to historically and geographically limited cultures particular to each individual people, a situation is rapidly approaching when everyone will be the neighbour of everyone else. This means that in future there also will be no more *homogeneous* regional strata and societies in the Christian sense. In the historical and social unity of the one humanity, Christianity will therefore be everywhere as well as being everywhere merely a part of humanity, since presumably embracing only a minority.