

THE THEOLOGY OF GOD'S SELF-GIFT

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CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY is fairly well agreed that the key concept in the supernatural and Christian economy is that of God's self-gift to men, particularly in the three cardinal mysteries of that economy: the Incarnation of God's Son, the life of grace, and the vision of God. More important than any created gifts of grace, even incomparably so, is the divine self-communication, the uncreated Gift. To explain or express the nature of the divine self-gift, one current of theological thought follows up Fr. M. de la Taille's concept of the supernatural proposed in 1928,¹ and looks to an analogy drawn from the composition of finite being, the analogy of act and potency, form (or quasi form) and matter (quasi matter). These basic concepts, it is believed, offer an apt expression of the mystery of God's self-communication to men.²

This approach has been challenged of late by Fr. B. Lonergan in two of his manuals, on Christ and on the Trinity.³ He refuses the analogy drawn from created things and their composition (essence and *esse*, matter and form) as unsuited for the purpose, and looks instead for an analogy in what we naturally know of God in whom being and knowledge and willing are one. His basic idea is that, in the case of the Incarnation, the divine infinite *esse* of the Son is the reason and intrinsic constitutive cause of the hypostatic union, on which, however, there follows of necessity a secondary *esse*, a substantial act, by way of *terminus* (terminating result). So, too, in the divine mission of the Holy Spirit or the divine indwelling through grace, His relation of origin constitutes His mission with, as a necessary condition, the *terminus ad extra*. In a word, instead of speaking of

¹ M. de la Taille, S.J., "Actuation créé par Acte incréé," *Recherches de science religieuse* 18 (1928) 253-68; English by C. Vollert, S.J., *The Hypostatic Union and Created Actuation by Uncreated Act* (West Baden, 1952) pp. 29-41 (referred to as *Hypostatic Union*).

² Cf. our article "Created Actuation by the Uncreated Act: Difficulties and Answers," *Theological Studies* 18 (1957) 60-92.

³ B. Lonergan, S.J., *De constitutione Christi ontologica et psychologica* (Rome, 1956) esp. pp. 63-82; *Divinarum personarum conceptio analogica* (Rome, 1957) esp. pp. 206-15. We refer to these two works as *CC* and *DP*.

(uncreated) Act and (created) actuation or of divine quasi form and created foundation of the union, Fr. Lonergan speaks of the (uncreated) intrinsic constitutive cause of the divine self-gift and the (created) terminating result.

For the purpose of a better theological understanding of the divine self-gift, as far as human concepts can give a glimpse of the mystery, we propose here to compare and contrast briefly the two approaches. After recalling Fr. de la Taille's concept of the divine self-gift, and expounding as faithfully as possible Fr. Lonergan's views (it is not always easy to grasp his mind), we will try to see where the two conceptions agree and where they differ, reviewing at the same time Fr. Lonergan's objections against the first approach. A recent study of Fr. K. Rahner on the theology of the Incarnation may serve as a further illustration.⁴

ANALOGY FROM FINITE BEING

In the mind of Fr. de la Taille,⁵ the composition in the finite being of act and potency opens a way for conceiving and expressing the self-gift of God to the creature. Every creature, and particularly the rational creature, is in obediential potency to its Creator. The pure and uncreated Act, God, because pure and unmixed with any potency, can communicate Himself as Act or perfection to the obediential potency of the rational creature, not as the form of the creature (this would suppose imperfection in God) but as its Act (or, as Fr. Rahner says, its quasi form), and even then not as "received" or limited by the creature's limited capacity, but as actuating (without informing) by a created or limited communication of Himself. A created actuation which is the reality in the creature of the self-communication of the Act (not a link standing between the two) is received in the obediential potency of the creature, and thus the creature is really transformed or perfected by and united with the uncreated Act.

This concept of the divine self-communication, Fr. de la Taille held, applies to the three key mysteries of our faith. In the Incarnation

⁴ K. Rahner, S.J., "Zur Theologie der Menschwerdung," *Catholica* 12 (1958) 1-16, reprinted in *Schriften zur Theologie* 4 (Einsiedeln, 1960) 137-55.

⁵ We may abstain here from detailed references to de la Taille and in general refer to *art. cit.* above n. 2.

of the Word, "the act of divine existence, according as this act is personal to the Word,"⁶ is communicated to the sacred humanity assumed in the hypostatic union. The created actuation by the uncreated Act, a secondary *esse* as actuation but not as act, is, in the humanity, the expression of this self-communication, and it takes the place of the humanity's own connatural act of existence. Thus this humanity exists by the very act of existence of the Word, it has no *esse* of its own; the self-gift of the Word to this humanity is an assumption of it into the unity of the Person.

In the vision, the uncreated Act gives Himself to the beatified mind as its immediate object, in a created actuation (or quasi information) which is the light of glory. In the life of grace, the uncreated Act unites Himself to the soul, Essence to essence, actuating in a created actuation the potency of the soul as remote principle of supernatural activity. Both of these divine self-gifts are in the intentional order: God gives Himself as object, not as subject as in the hypostatic union; both entail, as last disposition for the divine self-gift and its immediate result, a created actuation: the light of glory or the created gift of sanctifying grace. The uncreated Act, without being received or limited, perfects the mind or the soul by His self-communication which, as created actuation, is received in the obediencial potency of the creature.

The analogy therefore of composition of act and potency, in the mind of Fr. de la Taille, illustrates the union of the uncreated Act with the creature. God as infinite Act communicates Himself to the obediencial potency of the creature, and the result is, not that He is received in that potency (He cannot be so received or limited), but that the created communication of Himself is received; this received communication means that the uncreated Act unites Himself to the creature immediately so as to perfect or divinize it.

ANALOGY FROM NATURAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD:

HYPOSTATIC UNION

Fr. Lonergan considers the above analogy insufficient for a proper expression of God's self-gift (we shall come to his objections pres-

⁶ *Hypostatic Union*, p. 34.

ently).⁷ It is from what we know about God by our natural reason that we must start—an approach which apparently is the exact opposite of the former. We briefly sum up what he says in order to “explain” the mystery of the Incarnation.⁸

Starting Point

We know by our reason that the infinite God knows and wills by one same act of knowing and one same act of willing both what is necessary and what is contingent; and because His acts of knowing and of willing are not distinct from His act of being, He also, by the same act of being, is what He is of necessity and what He becomes contingently. And after noting that, in the things of God, “reason” means “that by which God knows and wills and is” and that the cause of two united things is the cause of their union, Fr. Lonergan goes on to say: just as God’s knowing and willing of what is necessary and of what is contingent are really one single act, so also, to apply this to what the faith tells us about the Incarnation, “in the Word, ‘being God’ and ‘being man’ are really united because the Word by the same act of being is God and man.” Thus he comes to the conclusion: “The divine *esse* of the Word itself founds and constitutes the real union of the divine and the human natures, because by this one *esse* one and the same person is God of necessity and became man contingently.”⁹

To sum up: because in God to know and to will and to be what is

⁷ We do not attempt here to summarize the twenty-seven points of Fr. Lonergan’s deduction from “the principle of the composition of the composite” (CC, pp. 77–82). For our purpose it should suffice to state, as accurately and clearly as possible, first the starting point of his reasoning, and then the three main points of his system (indicated by him): the constitutive cause of the (hypostatic) union, the created term *ad extra*, and the relation between the two. We shall do this first for his study of the hypostatic union, and then briefly for his study of the divine mission of the Holy Spirit through grace. This should suffice for the comparison and contrast with the corresponding three points in de la Taille’s concept: the uncreated Act (communicating Himself); the created actuation, or created grace of union or created sanctifying grace; and the relation between the two, the latter being both the ultimate disposition for and the result of the former (cf. *Hypostatic Union*, p. 37).

⁸ CC, pp. 69–82.

⁹ CC, pp. 69 f.: “Naturarum ergo divinae et humanae unionem realem fundat atque constituit ipsum Verbi esse divinum quia per hoc unum esse una eademque persona et necessario Deus est et contingenter homo factus est” (p. 70).

necessary, and to know and to will and to be what is contingent, mean one act of knowing and willing and being and not two, it is by one and the same act of being that the Word is both God and man (God of necessity, man contingently), and that one act is the intrinsic and constitutive cause of the hypostatic union of the two natures in one person. In terms of divine self-gift we may translate: it is by becoming man contingently in virtue of the same act of divine *esse* by which He is God, or by taking unto Himself the humanity so that it exists by His own divine act of existence, that the Word gives Himself to the human nature.

We must now detail this summary statement, after Fr. Lonergan, in three of its aspects: the constitutive cause of the union, the created term of the Word's "contingent" being, and the relation between the two.

Intrinsic Constitutive Cause of Union

Fr. Lonergan explains in what way the divine *esse* of the Word is the cause of the hypostatic union of the Word alone. The divine *esse* of the Word, though one with the *esse* of the Father and of the Holy Spirit and with the divine Essence, is the intrinsic cause of the Incarnation of the Son alone, because the triune God knows and wills that the Son alone should become flesh in such a manner that the union should be in the Person and according to the Person. For since that knowing and that willing are identically "being," they produce whatever created realities are necessary for the Incarnation, and by them the Son becomes hypostatically united through His infinite *esse*.¹⁰

Accordingly, the reason why the Word alone is incarnate is that the triune God so knows and wills (we know the fact from revelation) and therefore so causes it to be. This can be so because for God to know and to will and to be is one act. The constitutive cause or reason of the hypostatic union of the Word and the flesh, or why the same Word is God and man, is the infinite *esse* of the Son. By this infinite

¹⁰ CC, pp. 70 f.: "Si ergo Deus trinus intelligit et vult solum Filium ita incarnari ut unio sit et in persona et secundum personam, per hoc intelligere et velle et (1) producuntur ea finita quae ad incarnationem requirantur, cum Deus sit agens per intellectum, et (2) constituitur ipse Filius ut hypostaticè unitus secundum esse suum infinitum, cum hoc esse nihil sit aliud ac illud intelligere et velle."

act of existence He is both what He is of necessity and what He becomes contingently, viz., God and man. By this Act of existence, therefore, the union of the two natures is accomplished in one Person and according to one Person. Therefore, the infinite *esse* of the Son is the intrinsic constitutive cause of the hypostatic union.

Created Term of Union

But besides the intrinsic cause of the union, there must be also a created term. Why? Because what is true of God or of a divine Person in a contingent manner requires a created term *ad extra*. (If there were nothing new *ad extra*, we would say that, since there is nothing new in God, what is predicated of God contingently would be purely nominal.) The union of the Word with the flesh therefore entails of necessity such a term. Fr. Lonergan explains and proves by strict logical deduction what this term must be. It must be the real foundation of the real union of the humanity with the Word, a substantial and supernatural act of existence, created, of course, and distinct from the uncreated *esse* of the Word, and corresponding to the obediential potency which is the very essence of the human nature. And this substantial act of existing is received in the human nature so as to exclude from that nature its own connatural *esse*.¹¹

As we shall have to stress below, this created term of the union, absolutely necessary for the truth of the Incarnation, is singularly akin to the "created actuation" in the conception of Fr. de la Taille. Fr. Lonergan requires it in order that the Word can be truthfully said to have become man.¹² Without it there would be no Incarnation. (Yet he does not in any way allow, explicitly at any rate, that it pertains to the constitutive cause of the union; this latter is exclusively the uncreated *esse* of the Word.)

Relation between Intrinsic Cause and Extrinsic Term of Union

The intrinsic cause and the external term of the hypostatic union, Fr. Lonergan reasons, are correlatives,¹³ and for that reason, supposing

¹¹ CC, pp. 73-76.

¹² CC, pp. 73 f.: "... omne quod contingenter verum est de Deo vel de persona divina, adaequationem veritatis non habet nisi ponitur terminus quidam ad extra creatus. . . . Exigit ergo ipsa veritas incarnationis non solum causam constitutivam . . . sed etiam talem terminum ad extra productum. . . ."

¹³ CC, p. 77.

the Incarnation as a fact, they are of necessity together: no *assumere* without *assumi*, and vice versa. Because it is exclusively the uncreated *esse* of the Word that is the intrinsic cause of the hypostatic union, the term *ad extra*, of necessity required for it, is simply and absolutely (*simpliciter*) posterior to or consequent on the union. The infinite *esse* of the Word being absolutely independent and sufficient for everything,¹⁴ the term *ad extra* cannot be a previous or concomitant ontological condition of the union. Therefore, the secondary *esse* or substantial created act, received in the obediential potency of the humanity, follows on the union by which the Person in virtue of His infinite *esse* contingently makes Himself man, as a term *simpliciter* posterior, "just as the ultimate disposition for the form follows on the reception of the form."¹⁵ Being absolutely supernatural, this term may be called "grace of union," "to the extent that it is demanded by the constitutive cause of the union and follows on it."¹⁶

Accordingly, if we understand Fr. Lonergan correctly, there is a necessary connection between the constitutive cause of the hypostatic union and its extrinsic term: they are correlatives and unthinkable one without the other. But the term is ontologically in no way previous or concomitant to the union; it is consequent and posterior to the union, "as the last disposition to a form is to the infusion of the form."

In his conclusion Fr. Lonergan says that this extrinsic term does not differ from the secondary nonaccidental *esse* which St. Thomas allows in the *Quaestio disputata de unione Verbi incarnati*.¹⁷ (If so, then apparently neither does it differ from what Fr. de la Taille called the "created actuation": a secondary *esse* not as act but as actuation.¹⁸)

¹⁴ CC, p. 78: "... esse infinitum est absolute independens et ad omnia sufficiens." The statement, in its absoluteness, may be misleading. Even the Infinite cannot effect what is impossible. Even God cannot produce an effect in a creature without producing in the creature also the necessary adaptation or disposition for it. This remark should prepare for what will be said below concerning the relation between the "intrinsic constituent cause" of the union and the consequent term *ad extra*.

¹⁵ CC, p. 79.

¹⁶ CC, p. 79. This important concession seems to reduce or modify singularly the exclusiveness of the intrinsic constituent cause of the union. In a sense, while being *ad extra* (i.e., created and really distinct from God), the term produced pertains to the possibility of the hypostatic union: no such union is possible or thinkable without the adaptation or disposition of the humanity for that union by the created grace of union.

¹⁷ CC, p. 82.

¹⁸ *Hypostatic Union*, p. 40.

Application to Grace and Glory

In the same conclusion, Fr. Lonergan consistently applies the analogy from our natural knowledge of God in order to express God's self-gift in the life of grace and glory. At this point it will suffice briefly to indicate this application.¹⁹

In the life of grace, there is, besides the uncreated gift of the Holy Spirit (a union of the infinite perfection of God with the creature), the term of this divine self-gift, sanctifying grace, which is an accident received in the soul.²⁰ The intrinsic constitutive cause of the divine mission of the Holy Spirit is His very relation of origin from the Father and the Son, and there is no other constitutive cause of the inhabitation. But the mission, because it is a contingent fact, of necessity involves a created term *ad extra*, as the explanation of what is contingent in the divine mission, a term which is the consequent condition of the mission, not previous or concomitant.²¹

In the glory of the vision, the divine Essence "invades" the created intellect and takes the place of a (created) intelligible species. As in the hypostatic union and the inhabitation, this union of the infinite perfection of God with the creature is the intrinsic constitutive cause of the vision. Besides this, there is a created term, necessary for the vision to be real, which is the light of glory.²²

POINTS OF AGREEMENT AND OF CONTRAST

When comparing these two attempts at expressing the mystery of God's self-gift to men, one cannot help noticing a large area of agreement, despite the diversity of approach. In both of them the uncreated Gift comes first, and is the reason and explanation of all created gifts that may attend the divine self-communication. Both of them hold the indispensable necessity of the created gifts: in de la Taille's concept, in order that the self-communication of the uncreated Act should be real, and not merely nominal; in Lonergan's explanation, in order that what is predicated of God contingently should be true. The created gift in each of the three key mysteries of

¹⁹ We indicate here only what Fr. Lonergan mentions in *CC*, p. 82; further on we shall develop a little what he states at length in *DP*, pp. 210 ff.

²⁰ *CC*, p. 82.

²¹ Cf. *DP*, pp. 210-12.

²² *CC*, p. 82. In his manuals Fr. Lonergan had no occasion further to develop his theology of the divine self-gift in the vision. We need then not come back on this.

the supernatural economy is, for de la Taille, a created actuation, that is, both last disposition for and result of the self-communication of God; for Fr. Lonergan, a created term *ad extra* distinct from God, consequent on God's self-gift.

Different Approach

Within this very large margin of agreement there are also differences, resulting mainly, it would seem, from a basic difference in approach. Perhaps we might characterize this difference by the terms "static" and "dynamic."²³ Fr. de la Taille studies the supernatural reality of the divine self-gift in the first place *in facto esse*, as it exists statically. Fr. Lonergan studies it as it is *in fieri* or dynamically, for he considers in the first place the divine missions, thus naturally placing the emphasis on the divine Gift and inclining to reduce the role of the created gifts.²⁴

One may perhaps remain puzzled by Fr. Lonergan's insistence that it is the divine *esse* of the Word in the hypostatic union, or the divine relation of origin of the Holy Spirit in the mission of the state of grace, which is "the reason and intrinsic constitutive cause of the union" of God with the humanity of Christ or with the soul, to the exclusion of any concomitant or previous disposition on the part of the humanity or of the soul.²⁵ This insistence apparently intends to set aside Fr. de la Taille's idea of the created actuation, which is the concomitant and, in one respect, previous disposition of the creature for the self-gift of the uncreated Act. For Fr. de la Taille no less than for Fr. Lonergan, it is "the act of the divine existence, ac-

²³ The two terms are used here to indicate the predominant, not the exclusive, character of each approach.

²⁴ One might well ask whether Fr. Lonergan would not lessen this emphasis were he to write a theology of grace or of the vision, that is, of the creature in grace or in the vision.

²⁵ We hinted above in n. 14 at what seems to be the root of this exclusiveness. However true it may be that the divine *esse* of the Word alone intrinsically constitutes the union, in the sense that the Word incarnate *is* by His one divine *esse* both God and man, yet in His humanity there must be an adaptation for the union. This adaptation, it is true, is *ad extra* or extrinsic to the Word Himself (as Fr. Lonergan says more than once, the relation of the Word to the humanity is a relation of reason; cf. *CC*, p. 74), yet it is a disposition of the humanity that is absolutely indispensable for the intrinsic constitutive cause of the union to exert its causality. The unicity of the intrinsic constituent cause (uncreated) does not exclude but rather demands this role of the created grace of union.

ording as this act is personal to the Word, that is to say, inherited from the Father,"²⁶ which is the reason why "the incarnate Word, notwithstanding the duality of the natures, is something that is essentially one."²⁷ Yet, in de la Taille's mind, that act of divine existence does not account for the unity and duality, or union, except by being communicated to the humanity in what he calls a created actuation. By becoming man, the incarnate Word of necessity "changes" His humanity in the sense that its connatural *esse* is replaced by the (created) communication of the act of the divine existence—a secondary *esse*, not an act but an actuation. For Fr. Lonergan, this secondary *esse*, a substantial act, is no less necessary, but only as a term *ad extra* consequent on the Word becoming united to the humanity in a contingent manner.

Whence does this difference in concept arise? The very same reality is said to be, in one explanation, last disposition for and result of the union, because without it this union would not be real; in the other, it is called consequent term *ad extra*, in no way concomitant or previous to the union, but necessary for the truth of the contingent fact of the hypostatic union. Is the difference here really more than verbal?

More Apparent Than Real Differences?

To begin with the *secondary esse* or substantial act, Fr. Lonergan says of it that it is the term *ad extra* "*simpliciter* posterior, just as . . . the ultimate disposition for the form follows on the reception of the form."²⁸ This coincides singularly, except in words, with what Fr. de la Taille says of the relation between the created actuation and the self-gift of the uncreated Act: the former is, under one aspect, "the ultimate disposition for the Act, being introduced by the Act itself";²⁹ that is, in his mind there is a mutual priority between the two. Would Fr. Lonergan agree that the term *ad extra* of the union is *simpliciter* posterior to the union, yet that, under one aspect (namely, that of disposition of the humanity for the union—a disposition which, under another aspect, is produced by the union), it may be said to be anterior to the union (not in time, but "in the order of nature," while being simultaneous in time)? If he would so agree, then the difference between the two conceptions would, on this point, be more verbal

²⁶ *Hypostatic Union*, p. 34. ²⁷ *Ibid.* ²⁸ CC, pp. 79. ²⁹ *Hypostatic Union*, p. 37.

than real. It would come to this: what one calls consequent term *ad extra* of (and implicitly perhaps also disposition for) the union, the other calls created actuation by the uncreated Act: "created" to signify that it is distinct from, or *ad extra* in relation to, the uncreated Act, and that under the aspect of production it is also posterior to the union with the Act or follows upon the union.

With regard to *the intrinsic constitutive cause of the union*, which in Fr. Lonergan's mind is the divine *esse* of the Word,³⁰ there does not seem to be any doubt that for Fr. de la Taille, too, "the act of divine existence, according as this act is personal to the Word," is the Act by which the Word incarnate is both God and man: "the unity comes . . . from the side of the act whereby He has existence," and the same act "accounts for unity and existence in a composite."³¹ Fr. de la Taille expresses this communication of the divine existence to the humanity by the term actuation, or communication of the Act: the Act communicates or gives Himself to the humanity or assumes the humanity into His own *esse*. Fr. Lonergan refuses the idea of actuation of the finite by the Infinite. This actuation, he says, would mean that "in the Word incarnate . . . God through the divine *esse* is infinite in act, and through His human nature He must be something finite and potential."³² Yes, the Word is both God and man, but He is this latter by His divine act of existence, for it is by the divine *esse* or the divine act of existence that the humanity of Christ exists. The uncreated Act of the Word is united to the humanity, or unites that humanity to Himself, immediately by the divine act of existence. When Fr. Lonergan says that "by the divine *esse* of the Word . . . one and the same Person is God of necessity and becomes man contingently,"³³ does he not say in other words that this divine *esse* unites unto itself the humanity, i.e., the uncreated Act communicates Himself to the humanity? And if this way of understanding Fr. Lonergan is not mistaken, then both the expression of the mystery of the hypostatic union in terms of Act and actuation, and the expression in terms of the Word being by the same act or *esse* God of necessity and man

³⁰ CC, pp. 71 ff.

³¹ *Hypostatic Union*, p. 34.

³² CC, p. 64: ". . . in Verbo incarnato . . . et per esse divinum Deus infinitus est actu, et per essentiam humanam aliquid finitum in potentia sit necesse est. . ."

³³ CC, p. 70; cf. above n. 9.

contingently, would seem to be admissible. Then we should say that on this point also the difference is more verbal than real.

Objections to de la Taille

Fr. Lonergan objects to the idea of *eminent actuation by an eminent act*.³⁴ There is, he says, nothing left of a real analogy drawn from the composition of the finite being: there is no partial similitude, for there is no potency proportionate to the Act, nor is the Act received, nor is the Act limited by the potency. As far as Fr. de la Taille's idea of self-communication of the uncreated Act in a created actuation goes, we should say that there is a partial similitude. No doubt, no created potency is proportionate to the uncreated Act in the sense of a "comprehensive reception" of the Infinite. Yet every spiritual creature is of its nature (as image of God) open to the Infinite (at least in the intentional order, else the vision would be impossible). And in the case of the Incarnation, it is the communication of the uncreated Act, which is a created and finite actuation, that is received in the potency and limited by the potency, not the Act Himself. To that extent there would seem to be a real similarity and analogy between the natural union or composition of act and potency in the finite being, and the self-communication of the infinite or uncreated Act to the spiritual creature in a created actuation.

Nor is Fr. de la Taille's position hit by the objection that, if the divine *esse* is said to be the Act of the humanity of Christ, since this Act is common to the three Persons and identical with the divine essence, then *all three Persons are incarnate* and the *union* is not hypostatic or in the Person but *in the nature*.³⁵ He precludes these objections when he speaks of "the act of the divine existence, according as this act is personal to the Word."³⁶ It is true that he did not explain this any further and took the idea of the personal *esse* of the Word for granted, after the example of Billot.³⁷ Fr. Lonergan makes good this omission and shows why the Word alone is incarnate, namely, because "the triune God understands and wills that the Son alone should be incarnate, in such a manner that the union is in the Person

³⁴ CC, p. 64. ³⁵ CC, p. 63. ³⁶ *Hypostatic Union*, p. 34.

³⁷ L. Billot, *De Verbo Incarnato*, thesis 11: "...esse Verbi, quod est ipsum esse divinum distincto et incommunicabili modo habitum per relationem filiationis."

and according to the Person."³⁸ The knowledge and will of the triune God, therefore, identical with the divine *esse*, are the reason of the hypostatic union with the flesh of the Word alone. But this divine will, of course, must also be expressed in a created effect (else, since there is no change in God, the explanation of the hypostatic union would seem to be purely verbal). Fr. Lonergan accordingly points to "the finite things required for the Incarnation."³⁹ What are these? The created humanity of Christ, and in it "the substantial act of *esse* received in the obediencial potency" of that humanity—a substantial act which, as term *ad extra* of the hypostatic union, is the necessary condition of the contingent fact of the Incarnation.⁴⁰ The answer is acceptable, no doubt, as far as it goes. But it does seem not to account sufficiently for the Incarnation of the Word alone. It does account for the fact that a particular humanity is immediately assumed into union with the divinity, i.e., for an Incarnation, since it shows in that humanity the necessary consequent term *ad extra* of the union (Fr. de la Taille would say, the created actuation which is the very reality of the union in the humanity). But we must further ask: What is there *in* this created term *ad extra* that accounts for the hypostatic union with the Word *alone*? *Salvo meliori iudicio*, Fr. Lonergan's explanation does not seem to have given any such indication. It may well be that we touch here on the very core of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son, and of the mystery of the Trinity.⁴¹

ANALOGY FROM NATURAL KNOWLEDGE:

DIVINE INDWELLING

In his manual on the analogical concept of the divine Persons,⁴² Fr. Lonergan consistently applies his theology of the divine self-gift to the mission of the Holy Spirit for the sanctification of souls. As an illustration and confirmation of what was said above in connection

³⁸ *CC*, p. 70. ³⁹ *Ibid.*: "... ea finita quae ad incarnationem requirantur."

⁴⁰ *CC*, pp. 74 f.

⁴¹ K. Rahner, *art. cit.* above n. 4, proposes a theology of the Incarnation or of the "becoming man" of the Word, which suggests a reason why the Word alone became (and "could become") man. Cf. below, the last section of this paper.

⁴² *DP*, pp. 206-15, Assertum 17: "Divinae personae missio ita per divinam relationem originis constituitur ut tamen per modum conditionis consequentis convenientem ad extra terminum exigat."

with the hypostatic union, it may be helpful briefly to outline his explanation of the divine indwelling and thus to indicate his basic agreement with de la Taille's views.

There is no need to stress his special approach to the mystery: he starts from above, not from below; he studies the divine mission for the sanctification of souls, and only in the second place what this sanctification implies on the part of the soul. As a consequence, even more here than in de la Taille's approach, in which the primacy of the uncreated Act, or of God's self-gift, is most evident, the uncreated Gift of the Holy Spirit takes precedence over the created gifts that may attend His mission.

We may state immediately the three chief points in Fr. Lonergan's theology of the divine self-gift, the same three points already noted in connection with the Incarnation: the intrinsic constitutive cause of the union, the consequent term *ad extra*, and the relation between the two.

Intrinsic Constitutive Cause of Union

The divine indwelling in sanctified souls, while efficiently caused or constituted by the three divine Persons, is intrinsically constituted by the eternal divine relation of origin which constitutes the Person of the Holy Spirit, and there is no other constitutive reason of the indwelling, since the infinite divine perfection accounts for all things.⁴³ The three divine Persons know and will and thus efficiently constitute the mission of the Holy Spirit, without, of course, any change on the part of the triune God.

Consequent Term ad extra⁴⁴

In the mission and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which is a contingent fact, a term *ad extra* consequent on the mission is necessary; otherwise what is predicated of God contingently would not be true. This created term is sanctifying grace, a supernatural reality which exceeds the measure of nature, and is received in the soul as in an obediential potency. It is efficiently produced by the three Persons and is intrinsically dependent on its first efficient cause.

⁴³ DP, p. 211.

⁴⁴ DP, pp. 211 ff.

Relation between the Two

The created term *ad extra*, while being necessary for the truth or reality of the divine mission and indwelling, yet does not enter into the constitution of the mission or of the indwelling. It is only consequent on the mission, or on the union of the Holy Spirit with the soul.⁴⁵

Here again we may note the basic identity with Fr. de la Taille's view, and the diversity of approach and viewpoint. Both theologies of the divine self-gift give the primacy to the uncreated Gift; both consider the created, sanctifying grace as indispensable for the mission or indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But Fr. Lonergan considers the uncreated Gift as the sole intrinsic constitutive cause of the divine mission and indwelling, and does not allow the created term *ad extra* to be either concomitant or previous to the mission—except perhaps insofar as he would say of the created term or sanctifying grace (as he said of the created *esse* in the hypostatic union⁴⁶) that it is consequent on the mission as the last disposition for a form is consequent on the introduction of the form. In this position many, with St. Thomas, would see implied a certain priority (in the line of quasi-material or dispositive causality) of the created disposition, which is sanctifying grace, with regard to the divine mission. Fr. de la Taille, who conceives sanctifying grace as a created actuation which is both last disposition for and result of the divine indwelling or divine mission of the Holy Spirit,⁴⁷ would agree that the indwelling divine Person(s) is (are) the sole intrinsic constitutive cause of the divine indwelling and of our divinization, and yet say that the created actuation is not only the indispensable term *ad extra* of the mission, but also, on the part of the soul, the reason of its real union with the indwelling divine Guest. One may really doubt, as has already been said about the hypostatic union, whether there are here any differences except in words and points of view. Fr. Lonergan, when insisting on the exclusiveness of the intrinsic constitutive cause of the divine mission and the purely consequent character of the created term *ad extra*, apparently means to say that there is nothing new or changed in the divine Person who

⁴⁵ *DP*, p. 412: “. . . conditio vel praevia vel simultanea esse non potest.”

⁴⁶ Cf. above n. 15, and *CC*, p. 79: “. . . sicut etiam dicitur quod ultima dispositio ad formam receptionem formae consequitur.”

⁴⁷ *Hypostatic Union*, pp. 33 f.

is sent.⁴⁸ This Fr. de la Taille expresses by saying that the uncreated Act is not received in the potency of the soul, but only His created communication or created actuation,⁴⁹ and that only God or a divine Person can divinize—which is precisely the reason why Fr. de la Taille looks for a self-communication of the uncreated Act in all that pertains to the intrinsically supernatural. It would, then, seem immaterial whether you call the created term, sanctifying grace, consequent only on the union or also in a sense concomitant or previous. Even in this second alternative, created grace is not considered as an intrinsic constitutive cause of the union, in the sense in which Fr. Lonergan understands the phrase.

Our conclusion, then, is the same here as above: there is between the two views a manifest difference of approach and expression, but under this difference lies hidden a basic agreement about the primacy of the uncreated Gift, the necessity of the created gift, and the inseparability of the two.

ANALOGY FROM THE REVELATION OF THE WORD

To the above theologies of God's self-gift, one resting on the analogy drawn from the composition of finite being, the other on the analogy drawn from our natural knowledge of God, we may add, by way of illustration and as suggesting further investigation, a brief statement of Fr. K. Rahner's view. This in a way synthesizes the two previous explanations. Perhaps we may characterize it by saying that it rests on the analogy drawn from what revelation teaches us about the procession of the Word within the Trinity.⁵⁰ Before proposing his new contribution to the expression of the mystery of God's self-gift, particularly in the Incarnation of the Word, we should first recall his concept of quasi-formal causality.

Quasi-formal Causality

As far back as 1939, Fr. Rahner proposed a way of conceiving the Scholastic idea of uncreated Grace drawn from the concept of quasi-

⁴⁸ Cf. *DP*, p. 212.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Hypostatic Union*, p. 34.

⁵⁰ We suggest this phrase, which is not in Rahner, to keep in line with the two previous theologies of the divine self-gift, as named by Fr. Lonergan, *CC*, pp. 63, 69.

formal causality.⁵¹ His starting point is what the faith teaches about the vision of God. Here the divine essence is the direct object of the beatified intellect, taking the place of a created species: God is the quasi form of that intellect by immediate union with or quasi information of its obediential potency for the Infinite. This union is more characteristic of the vision than is the effective production of the light of glory which capacitates the intellect for the vision.⁵²

From this first mystery of God's self-gift Fr. Rahner concludes to another. Since grace is the way to and beginning of glory, it must be substantially of the same order as glory. In grace, too, there must be a self-gift of God to the soul by way of quasi-formal causality in which created grace is both last disposition and result. Uncreated Grace, then, is conceivable as quasi form of the soul.⁵³ In passing, Rahner notes that the same idea is applicable to the hypostatic union.⁵⁴

On all these points, then, Fr. Rahner expresses the mystery of God's self-gift in terms of quasi form and potency. Nor has he changed his mind on this point. In 1960 he writes: In glory and therefore also in grace, there is, besides the divine efficient causality which produces the created gifts, a quasi-formal self-communication of God to men. Thus, uncreated Grace is not just a consequence of created grace, it is the central Gift in the life of grace.⁵⁵

Incarnation of the Word

In several recent writings Fr. Rahner has proposed the idea that the Incarnation specifically of the Word (and not of another divine Person) is not only factually but also necessarily the central mystery in a supernatural economy.⁵⁶ The supernatural order being essentially

⁵¹ K. Rahner, S.J., "Zur scholastischen Begrifflichkeit der ungeschaffenen Gnade," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 63 (1939) 137-57, reprinted in *Schriften zur Theologie* 1 (Einsiedeln, 1954) 347-75; English in *Theological Investigations* 1 (London, 1961) 319-46.

⁵² *Schriften* 1. 354-56; English, pp. 325-27.

⁵³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 363-71; English, pp. 334-43. ⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 359; English, pp. 330 f.

⁵⁵ Cf. "Natur und Gnade," *Schriften* 4 (Einsiedeln, 1960) 209-36 (reprinted from *Theologie heute* [Munich, 1960] esp. p. 220. The role of the divine *esse*, which is very nearly the same as that indicated by Fr. Lonergan, will appear in what follows below on the Incarnation of the Word.

⁵⁶ Particularly two articles: "Zur Theologie der Menschwerdung," *Catholica* 12 (1958) 1-16, reprinted in *Schriften* 4, 137-55; and "Natur und Gnade" (cf. above n. 55). Cf. further, on the place of Christ in the supernatural economy, "Zur Theologie der Weih-

God's self-communication to His creatures, there must be, Fr. Rahner reasons, the Incarnation of the Word. And it is from this first self-gift of God to men that all other forms of it follow: His self-communication in the life of grace and in the glory of the vision.

We shall not attempt here to explain fully or to justify but only to state this basic intuition. For our present purpose of indicating Fr. Rahner's approach to and theology of the divine self-gift in the Incarnation, two main questions are of particular interest. First, why is the divine self-gift to His creation in the first place the Incarnation, and this specifically of the Word and not of another divine Person?⁶⁷ Second, in what manner is the divine self-gift in Christ the source of the other self-communications of God in grace and in glory? The answer to the first question should clarify the very meaning of God's self-gift; the answer to the second will show the unity of the supernatural economy.

a. Self-Gift of God and Incarnation of the Word

Fr. Rahner first notes that in pre-Augustinian tradition it was taken for granted that only the Word, and not another divine Person, "could" become man and begin a human history.⁶⁸ The reason for this he explains somewhat as follows. The Incarnation means that God while being changeless becomes changeable; that He empties Himself (kenosis) to become another (genesis); that He strips Himself to give Himself. For this self-expression or self-communication in time God possesses the free original possibility or power, but of course there is no necessity for it. And this original possibility or power of self-communication is, Fr. Rahner says, the root of His power to create; for creation is nothing else than the constitution of the context needed for the self-

nachtsfeier," *Wort und Wahrheit* 10 (1955) 887-93, reprinted in *Schriften* 3 (Einsiedeln, 1956) 35-46; and "Die ewige Bedeutung der Menschheit Jesu für unser Gottesverhältnis," *Geist und Leben* 26 (1953) 279-88, reprinted in *Schriften* 3, 47-60.

⁶⁷ The implication of the answer to this question is important: grace is of necessity Christological (cf. Rahner, *Schriften* 4, 222). This essentially Christian character of grace would deserve further investigation. It means that Christ is not only the *causa finendi* of all grace, but also its *causa essendi*, so that grace includes an actual and permanent dependence on Him. All grace is not only from Christ but also in Christ. Cf. M. de la Taille, *Mysterium fidei*, pp. 477 f., on our incorporation in Christ.

⁶⁸ *Schriften* 4, 138 f.

expression of God,⁵⁹ and the creature is of necessity an obediential potency open to this divine self-gift.⁶⁰

Because this divine self-expression or self-communication *ad extra* is the very essence of the Incarnation, there can be only the Incarnation of the Word or Son (and not of another divine Person); for the Son or Word is the divine self-expression *ad intra*.⁶¹ Fr. Rahner does not develop the reason. Perhaps we may add, applying here Fr. Lonergan's explanation, that the intrinsic constitutive cause of the divine mission (in the Incarnation) is the divine relation of origin (the "speaking of the Word" *in divinis*). In other words, God speaking His Word within the Trinity or His intratrinitarian self-expression means the generation of the Son; and God speaking His Word *ad extra* into His creation, or His self-expression or self-gift *ad extra* to His creation, means in the first place the Incarnation of the Word or the Son. The former is the condition of the latter, and this in turn "continues" the former. In that sense the first self-communication of God to the creature is of necessity the Incarnation of the Son. Christ therefore is "of necessity" the center of the supernatural order.⁶²

Accordingly, in this view, God's self-gift to man or self-communication *ad extra* means self-emptying, self-giving-away of God to His creatures—or love (cf. 1 Jn 4:9 ff.). This appears above all in the Incarnation of the Son. And the Word or Son (not any other Person in the Trinity) is that divine self-gift *ad extra*, just as He is the self-expression of the Father *ad intra*. The divine relation of origin, which constitutes the Son, and His mission in the Incarnation are in a line of continuity (but of course the latter self-gift is completely free), the first being, in Fr. Lonergan's view, the intrinsic constitutive cause of the second.⁶³

⁵⁹ It seems to be commonly agreed today that in the present order creation is meant for elevation, and not inversely; or that God the Creator's first intent is the supernatural and specifically the Incarnation of Christ. The Incarnation did not come, as it were, as a divine afterthought.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Schriften* 4, 142. Rahner's idea is clear and suggestive: man as man (or as a spiritual being) is of necessity a *potentia obedientialis* for the reception of the Infinite, and so also, or even in the first place, for the hypostatic union.

⁶¹ "Christ as man is God's self-expression *ad extra*, because as man He is God's self-stripping" (*Schriften* 4, 149).

⁶² On this interesting view of Rahner's, cf. above n. 57.

⁶³ If we are not mistaken, Fr. Rahner's conception of the continuity between God's

*b. Incarnation of the Word as Source of Further Self-Gifts
of God ad extra*

It is the common understanding of our faith in Christ the Redeemer that all grace comes from Him. This means, in the context of the theology of God's self-gift, that the first divine self-gift in the Incarnation is extended, as it were, in God's self-gift to other men through grace. Fr. Rahner explains this connection much in the same way as the common theology of Christ's capital grace. The hypostatic union of necessity entails in the humanity of Christ the absolute fullness of sanctifying grace, and this habitual grace He imparts to all who become His members as the principle of their union with God in Him or of God's self-gift to them in Him.⁶⁴

In this view, then, of the essentially Christian character of every supernatural gift, it follows that man's obediential potency to grace and glory, or to the divine self-gift in the *feri* of the *via* and in the *in facto esse* or fullness of the *terminus viae*, is actuated only in continuation or extension of God's self-gift in the Incarnation of the Word. Christ therefore is the "locus" in which every self-gift of God to His creatures takes place, not only in fact but also of necessity.⁶⁵

This theology of the divine self-gift, whose dogmatic and theological foundations would require fuller development,⁶⁶ is a third approach to the mystery of the supernatural; in its own way it synthesizes the first two. It includes the approach from the analogy of the finite being's composition of potency and act: the divine self-gift is the Act or

self-expression *ad intra* and *ad extra* restates, in terms of the analogy drawn from the revelation about the procession of the Word, what Fr. Lonergan expresses when he says that the divine *esse* of the Word is the intrinsic constitutive cause of the hypostatic union or that the divine relation of origin is the constitutive cause of the mission (entailing of course the created term *ad extra*). At the same time it does not repudiate the analogy from act and potency, since the very nature of man, as spiritual creature, is to be an obediential potency for the communication of the divine Act or quasi form.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Schriften* 4, 145, n. 2.

⁶⁵ In terms of actuation, this means that the uncreated Act does not communicate Himself to any man except in and through the Word incarnate, who imparts His Spirit and grace to His members.

⁶⁶ The point to be made in greater detail is that the supernatural order is of necessity, i.e., connaturally or from the nature of things as far as we can conceive these supernatural realities, an incarnational order: no supernatural order without the Incarnation (of the Son).

quasi form of the spiritual creature or man, whose very essence it is to be an obediential potency to the divine. It includes likewise the approach from the analogy of our natural knowledge of God: God's Son becomes man by the very act of *esse* by which He is God; the Word incarnate really *is* man, though the relation of the Word to the humanity is only a relation of reason (involving no change in the Word), because His humanity exists by His *esse divinum*. Fr. Rahner's analogy from the procession of the Word, who is the Father's self-expression within the Trinity, involves the idea that the self-gift of God in the Incarnation of the Word, or His self-expression *ad extra*, is constituted by His self-expression *ad intra* (the generation of the Word), extended freely and contingently to the humanity of Christ and, through Christ, in an accidental way to all His members.⁶⁷

CONCLUSION

These notes are a very inadequate and imperfect attempt at comparing a threefold theology of the divine self-gift. We would like to hope that this theology gives a glimpse of what is at the heart of our Christian faith. Perhaps none of the three expositions will appear fully satisfactory. This may be due in part to our imperfect presentation of them. But there is a more basic reason for such unsatisfactoriness. Should it, after all, be surprising if our human stammering of the divine mystery fails to render the full and clear sound of the Word of God? While we walk in faith and not in the clarity of vision, our mind's eye is veiled before the uncreated Gift. And the veil will fall away only when we shall see, as Fr. Rahner likes to say, the "very incomprehensibility of the Mystery"⁶⁸ in the vision of God in Christ.

⁶⁷ Thus Fr. Rahner's conception incorporates the whole positive part of Fr. Lonergan's theology of the divine missions, without setting aside the analogy from act and potency.

⁶⁸ Cf. "Über den Begriff des Geheimnisses in der katholischen Theologie," in *Beständiger Aufbruch (Przywora-Festschrift)*, ed. S. Behn (Nuremberg, 1959) pp. 181-216, reprinted in *Schriften* 4, 51-99 (cf., e.g., p. 80).