

TOWARD A SUBJECTIVE THEOLOGY OF REVELATION

THOMAS FRANKLIN O'MEARA, O.P.

Aquinas Institute of Theology, Dubuque

I

REVERSING OUR APPROACH TO REVELATION

Ten years ago the fallout of studies on the theology of revelation began. The immediate explosion behind it was Vatican II. Of course, from 1947 to 1962 the *nouvelle théologie* of Lyons-Paris as well as theologians in Germany and the Netherlands (influenced by kerygmatic and transcendental currents) had turned often to the themes of revelation and grace. The acceptance by Roman Catholics of historical-biblical criticism also brought consequences for any systematic framework of God's revelation. In short, during the years leading up to Vatican II, revelation was a field which exemplified the theological changes for which this period would become famous, and so it was no chance of the agenda that the crucial debates of the Council's first session centered around *De fontibus revelationis*.¹

Recent studies on revelation by systematic theologians fall into three classes. (1) Some deal with biblical theology, with key scriptural concepts concerning God's contact with man. (2) Others deal with theological and hermeneutical frameworks for revelation, with questions of epistemology or theological method. (3) A third, pastoral direction touches on issues such as ongoing revelation, a fidelity to and a demythologizing of biblical narratives, the problem of Christianity's universality before the vital world religions.²

If we look more closely at the second group, we see that while Congar studies the transmission of revelation in tradition and community,³ Rahner discusses the psychology and ontology of any religious, revelatory event.⁴ Schillebeeckx' two volumes focus on history and personality,⁵

¹ The initial title of what became the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation; cf. G. Baum, "Vatican II's Constitution on Revelation: History and Interpretation," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 28 (1967) 51 ff. For the history of the theologies of revelation, cf. A. Dulles, *Revelation Theology: A History* (New York, 1969); H. D. McDonald, *Theories of Revelation: An Historical Study, 1860-1960* (London, 1963).

² Cf. J. Neuner, ed., *Christian Revelation and World Religions* (London, 1967).

³ Cf. Y. Congar, "Scripture and Tradition in Relation to Revelation and to the Church," in *Tradition and Traditions* (New York, 1966); "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic Body, Continuers of the Work of Christ," in *The Mystery of the Church* (London, 1960) pp. 147 ff.

⁴ K. Rahner, "Revelation," "Religion," "Grace," "Jesus Christ," in *Theological Dictionary* (New York, 1965) or in *Sacramentum mundi* (New York, 1968-70).

⁵ E. Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology* 1 (New York, 1967) 33 f.

and Latourelle has provided a historical survey of how "revelation" (the scriptural usage is infrequent and oblique) is presented from Genesis to Vatican II.⁶ Finally, numerous commentaries on the Council along with a spate of postconciliar periodicals and handbooks examine carefully what Vatican II accomplished in this area.

Objectification of Revelation

Roman Catholic theology (always with some exceptions) has tended to concentrate upon the objectivity of revelation. By "object" we mean the persons, events, message, miracles, historical happenings which Scripture records and which faith accepts as saving power. This is understandable for several reasons.

First, as Congar, Tillich, and Barth have pointed out, the essence of Catholicism is the sacramental, i.e., the concrete presence of God in the world. A sacramental world view depends upon the objective and the real. Secondly, the Scholastic intellectual tradition had emphasized the objective side of experience, while the two reformations—of Luther and of Kant—were feared as subjectivistic, potentially agnostic. Finally, Catholic systematic theologians had the task of integrating into their work the results of the biblical critical-historical method. In biblical theologies, revelation does often appear within some prior model, e.g., the triad of person-word-event, but this is ultimately an objective framework for the encounter between human person and Spirit. This new attention given to the biblical record of revelation was in fact possible only when Catholic theologians were taking seriously subjective factors such as the structure of religious experience and existential hermeneutics. Still, the subjective place of contact with God was left undeveloped from a fear of naturalistic pantheism and a history of uncritical realism.

Pure objectivity has its dangers and heresies. When faith looks at the objects of revelation narrowly, the result is fundamentalism. Or some, because their faith is weakening, nourish an extreme emphasis upon the supernatural handily objectified. Protestant fundamentalism focuses on the letter of the text. Charismatic fundamentalism moves towards an easily available, flamboyant Spirit. Roman Catholicism had fashioned its own form of fundamentalism: revelation became statements drawn superficially from the Scriptures and carved out in statements by the magisterium.

European and American contact with Bultmann, Tillich, Ebeling, Fuchs, and Buri introduced into the Catholic mind ways of thinking which not only represented Protestant thinking on revelation but also took seriously the contributions of the philosophies and theologies of the

⁶R. Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation* (New York, 1969).

eighteenth and nineteenth century. Catholic students of Kant and Heidegger such as Karl Rahner could see a number of contributions to make towards understanding the dialectic between God and man which we call revelation or grace.

Stimulated by these forces, Catholic thought can turn from exclusive preoccupation with object to an interplay of subject-object. Husserl, at the edge of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, between idealism and existentialism, asserts: "Whether we like it or not, whether (for whatever prejudices) it may sound monstrous or not, this [I am] is the fundamental fact to which I must stand up."⁷ While one stimulus for a subjectual approach to Christian revelation comes from the line reaching from Kant, Husserl, Heidegger, and Cassirer, a second comes from the developments in theoretical physics and from the social and behavioral sciences after the turn of the twentieth century. It became increasingly difficult to separate the observing subject from the matter measured or studied. The subject was no longer a sovereign examining his kingdom of things, or an ego creative of all objects. The subject's involvement exercises a prior influence upon both "subject" and "object." To turn from science to art, painting after van Gogh and Kandinsky, as well as the experiments with tonality and melody by Schönberg, Webern, and Berg, are examples of the centrality of the subject.⁸ The contributions of ecumenical theology, the present cultural questions, and the success of critical and transcendental philosophy point in the same direction: overcoming a severe dichotomy in the theology of revelation, and avoiding a "choice" between God as object and man as subject in the theology of grace. Fransen's remarks can serve as a bridge from the recent history of the theology of revelation to reflections on a subject-oriented Roman Catholic theology of revelation/grace.

First, [the Copernican revolution in theology since Blondel] manifests that theology is returning to the important principle that there is no knowledge in theology which is not somehow grounded in experience. Secondly, there are basically only two archetypical models for human thought taken from our experience of being in the world. Either man sees himself as a thing among other things, eventually a subject confronted with exterior "objects": he assimilates the outer world through knowledge, more or less as a camera, and manipulates it in making or re-making and changing things. Or, he sees himself as meeting another person within the dimensions of the cosmos, which involves mutual relations between both as forms of presence, encounter, mutual confirmation and fulfillment. Thirdly, we can only speak of revelation when what is being revealed

⁷ *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (The Hague, 1969) p. 237.

⁸ In T. O'Meara, "Art and Music as Illustrators of Theology," *Anglican Theological Review* 55 (1973) 267 ff., there is an illustration of two theologies of revelation viewed through their cultural parallels in painting, music, and philosophy.

is actually assumed within the intentional thrust of our human consciousness, expressed in language and life. Fourthly, and this aspect is not so often referred to, looking at the activity of the divine revelation through grace from the point of view of God, even when we on our side have to divide this activity into different structural moments, for God creation, salvation and divine presence in grace are only one coherent and all-permeating gesture of love.⁹

Quest of the Subject

A theology concerned exclusively with the objectification of revelation is only one way to look at that which Christian faith grasps as its special contact with God amid personality and history. The epistemological, behavioral, and social sciences have discovered a complexity in man which casts doubt upon the validity of any subjectless presentation of an objective world. The standpoint of the contemporary world is the quest of the subject. The finite person pursues experience as quasi infinite and is then concerned with solving the opposition between the quest and the briefly touched goal. While this subjective side of God's presence in revelation and grace was only randomly developed within Roman Catholic theology, it practically absorbed Protestant theology during the past century.

Not only Rahner and Fransen but some American Catholic theologians are pointing us in this direction. Avery Dulles, in one of his studies on revelation after Vatican II, writes:

Supernatural revelation is treated [by Latourelle] as coterminous with the series of salvific acts by which God manifested Himself to the prophets and apostles of the Old and New Testaments. But some discussion of whether and how God reveals Himself to the unevangelized gentiles would seem to be in order, for the sake of a more comprehensive concept of revelation, which might in turn throw light upon the essential properties of revelation itself. . . . The primacy of the preconceptual, to which we have just alluded, is of major importance for an "ecumenical" theology of revelation.¹⁰

Referring to Jean Mouroux, Dulles points out that faith before the symbolically presented revelatory channels "has its basis in the ontological thrust of the whole person toward the Absolute."¹¹

Gabriel Moran's recent study on revelation approaches a subjectual consideration of revelation. He describes his work as pretheological, lying between phenomenology and theology. It appears to be not a phenome-

⁹ P. Fransen, "Grace, Theologizing and the Humanizing of Man," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 27 (1972) 71.

¹⁰ "Theology of Revelation," in *Revelation and the Quest for Unity* (Washington, D.C., 1968) pp. 58 f.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 60. See also Dulles' *The Survival of Dogma* (New York, 1971) pp. 41 f., on "authority and insight in the assent of faith."

nological analysis of personal structures *prior* to revelation but a survey of cultural issues which enhance our experience of revelation. "Revelation is not a theological concept similar to others but instead a premise for theological construction as a whole. The *real* meaning of revelation cannot be found in the bible or other theological sources. Only some wider human experience (which, of course, can include theology) can establish the meaning of revelation."¹² Culture is both the content and the result of the historical personality reflecting upon itself, and so it is the form of every faith and theology. Moran notes that the subjectual approach is anthropocentrically unavoidable. "Revelation in my usage always includes the note of a human subject who is engaged in the revelational process. The phrase 'human revelation' would seem, therefore, to be a redundancy because any revelation which man could be aware of would be human."¹³ Moran employs the right questions and categories, e.g., "experience," "subject-object," but his work seems to be a *propaedeutic* to a subjective theology of revelation. He presents the state of the question by surveying theologians and movements which suggest a transference of revelation from the objective sphere to the point where subject and object meet.

Personal Encounter with Revealing Presence

It could be objected that the subject's relationship to revelation occurs in the human response, in faith. The "subjective aspect" of revelation, however, implies much more than faith. Faith follows upon the subject's reception of a revelation. Faith is the conscious acceptance of God's revelatory presence. Traditionally, faith has looked to grace to enable faith's affirmation of revelation. Faith is distinct from God's initiating and surrounding communication which we call "grace." Revelation, however, has its own subjective aspects within every man and woman, not merely in the mind of the specially called prophet. Moreover, subjectual contact with the activity and presence of God is not only the foundation for accepting revelation, prophecy, and ecstasy. It is revelation. While individual and collective faiths articulate revelation, they are a secondary, psychological response. First comes the immediate encounter by the personality with the revealing presence.

By revelation we mean a contact which men and women have with the mystery we call "God" within yet beyond nature and world. The goal of revelation is assistance towards their destined life and future. The subject's psychological structure is a prior framework necessarily in-

¹² G. Moran, *The Present Revelation: In Quest of Religious Foundations* (New York, 1972) p. 21.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

fluencing every contact by God. At the same time, God's presence through a loving, communicative (and not only ontological) omnipresence overcomes the subject-object structure; for the word of God is also the life of mankind. Human subjectivity, then, is prior to any objectification of revelation and is the place where God meets man and woman. Our personality surrounded, interpenetrated by the divine milieu—this we want to explore.¹⁴

The dominant subject-object schema of Roman Catholic theology operating since the fourteenth century and drawn from Greek and scholastic thought is no longer adequate.¹⁵ The struggle of Western thought be-

¹⁴ We have been joining grace to revelation. The subject-object problematic is easier to see within the theology of revelation. A subjective theology of revelation leads to God's contact or presence, which is named both "revelation" and "grace." Unlike revelation, grace, even when described through an objective model (actual, efficacious, sufficient grace), does not become objectified in our consciousness. We cannot see, conceptualize, or perceive most of the facets of God's contact with us; traditionally they are called grace.

¹⁵ In the Middle Ages theologians tended to emphasize the objective events and teachings of salvation history. Yet, perhaps because of the limitations in their idea of history, they did see revelation as broader than the narratives of Scripture. They developed a psychological theology: the illumination of the personality to bestow the ability to respond to the objects revealed. Aquinas and other writers used "revelation" for the objective content of a special revelation, while a theology of *lumen* was developed for the subjective side. See Y. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, pp. 120 ff.; "'Traditio' und 'Sacra doctrina' bei Thomas von Aquin," *Kirche und Überlieferung* (Freiburg, 1960) pp. 170 ff.; J. de Ghellinck, "Pour l'histoire du mot *revelare*," *Recherches des sciences religieuses* 6 (1916) 149 ff.—The movement from a tension between the subjective and objective in the thirteenth century to an emphasis more upon mental processes (taking place between 1320 and 1570) seems not fully researched; perhaps the general cultural factors in the late Middle Ages partially explain it. The Spanish and Italian theologians of the Baroque Scholastic renaissance of the sixteenth century display an intriguing tendency to begin with or to emphasize the subjective and intellectual side. First, the activity of God strengthening the mind for the supernatural truths presented to it seems more important than the historical means by which God spoke. The formal aspect of revelation is not only the power and word of God objectified in Scripture but the light of faith infused by God. Cf. D. Báñez, *Scholastica commentaria in primam partem Summae theologiae s. Thomae Aquinatis* (Madrid, 1934) p. 30. Melchior Cano stresses the revelatory action of God from Himself into our minds, overlooking the crucial union of the supernatural with the historical; cf. *De locis theologicis* 2, q. 8, ad 4m. Continuing this direction is de Lugo's distinction between mediate and immediate revelation, the latter set aside from fear of Protestant ideas of direct contact with the Spirit. Nevertheless, de Lugo stresses the direct contact of the believer with God, and the objectification of this contact interests him less; cf. *Disputationes scholasticae et morales* (Paris, 1891-94) and *De fide*, disp. 1, sect. 7, 122. The Salmanticenses retain this distinction without adverting to fears of heresy; they admit that in some way "the assent of faith" is called divine revelation; cf. *Cursus theologicus* 11 (Paris, 1879) *De fide*, disp. 1, dub. 3, par. 1, 83. Cajetan confusingly defines Aquinas' "sacra doctrina" as "knowledge revealed by God, whether formally and virtually, possessing the rationale of a discipline and a teaching, but transcending the rationale both of what is believed and of what is known" (*Commentaria* 1, q. 1, a. 1 [Rome, 1888, p. 7]). Revelation enters John of St. Thomas' commentary on the *Summa* as information of

yond Kant through Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel and onward to Freud and Husserl can no longer be seen as inimical to the description of the entry and presence of God. German philosophy over the past one hundred and fifty years appeared as an enemy. The conflict, however, was continued not by the transcendental analysis of the human personality but by the apparent neglect of sin and grace in what seemed to be pantheistic naturalism. The critiques of dogmatic revelation by Kant and Fichte within the subjectivistic context of transcendental idealism led post-Tridentine and post-Vatican I theology to neglect the subjectual.¹⁶ Calmer years before and after World War II, with an appreciation of Maréchal and Heidegger, have created an atmosphere where the prior personal structure of Christian revelation along with the contribution of philosophy after Descartes could be considered.

Roman Catholic theological traditions suffer from a naive consideration of the Western subject-object schema and from too simple a description of the subject of revelation and grace, the person. "Subjective" need not imply a severance from reality; it bespeaks neither subjectivism nor psychological naturalism as the source of religion.

various levels contained virtually and implicitly within the more explicit "principles" penetrable by various lights (*In Iam partem divi Thomae Commentarii, Cursus theologicus* [Paris, 1931] disp. 2, art. 7.) These theologians, in fact, reflect a postmedieval split between subject and object, between nature and grace, which becomes much more prominent in the Enlightenment; see K. Eschweiler, *Die zwei Wege der neueren Theologie* (Augsburg, 1926) pp. 29-49.

I discuss this brief historical segment concerning theologies of revelation not merely to gain support for a subjectual approach to the revelatory presence of God, but to indicate differences as well as similarities between Baroque and post-Kantian theologians. The faith subjectivity which Baroque theologians are highlighting is highly intellectual, yet intellectual in the sense that it is objectified in propositions. For them, revelation consists in information and doctrines for which biblical events and prophets are valuable as *mediators*. They appreciate the subjective side of revelation, but not for the best reasons. The subject is emphasized not as the total personality in contact with realities but as a mind nourished by mysterious propositions and illumined by special light. Historically it is interesting to observe that these currents are not unlike Protestant emphases of the sixteenth century upon interior listening to the Holy Spirit; and they move toward Roman Catholicism's own nineteenth-century idealism grounded in universal mental categories, a universal language, and an understanding of revelation which was intellectualistic to the point of being gnostic. The past 150 years seem to have had two currents. The intellectualistic approach of Denzinger, Franzelin, Scheeben, and Gardeil culminates in Garrigou-Lagrange. The other, possessing correctives from Möhler and Newman, leads to Congar and Schillebeeckx. Beyond these two strains, the sources for Rahner are Maréchal and Heidegger. It is paradoxical that Garrigou-Lagrange, the archfoe of everything Kantian and idealist, presents a lengthy subjectual theology of revelation in *De revelatione* 1 (Rome, 1950) 125-481.

¹⁶ Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason* (1793); Fichte, *Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung* (1791). See A. Schweitzer, *Die Religionsphilosophie Kants von der reinen Vernunft bis zur Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (Freiburg, 1899).

Subjective describes each person as central to a particular enterprise, yet located within certain influential horizons of reality. In terms of God's contact with man, the subject as finite, fallen, and called by God presupposes a divine presence active in history beyond His creative sustenance of things. On the other hand, a subjective analysis of revelation investigates the horizon of each individual's consciousness. This consciousness enables the tribe or nation or church to articulate what it perceives to be the words and deeds of God.

The exploration of the subject is called transcendental reflection. We should avoid complaints that what we are treating here is Teutonic idealism resurrected.¹⁷ All theology is now rightly seen to be transcendental in the broad sense, i.e., anthropological, sociological, and cultural, precisely because all theology is articulated within the human subject. Religion and faith do not descend from a Platonic heaven but emerge within particular historical periods. Culture flows from experience suspended between psyche and history.

A subjectual approach goes beyond epistemology, fundamental ontology, and rational psychology into the realm of the behavioral and social sciences. Something like the encounter at an individual level between Presence and person takes place at the collective, cultural level. Just as there is a saving history in the individual, so there is a salvation history for races, for peoples, for all mankind. God's communication is both individual and collective and so cannot avoid being dependent upon cultural and subjectual thought-forms. Culture sums up the configurations of the human enterprise: the life-forms, the thought-forms, the models of a particular epoch concretely expressed in art, religion, politics. Beneath cultural forms lie the primal tremors for each age; they determine structures, bestow form, fashion inspiration.

Experience and culture raise questions for any revelation. How did this revelation contact human personality at one time, and how does it transcend the limitations of history? If a revelation appeals to one group, can it appeal to all? Does religion consist in the allegiance of a blank

¹⁷The fleshing-out of the ontology and epistemology of self-transcendence through psychology and sociology has yet to be accomplished fully. All that metaphysicians have said of the mind in its relationship to being and of the will before choice could be applied to other facets of our personality. When we understand man's freedom as nurtured amid his cities and schools, when we understand the degree of influence of sexual maturity and immaturity, when we appreciate all we have forgotten (and the hidden motives of our forgetfulness), then we will be able to chart the presence of grace. Where is grace concrete and what is its word to us? What dreams of infinite love or of lasting life nourish the psyches of our races? Subliminal neuroses grow and decline, and through them grace must also make its way. Freudian, Jungian, post-Freudian psychologies are all transcendental, i.e., subjective analyses. And so it is not surprising that the model for theologizing about the mystery of God called "grace" is inevitably a psychological or epistemological one.

psyche to novel miracles presenting themselves as objects of belief? For man, is not every revelation so subjective as to be myth?

The world is growing tired of dichotomies, of fragmentation through credibility gaps. Christianity appears naive as a purely supernatural objectivity: sacraments passively received, unverifiable dogmas to be believed, miraculous stories from the past to be retold. A culture which has long been attempting to balance subject and object finds excesses on either side unattractive. Our particular cultural epoch, beginning around 1963, raises new questions for the claims of Christianity. How can Christ be unique salvation for the exploding population of the world, when many peoples will be incapable of existential or cultural contact with Jesus the Christ?¹⁸ Is Buddhism or Hindu spirituality not only a legitimate but a needed alternative to Christianity? More central is the American syndrome of changing cultural identity, of dropping out. Previous religio-cultural designations, e.g., church member, divorcee, priest, student, prisoner, Quaker, or Catholic, no longer specify the religious identity of an individual. Sin is difficult to label in our society, while the signs of grace appear outside the churches. Advocacy for the better future, ministry to peace and justice, do not imply an ecclesiastical origin.

Pastoral experience shows that the problem for a theology of revelation and grace is not the existence of God or the hermeneutics of Scripture but the relationship of God to human personality. More and more people no longer believe creeds or belong to churches, yet desire a faith, a community, a liturgy. They are not followers of a post-Bultmannian reductionism or agitators in the angry Roman Catholic tumult. They are believers, but the objects of their belief remain uncertain. While detached objects of faith are unconvincing, today's believers do search for power and hope really if implicitly loose in the world.

An understanding of revelation moving within human subjectivity offers us a fundamental theology which can respond to varied questions about world religions, countercultures, mysticism, and social change. Mature religion nourishes the potentialities and needs of human personality as the history of salvation grows from a tribal ritual to global vision. The words of the prophets and the *magnalia Dei* exist not to glorify God or to fill the stage of history with pageants but to serve the individual personality. This character of personal service, found in the love of God in His Spirit and in Jesus, distinguishes Judeo-Christian revelation from pagan theophany.¹⁹

¹⁸ Cf. Hans Küng, "The World's Religions in God's Plan of Salvation," in *Christian Revelation and World Religions* (n. 2 above).

¹⁹ Cf. J. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (New York, 1967) pp. 95 ff.

A reversal for the theology of revelation presses upon us. Beneath the revealed objects lies the dialectic of person and Presence. The reversal begins with man and not with the divine, with the presence of God surrounding every personality and not with the entry into recorded history of Abraham or Moses, with personal contact rather than with words and doctrines. The individual search takes place in the subjectual framework and finds there any revelatory contact from the mystery we name "God." The beginning (and the goal) of revelation is the individual personality surrounded by an active atmosphere of divine presence disclosing ultimate reality and meaning.

II

HUMAN TRANSCENDENTAL SUBJECTIVITY: THE PLACE OF REVELATION

The structures of man's life (social, political, economic, interpersonal, existential, psychological) are the place where revelation and faith occur.²⁰ Within the structures of life our subjectivity fashions our world; intellectual spheres and emotional horizons are the intermediates between subject and object. Revelation does add more than it finds in man, and revelation can with effort disclose the ineffable God. Still, the revealed word remains inevitably a word of God *as present to man*. Grace and revelation have come not to be served but to serve.

The Subject as Transcendental

Transcendental²¹ includes all the conditions of life: volitional, emotional, mental activity. Not things or objects, but models, horizons, and plans define the presence of Being. We are actively seized by our world or by the pace of time. Transcendental analyses explore the person's various potentialities and worlds. For philosophy between Kant and

²⁰ Cf. Karl Rahner, "Man," *Sacramentum mundi* 3 (New York, 1969) 399. Liberal Protestant theology from D. F. Strauss to the post-Bultmannians has been developing a theology which is anthropology; see Bultmann, "The Idea of God and Modern Man," in *Translating Theology into the Modern Age* (New York, 1965) pp. 83 ff.; "What Does It Mean to Speak of God?" in *Faith and Understanding* (London, 1969) pp. 53 ff.; J. M. Robinson and J. Cobb, eds., *The New Hermeneutic* (New York, 1964). This differs essentially from a truly Christian anthropology. The latter is man-centered, not because the content of revelation is fully the product of man or a message only about man, but because the place of even a radically supernatural and eschatological revelation is the complexity of "person." The theology of Ritschl contains some similarities with the view of revelation we have been presenting, save that Ritschl too tends to employ transcendental (mainly Kantian) analysis as the content of revelation rather than as its form.

²¹ "Call all knowledge transcendental which is occupied not so much with objects as with our manner of knowing objects" (I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* [New York, 1966] p. 16). See O. Muck, *The Transcendental Method* (New York, 1968); J. B. Lotz, ed., *Kant und die Scholastik heute* (Pullach, 1955); Andrew Tallon, "Spirit, Matter and Becoming: Karl Rahner's *Spirit in the World*," *Modern Schoolman* 48 (1971) 155, 161.

Freud, the analysis of human subjectivity was largely limited to the axis epistemology-being. But a study of the mental preconditions receiving the presence of God is only one facet of human personality. Analyses of the subject can and should be done with regard to the will, clusters of emotions, identity, growth, sexuality, the subconscious. They condition man not only for existing before Being, but for living in the atmosphere of grace. What is analyzed is not only our power but our quest. To exist is to track new paths, explore new trips in fulfilment of the drive within us for the infinite.

This basic constitution of man which he affirms implicitly in each of his cognitions and actions we designate as his spirituality. Man is spirit, that is, he lives his life in a perpetual reaching out towards the Absolute, in openness to God. This openness to God is not a contingency which can emerge here or there at will in man, but is the condition for the possibility of that which man is and has to be, even in the most forlorn and mundane life. A revelation from God is thus possible only if the subject to whom it is supposed to be addressed *in himself* presents an a priori horizon against which such a possible revelation can begin to present itself in the first place.²²

The subject is the entire person, and the person is a single, unified being. A new awareness of the intimacy of mind and body asserts a psychosomatic desire for health and fulfilment. Cybernetics, communications systems, psychoanalysis, mysticism, drugs, techniques of consciousness-expansion—these are our culture's versions of the austere interest in transcendental subjectivity pursued by Fichte and Schelling.

Bernard Lonergan begins *Insight* by describing the energies of the active mind. "This primordial drive, then, is the pure question. It is prior to any insights, any concepts, any words. . . . On the other hand, though the pure question is prior to insights, concepts, and words, it presupposes experience and images."²³ Two characteristics of transcendental subjectivity develop further our reversal in the theology of revelation. First, the complex mental structure of man is prior to the objects of knowledge. Secondly, the object of thought is present to the human personality not as something lifeless, objectively impressed upon a passive receptivity (the famous *tabula rasa*), but as received by the mind actualizing its own powers. All knowledge about any object is mediated not only by the senses of the knowing subject but by the "spirit" of the subject. The a priori conditions of the psyche both limit its searching possibilities and transcend every object presented to it. We live at the center of the subject-object encounter, where neither person nor world is absorbed by the other.

²² Karl Rahner, *Hearers of the Word* (New York, 1969) pp. 66 f.

²³ *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York, 1957) p. 9.

In a dynamic, initially imprecise, explicit or implicit rush upon reality, the mind brings reality to me and finds both truth and dissatisfaction in this or that object. The world is not a panorama of objects but a network of relationships subjectively centered on the human person who creates and is created by his or her world. The self-transcending personality does not stand passively before God, any more than it exists in isolation before the universe. As the planet earth becomes world through man's active subjectivity, so God enters our world as Father or Presence. The Absolute fulfilling our powers could not be any single object, nor would the mature human mind attempt a permanent conceptualization of God. God who contacts us is not an object but a principle of our knowledge of eschatological reality (which is more than the reality of our bodies or of our cities).²⁴

The process of searching to know and the process of will rushing to love are the foundation (but not the demand) for contact by God with us on a different horizon. Plagued by the dichotomy which has always pursued nature and grace, to us our life appears prior to the horizon which God as Presence and Eschatological Summoner establishes. In fact, from the beginning the divine milieu of the Trinity infuses the world with eschatological life, the ultimate horizon for mankind. Grace is prior to personhood and world. In an individual two dynamic forces meet: the active, wise, loving presence of God, and the infinitely thirsty drives of the human personality. The embrace or mutual rejection of these two is the condition of all religion. The fundamental option of union or disarray is expressed by our "yes" or "no." Our situation lies between radical grace and radical sin; above that is the world of prophets, doctrines, and sacraments.

So, the analysis of the mind is only one example of research into the meeting of personality and grace/revelation. Just as the transcendental epistemology of Kant was expanded by Heidegger's fuller analysis of an existential ontology of the human subject in his world,²⁵ so the study of the *potentia obedientialis* by Aquinas, Cajetan, or Bañez moves to the supernatural existential of Karl Rahner and to the signals of transcendence of Peter Berger.²⁶ An analysis of man as the subject surrounded by

²⁴ Cf. Francis Fiorenza, "Introduction" to Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World* (New York, 1968). For a theological representative of this movement such as Rahner, a reversal of God from object to subject (within our subjectivity) becomes the principle for his entire theology. At the same time, one can say that from Hegel and Marx to Paolo Freire thinkers are intent upon showing that man is the subject of history rather than the object of world events.

²⁵ Cf. M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (Bloomington, 1962) pp. 239, 254.

²⁶ Aquinas observed the quasi-infinite openness of the human mind to Being and the warp of our minds which permits symbols and analogies (*Sum. theol.* 1, q. 12, a. 4, ad 3m; cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.* 1, 351 ff., for a detailed presentation of scholastic theology

grace includes aspects such as God's collective and individual call, relevant cultural and social spheres of meaning, the fall of the human race, the growth of my personhood through others.

God as Horizon

Grace/revelation is what phenomenology would call a horizon of human life. It is not superimposed but interpenetrates the words and aspirations of life. Amid the personal presence of God we are redeemed from a sinful condition. We are not merely amazed or educated by supernatural events and doctrine, but fulfilled, drawn forward. Life is not abandoned, postponed for paradise, but affirmed and promised. Exegetes inform us that it is increasingly difficult to find an ethical system in the New Testament, although we can certainly find there a behavioral stance.

In recent years the revealed doctrines of the Gospels have retreated from an exaggerated individuality and have coalesced into approaches, world views. This suggests that Jesus and the biblical writers are describing a horizon, a way of seeing and acting, a view of the real world accessible through what we call faith and hope. Ultimately, the truth of the gospel is not wonderment before supernatural objects or otherworldly mysteries but the capability (grounded on a radically supernatural Jesus) of seeing darkly what is ultimately real about the present and the future. This mind-set is one of unproven confidence that the kingdom has come and that it is more than therapy. The presence of Father, Son, and Spirit is the foundation for a psychic horizon which concretizes itself through the triad word-person-event.²⁷

People act out of their world view. Value systems and thought-forms are crucially important as human beings move amid the events of life. Our understanding of time, our historicity, are horizons. Each horizon illumines in a particular way; it does not fashion the objects of world, but within this or that horizon they take on new relationships, different emphases. They are seen differently. Although horizons spotlight and assemble the objects of the world, they are no less real than those

on this point). This grounds revelation from a Totally Other who wishes both to be Father and to remain Mystery. Karl Rahner's *Hearers of the Word* develops these ontological characteristics further within the metaphysics of Kant and Heidegger, adding two categories: the possibility of free personal communication, and the historicity of man. Such anthropological facets are dual: they are conditions so deeply present in man that for meaningful revelation God must observe them, and they are aspects of the human life which allow the special contact with God we call revelation. Peter Berger's *Rumor of Angels* (New York, 1969), as well as studies of motifs in serious films, are contemporary attempts at outlining psychological and social categories which lead to Presence. Descriptions of cultural systems are often phenomenologies of the subject meeting grace-revelation. Story, autobiography, psychoanalysis, and secular ritual modify and enable contact with God.

²⁷ Cf. Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, no. 2.

objects.²⁸ Philosophy from Kant to Lonergan culminates in the horizon.²⁹ The social and behavioral sciences also describe horizons. Durkheim, Levi-Strauss, Berger, and Luckmann have observed the network of symbols and patterns which make up the social consciousness of a period. There is today a general search for structures or languages which would arrange economics, the social and behavioral sciences, religion, art, and the media. Peter Berger writes: "All social reality has an essential component of consciousness. The consciousness of everyday life is the web of meanings that allow the individual to navigate his way through the ordinary events and encounters of his life with others. The totality of these meanings, which he shares with others, makes up a particular *social life-world*."³⁰ Our consciousness fashioned from experience does not contribute only ideas and goals but also prereflexive orientations. There exist not just in intellectuals but in every cultural

²⁸ Cf. M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, 1968) pp. 323 ff.; W. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague, 1963) pp. 154 f. See also Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, pp. 151, 157; H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen, 1960) pp. 286 ff., 356 ff. Moltmann and Pannenberg are also using the phenomenological model of horizon. Moltmann describes the central fact of the "future of Jesus" as a horizon which empowers the correct vision of the future in hope (*op. cit.*, pp. 190 ff.). For Pannenberg, God's word active in history meets cultures and individuals in events surrounded by spheres of meaning (cf. *Revelation as History* [New York, 1968] pp. 152 ff.). We are applying this analysis of subject-object to a different area: presence and personality. In the sphere of grace, both the dynamic mind and the presence of God are transcendental, i.e., they live and search between the fallen, needy human subject and the world of events and people.

²⁹ Cf. D. Tracy, *The Achievement of Bernard Lonergan* (New York, 1970) pp. 10-12. Existentialist and, we can surmise, more recent sociological and countercultural categories also illustrate the kairoic nature of the horizon as the foundation for all psychological activity, prior to the entrance of objects and desires. Lonergan's study of Aquinas on grace illustrates the nature of his work. It is a study of how transcendental subjectivity is concretely worked out in a particular mental system. Lonergan intends to remain method-oriented. A contrasting approach describes the subject in history to see how the *reality* of God's presence meets us, and to criticize the pastoral relevancy of every system. Lonergan, however, remains within the systems he evaluates. See B. Lonergan, "St. Thomas' Thought on *Gratia operans*," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 2 (1941) 289-324; 3 (1942) 69-88, 375-402, 533-78; J.-M. Laporte, "The Dynamics of Grace in Aquinas: A Structural Approach," *ibid.* 34 (1973) 203-26. Lonergan's work does not push backwards, describing concrete cultural influences upon past theological work, and it does move forward to the critical new models for theology. Lonergan resembles Aquinas in that the encounter and the realization between man and revelation/grace is described with an intellectual bent. Yet, grace encountering our minds may only be the tip of the iceberg. See his "Cognitional Structure," in *Spirit as Inquiry* (= *Continuum*, 1964) p. 240; also M. Heidegger, "Die Zeit des Weltbildes," in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt, 1963) pp. 69 ff. For McLuhan, the world as picture arises with Luther and Gutenberg, and is being replaced by an electronic global village; see *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (Toronto, 1962).

³⁰ *The Homeless Mind* (New York, 1973) p. 12.

group more or less conscious "webs of meanings" which fashion our worlds. Berger calls these meanings "reality definitions." Our subjective reversal can initiate a theopsychology of revelation and a fundamental theology for a cultural sociology of revelation.

A first task of the sociology of knowledge will therefore always be a systematic description of specific constellations of consciousness. And here, phenomenology offers helpful tools. Although consciousness is a phenomenon of subjective experience, it can be objectively described because its socially signified elements are constantly being shared with other. . . . Any specific knowledge has a *background* (phenomenology calls it a *horizon*). That is, whatever is specifically known assumes a general frame of reference. Also, the discrepant reality definitions of everyday life require some sort of overall organization. In other words, the individual needs overreaching reality definitions to give meaning to life as a whole.³¹

Understanding the horizon of God's Spirit at work in the world is a project similar to the enterprise of structuralists. All of man's contacts with grace or revelation, if they do not inevitably originate in symbol, end there. These symbols, from our dreams and mystical experiences to the Greek text of Ephesians, lead to human psychological structures (the symbols' grammar) for interpretation. The point of disagreement between the Catholic tradition (in the broad sense) and the Protestant idealism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is over the sacramental: original and lasting points of contact in the real world between God and man.

The presence of God as supernatural gift is the horizon of horizons. The horizon of the spirit is directed and expanded by the horizon of the Holy Spirit. "Life" may not be compartmentalized into "spiritual life" or "next life." God's presence is a human horizon, engaging every existential issue of life. The world, i.e., man's multiple relationships to his earth and society, is thereby perceived, felt as really fallen and really redeemed. We can surmise how other horizons—for instance, those of time and of history—might be modified by the influence of grace. Some of the varieties of our time experience such as the drive forward, a latent eschatology and messianism, an experience of slow and fast time, may not be as "natural" as they appear, since they correspond to fundamental aspects of God's plan for mankind, a better future. History is a history of grace; the reign of God is the temporal incarnation of Trinitarian activity; our horizon of time receives the modality of God's time, which is not eternity or *aevum* but future.³²

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 13–15.

³² See E. Klinger, *Offenbarung im Horizont der Heilsgeschichte* (Zurich, 1969); K. Rahner, "Theologische Bemerkungen zum Zeitbegriff," *Schriften zur Theologie* 9 (Einsiedeln, 1970) 302 ff.

Revelation's objects seem to delight in moving us away from the present and the real, backwards or forwards, attracting our eyes by the *unusual* of revelation. Bizarre Noah or the legend-like Assumption represent the distant, hence the unique. In fact, protology and eschatology do not escape the man-centered orientation of all revelation. Every objectification of revelation exists to concretize the psychological horizon we call grace. At the same time, the mistake of liberal and secular theologies is to exclude the "new" because the human imagination could not at present project it. The real, the supernatural, is the empirical but as empowered towards something greater: life overcoming death. God's contact with man has as its overriding goal *the new as the human*. While the impact of the Resurrection is quite "new," a new creation, it works within the life of man, which it will sustain and expand. The Incarnation and the Resurrection are, precisely as incarnational, fulfilments of the human subject. The Resurrection is not a unique miracle but the incarnate promise for all people of a final fulfilment of the total person in the horizon of grace, which is evolutionary and eschatological. We should be skeptical of easy miracles and irrelevant supernatural practices precisely when they are unrelated to our personal structure.

The horizon of grace is not an escapist projection upon harsh reality. The horizon of God's contact enables us to live in the world as it is and will be. So, revelation and grace are primarily principles of personality and secondarily an objective salvation history. Understanding God as a horizon of our life is not utterly new. The attitude of love and service in Matthew (20:24 ff.) or the "mind of Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5) expresses a horizon. Aquinas called attention frequently to the *lumen* which strengthens the personality to make faith, charism, or prophecy possible.³³

III

SPECIAL PRESENCE: THE GROUND OF REVELATION AND GRACE

A subjective schema for considering grace/revelation is the correct beginning for understanding every religious phenomenon. Through faith we have the conviction that God is present to us, active in history. Only this kind of God could complement the searching subject which we are. Whether a God with characteristics of immutability, pure actuality, and absence from time exists—this belongs to other realms than the conviction of Judeo-Christian faith.

In the revelation of God within each human subjectivity, the dichot-

³³What Aquinas says for the prophet of revelation and the believer is applied by Thomists to scriptural inspiration and to mysticism. Cf. P. Benoit, *Prophecy and Inspiration* (New York, 1961); *Sum. theol.* 2-2, q. 171, a. 2; see q. 1, a. 5, ad 1m.

omy of the subject-object schema (the puzzle of Hegel and of Heidegger) in the religious realm is confronted. Since the primary revelation of God is that He is with us, His presence (subject) is His contact (object), and His contact is His message. God's communication is not necessarily present explicitly to everyone. There is a spectrum of presences: blue colors for the implicit, the subtle contact; reds for the lines of prophecy close to Christ. The union of Presence and person, however, possesses an intrinsic dynamic which leads it to express itself in words, objects, and rituals. The human figures, the prophets of revelation, speak and act out of their subjectivity. They address our horizon as the witnesses of God's presence, as artists of the human experience of that presence. They do not bring or control that presence; they concretize it.

The primary revelation of God is not Being but Presence.³⁴ While God is the principle of revelation, He is not the central message of Scripture. The New Testament's theologies are loving, futuristic anthropologies. The objectification of the grace of God is not so much a share in "divine life" as God's presence intent upon *my life*. "Revelation" and "grace" are subsequent, partial terms we give to that presence. Objective revelation, i.e., miracles and teachings, are not the first products even of revealed religion.

We have been using grace and revelation interchangeably. Grace has traditionally had three meanings: (a) God—either in His Trinitarian life (Eastern theology) or in His gracious reconciliation of mankind (Lutheran theology and its sources); (b) the new life of men and women in the kingdom; (c) an entity which comes from God and sparks the new life. The third meaning is the most common among Roman Catholics, although it is the least important, the least intelligible. We should rediscover the first meaning of grace: God in His gracious relationship to us.³⁵ This "relationship" to us is not just a religious mood, not a

³⁴ Who is "the other" in this often unperceived dialogue with our subjectivity? Naming God is always difficult. The Christian term "Trinity" in fact describes God-toward-us: a pluralistic, encompassing, corelated, active God. Rahner delights in long circumlocutions employing "unnameable" and "mystery"; when pressed, he uses "self-communicating God." Teilhard's "divine milieu" is insightful. As Schelling and Hegel become better understood, their Absolute and *Geist* appear less austere. The "Ground" of Tillich, Spinoza, Boehme, and Schelling is right for existentialism or Nordic mysticism, but too solid for decades of future shock, too remote for identity crises. "Presence" would describe not simply a God of Sabaoth and *magnalia*, but a God whose presence in history reaches both an intimacy (for me) and an intensity (in Jesus the Christ). Presence surrounds me, my culture, my age, my world. Presence is more intimately present to me than I am to myself, pervading realms of my psyche of which I hardly know the existence. Presence is the horizon of both my vision (my future is eschaton) and my choices (my future is happiness).

³⁵ Cf. a rather remarkable text in Aquinas, *Quaestio disputata de veritate*, q. 24, a. 14.

purification of the soul, but a historical plan for us, an atmosphere effecting in women and men eschatological life. This de-emphasizes the third meaning of grace: grace explained by a transference-of-power model, a causal network of actual graces, where controversies over free will and merit flare up. Grace is not primarily an outside act moving our will but a broad horizon of life. Aquinas, too, concludes that grace is primarily a form.³⁶

“Grace” and “Presence” are interchangeable. God’s Presence as grace is the central, factual revelation of Judeo-Christian salvation history. “Revelation” adds a cognitive overtone. Revelation is Presence flowing through the mental realms of the human personality. Presence pervades the conscious, semiconscious, and unconscious horizons of every man and woman. As it is clearly or indistinctly conceptualized, it can be revelation.

Hence the simple inner bestowal of grace is already a kind of revelation. . . . This fundamental revelation in grace must, however, lie at the basis even of the original event of revelation in the case of revelation simply so called. This is because by definition there cannot be any higher form of revelation (before the Beatific Vision) than the self-communication by God in grace, with the result that this must be at the basis of what is normally called revelation.³⁷

The Catholic tradition holds that grace is universally offered to mankind—before Moses and Christ, beneath explicit faith. *If grace is universal, so is revelation.* The spectrum of grace/revelation stretches from the lightest implicit contact to the explicitness of the Incarnate Word. This spectrum depends upon the intensity of contact between Presence and an individual personality, and upon the assistance the culture gives the individual in articulating this inner religious dialogue. Revelation, like Presence, may be universal; but in the history of mankind how often is Presence visible and explicit? The struggle of grace to become explicit is salvation history. In each individual’s story of salvation, more or less implicit-explicit revelation struggles for air, for

³⁶ Cf. *Sum. theol.* 1-2, q. 110, aa. 1, 2, and 4. In several passages Aquinas stresses that grace belongs primarily to the order of formal causality (as does horizon) and not to efficient causality, where the power model of active grace fits; cf. q. 111, a. 1, ad 1m; also Karl Rahner, “Christologie im Rahmen des modernen Selbst- und Weltverständnisses,” *Schriften zur Theologie* 9, 237. Drawing on the theology of Möhler and the Catholic Tübingen school of the last century, as well as various patristic traditions, Yves Congar refers to the Holy Spirit as “the transcendent subject” of tradition, the life of the gospel alive within the community through the ages (*Tradition and Traditions*, pp. 338 ff.). The descriptions by Hegel of Spirit, and by Heidegger of the advent of Being in time, come to mind as parallels of grace present to communities during the epochs of salvation history; cf. Heidegger, *Hegel’s Concept of Experience* (New York, 1970) p. 126.

³⁷ Karl Rahner, “Theology in the New Testament,” *Theological Investigations* 5, 40.

objectification. Driven by the quest, the person searches for the self-giving God who would release him from ambivalence and threat. What we call the centrality of Christ or of the kingdom is the most explicit response we have for this desperate search. The record of the history of salvation—the books of Exodus and Judges as well as the Gospels of Mark or Matthew—illustrate a variety of responses to the word of God, a variety of successful or opaque concretizations. And so the scriptural records support our view of the degrees of explicit grace and revelation.

Important consequences follow from our description of revelation/grace as a meeting between God and the individual personality at the intersection of destiny and fall. Grace/revelation are not the bearers of supernatural objects for the powers of the intellect and will, nor are they mainly supports for those powers. Grace and revelation are words describing primordial contact; they are modalities of one Presence. Infused virtues, faith-hope-charity, charisms—these are fallouts from the deeper contact. God's horizon patiently stimulates the entire range of the conscious and subconscious. We distinguish within ourselves goals and needs, attitudes about life, value systems and world views, and we experience the almost painful horizon of freedom. Some never undertake or pursue this process of explicit self-reflection. Nevertheless, for all it is being done at a nonreflexive level.

Acceptance or rejection of God's contact is a lifelong process with various crises of maturity. The fundamental-option position of moral theology, corresponding to Aquinas' ultimate end and to Tillich's ultimate concern, is correct. The options are two: the acceptance or rejection of self and Presence.³⁸ Doctrines and sacraments are the needed concretizations of the meeting of grace and person. They are, nonetheless, secondary. While they may serve Presence and man, they do not infallibly cause or bear witness to grace and revelation. The same is true of external moral acts: they do not necessarily register the radical acceptance or rejection of grace. Behavior is crucial, because man is incarnate personality, but while behavior is a sign of grace, it is not an automatic or certain sign. The levels of the human psyche contacted by facets of grace are the realm described by a fundamental theology of Christian ethics. Grace and revelation within an individual's freedom are the ground of behavior. Christian ethics, rather than being a selection of natural laws, is a personalization of grace.

³⁸ Cf. Aquinas, *Sum. theol.* 1-2, qq. 1-5; Paul Tillich on "ultimate concern" in *Dynamics of Faith* (New York, 1957) and *Ultimate Concern* (New York, 1965); John W. Glaser, "Transition between Grace and Sin: Fresh Perspectives," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 29 (1968) 260 ff.; Kevin O'Shea, "The Reality of Sin: A Theological and Pastoral Critique," *ibid.* 29 (1968) 241 ff.

Serious personal sin is not an evil action but the closed, wrong orientation towards self and Presence. Murder or social injustice would be realizations of evil chosen as a horizon of life. The concrete ethical act is always the result of the orientation of an individual's freedom within the milieu of grace. Personal active sin is not a flaw in human nature but the free rejection of Presence.

Grace corresponds to freedom as revelation corresponds to mind. For the human subject, the process realized amid grace/revelation is like every healthy movement in human life: it is an ellipse going out from and returning to the subject. A person becomes a person only through self-definition amid the world and other persons. Then, by standing back from the world of relationships and movements, the person becomes conscious of freedom and sovereignty. The revelatory grace of God in the manifold depths of the psyche becomes concretized in life. But then the objectifications of Presence in revelatory events and inspired prophets return to fan the original fire. And in this process we find the three traditional meanings of grace and revelation: God, Presence as form or horizon of the personality, external impetuses towards action or concretizations of the word of God.

IV

THE HISTORY OF PRESENCE

God's presence is the central reality of religion, and incarnation is its normal goal. Since subjectual revelation takes place at all times and at all places, our next task is to situate within it revelation through Christ.

Just as the individual person's life is a "story" of his dialogue between Presence and sin, so the human race taken as a whole has a "history" of relationships with the relentless divine milieu.³⁹ Presence possesses as part of its dynamics a drive toward concreteness. God seems to rejoice in His invisibility (which is not the same as inaccessibility) and at the same time to be discontent with it. An implicit dialogue with man is not satisfactory, for man lives by senses and events. The hidden, the vague—these do not strongly influence behavior.

God's self-revelation in the depths of the spiritual person is a certain "state of mind" (in the spiritual, not the emotional sense) produced by grace, inarticulate, taken for granted, not an objective proposition—not knowledge but a consciousness.

³⁹Cf. Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, p. 4. For the contemporary approach through story, see Michael Novak, *Ascent of the Mountain, Flight of the Dove* (New York, 1970); John Dunne, *A Search for God in Time and Memory* (New York, 1969); *The Way of All the Earth* (New York, 1971); H. Cox, *The Seduction of the Spirit* (New York, 1973).

But this gracious, unobjective non-reflexive self-revelation of God must be translated into objective propositions if it is to become the principle of man's concrete behavior in his objective reflex consciousness. Now this "translation" has a history of its own which God governs and which is therefore another divine revelation, and this history of reflexion forms an intrinsic part of the historical process of God's self-disclosure in grace.⁴⁰

The history of the concretization of Presence is the same as the history of salvation. Several segments of one special history are narrated in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. Nevertheless, this imperfectly recorded history of salvation is not a grand theography of God's action but an incomplete record of His presence within some cultures of mankind. The Bible (along with the scriptures of other religions) is a *Bildungsroman* of individual and collective religious consciousness. Salvation history is the politics of the experience of grace.

Recent finds from Olduvai Gorge locate man in East Africa before 1,500,000 B.C. Figures like Nimrod may represent the ten million people alive ten thousand years before our era. Abraham and Moses do not begin salvation history. God touches every human being at least implicitly. The historical record of revelation is not the same as revelation itself. Objective salvation history could appear only with sophisticated, literary culture. The Bible gives us a record of a special history of Presence who seeks out concrete words and events for expression.

History's vastness renders any fundamentalist limits in viewing God's word incredible. Primitive religion extends into our time, and the more we know about it, the less we can employ the category "primitive" to describe it. The religions of man are not the artistry of demonic beings or the corrupted projections of man's natural bent for philosophizing. Colonialistic Christianity led us to imagine them in this way. Whereas "primitive" religion may never have existed, "natural religion" is an impossibility. Every human struggle moves within the dialectic of sin and Presence described above. There is no gray world, no revelatorily neutral word, either in past time or on today's planet. The history of religion is a record of the struggles of grace and sin in persons. Since mankind is fallen, sin and evil can corrupt the awe of self and of God. Taboos, bloody sacrifices, fear, institutionalized dehumanization pervert the religious horizon, but they cannot fully separate it from its ground, God's presence. There is no pure nature; there is only nature responding to God or rejecting God.

Religions reflect and serve man's dialogue with God. One of the

⁴⁰ Karl Rahner, "Revelation," *Theological Dictionary*, p. 411. Cf. also his "Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World," *Theological Investigations* 5, 179.

mysteries of our fallenness is the relative insufficiency of their contribution. What they articulate is often erroneous; what they cannot reveal is crucial. Man can discover in himself, his traditions, and his community broad contours about his life and destiny; yet, the subliminal or marginal "revelation" of much of religion is small in content, weak in concretization. There is a long evolution not only of man but of Presence. Biblical salvation history, culture, and religion are its record. Social and cosmic catastrophes have fashioned the costly humanizing and dehumanizing of history. As long as revelation is viewed objectivistically, it can say nothing to prehistory and little to anthropology. "Primitive" or "natural" religions appear to be cut off from the history of grace. Christianity sacrifices centrality and universality for an excessive uniqueness.

When humanity reaches a certain level of cultural development, God intensifies His initiatives. The history of God's presence corresponds to man's cultural maturity (which is itself partially an effect of an implicit dynamic of grace). Grace moves towards greater concreteness. The Old and New Testaments are the record of God's special initiative: the Old Testament observes the rapid, final stages of the inner drive of Presence leading to the eschatological era; the New Testament describes the first climax, the center of objective revelation: the event of Jesus Christ.

Why is there public, official revelation? Why does Jesus Christ come as the definitive prophetic figure not only of Israel but of all world religions? He is central not as the creator of the situation of revelation/grace but as its concretization and minister. Jesus does not judge the world into colored squares. Jesus Christ is one of us. However different he may be, he is, even more, one of us. He is the climax of the true human condition. In Jesus of Nazareth the self-communicating presence of the mystery we name "God" and our personal quest reach the highest level of intensity: they meet never to be separate; they meet as one. Jesus is subjective human personhood and subjective divinity as one.⁴¹ On the one hand, the self-disclosure of God driven by love pushes outward until God becomes the object of His love—a human being. At the same time, the self-transcendence and religious openness characteristic of each man and woman find a special intensity in Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus anticipates the future; he projects human cultural evolution ahead. In his nonviolence and dignity, he is the man or woman of the future, the eschatological person. God's process of self-realization which we call

⁴¹ Chalcedonian Christology is based upon a particular psychology and ontology where personality is expressed in metaphysics. It is, however, quite legitimate to derive a contemporary Christology out of categories such as horizon, consciousness, identity. Newer Christologies can respond better to the questions of Jesus' growth in knowledge and self-awareness without lapsing into an exclusively psychological (or, as traditional theology called it, a "moral") union with God.

revelation and grace cannot help but be ongoing. The priority of salvation history does lie in the future.

Jesus Christ is the place where God's presence makes itself most tangible, visible, attractive. For our history, Jesus is both climax and beginning; he is the end of religion and the center of kingdom. We can agree with C. H. Dodd quoting Ernst Troeltsch: "Jesus does not bring the kingdom of God—a view Jesus would find strange—but rather the kingdom brings Jesus with it."⁴² He is not the monopolizer of grace; he is not the only man who has been in contact with God's presence; he is not the miraculous demigod in a dark world. Jesus exists not to render our life secondary, but into his life we plunge ours in a search for friendship and assurance. Ultimately the same presence permeates our life as his. Like him, we are all "objects" of the active revelation of God.

It is not true that God is wrathfully absent except where the words "Jesus Christ" are written. Then why has Jesus come? His coming brings presence, information, and concreteness.

Jesus not only articulates the word of God, he is that word. The life of Jesus is as much grace and revelation as is his preaching. The events of Jesus' days have a public quality which advances interior religion. Jesus' preaching illumines our history of grace and sin. Experts in the religions of the world are seeing more and more that segments of the preaching of Christ are not completely new. The message is not utterly unknown either in the Jewish literature which immediately preceded Jesus or in the sacred writings of other religions. What Jesus possesses uniquely is focus. He expresses and synthesizes hints and aspirations. In short, Jesus is presence-in-personality conscious of its cosmic importance through redemption and resurrection.

V

PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS

The reversal of our theology of revelation outlined above is now the foundation for every mature ministry.⁴³ Understanding the presence of grace is the condition of service to each individual, no matter how varied his or her religious background. Only a subjective theology of revelation can interpret by faith the world around us. As long as we remain in the purely objective realm of sacred persons, rituals, and words, we cannot offer a pastoral or a cultural understanding of "grace," "sin," "religion and faith" which makes sense in our society so possessed by change. Today we find ourselves in the midst of a burst of popular religion and

⁴² R. Otto, *Reich Gottes und Menschensohn* (Munich, 1954) p. 67, cited in C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York, 1958) p. 37.

⁴³ A popular version of these ideas is found in my paperback *Loose in the World* (New York, 1974).

experiential search, yet we witness increased boredom and scandal in the organized churches. Caught in this tension, how do we respond to the questions "Who is Jesus Christ?" and "Why should there be church?" And so we return to our fundamental questions.

Meaning and identity are two horizons of our subjectivity. The horizons of grace and faith bring to each an eschatological dimension, i.e., the promise that our life has a vitality and intelligibility beyond death. The identity crises of the 1950's arose as people living in a static society puzzled over their individuality. After 1963 the confusion of roles in society compounded these crises. Previously stable categories of behavior vis-à-vis drugs, sexuality, church membership, business enterprises, and military and political activity were shattered. Traditional roles gave off false or new signals: students became revolutionaries, the young became mentors, priests became dissenters, governmental leaders became fascists. The churches had long divided the world into checker squares of the saved and the unsaved, members and nonmembers, the respectable and the disreputable. Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Roman Catholics had their own codes and signals. Not only churches but societies tended to deduce the presence of grace from external phenomena: e.g., church membership, patriotism, personal affirmation of Jesus, the experience of salvation, civic respectability, the confession of sin. The process of dropping out (result of intense cultural change) disrupts the patterns of religion as well as of society.

A world of stable red and green squares is declining; in some areas, e.g., university centers or congested cities, it is gone. New religio-sociological patterns arise. Phenomena which the Christian gospel stresses continue to appear but, from the point of view of organized churches, in strange places. The student who sacrifices some or much of his life for others may have resolutely dropped out of Western churches. Coalitions for a human life are based not upon theological ecumenism but upon an ecumenism of romantic consciousness. This wider ecumenism is more than fellowship or humanism; it is a vision, a demand, a nourishing of nonviolence. Yet "humanism" is not a neutral state but at least partially the product of grace or sin, for they exhaust the dialectic of ultimate reality.

We can contemplate this mosaic of social and theological mobility with some assurance by understanding the personal dialogue with grace and revelation as primary. Explicit revelation in word, sacrament, and community exists to minister to the deeper conversation. In religion it is difficult to avoid identifying faith and grace with sacred objects. The subjective approach recalls that ultimately the gospel is concerned with an intangible, sovereign relationship between the presence of God and an individual complex personality. Everything else, including the person of

Jesus Christ (by his own intimation), exists to serve that. It was the mistake of the Modernists, also inspired by subjectivity, to conclude that every objectification of revelation and grace is transitory. The correct conclusion is that every objectification of revelation and grace is subject to a partial but keen pastoral critique: How is this belief being interpreted for these people, how is this institution being renewed in order to serve grace rather than to judge or control sacred objects? Ultimately there is only one pastoral criterion: the dialectic of grace. Every sacramental experience, all ecclesiastical ministry, revelation itself find their justification in service to the horizon of grace. This horizon is never found in the abstract but only in individuals, in cities, in communities of Christians living today. There is no need to argue over whether the soul or the body, whether sacrament or social action, is the object of ministry. That debate separates politics from charism and originates in dichotomies now overcome by beginning with the subject of grace.

Questions about our global village challenge the pastoral voice of Christianity. How can Christianity be unique when alternate and rival world views pursue Christian goals? Could Mao's selfless humanizing transformation of China be accomplished without grace? If both Zen and Spanish mysticism tend toward dark, paradoxical, relatively contentless absorption, what place in each has Jesus Christ? The subjectual approach understands the *possible* presence of grace in these phenomena. The universality of human religious experience exists within the milieu of Presence.⁴⁴ The intensity of that Presence can be discerned only through the phenomenological and psychological analysis of cultures and various religions. This leads us to a question concerning the multiplicity of special salvation histories. While all history in extent (space) and duration (time) is the history of grace, theologians have called the history of God's call after Abraham and Moses "special" salvation history. Is this the only special salvation history, or is this simply special to us because of its coincidence with Western records? Were there earlier special salvation histories? Is that period in India culminating with Buddha also a special salvation history? Or does it make sense to speak of any special salvation history? If not, does this threaten the centrality of Christ?

These problems, illustrating the universality of God's contact, should not pose a withering challenge to the Christian missionary enterprise. The missionary is not the sole concretization of grace in an alien world.

⁴⁴ See the essays by K ung and Fransen in Neuner, *op. cit.*; W. Cantwell Smith, "Faith," in *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York, 1964). For a transcendental approach to Eastern mysticism, cf. J. B. Chethimattan, *Consciousness and Reality* (Maryknoll, N.Y., 1973).

He or she exercises a ministry to the patchwork of grace and sin in a region where the full condition of grace may be less explicit. The Church is never as intense, as missionary, in its activity as God is in His universal presence. Christianity is missionary not in the sense that it either creates or controls grace, but in its drive to announce and witness to what it knows by faith to be the concrete word of God's grace for the whole world. The missionary enterprise is a movement from older churches to young churches. By raising the level of explicitness and consciousness, it allows grace and revelation to flare up. Ministry always occurs within religions, cultures, and people where God's presence is already at work.

The interest in drugs (their synthetic variety is enormous) will ebb and wane. It remains to be seen how fast university research centers can develop and interpret legitimate phenomena of extrasensory perception. Whether the renewed interest in mysticism will reach depth and permanence is far from certain. Nevertheless, it seems a legitimate cultural judgment that interest in the many approaches to consciousness expansion will remain. A physician who is also a research scientist argues that the use of drugs is normal for many civilizations, part of the quest for identity, transcendence, and peace. "We seem to be born with a drive to experience episodes of altered consciousness."⁴⁵ If transcendence is the meeting point of personality with revelation/grace, how does the naturally or artificially expanded mind relate to this? If we are moving away from a scientific, rational, objective, individualized consciousness—prominent since the Enlightenment—into a cultural atmosphere where personality development and forms of mysticism are prevalent, the importance of a subjective approach to the ground of religion/revelation is clear. The theologian and the believer are interested in the psychological exploration of horizons, of "depths," of "states of time-awareness," of the immediacy of the self and of the other. Just as no geographical area is left untouched by Presence, so no level of consciousness exists in a neutral world untouched by the dialectic of sin and grace.

The union of grace with consciousness expansion bears the traditional name of mysticism. The believer approaches divine immediacy through the purification of the mind from objects and categories. At the same time, the emotional and volitional drives increase, producing a state of pleasure. In ecstasy the psyche seems detached from self and yet immersed in a milieu causing love and awe. Self-consciousness with detachment divests itself of cupidity for objects. The self plunges into deeper horizons to discover the impact of painful grace and darkly symbolized revelation. The realities objectified in salvation history can only hint at this experience; for they are themselves not the ultimate

⁴⁵ A. Weil, *The Natural Mind* (New York, 1972) p. 23.

reality but its signs, its sacraments. With new insight the personality understands those persons, events, and words which make up revelation history no longer as symbols or dogmas but as objectifications of a reality lying deeper and broader than its own consciousness, and into which it has plunged.

Clearly, mystical experience is a process similar to the primal revelatory contact by God with every individual. We can understand why many theologians and mystics held that infused mystical experience was "ordinary." The elements are not extraordinary, although the realization may be. Yet the experiences, messages, and stories of mystical experience in the dark night do not tend to objectification; for authentic mystical experience terminates not in information but in ineffability. From the standpoint of clarity and community, mysticism is rightly not given prominence as revelation; but from the viewpoint of intensity, the mystical experience is a *type* of primal, subjective, revelatory experience. The normalcy and universality of mysticism is a pointer to the omnipresence of grace. Yet there are differences; for revelatory Presence in the history of mankind tends to concreteness and explicitness in order to introduce the kingdom of God incarnationally, while in mysticism a mature believer yields to a particular grace leading to darkness and silence.

CONCLUSION

We have been exploring a reversal of theological approach to that most fundamental area of religion and faith: revelation and grace. While this reversal has been suggested by certain philosophers and theologians, it becomes all the more necessary with an appreciation of our present cultural and pastoral scene. The emphasis on the subject since the Renaissance is legitimate. The gospel is both an individual horizon of vision and a cosmic kerygma of the kingdom of God. Whereas the history of modern thought shows it is a mistake to think that Presence and world are exhausted in the human personality, the human subject is both the beginning and the goal of God's contact.