

It is the work of the imagination, both in art and in life, to provide the human images which enable us to "see God through a glass darkly."

THEOLOGY AND IMAGINATION

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FOLLOWING WILLIAM LYNCH'S EARLIER ADVICE THAT BOTH THE WRITING and the reading of an article should begin with a "composition of place," an image that can focus the attention and keep the article where it is supposed to be, I would suggest an image that might serve this purpose for these reflections on theology and the imagination. Writing to the early Christian community in Corinth, St. Paul tells them that someday they shall see God "face to face," but here and now they can see him only "through a glass darkly." (1 Cor. 13: 12). In other translations the verse reads: here and now we see only "a dim reflection in a mirror." If you have ever been in a museum of antiquities and seen what they used for mirrors in Paul's day, the point of his metaphor is clear. For they did not make mirrors from glass as we do, but from polished metal, and hence the "darkness" of the image. In our present situation, says Paul, seeing God is not like looking at a reality right there before our eyes; rather, it is like seeing an obscure reflection or image of that reality in a mirror. Taking Paul's analogy as our starting point, we shall try to see that there is a very necessary and intrinsic connection between theological reflection about God and the life of the imagination.

The analogy can, first of all, warn us against thinking of God as an "object" of knowledge to which theology has direct and immediate access, and of theology, therefore, as an independent, autonomous body of truths about God. At the very least, Paul's metaphor says that here and now we have no such direct, immediate, "face to face" access, in fact, that we see God only by looking at something else which reflects or mediates this vision. Moreover, he likens this something else not to a pane of glass to be seen through, so that the thinner and more transparent it is, the better the vision, but to a mirror, so that the "thicker" the image, the better the vision. The image is not to be seen *through*, but seen *into*, it is not something to be gotten around, but something to be entered into.

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We shall propose as our main hypothesis that it is precisely the work of the imagination, both in life and in art, to provide the images which enable us to "see" God in Paul's sense, and that without such images theological reflection loses its concrete content and its roots in real life and the real world.

We should be aware at the outset, however, that in the world of contemporary knowledge neither theology nor the artistic imagination enjoy first class citizenship when measured against the claims of scientific knowledge. It is the latter which reigns in the position once held by theology, indeed is credited with having liberated us from the false claims of theology to knowledge and truth. For many today the God of whom theology speaks is to be dismissed as an "unnecessary hypothesis" or at least an unverifiable one, or as an "illusion" projected by human hopes or fears or "wishful thinking," and wishful thinking is not really thinking. Likewise with the imagination, the very word "imagination" has come to mean the very opposite of knowledge: is that really true, we ask, or is it just your imagination? The arts themselves are seen as performing a "decorative" function in human life, or perhaps as a passing diversion from the real business of living and the real business of knowledge.

At the root of this attitude towards both theology and the imagination today lies a widely-shared presupposition which presumes that man is in possession of something called "reason" or "mind" which has an autonomous life of its own and thinks, or at least should think independently of such other human realities as hoping, wishing, imagining or desiring, in a word, independently of the whole person who is doing the thinking. Is this presumption itself reasonable, or is it a fine example of "wishful thinking," the product of someone's faulty imagination, faulty because it does not do justice to the unity and totality of human experience as we know it? Descartes with his "*cogito, ergo sum*" usually gets the blame (or the credit) for the isolation of reason into an autonomous faculty and for the exaltation of the "clear and distinct idea" as the primary, indeed, exclusive medium of "real" knowledge. Whatever the historical case for or against him may be, it is the presupposition itself we want to examine.

For this Cartesian ideal is being questioned today on a variety of fronts, and these various studies are all moving towards a similar conclusion. There is, for example, the work of Michael Polanyi, himself a scientist, on what he calls "the personal participation of the knower in all acts of understanding,"¹ where he rejects the notion of knowledge as a purely passive "observation" of how things are, for the knower is an active and personal participant in the process of discovery. There is also the work of Jurgen Habermas on the relationship between knowledge and interest, or, more precisely, self-interest, and on the role which the latter plays in what we come to know as real and as true.² Finally, there is the work of Berger and Luckmann in the sociology of knowledge and their analysis of the active role of a society or a culture in the formation of what

¹Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).
²Jurgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

they call its "social construction reality."³ In their various ways all of these studies reach the similar conclusion that the subject or knower is not a disinterested "spectator" of an "objective" world, but is very much involved in the process of discovery, knowledge and truth. Perhaps we can express this conclusion by saying that it is not the "mind" which thinks, but *people* think, and think from out of the totality of themselves and within the totality of the situation in which they exist. We are not going to enter into any of these studies in detail, but rather consider a simple example in which perhaps the point they are all making can be seen clearly enough for our purposes.

The Unity of Sensibility

At the very beginning of conscious life when a child is born into the world, it finds itself in the midst of a kaleidoscope of colors, sounds and other sensible stimuli which it learns only gradually to organize and unify into a world of distinguishable and recognizable objects. Moreover, in learning to distinguish and "objectify" this outside world, the child is also learning to distinguish itself from it. The emergence of a world of objects is simultaneously and identically the emergence of a conscious subject within this world, a center of consciousness which is not only aware of other things, but also aware of itself as different from them. All human knowledge includes this element of self-awareness or self-knowledge, even when our attention is focused on something else. Knowledge, then, is "two-directional," it encompasses both subject and object, both knower and known in the single act of knowledge. This is not to say, however, that all knowledge has two "objects," but that in focusing on or attending to a particular object, the subject is aware of itself in the process, and this self-awareness is a constitutive element in being a human knower, a conscious human subject in the world.

In learning that the world is different from itself, however, the child is also learning that it is by no means indifferent. The world of persons and things of which the child is becoming aware is in one way or another affecting it. Awareness is accompanied by affectivity, indeed, more than just accompanied by it, for the two are not disparate and separate operations. The child is becoming aware not of a world of objects and a self as two separate things, but rather of a relationship, the self and the world as related in some affective way. Initially our knowledge is not a disinterested "observation" of objects "out there," but a knowledge of relationship, the relationship between the knower and the known which is grasped through both awareness and affectivity. Awareness and affectivity together in their mutual interrelationship are the way in which we become conscious of the real world and of the real self, and together they constitute the single pathway into conscious human existence in the world. We do not begin, then, as neutral, impartial observers or spectators of a world "outside" us, a passing scene in which we have no part. Human life is not lived at such a

³Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Irvington Press, 1966).

distance. We begin, rather, within this world and within this scene, very much a part of it as it is of us, being affected by it as well as affecting it, and it is *this* relationship that comes to conscious awareness in human knowledge.

There are two points we want to call attention to in this simple example, two points of unity which we would include in the term the "unity of sensibility." First, there is the unity between knower-and-known-or subject and object in all knowledge. The two are not known in isolation, but in relationship. Being "in touch" with a world is simultaneously and identically being "in touch" with a self. Secondly, there is the unity of awareness and affectivity in which this relationship is grasped. It is through both in their interaction and interdependence that we become aware of the reality and "objectivity" of the world and the reality and "objectivity" of ourselves. This lived unity in the conscious existence of the knower can only subsequently and secondarily be analyzed into separate faculties such as intellect and will, or separate operations such as knowing and desiring. In concrete life they are interwoven, so that it is not an isolated "reason" or "mind" which thinks and knows, but the whole person from out of the concrete totality of the self and within the concrete totality of the situation in which it exists. To assert this unity is not to assert an identity, nor to deny any distinctions among these various elements, but rather to assert their mutual interaction and interdependence in the concrete life of the knower and the concrete process of his knowing. This is the point being made by the various studies we mentioned earlier about the *personal* participation of the knower in all acts of understanding, or the *intrinsic* relationship between knowledge and human interest in the process of knowing, or the social construction of reality as value and as truth.

Experiential Knowledge

In addition to the unity of sensibility in and through which we are related to and interact with the real world and it is related to us, the example of the child can perhaps bring out another aspect of human knowledge which is important for our considerations. For here in the early stages of learning it is obvious that we know the meaning of things before we know the meaning of words. Words are not the initial medium of our knowledge of and communication with the real world. Learning, knowledge and communication take place long before we can read and write, and even long before we can understand words or use them ourselves. Anyone who has ever seen a child in the early weeks or months of life has witnessed such non-verbal learning and communication, and probably even engaged in it. The child's emerging world of persons and things speaks to it in a variety of non-verbal languages, a variety of actions, movements, signs and gestures. For example, when the child is held or when it is touched gently or roughly, when it sees a smile or receives a sign of affection, very particular things and very important things are being "said" to it, and when the child has learned what these movements, actions and gestures mean, it has entered into communication with its world. It is learning through these signs and gestures not only that reality is there, but that it has a face. If it is lucky, it is learning that it has a human face, but it could also be learning the opposite.

Eventually another process begins as the child learns words or names for all of these realities which it already knows about from its own experience of them, words which refer to and identify realities which it knows, but are not the source of its knowledge. Existence itself and the real world which has touched this existence are the source. When education in a more formal sense begins, the child will learn about all sorts of other realities which may never have entered the world of its own experience, and, if this education continues far enough, it can learn ever more sophisticated and specialized names for things, and discover ever more sophisticated relationships between things in a variety of scientific and academic disciplines. For each of these disciplines represents a particular way of generalizing, conceptualizing, categorizing and naming things and their interrelationships.

But precisely because they are abstract and general, neither the everyday names for things such as mother or father or water, nor their scientific names, should the child learn in one science that mothers belong to the category of mammals, or in another that through a particular kind of analysis water can also be called H_2O , none of these names ever express what may have been his concrete and quite wordless and nameless experience of these realities. In order to exist as social beings we have to acquire a vast arsenal of such words and concepts, and in order to function as a general language which everyone can share, our words and concepts have to prescind or abstract from the particularities of individual experience. But that does not mean that we, even when using these words, can abstract from the particularities of our own individual experience, for the world we live in and interact with is a world of the concrete and the particular. Hence we can all use the same words with a very general and very precise conceptual content, but they can be weighted with a very different experiential content and have a very different experiential meaning for different individuals. This is not true, of course, for any and every reality which we name, but it is true of those realities which have made up our concrete world and have most directly and immediately touched our lives.

There is, then, a kind of knowledge which we all have and which is acquired not "from without" by learning from teachers or books, but is acquired "from within," by being in existence, by being in touch with and being touched by a world of real persons and real things. It is communicated not by words or concepts, but by life itself, by our experience of human existence as an existence in conscious relationship with particular persons and particular things. Through this experience we have formed "images" of the real, which in the first instance are not "things" inside us, but are reality itself in the concrete modalities and tonalities in which it has spoken to us. It is in our images of the real that we grasp the real self and the real world together in the unity of their lived and experienced relationship, and in the unity of awareness and affectivity in which we grasp this relationship.

Images of the Real

Images, then, constitute not only our initial knowledge of the real world, but also our most concrete, most real and most "objective" knowledge: this is,

indeed, the way reality has been, this is what my experience of existence has been like, and nothing is more real and objective for a human knower than this. At this most basic and concrete level of knowledge, what is most objective is what is most subjective, and what is most subjective is what is most objective, for it is precisely the actual, lived relationship between the two which is known. Nor only is our lived existence an "objective" element in our knowledge, but it is the element in and through which all other "objects" are filtered to us. Because human existence cannot be lived in the abstract or "at a distance," but is a conscious and affective relationship with concrete realities, we form and cannot help but form such images of the real. For at this level we have no other access to the real world except through our own experience of it. Our images of the real differ from our concepts of the real, then, not because one is "subjective" and the other is "objective," but because images contain the real, objective concreteness and particularity of the objective world, and concepts abstract from this. I can attach false ideas to my images by thinking that everyone's experience is just like my own, or by thinking that human existence is nothing more than or different from what I have already experienced. But these false generalizations simply mean that my images must grow and develop, grow through contact with the experience of other people and develop with the growth of my own experience.

In this process of growth towards maturity both in our experience and in our images there are two important aspects that concern us here. First, in the initial stages of life the child is mostly passive and dependent on the world of its experience. Life is more a passive "being done to" than a doing. At one level the child is highly active, at the level of felt needs and appetites which clamor for instant attention and satisfaction. But he is dependent on others for this attention and for the satisfaction of these needs, whether it be the biological need for food or warmth, or the human need for other kinds of warmth and attention. Secondly, in these early stages the child is largely "dispersed" in a series of discrete and disconnected experiences. Neither the world nor the self has as yet much "shape" or continuity, but things come and go in a disparate manifold.

Growth towards maturity, then, is characterized, among other things, first, by a movement from a more dependent and passive stage towards a more independent and active stage, from "being shaped" by one's experience of the real towards a more free and more active "shaping" of one's self and one's real world. Secondly, this "shaping" is largely a process of unifying and integrating the disparate manifold of the self and the world into a unity, a world and a self with form and shape, with movement, coherence and direction. It is in this process that our knowledge of the self and of the world is most free, for there is no concrete, antecedent blueprint for the shaping. We can observe how others have shaped human existence, and we can learn abstract principles or values about human existence in general, but it is of the very nature of being a human subject and a human person that we are free and responsible in the creation of human existence in the concrete. We cannot not be free. We can exercise this freedom minimally by simply being part of the way things are or by simply leaving things the way we find them, but this is itself a free decision.

This movement towards the free, active unifying and shaping of a world into our world, the forming and informing of it into a human world is basically the work of imagination. For from out of the concrete actualities and potentialities which confront us in all their variety both "within" and "without," we have to freely imagine how things can fit together and freely choose to do the fitting. We sometimes imagine life to be like a jig-saw puzzle-with-the-finished-product already pictured on the box. All we have to do is keep one eye on the box and the other on the pieces and conform to the picture by getting all the pieces in the right place. But we do not have to imagine it that way. Suppose that there is no picture on the box, no antecedent blueprint, suppose that the pieces can fit together in any number of "right" ways, what then? Imagination in this case has no choice but to be free and creative, or at most it can freely choose not to be. To live a human life which is a free, responsible and creative making, then, we all have to do something similar to what the artist does with his materials: we have to form and inform the "materials" of life with shape, form, action, movement, rhythm, meaning, sense and direction. What is more characteristic of the human than this capacity for forming and informing, for not only observing reality and meaning which is already there, but also for discovering and creating reality and meaning which would not be there but for the freedom and imagination of the creator?

The Primacy of Experience

To the extent that a person is open to and freely enters into human existence in its various dimensions and contours, his concrete, experiential knowledge and images of the real grow and mature with existence itself. This kind of knowledge is spoken of in various terms by different recent and contemporary authors. Earlier in this issue William Lynch insists that "images think," that they are cognitive and through them we know the reality of the world and of ourselves. His principle that "one must first be in existence before one can reflect on it" is echoed by German theologian Karl Rahner, in his insistence that human existence is something which has to be "done" in freedom, and in the doing we learn "existentially" what we may have known only abstractly or in theory. Consider, he says, the difference between the experience of joy or sorrow, hope or fidelity, or any of the other modalities of being in the world in a human way, and merely having a "concept" or a "definition" of any of these human realities.⁴

He insists, moreover, on the mutual interaction and interdependence of the two levels of the one knowledge. There is the need to reflect upon and express in language what we have learned in the depths of existence, even though words fall short and can never recapture and express the experience itself in its fullness. Likewise there is the need to relate our concepts and words about human things back to the original experiences from which they have been derived and to

⁴Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), pp. 15-17.

which they point, so that we can know what they "really" mean. Knowledge on the level of conceptual reflection and verbal expression is the articulation of what we know more basically and primarily in the actual process of living a human life. If such experience without reflection and expression would be "blind" and "mute," unable to be shared and communicated, reflection and words without experiential roots would be hollow and empty of their real content.

Cardinal Newman also speaks of these two levels in our knowledge when he distinguishes between "notional" and "real" knowledge. Our abstract notions become real knowledge when the realities they express actually touch our own lives, when we finally "realize" what words which we may have been using for a long time "really" mean. Some "realizations" are thrust upon us, but all sorts of human realities will never be real for us and thereby known by us unless we freely enter into them, unless we "realize" them in the sense of making them real. Such realization takes place when this particular reality is no longer something at a distance, something we have heard or read about, but something we have touched and been touched by.

We speak of this kind of realization as something "coming home" to us, a phrase which indicates that this "something" has "gotten inside" us and we have "gotten into" existence in a new way. Such a change is not a quantitative addition to our knowledge, but a qualitative movement of our existence itself. What is it like, for example, to be "captivated" by something of beauty, what is it like to stand in awe and wonder before something truly admirable, what is it like to trust and be trusted, or to love and be loved? What is it like "to be held," as Eugene Geinzer speaks of in his earlier article. We shall never "realize" what any of these realities are like unless we freely do them and let them be done to us.

There is a kind of knowledge and understanding which gives us a measure of mastery and control of reality. Through it we grasp and comprehend the laws and relationships of things and thereby are able to explain them and "get on top" of them. Think of the marvels that science and technology have achieved just in our own time through the development of their methods and techniques. There is another kind of knowledge which, too, leads to insight, not the insight gained by "taking things apart," by analyzing and reducing them to their basic components, but the insight gained by "putting things together" and seeing them in their concrete wholeness. If the former "puts us on top" of things and allows us to manipulate and control, the latter "puts us in union" with things by enabling us to see them and ourselves in a new way, a new relationship. If the former leads to explanation, the latter leads to contemplation. A society which can explain many of the details, but cannot see the whole is a society without vision. The capacity to imagine and envision the human is real knowledge, for it is the first and necessary step towards its realization.

If, then, the world in which we live becomes a human world not automatically nor by accident or chance, but only by design, the design of those who have the freedom and the imagination to see it as a human world, the role of imagination

is central in human life. It is central not only in the life of the individual in his own movement towards the "humanization" of things, but also in the larger life of a whole society. Here, too, a society becomes truly "civilized" and truly human only through the human freedom and human imagination of its members. Perhaps it is the artists who must point the way by giving expression to truly human images of the real. For by helping us to see the human face of things and to hear the human sound of things, by showing us the human touch and the human soul of things in words and sounds, in colors and shapes, in movement, rhythm and gesture, they are helping us to realize what the possibilities of the human are, a realization which includes both the moment of "seeing" in the work of art, and the "making real" beyond art in life itself.

Theology and the Imagination

Christian faith is not in the first instance a body of abstract, eternal truths, nor is the "good news" it proclaims a situation or state of affairs which always was. It speaks, rather, of concrete, historical persons and events, things which are said to have happened in time, truths which are contingent and particular. Theological reflection on this faith, then, is not in the first instance abstract "theory" or "speculation," however profound or ingenious, but reflection on these concrete, historical persons and events in an effort to understand and express their larger significance. Should it lose these roots in time and history, in the concrete and the particular, Christian theology would have lost its roots in Christian faith and in the concrete realities in which it believes.

Christianity, then, is an historical religion in the sense that its starting point is not an abstract "human nature" or "human essence" as something which is ahistorical and atemporal, but "human existence" as something which has come to be in time, what has happened to it in time and what it has done in time. Likewise, its basic concern is not a "divine nature" or "divine essence," but "God's existence" in the sense of his free activity in time and in history for man and with man. Theology's primary focus is these two "existences" or these two freedoms, that of God and that of man, or, more precisely, the relationship between the two as it has come to be in time. Hence it speaks of a "history of salvation" or a "history of revelation" as the history of those persons and events which it sees as constitutive for the coming to be of this relationship.

The center of this history for Christians, of course, is the concrete, historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. He is the "image," or, recalling Paul's metaphor, the "glass" in which and through which the Word entered into history and "became flesh," lived out a human existence and thereby became visible, audible and tangible in time. The "rediscovery" of the importance of the historical in Christian faith has had as one of its main effects a new emphasis in Christology on the theology of Jesus. The main focus of much of Christology today is the historical Jesus of Nazareth and the events of his life. Christology in this perspective is not so much a reflection on his "ontological structure" as it is a theology of the life of Jesus. It is not, however, an attempt to reconstruct the life of Jesus in a chronological sense as was done in the "Lives of Jesus" earlier

in this century, for we now know that we do not have enough information to write a "Life" or a biography of Jesus in that sense. Rather, it is an attempt to express the religious or theological significance of his person and life, in quite the same way that the Gospel writers were not writing a biography in our sense, but books expressing their religious faith.

Because of the new emphasis in Christology on the life of Jesus, there is, likewise, a renewed interest in the scriptural accounts of his life and in the enormous advances in our knowledge of the scriptures which have been made in recent decades. This interest is not, as before, in finding "proof texts" for the already formulated theses of theology, but in gaining a better and more concrete picture of the person and life about whom the theses were formulated. Moreover, the vast increase in our exegetical knowledge of the scriptures has been accompanied by a much better understanding of and appreciation for the various literary forms in which his life was portrayed and its religious significance expressed. This understanding has shown us the intrinsic connection between poetic and theological language, and has made clear that theology and art are necessarily interrelated. The discovery, which first had to be forced on us, that the Gospel writers were not just reporting literal "facts" after the manner of a news broadcaster, but using a rich variety of literary forms to express and communicate the significance of these facts means that theology must read scripture not as science or as history, but as it was written, as religious language and religious literature.

This has given us a deeper sense of the importance of "narrative" and "story" within theology, for if the life of Jesus is theology's central concern, it is through narrative and story that we tell others about a human life. The narrative or story is not a decorative or pedagogical device, for in the content of the story lies the real content of theology, a content not to be distilled into abstract ideas, but to be presented and represented in its concrete particularity. Likewise, it has given us a deeper sense of the "dramatic" element in his life, the movement of Jesus through time and his interaction with his friends as well as his enemies. Again, this is not just to arouse interest before getting on to "real" theology, for in this drama lies the real meaning of his life and the real significance of who he was. It has shown us, finally, the importance of Jesus' own use of parable in his teaching, and in showing us the place of parable and myth and legend in all human cultures and the kind of truth they express, it has enabled us to use these words in theology without fear and trembling. To have let go of the "literal fact" or the "clear and distinct idea" as the only touchstones of truth in theological knowledge has freed us to see the importance of literature and art in the first Christian theology, and in the Christian theology of every age.

For we, too, must express the significance of this person and his life in ways that allow it to be understood and "realized" by people today. Perhaps we have become more aware of the futility of trying to do this simply by repeating abstract formulas which have come down to us from the past. For however well these formulas served their purpose in expressing Christian faith for past gen-

creations, words, like all things human, have a history and they can change their meaning over the course of the centuries. The word "person," for example, does not mean in our culture what it meant in the early Christian centuries when it was used in both Christological and Trinitarian formulas of the faith. We use the word "person" to mean an individual center of human consciousness and freedom, and in this sense Jesus was very much a human person. To say that he was not, as is heard often enough, is not only misleading, but it gives rise to a somewhat unreal and "mythological" image of Jesus which empties him of his real history and real humanity.

To counter this misunderstanding, much of theology would stress that one does not have to diminish or water down the real humanity of Jesus in order to express his unique relationship to God. On the contrary, the two vary not in inverse, but in direct proportion: the more fully human he was and is, the more fully is he God's son. For it sees the human as having been created in the first place to be related to God, and sees the "hypostatic union" as the fullest realization of this *human* potentiality to be related to God, a relationship which can exist in lesser ways in all things human. We do not have to deny the human in order to "make room" for God, for it is in the human that He becomes embodied and symbolized, and the fuller and more real the symbol, the more the symbolized can be really present. Hence we look for the unique relationship of Jesus to God precisely in his humanity, not "underneath" or "alongside" it. For it is in the fullness of his humanity that he is for us the "image" of God.

To take this integrated view of the person and life of Jesus means that Christian faith and theology must "remember" and "recall" the historical Jesus in all his concrete particularity. It must preserve and hand on this history-memory, and not just "ideas" about his ontological constitution. For human existence, including the existence of Jesus, is something which comes to be in time and achieves its identity in time. We must look, therefore, to this temporal process, to the life of Jesus and keep its memory alive in the various images which have come down to us. Just as the Jewish people at the time of Jesus and in our own time celebrate the feast of Passover as a time of remembering the acts of God in delivering his people from Egypt, so too the Christian people remember the life of Jesus in order to see the acts and revelation of God in him. In his own words: "Do these things in memory of me."

"Tradition," then, in a Christian sense is not just a series of "ideas" about Jesus which have been developed logically through speculation, but the presentation and "representation" of his person and life in all the variety of ways in which the memory of his life has been preserved and kept alive through the centuries: in the words of poetry and story, in music and song, in the dramatic actions of liturgy and theater, in the figures of the sculptors and the paintings of the artists. In all of these ways the memory of Jesus has found expression in human images, in human shapes and forms, and all of these different "languages" are intrinsic parts of theology. For without them the concrete humanity of Jesus can easily evaporate into an "idea," and Christian faith into a form of gnostic "knowledge."

But Christians remember the past not for the sake of the past, but for the sake of the present, not as a way of jumping out of the present, but as a way of entering into the present from out of our roots in the past. Hence Christian faith must not only be a process of remembering, but also a process of imagining. For they are remembering not an abstract idea or principle, but a concrete truth which happened and was done in the past, and they must discover how this truth can be done in ever new particularities of time and space, in ever new situations and cultures. This process of discovery is the work of imagination, for if the present is genuinely different from the past, there is no "picture on the box" to show how the various "pieces" fit together. The whole must be imagined as the first step towards its concrete realization. From out of the concrete actualities and possibilities that confront us, an existence must be imagined into human shape and form, and in the process the truth of Christian faith is becoming real in the present, becoming visible and tangible in the world.

If, then, theology is to keep its roots in the history of the present as well as the history of the past, it must not only remember, but also imagine. It needs not only the artists of the past, but also the artists of the present and their images of the human. This is true not only when art has an explicitly religious purpose such as architecture in the design of a church or music and dance in liturgical worship, or when art has a religious topic as its thematic content. It is true whenever art is really itself. For if the human existence of Jesus is the central image of Christian faith, and if it is in the fullness of that existence that we must find his unique relationship to God, then wherever the human finds expression in authentic human images, in that very humanness lies its value for Christian faith. For the principle which is true of Jesus is true of all Christian life: its Christian truth is written in the lines of the human.

Christian faith, then, must be in touch with the images of both the past and the present, it must be both memory and imagination if the past is to speak to and be heard in the present, and if the present is to find its real roots in the past. For it is in the analogy of the images of past and present that the continuity of the faith is seen most concretely. This continuity lies not only in an analogy of images, but also, in Ernest Ferlita's earlier phrase, an "analogy of action." Perhaps nowhere is the analogy of this action stressed more strongly than in the New Testament itself: what you do to your brothers and sisters you are actually doing "to me" (Mt. 25: 40). To see God in the "glass" which is Jesus, and to see Jesus in all of his brothers and sisters is to have an imagination which is integrally human, and in being a truly human imagination it is also a Christian imagination.