

## 8. CHRIST AND SALVATION

### WHERE WE ARE

✓ Christology is reflection upon the one whom the Christian community confesses as Lord and Savior. Historically this reflection has not been a merely theoretical matter. The effort has been informed by the keenest of human interests—the interest in salvation. It is therefore fitting that soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) be considered at the same time as Christology.

✓ In testifying to Jesus Christ, the community points to a particular person who lived at a specific time and in a specific place. This reference gives Christianity its distinctive identity, its specificity. But Christian thought throughout its history has oscillated between questions of identity and questions of relevance,<sup>1</sup> and if Christology is located at the first pole, that of identity, then soteriology would seem to gravitate to the second pole, that of relevance. One might say that the role of soteriology is to show why this person Jesus Christ is understood to be significant.

✓ The modern period, however, experienced the polarity as a tension. Linking soteriology to Christology has seemed to many to be odd and even presumptuous. After all, it amounts to gathering up the most fundamental of human concerns—the concern with salvation, however defined—and linking it, focusing it, and somehow making it contingent upon a Jewish prophet in a minor Roman dependency some two thousand years ago. The sense of anomaly and tension this creates is often termed "the scandal of particularity."

✓ In view of this concern, modern theology has tended to reverse the classic order of the doctrines. In classic dogmatics one felt free to begin with Christology and then proceed to soteriology. One might talk about who Christ is, then about what he has done. For many in the modern period, however, to begin with Christ seems to presume too much, to risk being irrelevant if not intolerant. Thus modern

State  
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1. Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 7.

theologians have generally preferred to start with soteriology, to begin by establishing a common ground with their audience on the basis of common humanity. It has been said, after all, and only half in jest, that sin is the one Christian doctrine which can be empirically verified. And if sin should seem too harsh a term to serve as a point of contact, one may speak in a more positive vein, invoking the human search for peace and meaning. Whatever the particulars, this pattern of argument appears and reappears throughout the modern period in the rhetoric of conservative preaching no less than in the proposals of liberal revision. In this broad sense the modern temperament has been preoccupied with apologetics—depicting some human need or experience, then speaking of salvation in relation to that need or experience, and finally presenting Jesus Christ as the one through whom such salvation comes.<sup>2</sup>

Dei Brown

Few would deny the fruitfulness of the modern strategy. Further, one may claim on its behalf that it simply brings to light a method already implicit within the classic Christologies. The best of the tradition, as we have already remarked and as we shall see in greater detail, was never merely theoretical; it was animated from first to last by a deep soteriological interest. At the same time, however, the shape of theology does make a difference. To reverse the classic paradigm generally entails a reinterpreting of content as well. When the soteriological interest is converted into a topic of reflection in its own right and becomes itself a sort of doctrine (and a decisive one at that), then the modern approach, as we shall also see, produces problems of its own.

## THE DOCTRINES IN THEIR CLASSIC FORMULATION

### Biblical Foundations

Our knowledge about the historical Jesus is slight, but certain essentials are generally recognized. There was such a person; he preached a message summarized in the words "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel"

2. For the sake of simplicity I refer to the Christology-soteriology pattern, exemplified in the early creeds, as "the" classic paradigm. This is not to say that the period was confined to a single pattern, but merely to underline the fact that thinkers of the classical period felt at liberty to use the Christology-soteriology pattern, and did so extensively, whereas many leading figures of the modern period have not. Cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, pp. 37-39; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus: God and Man*, pp. 38-49.

(Mark 1:15). He exercised a ministry directed particularly to the poor and the outcast; and he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. Of his preaching it is clear that he did not proclaim himself; his gospel was not itself a developed Christology. But neither did he set forth a collection of truths, a series of ethical principles, unrelated to his own person. His attention was fixed upon "the kingdom of God," a radical turn in history which was immediately at hand. To this in-breaking event he bound his person and his ministry.

For the Jews to whom Jesus spoke, the coming of the kingdom was a matter of the greatest significance. One could not remain neutral before it. Jesus himself showed little interest in the specifics of historical prediction; his attention was fixed instead upon the necessity of decision. This necessity was heightened by the distinctive element in his preaching, the element of utter immediacy. Others had preached the coming of the kingdom, but with a view to what must be done in preparation. Now no time was left to prepare—the kingdom was already at hand! The human schemes we devise for having a hand in our salvation, and thus for keeping God at a comfortable distance, had all collapsed. The only question was whether one would repent and receive the kingdom as a child.

This person, the one who preached this message, was crucified. Precisely because Jesus had so bound his ministry to history, the execution was a crisis for the community that had gathered about him. The events themselves, it seemed, had refuted him. In the face of this reversal there arose within the community the testimony that Jesus was nevertheless alive—that he had risen from the dead. Here was the final confirmation of his ministry, God's vindication of him. And here was the assurance of his abiding presence: It was he himself who reigned. And if this was so, then all that went before was seen in a new light; all the events, Jesus' actions and words, had now to be reinterpreted.

Thus "the proclaimer became the proclaimed, and the implicit Christology of Jesus becomes the explicit Christology of the church." The New Testament itself is at once the product of this process of reinterpretation and a testimony to it. Beginning with what they had witnessed, the community reached back into their thought world,

3. Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology*, p. 143.

which was informed by both Judaism and Hellenism, in search of ways of understanding. Jesus was variously proclaimed as the Son of Man, the Son of David, and the Son of God. He was proclaimed the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ. These titles were rooted in the worship of the church and specifically in the practice of praying to Jesus as the one present and active in the life of the community. The function of each title was to take Christ's activity, both present and past, and place it in some crucial relationship, through a pattern of promise and fulfillment, to the saving activity of God. Each of the early titles, that is to say, was already implicitly soteriological.

This also meant that Christ's saving activity was not confined to his death. For the New Testament community, salvation was already present in his life—in his preaching and healing, his pronouncing of forgiveness, and his compassionate identification with the outcast and the oppressed. Thus his death must be seen as related to his entire ministry and yet as representing a decisive turn. The earliest interpretation of his death may well be the simple statement that Christ "died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3). The term "for," appearing repeatedly in such contexts, contains in germ a major strand of New Testament soteriology. The effect of such passages, once again, is to depict Jesus' death as the culmination of God's own saving activity. This point must be stressed, for there is no place in the New Testament for the notion that God stands aloof from human affairs or stands only in a posture of judgment until after Christ's death has made reconciliation possible. On the contrary, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). God was supremely active in that life and death, and it is for precisely this reason that they have saving significance.<sup>4</sup>

This conviction was infinitely more important in the eyes of the early community than any particular theory of how it had come about. Accordingly, the images which attach to Christ's death must be interpreted in light of this testimony and not the reverse. Of the various depictions, a number elaborate the understanding that Christ died "for our sins"—for instance, the images of ransom, punishment, and sacrifice. Christ is portrayed as the Paschal Lamb; his blood is efficacious. Simultaneously another cluster of images, interwoven

4. See George S. Hendry, *The Gospel of the Incarnation*, pp. 115-47.

with the first, portrays the death as a cosmic victory over powers of death and darkness, forces inimical to God. Here the cross is a triumph in which the reign of sin is ended. Death itself is overcome.

### Classic Christology: Nicaea and Chalcedon

Central to the thought of the second-century Apologists was the conception of Christ as the divine Logos. Through this conception the Apologists sought to establish lines of contact with the surrounding Jewish and Hellenistic cultures. At the same time, the conception clearly marked out the uniqueness of the Christian claim, for the Apologists understood Christ not simply as a great prophet or teacher, a second Moses or Socrates possessing the *logos* to a certain degree, but as *being* the very Logos. Further, the conception of Christ as Logos displays the Christian community's early recognition that if salvation is to be secure, then the one who redeems must be the one who created as well. Salvation cannot simply be, as it was in some early theologies, salvation *from* the created order. On the other hand, the modes of thought fashioned by the early Apologists did create certain problems for later theology. It remained possible on their premises to think of the Logos as subordinate to God and thus as a lesser divinity; in addition there was the uncertain status, in the Apologists' soteriology, of Jesus' suffering and death. The first issue was to be addressed at Nicaea, the second at Chalcedon.

The thought of Irenaeus, particularly the importance he accords to the incarnation, provides a striking example of the way in which Christology is informed by the interest in salvation. According to this second-century theologian, Christ "became what we are in order to enable us to become what he is" (*On Heresies* 5.pref.). Irenaeus is representative of Eastern Christian thought in holding, contrary to much of Western soteriology, that the incarnation is not just a necessary prelude to the death on the cross. Rather, the incarnation itself is of a piece with Christ's saving activity, conceived as active obedience to God in identification with humankind. With the incarnation there is initiated a process which extends throughout Jesus' life whereby he embraces all aspects of human experience excepting sin. In the course of this process, Christ "recapitulates" not only the whole of human experience but also the entirety of the created order. Thus Irenaeus

Incarnation ✓

receives with full seriousness Paul's declaration of God's intent "to unite all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:10). Once again, as with the Apologists, a link is forged between Redeemer and Creator. But now there is something more: In redemption, creation itself is brought to completion.

Questions implied but unresolved in the early Christologies came to a head in the fourth century. The theology of Arius made it impossible to ignore the fact that one could speak of Christ as the Creator of the world and yet consider him subordinate to God. In the name of a strict monotheism, Arius contended that in the last analysis the Logos must be considered a creature; he asserted in deliberately provocative terms that there was a time when Christ was not. It is significant that one indication of the inadequacy of Arius's position was that it did not square with the universally accepted practice of worshipping Christ.

In opposition to the Arian position, the Council of Nicaea (325) spoke of Christ as being homoousios—of the same nature—with God. In interpreting this formula we may take the thought of Athanasius as representative of what came to be acknowledged as the Nicene position. His thinking springs not from detached metaphysical speculation but from a specific soteriological concern. Athanasius reasons that if Christ were but a creature, he could not save us, "for how could a creature, by a creature, partake of God?" (*Against the Arians* 2:67). We were created out of nothing, and in sinning we had turned back toward that nothingness. What Christ achieved in saving us was to reverse this process; once again salvation was conceived as a virtual re-creation. It followed therefore that salvation could not be accomplished by one who was himself a creature—any more than creation could be. That required, precisely, one who was "of the same nature" as God.

The achievement of Nicaea was considerable. The council made it clear that Christ's obedience did not make him less divine. This had profound implications for conceiving of divinity not simply as power but also as love.<sup>5</sup> Further, the council made it clear that Christ's role as mediator did not mean that he was a sort of *tertium quid*, more than human but less than God, hovering somewhere between the

5. See Arthur C. McGill, *Suffering: A Test of Theological Method* (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1968), pp. 58–76.

two. But in laying these matters to rest, the council made another set of inherited questions all the more acute.

We noted that already at the time of the Apologists there was the question of the status of Christ's suffering and death; indeed, as Paul asserts, the cross has always been the great stumbling block. Now, with the Nicene clarification of Christ's oneness with God, this question had to be addressed: How could one so exalted be crucified and die? The question was complicated by the fact that Christian thinking had taken over from Greek philosophy the concept of the divine "impassibility." The root of this concept is the recognition that the things of this world flourish and then perish, while God alone abides. From this it is concluded that change of any sort implies transience; thus God, to be God, must be unchanging. This unquestioned assumption placed enormous pressure upon Christian thought to regard Christ's suffering and death as somehow unreal or as having no bearing upon his divinity.

To erect a barrier against such misconceptions, the Council of Chalcedon (451) spoke of Christ as "one person in two natures." The debates surrounding Chalcedon are notoriously complex, for reasons both political and metaphysical, but once again the soteriological intent is unmistakable. Chalcedon held that Christ did not simply take on the appearance of humanity—he became truly human. And becoming human meant, as prior debate had served to clarify, that more than a human body was involved. The incarnation of the Logos involved a human mind and will as well. Gregory of Nazianzus was well aware of what was at stake when he wrote that "what has not been assumed cannot be restored; it is what is united with God that is saved" (*Ep.* 101). Salvation, on this reasoning, requires Christ's full and distinct humanity. But salvation also requires that the human be somehow united with the divine, since what is not united with God is not yet saved. A careful balance must therefore be struck, affirming both distinctness and unity. And it was such balance that Chalcedon sought in the formula "one person in two natures."

It must be stressed that this formula was never meant to be an exhaustive and self-sufficient account of the person of Christ. Specifically it may be suggested that the framers of the creed conceived the formula in relation to a long-standing tradition of Christ's preexistence, self-emptying, and exaltation, which was embodied in the

liturgy and preserved in the great christological hymn of Phil. 2:6–11.<sup>6</sup> This tradition portrayed Christ not by a formula but by a narrative—a story which is moral in its implications and yet cosmic in its scope. The significance of this tradition had been implicitly reaffirmed in the very shape of the Nicene Creed. When Chalcedon is reinserted in this context, its static language regarding two “natures” is balanced by a language of process, and it becomes easier to make the soteriological point, for the narrative encourages us to speak not simply of two realities united in one person, but also of a saving process of *exchange*. In a manner characteristic of liturgy, the narrative revels in *paradox*. Hilary of Poitiers is fully within this tradition when he writes, “We were raised because he was lowered; shame to him was glory to us” (*On the Trinity* 2.25).

This point is crucial because the occasion which had necessitated the council in the first place was at least in part a perplexity over the status of Christ’s suffering and death. Here in the tradition of preexistence, *self-emptying*, and exaltation was an account that gave to those events a central and irreducible place. Seen in this context, the aim of the council was intentionally indirect. It sought to stake out a conceptual space in which this kenotic tradition and others like it might continue to develop and flourish. The council wished not to create a rival account in competition with the others but to set down certain *rules* regarding the existing accounts and all future accounts, indicating which fell within the acceptable bounds and which were apt to prove irreconcilable with the proclamation of salvation.

Understood in this way, the Chalcedonian definition merits its position as the classic statement of Christian orthodoxy regarding the person of Christ. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that there are aspects of Chalcedon which stand in an uneasy relationship to the very traditions it sought to protect. The language of the creed, imposing in its terminology and reinforced by a certain conciliar authority, might lead one to believe that this was “real” theology. In comparison, other theological modes, such as those of the liturgical narratives, may seem of little significance. Further, the creed established the pattern for a way of talking about Christ which began with the duality

6. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, 1:256–66; cf. Robert Victor Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon: A Historical and Doctrinal Survey*, pp. xiii–xviii.

of the divinity on the one hand and the humanity on the other. Once we begin in this way, all we may subsequently say about the unity of Christ's person has something of the air of an afterthought, as if we were gluing the two natures together. Besides, beginning with the duality—as if the two terms were already understood in their own right and needed only to be united—provides an open invitation to import into Christology our prejudices and preconceptions. When this occurs we are apt to find, as subsequent theology often found, that the old debates return unabated, dividing our very notion of Christ's person.

### Classic Treatments of Salvation:

#### Anselm to Luther

For the West, Chalcedon represented a point of relative closure regarding Christology and thus freed subsequent thinkers to turn their attention to a more direct consideration of soteriology. At the same time, the new task was profoundly shaped by the earlier achievement. The very title of Anselm's seminal work on the atonement, *Cur deus homo?* (1098), poses the question of why God united with humanity. The answer, to Anselm's mind, would have to be one which showed that the incarnation was in some sense a logical necessity.

Anselm found the grounds for this necessity in the moral order of the universe. It was this order, disturbed by human sin, which required a setting right. But to meet this requirement was beyond human doing, first because human powers had been vitiated by sin, and second because the debt owed was infinite. Anselm secured this latter point, the infinite character of the obligation, by interpreting the moral order in terms of a certain conception of *honor*. Because the one offended is of infinite worth, there is infinite liability. The debt is owed by humankind, but it is beyond all human paying. It is not, however, beyond the reach of God. Here the same logic works from the other side: If there should be offered a gift which had been of cost to God, then the worth of the gift would reflect the worth of the giver, which is to say, it would be infinite. What was needed, therefore, was a gift from God offered by a human being on behalf of all humankind. Hence the necessity of the incarnation.

It only remained for Anselm to specify the precise nature of the

gift, and in doing this he introduced another portentous innovation. Anselm took Christ's suffering and death to be an instance—indeed, the primary and originative instance—of the practice of penance, which was coming to prominence in the church of Anselm's time. What is crucial here is that penance be understood as distinct from punishment: It has the character not of something undergone but of a gift freely offered. So understood, it comports well with the notion of an offering given to God's honor and with a theory of merit, for when one suffers a punishment, the act is self-contained, a requirement has simply been met. But when one makes a payment or offers penance, a certain merit may accrue, and if the offering be precious enough, it may create a kind of reservoir upon which others in turn may draw. In this manner Anselm established the foundations for much of the medieval church's self-understanding as the custodian of grace. ✓

Another medieval understanding of salvation quite different from Anselm's is the "moral influence theory" of Peter Abelard. Abelard held that Christ's work is best understood as a manifestation of God's love, which has the purpose of awakening a corresponding love in the hearts of humankind. It is this awakening of love, neither more nor less, which constitutes salvation. Against Abelard it is often argued that his interpretation is unduly subjectivistic; <sup>how so?</sup> but the simplicity of his account, together with its sensitivity to the divine love and human experience, has won for it many advocates within the modern period.

For the understanding of Christ and salvation, as for much else, the high medieval period was outwardly a time of consolidation rather than innovation. But there did occur during this period a profound shift in the conceptual context within which the doctrines were conceived. It was a cultural transformation from a broadly "realist" to a predominantly "nominalist" world view. The bearing of this development upon our own concerns is twofold. First, the notion of a unitary human nature came to seem less real and more a matter of convention. This created difficulties regarding the solidarity which had been presumed to bind humankind together and, in turn, to Christ. Throughout the classical period, this concept of human solidarity had provided the crucial link between Christology and soteriology. If ✓

7. Robert S. Franks, *The Work of Christ: A Historical Study of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 114, 135.

the concept of an underlying human nature is now regarded as a fiction, how can the act of God in becoming human—that is to say, in becoming one particular person—be efficacious for all? This unsettling question was made the more acute by a second, related factor: the waning of confidence in the notion, so basic to Anselm, of an independent moral order. It can be argued that with regard to this pervasive transformation, the thought of Thomas Aquinas represented a precious moment of judicious, insightful balance. In any case it is certain that, for better or for worse, the emergent nominalism succeeded in setting the terms for much of subsequent discussion. In the questions it raised, it anticipated the Enlightenment. In the answers it gave—dissolving the apparent quandaries by appeal to the freedom and finality of God's sovereign will—it pre-saged the Reformation.

Most classic treatments of salvation, and many modern treatments as well, have taken as their task determining how it is that through Christ humankind is restored to fellowship with God. The aim of ✓ Martin Luther's doctrine of justification by faith, in contrast, was less to answer this question than to overthrow it. For the question presupposes a two-step process: first, the state of humankind is in some way transformed in order to render it acceptable to God; second, and as a consequence, divine fellowship ensues. For Luther, by contrast, there is no such preparation. Christ is given to us as free gift, and he is our fellowship with God. Then, as a result, we come to know that he is our righteousness, that his righteousness is imputed to us. Arguably, this all-decisive event in which we encounter God in Christ is for Luther the true meaning of the Nicene *homoousios*, and the divine exchange whereby Christ took our place in order that we might take his is the meaning of Chalcedon.

( Salvation is thus constitutive of Christ's very being. Luther conveyed this formative conviction by an endless variety of images. Christ is the Word, the Victor, the King. Salvation is Christ's triumph over sin; it is his suffering of our punishment in our place. The richness of Luther's imagery and the sweep of his vision admit of conflicting interpretations. His understanding of faith in particular—as that which grasps the highest reality and yet does so with the utmost inwardness—has engendered innumerable debates over the status of subjectivity. What is beyond debate is the impact of his reformulation and the fact

that he stands as a pivotal figure between the classical and the modern periods.<sup>8</sup>

## CHALLENGES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF MODERN CONSCIOUSNESS

### Three Strata of Modernity

#### 1. Reason as Critical: The Enlightenment

The thinkers of the Enlightenment sought to expunge from Christianity certain beliefs that were, in their opinion, the work of superstition. The basis for this doctrinal housecleaning was provided in large part by the notion of a universal rational and moral order accessible to any thinking person. The role of Christ was confined to that of a moral teacher, and it was in light of the moral order that even his teachings were interpreted and judged. But if one already has knowledge of truth, does one really need the particular figure of Jesus? And if on the other hand one does insist on Jesus as indispensable, is that not an arbitrary narrowing of what is rightfully universal? Here lie the roots of the "scandal of particularity," which is commonly associated with Gotthold Lessing's dictum, "Accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason."<sup>9</sup> An "ugly ditch" had opened between the time of Christ and the present. It was equally a chasm between the accidental and the necessary—between the relativities of history, including the historical Jesus, and the matters most deserving of human trust and fidelity.

#### 2. Reason as Self-Critical: Kant

The modern age is often identified with the Enlightenment and the rise of modern science. It is in this fashion that issues of religion and modernity are commonly portrayed. But to leave matters in these terms is to overlook the fact that the period of the Enlightenment, which so celebrated the achievements of science, culminated in a philosophy which strictly delimited the realm in which that science could claim authority. Quite arguably, the highest achievement of

8. My reading of Luther is particularly informed by Ian D. Kingston Siggins, *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

9. Gotthold Lessing, "The Proof of the Spirit and of Power," in *Lessing's Theological Writings*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1956), p. 53.

the critical spirit was to criticize itself, and this was preeminently the work of Immanuel Kant.

Kant predicated his philosophy upon a radical distinction between two fundamental human capacities: that of theoretical reason, exemplified in the achievements of Newtonian physics, and that of practical reason, which governs the moral life. In this manner Kant appropriated an earlier metaphysical distinction, that between "nature" and "spirit," and translated it into the terms of his own "transcendental" philosophy, a philosophy centered upon the capacities and limitations of the human subject. So translated, the contrast was rendered the more acute, the more emphatic. Applied to theology, Kant's disjunction served as a basis for rejecting the various arguments for God's existence, whether adduced by Christian tradition or natural religion, as efforts to extend the operations of theoretical reason beyond their legitimate sphere. At the same time, Kant did find it possible to reintroduce the idea of God not as an object of knowledge but as a necessary postulate arising from the activities of practical reason. Similarly, the Christology Kant fashioned within these limits bears the mark of his fundamental disjunction. A strong distinction is drawn between Christ understood as the ideal of moral perfection and the empirical-historical figure of Jesus. To a large extent Kant's solution to the christological problem simply carried to its logical conclusion the problematic tendency encouraged by the Enlightenment and lamented by Lessing—the severance of ideality from history.

### 3. *Reason as Self-Aware: Hegel*

With Kant the spirit of the Enlightenment had become self-critical, but the effect of Kant's thought had been to absolutize certain dichotomies. The truths of religion, for example, were set apart from those of science. But there is something in the human mind which does not love a sharp dichotomy; that dichotomy creates a conceptual itch. For G. W. F. Hegel this spontaneous dissatisfaction was evidence that the inherited divisions were really the result of fragmentation, and (Hegel was profoundly persuaded that fragmentation is finally error. For Hegel, the mind—or better, the spirit—is guided in its depths by a tacit awareness of the logic by which life itself evolves, a movement through diversity and conflict to convergence and reconciliation. Kant had been on the right track, Hegel believed, in the "Copernican

revolution" whereby he had concentrated attention upon the fundamental capacities of the human subject. But he had failed to follow through on his crucial insight; he had not taken with full seriousness the character of human subjectivity as all-determinative and self-transcending. With Kant, reason had become self-critical, but it had not yet become self-aware.

Hegel held that in the course of the quest for self-awareness, finite spirit comes to recognize that by virtue of that very quest—by virtue of the unlimited, unconditional character of human questioning—it is already implicitly infinite. But the point at which this infinite character of the finite becomes most concrete and is thus most fully realized is in Jesus Christ, and there, as elsewhere, realization comes by way of conflict. Hegel's Christology focuses on the cross, where Christ suffers death, the fate of all finite beings. But in Christ it is God, the infinite, who is submitted to death. The crucifixion is the death of God. Yet in and through that extreme moment God remains God—and so it is death itself that dies. The bonds are broken, the finite is overcome; it is taken up into the infinite. This, in Hegel's view, is the true meaning of the resurrection and the ascension.<sup>10</sup>

One may with good reason dissent from Hegel's conclusions, but one cannot deny his achievement, which was nothing less than a reclaiming of history for theology. No longer the repository of merely "accidental" truths, history became the realm in which spirit attains its most profound self-recognition. Similarly, as regards particular doctrines, it would be wrong to dismiss Hegel as a simple rationalist, for he reclaimed the very doctrines that the rationalism of the Enlightenment despised: the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection, and the Trinity. "Mystery" was no longer a term of opprobrium, but an invitation to deeper understanding. *mystery*

An aspect of Hegel's influence, which is often unremarked, stems from the tendency in his system to identify salvation itself with the process of revelation. This Hegelian turn comported well with the modern emphasis upon experience. The result has been that it is often unclear in modern theology whether salvation is an event that one knows or the event of one's knowing. There is another aspect of Hegel, however, which has been less well received. Much of the

10. See Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 3, and *The Christian Religion*, pp. 169–229; and James Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978).

Hegelian achievement lay, to quote Claude Welch, in the insistence that "Christianity is neither mere feeling nor a kind of truth claim (separate from the rest of man's knowing. In both respects Hegel stands in contrast to Schleiermacher." Certainly any responsible theology will hold that faith entails knowledge and truth in some important sense. But the modern penchant has been to regard religious knowledge as fundamentally distinctive and thus as set apart from the more ordinary forms. It is on just this point that "the disjunction between Schleiermacher and Hegel provided the shape of the issue for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."<sup>11</sup> Perhaps because it is more congenial to the soteriology-Christology paradigm, Schleiermacher's stress upon religious experience has largely carried the day. Yet the very success of this procedure, with its penchant for a dividing of the conceptual terrain, may be in part responsible for the uneasy conviction, widespread in the present day, that modern Christology has yet to find a truly comprehensive and adequate context.<sup>12</sup>

### Theological Reformulations

#### 1. *The Modern Turn: Schleiermacher*

With Friedrich Schleiermacher the various strata of the modern period began to be assimilated into the mainstream of Christian theology. Schleiermacher fundamentally endorsed the Kantian turn to the subject: his own crucial contribution was to seek to found Christian doctrine in a thoroughgoing way upon the actualities of human experience. The effect of this innovation was quite clearly to place soteriology before Christology. In this sense his is a "functionalist" Christology: Christ is known as the indispensable "whence" of the common life of the Christian community; there is a kind of reading back from Christ's effects to his reality. Indeed, to speak of the divinity of Christ apart from his impact upon our experience is, in Schleiermacher's view, to surrender the living faith to metaphysics and mythology. For subsequent theology this conviction became in large part normative. The classical tradition had tended to reason that Christ is

11. Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, 1:106.

12. Those minority voices which have been most critical of the modern paradigm have taken their stand on a deepened appreciation of the noetic character of faith, that is, the character of faith as knowledge. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 4/1, p. 758; and Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, trans. George H. Kehm (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 2:28-45.

divine and therefore able to save us. In Schleiermacher and much of modern teaching, Christ saves us; therefore we conclude he is divine. ★

But what of Lessing's problem? How is it that the experience of contemporary believers should be determined by this figure of past history, Jesus of Nazareth? For Schleiermacher the key was found in a developmental process occurring within history. In depicting this process, Schleiermacher offered a further variation upon the nature/spirit distinction; he suggested that we find within our awareness a lower and a higher consciousness. Our higher consciousness makes us aware that we depend upon God absolutely; the moment we gain this awareness, we know that it should be made to permeate our entire life, including the realm of our lower consciousness. But in fact this does not occur; we fall short of our own ideal, and this is the recognition of our sin.

At this point Jesus enters the picture, as the "archetype" of that which we cannot accomplish of ourselves, that is, the living out of the knowledge of God. But as archetype he is more than a mere example, as he was for the Enlightenment. While he does communicate the *form* of the authentic Christian life, he communicates a *power* as well. For Jesus' living out of the consciousness of God was itself a historical act which had a historical effect. It gave rise to the Christian community, which became in turn the further embodiment and communication of that act. In this manner Jesus' accomplishment is conveyed to us in the present time, as formative power and empowering form. Thus, Schleiermacher sought to overcome the estrangement of the truth of Christianity from the concreteness of history.<sup>13</sup>

It is not clear that Schleiermacher was ever entirely successful in uniting the two governing foci of his thought—the figure of Jesus and the character of Christian subjectivity. But then neither is it clear that the classical tradition ever realized its own twofold intent of affirming Christ's divinity and his humanity. In the tradition Christ's humanity tended to be regarded as itself miraculous in some way and thus as more than human; or contrariwise, it was regarded as peculiarly passive vis-à-vis the divinity and thus as not exercising a fully human freedom. Either way, a subtle Docetism seemed to be implied. In the

13. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, secs. 88, 94; Richard R. Niebuhr, *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 226.

✓ face of these tendencies a profoundly enriching contribution of the modern period to Christian thought is the clear conviction that being human entails an unreserved participation in finitude and freedom. The notion that Jesus shared in the preconceptions of his times, that his self-understanding developed gradually and not without search and struggle, that he was in his very humanity one who freely chose and actively embraced the course he was to take—these are all distinctly modern propositions. And it was Schleiermacher who in large part began the vital task of appropriating such propositions into the fabric of Christology, not as mere concessions to modernity but as legitimate, deepened insights into the truth of the Christian gospel. In this and in many related features of his thought—the appeal to experience, the project of a Christology “from below,” the priority accorded to soteriology, the effort to be entirely candid and self-critical—Schleiermacher fully merits his title as founder of modern Christian theology.

## 2. History and Apocalyptic

The persistence of Lessing's question was reflected in the course of the nineteenth century by the appearance of a great variety of efforts to recount the life of Jesus and thereby establish the historic core of the Christian faith. In 1906 this collective effort was brought up short by the publication of Albert Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus*. Schweitzer argued that historians and popularists alike had failed to produce a coherent picture of Jesus' person and career. The problem, Schweitzer contended, lay with a congenital incapacity to take seriously that which Jesus himself had taken with ultimate seriousness: the expectation of an immanent ending of history. Ironically the historians had been blinded to this all-determining feature of Jesus' message by their own Enlightenment commitment to a vision of history as internally coherent and immune to disruption from without. Thus the world-affirming attitude which the modern age had won at such a price was called into question by the imperious, world-negating figure who emerged at the boundary of Schweitzer's research.

Chastened by Schweitzer's critique and informed by his insistence upon apocalyptic, the next generation of scholars proceeded more cautiously. Their approach is epitomized in the historical-critical

work of Rudolf Bultmann, who took it as his fundamental premise that the New Testament is not history in the modern sense, not *reportage* about the historical Jesus, but the complex evidence of the early community's *response* to him. Attention thus shifted from the person of Jesus himself and centered instead upon the strands and elements of the community's faith. At the extreme point of skepticism the question arose whether one need posit the reality of the historical figure at all, or what difference it would make if one did not. More recently, however, such scholars as Ernst Käsemann have undertaken a "new quest," which has proceeded in full awareness of these strictures. After all, these scholars argue, if the Christian faith is not to be covertly Docetic, it must show that the figure of the historical Jesus can in *some* fashion bear the weight of the claims made on his behalf. Such, they believe, can indeed be shown if one attends to certain elements within the New Testament, notably in those parables and sayings of Jesus which do not bear the imprint of such subsequent events as the crucifixion. From these spare materials it is possible to derive a portrait of Jesus along the lines suggested at the beginning of the present essay.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. *Dialectical Theology*

The debate over the historical Jesus has carried us well into the present century. Now we must backtrack in order to pick up another thread, that of "dialectical theology." We may begin by recalling the distinction between spirit and nature which was so significant for the liberal theology of the nineteenth century. For many, the concept of spirit in particular served as a kind of conceptual link between divinity and the highest aspect, generally the religious aspect, of humankind. It is precisely this notion of some point of commonality between the divine and the human which Karl Barth attacked in his commentary on Romans. For Barth the quest for such a link, which is indeed the religious quest, is itself the work of presumption and sin.)

14. See Ernst Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM Press, 1964), pp. 15-47; and idem, "Blind Alleys in the 'Jesus of History' Controversy," in *New Testament Questions of Today*, trans. W. J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), pp. 23-65; James M. Robinson, *A New Quest for the Historical Jesus*; and Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976). For a popular presentation of the results of the new quest see Gunther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Irene and Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1961).

So far from bringing us closer to God, it is the very mark of our separation. For Barth *both* spirit and nature, heaven and earth, in fact all creation, stood on one side of the ultimate chasm, while God, the infinite one, stood on the other. Thus a form of the eschatological vision uncovered by Schweitzer became the central tenet of theology.

To say that God is wholly other does not mean, however, that God must exist in isolation. It does mean that if the gulf between time and eternity is to be overcome the movement must derive entirely from the side of God. This is what has happened in Jesus Christ. But Barth insists that when we speak that name we must continue to recall the chasm—that Christ is really God and really human and that the two are infinitely different—even as we proclaim its overcoming. Only in this manner can we hope to be mindful of Jesus Christ as event and thus as gift.

The historical-critical fires that consumed the early quest for the historical Jesus were in considerable part the work of Rudolf Bultmann. In his capacity as theologian, Bultmann professed to celebrate the conflagration, for what was lost, in his estimation, was nothing more than the misguided effort to know Christ after the flesh, in the manner of this world—to establish facts which would secure a controlling knowledge of who and what Christ was. This hankering after objectivity was to Bultmann an evasion, a dodging of the personal risk inherent in Christian faith. The New Testament for Bultmann was not an idle compilation of historical data but a proclamation: the kerygma. Behind the writings lay the faith of the writers, and behind that faith lay the kerygma itself—the challenge to surrender the securities of the past, to be open to the inbreaking future, and above all to *decide* in the present moment, the absolute “now.” Thus the task of demythologizing was not primarily a negative operation; it was an effort to recover the original challenge, to lay it bare, to let it speak anew. Dissolving the myth, we recover the word.

In attempting this recovery Bultmann drew heavily upon an existentialist philosophy inspired by Martin Heidegger. Heidegger interpreted human existence not as a being—not as some sort of thing—but as sheer possibility, recognizing and claiming itself in the moment of radical decision. Bultmann embraced this philosophical vision as profoundly consonant with the Christian kerygma, with the

crucial proviso that the kerygma goes beyond mere philosophy in declaring such authentic existence as freely given in Jesus Christ. This is the key to Bultmann's rethinking, or demythologizing, of Chalcedonian Christology. Jesus is indeed the point of encounter between the human and divine, but that encounter must not be treated as a metaphysical datum located in the distant past. Rather, it is an event, a present event, centered in the act of proclamation.

Because Bultmann so denounced the historical quest and philosophical speculation of the previous century, one may miss the lines of continuity which nonetheless persist. It is apparent upon reflection that the result of much of existentialism has been to reinforce the Kantian disjunction between practical and theoretical reason. Bultmann is entirely within the premises of this tradition when he reduces the conceptual content of the kerygma to the barest minimum and places all the emphasis on the side of decision. In Bultmann's hands, Philipp Melancthon's dictum that "to know Christ is to know his benefits" becomes a virtual definition of all one can know and should wish to know about the person of Christ. Thus Bultmann carries to a logical conclusion the modern tendency to accord primacy to soteriology. Christology is virtually absorbed into soteriology, and soteriology, shorn of its historical-conceptual content, is concentrated almost exclusively within the present moment.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4. *The Search for an Adequate Context*

The thought of Bultmann, Tillich, and even the early Barth represents a profound appropriation of philosophical existentialism. It counters the earlier tendency, epitomized in Hegel, to sublate all distinctions, including that between the human and the divine, within a comprehensive notion of spirit. Insisting upon the frailty of reason, the risk of faith, and the transcendence of God, the existentialist movement exploded the liberal synthesis. In this sense it represented a chastened retreat from Hegelian expansiveness to a Kantian sense of limits. Moreover, in saying this one must avoid the all-too-common

15. Paul Tillich's existential ontology represents an important attempt to establish existentialism within a more adequate setting, but Tillich continues to adhere most emphatically to the modern paradigm and is accordingly distrustful of noetic claims on behalf of faith. See Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 2:150; and David H. Kelsey, *The Fabric of Paul Tillich's Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 194-97. Thus it is not clear that Tillich marks a fundamental departure from the approach epitomized by Bultmann.

tendency to speak condescendingly of the existentialist heritage, as if it were nothing more than an overly pessimistic swing of the cultural pendulum. The eschatological demand is there to be reckoned with in the preaching of Jesus. The great merit of theological existentialism is that it strove to communicate that challenge undiminished, and any subsequent theology which neglects this task must be judged inadequate. Finally, among the appeals of this movement it must be noted that the existentialist disjunctions provided, or seemed to provide, a way of dealing with the abiding scandal of particularity. By distinguishing the historical Jesus from the kerygmatic Christ and concentrating salvific significance in the latter, it succeeded in diverting attention, at least temporarily, from the awkward questions of history.<sup>16</sup>

But this was its failing, for the existentialist tactic was an acute form of the penchant, noted earlier in Schleiermacher, for resolving problems of conflict by dividing the conceptual terrain. And thus it was inevitable that sooner or later the question Hegel addressed to Kant should reassert itself. Can a theology so fixed on a series of radical disjunctions—knowledge versus faith, history versus existence, immanence versus transcendence—be genuinely “concrete”? Can it, that is to say, provide an adequate conceptual context in which the divided, fragmentary facets of the truth may be seen to converge, if not yet fully to cohere? This question or some variant of it may underlie much of the recent exploration in Christology. Undoubtedly the various probings exhibit a great diversity, but many of the most significant may be understood as seeking some way in which Christian thought, while retaining the lessons of the first half of the century, might yet surmount the dichotomies of the once-dominant existentialism.<sup>17</sup>

Process theology is remarkably similar to existentialism in viewing human experience as profoundly oriented toward the future. But from the process perspective this openness is not unique to humankind, as in existentialism; rather, it is a clue by way of the human to

\* 16. See Van Austin Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer: The Morality of Historical Knowledge and Christian Belief* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1966).

17. One of the finest discussions of theology and transcendental philosophy is still Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Act and Being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961). For further treatment of the issue of context, to somewhat different effect, see George Rupp, *Christologies and Cultures: Toward a Typology of Religious Worldviews* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974); and Eugene TeSelle, *Christ in Context: Divine Purpose and Human Possibility* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

all of reality. The entire cosmos is conceived as a complex of future-oriented events which are drawn into creative purpose by the lure of the divine Logos. Thus human activity, when properly understood, does not exclude divine initiative, and divine activity, properly understood, is persuasive and never coercive. This authentic relationship of the divine and the human, obscured by the substantialist metaphysic of the traditional creeds, finds its paradigmatic realization in the person of Jesus Christ. In the words of John Cobb, "Jesus, without in any way ceasing to be human, participated in that one structure of existence in which the self is coconstituted by the presence of God."<sup>18</sup> Here Christ is understood in the context of and at the head of what is quite arguably the most comprehensive setting possible—the entire process of cosmic creativity.

For the later Barth, as for the early Barth, there is no question of placing Christ within some allegedly more comprehensive context. Christ is the adequate context of Christian theology. But in the Romans commentary, Barth's understanding of that context was constrained by a dialectical method drawn from Kierkegaardian existentialism. In the course of the *Church Dogmatics*, by contrast, a number of developments become increasingly evident. First, Christology is conceived in conjunction with a fully developed doctrine of the Trinity. Second, a distinctive concept of analogy, an "analogy of faith," enables Barth to speak of the divine and the human conjointly rather than in opposition, giving greater coherence to his Christology and greater autonomy to creation. Third, the figure of Christ—previously depicted as a bare, enigmatic moment of crisis—is fleshed out with all the detail of the scriptural account of Jesus' earthly ministry. Finally, it is significant that in the soteriology which accompanies this replenished Christology, Barth's earlier language of destruction and re-creation is absorbed within an overarching framework of exchange.<sup>19</sup> *Two East!*

18. John B. Cobb, *Christ in a Pluralistic Age*, p. 171.

19. See Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 4/1, pp. 79–154; and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. John Drury (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), pp. 100–150. See also Barth's essay "Rudolf Bultmann—An Attempt to Understand Him," in *Kerygma and Myth*, ed. Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: S.P.C.K., 1962), 2:83–132. Barth illustrates the fact that one does not have to regard Christ (or the Trinity) as an inadequate context in order to be concerned with context as an issue.

Karl Rahner may be seen as representing a middle course between the alternatives exemplified by Barth and process theology. He adopts a philosophical standpoint, but places strict limits on what philosophy can do. Rahner's approach resembles existentialism in taking the Kantian turn toward the subject, but it is amplified by a reverence for being and a respect for human nature which are drawn from classical Thomism. Rahner finds the crucial characteristic of humankind in a questing restlessness of spirit and in self-giving love. Accordingly he understands the incarnation of God as "the unique, *supreme*, case of the total actualization of human reality," which consists of the fact that we *are* insofar as we give up ourselves.<sup>20</sup> More recently Rahner has grounded his Christology in a view of world history interpreted in light of evolution and eschatology.

In many respects the work of Wolfhart Pannenberg marks a distinctive turn in contemporary theology, yet here too one finds an effort to appropriate and surmount the heritage of existentialism. History for Pannenberg is not simply human historicity; it is universal history. (And faith is not just an absurd decision; it exhibits its own distinctive rationality. For those who are open to an understanding of history along the lines of Jewish apocalyptic, it becomes possible to affirm the resurrection of Jesus as a historical event. And the resurrection, so understood, enables us to see in Christ the proleptic embodiment of the meaning of world history. In Christ the conclusion of history—the end time when all will be made plain—is already, anticipatorily present.

Liberation theology, too, would ground Christology in a new vision of history. But whereas Pannenberg sees the historical problem largely as posed by the first stratum of modernity, the Enlightenment, the liberationists find more compelling the issues raised by a further stratum, namely, Karl Marx's searching critique of social-economic oppression. The real issues emerge not by an abstract consideration of freedom and reason, as occurs even in existentialism, but by concrete encounter with the negative realities of injustice and victimization. Salvation in this context is experienced as liberation, and Christology comes to center upon Jesus' ministry and crucifixion. By his active identification with the poor and outcast, Christ pronounces judgment

20. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 4:110.

upon all the self-serving ideologies—including the complacent Christologies—which ignore and thus condone the hidden violence of the status quo. Thus the context the liberationists propose for Christology is not a generalized notion of history at all, but the concrete, self-critical practice of following in the way of Christ's own prophetic ministry. ✓

### ISSUES AND PROPOSALS

We have seen that from the earliest date Christology was informed by a certain soteriological interest, and we have noted how in the modern period that interest became a key to making Christology relevant. We have seen existentialism carry this modern strategy to a logical extreme, intensifying its strengths and weaknesses, and we have scanned a variety of recent explorations which, while yet influenced by existentialism, have found that position to be in some sense inadequate. But in what sense exactly? And do the shortcomings of existentialism, whatever they be, reflect upon the modern paradigm itself? If so, is the paradigm inherently defective, or does it simply require readjustment? The diagnoses offered on such questions are as various as the remedies prescribed.

The classical tradition is instructive in this regard. By roundly affirming that the one who saves must be the one who creates, the tradition made clear that the good news of salvation cannot be celebrated in splendid isolation. Salvation, if it be truly salvation, must be related in some fashion to all reality. In the course of its development, however, the classical tradition did create a de facto separation of Christology from soteriology by treating as discrete topics the "person" and "work" of Christ. Debating theories of salvation came to seem an enterprise unto itself, bearing only an external relationship to one's understanding of who Christ is. ★

The modern approach, which adopts soteriology as the inner meaning of Christology, may therefore be appreciated not only as an effort to render the figure of Christ more meaningful and credible, but also as an attempt to knit together two interdependent doctrines which had unfortunately grown apart. This modern reintegration has achieved much that any contemporary theology will wish to preserve. But it does seem clear that by beginning with soteriology the modern inte-

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gration has tended to produce, in actual practice, a constricted Christology which has in turn entailed an inadequate soteriology.

In light of this situation, I should like briefly to submit three proposals for consideration: first, that Christology must not be divorced from the presence of Christ within the worshiping community; second, that the nature of this presence is in the strictest sense mysterious; and third, that Christology is profoundly related to the doctrine of the Trinity.

✓ 1. The Christ who is present is the one who reigns even now as Lord, known by the worshiping community but not confined within it. It is by virtue of this presence that the community is impelled, directed, and enlivened, that the story of Jesus' life is remembered and interpreted, and that the consummation of all things is awaited and hoped for. The earliest resurrection accounts were reports of Christ known as present. In this manner he was known as alive and thus as risen. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer has shown, a Christology pursued in this fashion need not become parochial. Yet it is for fear of being parochial, too narrow in its base, that modern Christology has generally neglected this crucial but elusive key.

2. At the same time, however, there is a sense in which modern Christology has been *too* oriented toward the present. The effort to begin with soteriology was an attempt to establish some experience or need in the present to which Christ might prove relevant. But inevitably this meant that the experience or need was defined to some extent independently of Christ; thus terms were established which would then constrain one's very notion of the presence of Christ. Hence the need for the second proposal. In the words of one commentator, the Christ who is present cannot be predefined, he "is not the representation of the self-consciousness of the believing community, the personification of the kerygma, or the like, but . . . he owns his own mode of presence."<sup>21</sup> We must be equally resolute in affirming *that* Christ is present and in denying that we have

21. Dietrich Ritschl, *Memory and Hope: An Inquiry Concerning the Presence of Christ*, p. 230. See also Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, pp. 27-34; and Hans W. Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), pp. 33-34. My proposals are indebted to the triumvirate of Bonhoeffer, Frei, and Ritschl. The next question, once the mysterious character of Christ's presence has been acknowledged, is how we can then have any clear knowledge of Christ; here Frei's work is especially suggestive. In a somewhat different vein, cf. Peter C. Hodgson, *Jesus—Word and Presence: An Essay in Christology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

any independent knowledge of *how* he is present. Christ's presence is mysterious in the strictest sense: it is the presence of God—in God's own freedom.

In talking about salvation, we are drawn into some powerful terminology: life versus death, light versus darkness, heaven versus hell. It is crucial to remember that language of this sort, however legitimate, is open to immense abuse. If unaffected by the unifying power of an authentic Christology, such contrasts produce a theology which remains constitutionally divided, one might almost say schizophrenic, regardless of what it may say about reconciliation. Examples are found in many of the variants of the spirit/nature contrast and in the longstanding difficulty theology has experienced in its effort to affirm both the humanity and the divinity of Christ. It seems we continue to harbor the conviction that where God's freedom is active, human freedom is somehow diminished. The notion presents itself as common sense; it plays upon our deepest anxieties. But its effect is to deny the reality of reconciliation.<sup>22</sup>

3. To believe that God's freedom does not displace our freedom but rather creates and nourishes it is perhaps the inner meaning of saying that the one who saves is the one who creates. But these notions seem so difficult for us that it may be we are simply unable to appropriate them apart from the presence of Christ—which is to say, apart from the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who makes Christ present, as self-giving yet free. And it is this mysterious presence which in turn frees us—not simply from the world, but *into* it—to challenge and overcome the invidious and self-serving divisions which we ourselves have created in the vain attempt to effect our own salvation. By participating in this history of reconciliation, the people of God may share in the very life of that transcendent community which is the inner life of God. They become the body of Christ, and it is in this sense that Christology finds its adequate context within the life of the Trinity.

22. See D. M. Baillie, *God Was in Christ: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), pp. 106–18; and Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, I:162, 4:117.

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