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This work explores the adequacy of Karl Rahner's theological methodology through an analysis of the concept of salvation in his theology. Karl Rahner represents one of the most significant of twentieth century Roman Catholic theologians. His life work was to give expression to the inherited tradition in the vastly changed milieu of the modern world. He did not seek only to reformulate particular doctrines but to re-express the very foundations of theology. Building upon the work of Joseph Maréchal, he sought to root theology in a transcendental analysis of the knowing and willing human subject. Rahner's methodology remains foundational for many contemporary theologians. However, questions remain as to the adequacy of this methodology: Does Rahner, in the final analysis, simply seek to correlate the inherited tradition and theological methodology to contemporary self-understanding, or does he genuinely seek to re-articulate the Christian tradition and theological methodology in the light of contemporary self-understanding? We explore this question in dialogue with concerns drawn from fundamental soteriology. Throughout Christian history soteriological concerns have provoked theological debate. Soteriology brings to a focus fundamental questions in Christian theology and practice: the dignity and significance of Jesus of Nazareth; the relationship between a transcendent God and an immanent saving activity; the nature of the Christian vocation; the relationship between the historical order and eternal beatitude; whether theology fits with human concerns and if so, how? We examine these questions through a study of Karl Rahner's theology and in so doing inquire as to the adequacy of his theological method and his attempted re-articulation of the Christian tradition.



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THE CONCEPT OF SALVATION IN THE THEOLOGY OF KARL RAHNER

RAHNER'S APOLOGIA FOR A PRIORI METAPHYSICS  
AND THE NEED FOR A REVISIONIST SOTERIOLOGY

ONE VOLUME

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UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

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1990



17 OCT 1991



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### DECLARATION

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Atonement as a central question in Christian theology.

The Christian gospel is a gospel of salvation (1). It finds its originating impulse and raison d'être in the conviction that in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, God was present reconciling the world to Godself in a final and irrevocable manner. The Christian vocation is to proclaim in word and deed the reality of this new creation and to cooperate with God's redeeming activity. The soteriological significance of the Christ event has consistently determined Christian self-understanding. Indeed, soteriological motifs can be seen to have guided the formulation of the Church's Christology in the first few centuries (2). Whilst it is clear that Christian self-understanding is intrinsically linked to the belief that salvation is present in Jesus Christ, it is less certain as to what this salvation consists in (3).

Soteriological concerns have provoked some of the most crucial debates in Christian history. Against the dualism of gnostic systems, Christianity maintained that God's redeeming activity in Christ encompassed the entire created order (4). Against Pelagius the Church maintained that the entire created order was 'fallen' and in need of redemption (5). Luther believed himself to be maintaining the identity of Christianity in claiming that justification was by grace alone. Rome, in turn, believed that Christian identity required salvation to involve a genuine transformation of the person (6). Today, soteriology finds itself once again the focus of concern, being held to be the criterion by which to judge the adequacy of Christian self-understanding. 'Outside' the Church this is taken to operate at an

implicit level (7). In so far as Christian soteriology is identified with an other-worldly, individualistic vindication at the last judgement and admission to eternal beatitude, Christianity is held to be irrelevant to human life in this world. 'Inside' the Church, or within theology, it operates at an explicit level (8).

The dispute over recent theologies of Liberation concerns the question as to whether Christian salvation is individualistic and other-worldly as outlined above, or whether it is concerned with the liberating activity of God in the present order, establishing the life which God intends for humanity and which is to be enjoyed with God eternally. It is the question as to whether Christianity represents an escape from the world into the spiritual realm or whether it is concerned with the transformation of the present order. The liberation theologians, in identifying liberation and salvation (9), consciously perceive this to be a question of the nature of Christianity (10). They claim that in the process of being sacralised and put into the context of religious salvation schemes of an individualistic and other worldly emphasis, salvation language and the nature of Christianity has been distorted (11). They believe that an authentic Christian perspective can only be regained through rooting salvation language in human life. We believe this to be a genuine concern that must be upheld. The theologians of the Magisterium however have evinced concern that liberation theology should not allow itself to become the captive of ideologies (12). They maintain that Christianity cannot dispose of its 'other-worldly', 'spiritual' significance and reduce itself to the level of secular and materialistic humanism without becoming:

a novel interpretation of both the content of faith and of Christian existence which seriously departs from the faith of the Church and, in fact, actually constitutes a practical

negation. (13)

The concern is that in turning attention to the realities of human life, liberation theology ceases to be theology and reduces to socio-political analysis. Again, we would maintain that this is a genuine concern. Whilst soteriology must be rooted in human life it must continue to be soteriology.

Behind the concern as to whether salvation language is emptied of content in being located in concern for the transformation of the present order lie wider issues: Is it sufficient for Christian theology to maintain the orthodox model (14) where the object-referent of theology is exclusively understood as being authoritative past articulations of the Christian tradition (15)? Rather than leading to genuine dialogue with the concerns of human experience, such a model is unable to speak intrinsically to and from lived human reality (16) and gives the impression of dictating to human reality. Whatever the original intention, in practice the orthodox model invites the believer to be docile to a ready formulated system of theology which is to be secondarily applied to life (17). The question of the sufficiency of the orthodox model leads to other concerns. Can theology only be meaningful if it is contextual theology, i.e. self-consciously aware of the particular situation in human history from which it speaks (18)? Further, can contextual theology indeed be theology rather than simply a description of the situations with which it is concerned (19)?

To pose the question differently, how do 'faith stories' and 'faith discourse' relate to 'life stories' and 'life discourse' (20)? These questions pertain to the very nature and approach of Christian theology. They concern the starting point of theology, i.e. whether we start with common human experience or with the received Christian



tradition. They concern the focus of theology, i.e. whether it has a vertical or a horizontal focus, (21). Hence, they are brought to sharpest expression in soteriology where the divide between 'other-worldly escape' and 'this-worldly transformation' is presented most starkly. Soteriology can be seen to be a living issue in contemporary Christian theology, self-understanding and mission. It is here that the methodological questions of fundamental theology and the Church's understanding of her vocation in the world, what it is to be the agent of the salvation of the world (22), are brought to sharpest focus. We intend to pursue these questions in dialogue with the theology of Karl Rahner and in so doing to inquire as to the adequacy of his theology.

## 1.2 The soteriological issue as a moment within the response to modernity.

### 1.2.1 The axial rotation of modernity.

The issue as to whether Christian soteriology is exclusively other-worldly, in a vertical trajectory, or also this-worldly in a horizontal trajectory, can be seen to be a moment within the crisis occasioned for Christian self-understanding by the nexus of perceptions, beliefs and attitudes commonly referred to as modernity. It is impossible in a short introduction to present an adequate account of modernity and we shall content ourselves with outlining the basic shift in understanding that it occasions and presenting an overview of three of its major perspectives.

The pre-modern world-view divided reality into the higher sacral realm of the spirit and the lower profane realm of nature. Theology had precedence over philosophy, church over state and grace over <sup>2</sup> nature. Intrinsic value was denied to human life in this order (23).

To focus one's attention on the present order rather than on the next was to lose one's soul. McSweeney paints an amusing caricature:

The Catholic lived between two trinities: the Father, Son and Holy Ghost on the one side, attracting him, through the Church, towards the devout life and salvation, the World, the Flesh and the Devil on the other, placing obstacles in his way, enticing him towards evil and damnation. (24)

From the late Eighteenth century onwards the Enlightenment announced the emancipation of the human from the previously endured spiritual adolescence. The pre-modern world-view underwent an axial rotation (25). Humanity no longer feels itself to be a stranger in a foreign land. No longer is it considered sufficient to devalue human life this side of the grave, treating it as a provisional stage lacking in intrinsic value; on the contrary, it is thought to be the correct focus of our concern (26). Albert Keller describes the change in humanity's perspective thus:

There was a corresponding shift in perspective as regards the end of man. Flight from the world, with its neglect of the worldly, bodily and material, and its special connotation of contempt for the sexual, ceased to be regarded as an ideal to be valued for its own sake. Instead, these realms were assigned real values of their own, secondary no doubt at first in comparison to the religious realm contrasted with them, till finally a complete secularization was achieved. It became clear that neither the church nor the orientation to an other-worldly goal was helping men to master the tasks which were incumbent on them in the worldly realm. (27)

Times of crisis represent not only a threat to present self-understanding but also an opportunity for creative re-examination and the recovery of an alienated self-consciousness. Attempts to reformulate soteriology in view of the shift in perspective (cf. Liberation Theology) are not to be considered simply as accommodations to the zeitgeist of modern and post-modern thought. Rather, they are attempts to welcome the moment of crisis as presenting the opportunity of recovering an alienated, yet more authentic, self-consciousness.

Before we survey the response made by theologians to the crisis posed by modernity we shall detail three areas of modern thought which have profound repercussions for Christian soteriology and which we believe to have influenced Rahner's theology. These are in turn: the epistemological question of the limitation of human knowledge to the finite world; the autonomy of the human moral subject; the increasing scientific and political conscientization as leading to concern for this order.

### 1.2.2. Epistemological concerns

During the Middle Ages metaphysical theology reigned supreme as the queen of the sciences. Its position of unchallenged legitimacy then is only matched by its almost universal displacement now. At best, the possibility of metaphysical discourse must be established before one can seek to pursue the metaphysical endeavour. At worst, metaphysics in the traditional sense is simply considered impossible, in which case metaphysical discourse is confined to a transcendental analysis of the categories of knowledge. This situation is largely due to the epochal work of Kant in his Critique of Pure Reason (28).

Kant maintained that all knowledge was derived from our intuitions of sense-data as they were given form through the activity of the forms of sensibility (space and time) and the twelve categories of understanding (arranged in four kinds: quality; quantity; relation and modality). The concepts given by the categories enabled us to know the forms which in turn enabled us to know the intuitions of sense data. But the forms and categories could only legitimately function within the world of sense-data: "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind." (29) To inquire about objects

beyond spatio-temporal experience, or even to inquire about spatio-temporal experience in its totality, was to go beyond the valid limits of human knowledge. Kant's work heralded the end of the legitimacy of an intellectual fascination with a higher spiritual world.

#### 1.2.3. The autonomy of the moral subject.

Just as Enlightenment thought, epitomised in Kant, led to a shift from metaphysical abstraction to what could be experienced in the spatio-temporal realm, so also there was a parallel shift in moral perspective. The moral autonomy of the human person was upheld as absolute. One's decisions should not be determined by the voice of external authority, tradition or revelation but rather by the dictates of one's own conscience. Nor should the individual seek the means to fulfil the demands of conscience in an external source. One had to take responsibility for one's own life. "With the starry heavens above and the moral law within" the person must act in accord with the good.

The practical effects of the emphasise upon the moral autonomy of the individual were twofold. Firstly morality was reduced to an individual concern which found its purpose not in an other-worldly life but rather in an absolute demand in the present. Secondly, whilst Kant discussed the reality of evil in human life (30), his assertion of the ultimate freedom of the human person to determine oneself had the practical effect of relativising the notion of a radical fallenness in the human condition and consequent need of an equally radical healing transformation.

#### 1.2.4. Scientific and political conscientization:

The axial rotation in perspective to which we referred earlier

received its most dynamic impetus from the progress of scientific achievement and the politicisation of previously docile classes. The rise of scientific understanding from the seventeenth century onwards transformed people's perception of the world as it explained the hitherto mysterious realm of nature. This increased understanding provided humanity with power over its environment, people were able to direct nature and to harness its potentials for their own ends (31). Humanity had 'come of age'. The human person came to see him/herself as master of his/her own environment, thus paving the way for the technological achievements (and environmental despoliation) of the present century (32).

This optimistic assessment of human life was furthered by the all pervasive presence of evolutionary thought in the nineteenth century. The created order could be understood without recourse to the divine realm. In its origins humanity was seen to be firmly rooted in the dust of this earth. Whilst humanity might have been thought to have a unique status within the created order it was entirely beholden to this created order. Humanity belonged to the earth and with the aid of the scientific and technological resources available it could become master of its own destiny. In short, humanity no longer felt itself to be on a pilgrimage in a foreign land orientated towards its true heavenly abode. Rather it believed that this world was the legitimate sphere of its concern. Whilst the person continued to understand him/herself as directed towards the future, it was a future determined by his/her own activity in the present.

This transformation of humanity's perception of itself as being the subject rather than the object of history extended into the socio-political sphere. The French and Russian revolutions can be viewed as

milestones in the rise of this new consciousness. Indeed, one of the most influential critiques of the irrelevance and harmfulness of Christian soteriology due to its other-worldly spiritual emphasis came in the writings of Karl Marx. Whilst Feuerbach, equally convinced as Marx of the illusory nature of Christianity, saw in it the positive function of expressing humanity's alienated self-consciousness and so offering a way to integration, Marx ascribed to it no such positive function. He thought that the promise of eternal happiness beyond the grave where the humble and virtuous would be relieved of their oppression and accorded their true dignity was the product of the need for an anaesthetic against the harsh realities of life. Far from being a harmless illusion, he believed that religion had the effect of baptising the status quo (33). In projecting its hopes for a more just social order into the future, humanity reconciled itself to the present inequalities rather than seeking to transform the present world order. If Kant can be thought to have given definitive impulse to the 'Enlightenment of theory', Marx can be thought to have initiated the 'Enlightenment of praxis' (34). For Marx, Christianity is "The sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people." (35) This charge has to be taken seriously. It expresses one of the most profound difficulties that faces Christian soteriology (36).

The net result of the epistemological crisis in metaphysics, the emphasise upon human moral autonomy and the rise of science and political conscientization has been the displacement of the sacral realm by the profane realm as the legitimate focus of human concern. No longer is a theocentric vision of human life a widely held presupposition. Indeed, theological language such as 'salvation', which spoke with powerful univocacy to a former age, are commonly

experienced as meaningless concepts for modernity (37). At this point we touch upon what Langdon Gilkey names as the second level of the crisis in modern theology (38). Deeper than the call for the reinterpretation of traditional doctrines in a changed historical situation lie profound questions as to the continuing relevance of the very content of the doctrine itself. For many people concern for salvation is thought to be both irrelevant, lacking any empirical basis in human life, and harmful in that like a mirage it presents a false horizon which distorts and frustrates human activity. Any secular counterparts that may exist for the notion of salvation operate within the parameters of human life expressing the desire for full and free life in this world. To find salvation becomes the liberation from personal inauthenticity or from social, political and economic marginalisation.

### 1:3 Dual task for theology

We have outlined above something of the crisis posed by modernity to classical soteriology. If the living tradition of Christianity is not to be a dead repetition of outmoded formulas then it must seek to re-express itself within this context. Past articulations of the tradition were thought to be adequate to their context and univocal with human life because they were formulated in dialogue with contemporary thought forms and philosophy. Theological reflection could build upon the commonly held assumption of the theocentric nature of human life (39). However, it is precisely these thought forms and philosophical structures that have been profoundly questioned in the modern and post-modern period. The central question facing the theological endeavour in the modern and post-modern period is as to how it is possible to articulate a theology univocal with human life when

the central presupposition of the classical theological tradition is so profoundly called into question (40). At the very least, it would seem that theocentricity and a theological dignity for human life have to be established rather than assumed. It seems that for Christian theology to be Christian theology it must listen to the concerns and perspectives arising out of today's contemporary situation as carefully as it seeks to do to the tradition. Mark Taylor argues that there is a consensus amongst contemporary theologians as to such a bi-polar task in theology (41), whereby theologians hold that there are two sources of Christian theology, these being (in the language of David Tracy) classic Christian texts and common human experience (42). This represents a significant development from the orthodox model that we have already touched upon.

It is with little wonder then that the present consensus as to the bi-polar task of theology did not come to immediate expression in Catholicism. By contrast, Schleiermacher's Der Christliche Glaube (43), representing the first great attempt at a constructive synthesis of Christian theology and Enlightenment thought, set Protestant theology on a pursuit upon which it would continue to be actively engaged through liberal theology and neo-orthodoxy. But the nineteenth century witnessed the growing entrenchment of Roman Catholicism in a negative attitude towards modernity. There were notable exceptions to this trend, such as the Tübingen school with Drey and Mohler. However, they remained exceptions. The response of Pius IX to the political and intellectual insecurity of the time was to close ranks and seek to withdraw into a fortress of truth impermeable to the corrupting influence of modernity, culminating in his Syllabus Errorum (44): "If anyone thinks that the Roman Pontiff can and should reconcile and accommodate himself to progress, liberation and modern civilization,



let him be anathema." (45) The modernist crisis at the turn of the twentieth century resulted in the vigorous condemnation of Catholic thinkers who sought to relate Catholicism to the modern world. Pius X's encyclical Pascendi Gregoris (46) sounded the death knell for any such attempts.

To the external observer it may seem that the monolithic structure of Catholic belief and practice remained unchallenged and unaltered until the astonishing events of Vatican II. However, behind the scenes there were many Catholic thinkers committed to the dual task of theology, that of expressing the tradition, but for contemporary men and women. Thinkers such as Adam, Guardini, de Lubac and Congar recognised that the living tradition could only realise itself through becoming incarnate in the social and historical situation in which the Church found itself, thus paving the way for Vatican II.

#### 1.4 Rahner set in context - his significance for the neo-orthodox pursuit.

Karl Rahner is undoubtedly to be set amongst the ranks of those thinkers named above who, committed to the dual task of theology, sought to express the tradition in the vastly changed milieu of the modern world. His position is that whilst theology finds its "basic, norm and goal" (47) in the Christian tradition, it must be concerned to speak to modern self-understanding.

Theology is a theology that can be genuinely preached only to the extent that it succeeds in establishing contact with the total secular self-understanding which maintains in a particular epoch, succeeds in engaging in conversation with it, in catching onto it, and in allowing itself to be enriched by it in its language and even more so in the very matter of theology itself. (48)

Rahner is aware of the revolution that has taken place in secular

self-understanding. He likens it to the Copernican revolution in astronomy (49). The significance of this revolution is as great as that which took place in the early Middle Ages (50). Rahner characterises this revolution in terms of the turn to the human subject. Both in philosophy and also in the spheres of scientific, technical and political self-orientation, humanity has become the architect of its own destiny (51).

Rahner holds that theology must seek to address itself to this new self-understanding if it is to seek to convey the meaning of the Christian revelation. As he remarks, if the content of revelation is held to be meaningless then so also will the event of revelation be doubted (52). He believes that theology must follow philosophy in its turn to the human subject, so that the anthropological aspect of theology should be made explicit (53). Only in this manner can theology hope to show that it is concerned with realities which are of fundamental consequence for human life and so to seek to escape the charge of mythology.

He declares that the appropriate form for theology in view of the turn to the human subject, is a transcendental metaphysics of the sort proposed by Maréchal (54). For Rahner, the transcendental method not only provides a means of showing that theological concepts are rooted in human experience (and hence not mere mythology); it also provides a means of seeking to counter the Kantian objection that knowledge cannot be gained of realities beyond the world. That is, it provides him both with his epistemological justification for metaphysical discourse and also his basic methodology and hence constitutes a root and branch attack on the charge of meaninglessness in theology. Kant argued that knowledge was only possible of finite spatio-temporal realities. Rahner

follows Kant in his turn to sense-data but maintains that knowledge of spatio-temporal realities is only possible due to a prior knowledge of the infinite horizon of Holy Mystery. In Chapter Three we will follow Rahner as he seeks to turn the Kantian argument on its head, not by denying the validity of the transcendental turn but rather by welcoming it and seeking to show that if pursued logically it shows the final meaningfulness rather than meaninglessness of theology.

Rahner also welcomes the emphasis upon human moral autonomy. As we shall see in Chapters Three, Four and Five, 'Freedom' is a central tenet of Rahner's soteriology:

Man is characteristically the being who has been handed over to himself, consigned to his own free responsibility ... Freedom is the inevitable necessity of self-determination, by which man... makes himself what and who he wants to be and ultimately will be in the abiding validity and eternity of his free decisions. (55)

He seeks to reconcile a high place for human freedom in his theology with an objective salvation in grace through his notion of the supernatural existential.

Finally, Rahner shows himself concerned to relate soteriology to a positive concern for the present order of creation and political structures. As we shall see in Chapter Three, he seeks to do this through his equation of love of God and love of neighbour. This is a love which cannot be reduced to an individual level but must rather encompass the whole of humanity in a political love. Hence, for Rahner, concern for one's salvation and concern for political realities do not stand in contradiction for it is precisely through the latter that we respond to the former.

However, whilst the above few paragraphs are sufficient to indicate that Rahner fits within the ranks of those engaging in the

dialogue of the tradition with modernity, it is less clear quite what his position is. The ranks of those who support a dual task for theology is a broad spectrum of positions encompassing at least four distinct models. On David Tracy's analysis (56) it ranges from liberal theology, through neo-orthodoxy, radical theology and the revisionist model. According to this analysis, liberal theology represents the attempt to reconcile an explicit commitment to modern, secular self-understanding with a reinterpretation of the Christian tradition (57). The neo-orthodox model is held to be a critical moment within this liberal tradition (58).

Tracy maintains that the neo-orthodox criticism of liberal theology was not born from a disregard for contemporary self-understanding (as is the case in the orthodox model) but rather because it shared a different contemporary self-understanding to that of liberal theology (59). However, in addition to demanding and providing "criteria of adequacy" to human experience, neo-orthodoxy also maintained "criteria of appropriateness" to the central meanings of the Christian tradition (60). Hence, neo-orthodoxy maintained that liberal theology was inadequate both to secular self-understanding and to the Christological core of the Christian tradition (61). Neo-orthodox theologians believed that the authentic Christian tradition addressed the questions raised by contemporary self-understanding. This belief may explain the tendency not to analyse the central doctrines of the Christian tradition in a sufficiently critical manner (62). Questions about the internal coherence of Christian doctrines and their actual fit with experienced human reality were often avoided (63).

The radical theology (64) of the "Death of God" theologians (65) sought to take the dialectical interplay between contemporary self-

understanding and the Christian tradition to its limit. They claimed that a genuine commitment to the struggle for human liberation required not only a reformulation of traditional Christian doctrine but a negation of that tradition's central belief in God (66). "The radical argues that the Christian God cannot but alienate human beings from one another, from the world, and from their authentic selves." (67)

Tracy uses the term "revisionist model" (68) to refer to the attempts to continue the critical task of the liberals and modernists in a post-modern situation. It is the attempt to reconcile an explicit commitment to post-modern, secular self-understanding with a reinterpretation of the Christian tradition (69). Tracy describes the self-understanding of revisionist theology in the following way: "Contemporary Christian theology is best understood as philosophical reflection upon the meanings present in common human experience and the meanings present in the Christian tradition." (70) The question that poses itself is where to place Rahner in this spectrum?

On the one hand it is not adequate to maintain that he simply seeks to accommodate the tradition to secular self-understanding. He perceives his reformulation of Thomistic metaphysics in terms of a transcendental analysis as being more faithful not only to the task of theology but to the authentic tradition. Yet on the other hand it is not adequate to maintain that his alleged sympathies with contemporary self-understanding are merely a guise to lure people into the same old scholastic system. Such a view would simply not take account of the creative reformulation that he has given to traditional Catholic theology. As we noted earlier, Rahner's transcendental method is not merely an attempt to justify an already existing edifice but is rather the method with which he does theology. Rahner genuinely seeks to

present the tradition in a way that is consonant with the concerns of modernity. In particular, Rahner believes that the Thomistic metaphysical tradition can be reconciled with an intellectual milieu in which the philosophical basis of that tradition has been called into question. The central question is as to whether Rahner simply seeks to justify the pre-modern assumption of the theocentric nature of human life, and thereby justify the philosophical basis of Thomistic metaphysics, or whether he reformulates a theocentric vision in dialogue with modern and post-modern assumptions and experience? Does he genuinely engage in dialogue with modern and post-modern awareness and experience and seek the theological dignity of humanity within this context? Or does he simply seek to formulate a theology that will justify his primary awareness of, and commitment to, human life as moving within the praise of God (71)?

In the final analysis, we believe that there are grounds for viewing Rahner's theology as having something of an apologetical function. He seeks to engage far more intimately with the dialogue partners than apologetics normally allows. He affirms the value of contemporary self-understanding and seeks to reformulate the meaning of the tradition accordingly. But one is left with the impression that it is a reformulation carried out from within an unchanged and unchallenged structure of faith, as distinct from an unchanged articulation of theology. Rahner can more appropriately be called a 'liberal Conservative' than a 'conservative Liberal' (72). He displays the surety and confidence of one who knows already what must be achieved in the dialogue rather than one who endures the dying to self of genuine dialogue (73). As we shall see in Chapter Three, Rahner's intention is not so much to formulate a new philosophical basis for theology which would cohere with contemporary secular self-

understanding, rather his intention is to establish the continuing validity and sufficiency of Thomistic metaphysics aided by Maréchal's transcendental interpretation. Again, it would seem that his intention is not so much to explore and rediscover the possible locus of a theocentric vision immanent within the human realm but rather to justify the theocentric vision which he brings to the dialogue. In this manner Rahner is seen to stand amidst the apologetics of neo-orthodoxy. Indeed we hold that a transcendental metaphysics such as Rahner's represents the most creative attempt possible within neo-orthodoxy at dialogue with secular self-understanding. It is in questioning the internal coherence of Rahner's theology and its fit with experienced human reality, the questions that neo-orthodoxy would not pursue, that we are led to see the inadequacy of Rahner's theology. Therefore in judging the adequacy of Rahner's theological method we are also judging the adequacy of the neo-orthodox approach as it is represented by Rahner.

We argued earlier that the crisis in soteriology, as to whether salvation was rooted in particular human situations or was other-worldly in its entirety, brought to focus wider questions as to the nature and method of theology. We proceeded to claim that Karl Rahner is best understood to stand within the ranks of neo-orthodoxy i.e. the attempt to show how theological truth correctly expresses the human situation. Hence, the present thesis is concerned to examine the thought of this most influential theologian on one of the most pressing aspects of contemporary theological discourse in two ways:

- 1) To engage upon a critique of Karl Rahner's theology through an analysis of his soteriology.
- 2) To examine the adequacy of the neo-orthodox approach as it is

represented by Rahner and the justification for a revisionary approach.

In the process we will be able to investigate the basis for a fundamental soteriology.

#### 1.5. Overview of the present work.

In our second chapter we will formulate the criteria upon which we intend to judge the adequacy of Rahner's soteriology. These criteria are drawn from the second source for Christian theology which David Tracy names as "common human experience and language" (74). In the rest of the thesis we shall expound our understanding of Rahner's soteriology, mindful of these criteria. It is worth noting that the evolution of the thesis did not follow the pattern, of formulation of criteria then application to Rahner's soteriology, that might be suggested by the final product. The work originated as a straight forward presentation of Rahner's soteriology. It was only in the process of engaging with his thought that our own concerns were laid bare. In turn, our own concerns opened up new perspectives on Rahner's thought.

In Chapter Three we shall follow Rahner as he locates the possibility and the method of theology in a transcendental analysis of human knowledge and freedom. In this manner we shall observe how Rahner seeks to present a soteriology that takes account of the charges of meaninglessness, of infringing moral responsibility, and of devaluing concern for the present world order. At this stage we will examine whether Rahner presents a soteriology that is truly rooted in<sup>2</sup> human life, or whether, in spite of a far deeper relationship to human life than is usual in scholasticism, it does not ultimately reduce to a



refined scholasticism. That is, whether Rahner's soteriology ultimately reduces to an individualistic, a priori, pre-given structure which is then applied to life. We will proffer the seemingly paradoxical statement that the very transcendental starting point that enables Rahner to locate theological discourse far more intrinsically in the human realm than the scholastic approach would normally allow, is the reason why Rahner cannot ultimately overcome the deficiencies of the scholastic approach and why he shares with it an a priori, individualistic emphasis. ✓

In Chapters Four to Six we shall observe how the position outlined above is confirmed by a full examination of Rahner's soteriology. His transcendental starting point will be seen to prevent him from genuinely positing the presence and action of God in history and hence to lead to a formalism in his treatment of God's redeeming activity in grace and in Christ. His concept of the supernatural existential reduces God's redeeming and gracious presence to a formal statement, Christ is reduced to the level of a cipher and the Cross to a statement of God's will to forgive. ✓

Hence, we shall argue that Rahner's soteriology is inadequate both to the demands of common human experience (in that it is general, lacks redemption and is overly concerned with the individual's spiritual destiny) and to the demands of the Christian tradition (in that it reduces Christ to the level of a cipher and the Cross to a statement of God's will to forgive). We come to see that Rahner does not enable us to pursue a theology that is genuinely rooted in life. Hence we come to see the inadequacy of the neo-orthodox approach as it is represented by Rahner and the need for the formulation of a revisionary soteriology and an adequate philosophical and hermeneutical basis for contextual

theology.

As we have indicated, the present piece of work has led us to be far more critical of Rahner than was originally intended. Be that as it may, we would wish to record immense gratitude to Rahner, both for the profound influence his thought has had on our own growth in understanding of Christian faith and for the critical function which he restored to Catholic theology. If solace should be needed it may be found in the reassurance that an ongoing critical pursuit is a more faithful response to his theological heritage than it would be to establish him as a new orthodoxy. In the words of Kerr:

Even if one were to reject his own theological 'system' root and branch, doing so with questions and arguments one would be benefiting from the renewal of theological controversy and exploration in the Catholic Church for which he more than anyone is responsible. Even if nothing else of his work endures (an unlikely supposition), he would be content to have renewed interest in, and to have excited courage to deal with, the central questions of theology. (75)

1. cf. "The gospel is about salvation from sin. That is one of the few statements that all Christians would agree about - in the abstract." A. Nolan, God In South Africa. The Challenge Of The Gospel, (London: CIIR 1988), pp. 31. cf. "Theology that loses contact with the gift and task of salvation is no longer truly Christian theology always concerned with the grace of God, 'propter nos et propter nostram salutem'." Dermot A. Lane, Foundations For A Social Theology: Praxis, Process And Salvation, (Dublin. Gill and Macmillan 1984), pp. 73.
2. Athanasius' argument against the Arians who wished to place Christ wholly on the side of created reality was that only God could save: "The Word of God came in His own Person, because it was He alone, the Image of the Father, Who could recreate man made after the Image." St. Athanasius, De Incarnatione Verbi Dei, III; 13, translated by a religious of C.S.M.V, (London. Mowbray 1953), pp. 41 Hence, if Christ was our saviour then he must be identical with the Godhead. This was preserved in the Nicene formula (AD 325) that Christ was ὁμοουσιον τῇ πατρὶ, (of the same being as the Father). Gregory Nazianzen maintained against Apollinarius that τὸ ἀπροσληπτὸν ἀθεραπεύτον (what has not been assumed cannot be restored). This was approved by Constantinople (AD 381) where it was laid down that Christ was both true God and true man. The Council of Ephesus (AD 431/AD 433) exhibits a concern to maintain the reality of the union between the divine and human natures in Christ. In order for there to be a saving union there had to be an ontological union, this was expressed through the notion of a hypostatic union. Against the monophysites who thought that the hypostatic union required there to be only one nature in Christ, thus implying confusion of the divine and human, or a swallowing of the human by the divine, Chalcedon (AD 451) maintained that it was a union without confusion.
3. cf. "However, once we begin to ask about the meaning or concrete contents of these two words 'salvation' and 'sin' all the differences begin to appear." Nolan, op. cit., pp. 31.
4. cf., Jerome P. Theisen, O.S.B., Community And Disunity: Symbols Of Grace And Sin, (Collegeville, Minnesota: St. John's University Press 1985), pp. 2-9.
5. cf., ibid., pp. 9-13.
6. We will return to the Reformation dispute in order to illustrate our argument in Chapter Two.
7. cf. "Critical theory challenges theology to account in praxis for its claim that all are called to freedom 'in Christ', that salvation has already taken place 'in Christ', that humanity and history have been saved 'in Christ', that the world is destined 'in Christ', and that all who belong to Christ are a New Creation. Such soteriological themes of the gospel come under scrutiny today not only by critical theory but by all who look at Christianity from the outside. Do these doctrinal claims have any critical

import for society? Does the gospel really have an emancipatory thrust in praxis that affects the social situation of humanity? Is the orthodoxy of 'salvation in Christ' simply a matter of faith without an ortho-praxis? Is redemption just a theory about the next life without any basis in present experience and social praxis? Is salvation simply a spiritual and private affair between the individual and God without reference to the rest of humanity?" Lane, op. cit., pp. 82.

8. cf. "The primary task of ARCIC II is to examine and to try to resolve those doctrinal differences which still divide us. Accordingly, at the request of the Anglican Consultative Council (Newcastle, September 1981), we have addressed ourselves to the doctrine of justification, which at the time of the Reformation was a particular cause of contention. This request sprang out of a widespread view that the subject of justification and salvation is so central to the Christian faith that, unless there is assurance of agreement on this issue, there can be no full doctrinal agreement between our two Churches." ARCIC II, Salvation And The Church, (London: Church House Publishing and Catholic Truth Society 1987), pp. 6.
9. cf. "The Bible presents liberation - salvation - in Christ as the total gift, which, by taking on the levels we indicate, gives the whole process of liberation its deepest meaning and its complete and unforeseeable fulfilment. Liberation can thus be approached as a single salvific process." Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, (London: SCM 1973 ), pp. x. cf. "We always knew that there were references to freedom and liberty in the Bible: the freedom of the Spirit and the liberty of the sons of God for example. And we knew that Jesus had freed us from sin, from the law and from death, as Paul says. But in the past we had not noticed that liberation was a broad, comprehensive theme and that it was an alternative way of speaking about redemption or salvation and that it included liberation from oppression." A. Nolan, To Nourish Our Faith: Theological Reflections On The Theology Of Liberation, (London. CAFOD 1989), pp. 33. cf. Timothy Gorringe, Redeeming Time: Atonement Through Education, (London. DLT 1986), pp. xiv.
10. cf. "The question regarding the theological meaning of liberation is, in truth, a question about the very meaning of Christianity and about the mission of the Church" ibid., pp. xi.
11. cf. "It is not easy to say what the exact content of the theology of liberation is for all the Christians involved in it. Certain basic points, however, are clearly shared by all. They would maintain that the longstanding stress on individual salvation in the next world represents a distortion of Jesus' message. He was concerned with man's full and integral liberation, a process which is already at work in history and which makes use of historical means." Juan Luis Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, (London: SCM 1977), pp. 3.
12. Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction On Certain Aspects Of The Theology Of Liberation, (Vatican 1984), II:3. Quoted in Juan Luis Segundo, Theology And The Church. A Response To Cardinal Ratzinger And A Warning To The Whole Church,

(London: Geoffrey Chapman 1985), pp. 171.

13. ibid.; VI:9, quoted in Segundo, op. cit., pp. 176.
14. In our discussion of models in Christian theology we have drawn on the work of David Tracy, Blessed Rage For Order: The New Pluralism In Theology, (New York. The Seabury Press 1975), Chapter Two, pp. 22-42.
15. cf. ibid., pp. 24. The best example of the orthodox model within Catholic theology is neo-scholastic theology.
16. cf. ibid., pp. 25.
17. Tracy refers to the First Vatican Council's understanding of theology as a classic formulation of the orthodox model. "For Vatican I, the aim of theology is not "proof" of mysteries of the Catholic faith, but an "understanding" of those mysteries. That understanding is best achieved by following the classical medieval model." ibid., pp. 24. cf. "Classical theology seems to be concerned with theoretical interpretation of a given biblical and ecclesial tradition. The task of theology is to support the faith of the Christian community that keeps alive the integrity of this given tradition." Lane, op. cit., pp. 69. We acknowledge that the theologians of the orthodox model would not necessarily perceive their theology to be a removed articulation which was secondarily applied to life. In contrast they would have maintained the univocity of theology with life. cf. "Some clarifications are called for here. It must be noted that the origin and continued existence of the Christian tradition was and is the outcome of the praxis of the faith of the community." ibid. Paradoxically, the exclusive focusing of the orthodox model on the received Christian tradition, and hence the apparent gap between theology and life, is not due to a fideistic belief in the absolute equivocity of theology and life but from a belief in their univocity. On this model, received systems of theology are held in high regard precisely because they are believed to witness to the way in which Christian faith is the most coherent articulation of human reality. Theologians of the orthodox model perceive their job as being to speak from within these received articulations of the tradition to the world of lived human reality. Herein lies the cause of the division between the articulations of the orthodox model and lived reality. Theologians seek to interpret, or repeat, theological articulations that were adequate for past contexts in the very different contexts of the twentieth century. This is a far cry from engaging in the same process of genuine dialogue with contemporary human reality that originally led to the articulation of theology that was adequate to past contexts. In this manner, the living tradition becomes fossilised into dead traditionalism. Rather than being the articulation of reality, as assumed, theology of this sort ends up seeking to dictate to human reality.
18. cf. "There has been an important shift in perspective in theology in recent years. While the basic purpose of theological reflection has remained the same - namely, the reflection of Christians upon the gospel in the light of their own circumstances - much more attention is now being paid to how those circumstances

shape the response to the gospel. This focus is being expressed with terms like "localization," "contextualization," "indigenization," and "inculturation," of theology. Despite slightly different nuances in meaning, all of these terms point to the need for and responsibility of Christians to make their response to the gospel as concrete and lively as possible." Robert J. Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, (London. SCM 1985), pp. 1. cf. "Rather than trying, in the first instance, to apply a received theology to a local context, this new kind of theology began with an examination of the context itself." ibid., pp. 4.

19. We will return to these questions in Chapter Two when formulating our criteria of adequacy for soteriology. Suffice it to state at this stage our conviction with Segundo et al that theology must be rooted in the context of human particularity. However, we also recognise that it is not yet at all clear how theology can do this and yet still be theology, and this for two reasons: i) In order to be able to theologise at all we must be capable of involving ourselves in some degree of generalising discourse. That is, in order to be able to name God's presence in a situation we must be able to compare it with other similar situations rather than to remain captive by the data of this particular situation. Ultimately the ability to generalise is necessary because theology is formed in dialogue with the Christian tradition and the ability to carry on the dialogue demands the ability to generalise. Unless we can genuinely begin with the data of a situation yet still recover enough perspective to be able to reflect upon and judge the situation then genuine contextual theology is not possible. However, the phenomenological approach, (which lies at the root of the methodology of contextual theology), finds it difficult to move from the observation of particular data to generalising discourse. Contextual theology has a problem: In order to be theological it must dialogue with the tradition but its own contextual, phenomenological emphasis militates against the possibility of such a concern. There is the need for an adequate fundamental theology which will establish the possibility of moving from a phenomenological starting point to generalising discourse. ii) In order for contextual theology to be Christian theology it must be formed in dialogue with the sources of the Christian tradition. However, from the time of the Apologists onwards this tradition has been formulated in large part under the influence of Greek metaphysics. Hence, the Christian tradition exhibits the very tendency towards abstract generalisations (as opposed to all inclusive generalisations) which is held to be unacceptable by contextual theology. cf. Lane, op. cit., pp. 35. Hence the advocates of contextual theology are posed with a second dilemma: In order to be genuinely theological, contextual theology must dialogue with the tradition. However the vast majority of the texts of the tradition are expressed in the universalising, abstract manner considered to be unacceptable by contextual theology, so how is dialogue possible? cf. Schreiter, ibid., pp. 76. There is the need for an adequate hermeneutic which will enable us to read back from the texts of the tradition to the living tradition itself. With these two difficulties in mind we can appreciate the concern of the magisterium that contextual theology reduces theology. However, we believe that the need for contextual theology is so crucial that the above difficulties should not lead us to abandon the endeavour. On the contrary we

feel that they call for further work so as to establish on the one hand an adequate philosophical basis for theologising from the particular and on the other hand an adequate hermeneutic that enables genuine dialogue with the inherited tradition. cf. "Carrying out this project is an enormous task. On the one hand, one must engage in a semiotic study of culture, reading the culture texts to discern the signs, codes, and messages in the sign systems. On the other hand, one must reappropriate the church tradition in such a way as to make it available for the dialectic with the culture, which will give birth to a genuinely local theology." Schreiter, ibid., pp. 78.

20. cf. John Shea, Stories Of God: An Unauthorized Biography, (Chicago. Thomas More Press 1978) and id., Stories Of Faith, (Chicago. Thomas More Press 1980).
21. We accept that each of these juxtapositions represents a false dilemma. The starting point for theology is the dialogue between common human experience and the inherited tradition and the focus of theology is both vertical and horizontal in as much as it articulates the transcendent dimension immanent within human experience. cf. "What we are dealing with here is not a one-way street from the Bible to the context or from the context to the Bible. What we are dealing with here is a circular movement that proceeds forward like a wheel. We move from Bible to context to Bible and back again, making progress all the time as we come to a better and better appreciation of both the shape and the content of the good news for us today." Nolan, God In South Africa, pp. 28. cf. E. Schillebeeckx, Christ: The Christian Experience In The Modern World, (London: SCM 1980), pp. 76-77. cf. Segundo, The Liberation Of Theology, (London: SCM 1977), pp. 7-38.
22. Vatican II, "Gaudium Et Spes", 7th December 1965, published in Ed. Austin Flannery O.P., Vatican Council II: The Conciliar And Post-Conciliar Documents, (Leominster, Fowler Wright Book Ltd. 1980), pp. 903-1001.
23. cf. "The world as such (in contradistinction to the Church) and as much more than simply the scene of concern for human necessities, as a condition of attaining salvation, scarcely really existed yet. The world was something ready made by God, in which man works out his salvation; and it was not yet explicitly something which by God's command had still to be brought about." Karl Rahner, "Man, (Anthropology)", Encyclopaedia Of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi, hereafter referred to as E.T., (London: Burns & Oates 1981), pp. 89.
24. W. McSweeney, Roman Catholicism: The Search For Relevance, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1980), pp. 4.
25. cf. Schreiter, op. cit., pp. 64-65.
26. cf. David Tracy's claim that fundamental to modern and post-modern self-consciousness is a "fundamental commitment to those purely secular standards for knowledge and action initiated by the Enlightenment... The "authentic person" is committed above all else to the full affirmation of the ultimate significance of our lives in this world." op. cit., pp. 8.

27. Albert Keller, "Secularisation", E.T., pp. 1557.
28. Immanuel Kant, A Critique Of Pure Reason, tr. N Kemp Smith, (London: Macmillan 1929).
29. ibid., pp. 93.
30. id., Religion Within The Limits Of Reason Alone, tr. by Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson, (New York: Harper and Row 1960). c.f. Max Horkheimer and Theodore W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, (New York: Seabury 1972), pp. 29-42.
31. cf. Lane, op. cit., pp. 70.
32. cf. "Once upon a time, the world controlled humanity. Today humanity controls the world to an ever-increasing degree. Until recently it appeared that man and his world were in the grip of nature and blind historical forces. Now for the first time nature and history are more and more under the control of humanity. The world in the twentieth-century has become something of a global village, capable of social, political and economic engineering." ibid., pp. 112.
33. cf. Schreiter, op. cit., pp. 132-133. cf. Gorringer, op. cit., pp. 72-73.
34. cf. Lane, op. cit., pp. 71.
35. Karl Marx, Preface to the Critique Of Hegel's Philosophy Of Right, 1843, cited in K. Marx, Early Writings, (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1975), pp. 244.
36. cf. "However, the basic insight, that humanity must begin to assume an enlightened responsibility for the shape of the world, remains hauntingly valid to this day.... It is this insight and its application by Marx and critical theorists to the character of social existence that is ultimately at issue in the debate between classical theology and praxis theology." Lane, op. cit., pp. 70. cf. "In addition it must be pointed out that the major criticisms of Christianity down through the centuries, and especially in the twentieth-century, have been aimed at particular forms of praxis, or the lack of them, in the face of pressing socio-ethical-political problems, rather than at the cognitional claims of faith. The crisis of faith in the past and present was and is provoked more often by a particular praxis than simply by a particular theoretical stance." ibid., pp. 76. cf. Gorringer, op. cit., pp. 74. cf., D. W. Hardy and D. F. Ford, Jubilate. Theology In Praise, (London: DLT 1984), pp. 63.
37. cf. "At present the 'conventional' wisdom of our society is certainly not that one's life should be based on the reality of God." Hardy and Ford, op. cit., pp. 13.
38. cf. Langdon Gilkey, Catholicism Confronts Modernity - A Protestant View, (New York: The Seabury Press 1975), pp. 33-34; 39.
39. cf. "For them, the context of monastic life, with its daily round of manual work and study and worship, was extremely important...



Correspondingly, when we attempt to understand such major figures as Anselm of Canterbury, or Thomas Aquinas, we must remember that their work was 'enclosed' in a corporate life of praise; and even those who were not themselves 'religious' like Dante Alighieri, lived within surroundings deeply affected by the presence of the same ideals as those which shaped monastic life. For life itself, with all the sciences, arts and forms of behaviour of which it was made up, was seen to achieve its truth as and when it was fulfilled in the glorification of God who had created and redeemed it and would bring it to its final shape." Hardy and Ford, op. cit., pp. 182-183. cf., ibid., pp. 177-189.

40. cf. "After we have reviewed the complexities of the history of the life of praise, and the regular dislocations and distortions to which this life has been subject, it is little wonder that man today appears anxious and perplexed. Far from understanding himself, his thought and action, as caught up in a movement of praise for God - one which should make him relaxed and hopeful - his activities seem fragmented, bound together only by the fact that they are his, for what he can make of them. And, so far as his history is concerned, far from being a thrust towards an unconditioned truth and freedom in which there arises genuine hopefulness through anticipation (which, as we saw earlier, is another form of praise), it is more frequently seen as a series of complex accidents. What are the resources available today for the recovery of the movement of knowledge in the praise of God?" Hardy and Ford, op. cit., pp. 196.
41. cf. Mark Taylor, God Is Love, A Study In The Theology Of Karl Rahner, (Atlanta Georgia: Scholars Press 1986), pp. 10-19. cf. "All of this is to say that there is a general consensus among contemporary theologians that the adequacy of theological statements is to be evaluated both in terms of the faithfulness of such statements to the normative expression of the Christian faith in scripture and in terms of the understanding such statements show of the situation and experience of contemporary persons." ibid., pp. 11. cf. "What is called for desperately throughout the Christian churches is a synthesis of Christian revelation and modernity, of the witness and life with the forms of our age, a synthesis with power and authenticity, and thus one as authentically true to the gospel as it is relevant to modernity." Gilkey, op. cit., pp. 9. cf. Tracy, op. cit., pp. 43-45.
42. cf. Tracy, ibid., pp. 43.
43. F. Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, Ed. by H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1976).
44. Pius IX, Syllabus Errorum, 8th December 1864.
45. ibid., X;80.
46. Pius X, Pascendi Gregoris, 1907.
47. K. Rahner, "Theology", E.T., pp. 2687-2688.
48. id., FCF, pp. 7-8.

49. cf. id., "The Prospects For Dogmatic Theology", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 2.
50. cf. "No one can deny that in the last two centuries cultural and spiritual transformations have taken place which, to say the very least, are comparable in depth and extent and power to mould men's lives, with those which took place between the time of Augustine and that of the golden age of scholasticism" ibid.
51. cf. "Today, in his historical development, man has clearly and definitively entered into the phase of a characteristic creativity and has become the active and powerful master who rationally plans himself and his environment." id., "The Man Of Today And Religion", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 5. cf. "The man of today and tomorrow is the man who has genuinely become a subject. He is not just theoretically but practically responsible for himself... In his experience, he really stands in the realm of nature as in a quarry or a construction site upon which the world man wishes to live in as his own world must first be built, the world in which he can once again encounter himself - almost as if he were his own creator and God." ibid., pp. 8-9. Rahner attests to this appreciation of modern self-understanding consistently, cf. id., "Christianity And The 'New Man'", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 137. cf. ibid., pp. 138. cf. id., "The Experiment With Man", T.I. Vol. IX, pp. 208-209. cf. id., "The Problem Of Genetic Manipulation", T.I. Vol. IX, pp. 228.
52. cf., G. McCool, A Rahner Reader, (London: Darton Longman and Todd 1975), pp. 74.
53. cf., Rahner, "Theology And Anthropology", T.I. Vol. IX.
54. Joseph Maréchal, a Belgian Jesuit, initiated the school of thought which came to be referred to as Transcendental Thomism. His major work is the five volumes of Le Point De Départ De La Métaphysique, (Paris: Bruxelles Desclée De Brouwer 1944-1949). cf. O. Muck, The Transcendental Method, (Herder and Herder 1968).
55. id., "The Problem Of Genetic Manipulation", T.I. Vol. IX, pp. 227-228.
56. Tracy, op. cit., Chapter Two, pp. 22-42.
57. ibid., pp. 25-27. cf. "The spectrum of concrete historical options for liberal theologies is almost as wide as the spectrum of specific orthodox theologies. From the great figures of German and Anglo-American Protestant liberalism through the Catholic modernists, there were those in every church tradition who attempted to rethink and reformulate their tradition in accordance with the values and cognitive claims of modern thought. From the philosophical interests of Hegel, Schleiermacher, or Blondel, through the ethical interests of Harnack, Troeltsch, or Loisy, the same pattern emerges: the need to rethink the fundamental vision and values of traditional Christianity in harmony with the fundamental vision and values of modernity." ibid., pp. 26.
58. ibid., pp. 27.

59. As with liberal theology, 'neo-orthodoxy' designates a broad school of differing positions ranging through Barth, Brunner, Bultmann, Tillich, the Niebuhrs. The phrase 'neo-orthodoxy' seeks to concentrate on what were the shared perspectives and concerns of these differing theologians. cf. ibid., pp. 27-28.
60. ibid., pp. 29.
61. ibid., pp. 28.
62. ibid., pp. 29.
63. ibid., cf. "The liberals and modernists may not have been able to solve the problem which secular modernity posed for Christian self-understanding; but the neo-orthodox seemed unwilling at some inevitable final moment to follow to a truly critical conclusion the task which they themselves initiated." ibid.
64. ibid., pp. 31-32.
65. ibid., "Footnote 58", pp. 41.
66. ibid., pp. 31.
67. ibid.
68. ibid., pp. 32-34.
69. cf. "In short, the revisionist theologian is committed to what seems clearly to be the central task of contemporary Christian theology: the dogmatic confrontation, the mutual illuminations and corrections, the possible basic reconciliation between the principal values, cognitive claims, and existential faiths of both a reinterpreted post-modern consciousness and a reinterpreted Christianity." ibid., pp. 32.
70. ibid., pp. 34.
71. We take the phrase "Praise of God" from Hardy and Ford's work to refer in a generic sense to theocentric perspectives on human life. cf., Hardy and Ford, op. cit.
72. A phrase used by Clifford Longley about Karl Rahner in a review of Confessions Of A Conservative Liberal, John Habgood, (London: SPCK) in The Tablet, 10th December 1988: "A liberal conservative theologian sits under obedience to Tradition, and applies his intellectual ingenuity to the negotiation of as much freedom as can be justified within those limits. A conservative liberal sits in judgement upon Tradition: he is a traditionalist more by taste than by basic conviction." ibid., pp. 1428.
73. cf. Martin Buber, Between Man And Man, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1947). cf. "For many, perhaps most of these intellectuals who have experienced and analysed this present Western, indeed global crisis, of meaning, Christianity has exactly nothing to offer for its possible resolution. For others, however, Christianity, if critically reinterpreted, (my italics) still bears a real hope for a meaningful vision upon our common

life. A successful articulation of that vision, however, depends upon the individual theologian's ability to experience and to understand both the crisis of meaning of traditional Christianity in the modern "post-Christian" period and the present crisis of traditional modernity in the contemporary "post-modern" world. (11)... For anyone who correctly understands the full dimensions of that experience, neither traditional Christian self-understanding nor any combination thereof will suffice to resolve that dual dilemma. Only a basic revision of traditional Christianity and traditional modernity alike would seem to suffice." (Italics mine), Tracy, op. cit., pp. 4.

74. Tracy, ibid., pp. 43.

75. Fergus Kerr, "Rahner Retrospective -1- Rupturing Der Pianische Monolithismus", New Blackfriars, Vol. 61, no. 720, (May 1980), pp. 232-233.

## CHAPTER TWO: SOME CRITERIA OF ADEQUACY FOR SOTERIOLOGY

2.1 The need for an approach to theology which works from particular concerns to general theories.

2.1.1 The crisis of meaning in religious language.

From my religious upbringing I was left with the impression that concepts such as sin and salvation belonged to a specifically religious area of life (1). Sin could be described as a refusal to obey God's rules and salvation as the restoration to divine favour (2). These religious concepts were then applied to every facet of life, all circumstances had their soteriological significance or their sin value. The result was that the religious concern to avoid sin and to attain salvation was a dominating concern that accompanied all other concerns but did not actually originate within them (3). The religious concern and the human concern could not be identified. This compartmentalisation could function perfectly adequately provided I was content to derive my understanding of what sin and salvation were from my religious interpretation of life and to allow precedence to religious concerns over human concerns.

However, as life concerns came to the fore it was increasingly difficult to allow precedence to religious concerns. It seemed that life must be lived in the human realm. Increasingly, my understanding of what was ultimately important, of what sin and salvation were, was coming from life and not religion. When I sought to bring these human concerns into contact with my religious understanding no easy dialogue could take place. A crisis posed itself as to how to overcome the gulf between my inherited religious interpretation and the concerns of human life. My own personal difficulty with the meaningfulness of religious

discourse does I believe reflect a far wider crisis within contemporary Christianity: "One of the gravest errors of our time is the dichotomy between the faith which many profess and the practice of their daily lives." (4) We can see the same concern lying behind the ongoing pursuit, through liberal theology, neo-orthodoxy, radical theology and revisionist theology, for an adequate method of theological discourse. As Monika Hellwig writes, "The struggle of Christian theology in our times is to re-establish contact with the experience of contemporary Christians." (5) Further, we would maintain that this is not only a linguistic crisis requiring translation into more familiar language (which would imply that we all know what religious concepts mean; it is just that the language is not helpful) (6). Rather we believe that there is a genuine crisis of meaning; not only is the language which is used to express religious concepts felt to be unhelpful but the religious concepts themselves are felt to have no meaning or relevance for human life (7). We touch here upon what Gilkey terms the second level of criticism of religious language (8).

#### 2.1.2 Why this crisis?

We believe that we can isolate two interrelated reasons which contribute to the present crisis in religious discourse: Firstly the pre-modern world view has had a formative influence on religious discourse and the self-consciousness of the religious mind. Secondly, all too often theology has been deduced from abstract, universal principles. This stands in profound tension with the particularity of lived human life.

Let us first examine briefly the influence of pre-modern cultural assumptions on the theological endeavour. The language of the

Christian tradition is largely the product of an unrestrained use of what Tracy terms the orthodox model (9). That is, theology was formulated by believers for believers who already interpreted life through the mediation of these concepts and assumed the theocentricity of human life. The theology that was formulated was considered to be univocal with human life. In this manner, theology was considered to be an adequate and true articulation of human reality. However, the context within which theology was written was either the medieval monastic cloister or the University school. The lived human reality that was theologised upon was an intellectual, monastic, clerical, celibate, male, medieval perspective (10).

There are obviously constraints as to how adequate to lived human reality theology written from such contexts could be (11). Even if theology written from such contexts could be considered adequate to past human experience, a point that we would question, it hardly seems possible that it be immediately adequate to the very different contexts of the modern and post-modern world (12). However, within the orthodox model for theology, belief in the univocacy of theology with life tends to justify a domination of life by past articulations (13). The 'religious' realm, as expressed in the inherited tradition, comes to be thought of as the truth through which reality should be interpreted (14). When pursued in this manner, theology gives more the impression of dictating to human reality rather than genuinely expressing it. This approach fails to take account of the axial rotation in world-view that has taken place since the Enlightenment. It assumes that the theocentricity of life is part of the cultural presuppositions and perspectives of the twentieth century (15).

Such an approach to theology comes into difficulties when human

life concerns come to be seen as having an importance in their own right. The charge of meaninglessness ensues when the human realm is viewed as the legitimately prior focus of concern. Gabriel Daly gives voice to this problem: "Traditional soteriology, which in former ages spoke with imaginative effectiveness and power, now seems to inhabit a world of its own which appears to be sealed off from daily modern experience." (16) The question posed by this crisis is as to whether the process of demystification of the world will lay waste the "rich and mythical imagination" (17) of Christianity or merely eliminate the mystifying components of the Christian vision of the world and free the basic vision to speak with contemporary integrity.

We maintain that a genuine belief in the univocacy of theology with life should lead us to seek an intrinsic connection between the concerns of human life and religious concerns. If the crisis in religious discourse is to be overcome then we believe that religious discourse must be grounded in an analysis of common human experience (18). That is, we believe that we must seek to rediscover the locus of the transcendent God immanent within human life rather than simply assume, with the classical tradition (19), that life is centred in the 'praise of God'. In the twentieth century theocentricity has to be established rather assumed. We have to go behind the written tradition to the reality in our experience to which it refers. Gabriel Daly refers to this process as the "search for the element of univocation" (20), Tracy refers to it as a phenomenology of the "Religious Dimension" that is present in everyday, and scientific, experience and language (21).

In terms of atonement theology we believe that sin and salvation should not be predefined as personal moral indiscretion and restoration



to grace respectively but should rather be discerned through a study of the human realm and the finding there of the most appropriate locus of such designations (22). As Daly states:

It will not do simply to continue repeating the classical formulas of Christian soteriology as if they possessed self evident meaning and had merely to be invoked catechetically or intoned liturgically for their effect to take place. The reality to which they refer has to be experienced in all the contexts which go to make up any human life, however seemingly humdrum. (23)

Once such a locus in human life has been recovered for soteriological discourse then genuine dialogue with the tradition can commence. However, until such a locus has been established we suspect that any theological discourse will give the impression of speaking with ever greater exactitude about religious concepts that are felt to have no meaning for life (24). With this concern in mind, we shall examine Rahner's transcendental metaphysics.

The second reason that we isolated as contributing to the meaninglessness of religious discourse concerns the question of the a priori universalism prevalent in much theology as distinct from the particularity of human life. Human life, whilst complex in its interrelatedness, is always experienced in its particularity. For example, whilst each divorce may be a statistic in a records office, each has its own uniqueness. It involves uniquely individual human persons with their own emotional, psychological and physical <sup>typically</sup> determinations interacting in unique circumstances. The continuity of life is lived and experienced through particular situations. As we compare our various experiences and those of other people general patterns emerge which help us to better understand the particular situations of life. However, the generalisations which provide perspective on particular situations always come after the lived <sup>existential</sup>

particularity. Further, the generalisations can never do complete justice to the level of particularity (25).

For these reasons we are unable to subscribe to the view of Platonic Idealism which would consider all human life and experience to be passing modes of universal forms. However, we do allow for the necessity of generalisations in human discourse. Without them we cannot see, judge and act. In accepting the need for generalisations, we accept the need for what Tracy terms the "transcendental moment" (26) in philosophical and theological inquiry. Hence, we would distinguish between a posteriori generalisations with maximum inclusiveness, which are born from a semiotic analysis (27) of the data of human life, and a priori universalising generalisations which are not rooted in the particularity of human life. In this manner we distinguish between transcendental reflection born from a prior semiotic inquiry on the one hand and an exclusively transcendental reflection on the other hand which chooses particular data as a secondary "proof" of the adequacy of the transcendental reflection. It is this a priori, universalising method of generalising that has dominated much theology. This tendency contributes to the crisis in meaning in religious discourse. Whilst a priori, universal systems of theology may have been adequate to the pre-modern situation, they are not felt to be adequate for the modern and post-modern world with its awareness of a pluralism in world-views and the contextualisation and particularity of knowledge and experience. Theology written from an a priori, general, exclusively transcendental perspective is thought to be a self-contained system secondarily applied to life which can have no meaning or relevance to particular life situations (28). This means that in addition to having to root theology in life, and seeking to establish a theocentric perspective rather than simply assume one, it

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is further necessary to root theology in the particularity of life. It is insufficient to seek to justify the univocacy of theology with life by means of a general, a priori argument. Rather it is necessary to engage upon an a posteriori analysis of life, in its particularity, in a way that uncovers the foundations of a theocentric vision and allows for a consequent transcendental analysis. Even if one should desire to overcome the religion/life divide, an a priori transcendental perspective would militate against this concern. This point will be of prime importance in our critique of Rahner.

In terms of atonement theology, this will cause us to hold as inadequate any theory which abstracts Jesus' life, death and resurrection from their historical context and makes universal claims for their salvific import without seeking to relate this claim to the in-situ details of particular situations. Atonement language that is phrased in removed, a priori abstractions is felt to be meaningless. Unless God is saving particular situations in their particularity then God is not saving at all.

We have maintained that soteriological language should be the articulation of common human experience and concerns rather than the articulation of distinct religious concerns. We further maintained that this requires that soteriological language should be born from reflecting on particular human situations rather than functioning as an a priori idealism. In turn this requires that adequate soteriology must think of God as genuinely present in the human realm in all its particularity. From this discussion we can formulate our first criterion of adequacy for soteriological discourse:

**Soteriology must be rooted in the human realm, it must flow from and address the particularity of human life and hence God must be thought of as genuinely present within the particularity of human life.**

*But what is God?!*

We may compare here the words of Timothy Gorringer:

To speak of God as being at work in 'the whole of human history' raises the problem which we have stumbled across again and again... 'history' is not a universal, but a record of particulars. God can only commit himself to history, work within history and redeem history by committing himself to the particular. (29)

Before we move on to the formulation of our second and third criteria, which in part follow as a consequence of our first, we feel it is necessary to clarify what we are and are not maintaining in this our first criterion:

Firstly, in claiming that theology should be rooted in common human experience and language we are not claiming that theology is simply a representation of the most superficial understanding of common human experience. We are not claiming with the Death of God theologians that theology is best understood as a language of ultimacy for purely secular realities, and thereby introducing "trojan horses into the camp of Christians" (30). Nor are we seeking to speak of God by 'speaking of man in a loud voice' (31). We are simply claiming that religion and life are not contradictory realms such that theology then requires application to life (32). Rather than claiming that theology is as 'empty' as common human experience, we are saying that common human experience moves within the richness that theology articulates. We are claiming that life is profoundly theological and is indeed the original locus for theology, that the sociological, anthropological and political aspects of life are intrinsically theological (33), that theology is rooted in the phenomena with which they are concerned. Further, we are claiming that whilst theological discourse is rooted in the data of common human experience, it encompasses the perspectives of sociology, politics and anthropology and sets them within the wider context of God's relationship with men and women as mediated by the

naive!

Christian tradition. In the words of Leonardo and Clodovis Boff:

In these realities, considered to be secular, there is a real, but hidden, theological element... It is the task of Christian reflection to unveil and extract this hidden theological element, to bring it to the light of day in reflection, in liturgical celebrations, in an expression of prayer. (34)

With David Tracy, we believe that a "proper understanding of the explicitly Christian faith can render intellectually coherent and symbolically powerful that common secular faith which we share" (35). The theological presupposition here is that God is genuinely present in the particularity of human life and hence that human life is intrinsically theological (36). A friend's comment, "There is nothing more to life than life itself", is not so much a reconciliation to finitude as a declaration of the locus of the divine in human life (37). We endorse the words of Lane:

In effect, we must rid ourselves, therefore, of any artificial conflict that is alleged to exist between the so-called vertical and horizontal dimensions of our Christian faith. We must realise.... that the horizontal dimension is constitutive of the vertical and that the vertical dimension sustains the horizontal. (38)

We believe this to be a profoundly scriptural perspective. In scripture the whole of life is understood to be the locus of God's presence; historical narrative and theological reflection are interwoven. It is a return to this manner of theologising that is being called for (39). We are arguing for some form of what Tillich termed "self-transcending naturalism" (40). Further, we would suggest that the realm of common human experience is the original locus of religious concerns and ritual (41), that long before God and theology are banished to the realm of the sacred they are rooted in the common clay of human life.

We believe that before sin and evil are named as moral

indiscretions and defiance of God they are understood to be that which deals death and destroys human life (42). As Daly says: "The experience of evil precedes every attempt to name it." (43) Likewise we believe that before salvation is understood to be the quest for a divine destiny it is understood to be the quest for healing and restoration to truth. With Daly we agree that: "The need to be saved precedes the commission of sin." (44) When seen from this perspective sin and salvation do not appear to be irrelevant religious hang ups but rather speak to basic questions in human life:

I wish to contend that the scope of salvation includes, but far exceeds, the scope of sin. We are saved not merely from our sins but also from the alienating effects (or, better, side-effects) of the creative process. (45)

The human being comes to be seen as the person who looks for redemption. Hence we can claim that the question of atonement is not only central to Christianity but also central to the human endeavour: "To be human is to find oneself amongst the walking wounded, constantly in need of healing, forgiveness, acceptance, affirmation, reinvigoration and hope." (46)

In claiming that sin and salvation are rooted in common human experience before they are named as specifically religious concepts we are not intending to deny that they can only be fully appreciated when set within an explicitly religious context (47). Whilst sin and salvation may be rooted within the experience of what destroys and gives life, we accept that this does not exhaust their meaning. Not everything that destroys life can be thought of as sin in the traditional sense of the word. Traditional usage <sup>is obvious</sup> maintains that sin can only finally be understood to be a free personal self-determination vis-a-vis the very ground of reality itself (48). The tradition would <sup>Tillich!</sup> maintain that sin does not refer in general to that which destroys life

but rather refers to the culpable refusal to share God's communitarian life, by choosing narrow self-interest, which leads to the destruction of life. We feel fully able to work within this tradition. We understand sin to be an inversion of human horizons which seeks to centre the world around self in a futile attempt at self-fulfillment rather than around community,<sup>k</sup> grace,<sup>l</sup> God. However, whilst accepting that sin is only fully understood when it is set within an explicitly religious context, we would claim that it is never a 'purely religious' reality. We believe that sin language articulates the depth-language of the common human experience of self-willed frustration, of seeking fulfilment and security through narrow self-interest which destroys relationships and community.

Secondly, we have formulated a criterion which performs the function of judging the adequacy of theological method. We do not claim to have articulated a methodology that is adequate to this criterion. Indeed, we are aware that there are appreciable difficulties with the demand for a theological methodology that is adequate to this criteria:

- i) There is the question of the theology of revelation which underpins our criterion. We have claimed that human life is intrinsically theological. Hence the theology of revelation that we would adopt is consonant with that manifested by such as Rahner. That is, we share the same principle that truth is not divisible and that human truth is religious truth. However, we would wish to change the emphasis. Rather than starting with theological truth and seeking to reconcile this with human truth, we would start with the truth that could be discerned in particular human situations. We would seek to gain deeper perspective on this through comparing various

situations and finally viewing the discerned truth within the embracing perspective of Theology. We recognise that this presumed why? theology of revelation would need to be explicated at much greater length if we were to seek to derive a methodology from what is at present only a criterion. In particular the relationship between natural theology and revealed theology would need to be explored in greater detail.

ii) There is the question of how it is possible, from the perspective of experienced reality, to dialogue with the inherited tradition. We have claimed that adequacy to the demands of common human experience means that theology must be rooted in the particularity of human life rather than in a priori universalising statements. However, the tradition with which theology must dialogue is, in large part, formulated in just the sort of a priori abstract statements that we believe to be incapable of addressing genuinely human concerns. Schreier is aware of this problem (49). There is the need for an adequate hermeneutic which will enable us to recover the original life significance of the tradition. Such a hermeneutic would liberate the tradition which would in turn illuminate our particular concerns.

[ With the above provisos in mind we can restate our first criterion:

**Soteriology must be rooted in the human realm, it must flow from and address the particularity of human life and hence God must be thought of as genuinely present within the particularity of human life.**

## 2.2 The inadequacy of a soteriology focused upon individual salvation.

When I was younger, my inherited notions of sin and salvation were



very individualistic in emphasis. Sins were the ways in which I broke the divine commands, offended the holiness of God and ran up a debt to God (50). Salvation was the hoped for admission into heaven despite my sins on account of the intercession of Christ and the Saints. Whilst allowing for varying emphasise, we believe that Western soteriology has shown a marked tendency to become narrowly focused upon the salvation of the individual (51). This is possibly due to the influence of legal metaphors whose original context was the upholding of the rights of individuals. Whatever the cause, soteriological language focused exclusively upon the salvation of the individual becomes increasingly meaningless as the wider concerns of human life come to the fore (52).

If we follow our first criterion we see the need to reformulate the locus for soteriological language. We believe that before evil is associated with an offence against the majesty of God it is identified with that which destroys human life. That is, evil is an offence against God because it is destructive of human life and not vice versa (53). As we come to see that evil most properly designates that which destroys human life we come to see that it cannot be confined to an individualistic level. Lurking behind individualistic salvation schemas is the notion that the human person is an autonomous, isolated monad. This assumption, despite its widespread influence in Western philosophy and theology (54), is quite inadequate to both common human experience and the Judaeo/Christian tradition. Enda McDonagh writes:

It is not possible to be historical even about the individual without being social. The isolated individual with a personal, asocial history of salvation is an abstraction owing more to modern individualism than to Hebrew or Christian tradition. (55)

Human life is constituted by relationships (56). Through the immediate material environment of their own embodiedness human persons

relate to each other and to the natural order as a whole (57). It is through these relationships that we act and are acted upon both for good and for ill. It is in and through these relationships that we exist (58). We cannot subscribe to a metaphysic that would view the essential person as an abstract substance to whom relationships were merely accidental. In contrast, we maintain a dynamic notion of personhood. We are defined by the relationships that we have with other people and with the natural order:

I am the person I am precisely because of my relationship to this history, this family, these friends, those mentors, these ideas appropriated and experiences shared. I am, in a word, a profoundly relative not substantial being. Whether I know it or not, I am the person I am because this idea has taken hold in me, this friend has literally entered my life, this set of historical experiences has affected me. Indeed love, the most human and the most religious of all experiences, is by definition a relative concept. (59)

Nor would we limit this to the level of one-to-one interaction. Individuals group together and organise themselves as communities, the structures that groups inherit and the structures that they create determine who these people are. Human life at a societal and organizational level is life governed and enabled by structures. Through these structural forms in life we stand in mediated relationship with people within our immediate community, within our nation and within the global community.

In contrast to the prevalent attitude in western thought, we would claim that common human experience teaches us that the individual does not exist in isolation. Rather we claim that the individual exists in and through a whole nexus of relationships; relationships with the created order, relationships with family, neighbours, work colleagues, friends, local community, nation, people throughout the world (60). We would claim that these relationships are mediated, determined and

established by the structures of society. In truth "No man is an Island, entire of itself" (61). Human life is fundamentally social and communitarian in character (62). Once we become aware of the interrelational nature of life then we also become aware of the interrelational character of evil (63). The very relationships through which we exist are the same relationships through which we deal death unto ourselves, our environment and our sisters and brothers (64).

Our embodiedness, without which we could not be a person, limits us and frustrates us (65). The traditional phobia about sexuality recognises that our materiality can dominate us. We are essentially orientated towards finitude. The bodies that enable us to be are the bodies in which we anticipate our death and in our bodies we cry out for liberation (66).

In our relationships also with the wider material environment of the natural order here too misery impinges, if not dominates. Ecologists, environmentalists and zoologists berate us with a litany of woes of the despoliation of rainforests, intensifying pollution, encroaching deserts, extinction of species and the squandering of non-renewable resources. The technology which has enabled us to harness the vitality of the created order has been used to dominate and destroy it. Enda McDonagh expresses the dilemma succinctly:

Pacification by obliteration and famine in the shadow of meat and grain mountains offers adequate comment on the continuous disastrous combination of technical achievement with moral and political failure. (67)

The promethean desire to dominate the natural order has resulted in the threat of our own extinction, symbolised most horrifically in the nuclear capabilities (68). For the first time a generation has grown up with the possibility that it may be the last (69). The human

community has fashioned for itself a life-style that cannot be supported (70). Through frustrating the natural order in seeking our own gain we have only succeeded in frustrating ourselves. In this relationship we cry out for liberation.

It is, perhaps, the interpersonal sphere that displays the depths of evil most clearly. Personal insecurities and feelings of inadequacy are compensated for by dominating other people and measuring self-worth in terms of power, wealth and status. Such relationships depersonalise both victim and perpetrator. In our relationships we cry out for healing and liberation.

As we turn to the level of social and political interaction, we can again view them as the locus of what can only truly be named as sin and evil in human life (71). We noted that the social character of human life inevitably gives rise to the formation and maintenance of structures in a society which enable that society to function. Through these structures the individuals in a society exist in relation to each other, and through them the mutual dependence of all members of the global village is lived out. Should the structures of a society determine that a third of the population becomes increasingly more destitute whilst, and because, another third becomes increasingly more wealthy then they exist in a relationship of oppressed to oppressor (72). This is in fact what we find (73). The structures that function to give us life also deal death (74). They exhibit the same evils that we notice in individual relationships and this with little wonder; the structures of a society are created by fallible humans and incarnate their flaws (75). We believe there to be a vital relationship between personal and structural evil (76). Structural evil may arise from and incarnate personal evil but it also in turn determines the vision of

the individual (77). There is a 'lock-on' effect between structural and personal evil such that evil structures in a society perpetrate their own existence (78). Within these structures the human community cries out for liberation and redemption (79).

As we become aware of the interrelational character of evil, and the reality of structural sin, we come to see the inadequacy of salvation schemas which focus exclusively upon sin as a private and personal matter concerning only the sinner and God. Schleiermacher maintained that sin is "in each the work of all and in all the work of each" (80). Sin and evil pervade the communal aspects and structures of human society (81). We agree with Nolan:

All sin is both personal and social at the same time. All sin is personal in the sense that only individuals can commit sin, only individuals can be guilty, only individuals can be sinners. However, all sins also have a social dimension because sins have social consequences (they affect other people), sins become institutionalised and systematised in the structures, laws and customs of a society. (82)

Having claimed that sin and evil are interrelational, so also we believe that 'salvation' language should find its locus here. We do not seek a salvation which takes us out of our relationships in the human sphere and which goes on within a private relationship with God. Unless the sought-for redemption is a liberation of the interpersonal and material relatedness of human life then it is not a redemption of human life at all. Timothy Gorringe reminds us that a solidarity in sin demands a solidarity in redemption:

There is a solidarity in sin which reaches back to the very origin of human history and which is embedded in the structure of every human society in its patterns of family life, of relationships, of education, of employment and so on. But this means that if we are to speak meaningfully of redemption we must also speak of a redemptive solidarity there which, like human solidarity in sin, is also an historical reality. Because human beings only exist in complex patterns of social relationships they can only be redeemed in those patterns - They cannot be miraculously lifted out of the historical process which would in any case

be a reverse of the redemptive movement of the incarnation.  
(83)

Gabriel Daly echoes the same concern:

No one can be human on his or her own. Consequently no one can be saved on his or her own. We are members one of another. Human interdependence necessarily implies the need for salvific relationships. (84)

Following our first criterion that theology should be located in common human experience, we maintain that the true soteriological question is not How can I as an individual achieve salvation out of my human context? Rather it is, Is redemption possible for the human context as a whole? (85) In seeking to be faithful to our first criterion we are led to formulate our second:

**A soteriology will be found to be inadequate if it is centred upon the salvation of the individual without a true appreciation of the need for a corporate redemption of the human community.**

We believe that this realisation lies behind the beautiful English soteriological metaphor, atonement. The very word at-one-ment suggests that redemption involves a reconciling process within the interrelational dimensions of life.

2.3 The need for a soteriology of healing liberation and radical transformation.

2.3.1 Idealistic perspectives on humanity

There is a recurrent tendency towards idealistic (86) accounts of human life, witnessed to in literature, theology and philosophy. Humanity is viewed as having an all surpassing beauty, dignity and destiny. Sin, evil and suffering are thought of as intruders into the human condition which contradict our true nature (87). The existence of a flaw in human nature is admitted but it is a manageable flaw that

can certainly be overcome. The soteriological question is reduced to How might restoration best be achieved? The more fundamental question as to whether there are any grounds at all for hope in a redemption, or fulfilment is avoided. In defining the human person in a priori manner as having an essential and all surpassing greatness, the ineradicable possibility of redemption has already been affirmed and sin has thus been dealt with. The very possibility of redemption is not radically in doubt.

### 2.3.2 The depth of the soteriological question.

In rejecting an Idealistic starting point for soteriology we then rejected any soteriology that did not take account of the corporate dimension of evil. Now we must reject any idealistic soteriology that does not take account of the extent of the required redemption. In face of the atrocities that our own century has witnessed it is very difficult to maintain an idealistic vision of humanity. The ovens of Auschwitz make it difficult to maintain the presence of an inextinguishable spark of divinity in humanity (88). When we forego Idealistic abstraction and view humanity as it is in the flesh, then the march of progress appears not simply as an ascent to greatness but also as a descent into increasingly sophisticated and depraved means of waging war, inflicting political and economic oppression and despoliation of the created order (89). We become less confident in claiming that selfishness is a perversion of our nature, and not our true nature (90). We begin to appreciate the radical and all pervasive presence of sin and evil reaching right into the depths of our lives. As our perception of humanity's need of salvation increases the confidence with which we claim that such a salvation is possible decreases. The question as to how the human person might recover the

deformed image of God is eclipsed by the question as to whether it is even possible to speak in this way about humanity.

Having sought to rid ourselves of idealistic presuppositions about the ineradicable goodness of the human person and to stand naked before the radical presence of evil in human life, a vortex of despair opens up which threatens to engulf us and to empty us of all hope (91). This may be a diet for madmen and mystics but hardly for those who would retain their sanity. However, we believe that theology must taste this bitter draught if it is to address itself to the experienced reality of human life. The only notion of redemption that is credible will be one forged and tested within this hell of human making. Only if theology enters into the Jordan of our iniquity will it be a theology that can be lived.

It might be objected that because God is creator then we know that humanity is fundamentally redeemable. However, it is precisely the articles of faith that God is creator and redeemer that we cannot state with a priori certainty as we approach the close of the second Christian millennium (92). It seems that we will only recover a profound faith in God as creator of all things as a result of finding grounds for hoping in God's redeeming presence in all things (93). That is, we look to a continuing creativity to establish for us that all that exists is God's creation. Where are such grounds to be found within human history (94)?

The question of whether in the face of the radical evil in human life there are grounds for hope in a better humanity does, we believe, represent the fundamental question of human life. Can we live as genuine community or is selfishness and domination of others the only basis to life? Ultimately, this question cannot be suppressed or



escaped and the answer we give will determine how we live. However, most of us, most of the time do indeed seek to suppress or escape this question and with little wonder. Should we conclude that evil is the sole reality then suicide poses itself as the definitive question. As Camus appreciates:

There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. (95)

The radical evil in human life poses only two real options: Either a profound, genuine hope rooted in the human context or despairing nihilism. With this realisation, we are able to give initial expression to our third criterion of adequacy in soteriology:

**An adequate soteriology must have a profound appreciation of the radical presence of evil in human life and must be able to give grounds for hope in a redemption of this situation. (96)**

Consistent with the realisation of the radical presence of evil in human life is the realisation of the illusory nature of the search for enclaves of purity and integrity safe from the common morass of human life. It comes to appear as impossible for individuals and groups to escape all involvement in the evil in human life. As we have already argued in formulating our second criterion, we believe that life is determined by relationships with other people, with the created order, and with the human community as a whole through the structures of a society. Moreover, all these relationships are co-determined by their wider contexts and so to a greater or lesser degree are determined by evil (97). The structures and relationships which mediate life to us are permeated by evil and so also mediate death to us (98). At a communal level there can be no such thing as a pure, *élite* (99). At an individual level we can say that it is impossible to think of a person who does not find him/herself in a situation determined by evil (100).

An awareness of the radical presence of evil in human life means that we cannot equate salvation with a removal from the common morass of humanity and an entrance into the elect. If soteriology is to mean anything at all then it must be rooted within the human situation. That is, it must be a transformation of the evil present within human life rather than a salvation out of human life (101). This in turn requires that it is possible to think of God as present to the evil in human life, redeeming it within its context, rather than as isolated in a pure realm into which people are transported (102).

Also consistent with the realisation of the radical presence of evil in human life is the apparent inadequacy of attempts to minimise the significance of evil through reducing it to the level of moral indiscretions that can be overlooked. We have argued that evil is that which destroys human life both at a communal and an individual level. It is radical, not superficial (103). Hence, it cannot be ignored but has to be overcome. Further, we maintain that there is a dynamic quality to evil such that it does not exist in isolation from other acts but rather influences them (104). We become what we do in our relationships (105). Hence, an individual's self-chosen determination for evil in one relationship will affect his/her other relationships and in turn will affect the persons s/he has dealings with (106). At the wider communal level we have already touched upon the way in which structures both free us and limit us. They mediate and determine our relationships and hence preserve the dynamics of destruction and death which they incarnate (107). The world view of white South African children, will understandably develop in a vastly different manner to the world view of black and coloured South African children. Again we may say that evil cannot be ignored but has to be overcome.

In religious terms this suggests that salvation cannot be exclusively identified with divine forgiveness. Whilst it is the need for forgiveness that gives the human quest for salvation its distinctively religious character, an overemphasis upon the need for forgiveness to the exclusion of our need for healing represents the same superficial understanding of sin and evil that we have decried above. It reduces sin to an external, moral infringement of an arbitrary code that can be overlooked by a well disposed deity, rather than it being a willed orientation of the free human person in a direction that frustrates and depersonalises oneself and others. To say that God turns a blind eye to the evil in the world no more answers our problem than if we say that we will turn a blind eye to it, for as long as it exists then it stands in need of redemption. In the words of Hardy and Ford:

If it is granted that evil is a possibility in a world where freedom is valued, the answer to evil must be in the possibility of a free response to it that genuinely meets and overcomes it. Evil is both particular and dynamic, and the answer to it must be primarily in the language of action. So God will be justified if he does in fact respond to evil so that its distortion of order and non-order is overcome and taken up into something new. (108)

In line with this, we claim that genuine redemption requires that evil be transformed or healed and not just forgiven (109). We agree with Nolan:

We need to have our guilt removed but we also need to overcome the consequences of original sin: weakness and alienation... Salvation in the Bible is the victory over the powers of evil that oppress us, alienate us and tempt us - over the whole cycle of sin... Salvation includes the forgiveness of sin (liberation from guilt) but it cannot be reduced to that alone. (110)

Forgiveness and healing cannot ultimately be separated. Either we must say that the person is continually accepted by God and led, through healing forgiveness, to an ontological sharing in the divine

life (justification unto sanctification). Or we must say that God comes close to the human person in forgiving healing which brings the person to know the acceptance of full communion with God, (sanctification unto justification) (111). To phrase this in rather more traditional language, the imputed righteousness of forgiveness must lead through sanctifying healing into the full realization of sanctification and the full enjoyment of forgiveness denoted by imparted righteousness (112).

When we transpose our concern, that salvation should include both forgiveness and healing, into the arenas of the communal and structural dimensions to human sin and evil then we come to see that the denunciation of communal and structural sin and the forgiveness of individuals enmeshed in these situations must lead through liberating activity into new social and political realities. Redemption requires what Jon Sobrino (113) refers to as the "forgiveness of sinful reality", including the eradication of structures of oppression and violence, in addition to the forgiveness of the sinner. In this way, our 'turn to human experience' (criterion one) has led us to see the necessity for the 'turn to praxis' in theology that is evident in the European political theologies of such people as Metz (114), Moltmann (115) and Davis (116) and in the Third-World theologies of liberation (117). From this perspective, the primary experience upon which theology (academic and otherwise) is called to reflect is not a dispassionate, theoretical experience but the experience of critical engagement to change human reality (118).

An initial expression of our third criterion of adequacy in soteriology was that an adequate soteriology must have a profound appreciation of the radical presence of evil in human life and must be

able to give grounds for hope in a genuine redemption of this situation. On closer examination we came to see that this requires that it is possible to think of God as present to the evil in human life redeeming it within its context rather than as isolated in a pure realm into which people are transported. We were also led to conclude that it requires that soteriology should not limit salvation to the securing of divine forgiveness alone but must also maintain the need for, and the possibility of, a transforming liberation. We might say that salvation must be truly 'subjective' and truly 'objective': 'Subjective' in as much as the human person and society require a salvation that is a true healing / liberation of that which is broken rather than a salvation that is tangential or extrinsic to human life; 'Objective' in as much as the human person and community feels itself to be unable to actualise this salvation. It seems most appropriate to seek an 'objective' process of salvation within the life and history of the human person and society. Hence, a full expression of our third criterion of adequacy is as follows:

**An adequate soteriology will be one that is formulated in dialogue with an appreciation of the radical nature of sin and evil in human life and which allows for the possibility of God's transforming, liberating presence to evil.**

We believe that these concerns are deeply rooted in the Christian tradition (119). We shall seek to illustrate this by looking at the Reformation dispute which we feel can in part be seen as a dispute over the dual principle that God must be present to evil both in forgiveness and in healing. Having done this we will be able to ask why it is that in practice Catholic theology has seemed to fall foul of this principle. In turn, this will enable us to link our third criterion (that soteriology should be rooted in an appreciation of God's healing presence to the radical evil in human life) with our first criterion

(that theological language should be born from the particular rather than from a priori generalisations). We will claim that an abstract starting point makes it difficult to take the reality of human life seriously. This will set the scene for one of our most important criticisms of Rahner. In Chapter Five we will claim that whilst Rahner states the need for radical healing his a priori starting point militates against him securing this. Firstly let us explore some aspects of the Reformation dispute.

### 2.3.3 The Reformation dispute over justification and the dual principle that God must be present both in forgiveness and in healing.

With varying emphasis both Protestant and Catholic theology maintained that salvation involved a transformation of the entire person brought about by God's gracious presence. However, the varying emphasis contributed to the mutual suspicion between the parties (120). In reality, Catholic and Protestant alike had failed to appreciate each other's theology, if not practice, upon this issue. For centuries, the doctrine of justification remained one of the points of most bitter dispute between the western churches. It is to be counted a great blessing for our own age that we have been enabled to see that whatever difference in emphasis might exist on this point, there does not exist sufficient doctrinal divergence to warrant a continuing separation of the churches (121).

The Roman Catholic understanding of justification as to make righteous (imparted righteousness) caused it to be identified with the fulfilment of God's sanctifying action (122). The justified person was the sanctified person. In contrast Protestant theologians interpreted

justification as to pronounce righteous (imputed righteousness) (123). This caused it to be identified with God's gracious forgiveness; the justified person was the forgiven person. Whilst Luther maintained that the righteousness that was imputed fully to a person's spiritual nature still had to become manifest in his/her corporeal nature (124), he distinguished justification from sanctification whereas they were identified in Catholic theology. However, it must be noted that for Luther, the imputed righteousness of Christ was not a pretence or a legal-fiction. For Luther, the righteousness of Christ was not simply thought of as covering human sin, the righteousness of Christ actually becomes our righteousness (125):

This is an infinite righteousness, and one that swallows up all sins in a moment, for it is impossible that sin should exist in Christ. On the contrary, he who trusts in Christ exists in Christ; he is one with Christ, having the same righteousness as he. It is therefore impossible that sin should remain in him. (126)

The difference in terminology, fuelled by the Catholic practice of indulgence and a merit system which placed great emphasis on good works, led to a profound rejection by Protestants of Catholic belief and practice. To the Protestant mind, the Catholic interpretation seemed to make God's saving, forgiving acceptance (justification) dependent upon one's sanctification which was in turn dependent upon oneself (127). Ultimately it seemed as though it was the person who saved him or herself. Such a conclusion was abhorrent to the Reformers. To make the person's justification in any way dependent upon his/her own initiative was to compromise the free sovereignty of God's grace (128). For the Reformers, the Catholic position not only sought to manipulate God, but it ultimately condemned humanity to a hopeless fate. Quite simply, if the human person was responsible for his/her own sanctification yet knew him/herself to be unable to achieve

this s/he was given over to perdition and eternal wrath. With profound insight, Luther had plumbed the depths of the human abyss and known our absolute need of the God who comes close to us in forgiving love before we are pure. He proclaimed that we are both sinners and justified (i.e. forgiven) simul iustus et peccator.

On the other hand, the Catholic mind with its identification of justification with the final fulfilment of sanctification could only hear the phrase simul iustus et peccator as a cheapening of salvation. It was thought that salvation was thereby reduced to a legal fiction that left the corruption and sin in human life unhealed and not transformed (129). Catholics thought that the Protestant understanding of salvation was confined solely to a granting of forgiveness without reference to sanctification and the consequent need for responsible co-operation in one's own transformation (130). Here again a profound insight was being maintained, that the human person stood in need of a salvation that was a transformation of his/her entire life so that the sanctified person could really share in the triune life of God. That is, humanity stands in need of a salvation that transforms the sin and evil in human life rather than one which pretends that it does not exist.

As we have seen, if soteriology is to take the human dilemma seriously, then it must preserve both the Protestant emphasis on the God of forgiving acceptance who comes close to 'fallen' humanity, and also the Catholic emphasis on humanity's need of a transforming healing of evil. To emphasise either one of these concerns to the exclusion of the other is to cease to focus on the liberation of the entire human person in Christ and so to issue in an inadequate account of Christian salvation. As we have further stated, both the Protestant and Catholic



doctrines of justification, each with their own emphasis, managed to maintain the balance, holding that salvation included both forgiveness and healing, justification and sanctification (131). However, the longstanding mutual suspicion was not entirely the result of bigoted misrepresentation, but rather because their respective salvation schemas all too often in practice approximated to that considered to be abhorrent by the other party. We hear a great deal today about the difference between a catechesis of the head and a catechesis of the heart. So also on a communal level there can be a great difference between the explicit official theology of a church and the implicit theology that is lived out both in church organisation and piety. Of particular interest to us is this divergence between theology and practice in Catholic theology.

#### 2.3.4. The Catholic tendency to make salvation conditional upon the fulfilment of a near impossible ideal.

Popular Catholicism has displayed a tendency to become obsessed by the extent of human sinfulness. This may seem strange when it is recalled that traditionally it is Protestantism that comes closer to affirming humanity's utter corruption whilst Catholicism has maintained the original gracedness of human life. However, it is not so strange when we realise that humanity's accountability for sin, and the horror according to our sin, is in inverse, not direct, proportion to the inevitability of our depravity. The evangelical who knew the human person's inability to free him/herself from sin, believed that God had provided the answer through forgiving us. Hence sin could cease to be a problem. In contrast, Catholic Piety could too easily leave humanity with the major problem of sin. Great stress was laid upon the horror and depth of sin as leading to a fundamental distortion of the person

that could not simply be pronounced forgiven, the Catholic was warned against sin and told to avoid it. Far less stressed, however, was the practically endemic nature of sin in human life.

This led to a major problem for the devout Catholic. Catholics knew themselves to be responsible for their own sin and further knew themselves to have a responsibility to co-operate in their own transformation. Hence, Catholics knew themselves to be continually and freely rejecting the call to authentic life. In knowing this they were locked into a circle of guilt. They were caught between the two poles of, on the one hand, believing that they could not enjoy communion with God until they had turned away from sin and on the other of finding themselves unable to complete this transformation. This was backed up with a theory of the gracedness of human nature which implied that the human person was capable of making this transformation. Hence the human person was convicted of his/her own freely responsible and guilty rejection of God.

The human cost of this was immense. To the over sensitive Catholic, aware only of guilt and failure, God appeared to be distant and demanding rather than liberating and merciful. Such an image of God does not attract the sinner to bring his sin before God for healing and forgiveness. Rather one will seek to avoid God's company, and seek to appease God from afar. Is it more than coincidental that the Catholic would seek to approach God indirectly through the intercession of the saints and the Blessed Virgin Mary (132)? To the person conscious of his/her continued solidarity in human sinfulness, to whom Christian living was a messy affair, the picture of Christian life as one of purity and sanctity beyond the mess of life had the sad appeal of a greatly desired, yet unattainable, beauty. The novels of Graham

Greene are replete with characters who are unable to integrate the mess of their lives with the pure and high ideals of the Catholic piety in which they had been nurtured.

Unable to achieve self-transformation and unable to trust in the forgiving, healing love of God, Catholic piety all too easily slipped into legalism. The futile attempt at self-transformation was forgotten and the attention was focused on limiting the damage. Grace came to be seen not so much as the transforming life of God but more as a qualification of which one must be in possession in order to gain admittance to salvation (133). Religious practices seemed to be more like an attempt to qualify for grace and so to insure against damnation rather than being a means of disposing oneself to receive God's gracious forgiveness and healing. An elaborate series of religious devotions guaranteed certain quanta of grace, thus providing a fully paid up insurance policy (134). Provided one managed to remain somehow within the sphere of grace, one could hope in having wrestled salvation from the hands of God, the necessary growth in spiritual purity could be undergone in purgatory.

#### 2.3.5 The cause of Catholicism's retreat from a high theology of grace into legalism.

Should the above caricature of Catholic piety authentically represent a tendency to which it is prone then we are posed with a dilemma. On the one hand Catholic theology maintains a consistent balance in holding that salvation involves a transformation and that this is the result of God's gracious work. On the other hand, Catholic piety has all too often ranged from futile attempts at self-transformation through to near despair at achieving this self-

transformation resulting in the attempt to earn God's favour in other ways (135). Why is this so? In reply, we would claim that the reduction of Catholic piety to legalism is due to the inability of Catholic theology of grace to speak to the common human experience of the all pervasiveness of sin.

Catholic theology maintains that the person needs to undergo an entire transformation in order to enjoy communion with God. It further maintains that because human nature is graced then the human person already has the resources to effect this transformation. In face of this, the experience of continued sinfulness and apparent inability to do otherwise not unnaturally prompts the search for another way to God's favour. Catholic spirituality appeared to demand that the human do by nature what s/he feels him/herself unable to do without grace. Catholic theology of grace did not translate easily into practical living. Catholic teaching on the human person as graced nature could be charged with starting from an a priori Idealistic perspective rather than beginning with the reality of human experience and constructing an account of nature and grace that fitted that experience. The result is that the nature that is held to be graced seems already to be a 'supernature' at one remove from normal human nature (136). Such Idealism results in a very neat intellectual system with its own internal integrity. It can explain how in theoretical terms salvation is both all from God and all from man (137) in a way that requires the onus of responsibility to be laid upon the human person. However, it integrates far less happily with the realities of human life. It states that life is graced without explaining how. Consequently, Catholic piety has often retreated into just the kind of impossible demands for self-transformation and attempts to appease God that are so hateful to Protestants. With Bernhard Lohse we agree that:

"superstition, the system of indulgences, pilgrimages, and the rest are in the last analysis the result of a deficiency in the theology of scholasticism and of the entire medieval church." (138) The Catholic system fell upon the stumbling block of the common human experience of sinfulness (139).

Our third criterion of adequacy in soteriology was as follows:

**An adequate soteriology will be one that is formulated in dialogue with an appreciation of the radical nature of sin and evil in human life and which allows for the possibility of God's transforming, liberating presence to evil.**

We have examined the Reformation dispute in the light of this and have claimed that a contributory factor in the dispute was a differing yet ultimately complementary emphasis upon the need both for God's forgiving presence to evil and the need for a transformation of evil. We have further examined why it is that Catholic piety has all too often differed from Catholic theology by reducing the concern to maintain God's gracious transforming presence into a petty legalism. In doing so we came to see the connection between our third and our first criteria:

**We cannot maintain a soteriology of God's gracious and transforming presence to sin and evil unless it is a theology rooted in common human experience rather than one born of a removed apriori perspective.**

The present analysis of criteria of adequacy in soteriology has taken us full circle. Starting with the general principle that theology must be rooted in human life we formulated our first criterion:

**Soteriology must be rooted in the human realm, it must flow from and address the particularity of human life and hence God must be thought of as genuinely present within the particularity of human life.**

We called for the formation of an appropriate fundamental

theology. In turn, our principle that theology must be rooted in an aposteriori account of human life led us to formulate our second and third criteria:

A soteriology will be found to be inadequate if it is centred upon the salvation of the individual without a true appreciation of the need for a corporate redemption of the human community.

and:

An adequate soteriology will be one that is formulated in dialogue with an appreciation of the radical nature of sin and evil in human life and which allows for the possibility of God's transforming, liberating presence to evil. (140)

Finally, we have come to see that there is a connection between our first criterion and our third criterion (and so also presumably between our first and second criterion). The apriori mode of theologising (criterion one) excludes the possibility of formulating a soteriology that is adequate to the need for God's transforming and gracious presence in human life (criterion three).

In other words we cannot formulate a soteriology appropriate to the two criteria born from human life (2nd and 3rd) unless we also formulate an appropriate theological methodology.

This will be of prime importance in our analysis of Karl Rahner to which we now turn our attention.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER TWO

1. cf., D. W. Hardy and D. F. Ford, Jubilate: Theology In Praise, (London: DLT 1984), pp. 65-66.
2. Kevin T. Kelly names his earliest understanding of sin as "disobedience" and believes that this is typical of many Catholics, cf. "The Changing Paradigms Of Sin", New Blackfriars, Vol. 70, (November 1989), pp. 489. cf. "The analogy which dominated Catholic morality was that of sin as an act committed by a free and competent individual which violated some law of God, Church or State. Sin was a crime. And the sinner was the relatively isolated and therefore free individual who had committed a crime." P. T. McCormick, "Human Sinfulness: Models For A Developing Moral Theology", Studia Moralia, 1988, pp. 69.
3. cf. "Whilst this model presumed an internal dimension to disobedience, the external dimension loomed far more important. Psychologically 'disobedience to authority' was the dominant notion." Kelly, ibid. cf. "Employing such juridical and individualistic models rather exhaustively, moral theology initiated its task with an analysis of "objective" human acts, abstracted somewhat artificially from the context and story of persons performing them, moved on to an evaluation of the culpability of the identified individual sinner and brought the process to a conclusion with assignment of an appropriate penance." McCormick, ibid.
4. Vatican II, Gaudium Et Spes, 7 December 1965, a. 43, quoted in ed. Austin Flannery O.P., Vatican Council II. The Conciliar And Post Conciliar Documents 1981 Edition, (Leominster. Fowler Wright 1981), pp. 943. cf. E. Schillebeeckx, Christ: The Christian Experience In The Modern World, (London: SCM 1980), pp. 29.
5. Monica K. Hellwig, Jesus The Compassion Of God, (Glazier 1983), pp. 22 (*italics mine*).
6. cf. Robert J. Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, (London. SCM 1985), pp. 6-9. cf. "The most common model for local theology has been what could be called a translation model, which sees the task of local theology as one that calls for a two-step procedure. In the first step, one frees the Christian message as much as possible from its previous cultural accretions. In so doing, the data of revelation are allowed to stand freely and be prepared for the second step of the procedure, namely, translation into a new situation. An underlying image directing this procedure is one of kernel and husk: the basic Christian revelation is the kernel; the previous cultural settings in which has been incarnated constitute the husk. The kernel has to be hulled time and time again, as it were, to allow it to be translated into new cultural contexts." ibid., pp. 6-7.
7. cf. "The strength of the translation model is its concern to remain faithful to the received tradition of Christian faith. But without a more fundamental encounter with the new culture, that faith can never become incarnate. It remains an alien voice within the culture. It needs to engage in a more fundamental

encounter between Christianity as it has been elsewhere, and the culture in question." ibid., pp. 9.

8. Langdon Gilkey, Catholicism Confronts Modernity - A Protestant View, (New York: The Seabury Press 1975), pp. 33-34;39.
9. David Tracy, Blessed Rage For Order: The New Pluralism In Theology, (New York: The Seabury Press 1975).
10. cf. "Many of the theologies which we inherit were thought out in the context of the monastery or the equally isolated context of the world of academics in seminaries and universities, or in ecclesiastical and clerical circles or in the context of Western culture and liberal capitalism." Institute For Contextual Theology Johannesburg, Whose Theology?, (London: CIIR 1985), pp. 4.
11. cf. "Once we realise this about the theologies we inherit in our different churches and traditions, can we ever be surprised to find that they are irrelevant to the majority of the people who do not live in these contexts? They say nothing to the majority of the people. They are alien symbols that have no power to inspire because they come from another context, another world." ibid.
12. cf. "In the past, at a time when metaphysical thinking was predominant or when societies were still determined by a religious objective, it might have been possible for the theoretical points of departure that were currently valid to be simply taken over by a fundamental theology that was concerned with the theoretical foundations of Christian faith or used by that theology as a means of clarifying its own problems. This procedure is, however, no longer possible today. Neither of the two theoretical points of departure, to which all the theories that are valid today can be more or less directly traced back, is in any sense innocent or neutral with regard to religion and Christianity and therefore also with regard to theology. They can be regarded with different degrees of explicitness, as meta-theories with respect to religion and theology. In other words, religion can, for the purpose of these theories, in principle be reconstructed or abolished and seen as pointing to a more comprehensive theoretical system." J. B. Metz, Faith In History & Society: Towards A Practical Fundamental Theology, (London: Burns & Oates 1980), pp. 5.
13. cf. Chapter One of present work, footnote (17). cf. "More important is to recognize some of the factors which contribute to the loss of knowing in praise of God during the period. In some of these, the traditions of the past, for themselves or in distorted form, played a contributing role. For example, the persistence of scholasticism, associated with the continuing use of Aristotelian-based educational methods in universities, brought a drastic reshaping of the praise-constituted theologies of pre-Reformation and Reformation alike. The consistent emphasis on the praise which occurs in the movement of life and knowledge, which marked earlier periods, now became a rigid sytem of belief whereby series of statements were derived deductively from a first cause." Hardy and Ford, op. cit., pp. 189. cf. "What makes matters far worse is the that the main body of western scholastic theology is assumed to be valid for everybody as eternally true and incontrovertible. Many priests and academics are simply not aware



of the fact that their theologies were thought up in a particular, narrow and isolated context and that they could only be full of meaning for people who live in that same context." Institute For Contextual Theology, ibid. cf. "Previously, one almost took for granted that the theology of the Western churches was supraregional and was, precisely in its Western form, universal and therefore directly accessible for persons from other cultures. But especially with the emergence of liberation theology, as in Latin America for example, Western theologians came to the realization that their own theology has just as much socio-cultural bias as any other." E. Schillebeeckx in "Foreword" to Robert J. Schreiter, ibid., pp. ix. cf. "It has gradually become unthinkable in many Christian churches to engage in any theological reflections without first studying the context in which it is taking place.... There is now a realization that all theologies have contexts, interests, relationships of power, special concerns - and to pretend that this is not the case is to be blind." Schreiter, ibid., pp. 4.

14. cf. "One of the biggest problems with Western theology is that it thought it was a universal theology. It did not recognise its Western cultural context. This is clear from the fact that in past times it did not even call itself "Western theology". This has led to the tragedy of missionaries who preached Western culture as an essential part of the Christian faith. And even when they began to realise that this might not be the case they still treated Western theology as normative in the sense that it had to be adapted to African or Asian cultures." A. Nolan, To Nourish Our Faith: Theological Reflections On The Theology Of Liberation, (London. CAFOD 1989), pp. 13.
15. cf. "Alongside these, however, there have almost always been competing movements which in various ways undermine this movement of God's life with man; some do so purposefully, in open disagreement, others accidentally. (In modern times, the prominence of such competing movements has become increasingly great, as time and time again alternative standpoints have been presented which suggest that these inner movements of life are alienated from their proper nature by being associated with the movements of God's life with man.) These often, though not always, propose a radically different direction for the proper life of man, and are associated with drastically different properties for praise." Hardy and Ford, op. cit., pp. 173.
16. Gabriel Daly, Creation And Redemption, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan 1988), pp. 197.
17. Tracy, op. cit., pp. 5.
18. cf. Juan Luis Segundo, The Liberation Of Theology, translated by John Drury, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd. 1977). cf. "In ideal circumstances the process of constructing local theologies begins with a study of the culture, rather than with possible translations of the larger church tradition into the local circumstance." Schreiter, op. cit., pp. 39. Nor is this listening to culture a once for all event, a continuous study of culture should, claims Schreiter, lead to a continuous renewal of theology. cf. ibid., pp. 40.

19. By the 'classical tradition' we refer to the wide range of articulations of the tradition from Patristic theology through early medieval theology to late medieval theology and scholastic theology terminating with the dislocation in European understanding represented by the Enlightenment. The wide variety of methods and emphasis within the classic tradition were held within a shared context of a theocentric perspective on human life. The classic tradition was articulated in a world where the univocacy of human life with a theocentric perspective was a widely held assumption rather than being experienced as a dichotomy which must be bridged. cf., Hardy and Ford, op. cit., pp. 177-189. Even in the late medieval philosophy and theology of one such as Aquinas, which gave greater prominence to the world and human experience than had Patristic and early medieval philosophy, nature was thought of as being perfected by grace. cf., ibid., pp. 184.
20. cf. "That there is a univocal element in such words as 'salvation' and 'redemption' can hardly be doubted, even when we have weighed all the implications of cultural innovation and the natural tendency of metaphors to die. We cannot, however, simply repossess and re-articulate the old myths. What we can do is study how they functioned in an age which found them credible and then ask whether we in our age can create vehicles of expression which function in a comparable way and with a comparable effect on the Christian imagination." Daly, op. cit., pp. 173.
21. Tracy, op. cit., pp. 47-48.
22. Nicholas Lash claims that sin is not simply a moral category but an historical category which must be "specified, rendered determinate, in the analysis and resolution of specific situations and circumstances, specific dimensions of human sinfulness individual and social." A Matter Of Hope: A Theologian's Reflections On The Thoughts Of Karl Marx, (London: DLT 1981), pp. 189.
23. Daly, op. cit., pp. 198. cf. "The great soteriological truth that Christ died to save us from sin has to be constantly grappled with if it is to reveal its meaning and effectiveness in successive ages; and it is in our actual lived experience that we find the concrete means for living and understanding the realities we proclaim, most of all the reality of salvation." ibid., pp. 197.
24. cf. "If basic human experiences of evil are ignored, will thoughtful readers comprehend and truly accept what theologians offer when they speak of the role of the resurrected Jesus as Savior of the world?" Gerald O'Collins, Jesus Risen: The Resurrection - What Actually Happened And What Does It Mean?, (London: DLT 1987), pp. 203.
25. Hence, in addition to recognising the need for conceptual analysis in understanding human existence, with Tracy we recognise the need for story, cf. Tracy, op. cit., pp. 207-211.
26. Tracy, op. cit., pp. 69. cf. ibid., pp. 64-69.

27. By semiotics, I refer to the developing discipline which understands culture to be composed of "a vast communication network, whereby both verbal and non verbal messages are circulated along the elaborate, interconnected pathways, which, together create the systems of meaning." (Schreiter, op. cit., pp. 49). It is through these systems of meaning, as they are represented by signs and symbols, that reality is interpreted. Semiotics is the study of the signs representing the systems of meaning within a particular culture. Hence, semiotic analysis of the data of human life reveals the way in which such data is perceived within a particular cultural context. Whilst the emergence of semiotics as a discipline owes much of its impetus to the field of linguistics, it is by no means confined to that field. Rather, it is intended as an interdisciplinary concern drawing upon the apparently disparate fields of genetics, cybernetics and computer science, literary criticism, linguistics, sociology and social theory, psychoanalysis, philosophy, anthropology and formal logic and mathematics. For this reason, Schreiter argues that semiotics represents a particularly fruitful tool for analysing human life and uncovering the raw material for constructing genuinely a posteriori contextual theologies (cf. ibid., pp. 52). It certainly seems that the interdisciplinary nature of semiotics and its concern for all dimensions of culture and experience represents the sort of holistic analysis of common human experience that is necessary if we are to take the elements of human experience and culture in their particularity seriously whilst still being able to form a posteriori generalisations about the interrelationship between these diverse elements. Whilst far more work remains to be done in the development of semiotics, it promises to be a creative tool of analysis and dialogue partner in the articulation of theologies appropriate to the diverse contexts of human life.
28. cf. "As it is we have an academic, abstract theology, a pre-packed kit which we wander through life with, trying to apply. If we cannot apply it, it somehow remains intact, and we get on with life at large devoid of theology." T. Cullinan, The Passion Of Political Love, (London: Sheed & Ward 1987), pp. 101.
29. Timothy Gorringer, Redeeming Time: Atonement Through Education, (London: DLT 1986), pp. 197-198.
30. cf. Sidney Hook, "The Atheism Of Paul Tillich", Religious Experience And Truth: A Symposium, ed. Sidney Hook, (New York: New York University Press 1961), pp. 63.
31. As Barth is reputed to have accused Schleiermacher of doing, cf. Timothy Gorringer, Redeeming Time: Atonement Through Education, (London: DLT 1986), pp. xv.
32. cf. "A religious experience is a perfectly normal experience. It is simply an experience with a religious interpretation." A. Nolan, God In South Africa: The Challenge Of The Gospel, (London: CIIR 1988), pp. 24. cf. E. Schillebeeckx, Christ: The Christian Experience In The Modern World, (London: SCM 1980), pp. 45-54.
33. cf. "The theological fact and experience is not because I theologically reflect upon human experience, the human experience

- is in itself theological, because it is human beings caught up in the process of creation." A. Smith, Passion For The Inner City, (London: Sheed & Ward 1983), pp. 95.
34. Leonardo & Clodovis Boff, Salvation And Liberation: In Search Of A Balance Between Faith And Politics, translated by Robert R. Barr, (Maryknoll: Orbis 1984), pp. 17.
  35. Tracy, op. cit., pp. 9.
  36. cf., Hardy and Ford, op. cit., pp. 120-122.
  37. cf. "The more human criterion, the less 'religious' criterion, is the more divine one." J. L. Segundo, Faith And Ideologies, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books 1984), pp. 47.
  38. Dermot A. Lane, Foundations For A Social Theology: Praxis, Process And Salvation, (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan 1984), pp. 119.
  39. cf. "The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts." Vatican II, Gaudium Et Spes, op. cit., a. 1., pp. 903. cf. "One of the most far-reaching directives to come out of the Second Vatican Council was the call addressed to the Church to scrutinise the signs of the times and to interpret them in the light of the Gospel. By issuing this challenge to the Church, the Council was proposing a particular way of doing theology which it felt was more suitable to the kind of world we live in today. In effect, the Council was suggesting that theology grows out of the historical experiences of men and women living in the world. theology takes place within a particular context and it is this context which shapes the content of the Christian agenda." Lane, op. cit., pp. 110. cf. "There cannot be two parallel lives in their existence: on the one hand, the so-called "spiritual" life, with its values and demands; and on the other, the so-called "secular" life, that is, life in a family, at work, in social relationships, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture." Pope John Paul II, Christifideles Laici, a. 59, (London: CTS 1988), pp. 57.
  40. Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology Vol. 2, (Welwyn City: James Nisbet & Co. Ltd. 1960), pp. 5-10.
  41. cf. Tracy, op. cit., pp. 119-136. cf., F. Kerr, Theology After Wittgenstein, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1986), pp. 160, 180-184.
  42. cf. "Sin is an offence against God precisely because it is an offence against people." A. Nolan, op. cit., pp. 38. cf. "God is not offended by us except insofar as we harm ourselves and others." St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, III cap. 133.
  43. Daly, op. cit., pp. 150.
  44. ibid., pp. 1.
  45. ibid., pp. 4.

46. ibid., pp. 1.
47. cf. "Sin is a religious word. When we look at some wrong doing and call it a sin, we are bringing God into the picture. We are not simply saying that we think something is wrong, we are saying that God disapproves of it, that God condemns it, that it is an 'offence against God'." Nolan, op. cit., pp. 32.
48. cf. "When we speak of something as a sin we are saying that in a religious sense the one who is being wronged or sinned against is God." ibid., pp. 32. cf. "Sin is also a moral word. When we call some wrongdoing a sin, we are claiming that it is not the result of chance or fate but that somebody is morally responsible for it, somebody is to be blamed for it. Sin implies guilt... when we say that something is a sin, we are not only saying that God is involved, we are also saying that human beings are guilty or in some way responsible for it. What is being contradicted here is fatalism and determinism of any kind." ibid., pp. 32-33.
49. cf. "In the midst of this tremendous vitality that today's Christians are showing, one set of problems emerges over and over again: how to be faithful both to the contemporary experience of the gospel and to the tradition of Christian life that has been received. How is a community to go about bringing to expression its own experience of Christ in its concrete situation? And how is this to be related to a tradition that is often expressed in language and concepts vastly different from anything in the current situation?", Schreiter, op. cit., pp. xi. cf. ibid., pp. 95-121. cf. "That encounter with the tradition can raise many problems for the churches as they develop their local theologies. They are not trying to dilute or avoid aspects of the tradition; there is a deep desire to remain truly faithful to the apostolic tradition and to be themselves faithful witnesses to the gospel in their own circumstances. The problems arise instead from wondering whether or not the encounter with the tradition actually takes place at all, whether or not there is sufficient dialogue taking place to allow for mutual understanding between tradition and cultural situation. A heightened sensitivity to culture has made local churches only more keenly aware of the difficulties in communication. How can the tradition be truly received if the very grounds for dialogue are not first achieved?" ibid., pp. 95.
50. cf. McCormick, op. cit., pp. 69.
51. cf. "Until fairly recently the impression was often given that Christian faith was a highly private affair. Christianity seemed to be a religion concerned primarily with the development of 'individual' faith, the elimination of 'personal' sin, and the promotion of the salvation of 'my' soul." Lane, op. cit., pp. 1.
52. We may compare here Hans Küng commenting on the relevancy of the doctrine of justification today: "... it is a question not merely of individual justification, or purely of saving our own souls, but also of the social dimension of salvation: comprehensive care for our fellow human beings and work on changing the structures of bondage and the constraints of society. We cannot be concerned merely in a spiritual way with salvation hereafter and peace with God, but must be wholly concerned with the common good and the

total good of mankind in love of neighbour and of those who are far away." H. Küng, "Justification Today", Justification: The Doctrine Of Karl Barth And A Catholic Reflection, (London: Burns & Oates 1981), pp. xxiii.

53. cf., Nolan, op. cit., pp. 38.

54. cf., Lane, op. cit., pp. 88-93.

55. Enda McDonagh, Between Chaos And New Creation: Doing Theology At The Fringe, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan 1986), pp. 18. cf. "The ideal of individual self-sufficiency, so exalted in our liberal culture, is recognized in Christian thought as one form of the primal sin. For self-love, which is the root of all sin, takes two social forms. One of them is the domination of the other life by the self. The second is the sin of isolationism." Reinhold Niebuhr, The Children Of Light And The Children Of Darkness: A Vindication Of Democracy And A Critique Of Its Traditional Defense, (New York: C. Scribner's & Sons, 1944), pp. 55.

56. Lying behind this emphasis on the interrelational character of human life is the work of the dialogical philosophers, cf. Martin Buber, I And Thou, (New York 1958) and the process philosophers and theologians, cf. David M. Rasmussen, "Between Autonomy And Sociality", in Cultural Hermeneutics 1 (1973), pp. 3-47. cf. "Today, we know only too well in the light of the behavioural sciences that the individual is never merely an individual. He or she belongs to social network of human relationships. The individual is always an individual in relation to a community: family, friends and country. The individual is radically social." Lane, op. cit., pp. 1.

57. cf. "First of all, our bodies obviously insert us into the material world. We become part of the cosmos and the cosmos part of us. Once upon a time people naively assumed a far-reaching autonomy and stability for the human body. They had not yet discovered that our life is a dynamic process of constant circulation between our bodies and our material environment." O'Collins, op. cit., pp. 182.

58. cf. "Human agency, subjectivity and selfhood are a social reality in process. To this extent the individual as agent is always situated historically in a particular historical situation. The agent as subject is part of a wider network of complex social relations." Lane, op. cit., pp. 75.

59. Tracy, op. cit., pp. 178.

60. cf. "An isolated bodily person would be a strange anomaly. Our bodies make us share in and incessantly relate to the universe." O'Collins, op. cit., pp. 182. cf. Lane, op. cit., pp. 89.

61. cf. "No man is an Island, entire of itself; everyman is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind: And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for

thee." John Donne, "Meditation XVII", The Oxford Dictionary Of Quotations Third Edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1989), pp. 190.

62. cf. "Such an anthropology needs to recognize that experience and reality are transpersonal, reaching beyond both individualism and a localized interpersonality. There must also be a recognition of the essential intersubjectivity or communitarian character of human personhood, a character neither extrinsic nor secondary to the experience of being a person." McCormick, op. cit., pp. 92-93. cf. "Most of us were brought up to think of ourselves as isolated individuals with some personal relationships. We pictured the world as a collection of millions of independent individuals who were different from one another only because they freely chose to be different. What we now realise is that we are in the very first place social beings who belong to social groups that are dynamically related to other groups within a broader social structure." Nolan, To Nourish Our Faith, pp. 48.
63. cf. "This means that human freedom is radically interpersonal in its experience and expression. Personal freedom is contextualized and actualized within the organism of the interpersonal human community." McCormick, op. cit., pp. 93.
64. Jerome Theisen suggests that the symbol of disunity is better able to disclose the multiple aspects of conflict and dividedness in the human situation than is the traditional theological symbol of original sin." cf., Jerome P. Theisen, O.S.B., Community And Disunity: Symbols Of Grace And Sin, (Collegeville, Minnesota: St. John's University Press 1985), pp. 53-86.
65. cf. "Through sickness, old age, imprisonment and other causes, our bodies can bring us radical solitude and terrifying loneliness. That bodily loneliness finds its ultimate expression when the tomb encloses a newly-buried corpse. Our material bodies do not merely separate and alienate us from one another, the world and God. Through weariness, physical weakness, sickness and sleep they alienate us from ourselves. Our bodiliness can make us feel not fully free to be ourselves and to be with others." O'Collins, op. cit., pp. 183.
66. cf. "We saw that there really was no way to overcome the real dilemma of existence, the one of the mortal animal who is at the same time conscious of his mortality. A person spends years coming into his own, developing his talent, his unique gifts, perfecting his discriminations about the world, broadening and sharpening his appetite, learning to bear the disappointments of life, becoming mature seasoned - finally a unique creature in nature, standing with some dignity and nobility and transcending the animal condition; no longer driven, no longer a complete reflex, not stamped out of any mold. And then the real tragedy, as Andre Malraux wrote in The Human Condition: it takes sixty years of incredible suffering and effort to make such an individual, and then he is good only for dying.... He has to go the way of the grasshopper, even though it takes longer." Ernest Becker, The Denial Of Death, (New York: The Free Press 1973), pp. 268-269.

67. Enda McDonagh, op. cit., pp. 1-2. cf. "What is perhaps most alarming is the way the passion for technical production - electronic, computer and socio-biological - has significantly outstripped the human, spiritual, and psychological needs of humanity." Lane, op. cit., pp. 93.
68. cf. "The rapid rise of science to fame has suddenly become a matter of serious concern, a concern centred less on the success of science itself and more on the implications of these successes on the larger issues of life itself." ibid., pp. 85. cf. "The man of today seems ever to be under threat from what he produces, that is to say from the result of the work of his hands and, even more so, from the work of his intellect and the tendencies of his will.... Man therefore lives increasingly in fear. He is afraid that what he produces - not all of it, of course, or even most of it, but part of it and precisely that part that contains a special share of his genius and initiative - can radically turn against himself; he is afraid that it can become the means and instrument for an unimaginable self-destruction, compared with which all the cataclysms and catastrophes of history known to us seem to fade away." Pope John Paul II, Redemptor Hominis, 4th March 1979, a. 15.1.
69. cf. "In fact, in the process of enlightenment and secularization man has freely taken into his own hands the responsibility for the world and history in all areas, but this responsibility - originally an act of liberation - has increasingly turned out to be a heavy burden. For today man no longer finds in the world traces of his Creator, but only of himself. This is a hominized, but very often not humane world, in which man is continually confronted with his achievements, with his imposing creations, but increasingly also with his horrendous destructions. Many older people, once accustomed to success, cannot understand why there is a widespread aversion to the very idea of achievement among the younger generation." Küng, "Justification Today", pp. xxiv.
70. cf. "The world of nature can no longer be treated simply as an object available for external manipulation.... Without attention to the sensibilities of nature, the future of the human species is in danger of extinction. The ecological question is no longer the curious preserve of the naturalist. Instead the unity that exists between natural life and human life is something that must not only be respected but restored in the future if we are to ensure the survival of the human race." Lane, op. cit., pp. 90.
71. cf. "We live in a world that is divided unevenly into 'the haves' and 'the have nots', the rich and the poor, a northern hemisphere of over-production and a southern hemisphere of under-development, a first world of extravagant waste and a third world of extreme want. These signs of the times are easily illustrated by some stark statistics: 800 million people live in a condition of 'absolute poverty'; 20 million die of starvation each year; races of people like the Kampuchians and Ethiopians are being wiped off the face of the earth through starvation. Alongside these staggering statistics we learn that over two hundred thousand million pounds (£200,000,000,000) is spent yearly by the superpowers on the arms race. Other disturbing facts and figures could be instanced. Interpreted in the light of the gospel of



Jesus Christ these signs of the times disclose that we live in a situation of sin and injustice which has become institutionalised in our economic, social and political structures. Such a situation is now commonly described as one of 'social sin'." Lane, op. cit., pp. 110-111. cf. "'Sin' and 'structures of sin' are categories which are seldom applied to the situation of the contemporary world. However, one cannot easily gain a profound understanding of the reality that confronts us unless we give a name to the root of the evils which afflict us." Pope John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (36), 30th December 1987, (London: CTS 1988), pp. 69.

72. cf. "As long as our world remains unequally divided into a first world of over-production and a third world of under-development with the excesses of increasing richness and poverty, growing unemployment, illiteracy and violence, 'successes' and 'achievements' remain at most an ambiguous experience." Lane, op. cit., pp. 89. cf. The Brandt Commission, North-South: A Programme For Survival, (London: Pan Books 1980).
73. cf. "Any serious analysis of our social reality will soon begin to reveal that our human world is structured in such a way that some people are on top and others are down below. It may be the social hierarchy of classes in a society or simply the rich and the poor or male and female or white and black or the First World and the Third World (North and South) but there is a top and a bottom and the dynamics of the relationship generally is that the top dominates and oppresses the bottom." Nolan, To Nourish Our Faith, pp. 48-49. cf. "Many of the 'achievements' of modern governments such as the creation of a thriving economy, the establishment of a high GNP and the development of a strong defence system are now seen to be viable only at the expense and exploitation of others: the third world, the poor and the weak. Indeed, many of the structures that citizens took great pride in promoting through the political process are now seen to be something of an embarrassment because of their adverse effect on the rest of the world." Lane, op. cit., pp. 92. cf. "It is now generally agreed by social scientists and economic planners that under-development in the third world is related causally to over-development in the first world.... To this extent those who belong to the first world must bear some responsibility for the situation that exists in the third world." ibid., pp. 112.
74. cf. "Even though it is not for us to elaborate a very profound analysis of the situation of the world, we have nevertheless been able to perceive the serious injustices which are building around the world of men a network of domination, oppression and abuses which stifle freedom and which keep the greater part of humanity from sharing in the building up and enjoyment of a more just and more fraternal world." Synod of Bishops, Justice In The World (1971), a. 3., in Johannesburg Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission, Our Best Kept Secret: The Church's Social Teaching, (Johannesburgh 1989), pp. 61.
75. cf. "If the present situation can be attributed to difficulties of various kinds, it is not out of place to speak of "structures of sin", which, as I stated in my Apostolic Exhortation Reconciliatio Et Paenitentia, are rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked

to the concrete acts of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove." Pope John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (36). In talking of structures of sin, we are reminded of Reinhold Neighbour's claim that the behaviour of social groups is by its nature less moral than the behaviour of individuals, cf. Moral Man And Immoral Society, (London: SCM 1963), pp. xi-xii.

76. cf. Lane, op. cit., pp. 75-76.

77. cf. "And thus they (structures of sin) grow stronger, spread, and become the source of other sins, and so influence people's behaviour." Pope John Paul II, op. cit., ibid. cf. "We see the broad and deep acres of history through a mental grid,... through a system of values which is established in our minds before we look out on it... [A]nd it is this grid which decides... what will fall into our field of perception." J. Cone, God Of The Oppressed, (New York 1975), pp. 44, quoted in Austin Smith, Passion For The Inner City, (London: Sheed & Ward 1983), pp. 73.

78. cf. Lane, op. cit., pp. 75-76.

79. cf. "This is our predicament as persons. We need society in order to develop into our full humanity, but the societies to which we perforce belong are conditioned by the dead (or undead) past. And by belonging to them we become their captives." H. A. Williams, True Resurrection, (London: Mitchell Beazley 1979), pp. 141. cf., ibid., pp. 105-113.

80. F. Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, ed. by H. R. Makintosh and J. S. Stewart, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark 1928), pp. 288.

81. cf. "Sin in the Bible means something more than individual acts of wrongdoing. There is another dimension to the whole experience of sin. In very general terms we could say that it is the corporate or social dimension of sin... We have only to think of how the prophets condemned not merely the individual sins of individual people but also, and much more frequently, the sin of whole nations and empires including the sin of Israel itself as a nation. In fact the social dimension of sin is the major concern of all the Biblical writers." Nolan, God In South Africa, pp. 42. cf. "The ills and evils of our world today are as much social as they are individual, structural as much as they are personal, institutional as much as they are private." Lane, op. cit., pp. 102. cf. "Obviously, not only individuals fall victim to this double attitude of sin; nations and blocs can do so too. And this favours even more the introduction of the "structures of sin" of which I have spoken. If certain forms of modern "imperialism" were considered in the light of these moral criteria, we would see that hidden behind certain decisions, apparently inspired only by economics or politics, are real forms of idolatry: of money, ideology, class, technology." Pope John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (37), pp. 71.

82. Nolan, op. cit., pp. 43.

83. Timothy Gorringer, Redeeming Time: Atonement Through Education, (London: Darton, Longmann & Todd Ltd. 1986), pp. 52.

84. Daly, op. cit., pp. 1.
85. cf. "Disunity is the human condition that calls out for redemption, a reaching for community." Theisen, op. cit., pp. 83.
86. We distinguish between Platonic Idealism as a philosophical methodology founded upon apriori claims and idealism as representing romantic, unrealistic perceptions of humanity. However idealistic accounts of human life can only be supported, we believe, by an Idealistic methodology. In the present work, Idealism refers to a methodology and idealism to a naivety.
87. cf. N. Lobkowicz's comparison between the tradition flowing from Aristotle and that flowing from Hegel and Marx: "In Aristotle nothing is or even can be wrong as it is in its natural state. The problem for Aristotle does not consist in correcting the universe or in making it rational; it consists in discovering its inherent order and rationality.... In Hegel almost everything is wrong and consequently has to be auf gehoben, transfigured, transformed, revolutionized." Lobkowicz, Theory And Practice: History Of A Concept From Aristotle To Marx, (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press 1967), pp. 340.
88. cf. "On the occasion of the profound crisis of Western liberal culture (the horrors of two World Wars, the extermination of millions, the demonic outbursts of Fascist and Stalinist terror), both existentialist philosophy and neo-orthodox theology retrieved the classical Christian image of man as alienated, estranged, fallen, sinful. That classical Christian picture of humanity's radical possibilities for good and evil was and is antithetical to both the classical Greek philosophical view of humanity's inherent knowledge and goodness conquering error, and even to the classical Greek dramatists' profound view of humanity's tragic situation." Tracy, op. cit., pp. 212-213.
89. Habermas explores this dilemma in terms of it being a consequence of the dominance of technical reason in modern society which represses ethical concerns, cf. J. Habermas, Towards A Rational Society, (London: Hienemann 1971), pp. 112. cf. Lane, op. cit., 47-63. cf. "Habermas's analysis of the supremacy of technical reason in modern society helps us to understand some of the extraordinary anomalies that beset the latter half of the twentieth century. Such anomalies include the spending of more on militarism than on people, the build-up of nuclear arms that could destroy the world many times over in the name of peace, the 'management' of news in the name of truth, the indiscriminate crossing of geographical boundaries for the sake of security, and the muffling of truth by government news agencies. These anomalies are, in one way or another, the result of an all-pervading instrumental rationalisation of society." ibid., pp. 61-62. cf. ibid., pp. 84-87. cf. "There can hardly be any doubt that the contemporary situation of humanity in the Western world is in a serious state of crisis: scientific, social, ecological, nuclear, economic, political and cultural." ibid., pp. 84. cf. "More and more it is becoming clear that much of the technological progress we rate so highly today has brought with it a loss of human values, and the liberation it was expected to bring has become oppressive and enslaving." ibid., pp. 87. cf. "The paradox lies in

the fact that within this perspective of unity the forces of division and antagonism seem today to be increasing in strength. Ancient divisions between nations and empires, races and classes, today possess new technological instruments of destruction. The arms race is a threat to man's highest good, which is life; it makes poor peoples and individuals yet more miserable, while making richer those already powerful; it creates a continuous danger of conflagration, and in the case of nuclear arms, it threatens to destroy all life from the face of the earth. At the same new divisions are being born to separate man from his neighbour. Unless combated and overcome by social and political action, the influence of the new industrial and technological order favours the concentration of wealth, power and decision making in the hands of a small public or private controlling group." Synod of Bishops, Justice In The World, (9), op. cit., pp. 62-63.

90. cf. "It is common knowledge, universally assumed by all who pretend to know the world, that in our economic striving, our political allegiances, and our group loyalties, we are motivated by self-interest; and every statistical survey of voting habits bears out this universal tendency of our values and opinions to follow the direction of our interests. In each of these areas, the men who dominate the real world, the advertisers, businessmen, real estate agents, judges, politicians - and even social scientists - never question but that our behaviour is dictated by our self-interest rather than by our proclaimed ideals." Langdon Gilkey, Naming The Whirlwind: The Renewal Of God-Language, (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. 1969), pp. 386.
91. cf. "The symbol of disunity has the power to induce emotional responses in those who perceive its symbolic expression. It is difficult to remain unmoved in the face of this symbol. The symbol draws the person to look more closely at the underlying reality of fault and failure. It induces agony over the human condition. As it calls attention to the depths of human brokenness, the symbol produces mixed emotions of discouragement, anger, resignation and fear. There is discouragement with the failure that pervades human existence and that seems to perpetuate itself. There is anger that a failure beyond one's control reaches personal life and affects it to the core of its being. There is sad resignation to the condition which pre-exists one's birth and life which seems incapable of amelioration. There is fear that the condition of failure will eventually overcome the self as it has overcome many persons in the past. In short, the symbol is able to bring about an emotional response in those who perceive it and who allow it to enter their life." Theisen, op. cit., pp. 68-69.
92. cf. "That evil is a necessary constituent of our being, we may know we cannot state without contradicting the metaphysical necessity of our own freedom or the metaphysical and Christian theological belief in the loving actions of a good God (49). But that physical and moral evil is our actual condition; that such evil is an omnipresent fact, whose inevitability we realize - in this century surely - on both individual and societal terms, is a reality which only the most unhappily and self-destructively

innocent among us feels free to deny (50). Tracy, op. cit., pp. 212.

93. We may compare here a comment made by Daniel W. Hardy and David F. Ford: "To argue that....God is creator of man is not a very effective challenge. There is needed an alternative way of life in which this option is experienced." Jubilate: Theology In Praise, (London: DLT 1984), pp. 13.
94. cf. "Notwithstanding the fact that such a reconstitutive act in the materiality of a human being is required by the economy of praise in God, did it actually occur? There has to be evidence that this reconstitutive act took place in a particular historical person, and in quite a different way than could be claimed for others." ibid., pp. 165.
95. Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, translated by Justin O' Brien, (London: Hamish Hamilton 1955), pp. 11.
96. cf. "If revisionist theology is to succeed materially, I believe, it should incorporate that neo-orthodox anthropological vision into its own twin vision of a common faith in the worthwhileness of existence which sustains us even beyond good and evil and a reflective belief in a credible, a suffering and loving Christian God (65)." Tracy, op. cit., pp. 214.
97. cf. "Any local agitation shakes the whole universe." A. N. Whitehead, Modes Of Thought, (New York: The Free Press, 1968), pp. 138. cf. Lane, op. cit., pp. 103.
98. cf. "There is a human solidarity in sin which has an inescapably historical dimension, and it is this which Paul calls 'the power of sin' (Rom. 3:9) and the tradition 'original sin'. This power of sin, the principalities and powers which oppress us, may be named in structures such as racism, casteism, patriarchy, class - structures and deeply rooted attitudes into which an individual is born, which form a 'second skin' which it is not possible simply to jump out of." Gorringer, op. cit., pp. 52.
99. cf. "If the vast laboratory of man's history, secular or religious, illustrates any one general truth, it is that human freedom, however creative it may be, is not simply a freedom capable of choosing and then following its own ideals. Despite our best intentions, we do do something else; what we do gets corrupted and ends up sadly different from what we had intended; an evil that was not part of our purpose - or of the purpose we told ourselves was ours - appears from nowhere as an aspect of what we have done. For our human lot is filled with bitter tensions and destructive conflicts between persons and between groups - each side knowing nothing of "bad intentions" but on the contrary being sure of its own virtue and morality. This complicates endlessly our creative relation to culture and the role of our human autonomy in history. For it means, on the one hand, that every culture, created by the ambiguity of this freedom, is sinful and sick, always and in part, and thus, speaking theologically, under the judgement of God and of our judgement if we be Christians. But it also means that we, too, are under judgement, and that the only man who can be a faithful

prophet against the sin of the world or a creative reformer of its ills is one who sees that the community of sin includes himself, his directing revolutionary group, and even the shape of the new world he envisions in his protest." Gilkey, op. cit., pp. 388-389.

100. cf. "A person is never born into a neutral situation where there is complete autonomy and where one would be free of the good or bad suggestions of others." Theisen, op. cit., p. 33. This, of course, does not exclude the possibility of a person who whilst in a situation determined by evil did not personally choose evil as the tradition maintains in upholding the sinlessness of Jesus.
101. cf. "Third, the empty tomb expresses something vital about the nature of redemption, namely that redemption is much more than a mere escape from our scene of suffering and death. Rather it means the transformation of this material, bodily world with its whole history of sin and suffering....God did not discard Jesus' earthly corpse, but mysteriously raised and transfigured it so as to reveal what lies ahead for human beings and their world. In short, that empty tomb in Jerusalem is God's radical sign that redemption is not an escape to a better world but a wonderful transformation of our world. Seen that way, the open and empty grave of Jesus is highly significant for our appreciation of what redemption means." O'Collins, op. cit., pp. 178-179.
102. We may compare here the phrase of Gregory Nazianzen: "That which is not assumed is not healed". Commenting on this recurrent Patristic analogy of redemption as God's liberating solidarity with humanity in the incarnation, Gorringer writes: "If we begin by asking about the function of solidarity in this analogy we note that it is of the essence of these movements that a liberating pedagogy cannot be conducted from a safe distance beyond the struggle. In fact it can only be conducted from a position of complete solidarity with those who are oppressed." op. cit., pp. 59. cf., Hardy and Ford, op. cit., pp. 165.
103. cf. "Sin is described by Trent as the rule of the devil and of death through which man loses his innocence and becomes a child of wrath (D 793). Sin as aversio a Deo et conversio ad creaturas, drives directly toward total death and the ruin of the creature. It means much more than deprivation of an ornamental accident or of a white robe of grace. It means an attack on substance and heart. And because it is an attack on God it is really an attack on man, an attempt at sinful self-destruction. That is the final radicality and power of sin." Küng, Justification, pp. 175.
104. cf. "Evil at its worst has a dynamic of its own which counterfeits the movement of praise. There is a logic of overflow in evil too, magnifying itself in a widening spiral and sucking up whatever it can into its destructiveness." Hardy and Ford, op. cit., pp. 89. cf. "Evil in this form tends to be all-consuming. Its dynamic, historical nature emerges the more it is opposed. It is never a matter of simply isolating it and dealing with it. Each such attempt provokes new developments of evil in oneself and the situation, and exposes new depths of it." ibid., pp. 100. cf., Lane, op. cit., pp. 103-104.

105. cf., ibid., pp. 74-76. cf. "... how an actual entity becomes constitutes what that actual entity is; so that the two descriptions of an entity are not independent. Its 'being' is constituted by its 'becoming'. 'This is the principle of process.'" A. N. Whitehead, Process And Reality, corrected edition (New York: The Free Press 1978), pp. 23.
106. cf., Gilkey, op. cit., pp. 388.
107. McCormick points to the way in which sinful structures can be self generating: "In this sense such structures are not merely static realities but function in a dynamic and cyclical fashion. Members (whether individuals or subsets of the organic institution) respond to their weakened and contextualized freedom with learned patterns of behaviour which support the ongoing relationships of injustice and/or contribute to the progressive disintegration of the group. Such cycles are ongoing, incorporating new members and generations in structures of oppressive and alienating injustice." op. cit., pp. 94.
108. Hardy and Ford, op. cit., pp. 104.
109. cf. "What is required is not external, juridical absolution but healing of real injury - inner healing, inter-personal healing and even healing of dehumanizing structures or systems." Kelly, op. cit., pp. 493. cf. "What is centrally necessary to this reconstitution is the presence of the economy of God's praise made effective through its closeness and through its supplantation of that which in man renders it ineffective. And for this to regenerate humanity, God's economy of praise would actually have to become operative in man, displacing that which undermines it." Hardy and Ford, op. cit., pp. 165.
110. Nolan, op. cit., pp. 108. cf. Schillebeeckx, Christ: The Christian Experience In The Modern World, pp. 832-833.
111. cf. "It is one thing that God turns in free grace to sinful man, and quite another that in the same free grace He converts man to Himself. It is one thing that God as the Judge establishes that He is in the right against this man, thus creating a new right for this man before Him, and quite another that by His mighty direction He claims this man and makes him willing and ready for His service... But we have to say that to ignore the mutual relationship of the two can only lead at once to false statements concerning them and to corresponding errors in practice: to the idea of a God who works in isolation, and His 'cheap grace' (D. Bonhoeffer) and therefore an indolent quietism, where the relationship of justification to sanctification is neglected; and to that of a favoured man who works in isolation, and therefore to an illusory activism, where the relationship of sanctification to justification is forgotten." K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol. IV/2, pp. 503-505, quoted in Küng, Justification, pp. 70-71.
112. cf. "Genuine forgiveness is not about a simple pardoning or forgetting of sins but about empowering the sinner to an experience of conversion through which there can be an integration of the whole of human experience." McCormick, op. cit., pp. 76.

113. cf., Jon Sobrino, "Place Of Sin And Place Of Forgiveness", Concilium, n.184, pp. 45-46.
114. cf., Johann Baptist Metz, Faith In History And Society: Toward A Practical Fundamental Theology, (London: Burns & Oates 1980).
115. cf., Jürgen Moltmann, Theology Of Hope, (London: SCM 1967), The Crucified God, (London: SCM 1974), The Church In The Power Of The Spirit: A Contribution To Messianic Ecclesiology, (London: SCM 1977), The Trinity And The Kingdom Of God: The Doctrine Of God, (London: SCM 1981).
116. cf., Charles Davis, Theology And Political Society, (Cambridge: C.U.P 1980).
117. cf., Lane, op. cit., pp. 6-31. cf., ibid., pp. 56-86. cf. "Once theology rediscovered its foothold in experience, as it did formally at the Second Vatican Council, it was simply a matter of time, in fact only a few years, before praxis would move to centre stage. Praxis is an extension of the experiential base of theology; praxis is the application of the principle of experience to the realm of transforming activity; praxis is a particular form of human experience; praxis is the experience of reflective activity." ibid., pp. 8-9.
118. cf. "In this sense, then, fundamental theology is bound to be systematically interrupted by this praxis. This is why it can and should never be a theology that is purely confined to books or lectures - because of its claim to justification. It has to absorb new praxis and new experiences if it is to prevent itself from reproducing the concepts of earlier praxis and experiences." J. B. Metz, op. cit., pp. 10.
119. cf. "The whole point of the doctrine of salvation is to bring about a change from the old order of sin into the new order of grace." Lane, op. cit., p. 79. cf. "Had it been a case of a trespass only, and not of a subsequent corruption, repentance would have been well enough; but when once transgression had begun men came under the power of the corruption proper to their nature and were bereft of the grace which belonged to them as creatures in the Image of God." St. Athanasius, De Incarnatione Verbi Dei, II.7, translated by a religious of C.S.M.V., (London: Mowbray 1953), pp. 33.
120. In claiming this we do not claim that a breakdown in theological communication was the sole reason for the crisis at the time of the Reformation.
121. We may compare here the conclusion to Salvation And The Church, the Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission: "We are agreed that this is not an area where any remaining differences of theological interpretation of ecclesiological emphasis, either within or between our communions can justify our continuing separation." Salvation And The Church: ARCIC II, (London: Church House Publishing and Catholic Truth Society 1987), pp. 26. This speaks for a wide consensus in modern theology: "I want to say quite simply what a Catholic Christian thinks about justification, or, to express it more cautiously,



what he is allowed to think. In my opinion this presentation will be acceptable to official Catholic doctrine which derives from the Council of Trent and need not be opposed either by contemporary Protestant Christians. This implies that the doctrine of justification, i.e. the sola-gratia, is no reason for the separation of the Churches today." Karl Rahner, Grace In Freedom, (London: Burns & Oates 1969), pp. 96. cf., Joint statement agreed in 1983 by Lutheran-Roman Catholic Consultation in U.S.A: Justification by Faith, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House 1985). cf., Hans Küng, Justification: The Doctrine Of Karl Barth And A Catholic Response, (London: Burns & Oates 1981), pp. xxxiii, 275-284. cf., Rahner, "The Question Of Justification", T.I. (4), pp. 189-218.

122. cf. "Roman Catholic interpreters of Trent and Anglican theologians alike have insisted that justification and sanctification are neither wholly distinct from nor unrelated to one another. The discussion, however, has been confused by different understandings of the word justification and its associated words... The Catholic theologians, and notably the Council of Trent, tended to follow the usage of patristic and medieval Latin writers, for whom iustificare (the traditional translation of dikaioun) signified 'to make righteous'. Thus the Catholic understanding of the process of justification, following Latin usage, tended to include elements of salvation which the Reformers would describe as belonging to sanctification rather than justification." ARCIC II, Salvation And The Church, (London: Church House Publishing and Catholic Truth Society 1987), pp. 16-17.
123. cf. "The theologians of the Reformation tended to follow the predominant usage of the New Testament, in which the verb dikaioun usually means 'to pronounce righteous'." ARCIC II, ibid., pp. 17. cf. "There are two kinds of Christian righteousness, just as man's sin is of two kinds. The first is alien righteousness, that is the righteousness of another, instilled from without. This is the righteousness of Christ by which he justifies through faith... ", M. Luther, "Two Kinds Of Righteousness" in ed. by John Dillenberger, Martin Luther. Selections From His Writings Edited And With An Introduction, (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1961), pp. 86.
124. cf. "The first kind of righteousness is our proper righteousness, not because we alone work it, but because we work with that first and alien righteousness. This is that manner of life spent profitably in good works, in the first place, in slaying the flesh and crucifying the desires with respect to the self, of which we read in Gal. 5 [:24]:... This righteousness is the product of the righteousness of the first type, actually its fruit and consequence." ibid., pp. 88-89. cf. Martin Luther, "The Freedom Of A Christian", in Luther's Works, General Editors: Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, (St. Louis: Fortress Press 1955).
125. cf. "Through faith in Christ, therefore, Christ's righteousness becomes our righteousness and all that he has becomes ours," Luther, "The Two Kinds Of Righteousness" in Dillenberger, op. cit., pp. 87. cf. "Lutheran theologians insist that the event of justification is not restricted to individual forgiveness of sins and they regard it as more than a merely external declaration of

the sinner's justification. Through the message of justification, God's righteousness realized in the Christ-event is conveyed to the sinner as a reality that encompasses him, establishing a new life for the believer." Küng, "Justification Today", op. cit., pp. xvii. cf., ibid., pp. xiv-xv. cf., K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol. IV/1, pp. 95, 553f.

126. M. Luther, "Two Kinds Of Righteousness", quoted in Dillenberger, op. cit., pp. 88. cf. "While in a human law-court an acquittal is an external, even impersonal act, God's declaration of forgiveness and reconciliation does not leave repentant believers unchanged but establishes with them an intimate and personal relationship. The remission of sins is accompanied by a present renewal, the rebirth to newness of life." ARCIC II, op. cit., pp. 19.
127. cf. "As a consequence, Protestants took Catholics to be emphasising sanctification in such a way that the absolute gratuitousness of salvation was threatened." ibid., pp. 17.
128. cf. "Both sin and grace are understood as quantities, and on this assumption they are compared and pragmatized and tamed and rendered quite innocuous. The meaning of the conflict between the Spirit and the flesh, of the new man in Jesus and the old in whose form we confront Jesus, of freedom and bondage as totalities which do not complement but mutually exclude one another, is not only unperceived but actually concealed in a whole sea of obliterating formulae and objections and protests which are directed against every kind of quietism and fatalism, which have nothing whatever to do with what has to be said seriously concerning either the liberum or the servum arbitrium, and which can only secure us against having to see and say what really ought to be seen and said at this point. The teaching office [of] the Roman Church neither willed nor could say this... It will not and cannot say it to-day. Instead it speaks on the one hand of that assentire and cooperari of the unregenerate man in his relationship to the obscure gratia praeveniens which is arbitrarily invented and cannot be defined with any precision but which results in his capacity for faith and penitence and a turning to grace. And on the other hand it speaks of the good works of the regenerate man, who is only a little sinner and who commits only tiny sins, and who is in the happy position of being able to increase the grace of justification in co-operation with it, and even to augment the degree of his eternal bliss. The practical consequence of all this is that the misery of man is not regarded as in any way serious or dangerous either for Christians or non-Christians. The Reformation communions could not reunite with a Church which held this doctrine, and they cannot accept the call to reunion with it to-day." Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol. IV/2, pp. 498, quoted in Küng, pp. 48-49. cf. "Does Catholic theology really take justification seriously as the free sovereign act of God? Does it really accept grace as grace? Is its assertion about the unity of grace really more than an assertion? We know that this is not a new question; it was asked by the Reformers." Küng, Justification, pp. 30.
129. cf. "But does this conception of justification not leave man in a state of passivity? How is it possible to base a Christian ethic

upon Luther's understanding of justification? In the sixteenth century Catholics repeatedly raised this question with reference to Luther's doctrine of justification, and in the literature discussing Protestant-Catholic differences it is still found today." Bernhard Lohse, A Short History Of Christian Doctrine From The First Century To The Present, translated by F. Ernest Stoeffler, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1980), pp. 159.

130. cf. "On the other side, Catholics feared that Protestants were so stressing the justifying action of God that sanctification and human responsibility were gravely depreciated." ARCIC II, op. cit., pp. 17.
131. cf. "Protestants speak of a declaration of justice and Catholics of a making just. But Protestants speak of a declaring just which includes a making just; and Catholics of a making just which supposes a declaring just. Is it not time to stop arguing about imaginary differences?" Küng, Justification, pp. 221.
132. cf. "There is also a private dimension to popular religion, built around the seeking of favours from God via the mediators. Individuals develop a personal cult or devotion to a particular image of the Virgin or to specific saints. The regularity of the cult or devotion assures that the Virgin or the saint will be familiar with the supplicant when need arises. Seeking favours is a major part of devotional religion. The favors include protection from evil forces, from illness, from unforeseen crises (sickness, marriage problems), as well as certain boons (a spouse, good crops, successful travel, success in business transactions). Often vows are taken or promises made by persons to engage in certain penitential or prayerful activities if protection is extended or the boon granted. Sometimes vows are in response to protection or favor received." Schreiter, op. cit., pp. 129. cf., ibid., pp. 128-130.
133. cf. "This data is inadequately utilized from a pastoral point of view if an entirely too anthropocentric and materialistic popular notion of grace prevails - grace as a quasi-physical entity and a supernatural-natural fluid or "lump". To cite just one example, the effect of the Sacrament of Penance in people's minds is often not much more than a soul's being made pure again (with God as the condition for this) - a freshly cleaned suit for the soul (as though we had here the problem of getting a nice "white garment"). The question of personal relationship to God, of my again standing in favor with Him, of His being friendly and not looking angrily upon me any more - all this has, in many instances, receded into the background." Küng, Justification, pp. 199.
134. The prevalence of the Catholic tendency towards 'insurance policy piety' is witnessed to in many writings of authors with a Catholic background. We may quote Joyce's description of a sermon preached to business men: "He told his hearers that he was there that evening for no terrifying, no extravagant purpose; but as a man of the world speaking to his fellow-men. He came to speak to businessmen and he would speak to them in a business like way. If he might use a metaphor, he said he was their spiritual accountant; and he wished each and every one of his hearers to open his books, the books of his spiritual life, and see if they

tallied accurately with conscience." James Joyce, "Grace", Dubliners, (London: Jonathan Cape 1967), pp. 197-198. We may compare Joyce's characature with David Lodge's account of the pre-Vatican II Catholic metaphysic: "Up there was Heaven; down there was Hell. The name of the game was Snakes and Ladders: sin sent you plummeting down towards the pit; the sacraments, good deeds, acts of self-mortification, enabled you to clinch back towards the light... There were two types of sin, venial and mortal. Venial sins were little sins which only slightly retarded your progress across the board. Mortal sins were huge snakes that sent you slithering back to square one, because if you died in a state of mortal sin, you went to Hell. If, however, you confessed your sins and received absolution through the sacrament of Penance, you shot up the ladder of grace to your original position on the board, though carrying as penalty a certain amount of punishment awaiting in the next world... There was also such a thing as a plenary indulgence, which was a kind of jackpot, because it wiped out all the punishment accruing to your sins up to the time of obtaining the indulgence. You could get one of these by, for instance, going to Mass and Holy Communion on the first Friday of nine successive months. In theory, if you managed to obtain one of these plenary indulgences just before dying you would go straight to Heaven no matter how many sins you had committed previously." David Lodge, How Far Can You Go?, (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1981), pp. 6-8.

135. cf. "In Catholic theology "grace" is generally defined correctly in a philological and in an exegetical way, though it is true that this knowledge is neither theologically and systematically nor practically and pastorally made adequate use of." Küng, op. cit., pp. 198.
136. cf. "And as to Catholic teaching on the justified man, has it not in practice been forgotten that this justified man was a sinner? With all his grace does he not have only a very loose bond to the gracious God? Does not grace dwell within him in such a way that he really needs God only as Creator and Sustainer? Is the grace which justifies him not something which he "has", rather than something he receives afresh at each new instant?" Küng, op. cit., pp. 94.
137. cf., St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, 1-2ae, QQ. 111, a. 1-3.
138. Bernhard Lohse, op. cit., pp. 159.
139. cf., Kung, op. cit., 93.
140. We may compare the order in which we have progressed with a comment made by David Tracy: "If revisionist theology is to succeed materially, I believe, it should incorporate that neo-orthodox anthropological vision into its own twin vision of a common faith in the worthwhileness of existence which sustains us even beyond good and evil and a reflective belief in a credible, a suffering and loving Christian God (65). A first step in that direction can be taken when, singly and as a society, we admit to the reality of that central fact of our own experience which we name evil or, in explicitly religious limit-language, sin. A second step can be taken when we follow that admission with a

second one: that for character forming action we need to study any symbols of transformation which both face and promise authentically to transform that situation." Tracy, Blessed Rage For Order, pp. 214.

CHAPTER THREE: THE OPENNESS OF THE HUMAN PERSON TO THE INFINITE  
HORIZON OF HOLY MYSTERY.

3.1 Introduction

In the following chapter we will explore Rahner's theological anthropology which he develops in dialogue with Kant's critique of human reason. Rahner's theological anthropology is not simply a philosophical prolegomena in which he seeks to establish the possibility of metaphysics before moving onto theology proper. Through it he develops his basic understanding of the human person as being open to God. This provides him with the means of seeking to root such concepts as 'salvation' in what he takes to be the essential structures of human life. His anthropology grounds his soteriology.

In Chapter One we outlined three charges that modernity might bring against soteriology: That it is meaningless mythology; That it compromises the autonomy of the human person; That it militates against a concern for the transformation of the present order. Rahner seeks to answer these charges by means of his theological anthropology. He hopes to escape the charge of mythology by rooting salvation language in the essential structures of the human person. He shows a sensitivity to the enlightenment emphasis on the radical autonomy of the human person by developing his understanding of the human person in terms of freedom and responsibility. Rahner equates salvation with the freedom of the human person to 'choose him/herself' before God. Finally, Rahner seeks to reconcile a soteriological concern with an active concern for the transformation of this order. However, we shall have cause to question whether Rahner's a priori starting point militates against his concern to root 'salvation' in human life and the

*stupid objection*

transformation of the political order. First, let us explore the Kantian critique of reason.

### 3.2 The Kantian critique of human reason

When Immanuel Kant started upon his Critique of Pure Reason (1) his intention was to establish the possibility of metaphysics (2). However, his investigations led him in quite the opposite direction. Rather than having established metaphysics, he concluded that he had revealed the illusory nature of metaphysical discourse and the impossibility of a natural theology constructed on metaphysical foundations.

With Hume, Kant accepted that all human knowledge must be rooted in sense data. However, he believed that in addition to the experienced pole of sense data, the mind must also contribute some activity which makes it possible to synthesise the sense data. Only in this way would it be possible to form judgements and so to gain knowledge. Hence, Kant maintained that there were certain organising principles of the mind which operated in the formation of all knowledge. Kant further maintained that whilst these principles were necessary for the synthesis of all sense data the fact of their existence could not itself be derived from sense data. He thought of them as pre-given determinants of knowledge which we become aware of indirectly through their role in forming judgements. In order to analyse these pre-given determinants of knowledge Kant developed the transcendental method.

Kant distinguished between the forms of sensibility (space and time) and the categories of understanding, (quality, quantity, relation and modality). The only valid knowledge is empirical knowledge (3)

made possible by the union of intuitions (i.e. sense data given in the forms of sensibility) with the concepts (the categories of the understanding). The forms of sensibility can only supply data and the categories of understanding can only supply concepts. Each requires the other for genuine knowledge: "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind." (4) The categories of the understanding can only legitimately function within the spatio-temporal world of possible experience. To inquire about objects beyond the realities of spatio-temporal experience, or even to inquire about spatio-temporal experience in its totality was to go beyond the valid limits of human knowledge.

Kant accepted that the human mind does in fact make constant use of the concept of the "totality of all reality". It is this tendency that makes it possible to think of the individual because the idea of limitation presupposes the totality to be limited: "Nothing is an object for us, unless it presupposes the sum of all empirical reality as the condition of its possibility." (5) However, Kant maintained that the concept of the totality of all reality had a purely practical function. The positing of the concept may be necessary in order to know limited sense data, but it cannot legitimately be claimed that it is "a principle which must be valid of things in general" (6). However, the mind displays a strong tendency not only to use the concept of "all reality" (<sup>realissimum</sup> ens realismus) as a practical function but in a way that assumes that there is such a thing in reality. Kant referred to this as the transcendental ideal. He accepted the legitimacy of the transcendental ideal provided that it is acknowledged that we can neither investigate or speak meaningfully of the transcendental ideal in itself.



Kant referred to the metaphysical illusion which argues for the actual existence of God from the functional necessity of the concept of all reality (the transcendental ideal). This illusion firstly identifies the concept of all reality (the transcendental ideal) with the concept of God. The shift is then made from claiming that the concept of God is a necessary function in knowing finite beings to claiming that God must therefore exist in reality. To do this is to forget that we cannot speak meaningfully about the totality of reality because it is outside the scope of human experience. To seek to derive the existence of God from the transcendental ideal is to overstep "the limits of its purpose and validity" (7). Kant's transcendental turn to the human subject which was intended to establish the possibility of metaphysics seemed to result in showing the impossibility of metaphysical discourse.

As we noted in the Introduction, Rahner considers this transcendental anthropological turn to the human subject to be so fundamental to modern philosophy that it cannot be ignored (8). If metaphysical theology is to be pursued post-Kant, then it must either be content to operate within the parameters that Kant allowed, or Kant must be shown to have drawn erroneous conclusions from the transcendental turn. Rahner takes the latter option (9). He believes that a consistent application of the transcendental turn to the subject reveals the human person not as autonomous and closed against the transcendent, but rather as that being who is open to reality in its entirety, and who depends upon an unthematic knowledge of God in order to know anything at all.

### 3.3 Rahner in dialogue with Kant

#### 3.3.1 The place of anthropology in Rahner's theology

In his first major work Geist in Welt (10), Rahner engaged in dialogue with the Kant of the Critique by way of an extended philosophical commentary on the article of Thomistic metaphysics relating to the conversion to the phantasm (11). In this dialogue, Rahner was greatly influenced by the transcendental Thomism of Marechal and by Heidegger's ontology. Whilst one of Rahner's concerns in writing Spirit was to establish the possibility of metaphysics, this by no means represents the limit of his concerns. Spirit was not simply a prolegomena before moving onto theology proper. Through the investigations in Spirit, and later Hörer des Wortes (12), Rahner established the basic thrust of his theological anthropology: that the human person is spirit in world (13). The human person has an innate openness to the infinity of God but can only come to consciousness of this and respond to it through his/her material environment. This position remained foundational for Rahner's entire theological methodology (14). In 1966 he said:

As soon as man is understood as the being who is absolutely transcendent in respect of God, anthropocentricity and theocentricity in theology are not opposites but strictly one and the same thing, seen from two sides. Neither of the two aspects can be comprehended at all without the other" (15)

For Rahner, the transcendental question about the human person is "the whole of dogmatic theology itself" (16). Rahner believed that in order to avoid the charge of mythology in theology, the Christian mysteries had to be related to the a priori structures of human experience (17). Hence for Rahner the transcendental analysis of the a priori structures of the human subject determines not only that we can make theological statements but also what these theological

statements must be. This method of theological anthropology is brought to bear on a host of issues, governing the approach that he takes in Christology, the relationship between nature and grace, sacraments and many more. Indeed, the very notion of salvation is read off from the a priori structures of the human person: "Only those things can belong to man's salvation which, when lacking, injure his 'being' and wholeness. Otherwise he could eschew salvation without thereby being in danger of losing it." (18)

### 3.3.2 The necessity of the metaphysical question

Rahner accepts the Kantian starting point that all knowledge must be grounded in the sense data of spatio-temporal experience (19). He expresses this using the Thomistic principle of the conversion to the phantasm which claims that the universal concepts of the intellect can only be known in relation to an experienced something (20). However, Rahner proceeds with Aquinas to ask how the intellect can know things that transcend that which is given in sense data. He claims that this is made possible by the abstracting, judging activity of the agent intellect.

With Aquinas, Rahner holds that this abstracting activity is one of the two composite moments of the conversion to the phantasm, the other moment being sensibility. Hence, the question as to how knowledge of metaphysical objects is possible (by abstraction) is identical with the question as to how the conversion to the phantasm operates (21). The principle that states that all knowledge must be grounded in sense data (i.e. the conversio) turns out to also hold the key to explaining how the intellect might reach beyond sense data to an unthematic knowledge of God (22).



Rahner seeks to establish this by means of a transcendental analysis of the ultimate conditions of sense knowledge. For Rahner, the question about the possibility of sense knowledge is already the question about the possibility of metaphysical knowledge. Further, Rahner maintains that asking about the possibility of metaphysical knowledge is already to ask a metaphysical question. Hence Rahner states: "let it be said here explicitly in the concern of the book is not the critique of knowledge but the metaphysics of knowledge." (23) Rahner claims that the metaphysical question is unavoidable, "man questions necessarily" (24) and this is a radical questioning which can never be content with a finite answer; everything can be put into question (25). This inescapable dynamism of the questioner reveals the human person as the question about being in its totality (26). Even if one declares that the metaphysical question is absurd or unimportant, one is implicitly giving an answer to it; it is unavoidable (27). Before moving onto the transcendental analysis of sense knowledge, Rahner seeks to establish, in a preliminary manner, his thesis that the human person has an unthematic knowledge of God. He attempts this on the basis of the necessity with which the person asks the metaphysical question. Rahner states that: "What is absolutely unknowable cannot be asked about, in fact what is absolutely unknown cannot be asked about." (28) Since the human person necessarily questions being in its totality, Rahner claims that all being is already implicitly known. Further, on the basis of this knowability of all being Rahner argues that knowing and being exist in an original unity of "being present to self." (29) He refers to this ability of being to be present to self as the luminosity of being. However, guarding himself against idealism and ontologism, Rahner stresses that being is not known as one object amongst others but rather is known in an unthematic manner. Indeed,

for the question about being to be possible requires that being is both unknown and known (30). Rahner explains that being can be both known and unknown due to its analogical nature (31); being is known to the extent that one is or has being (32).

In Foundations of Christian faith Rahner again seeks to establish the unity of being and knowing but from a rather different tack (33). Rather than claiming that the necessity of the metaphysical question implies the knowability of all beings, Rahner begins with the inescapable experience of subjectivity. In all knowledge and experience the human person not only knows the object of his/her experience but also knows him/herself as the subject of this experience. When I love I know that it is I who love. On the basis of this, Rahner argues that knowledge is not a "coming into contact with something", or an "intentional stretching outwards of a knower to a known" but is rather a presence to self (34). Hence in all knowledge and experience there is a logically prior presence to self (35). However, this self-awareness is different from the experience of objects. Whereas objects are experienced directly, the subject experiences itself indirectly, implicitly, along with the experience of the object (36). Rahner's understanding of the "subjective, unthematic, necessary and unfailing consciousness of the knowing subject" (37) as "transcendental experience" is fundamental to his theology. Ultimately for Rahner, transcendental experience is the subject's experience of itself as being placed over against all of reality and hence as open to God. He maintains that this implicit experience of self is a condition of the possibility of explicit experience of objects. It is this that drives the person to ask questions (38). What Rahner seeks to establish in a preliminary manner (that knowledge extends beyond the limits of spatio-temporal

Identity and subjectivity.

experience) through an analysis of the question about being and the experience of subjectivity, he seeks to establish fully through his transcendental analysis of sense knowledge.

### 3.3.3 Rahner's metaphysical analysis of the transcendental structure of the knowing and willing human subject.

For Rahner, metaphysics does not give any new knowledge. It is "the conceptually formulated understanding of that prior understanding which man as man is" (39). It makes explicit the implicit knowledge that the human person already has. Through pursuing a transcendental analysis of the ultimate conditions of sense knowledge, Rahner seeks to bring to explicit consciousness the pre-apprehension of being that is a constituent factor in all human knowing. Rahner proceeds to analyse the two constituent, and temporally inseparable, moments of the Conversion to the Phantasm: Sensibility and Abstraction. In much of his work he is in accordance with Kant. However, he develops the dynamic aspect of abstraction and judgement which tended to become submerged in Kant's thought.

In the moment of sensibility (40), the subject finds itself given over to the being of the other (41). That is, the subject exists with the being of the other without knowing explicitly what that being is. In order to judge the quiddity ("whatness") of the object of knowledge, the knower needs to return to itself. That is, having existed with the other, the subject needs to gain perspective or difference from the other in order to judge what the other is. This judging what the other is involves placing the experienced sense data within the wider horizon of all known types of things and deciding which type of object this particular being is. Hence, the ability to return to self is

identified with the power of abstraction, whereby the universal concept is abstracted from the particular sense-data (42). The role of judgement is the synthesis of the abstracted universal concept with the given sense-data. It is the synthesis of a 'what' with a 'something'. Rahner considers it to be inadequate to think of judgement as a passive synthesising of two elements, the joining of the categories of the intellect with the sense data supplied in the forms of sense. He maintains that judgement involves an act of affirmation which reaches to the 'in-itself of the object and which is made possible by an a priori drive of the intellect towards Absolute Being. Rahner argues for the need for an active affirmation due to what Aquinas terms "the concretising synthesis" (43). The conversion to the phantasm states that universal concepts can only be known in relation to a particular something, and that a particular something can only be known in relation to a universal concept (44). This applies even in the case of judgement. Hence, the universal concept that is made the predicate of the subject of the judgement is already thought of in relation to another particular something. In turn, the subject of the judgement is already concretely conceptualised in reference to another universal concept (45). Thus, both the subject and predicate of a judgement always exist as a "concretising synthesis", that is as "a universal in its being in a 'this.'" (46)

The act of judgement is then seen to be the synthesis of two concepts, each of which is a concretising synthesis. This does not mean that the quiddity (whatness) of one concretising synthesis is synthesised with the quiddity of the other. If this was the case then we would have no knowledge of the object in itself as we would not have affirmed anything of any particular object. We would only have claimed that two general concepts were related. This, Rahner believes, is the

mistake that Kant made and which led him to conclude that knowledge remained on the side of the knowing subject, confined to the phenomenal. However, whilst the concretising synthesis of the predicate refers a general concept to any this, the concretising synthesis of the subject determines a definite this. For Rahner, the act of judgement involves an affirmative synthesis of the predicate, which previously in its own concretising synthesis had been applied to any this, with the definite this of the subject's concretising synthesis. Hence, for Rahner the affirmative synthesis of the act of judgement reaches to the in-itself of the known object: "Objective knowledge is given only when a knower relates a universal, known intelligibility to a supposite existing in itself" (47)

Rahner proceeds to ask about the possibility of the affirmative act. How can the knower complete the return to self by referring the universal concept to a particular existent in an act of affirmation? He seeks to answer this through an analysis of the agent intellect (48). This is the intellectual power which liberates the form from matter in the sense that it causes one to recognise that the form's potential reference is not confined only to the matter in which it is presently known. "The form can be liberated from matter, and so universalized, due to the agent intellect recognising that the form is limited by the this whose form it is." (49)

Further, the knowledge of the limitation of the form in the matter is only possible if the agent intellect comprehends all the further possibilities of the form. If the knowledge of limitation was known against a further limited range the question would again arise as to how this further limitation was known (50). Hence the knowledge of limitation is a transcendent knowledge made possible by a pre-



apprehension (vorgriff) of the a priori illimited horizon which accompanies and enables all particular knowledge of finite objects. "Human consciousness grasps its single object in a vorgriff which reaches for the absolute range of all its possible objects." (51)

### 3.3.4 God as the illimited horizon of all human knowing and willing

Rahner identifies the a priori horizon which accompanies and enables all particular knowledge of finite objects with being, Aquinas' esse, which in turn is God (52). For the sake of brevity we shall follow his argument in Hearers (53) rather than in Spirit. The a priori horizon, that is the whither (woraufhin), of the vorgriff cannot be an object in the strict sense, for that would then require a further vorgriff. However, the vorgriff can only be conceived as some kind of knowledge, and hence in this sense the object of the vorgriff can be asked about (54). This object has already been defined as the "totality of the possible objects of human knowledge." (55) Hence the question about the woraufhin of the vorgriff is the question as to the nature of the totality of all objects of knowledge.

Rahner considers the three answers that western philosophy has given to this question: that of the philosophia perennis which claims that the vorgriff extends towards illimited being in its totality, including the absolute being of God; that of Kant who claimed that the vorgriff extends only to the limited being of sense intention and that of Heidegger who claimed that the vorgriff extends to nothingness. Rahner seeks to refute Heidegger's solution, then by reducing Kant's solution to that of Heidegger he maintains with the philosophia perennis that the vorgriff must extend to absolute being.

As we have discussed, Rahner claims that in the act of judgement,

the human knower affirms the finite objects of sense experience as existing in themselves. Hence, against Heidegger he maintains that knowledge aims towards existence and not nothingness, which would suggest that the vorgriff is towards being rather than non-being. Rahner seeks to establish this by claiming that a pre-apprehension of nothingness could not ground our knowledge of the finitude of sense objects. The negating concepts of finitude and nothingness exist only in relation to a prior affirmation of that which they are the negation. Hence, it is only a prior knowledge of the illimited that could enable us to negate and so to know objects in their finitude: "It is not 'nought that noughtens', but it is the infinity of being, at which the vorgriff aims, which unveils the finiteness of all that which is immediately given." (56)

Kant had claimed that the woraufhin of the vorgriff was the relatively illimited spatio-temporal horizon of the imagination. In reply Rahner maintains that Kant contradicts this principle in the very act of formulating it. His argument is that one can only conceive of a finite horizon if it has already been surpassed and is known as finite against a further infinite horizon (57). This leaves either the infinite horizon of being (philosophia perennis) or the infinite horizon of nothingness (Heidegger) as possible options. As Kant had ruled out the possibility of attaining to illimited being he must in effect be forced to say that the recognition of finitude is made possible by a vorgriff towards nothingness. That is, Kant's contradiction and presupposition aligns him with the discredited solution of Heidegger.

We are left with the solution of the philosophia perennis as the only credible alternative. The vorgriff aims towards the illimited

totality of all being, God. Hence, a prior awareness of God accompanies and makes possible, all human knowing. Rahner quotes Aquinas approvingly: "All knowing beings implicitly know God in everything they know." (58) For this reason, Rahner refers to the human person as having a transcendental knowledge of God, that is one "that belongs to the necessary and inalienable structures of the knowing subject itself." (59)

However, guarding himself against the charge of ontologism, Rahner stresses that such transcendental knowledge does not constitute a direct intuition of God. It is an unthematic and pre-conceptual knowledge. Indeed, whilst an unthematic, pre-apprehension of God might be the a priori grounding which enables us to know anything whatsoever, we only become conscious of this unthematic knowledge of God a posteriorily:

What we are calling transcendental knowledge or experience of God is an a posteriori knowledge in so far as man's transcendental experience of his free subjectivity takes place only in his encounter with the world and especially with other people (60)

A posteriori knowledge of God, however, differs from a posteriori knowledge of objects: our pre-apprehension of God (vorgriff) is what enables us to know any finite object but it cannot itself be made an object of knowledge (61). Should we seek to turn our attention upon the vorgriff, we find that it constantly alludes us, each act of reflecting upon transcendence itself requires "another original act of transcendence" (62). Nor, in our a posteriori knowledge of God, do we gain a thematic knowledge of God that had previously been unthematic. To claim such would be to forget the transcendental element in our a posteriori knowledge of God (63). Rather, our a posteriori knowledge of God consists in the fact that we become aware that we always already

had a pre-conceptual apprehension of God. We cannot know in what the woraufhin of the vorgriff consists, only that it is. The human person stands ever present before the infinite light of God as one to whom it appears as impenetrable darkness: "The concept (of God) is its original ground and the reality itself to which this concept refers move beyond us and enter the unknown together." (64)

In Hearers Rahner is at great pains to establish that his thesis of the necessary pre-apprehension of God, which makes all knowledge possible, does not exclude the essential hiddenness of God (65). If this were so then it would suggest that the human person was not only orientated towards God but that by nature s/he was capable of attaining to a full and perfect knowledge of God. Such a view would compromise the gratuity of God's free self-communication. After having briefly referred again to the analogical character of being, Rahner considers it necessary to establish that even the analogical knowledge of being available to man is a negative knowledge. It results from the negation of finitude rather than a positive knowledge of infinite being, and so he maintains "the essential hiddenness of all positive aspects of the infinite being" (66). In Chapter Seven, Rahner continues on to establish that the unknowability of God is not due to a provisional imperfection on the part of man's knowledge, but rather belongs to the very essence of the freedom of God.

### 3.4 God is mystery.

The hiddenness and freedom of God are central to Rahner's understanding of God as mystery. His major treatment of this is to be found in his essay "The Concept Of Mystery In Catholic Theology" (67). In contrast to the scholastic notion of mystery, Rahner understands it

"not as the provisional but as the primordial and permanent" (68). Nor is it a property belonging only to certain statements but is rather an essential element of all knowledge. For Rahner, mystery is the horizon of all human knowing: "Man is the being who is orientated to the mystery as such, this orientation being a constituent element of his being." (69) For Rahner this mystery is the unlimited unknowability of God (70). He maintains that God remains incomprehensible even in the Visio Beatifica which is not the abolition or diminution of the mystery but its final assertion, its eternal and total immediacy (71). Rahner develops this position in Foundations of Christian Faith by starting with the human person's essential orientation towards mystery (72).

We find in the human person an irresistible dynamic to question reality, to remain ever unsatisfied with the finite. Rahner maintains that the human person's fundamental orientation to mystery is the ground and context of his/her being (73). This orientation towards mystery is inescapable (74); it is the question posed by our knowledge of finitude and we must give an answer, even if our answer is to avoid giving an answer (75). It can be hated, suppressed or loved, however it is ineradicable. In limit situations of grief, loss, suffering, death, anxiety, love, joy or hope, we can recover an awareness of this orientation. Indeed, Rahner can say: "mystery in its incomprehensibility is what is self-evident in human life." (76)

For Rahner, saying that the human person is orientated towards mystery is identical with saying that the human person is orientated towards God. He seeks to establish this through a reflection on the word God (77). His argument is that the word God does not so much describe an object as rather act as reference to the transcendent mystery surrounding the human person. Without such predicates as

fatherhood, personhood, God is an empty word, but this is the correct form of the word which by its very emptiness points towards the inescapable mystery in human life (78).

Rahner claims that the word God does not come to us from outside but rather flows from the depths of human life. "We hear and receive the word God" (79). Even if the word God is suppressed the experience which it names continues to exist. For this reason the word God continues to occur for it is only so that the human person can "be brought face to face with the single whole of reality" (80). In that the word God refers to this fundamental human experience, it could only fall out of use if the human person were to change, if s/he were to cease being human. Due to the many presuppositions and categorical images that the word God evokes, Rahner prefers to refer to the reality to which it refers as Holy mystery (81).

Hence, in Foundations, Rahner seeks to affirm the human person's knowledge of God by starting with the fundamental human experience of transcendence towards mystery (82). He had sought to do the same thing in Spirit and Hearers by reflecting upon the transcendental condition for human knowledge. For Rahner, theoretical proofs for the existence of God are not intended to establish something new, but rather to draw the human person into awareness of his/her fundamental experience of standing before mystery and so to show the human person to be the one who stands in absolute nearness before the ever distant God (83).

Rahner's approach in Foundations makes explicit what his intention was in Spirit and Hearers. He not only intended to establish the possibility of metaphysical discourse but to show that "it belongs to man's fundamental make-up to be the absolute openness for being as such" (84) by establishing a metaphysics of knowledge (85). This theme,

governs Rahner's entire theology, it defines his notion of salvation, his understanding of the nature-grace relationship and ultimately his Christology. It is for these reasons that it has been important to investigate Rahner's reasons for considering the human person to be Spirit in World, the one who whilst always open to God can only refer to God through his/her material environment.

### 3.5 The place of freedom in Rahner's anthropology.

If we were to focus our attention solely upon Spirit we could be forgiven for accusing Rahner of rampant intellectualism. Thus far it would seem that he confines the human orientation towards God merely to the level of an unthematic knowledge which whilst we affirm it implicitly in all knowing is otherwise peripheral to human life. There has been a recurrent tendency in Christian soteriology, influenced by Neo-Platonic mysticism, to reduce salvation to the attainment of true knowledge. Such a concern with right gnosis rather than with right praxis is unable to accommodate the concern for the transformation of this order that we claimed in Chapter Two was so essential (86). Should Rahner confine the human person's relationship to God to the level of knowledge then he would be in danger of reducing salvation to such an intellectual pursuit. However, to accuse Rahner of rampant intellectualism would be to miss his point that the epistemological considerations of Spirit were not for their own sake but rather for their metaphysical implications. He uses those investigations in order to establish his thesis of the human person's fundamental openness to God. It is this broader emphasis that guides his theology, not an arid, intellectual emphasis on the person's pre-conceptual knowledge of God.

In Hearers Rahner widens his concept of the person's openness to

God to include freedom through a transcendental analysis of the ultimate structures of human freedom (87). This analysis remained determinative for his theology. As we move to his later writings it is freedom rather than knowledge that is in the ascendant. Indeed, human freedom is where he roots his understanding of salvation. His discussion of freedom in Hearers follows three movements: firstly the importance of volition in knowing; secondly, human knowledge of God as consisting in freely willed love and thirdly, the nature of human freedom as being the choice of self in love and therefore the choice of God.

Firstly, Rahner argues that the human person can only question being in its totality by first affirming his/her own contingency: "Only the man who resolutely assumes his own finiteness and thrownness finds access to being's true infinity." (88) On account of the necessity with which the human person asks about being in its totality, Rahner argues that the human person is necessarily contingent. This absolute contingency of the human person creates problems for Rahner. Understanding, or the act of judging, finds its reason for affirming an object in the object alone, but there is no sufficient reason to be found in a contingent, and therefore accidental, object for affirming it absolutely. Hence, Rahner argues that more than static insight must be involved, the reason must be sought in the reason for the object's affirmation rather than in the object itself. Rahner finds this reason in will and argues that the human person's transcendence towards being "is brought about by the will as inner move of knowledge itself" (89). Hence, there is no such thing as pure intellectualism in Rahner; knowledge itself includes will.

Secondly, Rahner turns his attention to the question of how it is



possible for the finite human person to know the free God (90). He defines freedom as being primarily a choice of self before ever it is a particular choice of a particular something:

Now, a free act is originally not so much the positing of something else, of something external, of some effect which is distinct from and opposed to the free act itself. It is rather the fulfilment of one's own creative power over oneself. Thus it is a coming to oneself, a self-presence in oneself. (91)

As the original choice of self, one person's free act is unknown to another. The free act can be known to the agent because it is none other than the agent itself. However, through love it is possible for one person to enter empathetically into another person's free act and so to know his/her act. Love is to be seen as the perfection of knowledge: "In the final analysis knowledge is but the luminous radiance of love." (92) It is through love that we are able to enter into the free act of the free personal God and to know him. Indeed love does not flow from knowledge of God but is its condition (93). Rahner's understanding of knowledge being perfected in love is significant. It enables him to put to rest the over-intellectual emphasis that could be conveyed by his argument in Spirit. A pre-apprehension of God which remained solely on an intellectual level could have very little significance for lived human life. However, if this knowledge ultimately consists in love then we can see how it could be made the basis for an understanding of the person's orientation towards God as being lived out in the various actions and choices of life.

The third and most significant way in which Rahner seeks to move away from a narrow intellectualism (gnosis) to lived human life (praxis) is through a transcendental analysis of human freedom which complements and resembles his transcendental analysis of human knowing

(94). He argues that whilst the person may freely affirm him or herself in various ways, the person absolutely has to affirm him or herself in some fashion. As we have seen, without such willed affirmation knowledge is impossible. As with knowledge, the necessity of such volitional affirmation suggests a prior orientation (95).

Whereas in knowledge we know things as objects, in freedom we know things as values, and freedom, as with knowledge, has a transcendental moment to it. The free affirmation of finite values is only possible due to a vorgriff towards the absolute being of God. In this pre-apprehension "being itself is grasped as a value" (96). It is within this pre-grasp of the absolute order of values that the person is able to affirm finite values. Whilst a particular act may affirm or contradict the person's pre-affirmation of the "right order of values", Rahner claims that there is an even more intimate relationship between a person's affirmation of finite values and the horizon of values within which they make each affirmation (97). It is here that we approach the core of Rahner's understanding of human freedom as being fundamentally the choice of self.

Rahner argues that each decision about finite values has an effect upon the person's fundamental orientation towards the "right order of values". A decision about a finite value which is not in accord with the "right order of values" does not merely transgress the "right order of values", it also redefines a person's perception of the "right order of values". A dynamic is set up: "He not only assumes the basic laws that govern his love and his hatred, but he himself freely ratifies anew the right laws." (98) Thus, a person's choice of finite values is not merely a decision about things, it has an effect into the future because through them the person chooses him or herself: "In every

action he sets down a law of his whole activity and life. He does not simply perform good or bad actions, he himself becomes good or bad." (99)

For Rahner, we choose ourselves through our actions. Hence our actions are not disparate, together they constitute the person that we have chosen to be. Rahner terms this "the order of love" (100) which each person constructs for him/herself. It is only within the horizon of each person's own "order of love" that s/he can become aware of and respond to the "right order of love" of God. Hence if someone would freely respond to the right order of love of God then this is only possible through the way in which s/he responds to the finite order of values. This is the volitional equivalent to the necessity of the conversion to the phantasm in intellectual knowledge, and will provide the basis upon which Rahner will construct his famous dictum of "the unity of love of neighbour and the love of God": "The concrete way in which man knows God is from the start determined by the way man loves and values the things that come his way." (101)

Rahner's analysis of freedom in Hearers remains determinative for his approach in his later writings. We see him display the same concern to escape the charge of rampant intellectualism and to seek to root human transcendence in life. The fundamental experience of human subjectivity, which Rahner focuses upon in Foundations, is not a merely intellectual orientation. He refers to it as "transcendental experience" rather than "transcendental knowledge". This transcendental orientation is responded to through the free self-determination of the human subject: "This transcendental experience of course, is not merely an experience of pure knowledge, but also of the will and of freedom". (102)

Again we hear Rahner dismiss as inadequate an understanding of freedom confined to a choice between acts:

freedom is not originally the capacity of choosing any object whatsoever as the ability of adopting an individual attitude to this or that; it is rather the freedom of self-understanding, the possibility of deciding for or against oneself. (103)

This freedom of the human subject over against him/herself is dependent upon a prior orientation towards God: "the individual finite good can only be freely asserted to or rejected in the dynamism of a movement towards the good simply speaking" (104). Since God is present unthematically in every act of freedom then all acts of human freedom have a theological character and not only explicitly religious acts (105). In order to emphasise the theological context of human freedom, Rahner refers to the mystery which surrounds the person as "Holy Mystery" (106). Further, the theological character of acts of human freedom extends beyond the fact that God is present as the distant horizon of free acts, to the fact the human person's creation of self in freedom actually constitutes a decision for or against God (107). Through the particular decisions that we take, we are making of our lives a 'yes' or 'no' towards God; this constitutes our "Fundamental Option". The radical extent of human freedom is evidenced by the fact that humans can reject God who is the horizon of their freedom. Whilst such a denial contradicts itself in that it depends upon a prior openness to God, it remains nevertheless a real possibility (108). The human person seeks to give expression to his/her fundamental option of and for self in the particular circumstances of life. Hence, the various free acts of an individual's life are not to be thought of as disparate and isolated, rather they refer to the individual's unified free attitude to self which is actualized throughout life. In this manner, human freedom is not directed towards an ongoing perpetuation

of free acts but is instead directed towards the finality of eternity:

It is the capacity of a subject who by his freedom is to achieve his final and irrevocable self. In this sense and for this reason, freedom is the capacity for the eternal.  
(109)

### 3.6 The human person's free choice of self into eternity as the locus of soteriology.

Rahner's understanding of freedom as the choice of self bears many similarities to the dynamic understanding of human freedom and evil which we thought necessary in Chapter Two. This could lead us to hope that, aware of the consequent 'dark side' of human freedom, Rahner would perceive the need for a liberating salvation. However, such hopes would be premature at this stage. He does indeed locate <sup>7</sup> salvation in terms of human freedom but he does so in terms of salvation being the eternalisation of the person's choice. This will <sup>! Really?</sup> open up for us the question of subjective versus objective atonement <sub>↓</sub> theories. In Chapter Two we claimed that salvation must be subjective in as much as it must be a real transformation of unique persons and situations. It must be a salvation that is really appropriated and not just granted. However we also claimed that salvation must be objective in as much as we are not able of ourselves simply to appropriate this salvation and work an instantaneous transformation. Salvation, we claimed, must be the making possible of the transformation that is necessary. We will find it necessary to ask in what way does Rahner secure the objective aspect of atonement.

Rahner is concerned to distance himself from what he terms extrinsicist or mythological concepts of salvation which hold to an external transformation of a person's state of life in a way that bears no relation to the life that s/he had lived. Rather than salvation

being an exterior transformation by grace or a reward for a virtuous life, Rahner wishes to understand salvation as flowing from the heart of a person's life (110). This is a concern that we also have expressed in Chapter Two. Rahner states that salvation must be understood as a subjective concept rather than as an objective concept (111). If by "subjective" Rahner intends that salvation language should not ignore a person's freely chosen evil acts but must rather involve a full redemption of the very depths of the person, then the door would be left open for the kind of objective liberation that we have called for in Chapter Two. However, there are statements that suggest that Rahner ignores the need for an externally effected, objective liberation of the inner depths of the person. In contrast such statements suggest that Rahner views salvation merely as the radical finalisation into eternity of the person one has created oneself to be:

It means rather the final and definitive validity of a person's true self-understanding and the true self-realisation in freedom before God by the fact that he accepts his own self as it is disclosed and offered to him in the choice of transcendence as interpreted in freedom.  
(112)

Rahner avoids the charge of mythology by rooting salvation language in the very fabric of human life and he also emphasises the human subject's responsibility to determine his/her own salvation. But we have to ask at what cost does he achieve this? Thus far, Rahner's notion of salvation as being the radical finalisation into eternity of the human subject's freely chosen self sounds ominously like the kind of philosophy of self-achievement which we consider to be so unacceptable, lacking as it does an appreciation of the radical nature of human evil from which humanity requires a healing liberation. Should we be forced to conclude that Rahner's soteriology reduces to a

philosophy of self-achievement then we would have discovered a fundamental inconsistency in his theology. His profound understanding of human freedom as being the creation of self into the future has a consequent dark underside. Just as through good acts we become good, so also through evil acts we become evil. (Rahner is aware of this darker side to human freedom as we shall see in the next chapter.) Therefore, evil acts cannot simply be forgotten but require a profound healing liberation. The human person is caught in a dynamic which seemingly the human person cannot reverse. The momentum of previous personal, communal and structural sins continue to affect actions in the present and militate against a radical change in one's fundamental orientation. In terms of traditional understanding, conversion requires grace. It would seem that Rahner can only ascribe a dynamic understanding to human evil, without falling into inconsistency, if he also holds to an objective healing liberation.

We must explore this point further. Firstly we shall expound Rahner's understanding of the human subject as being apparently determined yet truly free. This will allow us to make the strongest case possible that Rahner's soteriology reduces to an existentialist philosophy of self-achievement. Having made this case we can then examine it in order to determine quite what the subjective/objective balance is in Rahner's soteriology. So secondly, we shall briefly consider the philosophical background to Rahner's thought in order to explore the possibility of an objective subjectivity. Thirdly, we shall anticipate our fourth and fifth chapters in order to maintain that Rahner does take account of the radical dynamism to human evil (Chapter Four) and avoids inconsistency through his understanding of freedom as graced freedom (Chapter Five).

Firstly let us explore Rahner's understanding of the human person's irreducible freedom to determine him/herself and to dispose of the given in his/her life. A philosophy of self-achievement would assume that the human person was free to choose him/herself over against all the determining conditions of life. It would thus preserve the notion of the human person standing in a neutral position between good and evil, free to choose either option, unaffected by past decisions. This is precisely what is suggested by Rahner's analysis of human freedom as consisting in the questioning drive of subjectivity. He maintains that the person's ability to question all the constituent elements of his/her life reveals that the person must be more than the sum of all these elements (113). The person cannot be exhaustively explained by any regional anthropology (114). The awareness of being more than what is empirically given is the experience of subjectivity, it is the experience of knowing oneself to be the one who exists in relation to these given factors and who can dispose of the totality. Hence, it is the locus of freedom: "insofar as I experience myself as person and as subject, I also experience myself as free." (115)

In this manner Rahner contrasts the phenomenal level to the noumenal level and develops an understanding of the human person as being apparently (phenomenally) determined by all the given in life yet as being ultimately free in him/herself (noumenally). This is very problematic as it seems to ignore the degree of limitation in human life. By limitation we refer not only to such things as environmental conditioning but also to the more radical imprisonment of human freedom by prior evil deeds. The analysis of the dynamic aspect of human evil that we touched upon in Chapter Two has as its consequence that the human person is not free simply to repent of past evil deeds and to

Many must  
have a new  
vatic computer!



engage upon an instantaneous conversion to the good. Rather we stand in need of a healing liberation. As we have noted approvingly, Rahner also develops such a dynamic understanding of human freedom. However, his understanding that there is a contrast between the person's apparent determination on the one hand and the person's ultimate freedom in him/herself on the other hand seems to dispense with the radical confinement of human freedom so apparent to those who know themselves to be enmeshed in the structures of communal and personal sin.

It seems that it must either be the case that Rahner really does neglect to treat of the darker side of human freedom and so remains blind to the radical confinement of the human person by past evil acts. Or, on the other hand, his notion of the human person's ultimate freedom is nothing more than the freedom to distance him/herself in attitude from actions which cannot in fact be avoided. That is, the person's 'freedom' would not be the freedom to determine his/her life but would be limited to the 'freedom' of the prisoner who may distance him/herself in attitude from the forced labour which s/he must nevertheless perform. This latter possibility, that freedom for Rahner is the freedom to distance oneself in attitude from acts which one is not free to determine, would seem to be insufficient to support Rahner's understanding of salvation. Salvation, for Rahner, seems to be the eternalisation not merely of the attitude that we have taken to the given in our lives but of what we have actually made of the given in our lives. This assumes a freedom of action and not merely a freedom of attitude. Hence, of the two possibilities outlined above it seems, at this stage, more likely that Rahner remains blind to the radical confinement of human freedom rather than that he consciously limits freedom to freedom of attitude.

what is evil?  
probably?  
Rahner?

Having ascended to the heights of a dynamic understanding of human freedom, has Rahner kicked away the ladder oblivious of the depths that have opened up beneath him? That this is so could be suggested by the rather cursory way in which Rahner acknowledges Scripture's understanding of human freedom as being enslaved by the demonic powers of sin and the consequent need for liberation before moving on to vigorously maintain that human responsibility is not thereby destroyed:

Yet it cannot be doubted that for scripture both the sinful and the justified man are responsible for the actions of their life and to this extent are also free and that freedom therefore, is a permanent constitutive of man's nature. (116)

At this stage, therefore, it seems that in spite of Rahner's brilliant analysis of the dynamic nature of human freedom, he ultimately proposes a concept of salvation that is not just subjective in the sense that it refers to a saving of the very depths of the human person, but is rather a salvation that is simply the result of the person's free choice. If this is so then we would have to conclude that he displays a blindness to the depths of evil by overestimating the capacity of human freedom and by underestimating the need for the sustaining and healing activity of God's gracious presence. In effect, we are led to suspect Rahner of presenting an account of atonement lacking in redemption.

However, before we launch into accusing Rahner of a thoroughgoing and unacceptable subjectivity it is necessary to reconsider more profoundly his understanding of human freedom. So far we have balked at Rahner's understanding of human freedom, claiming that it gives too much to the powers of self-determination of the human subject. Perhaps this is an inadequate interpretation of Rahner's understanding of human freedom? It is possible that Rahner understands human freedom to be already held in being by the gracious presence of God, in which case

the exercise of human freedom would not be merely a process of self-achievement but would be the activity of God's grace in human freedom. In this manner Rahner would not be advocating a purely subjective soteriology of self-achievement but would rather be advocating a soteriology that was at once truly objective in that it was effected by the sustaining grace of God and truly subjective in that it flowed from the heart of the human subject.

It will be helpful to explore Rahner's philosophical background on this point. His approach is unashamedly influenced by existentialism, but by whose existentialism is an important distinction to make. If we were to conclude that Rahner's soteriology represented a philosophy of subjective self-achievement then we would align him with the atheistic existentialism of Sartre. In contrast to this stands the Christian existentialism of Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard's claim that truth is subjective is not to be understood in terms of Sartre's thoroughgoing subjectivism. For Kierkegaard, truth is synonymous with God, and God is the objective reality against whom all else is relative; freedom can only be preserved through subjection to God (117). Hence when Kierkegaard proclaims truth to be subjective, he proclaims that the objective presence of God is given to the individual human subject in his/her uniqueness. Morality, for Kierkegaard, becomes not so much self-achievement as for Sartre but rather the empowerment by, and response to, the presence of God within the human subject. Such objective subjectivity is perfectly consonant with our concern for an objectively given healing liberation in human life.

Heidegger, whom Rahner acknowledges as his major influence amongst the existentialists, sides with the objective subjectivity of Kierkegaard. He locates the objectively given in the human conscience.

This should cause us to suspect that Rahner also sides with the objective subjectivity of Kierkegaard and Heidegger. As we move through Chapters Four and Five we shall see that Rahner is aware of the darker side to human freedom (Chapter Four) and that through his notion of the supernatural existential he holds that human freedom is always graced freedom. However, this will cause us to further question whether Rahner falls foul of a formalism that whilst stating the presence of grace does not explain how grace is active in a dynamic manner bringing healing and liberation. The result is that against his own intentions grace seems to be ascribed to human life in a merely verbal manner and has the practical result of throwing the person back on his/her own inadequate resources. We will claim that in the final analysis Rahner proclaims the that of atonement without the how of redemption. Let us now turn our attention to the way in which Rahner seeks to reconcile soteriological concern with concern for this order.

### 3.7 The human person's soteriological concern as embracing concern for the human community:

As we have seen, Rahner locates his theology in an a priori analysis of the individual subject. This gave us a picture of the human person as having an eternal destiny which is achieved or lost through the exercise of his/her freedom. Hence the question of the individual's exercise of freedom was seen to be a question of salvation. Rahner seeks to reconcile the individual's eternal destiny achieved through freedom with a concern for this world through his understanding of love of neighbour. As we noted earlier his principle of the unity of love of neighbour and love of God performs the same function within his discussion of freedom as did the conversion to the phantasm within his discussion of knowledge. The person's pre-

apprehension of God does not admit him/her to a direct knowledge of God. As finite spirit the human person can only know God through the conversion to the phantasm. So also the person has to externalise his/her fundamental option in the circumstances of his/her life (118). It is in and through the free acts of his/her life that the person creates him/herself in freedom before God and determines his/her salvation: "The question of salvation cannot be answered by bypassing man's historicity and his social nature." (119) Hence love of God, the most basic act which alone can express the person completely (120), has to be mediated through the particular acts of a person's life. We love God through loving our neighbour. "The original relationship to God is .... love of neighbour." (121) Rahner dismisses it as "too cheap and over facile" to regard love of neighbour merely as a moral consequence of loving God, a secondary commandment which must be fulfilled if we are to love God properly (122). He maintains that there is a radical identity between love of neighbour and love of God. Our free decision to love (i.e. respect the true value of our neighbour) is only possible against the transcendental horizon of ultimate value, God. Hence Rahner argues:

all interhuman love, provided only that it has its own moral radicality, is also caritas, (i.e. love also of God), since it is orientated towards God, not indeed by an explicitly categorised motive but by its inescapably given transcendental horizon. (123)

For Rahner, love of neighbour really is love of God. Indeed, love of neighbour is the primary way of loving God (124).

It is radically true... that whoever does not love the brother whom he 'sees', also cannot love God whom he does not see, and that one can love God whom one does not see only by loving one's visible brother. (125)

In this manner, Rahner seeks to establish that soteriological concern does not turn one's attention away from the interpersonal

realm, to value only the 'spiritual' love of God. One's relationship with God must be lived out through one's relationship with other humans. However, this raises the further question as to whether Rahner holds that concern for the interpersonal worldly realm is really important in its own right or whether it is only important in as much as it is a veiled means of responding to God. Is love of neighbour intrinsically important in that it constitutes human fulfilment and in this manner becomes the primary means of the total response of the person to God? Or, is love of neighbour important only in as much as Rahner thinks of it as the primary means of responding to God, as reception of the Blessed Sacrament might once have been so considered in an earlier day? In order to satisfy the demand that Christian soteriological concern be consonant with this worldly concern, only the former possibility is adequate. If love of neighbour constitutes such a radical fulfilment of the human person that it is at once a love of God then we have a firm basis for perceiving our relationship with God as being lived out in a genuine relationship with the present order. However, if the neighbour is only loved as a means of loving God then the neighbour is not really loved at all. Rahner takes the former option.

As we have seen, the human person's subjectivity in knowledge and freedom is only mediated through a relationship with another (126). For Rahner, the human person is essentially related to other persons. Where there is the human person, there is necessarily human community (127): "Man lives in an environment, he is always a being referred to the other - to the other with which he associates, which he accepts, on which he depends." (128) Hence, human fulfilment is found in relationship to other people. Love of neighbour comes to be seen as the basic act through which a person determines him/herself (129). In

this way, Rahner maintains that love of neighbour genuinely is a love of neighbour which fulfils the human person rather than being merely a veiled form of loving God:

love for God's sake - to be precise - does not mean love of God alone in the 'material' of our neighbour merely seen as an opportunity for pure love of God, but really means the love of our neighbour himself, a love empowered by God to obtain its ultimate radicality and a love which really terminates and rests in our neighbour. (130)

Should love of neighbour be thought of as too restricted a notion to take account of the soteriological significance of structural evil in the world, Rahner stresses that it "must not be taken as confined to one's private circle" (131). On the contrary, it is a love that is "socially orientated" (132), it is a love "that carries with it a will to justice and today at least, has also socio-political tasks" (133). Hence it is that Rahner claims that Christianity proclaims the human person to have an earthly task which is of real significance for his/her eternal salvation (134).

That Rahner understands the material interrelatedness of human life to be of essential significance, rather than merely being a means of responding to God, is shown by the emphasis that he places upon its permanent eschatological fulfilment: "If eschatology were to fail to take account of man's physical, spatio-temporal bodily existence then it would become mythology." (135) The whole person (and hence also his/her corporeality) "will be saved" (136). That our perfect communion with God consists in a totality of our being, body and soul, is witnessed to by the bodily resurrection of Christ (137). Christ's humanity is of eternal significance to the believer for it is through his humanity that we are able to approach God (138), and what is true of Christ will be true of us also. In treating of the final eschatological fulfilment of the person's bodily aspect, Rahner does

not neglect to treat of a consummation of the interpersonal realm: "The eschatology of the concrete, individual person can be complete only if we also develop a collective eschatology." (139)

Indeed, it is the communal aspect of eschatology which has precedence in Christian theology through such notions as "the Kingdom of God, the external covenant, the triumphant Church, the new heaven and the new earth" (140). For Rahner, the Christian hope in the future consummation of the interpersonal order should not give rise to a passive awaiting of this future consummation but should rather occasion a permanently revolutionary attitude to the existing structures (141). "The eschatological hope has itself to impose its own stamp upon the framework of the vita saecularis." (142) Hence it is that the interpersonal aspect of human life is not merely a means of attaining to salvation, but is itself fulfilled in the eschatological consummation of salvation.

### 3.8 The inadequacy of Rahner's starting point:

In the present chapter we have followed Rahner as he sought to counter the charge of the meaninglessness of soteriological discourse through grounding salvation language in the human person's fundamental and inescapable openness to God. Salvation is the final consummation of the person's transcendental openness to God, chosen through his/her freely willed disposition of self before God. Again, we have observed how he seeks to reconcile the Christian salvation schema with concern for this world through his understanding of the love of neighbour. Love of neighbour is not merely a moral consequence of loving God, rather it is love of God. Nor is the neighbour loved merely as a means of loving God, love of neighbour is essential to personal fulfilment.



Such love of neighbour extends beyond the confines of one's immediate relationships throughout the socio-political sphere, and finds consummation in the eschatological fulfilment. However, we now have cause to raise two concerns as to the adequacy of Rahner's starting point, his transcendental analysis of the structures of the knowing, willing, individual human subject. Firstly we must ask whether such a starting point will not inevitably lead to a priori generalisations and secondly whether it will not inevitably lead to an over concern with the individual.

*you did not at all understand the due of the term "a priori"*

As we have discussed in Chapters One and Two, the 'classic' approach in theology was unashamedly theocentric and assumed the univocacy of theology with the human endeavour. Human life was commonly held to be, and experienced as, life within the 'praise of God' (143). Theological reflection could assume this context (144). However, the axial rotation in world view and dislocation in human understanding represented by the Enlightenment (145) make such assumptions quite inappropriate to the modern and post-modern climate of the twentieth century (146). The inherited tradition, which was born from reflection on human life as rooted within God and which spoke powerfully to the pre-modern era, now seems like an imposition of an a priori assumption onto human life (147). Given the vastly changed milieu of the twentieth century, we claimed that the central question in contemporary theology is: How are we to continue to speak of the theological dignity of human life in a way that respects the lived experience of human life rather than imposing a priori assumptions onto this experience (148)? How is it possible to articulate a theology univocal with human life when the central presupposition of the classical tradition, that life is rooted in the praise of God, is so profoundly disputed? In Chapters One and Two we argued that the onus

*oh stupidity!*

was upon theology to creatively establish, rather than assume, the univocity of theology with life.

As we have seen, Rahner makes a significant contribution to the attempted resolution of this dilemma. Rather than assume the validity of a theocentric vision and soteriological language, as may have been possible in the pre-modern era, Rahner recognises that this must be established. He recognises that theological language must be relocated within human life. He seeks to do this, as we have seen, through following Kant in a transcendental analysis of the knowing and willing human subject. That is, he seeks to reclaim the validity of a theocentric vision of human life through an anthropocentric starting point.

In this manner he situates 'salvation' in the fulfilment of the human person's transcendental openness to God. However, whilst we approve wholeheartedly of the anthropological shift in theology which Rahner advocates, it remains questionable whether he has gone far enough. He gives more the impression of seeking to justify a theocentric vision in a general way which he then relates to the particularity of human life than he does of seeking to reformulate a theology that is genuinely univocal with human life in its particularity. Rahner's soteriology is focused on an understanding of salvation as the fulfilment of the person's transcendental (i.e. a priori and universal) openness to God. He then relates this understanding of salvation to the particular situations of human life, seeking to show how we live out our response to God in our daily lives. This is a long way short of starting with particular human situations which cry out for a liberating redemption and then seeking to locate the meaning of salvation language in such contexts. In Chapter Two we

→ this very idea  
is mythological  
and pre-modern  
Mr. Rahner!

claimed that just as the quest for salvation stems from particular situations so also salvation language must be rooted in and capable of speaking to, particular situations. Only in this way, we claimed, can salvation language be meaningful. We share O'Leary's concern:

As long as a preacher thinks that the essential gospel is a set of principles, and the rest its metaphysical clothing, then God remains a concept to be applied rather than one whose cause, will, kingdom, or presence is to be found concretely inscribed in the texture of our lives and struggles." (149)

We believe<sup>(1)</sup> that Rahner's apparent inability to root salvation language in particular human situations can be traced back to his starting point. Although Rahner makes the anthropological turn and seeks to establish the univocacy of theology with human life, he does not turn to study human life in its particularity. Rather, he begins with what has the form of an a priori, transcendental analysis of what he takes to be the universally<sup>(1)</sup> given structures of the human subject. Whilst we accept that Rahner's reflections are a posteriori and particular in as much as they are grounded in his own experience of the way that the world is, it is insufficient for him to assume that his own experience is universally valid without pursuing a wide ranging reflection on human experience and painstakingly building up an a posteriori basis for a transcendental analysis. When Rahner does turn his attention to lived human experience in order to give examples of the transcendent dimension of human life he gives more the impression of seeking to justify an a priori conclusion that he has already arrived at, concerning the univocacy of human life with a theocentric vision, than he does of engaging upon a genuinely a posteriori analysis of human life. Nor is it sufficient, we believe, to argue that this is an accidental result of Rahner's order of presentation. Rather, we would claim that it betrays Rahner's ultimate

Come on Murray!  
Is it too a priori.  
or too a posteriori?  
You have to make up  
your mind!

concern. If Rahner had perceived that it was necessary not only to establish that theology is univocal with life but to relocate a theocentric vision of human life in accordance with an a posteriori analysis of life in its particularity then surely his methodology would have reflected this concern?

The present criticism of the use that Rahner makes of the transcendental method should not be taken as being an outright rejection of the transcendental moment in theology per se. We have already noted our agreement with David Tracy that analysis of common human experience requires both a phenomenological moment and a transcendental moment. Hence, we would distinguish our position from such as O'Leary who is suspicious of any transcendental, metaphysical reflection whatsoever on the grounds that: "Transcendental theorizing is possible only at the cost of an extreme simplification and stylization of that about which one wishes to theorize." (150) However, as we maintained in the previous chapter, we believe that the moment of transcendental reflection must follow on the moment of phenomenological (pace Tracy) or semiotic inquiry. Unless this is the case then the inevitable result seems to be abstract generalisations which seek secondary affirmation through a selective use of data. It is this moment of a posteriori analysis that we find to be missing in Rahner's approach. Whilst Rahner does turn his attention to the data of common human experience, this is a secondary pursuit which comes after the prior transcendental analysis. O'Leary states: "the phenomenological fleshing out of the transcendental deduction in Rahner always comes after the speculative fact." (151) O'Leary distinguishes the general concepts which Rahner uses from the poetic language used by Heidegger (152). In the very act of using Heidegger's phenomenological data it becomes subverted by the generalising tendency

of Rahner's a priori starting point. For O'Leary the very fact that Rahner derives his phenomenological data from the work of another thinker suggests that Rahner has not focused on these originary experiences himself (153). He claims that Rahner takes over Heidegger's phenomenological data as an attempt to ground and verify his metaphysical anthropology. Ultimately, O'Leary claims that whilst Heidegger uses phenomenology to overcome metaphysics and to point a way beyond it, Rahner uses it as a way back into metaphysics. He quotes Kerr approvingly: "to go on saying the kind of thing outlined above, after having studied with Heidegger, shows very considerable powers of resistance to the master's main thoughts." (154)

Hence, whilst Rahner seeks to reconcile concern for anthropocentricity and theocentricity through reformulating theology in terms of the essential structures of the human subject, his transcendental starting point can be seen to militate against a genuine concern for human life in its particularity. Certainly, Rahner represents a creative reformulation of the classic approach through his transcendental analysis which seeks to locate salvation language in the transcendental structures of the human person. Rather than assume the univocity of theology with life, Rahner seeks to establish this through his transcendental approach. In developing the transcendental method of Maréchal, Rahner has bequeathed to theology a powerful and creative tool for reflecting upon the data of common human experience and rediscovering the locus of the transcendent God immanent within human life. However, the adequacy of the way in which Rahner employed this method is limited by the fact that his starting point is transcendental analysis rather than common human experience.

We will now turn our attention to the second of our concerns

regarding Rahner's starting point, that is as to whether it displays an excessive concern with the individual's relationship with God. As we have seen, Rahner builds his theology upon a transcendental analysis of the knowing and willing individual human subject. Salvation is thought of as the eternalisation of the person's option for God, or the consummation of the person's openness for God. Rahner equates response to God with love of neighbour. Hence relationships in this order, even political relationships, have a radical significance about them.

However, thus far it seems that Rahner's soteriological concern remains entirely centred upon the individual's salvation and responsibility. Socio-political realities are only included in the sphere of soteriological import in as much as they reflect the concern of the individual to love his/her neighbour with the demands of political love. Whilst such situations might be a real response to neighbour, a real response to God and a real fulfilment of the person, the implicit soteriological concern is not for the salvation of interpersonal human situations but rather for the fulfilment of the individual's eternal destiny. The main soteriological question in Rahner's schema inevitably becomes: How can I live out my eternal destiny in this world? Rather than: How can we hope for a healing liberation of this situation? Whilst we accept that this is a legitimate and highly important soteriological concern, it is not the only soteriological concern in human life. Exclusive focusing upon the eternal destiny of the individual leaves unaffected structural and ecological questions. Further, as we have claimed in Chapter Two, the salvation of the individual cannot be pursued in isolation from the liberation and salvation of the socio-political realities in which the individual finds him/herself. We agree with Metz:

any existential and personal theology that claims to

understand human existence, but not as a political problem in the widest sense, is an abstract theology with regard to the existential situation of the individual. (155)

It might be claimed that we are quibbling over nothing: After all, does not Rahner show great concern that individual salvation and political involvement should not be divorced, and does he not go a long way towards ensuring this? In reply we would accept that Rahner is genuinely concerned to overcome the widespread emphasis upon other-worldly individualism (156). He wants theology to be developed with a view to its significance for:

social politics and the shaping of history, and thereby the exaggeratedly narrow and individualist view of revelation as pertaining to the salvation of the individual in isolation would have to be overcome. (157)

Yet having accepted this, we would continue to claim that we are not splitting hairs but rather pointing to a fundamental inadequacy in Rahner's approach to soteriology. If Rahner's soteriology reflects a concern as to how the individual's eternal destiny might be lived out in the present world rather than a concern for the redemption of interpersonal situations then it can be seen to stand within the western cult of, and obsession with, personal fulfilment and authentic existence. Adorno disparagingly refers to this aura as The Jargon of Authenticity (158). In this jargon the profound alienation of the human community and consequent need of a liberation extending throughout the structures of human life is packaged into a manageable quest for personal authenticity: "the jargon bars the message from the experience which is to ensoul it." (159) Such a quest can only be a problem for a person with enough leisure, education and security to worry over such things. In short it reflects the concerns of the comfortable in the western world and is entirely irrelevant to people whose only question is as to whether life might become bearable,

whether they might be freed from the crushing evil (personal and structural) in human life. In such situations, salvation schemas of self-realisation are irrelevant in that they appear to raise to the level of utmost importance what is only of peripheral concern. In contrast we seek the redeeming presence of God within the interpersonal dimensions of life. We do not just cry out for a personal liberation and hope that this can be reconciled with a positive attitude towards the world rather we experience the way in which human life is lived as unbearable and we ask whether there are grounds for hope. Whilst Rahner clearly intends to reconcile soteriological concern and concern for this world, his emphasis upon the eternal destiny of the individual in relation to God militates against this concern. As Metz says:

does not such a transcendental-existential approach... concentrate the necessarily historically realized salvation of man too much as the question of whether the individual freely accepts or rejects this constitution of his being? (160)

We may compare this with Timothy Gorringer's summary of the Augustinian view of history:

The important thing in history is not the process but each individual's meeting with God which is as available to a life 'measured out in coffee spoons' as it is to a life lived in sound and fury. It asserts therefore the eternal significance of each individual's life, and on this ground relegates the process to an entirely secondary importance. (161)

Such a focus upon the individual is well nigh inevitable due to Rahner's metaphysics which, in line with the dominant strand in western philosophy, is a metaphysics of the autonomous subject. For Rahner, being is fundamentally being with self. Whilst Rahner acknowledges that we are only ourselves through being with others, this is simply due to our finite nature which already finds us given over into the other of matter. In contrast to us, God who is perfect being has no need to be with God's other. In itself this metaphysics of the



autonomous subject is a very questionable position to hold. Various strands of thought from the fields of psychology, the dialogical philosophers, liberation theologians and process thinkers cohere in their repudiation of the notion of the autonomous human subject (162). In contrast they would maintain that being is essentially being with others, that human life is marked by an essentially interpersonal and communitarian nature. In the second chapter of the present work we outlined our support for this position (163).

Kerr also points to the inadequacy of Rahner's concern with the individual human subject (164) but from a different angle. Whereas we have criticised Rahner's ontology of the autonomous nature of Being, Kerr applies the Wittgensteinian critique of private languages to Rahner's starting point: Rahner's transcendental analysis of knowledge is based upon the claim that prior to any thematic, conceptualised knowledge, there is an unthematic, pre-conceptual pre-apprehension of the subjective pole of self-consciousness. For Kerr, such talk of a "subjective consciousness of the knower" going on "behind the back of the knower" (165) is to be equated with the private language so disdained by Wittgenstein. With Wittgenstein, Kerr argues that such private language 'hijacks' the essentially corporate nature of language as a means of social communication and seeks rather to establish the roots of language in the mind of the autonomous knowing subject (166). Hence, whilst Rahner believes that the turn to the subject in modern philosophy provides the basis for a firm establishment of Christian soteriology through a transcendental analysis which shows man to be fundamentally open to God, in contrast Kerr concurs with Wittgenstein that the turn to the individual human subject is an inadmissible starting point for philosophy.

We believe that Rahner's transcendental methodology provides a rich and creative resource for modern theology. However, we believe that there are two fundamental weaknesses in this methodology as it is developed by Rahner. Firstly, the fact that he starts with a transcendental analysis rather than with a phenomenological/semiotic analysis of common human experience seriously limits his ability to engage in genuine dialogue with the particularity of human life. Secondly, his focus upon the individual human subject results in an over concern with a soteriology of individual/personal salvation. In short his soteriology can only be applied to human life in its particularity and communality in a secondary manner and it thus perpetuates the least helpful elements that have crept into Christian soteriology. Mindful of the limitations of Rahner's starting point, we will turn in the following chapters to continue our examination of his soteriological schema. We should not be surprised if we find that his a priori perspective causes him to have a formalistic approach to grace which is far too ready to state that human life is graced without saying how it is graced unto liberation. Nor should we be surprised to find that he can only conceive of God's activity in the world in a generalised manner. Before we turn in Chapter Five to consider his understanding of freedom as graced freedom we shall examine in Chapter Four his understanding of the dark of side of human freedom.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER THREE

1. Immanuel Kant, A Critique of Pure Reason, tr. N Kemp Smith, (London: Macmillan 1929).
2. In 1791 he wrote: "The transcendental philosophy, that is, the teaching concerning the possibility of all a priori knowledge which is the critique of Pure Reason,.... has as its purpose the establishment of metaphysics." Kant, Welches sind die wirklichen Fortschritte, die die Metaphysik seit Leibnizens und Wolfs Zeiten in Deutschland gemacht hat?, (Berlin: 1804), A43, quoted in Francis P. Fiorenza's Introduction to K. Rahner, Spirit in the World, (London: Sheed and Ward 1968), pp. xx.
3. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A50 B74, pp. 92.
4. ibid., B75 A52, pp. 93.
5. ibid., A582 B610, pp. 494.
6. ibid.
7. ibid., A580 B608, pp. 493.
8. cf. "philosophy today and hence theology too cannot and must not return to the stage before modern philosophy's transcendental anthropological change of direction since Descartes, Kant, German Idealism (including its opponents) up to modern Phenomenology, Existentialism and Fundamental Ontology... We must accept the situation in all its fundamental essence, as a factor henceforward indispensable in a modern Christian philosophy and so too in modern Christian theology." K. Rahner, "Theology And Anthropology", Theological Investigations Volume IX, (London: DLT 1972), quoted in G. A. McCool, A Rahner Reader, (London: DLT 1975), pp. 72-73.
9. ibid.
10. K. Rahner, Geist in Welt: Zur Metaphysik der endliches Erkeintrus bei Thomas von Aquin, (Innsbruck: Verlag Felizlan Ramb 1939). All references here are to the English translation of the Second German Edition edited by J. B. Metz in 1957: K. Rahner, Spirit in The World, (London: Sheed and Ward 1968). Henceforth referred to as Spirit.
11. "Can the intellect, using only the species it has and not turning to sense images, actually understand?" St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Ia. Q.84 A.7., edited and translated by Paul T. Durbin, (London: Blackfriars in conjunction with Eyre and Spottiswoode 1968).
12. id., Horer des Wortes: Zur Grudlegung eines Religions Philosophie (Munchen: Verlag Kosel-Pustet 1941). Henceforth referred to as Hearers. All references here are to the English translation of the First German Edition edited by J. Donceel excerpts from which are printed in: G. A. McCool, A Rahner Reader, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd 1975) pp. 1-65.

13. "The present work is entitled Spirit In The World. By spirit I mean a power which reaches out beyond the world and knows the metaphysical. World is the name of the reality which is accessible to the immediate experience of man." Rahner, Spirit, pp. liii.
14. cf., A. Carr, The Theological Method Of Karl Rahner, (Missoula: Scholars Press 1977).
15. Rahner, "Theology And Anthropology", Theological Investigations Vol. IX, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd 1972), quoted in McCool, pp. 66. Theological Investigations henceforth referred to as T.I. Vol.
16. ibid., cf. "Since theology deals with man's salvation (in as much as it consists of God's self-communication) and really with nothing else, its subject matter is the perfect totality of man: man is the 'subject' in the strict sense of the word and not a particular along with others." id., "Transcendental Theology", Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi, (London: Burns & Oates 1977), pp. 1748. Henceforth referred to as E.T.
17. cf. "Therefore, if one wishes to pursue dogmatics as transcendental anthropology, it means that whenever one is confronted with an object of dogma, one inquires as to the conditions necessary for it to be known by the theological subject, ascertaining that the a priori conditions for knowledge of the object are satisfied, and showing that they imply and express something about the object, the mode, method and limits of knowing it." id., "Theology And Anthropology", T.I. Vol. IX, quoted in McCool, pp. 67. cf. "The discovery of such connections between the content of dogma and man's experience of himself is, in actual fact however, nothing else but the required change to a transcendental anthropological method in theology. Thus today's demand for it is founded on reasons of fundamental theology and apologetics." ibid., quoted in McCool, pp. 74.
18. ibid., quoted in McCool, pp. 69.
19. Kant, op. cit., B75 A52, pp. 93.
20. "It is impossible for our intellect in the present state of life, in which it is united with receptive corporeality, to know anything actually without turning to the phantasms." Rahner, Spirit, pp. 5.
21. "How, according to Thomas, human knowing can be spirit in the world, is the question which is the concern of this work... For this reason the work could have been entitled, Conversion To The Phantasm." ibid., pp. liii. cf., pp. 63-65.
22. "in and through the knowledge of world there must open up the possibility of an access to a 'beyond the world'", ibid., pp. 17.
23. ibid., pp. liii.
24. ibid., pp. 57.

25. "He can place everything in question. In his openness to everything and anything, whatever can come to expression can be at least a question for him." Rahner, Foundations Of Christian Faith, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd 1978), pp. 31-32. Henceforth referred to as FCF.
26. cf., id., Spirit, pp. 57-59.
27. cf., id., Hearers, Chapter 3 (McCool pp. 3ff).
28. cf., id., Spirit, pp. 68. cf., id., Hearers, pp. 60-61 (McCool pp. 6).
29. cf., id., Spirit, pp. 68-69. cf. "In the metaphysical question about being we inquire first about all being as such. This implies that the nature of being is to know and to be known in an original unity. We shall call this the self-presence or luminosity of being." Hearers, (McCool pp. 6).
30. cf., id., Spirit, pp. 71.
31. ibid., pp. 71ff.
32. "the intensity of knowledge is parallel to the intensity of being, that an existent is present-to-itself insofar as it is being, and that, vice versa, the degree of this 'subjectivity' is the measure of an existent's intensity of being." ibid., pp. 72. cf., ibid., pp. 162, 402.
33. cf., id., FCF, pp. 14-19.
34. cf. "In the original and basic concept of knowledge which alone provides a means of interpreting metaphysically all concrete modes of knowledge, knowledge is not an 'intentional' stretching out of the knower to an object it is not an objectivity in the sense of the going forth of the knower out of himself to something other not an externally orientated entering into contact with an object by means of the cognitive faculty; it is primarily the being present to itself (Beisichsein) of an entity, the inner illuminatedness of an entity for itself on the basis of its determinate grade of being (immateriality), it is a being-reflected-upon-itself (Insuhreflektiertheit)." id., "Some Implications Of The Scholastic Concept Of Uncreated Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 327.
35. cf. "The knowing subject possesses in knowledge both itself and its knowledge... In knowledge not only is something known, but the subject's knowing is always co-known." id., FCF, pp. 17-18.
36. cf. "The subjective consciousness of the knower always remains unthematic in the primary knowledge of an object presenting itself from without." ibid., pp. 18.
37. ibid., pp. 20.
38. cf. "The original self-presence of the subject in the actual realization of his existence strives to translate itself more and more into the conceptual, into the objectified, into language,

into communication with another. Everyone strives to tell another, especially someone he loves, what he is suffering." ibid., pp. 16.

39. id., Spirit, pp. 34. cf. "Consequently, there is metaphysics for man only insofar as he has already made use of it for his physics." ibid., pp. 391.
40. For the discussion of sensibility, ibid., pp. 78-116.
41. "When man begins to ask about being in its totality, he finds himself already and invariably away from himself, situated in the world, in the other through sensibility. Sensibility means the givenness of being (which is being-present-to-self) over to the other, to matter." ibid., pp. 117. cf., ibid., pp. 79.
42. For the discussion of abstraction, ibid., pp. 117-213.
43. For what follows cf., ibid., pp. 120-131.
44. "The singular concept always already contains in itself a universal ('this thing of this kind'), and the universal as such is still related to a 'this' ('the kind of this thing'), or is itself conceived as a 'this of this kind'." ibid., pp. 121. cf. "Every objective knowledge is always and in every case the reference of a universal to a 'this'." ibid., pp. 122.
45. "Usually the subject of a proposition is not a 'this' which is completely indetermined in itself. It is already by itself the synthesis of an empty 'this' with a universal, known intelligibility. The same holds, and in fact necessarily, for the predicate of the proposition. The universal concept of a predicate must already be concretized before it is ascribed to the subject; it must already be thought of as related to a possible subject." ibid., pp. 123-124.
46. ibid., pp. 124.
47. ibid., pp. 125. cf. "In so far as thought necessarily thinks objectively there is no thought without the affirmation of an in-itself." ibid.
48. ibid., pp. 138-142.
49. ibid., pp. 140.
50. cf. "Now this 'more' can obviously not be a single object of the same kind as the one whose abstracting knowledge it is supposed to make possible. Otherwise the same question would come up again. This 'more' can only be the absolute range of all known objects as such." McCool, op. cit., pp. 15.
51. ibid.
52. cf., Rahner, Spirit, pp. 142-201.
53. cf., McCool, op. cit., pp. 16-21.

54. ibid., pp. 16.
55. ibid.
56. McCool, op. cit., pp. 17-18.
57. "We can know that the totality of the objects of human knowledge is finite only if we read beyond this finiteness" ibid., pp. 18.
58. "de Ver; 22, 1 ad 1" quoted in McCool, op. cit., pp. 20.
59. Rahner, FCF, pp. 60.
60. Rahner, op. cit., pp. 51-52.
61. cf. "as the condition of the possibility of all knowledge of objects, the vorgriff itself never represents an object in itself." McCool, op. cit., pp. 18. cf., Rahner, FCF, pp. 64.
62. Rahner, op. cit., pp. 62. cf., ibid., pp. 57-65.
63. ibid., pp. 53.
64. ibid., pp. 55.
65. id., Hearers, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 in McCool, op. cit., pp. 23-35.
66. McCool, op. cit., pp. 26.
67. Rahner, T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 36-73.
68. ibid., pp. 37.
69. id., T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 49.
70. ibid., pp. 51.
71. ibid., pp. 37.
72. cf., "The horizon of human existence which grounds and encompasses all human knowledge is a mystery." id., FCF, pp. 12.
73. id., FCF, pp. 44.
74. cf., ibid., pp. 21-22.
75. ibid., pp. 23.
76. ibid., pp. 21.
77. Rahner, FCF, pp. 44-50. cf., id., Grace In Freedom, (London: Burns and Oates 1968), pp. 183-191.
78. cf. "it is the final word before we become silent, the word which allows all the individual things we can name to disappear into the background, the word in which we are dealing with the totality which grounds them all." id., FCF, pp. 46-47.

79. ibid., pp. 40.
80. ibid., pp. 48.
81. ibid., pp. 59-61.
82. cf. "Insofar as this subjective, non-objective luminosity of the subject in its transcendence is always orientated towards the holy mystery, the knowledge of God is always present unthematically and without name, and not just when we begin to speak of it." ibid., pp. 21.
83. ibid., pp. 68-71.
84. cf., McCool, op. cit., pp. 20.
85. cf., id., Spirit, pp. liii.
86. cf., D. Lane, Foundations For A Social Theology: Praxis, Process And Salvation, (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan 1984), pp. 67-74.
87. ibid., pp. 31-45.
88. ibid., pp. 32.
89. ibid., pp. 33.
90. ibid., pp. 36-41.
91. ibid., pp. 39.
92. ibid., pp. 40. Rahner reiterates his understanding of love perfecting knowledge in his essay "The Concept Of Mystery In Catholic Theology", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 36-73. cf., ibid., pp. 42-44.
93. McCool, op. cit., pp. 41.
94. ibid., pp. 41-45.
95. cf. "The necessity of his self-affirmation implies already a directive which tells him how he must understand himself." McCool, op. cit., pp. 42.
96. ibid.
97. ibid., pp. 43.
98. ibid.
99. ibid.
100. McCool, op. cit., pp. 43.
101. ibid., pp. 44.
102. id., FCF, pp. 21.



103. id., "Theology Of Freedom", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 185. cf. "For originally and ultimately moral freedom is not so much a decision with regard to an objectively presented individual value-object as a decision with regard to the freely operative subject himself." id., "The Theological Concept Of Concupiscentia", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 36. cf. "When freedom is really understood, it is not the power to be able to do this or that, but the power to decide about oneself and to actualize oneself." id., FCF, pp. 38.
104. id., "The Theological Concept Of Concupiscentia", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 36. cf. "there is unlimited transcendence towards being as such and hence indifference with regard to any particular finite object within the horizon of this transcendence in even individual act concerned with a finite object is directed towards the original unity of being as such." id., "Theology Of Freedom", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 179.
105. cf. "Freedom, therefore, has a theological character not only when and where God is represented explicitly and side by side with other objects in the objectivity of categories, but always and everywhere by the nature of freedom itself, since God is present unthematically in every act of freedom as its supporting ground and ultimate orientation." id., "Theology Of Freedom", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 150.
106. id., FCF, pp. 65-66.
107. cf. "It is decisive for the Christian understanding of freedom, however, that this freedom is not only made possible by God and is not only related to him as the supporting horizon of the freedom of choice in categories, but that it is freedom vis-à-vis and himself. This is the frightening mystery of freedom in its Christian understanding." id., "Theology Of Freedom", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 180.
108. cf., ibid., pp. 181.
109. id., FCF, pp. 96. cf. "Freedom is rather the capacity to make oneself once and for all, the capacity which of its nature is directed towards the freely willed finality of the subject as such." id., "Theology Of Freedom", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 183. cf. "Freedom is the capacity to do something uniquely final, something which is finally valid precisely because it is done in freedom. Freedom is the capacity for the eternal." ibid., pp. 186.
110. cf. "Freely posited salvation or damnation, consisting in the gaining or loss of God, must not be understood as a merely external reaction of a judging or rewarding God." ibid., pp. 187. cf., FCF, pp. 39.
111. cf. "It does not primarily signify an 'objective' achievement but rather a 'subjective', existential healing and fulfilment of life." id., "Salvation", Concise Theological Dictionary, (London: Darton Longman and Todd 1968), pp. 419. Concise Theological Dictionary hereafter referred to as CTD.
112. id., FCF, pp. 39. cf. "This means that man does not merely perform actions which, though they must be qualified morally, also

always pass away again (and which after that are imparted to him merely juridically or morally) man by his free decision really is so good or evil in the very ground of his being itself that his final salvation or damnation are really already given in this, even though perhaps in a still hidden manner." id., "Theology Of Freedom", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 184.

113. cf. "The experience of radical questioning and man's ability to place himself in question are things which a finite system cannot accomplish." id., FCF, pp. 30. cf. "In the fact that man raises analytical questions about himself and opens himself to the unlimited horizons of such questioning, he has already transcended himself and every conceivable element of such an analysis or of an empirical reconstruction of himself." ibid., pp. 29.
114. cf., ibid., pp. 27-31.
115. ibid., pp. 29.
116. id., "Theology Of Freedom", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 184.
117. cf. "The most tremendous thing which has been granted to man is: the choice, freedom. And if you desire to save it and preserve it there is only one way: in the very same second unconditionally and in complete resignation to give it back to God, and yourself with it." Søren Kierkegaard, The Journals Of Kierkegaard, edited and translated by Alexander Dru, (London: Oxford University Press 1938), pp. 372.
118. cf. "Human freedom, even in the case when it prepares to be directly and explicitly freedom vis-à-vis God, is always freedom with regard to some category of object and vis-à-vis some intramundane thou, since even such an act of an explicit yes or no towards God cannot conduct itself directly in relation to the God of original, transcendental experience but only to the God of explicit, conceptual reflection, to God in the concept and not directly and alone to the God of transcendental presence." ibid., pp. 189. cf. "The relationship to God in its directness is necessarily mediated by intramundane communication." ibid.
119. id., FCF, pp. 40.
120. "What is the basic act of man into which quite absolutely he can synthesise his whole nature and life, the act which can embrace everything and incorporate everything within itself, everything which goes under the name of man and the life of man, happiness and despair, everyday life and starlight hours, sin and redemption, past and present. Yet this is really the case; the love of God, and this love alone, is capable of embracing everything... Love of God is the only total integration of human existence, and we have only grasped it in its dignity and all embracing greatness if we have understood it to be this and once we suspect that it must be the content of the eternity with God himself which is born out of it." id., "Theology Of Freedom", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 187. cf., ibid., pp. 188.
121. ibid., pp. 189.

122. cf., id., "The Church's Commission, T.I. Vol. XIV, pp. 303.
123. id., "On The Unity Of Love Of Neighbour And Love Of God", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 238. cf. "Whenever a genuine love of man attains its proper nature and its moral absoluteness and depth, it is in addition always so underpinned and heightened by God's saving grace that it is also love of God, whether it be explicitly considered to be such a love by the subject or not." ibid., pp. 237. cf., id., "Theological Justification For The Church's Development Work", T.I. Vol. XX, pp. 67. cf., id., "The Church's Commission", T.I. Vol. XIV, pp. 303-306.
124. cf. "Love thy neighbour..... is not to begin with just any of the many coexisting morally right reactions of man towards his own reality and that of his surroundings, but is the sum total of the moral as such." id., "Unity Of Love Of Neighbour And Love Of God", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 240.
125. ibid., pp. 247.
126. cf. "the known personal that is the mediation, the 'being-within oneself' of the subject." ibid., T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 241. cf. "the free self-disposal, when morally right and perfect, is precisely the loving communication with the human Thou as such." ibid. cf. "In knowledge, and freedom, which are the concrete realization of life, the I is always related to a thou, is primarily as much with the Thou as with the I, always only experiences itself as differentiated from and identified with the other in the encounter with the other person." id., T.I. Vol. XIII, pp. 127.
127. id., "Theological Reflections On Monogenism", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 287.
128. id., "The Man Of Today And Religion", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 5. cf. "This environment of persons is the world through which man finds and fulfils himself." id., "Unity Of Love Of Neighbour And Love Of God", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 240.
129. cf. "the act of personal love for another human being is therefore the all embracing basic act of man which gives meaning direction and measure to everything else." ibid., pp. 241. cf. "the whole incalculable mystery of man is contained and exercised in this act of love of neighbour." ibid., pp. 242.
130. ibid., pp. 244. cf., ibid., pp. 247.
131. id., "The Unreadiness Of The Church's Members To Accept Poverty", T.I. Vol. XIV, pp. 271. cf. "love of neighbour.... is not merely a private relationship between individuals with the static, existing structures of society." id., "Theological Justification For The Church's Development Work", T.I. Vol. XX, pp. 69. cf. "Love of neighbour has as its concrete object in changing of these sociological conditions under which love of neighbour as a private activity has to be practised." ibid.
132. id., "On The Theology Of Revolution", T.I. Vol. XIV, pp. 317.
133. id., "Theological Justification For The Church's Development

- Work", T.I. Vol. XX, pp. 70. cf. "The love of neighbour must become the sober service of 'political' love as well, whose concern is the whole of mankind, turning the most distant person into the nearest neighbour." id., "Christian Humanism", T.I. Vol. IX, pp. 188.
134. cf., id., "The Passion And Asceticism", T.I. Vol. III, pp. 59. cf., id., "The Function Of The Church As The Critic Of Society", T.I. Vol. XII, pp. 241.
135. cf., id., "The Hermeneutics Of Eschatological Assertion", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 341. cf., id., FCF, pp. 434.
136. id., "The Secret Of Life", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 152.
137. cf., id., "The Interpretation Of The Dogma Of The Assumption", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 222.
138. "one arrives continually by continually passing through this mediating centre of Christ's humanity. This is analogous to the fact that we ourselves never cease being creatures even when we become partakers of the Godhead." id., "The Eternal Significance Of The Humanity Of Jesus For Our Relationship With God", T.I. Vol. III, pp. 46.
139. id., FCF, pp. 444-445. cf. "It is quite impossible for the resurrection to be an individual event, because our 'bodily condition' (whether glorified or not) is simply the outward aspect of the spirit, which the spirit forms for itself in matter so as to be open to the rest of the world, and which in consequence necessarily includes a community of a bodily kind with a bodily Thou (and not just with God's spirit)." id., "The Interpretation Of The Dogma Of The Assumption", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 219.
140. cf., id., "The Unity Of Spirit And Matter In The Christian Understanding Of Faith", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 162.
141. cf., id., "On The Theology Of Hope", T.I. Vol. X, pp. 257.
142. id., "The Theological Problems Entailed In The Idea Of The 'New Earth', T.I. Vol. X, pp. 265.
143. cf., D. W. Hardy and D. F. Ford, Jubilate: Theology In Praise, (London: DLT 1984), pp. 177-189. cf. "There was normally no such clear gap between the ways of biblical presentation and those of post-biblical writers as is so often supposed. Common to them was the supposition of a dynamic unity of God and man, whose basis in the nature of God himself was enacted for man in Jesus and the Holy Spirit." ibid., pp. 178.
144. We may compare again here the passage that we have already quoted from Hardy and Ford in footnote 39, page 34 of the present thesis: "For them, the context of monastic life, with its daily round of manual work and study and worship, was extremely important... Correspondingly, when we attempt to understand such major figures as Anselm of Canterbury, or Thomas Aquinas, we must remember that their work was 'enclosed' in a corporate life of praise; and even those who were not themselves 'religious' like Dante Alighieri,

lived within surroundings deeply affected by the presence of the same ideals as those which shaped monastic life. For life itself, with all the sciences, arts and forms of behaviour of which it was made up, was seen to achieve its truth as and when it was fulfilled in the glorification of God who had created and redeemed it and would bring it to its final shape." ibid., pp. 182-183.

145. cf. "As there came new developments in the theory of knowledge, and in supporting technology, powerful alternatives to the received traditions were provided... whether they be John Locke, Isaac Newton, Rene Descartes or Benedict Spinoza or others after them, including Kant and Hegel much later, the movement of praise is radically displaced, usually with the aim of reducing man's knowledge and the universe to a unified and uniform whole, in so doing also displacing the objects of praise (God) to a position in keeping with their 'systems'." ibid., pp. 190.
146. cf., ibid., pp. 11-13. cf. "At present the 'conventional' wisdom of our society is certainly not that one's life should be based on the reality of God." ibid., pp. 13. cf. "there have almost always been competing movements which in various ways undermine this movement of God's life with man; some do so purposefully, in open disagreement, others accidentally. (In modern times, the prominence of such competing movements has become increasingly great, as time and time again alternative standpoints have been presented which suggest that these inner movements of life are alienated from their proper nature by being associated with the movements of God's life with man.) These often, though not always, propose a radically different direction for the proper life of man, and are associated with drastically different properties for praise." ibid., pp. 173.
147. cf. "More important is to recognize some of the factors which contribute to the loss of knowing in praise of God during the period. In some of these, the traditions of the past, for themselves or in distorted form, played a contributing role. For example, the persistence of scholasticism, associated with the continued use of Aristotelian-based educational methods in universities, brought a drastic reshaping of the praise-constituted theologies of pre-Reformation and Reformation alike. The consistent emphasis on the praise which occurs in the movement of life and knowledge, which marked earlier periods, now became a rigid system of belief whereby series of statements were derived deductively from a first cause." ibid., pp. 189.
148. cf. "After we have reviewed the complexities of the history of the life of praise, and the regular dislocations and distortions to which this life has been subject, it is little wonder that man today appears anxious and perplexed. Far from understanding himself, his thought and action, as caught up in a movement of praise for God - one which should make him relaxed and hopeful - his activities seem fragmented, bound together only by the fact that they are his, for what he can make of them. And, so far as his history is concerned, far from being a thrust towards an unconditioned truth and freedom in which there arises genuine hopefulness through anticipation (which, as we saw earlier, is another form of praise), it is more frequently seen as a series of complex accidents. What are the resources available today for the

- recovery of the movement of knowledge in the praise of God?" ibid., pp. 196.
149. Joseph Stephen O'Leary, Questioning Back: The Overcoming Of Metaphysics In The Christian Tradition, (New York, Chicago & Minneapolis: A Seabury Book Winston Press 1985), pp. 73.
  150. ibid., pp. 96. cf. "Can any generalizing discourse about human being do justice to the pluralism of its manifestations?... Even to take the first step of ensconcing oneself in the transcendental horizon one must consign the phenomena to the status of mere appearance, in the classical Platonic gesture... Faith is abducted into the recesses of transcendental consciousness and becomes disengaged from the historical contexts in which alone Christ is to be encountered." ibid.
  151. ibid., pp. 89. cf. "But this unthematized original fact never becomes the focus of an autonomous phenomenological inquiry. It is approached from within the metaphysical perspective and articulated solely in terms of that perspective" ibid., pp. 90.
  152. ibid., pp. 1-90.
  153. cf. "the derivative character of theological language - whether derived from scripture, metaphysics or existentialism - testifies to a lack of engagement with the texture of experience." ibid., pp. 94.
  154. ibid., pp. 93. cf., Fergus Kerr, "Rahner Retrospective III Transcendence Or Finitude", New Blackfriars Vol. 62, no. 735, (September 1981), pp. 376.
  155. J. B. Metz, Faith In History And Society: Toward A Practical Fundamental Theology, (London: Burns & Oates 1980), pp. 62-63.
  156. Rahner, "The Function Of The Church As A Critic Of Society", T.I. Vol. XII, pp. 237-238.
  157. id., "Theological Reflections On The Problem Of Secularisation", T.I. Vol. X, pp. 336.
  158. T. W. Adorno, The Jargon Of Authenticity, translated by Knut Tarnowski and Frederick Will, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1973).
  159. ibid., pp. 6.
  160. J. B. Metz, Foreword to Spirit, pp. xvii.
  161. T. Gorringe, Redeeming Time: Atonement Through Education, (London: DLT 1986), pp. 51.
  162. For an excellent survey of this terrain and its bearing upon Trinitarian theology compare the recent article by John O'Donnell S.I., "The Trinity As Divine Community. A Critical Reflection Upon Recent Theological Developments", Gregorianum (69), 1, 1988, (Rome: Gregorian University 1988) pp. 5-34.
  163. Whilst not wanting to ignore the solitude in human life, we would

want to avoid any suggestion that solitude was to be identified with an infinite isolation at the heart of human life. Rather we would maintain that solitude was the birth place of radical solidarity with the human condition. cf., Austin Smith, Passion For The Inner City, (London: Sheed & Ward 1983), pp. 75-77.

164. cf., Kerr, Theology After Wittgenstein, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1986). cf., id., "Rahner Retrospective III - Transcendence Or Finitude", New Blackfriars, Vol. 62, no. 735, (September 1981), pp. 370-379.

165. cf., Rahner, FCF, pp. 18.

166. cf., Kerr, Theology After Wittgenstein, pp. 11.

#### CHAPTER FOUR: SIN AND GUILT AS RADICAL DETERMINANTS OF HUMAN LIFE.

In the last chapter we discussed Rahner's profound understanding of the dynamic nature of human freedom and its consequent dark side. We pondered whether Rahner, carried away on the wings of enlightenment optimism, had remained blind to this dark side. We asked whether Rahner's understanding of salvation is thoroughly subjective or whether it is an objectively given healing liberation which is appropriated subjectively. In the present chapter we shall see that Rahner does indeed provide an account of human evil as profound as his account of human freedom. Rahner frees us from fear of a wrathful God only to remind us that our own capacities for radical and final evil should strike fear and humility into our hearts. The present chapter will provide the backdrop for Chapter Five. There we shall turn to focus on the place of the supernatural existential in Rahner's soteriology. It is through the supernatural existential that Rahner seeks to secure an objective salvation that is appropriated subjectively.

Rahner uses the terms sin and guilt (Schuld) seemingly interchangeably to refer to freely determined acts which constitute a 'no' to God. The German word Schuld has a broader meaning than the English word guilt. Whereas guilt is normally taken as referring to the moral state of having sinned and the consequences which that brings with it, the German word encompasses this meaning whilst referring primarily to the sinful act. One is not only guilty in the legal sense of having committed a wrong act, nor is one merely guilty in the psychological sense of feeling guilty. Guilt refers primarily to that existential state of freely choosing to alienate oneself from one's true being. When we refer to guilt in the present chapter it should be taken in this broader sense unless otherwise indicated.



To recapitulate on Rahner's understanding of freedom, freedom is not so much the choice between various disparate acts but rather the subject's choice of self (1). Through his/her various free acts the human subject creates him/herself into the person he/she wishes to be (2). Hence, freedom is not to be seen as a neutral capacity. A person's future freedom is circumscribed by previous acts of free disposition (3).

Rahner's understanding of sin and guilt are consonant with his understanding of freedom. Acts of sin and guilt are not just disparate and superficial without any lasting effect into the future: "Sin is not a contingent act which I performed in the past and whose effect is no longer with me." (4) Rather, the particular sinful and guilty deeds of a person's life form a radical determination of the person, s/he actually becomes sinful:

Sin determines man in a definite way; He has not only sinned, but he himself is a sinner. He is a sinner not only by a formal, juridical, imputation of a former act, but also in an existential way, so that in looking back on our past actions, we always find ourselves to be sinners. (5)

Hence past sins form the person in the present and influence future acts. Whilst sin and guilt do refer to particular acts in which the person rejects God, their primary reference is to the final state of enduring opposition to God which we form ourselves into through these particular acts: "guilt regarded theologically is primarily and in its most proper essential ground the total and definitive decision of man against God." (6)

Because the horizon of all freedom is God, sin is an act of self-contradiction, indeed Rahner refers to it as "theological and metaphysical suicide." (7) Sin and guilt represent real possibilities that are open before the human person and which threaten his/her

existence (8). The radical depth of sin for Rahner is to be seen in three ways: firstly in that sin inevitably produces punitive suffering in the sinner; secondly in that the effects of sin last into the future and so rule out the practical possibility of instantaneous conversions and thirdly in that the person can close him/herself off to God in a radical 'no' and so choose eternal damnation. We will turn our attention to each of these points in the order in which we have outlined them.

Rahner insists that whatever the phrase punishment of sins may be taken to mean it is not to be thought of as equivalent to the punishment which one incurs for breaking the stipulations of the civil law (9). Indeed he explicitly berates the view which would hold the punishment of sins to be "something which is extrinsically imposed on man by the justice of God, conceived merely as something vindictive" (10). In contrast, Rahner understands the punishment due to sin as being due to the intrinsic make-up of the created order. "In other words, can we not say that man and the world (including the realities beyond), have been constituted by God in such a way that sin punishes itself?" (11) How is it that nature is so constituted that sin punishes itself? As we have seen in Chapter Three, Rahner understands the person to be spirit in matter. When the spiritual person determines him/herself in freedom the spiritual act of freedom embodies itself in the exterior of the being (12). However, the person's exterior being, materiality or nature, is different from his/her personal core. His/her nature has certain a priori structures given it by God and orienting it towards God. In as much as a sinful act of personal freedom contradicts the person's basic orientation towards God the sinful act embodies itself in his/her exterior being in a way which contradicts the fundamental structures of his/her exterior being. This

gives rise to a tension:

When the seminal, personal act is formed into his medium in a manner contradicting its a priori structures, it experiences the resistance offered by these structures as a conflict and hence as suffering. (13)

This tension in the exterior being of the person necessarily causes pain: "It is the painful protest of the reality which God has fashioned against the false decision of man." (14) The person who has caused this tension to arise, due to the exteriorization of his/her own sin, experiences the pain and suffering as punishment for his/her sin (15). Rahner stresses that punishment is intrinsic to sin, "sin punishes itself" (16), rather than being vindictively given by God:

all divine punishment is a connatural consequence of guilt flowing from the proper nature of guilt and need not be specially added by God: and that therefore God is the punisher of sin by having created the objective structures of man and the world. (17)

In this manner, Rahner distances himself from the disobedience model of sin that we rejected in articulating our criteria in Chapter Two. The suffering that is consequent upon sin is not thought of here as an external punishment imposed by God for having broken divine commands. Rather Rahner understands suffering to be an inevitable and intrinsic consequence of sin. Rahner further claims that the person's free decision takes real effect in his/her being, and continues to take effect even when the person changes his/her free decision (18):

Such incarnations of man's personal decision of freedom in the exterior of the person (and, beyond this, in his surroundings) are not simply cancelled out again, once they have taken place, by a change of disposition in the spiritual nucleus of the person through contrition etc." (19)

Hence the punishment due to sin continues on long after the sinner has distanced himself from his sinful act. In maintaining the lasting effects of sin, Rahner is consistent with his theology of freedom (20). He pursues the dark side of his anthropology and understands the

implications in terms of the bondage that past sinful acts bring in their wake. On this understanding of freedom and sin, conversion becomes problematic in the extreme. Past acts cannot simply be forgotten about for they form a person's present (21). Nor can they easily be overcome for they cause deeply ingrained attitudes, and aftereffects in the person (22). Rahner states:

it is - let us note - not very easy to explain how this person, who has not only done a guilty act but also has become guilty as a result of this act, can still be capable of such a fundamental transformation of the whole nucleus of the person. (23)

Rahner believes that the grace of conversion does not consist merely in an instantaneous re-orientation of the person towards God but should rather gradually integrate the entire person, spirit and matter, towards sanctification (24). In perceiving the radical depth of sin and evil in human life, Rahner perceives the need for a healing, liberating dynamic that overcomes the effects of sin and evil in human life. Rahner seeks to address the concern that lay behind our third criterion of adequacy for soteriology.

Rahner seeks to harmonise his understanding of the lasting effects of sinful acts and his recognition of the need for a healing, integrating dynamic with the Church's teaching on indulgences. He offers a reformulated understanding of the payment due to sin which complements his understanding of the punishment due to sin. He conceives of the payment for sin as a maturing process which re-integrates all that has been frustrated in the person through sin (25). Hence an indulgence cannot be thought of as a financial payment in order to pay off a financial debt, rather it must be thought of as the effective prayer of the Church joining with the prayer of the sinner for his/her integration. In this manner:

the process of painful integration of the whole of man's

stratified being into the definitive decision about his life, taken under the grace of God, happens more quickly and intensively and therefore also less painfully. (26)

Thirdly we turn our attention to the radical nature of sin as displayed by the possibility of self-chosen eternal damnation. As we observed in Chapter Three, Rahner understands human freedom to be geared towards eternity (27). For this reason, it is possible for the human person to enter into eternity having made of his/her life a radical and definitive no to God and so to enter into eternal damnation. Christianity can say nothing about how many people, which people, or indeed whether any at all will enter into the final damnation of Hell, but it can and must proclaim that it is a real possibility for each and everyone of us (28). The scriptural accounts, in line with Rahner's hermeneutics of eschatological statements (29), are not to be read as eye witness accounts of what shall be but rather as pictorial representation of the possibilities of human life (30). They show the human person to have the capacity of deciding against God for ever (31). "Man's freedom might suffer absolute loss in its final and definitive state, that is, the possibility of hell." (32) In this sense, the Christian teaching about freedom, sin and hell is invested with an absolute seriousness.

It says to each one of us, not to someone else, but to me personally: in and through yourself, in and through what you in your innermost depths are and definitively want to be, you can be a person who discloses himself into the absolute, deadly and final loneliness of saying no to God. (33)

We have noted that Rahner roots his discussion of sin and evil in common human experience in terms of that which destroys and disintegrates human life. When in Chapter Two we formulated our first criterion of adequacy for soteriology, we argued that whilst soteriological language must be rooted within common human experience

it must not be collapsed into a representation of the most superficial level of understanding human experience. We claimed that the traditional reference of sin must be respected. That being that sin can only finally be understood to be a free personal self-determination vis-à-vis the very ground of reality itself, God. We have seen that Rahner holds these two concerns in intimate relationship. He understands the human relationship with God to pervade all aspects of human life. Hence, for Rahner, sin is not simply a symbolically loaded reference to that which frustrates human life within a finite context. Sin refers to that which frustrates human life which moves within the context of God. In this sense, sin is a refusal of God.

Rahner develops his theology of sin further. Not only do we have the horrific possibility of our freely willed and final evil to contend with, we also find ourselves to be in a situation already determined by other people's evil. Other people's evil, and the very situation in which we are located, in turn influences our own actions. Further, we find a basic disintegration of our personality which prevents us from acting in the way that we desire. Rahner treats of these aspects of human life in his thoughts on original sin and concupiscence. Concupiscence, as it is experienced in the concrete is the practical manifestation of the effects of original sin. Hence, we shall turn our attention first to original sin.

The human person lives out his/her freedom in the world, that is in a pre-existing, given situation (34). This pre-existing situation in which the person actualizes him/herself is always determined by other people's free acts (35). Hence a person's free self-determination is always limited by, and influenced by, the situation in which it is exercised (36). There is nowhere a person can turn to

escape this influence which reaches to every part of the person (37). Hence Rahner states that one person's earthly history "inevitably bears the stamp of the history of the freedom of all other men." (38) This history is a history marked by guilt, hence the situation in which the individual must achieve his/her freedom is a situation pre-determined by guilt (39). This situation, determined as it is by guilt influences the individual's free disposition of self:

All of man's experience points in the direction that there are in fact objectifications of personal guilt in the world which, as the material for the free decisions of other persons, threaten these decisions, have a seductive effect upon them, and make free decisions painful. (40)

Even a good free decision does not succeed in transforming the material determined by evil, entirely and so remains ambiguous (41). Christianity claims that this cotermination of the situation of every person by the guilt of others is something "universal, permanent, and therefore also original." (42) There is no place which has not in some way been marred by the guilt of others (43). For Rahner, the universality of guilt in the single history of humanity suggests that the determination of the human situation by guilt goes back to the origins of human life. That is, it implies an "original sin" (44). Rahner maintains that the biblical account of the fall should not be understood as an historical, eye witness report. It should rather be seen as an aetiological account which works back from "the experience of man's existentiell situation in the history of salvation to what must have happened at the beginning if the present situation of freedom actually is the way it is experienced and if it is accepted as it is." (45)

However, Rahner is at pains to emphasise that the doctrine of original sin does not mean that later generations can be held morally

culpable for Adam's sin, whether through juridical imputation or through biological heredity (46). To maintain such moral culpability on the part of later generations would be to contradict Rahner's understanding of freedom. For Rahner, freedom is where a person is unique, where no one can take one's place, and where no one else can be held responsible for one's own actions. Freedom is the place "where he cannot be analysed away, as it were, either forwards or backwards or into his environment, and in this way escape responsibility for himself." (47) Hence the personal guilt from the original act of disobedient freedom cannot be transmitted. Rahner develops this line of thought in his essay, "The Sin Of Adam" (48). In that the human person does not inherit the moral culpability for Adam's sin, Rahner insists that sin and sinfulness as applied on the one hand to the condition which man owes to his descent from Adam and on the other hand to the condition which is the outcome of his own personal decision to go against God are to be understood in a merely analogous sense. However, whilst original sin is not to be confused with personal, voluntary sin, it does place every individual human being in a situation of inward alienation from God. The entire person is wounded by the consequences of original sin and weakened in his/her natural powers. The effects of original sin are seen most clearly in the presence of concupiscence in human life and it is to this that we shall now turn our attention.

Rahner begins his essay on "The Theological Concept Of Concupiscentia" (49) by asking whether it is a force weighing down on the person through original sin which irresistibly inclines the person towards sin (as classical Protestantism would maintain) or whether it is a natural facet of human life present even in the pre-fall state (as classical Roman Catholicism had maintained). In effect Rahner takes a



mediating position. He claims that whilst concupiscence was naturally present in the pre-fall state, it takes on a greater significance in the post fall state. He holds that these can be considered as two distinct elements within the concept of concupiscence (quite how they are distinct is a little less clear).

From the first, two entirely distinct elements are given in our empirical concupiscentia: One an element which belongs essentially to every man so long as he forms a part of this cosmic epoch, and another which is a consequence of the loss of integrity of paradise due to the primordial sin. (50)

By concupiscence in the theological sense Rahner refers to the post fall state where concupiscence is experienced as debilitating. Rahner locates his understanding of concupiscence in the difference between acts due to a person's natural, spontaneous dynamisms on the one hand (actus indeliberatus) and their acts of personal freedom on the other (actus deliberatus) (51). Whereas the spontaneous natural desires, which have both a sensitive and a spiritual aspect, are orientated towards a finite good, the acts of personal freedom are always orientated towards the ultimate good and seek to achieve a fully integrated disposition of the whole person before the ultimate good, i.e. God. Hence it means that a person's cognitive and appetitive powers take part in a natural inclination which precedes man's personal free decision. This is what Rahner means by concupiscence in the natural sense (52), understood in this manner concupiscence would have been an element in human life even in a pure-humanity. However as we experience concupiscence in the concrete, the spontaneous natural desires do not only precede our personal free decisions but they precondition them and influence them and prevent us from ever achieving a full personal disposition of our nature. This is what Rahner means by concupiscence in the theological sense (53). We may compare:

Concupiscence, rightly understood, implies an interior pluralism within man at all levels of his being and in all

his impulses, and that too a pluralism of such a kind that it can never be totally or radically integrated into the single decision of freedom. (54)

This resistance that man finds in himself prior to his free decision and going against his attempt to dispose of himself totally has its metaphysical roots in the dualism in the human person as being composed of both matter and form. "The form can never fully manifest itself in the other of matter." (55) Rahner accepts that even in a pre-fall state there would be natural desires which preceded personal acts of freedom and that there would be a duality between matter and form. However, he maintains that they would not be experienced in the same way. Men and women in their natural state should be thought of as having an integrity now lacking to us, an integrity which would overcome the debilitating effects of the natural desires and of the dualism between matter and form. In this manner, concupiscence can be thought of as the practical manifestation of original sin:

Man of himself should be in a state of integrity free from concupiscence. What we mean is this: As we now know the constitution of man, he finds himself unable to integrate fully and clearly the whole reality of his existence, in all its dimensions, into the decision of his freedom... This experience of concupiscence and passibility is a form of manifestation of sin (though the expression manifestation of sin is not to be confused with sin itself). (56)

Hence, for Rahner, in addition to sin having a dynamic and radical depth about it which confronts the human person with the awful possibility of his/her own self-chosen damnation, the human person also finds him/herself to be in a situation that is always predetermined by other people's guilt. Further, we find a fundamental lack of integrity in ourselves that prevents us fully achieving the good that we desire. However, the effects of concupiscence are not wholly negative. It is not only our good decisions that encounter concupiscence but also our bad one's. We are not able to determine ourselves fully in an evil manner (57). He comments wryly:

This inner division of man is often indeed the occasion of his ruin, but - who knows - perhaps still more often the occasion of his salvation, because it also prevents him from being utterly evil. (58)

Rahner presents us with a profound understanding of the depth and radical nature of evil in human life, of the determination of the human situation by guilt and of our personal disintegration as a consequence of original sin. At this stage then it would be surprising if Rahner was to promote the sort of superficial ethic of self-achievement that we earlier criticised. Rahner is only too well aware of this. He raises the question as to how the person who has actually become guilty can still be capable of a "fundamental transformation of the whole nucleus of the person." (59) Faced with the dark side of human freedom we may well be left with a promethean fear rather than a facile optimism (60). Rahner states that:

any introduction to the idea of Christianity would be deficient if it did not discuss man's guilt and forlornness, the necessity of deliverance from radical evil, redemption and the need for redemption. (61)

Having discussed in the present chapter Rahner's understanding of the human person's guilt and forlornness, we shall turn our attention in the next chapter to his concept of the supernatural existential as the means by which he seeks to establish the objective subjectivity of Christian salvation in terms of graced freedom. Whilst Rahner perceives the need for an objectively granted salvation (which he seeks to secure through his understanding of human freedom as always being graced freedom), we shall have cause to question whether his account of grace suffers from a formalism which simply states the that of grace without exploring the how. In this manner we shall claim that Rahner's account of grace ultimately condemns the human person to his/her own inadequate resources.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

1. cf. "in reality freedom is first of all the subject's being responsible for himself, so that freedom in its fundamental nature has to do with the subject as such and as a whole." K. Rahner, FCF, pp. 94.
2. cf. "In real freedom the subject always intends himself, understands and posits himself. Ultimately he does not do something, but does himself." ibid.
3. cf. "Freedom, then, is not a capacity to do this and then that with the capacity itself remaining neutral, so that the results of these individual acts would then be added together subsequently." ibid.
4. id., Spiritual Exercises, (London: Sheed & Ward 1967), pp. 36.
5. ibid. cf. "this possibility of a no to God himself can become a reality in him in the sense that in his subjectivity, which he cannot distinguish from himself and shirk responsibility for, he really is evil and he understands this evil as what he is and what he definitively wants to be." id., FCF, pp. 103.
6. id., "Guilt - Responsibility - Punishment Within The View Of Catholic Theology", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 210. However: "it must be repeated once more than in spite of its all embracing character and in spite of the impossibility of localising it at any particular point of existence in space and time, the absolute definitive no of the whole of existence towards God takes place for reflex consciousness in perfectly determined, concrete acts of life." ibid., pp. 211.
7. ibid., pp. 210.
8. ibid.
9. cf., ibid., pp. 214.
10. id., "Remarks On The Theology Of Indulgences", T.I. Vol. II, pp. 194.
11. ibid., pp. 196.
12. cf., ibid., pp. 197.
13. id., "Guilt And Its Remission", T.I. Vol. II, pp. 274. cf. "When man, taking his own freedom as person as the centre and source of his action, misuses the (rest of) his personal make-up, violating and damaging it, then in this distortion of his own nature he experiences the contradiction and the opposition of this nature, its forms and its tendencies which were created by God and are therefore ineradicable, and which are prior to this decision which man takes of his freedom. There is contradiction between that in him which is free and that which, from the point of view of God, he is intended to be and which, moreover, he inalienably is; a contradiction which arises from the condition of man following

- upon his sinful act." id., "A Brief Theological Study Of Indulgence", T.I. Vol. X, pp. 153.
14. id., "A Brief Theological Study On Indulgence", T.I. Vol. X, pp. 153.
  15. cf., id., "Remarks On The Theology Of Indulgences", T.I. Vol. II, pp. 197.
  16. id., "A Brief Theological Study On Indulgence", T.I. Vol. X, pp. 153.
  17. id., "Guilt - Responsibility - Punishment In The View Of Catholic Theology", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 215. cf. "The punishments of sin are the persistent objectivations of the bad moral decision, being themselves hurtful because contrary to the true nature of the free subject, and being also the means through which the resistance of the due order of the world (of men and things around the subject) likewise operates as hurtful." id., "Punishment Of Sins", E.T., pp. 1587.
  18. cf. "Free decision takes effect, and must take effect, in dimensions and strata which, on the one hand, really belong to man and yet, on the other hand, are not simply identical with the subject of freedom in its subjective origin and thus can still assert themselves as consequences of true guilt in the whole man even when the free decision as such has been revised." id., "Guilt - Responsibility - Punishment In The View Of Catholic Theology", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 215.
  19. id., "Remarks On The Theology Of Indulgences", T.I. Vol. II, pp. 197.
  20. cf. "Freedom is not like a knife which always remains the same in its capacity for cutting, and in cutting always remains the same knife." id., FCF, pp. 95. cf. "A future decision, however reflexive, is also co-determined by the previous decision which is impervious to subsequent reflection." id., FCF, pp. 104.
  21. cf. "Man cannot and may not simply leave his past behind him with indifference as something which is no longer real; it still exists as an element of his present, which he himself has brought about in personal freedom." id., "Contrition", E.T., pp. 288.
  22. cf., id., "A Brief Theological Study On Indulgence", T.I. Vol. X, pp. 151-152.
  23. id., "Guilt And Its Remission", T.I. Vol. II, pp. 279.
  24. cf. "This grace of conversion is, in fact, intended to draw the whole nature of man into its sphere of influence, extending this to the physical side of his nature, to the unconscious movements of his nervous system, to the submerged impulse; in it, in order that all may be healed and sanctified." id., "A Brief Theological Study On Indulgence", T.I. Vol. X, pp. 152.
  25. cf. "The payment of a punishment of this kind could in this case be conceived only as a maturing process of the person, through

which, though gradually, all the powers of the human being become slowly integrated into the basic decision of the free person." id., "Remarks On The Theology Of Indulgences", T.I. Vol. II, pp. 19.

26. ibid., pp. 198.

27. cf. "Freedom therefore is not the capacity to do something which is always able to be revised, but the capacity to do something final and definitive. It is the capacity of a subject who by this freedom is to achieve his final and irrevocable self. In this sense and for this reason freedom is the capacity for the eternal." id., FCF, pp. 95-96.

28. ibid., pp. 103.

29. cf., id., "The Hermeneutics Of Eschatological Assertions", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 323-346. cf., id., FCF, pp. 431-434.

30. cf. "these eschatological statements are basically statements about man existing now insofar as he faces these two possibilities about his future." id., FCF, pp. 103.

31. ibid., pp. 435.

32. ibid.

33. ibid., pp. 103-104.

34. cf., ibid., pp. 106-107.

35. cf. "It means that he actualizes himself as a free subject in a situation which itself is always determined by history and by other persons." ibid., pp. 107.

36. cf. "Man as a bodily being, before he has made his personal decision, is open to being seized by a creative influence which is independent of him: the influence of material forces and other created persons (men and angelic powers)." id., "The Dignity Of Man", T.I. Vol. II, pp. 242. cf. "Freedom inevitably appropriates the material in which it actualizes itself as an intrinsic and constitutive element which is originally co-determined by freedom itself, and incorporates it into the finality of the existence which possesses itself in its freedom." id., FCF, pp. 107.

37. cf. "There is no zone of the person which is absolutely inaccessible to such influences from without. Every external event can be significant and menacing for the ultimate salvation of the person." id., "The Dignity Of Man", T.I. Vol. II, pp. 242.

38. id., FCF, pp. 107.

39. cf., ibid., pp. 107.

40. ibid., pp. 109.

41. cf., ibid.

42. ibid.
43. cf. "There are no islands for the individual person whose nature does not already bear the stamp of the guilt of others, directly or indirectly, from close or from afar." ibid.
44. ibid., pp. 110.
45. ibid., pp. 114.
46. cf., ibid., pp. 111.
47. ibid.
48. id., "The Sin Of Adam", T.I. Vol. XI, pp. 247-262.
49. id., "The Theological Concept Of Concupiscentia", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 347-382.
50. ibid., pp. 350.
51. cf., ibid., pp. 358.
52. cf. "Concupiscentia in the narrower sense is the act of the appetite in regard to a determinate good or determinate value, in so far as this act takes shape spontaneously in the consciousness on the basis of man's natural dynamism, and as such forms the necessary presupposition of man's personal free decision." ibid., pp. 359.
53. cf. "The impossibility of being able to commit oneself totally at every moment - the impossibility of a totally making-of-oneself in every moment what one wants to be - is however, nothing more than what is called concupiscence in the strictly theological sense of the word (in contrast to the usual moral interpretation of this term)." id., "Reflections On The Problem Of The Gradual Ascent To Christian Perfection", T.I. Vol. III, pp. 21-22. cf., id., "The Theological Concept Of Concupiscentia", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 368-369.
54. id., "Theological Reflections On The Problem Of Secularisation", T.I. Vol. X, pp. 342. cf. "There always remains in the nature of things a tension between what man is a kind of entity simply present before one (as nature) and what he wants to make of himself by his free decision (as person): a tension between what he is simply passively and what he actively posits himself as and wishes to understand himself to be. The person never wholly absorbs its nature." id., "The Theological Concept Of Concupiscentia", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 362.
55. cf., ibid., pp. 364.
56. id., "The Theology Of Power", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 393.
57. cf. "it follows that the dualism of nature and person in its specifically human form, which we call concupiscence, is something which is at work both in the case of a good decision of man's freedom against the spontaneous desire of nature for a morally negative good, and also in the case of a bad free decision against

a natural inclination to something morally good... Both the good and the bad moral decision encounter the resistance, the solidity and the impenetrability of nature." id., "The Theological Concept Of Concupiscentia", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 365-366.

58. ibid., pp. 374.

59. cf., id., "Guilt And Its Remission", T.I. Vol. II, pp. 279.

60. cf., id., "The Man Of Today And Religion", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 13-14.

61. id., FCF, pp. 90.



CHAPTER FIVE: THE SELF-COMMUNICATION OF GOD AS THE ABSOLUTE CLOSENESS  
OF FORGIVING LOVE.

5.1 God - the radical closeness of the absolute horizon of human life.

In Chapter Three, we discussed Rahner's understanding of God as the mysterious horizon (woraufhin) of human transcendence. For Rahner the human person is always orientated towards God as the infinite horizon of mystery (1). Rahner refers to the widespread religious consciousness resulting from this orientation as natural religion which expresses itself in a "Devotion to the World" (2). However, humanity's hunger is not satisfied by this natural religion. In seeking to explain the dynamism of the human person, philosophical analysis brings us to threshold of a further question:

Is there the possibility of an immediacy to God in which, without him ceasing to be really himself by being made a categorical object, he no longer appears merely as the ever distant condition of possibility for a subject's activity in the world, but actually gives himself, and this in such a way that this self-communication can be received. (3)

Has humanity only to do with God as the infinite and mysterious horizon of human existence or will God really enter into relationship with men and women and communicate Godself to them? Whilst philosophical analysis of the transcendental structures of knowledge and freedom causes this question to be raised, it cannot of itself establish the possibility of such supernatural religion (4). To answer this question revelation is required, and revelation is not something given along with the human person's spiritual transcendence. "It has the character of an event" (5) in which God makes something known that would otherwise remain unknown (6).

For Rahner, the heart of the Christian message is precisely the proclamation of God's yes to this question (7). It is the announcement

that "God communicates himself in his own person to the created, as absolute proximity and as the absolute holy mystery." (8) God gives himself in absolute and forgiving closeness to the human person (9). Hence, Rahner can say: "Man is the event of a free, unmerited and forgiving, and absolute self-communication of God." (10) Indeed, Rahner claims that the three central mysteries of Christian faith (that is, the Trinity, the Incarnation and Grace) all reduce to this one central mystery, that God is not just the distant horizon but communicates Godself to human beings (11). However, the message that Christianity proclaims is not an obvious fact. It can only be known through what God has revealed of himself in salvation history:

That God loves us, that he is 'dear God', is not a metaphysical matter of course, but the inconceivable marvel that the New Testament must proclaim, belief in which never ceases to demand the utmost effort of man's power of faith.  
(12)

Rahner's understanding of grace as the self-communication of God is a (if not the) fundamental concept in his theology. Indeed, Shepherd has argued that Rahner's entire theology is to be understood as a theology of grace (13). It is through his theology of grace that Rahner claims that salvation is not only the choice of self before the distant horizon of God but is the acceptance of God's personal self-communication. Salvation, for Rahner, is the acceptance of God as the innermost constitutive element of our being. For this reason it will profit us to examine further his understanding of grace as God's self-communication.

Primarily, Rahner employs the notion of self-communication in order to emphasise that God does not communicate something about God but really communicates Godself: "The term self-communication is really intended to signify that God in his own most proper reality makes

himself the innermost constitutive element of man." (14) Hence he refers to it as the "ontological self communication of God" (15). Rahner reminds us that in the economy of salvation, God has revealed himself as three fold, Father Son and Spirit (16). He argues that if this is to be a real self-communication of Godself then there must be an identity between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity: "The Trinity of the economy of salvation is the immanent Trinity and vice versa." (17) Hence, Rahner argues that if grace really is the self-communication of God then it too must bear this three fold, trinitarian character. He states:

The countenance of God which turns towards us in this self-communication is, in the trinitarian nature of this encounter, the very being of God as he is in himself, and must be if indeed the divine self-communication in grace and in glory really is the communication of God in his own self to us, (18)

Viewed in this manner, grace is seen to be a sharing in the intimate life of the Trinity. He states:

God does not simply grant some kind of salutary love and intimacy, such as is necessarily implied in the abstract concept of a relationship between the Creator and his still innocent creature, but allows him to participate in the divine nature itself to be joint heir with the son, called to eternal life face to face with God in the intuitive beatific vision of God, that is of God's own life (in \*doxa).  
(19)

Scholastic theology distinguished between uncreated grace and created grace: uncreated grace being God's gift of Godself whereas created grace is the transformation of human nature which either precedes or accompanies this gift (20). Rahner maintains that whilst there is no agreement in Catholic theology on how exactly the relation between created and uncreated grace is to be determined, the dominant view since Trent has been that "uncreated grace is to be regarded as more or less merely the consequence of created grace" (21). Rahner finds this position to be inadequate to the trend of the later thought of Aquinas

(22). In contrast, Rahner maintains that it is uncreated grace that is primary (23). For Rahner, grace does not mean God's gift of some created reality, in grace God really gives Godself (24). His lengthiest discussion of this is to be found in his essay "Some Implications Of The Scholastic Concept Of Uncreated Grace" (25) On the premise of the identity of knowing and being, Rahner argues that the beatific vision as perfect knowledge of God can only be possible through the knower sharing the being of God. Grace is held to be "the ontological presupposition" and "homogeneous commencement" of the beatific vision. Hence, Rahner argues that grace must also be a sharing in the life of God i.e. uncreated (26). Rahner repeats this argument elsewhere (27).

Rahner struggles to explain further the how of God's action in the bestowal of God's self in grace. Scholastic theology held that created grace was given through efficient causality (i.e. the creation of something different from the cause). Hence, efficient causality is insufficient to account for God's action in uncreated grace where God gives God's self; "the cause becomes an intrinsic, constitutive principle of the effect itself" (28). Rahner proposes the model of quasi-formal causality (29). He states:

God does not merely give his creature a share in himself (indirectly) by creating and donating finite realities through his all-powerful efficient causality: but he gives himself, really and in the strictest sense of the word, a quasi-formal causality. (30)

This notion of quasi-formal causality is of great importance in Rahner's theology. With the help of this notion, Rahner seeks to explain how God who is infinite mystery, who transcends all categorical reality, can really be present and active within the categorical realm. Should the notion of quasi-formal causality be incoherent, or a mere

verbal formula empty of content, then Rahner's understanding of God's presence within the historical realm would be called into serious question. (Which in turn would call the adequacy of his soteriology into question.) Rahner believes the hypostatic union to be the revealed statement of God's quasi-formal causality (31). For this reason, we will be unable to give final judgement upon the adequacy of Rahner's solution until we have treated of his Christology in the next chapter. For the present, it is sufficient to observe that Rahner shares the concern that God must be thought of as present and active within the historical order. He believes that his understanding of grace as God's self-communication flounders unless it can be thought of as being given "in such a way that this self-communication can be received" (32). That is, for grace to be really communicated then, it must reach the human person where s/he is (33). As have seen in Chapter Three, Rahner argues that the human person is spirit in the material order (34). Further, due to the essential historicity of matter (35), it means that the person's spiritual transcendence can only be lived out in the historical order (36). Hence, if God's self-communication in grace is really to reach the human person where s/he is then it must be given in the historical order (37). Thus the terms of Rahner's own transcendental analysis of the human person requires that God who is infinite mystery must be able to present within the historical order if self-communication is really to be possible. However, it is by no means certain that Rahner has established how God might be thought of as present and active within the historical order.

Rahner emphasises that even in God's self-communication, the mysteriousness of God remains absolute. Rahner maintains that God's presence within historical reality must not in any way reduce God to the level of one created reality amongst many. On the one hand, Rahner

wishes to maintain that God's self-communication in grace grants to the recipient an immediacy to God which "no longer comes through objects and categories derived from created things." (38) This is in contrast to our mediated philosophical knowledge of God as the woraufhin of human transcendence. However, on the other hand, he wishes to maintain that such immediacy does not eliminate the "transcendental necessity whereby God is essentially the holy mystery." (39) He seeks to hold these two statements together through his redefinition of mystery that we mentioned in Chapter Three. Rather than seeing mystery as a temporary limitation of knowledge due to the finitude of the human ratio, Rahner views it as that which is permanent, it is the being of God. Hence in self-communication, God communicates Godself as mystery: "Grace is therefore the grace of the nearness of the abiding mystery: it makes God accessible in the form of the holy mystery and presents him thus as the incomprehensible." (40) Hence, the contrast is not between an imperfect and vague knowledge of God on the one hand, and a perfect and transparent knowledge of God in grace on the other (41). Rather: "The contrast is between immediate sight of the mystery itself and the merely indirect presence of the mystery after the manner of the distant and aloof." (42) Grace does not dissolve the mystery, but rather brings it into "absolute proximity." (43) One might be forgiven for asking whether Rahner gives the presence of God in the historical order with one hand only to immediately snatch it back with the other in maintaining God's absolute transcendent aloofness. This is a question to which we shall shortly address ourselves. First, let us explore the soteriological implications of Rahner's understanding of grace as the uncreated self-communication of the trinitarian God which draws the recipient into God's own intimate trinitarian life.

## 5.2 Salvation as sharing in the trinitarian life of God:

As we have seen, God's self-communication in grace transforms the human person's standing before God. God is not only known as the transcendent horizon of all human knowledge, but is also known in absolute closeness. Human freedom is not only related to God as the distant horizon and ultimate ground of all freedom, human freedom is a freedom directed immediately vis-à-vis God:

In other words, God in the concrete is not present merely as the horizon of our transcendence, one which always withdraws itself and refuses to give itself; rather, understood as this horizon, he offers himself to be directly possessed in what we call divinising grace. Given all this, the freedom in transcendence and in the yes and no towards the ground of this transcendence is given a directness towards God by which it becomes most radically capable of saying yes and no to God as such. (44)

The distant horizon and ultimate ground of freedom itself becomes the object of freedom (45). In this light, moral acts are seen to be directed immediately to God (46), and love of neighbour becomes a radical love of God (47). Rahner claims that the transcendent orientation of the human person is fulfilled by this self-communication of God which brings the transcendent horizon and ground of human knowledge and freedom into radical proximity to the human person. "In this forgiving closeness God gives himself as the inner fulfilment of unlimited transcendentality. The absolutely unlimited question is fulfilled and answered by God himself as the absolute answer." (48) The human person knows him/herself to be orientated towards God's infinity as the transcendent horizon of all knowledge and freedom. Left to his/her own devices the human person would know him/herself to be incapable of absolute fulfilment by anything less than God on the one hand and yet incapable of attaining to God on the other. This dilemma is resolved by God's self-communication: "The goal which man cannot reach can become the real point of departure for man's fulfilment and

self-realization." (49) In short, God's self-communication is not only the radical closeness of that which would always otherwise remain distant, it is the "highest summit" of human life (50). It is:

The final fulfilment of life because that towards which life is opened now becomes also its innermost ground and most interior possession, since the word of life becomes the life of life itself: vita aeterna, (51)

It is for this reason that Rahner refers to God's self-communication as the human person's salvation:

God's offer of himself, to which God communicates himself absolutely to the whole of mankind, is by definition man's salvation. For it is the fulfilment of man's transcendence in which he transcends towards the absolute God himself. (52)

As we have seen, God's self-communication makes the recipient a sharer in the intimate trinitarian life of God:

In grace, that is, in the communication of God's Holy Spirit, the event of immediacy to God as man's fulfilment is prepared for in such a way that we must say of man here and now that he participates in God's being; that he has been given the divine spirit who fathoms the depths of God; that he is already God's son here and now, and what he already is must only become manifest. (53)

We have discussed above how Rahner understands God's self-communication to fulfil the transcendent orientation of the human person. It brings human life to fulfilment and as such constitutes salvation. Combining this with Rahner's understanding of God's self-communication as being the initiation into the trinitarian life we may now state that for Rahner salvation does not consist simply in the choice of self before God, as we earlier supposed. For Rahner, salvation consists in the acceptance of God's self-communication as the innermost constitutive element of human life, drawing the human person into the intimate life of the Trinity:

Salvation is not to be found in the finality of the free decision of man, if this is taken to mean that man simply creates this salvation himself by his free decision. Salvation is God communicating himself. (54)



Further, Rahner does not isolate salvation in an other-worldly, future realm (55). Whilst allowing for a future consummation, Rahner maintains that salvation is already really present. He argues for an intrinsic and substantial connection between grace as the presence of salvation and the eschatological consummation of that in the life of glory:

Since this grace is basically God communicating himself to man, it is not merely something provisional, nor is it merely a means to salvation nor a substitute for salvation. Grace is really this salvation itself, for it is God himself in his forgiving and divinizing love. (56)

The future life of glory will be the radical manifestation of the divine sonship already present in grace. (57)

Whilst Rahner considers salvation to consist ultimately in God's self-communication rather than in the person's creation of self in freedom, he does not intend to renege on the high place that he has given to human freedom. The human person has the choice of whether to accept God's self-communication in "faith, hope and love" (58) or whether to reject it. Nor can this act of free acceptance be an "esoterically confined happening in the life of man" (59) for freedom is always exercised through the totality of a person's life (60) and not in a special realm:

Hence the freedom of acceptance or refusal of salvation occurs in all the dimensions of human existence... and not merely in the confined sector of the sacred or worship and 'religion' in the narrow sense;... man works out his salvation or damnation in everything he does and in everything which impels him. Everything in the history of the world is pregnant with eternity and eternal life or with eternal ruin. (61)

Rahner wants to say that our salvation does not consist simply in eternally living as the persons we have chosen to be but rather consists in sharing God's gift of Godself. However, he also wants to say that our acceptance of God's offer cannot be thought of as being

extrinsic and superficial to the persons we have created ourselves to be. He claims that our acceptance of God's offer of God's self consists in whether through our free creation of ourselves, we have made of our lives a fundamental yes or no to God's self-communication. Hence we can see that Rahner's understanding of salvation as ultimately consisting in God's self-communication complements and fulfils the high place he wishes to give to human freedom rather than dissolving it. Rahner is concerned to maintain a concept of salvation that he believes to be a consummation of the totality of a person's being which must be accepted by the totality of a person's being.

Rahner's emphasis on the person's freedom to accept or reject God's self-communication creates a problem. If the human person has the last word on whether or not s/he accepts salvation then s/he would determine his/her own salvation and Rahner could be accused of Pelagianism. More specifically, if the act of acceptance is entirely due to the person's natural resources then that which is accepted is reduced to the level of created reality. Hence, to preserve the uncreated reality of God's self-communication, the act of acceptance must itself be borne by God who is communicating God's self. In more traditional language, there is the need for prevenient grace. Rahner is aware of this problem:

The acceptance of grace needs to be sustained by God just as the gift of grace is, lest finite man... reduce the divine self-communication to the level of an event which remains merely something which is of the finite order, thus eliminating God's self-communication as such. (62)

Rahner seeks to give answer to this by claiming that there is a parallel between human knowledge and freedom, on the one hand, and grace on the other. He recalls the fact that human knowledge and freedom are not only knowledge and freedom vis-à-vis God, but are actually possible due to a prior apprehension of God. He extends this

relationship to grace (63) and claims that the free acceptance of grace is made possible by grace. It is an event of grace itself: "The self-communication as such effects its own acceptance, so that the actual and proximate ability to accept it is the sheerest grace." (64)

We are now in a position to make a preliminary answer to the question that we raised in Chapter Three as to whether Rahner's system is ultimately Pelagian due to the high place that he gives to human freedom. We asked whether Rahner was advocating a purely subjective soteriology of self-achievement by using the concept salvation to refer to the final state that each person created for themselves through their own unaided free action. At that stage we acknowledged the possibility that Rahner wishes to advocate a soteriology that is at once truly objective in that it is effected by the sustaining grace of God and truly subjective in that it flows from the heart of the human subject. We are now in a better position to see that Rahner does indeed seek to guard against the sort of subjective soteriology of self-achievement that we have reacted against. Despite his concern to expunge all notions of salvation as an extrinsic moral reward and to maintain the importance of the person's free choice of self, Rahner modifies his notion of salvation in the two important ways that we have mentioned: Firstly, salvation is ultimately God's self-communication which we accept through our freely chosen self rather than salvation merely being the eternalisation of our freely chosen self; Secondly, freedom itself is already borne by grace, thus he seeks to close the door to the charge of Pelagianism.

However, this does not, as yet, answer our other question about Rahner's understanding of human freedom. Rahner maintains a dynamic quality to human freedom, the person becomes that which s/he does.

Hence evil acts do not remain at a superficial level but determine the very being of the human person and have an effect into the future. Given this dynamism of human freedom, a person finds their freedom to be determined and constrained by their own freely chosen evil orientations and by the prior evil determinations of other people that necessarily affect the situation in which the person finds him/herself. Therefore, human freedom itself stands in need of healing and liberation. If this be so, as we believe it is, then the need for grace is not merely a concern to verbally acknowledge God's primacy and so to avoid noetic Pelagianism. Rather it reflects the concern to offer a real healing to the human person and so to avoid an existential Pelagianism which would face the human person with the dilemma of being condemned to their own inadequate resources. We will return to this question later in the present chapter and will argue that Rahner's understanding of the supernatural existential threatens to make of grace a vacuous concept.

### 5.3 The universality of God's offer of salvation:

Rahner maintains the universality of God's salvific will (65) which he claims is disclosed by God's self-communication in revelation (66). "The event of free grace and of God's self-communication is already given to all times." (67) Indeed, for Rahner, the entire created order "has always been embedded in a supernatural context" (68): "The world as a whole is ordered to the personal, Trinitarian God beyond the world." (69) It is within this context that he claims that divinizing grace is offered to all people at all times. He dismisses the contrary opinion as being due to "an unavowed supposition that grace would be no longer grace if it were too generously distributed by the love of God." (70) Just as grace is communicated

universally, so also Rahner claims that it is responded to universally, to some degree:

Anyone who does not close himself to God in an ultimate act of his life and his freedom through free and personal sin for which he is really and subjectively guilty and for which he cannot shirk responsibility, this person finds his salvation. (71)

Wherever a person follows his/her conscience, or fulfils the absolute demand of love even when it is not rewarding to do so, or endures darkness and suffering in hope, there God is responded to and salvation achieved (72). It is this understanding that leads Rahner to develop his concept of anonymous Christianity which we shall mention in our next chapter.

Rahner describes the human person's universal orientation to the salvific will of God in terms of the human person being open to the "Absolute Future" of God, when God will be all in all. The person responds to his/her call to salvation by maintaining an openness to God as the absolute future rather than settling for any finite reality as his/her future:

The doctrine about this grace and its fulfillment, therefore, bids us keep ourselves radically open in faith, hope and love for the ineffable, unimaginable and nameless absolute future of God which is coming, and bids us never close ourselves before there is nothing more to close, because nothing will be left outside of God, since we shall be wholly in God and he shall be wholly in us. (73)

Through his concept of God as the absolute future, Rahner maintains that God's salvific will does not merely extend to the totality of humanity viewed as individuals but rather extends to the entirety of human history (74). He stresses that because the absolute future of humanity is God, it can never be identified with, or substituted by, a merely finite future state of affairs:

It follows from the very nature of the totality of the absolute future that this totality cannot really become the object of a proper classification or of a technical

manipulation, but remains the unspeakable mystery which precedes and surpasses all individual cognition and each individual action on the world. (75)

Hence, the Christian who recognises God to be the absolute future of humanity must remain always open to the future, always prepared to transcend and to radically criticise the present order in hope, without ever resting content in a hope for a coming Utopia (76). Nor is this to be taken as justification for Christians passively awaiting God's absolute future, they have a duty to engage in transforming the world and to prepare the way for God's absolute future: "The Kingdom of God only comes to those who build the coming earthly Kingdom" (77). Again: "As the religion of the absolute future, Christianity is and must be the religion which sends man into the world to act." (78)

We have already noted that Rahner claims that the human person's acceptance of grace is itself a moment within grace. So now Rahner stresses that the movement of human history towards the absolute future of God is itself an inner moment within the absolute future of God:

It is already moving within it, for, this becoming is so truly distinguished from its yet-to-come future and fulfillment... that the infinite reality of this future is nevertheless already active within it and supports it as an inner constitutive element of this, even though it is independent of this becoming itself. (79)

In this manner, Rahner seeks to exclude the notion of a primitive deism and to preserve what he perceives to be the truth in pantheism (80). That truth is that God does not stand over against the world in utterly transcendent detachment, but rather:

He has inserted himself into the world as its innermost entelecheia and he impels the whole of this world and its history towards that point at which God himself will be the innermost and immediately present fulfilment of our existence in the face-to-face presence of eternal beatitude. (81)

#### 5.4 Rahner's disagreement with the scholastic teaching on nature and grace:

In maintaining his thesis that God's salvific grace is granted to all people at all times, rather than being confined to special sacral realms, Rahner has moved well beyond the bounds of the scholastic teaching on the relationship between nature and grace (82). As we have seen, the dominant view since Trent has been that uncreated grace could only be given on condition of the human person's prior substantial elevation by created grace. That is, scholastics sought to maintain the supernatural character of grace by positing a fundamentally irreconcilable gulf between uncreated grace and nature as it is experienced in the concrete. This gulf, it was maintained could only be bridged through the absolute elevation of nature by created grace. Indeed, the orientation of nature to grace was "conceived in as negative a way as possible" (83). Nature's obediential potency for grace was thought of merely as a non-repugnance for nature's elevation by created grace (84). Nature was thought of as being fulfilled without grace:

Of itself, nature would find its perfection just as readily and harmoniously in its own proper realm, in a purely natural end, without an immediate intuition of God in the beatific vision. (85)

Further, the nature for which grace was thought dispensable was identified with all that the human person knew of him/herself from everyday experience (86). As a consequence, the world of everyday experience came to be seen as entirely lacking in grace. Nature as it was experienced in the concrete was thought of as almost identical to pure nature (87), (i.e. human nature before the potential for sharing in God's life was granted to human beings). The supernatural came to be seen as an extrinsic superstructure imposed from without on a

largely indifferent nature (88): "Supernatural grace then can only be the superstructure lying beyond the range of experience imposed upon a human nature which even in the present economy turns in its own orbit." (89) In terms of practical living there is posed a near to absolute divide between the sacred and the profane, holiness and humanity, God and the world:

In a word, the relationship between nature and grace is conceived in such a way that they appear as two layers so carefully placed that they penetrate each other as little as possible. (90)

This tension puts the believer in a peculiar position. On the one hand faith teaches that grace "is acknowledged to be the most sublime and divine element, his only solitary possession" (91). Yet on the other hand it is a superstructure lying beyond the conscious realm (92): "The space where he comes to himself, experiences himself and lives, is, as regards the data of consciousness, not filled by this grace." (93) This puts the human person in a situation of unbearable contradiction. What is of ultimate importance is said to be beyond experience and what is experienced is of little value. There is a fundamentally irreconcilable tension between religion and life. Either one must live constantly distancing oneself from the world and seeking to escape into the sacred sphere, or one must settle for living human life and condemning religion as irrelevant. In contrast to the claim that the sacred makes to be of absolute importance, humanity finds at an experiential level that the immediate concerns of human life are those which demand attention. Whilst we may have a choice about whether or not to take the supernatural superstructure seriously, we have no such choice about whether or not to take human life seriously (94). Under such a divide between nature and grace, the vast majority of people will confine their concern to the natural level. Even if they manage to preserve special religious moments, excursions into the



supernatural, their lives will be essentially lived in a proclamation of the irrelevance of grace:

It is not surprising - though not of course justifiable - that man should take very little interest in this mysterious superstructure of his being. After all, he does not find grace where he finds himself, in the immediate activation of his spiritual being. (95)

It is for reasons such as these that Rahner considers it to be a "genuine concern of theology to put an end to such extrinsicism" (96). We share this view wholeheartedly. As we have said in Chapter Two, any notion of religion which does not acknowledge God as present to humanity where humanity finds itself to be must be considered irrelevant as we cannot be present anywhere else. Rahner's attempted redefinition of the relationship between nature and grace is highly creative and has been extremely influential in Catholic theology. It is to this that we now turn our attention.

#### 5.5 Rahner's approach to the relationship between nature and grace:

In keeping with the transcendental starting point that he had borrowed from Marechal, and in distinction to the scholastic teaching, Rahner develops his understanding of the nature-grace relationship in terms of the human person's fundamental orientation to God (97). He conducts this analysis in his two essays, "Concerning The Relationship Between Nature And Grace" (98), and "Nature And Grace" (99). He seeks to establish a unified view (100) which does not separate them into the disparate elements of nature and supernature but rather takes a Christocentric (101) view of the whole created order.

In essence, Rahner's approach is to say that the human person's orientation to God as the infinite horizon, which is an existential of human life, is always also an orientation to the immediacy of God's

self-communication: "The capacity for the God of self-bestowing personal love is the central and abiding existential of man as he really is." (102) In order to preserve the gratuity of God's self-communication, Rahner maintains that the existential which orientates the person to the immediacy of God is itself supernatural. He refers to it as the "supernatural existential" (103). Although it is supernatural, it is always given to the human person as s/he experiences him/herself in the concrete. It is of a person's nature to be open to grace: "Man is only really known in his indefinable essence when he is understood as potentia oboedientialis for the divine life and when this is his nature." (104) Hence, nature as it is experienced in the concrete is always graced nature:

In the concrete order which we encounter in our transcendental experience and as interpreted by Christian revelation, the spiritual creature is constituted to begin with as the possible addressee of such a divine self-communication. (105)

For Rahner the human person only knows him/herself as graced and cannot treat him/herself as though s/he were pure nature:

Man can experiment with himself only in the region of God's supernatural loving will, he can never find the nature he wants in a chemically pure state separated from its supernatural existential. (106)

Again:

Our actual nature is never pure nature. It is nature installed in a supernatural order which man can never leave, even as sinner and unbeliever. It is a nature which is continually being determined (which does not mean justified) by the supernatural grace of salvation offered to it. (107)

Nature becomes a remainder concept, which is not experienced in the concrete, and which we can only arrive at through subtracting the supernatural existential from the concrete quiddity (108). Indeed, we can only arrive at the concept of nature after revelation has shown us what in the concrete order is due to grace (109).

In contrast to the scholastic teaching which viewed the person's openness, (or potentia oboedientialis), for grace as a mere non-repugnance, Rahner holds that it is an active striving for God (110). Grace and nature quite simply cannot be viewed as two separate, unconnected realms, indeed it is only grace that can be the absolute fulfilment of nature:

Grace simply means giving radical form to man's being. It is not a new, additional storey planted on top of what is really a self-contained sub-structure known as the nature of man.  
(111)

Nature is so constituted that it can only reach its absolute fulfilment (112) in grace because God has always willed to communicate Godself to the human person: "The spiritual essence of man is established by God in creation from the outset because God wants to communicate himself." (113) Indeed, God has only embarked upon the creative endeavour because God intended to communicate Godself to creation: "God has created the servant only in order to make him his child." (114) Nature can be seen to be an "inner moment" in the communication of grace (115). In describing nature as an inner moment within grace, Rahner does not intend to refer only to the intended fulfilment of nature in grace, but also to the very act of creation which he considers to be a deficient mode of God's self-communicating activity (116).

In Chapter Three we posed the question as to whether Rahner held a purely subjective account of human freedom, such that his soteriology reduced to an ethic of self-achievement, or whether he maintained an objective subjectivity such as we might find in Kierkegaard and Heidegger. We should now be able to see that through his concept of the supernatural existential, Rahner sides decisively with the latter of these two options. For Rahner, freedom is always graced freedom, it

is always given, sustained and made possible through grace. Freedom and grace do not stand as contradictory. Rather than compromising freedom, grace establishes freedom (117). Whereas Heidegger had located the given objectivity of the person's free self-disposition in the human conscience, Rahner locates it in the supernatural existential. However, we have yet to ask whether the objectively given grace actually makes any difference to human life or is it simply stated as being always present? That is we must examine whether Rahner's concept of the supernatural existential is merely an a priori, formal statement which neglects to account for the dynamic, transforming liberation that is required of grace. If this is found to be so then the practical effects of Rahner's teaching on grace, despite his intentions, will be to condemn the human person to reliance upon their own inadequate resources. We will return to this question in some detail towards the end of the present chapter.

#### 5.6 The historical thematic mediation of the supernatural existential:

Against the extrinsicist interpreters of Aquinas, Rahner maintains that grace cannot be thought of as merely an objective state beyond the realm of human consciousness (118). Rahner claims that grace cannot be thought of as granting a new proper object to the human subject. However, he further claims that it must be thought of as elevating the subject to a new formal object of consciousness (119). That is, whereas the natural spiritual dynamism of the human subject is orientated towards God as the distant horizon, the supernatural spiritual dynamism is orientated towards the God of absolute immediacy (120). This orientation towards the immediacy of God's self-communication may remain at the preconceptual, unthematic level but it is still an element within the consciousness of the human person (121).

For this reason, Rahner maintains that the conscious orientation to the immediacy of God has the character of an unobjectified revelation given to all men and women:

The supernaturally elevated, unreflexive but really present, and transcendental experience of man's movement and orientation towards immediacy and closeness of God... must be characterized as real revelation throughout the whole history of religion and of the human spirit. (122)

Rahner argues that just as the human person's transcendentality in knowledge and freedom is mediated to itself by the material of a posteriori experience, so also the person's supernaturally elevated transcendentality is mediated through the historical realm (123). Hence, he claims that corresponding to the pre-conceptual, transcendental revelation there must be a conceptualised, thematic history of revelation:

If, then, history exists in this way as the necessary and objectifying self-interpretation of transcendental experience, then there is a revelatory history of transcendental revelation as the necessary and historical self-interpretation of that original, transcendental experience which is constituted by God's self-communication. (124)

This general, conceptual history of revelation corresponds to the objectification of humanity's supernatural orientation in explicit expressions of religion (125). Such explicit expressions of religion represent the protest of the human spirit against any attempts to enclose humanity within the merely natural realm (126). However, it is only when the preconceptual general revelation is mediated in an objective and reflexive manner that it can become the "principle of concrete action" in human life that it is intended to be (127). The drive towards historical objectification of humanity's supernatural existential is not due only to a dynamism on behalf of humanity but is due also to the self-communication of God which "has a dynamism towards

its own objectification." (128) All religion represents both humanity's attempt "to mediate the original, unreflexive and non-objective revelation historically, to make it reflexive and to interpret it in propositions" (129) and also God's objective self-interpretation and self-expression of God's self-communication. All religions include moments when the two have coincided, moments when humanity's attempt at thematisation has been carried by God's self-interpretation. Rahner states that at such times: "The supernatural transcendental relationship of man to God through God's self-communication becomes self-reflexive." (130)

However, humanity's sin and guilt which "has its darkening and depraving effect on all of man's collective and social dimensions" (131) also has its effect on the history of humanity's objectifying self-interpretation of general revelation. Hence it is only partially successful, the history of general revelation is a history of truth mixed with error. It is a history "which is still seeking itself." (132)

In order to distinguish between truth and falsity in the general history of revelation there is the need for a "categorical particular and official history of salvation," (133) which will interpret the history of general revelation (134). The special revelation history is established through people who are singled out as prophets, in such cases God himself directs the objectification of the divine self-communication in such a way that its purity is maintained. This is witnessed to by attendant signs (135). When this happens we have what we normally refer to as revelation in the absolute sense (136). Hence special revelation cannot be thought of as the primary form of revelation (137). Nor can it be thought of coextensive with the

general history of revelation (138): "It has a special history within universal history and with the universal history of religion." (139) However, in that the special history of revelation represents the self-illumination of the general history of revelation it can be thought of as recapitulating it (140).

The universal, general history of salvation can only take place through particular and unique historical incidents. Hence, the dynamism towards greater purity and the achievement of a legitimate self-interpretation of God's self-communication in salvation history is seen to be a dynamism towards a historical climax (141). For Rahner, this insurpassable historical climax of salvation history is to be found in Christ:

The history of revelation has its absolute climax when God's self-communication reaches its insurpassable high point through the hypostatic union and in the incarnation of God in the created, spiritual reality of Jesus for his own sake, and hence for the sake of all of us. (142)

We shall turn our attention to Rahner's understanding of Christ as the climax of salvation history in the next chapter. For the time being, it is enough to indicate that up to this point Rahner has focused his attention on salvation history as the official history of revelation in which God's transcendental self-communication becomes self-reflexive without so far showing any concern to speak of the liberating activity of God in human history. If this is indicative of Rahner's theology as a whole then it betrays a tendency to value epistemology and revelation over critical praxis (143). However, we may be doing Rahner a disservice. It is possible that Rahner understands the event of revelation to be not merely the statement of God's transcendental self-communication but the self-revealing ontological presence and activity of God in the historical realm.

When, in the next chapter, we discuss his understanding of Christ as the climax of salvation history, we shall have cause to question whether it is sufficient to interpret Christ's salvific significance merely in terms of his being the insurpassable objectification of general revelation.

Before we proceed along these lines of enquiry there are two other pressing questions which demand our attention. Firstly, how does Rahner seek to bridge the gap between his understanding of God as the transcendent ground of all reality, who cannot be thought of as an existent within the historical realm, and his understanding of uncreated grace as God's real self-communication to the human person? If Rahner cannot adequately overcome this apparent dichotomy then he fails to establish the possibility of God being truly active in the historical order which was one of the three criteria of adequacy that we have formulated in Chapter Two. Secondly, how can Rahner claim that the human person is always graced, (that indeed human nature only finds its absolute fulfilment in grace), without thereby compromising the gratuity of grace and so leaving himself open to the charge of Pelagianism? This will lead us to further question whether Rahner's attempted solution is a vacuous verbal definition by which he guards himself against the charge of noetic Pelagianism without adequately perceiving the threat of existential Pelagianism.

#### 5.7 How can the transcendent God be present in the historical order?

We are concerned in this section with what Rahner terms "The tension between a transcendental starting point and historical religion." (144) On the one hand, Rahner insists that God is the transcendent ground of all reality (145) who cannot "be incorporated



along with what is grounded into a system which encompasses them both."

(146) For Rahner, God, by definition, cannot be thought of as an individual existent in the world (147). Indeed, if God were to enter into the world, as one existent reality amongst many, then God would cease to be God (148). However, on the other hand, the human person can only know objects of spatio-temporal experience. Hence, if God is really to communicate Godself in immediacy to man, as Rahner maintains to be so, it would seem to suggest that God must be present within the historical order. The notion of an historical religion seems to require that: "God as it were appears within the world of our categorical experience at quite definite points as distinguished from other points." (149) These basic requirements of historical religion, (that God is active in the created order and reveals Godself in the historical order) stand in tension with Rahner's starting point: "Our basic starting point seems to say that God is everywhere in so far as he grounds everything, and he is nowhere in so far as everything that is grounded is created." (150)

There are genuine difficulties here. Firstly as to whether the God who transcends all historical reality can be present and active within the historical order: "The difficulty consists in the fact that by definition God does not seem to be able to be where by definition we are." (151) Secondly as to whether the notion of a transcendental self-communication to all people at all times does not exhaust the possibility of a genuinely historical revelation:

What then can still take place in a history of salvation and redemption if always and everywhere and from the very beginning God with his absolute reality has already communicated himself as the innermost centre of everything which can be history at all? (152)

If revelation is transcendently given, does that not reduce historical religion to the level of a mythological representation of

that which was already always known in its fullness? (153) These two questions (as to God's activity in the historical order and as to the coherency of maintaining both a historical and a transcendental revelation) together focus on the coherency of Rahner's position that God who is transcendent, and who communicates Godself transcendently, is also present and active and communicating Godself in the historical order.

To the question of God's presence in the historical order, Rahner gives a two stage answer: Firstly, he argues that God's presence can be thought of in terms of mediated immediacy; Secondly, he argues that God can become God's other (154) and change in God's other. This latter argument ties in with Rahner's understanding of quasi-formal causality, and, as we mentioned earlier, Rahner locates his argument for God's quasi-formal causality in the special revealed case of the hypostatic union (155). Hence we must defer giving a full answer to Rahner's attempted solution to the question of God's activity in the historical order until we treat of Christology in the next chapter. To the question as to the possibility of maintaining both a transcendental and a historical revelation, Rahner attempts a reply in terms of the essentially historical nature of transcendentality. Firstly, let us focus our attention upon Rahner's understanding of God's presence within the historical order as being one of mediated immediacy.

Rahner's premise is that if God cannot be present in the historical realm in the manner of an individual existent, then God's presence must be mediated in some fashion (156). Hence, for Rahner the question as to whether God can be immediately present within the historical realm is identical to the question as to whether there can be such a thing as mediated immediacy (157)? We believe that the

concept of 'mediated immediacy' is helpful when seeking to articulate the manner of God's presence in the historical order. We believe that the insights of process thought make it possible to articulate a coherent panentheism which overcomes the apparent dichotomy between the transcendence and immanence of God by thinking of the entire historical and created order as existing within God. Such an approach makes it possible to think of created, historical reality as being suffused by, and diaphanous to, God's presence in such a way that God is present in and through all things without being confined to, or exhausted by, any finite, created reality. In this way it is possible to speak of a 'mediated immediacy' in relation to God's presence in the historical order. However, we find the way in which Rahner makes use of this concept to be inadequate. Our basic concern is whether Rahner adequately explains how the model of 'mediated immediacy' coheres with his fundamental starting point of God as the distant, transcendent horizon of human knowing and willing.

In seeking to argue a case for the concept of mediated immediacy Rahner recalls that the presence to God as the distant, transcendent horizon of all knowledge and freedom is always mediated by finite reality. He then proceeds to claim that this presence to God as the horizon of all finite reality is an immediacy to God:

For at least the presence of God as the transcendental ground and horizon of everything which exists and everything which knows (and this is a presence of God, an immediacy to him) takes place precisely in and through the presence of the finite existence. (158)

From this premise Rahner then proceeds to claim that notions of mediation and immediacy are not incompatible when applied to God in general: "Mediation and immediacy are not simply contradictory. There is a genuine mediation of immediacy with regard to God." (159) However, there are problems here. Earlier in the present chapter we

noted how Rahner contrasts the presence of God as the mysterious horizon of human knowledge and freedom with the presence of God in the absolute self-communication of grace. We may compare:

In this kind of a natural, transcendental relationship to God the question is still unanswered whether God wants to be for us a silent and impenetrable mystery keeping us at a distance in our finiteness, or wants to be the radical closeness of self-communication. (160)

And:

According to Christian teaching, this one life finds its summit in the self-communication of God, God is not only the ground and innermost dynamism of this one history of nature and the spirit. He is also its goal, not merely as the asymptotic final point towards which this whole movement is orientated but also in the sense that he gives himself in his most personal, absolute reality and infinite fullness of life, to the life of man as its innermost power (called grace) and as its innermost goal which communicates itself in its own proper reality. (161)

Rahner contrasts the presence of God as the distant horizon of knowledge and freedom with the presence of God in the absolute self-communication of grace in such a way that it only seems appropriate, in the terms of his own system, to refer to the latter as an immediate presence. Otherwise it would mean either that Rahner is equating the presence of God as distant horizon with the presence of God as self-communication, which would make nonsense of his earlier comparison, or he is using the concept 'mediated immediacy' to mean two very different things in each case. If the latter, then whatever Rahner means by 'mediated immediacy' as regards God as the distant horizon of human finitude cannot be taken to establish the possibility of the 'mediated immediacy' of the self-communication of God in grace as they are not logically equivalent uses of the concept. It would seem that, when judged by the terms of his own system, Rahner is trying to square the circle by seeking to argue from the possibility of God's transcendental presence to history as the transcendent horizon of human finitude to the possibility of the immanent presence of God within the created

order. Rahner's concept of God as the infinite horizon of human finitude does not require the involvement of God in the historical order, with classical theism it allows God to stand outside of the historical order. Hence, Rahner cannot state the presence of God as distant horizon as evidence for the possibility of God being present to, within and through created reality.

The problem is that in the terms in which Rahner has set the question in his own system, transcendence is in tension with immanence. As we saw in Chapter Three, Rahner builds his entire philosophical and theological system on a transcendental analysis of the ultimate conditions of human knowing and willing which discloses God as the distant horizon of human finitude. It is only after establishing this premise that Rahner turns to ask whether the transcendent horizon of Holy Mystery is not only present as the absolutely distant one but also as the absolutely near one in loving self-communication. That is, the question of immanence in Rahner's schema is consequent upon the prior establishment of transcendence. Rather than representing a creative reformulation of transcendence and immanence, Rahner's starting point seems to be laden with the dualistic assumptions of the classic tradition (162). Tracy states:

For the moment, it may be sufficient to state that this transcendental tradition - thus far at least - is unwilling to break with the classical theistic concepts of Aquinas. Hence, whatever its other merits as an authentic method of metaphysical inquiry, the transcendental methods of Rahner and Lonergan will not prove helpful to any theologian sharing the present revisionist conviction that classical Christian theism is neither internally coherent nor adequate as a full account of our common experience and of the scriptural understanding of the Christian God. (163)

Given the centrality in Rahner's system of God as the distant horizon of knowing and willing, it is inadequate for him to simply seek to graft a reworked understanding of transcendence and immanence into

his system at a late stage. Our dispute is not with this reworked approach per se but rather with Rahner's late and unargued adoption of it. Before he can legitimately and coherently adopt a reworked model such as this it is necessary for him to show how the immanence of God coheres with the transcendence of God as he initially treats of it. As it is, Rahner does not overcome the dualism between transcendence and immanence. In fact, he threatens to collapse immanence into transcendence in such a way that the immediate presence of God in grace is reduced to the level of the presence of God as the distant horizon of human finitude. We may compare:

There can be a presence of God as the condition and the object of what we are accustomed to call religion in the usual sense only in so far as the representation of this presence of God... can essentially be nothing other than something categorial which points to the transcendental presence of God. (164)

Thus far, we can claim that Rahner has failed to establish the presence of God in the historical realm, in a way that coheres with his own foundations, with all the disastrous implications which that holds for the notion of a redeeming activity of God in the historical order. However, we shall have to postpone final judgement until we have discussed Rahner's Christology.

Let us now turn our attention to the question as to how Rahner conceives of the relationship between transcendental and historical revelation. Rahner has argued that "man is spirit in world", that the human person's transcendental orientation is only given to him/her and lived out through the activity of forming finite judgements and free acts of self-realization. That is, he claims that the human person's transcendentality is essentially mediated historically (165). Hence, rather than posing history and transcendence as contradictory realms, Rahner claims that they are mutually related. Transcendence is only

possible in history and history is always the history of transcendence for without humanity's transcendental orientation there would be no history: "We are beginning with the proposition, therefore, that transcendence itself has a history, and that history itself is always the event of this transcendence." (166) Hence it is, he argues, that God's transcendental self-communication is not to be thought of as standing in contradiction to the notion of a genuinely historical religion. God's transcendental self-communication is inevitably mediated historically.

However, this cannot as yet be thought of as a sufficient solution to the problem. Rahner has merely stated that transcendence has a history without explaining how this is so in a manner which does not reduce the historical manifestation of God's transcendental revelation to the level of mythology. His justification for claiming that transcendentality and history cannot be thought of as incompatible is that they are already found to be in a relationship in the exercise of human knowledge and freedom. That Rahner uses this as grounds for claiming a general compatibility between transcendental revelation and historical revelation should alert our suspicions. In human knowledge and freedom, humanity's orientation to the transcendental horizon is prior to any reflection upon it or any freely chosen determination over against it. Any reflection or freely chosen determination represents the process of bringing to explicit awareness that which was always already known at an implicit level, that is the person's orientation to the transcendent horizon of God. Is such an analogy adequate to support a genuinely historical religion of revelation? It would tend to suggest that the historical aspect of revelation is merely the manifestation of that which has always already been given. Indeed Rahner states:

Consequently, every real intervention of God in his world, although it is free and cannot be deduced, is always only the becoming historical and becoming concrete of that intervention in which God as the transcendent ground of the world has from the outset embedded himself in the world as its self-communicating ground. (167)

This could be taken to suggest that the historical aspect of revelation is reduced to the level of a cypher rather than being a genuine self-revealing presence of God in the historical order. If this is so then the historical order of revelation would be seen to result not so much from God's free activity of self-disclosure, so much as from the varying degrees to which God's universal will to disclose Godself is passively mediated by the varying potential of particular situations to do so. Historical revelation, ultimately becomes not so much an activity of God as rather a subjective apprehension of humanity.

That the suggestion above represents a correct understanding of the status of the historical aspect of revelation in Rahner's thought may be suggested by Rahner's understanding of God's causal activity. He maintains that God as the transcendent ground of the created order can be thought of as sustaining all things but cannot be thought of as acting causally in history: "God causes the world, but not really in the world." (168) God's causal activity in the historical order is due to a subjective interpretation, on behalf of man, through viewing a situation in terms of its ultimate significance (169). Whilst events in the world can be explained in terms of inner-worldly causality (170), the religious subject who perceives a particular event in terms of its ultimate grounding in God's causation of the world can legitimately claim that it is caused by God:

This role indeed really belongs to these phenomena in themselves, but only in so far as they really and truly exist within this subjective context, and therefore they can also be recognised in the special character which belongs to them only within this context. (171)



This position is inadequate to support a genuine presence and activity of God in the historical order. The most it can claim is that the universal, transcendental presence of God is mediated through the historical realm, some situations mediating it more effectively than others. It would tend to suggest that historical revelation is merely a showing forth, or a pointer towards, the transcendental truth about God. This would be a far remove from understanding God as the one who acts in history to secure one eventuality rather than another (172). If this were so, then Christ would be reduced to the level of a cypher and his salvific significance reduced to his being the fullest manifestation, the most adequate symbol, of the transcendental presence of God rather than his being the liberating activity of God.

However, we believe that the above presentation does not do<sup>7</sup> justice to Rahner's intentions when exploring the relationship between historical revelation and transcendental revelation. For Rahner, revelation is not a word about God, it is the ontological self-communication of God transcendently granted. Hence, historical revelation is not merely a word about transcendental revelation, or a cypher pointing towards the transcendental presence of God. It is the "becoming historical and becoming concrete" in this situation "of that intervention in which God... has from the outset embedded himself in the world as its self-communicating ground." (173) Historical revelation is not a reduced expression of the totality, it is the absolute self-communication of God, which is transcendently and unthematically present to all situations, categorically present in and to this particular situation (174). However, the adequacy of this<sup>7</sup> position is in turn dependent upon the adequacy of Rahner's solution to the problem that we have earlier examined: Can the notion of God's genuine presence and activity be reconciled with Rahner's starting

point? If Rahner fails to do this, as so far he seems to do, then the terms of Rahner's own system would prevent us from thinking of historical revelation as the ontological self-communication of God in the historical order. Historical revelation would be reduced to being a word about the transcendent God and Christ would be reduced to the level of a cypher. Before pursuing this question further in the next chapter we must turn to ask whether the universality of God's self-communication does not compromise the gratuity of grace.

#### 5.8 Can the universality and the gratuity of grace be reconciled?

Is the human person naturally orientated to grace and the beatific vision, or is this due to a supernatural elevation? Over against the nouvelle theology, official Catholic theology as outlined in the encyclical Humani Generis (1950) maintained that the human orientation to grace and beatitude was due entirely to a supernatural elevation. Through his notion of the supernatural existential, Rahner sought to bridge the gap between these two positions whilst maintaining the primacy of grace. His argument is that it is the human person's natural state to be supernaturally elevated. However, there is a difficulty here. If the supernatural existential is always given to the human person in the concrete, does this not make the notion supernatural somewhat vacuous? Indeed, does not Rahner's position, (that the human person's absolute fulfilment is to be found in God's self-communication in grace), mean that grace must be an essential constituent of the person due to him/her having an unfrustratable orientation to grace? If this were the case then Rahner could only claim that the human orientation to grace was gratuitous in as much as God could have refrained from creating humanity at all. In which case, his solution would reduce to that of the nouvelle theology, even though

he refers to grace as supernatural rather than natural. That is, it would seem that if human nature for Rahner cannot be anything other than supernature then the term supernatural is vacuous and leaves Rahner open to the charge of Pelagianism.

However, Rahner's position is more nuanced than this. He realises that an unconditional disposition (whether termed natural or supernatural) for grace can only be considered gratuitous in the sense that God could have refrained from creating the human person (176), and he clearly considers this to be an inadequate understanding of gratuity:

as God's real partner I must be able to receive his grace (otherwise than my existence) as an unexpected miracle of his love, not first of all think myself out of existence and then conceive of my own being as such as the miracle of his freedom. (177)

He rejects the position of the nouvelle theology (178), arguing instead for a double gratuity whereby God could refuse to communicate Godself to the human person without frustrating the person's nature:

What is called supernatural grace in Catholic doctrine is something uncalled for with regard to our present de facto permanent condition (our nature) even prior to sin. It is not merely free with regard to our non-necessary existence and God's free, uncalled for decision to create us. (179)

Rahner argues that the person's potentia oboedientialis is to be identified with the person's natural spiritual transcendence towards God as the infinite horizon of human knowledge and freedom (180). Whilst this spiritual dynamism only finds its absolute fulfilment in God's self-communication it already reaches a partial fulfilment in God as the woraufhin of human transcendence. Hence, whilst the person's spiritual nature as potentia oboedientialis has an openness for the supernatural existential, it does not demand it unconditionally. The person's spiritual nature is not frustrated if it does not receive God's self-communication (181) as the person's potentia oboedientialis

would still be the "indispensable transcendental condition of the possibility of a spiritual life" (182). Rahner's claim is that we cannot dismiss as meaningless even a spiritual life which only approaches God asymptotically (183).

Rahner understands God's activity in creation to be a derived and secondary mode of his activity in self-communication. However, he maintains that God's self-communication is not simply an extension of God's act of creation. Whereas in creation God posits the creature over against Godself through efficient causality, he maintains that in self-communication God gives himself through quasi-formal causality to the previously posited creature. Nor does the act of creation necessitate the act of self-communication, "the secondary could be realized without the primal." (184) Pure nature really could have existed, nature is conceivable without the supernatural existential (185).

It is unclear in Rahner's theology whether he wants to maintain double gratuity merely as a logical distinction between the acts of creation and self-communication, (i.e. to claim that whilst nature in the concrete always has been graced, it could have been created differently), or whether he wants to maintain double gratuity in terms of a temporal distinction, (i.e. to claim that man was first created and later graced). Certain metaphors that he uses to convey the notion of double gratuity tend to suggest a temporal distinction: "He (God) was able to create the child of grace, in distinction to his only-begotten son, only by creating the addressee without claim to sonship i.e. the servant" (186). Shepherd maintains that Rahner did intend such a temporal distinction in his technical doctrine of nature and grace. He argues that this stands in a position of fundamental inconsistency

with Rahner's wider theology which claims that creation was always given so that God could communicate Godself, implying only a logical distinction (187). Shepherd claims that the coherency of Rahner's position can only be won at the cost of dropping the notion of a temporal distinction and maintaining double gratuity through the notion of a logical distinction alone. Shepherd claims that such a position would still be adequate to guard against the intrinsicism of the nouvelle theology as it would be a real possibility that the human person could have been created differently (188). Whether or not Rahner's technical doctrine of nature and grace needs to be modified in the manner suggested by Shepherd depends upon whether Rahner really intends by his metaphor to maintain a temporal distinction rather than a logical distinction. It is far from certain that Rahner does intend his metaphor to be pushed this far. However, in either case it represents only a slight modification to Rahner's solution. Through maintaining the genuine possibility of the human person being created without grace, Rahner is able both to maintain that all of human life as it is experienced in the concrete is graced and that this really is a supernatural elevation and not simply an outworking of human nature. In this manner, Rahner seeks to defend himself against the charge of Pelagianism. However, we must now ask whether Rahner's solution adequately matches concretely experienced human life, or whether his rebuttal of a Pelagian stance is merely verbal and vacuous after all.

#### 5.9 Rahner's understanding of the nature-grace relationship as condemning the human person to existential Pelagianism:

Common human experience would seem to tell us that the concept grace fundamentally refers to a more than humans, as they experience

themselves in the concrete, feel themselves to be in need of (189). It is difficult to see how Rahner's position, which claims that grace is always given everywhere, can allow for such a more quality to grace. Augustine's dispute with Pelagius was not simply a verbal quibble as to whether Pelagius ascribed, intentionally or otherwise, the first step in salvation to the human person or to God. It was a deeply experiential dispute as to whether Pelagius had plumbed the depths of the human abyss and perceived our inability to liberate ourselves and our consequent need of God's redeeming grace. Pelagius' error was not that he gave a true account of concrete human experience yet failed to give due verbal acknowledgement to grace, his error was rather that he misrepresented human experience, we might say that he perceived it to be naturally graced.

It would seem appropriate to question whether Rahner's attempt to modify the position of the nouvelle theologie remains on a verbal level. In claiming that nature could have been created without grace, Rahner does indeed secure a definitional acknowledgement of the gratuity of grace, but in claiming that nature as it is experienced in the concrete is always graced does he not present the human person with the same dreadful conclusion as the ascetic Pelagius: "since perfection is possible for man, it is obligatory" (190)? To the person who feels him/herself to be ensnared by evil, who knows the inadequacy of present resources, it is little comfort to be assured against the knowledge born from bitter experience that s/he really does have all the resources required for change. Indeed, this is to be told that the present inadequate resources are all that can be hoped for, that there is no more to be sought. Ultimately this is to condemn a person to their plight just as surely as does a government who tells a powerless underclass that they already have the means to change their situation

if only they would use them. As Daly says:

I believe that Pelagian optimism about the human condition is ultimately the most depressing of doctrines, as soon as one reckons with one's divided self, one's failed opportunities, and the ambivalent character of whatever good one may do.  
(191)

We maintain that the need for a more to grace stems from the implications of Rahner's own dynamic understanding of human freedom. In Chapters Three and Four we characterised Rahner's understanding of human freedom as we become that which we do, an understanding that we wholeheartedly agreed with. We argued that such an understanding of human freedom had a consequent dark side. The sinful acts which all of us perform, to some extent, cannot be seen as superficial discrepancies which can be ignored, in contrast they actually form our personalities. Further, the human person always finds him/herself to be in a situation codetermined by other people's sin. For these reasons the sinner cannot simply reject his/her sin and turn again to enjoy the fullness of grace. There is the need for a healing process which will arrest and reverse the dynamic of sin. That is, a dynamic understanding of freedom and sin seems to also require a dynamic understanding of grace. Common human experience seems to suggest that grace must include a healing element which always opens to a more, or to greater healing. Whatever we mean by the universality of grace, we cannot think of it as a static universal in a way that excludes this possibility of always opening to a more.

There is a genuine problem here. Rahner has good reason for wanting to maintain that grace is present everywhere, at all times. In so doing he can maintain the universal salvific will of God and also close the door to any sacred/profane distinctions that would isolate the religious realm from the human realm. These are concerns that we

also share. The problem is whether Rahner has secured these concerns at the apparent cost of giving rise to a concept of grace that is vacuous. As we have already maintained, a formalistic statement of the universality of grace is of little use without an explanation of how grace transforms.

Rahner could have sought to escape this impasse by attributing a dynamic aspect to the transcendental gracious presence of God, both in the sense that grace could be thought of as always seeking to establish that which God is, and also in the sense that we can think of a dynamic between God's offer and the free human response. This would mean that grace had a latent potency about it. It would be understood as being present in the manner of an offer or invitation which whenever it was responded to, (a response itself held in being by grace), enabled God to achieve Godself in that situation (192). In this manner, the dynamic presence of grace could be thought of as both preceding the human person's responsive cooperation and also achieving the human person's responsive cooperation. Each such cooperative response could be thought of as opening the human subject more and more to the dynamic of grace. We could employ the image of an unstretched balloon on the end of a tap being filled with water. As the water fills the given capacity of the balloon at any one moment, so it creates a greater potential capacity. We may compare here Hardy and Ford's exploration of the dynamic of the 'praise of God':

Perhaps the central effect of praise here is that of opening. Very simply seen, the effect of praise is to open 'space' for the recipient to be himself, and thus to allow him to be himself without confinement or coercion; and this brings about an enlargement, both of him and of his sphere of relevance and relationships... Thus, the dynamic of this self-realization is like a circumference which continually expands, rather than an exclusive centre concerned with establishing and maintaining its own individuality and uniqueness... praise of God serves to recognize the expansion which is God's nature. For with him, 'space' and 'time' and



'energy' are actually expanding, something like that expanding circumference which we saw before. It is not, of course, a matter of expanding to places which were there but he had not reached before, though human imagination seems always to operate in these terms; in this case, God is expanding the very notions of space, time and place, and even energy. So when, in what is perhaps the most characteristic feature of Christian praise, God is in praise found to be ever more totally present, this is a profound intuition of the way he actually is. (193)

Is Rahner concerned to establish any such dynamic aspect of grace? Gerard McCool claims that Rahner does indeed ascribe a senating (194) quality to grace which enables the human person to extend his/her control over the other dynamisms of nature, and so to overcome the effects of concupiscence. However, we find no evidence in Rahner's essay on concupiscence (195) to support such a view. Even if Rahner does claim that grace overcomes the effects of concupiscence, this would still be insufficient for our purposes. We have claimed that there must be a dynamic quality to grace not only to overcome concupiscence, but to overcome the effects of a person's own freely chosen evil orientation and to lead him/her through sanctifying healing to a greater and greater openness to grace. In the entirety of our reading of Rahner we have found only two references to any such dynamic aspect of grace. The first is given in such an afterthought manner that we can only conclude that it is either a peripheral concern for Rahner or that he simply assumes a dynamic aspect of grace and so considers it to be adequate to make a formal statement of it. He states:

The only distinction here that is binding on faith is this: Grace is habitual insofar as God's supernatural self-communication is permanently offered to man (after baptism) and insofar as it is freely accepted (by one who is of age); this very same grace is called actual insofar as it actually sustains the act whereby it is accepted - an act which is intrinsically graduated in existential depth and can be renewed indefinitely - and thus actualizes itself. (196)

The second comes in Foundations when Rahner is introducing the

relationship between historical revelation and God's transcendental self-communication. He refers to this self-disclosure as having "a dynamism towards its own objectification" (197).

Why is it that Rahner treats of the dynamic aspect of grace in such a peripheral way? Is it due to a different spiritual temperament which like that of the ascetical Pelagius cannot identify with the troubled Augustine's knowledge of his absolute need for a more? This seems unlikely. As we saw in Chapter Four we cannot ascribe to Rahner a blindness to the extent and depth of human evil and the consequent need for an objectively given redemption. Indeed, in the present chapter we have observed how Rahner has sought to locate the objectivity of redemption in his understanding of human nature as graced nature. Given Rahner's awareness of the radical depth of sin which requires a process of conversion, it would seem to be most likely that Rahner assumes throughout his theology of grace that it does indeed have a dynamic aspect to it, rather than that he overlooks this need entirely. However, the marginal way in which he refers to this dynamic aspect of grace betrays a certain formalism. His theology of grace is not dominated by anguish over the possibility of healing and transformation in human life. His, more theoretical, concern is to establish the universality of grace in a way that does not compromise the gratuity of grace. Whilst reams are written on this question, the actual working of grace, or effects of grace, are treated in a somewhat cursory fashion. Rahner states that human life is graced without exploring what difference this makes and without explaining how the activity of grace in human life liberates. We believe that it is insufficient to assert formally that human life is graced without establishing the how of the dynamic, liberating activity of grace. The

practical effect of such formalism, contrary to the desired intention, will be to appear to be condemning the person to his/her own inadequate resources. We could term this the despair of existential Pelagianism.

We feel bound to conclude that Rahner's approach to the nature/grace relationship, albeit unintentionally, reduces to a verbal solution which does not answer the hungering and doubt of the human heart. Rahner is concerned with the theoretical question of the relationship between the universality and the gratuity of grace. He does not show himself to be sufficiently immersed in the experienced dilemma of personal, social and structural evil in human life. Metz claims that this is due to Rahner's abstract, a priori starting point which treats the human subject in isolation from his/her historical and social struggles for identity (198). As we have already noted, we believe that this problem of a priori formalism runs throughout Rahner's theology. At that point, we also claimed that it stems from Rahner's transcendental starting point which shifts the attention onto universal, general, a priori statements rather than the particular details of human life and history. As we turn in our final chapter to explore Rahner's Christology and his understanding of Christ as the consummation of salvation history we wonder whether the same problem of formalism will show themselves. Will Rahner be able to establish that God was really present and active in the historical order in Christ or will Christ remain, against his intentions, at the level of a cypher of God's transcendental presence? Will Rahner be able to establish the salvific significance of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, or will it merely be stated that he is the Absolute Saviour?

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER FIVE

1. cf. "Man is he who is always confronted with the holy mystery, even where he is dealing with what is within hand's reach, comprehensible and amenable to a conceptual framework. So the holy mystery is not something upon which man may also stumble, if he is lucky and takes an interest in something else besides the definable objects within the horizon of his consciousness. Man always lives by the holy mystery, even where he is not conscious of it. The lucidity of his consciousness derives from the incomprehensibility of this mystery. The proximity of his environment is constituted by the distant aloofness of the mystery. The freedom of his mastery of things comes from his being mastered by the Holy which is itself unmastered." K. Rahner, "The Concept Of Mystery In Catholic Theology", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 53-54.
2. cf., id., FCF, pp. 84-86.
3. ibid., pp. 85. cf. "Hence there is really only one question, whether this God wanted to be merely the eternally distant one, or whether beyond that he wanted to be the innermost centre of our existence in free grace and in self-communication." ibid., pp. 50. cf., id., "The Concept Of Mystery In Catholic Theology", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 61.
4. cf. "The philosophy of religion, conceiving of God as essential and perpetually the holy mystery, can of course offer no grounds for a philosophical proof of the possibility of the beatific vision and hence of grace and the supernatural order in general." id., "The Concept Of Mystery In Catholic Theology", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 61. cf. "In this kind of a natural, transcendental relationship to God the question is still unanswered whether God wants to be for us a silent and impenetrable mystery keeping us at a distance in our finiteness, or wants to be the radical closeness of self-communication; whether he wants to confront our sinful rejection of him in the depths of our conscience and in its categorical objectifications in history as judgements or as forgiveness." id., FCF, pp. 170.
5. cf., id., FCF, pp. 171.
6. cf. "It is dialogical, and in it God speaks to man, and makes known to him something which cannot be known always and everywhere in the world simply through the necessary relation of all reality in the world to and in man's transcendence." ibid.
7. cf. "According to Christian teaching, this one life finds its summit in the self-communication of God, God is not only the ground and innermost dynamism of this one history of nature and the spirit. He is also its goal, not merely as the asymptotic final point towards which this whole movement is orientated but also in the sense that he gives himself in his most personal, absolute reality and infinite fullness of life, to the life of man as its innermost power (called grace) and as its innermost goal which communicates itself in its own proper reality." id., "The Secret Of Life", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 152.

8. id., "The Concept Of Mystery In Catholic Theology", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 67.
9. cf., id., FCF, pp. 171. cf. "God is neither the absolute, remote and distant one, nor judgement, although he could be both." ibid., pp. 172.
10. id., FCF, pp. 116.
11. cf., id., "The Concept Of Mystery In Catholic Theology", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 60-73. cf. "The three mysteries, the Trinity with its two processions, and the two self-communications ad extra in a real formal causality corresponding to the two processions, are not intermediate mysteries... they signify the articulation of the one single mystery of God, being the radical form of his one comprehensive mysteriousness, since it has been revealed in Jesus Christ that this absolute and abiding mystery can exist not only in the guise of distant aloofness, but also as absolute proximity to us, through the divine self communication." ibid., pp. 72. cf. "There are these three mysteries in Christianity, no more and no fewer, and the three mysteries affirm the same thing that God has imparted himself to us through Jesus Christ in his spirit as he is in himself." ibid. cf. "The only really absolute mysteries are the self-communication of God in the depths of existence, called grace, and in history, called Jesus Christ, and this already includes the mystery of the Trinity in the economy of salvation and of the immanent Trinity." id., FCF, pp. 12.
12. id., "Theos In The New Testament", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 115. cf. "Properly and precisely, we know who God is, not from ourselves and the world, but only from the activity in history of the free and living God, through which he showed us who he wished to be for us. Consequently the teaching of the New Testament in the ultimate analysis is not an ontology of God's attributes, not a theory, but an historical account of the experiences in which man has come to know God." ibid., pp. 117.
13. W. C. Shepherd, Man's Condition: God And The World Process, (New York: Herder and Herder 1969).
14. Rahner, FCF, pp. 116. cf., ibid., pp. 171. cf. "God communicates himself to man in his own most proper reality." id., "Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 175.
15. id., FCF, pp. 116. Rahner uses many phrases the stress that God's self-communication is really a communication of God's self: cf. God "gives away himself", id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 114. cf. "God himself goes out of himself", ibid., pp. 115. cf. "God expresses himself", ibid., pp. 116. cf. "Grace is God himself, the communication in which he gives himself to man as the divinizing favour which he is himself, there his work is really himself, since it is he who is imparted." id., "Nature and Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 177. cf. "God's self-communication means, therefore, that what is communicated is really God in his own being", id., FCF, pp. 117-118. cf. "It is decisive for an understanding of God's self-communication to man to grasp that the giver in his own being is the gift, that in and through his own being the giver gives himself to creatures as

their own fulfillment." ibid., pp. 120.

16. cf., id., FCF, pp. 136-137.

17. id., "Remarks On The Dogmatic Treatise De Trinitate", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 87. cf., id., The Trinity, (London: Burns and Oates 1970), pp. 22.

18. id., FCF, pp. 135. cf. "God is not only trinitarian in himself, but also communicates himself in a trinitarian way in grace." id., "Nature and Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 175. cf. "But this self-communication of God to us has, according to the testimony of revelation in the Scripture, a three-fold aspect. It is a self-communication in which that which is imparted remains the sovereign and incomprehensible, and which even as something received continues to be unoriginated and not at the disposal or within the grasp of anyone. It is a self-communication in which the God who reveals himself is there, as self-expressive truth and as free directive power acting in history and it is a self-communication in which the God who imparts himself brings about the acceptance of his gift, in such a way that the acceptance does not reduce the communication to the level of merely created things." id., "Remarks On The Dogmatic Treatise De Trinitate", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 96-97. cf. "If man has comprehended himself only when he has understood himself as the addressee of this divine self-communication, then it can be said that the mystery of the trinity is the final mystery of our own reality and, in fact, is experienced in that reality." id., The Trinity, pp. 47.

19. id., "Grace", CTD, pp. 193.

20. cf., E. J. Yarnold, "Grace" in Ed. Alan Richardson and John Bowden, A New Dictionary Of Christian Theology, (London: SCM 1983), pp. 245. cf. "Grace: In theology God's personal condescension and absolutely gratuitous clemency to man; but grace... also signifies the effect of this clemency in which God communicates himself to man." "Grace" in Ed. Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, Concise Theological Dictionary, (London: Burns & Oates 1965), pp. 192. cf. "strictly supernatural grace, grace as such (the grace of \*justification), is primarily God's communicating himself in his own being: uncreated grace... justification is a true rebirth, that it produces a new creature, a temple truly inhabited by the Spirit of God himself, a man anointed and sealed by the Spirit and born of God... The very term "uncreated" grace implies that man himself, in himself, is truly re-created by this divine self-communication, so that in this sense there is a "created" and "accidental" grace." ibid., pp. 195.

21. Rahner, E.T., pp. 592.

22. cf., ibid.

23. cf., ibid.

24. cf. "He does not use the creature to impart himself, as when it points to God by its created reality: God imparts himself immediately of himself to the creature." id., "The Concept Of

Mystery In Catholic Theology", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 66.

25. id., "Some Implications Of The Scholastic Concept Of Uncreated Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 319-346.
26. cf. "Uncreated grace is only to be determined in terms of the visio, it is the homogeneous commencement already given though still concealed and still to unfold, of that communication of the divine Being taking place by way of formal causality to the created spirit which is the ontological presupposition of the visio." ibid., pp. 335.
27. "If, as Pius XII emphasizes, grace and glory are two stages of the one divinization of man; if, as classical theology has always emphasized, glory means a self-communication of God to the created spirit which is not a created quality or entity distinct from God, produced by efficient causality but God's imparting himself to man by means of quasi-formal causality: then this notion can be applied far more explicitly to grace than has been customary hitherto in theology." id., "Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 175. cf. "Grace is one supernatural elevation of man and the formal beginning and ontological prerequisite of the vision. Hence in the doctrine of grace also, the central element is the uncreated grace, which is the immediate self-communication of God in quasi-formal causality in contrast to an efficient causality." id., "The Concept Of Mystery In Catholic Theology", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 66. cf. "In what we call grace and the immediate vision of God, God is really an intrinsic, constitutive principle of man as existing in the situation of salvation and fulfillment." id., FCF, pp. 121.
28. id., FCF, pp. 120.
29. cf., id., "Some Implications Of The Scholastic Concept Of Uncreated Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 330-334. cf. "God communicates himself to the man to whom grace has been shown in the mode of formal causality, so that this communication is not then merely the consequence of an efficient causation of created grace." ibid., pp. 334.
30. id., "Remarks On The Dogmatic Treatise De Trinitate", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 96.
31. cf., id., "Some Implications Of The Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 330.
32. id., FCF, pp. 85.
33. In Hearers, Rahner stated the similar concern regarding revelation thus: "Revelation has to be transposed into the human word, if man is not to be taken by revelation out of his human way of existing." id., Hearers, (Mc Cool, A Rahner Reader, pp. 64).
34. cf. "Man is spirit in such a way that, in order to become spirit, he enters and he has ontically always already entered into otherness, into matter, and so into the world." ibid., pp. 51.
35. He states that matter can only fulfil all its possibilities in a

temporal sequence: "The total realization of the possibilities of a material being is possible only in the succession of the latter's inner movement. In other words, the being is temporal." ibid., pp. 53.

36. cf. "Man is spirit as an historical being. The place of his transcendence is always and also an historical place." ibid., pp. 47. cf. "Man's transcendentality cannot be understood as a capacity which is given and lived and experienced and reflected upon independently of history." id., FCF, pp. 140. cf. Man is the one "who actualizes his essence in history and only in this way can accept it in freedom." ibid., pp. 138. cf. "Man's transcendentality along with its term and its source is not reached alongside history." ibid., pp. 141. cf. "his subjective essence of unlimited transcendentality is mediated historically to him in his knowledge and in his free self-realization." ibid., pp. 140.
37. cf. "The place of a possible revelation is always and necessarily also the history of man." id., Hearers, pp. 47. cf. "Hence revelation takes place once in human history, at least in this sense that it cannot be permanently coexistent with all the single moments of a single human history." ibid., pp. 64.
38. id., "The Concept Of Mystery In Catholic Theology", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 54.
39. ibid.,
40. id., "The Concept Of Mystery In Catholic Theology", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 56. cf. "This self-communication does not cancel out or deny what was said earlier about the presence of God as the absolute mystery which is essentially incomprehensible. Even in grace and in the immediate vision of God, God remains God, that is, the first and the ultimate measure which can be measured by nothing else. He remains the mystery which alone is self evident... in this very event of God's absolute self-communication the Godness of God as the holy mystery becomes radical and insuppressible reality for man. The immediacy of God in his self-communication is precisely the revelation of God as the absolute mystery which remains such." id., FCF, pp. 119-120.
41. id., "The Concept Of Mystery In Catholic Theology", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 55.
42. ibid.
43. ibid.
44. id., "Theology Of Freedom", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 183.
45. cf. "God is not merely the distant horizon towards which man projects his free self-understanding as to something always distant but he has become in absolute immediacy the space and object of this exercise of freedom." ibid., pp. 196. cf. "Indeed this statement bids us surrender ourselves to the ineffable and holy mystery and to accept it in freedom, the mystery which becomes even more radical for us the more it communicates itself,



and the more that we allow this self-communication to be given to us in what we call faith, hope and love." id., FCF, pp. 125.

46. cf., id., "Reflections On The Unity Of The Love Of Neighbour And The Love Of God", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 239.
47. cf. "In the present order of salvation, i.e. one having a supernatural goal, this basic act is, according to what has been said, elevated supernaturally by a self communication of God in uncreated grace and in the resulting basic triune faculty of the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, whereby theological love necessarily and of its very nature integrates and saves faith and hope into itself. Hence the one basic human act, where it takes place positively, is the love of neighbour understood as caritas, i.e. as a love of neighbour whose movement is directed towards the God of eternal life." ibid., pp. 241.
48. id., FCF, pp. 172.
49. ibid., pp. 120.
50. cf., id., "The Secret Of Life", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 152.
51. ibid.
52. id., FCF, pp. 143. cf. "The Mystery enfolds him in an ultimate and radical love which commends itself to him as his salvation and as the real meaning of his existence." id., "The Need For A Short Formula Of Christian Faith", T.I. Vol. IX, pp. 122.
53. id., FCF, pp. 120.
54. id., "The History Of The World And Salvation History", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 101-102.
55. cf. "Salvation for the Christian is not a future which is simply still to come and which has not yet started at all since, when it does come, it will absorb the history of the world into itself. No, salvation takes place now." ibid., pp. 98.
56. ibid.
57. cf. "The life of grace, that is to say, and the life of future glory do not stand in a purely moral and juridical relation to each other, such that the latter is the reward of the former as merit; the life of glory is the definitive flowering (the manifestation, the disclosure) of the life of divine sonship already possessed and merely hidden for the moment." id., "Some Implications Of The Scholastic Concept Of Uncreated Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 326.
58. id., FCF, pp. 171. cf. "This self-communication of God... takes place in the form of that free acceptance of this communication which we call faith, hope and charity is the freedom of man." id., "History Of The World And Salvation History", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 98. cf. "This God in his free communication of himself, in the grace- giving gift of his own eternal glory, must indeed be accepted in freedom." ibid., pp. 102.

59. ibid., pp. 98.
60. cf. "This acceptance of salvation in freedom, takes place just as much with reference to the material presuppositions of man's freedom in which that freedom is accomplished... precisely this freedom of the corporeal, social and historical creature which in man is always and necessarily a freedom which is exercised through an encounter with the world-the community and environment in which man lives." ibid., pp. 98.
61. ibid., pp. 98-99.
62. id., "Grace", CTD, pp. 193.
63. cf., id., FCF, pp. 118, 128.
64. id., "Grace", CTD, pp. 193. cf., id., FCF, pp. 128-129. cf. "this acceptance is itself once more an act of that human freedom which in turn is a gift of God himself, granted to man by God's communication of himself." id., "History Of The World And Salvation History", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 102. cf. "And it follows still further that the concrete act of freedom precisely in its concrete goodness and moral rectitude must once again be understood as coming from and being empowered by the origin of all reality, and hence by God." id., FCF, pp. 119. cf. "indeed... in the movement towards this attainment it is already borne by the self-communication of the future towards which this process is moving as to its absolute fulfillment." id., FCF, pp. 126. cf. "the act of hearing, the acceptance of this self-disclosure and self-communication is borne by God himself through his divinization of man." id., FCF, pp. 171. cf. "In this elevation God gives not only something different from himself, but his very self, and the act of its acceptance is borne by him." id., FCF, pp. 172.
65. cf. "Even prior to justification by sanctifying grace, whether this is conferred sacramentally or outside the sacraments, man already stands under the universal, infralapsarian salvific will of God which comprises within its scope original sin and personal sin." id., "Existence", Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi, pp. 494.
66. cf. "So it is revelation which throws light on the half or even completely concealed supernatural, theological factor in pre-Christian and non-Christian religion and philosophy, which cannot be regarded as some sort of purely natural religion or purely natural speculation, nor again as religion and philosophy which have become corrupted in some purely natural way." id., "Theos In The New Testament", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 81.
67. id., FCF, pp. 172. cf. "Our whole spiritual life is lived in the realm of the salvific will of God, of his prevenient grace, of his call as it becomes efficacious... Even when he does not know it and does not believe it... man always lives consciously in the presence of the triune God of eternal life." id., "Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 180-181. cf. "It (divinizing grace) is offered to everyone as light and as the promise of eternal life,

working freely and graciously in every man, welling up from the origin of his existence - even though perhaps not named as such." id., "The Need For A Short Formula Of Christian Faith", T.I. Vol. IX, pp. 123.

68. id., "Theos In The New Testament", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 81.

69. ibid., cf. "What we call grace - innermost divinization of the creature from its very roots and its openness to the immediacy of God himself - does not merely begin at the same point as does the explicit message of faith, church, sacrament, worship or the written word of God. All these explicitly sacral elements are rather the necessary, divinely disposed, reflex realisation of that divinization of the world freely caused by God's favour yet truly caused by him, in which God has always already accepted and sanctified the whole world in all its dimensions." id., "The Man Of Today And Religion", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 18-19.

70. id., "Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 180.

71. id., FCF, pp. 143. cf. "According to the Christian view of things, even though a person is co-conditioned by original sin in his situation of salvation and sin, he always and everywhere has the genuine possibility of encountering God and achieving salvation by the acceptance of God's supernatural self-communication in grace, a possibility which is forfeited only through his own guilt. There is a serious, effective and universal salvific will of God in the sense of that salvation which the Christian means by his own salvation." ibid., pp. 146-147. cf. "Everyone is offered salvation, which means that everyone, in so far as he does not close himself to this offer by his own free and grave guilt, is offered divinizing grace - and is offered it again and again (even when he is guilty). Every man exists not only in an existential situation to which belongs the obligation of striving towards a supernatural goal of direct union with the absolute God in a direct vision, but he exists also in a situation which presents the genuine subjective possibility of reaching this goal by accepting God's self-communication in grace and in glory. Because of God's universal saving purpose, the offer and possibility of salvation extend as far as extends the history of human freedom." id., "The History Of The World And Salvation History", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 103. cf. "Acts inspired supernaturally by grace are not confined to the justified." id., "Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 179.

72. cf., id., "The Need For A Short Formula Of Christian Faith", T.I. Vol. IX, pp. 123. cf., id., "Christian Humanism", T.I. Vol. IX, pp. 189. cf., id., "Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 183-184.

73. id., FCF, pp. 126.

74. cf. "He (the theologian) is aware that he may only look at the salvation of an individual as one which is not achieved fully except within the absolute future of the whole of mankind, as the ultimate result of the love of all the others in the absoluteness of God. In other words, the salvation of an individual soul does not consist in escaping from the history of humanity but in

entering into the latter's absolute future, which we call the Kingdom of God." id., "Christian Humanism", T.I. Vol. IX, pp. 189. cf. "Christianity understands itself as the religion of the future, as the religion of the new and eternal man." id., "Christianity And The New Man", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 135. cf. "Christianity is a religion of the future. It can indeed be understood only in the light of the future which it conceives as an absolute future gradually approaching the individual and humanity as a whole." id., "Marxist Utopia And The Christian Future Of Man", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 60.

75. id., "Marxist Utopia And The Christian Future Of Man", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 6. cf. "God himself will be this consummation. And since God, the Infinite, is the mystery which can be named and called upon only by a via negationis and by pointing silently beyond anything which can be put into words, we can speak of this consummation only negatively in images and likenesses and in speechless reference to absolute transcendence. Our consummation, therefore, is not fitted to become the subject of party tirades, of glowing imagery, of plastic description of utopian conceptions." id., "Christianity And The New Man", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 148.
76. cf. "The eschatology of Christianity is no intramundane utopia, it sets no intramundane tasks and goals." id., "Christianity And The New Man", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 138. cf. "By the fact that this coming of God himself is the true and the only infinite future of man, Christianity has always already infinitely surpassed all intramundane ideologies and utopias about the future." ibid., pp. 148. cf. "Being the religion of the absolute future, Christianity has no utopian ideas about a future in this world... Any future which is planned by man and is to be produced by the intramundane means at his disposal and which is posited as an absolute beyond which there is nothing to be expected, would be rejected by Christianity as an expectation for the future which only amounts to utopian ideology." id., "Marxist Utopia And The Christian Future Of Man", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 64. cf. "Christianity renders every concrete humanism contingent, i.e. dispensable in favour of another, future humanism, by situating everyone within God's open future." id., "Christian Humanism", T.I. Vol. IX, pp. 195.
77. id., "Christian Humanism", T.I. Vol. IX, pp. 201.
78. id., "The Experiment With Man", T.I. Vol. IX, pp. 221. cf. ibid., pp. 220. cf. "The mastering of the intramundane situation represents a task (in so far as this is possible for man) which is also really Christian - because eternal life must be effected in time - it is sadly perhaps possible to show that the Christians of this day and age occupy themselves far too little with the programming of man's future in this world, as if this did not present any problems or it could safely be left to the non-Christians." id., "Christianity And The New Man", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 139. cf., ibid., pp. 149. cf., id., "Marxist Utopia And The Christian Future Of Man", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 64.
79. id., "Marxist Utopia And The Christian Future Of Man", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 60.

80. ibid.
81. id., "The Position Of Christology In The Church Between Exegesis And Dogmatics", T.I. Vol. XI, pp. 200. cf. "We say that Christianity is the religion of the absolute future to the extent in the first place that God is not only above us as the ground and horizon of history, but in front of us as our own future, our destination, sustaining history as its future. For Christianity acknowledges the absolute, infinite God who is superior to the world, a radical and infinite mystery, as the God who in free grace communicates himself in his absolute mystery as its innermost principle and ultimate future, who sustains and drives history as his genuinely most intimate concern, not only distinguishing himself from it as its creator." id., "The Experiment With Man", T.I. Vol. IX, pp. 219.
82. cf., id., "Concerning The Relationship Between Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 297-300.
83. cf., id., "Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 167.
84. ibid.
85. ibid.
86. cf., id., "Concerning The Relationship Between Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 299.
87. cf., id., "Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 168.
88. cf., id., "Concerning The Relationship Between Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 303.
89. ibid., pp. 299.
90. id., "Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 167.
91. cf., ibid., pp. 166.
92. cf., ibid.
93. ibid.
94. Unless, that is, we choose to be a spiritual pilgrim living in alienation from the human condition, an option akin to insanity.
95. ibid., pp. 168. cf. "If man, just so far as he expresses himself existentially by himself, is really nothing but pure nature, he is always in danger of understanding himself merely as a nature and of behaving accordingly. And then he will find God's call to him out of this human plane merely a disturbance which is trying to force something upon him." id., "Concerning The Relationship Between Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 300.
96. ibid., pp. 303.
97. For Rahner's comment on Maréchal's significance cf., id., "Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 169.

98. id., "Concerning The Relationship Between Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 297-318.
99. id., "Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 165-188.
100. ibid., pp. 173.
101. ibid.
102. id., "Concerning The Relationship Between Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 312.
103. cf. "The real man as God's real partner should be able to receive this love as what it necessarily is: as free gift. But that means that this central abiding existential, consisting in the ordination to the threefold God of grace and eternal life, is itself to be characterized as unexacted, as supernatural." ibid., pp. 312-313.
104. id., "Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 186. cf. "If God gives creation and man above all a supernatural end and this end is first in intentione, then man (and the world) is by that very fact always and everywhere inwardly other in structure than he would be if he didn't have this end, and hence other as well before he has realised this end partially (the grace which justifies) or wholly (the beatific vision)." id., "Concerning The Relationship Between Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 302-303.
105. id., FCF, pp. 123.
106. id., "Concerning The Relationship Between Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 315. cf. "All one must guard against is identifying this unlimited dynamism of the spiritual nature in a simply apodeictic way with that dynamism in which we experience (or believe we experience) in the adventure of our concrete spiritual existence, because here the supernatural existential may already be at work - as subsequently emerges in the light of revelation." ibid.
107. id., "Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 183.
108. cf., id., "Concerning The Relationship Between Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 313.
109. cf. "A precise delimitation of nature from grace (supposing it were possible at all) and so a really pure concept of pure nature could thus in every case only be pursued with the help of revelation, which tells us what in us is grace and so provides us with the means of abstracting this grace from the body of our existential experience of man and thus of acquiring pure nature (in its totality) as a remainder." ibid., pp. 302.
110. cf. "This openness is not to be thought of merely as a non-repugnance, but as an inner ordination." ibid., pp. 315. cf. "It is not necessary to take this potentia oboedientialis as more or less just a non-repugnance, which would be the extrinsicism of which we have spoken already." id., "Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 106.

111. id., "The Theological Dimension Of The Question About Man", T.I. Vol. XVII, pp. 66. cf. "The nature of a spiritual being and its supernatural elevation are not opposed to each other like two things which lie side by side, so that they must be either kept separate or confused. The supernatural elevation of man is, though not due to him, the absolute fulfillment of his being, whose spiritual quality and transcendence towards being as such prevents its being defined, that is delimited in the same way that sub-human entities can." id., "Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 183. cf. Rahner's description of grace as "the real essence of what constitutes the ontological relationship between God and creatures." id., FCF, pp. 122.
112. Although nature could be granted a natural fulfillment without grace in the dynamism towards God as infinite horizon which would not frustrate nature, hence preserving the gratuity of grace.
113. id., FCF, pp. 123.
114. id., "Philosophy And Theology", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 75. cf. "God's creation through efficient causality takes place because God wants to give himself in love." id., FCF, pp. 123. cf. "Even what is earlier in time can be and can become precisely because it is the condition of the possibility of what comes later in time, for both come about because they are supported by the one God who simply wants one thing, viz. to communicate himself." id., "Philosophy And Theology", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 76. cf. "The creature is endowed, by virtue of its inmost essence and constitution, with the possibility of being assumed, of becoming the material of a possible history of God. God's creative act always drafts the creature as the paradigm of a possible utterance of himself." id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 115.
115. cf. "The concrete reality of grace includes nature as an inner moment within itself." id., "Philosophy And Theology", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 72.
116. cf. "Such a creative, efficient causality of God must be understood only as a modality or as a deficient mode of that absolute and enormous possibility of God which consists in the fact that he who is agape in person, and who is by himself the absolutely blessed and fulfilled subject, can precisely for this reason communicate himself to another." id., FCF, pp. 122. cf. "What then is the power of being creator, his ability to keep himself aloof while constituting, bringing out of its nothingness, that which in itself is simply something else? It is only a derivative, restricted and secondary possibility, which is ultimately based on the other primal possibility." id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 115.
117. Rahner maintains a parallel relationship between creatureliness and dependence upon God, whereby radical dependence upon God and genuine autonomy vary in direct and not in inverse proportion. cf., id., FCF, pp. 77-79.
118. cf. "Grace, being supernaturally divinizing, must rather be thought of as a change in the structure of human consciousness." id., "History Of The World And Salvation History", T.I. Vol. V,

pp. 103.

119. cf. "The formal object, the horizon within which the normal empirically experienced realities of consciousness are grasped, and the ultimate orientation of consciousness are changed by grace." ibid.
120. cf. "It is the dynamism of the spirit's transcendence into the infinity of the silent mystery which we call God - the dynamism which is really meant to arrive and to accept, and not merely to be the eternally approaching but never quite arriving movement towards the infinity of God, it is meant to reach the infinity of God, since God gives himself to it of his own accord and in such a way that he has already even now entered freely into this movement of infinite transcendence itself as its innermost moving force and raison d'être." ibid., pp. 104.
121. cf., id., FCF, pp. 149.
122. ibid. cf. "as an element in our transcendentality which is constituted by God's self-communication, it is already revelation in the proper sense." ibid. cf. "this supernatural elevation of man which is granted by God's universal saving purpose already has of itself the nature of a revelation... It is, therefore, absolutely legitimate to call it already a revelation, especially since it already communicates or offers in an ontologically real sense as grace something which also ultimately constitutes the whole content of divine revelation contained in proper propositions and human concept, viz. God and his eternal life itself which, as God's self-communication in grace and glory, is the salvation of man." id., "The History Of The World And Salvation History", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 104. cf. "If there is indeed a universal, supernatural salvific will of God, then there is a revelation history which is co-existent with the history of mankind and hence with the whole history of religion. This general revelation doesnot occur directly by way of the objectivity and conceptuality constitutive of the thematic content of human words, but by a change in the unthematic horizon and in the basic condition of the mind of the person, a change which necessarily takes place on account of the accepted or rejected supernatural grace." id., "Philosophy And Theology", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 78. cf., id., FCF, pp. 172.
123. cf. "God's gift of himself, the gratuitously elevated, determination of man, the transcendental revelation is itself always mediated categorically in the world, because all of man's transcendentality has a history." id., FCF, pp. 173. cf. "In this sense the world is our mediation to God in his self-communication in grace, and in this sense there is for Christianity no separate and sacred realm where alone God is to be found." ibid., pp. 152.
124. ibid., pp. 154. cf. "This moment of God's self-communication, which seemingly is merely transcendent and trans-historical because it is permanent and always present, belongs to this history and takes place within it... this event of God's self-communication is indeed transcendental, but precisely as transcendental it is a real history." ibid., pp. 143. cf. ibid.,



pp. 138, 141.

125. cf. "It is to be expected that it will try to objectify itself in explicit expressions of religion, such as in the liturgy, and in religious association, and in protests of a prophetic kind against any natural attempt by man to shut himself up in the world of his own categories and against any (ultimately polytheistic) misinterpretations of this basic graceful experience." id., "History Of The World And Salvation History", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 105.
126. cf., ibid.
127. id., FCF, pp. 173.
128. ibid., cf. "We are dealing with the self-interpretation of that reality which is constituted by the personal self-communication of God, and hence by God himself. If it interprets itself historically, then God interprets himself in history." ibid., pp. 158.
129. ibid., pp. 173.
130. ibid.
131. ibid.
132. ibid., pp. 155. cf. "It is only partially successful, it always exists within a still unfinished history, it is intermixed with error, sinful delusions and their objectifications, and these once again co-determine the religious situation of other people." ibid., pp. 173. cf. "The way in which it is directed or furthered by God, and guaranteed by prophets and miracles, may not be the same everywhere; it may often be mixed up with false interpretations, a fact which proclaims the helplessness and the guilt of unbelief or of any proud wanting-to-be-like-God by one's own powers." id., "Philosophy And Theology", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 75.
133. id., FCF, pp. 153.
134. cf. "God has interpreted a particular part of this profane and otherwise ambiguous history by his word... by giving it a saving or damning character... Thus he has distinguished this particular part of the one history from the rest of history and has made it the actual, official and explicit history of salvation." id., "The History Of The World And Salvation History", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 106.
135. cf., id., FCF, pp. 173-174. cf., id., "Philosophy And Theology", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 77.
136. cf. "Therefore the history of revelation in the usual and especially the full sense of this term is found where this self-interpretation of God's transcendental self-communication in history succeeds, and where with certainty it reaches its self-awareness and its purity in such a way it correctly knows itself to be guided and directed by God, and, protected by him against

clinging tenaciously to what is provisional and to what is depraved, it discovers its own true self." id., FCF, pp. 155.

137. cf. "What we normally call revelation and revelation history is in reality the conceptually concrete, propositional and divinely controlled thematization of the universal gratuitous revelation and its history achieved by God through his witnesses and miracles, and not the first most original or slowly generalised revelation history." id., "Philosophy And Theology", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 77.
138. cf. "(It) doesnot take place everywhere in this official and, as it were, reflexively guaranteed purity." id., FCF, pp. 174.
139. ibid.
140. cf. "The universal history of revelation, both transcendental and categorical, reaches its complete essence and its full historical objectification in the particular, regional, categorical history of revelation." ibid., pp. 161.
141. cf. "The history of the transcendental revelation of God will necessarily show itself again and again to be a history which is taking place in an irreversible direction towards a highest and comprehensive self-interpretation of man." ibid., pp. 154.
142. ibid., pp. 174. cf. "Not until the full and unsurpassable event of the historical self-objectification of God's self-communication to the world in Jesus Christ do we have an event which as an eschatological event, fundamentally and absolutely precludes any historical corruption or any distorted interpretation in the further history of categorical revelation and of false religion." ibid., pp. 157. cf. Rahner's description of Christianity as the "process by which the history of revelation reaches a quite definite and successful level of historical reflection, and by which this history comes to self-awareness historically and reflexively, a history which itself is coextensive with the whole history of the world." ibid., pp. 146.
143. cf., Dermot A. Lane, Foundations For A Social Theology: Praxis, Process And Salvation, (Dublin: Gill And Macmillan 1984), pp. 67-74. cf. "The understanding of knowledge and truth operative in the primacy of praxis is one of transformation in contrast to the more traditional understanding of knowledge and truth as simply disclosure or correspondence or conformity or verification." ibid., pp. 67. cf. "The disclosure model of truth tends to leave things as they are, affirming the present in a way that neglects the future. The transformative model promotes change within our world. What is needed in Christian theology today is a creative unity of disclosure and transformation, directed towards a concern for change within continuity." ibid., pp. 74.
144. ibid., pp. 81.
145. ibid.
146. ibid.

147. ibid.
148. ibid.
149. ibid., pp. 82.
150. ibid.
151. ibid., pp. 81-82.
152. ibid., pp. 139.
153. cf., ibid.
154. He describes God's self-communication to the creature as: "essentially the act whereby God goes out of himself into the other in such a way that he bestows himself upon the other by becoming the other." id., "The Concept Of Mystery In Catholic Theology", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 68.
155. cf. "It is indubitably given for every Catholic theologian at least is the special case of the hypostatic union." id., "Some Implications Of The Scholastic Concept Of Uncreated Grace." T.I. Vol. I, pp. 330.
156. cf. "If there is any immediacy to God at all, that is, if we really can have something to do with God in his own self, this immediacy cannot depend on the fact that the non-divine absolutely disappears." id., FCF, pp. 83.
157. id., FCF, pp. 83.
158. ibid.
159. ibid.
160. ibid., pp. 170.
161. id., "The Secret Of Life", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 152.
162. For the dualistic emphasis in the classic tradition cf., D. W. Hardy and D. F. Ford, Jubilate: Theology In Praise, (London: DLT 1984), pp. 61. cf. "With the rise of modern science, Christian cosmology on the whole went along with a dualism it had helped to form. The view of the world as a mechanism of linked causes with no room for God's presence, dominated science. It led religion to see God either as a remote figure who merely set the system going, or as identified with history's meaning, or as a presence in the subjectivity of people - the God of feeling, intuition, regulative ideas or morality." ibid.
163. D. Tracy, Blessed Rage For Order: The New Pluralism In Theology, (New York: The Seabury Press 1975), pp. 172.
164. ibid., pp. 85.
165. cf., id., FCF, pp. 140.

166. ibid. cf., ibid., pp. 140.
167. ibid., pp. 87. cf. "A special intervention of God, therefore, can only be understood as the historical concreteness of the transcendental self-communication of God which is already intrinsic to the concrete world." ibid.
168. ibid., pp. 86.
169. cf., ibid., pp. 86-89.
170. cf., id., FCF, pp. 87.
171. ibid., pp. 88.
172. cf. "According to the biblical witness God is active in human history, proclaiming and making real his righteousness in that history, 'mighty to save' (Isa. 63:1). God is engaged with his creation, and in this engagement he is not concerned to offer an interpretation of reality, as if salvation might be obtained by contemplation, but his purpose is the transformation and renewal of creation from within. The incarnation is the focal point of this engagement and activity of God." T. Gorringer, Atonement Through Education: Redeeming Time, (London: DLT 1986), pp. 71.
173. Rahner, FCF, pp. 87.
174. cf. "God's self-revelation in the depths of the spiritual person is an a priori determination coming from grace and is in itself unreflexive... But none of this means that this a priori determination exists for itself, and that in this apriority it could only become the object of a subsequent reflection which would have nothing intrinsically to do with the apriority of grace as such." ibid., pp. 172.
175. Pius XII, Humanae Generis, 1950.
176. cf. "Where an unconditional disposition has preceded the gift, such a gift can at most be a part of a partial end of nature, and hence can only be unexacted in the sense in which nature itself is (i.e. God need no more have created it than the whole of nature)." Rahner, "Concerning The Relationship Between Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 307. cf. "Were he simply this existential, and were this his nature, then it would be unconditional in its essence, i.e. once it has been given the love which is God would have to be offered by God." ibid., pp. 313.
177. ibid., pp. 305. cf. "We hold that with these presuppositions grace and beatific vision can no longer be said to be unexacted." ibid., pp. 304. cf. "Why cannot the reality called nature be conceived simply as an inner moment in the concrete relationship to God, which is known as the order of grace, in such a way that if it is not given grace, it must always be thought of as always and completely meaningless and hence simply sinful? The answer is: because grace understood as the absolute self-communication of God himself, must always presuppose as a condition of its own possibility (in order to be itself) someone to whom it can address itself and someone to whom it is not owed; which therefore means

also someone who can be thought of without contradiction even apart from this communication." id., "Philosophy And Theology", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 75.

178. cf. "But is this inner reference of man to grace a constituent of his nature in such away that the latter cannot be conceived without it, i.e. as pure nature, and hence such that the concept of natura pura becomes incapable of complete definition. It is at this point that we are bound to declare our inability to accept the view which has been attributed to the nouvelle théologie and has met with so much opposition." id., "Concerning The Relationship Between Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 303.
179. id., "Controversial Theology On Justification", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 213. cf. "Grace is absolutely gratuitous, that is, as unmerited and indeed with respect to every finite existent, and prior to any and every sinful rejection of God by a finite subject." id., FCF, pp. 123. cf. "The gratuitousness of creation, as a free act of God, and grace as a free gift to the creature, as something already existing, are not one and the same gift of God's free act." id., "Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 185. He continues on to describe grace as being "not merely not due to man as a sinner, but not due to man even as a creature." ibid., pp. 185.
180. He describes the Potentia Oboedientialis as the "natural existential," the "unlimited dynamism of the spiritual nature," id., "Concerning The Relationship Between Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 315.
181. cf., ibid., pp. 315.
182. ibid.
183. cf. "Since this transcendence of man, making him capable of objective knowledge and personal freedom, would be intelligible even if the offer of this divine self-communication had not occurred, it is not, even in the concrete human nature that exists, the inevitable consequence of God's act in creating the intelligible being man, but a free grace, in no way due to man even if we abstract from the sin whereby man made himself positively unworthy of this divine gift." id., "Grace", CTD, pp. 303-309. cf., id., "Concerning The Relationship Between Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 316.
184. id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 115.
185. cf. "A reality must be postulated in man which remains over when the supernatural existential as unexacted is subtracted, and must have a meaning and a possibility of existence even when the supernatural existential is thought of as lacking (for otherwise this existential would necessarily be demanded precisely by the postulated reality, and it could only be unexacted with respect to a purely possible man, as an element in creation in general)." id., "Concerning The Relationship Between Nature And Grace", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 314.
186. id., "Philosophy And Theology", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 75.

187. cf., Shepherd, Man's Condition: God And The World Process, pp. 240-251. cf. "It is one thing to say that there is a logical sense in which nature can be thought of apart from its inextricable conjunction with grace... But it is quite another to move from such an assertion, which is necessary to maintain gratuity of grace, to the temporal implication of the assertion that God created man a servant in order to make him a child through grace. Recipient, addressee, language is specious in this context, for it implies a temporal distinction among ontologically different epochs. This sort of language and implication is expressly denied in Rahner's rejection of any historical state of pure nature prior to grace." ibid., pp. 250.
188. cf. "Obviously, it continues to be possible to envisage an entirely distinct world order, without grace and without ordination to glory. Other alternatives for God are sufficient to safeguard the gratuity of God's action toward this world order. As it happened, God acted gratuitously to create a nature graced by his presence. Rejecting the possibility of other options given to him, one perhaps to which grace would not be given with creation but would perhaps come later, and one perhaps with no grace at all, appears to lack theological warrant." ibid., pp. 258.
189. cf. "But 'grace' always involves a 'plus', an abounding, a going beyond - expressed by Paul through his use of the intensive (Rom. 5:16-17) and by Jesus in a story like that of the Prodigal Son." Gorringer, op. cit., pp. 115.
190. E. Portalié, A Guide To The Thought Of St. Augustine, (translated by Bastian), 1960, pp. 188. quoted in P. Brown, Augustine of Hippo: A Biography, (London: Faber & Faber 1967), pp. 342.
191. Gabriel Daly, Creation and Redemption, pp. 10.
192. Hardy and Ford also point to 'invitation' as a model of divine causality cf. "If we look for the highest forms of causality known to us, according to the standards of recognition and respect, then a simple answer is found: speech. If we wish to cause someone to do something while respecting their freedom and integrity, we may speak and ask them. This is the form of causality most characteristic of human beings. Speech may of course be coercive or backed by the threat of force, but that is not necessarily so, and at its best it works by invitation and information rather than by manipulation." Hardy and Ford, op. cit., pp. 79.
193. cf., ibid., pp. 159-161.
194. cf., Mc Cool, A Rahner Reader, pp. 185.
195. Rahner, "The Theological Concept Of Concupiscentia", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 347-382.
196. id., "Grace", CTD, pp. 195, (italics mine).
197. cf., id., FCF, pp. 173.
198. cf., J. B. Metz, Faith In History & Society: Toward A Practical Fundamental Theology, (London: Burns & Oates 1980), pp. 62-65.

cf. "The concept of experience that has been elaborated in the transcendental theology of the subject does not have the structure of historical experience. The social contradictions and mutually antagonistic aspects which form the basis of suffering in historical experience and in which the historical subject is constituted in fact disappear," ibid., pp. 65. cf., D. Lane, Foundations For A Social Theology: Praxis, Process And Salvation, (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan 1984), pp. 10-11.

## CHAPTER SIX: CHRIST THE CONSUMMATION OF SALVATION HISTORY.

### 6.1 Introduction.

As we noted in Chapter Five, when discussing the supernatural existential, Rahner holds that God's self-communication which is transcendently granted in and through the historical order seeks to attain to ever greater purity. For this reason, he maintains that God's transcendental self-communication looks for an unsurpassable, irrevocable, historical consummation whereby God is truly present in the historical order. For Rahner, the irrevocable climax of God's transcendental self-communication is to be found in Jesus, the God-man (1). Jesus is at once the radical fulfilment of God's offer of self to the human person and the radical fulfilment of the human person's acceptance of this offer (2). In as much as the person of Christ is the climax of God's transcendental self-communication in human history, Christ is the climax of salvation history (3). Hence, for Rahner Christology and soteriology are inextricably linked. Jesus is the absolute saviour in that he is the self-communication of God (4). The present chapter will be concerned with an extended analysis of Rahner's understanding of Jesus as the God-man. Firstly we shall ask how it is that a human can be God and how can God become a human? We shall follow Rahner as he seeks to answer these questions through his "Transcendental Christology" (5). Then we shall explore why Rahner holds that the possibility of the God-man has occurred definitively in Jesus of Nazareth. We will seek to understand Rahner's intentions in bringing soteriology and Christology together. What exactly does Rahner intend by claiming that Christ's soteriological significance lies in the fact that Christ is the irrevocable climax of God's self-communication? We will proceed to ask whether or not Rahner is



prevented from achieving his soteriological aims due to his transcendental starting point. We will ask whether Rahner's transcendental premise does not inevitably reduce Christ to the level of a sign of God's presence amongst us and Christ's soteriological importance to the level of an assurance that God wills to forgive us? Finally, we shall explore the adequacy of the ways in which Rahner attempts to overcome these tensions in his thought through seeking to establish the principle that "He who is unchangeable in himself can himself become subject to change in something else" (6). First we will turn our attention to Rahner's transcendental Christology.

## 6.2 Transcendental Christology.

### 6.2.1 Background.

Having decreed God to be the transcendent horizon of all human knowledge and volition, Rahner must guard himself against two unacceptable possibilities if he is to maintain a genuinely revealing self-presence of God in the historical order. Firstly, he must avoid subsuming the historical order under the transcendental order of God's self-expression in the manner which Hegelian Idealism tends towards. This would reduce the historical order to being the self-expression of God. Secondly, Rahner must avoid inferring that there is an unbridgeable chasm between the absolute, eternal, unchanging realm on the one hand and the finite, temporal, changing realm on the other hand.

The first of these options does not allow any genuine reality to the historical order. On this basis, revelation cannot be understood to be the presence of God in the historical order (indeed at its most extreme such an option would equate history and revelation), Jesus

cannot be thought of as genuinely human and historical, his humanity would merely be the visage through which God expressed Godself. The practical result would be the same as monophysitism. Rahner is well aware of the unacceptability of this position. Along with the tradition, Rahner affirms that the absolute saviour must be thought of as truly human if he is to be the self-communication of God to human history (7).

The second option poses an irreconcilable gulf between the transcendental order and the historical order. This would seem to rule out the possibility of God's presence in the historical order and hence the possibility of genuine revelation. Whilst this option, in contrast to the first, seeks to take the historical realm seriously, the historical realm still cannot be the locus of genuine revelation. At best the historical realm is a window onto the infinite. Whilst the historical order is not illusion, it is changing and temporal, and hence only a pointer to what is permanent, absolute and transcendental. This option allows Christ's true humanity to be affirmed, but it limits the significance of Christ to the level of a man who points towards the eternal, the most adequate cipher of God's presence. Again Rahner sides with tradition in finding such a position inadequate and holding to the belief that in Jesus God was truly present amongst us (8).

Hence Rahner seeks to distance himself from each of these <sup>7</sup> positions. In contrast to being a mere visage, a moment in God's self-expression, Rahner maintains that Jesus is truly human. In contrast to being a mere cipher of God's presence, Rahner maintains that Jesus is truly God. Indeed, Rahner asserts that Jesus' humanity is truly the existence of God, this is what he takes to be the meaning of the hypostatic union (9). However, whilst Rahner affirms the Chalcedonian <sub>1</sub>

formula of two natures in one person he is not content to simply restate it, he sees it both as an "end and as beginning" (10). Beyond the statement of the reality of God's presence in, and ontological union with, the human reality of Jesus, Rahner pursues such questions as: How is it possible for a human to be thought of as God? How is it possible for God to be really present as a human? What conditions must be met if this is to be thought of as having occurred? It is for this purpose that Rahner pursues his transcendental Christology, which "asks about the a priori possibilities in man which make the coming of the message of Christ possible" (11).

Essentially Rahner's approach is to claim that the idea of the God-man represents both the radical fulfilment of humanity's transcendental openness to God and the radical fulfilment of God's transcendental self-communication to humanity. It would be recognised in one who's life and death accepted God's self-communication and which was seen to be accepted as such by God. Before we turn our attention to Rahner's transcendental Christology in greater detail it is important to note that whilst Rahner may intend to avoid the two unacceptable positions that we have mentioned, it is not at all certain that he in fact manages to escape the second option. Indeed our central criticism of Rahner's Christology and soteriology will lie in the claim that he does not explain how God who is the transcendent horizon of all reality can also be thought of as genuinely present in the historical order. This is not to decry Rahner for not having presented an a priori proof of God's presence in the historical order - something we would not ask of any theologian. Our claim will be that the foundations of Rahner's own system resist his desire to affirm the presence of God in the historical order and that he fails to adduce any sufficient arguments to reconcile this incoherency.

### 6.2.2 The God-man as the radical fulfilment of humanity's transcendental openness to God.

We saw in Chapter Three that Rahner holds that every act of knowledge and freedom is orientated towards God (12). In this manner he understands the human person to be the place where the tendency of matter to transcend itself into spirit (13) becomes self-reflective (14): "By his very nature and by his very essence man is the possibility of transcendence which has become conscious of itself." (15) Further, the human person hopes that s/he is orientated to God not only as the distant worauhin of human transcendence but rather immediately in grace (16). Indeed, Rahner claims that for this hope to be possible at all it must already be held in being by the gift of God's self-communication (17). Hence it is that Rahner believes that the human person cannot be exhaustively defined but can only be defined in terms of his/her openness for the immediacy of God (18):

Man can be expressed only by talking about something else: about God, who he is not. It is impossible to engage in anthropology without having first engaged in theology, since man is pure reference to God. (19)

In his/her very being the human person is open to the being of God,<sup>7</sup> indeed this is the very essence of the human person (20). The human person's being is dependent upon, and constituted by, a sharing in the divine being. This leads to a unique relationship between God and the human person. Whereas in most situations dependence upon something and radical autonomy from it increase in inverse proportions, Rahner claims that in the case of the creaturely relationship with the creator, (and in particular in the human person's relationship with God) radical dependence and genuine autonomy increase in direct proportion: "There lies the mystery of that active creation which is God's alone. Radical dependence upon him increases in direct, and not in inverse,

proportion with genuine self-coherence before him." (21) Hence, the more radically dependent upon God a human subject is, the more truly human that person will be. The fullest and most radical expression of genuine human life will be found in that person who is most radically united with God. We hear echoes here of Irenaeus: "For the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man is the vision of God." (22)

Rahner's understanding of the radical fulfilment of the human person's potential as lying in an absolute openness to and dependence upon God presents him with a way of trying to understand how it is that a human person might be God. He believes the doctrine of the hypostatic union to be the radical statement that the human person is most genuinely autonomous from God precisely when the human person is most radically united with God (23). The possibility of the God-man asserts that the God-man is most truly man because he is truly God and vice versa (24). For Rahner, the idea of the God-man represents the climax of human openness to God:

Seen from this perspective, the incarnation of God is the unique and highest instance of the actualization of the essence of human reality, which consists in this: That man is insofar as he abandons himself to the absolute mystery whom we call God. (25)

In this manner, Rahner argues for an intrinsic unity between human transcendence in grace and the possibility of the incarnation. Grace does not simply stem from the incarnation on juridical grounds, rather the incarnation represents the climax of human transcendence in grace (26). Rahner claims that an intrinsic unity between the incarnation and human transcendence is suggested by the fact that the intrinsic effect of the incarnation, (i.e. the granting to Jesus of an immediate vision of God), is precisely what is taken to be the goal and fulfilment of all human transcendence (27). For this reason, Rahner

believes that the tradition itself suggests that the hypostatic union brings human transcendence to its fulfilment. For Rahner divinity and humanity are not irreconcilable. On the contrary, it is only through maintaining an inadequate understanding of human nature that one can rule out the possibility of the God-man:

Only someone who forgets that the essence of man... is to be unbounded (thus in this sense, to be un-definable) can suppose that it is impossible for there to be a man, who, precisely by being man in the fullest sense (which we never attain), is God's Existence into the world. (28)

However, Rahner does not intend to reduce the incarnation to the level of the inevitably attained asymptote of human transcendence. There could be human life without it ever resulting in the incarnation (29). The incarnation is not the result of the upward evolution of graced human life into divine life. Rather it consists in human life being assumed by the word of God and brought to its radical fulfilment. For Rahner it is not the incarnation that is dependent upon graced human life as its inevitable climax but rather graced human life which is dependent upon God's intention to become man (30). For Rahner, all grace is orientated towards the incarnation without, however, making the incarnation inevitable. In other words: The potentia oboedientialis of the human person for the supernatural existential can be seen to be a potentia oboedientialis for the incarnation. Rahner identifies the human person's essence with this potentia oboedientialis for the incarnation (31). In answer then to the question as to how it is possible for a human person to be thought of as God, Rahner's reply is that the human person is the potentia oboedientialis for the incarnation. For this reason, he states: "Christology may be studied as self-transcending anthropology, and anthropology as deficient Christology." (32) We now turn our attention to the question as to how God might be thought of as becoming a human person.

6.2.3 The God-man as the radical fulfilment of God's transcendental self-communication to the human person.

We have already seen that the ability of God to create something other than Godself is derived from the more primordial ability of God to communicate God's self to God's other. Indeed, he refers to creatures as the "grammar of God's possible self-expression" (33). Rahner further claims that God's ability to communicate Godself to God's other derives from the necessity with which God expresses God to God through the Logos:

It is because God must express himself inwardly that he can also utter himself outwardly; the finite, created utterance ad extra is a continuation of the immanent constitution of image and likeness a free continuation because its object is finite - and takes place in fact through the Logos (Jn 1:3) (34).

Rahner develops his "Theology Of The Symbol" (35) in order to explicate how the Logos expresses God to God inwardly and is thus capable of expressing God outwardly to God's other. He distinguishes between representational symbols and real symbols (36). A representational symbol is where one existent acts as a sign or cipher for another quite independent existent. In this case there is no intrinsic connection between the reality and the concept that accidentally indicates it. In contrast, a real symbol is the "highest and most primordial manner in which one reality can represent another" (37). In this case there is an intrinsic connection between the symbol and the reality, the symbol allows the reality to be there: "One reality renders another present (primarily for itself and only secondarily for others)." (38)

Rahner maintains that all beings are symbolic. He claims that this is primarily so that a being can be present to itself and only secondarily in order for the being to communicate itself to others (39). He further claims that a being and its symbol cannot be

separated and thought of as something other: "The symbol strictly speaking (symbolic reality) is the self-realization of a being in the other, which is constitutive of its essence." (40) Rahner identifies God's symbol with the Logos, the word of God (41). He refers to the theology of the Logos as the supreme form of the theology of the symbol (42). He understands the Logos to be the "image and expression of the Father" (43) who communicates God to God in the immanent divine life. The Logos who is the immanent divine self-expression is capable of expressing and communicating God to God's other. However, all such self-expressions in that they take place through the finite realm are surpassable by other finite mediations. Only if it was possible to assert that in a given situation a finite reality was the reality of God present in the finite order would it be possible to claim an insurpassable and irrevocable self-communication on God's part. Rahner claims that this is precisely what is to be understood by the doctrine of the hypostatic union, that in the God-man the human reality is God's own reality (44). He utilises his understanding of the Logos as the real symbol of God in order to explicate how this is so.

In contrast to the tradition stemming from Augustine onwards, which maintained that any of the divine persons could have become man, Rahner claims that this only possible for the Logos who is the divine self-expression (45). Rahner rules out the possibility of there being merely an external relation between the humanity of the God-man and the Logos. The humanity cannot be thought of as a visage through which God is revealed, rather it is the Logos expressing itself in this human reality:

The humanity of Christ is not to be considered as something in which God dresses up and masquerades - a mere signal of which he makes use, so that something audible can be uttered about the Logos by means of this signal. (46)



Hence the humanity of the God-man is not something which exists prior to its assumption by the Logos, it is that which comes to be when the Logos empties itself and expresses itself in human form (47): "The humanity is the self-disclosure of the Logos itself, so that when God, expressing himself, exteriorizes himself, that very thing appears which we call the humanity of the Logos." (48) The humanity of the God-man, because it is the humanity of the Logos, is the most adequate symbol of God in the created order and the radical fulfilment of God's transcendental self-communication (49). The Logos can become a human person because the Logos seeks to communicate God to God's other and assuming a human nature is the most adequate means of achieving this. Hence, for Rahner the ultimate definition of the human person is that s/he is: "that which comes to be when God's self-expression, his Word is uttered into the emptiness of the Godless void in love." (50) Having looked briefly at the notion of the God-man and at how it represents the fulfilment both of the human person's openness to God and of God's self-communication to the human person, we shall now turn our attention to the conditions which Rahner believes must be met if we are to ascribe the idea of the God-man to any person.

#### 6.2.4 The conditions that the absolute saviour must fulfil.

When discussing the supernatural existential in Chapter Five we noted Rahner's belief that God's transcendental self-communication in grace must be mediated historically. So also he claims that it is not sufficient to just have the idea of the absolute saviour, rather we must look for the historical establishment of this (51). Indeed, ultimately our idea of the absolute saviour is dependent upon its historical realization and not vice-versa (52). Rahner distinguishes two ways in which the coming of the absolute saviour could proclaim the

irreversible, final and eschatological self-communication of God. It could either be an absolute fulfilment which announces the end of history or it could be an event within an ongoing history which makes the promise irrevocable without bringing history to its end in a final fulfilment (53). Rahner maintains that for God's transcendent, salvific, self-communication to be established in an eschatologically irrevocable manner then it must have the character both of offer and acceptance. That is, it must be both the definitive offer of God's self-communication to the human person and the definitive acceptance of this offer by the human person (54). Hence, for Rahner, the absolute saviour will have to be one who is conscious of being God's self-communication in an absolute sense such that this offer is inseparable from his/her very person. Further, the absolute saviour must show by his/her life and death that this offer has been accepted in an equally irrevocable manner. Finally, the life and death of the Absolute Saviour must be seen to be vindicated by God in a manner which confirms that God accepts this person as the eschatological event of God's self-communication:

The categoriality of God's irreversible offer of himself to the world as a whole... can only be a man who on the one hand surrenders every inner-worldly future in death, and who on the other hand in this acceptance of death is shown to have been accepted by God finally and definitively. (55)

Before we turn to consider Jesus Christ as the historical actualisation of the absolute saviour, it will profit us to consider further the significance which Rahner ascribes to death. We noted in Chapter Three that human freedom for Rahner is not geared towards an endless series of disparate choices but rather towards a final self-realization (56). Hence, if one is to think in terms of life after death then it cannot be understood simply to be a continuance of the

temporal sequence that went before. Death marks an end, a cessation of being able to change:

In this respect death marks an end for the whole person. Anyone who simply allows time to "continue" for man's soul beyond his death so that new time arises gets into insuperable difficulties both in the understanding and in the existentiell actualization of the true finality of man which takes place in death. (57)

Thus, the finality which we aim at through our free choices of self, in which we create ourselves (58), is achieved in death (59). Life after death can only be understood as the radical establishment and eternal validity of the person that one has chosen to be (60). Death does not simply mark the end of an otherwise continuing life and capture it in this state for eternity rather like a "freeze-frame photograph" might do. There is a far more intrinsic relationship between human freedom and death than this would allow. Human freedom is essentially freedom to choose or reject God, that is the freedom as to whether one will submit to another will than one's own. It is precisely this choice that confronts us most profoundly in the anticipation and actualisation of our death. There we are confronted in an ultimate way with our own finitude and powerlessness (61). The choice is ours as to whether we will rebel against our death in a last despairing no to God or whether we will accept the condition of being given over entirely to other things and so hand ourselves over to God (62). When viewed in this manner we see that there is an intrinsic connection between freedom and death. Our individual acts of freedom through which we make of ourselves a yes or no to God already anticipate the moment of death when we will be confronted in the starkest way with our own powerlessness before God. Our death can thus be seen to be something that extends throughout our life in as much as we hand ourselves over to God (63). How we have died to self during our life will affect how we die at the end of our lives. Hence, our death does not merely freeze

our otherwise continuing life. In the final powerlessness of death our entire life is gathered up and the response that we have been making to God throughout our lives is realized in a radical manner :

The dying man, who of his freedom possesses his own life, nevertheless inescapably confronts death with a demand that it must constitute the sum total of his life as an act of freedom in which the whole of life is gathered up. (64)

Hence it is that Rahner lays so much emphasise upon the death of the absolute saviour. The absolute saviour will be recognised as the irrevocable offer of God's self-communication which has been accepted through abandonment to God only if his/her death can be seen to fulfil the abandonment to God which has characterised his/her life. Further it must be seen to be vindicated by God as such:

This free and definitive acceptance of God's offer of himself, which makes God's word to the world eschatological and predestines world history to salvation, can come about only by the death of the person who freely accepts that offer: a death of course which must be seen as redeemed. (65)

6.3 Jesus, the absolute saviour, the God-man, the irrevocable self-communication of God and the eschatological consummation of salvation history.

Along with the Christian tradition, Rahner proclaims that the transcendental idea of the God-man, the irrevocable self-communication of God, has found its historical establishment in Jesus of Nazareth (66). He claims that were we to search the entire history of the human race, none other would stand out as capable of bearing this title in the manner which Jesus does (67). Rahner identifies God's self-communication with salvation. Hence, the God-man, Jesus, who is the irrevocable self-communication of God is the absolute saviour, the eschatological consummation of salvation history on whom the salvation of each one of us depends (68).

We will discuss Rahner's ontological soteriology in greater detail in (6.4) and (6.5). It is sufficient at this stage to note Rahner's identification of Christology and soteriology. Christ's acts are not just thought to be redemptive in virtue of the dignity of his person. Nor is Christ's person thought to be divine in virtue of what he has accomplished. Rather Christ is in his very being the establishment of salvation in that he is the God-man, the irrevocable self-communication of God to the human race. It is inadequate to describe Christology and soteriology as being related in Rahner's theology. Christology does not merely suffuse soteriology, nor does soteriology merely give rise to Christology. Christology and soteriology are identified. Christ's work is his person manifested through his life and death.

Rahner does not simply seek to impose a post-Easter understanding of Jesus as the God-Man upon the historical Jesus. He is well aware that such an approach would reduce Christian faith to the level of mythology. However, along with the New Testament, Rahner holds there to be a continuity between the Christ of faith and the Christ of history. He maintains that Christian faith is solidly founded upon the historical Jesus (70). He accepts that we have to constantly inquire as to what we can know about the Jesus of history, but maintains that we can know about him is beyond dispute (71). In this manner, he maintains that scriptural study provides us both with objects of faith (Jesus of faith) for dogmatic theology and with grounds of faith (Jesus of history) for fundamental theology (72). It is the task of historical study of the New Testament to lay such grounds of faith bare (73). Rahner claims that there are only two absolutely necessary grounds for us to be able to claim continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. Firstly, that Jesus saw himself not just as one amongst many prophets but rather as "the eschatological prophet, as the

absolute and definitive saviour" (74). Secondly, his self-understanding can be seen to have been vindicated by God in a manner that is credible from the perspective of our transcendental experience. Rahner finds the first ground in Jesus' proclamation of the immanent arrival of the Kingdom of God and the second ground in the resurrection of Jesus. We turn now to examine his treatment of each of these grounds in greater detail.

Rahner considers it to be firmly established from contemporary exegesis that the pre-Easter Jesus saw himself as the "absolute eschatological event of salvation and the eschatological bringer of salvation" (75). The grounds for this claim are to be found in the radical nature of Jesus' message of the immanent arrival of the Kingdom of God with his person. Unlike the prophets who called people to renew a relationship that already existed between them and God and whose message could always be surpassed, Jesus stands as one who presents a new and insurpassable summons of God. "Jesus, then, proclaimed the immanence of God's Kingdom as the now present situation of an absolute decision for or against salvation." (76) Further, it is significant that this message of the new and irrevocable presence of God is given precisely by this person Jesus. His message is inextricably tied to his person and makes at very least an implicit claim for his person:

According to his own self-understanding he is already before the resurrection the one sent, the one who inaugurates the Kingdom of God through what he says and what he does in a way that it did not exist before, but now does exist through him and in him. At least in this sense the pre-resurrection Jesus already knew himself to be the absolute and insurpassable saviour. (77)

The connection between Jesus' person and his message is evidenced by the way in which he makes the decision at the Last Judgement dependent upon a decision vis-à-vis his own person. For Rahner, the radical nature of the identity between the message and person of Jesus is shown

by Jesus' death. He dies because of his message and for his message believing that through his death God will vindicate him (78). As we mentioned earlier, Rahner believes that it is only in and through our death that we can dispose of ourselves in our entirety (79). Hence it is in his death that Jesus disposes of himself most fully as the one who in his person is the inbreaking Kingdom of God (80).

Turning to what Rahner takes to be the second ground for affirming a continuity between the Jesus of history and the Jesus of faith we see that Rahner holds, with the New Testament, that the resurrection is not merely an object of faith but rather a ground of faith. He holds there to be an intrinsic unity between the death and resurrection of Jesus (81) such that the resurrection is: "The permanent, redeemed, final and definitive validity of the single and unique life of Jesus who achieved the permanent and final validity of his life precisely through his death in freedom and obedience." (82) The resurrection can be seen as God's seal upon Jesus' life (83) and his claim that "there is present with him a new and insurpassable closeness of God which on its part will prevail victoriously and is inseparable from him" (84). Rather than faith in Jesus' resurrection, and hence faith in the risen Jesus, being projected back onto the pre-resurrection Jesus, Rahner believes the resurrection to be the validation and explicit manifestation of what was already true of Jesus' life. The resurrection does not make Jesus the absolute saviour rather it vindicates his claim to be the final and insurpassable historical presence of God's word of self-disclosure. In this sense the resurrection shows Jesus to be absolute saviour (85).

Should it be objected that Rahner can hardly appeal to the resurrection of Jesus as a ground of faith as so many people find the

reality of the resurrection difficult to accept, Rahner would only reply that far from being difficult to believe in, the hope in personal resurrection is a transcendental of human life. He has claimed that human freedom is the creation and disposition of self in a manner that seeks for a unified, final self-expression that can only be achieved in death. Rahner maintains that such an understanding of freedom includes within it the implicit hope that an individual's personal history will be successful and conclusive. Rahner identifies this hope with the hope for a personal resurrection (86). It is the hope for the abiding validity of a person's single and entire existence (87). Hence, Rahner argues that the resurrection of Jesus can be thought of as a ground of faith (and not just believed in as an object of faith) in that it resonates with and fulfils a hope that all men and women share.

Before we seek to establish the precise significance which Rahner seeks to accord to Jesus as the climax of God's transcendent self-communication it is necessary to make some observations on his identification of Jesus as the absolute saviour. Rahner perceives the need to root the Christ of faith in the Jesus of history. However, it is questionable as to what degree he has actually achieved this. He states that the Jesus of history can be thought of as the climax of God's self-communication, but he does not necessarily establish how or why that this is so. The grounds that Rahner adduces can be reduced to the fact that Jesus claimed to be the definitive presence of God amongst us and that this claim was vindicated by his resurrection. However, he shows no concern to develop this in terms of what it meant in Jesus' life, how it was that people experienced the presence of God amongst them in this man Jesus. Historical study of the New Testament reveals that Jesus' self-consciousness of being the eschatological agent of the Kingdom of God was not a static, formal knowledge of his



essence. It was a consciousness of being the one in and through whom the liberating, redeeming presence of God was at work in an eschatologically final and irrevocable manner. So also, the witness of the earliest disciples is that people did not simply meet Jesus as one who declared with authority that he was the definitive presence of God amongst them. They met him as one in whom the liberating and redeeming presence of God was at work in a definitive manner. Again, the resurrection was not rationally experienced as a formal validation of a claim made by Jesus. It was experienced as a participation in the redeemed life that had been experienced in and through the ministry of Jesus. However, Rahner shows no interest in developing the experiential implications of what it means that Jesus was the presence of God amongst men and women. He rests content with the statement that Jesus can be thought to be such because that is how he considered himself to be and that this claim was vindicated by his resurrection. Rahner's formal statement on this point reminds us of his earlier formalism (Chapter Five) when he rests content with stating that we are redeemed by God's self-communication in grace without exploring how this is so. We feel compelled to agree with Daly:

We have to ask searching questions about the historical Jesus of Nazareth; who he was, what he preached, and why the religious and civil authorities decreed his destruction... Mystical and cosmic theories can come later, but their credibility will ultimately depend upon their being rooted in certain historically specifiable events which took place in first-century Palestine. (88)

We will return to these points in section 6.5 when we have to consider Rahner's understanding of the soteriological implications of Christ as the irrevocable self-communication of God. First let us clarify our understanding of the status of Christ in Rahner's theology.

#### 6.4 Christ as ground and goal of God's transcendental self-communication:

Approving wholeheartedly of the Scotist emphasis upon the incarnation as the crown of creation (89) Rahner understands the significance of Christ in a way that complements his understanding of God's transcendental self-communication to all men and women in grace. He considers creation, (with its orientation to God's transcendental self-communication in grace) and the incarnation to be two moments of the one process of God's self-giving (90). As we saw in Chapter Five, the transcendental revelation of God seeks objectification. This gives rise to a history of revelation which in turns seeks an irrevocable historical climax. For Rahner and Scotus alike this climax is to be found in the God-man, Jesus, the point to which all creation has been moving (91). The incarnation marks that stage of the world's evolution when the divinisation of humanity has started:

We give the title of saviour simply to that historical person who, coming in space and time, signifies that beginning of God's absolute communication of himself which inaugurates this self-communication for all men as something happening irrevocably and which shows this to be happening. (92)

However, there are two potential difficulties with such an understanding of Christ's significance. Firstly, in claiming a continuity between Christ and God's transcendental self-communication, do we not inevitably reduce Christ to the level of other objectifications of God's transcendental self-communication? Does not Christ become reduced to the level of a cipher of God's presence, albeit the most adequate cipher, but a cipher nevertheless? Secondly, if the incarnation is understood as the climax of creation, the highest point in the evolution of matter, does the incarnation not inevitably become subsumed under the creative process? Does not the God-man

become reduced to an inevitably reached stage in the evolutionary process, rather than being a free self-communication of the free God? (93)

Rahner seeks to close the door to the first objection, (that Christ is reduced to the level of a cipher), by claiming that there is an absolute (although not essential) difference between God's self-communication in Christ and God's transcendental self-communication in grace. Whether in fact Rahner's position is adequately maintained is a question that we will turn to in section 6.6. Rahner does not simply hold Christ to be a heightened mode of God's transcendental self-communication. Such a heightened mode would still be surpassable. He holds Christ to be the absolute climax of God's self-communication. For Rahner, Christ is the place where God's self-communication really becomes self-communication in an absolute manner. Hence Christ can be thought of as the absolute beginning of God's self-communication (94). Whereas in any other event of self-communication God communicates Godself to, in and through, what is other than Godself, the human reality of Jesus is really and truly the human reality of the Logos. Therefore in Christ, God communicates Godself to, in and through, God's own reality. The incarnation is the event of God's self-communication (95).

To the second objection, (that a continuity between graced creation and the incarnation compromises the gratuity of the Christ event through reducing it to an inevitable outworking of the evolutionary process), Rahner seeks to cover himself in two ways. Firstly, he argues that whilst the created order as it is given is orientated towards the incarnation as its fulfilled climax, it could have been otherwise. The incarnation was not inevitable, the created

order could have been orientated in a different way without being frustrated (96). The argument here reflects his earlier argument that although concretely experienced human nature is orientated towards grace and is fulfilled in grace, things could have been different. Secondly, Rahner argues that far from the incarnation being subsumed under creation and being reduced to the level of the inevitable climax of the creative process, in contrast the incarnation is both the ground and the goal of the creative process. Rahner develops this argument in various articles and it is worthy of lengthier treatment.

In Chapter Five we noted that the primordial possibility of God is to communicate Godself in grace. It is from this primary possibility that the possibility of God creating finite things other than Godself is derived. For Rahner, the primordial possibility of God's self-communication reaches its climax in the incarnation. Hence, it is the possibility of the incarnation that grounds the possibility of creation and not vice versa. Creation, for Rahner, is held to be a reduced mode of what God achieves fully in the incarnation (97). It is for this reason that Rahner views the incarnation as the climax of creation, and not because the incarnation is an inevitable evolutionary development.

In keeping with his principle that the lesser is grounded in the possibility of the greater and not vice-versa, Rahner further maintains that the possibility of the incarnation is not only what God's transcendental self-communication is geared towards but is what makes this transcendental self-communication possible (98). As we have already noted, Rahner refers to the incarnation as the absolute beginning of God's self-communication (99). Rahner argues that the dynamism behind a historical movement is provided by the goal towards

which it moves. Hence he maintains that the incarnation can be understood to be the "Final Cause" (100) of God's universal self-communication and not just its effect:

In so far as a historical movement lives by virtue of its end even in its beginnings, because the real essence of its dynamism is the desire for the goal, it is completely legitimate to understand the whole movement of God's self-communication to the human race as borne by this saviour even when it is taking place temporally prior to the event of its irrevocable coming to be in the saviour. (101)

In as much as all grace can be thought of as being given on account of its final and irrevocable manifestation in Christ, then all grace is to be thought of as being the grace of Christ. Rahner holds that this is true even of the supralapsarian grace of the "original state" (102). Further, the Spirit is to be thought of as being the Spirit of Christ (103). In this manner Rahner is able to formulate his famous and influential theory of "Anonymous Christianity" (104). If grace is everywhere and is always Christ's grace, then all people are always in relationship with Christ whether they realise it or not (105). Rahner claims that his theory of anonymous Christianity finds scriptural backing when Jesus claims that anyone who loves his/her neighbour loves himself (106). We may compare here Rahner's identification of love of God and love of neighbour that we discussed in Chapter Three.

The results of our investigation into the status of Christ in Rahner's theology reveals the following: He wishes to understand Christ's significance in continuity with the created order and God's transcendental self-communication. He does not intend to either reduce Christ to the level of a cipher of God's presence or to subsume the Christ-event under the graced created order such that it becomes the inevitable outgrowth of evolution. In contrast, Rahner maintains that

Christ is the presence of God as a human, the ultimate cause of God's transcendental self-communication. However, we must restate that if Rahner wants to avoid reducing Christ to the level of a cipher by maintaining that he is the presence of God, then he must do more than simply state this in a formalistic manner due to the tendencies of his own theological foundations.

As we have seen in Chapters Three and Five, Rahner builds his philosophical and theological system on a transcendental analysis of the ultimate conditions of human knowing and willing which discloses God as the transcendent, distant horizon of human finitude. It is only after establishing this premise that Rahner turns to ask whether the transcendent horizon of Holy Mystery is not only present as the absolutely distant one but also as the absolutely near one in loving self-communication. That is, the question of God's involvement in the historical order, in Rahner's system, is consequent upon the prior establishment of God as the transcendent horizon of human finitude. Further, Rahner's concept of God as the distant horizon of human finitude does not require the involvement of God in the historical order, with classical theism it allows God to stand outside the historical order. Rather than representing a creative reformulation of transcendence and immanence, Rahner's starting point seems laden with the dualistic assumptions of the classic tradition (107). The problem is that, in the terms in which Rahner develops his system, transcendence and immanence are in tension and it is a transcendental perspective on the transcendent, distant God that has precedence. Hence, there is a real question as to how the God who is the distant horizon of human finitude can be genuinely present and active in the historical order. It is not sufficient for Rahner to simply state that this is so, it is necessary for him to explain how this is so in a way

that coheres with the foundations of his own theology. If Rahner settles for a formal statement that God is present in the historical order in Christ then, despite his intentions, the terms of his own theology will inevitably tend to reduce Christ to the level of a cipher. We shall return to this point later in the present chapter.

Whatever we may be forced to conclude about the actual status of Christ within Rahner's theology when viewed as a whole, it is vital for us to realise that he genuinely intends to avoid reducing Christ to the level of a cipher. Only if we appreciate this point will we be equipped to understand the soteriological import which Rahner wants to accord to Christ as the irrevocable self-communication of God. It is the difference as to whether Rahner intends Christ to be understood as an expression and reassurance of God's will to forgive humanity or whether he can be understood as the cause of human redemption. To this question we now turn our attention.

#### 6:5 Rahner's Ontological Soteriology

In the previous section we observed that Rahner follows Scotus in viewing the incarnation as the crown of creation. He further follows Scotus in locating Christ's soteriological significance in terms of his being the crown of creation, the irrevocable self-communication of God. In Chapter Five we noted that for Rahner the fulfilment of the individual was to be found in the self-communication of God and that consequently salvation was to be identified with this self-communication (108). So also Rahner has argued that the entire creation is orientated towards the irrevocable self-communication of God such that the incarnation is to be thought the fulfilment of salvation history. Indeed, Rahner refers to Christ as the absolute

saviour on account of his being the irrevocable self-communication of God (109). Following Scotus, Rahner maintains that the incarnation was not only given on account of sin and evil in order to restore a fallen creation. Rather, he understands the incarnation as being the consummation of the created order and hence as the fulfilment of salvation history even had there been no sin:

In the Catholic Church it is freely permitted to see the incarnation first of all, in God's primary intention, as the summit and height of the divine plan of creation, and not primarily and in the first place as the act of a mere restoration of a divine world-order destroyed by the sins of mankind, an order which God had conceived in itself without any incarnation. (110)

Hence the primary soteriological significance of the incarnation for Rahner consists not in any deeds performed by the incarnate one but rather in the fact of God's self-communication to humanity. Indeed, the restorative and redemptive aspect of the Christ-event is not to be distinguished from the fact of God's self-communication in the Christ-event. Christ's soteriological significance is thought to consist in the fact that Christ is the irrevocable self-communication of God to a sinful, fallen creation, accepting it in a forgiving embrace. We will quote at length to illustrate this:

Jesus' being (as the union of God's life and human existence) and activity... taken together are the historically real, eschatologically victorious bestowal on the world of God's self-communication despite, and in, the world's sinfulness... Thus the presence of God's redemptive forgiveness, efficacious throughout history, has found its all-sustaining sense and centre, its definitive culmination, in Jesus Christ; and it remains unabrogably such because in Jesus God has definitively accepted the one world and humanity, as a whole, in spite of sin and precisely in their culpable destiny. (111)

However, in identifying the soteriological importance of Christ with his designation as the irrevocable self-communication of God to humanity, Rahner does not intend to reduce atonement to being God's word of forgiveness to sinful humanity as manifested in Christ. As we



have already mentioned, for Rahner God's self-communication is not simply a finite word about God but is rather God's own logos and hence a genuine self-communication (112). Revelation is understood by Rahner to have an ontological character, it is God's presence in history. In this manner, Rahner understands the history of salvation and revelation to be God's "progressive taking possession of the world." (113) Hence God's irrevocable self-communication in Christ is not simply the final word about God's will to forgive but is rather an ontological self-communication of God (114) which assumes and redeems human nature: "The fact that he pronounces as his reality precisely that which we are, also constitutes and redeems our very being and history." (115) Hence, along with the Catholic tradition in general, Rahner maintains that:

The redemption and destruction of sin must not be understood as a merely moral or legal transaction, or as a mere acquittal from guilt, or as a mere non-reckoning of guilt. It is the communication of divine grace and takes place in the ontological reality of God's self-communication. (116)

Further, Rahner draws upon the emphasis in Greek patristic soteriology in maintaining that the entire human race shares in and is affected by the ontological self-communication of God in Christ. Against what Rahner perceives, rightly we believe, to be an excessive emphasis upon individualism in western thought (117) he maintains that there is an underlying unity to humanity (118). Hence, he claims that the objective redemption of God's ontological self-communication to humanity in the incarnation is something that affects the entire human race. The incarnation heralds the divinisation of humanity as a whole (119) and as such is to be seen as the event of salvation history (120). Hence, the incarnate one is not so much the one who performs redemptive acts as rather the one who is "in his very being salvation, redeemer and satisfaction." (121) This constitutes Rahner's

ontological soteriology to which we referred in the title of this section.

However, we have to ask how this ontological soteriology conceives of the crucifixion. The tradition has normally maintained the scriptural emphasis upon the cross as being in some sense the cause of our salvation, whether through the notion of paying a debt or bearing a punishment, or as representing the definitive victory over evil. In such theologies of the atonement, salvation all too easily becomes identified with averting the anger of God and securing a favourable judgement on account of Jesus' propitiatory death. In contrast, Rahner maintains that salvation consists in God's ontological assumption and divinisation of human nature through his ontological self-communication in the incarnation. Indeed Rahner specifically distances himself from any propitiatory ideas, maintaining instead that the incarnation and crucifixion occurred precisely because God already willed to save humanity:

God is not transformed from a God of anger and justice into a God of mercy and love by the cross; rather God brings the event of the cross to pass since he is possessed from the beginning of gratuitous mercy and, despite the world's sin, shares himself with the world, so overcoming its sin. (122)

But such an understanding seems to negate any notion of a casual efficacy for the cross. Far from the cross being the cause of our salvation it is God's prior salvific will which is seen to be the cause of the cross:

According to common understanding, cause means a physical or moral operation which brings something about. By contrast we must say: because God wills salvation, therefore Jesus died and rose again, and not: because the crucifixion occurred, therefore God wills our salvation. (123)

Further, what salvific import Rahner attaches to the incarnation is understood to consist not so much in the acts of the incarnate one

as rather in his being. Hence, not only are the incarnation and crucifixion apparently caused by God's salvific will (and not vice versa) but their primary soteriological significance is to be understood in terms of God's ontological self-communication in the incarnation. Tying this in with Rahner's understanding of death as the unique event in which we can dispose of ourselves fully, it would seem that the only soteriological significance which we can ascribe to the cross in Rahner's theology is that it is the most integrated expression of Jesus' life as the self-communication of God. That is, the significance of the cross is derived from the incarnation and the incarnation, in turn, is caused by God's universal salvific will. However, it would be a gross misunderstanding to charge Rahner with actually holding the view which we have just outlined. He vigorously denies that the cross can be reduced to the level of an "attestation (directed to us) of God's forgiving love, which moves us to believe in this love" (124). He insists with the tradition (125) that we must ascribe a causal efficacy to the crucifixion (126). Hence, it is not all forms of causality that Rahner denies to the cross, only the sort which understands it to be the cause of God being changed from wrath to love. In effect, it is not the notion of causality that Rahner disagrees with but rather an understanding of salvation as being the securing of divine favour. Instead he maintains that salvation is the ontological redemption of human life which God has always willed to effect. All this being so, how then does he seek to secure a causal efficacy for the crucifixion?

To achieve this Rahner employs the scholastic notion of Final Cause. He maintains that whilst God's universal salvific will and transcendental self-communication may be the efficient cause of the incarnation, the incarnation and, in particular, the crucifixion are

the final cause of God's ontological, divinising self-communication to the world. How is this? As we have mentioned God's transcendental self-communication seeks an irrevocable historical climax, establishment and manifestation. For Rahner this climax is to be found in Christ. We also noted that for this to be the case then it must be accepted victoriously by the entire unified life of Christ (127). However, such a unified disposal can only be achieved in death: "Death is the one act which pervades the whole of life, and in which man, as a being of freedom, has disposal of himself in his entirety." (128) Hence it is that the crucifixion of Jesus as the fulfilment of his life can be seen to be the climax of God's transcendental self-communication. In as much as it is the irrevocable climax to which God's transcendental self-communication has always been moving and on account of which it has always been given, then the crucifixion of Jesus is to be understood to be the final cause of God's salvific will (129):

In as much as the history of God's transcendent self-communication... is based in all its phases on its irreversible goal and culminating point (as causa finalis), and unfolds by moving towards this eschaton, Christ and his destiny (the complete accomplishment of which appears in the resurrection) are the cause of salvation as historically constituting the historically irreversible saving situation for all. (130)

Rahner likens his understanding of the causality of the cross to sacramental causality (131). He conceives a sacrament to be a real symbol of grace in which "grace achieves its own fullness of being and forms an irreversible gift (opus operatum)" (132). Hence "to this extent the sign is a cause of grace, although the sign is caused by this grace" (133). So also, the crucifixion is the primary sacrament for the salvation of humanity (134) in that it is the irrevocable manifestation of God's salvific will for the entire human race (135).

In the present section we have examined Rahner's conflation of Christology and soteriology, or Christ's being and Christ's work, in what we have termed his ontological soteriology. In the last section we observed that Rahner was concerned to maintain Christ's status as the ontological self-communication of God to humanity rather than reduce him to the level of a cipher. So also in the present section Rahner seeks to maintain the identity of the Christ event with the climax of salvation history without reducing its soteriological significance to the level of an expression of God's will to forgive. Further he seeks to achieve this in the same manner that he seeks to avoid reducing Christ to the level of a cipher. That is he maintains that the Christ event is the irrevocable establishment of God's ontological giving of self in a divinizing self-communication to humanity. In this manner he views the crucifixion as the final cause or primary sacrament of salvation. We welcome such a closer identification between the being and work of Christ.

However, before we turn our attention to the question that we raised at the end of the last section (i.e. as to whether the foundations of Rahner's theology do not undermine his attempt to avoid reducing Christ to the level of a cipher and the atonement to the level of an expression of God's will to forgive) it is necessary for us to make some observations as to the deficiencies in Rahner's approach as it stands. These deficiencies do not annul the attempt to formulate an ontological soteriology, however we do consider that they raise points that would have to be included in any such attempt. We have three difficulties with Rahner's presentation and they all cohere in being expressions of the formalistic tendency that we have found in Rahner: Firstly, Rahner states that all of humanity forms a unity and so shares in Christ without saying how this is so. Secondly, he states that

Christ as the irrevocable self-communication of God is redemption and salvation without really showing any concern to show how this can be seen to be so in the life of Jesus. Thirdly, he states that God's self-communication redeems human life without explicating how this is so. We shall treat briefly of each of these in turn.

Firstly, regarding Rahner's statement that humanity forms a unity. We are not disputing Rahner's plea for a redressing of the excessive emphasis upon individualism in Western thought, indeed such a plea forms a central thrust of the present work. However, given the degree to which absolute individualism has become ingrained in Western thought it is insufficient to simply state that there is really a unity. Indeed, Rahner seems blind to his own individualist/existentialist perspective which dominates his soteriological concern concentrating as he does upon a soteriology of personal authenticity. The latter formed the basis for one of our criticisms of Rahner's overall approach in Chapter Three.

Secondly, regarding Rahner's statement that the being of Christ as the irrevocable self-communication of God is salvation, without showing any real concern to relate this to the life of Jesus. As we noted in section 6.3, Rahner show very little concern to relate his understanding of Jesus as the ontological self-communication of God to the events of Jesus' life. Whilst he seeks to establish that Jesus thought of himself as the irrevocable presence of God and that his claim was vindicated by his resurrection, he displays little or no concern to explore how Jesus was experienced as the presence of God in his acts. Rahner seems to feel it sufficient for him to establish that Jesus considered himself to be the presence of God without exploring the implications of this. He does not explore how the redemptive acts

of healing, teaching, forgiving and restoring in Jesus' ministry can be thought of as the redemptive aspect of the ontological self-communication of God. It seems that Rahner's fascination with the redemptive significance of the fact of the incarnation is not matched by a concern with the soteriological significance of the life, death and resurrection of the incarnate one. The effect of this is that, despite Rahner's protestations about Christology being rooted in the historical Jesus, it seems that his identification of Jesus as the self-communication of God sits loosely on the shoulders of the historical Jesus. We would expect an ontological soteriology to develop the connections between ontological statements of Christ's dignity and the record of his ministry, death and resurrection as the liberating activity of God.

Our third concern, (that Rahner states that God's self-communication to Christ redeems human life without going on to explain how), is related to our second. Rahner's equation of salvation with Christ as God's self-communication seems to be a static, formal definition which does not develop the redeeming, liberating, dynamic aspect of God's presence to which scripture gives attestation. We are told by Rahner that we are redeemed/divinised without any of the dynamics being laid bare as to how humanity is divinised in the particularity of human life. We have here the same problem that we have already encountered in Chapter Five as regards Rahner's failure to explicate the healing dynamic of grace. Again, we would expect an ontological soteriology to seek to give an account of such a dynamic in a way that is applicable to the particularity of lived human life.

The above points are criticisms of Rahner's attempt at formulating an ontological soteriology. However, they do not in themselves

invalidate any such attempt at formulating an ontological soteriology. They show the need for a development of Rahner's position rather than its final inadequacy or inconsistency. However, there is a more serious tension in Rahner's theology which if it cannot be resolved renders his soteriology incoherent and inadequate. Rahner identifies the climax of salvation history with the irrevocable self-communication of God in Christ. For Rahner, God's self-communication is not a finite word about God but is rather the ontological presence of God. Hence, for Rahner, Jesus is not a cipher of God but God's presence, and redemption is not a sign of God's forgiveness but God's redeeming, divinising, self-communication in Christ. However, as we have claimed earlier in the present chapter and in Chapter Five, unless the possibility of the genuine presence of God in the historical order can be coherently reconciled with the central thrust of Rahner's own theological foundations, (God as the distant, transcendent horizon of human finitude), then against his own intentions the notion of Christ of as the self-communication of God inevitably reduces Christ to the level of a cipher pointing towards the distant God and reduces the soteriological significance of the life, death and resurrection of Christ to the level of a statement of God's will to forgive. We have claimed that so far Rahner has not established the possibility of God's genuine presence in the historical order in a way that coheres with his own foundations.

In the present chapter, we have followed Rahner as he explained how a human person could be thought of as God due to the human person's openness and potentia oboedientialis for God. We have seen how Rahner uses the concept of the symbol in order to explain how the Logos is capable of expressing God exteriorly in such a manner that the humanity of Jesus is to be thought of as the humanity of the Logos. However



Rahner has gone no way towards establishing how it is that God can be present in the historical order given his own designation of God as the distant horizon of human finitude. In the next section we will turn our attention to a detailed analysis of Rahner's attempt to establish this through his claim that "God who cannot change in himself can change in his other" (136). Should this attempt prove to be incoherent or reduce to a mere empty formalism then it would seem that Rahner cannot save himself from ultimately reducing Christ to the level of a cipher of God's transcendental self-communication, albeit the most adequate one, and from reducing the soteriological significance of Christ's life and crucifixion to the level of a sign of God's forgiveness.

#### 6.6 Rahner's last stand - God who cannot change in Godself can change in God's other.

Rahner expresses his awareness of the tension between his claim that God is the absolute, transcendent ground of all reality and his claim that in Jesus, God is "part of the history of the cosmos itself" (137) through the notion of God's immutability (138). Christians maintain that "God is the immutable One who is in an absolute sense" (139). Rahner asks how this claim is to be reconciled with the claim that the word became flesh:

It is the question of how to understand the truth that the immutability of God may not distort our view of the fact that what happened to Jesus on earth is precisely the history of the word of God himself, and a process which he underwent.  
(140)

Rahner rejects the scholastic solution which claimed that in the incarnation change only occurred on the side of the human reality of Jesus and not on the side of the Logos (141). However this would seem

to lead to incoherency. If Rahner wants to maintain that change does not only occur on the side of the created reality but also on the side of God and yet to continue to maintain the immutability of God, does this not inevitably mean that Rahner seeks to maintain both that God does change and that he does not change. Rahner seeks to overcome this incoherency by claiming that whilst God really does become in the incarnation this is not to be thought of as a change of God in Godself so much as a change of God in the human reality of Jesus. Hence Rahner proclaims his principle: "God can become something. He who is not subject to change in himself can himself be subject to change in something else." (142)

Rahner claims that this formula must not be reduced to either contradicting God's immutability or to positing any change as occurring only on the side of the created reality (143). However this statement does not of itself go any way towards resolving the tension between God's immutability and God's becoming in the incarnation. Indeed, Rahner recognises that the statement is not an explanation of how the transcendent, immutable God can be present in the particular and changing realm of history but is rather a dialectical juxtaposition of the two claims that he is concerned to maintain (144). Ultimately, Rahner does not seek to explain how the incarnation is possible, given the immutability of God, so much as to state what must be adhered to if we are to remain loyal to the fact of the incarnation (145). His final appeal is to the mysteriousness of God's reality, which cannot be probed: "Here ontology has to be adapted to the message of faith and not be schoolmaster to this message." (146)

However, we feel bound to claim that this is quite inadequate to overcome the avowedly transcendental, ahistorical perspective in

Rahner's theology. He has not as yet explained how, within the transcendental premises of his own theology, God can be thought of as genuinely present in the historical order. He simply states that this is so. But this is what is so very difficult to explain let alone state given his transcendental perspective. Indeed, we have claimed that the transcendental orientation of Rahner's theology is so overwhelming that a simple statement of God's presence in the historical order inevitably reduces to an empty verbalism in which the historical aspect of God's presence is reduced to the level of a cipher of God's transcendental presence.

However, Rahner does make some attempt to explicate his thought further at this point by developing his notion of God's other as the real symbol of God. He has claimed that in the light of the incarnation, God is seen to be the one who in God's infinite fullness gives Godself away (147). He further claims that in so far as God gives Godself from infinite fullness, then the other which comes to be, comes to be as God's own reality:

By the fact that he remains in his infinite fullness while he empties himself - because, being love, that is, the will to fill the void, he has that wherewith to fill all- the ensuing other is his own proper reality. (148)

Hence, Rahner wishes to maintain that God has the possibility of becoming God's other in such a way that God's other is both distinct from God and yet identical with God (149). As we have seen, Rahner maintained a similar notion of unity in difference when developing his theology of the symbol. A real symbol is both genuinely other than that which it symbolises and also a genuine expression of, and hence not wholly other than, that which is symbolised:

We may say that each being forms, in its own way, more or less perfectly according to its degree of being, something distinct from itself and yet one with itself, for its own fulfilment. (Here unity and distinction are correlatives

which increase in like proportions, not in inverse proportions which would reduce each to be contradictory and exclusive of the other). (150)

Insofar as God's other or symbol is genuinely God then God can be thought to really change in God's other. Insofar as God's other is distinct from God in God's self then God does not change in God's self.

However, Rahner's understanding of God's other as being both distinct from God and identical with God has not overcome Rahner's dialectical juxtaposition of the statements that God cannot change in Godself yet can change in God's other. Indeed, he has merely succeeded in shifting the dialogical juxtaposition onto the notion of God's other. Rahner vacillates between seeing God's other as identical with God, (and hence claiming that God changes) on the one hand and seeing God's other as different from God (and hence claiming that God does not change) on the other hand. Hence, Rahner still has not explained how God can change in God's other without changing in Godself. For God to be thought of as changing in God's other it seems that God's other must be identified with God's self, but God's immutability in Godself can only be maintained if God's other is to be thought of as different from God in Godself. We have the same problem as before. Either God does not really change and hence the statement reduces to an empty verbalism or God really does change, in which case the statement is inconsistent.

We must note with Taylor that Rahner's appeal to mystery at this point, whilst being clothed in language of the intractable mystery of God's being, sounds ominously like an appeal to the notion of mystery as a limitation of human reason which Rahner earlier dismissed as inadequate. Indeed, his appeal to mystery could be seen as an attempt at "excusing real conceptual incoherence" (151). Incoherence, that is, in maintaining God's historical presence given Rahner's transcendental

perspective. We have to conclude with Taylor that Rahner has not established the coherence of his statement that God who cannot change in Godself can change in God's other. As we mentioned in the last section, this failure to secure God's presence and activity in the historical order bodes ill for Rahner's Christology and ontological soteriology.

#### 6.7 The inadequacy of Rahner's ontological soteriology due to his transcendental perspective:

The inadequacy of Rahner's formula "God changeless in self but changes in his other" as a means of establishing God's presence in the historical order means that our earlier suspicions were correct. Rahner is unable to overcome the overriding and thorough going transcendental perspective in his theology. Despite his intentions to maintain the reality of God's ontological redeeming presence in Christ, the terms of his own theology inevitably reduce Christ to the level of a cipher of God's transcendental presence and soteriology to the level of a sign of God's will to forgive.

Further we would maintain that this tendency does not only become apparent upon close scrutiny of Rahner's theology. Due to the overarching transcendental perspective of his thought even an initial and superficial encounter with a work such as Foundations of Christian Faith creates the impression that the crucified Christ can be thought of as no more than a cipher of God's transcendental will to forgive. Indeed, it is only upon a second and more diligent examination that we perceive that Rahner does indeed intend to hold that grace is redeeming, that Christ is the ontological self-communication of God and that God's atoning work consists in the divinising redemption of

humanity. His statements in defence of these positions can very easily be swamped by the momentum of his own theology. Further analysis reveals that our first impressions are correct, that Rahner is not able to establish God's presence within the realm of historical particularity given his transcendental perspective. Hence, his claims that grace entails a healing dynamic, that Christ is God's presence in history and that in Christ humanity is divinised reduce to an empty and formal verbalism that cannot secure what they maintain. Rahner's theological inability to posit God as active in the historical order serves to reinforce his philosophical inability to take the particularity of human life seriously.

We have consistently raised this question of Rahner's tendency towards generalising abstractions. That is, Rahner makes statements about the redeeming dynamic of grace and our divinisation in Christ that do not seem to be rooted in experienced human life. These statements have the character of a priori, universal generalisations which are imposed onto the particular situations of human life without being able to genuinely speak to them. In Chapter Three we claimed that Rahner's transcendental starting point inevitably tends towards generalised abstractions. We have now found that the philosophical inadequacies of Rahner's starting point are compounded by the theological implications of his transcendental starting point (i.e that God who is the distant horizon of all reality cannot be thought of as present in the historical order). Rahner does not simply neglect to treat of the process of redemption in particular situations (a fundamental requirement of the present critique) due to an over concern for the universal, transcendental realm over against the historical, particular realm. Ultimately he is unable to treat of the process of God's redeeming activity in the genuinely historical sphere.

Given this inability, we should not be at all surprised to find that Rahner presents us with an abstract soteriological schema that is imposed on Christ and imposed on humanity. This is indeed what we have seen to occur. Christ's redemptive significance is reduced to the fact that he claimed to be the absolute self-communication of God without developing the significance of Jesus' ministry as the redeeming presence of God. Likewise the interpretation of the cross as the most unified expression of Jesus' life is drawn more from an existentialist theology of death than it is based upon the historical context of Jesus' death. We have observed a similar lack of concern to relate the redemptive self-communication of God in Christ to the particular situations of human life. Hence Rahner's soteriology appears to be an inadequate Idealism that is imposed upon scripture and lived human reality alike. In contrast, we maintain the need for theology to speak to and from the context of particular human situations and to be faithful to the contexts of scripture.

*The conclusion will be to see that it is the person who  
and the church who are the meaning of life.*

## 6.8 CONCLUSION

In our Introduction we maintained that Rahner's theological endeavour represents one of the most influential attempts within twentieth century Roman Catholic theology at mediating between traditional scholasticism and the concerns of modernity. Having engaged with the grandeur of his system it is not difficult to see why it has been so influential. He is not content to assume that theology is univocal with human life, rather he seeks to establish that this is so. Nor does he simply repeat the inherited tradition, he seeks to reformulate and re-express the tradition in a way that is consonant with the concerns of modernity. In dialogue with Kant, Rahner employs a transcendental method not only to establish the possibility of

metaphysics but rather to present a creative reformulation of traditional scholasticism, one that maintains a distinctively anthropological bias. He seeks to counter the charge of the meaninglessness of soteriological discourse through grounding salvation language in the human person's fundamental and inescapable openness to God. He respects the role of human freedom by thinking of salvation as the human person's acceptance of God's transcendental self-communication through the person s/he makes of him/herself. Again, we have observed how he seeks to reconcile the Christian salvation schema with a concern for this world through his understanding of the love of neighbour which must extend to the socio-political sphere. However, in Chapter One we raised the question whether Rahner simply seeks to justify, and thereby re-establish, the pre-modern assumption of the theocentric nature of human life, and so justify the philosophical basis of Thomistic metaphysics, or whether he genuinely reformulates a theocentric vision in dialogue with modern and post-modern assumptions and experience. In Chapter Two we articulated three perspectives and concerns, drawn from the modern and post-modern experience of human life, with which we chose to engage in dialogue with Rahner. These concerns broadly pertain to the area of fundamental soteriology:

- 1) Soteriology must be rooted in the human realm, it must flow from and address the particularity of human life and hence God must be thought of as genuinely present within the particularity of human life.
- 2) A soteriology will be found to be inadequate if it is centred upon the salvation of the individual without a true appreciation of the need for a corporate redemption of the human community.
- 3) An adequate soteriology will be one that is formulated in dialogue



with an appreciation of the radical nature of sin and evil in human life and which allows for the possibility of God's transforming, liberating presence to evil.

We hoped that Rahner's adequacy when measured against these concerns would throw light on the adequacy of his method as a whole. In the body of our work we turned to explicate Rahner's soteriology, mindful of the above criteria. In Chapter Three we found that his a priori, transcendental method prevented him from truly addressing human life in its particularity. Rahner's soteriology is focused upon an understanding of salvation as the fulfilment of the person's transcendental openness to God. He then seeks to relate this understanding of salvation to the lived experience of human life, to the way in which the person lives out his/her response to God in his/her daily life. This is a long way short of starting with particular human situations which cry out for a liberating redemption and then seeking to locate the meaning of salvation language in such contexts. We claimed that this inadequacy is rooted in his theological method which has the form of an a priori analysis of the universally given structures of the human subject. We also claimed that Rahner's soteriological schema displays an excessive concern with the individual subject's relationship with God in isolation from the corporate salvation of the social and political realities in which s/he finds him/herself. For Rahner, social and political realities are only important in as much as the human subject accepts or rejects salvation through the personal response that s/he makes in these contexts. Again we claimed that this deficiency in Rahner's soteriology is due to his philosophical starting point which is a metaphysics of the autonomous subject. In Chapter Five we observed that whilst Rahner has a profound understanding of human freedom and evil and whilst he recognises the

need for a genuine dynamic of redemption in human life, he only treats of such a dynamic, healing aspect of grace in a peripheral manner. We claimed that this betrayed a recurrent formalism in Rahner's theology which led him to be more concerned with a priori, theoretical questions about the universality of grace than with questions born from the anguished human heart as to the sufficiency of grace. Again we claimed that this is due to his transcendental starting point which shifts attention away from the particular details of human life and history and towards universal, general, a priori concerns.

Finally, we observed that there is a tension in Rahner's theology between his identification of the distant horizon of human finitude with God and his concern to speak of the self-communicating presence of God in the historical order. Rahner's entire philosophical and theological edifice is built upon the foundation stone of God as the distant horizon of human finitude. Hence, we claimed that unless Rahner coherently reconciles this starting point with the genuine immanence of God then immanence becomes swallowed up in transcendence. It is insufficient for Rahner to simply state that God can be present in the historical order. Given the terms of his own theology, Rahner has to explain how this can be so. We repeat again that we are not arguing for an extreme rationalism that claims that God must be proven to be present in the historical order before one can believe in, or experience, this reality. Rather, we are claiming that Rahner must reconcile this claim with the terms of his own system if he is to avoid falling into incoherency. After having explored the various ways in which Rahner has wrestled with this problem we have claimed that Rahner does not secure the genuine presence and activity of God in the historical order in a way that coheres with his philosophical and theological starting point. Rahner's transcendental method, which

risers at the very dawn of his theology, proves to be his stumbling block. We echo the words of Tracy: "On no single question does the choice of a basic theological method so determine one's response as on the question of God." (152) We were forced to conclude that, despite his intentions, Rahner's overall theology reduces Christ to the level of a cipher of God's transcendental self-communication and Christ's soteriological significance to his being the sign of God's will to forgive.

In short we believe that, against his own intentions, Rahner's soteriology is inadequate both to the demands of common human experience, in that it is general, lacks redemption and is overly concerned with the individual's spiritual destiny, and to the demands of the Christian tradition, in that it reduces Christ to the level of a cipher and the Cross to a statement of God's will to forgive. We further believe that each of these deficiencies can be traced back to Rahner's starting point, an a priori transcendental analysis of the individual human subject. In answer to our earlier question whether Rahner simply seeks to justify, and thereby re-establish, the traditional assumptions and starting point of scholastic metaphysics or whether he genuinely seeks to reformulate a theocentric vision in dialogue with modern and post-modern assumptions and experience, we can now state more clearly that Rahner's attempt to reformulate a theological starting point does not go far enough. He succeeds in locating theological discourse far more intrinsically in human life than was possible with scholastic extrinsicism. However, the very method which enables him to do this also causes him to perpetrate some of the least helpful elements that have crept into Christian soteriology. We believe that a transcendental metaphysics, as is represented by such as Rahner, presents us with the most creative

attempt possible within neo-orthodoxy at dialogue with secular self-understanding. Hence, in seeing the inadequacies of Rahner's methodology, we believe that we are led to see the need for the formulation of a revisionist soteriology and an adequate philosophical and hermeneutical basis for contextual theology. We must be prepared to move beyond the attempt to reconcile the inherited tradition and contemporary self-understanding and allow each to criticise and re-interpret the other.

Should it be thought premature and arrogant for a comparative whelp to have maintained a fundamental inadequacy in Rahner's theology we would wish to put on record our enormous gratitude and respect for his work. Rahner's stature and influence quite simply cannot be over emphasised. His energies helped the church leave behind the dark ages of fortress isolationism and to give her the confidence to proclaim again her mission to be the sacrament of the redemption of the world. In turning to study Rahner we did not proceed with an iconoclastic zeal, eager to sneer at a pillar of authority. Rather we proceeded as a student eager to learn from the Professor, or if I may be allowed the analogy, as a disciple docile to the master. It was the very event of engagement with Rahner that provoked the articulation of our presuppositions and concerns which in turn we believe to have revealed the final inadequacy of Rahner's approach.

We acknowledge a symbiosis between the present critique and Rahner's achievement. Our call for theology to be rooted in the particularity of human life would be impossible without the anthropological turn in theology which Rahner was largely responsible for initiating. Our criticism of Rahner's transcendental method is not to be viewed as a criticism of his anthropological grounding of

theology. It is rather the criticism that in starting with a transcendental analysis of the a priori structures of human knowledge and freedom Rahner has remained captive within the universal perspective of the metaphysical tradition in general, resulting as it does in abstract generalisations. In place of an a priori theological anthropology we seek an a posteriori theological anthropology. Finally we would wish to claim that in criticising Rahner in order to move forward we are responding to him as he would wish. He consistently maintained that the anthropological shift in theology was of far greater importance than his particular methodology. We draw our conclusion to a close with the same words of Kerr about Rahner with which we closed our introduction:

Even if one were to reject his own theological 'system' root and branch, doing so with questions and arguments one would be benefiting from the renewal of theological controversy and exploration in the Catholic Church for which he more than anyone is responsible. Even if nothing else of his work endures (an unlikely supposition), he would be content to have renewed interest in, and to have excited courage to deal with, the central questions of theology. (153)

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER SIX

1. cf. "This history of revelation has its absolute climax when God's self-communication reaches its insurpassable high point through the hypostatic union and in the incarnation of God in the created, spiritual reality of Jesus for his own sake and hence for the sake of all of us." Rahner, FCF, pp. 174.
2. cf. "This moment in which the irreversibility of God's historical self-communication becomes manifest refers both to the communication itself and to its acceptance." id., FCF, pp. 194.  
cf. "The unique and final culmination of this history of revelation has already occurred and has revealed the absolute and irrevocable unity of God's transcendental self-communication to mankind and of its historical mediation in the one God-man Jesus Christ, who is at once God himself as communicated, the human acceptance of this communication and the final historical manifestation of this offer and acceptance." id., "Revelation", E.T., pp. 1462.
3. cf. "In Jesus Christ, the God who communicates himself and the man who accepts God's self-communication become irrevocably one, and the history of revelation and the salvation of the whole human race reaches its goal." id., FCF, pp. 169.
4. cf. "We are applying this title (Absolute Saviour) to that historical person who appears in time and space and signifies the beginning of the absolute self-communication of God which is moving towards its goal, that beginning which indicates that this self-communication for everyone has taken place irrevocably and has been victoriously inaugurated." ibid., pp. 193.
5. cf., ibid., pp. 206-227.
6. id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 113.
7. cf., ibid., pp. 118. cf., id., "Current Problems In Christology", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 158.
8. cf. "As long as this finite mediation of the divine self-expression does not represent a reality of God himself in the strict and real sense, it is still basically provisional and surpassable because it is finite. And in this finiteness it is not simply the reality of God himself, and so it can be surpassed by God by establishing something else finite. If, therefore, the reality of Jesus, in whom as offer and as acceptance God's absolute self-communication to the whole human race is present for us, is really to be the insurpassable and definitive offer and acceptance, then we have to say. it is not only established by God but is God himself." id., FCF, pp. 202. cf., ibid., pp. 176.
9. cf. "The union between the one offering and the offer cannot be understood only as a moral unity, as for example between a human word or a mere sign on the one hand and God on the other. It must rather be understood only as an irrevocable kind of union between this human reality and God, as a union which eliminates the possibility of separation between the proclamation and the

proclaimer, and hence a union which makes the really human proclamation and the offer to us a reality of God himself. And it is just this that the hypostatic union means, this and really nothing else: In this human potentiality of Jesus the absolute salvific will of God, the absolute event of God's self-communication to us along with its acceptance as something effected by God himself, is a reality of God himself unmixed, but also inseparable and therefore irrevocable." id., FCF, pp. 202. cf. "This human reality as human (not as something abstract, of course) in its bare humanity can only be of theological importance if it is as such (as just this) the manifestation of God in the world, not just as something joined on in a logically subsequent way; if, that is to say, it is one with the Logos in virtue of being the reality of the Logos itself, and not the reality of the Logos in virtue of being one (how?) with The Logos... we must learn to see that what is human in Jesus is not something human (and as such uninteresting for us in the world) and in addition God's as well (and in this respect alone important, this special character however always merely hovering above the human and forming its exterior setting, as it were). On the contrary, in this view the everyday human reality of this life is God's existence, in the sense cautiously determined above it is human reality and so God's, and vice versa." id., "Current Problems In Christology", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 191.

10. id., "Current Problems In Christology", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 150.
11. id., FCF, pp. 207.
12. cf. "Man is understood as the existent of transcendental necessity who in every categorical act of knowledge and of freedom always transcends himself and the categorical object towards the incomprehensible mystery by which the act and the object are opened and borne, the mystery which we call God." ibid., pp. 209.
13. cf., id., "The Unity Of Spirit And Matter In The Christian Understanding Of Faith", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 153-177.
14. cf. Rahner's description of the human person as "the being in whom this basic tendency of matter to find itself in the spirit by self-transcendence arrives at the point where it definitely breaks through." id., "Christology Within An Evolutionary View Of The World", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 160. cf. The human person is "the existent in whom the basic tendency of matter to discover itself in spirit through self-transcendence reaches its definitive breakthrough." id., FCF, pp. 181.
15. id., FCF, pp. 198.
16. cf., ibid., pp. 209.
17. cf., ibid., pp. 210.
18. cf. "When we have said everything which can be expressed about ourselves which is definable and calculable, we have not yet said anything about ourselves unless in all that is said we have also included that we are beings who are orientated towards the God who is incomprehensible." ibid., pp. 216.

19. id., "Thoughts On The Theology Of Christmas", T.I. Vol. III, pp. 31.
20. cf. "Thus he himself is a mystery, always referred beyond himself into the mystery of God. This is his being; he is defined by the indefinable which he is not, but without which he is not even (nor realizes) what he is." ibid.
21. id., "Current Problems In Christology", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 162. cf., id., FCF, pp. 78-79.
22. Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses, IV, XX.6, quoted in H. Bettenson, The Early Christian Fathers, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1984), pp. 75-76.
23. cf. "We must conceive of the relation between the Logos person and his human nature in just this sense, that here both independence and radical proximity equally reach a unique and qualitatively incommensurable perfection, which nevertheless remains once and for all the perfection of a relation between creator and creature." id., "Current Problems In Christology", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 162-163.
24. cf. "If this indefinable nature, whose limit, that is, its definition, is this unlimited orientation towards the infinite mystery of fullness, is assumed by God as his own reality, then it has reached the very point towards which it is always moving by virtue of its essence. It is its very meaning, and not just an accidental side activity which it could also do without, to be given away and to be handed over, to be that being who realizes himself and finds himself by losing himself once and for all in the incomprehensible." id., FCF, pp. 217. cf., id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 109.
25. id., FCF, pp. 218.
26. cf. "The point of the thesis that we are trying to establish is this: although the hypostatic union is a unique event in its own essence, and viewed in itself it is the highest conceivable event, it is nevertheless an intrinsic moment within the whole process by which grace is bestowed upon all spiritual creatures." ibid., pp. 201. cf. "We have constantly to remind ourselves that human being is not some absolutely terminated quality, which, while persisting as a quite self-contained whole indifferent to all else, is combined with some other thing (in this case the Logos) by a wholly external miracle. Human being is rather a reality absolutely open upwards; a reality which reaches its highest (though indeed unexact) perfection, the realization of the highest possibility of man's being, when in it the Logos himself becomes existent in the world." id., "Current Problems In Christology", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 183.
27. cf., id., FCF, pp. 200.
28. id., "Current Problems In Christology", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 184.
29. cf., id., FCF, pp. 223.



30. cf. "The Incarnation cannot be understood as the end and goal of the world's reality without having recourse to the theory that the Incarnation itself is already an intrinsic moment and a condition for the universal bestowal of grace to spiritual creatures." ibid., pp. 199.
31. cf., ibid., pp. 218. cf., id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 110.
32. id., "Current Problems In Christology", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 164.
33. id., FCF, pp. 218.
34. id., "The Theology Of The Symbol", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 236-237.
35. ibid., pp. 221-252.
36. cf., ibid., pp. 225.
37. ibid.
38. ibid.
39. cf. "All beings are by their nature symbolic, because they necessarily express themselves in order to attain their own nature." ibid., pp. 224.
40. ibid., pp. 234.
41. cf. "The Logos is the word of the Father, his perfect image his imprint, his radiance, his self-expression." ibid., pp. 236.
42. cf., ibid., pp. 235.
43. ibid., pp. 236. cf. "The Logos is the symbol of the Father, in the very sense which we have given the word: the inward symbol which remains distinct from what is symbolized, which is constituted by what is symbolized, where what is symbolized expresses itself and possesses itself." ibid., pp. 236.
44. cf., id., FCF, pp. 202.
45. cf., ibid., pp. 215. cf. "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 115.
46. id., "The Theology Of The Symbol", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 239. cf., id., "Thoughts On The Theology Of Christmas", T.I. Vol. III, pp. 29. cf., id., FCF, pp. 226.
47. cf. "If, therefore, the Logos becomes man, then this humanity of his is not something which exists antecedently, but rather is that which comes to be and is constituted in its essence and existence if and insofar as the Logos empties himself." id., FCF, pp. 224. cf., id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 116.
48. id., "The Theology Of The Symbol", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 239. cf. "The divine Logos himself both really creates and accepts this

corporeality - which is a part of the world - as his own reality; he brings it into existence as something other than himself in such a way, therefore, that this very materiality expresses him, the Logos himself, and lets him be present in his world." id., "Christology Within An Evolutionary View Of The World", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 177. cf. "Because the human itself, affirmed by the fact that he pledges himself to us, is really and truly affirmed of him himself (although differently from the divinity), this human nature is thus his very own reality in which he himself and not merely a human nature different from him comes out to meet us, so that, when one grasps this humanity, one has in very truth understood and grasped something of God himself." id., "Thoughts On The Theology Of Christmas", T.I. Vol. III, pp. 29-30.

49. cf. "The Logos, as Son of the Father, is truly, in his humanity as such, the revelatory symbol in which the Father enunciates himself, in this Son, to the world-revelatory, because the symbol renders present what is revealed." id., "The Theology Of The Symbol", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 239.
50. id., FCF, pp. 224. cf. "When God wants to be what is not God, man comes to be... We know this by the fact that we recognise the incarnate Logos in our history and say: here the question which we are is answered historically and tangibly with God himself." ibid., pp. 225. cf. "When God lets himself go outside of himself, then there appears man - who for this very reason is pure openness for God - out of the very fringe of nothingness (i.e of the material)." id., "Thoughts On The Theology Of Christmas", T.I. Vol. III, pp. 32. cf. "We could now define man, within the framework of his supreme and darkest mystery, as that which ensues when God's self-utterance, his Word, is given out lovingly into the void of god-less nothing... If God wills to become non-God, man comes to be, that and nothing else, we might say." id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 116.
51. cf. "Since man can experience and actualize his ultimate, essential being only in history, this orientation must come to appearance in history. Moreover, since God's offer can be actualized only in and through a free act of God, if it is to find its irreversible actualization and validity, man must expect and look for this offer within this historical dimension." id., FCF, pp. 298.
52. cf., id., FCF, pp. 177. cf., id., FCF, pp. 207.
53. cf., ibid., pp. 211.
54. cf. "This Saviour, who represents the climax of this self-communication, must therefore be at the same time God's absolute pledge by self-communication to the spiritual creature as a whole and the acceptance of this self-communication by this Saviour; only then is there an irrevocable self-communication on both sides, and only thus is it present in the world in a historically communicative manner." id., "Christology Within An Evolutionary View Of The World", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 176.
55. id., FCF, pp. 211.

56. cf., id., "On Christian Dying", T.I. Vol. VII, pp. 287.
57. id., FCF, pp. 271. cf. "It is obvious that death is in this sense the absolute end of the temporal dimension of a being of the kind to which man belongs." id., "Ideas For A Theology Of Death", T.I. Vol. XIII, pp. 174.
58. cf. "Life is one and single, and is brought to its fullness in a single and definitive historical development." ibid.
59. cf. "Death, then, is the consummation of a man's history as a free person, that in which this history breaks through into the absolute future which is its goal, and in which God as the ultimate, original, and infinite all, by whom all reality is upheld, is encountered either as judgement or as man's blessed consummation. Now if this is true then death is that towards which the will of the free person tends at its deepest and most ultimate, because this free person must seek the end of that which merely prolongs itself in time in order to achieve his consummation." id., "Theological Consideration On The Moment Of Death", T.I. Vol. XI, pp. 319. cf., id., "Ideas For A Theology Of Death", T.I. Vol. XIII, pp. 170.
60. cf. "In reality eternity comes to be in time as its own mature fruit. Eternity does not really come beyond the experienced time of our biological life in time and space and continue this time, but rather it subsumes time by being released from the time which came to be temporarily, and came to be so that the final and definitive could be done in freedom." id., FCF, pp. 271.
61. cf. "Death (which is something that goes on throughout the whole of life to its very end) understood in wholly human and theological terms, is not a merely biological occurrence at the end, a medical exitus, but a self-realization of creaturely-human freedom in which man faces God and disposes of himself completely and finally for or against God: this he does in that final state of creaturely powerlessness that reaches its uttermost realization and manifestation in what we commonly experience as death." id., "The Death Of Jesus And The Closure Of Revelation", T.I. Vol. XVIII, pp. 139. cf., id., "On Christian Dying", T.I. Vol. VII, pp. 290-291.
62. cf., id., "On Christian Dying", T.I. Vol. VII, pp. 288-289.
63. cf. "In the temporal duration of life which is to end completely, eternity is actualizing itself towards its fulfillment." id., FCF, pp. 272.
64. id., "Ideas For A Theology Of Death", T.I. Vol. XIII, pp. 179-180.
65. id., "The Death Of Jesus And The Closure Of Revelation", T.I. Vol. XVIII, pp. 139.
66. cf. "For the real point of the Christian message lies precisely in the assertion that this Jesus, who died under Pontius Pilate, is none other than the Christ, the Son of God, the absolute saviour." id., FCF, pp. 232.

67. cf. "If one seeks him, to whom one can bring the eternal mystery of the pure fullness of one's own being for fulfilment, one can see very simply, if one seeks quietly, that is, in meekness and with the eyes of innocence that it is only in Jesus of Nazareth that one can dare to believe such a thing has happened and happens eternally." id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 111. cf. "But when the longing for the absolute nearness of God, the longing, incomprehensible in itself, which alone makes anything bearable, looks for where this nearness came - not in the postulates of the spirit, but in the flesh and in the housings of the earth: then no resting place can be found except in Jesus of Nazareth, over whom the star of God stands, before whom alone one has the courage to bend the knee and weeping happily to pray: 'And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us'." ibid., pp. 120.
68. cf. "The salvation of all times depends on this historical event, indeed the salvation of each one of us" id., FCF, pp. 232.
69. cf., ibid., pp. 235-236.
70. cf. "The genuine Christianity of the New Testament understood itself differently than this approach does. It knew itself to be a faith which was related to a definite historical event, and which did not itself simply posit this event or create it in faith, but rather it receives its justification and foundation from this event." ibid., pp. 238.
71. cf., ibid., pp. 236.
72. cf., ibid., pp. 245.
73. cf. "In a historical inquiry what can be established with sufficient certainty about those events which are not only objects of faith but also grounds of faith?" ibid., pp. 244.
74. ibid., pp. 245-246.
75. id., "The Position Of Christology In The Church In Between Exegesis And Dogmatics", T.I. Vol. XI, pp. 201-202.
76. id., FCF, pp. 250. cf. "Jesus understood himself as something more than merely some kind of preacher with a mission to arouse men to a sense of religion such that his message merely pointed to a relationship between God and man, a relationship itself already existing independently of the message pointing to it. He understood himself, rather, as one in whose message (precisely as his), and in whose person that which he preached was actually made present in a new and irrevocable form as a new and insurpassable summons of God." id., "The Position Of Christology In The Church In Between Exegesis And Dogmatics", T.I. Vol. XI, pp. 202.
77. id., FCF, pp. 254. cf. "The closeness of God's Kingdom, which did not always exist but does now and in a new presence as the victorious situation of man's salvation, a situation of radical conversion or metanoia, is for the pre-resurrection Jesus already inseparably connected with his person." ibid., pp. 251-252. cf. "He is the final call of God, and after him no other follows or

can follow because of the radical nature in which God, no longer represented by something else, promises himself." ibid., pp. 253.

78. cf. "Jesus maintains in death his unique claim of an identity between his message and his person in the hope that in this death he will be vindicated by God with regard to his claim." ibid., pp. 255.
79. cf., ibid., pp. 297.
80. We will treat of Rahner's full understanding of the crucifixion when we turn to discuss Rahner's understanding of the soteriological implications of God's self-communication in section 6.5.
81. cf. "The death and resurrection of Jesus is such that by its very nature it is subsumed into the resurrection. It is a death into the resurrection. And the resurrection does not mean the beginning of a new period in the life of Jesus, a further extension of time filled with new and different things." ibid., pp. 266.
82. ibid. cf., ibid., pp. 277.
83. cf., id., "Remarks On The Importance Of The History Of Jesus For Catholic Dogmatics", T.I. Vol. XIII, pp. 210. cf. "This Jesus with his concrete claim and his history is experienced in the resurrection experience as of permanent validity and as accepted by God." id., FCF, pp. 279. cf. "By the resurrection, then, Jesus is vindicated as the absolute saviour. We can also say more cautiously at first as the final 'prophet'." ibid., pp. 279.
84. ibid.
85. cf., ibid., pp. 280.
86. cf. "The hope that a person's history of freedom will be conclusive in nature (a hope which is given in the act of responsible freedom and which is transcendently necessary) already includes what we mean by the hope of resurrection." id., "Jesus' Resurrection", T.I. Vol. XVII, pp. 16.
87. cf., id., FCF, pp. 268.
88. Gabriel Daly, Creation and Redemption, pp. 88.
89. cf., id., "Christology Within An Evolutionary View Of The World", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 185.
90. cf. "We are entirely justified in understanding creation and Incarnation not as two disparate and juxtaposed acts of God outwards which have their origins in two separate initiatives of God. Rather in the world as it actually is we can understand creation and Incarnation as two moments and two phases of the one process of God's self-giving and self-expression, although it is an intrinsically differentiated process." id., FCF, pp. 197.
91. cf. "The Incarnation of the Logos (however much we insist on the

fact that it is itself an historical, unique event in an essentially historical world) appears as the ontologically (not merely morally, an afterthought) unambiguous goal of the movement of creation as a whole, in relation to which everything prior is merely a preparation of the scene." id., "Current Problems In Christology", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 165. cf. "His laying hold of this part of the single material and spiritual reality of the reality of the world can rightly be understood as the climax of that dynamism in which the self-transcendence of the world as a whole is borne by the Word of God." id., FCF, pp. 197.

92. cf., id., "Christology Within An Evolutionary View Of The World", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 174-175. cf. "The God-Man is the initial beginning and the definitive triumph of the movement of the world's self-transcendence into absolute closeness to the mystery of God." id., FCF, pp. 181. cf. "The first step and definitive beginning, and the absolute guarantee that this ultimate and basically unsurpassable self-transcendence will succeed and indeed has already begun, is to be found in what we call the Hypostatic Union. At a first approximation, this must not be seen so much as something which distinguishes Jesus Our Lord from us, but rather as something which must happen once, and once only, at the point where the world begins to enter into its final phase in which it is to realize its final concentration, its final climax and its radical nearness to the absolute mystery call God. Seen from this viewpoint, the Incarnation appears as the necessary and permanent beginning of the divinization of the world as a whole." id., "Christology Within An Evolutionary View Of The World", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 160-161.
93. cf., ibid.
94. cf. "God's self-communication must have a permanent beginning and in this beginning a guarantee that it has taken place, a guarantee by which it can rightly demand a free decision to accept this divine self-communication." id., FCF, pp. 193.
95. cf. "In the absolute event of salvation God must live out its history as his own history and retain it permanently as something done in freedom, for otherwise it would remain something inconsequential and provisional for him. Only if this event is his own history, a history which, as lived out in divine and of course also in created freedom, determines him once and for all and hence becomes irrevocable, only then can we speak of an absolute and eschatological event of salvation." ibid., pp. 301.
96. cf. "Such an understanding in no way denies that God could also have created a world without an Incarnation, that is, that he could have denied to the self-transcendence of matter that ultimate culmination which takes place in grace and Incarnation. For although every such essential transcendence of self is the goal of the movement, it is always related to the lower stage as grace, as the unexpected and the unnecessary." ibid., pp. 197.
97. cf. "For there is no problem in understanding what is called creation as a partial moment in the process in which God becomes world, and in which God in fact freely expresses himself in his Logos which has become world and matter." id., FCF, pp. 197.

98. cf. "We are presupposing, then, that the goal of the world is God's self-communication to it, and that the entire dynamism which God has implanted in the process by which the world comes to be in self-transcendence (and this as intrinsic to it but not, however, as a constitutive element of its own essence) is already directed towards this self-communication and its acceptance by the world." id., FCF, pp. 192.
99. cf., ibid., pp. 193.
100. cf., ibid., pp. 316-318.
101. ibid., pp. 194. cf., id., "Christology Within An Evolutionary View Of The World", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 175-176.
102. cf. "This creation in view of grace... may have been conceived of by God (in the Scotist sense) all along from the very beginning in view of Christ as the supreme point in history and the point of eschatological irreversibility of this world as endowed with divine grace, and if this interpretation is correct, then even the supralapsarian grace of the original state was a grace of Christ." id., "The Sin Of Adam", T.I. Vol. XI, pp. 256.
103. cf. "In so far as the universal efficiency of the spirit is always oriented towards the high point of its historical mediation, in other words, in so far as the event of Christ is the final cause of the communication of the Spirit to the world, it can truly be said that this spirit is everywhere and from the outset the spirit of Jesus Christ, the Logos of God who became man." id., FCF, pp. 318. cf., id., "Jesus Christ In The Non-Christian Religions", T.I. Vol. XVII, pp. 46.
104. cf. "Since the transcendental self-communication of God as an offer to man's freedom is an existential of every person, and since it is a moment in the self-communication of God to the world which reaches its goal and its climax in Jesus Christ, we can speak of anonymous Christianity." id., FCF, pp. 176. cf., ibid., pp. 306. For the full statement of Rahner's theory of anonymous Christianity see the article: id., "Anonymous Christians", in T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 390-398.
105. cf. "Consequently, anyone who, though still far from any revelation explicitly formulated in words, accepts his existence in patient silence (or, better, in faith, hope and love), accepts it as the mystery which lies hidden in the mystery of eternal love and which bears life in the womb of death, is saying yes to Christ even if he does not know it." id., FCF, pp. 228.
106. cf. "If we do not turn the saying of Jesus that he himself is truly loved in every neighbour into an 'as if' or merely into a theory of juridical imputation, then, when this saying is read from out of the experience of love itself, it says that an absolute love which gives itself radically and unconditionally to another person affirms Christ implicitly in faith and love." id., FCF, pp. 295-296.
107. cf., D. Tracy, Blessed Rage For Order: The New Pluralism In Theology, (New York: The Seabury Press 1975), pp. 172.

108. Rahner states that salvation "implies the absolute self-communication of God in himself as the innermost power of our existence and as our goal." ibid., pp. 205.
109. cf. "We are calling saviour here that historical subjectivity in which, first, this process of God's absolute self-communication to the spiritual world as a whole exists irrevocably; secondly, that process in which this divine self-communication can be recognized unambiguously as irrevocable; and thirdly, that process in which God's self-communication reaches its climax in so far as this climax must be understood as a moment within the total history of the human race, and as such must not simply be identified with the totality of the spiritual world under God's self-communication." ibid., pp. 194.
110. id., "Christology Within An Evolutionary View Of The World", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 185.
111. id., "Redemption", Concise Theological Dictionary, pp. 396. cf. "In a history which, through the free grace of God has its goal in an absolute and irrevocable self-communication of God to the spiritual creature - in a self-communication which is finally established through its goal and climax, i.e. through the Incarnation - the redeeming power which overcomes sin is necessarily found precisely in this climax of the Incarnation and in the realization of this divine human reality." id., "Christology Within An Evolutionary View Of The World", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 186. cf. "It has also been revealed in this experience of freedom that man's no to God, as far as the whole history of human freedom is concerned, was permitted by God in this yes to His own self-communication to created freedom and that it remains embraced by this yes of God which remains victorious in the history of salvation as a whole." id., "Theology Of Freedom", T.I. Vol. VI, pp. 196.
112. cf. "This act (of revelation) is never merely of the nature of a thing, but rather it always has an ontological character." id., ECF, pp. 300.
113. id., "Current Problems In Christology", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 167.
114. cf. "God's central and definitive saving act... is the single inner unity of Incarnation, Cross and Resurrection, in which he definitively and radically communicated himself to the world and in which he really came to us." id., "Theos In The New Testament", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 88.
115. id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 116.
116. id., "Christology Within An Evolutionary View Of The World", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 187. cf. "From this perspective we can come to the idea of an 'absolute event of salvation' and of an 'absolute saviour', which are two aspects of one and the same event: it is the historical and personal event, and not merely a word which is added to the reality or merely a verbal promise, in which man experiences his essential being in the above sense as really affirmed by God in and through his absolute, irreversible and 'eschatological' offer of himself. This touches all his



dimensions because it is only then that salvation is the fulfilment of the whole person." id., FCF, pp. 298.

117. cf., ibid., pp. 293.

118. cf. "Humanity and history form a genuine unity and do not merely consist in a sum of individual human beings and isolated biographies put together by our thought processes." id., "The One Christ And The Universality Of Salvation", T.I. Vol. XVI, pp. 210.

119. cf. "The Incarnation appears as the necessary and permanent being of the divinization of the world as a whole." id., "Christology Within An Evolutionary View Of The World", T.I. Vol. V, pp. 161. cf. Rahner's claim that in Christ, "the mystery of our participation in the divine nature is promised to us in a definitive and historically tangible way." id., FCF, pp. 213. cf., id., FCF, pp. 81.

120. cf. "Thus, this event of becoming man is an 'eschatological' event: the definitive salvation of the world, irrevocable and unsurpassable, by God's grace in the Word of the Father become flesh, is already definitely in the world in virtue of what took place in and through Mary, and had to and still has to merely work itself out in what we call the Cross of the Son, his Resurrection and the history of the world post Christum natum." id., "The Interpretation Of The Dogma Of The Assumption", T.I. Vol. I, pp. 216-217.

121. id., FCF, pp. 293.

122. id., "The One Christ And The Universality Of Salvation", T.I. Vol. XVI, pp. 207. cf., ibid., pp. 211.

123. ibid., pp. 207. cf., id., FCF, pp. 317.

124. id., "Salvation III", E.T., pp. 1525.

125. cf., id., FCF, pp. 282.

126. id., "Salvation III", E.T., pp. 1525.

127. cf., id., FCF, pp. 284.

128. ibid., pp. 297.

129. cf. "The life and death of Jesus taken together, then, are the 'cause' of God's salvific will (to the extent that these two things are regarded as different) insofar as this salvific will establishes itself really and irrevocably in this life and death. In other words, insofar as the life and death of Jesus, or the death which recapitulates and culminates his life, possess a causality of a quasi-sacramental and real-symbolic nature." id., FCF, pp. 284.

130. id., "Salvation III", E.T., pp. 1526.

131. cf., id., FCF, pp. 284.

132. id., "The One Christ And The Universality Of Salvation", T.I. Vol. XVI, pp. 213. cf., id., "The Theology Of The Symbol", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 221-252.
133. cf., id., "The One Christ And The Universality Of Salvation", T.I. Vol. XVI, pp. 216.
134. cf. "We may assert the following: the cross (together with the resurrection of Jesus) has a primary sacramental causality for the salvation of all men, in so far as it mediates salvation to man by means of salvific grace which is universally operative in the world. It is the sign of this grace and of its victorious and irreversible activity in the world. The effectiveness of the cross is based on the fact that it is the primary sacramental sign of grace." ibid., pp. 212.
135. cf. "Given the unity and solidarity of mankind, we have here before us the sign of an irreversible positive outcome of the one historical process. Before this event took place the positive ending of salvation history was not assured with tangible historical certainty, but was obscured by the ambiguity of human and divine freedom. Thus we may predicate of this sign of the salvation of the whole world the type of sacramental causality which was mentioned earlier. Because Jesus died and rose again, therefore salvation is offered and given to the whole of mankind; taken together cross and resurrection are the 'cause' of the salvation of all men. To avoid the problems alluded to above, this 'causality' must be thought of in terms of 'sacramental sign causality', which is brought about by the prior divine will to save mankind and is not itself the cause of this divine will." ibid., pp. 214.
136. cf., id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I., Vol. IV, pp. 113.
137. id., FCF, pp. 195.
138. cf., ibid., pp. 219.
139. ibid.
140. id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 113.
141. cf., id., FCF, pp. 219-220.
142. ibid., pp. 220. cf., id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 113.
143. cf. "We may not regard this process by which one changes in something else as a contradiction to God's immutability, nor allow this changing in something else to be reduced to asserting a change of something else." id., FCF, pp. 221. cf., id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 113 footnote 3.
144. cf. "Now this gives us a formulation which is not intended to offer a positive insight into the compatibility of the dogma of God's immutability and the possibility of becoming in the eternal Logos, nor a positive solution to the duality of this fundamental

Christian assertion. It is a formulation which clearly and seriously maintains both sides of it." id., FCF, pp. 220.

145. cf. "We must maintain methodologically the immutability of God and yet it would be basically a denial of the incarnation if we used it alone to determine what this mystery could be... we learn from the Incarnation that immutability (which is not eliminated) is not simply and uniquely a characteristic of God, but that in spite of his immutability he can truly become something." id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 113-114 footnote 3.
146. id., FCF, pp. 221. cf., id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 113-114 footnote 3.
147. cf. "God goes out of himself, he himself, he as the self-giving fullness. Because he can do this, because this is his free and primary possibility, for this reason he is defined in scripture as love." id., FCF, pp. 222. cf. "The primary phenomenon given by faith is precisely the self-emptying of God, his becoming, the kenosis and genesis of God himself." ibid. cf., id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 114.
148. id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 114-115. cf. "Insofar as in his abiding and infinite fullness he empties himself, the other comes to be as God's very own reality." id., FCF, pp. 222. cf. "This brings us to an ontological ultimate, which a purely rational ontology might perhaps never suspect and find it difficult to take cognizance of and insert as a primordial truth into its most basic and seminal utterances: the absolute, or more correctly, he who is the Absolute, has, in the pure freedom of his infinite and abiding unrelatedness, the possibility of himself becoming that other thing, the finite; God, in and by the fact that he empties himself gives away himself, poses the other as his own reality." id., "On The Theology Of The Incarnation", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 113-114.
149. cf. "The absolute, or, more correctly, the absolute one in the pure freedom of his infinite unrelatedness, which he always preserves, possesses the possibility of himself becoming the other, the finite. He possesses the possibility of establishing the other as his own reality by dispossessing himself, by giving himself away." id., FCF, pp. 222.
150. id., "The Theology Of The Symbol", T.I. Vol. IV, pp. 228.
151. M. Taylor, God Is Love: A Study In The Theology Of Karl Rahner, (Atlanta Georgia: Scholars Press 1986), pp. 201.
152. Tracy, op. cit., pp. 175.
153. F. Kerr, "Rahner Retrospective - 1 - Rupturing Der Pianische Monolithismus", New Blackfriars, Vol. 61, no. 720, (May 1980), pp. 232-233.

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