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## Revelation, Philosophy and Theology<sup>\*</sup>

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Quotations from the Greek have here been transliterated.

### I. Revelation

There are two aspects of religious knowledge: *Revelation* and *Experience*. Revelation is the voice of God speaking to man. And man hears this voice, listens to it, accepts the Word of God and understands it. It is precisely for this purpose that God speaks; that man should hear him. By Revelation in the proper sense, we understand precisely this *word* of God as it is *heard*. Holy Scripture is the written record of the Revelation *which has been heard*. And however one may interpret the inspired character of Scripture, it must be acknowledged that Scripture preserves for us and presents to us the voice of God in the language of man. It presents to us the word of God Just as it resounded in the receptive soul of man. Revelation is theophany. God descends to man and reveals himself to man. And man sees and beholds God. And he describes what he sees and hears; he testifies to what has been revealed to him. The greatest mystery and miracle of the Bible consists of the fact that it is the Word of God in the language of man. Quite properly the early Christian exegetes saw in the Old Testament Scriptures an anticipa-

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tion and prototype of the coming Incarnation of God. Already in the Old Testament the Divine Word becomes human. God speaks to man in the language of man. This constitutes the authentic anthropomorphism of Revelation. This anthropomorphism however is not merely an accommodation. Human language in no way reduces the absolute character of Revelation nor limits the power of God's "Word." The Word of God can be expressed precisely and adequately in the language of man. For man is created in the image of God. It is precisely for this reason that man is capable of perceiving God, of receiving God's Word and of preserving it. The Word

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of God is not diminished while it resounds in human language. On the contrary, the human word is transformed and, as it were, transfigured because of the fact that it pleased God to speak in human language. Man is able to hear God, to grasp, receive and preserve the word of God. In any case, Holy Scripture speaks to us not only of God, but also of man. Furthermore, God himself speaks in his Revelation not only about himself but also about man. Thus historical Revelation fulfills itself precisely in the appearance of the God-Man. Not only in the Old but also in the New Testament we see not only God, but also man. We apprehend God approaching and appearing to man; and we see human persons who encounter God and listen attentively to his Word— and, what is more, respond to his words. We hear in Scripture also the voice of man, answering God in words of prayer or of thanksgiving or of praise. It is sufficient to mention the Psalms in this connection. And God desires, expects, and requires this response. God desires that man not only listens to his words but that man also responds to them. God wants to involve man in "conversation." God descends to man and he descends in order to elevate man to him. In Scripture one is astounded, above all, by this intimate nearness of God to man and of man to God, this sanctification of all human life by the presence of God, this overshadowing of the earth with Divine protection. In Scripture

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we are astonished by the very fact of *sacred history* itself. In Scripture it is revealed that history itself becomes *sacred*, that history can be consecrated, that life can be sanctified. And, to be sure, not only in the sense of an external illumination of life-- as if from outside-- but also in the sense of its transfiguration. For Revelation is indeed completed with the founding of the Church and with the Holy Spirit's descent into the world. Since that time the Spirit of God abides in the world. Suddenly in the world itself the source of eternal life is established. And Revelation will be consummated with the appearance of the new heaven and the new earth, with a cosmic and universal transformation of all created existence. One can suggest that Revelation is the path of God in history-- we see how God walks among the ranks of men. We behold God not only in the transcendent majesty of his glory and omnipotence but also in his loving nearness to his creation. God reveals himself to us not only as Lord and *Pantocrator* but, above all, as Father. And the main fact is that written Revelation is history, the history of the world as the creation of God. Scripture begins with the creation of the world and closes with the promise of a new creation. And one senses the dynamic tension between both these moments, between the first divine "fiat" and the coming one: "Behold, I make all things new" [*idou, kaina poiō panta-- Revelation 22:5*].

This is not the place to treat in detail the basic questions of Biblical exegesis. Nevertheless one thing must be unconditionally stated. Scripture can be viewed from a double perspective: outside of history *or--* as history. In the first case the Bible is interpreted as a book of eternal and sacred images and symbols. And one must then unravel and interpret it precisely as a

symbol, according to the rules of the symbolical or allegorical method. In the ancient Church the adherents of the allegorical method interpreted the Bible in this

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manner. The mystics of the Middle Ages and of the era of the Reformation understood the Bible also in this manner. Many contemporary theologians, especially Roman Catholic theologians, also lean toward such an understanding. The Bible appears then as a kind of Law Book, as a codex of divine commandments and ordinances, as a collection of texts or "theological *loci*," as a compilation of pictures and illustrations. The Bible then becomes a self-sufficient and self-contained book a book, so to speak, written for no one, a book with seven seals... One need not reject such an approach: there is a certain truth in such an interpretation. But the totality of the Spirit of the Bible contradicts such an interpretation; it contradicts the direct meaning of Scripture. And the basic error of such an understanding consists in the abstraction from man. Certainly the Word of God is eternal truth and God speaks in Revelation for all times. But if one admits the possibility of various meanings of Scripture and one recognizes in Scripture a kind of inner meaning which is abstracted and independent from time and history, one is in danger of destroying the realism of Revelation. It is as though God had so spoken that those to whom he first and directly spoke had not understood him or, at least, had not understood as God had intended. Such an understanding reduces history to mythology. And finally Revelation is not only a system of divine words but also a system of divine acts; and precisely for this reason it is, above all, history, sacred history or the history of salvation [*Heilsgeschichte*], the history of the covenant of God with man. Only in such an historical perspective does the fulness of Scripture disclose itself to us. The texture of Scripture is an historical texture. The words of God are always, and above all, time-related they have always, and above all, a direct meaning. God sees before him, as it were, the one to whom he speaks, and he speaks because of this in such a way that he can be heard and understood. For he always speaks for the sake of man, for man. There is a symbolism in Scripture-- but it is rather a prophetic than an allegorical symbolism. There are images and allegories in

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Scripture, but in its totality Scripture is not image and allegory but history. One must distinguish between symbolism and typology. In symbolism one abstracts from history. Typology, however, is always historical; it is a kind of prophecy-- when the events themselves prophesy. One can also say that prophecy is also a symbol a sign which points to the future-- but it is always an historical symbol which directs attention to future events. Scripture has an historical *teleology*: everything strives toward an historical boundary-point, upward toward the historical *telos*. For this reason there is such a tension of time in Holy Scripture. The Old Testament is the time of messianic expectation-- this is the basic theme of the Old Testament. And the New Testament is, above all, history-- the evangelical history of the Divine Word and the beginning of the history

of the Church, which is directed anew to the expectation of Apocalyptic fulfillment. "Fulfillment" is in general the basic category of Revelation.

Revelation is the Word of God and the Word about God. But, at the same time, in addition to this, Revelation is always a Word addressed to man, a summons and an appeal to man. And in Revelation the destiny of man is also revealed. In any case the Word of God is given to us in our human language. We know it only as it resounds through our receptiveness, in our consciousness, in our spirit. And the substance and objectivity of Revelation is apprehended not by man's abstracting himself from himself, nor by depersonalizing himself, nor by shrinking to a mathematical point, thereby transforming himself into a "transcendental subject." It is precisely the opposite: a "transcendental subject" can neither perceive nor understand the voice of God. It is not to a "transcendental subject," not to any "consciousness-in-general" that God speaks. The "God of the Living," the God of Revelation speaks to living persons, to empirical subjects. The face of God reveals itself only to living personalities. And the better, the fuller and the clearer that man sees the face of God, so much the more distinct and living is his

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own face, so much the fuller and clearer has the "image of God" exhibited and realized itself in him. The highest objectivity in the hearing and understanding of Revelation is achieved through the greatest exertion of the creative personality, through spiritual growth, through the transfiguration of the personality, which overcomes in itself "The wisdom of flesh," ascending to "The measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" [*eis metron hêlikias tou plêrômatos tou Christou*-- Ephesians 4:13]. From man it is not self-abnegation which is demanded but a victorious forward movement, not self-destruction but a rebirth or transformation, indeed a theosis [*theôsis*]. Without man Revelation would be impossible-- because no one would be there to hear and God would then not speak. And God created man so that man would hear his words, receive them, and grow in them and through them become a participator of "eternal life." The Fall of man did not alter the original intention of God. Man has not lost completely the capacity of hearing God and praising him. And finally the dominion and power of sin has ceased. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us... and we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" [John 1:14]. The way of life and light is open. And the human spirit has anew become capable of hearing God completely and of receiving his words.

## II. [Philosophy]

But God spoke to man not only so that he would remember and call to mind his words. One can not just keep the Word of God in his memory. One must preserve the Word of God, above all, in a living and burning heart. The Word of God is preserved in the human spirit as a seed which

sprouts and brings forth fruit. This means that the truth of divine Revelation must unfold within human

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thought, must develop into an entire system of believing confession, into a system of religious perspective-- one may say, into a system of religious philosophy and a philosophy of Revelation. There is no subjectivism in this. Religious knowledge always remains in its essence heteronomous, since it is a vision and a description of divine reality which was and is revealed to man by the entrance of the Divine into the world. God descends into the world-- and unveils not only his countenance to man but actually appears to him. Revelation is comprehended by faith and faith is vision and perception. God appears to man and man beholds God. The truths of faith are truths of experience, truths of a face. It is precisely this which is the foundation of the apodictic certainty of faith. Faith is a descriptive confirmation of certain facts-- "thus it is," "thus it was," or "thus it will be." Precisely for this reason faith is also undemonstrable faith is the evidence of experience. One must distinguish clearly between the epochs of Revelation. And one ought not ascertain the essence of the Christian faith on the basis of Old Testamental precedents. The Old Testament was the time of expectation; the entire pathos of Old Testamental man was directed toward the "future"-- the "future" was the basic category of its religious experience and life. The faith of Old Testamental man was expectation-- the expectation of that which was not yet, of that which had not yet come to pass, of that which was also "invisible." Indeed the time of expectation came to an end. The prophecies are fulfilled. The Lord has come. And he has come in order to remain with those who believe on him "Always, to the close of the age" [Matthew 28:20]. He has given man "the power to become children of God" [John 1:12]. He has sent the Holy Spirit into the world to lead believers "into all truth" [John 16:13], and bring to remembrance all that the Lord has said [John 14:26: *ekeinos hymas didaxei panta kai hypomnêsei hymas panta ha eipon hymin egô*]. For this reason the believers have "the anointing by the Holy Spirit, and know

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all... and have no need that any one should teach them" [1 John 2:20, 27]. They have the "unction of truth," *charisma veritatis*, as St. Irenaeus states. In Christ the possibility and the path of spiritual life opens itself to man. And the height of spiritual life is knowledge and vision, *gnôsis* and *theôria*. This alters the meaning of faith. The Christian faith is not directed primarily toward "the future," but rather toward that which was already fulfilled-- more properly expressed, toward that Eternal Present, toward the divine fulness which has been and is being revealed by Christ. In a certain sense one can say that Christ made religious knowledge possible for the first time; that is, the knowledge of God. And this he accomplished not as preacher or as prophet, but as the "Prince of Life" and as the High Priest of the New Covenant. Knowledge of God has become possible through that renewal of human nature which Christ accomplished in his death and

resurrection. This renewal was also a renewal of human reason and of the human spirit. That meant again the renewal of man's vision.

And the knowledge of God has become possible in the Church, in the Body of Christ as the unity of the life of grace. In the Church Revelation becomes an inner Revelation. In a certain sense Revelation becomes the confession of the Church. It is very important to remember that the New Testamental writings are younger than the Church. These writings are a book written *in the Church*. They are a written record of the faith of the Church, of the faith which is preserved in the Church. And the Church confirms the truth of Scripture, confirms its authenticity-- verifies it by the authority of the Holy Spirit who dwells in the Church. One should not forget this with regard to the Gospel. In the written Gospels the image of the Saviour is held firm, that same image which lived from the very beginning in the living memory of the Church, in the experience of faith-- not just in the historical memory but in the very memory of faith. This is an essential distinction. Because we know

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Christ not just from memories and accounts. Not only is his image living in the memory of believers-- he himself abides among them, standing always before the door of each soul. It is precisely in this experience of the living community with Christ that the Gospel becomes alive as a holy book. Divine Revelation lives in the Church how else should it be able to preserve itself? It is sketched and strengthened by the words of Scripture. To be sure, it is sketched but these words do not exhaust the entire fulness of Revelation, do not exhaust the entire fulness of Christian experience. And the possibility of new and other words are not excluded. Scripture, in any case, calls for interpretation.

And the unalterable truths of experience can be expressed in different ways. Divine reality can be described in images and parables, in the language of devotional poetry and of religious art. Such was the language of the prophets in the Old Testament, in such a manner the Evangelists often speak, in such a way the Apostles preached, and in such a manner the Church preaches even now in her liturgical hymns and in the symbolism of her sacramental acts. That is the language of proclamation and of good tidings, the language of prayer and of mystical experience, the language of "*Kerygmatic*" theology. And there is another language, the language of comprehending thought, the language of dogma. Dogma is a witness of experience. The entire pathos of dogma lies in the fact that it points to Divine reality; in this the witness of dogma is symbolic. Dogma is the testimony of thought about what has been seen and revealed, about what has been contemplated in the experience of faith and this testimony is expressed in concepts and definitions. Dogma is an "intellectual vision," a truth of perception. One can say: it is the logical image, a "logical icon" of divine reality. And at the same time a dogma is a definition that is why its logical form is so important for dogma, that "inner word"

which acquires force in its external expression. This is why the external aspect of dogma-- its wording-- is so essential.

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Dogma is by no means a new Revelation. Dogma is only a witness. The whole meaning of dogmatic definition consists of testifying to unchanging truth, truth which was revealed and has been preserved from the beginning. Thus it is a total misunderstanding to speak of "*the development of dogma*." Dogmas do not develop; they are unchanging and inviolable, even in their external aspect their wording. Least of all is it possible to change dogmatic language or terminology. As strange as it may appear, one can indeed say: dogmas arise, dogmas are established, but they do not develop. And once established, a dogma is perennial and already an immutable "rule of faith ["*regula fidei*;" *ho kanôn tis pisteôs*]. Dogma is an intuitive truth, not a discursive axiom which is accessible to logical development. The whole meaning of dogma lies in the fact that it is *expressed* truth. Revelation *discloses itself* and is received in the silence of faith, in silent vision-- this is the first and apophatic step of the knowledge of God. The entire fulness of truth is already contained in this apophatic vision, but truth *must be expressed*. Man, however, is called not only to be silent but also to speak, to communicate. The *silentium mysticum* does not exhaust the entire fulness of the religious vocation of man. There is also room for the expression of praise. In her dogmatic confession the Church expresses herself and proclaims the apophatic truth which she preserves. The quest for dogmatic definitions is therefore, above all, a quest for terms. Precisely because of this the doctrinal controversies were a dispute over terms. One had to find accurate and clear words which could describe and express the experience of the Church. One had to express that "spiritual Vision" which presents itself to the believing spirit in experience and contemplation.

This is necessary because *the truth of faith* is also the truth *for* reason and *for* thought this does not mean, however, that it is the truth of thought, the truth of pure reason. The truth of faith is fact, reality-- *that which is*.

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In this "quest for words" human thought changes, the essence of thought itself is transformed and sanctified. The Church indirectly testified to this in rejecting the heresy of Apollinarius. Apollinarianism is, in its deepest sense, a false anthropology, it is a false teaching about man and therefore it is also a false teaching about the God-Man Christ. Apollinarianism is the negation of human reason, the fear of thought it is impossible that there be no sin in human thoughts [*"adynaton de estin en logismois anthrôpois hamartian mê einai"*— Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Apollin.* II, 6, 8; I, 2]. And that means that human reason is incurable— *atherapeuton esti*— that is, it must be cut off. The rejection of Apollinarianism meant therefore, at the time, the fundamental justification of reason and thought. Not in the sense, of course, that natural reason is sinless and right by itself but in the sense that it is open to transformation, that it *can be*

*healed*, that it *can be renewed*. And not only *can* but also *must* be healed and renewed. Reason is *summoned* to the knowledge of God. The "philosophizing" about God is not just a feature of inquisitiveness or a kind of audacious curiosity. On the contrary, it is the fulfillment of man's religious calling and duty. Not an extra-achievement, not a kind of *opus supererogatorium*— but a necessary and organic moment of religious behavior. And for this reason the Church "philosophized" about God "formulated dogmas which fishermen had earlier expounded in simple words" [from the service in honor of the Three Hierarchs], The "dogmas of the Fathers" present again the unchanging content of "apostolic preaching" in intellectual categories. The experience of truth does not change and does not even grow; indeed, thought penetrates into the "understanding of truth" and transforms itself through the process.

One can simply say: in establishing dogmas the Church expressed Revelation in the language of Greek philosophy— or, if preferable: translated Revelation from the Hebraic,

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poetic and prophetic language into Greek. That meant, in a certain sense, a "Hellenization" of Revelation. In reality, however, it was a "Churchification" ["*Verkirchlichung*"] of Hellenism. One can speak at length about this theme— indeed, much and often has this theme been taken up and discussed— indeed, it has been discussed and disputed too much and too often. It is essential here to raise only one issue. The Old Covenant has passed. Israel did not accept the Divine Christ, did not recognize Him nor confess Him and "the promise" passed to the Gentiles. The Church is, above all, *ecclesia ex gentibus*. We must acknowledge this basic fact of Christian history in humility before the will of God, which is fulfilled in the destiny of nations. And the "calling of the Gentiles" meant that Hellenism became blessed by God. In this there was no "historical accident"— no such accident could lie therein. In the religious destiny of man there are no "accidents." In any case the fact remains that the Gospel is given to us all and for all time in the Greek language. It is in this language that we hear the Gospel in all its entirety and fulness. That does not and cannot, of course, mean that it is untranslatable— but we always translate it from the Greek. And there was precisely as little "chance" or "accident" in this "selection" of the Greek language— as the unchanging proto-language of the Christian Gospel— as there was in God's "selection" of the Jewish people out of all the people of antiquity— as "His" People— there was as little "accident" in the "selection" of the Greek language as there was in the fact that "salvation comes from the Jews" [John 4:22]. We receive the Revelation of God as it occurred. And it would be pointless to ask whether it could have been otherwise. In the selection of the "Hellenes" we must acknowledge the hidden decisions of God's will. In any case, the presentation of Revelation in the language of historical Hellenism in no way restricts Revelation. It rather proves precisely the opposite— that this language possessed certain powers and resources which aided in expounding and ex-

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pressing the truth of Revelation.

When divine truth is expressed in human language, the words themselves are transformed. And the fact that the truths of the faith are veiled in logical images and concepts testifies to the transformation of word and thought— words become sanctified through this usage. The words of dogmatic definitions are not "simple words," they are not "accidental" words which one can replace by other words. They are eternal words, incapable of being replaced. This means that certain words— certain concepts— are eternalized by the very fact that they express divine truth. This means that there is a so-called *philosophia perennis* that there is something eternal and absolute in thought. But this does not at all mean there is an "eternalization" of one specific philosophical "system." To state it more correctly— Christian dogmatics itself is the only true philosophical "system." One recalls that dogmas are expressed in philosophical language— indeed, in a specific philosophical language— but not at all in the language of a specific philosophical school. Rather, one can speak of a philosophical "eclecticism" of Christian dogmatics. And this "eclecticism" has a much deeper meaning than one usually assumes. Its entire meaning consists of the fact that particular themes of Hellenic philosophy are received and, through this reception, they change essentially; they change and are no longer recognizable. Because now, in the terminology of Greek philosophy, a new, a totally new experience is expressed. Although themes and motives of Greek thought are retained, the answers to the problems are quite different; they are given out of a new experience. Hellenism, for this reason, received Christianity as something foreign and alien, and the Christian Gospel was "foolishness" to the Greeks [—*ethnesin de mōrian*; 1 Corinthians 1:23].

Hellenism, forged in the fire of a new experience and a new faith, is renewed; Hellenic thought is transformed. Usually we do not sufficiently perceive the entire significance

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of this transformation which Christianity introduced into the realm of thought. This is so, partially because we too often remain ancient Greeks philosophically, not yet having experienced the baptism of thought by fire. And in part, on the contrary, because we are too accustomed to the new world-view, retaining it as an "innate truth" when, in actuality, it was given to us only through Revelation. It is sufficient to point out just a few examples: the idea of the creaturehood of the world, not only in its transitory and perishable aspect but also in its primordial principles. For Greek thought the concept of "created ideas" was impossible and offensive. And bound up with this was the Christian intuition of history as a unique— once-occurring— creative fulfillment, the sense of a movement from an actual "beginning" up to a final end, a feeling for history which in no way at all allows itself to be linked with the static pathos of ancient Greek thought. And the understanding of man as *person*, the concept of person[hood], was entirely inaccessible to Hellenism which considered the [*person* only as a *mask*]. And finally there is the message of Resurrection in glorified but real flesh, a thought which could only frighten the

Greeks who lived in the hope of a future dematerialization of the Spirit. These are some of the new vistas disclosed in the new experience, out of Revelation. They are the presuppositions and categories of a new Christian philosophy. This new philosophy is enclosed in Church dogmatics. In the experience of faith the world reveals itself differently than in the experience of "natural man." Revelation is not only Revelation about God but also about the world. For the fulness of Revelation is in the image of the God-Man; that is, in the fact of the ineffable union of God and Man, of the Divine and the human, of the Creator and the creature— in the indivisible and unmerged union forever. It is precisely the Chalcedonian dogma of the unity of the God-Man which is the true, decisive point of Revelation, and of the experience of faith and of Christian vision. Strictly speaking,

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a clear knowledge of God is impossible for man, *if* he is committed to vague and false conceptions of the world and of himself. There is nothing surprising about this. For the world is the creation of God and therefore, if one has a false understanding of the world, one attributes to God a work which he did not produce; one therefore casts a distorted judgment on God's activity and will. In this respect a true philosophy is necessary for faith. And, on the other hand, faith is committed to specific metaphysical presuppositions. Dogmatic theology, as the exposition and explanation of divinely revealed truth in the realm of thought, is precisely the basis of a Christian philosophy, of a sacred philosophy, of a philosophy of the Holy Spirit.

Once again it must be stressed: dogma presupposes experience, and only in the experience of vision and faith does dogma reach its fulness and come to life. And again: dogmas do not exhaust this experience, just as Revelation is not exhausted in "words" or in the "letter" of Scripture. The experience and knowledge of the Church are more comprehensive and fuller than her dogmatic pronouncement. The Church witnesses to many things which are not in "dogmatic" statements but rather in images and symbols. In other words, "dogmatic" theology can neither dismiss nor replace "*Kerygmatic*" theology. In the Church the fulness of knowledge and understanding is given, but this fulness is only gradually and partially disclosed and professed and, in general, the knowledge in this world is always only a "partial" knowledge, and the fulness will be revealed only in the *Parousia*. "Now I know in part"— [*arti ginôskô ek merous...*] 1 Corinthians 13:12]. This "incompleteness" of knowledge depends upon the fact that the Church is still "in pilgrimage," still in the process of becoming; she witnesses to the mystical essence of time in which the growth of mankind is being accomplished according to the measure of the image of Christ. And furthermore: the Church does not endeavor at all to express and declare

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everything. The Church does not endeavor to crystallize her experience in a closed system of words and concepts. Nevertheless, this "incompleteness" of our knowledge here and now does

not weaken its authentic and apodictic character, A Russian theologian described this situation in the following way: "The Church gives no fixed plan of the City of God to her members but rather she gives them the key to the City of God. And he who enters, without having a fixed plan, may occasionally lose his way; yet, everything he sees, he will behold as it is, in full reality. He, however, who will study the City according to plan, without possessing the key to the actual city, will never get to the City" [B.M. Melioranskii, from the *Lectures on the History of the Ancient Christian Church*, "Strannik," (June, 1910), p. 931, in Russian].

### III. [Theology]

Revelation is preserved in the Church. It was given by God to the Church, not to separate individuals. Just as in the Old Testament "the words of God" [*ta logia tou Theou* — Romans 3:2] were entrusted not to individuals but to the People of God. Revelation is given, and is accessible, only in the Church; that is, only through life in the Church, through a living and actual belonging to the mystical organism of the Body of Christ. This means that genuine knowledge is only possible in the element of *Tradition*. Tradition is a very important concept, one which is usually understood too narrowly: as oral Tradition in contrast to Scripture. This understanding not only narrows but also distorts the meaning of Tradition. Sacred Tradition as the "tradition of truth,"— *traditio veritatis*, as St. Irenaeus stated— is not only historical memory, not simply an appeal to antiquity and to empirical unchangingness. Tradition is the inner, mystical *memory of the Church*. It is, above all, the

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"unity of the Spirit," the unity and continuity of the spiritual experience and the life of grace. It is the living connection with the day of Pentecost, the day when the Holy Spirit descended into the world as the "Spirit of Truth." The faithfulness to Tradition is not a loyalty to antiquity but rather the living relationship with the fulness of the Christian life. The appeal to Tradition is not so much the appeal to earlier patterns as it is an appeal to the "*catholic*" experience of the Church, to the fulness of her knowledge. As the well-known formula of St. Vincent of Lerins states: *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus creditum est*— in this formula, to which one so often appeals, there is an essential ambiguity. "*Semper*" and "*ubique*" must not be understood literally and empirically. And "*omnes*" does not include all who claim to be Christian but only the "true" Christians who preserve the right doctrine and interpret it correctly. Those, however, who are "heretics," who are misled, and those who are weak in faith are not included in the concept of "*all*." The formula of St. Vincent is based on a tautology. The scope of Tradition cannot be established simply by historical research. That would be a very dangerous path. That would mean a complete disregard for the spiritual nature of the Church. Tradition is known and understood only by belonging to the Church, through participation in her common or "*catholic*" life. The term "catholic" is often understood wrongly and imprecisely. The *katholikos* of *kath'*

*holou* does not at all mean an external universality— it is not a quantitative but rather a qualitative criterion. “*Catholic*” does not mean “universal”; *katholikos* is not identical with *oikoumenikos*. The “Catholic Church” can also historically turn out to be the “small flock.” There are probably more “heretics” than “Orthodox believers” in the actual world and it can turn out that “heretics” are “everywhere”— *ubique*— and the true Church is pushed into the background of history, into the “desert.” This was often the case and it may happen again. But this empirical limitation and situation does not

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in any way destroy the “*catholic*” nature of the Church. The Church is *catholic* because she is the Body of Christ, and in the unity of this Body the reciprocal co-growth of individual members takes place; mutual seclusion and isolation is overcome, and the true “community” or the “common life”— *koinonia* or *koinobia*— is realized. And that concerns thought also. In the unity of the Church the catholicity of consciousness is realized. In this the true mystery of the Church is contained: “that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us...so that they may become perfectly one...”— “*hina pantes hen ôsin— hina ôsin teteleiômenoi eis hen...*”— John 17:21, 23.

This “fulness of unity” in the image of the Trinity is precisely the *catholicity* of the Church. In explaining the High Priestly prayer of our Lord, the late Metropolitan Anthony of Kiev stated: “This prayer concerns nothing else other than the establishment of a new, united existence of the Church on earth. This reality has its image not on earth, where there is no unity but only division, but rather its image is in heaven where the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit unites Three Persons in one Being. Thus there are not three Gods but One God who lives One life. The Church is the completely new, particular, unique existence on earth, a unique existence which one cannot define clearly by certain concepts taken from profane life. The Church is an image of Trinitarian existence, an image in which many persons become one being. Why is such an existence, as also the existence of the Holy Trinity, new and, for ancient man, inaccessible? For this reason; because in the natural self-consciousness a person is enclosed within himself and is radically opposed to every other person” [Archbishop Anthony Khrapovitski, *Collected Works*, II, 2; St. Petersburg, 1911, “The Moral Idea of the Dogma of the Church,” pp. 17 and 18; in Russian]. Elsewhere Metropolitan Anthony states: “The Christian therefore must free himself, in the measure of

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his spiritual perfection, from the direct opposition of “I” and “non-I” to transform from its very foundation the structure of human self-consciousness” [*Ibid.*, p. 65].

Such a transformation of “human self-consciousness” also takes place in the Church, in the “*catholic*” or “*communal*” consciousness of the Church. “Catholic” consciousness is not a

collective-consciousness, not a universal or profane community-consciousness— neither is it a conglomerate of single conscious individuals; it is not an impersonal "consciousness-in-general." "Catholicity" is the concrete "unity of thoughts" and "community of persons." "Catholicity" is structure and style, "the determination of personal consciousness," which overcomes its limitation and isolation and matures to a "catholic" height— "catholicity" is the ideal standard or boundary-point, the "*telos*," of personal consciousness which is realized in the affirmation, not in the abolition, of personality. And the measure of "catholicity" can only be fulfilled through life in Christ. And not because we realize in our consciousness an abstract "consciousness-in-general" or an impersonal nature of logical thought, but rather "catholicity" is realized by concrete experience or by the Vision of the Truth. Unity is realized through participation in the one truth; it realized itself in the truth, in Christ. And therefore consciousness transforms itself. As the clearest expression of this transformation one must recognize that mysterious overcoming of time which takes place in the Church. In Christ the believers of all eras and generations unify and unite themselves— meeting each other, as it were, as mystically united contemporaries. In this consists precisely the religious and metaphysical meaning of "the communion of the saints"— *communio sanctorum*. And therefore the memory of the Church is oriented not to the past which has passed away but rather to what has been achieved or "completed"— the memory of the Church is turned toward those of the past as contemporaries in the fulness of the Church of the Body of Christ, which embraces all times. Tradition is the symbol

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of this "all-time-ness." To know or perceive through Tradition means to know or perceive from the fulness of this experience of "all-time-ness." And this can be known within the Church by each person in his personal experience, according to the measure of his spiritual maturity. To turn oneself toward Tradition means to turn oneself toward this fulness. The "Catholic transformation" of consciousness makes it possible for each person to know— not in fact for himself only but for all; it makes the fulness of experience possible. And this knowledge is free from every restriction. In the catholic nature of the Church there is the possibility of theological *knowledge* and not just something founded upon theological "*opinions*." I maintain that each person can realize the catholic standard in himself. I do not say that each person does realize it. That depends upon the measure of one's spiritual maturity. Each person is, however, called. And those who realize it we call Fathers and Teachers of the Church, for we hear from them not simply their personal opinions but the very *witness* of the Church because they speak out of the Catholic fulness. This fulness is unexhausted and inexhaustible. And we are summoned to testify about this and in this the vocation of man is fulfilled. God revealed and reveals himself to man. And we are called to testify to that which we have seen and see.