

## THE THEOLOGY OF REVELATION

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TO A GREAT EXTENT the history of Catholic theology mirrors in reverse the history of heresy. In a panoramic view we can distinguish three great eras in the development of heresy, each more radical than its predecessors. Before the Reformation the chief point at issue was most commonly whether this or that particular doctrine was revealed, and creeds of ever-increasing complexity were framed to set forth orthodox tenets against heretical pretensions. In the sixteenth century, attention shifted to the norms of revelation. Whatever the first Reformers may have intended, the dispute between Catholics and Protestants soon became focused about the methods of finding out what was contained in revelation. It became urgent to ascertain the canon of Scripture, the value of "unwritten" tradition, and the authority of popes and councils. Finally, in the course of the past century, Rationalists and Modernists called into question the very existence of supernatural revelation, thus occasioning the pronouncements of the First Vatican Council and the anti-Modernist documents on faith and revelation.

### A CONTEMPORARY CONCERN

Corresponding to these three stages of heresy, we may distinguish three major periods in the development of theology. Prior to the Reformation primary attention was given to special dogmatics, which became systematically enshrined in the great medieval *Summae*. In the post-Reformation period fundamental theology began to emerge as a distinct discipline. The treatises *De ecclesia* and *De locis theologicis* took shape. Most recently, the theological study of revelation itself has gotten under way. The present century has seen the first systematic efforts along this line.

Almost inevitably the initial studies in this field were strongly apologetical in tone. They sought to establish, against the caviling of adversaries, that God can reveal Himself and has in fact done so in Christ. But the controversial tracts and seminary manuals produced in

this polemical atmosphere gave all too little attention to the crucial dogmatic questions. Hardly anyone stopped to ask what revelation concretely is, what are its structural features, how it comes to man, and precisely how it is connected with grace and salvation. Is it, for instance, a system of speculative truths beyond the scope of philosophy, which nevertheless need to be known if man is to direct his life toward its last end? Or is revelation rather a living encounter in which man becomes linked in friendship with God, who opens up His heart to the creatures of His predilection? These and similar questions must be answered by a rigorous examination of the data of Scripture and tradition.

To construct a sound and credible notion of revelation is an urgent task in our day, both for the Church's dialogue with the surrounding world and for her own internal development. It is increasingly apparent that the major religious cleavages among Christians are in no small measure due to divergent views concerning revelation. Even more obviously, the profound abyss between believers and infidels is constituted by the acceptance or denial of revelation itself. Those who deny revelation are always in danger of slipping into some form of atheism, for a God who does not speak can with great difficulty be recognized as personal. From a pastoral point of view, the Catholic faithful must be made more keenly aware of the salvific power of the word of God. A unilateral stress on the sacraments as means of grace has all too often obscured this point. For the progress of Catholic theology, likewise, a more intensive study of revelation is in order. Without it we can hardly hope to give a plausible answer to various pressing questions, such as the development of dogma, the uses of Scripture, and the nature of tradition. Recent debates about the so-called sources of revelation have often been rendered sterile by a lack of agreement about what revelation really is.

Protestants in our century have contributed importantly to this branch of theology. Troeltsch and Richard Niebuhr wrestled earnestly with the problem inherent in the historicity of revelation. Barth and the dialectical school forged a dynamic theology of the word, conceived as a vertical intervention of the transcendent God, who never places Himself at man's disposal. Bultmann and the existential theologians have boldly faced the task of distinguishing between revelation itself

and the time-conditioned world views of those to whom it comes. Contemporary Anglican divines are engaged in a deep exploration of the role of imagery and symbolism in God's speech to man. Catholic theologians have recently begun to take part in all these discussions; they are eager to assimilate the best insights of other Christian thinkers. Thus far, however, we have lacked a comprehensive survey of the whole problem of revelation as it presently stands in Catholic theology.

René Latourelle, Professor of Fundamental Theology at the Gregorian University, has now given us a lengthy monograph on this subject, the fruit of a decade of unremitting labor.<sup>1</sup> He divides his treatment into five parts, corresponding to the standard phases of theological inquiry: the scriptural data (61 pp.), the Fathers (71 pp.), the theological tradition (101 pp.), the magisterium (70 pp.), and the author's personal speculation (147 pp.). The most conspicuous qualities of the book are its comprehensive scope and the familiarity it evinces with the pertinent literature in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Latin. Accurate and up-to-date references are given to innumerable books and articles. This abundance of information is matched by synthetic power. Without oversimplifying complex issues, Latourelle succeeds in bringing the multiple data of tradition and the paradoxical features of revelation itself into a measure of systematic unity. Notwithstanding a certain tendency to be verbose and repetitious, he has an attractive style of writing and a serene piety which make his book appealing, readable, and spiritually satisfying. In summary, it may be said that this book will go far to set the dogmatic treatise on revelation on a sound footing and to open the way for further detailed studies. It will presumably remain the standard Catholic work on the subject for some years to come. The publication of this study before Vatican II resumes its deliberations on the schema *De revelatione* is especially propitious.

#### THE BIBLICAL DATA

Latourelle's section on the *OT* is an excellent recapitulation of the fruits of twentieth-century biblical theology. Beginning with the rather primitive manifestations of the patriarchal period (in which theophany

<sup>1</sup> René Latourelle, S.J., *Théologie de la révélation*. Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1963. Pp. 509. 330 fr.

nies and oracles predominate, with divinatory techniques and dreams still playing a considerable role), a gradual progress is noted toward the high period of Israelite revelation. In the Sinai Covenant the Law is grasped as God's revealed will; in the prophetic literature God's promises and imperatives confront His people with dynamic urgency; and in the historical writings the blessings and misfortunes of Israel are set forth as divine visitations. Finally, in the wisdom literature and the Psalms we have the inspired response of human meditation and worship to God's gracious initiatives.

This portion of Latourelle's survey is an admirable introduction to the multiple strands of the *OT* idea of revelation, bringing out the recurring themes of God's magnanimous liberty and man's duty to respond to it in trust and obedience. The progressive nature of revelation, slowly advancing toward its completion in the final age, is clearly shown. Perhaps it is not entirely evident how much authority Latourelle wishes to claim for the *OT* ideas of revelation. He apparently has no wish to deny that primitive superstition, legend, and anthropomorphism have left certain traces on the sacred page. Such an admission in no way compromises the essential point: that the *OT* in all its length and breadth is a divinely given adumbration of the definitive revelation which was to be accomplished in Christ. The New Testament revelation is intelligible only against the background of the Old.

Latourelle divides his discussion of the *NT* into four sections, concerned respectively with the Synoptics, Acts, Paul, and John. In the Synoptics he notes that Christ's revelatory office is centered about His functions of preacher and doctor and His unique filial relationship to God. In Acts the apostles are portrayed as heralds of Christ's revelation, thanks to their position as eyewitnesses and the powerful help of the Spirit. The Pauline notion of revelation centers about the idea of *mysterion*: the disclosure of God's plan to restore all things in Christ. In his treatment of John, Latourelle gives an interpretation of the Logos-doctrine based largely on Boismard; he also expatiates on the Johannine theme of *martyrion*, showing how the Father and Son bear witness to each other.

This chapter, while containing many elements of value, is in some ways disappointing. The Synoptic Gospels are treated too much as if they were unsifted factual memories, although, as Latourelle elsewhere

recognizes (pp. 375, 405), the entire Christian literature was deeply affected by the experience of the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> The Synoptic writers, moreover, have their own distinctive theologies of revelation and cannot be reduced to a common pattern. Mark's Gospel, for instance, has been aptly characterized as "the book of secret epiphanies" (Dibelius, Bultmann), in which the "Messianic secret" plays a cardinal role. Matthew, whose aim is more catechetical, portrays Jesus as the new Moses, promulgating the perfect law of charity. Luke, the theologian of history, accents the role of the Holy Spirit, who descends upon the praying Jesus and prompts Him to herald the arrival of Messianic times.

In his discussion of *NT* Christology Latourelle makes much of the passages which depict Jesus as revealer, but he overlooks the fact that the Evangelists seem to regard Him also as the recipient of revelation (Mk 1:11; Lk 10:17) and even allude to limitations in His revealed knowledge (Mk 13:32). Latourelle writes almost as if Christ's human words were a direct expression of His divine consciousness, and gives no attention to the psychological structure of Christ's human intellection. The matter is of some importance for the correct understanding of the traditional statement that the apostles, like the prophets, were recipients of immediate revelation.

A third lacuna in Latourelle's chapter on the *NT* is his failure to deal with the continuing process of revelation in the primitive Church. In his treatment of Acts and Paul he is much concerned with the "deposit" and its transmission, but says practically nothing about the new revelations being conceded to the apostles and prophets. In a study of the *NT* notion of revelation the "visions and revelations" received by Peter and Paul after Pentecost (e.g., Acts 9 and 10; cf. 2 Cor 12:1) ought not to be passed over in silence. In what cases, if at all, should these experiences be regarded as constitutive of the *depositum* itself? In view of the language of Trent (*DB* 783 [30th ed.]) it seems doubtful whether these experiences should in every case be equated with the unauthoritative visions of the charismatics (1 Cor 14). During the first generation the dialectical tension between revelation as event and as institution was perhaps especially acute.

<sup>3</sup> In a number of important articles, chiefly published in the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, David M. Stanley, S.J., has skilfully developed this insight.

## CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL TRADITION

Part 2 of Latourelle's monograph gives a dense but highly stimulating summary of the patristic doctrine on revelation. Some twenty important writers from the Apostolic Fathers to St. Augustine are examined. Justin, it appears, made a bold step forward in applying the Stoic concept of *logos* to clarify the relationship of Christ to the pre-Christian pagan world. Irenaeus is outstanding for his historical grasp of revelation, which leads him to speak of the "economy," the "divine pedagogy," and the "recapitulation" of all things in Christ. Clement of Alexandria held that the pagans were prepared for the Christian revelation by their philosophy, much as were the Jews by the Mosaic Law. Origen explored with fascinating subtlety the dialectic of Law and Gospel, history and Spirit. The Cappadocians and John Chryostom dwelt on the divine incomprehensibility in a way that enriched the Catholic theology of mystery. And among the Western Fathers Augustine is remarkable for his mystical insight into the role of the Word as the interior teacher of revelation.

In this survey of the patristic territory Latourelle seems to do as much as is feasible in so brief a compass. In a larger treatment it would have been helpful to include some discussion of the early heresies; for even if they did not directly assail the traditional view of revelation, the Gnostics, Marcionites, Manicheans, Montanists, and Eunomians were not exempt from serious errors in this realm. Perhaps also, in view of the discussion of the theology of preaching later in the book, it would have been well to make some mention of Augustine's contribution to this field, in which he was so ably seconded by Gregory the Great.

Skipping over the entire period from Augustine to Bonaventure—in spite of the very evident riches offered by such figures as Erigena and Anselm—Latourelle next treats of the High Scholastic and Neo-Scholastic theological tradition. St. Thomas, he finds, considerably advanced the psychology of revelation (notably in his treatise on prophecy) but failed to give corresponding emphasis to the historical progress of revelation and to its culmination in Christ's revelation to His apostles. The post-Tridentine Scholastics (Suarez, de Lugo) shifted the focus of attention from active, immediate revelation to objective, mediate revelation and the guarantees needed to certify it as God's

word. The leading theologians of the nineteenth century (Möhler, Franzelin, Newman, Scheeben) helped to revitalize the theology of revelation through a return to the Fathers, but their work was hampered by their involvement in anti-Rationalist and anti-Protestant polemics. The Neo-Scholastics of the early twentieth century (Gardeil, Garrigou-Lagrange, and Dieckmann), for all their systematic acumen, are deservedly criticized by Latourelle for their excessively apologetical orientation, their abstract and propositional view of revelation, and their neglect of the biblical and historical data.

The contemporary period in Catholic theology, as Latourelle depicts it, is marked by an intense reaction against the rigidities of Scholasticism. A generation ago the manual theology was severely castigated by Chenu and de Lubac in France and by the advocates of kerygmatic theology in Germany and Austria. The current orientations in Catholic theology concerning revelation may be characterized as Christocentric, historical, interpersonal, and biblical. Although the neatness of Scholastic conceptual structures has been somewhat ruffled by the leading theologians of our day, we need not regard this as an unmixed evil. "It is a proof that the reality of revelation will always be richer than the constructions of human thought, and that theology must use many different approaches in order not to be too unfaithful to that reality" (p. 257).

Part 4 takes up the pronouncements of the Catholic magisterium on revelation. Practically speaking, Latourelle limits himself to the Council of Trent, Vatican I, the anti-Modernist documents, and some recent encyclicals (especially *Humani generis*). This portion of the book conveniently assembles information which is for the most part accessible elsewhere. Latourelle shows very successfully that although the magisterium has never undertaken to state positively the full notion of revelation, the condemnations of successive errors have, by implication, brought into relief the various aspects of God's word to man. As a result, one can gather from the Church documents a picture of revelation closely approximating that already culled from the biblical and patristic testimonies. In a fine concluding summary Latourelle constructs, on the basis of the magisterial documents, the following descriptive definition of revelation (p. 330):

the salvific, sovereignly wise, and free action by which God, in order to bring man to his supernatural goal, consisting in the vision of the divine essence, gives Himself to be known, and manifests at the same time the plan of salvation which He has decreed for mankind. This action is called the attesting word of the uncreated Truth, the divine testimony calling for the homage of faith. . . .

This admirable summary of the official documents of the Church leaves little to be desired except that the plan of the book has occasioned a certain neglect of the earlier Church pronouncements. "It leaps to the eyes of anyone who studies the documents of the Church that the errors concerning the notion of revelation are a recent phenomenon" (p. 261). This would seem to be an exaggeration. The writings of Paul and John bear witness to serious confusions even in *NT* times. Many of the early heresies, as mentioned above, had to do with the notion of revelation. Manicheism and Illuminism continued to plague the medieval Church and were repeatedly condemned. The errors of Abbot Joachim, Wycliffe, and Hus, not to mention the Anabaptists and other Protestant sectarians, were based on misunderstandings in this area.

#### LATOURELLE'S PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

The last and longest part of the book presents the author's personal reflections. Without turning his back on Scholastic categories, Latourelle makes fruitful use of existentialist and personalist themes. To begin with, he ponders the traditional definition of revelation as *locutio Dei*, a notion which he greatly enriches by exploiting modern studies in the theory of language. Speech, he maintains, is a specifically interpersonal phenomenon; it involves not simply the transmission of ideas or information, but also the self-expression of a speaker and an appeal to a personal addressee. Human speech employs language as its preferred medium, but makes use of other signs and gestures to bring about its full effect. God's speech to man, far from being a mere communication of supernatural information, is above all a gracious self-donation, an appeal for the obedience of faith, and an assumption of man into a transforming situation of divine friendship. The deeds by which God backs up His words give depth and realism to His testimony. These reflections, splendidly developed by Latourelle, are a powerful antidote to the jejune rationalism of some of the more popular manuals.



The relations between creation and revelation are next discussed. The production of the universe has a revelatory dimension insofar as it shows forth the power and goodness of the Creator and calls for a response of adoration and worship. But in Latourelle's opinion this does not yet establish a dialogue situation and hence falls short of being revelation in the strict sense. His statements on this point are reminiscent of Guardini, who remarks that the study of creation yields a knowledge of God comparable to that which one might gain of a proprietor from examining the home which he has built and furnished for himself. This differs vastly from the knowledge gained by personal encounter and conversation.<sup>3</sup>

Next, Latourelle addresses himself to the historical aspect of revelation. As many contemporary Protestants have insisted, God revealed Himself to Israel by His mighty salvific interventions on behalf of His elect people. But the "brute facts" of objectivizing history are not yet revelation. In Latourelle's opinion, which seems eminently sound, they are rather the raw material which receives its formal character as revelation from an inspired, prophetic interpretation. God must furnish the authentic commentary on His own action. "The structure of revelation is sacramental: it consists of facts, of events, interpreted by a word" (p. 373). This holds for the New Testament as well as the Old. Our Lord's career becomes an object of faith, and is believed by Christians, in the framework of the interpretation which He Himself placed upon it and communicated to the Church. Christian revelation, therefore, is not crudely factual; it always has a doctrinal aspect. And conversely, Christian doctrine is not abstractly speculative; it is essentially linked to God's concrete historical self-disclosure.

¶ In the following chapter these points are underscored with special reference to Christ. In agreement with Karl Rahner, Latourelle adheres to the view of many of the Greek Fathers that the eternal Logos is "the only possible revealer" (p. 385). In taking on human flesh, in speaking human language, and in living to the full the message which He preached, the subsistent Word has given the ultimate, unsurpassable revelation. The immeasurable gap between God and man—which Karl Barth will not allow us to forget—is in some sort spanned by the

‡ <sup>3</sup> Romano Guardini, *Die Offenbarung: Ihr Wesen und ihre Formen* (Würzburg, 1940) pp. 47-48.

unfathomable condescension of God. According to the Catholic view of the Incarnation, Christ, the perfect witness, can guarantee the veracity of the human language in which He speaks of the divine.

In the remaining few chapters Latourelle discusses the role of the light of faith in man's assent to revelation, the miracles of Christ as symbolic deeds, the Church as the medium through which revelation becomes present in the world, the vision of God as the consummation of revelation, and the glory of God as the ultimate goal of the whole revealed economy. These closing chapters, while they do not introduce many ideas that have not been previously intimated, serve to round out the speculative portion of the book and to bring it to a rhetorically effective conclusion.

#### SOME REMAINING QUESTIONS

This study of revelation, thorough and many-sided as it is, makes no pretense of being exhaustive. On the contrary, Latourelle protests that he regards it as a mere sketch and invites others to build on the foundations he has laid. As is evident from the preceding pages, I am convinced that he has made an enormous step forward, and my negative criticisms are quite incidental. But there are a number of major questions, raised especially by the last part of the book, which would seem to call for concentrated labor on the part of Catholic theologians. Several of these problem areas may now be mentioned.

This book is almost exclusively concerned with the historical Judeo-Christian revelation. Supernatural revelation is treated as coterminous with the series of salvific acts by which God manifested Himself to the prophets and apostles of the Old and New Testaments. But some discussion of whether and how God reveals Himself to the unevangelized gentiles would seem to be in order, for the sake of a more comprehensive concept of revelation, which might in turn throw light upon the essential properties of revelation itself. If St. Thomas, for instance, was correct in his doctrine of justification by a "first moral act" at the dawn of reason (*Sum. theol.* 1-2, q. 89, a. 6), it must be possible for men to receive supernatural revelation prior to any instruction about the facts of redemptive history and their doctrinal interpretation.<sup>4</sup> In such a perspective, the interior illumination of grace seems to take on a greater

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Maurice Eminyan, S.J., *The Theology of Salvation* (Boston, 1960) pp. 56-59.

constitutive role in the process of revelation than Latourelle is inclined to allow it (pp. 232, 410–13). In order to explain how the faith of the unevangelized is structurally homogeneous with that of Christians, the patristic theme of the universal illuminative office of the Logos could perhaps be usefully invoked.

In setting forth the generic features of revelation, Latourelle rightly makes much of salvation history. The great acts of God are, so to speak, the material component of the revealed object. But it would be of interest to inquire just what is needed to make an event pertain to *Heilsgeschichte*. Latourelle holds that the history of revelation is not simply coincident with universal history; it depends upon God's free interventions. Yet these interventions, he remarks, need not be strictly miraculous; they would include God's special providence over the formation and fortunes of Israel, as attested by biblical history. But it may still be asked whether God has not manifested Himself by deeds to other peoples too, and whether He has not continued to act in a revelatory way since apostolic times. Tillich's view that Church history is a living channel of revelation, punctuated by decisive *kairoi*, seems closer to Catholic doctrine than the narrow biblicist view that salvation history ceased with the age of the apostles. Such an existential "filling up" of Christ's revelation in the course of later centuries would, of course, add nothing substantially new—inasmuch as the essential meaning of all history has been finally disclosed in the Christ-event—but it would continue to actualize God's message in new forms, adapted to new situations.<sup>5</sup>

Latourelle makes much of the role of doctrine as complementary to historical event in the process of revelation. As already mentioned, he holds that redemptive history does not exhibit its revelatory significance except in the light of a divinely communicated interpretation, which is at least seminally doctrine. In its finished form, as committed to the Church, the revelation takes on the form of a body of truths to be preserved, defended, and taught. While this may be admitted, it would

<sup>5</sup> Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., "The Development of Doctrine and the Ecumenical Problem," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 23 (1962) 27–46, concludes: "... one might say, therefore, that the material element of this phase of revelation will not be completed till the last day, but the formal element was completed nineteen centuries ago in the center of time in the Holy Land" (p. 40).

be helpful to have a fuller discussion of how, in an inchoate manner, revelation can be communicated without doctrine, i.e., without precise conceptualization and carefully articulated enunciation. Inverting Latourelle's order of priorities (pp. 412 f.) I should be inclined to say that the ineffable experience of the Word holds a certain precedence over its doctrinal statement. In the life of the individual believer and in that of the whole Church, as Blondel observed, "it may be said that we go less from dogmas to faith than from faith to dogmas."<sup>6</sup> The Church herself, in formulating and judging doctrines, draws abundantly on her preconceptual knowledge gained through a mysterious vital contact with the divine Persons. Unless this were so, it would be most difficult to account for the dogmatic progress that has occurred.

The primacy of the preconceptual, to which we have just alluded, is of major importance for an "ecumenical" theology of revelation. In Catholic theology the faith of heterodox believers has too long been treated as an embarrassing anomaly. Canon Mouroux, in his stimulating study of the personal structure of faith, has done much to clear up the confusion. Through an act of faith, he points out, man surrenders himself to an overwhelming reality made present to him by God's grace. The spiritual plenitude of this total engagement issues in a "profound affirmation" which cannot be encompassed in words, concepts, or judgments. The judgments and formulas of faith, according to Mouroux, include a representative element which is always inadequate and sometimes even incorrect. But since the affirmation has its basis in the ontological thrust of the whole person toward the Absolute, it is not canceled out by faulty expression. "The saving movement of the soul, initiated by grace, can pass through formulas, themselves pitifully inadequate, or even glaringly false."<sup>7</sup> While this observation bears more directly on the study of faith than on the theology of revelation, it helps to clarify the true role of doctrine in revelation.

Besides being historical and doctrinal, revelation is mysterious. Central to the theology of Paul, the notion of mystery has remained vital for Catholic theology and was strongly re-emphasized by Vatican I. Latourelle's speculative section would have been enriched by a further treatment of this theme. Widely divergent understandings of mystery

<sup>6</sup> Maurice Blondel, *Histoire et dogme* (Paris, 1956) p. 218.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Mouroux, *I Believe*, tr. M. Turner (London, 1959) pp. 73-74.

are current in Catholic theology—for example, those proposed by Lonergan and Rahner. From many presentations one gets the impression that mystery is a sort of insoluble problem, an impenetrable mass which remains after positive and speculative theology have exhausted their resources. This view overlooks the fact that the whole of revelation, insofar as it bears on the order of grace and beatitude, exceeds man's comprehension. Sacred history and sacred doctrine are themselves steeped in mystery. Far from being what is left over after theology has done its best, mystery is the very substance on which theology feeds and thrives. A statement free from mystery would hardly be, in the proper sense, theological.

The theology of revelation must seek to account for two things: both the special obscurity of the Christian mysteries, which are vastly more opaque than the "natural mysteries" probed in philosophy, and their luminosity, which renders them susceptible of an *intelligentia fructuosissima* (cf. *DB* 1796). Because God's revelation involves a personal approach to His creatures in finite forms, the God who speaks is more mysterious than the silent, absent God. The God of faith, precisely because He is more intimately known than the God of philosophy, is more inscrutable. The revealed light exhibits the profundity of what Newman called the "revealed darkness."<sup>8</sup> To the unbeliever, the Christian mysteries may appear as mere conundrums. But thanks to the inner dynamism of grace, which comes to man together with the revealing word, these mysteries are singularly luminous to the eyes of faith. They evoke a total response in which the thrill of fascination, as Rudolf Otto noted, is dialectically conjoined with a sense of holy awe. In terms of man's vital relationship to them, mysteries possess an intelligibility in their own order which does not depend upon clear conceptualization but surpasses it. This elusive type of knowledge will appear crude and "prescientific" only to those who hold up scientific explanation as the ideal toward which all knowledge should aspire.

Considerations such as these have a direct bearing on the problem of the transmission of revelation. It is often argued that the logic of analogy, as taken over from the philosophical disciplines, is unsuited

<sup>8</sup> Latourelle, p. 208, quotes Newman's statement: "When you knew nothing of the revealed light, you knew not the revealed darkness" (*Plain and Parochial Sermons* 1 [London, 1834] 211).

to revealed mysteries. A friendly Lutheran critic, for instance, has this advice for Catholics:

The Church must be willing to be led by the Holy Spirit back to a "polar" or "dialectical" thinking and teaching about the mysteries of God. This dialectic alone is suitable for the "Mysterium" of the events of God's grace. Up to the present time, and under the pressure of a justifiable defense against dangerous errors, the Church has abandoned such dialectic in favor of an all too rationalistic oversimplification of its dogmatic and theological statements.<sup>9</sup>

Latourelle, insisting on the value of the *analogia entis*, accuses Barth of an agnosticism that "suppresses all real communication between God and man" (p. 475). But in his own treatment of the theology of preaching Latourelle avoids any facile rationalism. He recognizes that to communicate the gospel is a supernatural action in which the power of the Spirit must energize the servant of the word (p. 439). In a recent essay Karl Rahner has raised the question whether all doctrinal utterance must not participate in the supernatural quality of kerygmatic utterance; whether even theology does not risk falsifying its nature if it merely talks about mystery as a kind of "object" and fails to "conjure up the gracious experience of the absolute mystery itself."<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the profound intention of dialectical theology was to forge a language better suited to this evocative task than the *analogia entis*, or at least the oversimplified version of analogy often presented in elementary manuals, against which Barth so fiercely protested.

Closely connected with the foregoing is the question of symbolic language, which ought to find a place in any full treatise on revelation. As is evident, figurative speech and imagery hold a place of prime importance in Scripture, in the liturgy, and in many creeds. Rationalistically oriented theologians may look on this as a merely pragmatic or rhetorical device designed to impress on untutored minds and wayward hearts the "straight" truths of revelation. Spinoza held this view, but St. Thomas takes a more nuanced position (*Sum. theol.* 1, q. 1, a. 9). Recent language theory finds riches in the "latent meaning" of metaphorical expression that defy transposition into the "manifest con-

<sup>9</sup> Max Lackmann, *The Augsburg Confession and Catholic Unity*, tr. W. R. Bouman (New York, 1963) p. x.

<sup>10</sup> "Was ist eine dogmatische Aussage?" *Schriften zur Theologie* 5 (Einsiedeln, 1962) 74.

tent" of scientific cognition.<sup>11</sup> Hence we must ask whether the supernaturally given images in Scripture and tradition may not have an irreplaceable role in the communication of God's word to man. Austin Farrer, among others, vigorously contends that we cannot grasp the biblical message apart from the images in which it is clothed; that "we cannot by-pass the images to seize an imageless truth."<sup>12</sup> The veil of faith, he asserts, is impenetrable indeed, but far from blank. "It is painted with the image of God, and God himself painted it, and made it indelible with his blood, when he was nailed to it for us men and for our salvation."<sup>13</sup>

The principal proponents of the theology of symbol, including E. L. Mascall, M. Eliade, and G. Vann, have no intention of reducing the whole of revelation to poetic imagery, to the exclusion of historical fact and doctrinal truth. But they would insist that the biblical images cannot be discarded to make room for purely scientific discourse. This position, if valid, is of great significance both for the theory of revelation and for theological method. What must revelation be, we may ask, if it cannot be adequately communicated without imaginative symbols? Can theology itself ever really leave imagery behind? The recent debates at the Vatican Council concerning the various images of the Church give grounds for the view that correct imagery is a perennial concern of dogma and theology.

In his chapter on miracles Latourelle touches lightly on the theme of symbolism. The prodigies worked by our Lord, he points out, were not merely substantiations of His authority but also figures or symbols of the new order which He came to bring. Once miracles are looked upon as God's symbolic gestures, the problem of imagery appears in a new light. The mutual disclosure of persons is normally accomplished more through symbolism than through propositional speech, more through gestures and accents than through formal statements. If revelation, as Latourelle insists, is not simply a transmission of new knowledge, but a personal encounter between God and man, it is not surprising that imagery should be so abundant. The Catholic theologian may heartily

<sup>11</sup> Cf. J. S. Bruner, *On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962) p. 74.

<sup>12</sup> *The Glass of Vision* (Westminster, Eng., 1948) p. 110.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

concur with Alan Richardson when he writes: "Once we have discarded the dogma that scientific knowledge is the only kind of truth, we shall realise that the imagination, using the word in such a way as to include the act of the will, is the only means by which ultimate or existential truth can be apprehended and communicated."<sup>14</sup>

In singling out these various points which require more extensive investigation, I do not wish to imply any fundamental inadequacy in Latourelle's book as it stands. Like any author, he is entitled to place limits to his inquiry. He has given us a very useful and substantial introduction, and has not aimed at a final summation, which would evidently be premature in the present state of theology. The fact that his work stimulates more questions than it answers is a tribute to its thought-provoking power. And the author gives such evidence of scholarship and theological skill as to leave little doubt that he himself, in future years, will carry the theology of revelation far beyond the point where he leaves it in this book.

<sup>14</sup> "Gnosis and Revelation in the Bible," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 9 (1956) 44.