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But every one of us who has been brought into the embrace of the community of faith and has had at least a glimpse of a reconciled relationship with God has the responsibility of accepting or rejecting that covenant. Through our fateful choices we shall one day know that *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.

REVELATION

AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHURCH

BEING

THE DUDDEIAN LECTURE

FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 1953-1954

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

DELIVERED IN ANDOVER CHAPEL

APRIL 27, 1954

BY

PAUL SEVIER MINEAR, LL.D., B.D., PH.D.

ANDOVER NEWTON THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

It would be quite unthinkable for me to begin without giving three salutes: (1) a word of tribute to Chief Justice Paul Dudley, class of 1690, in whose honor lectures have been given on this Foundation since 1755; (2) a word of cordial greeting from Andover Theological Seminary to Harvard Divinity School, in memory of the years of close affiliation and in recognition of continued partnership in a common task; (3) a word of gratitude to Harvard University and its Graduate School for their staunch defense of academic, religious and civil liberties. You have continued to open fresh continents for exploration by the human mind and to oppose the erection of barriers which would prevent access to these areas. Generation after generation, men of power, whether political or ecclesiastical, have sought to fetter scholarship to the demands of conventional gratitude to Harvard University and its Graduate School for their staunch orthodoxy, but here at Harvard they have found their efforts circumvented.

There are no doubt men who assume that any address in defence of "revealed religion" is bound to be an attack upon the liberties of the mind, however surreptitious and subversive the technique. "Is not religion a means by which professional priests exercise control over society," they ask "a control all the more arbitrary and insidious when the support of revelation is claimed?" There is an uncomfortable degree of fairness in this question. Revelation has been defended too often as a divinely authorized tariff-wall which chokes the channels of commerce. Now it is possible for some theologians to be high-tariff advocates and yet for Christian theology itself to be the charter of freedom in the commerce of ideas. I believe, in fact, that God's revelation in Christ is an ultimate guarantee of man's freedoms, including the liberties of the mind.

To this matter of freedom we will return at the end of our discussion. In the meantime let me outline, first, the boundaries of academic knowledge; second, the Christian conception of God's revelation; third, the manner by which the Church gains access to knowledge of God; and finally, the self-knowledge which God thus gives to his people.

Boundary Questions

Let us begin by visualizing that process which we call the extension of academic knowledge. Here is a student in his library cell, scribbling away with cramped fingers and knit brows—a man at work. As commencement speakers insist, this student is the living center of the educational process. From his mind radiate lines of force bent on subduing stubborn data. These lines are focussed not alone on the immediate book, but also on a more distant goal—tomorrow's class assignment, a term paper or an academic degree. As he scrounges notes, this goal determines which quotes to crib and how these jottings are to filed. Throughout the course of his study, the movements of mind and pen are circumscribed by time. His academic assignment carries a deadline. The library closes at ten o'clock. His watch warns him of his next appointment. But when a spark from the page ignites the fires of his mind, the rotation of the clock is forgotten. Time forgotten is time filled with meaning. When time is most full of meaning, the present is most alive. Yet this surcharged present is not isolated from the past or the future. Rather the past and the future come to life in a new way when the student, prompted by a particular goal, becomes absorbed in the process of discovery. There are limits, however, to this process, limits which can be described as the capacities of the student, the character of his goal and the boundaries of his time. To these limits we shall return.

From another perspective, the academic monk is not the center at all, but a denizen of a monastery. All learning centers in a school in which, at least in a limited way, each participant, whether student or teacher, is a member of the others. The library, the class-room, the laboratory—these are corporate aids in the voyage of discovery. Discoveries in the realm of the mind are never purely private. The individual scientist may patent the result of his laboratory experiment, but the result is no less a fruit of collective effort. When the student is at his best, then, too, is the community functioning at its best.

Moreover, it is obvious that this community bears a unique sense of selfhood, seeks its own goals, and embodies a complex involvement in time. It lives in the Now, but its life cannot be restricted to the mere present. Things past and things to come meet in contemporary choices.

The life of the group gives meaning to time, and yet is also bound by time. On the basis of previous discoveries, this community provides maps of space and time on which the student locates his private discoveries. When the student marches off the map of his own private atlas, he discovers that he is still able to locate his bearings on the larger maps provided by academic disciplines. The power of the academic community to sketch maps covering both the atom and the galaxies has been firmly vindicated; its methods of inquiry have proved their competence over ever wider territories.

Even these maps, however, for all their accuracy and coverage, do not provide answers to all questions. There are both inward and outward landscapes which cannot be charted. The existential perspectives defy the best diagrams. The actual substance of the common life and the actual contours of its environment elude exact measurement and control. The existence of the community, no less than that of the person, is horizoned by profound and universal mysteries. It is easier, to be sure, to avoid recognition of mystery when dealing with corporate knowledge, because the life of the monastery possesses greater solidity and continuity than does the life of the monk. It is more difficult to locate a vantage point from which to examine the axiomatic structure of group-consciousness. It is also more dangerous to examine the stock of assumptions by which the corporate ego has shaped its own world. Yet who will deny, on the ground of danger or difficulty alone, that questions must be raised which affect the inner core of community, the shape of its goals, and the significance of its time.

Man's mind lives and grows on its questions. But which questions offer the best nourishment? Some are rhetorical questions in which the answers are implicit in the questions themselves. Some are didactic questions, given by a teacher who knows the answers, for the sake of increasing or testing the student's memory and proficiency. Others are exploratory questions, answers for which can be found in appropriate reference books. Still others are maieutic questions, designed to force into consciousness the latent knowledge of truth. None of these is an ultimate question. An ultimate query eludes present capacities to answer because it emerges at the very boundary of human existence. Some boundaries are quite tentative, because further accumulation of data and

improvement of techniques will erase them. Some boundaries are temporary because the extension of present lines of progress will overrun them. But the outermost horizon persists, and no advance in accumulative knowledge can erase it. It is at such a horizon, where "there is only the flash of negative knowledge" (Auden), that we raise ultimate questions, even though we know too little about the boundaries to phrase the questions properly. It is a mark of the parochialism of the modern mind that these questions are so often called irrelevant. Actually only questions of this sort can be relevant in an ultimate sense. We have already intimated the burden of some of these questions.

First of all, what is the innermost status and structure of the self? Mental growth is, in part at least, a process by which knowledge of the self grows. But the more we learn about the self the more the self eludes our knowledge. It feeds on hidden sources which we cannot examine. It disappears behind every mirror into which we look and behind the eyes with which we look. The act of looking furnishes a sure hiding place for the pursued. Increasing knowledge may aid in detecting various masks and evasions, but it does not aid in apprehending the actual *person* who can always disappear behind a still more deceptive disguise. Yet this secretive self remains the active subject in all its knowing and doing.

Second, how is this hidden self related to its goals, its destiny? What is the connection between the potential future and the actual present? The typical posture of the person is one of leaning forward toward something that is not yet. The self with no desire and dread is inert and empty. As long as it is alive, the self is greedy and fearful of those unknown possibilities which we call tomorrow. It is both repelled and attracted by the crystal ball. It struggles to defend itself against the future, and to that end it jealously guards whatever hostage the past has provided. Or, resentful of the past, it looks forward toward its vindication. Tomorrow offers the twin possibilities of being and non-being, and the question of *which* it is to be affects the morale of the self today. Death, as Rilke repeats, is "the silent, knowing partner of the living." Each man bears his own death within himself, as "the fruit which nourishes the whole." *What* man's hope *is* we may not say; but *that* his hope constitutes his very being we cannot deny. And most men are realistic

enough to know that the true future, with its genuine possibilities, lies beyond the jurisdiction of their own knowledge and power. The relation of the self-that-is to the self-that-is-to-be remains a riddle.

Third, what does time have to do with the fullness of life? The person who hopes and fears becomes conscious of time. Time can serve as an enemy of his projects, an aid to his movements, or as a neutral tool of measurement. It provides both a parenthesis bracketing his dreams, and a rhythm punctuating his days.

Time is your barracks and your discipline
Heart-ticking clocks, bugles and bells that chime
Irrevocable sequences now begin
Through night and day and night and day and night
Their quick partition of the infinite. (Theodore Spencer)

Time continues in its irrevocable sequence, yet we know not what it is nor what purpose it serves. We may detect the beginnings and endings of limited periods of time, but the beginning of time and its end reach always beyond our vision. Unable to bound time, we postulate eternity as unconditioned by time, but how much this really means is dubious, for we are contrasting two unknown things which may be qualitatively different. Yet the self that is time-bound is also time-transcendent. It knows of a time which is relative to its purposes and its frustrations. It experiences "bright occasions" which are neither in time nor enslaved by it. It uses time, consumes it, fills it, redeems it. The clock which tells the passing of the hours tells also of men who use the clock to enhance and to fulfill the meaning of life. But what is time-in-relation-to-man? And what is man-in-relation-to-time? In such matters, as

Auden says,
We're quite in the dark: we do not
Know the connection between
The clock we are bound to obey
And the miracle we must not despair of.

Fourth, what is the ultimate structure and function of community? Whatever we may say about the mystery of the self may also be said about the mystery of community. Awareness of the bounds of personal existence is accompanied by an awareness of abysses of meaning in the lives of others. We are able to increase a certain kind of objective knowl-

edge about them by assembling observations of their behavior, by tracing sequences in their story, by comparing their abilities with the norms of group achievement. Yet the more we know about them the more we know that in each person there is an inner citadel of selfhood which we shall never penetrate. There is a rich concreteness to their story which can never be reduced to words. It would be blasphemous to attempt it and folly to suppose that we had succeeded. There *are* chasms in social intercourse which we cannot bridge. What separates us, however, also makes us fellows, for we are united by the same boundaries of life and death, by the ultimate walls of a mutual strangeness, by the problematic character of the ground on which we all stand. The community is constituted by depths of indivisibility and mutuality which elude the research of any science. The innermost interpenetration of selves in society remains a mystery which we ignore at our peril or try to manipulate to our certain frustration. Fellowship we know, but what constitutes the ultimate ground of an eternal fellowship we do not know.

I have mentioned four elusive frontiers within which the academic community carries forward its research. The use of this term "frontier" should not be construed to mean that these frontiers are separate lines on any map. They are inseparable aspects of human existence which is bounded on all sides by mystery. Human consciousness is surrounded by "the Nothing and the All" (Pascal). The term "frontier" is also misleading" if it implies that we are located at a measurable distance from the boundaries of knowledge. The mystery is encountered not alone at the fringe of things but at their center. It is in the midst of life's meetings that we become aware of the "beyond."

Moreover, the borders we have described are not merely the limits of our perceptive faculties as finite creatures. They mark more than the line between the finite and the infinite, the relative and the absolute. What ultimately surrounds our life at its center and circumference, at its beginning and end, is not an "It," but a "Thou." Our contact with the boundaries of our existence is a personal encounter. Faith spells out the implications of this encounter with its sceptical question, "Who by seeking can find out God?" In this question all genuine questions are raised. The admission that we cannot find God by our own seeking does not, however, permit us to reduce the encounter itself to "the flesh of nega-

tive knowledge." Faith's sceptical question is accompanied by a knowing question: "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?" God is one whom we can neither find with our knowledge nor escape in our ignorance. Whether we take refuge in cynical relativism or in idolatrous absolutism, there is a hound who follows, follows after with "unperturbed pace." The boundaries mark the place where he addresses us and where we turn in futile flight. That is to say, all ultimate questions are theological questions, and the answers, if they are to embody more than the shadow of our sin, must be given by God himself. When he gives the answers, however, we should not expect him to follow the pattern of our questions.

Apocalypsis

God gives his answers in action which we call revelation. It is of such revelation that the Christian theologian speaks. He begins, not with abstract analysis, but with the concrete testimony that in Jesus Christ God has disclosed himself in a decisive way, once-upon-a-time and once-for-all-time. The key words for disclosure in the New Testament are *apocalypsis* and *apocalypso*, the noun and the verb, but in both the primary accent is verbal. The word refers to an event, to an act which discloses the hidden God who acts. The various uses of the word all rest back upon the basic event narrated as good news — "In Jesus Christ God was reconciling the world to himself." What we are confronted with in revelation is not the "ontological exaltation" of some fragment of human knowledge but the historical humiliation of the true God.

In this humiliation the central events are Christ's death and resurrection. These events are central because they illuminate both prior and subsequent history. In them are re-enacted all earlier disclosures of God's power; and in them are "pre-enacted" all coming disclosures (to use Richard Niebuhr's phrase). In them men are judged as guilty; in them men are summoned to enter into God's Kingdom. The Gospel addresses man with the word, "God has made both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified . . . Repent."

According to the New Testament, this revelation is not to be grasped first of all as the hypothetical solution to an intellectual riddle. Rather is it to be trusted as the action of a personal God sharing his love with

persons through a person. It is not a sly way by which finite creatures build dream castles out of temporal frustrations; rather is it the means of proving the accusation that they have rejected the health and peace which God has offered. Revelation is not a gift to superior individuals, making them secure in a knowledge which has been arbitrarily denied to fellow-mortals; rather is it the majestic condemnation of all men by a Messiah whom they have joined in crucifying.

Such a disclosure would be emptied of its redemptive power were it to become a device for buttressing the claims of one religion in its battle for dominance over others. What is revealed is not a religion but the Most High God whose justice and mercy encompass the histories of all men. Nowhere does the New Testament encourage the use of the phrase *revealed religion*. It never uses the adjective nor does it speak of the content of revelation as *religion*. In saying this I am perhaps betraying the provisions of this lectureship on revealed religion. Nevertheless, I must insist that a false conception of revelation is implied when Christianity is described as a revealed religion. The Gospel speaks of the disclosure of *God*, a disclosure mediated by *Jesus Christ* not as a Christian but as *Man*, a disclosure that places on every man and every religion the stamp of final judgment and final redemption. Through the work of Christ the God of hope consigns all creation to futility in order that he may include all creation in his adoption of sons. In short, the revelation of which we are speaking is thoroughly eschatological.

Let me make clear what I mean by this confusing word. Revelation is eschatological, in the first place, because it is a movement from the beyond into the here, from God's world into our world. Whenever he speaks finally about himself, the God who is Omega and Alpha "speaks finally about the world process" (J. A. T. Robinson). His purposive action moves from the coming age into the present, and links contemporary events firmly to their consummation.

Revelation in the Messiah is eschatological, secondly, because of the finality of the events through which it is mediated—the death and resurrection of Jesus. His death was his own death, the death of a man who dies once and not a second time. It was also the death of Adam and the death of every man, since "he tasted death for all men." Such death is beyond doubt an eschatological category. So, too, is the

Messiah's resurrection. His life-through-death is the life in which all shall be made alive. To him as first-born of the dead was given the power to beget the same life in those who "were dead through trespasses and sins." As J. A. T. Robinson so well says: "Christians go to heaven not at death but at baptism." They then become not so much members of a religion as citizens of heaven (Col. 3:1-3).

The proclamation of the Gospel is eschatological, thirdly, because it discloses the present moment as the fullness of time. The demand for repentance transforms the ordinary day into the dawn of the Lord's Day. Present isolation, present frustration, present despair, present idolatries of action—these are confronted with the Word of the Cross, with the promise of life through death. The God who was disclosed on Golgotha to believers and who will manifest himself to all in the Parousia is now pressing in on men and compelling them to a decision. Each present situation is laid bare as the scene of a critical choice. Wherever the Crucified is acknowledged as the Reigning Lord, there the thoughts of many hearts are revealed, secrets which otherwise would never have been known. The Messiah's Cross is God's sword, slicing through pious self-deceptions and frantic self-justifications. The fire which he kindles is the refiner's fire by which all men's works are tested. The warfare which he precipitates transforms human actions into fateful episodes in a final cosmic struggle between the Messiah and "the rulers of this darkness." Revelation turns the Now into a point where the transient world meets the Eternal Kingdom, where the ego must crucify its pride and be reborn into life with the Messiah, into the brotherhood of the poor in spirit.

Finally, God's self-disclosure is eschatological because it "pre-enacts" the coming of the Messiah, when he will complete his work of subjecting every enemy. In Christ has taken place such an invasion of human life that nothing human and historical will in the end remain outside his kingdom. God has already given the Messiah dominion over death and life, over angels and principalities, over things present and things to come. In the end this dominion will be demonstrated to every creature. The Gospel confronts men with the signs of this consummation and summons them to participate in the final conflict. Revelation is always vocational—and because the revelation is final, this vocation provides

an ultimate beginning and end for the pilgrim journey. All this is so sweeping, so inclusive, so grandiose, that it is easy to forget what must not be forgotten—that the event of revelation was the ministry of a humble Galilean carpenter who accomplished his messianic work on the ridiculed and obnoxious Cross.

Gnosis

We are now prepared to deal with the question: how does the Church gain access to the knowledge of God? By what activities is its knowledge enhanced? It should be obvious that the manner of knowing God should accord with the event of revelation itself. Revelation is as closely linked to saving knowledge as is the death of Jesus Christ to his resurrection. Since the agent of revelation is personal, the Church's relation to him will be personal, a relationship for which the bonds of human love are dim but suggestive analogies. The knower, like the lover, is able to know because he is already known and loved. The act of knowledge proceeds within the relationship of being known by God.

The revelation of God, as we have noted, carried with it the implicit and uncompromising demand: Repent. The act of repentance is an act of knowledge, an act of acknowledging and accepting God's judgment. God's epiphany thus becomes "the heart's epiphany" (Rilke). In the light of the Cross the ego accepts itself as guilty, as estranged from God, yet now drawn by God within the circle of his mercy. In repentance the warring ego is brought to a total surrender, recognizing that its pride has been undermined by God's self-emptying. The ego-enhancing structures of community are demolished by the power of the Cross, "towering over the wrecks of time." In being humbled by the Suffering Servant, the Church enters into authentic knowledge of itself and its world.

The Gospel is equally ruthless in its demand for *mercy*. Only by an act of forgiveness can the Church know itself as forgiven. By its act of peace-making it learns what is meant by sonship to a God of peace. Only in an act of self-forgetting and outgoing intercession can the beloved fully enter into the knowledge of what love actually is. Hidden within this knowledge is the door to self-knowledge. The segregated Church is segregated not only from true knowledge of God, but also from a true understanding of itself. And knowledge of itself as loved is inseparable

from knowledge of the world as loved. How can the Church love its unseen Lord or truly know him unless it loves and thereby knows the estranged communities with which it deals?

God's disclosure of himself always conveys an absolute imperative: *obedience*. The Gospel proclaims each act of obedience as an act of knowing him in whom was perfect obedience. It proclaims each taking up of the Cross as a step toward fuller knowledge of the grace that is made perfect in weakness. Such knowledge is too wonderful for the Church, yet it is this very knowledge which makes the Church the Church. Obedience to the love that surpasses knowledge is the means by which the structure of community is knitted together. The Church knows what revelation means when it obeys the summons to share the mission of God's Son, who through suffering redeems every time and brings every place within the orbit of glory.

These then are ways by which the Church enters into authentic knowledge of revelation: repentance, forgiveness, and obedient faithfulness to its mission as Christ's Body. Each act of knowledge is creative of new sinews of strength, new bonds of mutuality, and new motivation for continuing the reconciling ministry of the world.

It should be at once clear that the basic categories in this type of knowledge are incommensurable with the categories of our scientific disciplines. Each increment of this knowledge is a work of grace which leaps across the ultimate boundaries of ordinary existence, from the beyond into the here, from the then into the now. Such knowledge is not something gained once for all, something which accumulates until we are able to push beyond the bounds of time and space, but something which transforms the surface of things from the invisible center. It recognizes the sign of death and resurrection at the core of every situation, and this sign invests that situation with immediate importance stemming from Christ's eschatological action. His action does not negate the concerns of everyday life but imparts to them an ultimate and decisive significance. Knowledge of his kingdom does not lead to abolishing the relative, but enables the Church to re-perceive the transient present in the light of God's abiding intention to rule within it.

What has been said about revelation should make clear the fact that the Church's knowledge of God does not conflict with other forms of

knowledge so long as these other forms do not claim unlimited autonomy. The Church has not found an esoteric short-cut which replaces the tedious processes of research. It does not jealously guard a secret scientific formula. It does not claim exclusive jurisdiction over any province on the scholar's map. The relevance of revelation appears at the boundaries of accumulated human knowledge, but these boundaries, we repeat, lie within as well as without. The impact of revelation transforms the knower, transfigures the community of knowers and orients the Church's knowledge around a new center and toward a new goal. We come, then, to the question: What is the "content" of the knowledge which God's disclosure conveys to the Church? And more specifically what knowledge does the Church receive concerning its own distinctive existence?

Koinonia

The answer, I believe, may be indicated in terms of *koinonia*. The usual translation is fellowship, but this rendering is altogether too subjective, too sentimental, too weak. C. H. Dodd prefers the idea of sharing. "*Koinonoi* are persons who hold property in common" as joint-owners. The solidarity is as objective and tangible as that. But *koinonia* goes much deeper than financial partnership, since Christians have been made partners with Christ and in him. They are joint-heirs of a common life bestowed by him through the Spirit. This solidarity is so complete that what belongs to the whole community belongs to each member, and vice versa. "The life that is shared exists only as shared" (C. H. Dodd, *The Johannine Epistles*, p. 6 f.). Sharing in this life changes the status of each partner and decisively redefines his existence.

The emergence of this solidarity not only is central to the Church's knowledge of itself but it also furnishes clues to the boundary questions which we have raised. In the first place, because of its partnership in Christ the Church knows itself to be one. He shared fully in man's flesh and blood, in Adam's sinning and dying. His sharing with men established their solidarity with him. As Auden writes: "Scorned on a scaffold, (he) ensconced in his life the human household." Or as the Epistle to the Hebrews phrases it: "He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin" (2:11). He is not divided; neither is His Body. The togetherness of the Church in his death is, however, a com-

plex rather than a simple fact. There is a oneness in the guilt for his death — Adam is Judas. There is a oneness in the enmity for which he prayed forgiveness, in the lossiness of the world for which he died. The Church also becomes one with him when it truly proclaims his death as God's power and wisdom. It becomes one with him in dying with him, the daily dying of repentance and the daily dying of a reconciling ministry. The Church identifies itself both with his cry of dereliction and his assurance of victory. And in all these ways, participation in Christ's body means becoming members one of another, each counting the other better than himself.

We have said that this joint-inheritance applies simultaneously to the whole community and to each member. When a man recognizes his share in Christ's death, something happens to his conception of his real self. He sees in Jesus Christ the fact that the distinguishing mark of a man is his God-relationship, and the fact that this relationship rightly determines all dealings with himself and with other men. He knows how worthless his "old self" is, "guilty of treason against the love of God." But he sees Jesus treating this traitor self as of more value than his own life. He senses that the verdict of death, all too just a sentence for his guilt, is reversed and that the verdict of life, of life eternal, is rendered, because Jesus died for him while he was a sinner. Acquittal by God's grace through faith bestows on him the gift of joint-inheritance, so that he can say, "Dying, yet behold, we live." The self remains a mystery; no longer, however, the baffling enigma of a self that can hide behind every disguise, but the redemptive mystery of a self which God has reclaimed by penetrating every mask. The doctrine of justification by faith is one way of describing this removal of evasive isolation by the invasive grace of God. It is a doctrine which applies to the Church as fully as it applies to the believer. *Koinonia* with the body and blood of Jesus means such solidarity in sin and in forgiveness that the doors are opened to a true and a final self-knowledge.

Second, its communion in the body of Christ conveys to the Church solidarity with the living and returning Christ. In witnessing to the revelation of God in the Cross and the resurrection, it witnesses to the coming epiphany of Jesus Christ with all who belong to him. By its very existence the Church proclaims the Lord's death *until he comes*.

It lives by the power expressed in the prayer, "Thy Kingdom come." But this is no disjunctive futurism, because the Holy Spirit brings the *eschaton* into contact with the immediate struggle. The Church recognizes itself as a colony of heaven. It has been delivered from darkness into the dawn of a new day. It lives by the ingressive powers of the coming day, strengthened by the first fruits of the final harvest. The acts of repentance and love are acts of knowledge by which the Church apprehends that love which will exercise the final power and the final justice. The fact that the Church has a leashold on the coming age does not encourage it to play with futures on the world's markets but to do its daily work in mills and fields. And it does this work in fear and trembling, for it knows of an impending judgment by the austere and impartial love of the Crucified. It knows that every revelation of his power brings surprising repudiations of those who rely on cheap grace and on cheap substitutes for obedience. As the spearhead of the advancing Kingdom the Church knows that every fullness of time is marked by conflict and suffering before joy and glory are revealed. *Koinonia* in the returning Lord is realized through sharing his warfare in the world. Knowledge of his crown comes through knowledge of his daily cross.

Partnership in this coming glory illuminates the human quandaries associated with futurity. The self-that-is-to-be and the Church-that-is-to-be, these become real rather than hypothetical, assured rather than problematical. The destiny assured by God's preventient grace becomes prior ground for present choices. Through this grace the believer and the Church receive the confidence that all things (including things present and things to come) belong to them since they already belong to Christ. The ambiguous present is re-perceived in the light of dependable promise. Fears that death and non-being are man's final destiny are vanquished. Eternal life becomes "a silent knowing partner" of the self. The present and the future remain distinct tenses, but both are comprehended within the Kingdom of Christ. The past with its fatalistic power of guilt and causation ceases to tyrannize the present. The future with its prospect of endless succession ceases to appall the weak or to bewitch the powerful. The present is restored to its rightful significance as the fullness of time, where men may realize the destiny to which God has called them. Knowledge of the End yields a hope purged of parochialism and a love

freed from self-concern. Solidarity with the coming Christ thus produces solidarity in faith, hope and love, gifts which manifest a basic reorientation toward time.

In the third place, *koinonia* with Christ produces in the Church a new solidarity with all other communities, the nations, races, tongues and peoples which constitute the world. In every encounter with Christ the Church meets a Lord "whose only concern is for others." His love is the point where the Church sees God's omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence,—the point where these divine attributes are redefined by the weakness, ignorance and limitations of incarnation and death. His love is the measure both of God's distance and His nearness. There were no limits to the love of him who was hung between two thieves. He established a solidarity with mankind at its lowest denominator: sin, flesh, futility, death. He was raised as the first fruits of God's harvest which will include all creation. The only line between his community and all others is drawn by a love which is so exclusive only because it is so inclusive. He welds into his community a genuine solidarity with all men, not last with the last, nor least with the least. He sets it in the world to bear the sin of the world and thus to serve as trustee of the world's reconciliation. The sanctuary rightly stands not on the fringe of the city, but at its center, even though this means being destroyed in the holocaust of hydrogen bombs. "The Church is her true self only when she exists for others" (Bonhöffer). Only thus can it maintain solidarity with him who has placed the stamp of the Cross and the resurrection on all.

Fourth, fellowship in Christ opens the door to a final freedom. The person who lives wholly for others is freed from self. Love brings the amazing gift of self-transcendence. The love by which the Church is knit together unites it in an indestructible hope which frees it from the bondage to frustration. Its *koinonia* with Christ includes a gift of freedom, an eschatological freedom. In all other communities, the requirements of finite security create external restraints on personal freedom. Not so with the Church. Here communal obligation and individual emancipation spring from the same person. The Lord who commands is the Lord who frees. The apostle who says, "I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me," must also say, "For freedom has Christ set you free."

And this personal confession is the Church's confession as well. Knowledge of itself as the possession of Christ is knowledge of a majestic liberty.

This knowledge overcomes human bondage in many subtle ways. The act of repentance liberates the Church from group-egoism, from communal self-centeredness. The act of faith liberates it from anxieties of impending catastrophes and from dread of unknown possibilities. The act of expectancy tears it loose from preoccupation with the past, from the stingy clutch of dead traditions. The act of trust gives it the courage to accept itself, to forget itself, to spend itself. The act of love frees it from compulsions to retaliate against earthly enemies. All of the acts by which it acknowledges God's gift elicit an open heart, an open future, an open world. It shares the frustrations of mankind, but it knows that no work which is done in the Lord is done in vain. It lives under the constant pressures of conventional moralities, of ecclesiastical ambitions, of cultural ideologies, of economic systems, of totalitarian nationalisms, but each re-enactment of the Advent and pre-enactment of the Parousia restores its knowledge of a final freedom. *Koinonia* in that freedom makes the Church the trustee of all those liberties of which the human spirit is rightful heir. Other human communities whittle down the freedoms of the individual when historical survival is threatened; the Church celebrates a freedom given by God in the midst of catastrophe and death.

The schedule for this hour does not provide opportunity for asking questions or offering protests. If it did, I am sure one protest would be bluntly given: "How fantastic! How vastly different is the Church we know. We see everywhere a Church which is divided, segregated, frightened, and enslaved to cant and custom." I fully agree that this disparity exists, but I would add two rejoinders. In the first place there is positive meaning in the fact that the Christian community is fully involved in the ambiguities and anarchies of what we call the social order, guilty of foolishness and futility, of weakness and hostility. The positive meaning lies here: these very contradictions do not allow us to forget that God has always chosen vessels of weakness and sin to manifest his power and righteousness. His revelation is always given under conditions of a life authentically human; the eternal is always manifest in what is obviously temporal. As Auden has phrased it:

For the new locus is never
Hidden inside the old one
Where Reason could rout it out,
Nor guarded by dragons in distant
Mountains where Imagination
Could explore it; the place of birth
Is too obvious and near to notice,
Some dull dogpatch a stone's throw
Outside the walls, reserved
For the eyes of faith to find.

My second rejoinder is this: I have been dealing with eschatological categories which characterize God's action in *apocalypsis*, *gnosis*, and *koinonia*. The Church's knowledge of itself is derived from God's disclosure of himself. The norm of this knowledge is not an existing ecclesiastical practice, nor an idealized picture of historical possibilities, but the event of Jesus Christ in whom God unveils ultimate purpose and destiny. It is entirely legitimate to begin with the Church as a familiar sociological entity and to move toward an understanding of its historical functions. The Church needs to see its empirical face in mirrors which the world is only too eager to provide. But it is also both legitimate and necessary to begin with Christ, to observe how the Church is already comprehended and given in him, and then to move toward that self-knowledge of the Church which is recreated whenever it proclaims the Lord's death until he comes. Quite obviously the Church will utilize many finite forms of partial knowledge, but for a living awareness of its unity and its freedom, it will return to "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (II Cor. 4:6). Even in times when the Church betrays its solidarity with Christ, it cannot escape the knowledge that it is known by One who will not release it from its call or its destiny.