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**REVELATION
AND
RELIGIOUS PLURALISM
IN THE THEOLOGIES OF
JOHN MACQUARRIE AND KARL RAHNER**

by

JAMES BRYSON ARTHUR BD

APRIL 1994

A thesis submitted for the
degree of Ph.D to the
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DEDICATION

*This work is dedicated
to the memory
of my wife Mary
Who died of Cancer on the 17th of October 1992.
It is certain that without her loving support and provision this work would
never have been accomplished.*

*And in honour
of my parents David and Martha
whose love faileth never*

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study into the foundational elements of the theologies of John Macquarrie and (in comparison and contrast) Karl Rahner, in respect of their differing concepts of the Self-Revelation of God, in the context of their particular validations of the authenticity of the religious pluralism of World Religions.

Both Theologians are, in essence, ontological and anthropocentric in respect of their methodology and largely concerned with the immanence of God in the beings of creation (principally human beings). The contrast arises in respect of the particular method of theological development. Macquarrie's concern is with the phenomenology of Holy Being as present and manifest in the particular existential symbols of divergent cultures, whereas Rahner's concern is wholly epistemological in respect of the 'universal logos'; and therefore his development is along metaphysical lines.

The basis of Macquarrie's religious pluralism lies in a synthesis of ontological unity and cultural diversity; symbolic and psychological. Holy Being (God) reveals itself to different cultural groups through the essential, existential symbols of the particular cultures. The principle of unity is the universality of Being and the admissible principle of diversity appears in terms of the different symbols. The different symbols themselves, then, including the hermeneutic in respect of them, results necessarily in religious pluralism. The basis of Rahner's religious pluralism lies in his understanding that the human constitution includes a pre-concept of all being, including the Being of God; and a supernatural element whereby all men are necessarily epistemically oriented towards God. As with Thomas Aquinas knowledge and Being are equated therefore Rahner's whole theology is grounded in a universal epistemology of both an ordinary and a supra-ordinary nature. These factors give rise to Rahner's doctrine of 'Anonymous Christianity' through which all men are implicit Christians, and other religions are, to some degree, perversions of Christianity.

Introduction

The basis for the validation of religious pluralism and therefore the authenticity, or partial authenticity, of all 'world religions' in the respective theologies of John Macquarrie and Karl Rahner lies in their particular conceptuality of God's Self Revelation to man.

Both Theologies begin from the same, ontological and anthropological, starting point through the influence of the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. From this beginning Macquarrie develops existentially and phenomenologically, through the application of existential philosophy and process philosophy. He adopts Edmund Husserl's Phenomenological descriptive method and is influenced by Paul Tillich, Rudolf Otto, A N Whitehead, Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Rahner himself, amongst many others¹. Rahner develops epistemologically through a metaphysic which bears the marks of the profound influence of Thomas Aquinas. Both theologies could be properly categorised as anthropocentric and both thinkers, whilst apparently holding to a doctrine of the transcendence of God, in effect spend their whole concern in respect of God's immanence in the beings of creation. Macquarrie's theological position, in this respect, moves from an early pantheism to a higher pantheism which he terms 'panentheism' or 'dialectical theism'. Rahner develops his position along the lines of transcendental Thomism.

¹ Macquarrie is, of all things, an eclectic extraordinaire therefore the influences on his thinking are enormously widespread and diverse. We have mentioned those (though our list is by no means exhaustive) who are directly relevant to and involved in the particular area of study in this thesis.

Both Macquarrie and Rahner understand 'Revelation' as a transcendental experience through which man's present limitedness (in Macquarrie's case, his present state of 'inauthentic life') is transcended through the negation of the limits. Macquarrie's view is of an existential encounter of certain, predisposed or attuned, individuals (who are, in effect, prophets and who go on to found world religions) with Holy Being; as made manifest and present in the available (cultural) existential symbols. This is an holistic experience which, since it is non-verbal, is more conative than cognitive. Rahner, in direct contrast, understands Revelation as consisting of the (ordinary) human epistemic capacity, by virtue of their constitution as created finite spirits; who are coincident with the Spirit of God through the logos. Macquarrie's term for the Self-Revelation of Being (God) is "Primordial Revelation" or "Classical Revelation", Rahner's corresponding term is "Primordial Delimitation" ('delimitation' is Rahner's primary term for 'creation').

Our primary contention is that the, contrasting, concepts of Primordial Revelation as held by Macquarrie and Rahner are both essentially of 'Creational' and not 'Historical' Revelation. The basis of their respective validations of religious pluralism lies in the particular views of 'Creational' or 'Natural' Revelation that they hold. It follows that their respective theologies are both, at heart, forms of 'Natural Theology'. - 'Creational Revelation' may be defined as the general and universal Revelation of the immanence of God in and through the beings of His creation. 'Creational Revelation' corresponds with the category of 'General Revelation' in Reformed Theology. 'Historical Revelation', on the other hand, may be defined as the inbreaking of the transcendence of God, in self-disclosure, into the personal history of mankind. The account of such an 'Historical Revelation' is given in the Old and New Testaments; the principal factor being the incarnation of God Himself (Emmanuel) in the Person of Jesus Christ. This type of Revelation corresponds with the category of 'Special Revelation' in Reformed Theology, as it is always particular and never universal².

It follows then, if we are right, that the validation of the authenticity of religious pluralism in respect of world religions, in the theologies of Macquarrie

² For a good summary of the concepts of 'general' and 'special' revelation in reformed theology see Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1984 pp. 36-40

and Rahner, is based on the universality of 'Creational Revelation' at the expense of the particularity of 'Historical Revelation'. Such a view demands also the universality of (saving) faith which arises from and is a product of the transcendental experience of the Revelation of the immanence of God in creation. In Macquarrie's case, it appears that the dynamic of this universal faith is 'ontological recognition'. In Rahner's case faith is the intrinsic reality which necessarily results from the supernatural element in the constitution of human beings which (epistemologically) orientates them towards God; therefore faith is necessarily involved in the ordinary as well as the transcendental, epistemic experience. The presupposition of this thesis, in this respect, is that saving faith (meaning the faith through which sinners are justified; as discussed by Paul in Romans chapter 5 et al) is a product of some form of synthesis of 'Creational' and 'Historical' revelation. Our contention here is that Macquarrie and Rahner are, at worst, one sided and biased in favour of the Revelation of the immanence of God with only a quasi treatment of God's transcendence and, at best, vague and obscure in respect of the distinction between the two elements.

This universal, implicit faith aspect is developed by Macquarrie from its genesis at the revelatory encounter of individuals with Holy Being, who is recognised as the depth aspect in the beings (symbols) of the experience, and through particular hermeneutic activity in respect of the phenomenon of the particular existential symbols of the encounter. Religious diversity is understood, in this way, as arising, primarily, from the diversity of symbols; and the divergent theologies, which follow, from the particular, ongoing hermeneutic activity. In Rahner's case implicit faith, which he terms 'anonymous faith', is the basis for his concept of 'anonymous Christianity'; upon which his own validation of the authenticity of religious pluralism is grounded.

The similarity of context, namely that of an anthropocentric and ontological nature, in which the theologies of Macquarrie and Rahner are housed, throws the contrast of their differing theological developments into sharp focus. Such a contrast is itself a bright light through which the two positions are more clearly seen. It has been thought helpful to juxtapose the relevant aspects of the two views, in schematic form (see fig. 1, page 6). The schematic also indicates the structure of the thesis.

It should be noted that this thesis is primarily an analysis of text of the applicable writings of John Macquarrie and Karl Rahner.

It should be understood that in view of the fact that John Macquarrie is, in every way, an eclectic and therefore often wholeheartedly adopts the position of certain others, for example Rudolf Otto, in respect of particular aspects of his own theology, it has been considered to be admissible to include analysis of the works of those others in direct elucidation of Macquarrie's own position.

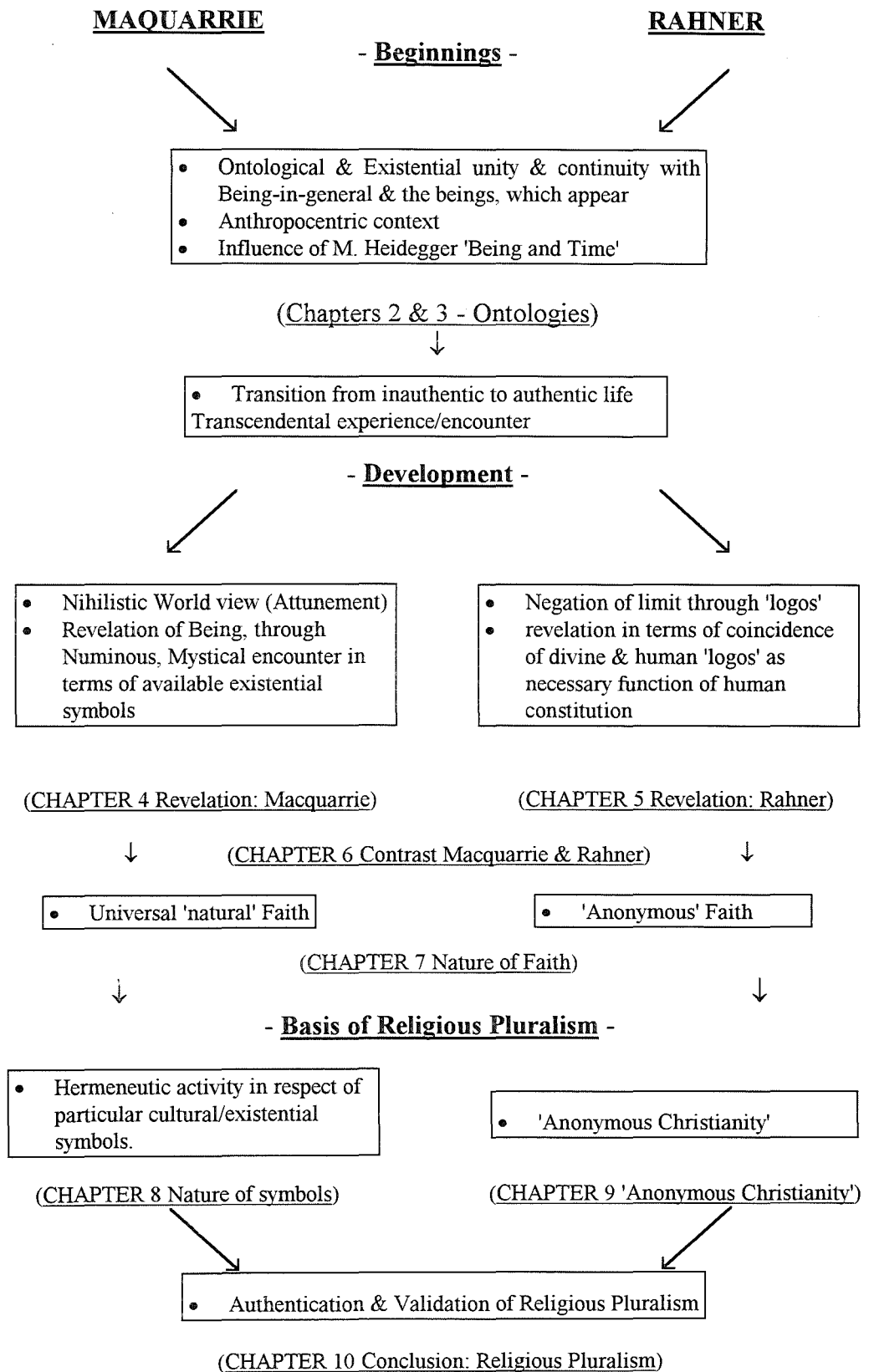
The inclusive form of the term 'man' for 'man and woman' is intended throughout the thesis.

The capital "B" is used for 'B'eing when the term is used for being-in-general or Holy Being/God.

BRIEF OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapters 2 and 3 are outlines of the ontologies of Macquarrie and Rahner respectively, as relevant to the subject of the thesis. They serve as a backdrop and ground of and for their understandings of the Self-Revelation of God; which are dealt with in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 6 is an analysis of the contrast between Macquarrie and Rahner's view of Revelation, in terms of the elements which are considered to be vital. Chapter 7 is a study into their respective understandings of 'faith' which is the result of Revelation. Chapter 8 is on Macquarrie's development of the concept of 'symbol' as relevant to the revelatory encounter and chapter 9 is on Rahner's development of 'anonymous Christianity'. Chapter 10 serves as the conclusion to the thesis and deals more explicitly with religious pluralism; in Christological perspective.

FIGURE 1: Juxtaposition of the relevant positions of Macquarrie and Rahner.



John Macquarrie's Existential Ontology

2.1 The Meaning of Being

There are really two primary metaphysical questions which act as the basic structural elements of Macquarrie's ontology. They are: 'What is the meaning of Being?' and 'What is the meaning of the term God?' The relationship between the two questions could be described, in Macquarrie's understanding, as the nature of religion. The major formative influences on Macquarrie, in respect of his ontology, are Martin Heidegger and Paul Tillich.

2.1.1 What is the Meaning of Being?

a) The Quest for Meaning

Macquarrie considers that the question of the meaning of Being is not a detached, metaphysical, speculative question, essentially because it arises, he argues, in an existential context. The existential context, which of course is anthropocentric, takes on an ontological focus in respect of the primary ontological dialectic of Being and Nothing¹. Macquarrie states: "We began by asking about ourselves, and it was the confrontation with nothingness in our

¹ Being presents itself to human awareness through contrast with nothing. Such a contrast arises in the form of a metaphysical question, such as Leibnitz famous question: "Why are there entities at all, and not just nothing?" Macquarrie discusses this particular question in *Twentieth Century Religious Thought*, SCM Press, 2nd imp. 1967, p.355

own existence that opened our eyes to being which contrasts with nothing. So our question about being ... is an existential question in the sense that it is asked by someone who is involved in the question of being. Man ... cannot understand his own being until he has an understanding of being as such. Thus the existential question leads into the ontological question"².

As Heidegger would argue, man is already in the world, he is a being-in-the-world, being-in is the primary structure of his existence:

"'Being-in' is thus the formal existential expression for the being of Dasein, which has being-in-the-World as its essential state."³

Since man has being-in-the-world as his essential state, 'being' is the primary, essential issue for him. The quest for meaning, then, is fundamentally ontological, but it is existentially oriented, therefore we must look to the appearances of man's existence to behold Being. The quest to understand Being is, according to Macquarrie, therefore primarily phenomenological and not metaphysical. His view lies in sharp contrast with that of Karl Rahner who states: "Our intention is to produce an analytic of the being of man. Metaphysics is, however, the question about the being of that which is, in the way that it is. It is the question; 'What is the meaning of being?' This is the way in which metaphysics has always been conceived and still is understood today, although under various disguises. Man, in his thought or action can never halt at this or that point. He wants to know what everything is, especially in the unity in which all is always present to him. He enquires into the ultimate reasons; into the final cause of all reality and to the extent that he recognises each separate thing as existing, and ever being brought face to face with himself in such knowledge, he enquires into the being of all that exists. He practises metaphysics."⁴

² *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie Revised ed, SCM Press 1988, p.107

³ *Being and Time* - Martin Heidegger - Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1967, Trans. J Macquarrie & E Robinson, p.80

⁴ *Hearers of The Word* - Karl Rahner - Sheed & Ward, Revised J B Metz 1969, Trans. R Walls, p.33

The divergence of the methodologies of Macquarrie and Rahner is seen at this fundamental common root of their respective theological developments. This contrast is taken as a major structural element of this thesis.

b) The 'via negationis'

To return to the question concerning the meaning of Being, Macquarrie begins his answer with a 'via negationis'; he says what Being is not. His 'via negationis' has five points, which are:

1. Being is itself not something that is. (Being is not itself a being)
2. Being is not a property.
3. Being is not a class.
4. Being is not a substance.
5. Being is not the 'absolute'.

Through this route Macquarrie makes a statement about Being as transcending the existence of the beings which appear. Being is itself not a thing, it is not a property of things, it is not a class of things, neither is it an absolute 'thing', it does not exist as things exist. It is that which transcends the existence and thinghood of the beings. It must be understood that Macquarrie's 'negative way' is essentially the first step toward a positive statement in respect of the nature of Being in general. This beginning sets the tone for Macquarrie's doctrine of God whereby He is conceived as a mysterious transcendence which appears in terms of the beingness of the beings.

Heidegger asserts that: "being is a transcendentia pure and simple"⁵. Yet there is no denying that Being, itself, strikes man's consciousness with metaphysical force. The nature of the force is the powerful sense of continuity between Being and 'the beings'. The biting edge of the force is however the union of difference and similarity, there is a dialectical reality to be faced in that Being is in some way present in the beings and indeed in all of created being, Being is thus, the same as the beings but at the same time it is utterly different. It is really and truly immanent and at the same time wholly other and absolutely transcendent. Macquarrie states:

⁵ *Being and Time* - Martin Heidegger, p.38

"The difference can be brought out in another way by setting out to enumerate the beings to be found within the world, as stars, mountains, rivers, animals, trees and so on. Clearly one would never add 'being' to such a list; for this is not another being and does not belong in the same category ... as the items listed. Yet in some way, being is common to all the beings."⁶

The question arises 'What is it that Being has in common with all of 'the beings'? The logical step is to think of it as some property or other of 'the beings'. In dispelling this notion Macquarrie lists some of the items of the category of such a property: "Whiteness, hardness, roundness and the like"⁷. Being can be clearly seen not to fit at all into this category. Indeed the ontological argument for the existence of God fails, as refuted by Kant, on this very point⁸.

There is something of the force of the continuity of Being and 'the beings' in Rom 1.20: "Ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature, namely, His eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made." (It is required to substitute the term 'Being' for the deity in this case, however there is no strain of an imposition in this respect as it will be seen that Macquarrie, with certain qualifications, in effect, considers 'Being' and 'God' to be one and the same). The force behind this text is that there is some kind of cognitive continuity between the Creator and the 'conscious' beings who have been created⁹. We contend that it is precisely the nature of this force of continuity which gives rise to the design arguments for the existence of God. The precise character of the force is seen in the argument of Cleanthes in David Hume's "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion". Cleanthes argues that the Being of the world strikes the mind with an immediate impression "with a force like that of sensation"¹⁰.

The immediate human impulse in respect of the precise form of the beings which appear is that of continuity between an intelligent Creator and the beings

⁶ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie, p.108

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Critique of Pure Reason* - Immanuel Kant, B628 (This is, of course, Macquarrie's second point in his 'via negationis')

⁹ This point of coincidence is more clearly seen in Rahner's position in Chapter 3.

¹⁰ *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* - David Hume, p.191

of His Creation. The dynamic of this continuity is therefore 'Creation' as perceived through the inner logic of its form. The example used by Cleanthes is that of the eye, with all of its complexity. The inner logic of the form of the eye strikes human consciousness with the immediate impression that it must have had an intelligent Designer. The coincident medium of Creator and creature is therefore the design itself.

Macquarrie's thinking in this respect is consistent with these two aspects, he is not primarily concerned however with form on matter but rather with the mystical presence and manifestation of Being itself in sharp contrast with nothing. Being itself or Being-in-General is therefore the common factor.

c) The distinctions

Following from his 'via negationis', Macquarrie offers what he calls a more positive characterisation of Being, by a consideration of the distinctions which exist in respect of its nature both in ordinary language and in the history of philosophy. The distinctions are; Being and Becoming, Being and Appearance and Being and the Ideal. His reason for this consideration is grounded in the fact of Being's universality therefore our analysis is preceded by a consideration of this universality. Macquarrie quotes Thomas Aquinas as follows:

"That which first falls under apprehension is 'being', the understanding of which is included in all things whatsoever a man apprehends."¹¹

This epistemological statement of the universality of being corresponds to Rahner's claim that: "our (universal) pre-concept or pre-knowledge of 'Being in General' is the condition for the possibility of all other human knowledge."¹² Macquarrie, as usual, asks the pertinent question:

"If the understanding of being is so universal why is it so difficult to give an account of it?"¹³

¹¹ *Summa Theologiae* - Thomas Aquinas, 1a,2ae,94. Quoted by Macquarrie in *Principles of Christian Theology*, p.110

¹² See below; Chapter 5

¹³ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie, p.110

His answer is that Being is too close to be seen. Its very nature as a universal, ever present and indeed immanent reality, allows it to remain hidden from human awareness. This is rather like the Pythagorean idea of the singing of the planets and the construction of the universe in terms of musical harmony. We cannot hear the music however because it has always been sounding in perfect harmony, therefore our ears cannot pick it out and we have no way of distinguishing it. To hear it, it would be necessary for it to stop sounding and then start up again¹⁴. Similarly, in respect of Being, for man to become aware of it he must contrast it with nothingness.

This universality in its immediacy and closeness cannot be readily seen, the eye that is looking cannot see itself, unless it beholds its image in a mirror. Nothingness is the mirror of being, through which the beings come to awareness. However there is another approach to this; the mind that thinks, is a bivalent reality in that it necessarily thinks two things at once. It thinks about the object of its thought and it thinks that it exists. Descartes' "cogito ergo sum" is amongst other things, a statement about this kind of bivalence. The eye then, if it could think, would think 'what' it saw and would think 'that' it saw. In respect of awareness of Being, human beings think that they have-being and they think that there 'is' Being. It is necessary to hold the concept that there 'is' being, before they can meaningfully think that there is 'having-being'. Being 'is' then, is the necessary universal pre-concept to the comprehension of having-being. This factor is the ground spring of metaphysical enquiry. The metaphysical quest proceeds on the emotive force of this bivalence of primary

¹⁴ This Pythagorean doctrine is referred to as "The harmony of the spheres" which many philosophers have cited, eg. Aristotle in his 'Metaphysics'. William Shakespeare brings out the idea that because of the nature of human hearing, we cannot hear it:

 "..soft stillness and the night
 Becomes the touches of sweet harmony.
 There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
 But in his motion like an angel sings,
 Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
 such harmony is in immortal souls;
 But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
 Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."
 (Merchant of Venice, Act 5, Sc.1)

and relative awareness¹⁵, therefore we do not completely agree with Professor Macquarrie that Being is too close for us to be aware of it, indeed it is the awareness of Being itself which differentiates human beings from other conscious beings.

i) Distinction 1 - 'Being and becoming'

At the outset of our discussion of this distinction it should be stated that Macquarrie's consideration of 'becoming' as a vital part of the essence of 'being' is concerned essentially with the idea of process in respect of God's Being, in and through the beings He creates. We are dealing then with the concept of God as a form of 'Creativity' and indeed as an ever ongoing 'Event'.

The influences on Macquarrie's thinking in this respect are principally, Martin Heidegger, Rudolf Bultmann, A N Whitehead, and the Greek philosophers (Plato and Plotinus). Lesser influences here would be Leibnitz and Hegel. The concept of this distinction is introduced and discussed in 'Principles of Christian Theology'¹⁶, where we see the influence of Greek Philosophy, and developed in "In Search of Deity" under the headings of 'The One and The Many'¹⁷ and 'Twentieth century¹: Whitehead'¹⁸.

The idea of God as a kind of 'Creative Process' is a key concept in respect of Macquarrie's theology and analysis of his thinking in this respect produces valuable insights into his view of revelation and of course of his doctrine of God.

In Greek philosophy 'becoming' lies somewhere between 'being' and 'nothing'. ('being and nothing' is the underlying dialectic in the discussion of the three

¹⁵ This factor is, as will be seen, the basis of Rahner's epistemology. Cp. also in this respect Calvin's statement: "No man can survey himself without forthwith turning his thoughts towards the God in which he lives and moves". *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Trans H Beveridge, W B Eerdmans 1981, vol 1 Book First, p.37

¹⁶ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie. p.111f

¹⁷ *In search of Deity* - John Macquarrie, SCM Press 1984, p.174f

¹⁸ Op. Cit. pp.139-152

pairs of distinctive opposites, and it will be seen that it is the central factor in the conversion of man from inauthentic to authentic life).

"Whatever becomes, must, in some sense already be; yet the fact that it is becoming implies that it is not yet what it is on the way to becoming"¹⁹

Macquarrie quotes Plato (rather out of the context of Plato's own argument):

"If there be anything so constituted at the same time to be and not to be, must it not lie somewhere between pure being and pure nothing?"²⁰

He cites Hegel in respect of the concept of 'pure being':

"Pure being simple and indeterminate is just nothing."²¹

The notion, which Macquarrie is at pains to get across here, is that God is not a static undifferentiated unity. He says: "Being cannot be identified with a static, changeless, undifferentiated ultimate"²². If this be so then in some way being must be becoming, in terms of some mode of differentiation. Further: "Becoming is unintelligible apart from some conception of being, in which becoming is included."²³ As a corrective, however, he adds, "a mere flux would be chaos, as would a sheer pluralism ... there can be no intelligibility without some unity and stability of being."²⁴ The becomingness of Being therefore is not a mere flux or sheer pluralism but the becomingness of some basic unity. This essential unity of Being Macquarrie (and Whitehead) term "Primordial Being". The becomingness of being, Macquarrie terms "Expressive Being" and "Unitive Being". Whitehead uses only one term, which

¹⁹ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie, p.111

²⁰ Ibid. (& Plato's *The Republic* - J M Dent & Sons 1976, Trans. A D Lindsay, Bk5:477, p.170)

²¹ Ibid (& *The Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* - G.W.F Hegel, Logic section 87)

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

is, "Consequent being".²⁵ Macquarrie, not uncritically, develops Whitehead's di-polar concept into a Trinitarian concept in terms of the three modes of Being (as termed above).

Reality is a process of events which can be called 'becoming'. In Whitehead's thinking the events are the atoms of the cosmos. Each atom is a point in the process which moves from the past event by incorporating new possibilities in to a new event which in turn contributes to the future event. This process view is of the very nature of creativity. The fundamental unit of this creative process is not the solid particle but the event. Macquarrie states:

(Whitehead) ... "boldly posits that even in a molecule or an atom, perhaps even in an electron or any other sub-atomic event, there is a mental as well as a physical pole. This doctrine of the omnipresence of mind ... is sometimes called 'Panpsychism'"²⁶.

The events are also called occasions. The occasions are the nature of the diversity which, as it were, flows from a comprehensive unity. The occasions derive their character in respect of this (whole) comprehensive unity but at the same time they in turn contribute to the precise being and nature of the (whole) unity at any given point in the process. The unity is always therefore in a state of changing diversity. It is itself the creative principle in its process of becoming. This creative principle is the coherence which allows intelligibility. It must be said, though, that 'Being' is in this way understood to be a process of events, which are of the nature of the becomingness of itself. Thus the One is at the same time the many and the many are at the same time the One. All, are of the nature of 'event'. The events themselves, according to Whitehead, endure only for a very short time. They come into being, contributing to the precise nature of its wholeness for the short time, and then they perish. They perish because in themselves they are changeless. Change comes only in the transition from one event (or occasion) to another.

If being consists of a process of perishing events, just where does the principle of unity lie? In Whitehead the unity is in terms of the di-polar concept (of

²⁵ More accurately Whitehead talks of two natures of God which are His 'primordial' nature and His 'consequent' nature. Macquarrie develops this di-polar concept into a trinitarian articulation of the modes of Being.

²⁶ *In Search of Deity* - John Macquarrie, p.143

God's existence). God, in His 'Primordial', eternal, absolute nature, as mind, contributes the novel aims or possibilities to each succeeding event. God in His 'Consequent', changing and developing nature, physically experiences the process. This experience of God involves a real union of the two natures of the mental and the physical therefore the cosmic process is God Himself. (This 'philosophy of organism' involves equally the elements of mind and corporeality, therefore Whitehead avoids the extremes of both idealism and materialism). The unity, then, is the precise relation of Being and becomingness; each are contained in the other. The relation is the how in the statement 'how being becomes', and Being itself is the very dynamism of the dynamic beings. Being is then the dynamic creativity. In this light it can be seen that Being is a dialectical reality. Macquarrie makes the case in "In Search of Deity" for a 'dialectical theism' which seeks to exploit and express this dialectic in terms of a doctrine of God.

Further insight into the nature of Being as creativity can be gained through the thinking of Yeow Choo Lak, especially in his article in 'Being and Truth' (Macquarrie's Festschrift).

"Being's creativity implies emergence and growth which in turn suggests constancy as well as advance or novelty or further growing. For example, the pulsating vitality and activity of a rose bush can be said to 'consummate' in the first bud. In it, the vitality and activity achieve a degree of self-blossoming emergence or unfolding that may be reckoned as attained, objectified, permanent, and constant. Yet the objectified constancy is not static. Rather the assured constancy is viable and ongoing to the extent that it is already being surpassed by its own dynamism. The assured attainment then becomes present in another process of becoming, for example, the bud which is the culmination of the rose-bush's process of becoming, gets caught up in the process of becoming a flower."²⁷

Choo Lak goes on to say that: "Constancy and further growing are correlative components of a single activity, deriving from and contributing to the unified

²⁷ *Being and Truth* - Ed. Alister Kee & Eugene T Long, SCM Press 1986, (John Macquarrie's Festschrift) Article by Yeow Choo Lak p.113 (The illustration is borrowed from Heidegger. Heidegger and Whitehead come remarkably close in their emphasis on the ongoing character of entities; see Yeow Choo Lak's notes 6 & 7)

constitution of the ongoing activity."²⁸ Constancy and surpassment are the two vital elements of process, constancy serves surpassment because it has achieved attainment or satisfaction which is the basis for further achievements. Surpassment serves constancy by preserving its interior integrity in the process of growth. Becomingness is being's surpassing of itself in seeking to become stronger and to become more. Being in becoming is endeavouring to achieve more being, therefore creativity of being is in effect always an overpowering of itself to become more.

Following this logic it can be seen that being is never complete. There is, so to speak, always a gap before it which it must reach out to, and indeed fill, only to find another gap before it, ad infinitum. The nature of surpassment can in this sense be readily conceded as rightly described. However the nature of constancy is not so clearly dealt with. It seems to us that the term constancy as described here would be better filled by the term continuity. Continuity as well as constancy, however, requires an immutable ground of being. A basis of being which does not change, therefore the fundamental and indeed essential principle of being is a constant. This can be well illustrated again with reference to Heidegger's rose bush. The principle of the rose bush's being is that it is firmly planted in the constancy of the ground. Therefore whilst the rose plant develops into a more beingful expression of its primary nature, it can only do so because of the earth of constancy in which it is planted. This earth makes up the nature of an unchanging ground of Being of the rose - stem, bud and flower. Becoming, seen in this light, must be firmly rooted in a being which is not becoming but in fact is quite static. In turning the analogy around in this way Being must precede existence and not vice versa. (Macquarrie never concedes this possibility.)

Choo Lak says further of Being's creativity:

"Being's creativity is understood as the emergent and abiding presence by virtue of which beings become unconcealed or brought into existence. Being's creativity is the power that holds sway in and through the world of entities."²⁹

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Op. Cit. p.114

We come then to the concept of presence or appearance. The appearance of the entities, the beings in which Being in becoming is creatively present. This is what Macquarrie terms the "presence and manifestation" of Being, in 'the beings'. It appears that Macquarrie seeks, through his treatment of this distinction, to convey the idea that Being is some form of dynamic creativity which expresses itself in and through the diversity of 'the beings'.

ii) Distinction 2 - ' Being and Appearance'

This distinction is between what actually 'is' and what 'appears' to be. The example which Macquarrie gives by way of illustration, is also given by Descartes, with respect to the same issue. It is of the stick which is actually straight but appears bent in water. Descartes was concerned with the trustworthiness of sensorial faculties in respect of an authentic epistemology. Macquarrie, however is not concerned with epistemology but rather with the distinction of appearance and reality. He states:

"Just as in the case of becoming, so with appearing, that which appears is (for nothing can appear unless it in some sense is) and yet it may not be what it purports to be. Appearing too belongs within being as well as being distinguished from being ... being which did not appear could not be distinguished from nothing. Being is nothing apart from its appearances. So by 'being' we most decidedly do not mean some invisible, intangible realm that is supposed to lie back of the appearances, as a world of 'things-in-themselves'. Being gives itself in and through its appearances and nowhere else. However it can also be screened by its appearance ... where appearance misleads. Our aim must always be to see the appearances in their being; and this does not mean seeing something else but rather seeing the appearances as they are, in depth, as it were, as bearers of the presence and manifestation of being."³⁰

Macquarrie is not primarily concerned (as was Descartes) with the integrity of that which appears to be (i.e. real or false) but with the depth aspect of the appearance of Being itself. His point here is that Being only exists in and through the actual beings which appear. This strikes one as a radically immanentist viewpoint. He states: "Being is nothing apart from its

³⁰ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie, p.112

appearances."³¹ At first glance this passage seems to leave no room for any real idea of transcendence. However, Macquarrie does have an idea of the transcendence of Being (God), which is brilliantly conceived. The key to Macquarrie's thinking in this respect is given by his understanding of God as nothing or better no-thing. To say that God is nothing is to recognise that He does not exist as we do, that is, as an entity. God in His existence is outside of our ordinary existence, indeed He has 'more than' existence, and He is "more than being"³². Indeed the nature of Being is 'wholly other' with respect to the beings, yet at the same time it is completely immanent:

"Being, which is transcendent of every particular being, and is thus 'wholly other' and the furthest from us, is also the closest, because it is present in every being including our own being."³³

Macquarrie's argument is that Being only 'gives itself' in and through the appearances. The givenness is in terms of the appearances, and therefore the givenness is always an immanent and not a transcendent reality. The beings know nothing of Being apart from its givenness, in which they participate. Therefore if Being-itself is to be known, human beings must look with new eyes and more deeply into the appearances of Being in the beings. Macquarrie is arguing that we must come to see the ultimate in the finitude; we must see more deeply in to the beings which appear to us, in effect seeing them as bearers of the presence and manifestation of Being itself.

In terms of the idea of 'presence' of Being, Macquarrie proposes that the term 'participation' might also be used. He states:

"Nothing can be unless it participates in being ... Participation stresses the presence of being - its openness and accessibility of being in the beings - as over and against its distance and transcendence as the mysterious act or energy of letting-be."³⁴

³¹ Op. Cit. p.112

³² *In Search of Deity* - John Macquarrie, p.172. The term 'more than being' is taken from Johannes Scotus Eriugena. It is his name for God; See also p.90

³³ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie, p.114

³⁴ Ibid.

It can be said, in view of this 'participation' of the beings in Being, that all beings are, to some degree, an incarnation of Being itself. Being is incarnate in the beings, especially human beings, and therefore accessible within the sphere of ordinary appearances (which is the sphere of human perception). This is particularly so, and indeed is demanded, by the concept of being as becoming, discussed above. The participation could be seen to be the becomingness of being, the 'presence' then, is the appearance of the becomingness of being. Concerning Macquarrie's term 'manifestation', he states:

"The expression 'manifestation' refers to being's opening itself in the beings. The manifestation of being is possible always and everywhere, for being is present in every particular being ... But the manifestation may be, most of the time, latent, for we have seen that for the most part we do not notice being, but concern ourselves only with the beings and only in revelatory experiences, whether primordial or repetitive does being itself take the initiative and communicate itself."³⁵

The idea here is that Being in its immanence is always manifest in the beings. Its a question then of recognition. Revelation in this sense is a coming to the place of recognition of something that is already and always there (present). In coming to recognise the presence of being as manifest in the beings (and nowhere else) nothing objectively new occurs. The new reality is born through a new self-understanding which such recognition (for the first time) brings.

We have, then, both the immanence and transcendence of 'Being', present to us, in the actually appeared beings. The problem, which has to do with the nature of appearance, is that it is extremely difficult to distinguish the two. Indeed the ability to distinguish (as we shall see) comes only with the force of revelation. In any event all that is available and accessible to man are the appearances. According to Macquarrie there is no Being outside of the appearances. But with the appearances there is always a dichotomy. The question of the appearances is well put by F H Bradley:

"We have got ... reality on one side and our appearances on the other, and we are naturally led to enquire about their connexion. Are they related, the one to the other, or not? If they are related, and if in any way the appearances are made the adjectives of reality,

³⁵ Ibid.

then the 'thing' has become qualified by them. It is qualified but, on what principle?"³⁶

If we substitute the term Being for reality, which we think the nature of Bradley's argument would allow, (it must be noted that Bradley thinks of 'reality' and 'the absolute' as constituting a unity) then Being and appearances according to Bradley are poles apart. If there is a relation, he says, and if the appearances are a real description of reality (Being) then the thing in itself (being in itself) is fully qualified by them. Yet Bradley seeks further, to the precise relation between reality and appearance, and it is clear that he would not be satisfied by Whitehead's concept of the relation of the 'Primordial nature' and the 'consequent nature' of Being, nor indeed the relation illustrated by Heidegger's rose bush. Bradley's whole argument is based on the distinction between what appears and what is real. However he does concede that reality is not something else which is unable to appear:

"We found that reality was not the appearances, and that result must hold good; but, on the other hand, reality is certainly not something else which is unable to appear. For that is sheer self-contradiction."³⁷

Macquarrie's concept of 'participation' (above) states that: "nothing can be unless it participates in being." Participation is the key to the relational problem for Macquarrie. Bradley has a similar notion. His term which corresponds with participation is "sentient experience". He states:

"Experience means something much the same as given and present fact ... to be real or even barely to exist, must be to fall within sentience. Sentient experience, in short, is reality, and what is not this is not real."³⁸

The real then, is nothing but sense experience. Experience is participation in the real, therefore it is itself the real. Further: "The Absolute holds all possible content in an individual experience, where no contradiction can remain."³⁹

³⁶ *Appearance and Reality* - F H Bradley, Oxford University Press, 9th imp. 1959, p.112

³⁷ Op. Cit. p.113

³⁸ Op. Cit. p.127

³⁹ Op. Cit. p.131

The absolute the real and the appearances come together in sentient experience, which is participation. It is worth continuing with Bradley a little further on this subject:

"There is but one Reality, and its 'being' consists in experience. In this one whole all appearances come together, and in coming together they, in various degrees, lose their distinctive natures. The essence of reality lies in the union and agreement of existence and content, and on the other side, appearance consists in the discrepancy between these two aspects. And Reality in the end belongs to nothing but the single Real."⁴⁰

Bradley is saying that the absolute is a singular whole of experience, and it is present in (and in a sense, alike) each of its special appearances; though present everywhere again in different values and degrees. He says in the same place: "Everything is experience and experience is One."⁴¹

A very powerful, though not unchallengeable, point is being made here: namely that being which (if it) exists outside of human perception is entirely irrelevant, in any immediate sense, to human existence. Reality, as far as human existents are concerned is their sentient experience of, and in, the beingness which appears. The ultimate can only be perceived in the (ordinary) appearances. To see the ultimate in 'the beings' is to see the beings 'in depth' or 'in a new dimension' as Macquarrie argues.

iii) Distinction 3 - 'Being and the Ideal'

This distinction, according to Macquarrie, is essentially the comparison between the way things are and the way they ought to be. This can be understood in various ways. (For instance, it can be understood morally, in respect of the actual condition of society against that which it ought to be.) Macquarrie claims that there is no absolute disjunction between Being, as immanent in the beings and the ideal:

⁴⁰ Op. Cit. p.405

⁴¹ Ibid.

"Rather the distinction seems to call attention to different levels, or perhaps, one should say, different degrees of plenitude, not so much in being itself, but in the manner in which being is present and manifest in the beings, or in the state of affairs which these beings constitute. It seems that the presence and manifestation of being can be impeded or distorted, and with such a state of affairs we contrast an 'ideal' condition in which the fullness of being can manifest itself in and through some particular being or group of beings."⁴²

It is clear that, for Macquarrie, the 'ideal' is not a transcendent quality but rather it is a matter of moral standard or degree in respect of a particular (human) being or group of (human) beings. The ideal could perhaps be defined in this light as; that perfection of a particular being or a group of beings through which Being itself could be perfectly manifest in all of its fullness. It follows that if Being is 'nowhere apart from the beings' it cannot be perfectly and fully manifest until an individual being or a society of beings develops to moral, and every other, perfection. (Macquarrie would of course agree that Jesus of Nazareth was the archetype man of such perfection; which, of course presupposes an adoptionist christology). Macquarrie concedes that the presence and manifestation of Being can be impeded or distorted in imperfect beings. Indeed if we sum up the nature of this distortion under the Biblical term 'sin'⁴³, Macquarrie states that:

"We agreed that sin is universal or in St Paul's words, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"; and that the consequences of sin are grievously disabling in human life."⁴⁴

It appears that, if sin is a universal condition, Being must await a moral evolution through which a being or group of beings reach perfection before it can itself be perfect or ideal. The great weakness here, which may indeed be evidence of a fallacy, is that before such an evolution takes place Being (or God) exists in a state of imperfection and is therefore imperfect. If God is at

⁴² *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie, p.112

⁴³ Macquarrie prefers the term disorder to sin; See *Principles of Christian Theology*, p.68, although he does agree that the term 'sin' is appropriate to religious language; See p.71 Compare also the Heideggerian concept of 'falling', in *Being and Time*, Div 1.5 sec 38 p.220, Heidegger equates fallenness with inauthentic Dasein. (Macquarrie cites this text)

⁴⁴ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie, p.259- Macquarrie's discussion concerning sin takes place over many texts; for his most explicit discussion see *Principles of Christian Theology*, pp.259-267

any moment imperfect, where does the tendency towards perfection exist whilst God is imperfect? It could only exist as God's desire to perfect Himself, which He achieved in Christ and the developing society which followed Him. The brute fact appears to be that since Christ no other (human) being has reached perfection therefore God remains imperfect in the present day world.

d) 'Letting Be' - Macquarrie's positive statement about Being.

Having outlined what Being is not, and then discussing Being in terms of three pairs of distinctions, it now falls on Macquarrie to say what Being is. Just what does he mean by the term 'Being'? Since Being does not fall within any of our usual categories of thought, "it must be regarded as strictly -incomparable-"⁴⁵. It is a transcendence, which must remain mysterious, therefore just what can be positively said about it? Can it be thought of as a kind of energy? Macquarrie states:

"Would these paradoxes be sorted out somewhat if we thought of being as a kind of energy that permits beings to be?"⁴⁶

However the term 'energy' is associated too much with physical force therefore Macquarrie prefers the term 'act':

"Act ... suggests a more highly organised energy, a unified energy which recalls the peculiar relation of being and becoming ... The expression which I prefer to use, however to point to the characteristic of being as the condition that there may be any particular beings is 'letting-be'. Being, strictly speaking, 'is' not; but 'lets-be'."⁴⁷

Being, to Macquarrie therefore, is a kind of energy, which is a certain quality of gracious action. This quality, Macquarrie names 'letting-be'. Otherwise put, letting-be is a form of creativity therefore it can be said that 'being' is creativity. This concept fits very well with the concepts of being in existential philosophy and process philosophy/theology as discussed above.

⁴⁵ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie, p.113

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

If we agree that being includes becoming, then letting-be lets being become. It is the nature of the creativity that empowers becoming. Since, to Macquarrie, as to other existentialists, existence precedes essence, then clearly the letting-be creativity is at work in the dynamic of the translation from existence to being. With this thought we are at the very root of Macquarrie's existential-ontology. To quote Yeow Choo Lak again:

"Macquarrie's favourite way of explaining the transition from existence to being is by using Being's creativity, which empowers man to enjoy the maximal range of his being. ... Therefore man finds his full existence by living within the wider being which supports and complements his 'meagre' heritage of being. Thus there are resources beyond man's human resources."⁴⁸

And:

"Earlier we mentioned Being's letting-be, contending that the best way to describe being is to say that it lets-be rather than to say that it 'is'. To let-be is to enable or empower beings to be, or to come into existence, or to become. In a word: creativity."⁴⁹

Being then, is the dynamism of dynamic beings, it is the very nature and power of becomingness. This dynamism or energy of letting-be is itself a transcendent reality which is, as such, outside of human resources. Further, in itself it is a mystery which cannot be articulated, it can only be participated in. That which can be articulated is the nature and ethos of the participation itself, in terms of the beings which participate. 'Letting-be' is gift-like. The nature of the gift appears to be of a passive quality rather like permission to be or non-interference-with, however, Macquarrie does not mean this passive sense:

"By 'letting-be' I mean something much more positive and active, as enabling to be, empowering to be or bringing into being."⁵⁰

Even so, there is the notion of freedom in the term rather than determinism. The empowering to be does not seem to interfere with the free existence of the particular being. Letting-be suggests a gracious creativity which sets free.

⁴⁸ *Being and Truth* - Yeow Choo Lak's article, p.112

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ *Principles of Christian Theology* - p.113

Therefore the letting-be serves the beings and not the other way around. This is of the nature of love. Can we say that 'letting-be' is love? According to Macquarrie this depends on the disposition of the particular (human) being:

"The religious man experiences the 'letting-be' of being as being's own self giving, the grace of being which pours itself out and confers being ... but there are also men, like the character in Sartre's novel, who experience being as alien and so its letting them be is like the imposition of a burden."⁵¹

There are two senses to 'letting-be' in human experience, which correspond to Grace and judgement. The two senses are also seen in Heidegger's terms of authentic and inauthentic being. The point here is that it is grace, and not primarily wrath, which constitutes the judgement. Judgement is in terms of the inauthentic disposition which Being also lets-be. The burden then, is not imposed from outside but is a negative product of the freedom to be. Freedom to such men is a curse and not a blessing.

2.1.2 - What is the Meaning of the Term God ?

a) The relationship of the term 'Being' and the term 'God'

It is immediately noticeable that when Macquarrie comes to discuss God in relation to Being he switches from the realm of the ontological reality of 'God' to that of human language about Him and about Being. The discussion changes key, as it were, from ontic reality to human conceptuality and its expression. Primarily, then, Macquarrie does not discuss the relationship of God and Being, but rather the relationship of the words 'God' and 'Being'. Again the concern is with who or what God is 'to us', and therefore with His immanence, and not His transcendence. Macquarrie considers that Being-in-general or the Being behind the beings is in fact the God who is immanent (present and manifest) in the beings which appear. God, then, is Being-in-general and the term God is no more than a descriptive name for Being-in-general. Indeed the term God is used for Being-in-general only by those of a

⁵¹ Op. Cit. p.114

religious disposition. The primordial reality as it appears as present and manifest in the beings is Being-itself; the general name for Being-itself, which is 'God', is applied only through the attitude of faith. God, therefore, is a subjective term for the objective reality of Being, which is essentially a categorial heading, a key term for those of a particular attitude to life:

"To use the word 'God' means that one has taken up a certain attitude towards being, namely the attitude of faith."⁵²

The term 'God', then, does designate 'Being' but only to those of the religious attitude of faith. The words 'God' and 'Being' are not universally used as synonymous; it follows that those of a religious attitude would use the term 'God' and those who are not of a religious disposition would use the term 'Being'.

'Being' is a neutral term but 'God' is not, and according to Macquarrie there are important existential connotations of value, commitment, worship, and so on associated with the term 'God'. God, then, is the word used for Being by those who have an attitude of faith towards it/Him, who indeed worship it/Him and are committed in a particular existential disposition towards it/Him. Such religious persons revere Being as Holy. Therefore Macquarrie can say that the term 'God' is synonymous with the term 'Holy Being'.⁵³ The term 'Holy' sums up all that is involved in the attitude of faith. In effect God is a qualifying term in respect of 'Being' for those of a religious disposition. The objective reality is summed up by the term 'Being', human conceptuality in and through a particular emotional state expresses this attitude towards being, in human language, by the word 'God'. The term for the objective reality is 'Being' and the term for the human disposition towards the objective reality is 'God'.

What we are essentially concerned with here is human language about Being. In the realm of religion this translates to language about God, which is theological language. 'Being', however, and not 'God', is the existent objective referent of theological language. Again, Being is the objective referent which subjectively is thought of (understood) in the terms 'alien' or 'God'. The terms 'alien' and 'God' exist as descriptive names for being in respect of human

⁵² Op. Cit. p.115

⁵³ Ibid.

emotional states and attitudes. The linguistic term 'God' has to do with the attitude and state which allows one to perceive a 'depth dimension' in 'Being'. This depth dimension is what Macquarrie means by 'Holy'. The depth of 'ultimate' Being in the ordinary beings, comes together with the human disposition or "affective state"⁵⁴ to form a unity, therefore we may call the 'depth dimension' 'God' (we mean here that the character of the 'depth dimension' is seen in the particular human, perceptive attitude. Therefore the depth dimension is always the subject and not the object of human consciousness). If however, we were to think of the depth dimension in the particular (human) being, as constituting the presence and manifestation of God in that being, then we could think of it in objective terms as the divine image in man. If we do consider these two terms as being synonymous, and we might well do so, then the 'depth dimension' in the beings is a valid reflection of the essential Being of God Himself, but it is not the essential Being of God Himself.

b) Religious language

'God' is the key term of religious language, so much so that all of theology is really only talking around this term. Talking about God arises from religious language as a whole which in turn arises from the kind of faith attitude discussed above. This attitude, Macquarrie describes as comprising of affective states or moods, principally the mood of angst. That which is disclosed through this and other moods, (not excluding sensuous intuition) can be articulated in words. Such articulation is, in effect the form and content of religious language. The mood of angst, when extreme, produces an awareness of the transient nature of the existence of personal beings in the world. Macquarrie states:

"Yet the very attainment of such an awareness is also a transcendence of mere transience, and it is the awakening of the quest for grace and meaning. This is the starting point for religious language and, a fortiori, for theological language."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Heideggerian term

⁵⁵ *God Talk* - John Macquarrie, SCM Press 1967, p.80

We shall see later that this particular awareness, in respect of the human disposition towards Being, takes on the proportions of the revelation of Being (God) to some men, producing in them a radically new disposition which Macquarrie terms 'Authentic life'. The revelation, which these particular recipients interpret in terms of the particular, essential symbols, of their particular life context (culture) finds articulation, embodiment and expression through the particular religious language which results from it.

Further, concerning the faith attitude which is the seed bed of religious language, Ian Ramsey's book: "Religious Language" is most helpful (cited by Macquarrie).⁵⁶ In "Religious Language", Ramsey refers to the religious attitude as 'discernment' and to discernment he adds 'commitment'. These terms are taken on board by Ramsey as borrowed from Joseph Butler and his book: "The Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed to the Constitution and Course of Nature." Ramsey expounds Butler:

"It is contrary to experience to suppose that 'gross bodies' are ourselves. Belief in immortality is thus founded in an awareness that as 'living agents' we are more than our public behaviour."⁵⁷

And Ramsey continues:

"Here, I suggest is the discernment without which no distinctive theology will ever be possible; a 'self awareness' that is more than 'body' awareness and not exhausted by spatio-temporal 'objects'. Such a discernment lies at the basis of religion ... without such 'depth'; without this which is 'unseen' no religion will be possible."⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Cited by Macquarrie in *God Talk*, p.18 et. al.

⁵⁷ *Religious language* - Ian T Ramsey, SCM Press 2nd imp 1957, p.15 - Ramsey cites: *The analogy of Religion* Conclusion to part 1, Found in the edition published by: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York 1961, pp.117-122, or in *The Works of Bishop Butler* - Ed. J H Bernard, Vol 2 sec 4

⁵⁸ Ibid.

And:

"Butler suggests that religion claims a) a fuller discernment, to which we respond with b) a total commitment ... discernment without an appropriate commitment is the worst of all religious vices."⁵⁹

Ramsey terms the 'religious attitude', which corresponds with Macquarrie's 'attitude towards being', a 'discernment-commitment'. The precise nature of this 'discernment-commitment' he brings out through various illustrations, as being the 'depth aspect' whereby the 'light dawns' the 'ice breaks' and the 'penny drops'.

"The situation is more than 'what's seen', it has taken on 'depth'; there is something akin to religious 'insight' 'discernment', 'vision'."⁶⁰

Ramsey is concerned with the situation whereby the particular attitude adopted evokes 'depth' which results in an awareness whereby the light dawns or the penny drops, as it were. This is what he means by 'discernment which produces disclosure'. This disclosure in turn produces religious commitment. "Religious commitment", states Ramsey, "is a response to something from outside us ... (it) is a commitment which we give up only at the cost of personal revolution"⁶¹. Clearly this depth evoking, disclosive attitude, which produces commitment, is set towards an objective reality, which to Ramsey is God. He quotes Jn 15:16 in respect of the initiative of this objective reality: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

What Ramsey seeks to draw out from his various illustrative examples is that religious language has an empirical basis. It arises from the union of the existential situation and the depth aspect of man's search for reality. Yet there is 'something from outside us', another initiative, therefore it appears that there are three elements which in union produce the awareness in the participant whereby 'the penny drops' and 'the light goes on'. The response to this revelation is religious commitment. Ramsey states:

⁵⁹ Op. Cit. p.18

⁶⁰ Op. Cit. p.20

⁶¹ Op. Cit. p.36

"There is now a personal revolution, the whole of one's life is altered, we are 'converted'." ⁶²

Ramsey sums up:

"So we see religious commitment as a total commitment to the whole universe; something in relation to which argument has only a very odd function; its purpose being to tell such a tale as evokes the 'insight' the 'discernment' from which the commitment follows as a response. Further religious commitment is something which is bound up with key words whose logic no doubt resembles that of the words which characterise personal loyalty ... (these are) key words suited to the whole job of living - 'Apex' words." ⁶³

Religious conversion and commitment are seen as being bound up with key words which serve as the structural pillars of religious language. Examples of such key terms are; 'Christ', 'Jesus of Nazareth', 'dead', 'risen' and 'ascended'. In comparison with ordinary language, religious language appears as 'logically odd'; it is an odd kind of language. There are logical peculiarities which appear to lack logical integrity. Essentially we are dealing with observational language which is specially qualified. Religious language has its foothold in phenomenology but refers to something beyond and transcendent; herein lies the root of its oddness. Clearly the key term 'God' falls into that category, in that it refers to the 'something else', which is discerned as the 'depth aspect'. It is the discernment of God which produces some sort of conversion, which produces total religious commitment. The term 'God' evokes a distinctive personal relationship of the human self and 'the beyond', which Macquarrie terms 'letting-be' or 'Holy Being'. The term God might, in Ramsey's terms, be a kind of intimate name for Being whereby the personal aspect is invoked.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Op. Cit. p.37

2.2 - Insights Into Macquarrie's ontology, in Heidegger and Tillich

2.2.1 - Heidegger on the question of the meaning of Being, and the concepts of 'Letting-be' and 'Moods'

a) The question of the meaning of Being

In 'Being and Time' Heidegger begins his enquiry into 'Being' by seeking to re-structure the question of Being itself. He states that: "today this question has been forgotten". The reason for this, and therefore the fault, lies with the Greeks:

"On the basis of the Greeks' initial contribution towards an interpretation of being, a dogma has been developed, which not only declares the question about the meaning of being to be superfluous, but sanctions its complete neglect. It is said that being is the most universal and the emptiest of concepts, as such it resists every attempt at definition. Nor does this most universal and hence indefinable of concepts require any definition, for every one uses it constantly and already understands what he means by it."⁶⁴

The three essential presuppositions of the ancient ontology of the Greeks are:

1. Being is the most universal.
2. The concept of Being is indefinable.
3. Being is of all concepts the one that is self evident.

Therefore enquiry into Being is unnecessary. The understanding of Being is already included in conceiving anything which one apprehends as an entity.

Heidegger argues that the universality of being is not that of a class or a genus therefore the term 'Being' does not define the realm of entities. Indeed, the universality of being transcends any universality of genus. Heidegger begins his enquiry by arguing that being is an utterly transcendent reality, its universality is not therefore of the order of this ordinary reality:

⁶⁴ *Being and Time* - Martin Heidegger, p.21

"Aristotle himself knew the unity of this transcendental 'universal', as a 'unity of analogy' in contrast to the multiplicity of the highest generic concepts applicable to things."⁶⁵

Since being is the most universal concept, of the order of utter transcendence, it is not the clearest concept but indeed the darkest. Being cannot be conceived as an entity and it cannot have the character of an entity:

"Being cannot be derived from higher concepts by definition, nor can it be presented through the lower ones... Thus we cannot apply to being the concept of definition as presented in traditional logic ... but this indefinability of being does not eliminate the question of its meaning - it demands that we look the question in the face."⁶⁶

What we cannot do is apply what Heidegger terms: "an average kind of intelligibility" in our attempt at understanding Being. There is implicit in the enquiry an 'a priori enigma', therefore being is not self evident, it is not 'intelligible without further ado'. The meaning of Being is still set in darkness. Heidegger's first task is to adequately frame the question of the meaning of Being. This is the fundamental question. He states:

"Enquiry as a kind of seeking, must be guided beforehand by what is sought. So the meaning of being must be already available to us in some way. We do not know what being means but even if we ask; What is Being? We keep within an understanding of the 'is'. Though we are unable conceptually to fix what that 'is' signifies. We do not even know the horizon in terms of which that meaning is to be grasped ... But this vague average understanding of Being is still a fact."⁷¹

We are considering the meaning of Being as being in some way accessible to us, yet it is entirely different, it is not in any way an entity in itself, therefore it must be exhibited in a way entirely of its own. That way must be essentially different from the way entities are discovered; its conception must be new and unique, however, since 'all is being' the way of conceiving it must lie in essential contrast with the means through which entities are commonly understood.

⁶⁵ Op. Cit. p.22

⁶⁶ Op. Cit. p.23

⁷¹ Op. Cit. p.42

What Heidegger is saying, in effect, is that whilst being is a-priori enigmatic because it is not an entity in itself but a 'transcendence', it is in some way understood through the entities. Here again we have a similar outline to that which has been referred to as 'the depth aspect' in the beings (by both Macquarrie and Ramsey). The transcendence of Being is only to be found in and through the particular beings. It is the ultimate dimension in the temporal ordinary beings (Heidegger refers to ordinary, inauthentic, existence as averageness and every-day-ness). The question now arises; which entity should be taken within which to seek being? For Heidegger there can only be one answer to this question:

"We are the enquirers ourselves ... We must make our (particular) entity - the enquirer - transparent in his own being ... The very asking of the question is the enquirer's mode of being ... This entity which each of us is in himself and which includes enquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote 'Dasein'." ⁷²

The question now translates; what is the Being of Dasein ?

Heidegger says of theology, in this respect:

"Theology is seeking a more primordial interpretation of man's being towards God, prescribed by the meaning of faith itself and remaining within it. It is slowly beginning to understand once more Luther's insight that the 'foundation' on which its system of dogma rests has not arisen from an inquiry in which faith is primary." ⁶⁷

Heidegger is proposing that the more primordial interpretation of man's being towards God is the anthropocentric ontological inquiry into Dasein (the having-being or existence of man himself). Here, we are at the root or starting point of both Macquarrie's and Rahner's theological development.

Heidegger states further on the subject:

"By understanding Dasein's ontico-ontological priority in this provisional manner, we have grounded our demonstration that the

⁷² Op. Cit. p.89

⁶⁷ Op. Cit. p.25

question of being is ontico-ontologically distinctive ... If to interpret the meaning becomes our task, Dasein is not only the primary entity to be interrogated, it is also that entity which already comports itself, in its being towards what we are asking about, when we ask this question. But in that case the question of being is nothing other than the radicalisation of an essential tendency-of-Being which belongs to Dasein itself - the pre-ontological understanding of Being."⁶⁸

Heidegger progresses from Being, to time, as he develops the meaning of Dasein; Dasein is 'temporality'; in this way 'time' becomes the horizon for all understanding of Being. Historically is the determining characteristic of Dasein;

"The question of the meaning of being must be carried through by explicating Dasein beforehand in its temporality and historicity."⁶⁹

Part of the explication is that the basic state of Dasein is being-in-the World. Being is always being-in; being-in-the-World is the state in which Dasein operates, pre-eminently (in inauthentic life) in the mode of 'every-dayness'. However, being is also always 'outside':

"When Dasein directs itself towards something and grasps it, it does not somehow get out of an inner sphere in which it has been proximally encapsulated, but its primary kind of Being is such that it is always "outside" alongside entities which it encounters and which belong to a world already discovered."⁷⁰

This state (essential structure) of Dasein as being-in-the-World in terms of, and in identity with, the other entities of the world, and of course other Daseins, results in the affective state of 'Concern'. The state of Being-in-the-World then, is a state of concern for Dasein, whose essential nature emerges as 'Care'⁷¹.

⁶⁸ Op. Cit. p.26; The idea of transparency of being is comparable with Rahner's concept of 'luminosity'.

⁶⁹ Op. Cit. p.30

⁷⁰ Op. Cit. p.35; The ontico-ontological distinction is that between the ontical and the ontological; the 'ontological' is concerned primarily with being, and the 'ontical' is concerned with entities and the facts about them.

⁷¹ But it is being-towards-the-world which is concern. See *being and time* p.83f

b) Letting-be

We have seen that 'letting-be' is Macquarrie's term for Being and indeed for God. Letting-be is a kind of energy that enables and empowers being. Letting-be is in a sense the nature of the transcendence of being, it is a kind of Holy creativity. Macquarrie understands (Holy) Being as God; Heidegger, understands 'Being' as Dasein, therefore all of Heidegger's analysis is in terms of Dasein. This includes the concept of 'letting-be' or more precisely 'letting-be-involved'. Letting-be-involved is the setting free by Dasein of the entities of the world which are 'ready-to-hand'⁷². We have, then, along with the concept of letting-be, the concepts of freedom and involvement. The idea of involvement, which could be said to be similar to Macquarrie's term 'participation', includes the concept of 'concern'. (That is, the state of being-in-the-World of Dasein):

"Letting things be involved makes up the existential structure of concern. But concern, as being alongside something, belongs to the essential constitution of care; and care in turn is grounded in temporality. If all this is so then the existential condition of the possibility of letting things be involved must be sought in a mode of the temporalizing of temporality."⁷³

Temporality is the basis of Letting-things-be-involved, which is the unity of the relations in which concern circumspectively operates. Letting-be has to do with the nature of concern, which in turn derives from the essential nature of Dasein, which is care. It appears that letting-things-be is a creative dynamic, born of care, through concern. With the term 'previously-letting-something-be', the creative activity is reinforced:

"Ontically, 'Letting-something-be-involved' signifies that within our factual concern we let something ready-to-hand be so-and-so as it is already and in order that it be such. The way we take this ontical sense of 'letting-be' is, in principle, ontological. And therewith we

⁷² The term "ready-to-hand" refers to the equipment in the world which is useable by Dasein. Heidegger states, "When we concern ourselves with something, the entities which are most closely ready-to-hand may be met as something unseable (equipment is ready-to-hand) "*Being and Time*", p 102

⁷³ But it is Being-towards-the-world that is concern; See p.83f

interpret the meaning of previously freeing what is proximally ready-to-hand within-the-world."⁷⁴

However:

"Previously letting-something-be does not mean that we must bring something into its Being and produce it; it means rather that something which is already an 'entity' must be discovered in its readiness-to-hand, and that we must let the entity which has this Being be encountered."⁷⁵

The notion of creating that which was not is missing from Heidegger's thinking in respect of letting-be, the element of previousness which is a-priori is rather the condition for the possibility of the encountering of an entity which is already ready-to-hand. Therefore to encounter something which is ready-to-hand we must set it free previous to the encounter, the setting of it free (which is not to, not-let-it-be-involved, or indeed to destroy it) is the condition for the possibility of the encounter itself. The encounter takes place in the involvement of the entity which we have let-be, or freed. In the encounter the being of the entity is disclosed to Dasein, therefore we are, in the nature of the involvement itself, involved in an epistemological activity. All of this is of course the dynamic of the structure of the temporal state wherein Dasein has its being. We are essentially concerned with Being as an existential, and therefore Letting-be-involved is the dynamic activity which makes up the temporal structure of the existential.

When we talk about the previous disclosure of the involvement of beings we are talking about some form of a-priori knowledge:

"But what does it mean to say that for which entities within the world are proximally freed must have been previously disclosed? To Dasein's Being, an understanding of Being belongs. Any understanding has its being in an act of understanding. If Being-in-the-world is a kind of Being which is essentially befitting to Dasein,

⁷⁴ The term 'ready-to-hand' refers to the equipment in the world which is useable by Dasein. Heidegger states: "When we concern ourselves with something, the entities which are most closely ready-to-hand may be met as something useable (equipment is..ready-to-hand)" *Being and Time*, p.102

⁷⁵ Op. Cit. p.404

then to understand Being-in-the-world belongs to the essential content of its understanding of Being. The previous disclosure of that for which what we encounter within-the-world is subsequently freed, amounts to nothing else than understanding the world - that world towards which Dasein as an entity always comports itself."⁷⁶

The intelligibility of the particular involvement is disclosed beforehand, it appears to be the content of an innate knowledge, or understanding, of being, which Dasein possesses by virtue of being Dasein. This sounds very similar to Rahner's 'Pre-concept' which is the condition for the possibility of all other knowledge.

If existence precedes being, then letting-be-involved is the nature of the dynamic, whereby being, becomes. The great similarity of Macquarrie's concept and the Heideggerian concept is clearly seen here, and a profound insight into Macquarrie's thinking is gained. Heidegger lays the foundation for Macquarrie's schema of the immanence of Being (God), and for his understanding of man's transcendental encounter with (Holy) Being (revelation); through the a-priori understanding in the encounter which takes place through the previous-freeing of the entity which is encountered through Letting-it-be-involved.

c) Moods (Affective states)

The nature of Dasein, is 'care', and 'care' is the primordial structural totality of the existential a-priori attitude of Dasein. Care is ontologically prior to any other aspect of Dasein's constitution, indeed it is pre-ontological. Care is 'being-ahead-of-oneself', it is 'in-being-already-in', and it is 'being-alongside'⁷⁷. In explicating the element of care, Heidegger quotes an ancient fable in which he says Dasein's interpretation of itself as care has been embedded:

"Once when 'Care' was crossing a river, she saw some clay; she thought-fully took up a piece and began to shape it. While she was meditating on what she had made, Jupiter came by. 'Care' asked him to give it spirit, and this he gladly granted. But when she wanted her name to be bestowed upon it, he forbade this and demanded that it

⁷⁶ Op. Cit. p.117

⁷⁷ Ibid.

be given his name instead. While 'Care' and Jupiter were disputing, Earth arose and desired that her own name be conferred on the creature, since she had furnished it with part of her body. They asked Saturn to be their arbiter, and he made the following decision, which seemed a just one; 'Since you Jupiter, have given its spirit you shall receive that spirit at its death; and since you Earth have given its body you shall receive its body. But since 'Care' first shaped this creature, she shall possess it as long as it lives. And because there is now a dispute among you as to its name, let it be called 'homo' for it is made out of humus (earth)."⁷⁸

Man is, therefore, most essentially 'Care' existing in the temporal state of 'Concern'. Care determines the state-of-mind of Dasein with respect to its own being and the being-in-the-world of itself and the other entities which it is alongside:

"What we indicate ontologically by the term 'State-of-mind' is ontically the most familiar and everyday sort of thing; our mood, our Being-attuned."⁷⁹

Dasein always exists in, and in terms of, some kind of 'mood'. It always has a mood which is the means of the disclosure (revelation) of its being to itself. There is a:

"Primordial disclosure belonging to moods in which Dasein is brought before its Being as 'there' ... a mood makes manifest how one is, and how one is faring. In this how one is', having a mood brings Being to its 'there' ... The being of the there is disclosed moodwise in its 'that-it-is'."⁸⁰

Dasein, then, finds itself in its thrownness of being, through a state-of-mind or mood. Moods, therefore, disclose Being. They disclose Being-in-the-world as a whole, and make it possible for one to direct oneself towards something. Moods are the constitution of Dasein's openness towards Being in General; through the attunement of moods Dasein encounters something that matters to it. It is through the various states-of-mind or moods therefore that Dasein discovers and encounters the world which is alongside it. The 'mood' is the medium of the revelation of being-in-the-world, to Dasein. However:

⁷⁸ Op. Cit. p.118

⁷⁹ Op. Cit. pp.235-241; for discussion on Dasein's Being as 'Care'.

⁸⁰ Op. Cit. p.242

"A state-of-mind not only discloses Dasein in its thrownness and its submission to the world which is already disclosed with its own Being; it is itself the existential kind of Being in which Dasein constantly surrenders itself to the 'world' and lets the world matter to it in such a way that somehow Dasein evades its very self."⁸¹

Dasein evades the Being which is disclosed in the mood. It flees from itself in the face of itself, therefore it finds itself, not primarily in seeking, but in fleeing from facing up to itself. When confronted by the disclosure of its Being through certain moods, Dasein more often than not evades them and turns away. We see in this action the element of 'threat' appearing. Heidegger says of threat:

"Pure beholding, even if it were to penetrate to the innermost core of the Being of something present-at-hand, could never discover anything like that which is threatening."⁸²

We begin to see that the moods which do not elate but threaten are by far the most disclosive, such a mood is 'anxiety':

"We shall provide an interpretation of anxiety as such a basic state-of-mind of Dasein, and as one which is significant from the existential-ontological standpoint."⁸³

Indeed Heidegger argues that since Dasein is in a state of 'fallenness', anxiety provides the phenomenal basis for explicitly grasping Dasein's primordial totality of Being. Dasein flees in the face of itself and of its authenticity, to an absorption in the world of its concern. It does not turn away or flee from a fear of the entities in the world, indeed it flees to the entities, and to the averageness and everydayness of the 'they'. The turning away is grounded in anxiety, but Heidegger is clear that, "'that' in the face of which one has anxiety is not an entity within the world"; 'that' in the face of which one is anxious is completely indefinite."⁸⁴ Indeed entities within the world are irrelevant, anxiety is not

⁸¹ Op. Cit. p.172

⁸² Op. Cit. p.173

⁸³ Op. Cit. p.178

⁸⁴ Op. Cit. p.177

anxious in the face of anything which is ready-to-hand. So what then is the ground of anxiety?

"When something threatening brings itself close, anxiety does not see any definite 'here' or 'yonder' from which it comes. That in the face of which is anxious is characterised by the fact that what threatens is nowhere. Anxiety does not know what that in the face of which it is anxious is ... Therefore that which threatens cannot bring itself close from a definite direction within what is close by; it is already there, and yet nowhere; it is so close that it is oppressive and stifles one's breath and yet it is nowhere ... In that in the face of which one has anxiety, the 'It is nothing and nowhere' becomes manifest. The obstinacy of the 'nothing' and 'nowhere' within the world means as a phenomenon that the world as such is that in the face of which one has anxiety."⁸⁵

Heidegger is saying that Being-in-the-world itself is the ground of anxiety, and being anxious discloses, primordially and directly, the worldhood of the world. Dasein is anxious in respect of its potentiality for authentic being:

"Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its Being towards its own most potentiality-for-Being, that is its Being-free for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself. Anxiety brings Being face to face with its being free for the authenticity of its Being and for this authenticity as a possibility which it always is."⁸⁶

"Anxiety individualises. This individualisation brings Dasein back from its falling, and makes manifest to it that authenticity and inauthenticity are possibilities of its Being. The basic possibilities of Dasein show themselves in anxiety as they are in themselves, undisguised by entities within-the-world to which proximally and for the most part Dasein clings."⁸⁷

Dasein clings to the entities through fear, it loses itself in the 'crowd' or the 'they' and so sustains inauthentic life. Anxiety is the form of (non verbal) revelation of the true state and condition of Dasein and also of its potential for authentic life. The Being of Dasein confronts itself in the anxious mood revealing to it the facticity of the worldhood of the world. Interestingly, there is an element of the uncanny in this disclosure, there is the presence of 'threat'

⁸⁵ Op. Cit. p.179

⁸⁶ Op. Cit. p.231

⁸⁷ Ibid.

and the 'Not at home'. What is made present to Dasein's awareness is something alien to it, something from nowhere and something which is 'nothing'. Some kind of primordial, ultimate reality which, whilst being so close, is at the same time transcendent. Anxiety is the gateway to the reception of this greater and stark reality of the Being of the individual in the world. In the shock of Being the Beingness or thereness of Being is uncovered, stripped naked, as it were, from its delusion amongst the entities.

Macquarrie leans very heavily on Heidegger's analysis of fear and anxiety, especially in respect of his concept of God's revelation to man. Macquarrie stretches Heidegger's existential/ontological philosophy over into the field of religion. He states:

"Although Heidegger does not explicitly say so, we contend that at this point the existential analytic has brought us to the threshold of religion, and the concept of anxiety demands a religious interpretation - and with it the whole concept of human existence. For in this fundamental malaise which, springs from man's very being, there is disclosed not only the self and the world, but also God. The disclosure does not indeed yield the explicit knowledge of God, but directs man to God as the ground of his being".⁸⁸

2.2.2 - Tillich - The problem of the finitude

The term 'the problem of the finitude' sums up the fragility and temporality of man's being. Essentially the problem is about the reality or possible reality, as conceived by man, of 'non-being'. Non-being or nothingness or the nullity, was seen by both Augustine and Barth as evil⁸⁹. According to Augustine sin is really 'nothing', it arises from nowhere as a deprivation of the good. Barth saw

⁸⁸ *An Existential Theology* - John Macquarrie - SCM Press 1955, p.71; For Macquarrie's full discussion on Heidegger's understanding of anxiety, see pp.67-81

⁸⁹ Barth's concept of 'das nichtige' is found in the *Church Dogmatics*, vol 3:3. Augustine's discussion, of sin arising out of nothing, is found in *The Confessions* Bk 7

sin and evil as a kind of active nothingness which seeks to win back that which it has lost to Being. When God created the being of the universe he elected what was to be and rejected what was not; the non-being which God rejected is conceived as constituting sin and evil.

Parmenides' thinking in respect of non-being (referred to by both Tillich and Heidegger) has a profound influence. Tillich states:

"Parmenides realised that in speaking of nonbeing one gives it some kind of being which contradicts its character as the negation of being. Therefore he excluded it from rational thought. But in so doing he rendered the realm of becoming unintelligible and evoked the atomistic solution which identifies nonbeing with empty space, thus giving it some kind of being."⁹⁰

What then is non-being, and what is its significance in respect of Macquarrie's theological development?

a) Non-Being - Meaning and significance?

According to Tillich the metaphysical question of Being is produced, or arises, through the shock of non-being. This point is precisely the apparent reality which serves as the basis of Macquarrie's position in respect of the revelation of Being. The contrast of Being and Nothing is the emotive force of man's new self understanding, through the awareness of the presence and manifestation of Holy Being. The tensions produced by the contrast bring about the affective state or mood which, in turn, is the appropriate context or frame for the reception of Being's self revelation. It is through this attunement that Dasein passes from inauthentic to authentic life. Non-being is perceived in this respect as the limit situation imposed on man, particularly in respect of death. Tillich states:

"Only man can ask the ontological question because he alone is able to look beyond the limits of his own being and of every other being. Looked at from the standpoint of possible nonbeing being is a mystery. Man is able to take this standpoint because he is free to transcend every given reality. He is not bound to 'beingness'; he can envisage nothingness; he can ask the ontological question. In doing

⁹⁰ *Systematic Theology* - Paul Tillich, SCM Press 1988, vol 1, p.186f

so however, he must ask a question about that which creates the mystery of being; he must consider the mystery of nonbeing. Both questions have been joined together since the beginning of human thought."⁹¹

Only when the two questions are dealt with together can there be the possibility of 'authentic life' and indeed 'religious faith', presupposing of course that the most fundamental and primordial question is in fact the ontological question.

Ontically, however, it is argued by Tillich that man is only able to look at his being because he can and must be separated from it. It is the separation which allows him to look at being as something strange and questionable. The separation is possible, argues Tillich, because man participates not only in being but also in nonbeing, (otherwise put, 'in life man participates in death'). Indeed unless man participates in nonbeing no negative judgements are possible. "Therefore the very structure which makes negative judgements possible proves the ontological character of non-being".⁹² Non-being provides being with its dialectical nature and therefore we can go further by proposing that unless man participates in non-being, no judgement of any kind is possible. Tillich states:

"There can be no world unless there is a dialectical participation of nonbeing, in being."⁹³

This view corresponds with Macquarrie's dialectical opposite of 'being and nothing' which is one of the dialectical opposites in God. This dialectic along with seven others go together as the content of Macquarrie's "Dialectical Theism".⁹⁴

Tillich argues, as does Macquarrie, for the dialectical nature of reality, whereby aspects of that reality are qualified and known in their existence by and through their dialectical opposite, in such a way that the antithesis is a part of the essential reality of the thesis itself. Non-being is an essential element in being

⁹¹ Op. Cit. p.186

⁹² Op. Cit. p.187

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ *In Search of Deity* - John Macquarrie, p.172f

and vice versa. We have then a dualistic reality which is essentially summed up by the transcendence and the immanence of God. This aspect is dealt with early on in the history of human thought by Plotinus, in terms of 'the One' and 'the Many'⁹⁵. Non-being exists in dialectical relationship with being, as the limit of being, and 'being' limited by non-being is the finitude.

b) Finitude and limitation

We have the idea of 'the limit' and limitedness, with respect to being. Finite being, by definition, is limited on every side and in every aspect or it would not be finite. Tillich argues that the nature of the limitation is 'non-being'. He states:

"Nonbeing appears as the 'not yet' of being and as the 'no more' of being. It confronts everything which is with a definite end ... everything which participates in the power of being is 'mixed' with nonbeing. It is being in process of coming from and going towards nonbeing. It is finite."⁹⁶

The limit is non-being, Being-itself has no beginning and no end therefore it did not arise out of non-being. Being is not an entity, it has its own power which 'is'. Being precedes non-being in ontological validity, non-being arose from Being, it is literally nothing without its relation to Being. "Being is the beginning without a beginning, the end without an end."⁹⁷ However, Being and non-being exist in the necessity of the dialectical nature of the known ontological reality.

Non-being is that limit of the finitude which is experienced by man as a threat to his being. It presents itself in terms of the end to being which man anticipates as one of the moments of his self-transcendence. Tillich states that the process of self transcendence carries a double meaning in each of its moments, the dialectic of Being and non-being are the two sides of the coin of

⁹⁵. *The Eneads* of Plotinus, Faber & Faber 1969, 4th ed. Trans. Steven MacKenna, p.36ff

⁹⁶ *Systematic Theology* - Paul Tillich, p.189

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

the transcendental experience. The dialectic is primordially that of the finite (Being) and infinite (non-being):

"In order to experience his finitude, man must look at himself from the point of view of a potential infinity. In order to be aware of moving towards death, man must look out over his finite being as a whole; he must in some way be beyond it. He must also be able to imagine infinity; and he is able to do so, although not in concrete terms, but only as an abstract possibility ... infinity is a directing concept and not a constituting concept. It directs the mind to experience its own unlimited potentialities, but it does not establish the existence of an infinite being."⁹⁸

The human mind continually transcends any possible object of finitude, for example, if finite space is thought of as an objective reality, one cannot prevent the mind from asking the question, 'what lies beyond finite space?' Infinity seen in this way can never be a 'thing' in itself; indeed, Tillich argues that infinity is a 'demand', not a thing. The demand is that the human mind goes on endlessly transcending every finite space and every finite time without exception. It transcends all finite realities in both directions, microcosmic and macrocosmic. The mind itself however, says Tillich, remains bound to the finitude of its individual bearer. "Infinitude is finitude transcending itself without any a-priori limit".⁹⁹

It is the very demand of the infinitude on the human mind, expressed through the transcendental experience, which brings to bear the limitation of man's particular finitude of being. The coming to bear of the infinitude in terms of the limitation of the finitude is what is referred to as 'the shock of being'. The limitation is perceived in the shock of being as the threat of non-being. In the precise tension of the shock, however, there arises the more primordial demand or call of Being-itself. Man comes to realise that he belongs not to non-being but to Being itself. This is what Macquarrie refers to as grace. When man is confronted, in his mind, by the power of non-being, he is thrown to the ground (with the force of revelation). The next demand on him is the contrast of Being-itself with the non-being. (Perhaps in the form of a question rather like that of Leibniz: "why is there being rather than nothing?") Through this

⁹⁸. Op. Cit. p.190

⁹⁹. Op. Cit. p.191

revelatory process Being-itself is disclosed to man and he beholds as it were for the first time, Being-itself (or Holy Being). In this encounter with Being, it does appear that the limitation of the finitude has been negated, indeed we have the negation of the negation in and through this transcendental experience.

"The potential presence of the infinite (the unlimited self-transcendence) is the negation of the negative element in the finitude. It is the negation of nonbeing."¹⁰⁰

In a sense infinity draws close and confronts the finitude acutely pointing to its limitation of being. The demand of the infinite, however, calls the finitude to transcend itself, thereby negating the limitation of nonbeing. However, Tillich states that:

"Being-itself is not infinity; it is that which lies beyond the polarity of finitude and infinite self-transcendence. Being-itself manifests itself to finite being in the infinite drive of the finite beyond itself. But being-itself cannot be identified with infinity, that is, with the negation of finitude. It precedes the finite, and it precedes the infinite negation of the finite."¹⁰¹

We see here that Tillich understands Being-itself, in its primordial reality, to be wholly other and utterly transcendent, even to the extent of transcending infinity. Non-being however does not hold the same status, it is wholly derived from the finitude. Indeed, if the finite beings ceased to exist then so too would non-being. It is essentially non-being, then, that presents itself to the mind of man, as limitation and threat, thereby producing the mental and indeed emotional state of 'anxiety' (angst).

c) Anxiety

"Finitude in awareness is anxiety. Like finitude, anxiety is an ontological quality. It cannot be derived; it can only be seen and described. Occasions in which anxiety is aroused must be distinguished from anxiety itself. As an ontological quality, anxiety is as omnipresent as is finitude. Anxiety is independent of any

^{100.} Ibid.

^{101.} Ibid.

special object which might produce it; it is dependent only on the threat of non-being which is identical with finitude."¹⁰²

Since there is no object of anxiety, anxiety is clearly distinguished from fear, which requires an object. Anxiety, according to Tillich, is identical with finitude itself. Therefore anxiety cannot be conquered as fear can be conquered, by conquering its object. Anxiety, then, is always present even though it may often be latent. Tillich states: "Therefore, it can become manifest at any and every moment, even in situations where nothing is to be feared."¹⁰³ Anxiety as an ontological concept expresses finitude from the 'inside'. Anxiety, then, is of a revelatory nature, and it has revelatory power:

"Anxiety is self-awareness of the finite self as finite. The fact that it has a strongly emotional character does not remove its revealing power. The emotional element simply indicates that the totality of the finite being participates in finitude and faces the threat of nothingness."¹⁰⁴

The question is; 'What is it that anxiety reveals?' It cannot be Being-itself because Being-itself, according to Tillich, transcends both the finite and the infinite, it follows therefore that anxiety reveals the ontological reality of non-being. Non-being is that which is experienced from the inside, through anxiety. We can say, however, that through the experience of nonbeing, being-itself is negatively experienced.

Non-being is experienced in categories of the finitude, the examples of these given by Tillich are Time, Space, causality, and substance. Essentially non-being manifests itself through the insecurity of the anticipation of the loss or destruction of these finite categories, in so far as they pertain to the being of the individual. Anxiety, then, is about the anticipation of one's own death:

"The melancholy awareness of the trend of being towards nonbeing ... is most actual in the anticipation of ones own death. What is significant here is not the fear of death ... It is anxiety about having to die ... In the anxiety of having to die nonbeing is experienced from the 'inside'. This anxiety is potentially present in every moment. It permeates the whole of man's being; it shapes soul and

^{102.} Ibid.

¹⁰³ Op. Cit. p. 192

¹⁰⁴ Op. Cit. p. 193f

body and determines spiritual life. It belongs to the created character of being quite apart from estrangement and sin ... The Bible record points to the profound anxiety of having to die in him who was called the Christ."¹⁰⁵

Anxiety when faced in courage, reveals the ultimate dimension in terms of the finite categories themselves. Tillich, by example of the four categories, demonstrates the nature of the union of Being and non-being in everything finite. Getting beyond this anxiety of non-being is achieved by courageously facing non-being in the face of the full intensity and extremity of the anxiety itself. What is required in the facing and acceptance of one's own death and indeed one's own non-being is the 'courage to be'. The courageous dynamic of this acceptance is at the same time the revelatory path to God.

¹⁰⁵ Op. Cit. p. 198

Karl Rahner's Metaphysical - Epistemological Ontology

3.1 The Metaphysical Quest.

Man's quest for Being can be said to constitute both the nature and motivation of his need and desire for ontological revelation. (For theists, of course, this impulse is satisfied only by the Self Revelation of God.) Macquarrie understands this quest in existential terms; as man participates in Being. Rahner, on the other hand, understands it as taking place only in and through metaphysical questioning.

3.1.1 The Metaphysical question

The point of departure of man's ontological quest, according to Rahner then, is his facility of metaphysical questioning. Rahner holds that knowledge is the essential constitutive element in man's being, therefore his quest for being is in actuality his quest for knowledge. This quest is realised through the process of asking metaphysical questions. (Rahner defines metaphysical questions as questions about Being)

"Man questions. This is something final and irreducible ... the question is first of all the only 'must', the only necessity, the only thing beyond question to which questioning man is bound ... Man questions necessarily. But this necessity can only be grounded in the fact that being is accessible to man at all only as something

questionable, that he himself 'is' insofar as he 'asks about being', that he himself exists as a question about being."¹

a) The Question as the starting point of Rahner's metaphysics and the basis of his fundamental ontology.

"Man must ask the question about being if he wants to be, because only in this question is being in its totality, given to him ... The proposition stating the necessity of questioning in human existence includes in itself its own ontological proposition, which says; Man exists as the question about being. The question is the must which he himself is, and in which being as that which is questioned, presents and offers itself."²

We see, then, that according to Rahner questioning constitutes both man's existential reality and his very being. Questioning and questionability emerge as the roots of Rahner's ontology (which, since questioning is an epistemic activity, we have termed an 'Epistemological Ontology'). However, Rahner is referring to 'metaphysical' questions and questioning, and not all questions are of this order! Man asks questions about all existents, therefore he asks categorial questions as well as metaphysical questions. These two orders of questions constitute a primary bi-valence in man's ontology which effects every aspect of Rahner's 'fundamental', ontological development. In our analysis of 'questioning', therefore, it follows that we must consider both orders and their relationship. The categorial order we shall head 'The questioning of things-in-the-world' and the metaphysical order, 'Questioning - Metaphysical', we begin with a discussion of questioning in general.

i) Questioning

The nature of questioning can be seen to be paradoxical. The paradox is that man cannot ask a question unless he already, with the question, knows the answer in some way and if he knows the answer he has no need to ask the

¹ *Spirit in the World* - Karl Rahner, Sheed & Ward London, 3rd imp 1989, Trans. J B Metz, p.57

² Op. Cit. p.58

question!³ Nonetheless it does appear to be a fact that man needs to ask questions. From the age of early childhood man is a fervent questioner. The range of this apparently natural questioning appears to be extensive; there are questions concerning security, identity and the objects which are bodied against him, in both an immediate and ultimate sense. The immediate sense is of the categorial order (this is the major domain of empirical science) and the ultimate is of the metaphysical order. Both senses, (whilst some types of question are, more or less, ontologically neutral), are seen to be ontologically positive and developmentally wholesome. There exists also a negative strain of questioning arising from what Heidegger would term "idle curiosity", resulting in "falling" into inauthentic life.⁴ Perhaps we would do little violence by linking this concept to the Biblical motif of "the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen 3). We read in the Genesis story that the pursuit of such knowledge resulted in the fall of mankind into a sinful and negative (inauthentic) existence.

The activity of Questioning, then, can be categorial or metaphysical (immediate or ultimate) and it can be positive or negative, leading in a good or an evil direction.⁵ Further, if Rahner is right, and it appears that he is, man asks questions necessarily, therefore to be human in any real sense of the word, is to be a questioner. The problem of the dilemma of the paradox is no new thing, Plato was well aware of it as shown by the import of the questioning of Socrates in 'Meno':

"How will you look for it, Socrates, when you don't even know what it is? How will you aim to search for something you don't know at all? And if you

³ It may be said that Rahner's theology is the thematic outworking of the resolutions to his intellectual dilemmas. In this instance we have the paradox of knowledge, which is as old as knowledge itself. Plato's resolution of the paradox is seen in his principle of anamnesis whereby man, who already knows everything, when he comes upon the objects of this prior knowledge, simply 'remembers' them. Anamnesis is also an important concept in respect of 'historical revelation' (see the article in the *Concise Theological Dictionary* - Edited by Karl Rahner & Herbert Vorgrimler, Burns & Oats London 2nd ed. 1983, p.9)

⁴ For the term 'Falling' see: *Being and Time*, p.211ff
The terms 'Curiosity' and 'Idle talk' are to do with falling; for the term 'Curiousity' see; *Being and Time* pp.214-217, cp. also *Idle talk* pp.211-214

⁵ Rahner would term the negative, evil strain of questioning, 'perversion' or 'corruption'.

should meet up with it, how would you know that this is the thing that you didn't know?"⁶ The teaching of 'the Meno' is that the human soul already possesses all knowledge in an innate form. What's required for this implicit knowledge to become explicit is that the individual 'recalls' or 'remembers' the knowledge which his soul possesses. The implicit knowledge is that which makes 'the question' possible. The answer to the question is in the form of explicit a-posteriori knowledge. Rahner's understanding is similar to that expressed in 'the Meno'; clearly man cannot ask a real question which is beyond the knowledge he already possesses, or else he would not know what he was asking neither would he recognise the answer. Rahner's answer to the dilemma is that the knowledge which man must already possess in order to be capable of asking a real question, is a vague, unthematic kind of knowledge which the answer translates to an explicitly clear and thematic form. The question itself, then, is the 'whence' of the answer, yet the answer is superior in that it is explicit.

Thomas Sheenan defines the a-priori knowledge of the question as a "knowing unknowing":

"The classical answer to this dilemma - from Platonic 'anemnesis' to Rahner's 'Vorgriff' - is to point out a condition between knowing and not knowing, a 'knowing unknowing' which, as unknowing, gets the question started and which, as partial or implicit knowing, gives the question a direction and recognises the answer when it shows up."⁷

Rahner defines it as the 'whence' or the 'pre-concept'. His use of the term 'whence' (woher) is well summed up by Sheenan:

"In every inquiry which is a real question and not a futile shot in the dark, there is what Rahner calls the 'whence', the basis on which the questioner stands, the starting point from which he launches his question, and the principle from which he can expect a valid answer. This "whence" is always some prior, implicit knowledge of what is being asked about."⁸

⁶ *Meno* - Plato, sec 80d

⁷ *Karl Rahner; The Philosophical Foundations* - Thomas Sheenan, Ohio University Press, Athens 1987, p.156

⁸ *Ibid.*

The issue (whence) of the real question as already implicitly, vaguely and inadequately known, is the very basis of asking it.⁹ The known-unknown is the inner principle in the question's structure, from and through which the question reaches beyond itself to the answer. It follows that the whence of real metaphysical questions must be in some way innate to human being. The whence of metaphysical questions, then, is intrinsic to the created human constitution which leads on to the view that men from birth, already possess a total pre-knowledge or pre-conceptuality of Being-in-general.

ii) Questioning: Things-in-the-World

Man is thrown into an existence amongst the things-of-the-world, including his own body (or corporeal organ as Rahner puts it). He awakes to a situation of being totally 'in-the-world'. Therefore he is thrown into a questionability in terms of and concerning the things-of-the-world. He seeks to know more fully that which he already knows vaguely, therefore he asks categorial questions about 'the things' and their relations.

We have seen that, according to Rahner, man questions necessarily because he is necessarily on a quest for Being, and Being is only accessible to him as something questionable. This very reality is grounded in that he himself 'is' insofar as he asks about Being and in that he himself 'exists' as a question about Being.¹⁰ Man is both a question and a questioner yet man is not primarily on a quest for knowledge (which he surely is) but a quest for Being. His quest is principally for Being itself, and not for knowledge about 'the beings' which appear to him. His ultimate necessity is to ask the metaphysical question, which is 'essentially' metaphysical. Rahner says:

"... not just any question can ground the necessity of questioning as such: man could turn away from this or that question and thus free himself from the impelling need to question: he could sometimes get away from such a question completely. However the question about

⁹ The interesting and relevant parallel to this dualism emerges as that of 'creational' and 'historical' revelation. Creational revelation is clearly seen as the necessary whence of historical revelation.

¹⁰ As note 1.

being in its totality is the only question from which he cannot turn away, which he must ask if he wants to be at all."¹¹

But just how is man to ask the question about Being itself? How can he ask about a transcendent reality which does not appear to him as a thing-in-the-world? Could this be done apart from the phantasms¹² by some kind of pure intellection? To elucidate this matter we turn to Thomas Aquinas; Question 84, article 7, book 1 of the 'Summa Theologia'. The title of this article corresponds precisely with our present question:

"Can the intellect actually know anything through the intelligible species which it possesses, without turning to the phantasm?"

The Thesis of the article is that:

"It is impossible for our intellect in the present state of life, in which it is united with receptive corporeality, to know anything actually without turning to the phantasms."

What Thomas is saying here is that man does not have the capacity to know anything (in actuality) apart from the phantasms. The intellect requires the use of the corporeal organ (in this case the human brain) to function. If the corporeal organ is damaged in some way the intellect cannot function, body and mind are therefore linked in this human nature and cannot operate apart from their unity. Therefore the intellect requires the facility of the senses (which relate directly to the corporeal element), although Thomas considers that both the human senses and the human imagination belong to the "sensitive part of the 'soul'" which in turn makes direct use of the corporeal organ. Thomas also argues that when any one tries to understand anything: "he forms phantasms to serve him by way of examples, in order, as it were, to acquire in them the intuition for what he is trying to understand."

"However, the object which belongs to the intellect of man, who exists in corporeality, is the quiddity or the nature of corporeal things (things of the world). And through this nature of sensible

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "The phantasms" is Thomas Aquinas' term for the objects which appear to us.

things he also reaches out to some knowledge of non-sensible things."

What exactly are these non-sensible things? We may consider Aristotle's two major categories of Being, in this respect. The primary category is the individual existent, for example, the individual horse. And the secondary category is the universal genus of horses which would be the 'isness' or quiddity of the group of horses. In Platonic terms this would represent the 'idea' of the perfect horse, of which the particular horse is a shadow. The question always arises concerning where this 'idea of horse' exists; does it exist in some distant place (focus) of perfection, such as Plato's 'counter earth', or does it exist only in the particular individual instance, that is, this particular horse? In other words is there a separate, essential form? Thomas denies this. He states:

"But if the object which belongs properly to our intellect were a separate, essential form, or if, as the Platonists assume, the nature of sensible things did not subsist in individual things: then our intellect would not always have to turn to the phantasms when it knows."

It appears that for Thomas, the 'nature' of sensible things exists and indeed only exists in individual things: "But it belongs to the essence of this nature that it exists in a material individual. Thus it is essential to the nature of a stone that it exists in this stone, essential to the nature of a horse that it exists in this horse, and so forth. Wherefore, the nature of a stone or of any material thing can also be known completely and truly only in as much as it is known as existing in the individual thing."

We apprehend these individual things through the senses and as Thomas would argue, through the imagination. However it is the intellect that questions, and so gains the knowledge. To do so it must 'turn to the phantasms' in order, states Thomas, to look at the universal essence as existing in the individual thing.¹³

In other words, to gain knowledge of Being in its totality, man must turn to the phantasms, (He must be 'Converted to the Phantasm'). It does appear that man can only gain knowledge of universals in and through the individual actual

¹³ Quotes of Thomas Aquinas are from the *Summa Theologia* Bk 1, article 7, question 84

existents; any other means of gaining this knowledge would belong to the Angelic world and not the one accessible to human beings. The world itself then (or the things-in-the-world) is the 'whence' of the metaphysical question, which may be defined as the universal question about Being. The relationship of the categorial order and the metaphysical order is that the former is the whence of the latter; as Sheenan states:

"man must ask all of his questions in the world, he cannot climb back out of worldly questioning. To do so would require the separation, as it were, of his soul and body."¹⁴

Man's questionability and therefore his knowledge is limited to the realm of his senses, including his imagination. His intellectual powers are limited by that imagination which itself is restricted to the time space continuum: "man has no extra worldly access to beingness, and yet he can question (and thus somehow know) beingness in its unifying totality".¹⁵

The question about 'Being in total' is the question which Rahner has said that man cannot turn away from. He must ask that question if he wants to be at all; indeed he is summoned to ask it. Man is in the very presence of Being in its totality insofar as he finds himself in the world, and yet he can only gain knowledge of being in its totality through the individual beings. There is some form of unity of universal and particular found in this line of reasoning which sheds light on the epistemological and ontological bivalence of the two orders:

"What is united in this unity of knowledge? Knowledge of an existent in the world in its here and now and knowledge of being in its totality. If we say that sensation is being with a thing in its here and now of the world, and the intellect is the knowledge of being in its totality, we can also say that it is a question of understanding the intrinsic possibility of the unity of sensation and intellect, the fact of which unity forms the point of departure for all our considerations."¹⁶

We have arrived at the possibility of a unity of sensation and intellect as the epistemic means of the quest for Being.

¹⁴ *Karl Rahner; The Philosophical Foundations* - Thomas Sheenan, p.159

¹⁵ *Op. Cit.* p.160

¹⁶ *Spirit in the World* - Karl Rahner, p.66

iii) Questioning - Metaphysical

We have seen that the whence of the metaphysical question is the world itself. The question about Being in its totality, which is really 'What is the Being of the beings?' is grounded and has its basis in, and of, the beings themselves (the phantasms). In the bivalent unity of 'Being in General' and 'the individual beings' we see the content of the dialectic which is at the centre of Rahner's thinking. As with all dialectics, the metaphysical question necessarily turns back on itself. We must consider the precise nature of this turning, but first let us consider the 'whence' of the question more fully. In Rahner's development of this 'whence', several elements are uncovered:

1. The metaphysical question is an ontological necessity.
2. The actual questioning itself, is the whence.
3. The nature of the questioner, is the whence.
4. 'Nothing' is the whence.
5. The world, is the whence.

Following through the elements of the development; firstly, in respect of the necessity of the metaphysical question, Rahner argues that man must ask the question about being:

"The question is ... the only 'must', the only thing beyond question to which questioning man is bound, the only circle in which his questioning is caught (there is always another question which he must ask, ad infinitum) ... Man questions necessarily. But this necessity can only be grounded in the fact that being is accessible to man at all only as something questionable, that he himself 'is' insofar as he asks about being, that he himself exists as a question about being."¹⁷

Rahner is talking here about the metaphysical question, because man can turn away from this or that question, but he cannot turn away from the question about being itself (Being in its totality or Being in General), his own being and

¹⁷ Op. Cit. p.57

existence are intrinsically bound up with his questionability and his questioningness of being itself.

"For this reason the proposition stating the necessity of questioning in human existence includes in itself its own ontological proposition which says; man exists as the question about being. In order to be himself he necessarily asks about being in its totality. This question is the 'must' which he himself is and in which being as that which is questioned presents and offers itself, and at the same time, as that which necessarily remains in question, withdraws itself. In the being of the question which man is (so that he needs to question) being as that which is questioned both reveals itself and at the same time conceals itself in its own questionableness."¹⁸

We see, then, the dialectical opposites of Being in general (infinite being) and individual being (finite being) coinciding in the metaphysical question which man must ask, 'to be'. In the being of the question which is man's existence, Being in general (which is synonymous with God) reveals itself. However, it remains concealed, even in the actuality of this revelation, because it remains questionable.

Turning to the second element; (which is, that the question is its own starting point and therefore its own whence.) Since we confront the problem that Being in total includes everything at once there is no unquestionable ground to serve as a point of departure:

"Being in its totality can only be questioned as that which again constitutes in its turn every question about it. The being that is questioned is at once the being of the question and of the one questioning. But where can such a question begin since it has no point from which to take its departure?"¹⁹

The only possible answer is that the metaphysical question is itself its own point of departure, and indeed itself the content of its answer. However, lying behind this construct is the internal logic of 'must' in that the actual point of departure of the metaphysical question is the 'need to ask it'.

¹⁸ Op. Cit. p.58

¹⁹ Op. Cit. p.59

"This need to question is the only point of departure for the metaphysical question that has its foundation in itself."²⁰

And further:

"Metaphysics takes the 'whence and whither' of its asking about being in its totality precisely from this very asking as that pervasive 'must' which questioning man himself is. For out of this 'must' all actual asking and questioning is stimulated and thus made possible."²¹

The (absolute) need to ask the question arises from the 'must', and Rahner states that this 'must' is the being of man himself. Man, as constituted by the creative and gracious delimiting act of God, is constituted around the necessity to ask the metaphysical question, that is, the question about Being itself. It is man's essential nature, then, to ask the question about Being, which means in effect that man's attitude is fundamentally and intrinsically set towards infinite Being. He 'must' stand in the face of Being if he himself is to be, and he stands as a question about Being.

"Rahner, whose whole theology flows from his anthropology, begins with the conviction that all human beings are essentially oriented to the infinite."²²

Our third element follows naturally from this point. It can be seen that the whence of the metaphysical question is none other than the constituted nature of man himself. The question turns back on the questioner:

"Insofar as in metaphysics the question about being as a transcendental question consciously turns upon itself, looks at and questions itself, it reveals itself as a knowledge of man about his own questioning essence; he is already with being in its totality."²³

Since individual man, and being in its totality, coincide in man's very constitution, man himself is the only possible whence of the metaphysical question.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Op. Cit. p.60

²² *Being and Truth* - James J Bacik's article, p.169

²³ *Spirit in the World* - Karl Rahner, p.60

We perhaps see the Hegelian influence on Rahner here, the finite goes forth from the infinite, itself as a part of the infinite which is its ground of existence, and then seeks to return to be re-united with this infinite ground of its being. The infinitude and the finitude coincide in the concrete being of the finitude. It follows then that the finite being is itself the only whence of the question about the infinite being.

Fourthly, it may be conceded that when man starts out to question everything, he starts from nothing. If he started from everything he would have no need to ask questions. He must come from nowhere and therefore makes his start there. It follows that in some way the whence of his first question must be 'nothing':

"When man ventures to ask about everything, he starts out from 'nothing'. And yet this 'nothing' cannot be an empty void which man fills arbitrarily according to his own whims ... for he is summoned to ask about being in its totality. So, this nothing itself must have imposed upon him the task of reaching out after being as such."²⁴

The nothing at the beginning of man's questioning is not just an empty void, the 'nothing' itself becomes the need to reach out and encounter Being in its totality (in man's questioning). The 'nothing' itself constitutes the metaphysical 'must', which we have seen is the implicit whence of the metaphysical question. This nothing is not in any way determined by man, he cannot master it, yet he reaches out from it through necessity.

What we have here is the dialectic of Being and nothing²⁵, man reaches out to Being from nothing and only from nothing. Yet when he finds himself thrown into the world he is already something, he is already a being, as it were, at the beginning of his existence as 'a question about Being and a questioner about Being'. It follows that this nothing must reach back beyond man's finite being into the infinite primordial reality, which we may term Being in General or God. In encountering 'nothing' man 'must' necessarily reach out to being in its totality, 'nothing' appears to be the cause of man's questioning about Being, therefore it is the cause of the Being of man himself.

²⁴ Op. Cit. p.61f

²⁵ This factor corresponds directly with Macquarrie's view.

However it can be immediately conceded that man, in his being, is not nothing; he is a thing in the world. Therefore whilst in a very real sense man ventures out in his questioning activity (concerning being in its totality) from nothing, he also ventures out from the world in which he finds himself. Therefore the world is the actual (concrete) whence of his questionability' which is our fifth element.

As we have already dealt at some length with the world as the whence of the metaphysical question, we need not be further detained by this point, apart from a final quote from Rahner:

"Man is in the presence of being in its totality insofar as he finds himself in the world ... (Thomas's) man dwells on earth and it is not given to him to exchange this dwelling place for a heavenly one at his own discretion."²⁶

Returning to the nature of the metaphysical question as one that 'turns upon itself', Rahner states:

"The metaphysical question, which is a final and radical sharpening of man's questioning, turns upon itself as such and thereby turns upon the presuppositions which are operative in itself. It is the question turned consciously upon itself ... The metaphysical question as transcendental question is the pervasive question about being itself, raised to conceptual form. In actually asking the metaphysical question man becomes aware of what he is in the ground of his essence: he who must ask about being."²⁷

Because we have a dialectical bivalence, we have a perpetual necessary turning moment from one pole to the other. The actual asking of the transcendental question is at the same time the moment of turning in awareness of the being of the questioner. This new self awareness is the means and reality of the transcendence of the present limitedness therefore it is the dynamic of the negation of the negation. We can say that when man by necessity seriously asks the metaphysical question; from the whence of both the world and nothing (together) the answer comes through a revelation of Being, which produces a

²⁶ *Spirit in the World* - Karl Rahner, p.62

²⁷ Op. Cit. p.58

new and radical self awareness and understanding in the serious questioner. This in every way is a revelation of paradox.

With the articulation of Rahner's thinking, in this fundamental respect, we have much light shed on the basis of Macquarrie's theology of the revelation of Holy Being to man. Man in-the-world comes to an awareness of nothing which is dialectically, at the same moment, a turning in awareness to Being itself, which in turn produces a radical new self awareness in man, who then sees the same things in a different way.

In Rahnerian terms; In finding the whence of the metaphysical question to be his own nature and through the dynamic of the turn upon itself, man's awareness moves through the transition of that which is implicit and unthematic to that which is explicit and thematic. Man's questioning now becomes explicit and thematic in form and produces a thematization of human nature. This transition, in Heideggerian terms, would be that from inauthentic to authentic life.

b) The Transcendental Spirit

If the world is the whence of the metaphysical question, as indeed the very nature of man as a corporeal being-in-the-world is the whence, and all knowledge is achieved through the sensate dynamic of 'conversion to the phantasm' (without looking over one's shoulder), then how can there be any real transcendental motion? Man cannot raise his feet from the ground upon which he is thrown upon and must walk. He can leap upwards, but he is brought back by an immediate force from which he cannot escape. Transcendence demands a going beyond, in the greatest sense, a going beyond the world, to some wholly other realm; from the natural to the supranatural.

If metaphysics is a transcendental activity, then some form of extra worldly access to Being must be required but no such access is available to man. However, we have again a paradox; if man can question 'Being in its totality' then he must know something of it. And clearly he can question 'Being in its totality' therefore he can ask a transcendental question, which means he already has transcendental knowledge. Transcendental knowledge is supra natural,

therefore man who is a being-in-the-world must be at the same time the possessor of otherworldly, supra-natural knowledge. This is rather reminiscent of the Gnostic concept of divine spark. Sheenan poses the thought that 'conversion to the phantasm' may mean looking away from the world to some pure realm of spiritual being and then turning back to the phantasm to put together intellectually intuited beingness with worldly things. But Rahner insists (Sheenan says) that conversion to the phantasm means a constant turnedness to the phantasm with no looking-over-one's-shoulder. At the same time Rahner asserts that metaphysics:

"transcends everything spatial and temporal, encompasses all sein as such, and reaches the absolute."²⁸

Rahner is faced with a dilemma which, as he states, refutes his own position. He asks:

"How is human knowledge to transcend its own boundary, namely, that of the imagination which is its only intuition, without a direct view beyond the imagination, without an intellectual intuition? And if intellectual intuition means metaphysics, then the dilemma is the question about the possibility of metaphysics founded upon the imagination ... it (this question) has now been defined as the question about the possibility of the transcendence of the imagination without intellectual intuition, a transcendence of such a kind that it constitutes the possibility of human intuition on the level of the imagination, and has its intimation in the limit-idea of an intellectual intuition."²⁹

What we are concerned with here is the question about the possibility of human knowledge, including both sensorial and abstractive elements, transcending

²⁸ Op. Cit. p.27

²⁹ Op. Cit. p.38, An 'intellectual intuition' is understood as the means of gaining metaphysical (transcendental) knowledge, quite apart from sense intuition, as is 'the conversion to the phantasm'. Nor is a purely intellectual intuition to be confused with imagination, which arises and is a product of the sensorial faculty. An intellectual intuition as being purely spiritual and incorporeal (if such a faculty is possible, and Rahner concedes that it is not) is thought of as being the cognitive faculty whereby metaphysical knowledge is immediately accessible. We see the primary bivalence, with which we are dealing in Rahner's ontology, emerge in the dualism of 'sense' and 'intellectual' intuition.

itself. This transcendence is some dynamic of reaching beyond (*excessus*) the limits of human intellect, the evidence of which is that from within these limits it can ask the metaphysical question, the whence of which is the world, but the knowledge of which is of the nature of 'beyond' the limits of the corporeally bound intellect in the world. The limit itself is known only by transcending it, but what we are saying is that the means of cognitive and therefore spiritual transcendence must exist as an integral and indeed intrinsic part of man's own constituted (created) nature. In terms of the bivalence of man's constitution (which is dialectical) he has the facility to transcend the limits within which his nature, as a thrown being-in-the-world, exists. He can go beyond all that he is because all that he is includes the supranatural facility to reach beyond; this facility is the 'spirit'. Rahner means by the term spirit, 'a power which reaches out beyond the world and knows the metaphysical'.

What Rahner is saying is that some kind of metaphysics happens naturally in man, this Rahner calls a metaphysics of spirit-in-the-world. This could be equally called, as Sheenan suggests, a metaphysics of abstraction-of-esse in conversion to the phantasm. Man is a free spirit in the world of objects that are bodied against him; this free spirit exists in epistemic dynamic by abstracting from the objects of its knowledge or questioning, and being present to itself. Spirit is this self-presence.

The dynamic of knowing the object which is questioned has essentially two elements (as previously stated). The first element is the conversion, or turning towards, the phantasm (the object which appears); this is the primary sensorial level whereby man, the sentient knower, receives the essential knowledge of the phantasm. In this going out of himself to the corporeal appearance, man is absent from himself. This is the animal level where man is at one with the material reality before him. The next stage in the dynamic, is the return of man by abstracting from the phantasm to his own subjective, where he is present-to-himself. In this abstractive turn, man is free spirit; he comes free from the object; he transcends it and he judges it therefore he becomes its master.

It is in this return to his own subjective, from animal to intellect, and in his complete self presence, that man is a transcendental being; always transcending the things of the world of which he is a part. In this way he goes beyond the beings of the world but at the same time he remains firmly rooted amongst

them, therefore he is a 'spirit in the world'. A transcendental spirit in a material, time space continuum.

Man is a spirit who steps back (by abstracting) in order to focus better on the material object (whilst remaining with it). Clearly his judgement of the object requires that he distinguishes it by 'comparatio' (comparison) with all of the other objects which he knows; and indeed from the basis of his pre-hension or pre-concept of all being. However, when it comes to metaphysical knowledge, (that is, of Being in its totality or Being in general) he cannot compare, because Being in its totality cannot be compared with anything else, it is not of the categorial order. In this metaphysical step back man transcends by 'remotio' (negation).³⁰ Man can transcend his own being-in-the-world, he is a transcendental spirit who remains free, this free spirit is constituted by excessus, comparatio and remotio. However, Sheenan makes an excellent point of criticism:

"Does any arm's length free me from the thing I am holding!"³¹

3.2 - The Unity of Being and Knowledge

Aquinas said that: "whatever can be can be known"³² and Rahner said: "being is being able to be known".³³ We have seen above, that 'Being is questionability' and questionability presupposes knowability. Clearly, being and knowing are joined in some kind of intrinsic unity, so much so that, for Rahner, metaphysics is essentially grounded in epistemology. Indeed his 'fundamental ontology' finds its very root in a metaphysics which is essentially an analysis and expression (indeed exploitation) of ontological and epistemological unity. We propose that Rahner's whole theology arises from the three elements of metaphysics, ontology and epistemology in essential unity. His metaphysics, as we have seen, is the dynamic unity of ontology and epistemology. His

³⁰ The 'negation' is discussed in chapter 5

³¹ *Karl Rahner; The Philosophical Foundations* - Thomas Sheenan, p.190

³² *Summa Contra Gentiles* - Thomas Aquinas, Bk2:98 (near the end of the section)

³³ *Spirit in the World* - Karl Rahner, p.67

ontology is a metaphysical epistemology and his epistemology a metaphysical ontology. It follows that we must analyse this dynamic unity in order that we may see where it arrives.

3.2.1 - The original unity of 'being' and 'knowing'

We begin with Rahner's statement in definition of being: "Being is questionability"; and we have seen that questionability requires some kind of vague, implicit prior knowledge. It follows that if being is questionability and questionability requires knowledge to be questionability, there must exist an essential unity of being and knowledge. Beingness, then, is the act of (seeking and gaining) knowledge. Indeed, being is itself the act of questioning.

When man questions 'Being in its totality' he affirms the fundamental knowability of being. This fundamental relationship of being and knowing is laid out by Rahner as the essential dynamic of human beingness, these are the essential elements of 'spirit'. Indeed they are the occasion of the transcendental 'spirit in the world'. Therefore being and knowing are a necessary and indeed original unity. Rahner states:

"They must be of a single origin, since the intellect and the intelligible in act are one (because otherwise the factual unity of being and knowing in actual knowing could not be made intelligible in possibility)."³⁴

Rahner continues to say that knowing does not come upon its object by chance, the idea of knowing 'coming upon' something is a common misconception.

"Knowing does not come about 'through a contact of the intellect with the intelligible thing', but being and knowing are the same."³⁵

We have arrived at being and knowing as a synonym; they are an original intrinsic and necessary unity which cannot be separated; an intrinsic necessary union. Being and knowing are the same, they are not separate things that come

³⁴ Op. Cit. p.68

³⁵ Op. Cit. p.69

together; they began together. In Sheenan's interpretation: "beingness and knowing are intrinsically proportioned to each other"³⁶, he goes on to say that:

"Intelligibility is a transcendental property of every being insofar as it is; hence it is a transcendental property of beingness ... Knowability is natural, intrinsic and essential to beings. A beings beingness is its questionability and therefore its knowability, but not as some separate condition that floats off, self sufficient unto itself. Knowability is the ability of beings to be known. To be at all is to be able to be known. From the side of knowing, this means that cognition is not a 'bumping against things' not an intentional stretch out towards things that are intrinsically separate and different from the knower ... Aquinas' many statements about the sameness of the intellect and what it knows affirm precisely this transcendental correlation or intrinsic proportionality of beingness and knowability."³⁷

How are we to understand this 'transcendental correlation'. If the unity of being and knowing forms the dynamic of the transcendental spirit, how are we to understand the precise nature of this transcendence? The answer lies in Rahner's concept of 'being-present-to-self'.

3.2.2 Self-Presence or being-present-to-self.

The abstractive motion in the epistemic activity, whereby the knower (man) comes free from the phantasm and returns to self, is what Rahner calls "being-present-to-self". This is the perfect return from the object, to man's subjective. Man's subjective (cognitive) realm is his transcendental plane, as it were. According to Aquinas: "the intensity of being is determined by the degree of possibility of being able to be present to itself".³⁸

"Knowing is thus essentially 'subjectivity', not a 'being dispersed to many', in which dispersion to objects one could, in a metaphysical misunderstanding, see the objectivity of knowledge ... knowing is the subjectivity of being itself."³⁹

³⁶ *Karl Rahner; The Philosophical Foundations* - Thomas Sheenan, p.162

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Cited by Rahner in *Spirit in the World*, p.69 (Aquinas- De Ver. q.1, art.9)

³⁹ Ibid.

In the abstractive dynamic, we have the transcendental intelligibility of being. This transcendent intelligence is the free spirit which is the essential being of man. Essential being, then, is 'being-present-to-self'. This self-presence is at the same time the total knowledge which man has:

"Knowing is understood as the subjectivity of being itself, as the being-present-to-self of being. Being itself is already the original unifying unity of being and knowing, is onto-logical; and every actual unity of being and knowing in the actualisation of knowledge, is only raised to a higher power that transcendental synthesis which being is 'in itself'."⁴⁰

The transcendental reality of being is the synthesis of 'the conversion to the phantasm' and 'the abstraction, or perfect return to self'. This living, dynamic synthesis is the existence of man in his subjective being. "Being is being-present-to-self and ... the known is always the being of the knower."⁴¹

Being and knowing unit in the being-present-to-self of the knower they form the transcendental self presence, which exists in the face of the infinite beyond of Being in its totality (God).

Sheenan states that Rahner's basic presupposition here is:

"To be, means to resist fragmentation and to achieve some relative degree to self-unification or simplicity."⁴²

Clearly this resistance is the resistance of a plurality of being which would in effect be self-absence; man resists by drawing himself together in his own subjective, which is the freeing of himself from plurality to a perfect unity of self presence. Essentially his being is then a perfect self coincidence which has the elements of knowledge of the phantasms and self knowledge.

"Therefore 'to be' is, to some degree, to know oneself, (and) to be known by oneself ... To the degree that a being is it knows itself and is known by itself in a relative unity."⁴³

⁴⁰ Op. Cit. p.70

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *Karl Rahner; The Philosophical Foundations* - Thomas Sheenan, p.164

⁴³ Ibid.

This is what is termed 'luminosity of being', self clarity, transparency of being to oneself and indeed to others. In Rahner's words: "Being is illuminated in itself"⁴⁴. Knowability is, then, the essential capability of being to grasp and understand its own essence. "Knowability belongs interiorly and a-priori, in terms of the existent being itself to the grasping of its essence".⁴⁵

Another way to think of this being-present-to-onself is the concept of self possession:

"Conversely, the knowledge which belongs to the concept of the essence of being is the being-present-to-itself of being itself. In its original concept knowledge is self possession, and anything which is, possesses itself in the measure in which it is being."⁴⁶

"All things strive to return to themselves, want to come to themselves, to take possession of themselves, because the having being that they desire comes to be in the measure in which they take possession of themselves. All activities, from the sheerly material (which is self-absence) to the innermost life of the Blessed Trinity, are but modulations of this one metaphysical theme, of the one meaning of being: self-possession, subjectivity."⁴⁷

The meaning of being, then, is defined as self possession, which is the subjective 'being-present-to-self'. Such being-present-to-self necessitates, at the same moment, the exercise of the will in self affirmation or rejection; and to affirm or reject oneself is at the same moment to affirm or reject Being itself (God).

⁴⁴ *Hearers of the Word* - Karl Rahner, Sheed & Ward, Revised J B Metz 1969, Trans. R Walls, p.40

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Op. Cit. p.39

⁴⁷ Op. Cit. p.49

Revelation in the Theology of John Macquarrie

Revelation, in Macquarrie's view, is an ontological phenomenon whereby a certain reality of Being is disclosed to man. In a sense revelation is the answer to man's quest for Being; through which he seeks for 'meaning' and 'grace' for his life. However, the revelatory initiative is not man's, but lies beyond him in the transcendent reality of Being itself. According to Macquarrie man experiences this 'initiative from beyond' in various ways in terms of his overall and essential existence:

"In so far as it supports and strengthens his existence and helps him to overcome its fragmentariness and impotence, he calls it 'grace'. In so far as it lays claim on him and exposes the distortions of his existence, it may be called 'Judgement'. In so far as it brings him a new understanding both of himself and of the wider being within which he has his being (for the understanding of these is correlative), then it may be called 'revelation'. The word 'revelation' points therefore especially to the cognitive element in the experience."¹

Revelation is classed as the cognitive dimension in the experience of the initiative from beyond. It appears that man experiences grace, judgement and revelation through the transcendent object of his faith, which is at the same time the initiative from beyond. These three factors are essentially subjective interpretations of the one holistic experience, which through categorisation, relates to the different elements of man's ontological quest.²

¹ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie Revised ed. SCM Press 1977, p.84

² It appears that Macquarrie is distinguishing between experience and revelation as exclusive categories. He does agree however that revelation

Since revelation is the cognitive element involved in the experience of the initiative from beyond, it follows that it is the primary source for theology. This Macquarrie asserts:

"(Revelation) ... is the primary source of theology and (it) is also a basic category in theological thinking ... If, in general terms, we say that what is disclosed in revelation is the dimension of the holy, then, in revelatory experience it is as if the holy 'breaks in' and the movement is from beyond man towards man."³

However, the holy can not, or does not, break in on man in revelatory experience, if man is not previously attuned to receive it. Such an attunement constitutes the human side of revelation. We have then an apparently two fold dynamic which operates simultaneously: the subjective aspect, in terms of the preparation of man's awareness and the objective aspect, in terms of the initiative of the holy.

4.1 - Dynamic elements of revelation

We must consider the dynamic of revelation, in Macquarrie's understanding, in terms of both subjective and objective aspects; yet, since revelation is, as far as man is concerned, a cognitive reality, we must also consider the dynamic of revelation as finding its shape in the dimension of human epistemology.

itself is a mode of experience and that there is an element of revelation in all experience. He states: "one cannot therefore draw a hard and fast line between experience and revelation, but in practise it is desirable to keep these formative factors distinct in our theological thinking". - *Principles of Christian Theology* p.8 See also section 1.3:b below

³ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.7

4.1.1 - Attunement (the human subjective realm)

a) Existential

The human side of the revelatory situation arises from the polarities and tensions of human existence: "in which", states Macquarrie, "possibility and responsibility are cojoined with finitude and death."⁴

"Out of this polarity is generated an anxiety (Angst) ... a concern about existence itself with its potentialities and its precariousness. The quest for sense, coherence, a meaningful pattern, thus takes its rise from the very constitution of existence."⁵

The problem is that the tensions and polarities within existence: "some of them so sharp that man, as the bearer of such existence, is almost torn apart by them"⁶, are so difficult to hold in balance. Imbalance leads to inauthentic selfhood⁷ through the disorder of alienation, falling, lostness and sin. The examples of the polarities of existence which Macquarrie gives are: 'possibility and facticity', 'rationality and irrationality' and 'responsibility and impotency'. There is a further polarity which is of a different order, namely; 'the individual and society'.

Man is aware of these tensions in his existence because existence is: "the mode of being in which the existent has its being disclosed to it".⁸ The disclosure and awareness of being are constitutive of existence itself. We have the primary bivalence in human being discussed elsewhere⁹ as the nature of human existence whereby man not only 'is' but he is 'aware that he is'. Such an awareness which takes the form of the various polarities and tensions, above, results in the shock of being. The existent is therefore both concerned and responsible, in terms of the relation he has with himself. Balanced life leads to selfhood which of course, in keeping with the primary existentialist tenet that

⁴ Op. Cit. p.86

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Op. Cit. p.62

⁷ Selfhood can be taken to mean the state of 'realised human potential' which comes through 'authentic life'

⁸ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.61

⁹ Chapter 2

'existence precedes essence', is not ready-made, but is always before man as something incomplete. Existence is a reality which is ever transcending its present limitedness, therefore there is always a lack, or a gap before it, to which it reaches out.

"What is given to man is an existence that stands before different possibilities of being, and among these it must responsibly discriminate ... Because selfhood is not a ready-made 'nature', or collection of properties, but a potentiality that has to be responsibly actualised, man can either attain to authentic selfhood or miss it, and so fall below the kind of being that can properly be called 'existence' in the fullest sense."¹⁰

The human spirit is a transcendent openness, which as incomplete or unfinished, is always passing beyond its present condition of existence, in either a positive or a negative direction. There is therefore, according to Macquarrie and the existential philosophers, a great weight of responsibility on man's shoulders, which he has by virtue of being thrown into the world. All of this points towards a profound anxiety in the being of man, but before coming to that anxiety itself let us first consider briefly the polarities and tensions out of which the anxiety arises.

The polarity of 'possibility and facticity' exists because of the freedom and responsibility of man, as he stands before, and moves into, possible ways of being. Possibility exists because of freedom yet man is not completely free, he is limited by the facticity or givenness of the particular world in which he exists; man's possibilities are limited in that they are related to this particular world. Man's facticity, according to Macquarrie: "includes all the 'givens' of any particular existence -intelligence, race, temperament and many other factors which no one chooses for himself".¹¹ There are so many of these elements of facticity that man's freedom appears to be almost negligible. These factors of man's finitude cause him great frustration as he seeks to responsibly exercise his free choice of possibilities towards a complete selfhood.

'Rationality and irrationality' involve the apparent reality that man as a highly rational being lives a life which is ruled by dark irrational forces. This

¹⁰ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.61

¹¹ Op. Cit. p.62

irrationality produces an ulterior motive in man's existence which involves him in lies, error and deception.

"While man's rationality seems to afford a ground for the right ordering of life and for almost unlimited progress in improving its conditions and deepening its quality, his irrationality, as we know only too well, keeps breaking in and threatening to disrupt all order."¹²

Such disorder, which again acts against the positive use of man's freedom is, as a great limiting factor upon it, grounds for despair and anguish.

The polarity of 'responsibility and impotency' is clearly of the same order. Responsibility pertains to the dynamic of the disclosedness of Being and according to Macquarrie: "The mode of disclosure which has to do most closely with responsibility is conscience ... the name 'conscience' implies a kind of synoptic self-understanding, the self's own awareness of how it measures up to itself, that is to say, how far it is failing or succeeding in bringing to actualisation its own potentialities for being."¹³

Macquarrie goes on to say that:

"It is well known that while the summons of conscience may be clear enough, the will to obey this summons may be too weak. We recognise responsibility and even the 'oughtness' of a situation, yet we cannot bring ourselves to do what is demanded."¹⁴

We have to face up to this impotence, which seems to make no sense of moral values, and as Macquarrie states: "challenges the value of any aspiration".¹⁵

Finally, there is the polarity of the 'individual and society'. As Macquarrie states: "No human being exists in isolation"¹⁶; they are social beings which must exist in community. Macquarrie uses the examples of sexuality and language, to demonstrate this fact, he also cites Ludwig Feuerbach: "where there is no

¹² Op. Cit. p.63

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Op. Cit. p.64

¹⁶ Op. Cit. p.66

thou, there is no I"¹⁷ However, whilst sociability appears to be intrinsic to human existence every existence is unique: "every human being looks out on the world from the point of view of a particular ego and constitutes, as it were, a microcosm."¹⁸

The individual has both the intrinsic need for community and for autonomy and privacy, to be an individual. The dialectical tension exists in that neither the individual (as we have seen) nor the community, is yet perfect. Therefore the tension between individual and community appears to be (in its present form) destructive in its actualisation. Macquarrie cites Reinhold Niebuhr: "The community is the frustration as well as the realisation of individual life."¹⁹ Yet Macquarrie goes on to say: "The attainment of selfhood in the individual is related to the achievement of authentic community in society."²⁰

If we take all of these polarities and tensions together we might well arrive at the position that man's existence with its finite possibility, is self-contradictory and therefore absurd. Macquarrie cites Sartre's famous phrase in this respect 'man is a useless passion':

"Man in Sartre's famous phrase is 'a useless passion', for his very existence is such as to make nonsense of his aspirations and potentialities. And indeed we have still to add the final touch to the picture - death. This existence of man, an existence that is throughout subject to the tensions between its opposing poles, will terminate in any case in death, and this looks like triumph of finitude and negativity ... An existence of contradictions, coming finally to nothing in death - this is an absurdity."²¹

Such absurdity would appear to be irrefutable, yet a strange paradox is evident in all human life, which in fact is in the same dialectical form as the other polarities, this is the polarity of 'anxiety and hope'. It appears that hope exists in proportion to anxiety; it is intrinsically, dialectically attached to anxiety, therefore it cannot be stifled or eradicated. Human life is lived in hope, in the face of negativity and absurdity. Anxiety does not cancel out hope, nor, of

¹⁷ Ibid. & *The Essence of Christianity* - L Feuerbach p.92

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Op.Cit. p.67 & *The Nature and Destiny of Man* - R Niebuhr, Vol 2, p.310

²⁰ Op. Cit. p.68

²¹ Op. Cit. p.64 & *Being and Nothingness* - J P Sartre p.615

course, does hope cancel out anxiety, the context of life is therefore the synthesis of these two:

"Hope and anxiety may alternate almost like the perceptions of an ambiguous figure in a textbook of psychology. The twentieth century has seen many oscillations between hope and anxiety - even between a brash unthinking optimism which lacks the humility of true hope to an apocalyptic despair that has nothing of the subtlety of ontological anxiety."²²

Both of these 'affective states' are seen to be fundamental to human existence, therefore the questions which are raised by the synthesis tension are profound and essential to the human quest for Being. It seems clear, as Macquarrie suggests, that only a dialectical interpretation can be adequate to the complexity of the phenomenon. As we deal with 'hope' at some length, under the appropriate heading of 'faith' in chapter 7, it remains to consider 'anxiety' at this point.

i) Anxiety

Macquarrie has summed up, in existential categories and conceptuality, the human condition in its reality; such a brilliant treatment of the reality of human existence, demonstrates, at least in this area, the suitability and appropriateness of existential philosophy as a theological medium. Great light is shed on the true and essential nature of human being, as existing in a state of disorder and 'fallenness'.²³ Such a reality leads to the ultimate category of 'hope', which is essentially of the nature of 'faith' and if man is to avoid the debilitating despair of anxiety, hope and faith take on the significance of necessity. Macquarrie's analysis, is, in effect, a very powerful apologetic basis for the rise and existence of 'religion' as an authentic and necessary reality and medium of human salvation. The human malady or 'lostness' is disclosed to human consciousness through the affective state of 'anxiety', therefore in the context of a real and living 'hope' or 'faith', anxiety is in fact a positive phenomenon. Both hope, and anxiety can be seen to be fundamentally of the same relation; that is of the

²² *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.65

²³ For a discussion of this disorder see - *Principles of Christian Theology* p.71f

fallen human state, which we may term 'inauthentic life', and the possibility of realising the full human potential in God, which we may term both 'selfhood' and 'authentic life':

"Both anxiety and hope seem to be very deeply rooted in the being of man. Paul Ricoeur suggests that these seemingly contradictory moods might be understood as two ways of experiencing the same relation. Anxiety is the sense of difference between the finite being and the mysterious totality in which he has, so it seems, an insignificant place; hope and joy arise from the sense of belonging to that totality and having some affinity with it."²⁴

Anxiety is understood as a 'mood' or in Heideggerian terms, an 'affective state'.²⁵ A mood is a mode of awareness, therefore anxiety is not understood primarily as a subjective emotion, but as a mode of awareness; as a concern about existence itself, in the face of its apparent absurdity and its precariousness. Anxiety gives rise to the quest for sense or meaning to it all; for coherence and purposiveness. To the quest for sense is added the quest for grace, because of the awareness of the disorder in existence and the corresponding guilt which goes with it.

We have proposed that anxiety is a disclosure of the disorder in human existence but if we seek to reach deeper into the essential nature of the mood of anxiety, by asking the question, 'essentially what is anxiety an awareness of?' Macquarrie's answer is: "Awareness of nothing!"²⁶ or more accurately put 'awareness of nullity'. Macquarrie expands on precisely what he means by such an awareness:

"What is intended is the awareness of the precariousness of existence which at any time may lapse into nothing. It may cease to be in death and it fails to be in guilt. We become aware of a nullity that enters into the very way in which we are constituted."²⁷

²⁴ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.65 & *Fallible Man* - Paul Ricoeur, p.161

²⁵ We have already dealt with Heidegger's thinking on moods or affective states, and angst, and also Tillich's thinking on angst, in Chapter 2

²⁶ *Principles of Christian theology* - John Macquarrie p.86 (This is precisely the same answer Tillich gave; see chapter 2)

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Essentially we are anxious about ceasing to be, and the awareness of the possibility and indeed inevitability, through death, of ceasing to be enters into our existence as an intrinsic factor of existence itself. Tillich uses the term of 'nonbeing' for nullity, although he does state that finite being faces the threat of 'nothingness' yet anxiety, according to Tillich, reveals the ontological reality of nonbeing. Concerning the entry of the nullity into the very constitution of human being, nonbeing enters into the whole of man's being because anxiety permeates the whole of his being, indeed "it shapes soul and body and determines spiritual life".²⁸

Macquarrie steps further than the immediate human constitution in claiming that the mood of anxiety brings an awareness of the external world as sinking to nothing:

"The world too sinks to nothing, it gets stripped of the values and meanings that we normally assign to the things and events that belong within it, and it becomes indeterminate, characterised by the same kind of emptiness and nullity that we know in ourselves."²⁹

But surely anxiety, as a mood of such profound intensity, is experienced by only a very few persons! Macquarrie's view, in this respect, is that this intensity of anxiety, and therefore the revelation of nothingness, is not common because man does his utmost to escape from falling into it:

"we can learn as well from psychologists and anthropologists as from existentialist philosophers about the devices and illusions that we employ to tranquillise our fundamental anxiety in the face of our radical finitude and transience. Yet I believe that the mood is universal in the sense that at one time or another it catches up with almost all of us."³⁰

Heidegger has no reservations as to the universality of the mood of Angst, he considers that man is most essentially 'Care' existing in the temporal state of

²⁸ *Systematic Theology* - Paul Tillich, p.193f (See Chapter 2)

²⁹ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.86

³⁰ Ibid.

'concern', care is ontologically earlier than any other aspect of man's existence.³¹

Angst then, is the fundamental determinant in our mood or state-of-mind, and our state-of-mind is our being-attuned.

According to Macquarrie, man is attuned through the mood of anxiety to receive revelation of Holy Being. This attunement is man's predisposition whereby he is able to recognise holy being's approach to him. Attunement therefore produces the facility of recognition, which is the character of the awareness of anxiety. The capacity of recognition is therefore the human side of the dynamic of revelation. There is, then, a continuity which leads from anxiety to the revelation of the truth of Being, which Macquarrie claims: "was well seen by those Old Testament writers who declared the fear of the lord to be the beginning of wisdom or knowledge."³²

b) Ontological

In the mood of intense anxiety man becomes aware of 'nothing'; he becomes aware of this nullity in himself and in all of the things of the world in which he lives. Everything is perceived as valueless and meaningless. The affective state of anxiety produces a psychological condition of nihilism and the awareness of the profound and primordial reality of nonbeing. Indeed, anxiety's nature is rooted in nonbeing itself and it could be argued that the various polarities of existence, which lead the mind to consider that human life is absurd, themselves arise and are in relational union with the primary dialectic of 'Being and nothing'.³³

When an individual ceases to flee, as Heidegger would say, from the reality of being with its polarities and tensions and indeed frustrations, and faces his own being, he enters the realm of the ultimate whereby he becomes aware of the

³¹ The discussion on Heidegger's understanding of moods (affective states) in Chapter 2, is most enlightening in respect of Macquarrie's thinking in this area.

³² *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.87 & Ps.110:10, Prov. 1:7, 9:10

³³ See the discussion concerning 'being and nothing' Chapter 2

meaninglessness and futility of the beings in the world which exist for their own sake, seeking meaning and value in terms of themselves alone. He comes to a nihilistic perspective where the only reality which has integrity is 'nothingness'. In the anxious mode of awareness everything sinks to nothing. Delusion is at an end and there is no point to anything. Perhaps this place of the coming to nothing could be described as radical and total cynicism. Or perhaps it could be described as the reality of the disorder of fallen existence whereby man seeks meaning, satisfaction and realisation in terms of himself and his finite world, rather than in and through God. He seeks the fulfilment of his person or 'selfhood' in and through the 'love of self' and not the love of the other in God.³⁴

In this respect Macquarrie states:

"Selfhood is attained only in so far as the existent is prepared to look beyond the limits of his own self for the master concern that can create such a stable and unified existence. He must be prepared to accept the factual aspects of his existence, his finitude, transience, morality, and take these up into the potentiality which he projects for himself into the future. This means in effect that by looking beyond himself, or as we may say, dying to himself, he becomes himself."³⁵

Macquarrie goes on to quote the New Testament in respect of this paradox: "who ever will save his life will lose it"; "whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." (Mark 8:35) And: "What does a man gain by winning the whole world at the cost of his true self" (Mark 8:36). Perhaps we could describe the apparent evil of nothingness, in this respect, as self seeking and self love. In Hegelian terms, the finite seeking realisation in the finitude itself rather than in the infinitude, from which it came and has its meaning and very existence.³⁶

But if man, through the mood of anxiety, sinks to an awareness of his existence and the world's existence as 'nothingness' and he experiences the effects of the nullity in his own being; and indeed he is aware of his coming nonbeing through

³⁴ This develops to idolatry which Macquarrie considers to be the very essence of sin

³⁵ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.79

³⁶ Karl Barth considers that evil is 'nothingness' or more accurately 'das nichtige'. For his, revealing, treatment of this subject see - *Church Dogmatics*, 3.3

his death which he cannot avoid, would he not be completely demotivated and stultified in respect of his future existence? Would he not cease to exist in the existential understanding of the term? Macquarrie states: "If death shows up the futility of our concerns, does it not stultify them all? ... every human aspiration is devalued so that, as Sartre goes so far as to suggest, the life of the solitary drunk and the great statesman are equally pointless?"³⁷

The answer is that man has to come to the recognition that he has his being within the wider context of a 'wider Being':

"Human existence can make sense if this wider being supports and supplements the meagre heritage of our finite being ... To adapt words of St. Augustine, human existence makes sense if being grants what it commands, that is to say, if there are resources beyond our human resources to help us fulfil the claims that our very existence lays upon us."³⁸

At this point we draw near to the Schleiermacherian maxim of 'utter dependence upon God'; such a one who comes to this total dependence has been converted from 'sin consciousness' to 'God consciousness'. It seems reasonable to consider that the very real phenomenon that Macquarrie has been describing is in fact none other than 'religious conversion' through which the man or woman of unfaith has become a man or woman of faith. Macquarrie agrees that the new attitude which man who has come to nothing, must take up is 'faith': "The attitude described is what the religious man calls 'faith'. It is obvious that faith is not a mere belief but an existential attitude".³⁹

i) Being and nothing

The awareness of the nothingness of the finitude in man's own being and in the world is in the same moment the awareness of a 'wider being'; this wider being may be termed Being-in-total, Being-in-general, Being-itself or Holy Being. The internal logic of this psychology is that the concept of nonbeing, nullity or nothingness can not exist without the concept of Being. Both Being and

³⁷ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie

³⁸ Op. Cit. p.80

³⁹ Ibid; The whole question of faith is dealt with in Chapter 7

nothingness, as already discussed briefly, in respect of Paul Tillich's thinking in Chapter two exist in necessary dialectical relation to one another. Being is itself permeated or indwelt with nonbeing as an essential element of its own reality. Existence of the beings could be interpreted as a living synthesis of the tensions between the apparently contradictory opposite poles. It follows that if man becomes aware of the ultimate of the nothingness he must also become aware of the ultimate of Being itself. The mood of anxiety brings him to an awareness of the nothingness, and so attuned, Being itself is revealed to him. Macquarrie states:

"What is it then that confronts us and reveals itself to us when we have become aware of the nothingness of ourselves and our world? The answer is: Being. It is against the foil of nothing that for the first time our eyes are opened to the wonder of being, and this happens with the force of revelation."⁴⁰

For the first time man recognises and is aware of Being itself, which was around him all the time, but went unnoticed. The Being that is revealed is different from the beings: "It is different from any particular being or any property, yet we are aware of it as more beingful, so to speak, than anything else".⁴¹ Being does not fall under any of the everyday categories, it cannot be grasped conceptually, it transcends the ordinary mundane reality. Nonetheless it becomes present and manifest to the attuned awareness, in and through the ordinary beings which take on new and fresh symbolic value. It is clear that Macquarrie equates the Being which is revealed with God, although only those of a religious attitude would call it God. In respect of this religious disposition Macquarrie suggests that Being is called 'Holy Being', and Holy Being can only be God Himself.

⁴⁰ Op. Cit. p.87

⁴¹ Ibid.

4.1.2 - The Initiative of Holy Being (The objective element in revelation)

We have seen that, according to Macquarrie, the human subjective is attuned to receive the revelation of Holy Being through the affective state of anxiety (and no doubt this is the experience of many). Through this psychological and emotional attunement man receives the capacity to recognise Being, therefore the awareness of nothing is at the same time the recognition of Being. However, there is another dynamic at work in this revelatory experience, and that is the objective initiative of Holy Being in revealing itself (or Himself) to attuned man. The quest for sense and grace on man's part is matched by a quest for man: "a quest that is initiated outside of man and remains beyond his control".⁴² We must seek to spell out, as much as is possible, the precise nature of this Holy Being which is on a quest for man and so reveals itself to him.

a) *Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinans*

Macquarrie states: "The revelatory approach of being is nowhere better described than in the classic analysis of Rudolf Otto"⁴³; Macquarrie adopts Otto's analysis which is in terms of the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, which is the mystery which is at once overwhelming and fascinating.

Otto's term 'creature-feeling', which Macquarrie considers the equivalent of the mood of anxiety, becomes awe in the presence of the holy. Essentially what is being described by the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, is the relationship of the numinous presence of 'the holy', as Otto refers to it, and the reaction in the being of man. We have both elements, subjective and objective, present in this experience. There is the drawing close of the holy in numinous presence, and the reaction of 'creature-feeling' in awe and fascination, in the consciousness and being of man. Macquarrie states :

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid; For a full discussion of the *tremendum*, *mysterium*, *fascinans*, and 'creature-feeling' see *The Idea of the Holy* - Rudolf Otto, chapters 2-6

"The 'mysterium' refers to the incomprehensible depth of the numinous presence, which does not fall under the ordinary categories of thought but is other than the familiar beings of the world. The 'tremendum' stresses the otherness of holy being as over against the nullity and transience of our own limited being; it points to the transcendence of being. The 'fascinans' points to what we have already called the 'grace' of being which has unveiled itself so that we understand that it gives itself to us, that it is the source of our being and strengthens our being with its presence."⁴⁴

We have here the painting of a picture of revelation in terms of a mysterious numinous presence, through which man receives a holistic, revelatory experience; he receives an experience in his own being through the revelatory awareness of the numinous presence of Being itself. This revelation strengthens our own being in this 'giving' of Being to our awareness and in the realisation that the meaning and purpose to existence can only be found in terms of this 'wider Being'. The key to the approach of holy Being, by its own initiative, is the concept of givenness, which is the content of grace. Being is a given reality and according to Macquarrie, as we have seen, Being (or God) is 'letting-be'; Holy Being, through and in grace, lets-be all that is. However, to gain a further insight into Macquarrie's understanding of the nature of Holy Being who lets-be we must turn to Otto's analysis. Our warrant to do so is Macquarrie's whole hearted endorsement and adoption of Otto's thinking in this respect.

i) Rudolf Otto's analysis

Otto's category for 'Holy being', or more accurately 'the holy', is 'the numinous'. The numinous is understood as objective in that it is a category of value, and subjective in that it is a state of mind:

"I shall speak then of a unique 'numinous' category of value and of a definitely 'numinous' state of mind, which is always found wherever the category is applied. The mental state is perfectly 'sui generis' and irreducible to any other; and therefore, like every absolute primary

⁴⁴ Op. Cit. p.87

and elementary datum, while it admits of being discussed, it cannot be strictly defined."⁴⁵

Because the objective reality of the numinous can not be defined, Otto's concern is to discuss the corresponding human feeling in the experience of the numinous presence. Schleiermacher called this particular phenomenon 'a feeling of dependence' but Otto prefers the term 'creature-feeling'. He considers that Schleiermacher made an important discovery. However, he criticises him in that: "the feeling or emotion which he really has in mind ... is in its specific quality not a 'feeling of dependence' in the 'natural' sense of the word. As such, other domains of life and other regions of experience than the religious occasion the feeling, as a sense of personal insufficiency and impotence, a consciousness of being determined by circumstances and environment."⁴⁶

The feeling of which Schleiermacher wrote is analogous to these non-religious states of mind, therefore its nature may be elucidated by them. Otto's point is that the feeling is in fact qualitatively different from such analogous states of mind; Schleiermacher does recognise a difference of degree in this respect but not an intrinsic qualitative difference, which Otto demands as being the case.

In describing the precise feeling which Otto means, he cites the words of Abraham in Gen 18:27: "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak to the Lord, which am but dust and ashes".⁴⁷ This is more than just a feeling of dependence; Otto calls it 'creature-consciousness' or 'creature-feeling'. This "is the emotion of a creature abased and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures".⁴⁸ Creature-feeling, then, is expressed as "the note of self abasement into nothingness before an overpowering, absolute might of some kind".⁴⁹ Schleiermacher's understanding is of this emotional state as a subjective reality without an objective element, whereas for Otto:

⁴⁵ *The Idea of the Holy* - Rudolf Otto Oxford Uni Press 1925 trans. John W Harvey, p.7

⁴⁶ Op. Cit. p.9

⁴⁷ Ibid. f

⁴⁸ Op. Cit. p.10

⁴⁹ Ibid.

"The 'creature-feeling' is itself a first subjective concomitant and effect of another feeling-element, which casts it like a shadow, but which in itself indubitably has immediate and primary reference to an object outside the self. Now this object is just what we have already spoken of as 'the numinous'."⁵⁰

Otto goes on to describe this numinous, objective something else, which is a supreme, overpowering absolute might, in terms of a 'mysterium tremendum'.

i) 1 - The idea of 'tremendum'

Essentially Otto's analysis is concerned with the objective reality of the numinous as it is reflected in the human mind in terms of feeling. The unity of cognitive and conative faculties is presupposed; the numinous "grips or stirs the human mind with this and that determinate affective state".⁵¹ Clearly we have an epiphenominal situation whereby the mind is controlled by the emotional state and the emotional state is determined by the presence of the numinous. Otto's task is to find the terms whereby these affective states, and indeed the numinous presence, can in some way be described. The most fundamental and profound element in strong and sincere religious emotion can only be expressed, claims Otto, by the term 'mysterium tremendum'. Perhaps we could use the English equivalent of an 'awful mystery' or 'a mystery which is awful' for Otto's term; the element of 'awfulness' relates to the fundamental character of the tremendum.

The noun of tremendum is tremor, which is the natural emotion of fear, but the emotional response to the numinous is distinct from fear in that it is more profound. Otto refers to the Hebrew term 'hiqdish' (hallow) as a suitable descriptive term. To hallow something is to keep it holy in the heart, this means "to mark it off by a feeling of peculiar dread, not to be mistaken for any ordinary dread".⁵² The parallel expression for this term, in the Old Testament, is 'the emat of Yahweh' (the fear of God). Macquarrie too uses this term as the human response to the revelatory approach of Holy Being; he uses it in its

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Op. Cit. p.14

⁵² Ibid.

expanded form, that is "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom".⁵³ This fear can be described as dread or awe or awfulness. The emphasis here is on the unnaturalness of this awe; it is a supernatural, unique experience, brought about by the objective presence of the numinous, but only to those who are predisposed mentally to receive it. The experience "is only possible to a being in whom has been awakened a mental predisposition, unique in kind and different in a definite way from any natural faculty".⁵⁴

Otto also refers to the objective element as 'the orge (wrath) of Yahweh', he says of this:

"Any one who is accustomed to think of deity only by its rational attributes must see in this 'wrath' mere caprice and wilful passion. But such a view would have been emphatically rejected by the religious men of the Old covenant, for to them the Wrath of God, so far from being a diminution of his Godhead, appears as a natural expression of it, an element of holiness itself and a quite indispensable one."⁵⁵

"'Wrath' here is the 'ideogram' of a unique emotional moment in religious experience, a moment whose singularly daunting and awe-inspiring character must be gravely disturbing to those persons who will recognise nothing in the divine nature but goodness, gentleness, love and a sort of confidential intimacy, in a word, only those aspects of God which turn towards the world of men."⁵⁶

"Something supra-rational throbs and gleams, palpable and visible, in the 'wrath of God', prompting to a sense of 'terror' that no 'natural' anger can arouse."⁵⁷

The element of awfulness is summed up in the phrase 'the absolute unapproachableness of God'. To this Otto adds the element of 'overpoweringness' (majestas). This is the element of power and might which Otto sums up in the term 'majesty', he states: "the 'tremendum' may then be rendered more adequately 'tremenda majestas' or 'awful majesty'".⁵⁸

⁵³ See note 32.

⁵⁴ *The Idea of the Holy* - Rudolf Otto, p.15f

⁵⁵ Op. Cit. p.18

⁵⁶ Op. Cit. p.19

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Op. Cit. p.20

"It is especially in relation to this element of majesty or absolute overpoweringness that the creature-consciousness ... comes upon the scene as a sort of shadow or subjective reflection of it. Thus in contrast to 'the overpowering' of which we are conscious as an object over against the self, there is a feeling of one's own abasement, of being but 'dust and ashes' and nothingness."⁵⁹

In the term 'majesty' we have both the idea of the annihilation of self and, at the same time, the transcendence of God as the sole and entire reality. A confrontation with the transcendent reality in the numinous is a revelation of the delusion of selfhood, a seeing of the self as a nullity; this produces an attitude of self-depreciation and rejection of the delusion. We have here the idea of the 'death of self' and the living for God which is so prominent in Pauline theology.

Finally there is the element of 'energy' in the 'tremendum' which Otto also refers to as 'urgency'. Perhaps here more than other places the condemnation of the philosophers, concerning descriptive terms for God as being mere anthropomorphisms, is brought to bear. However, Otto claims that this element is a genuine aspect of the divine nature. The idea of 'the living God' presupposes energy; energy is the urgent, active, compelling and vigorous aspect of life itself. Indeed love requires energy as does wrath, therefore it is difficult to think of the presence of the numinous in awful majesty without also considering that in the great unapproachable, transcendent power, there is not also essential and absolute energy.

i) 2 - The idea of 'Mysterium'

"Taken in the religious sense that which is 'mysterious' is - to give it perhaps the most striking expression - the 'wholly other' that which is quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible and the familiar, which therefore falls quite outside the limits of the 'canny' and is contrasted with it, filling the mind with blank wonder and astonishment."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Op. Cit. p.26

The 'mysterium' is the 'wholly other', and since the wholly other is a transcendent reality which is beyond the sphere of man's perception and indeed of his world altogether, it is quite incomprehensible to him. Man can neither comprehend nor apprehend it. The question is, if the mysterium is 'wholly other' and beyond man's understanding and imagination, just how does the feeling of 'wholly other' in the numinous consciousness grip the mind?

Indeed it is quite beyond the mind! According to Otto the numinous object - the wholly other - is contrasted with ordinary experience, and it is the nature of the contrast that grips the mind. In referring to Mysticism, Otto states:

"Mysticism continues to its extreme point this contrasting of the numinous object (the numen), as the 'wholly other', with ordinary experience. Not content with contrasting it with all that is of nature or this world, Mysticism concludes by contrasting it with Being itself and all that 'is', and finally actually calls it 'that which is nothing'".⁶¹

It follows that in contrast to ordinary being, Being-itself or God, is 'nothing'. "By this 'nothing' is meant not only that of which nothing can be predicated, but that which is absolutely and intrinsically other than and opposite of everything that is and can be thought".⁶²

i) 3 - The idea of 'Fascinans'

Whilst the element of awfulness could be said to represent 'judgement' in all its daunting unapproachableness, the element of fascination represents 'grace'. The mysterium, tremendum, fascinans is therefore seen as existing in dialectical tension. The qualitative content of the numinous experience is at the same time awesome and daunting and attractive and fascinating. Otto states that: "These two qualities, the daunting and the fascinating now combine in a strange harmony of contrasts ".⁶³

⁶¹ Op. Cit. p.30

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Op. Cit. p.31

The person who trembles before the awesomeness and dread of the numinous has at the same time the irresistible impulse to turn towards it and claim it as his own. Otto states:

"The 'mystery' is for him not merely something to be wondered at but something that entrances him; and besides that in it which bewilders and confounds, he feels a something that captivates and transports him with a strange ravishment, rising often enough to a pitch of dizzy intoxication."⁶⁴

We are talking here of the state of bliss and beatitude, which Otto claims to be non-rational elements. The rational ideas which correspond are listed as: love, mercy, pity and comfort. These Otto considers to be "the natural elements of the physical life." He goes on to say that "important as these are for the experience of religious bliss or felicity, they do not by any means exhaust it".⁶⁵

"Just as 'Wrath' taken in a purely rational or purely ethical sense, does not exhaust that profound element of awfulness which is locked in the mystery of deity, so neither does 'graciousness' exhaust the profound element of wonderfulness and rapture which lies in the mysterious beatific experience of deity."⁶⁶

Clearly the element of fascination, as opposite pole to awfulness and judgement, has the essential nature of 'grace' and salvation; It relates to the forgiveness and salvation of human beings. Otto states: "it is a bliss which embraces all of those blessings that are indicated or suggested in a positive fashion by any 'doctrine of salvation'".⁶⁷ In respect of this salvation Otto quotes:

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for those that love him." (1 Cor 2:9) This is clearly a salvific blessing which is beyond the conception of the human intellect, "this", states Otto, "brings the peace that passes understanding":

"Mere love, mere trust, for all the glory and happiness they bring, do not explain to us that moment of rapture that breathes in our

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Op. Cit. p.32

⁶⁷ Op. Cit. p.34f

tenderest and most heart-felt hymns of salvation ... This is where the living 'something more' of the 'fascinans', the element of fascination is to be found. It lives no less in those tense extollings of the blessings of salvation".⁶⁸

Clearly the element of 'fascination' is the 'saving grace' of God; seen in the extreme this would be something like the 'beatific vision'.

4.1.3 - The Two Side Dynamic of Revelation, in Particular Christian Perspective.

In his discussion under the heading "Entry into the Christian life", Macquarrie discusses four stages which clearly correspond to the general, two sided revelation dynamic. It is both helpful and enlightening to give some consideration to this example of a particular instance of the apparently general phenomenon, at this stage.

a) The human side

The two stages which correspond to the human side of the general dynamic of revelation, in the Christian instance of it, are: i) Conviction of sin, and ii) Repentance.

i) Conviction of sin

Macquarrie deals with the awareness of sin, (as already seen above) in two specific places apart from this one. In one place sin is seen in general perspective as a 'natural' disorder of existence⁶⁹ and in another place it is very powerfully described, in relation to God and creation, as being basically idolatry.⁷⁰ Since Macquarrie has dealt with the nature and reality of sin so

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie pp.68-73

⁷⁰ Op. Cit. pp.259-267; It is clearly seen in these pages that Macquarrie has a high view and doctrine of 'sin'. See also pp.68-73,71-72 & 338-339 et al.

fully, in the above two places, he can now proceed, unhindered, to discuss the conviction of sin, in a Christian context.

"Conviction of sin" is understood by Macquarrie to be primarily a work of the Holy Spirit, he states:

"now sin is to be seen in its full dimension, when the Spirit convicts us of sin in the light of what is revealed in the person and work of Christ."⁷¹

"An act of grace, we have seen, is at the same time an act of judgement. The work of Christ is a saving work that lights up and indeed brings us to Being, christhood, and selfhood; but inevitably at the same time it reveals how far away we are from these, and indeed how we reject them, as Christ was rejected. In making unhidden the disclosure of existence and Being in Christ, the Holy Spirit makes unhidden the disclosure of the depth of human sinfulness in a way that goes beyond any previous awareness that we may have had of it."⁷²

Macquarrie sees that in the presence of Christ and His revelation, the general awareness of sin, which is a universal unease, intensifies to the point that the burden of sin becomes intolerable. We see that the presence of Christ produces at the same moment a profound conviction of sin. This is a direct parallel with the presence of holy Being, at the same time producing the awareness of the nothingness of self and the world. It is the Spirit, however, who intensifies and heightens man's natural awareness to the point of conviction, yet this initiative of the Spirit is not imposed on man from outside:

"Man's conscience, his critical self awareness is sharpened and made more perceptive, so that he becomes aware in a new way of the distance which separates his actual existence from the fulfilling of his potentialities in true selfhood; but this is no violation of his being, but the raising of it to a higher level."⁷³

The two sides of the dynamic of revelation are clearly seen in this particular instance, and again the divine initiative does not overwhelm the human side.

⁷¹ Op. Cit. p.338

⁷² Ibid.f

⁷³ Op. Cit. p.339

ii) Repentance

Repentance, which according to Macquarrie (and Martin Buber) is "a turning of the whole person"⁷⁴ from sinful existence to God, is intrinsic to the 'conviction of sin':

"Repentance is already implied in conviction of sin, for to be aware of sin is to be dissatisfied with oneself, and so to be already seeking to turn away from where one actually is ... Conviction of sin by itself might lead to despair rather than to repentance, were it not that the very revelation that convinces of sin also offers promise of reconciliation - that grace and judgement belong equiprimordially to the same event. Likewise the 'turning away' of repentance, which is turning away from sin and thus from idols, is at the same time a 'turning toward', a turning toward God or Being, who had been forgotten in the preoccupation with the beings."⁷⁵

Repentance, then, is both an essential element in salvation and an integral aspect of the revelatory encounter with God or Holy Being.

b) The divine side

The two stages which correspond with the initiative of Holy Being, in the revelatory dynamic are; i) Election, and ii) Justification.

i) Election

Macquarrie prefers the term 'choosing' rather than election, as it follows from Jesus' words to His disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (Jn 15:16), however, he states: "The doctrine of election is one of the strongest expressions of the divine initiative in the process of salvation".⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Op. Cit. p.340

⁷⁶ Ibid.

"Through the revelation in Christ, man knows himself to be chosen, and chosen to be. He is called out of nothing into existence into a reconciled existence, eventually called to have his being in God."⁷⁷

Macquarrie, here more than anywhere, makes it quite plain that the initiative in revelation and indeed in salvation is wholly God's. The human side is not wholly passive, however, as man must respond to God's call.

ii) Justification

Macquarrie is not very happy with the term 'justification', which he claims is only one element in the Christian experience of reconciliation. He states:

"What is trying to find expression in the doctrine of justification is the experience of being accepted by Being, of emerging from lostness and alienation into a right relation with Being. Thus another model used to describe what happens is forgiveness, which takes place when a cause of estrangement between two persons is overcome through the initiative of one of them, and a good relation restored."⁷⁸

Justification is already implicit in election, and follows necessarily from it. Indeed the whole thrust of the Protestant stress on justification is that it is entirely a work of God through the initiative of divine grace. This far Macquarrie goes along with the traditional Protestant doctrine. Justification, then, is evidence again of the initiative from beyond man.

4.1.4 Epistemological Aspect

a) Cognitive verses conative; and modes of thinking and knowing

Primordial revelation, according to Macquarrie, takes place in the context of an encounter between certain, suitably attuned individuals and Holy Being. The two necessary aspects of the encounter are the predisposition of the individual

⁷⁷ Op. Cit. p.341

⁷⁸ Op. Cit. p.342

towards Holy Being through the mood of anxiety and the numinous presence of Holy Being in 'awful majesty'. Revelation conceived of in this way is not primarily a cognitive experience but rather a conative experience whereby the Holy is present in a complex of feelings and emotions. The cognitive element follows on from the emotional experience as an interpretative activity. The cognitive is a result of the conative; revelation is not primarily given in words or propositions yet we require words and propositions to articulate it. Indeed the words and propositions through which the particular revelation is expressed is the arising 'theology'. It must be conceded that revelation is, and has to do with, knowledge; it is a 'knowledge event'. Indeed, new knowledge of anything is a revelation to the one who gains it. Macquarrie states: "Revelation suggests some kind of unveiling, whereby what has been hitherto concealed from us is now opened up".⁷⁹ Otherwise put, what was previously unknown is now known. In respect of the revelations or discoveries of empirical science, we could say that revelation corresponds merely to the ordinary way of knowing. However, we are concerned with the revelation of the transcendent 'wholly other', to which the category of ordinary knowledge does not apply. We can say that revelation 'must' correspond to some form of human knowledge, because even Macquarrie's understanding of revelation confronts the cognitive consciousness as something which is essentially (in terms of its very own nature) knowable. If the revelatory experience is not knowable, in respect of the human epistemic sphere, then it is not a revelatory experience, because nothing has been unveiled to the human perception. This poses a problem to Macquarrie which he seeks to resolve by finding a corresponding form of human knowing and thinking. His essential concern, however, is not the resolution of the problem as outlined here, which he does not appear to address directly, but as to the trustworthiness of the revelatory encounter in the face of the possibility of it being illusory:

"The revelatory experience is not self authenticating and may be illusion."

"Its trustworthiness would be supported if we found that it is not an experience utterly mysterious and isolated, and if we were able to find something like parallels and connections in our more mundane experience or in the accounts of knowing and thinking that we find in secular philosophers. It is true that there must be a uniqueness

⁷⁹ Op. Cit. p.85f p.88

about revealed knowledge that sets a great difference between it and our everyday knowledge ... I do not want to minimise this difference. Nevertheless, it would be a still greater error to think of revealed knowledge as completely unrelated to the more familiar modes of knowing."⁸⁰

Macquarrie is concerned, then, with an epistemology of revelation, whereby the gap between transcendence and immanence is bridged. The epistemological schema, which Macquarrie proposes, is as he declares, largely taken over from Heidegger. It has three principal elements (ways of thinking and knowing), two of which apply in some way to the 'knowledge' of revelation:

1. Calculative thinking - Knowledge of a subject/object pattern.
2. Existential thinking - Knowledge of a subject/subject pattern.
3. Primordial or essential thinking - Knowledge of an object/subject pattern.

'Calculative thinking' - This is the commonest mode of thinking in which what we think about is an object which stands over against us. Our thinking is directed towards handling, using, manipulating the object and incorporating it within our instrumental world. Technology is the most sophisticated form of this type of thinking. The knowledge corresponding to calculative thinking is objective knowledge in which we transcend the known object, indeed we subject and master it; the knower is completely active and the object completely passive.

'Existential thinking' - This kind of thinking is proper to personal being; it is a 'thinking into' the existence of the other subject, therefore it is not subject/object but subject/subject thinking. The corresponding knowledge to this mode of thinking is 'personal knowledge', perhaps of an 'I/Thou' character. Macquarrie states that: "'thinking into' is possible because of the common kind of being on both sides" and "this kind of thinking can become theoretical where the practical solicitude or interest has been dimmed down".⁸¹ However, an existential thinking proceeds on the basis of participation in existence. A key aspect or case of existential thinking is 'Repetitive Thinking':

⁸⁰ Op. Cit. p.90, cp. also p.88

⁸¹ Op. Cit. p.92; Macquarrie outlines the three types of thinking and knowing on pp.91-95

"The expression 'repetition' is to be understood as meaning much more than a mere mechanical going over again. It implies rather going into some experience that has been handed down in such a way that it is, so to speak, brought into the present and its insights and possibilities made alive again. This can happen with an historical happening. ... If we are to understand it, we must think into it, and so think again with the agent."⁸²

'Primordial thinking' - In this mode of thinking 'I' am transcended and mastered and known myself; I become subjected to that which is known:

"This primordial thinking ... waits and listens. Heidegger can even talk of it as an 'occurrence of being' (such an occurrence is fundamental to Macquarrie's understanding of revelation) or as a thinking that 'answers to the demands of being'. This primordial thinking is a philosophical thinking, but it is described as a thinking which responds to the address of being, and is explicitly compared both to the insights of religion and to those of poetry. This kind of philosophical thinking, then, provides a kind of paradigm for the understanding of what is meant by 'revelation' and shows where revelation is to be located in the range of man's cognitive experience."⁸³

In this kind of thinking, it is the knowledge that masters the thinker. Indeed the initiative passes to it as it seizes the thinker (and therefore the knower) and impresses itself upon him. Macquarrie states:

"What is known is not another being, but rather being itself, the being which communicates itself through all the particular beings by which it is present, by which it manifests itself, and not least through the depth of our own being."⁸⁴

The knowledge which corresponds to this type of thinking has, according to Macquarrie, a gift-like character. This, he claims, is the nature of revealed knowledge. With this gift-like capacity the knowers are passive and the knowledge is active or, more properly, Being which reveals itself is the active party in revelation.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Op. Cit. p.94

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Clearly Macquarrie is advocating that primordial thinking and knowledge is the kind of thinking and knowledge that is involved in (primordial or classical) revelation. It must be said however that only a very few are recipients of such revelation, the vast majority receive revelation of Holy Being through repetitive thinking which is essentially existential thinking and knowledge:

"Here let it be said that presumably a genuine primordial thinking or a primordial experience of revelation of being is rare. For most of us there can only be repetitive thinking that follows in the course of some classic experience of the holy, as the experience has come down to us in concrete symbolism, and as it has subsequently been lit up further by generations of thought and experience in the community of faith which it founded."⁸⁵

b) The epistemological significance of 'moods'

We have said above, that revelation, in Macquarrie's view, is primarily conative and not cognitive. In the revelatory situation we are concerned with 'feelings' and not, primarily, thoughts. From Otto's analysis, which is fully endorsed by Macquarrie, we find ourselves involved in a Schleiermacherian scenario, with only two fundamental differences.⁸⁶ The question Macquarrie faces in this respect is twofold: i) Precisely how are feelings revelatory? and ii) Can feelings be considered to be a trustworthy medium of revelation?

i) Precisely how are 'feelings' revelatory?

Revelatory knowledge, to Macquarrie, is essentially to be understood as 'awareness of Being'. The character of this knowledge is, then, 'awareness', and awareness as a mode of knowing is not singularly, nor primarily, cognitive. Rather, it is an holistic facility, drawing, not necessarily equally, from the conative, cognitive and volitive elements of man's existence. Macquarrie states:

"Whereas our knowledge of particular beings comes through our perceiving them and through the intellectual appropriation of what is given in perception, our knowledge or awareness of being (if indeed

⁸⁵ Op. Cit. p.96

⁸⁶ Op. Cit. p.97 (See especially p.97)

we have any) is more broadly based. It arises out of the total range of our existence in the world, and not out of perception and intellection alone. It is only through our total experience of being in the world that we reach an understanding of being. ... Being, then, gets disclosed in existing. But existing is not just beholding or contemplating or perceiving for it is also concern and involvement and participation. Feeling is always a constituent factor in existing. At any given time feeling, understanding, and willing - or, if one prefers a more latinized terminology, affection, cognition and volition - are all together in existing."⁸⁷

Macquarrie is saying that feeling and understanding must be taken together as a unity, there can be no sharp distinction between the two. Further, affective and conative experience has its own understanding. We have here a kind of 'inner feeling' understanding, which could be perhaps better termed 'intuition' or something of that order. This understanding is clearly a product of the 'affective state' or 'mood' of the existent, and it is claimed that awareness of Being arises from the particular mood of anxiety. But what precisely is a mood?

"A mood is something like an attunement to the environment, an awareness and response to the total life situation in which one finds oneself and in which one participates. No amount of objective perceiving could ever disclose that of which we become aware in the mood. Yet the mood does not show us anything that does not show up in perceiving. It simply lets us be aware of the situation as a whole and permits us to notice dimensions of that situation which are disclosed to a participant but may be veiled to a mere beholder."⁸⁸

Feelings, through moods, are therefore described as special means of awareness and response and therefore disclosure to the human consciousness, of the life situation in which one finds oneself. The mood of anxiety is disclosive of Being itself, in contrast with nothingness.

It can be readily conceded that a particular mood renders one more acutely aware of particular facets of one's immediate environment, which stand out as conducive to the mood. There can be no doubt that such affective states prepare the subjective consciousness to see the same things in a different way,

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Op. Cit. p.98

through the particular frame of the mood. Indeed, a mood could be considered to be a different angle on the world, which is no doubt profound enough in itself. But can it be tenably claimed to be revelation? As far as we are aware, nowhere does Macquarrie claim that moods are themselves revelation. What he does argue is that a mood (and here we have in mind the mood of anxiety) is one side (the human side) of the revelatory experience. The other side is overwhelmingly the greater in that it consists in the content of the initiative of Holy Being or God. The mood is merely the preparation (albeit necessary) of the human subjective, in order that he, being brought into phase with the dimension of revelation, can recognise Holy Being's approach.

As already described, we have a two stage dynamic of revelation, in Macquarrie's doctrine: 1) The preparation of the vessel which has to receive the (*sui generis*) self revelation of Holy Being; and 2) The approach of Holy Being in revelatory encounter with the prepared vessel (the image of a vessel is my own). The preparation of the human subjective could, not unreasonably, be termed 'a coming to humility'. Concerning creature-consciousness, Otto states:

"There is a feeling of one's own abasement, of being 'dust ashes' and nothingness. And this forms the numinous raw material for the feeling of religious humility."⁸⁹

Macquarrie's category of 'conviction of sin' (as above) involves humility at its very root. Indeed, all that Macquarrie discusses about this category could be said to fill out the content of the nature of humility. The process of coming to awareness of one's own nothingness must be of the very essence of humility, it is a coming down to see the true reality in sharp focus. And yet such a motion is not in any way destructive (apart from destruction of delusion) but rather highly creative. There can be no doubt that humility is a very real, healthy, affective state, which is at the same time the efficacious medium of seeing things in a different way as they really are, in depth.

Humility as the creative, root product of the mood of anxiety is, in our view, a powerful preparation of the human disposition in respect of openness to Being. Through humility the gates of egoism are closed and at the same moment the gates to God are opened. Macquarrie's further category of 'repentance' can be

⁸⁹ *The Idea of the Holy* - Rudolf Otto, p.20

seen to bear a close relation with humility. In humility, man is able to behold his nothingness and at the same time he is free to behold the awe and majesty of Holy Being or God. Repentance must follow the conviction of nothingness and sinfulness, as Macquarrie argues. Repentance is understood as the dialectical opposite of despair, therefore it is a profoundly positive and creative condition. Repentance is the dynamic of turning away from self and inauthentic life and turning towards God and authentic possibilities. Indeed repentance itself could be understood to be a mode of awareness of Being, whereby all traces of alienation are removed and there is a bright hope.

Humility and repentance come together in the union of contrition. We contend that if the quest for meaning and the quest for grace are sincerely followed through, the point of contrition comes as the critical juncture to the disillusioned sojourners. This place of nothingness, where the absurdity, nullity and guilt of human existence come together in profound crisis, produces either a profound though hopeless despair, or the humility and repentance of a real and essential contrition whose end is joy. Our proposal is that the disposition of 'deep contrition' is the coincident point of human being and Holy Being. Therefore 'contrition' is the only receptive state, to which the self-revelation of Holy Being is immediately, and absolutely effectively, addressed.

It can be conceded that contrition is not principally a cognitive state but rather a holistic state of being, therefore the term 'feeling' would be more appropriate than 'thought' in describing its centre and nature. As a coincident point 'real contrition' takes one into the immediate presence of God, and therefore it can be seen to be one side of God's self-revelation. This state of nothingness and its positive product of contrition is not in itself revelation, it is rather the necessary pre-requisite on the human side of the coin; the other side being infinitely greater. Revelation is always an object/subject affair, with the initiative being that of Holy Being's from start to finish - it cannot be produced by human effort of any degree.

ii) Can feelings be taken to be a trustworthy medium of revelation?

Macquarrie has conceded that the revelatory knowledge, which is the result of the encounter with Holy Being, is not self-authenticating and may be illusory.

It must follow that if it is illusory at least on some occasions, the religions which are founded on the illusory primordial revelations are not based on the truth and are therefore inauthentic. Further, revelation based on subjective feelings in this way is almost impossible to test for validity. Truth claims are made but cannot be tested because testing, of its own nature, is a purely objective facility. This problem could perhaps be stated as the central apologetic problem of all religions who make particular truth claims in support of their own authenticity and integrity.

Macquarrie's solution is to find a philosophical basis for the religious experience, and thereby render it more respectable, and less likely to be taken as untrustworthy. He sets the revelatory encounter, as he understands it, in a philosophical epistemological frame borrowed from Heidegger⁹⁰, and locates it within that context as corresponding to a particular aspect, namely 'Primordial thinking'. Respectability is now equated with the respectability of this particular philosophical view point. However, since there is no essential link between the phenomenon of the revelatory encounter with Holy Being and a particular style of philosophical thought, the trustworthiness of the claimed revelatory method remains highly vulnerable. Macquarrie is of course aware of this, and argues from the general, common experience of men. His claim is for a common or general pattern which has an existential line from man's metaphysical questioning to the encounter with Being, and in terms of this accepted pattern there is apparent, internal and intelligible logic.

"We can I believe trace something like a coherent pattern of experience that leads from man's questioning of his own existence to the religious confrontation with holy Being; and this experience brings itself to expression in a way of thinking that has its own defensible and intelligible logic."⁹¹

The degree of coherence of the pattern, if accepted, would determine the defensibility of the particular logic, which must remain internal and special rather than universally objective and therefore generally verifiable. Such a vague and obscure mode of revelation (without words) which is dependent on particular hermeneutic activity in terms of the most immediate existential symbols (which remains wholly a subjective affair, becoming objective only

⁹⁰ This of course is the basis of his whole existential-theological method.

⁹¹ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.100

secondarily in the rituals doctrine and theology of the preceding, particular religion) must in the final analysis be deemed a 'private affair'. Such a mode of revelation stands in direct contrast to the mode of revelation of the logos, which since it is in the medium of human language cannot, by definition, be a private matter. The revelatory encounter which Macquarrie describes, which is no doubt in itself a real form of revelation, is unverifiable and therefore may be false and inauthentic.

4.2 The General Nature of Revelation

If we draw together the dynamic elements of revelation, as discussed, we have a fair outline of its nature, as understood by Macquarrie. The 'primordial' or 'classical' revelation, which we have described, as received by only a very few (who go on to found religions based on the revelation), is understood by Macquarrie to be a very variable experience. Yet, Macquarrie claims that there is a similar pattern to all such revelations of Holy Being:

"A perfectly definite pattern runs through them all, and this basic pattern of revelation seems to be common to all the religions of the world. It can be clearly seen in such widely separated examples as the revelation granted to Moses in the desert, to the Gnostic writer who receives the gospel of Pomanders, to Arjuna who receives a theophany of the god Krishna, and in numerous other cases."⁹²

We have then a universality of revelatory encounter, in respect of the apparently universal constant and common pattern. Macquarrie summarises this pattern as:

"a mood of meditation or pre-occupation; the sudden in-breaking of the holy presence, often symbolised by the shining of a light; a mood of self-abasement (sometimes terror, sometimes consciousness of sin, sometimes even doubt of the reality of the experience) in the face of the holy; a more definite disclosure of the Holy, perhaps the disclosure of a name or of a purpose or of a truth ... the sense of being commissioned by the holy to a definite task or way of life."⁹³

⁹² Op. Cit. pp 7-8

⁹³ Op. Cit. p.8

The encounters or experiences, as Macquarrie understands them, are always however some particular focus of the presence and manifestation of the 'numinous', as already described above. The question is: is the numinous presence passively around everywhere, but simply unrecognised by men who are not attuned? Or does Holy Being remove from its transcendent realm, to enter the mundane reality of the encounter in terms of the personal history, of the particular recipient?

a) Personal event versus recognition

When we talk about initiative we imply intentionality. Intentionality, in turn, implies personal, intelligent design, and if the intention is carried out there must be some form of positive action. Action is of the nature of event, therefore if intentionality is involved through some initiative which constitutes an event, in this instance the event of encounter, there requires to be some form of objective (personal) action. Macquarrie is characteristically vague concerning the 'personal event' nature of Holy Being in the revelatory encounter. He does, however, insist that the encounter involves the inbreaking of the Holy presence by its own initiative, quite apart from man. This concept is reinforced by the use of the terms 'election' and 'choosing', in respect of the Christian religion (see above). Such an inbreaking must necessarily be of the nature of the transcendence of God acting through 'personal event' in terms of human history. Yet Macquarrie remains 'seriously ambiguous' in his treatment of this aspect. Concerning this objective initiative, Macquarrie states:

"What is distinctive in the religious use of the word 'revelation' is the thought that in this process, the initiative lies with that which is known. We do not bring it into light or strip away what is concealing it ... but rather that which is known comes into the light, or better still, provides the light by which it is known and by which we in turn know ourselves."⁹⁴

We see the ambiguity here in that Macquarrie makes no definite statement as to his position rather he pre-sets the statement by the words 'the religious use of

⁹⁴ Op. Cit. p.86

the word ... is the thought that'. We are left with the vagueness that this is (merely) a religious thought, and not necessarily an objective reality. Similarly:

"This mood can be said to constitute our capacity for receiving revelation. It predisposes us to recognise the approach of Holy Being. In other words I am asserting a continuity between the quest for sense and grace that arises out of man's existence, and the directionally opposite 'quest for man' to which experiences of grace and revelation bear witness, a quest that is initiated outside of man and remains outside his control."⁹⁵

The ambiguity exists in the precise nature of the continuity, and in the facility of 'recognition', the directionally opposite quest is a little too close to the human quest itself. It could appear that the directionally opposite objective quest, is no more than the product of the quest which arises by itself, out of man's existence.

Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that the revelatory encounter takes place entirely in the recipient's subjective realm, whereby 'recognition' constitutes revelation.

Perhaps Macquarrie's most direct statement in respect of God's activity in revelation is:

"Our knowledge of facts in the world is gained by our own active discovery of them, but since God is himself the supremely active principle, he does not await our discovery but presents and manifests himself in an active manner."⁹⁶

God is seen here as an active principle rather than an active Being. We do however have the assertion that Holy Being is, in some mode, active as a principle. The mode of activity is seen elsewhere⁹⁷ as the divine 'letting-be' and of the nature of the 'becomingness' of being. The ambiguity lies in whether God is to be thought of as 'Being' generally and universally active at all times and in every place, or sometimes specially and 'personally' active at a particular location and at a particular time.

⁹⁵ Op. Cit. p.87

⁹⁶ Op. Cit. p.53

⁹⁷ See chapter 2

i) Evidence for 'recognition'

"Being is all the time around us, but for the most part it does not get noticed."⁹⁸

If Being or Holy Being is all the time around us, then no special initiative in respect of a revelatory event is required. Indeed it is difficult to see where the facility of initiative comes to bear, unless we are talking about God's initiative in the original creative happening. What is implied in the above statement is that the revelatory encounter is by nature no more than a 'noticing' or recognising of that which is already there.

Recognition, then, becomes the essential mode of revelation, the elements of unveiling and disclosure are summed up in the recognition dynamic. Recognition in effect constitutes the seeing of the same things 'for the first time' in 'depth', therefore they are seen in a new way. The depth dimension⁹⁹ of Being itself, is now seen, or recognised in the beings. Macquarrie states:

"In the account of revelation given here, it is assumed that the person who receives the revelation sees and hears no more than any other person in the situation might see and hear. What is revealed is 'not' another being, over and above those that can be perceived by anyone. Rather, one should say that the person who receives the revelation sees the same things in a different way. We might say that he sees them in depth ... Perhaps we should say then that he notices features of the situation that would otherwise escape notice, as if he saw an extra dimension in it."¹⁰⁰

It could be argued that it is the 'immanence' of Being or God that is revealed in this encounter of recognition, as present and manifest in 'the beings' of creation, and not God in His transcendent wholly otherness. If this be the case then the type of revelation that Macquarrie advocates is in fact 'creational revelation' or ('natural revelation'), and apparently not 'historical revelation'. We are arguing in this thesis, that this is in fact the case, and that the whole of Macquarrie's

⁹⁸ Op. Cit. p.87

⁹⁹ Discussed in chapter 2

¹⁰⁰ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.89

existential and ontological theology is built (most brilliantly) on creational or general revelation.

b) General versus particular

It does appear that Macquarrie's concept of revelation is essentially of universal, creational revelation. Its universality lies in its universal availability rather than universal reception and application. It seems from Macquarrie's discussion that those who have been attuned by the mood of anxiety and are thereby prepared to receive the revelation of Being automatically receive it. Holy Being is apparently evoked by this predisposition to present itself in revelatory encounter, but there is no apparent idea of particular and personal action involved here. Rather, the dynamic involved appears to be merely that of the recognition of Being in the beings, by the attuned one. The nature of this recognition dynamic is essentially the awakening or dawning of this one's awareness of Being - itself, in sharp contrast to his own nothingness. There can be no doubt that such a dynamic is a powerful revelatory medium in respect of the immanence of Being (or God) in creation. Such a mode of revelation, however, which is encountered as the numinous presence of Being, remains necessarily vague and obscure. Such obscurity is typical of the ontological mysticism which accompanies the method of phenomenological description.

i) General (universal)

In respect of the generality of revelation Macquarrie states:

"There are objections to the expression 'general revelation' because of its abstractness. The knowledge of God comes always in particular concrete revelations. However, the notion of 'general revelation' is justified in so far as it seeks to express the claims both of 'natural' and 'revealed' theology, and in so far as it is understood not as a body of highly abstract truth common to all particular revelations but rather the universal possibility of revelation, which is in turn the condition that there may be any particular occasions of revelation whatsoever."¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Op. Cit, p.53

The serious ambiguity here lies in the blurring of the distinction between natural and revealed theology. It is usually understood that 'natural' theology is the product of 'natural revelation' (general revelation in nature and creation) and 'revealed theology' is the product of special revelation in human history, for example the Old Testament theophanies, dreams, visions etc. and the New Testament revelation through the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

Coupled with the desire to do away with the distinction between 'natural' and 'revealed' (which is in itself very revealing of Macquarrie's true position) is the understanding that revelation is a 'universal possibility' and that this very universality is the condition of any and all occasions of revelation whatsoever. In terms of Macquarrie's proposal for what he terms a "new style philosophical theology" and its differences with the "old style natural theology", (and of course his proposal is for an existential theology), he states:

"(this) means the virtual abandonment of the old distinction between 'natural' and 'revealed' knowledge of God, for the appeal is going to be for a general possibility of revelation (this expression is to be preferred to 'general revelation')." ¹⁰²

And further in respect of this general possibility he states:

"Let us remember that one can hardly speak of a 'general' revelation, though there is a universal possibility of revelation." ¹⁰³

The universal possibility of revelation demands the universal availability of revelation, and the reason that Macquarrie states that we can hardly talk of a general revelation is that it is clearly not generally received by all men. The reason that it is not generally received is that most hide from it in some sophisticated delusion through which they maintain their inauthentic life in what Heidegger calls 'averageness' and 'idle talk'. ¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Op. Cit. p.57

¹⁰³ Op. Cit. p.89

¹⁰⁴ 'averageness' is one of Heidegger's terms for sin and inauthentic life This is seen in the context of 'idle talk' in *Being and Time* pp.210-214, and in many other places in this work.

Considering the 'general possibility' (or availability) of revelation as the condition for revelation itself, the universality of revelation is clearly seen as the necessary condition for any occasion of revelation whatsoever. This general condition is comparable with Rahner's condition for the possibility of any human knowledge, which is that we must have a total, though implicit, knowledge of all being before we can have any item of explicit knowledge of being, this includes scientific empirical knowledge.¹⁰⁵ In both cases the knowledge (revelation) is already available in creation; all that is required to receive it, is to recognise it and think explicitly and thematically about it. This generality points towards 'creational revelation' no matter how the edges are blurred.

ii) Particular (special)

Macquarrie states quite clearly that this general possibility of revelation becomes actual only in concrete particular instances. It is hard to see how there could be any other possibility, the only one being the possibility that everyone in the world, at the same time and in precisely the same circumstances, received this generally available revelation through attunement and recognition!

This particularity, then, does not in any way detract or oppose the universality and generality of Macquarrie's mode and type of revelation. The particularity merely relates to the precise circumstances and situation of the individual's appropriation of this universal revelation. The particularity extends of course through hermeneutic activity in respect of the immediately available (existential symbols), to particular theologies and particular religions. We see this universal particularity, if we may so call it, in Macquarrie's statement in respect of Karl Barth's demand for the particular 'exclusively'. He states:

"This insistence on concreteness and particularity is acceptable, provided it is not arbitrarily restricted to the biblical revelation. The examples of revelation given earlier in this book have been quite concrete - Moses at the burning bush, the theophanies of

¹⁰⁵ See Chapter 5

What Macquarrie is saying is that there is a general structure of revelation which finds expression in particular instances¹⁰⁷; this is no more than saying that the universal and essentially constant revelation of Being is appropriated in particular situations involving particular individuals. The only constant and generally possible or available revelation is the revelation of the immanence of God in and through creation - this is properly 'creational revelation' - a rose by any other name is still a rose.

c) Historical revelation

As our contention is that there is a clear distinction between 'creational revelation' and 'historical revelation' it follows that we must offer a definition of the precise difference.- Creational revelation, as stated in Chapter 1, is the revelation of the immanence of God as implicitly expressed in and through the beings and existents of creation, including both human beings and what we term 'nature'. The only dynamic involved in this revelation on God's side was the moment of the act of creation itself, which we will consider as happening 'in the beginning'. The dynamic on the human side is that of the recognition of the immanence of God 'in' creation. Historical revelation, as stated in Chapter 1, is the inbreaking of the transcendence of God into human history. This is always necessarily particular and special and not universal in any understanding of the term. The supreme example of historical revelation was the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. In Christ the transcendence of God broke into the world and its history. The revelation of 'God with us' took the form of both event and logos. The difference can be seen, if our definitions are correct, to

¹⁰⁶ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.89 - In our understanding, the recognition of the disciples was of Christ's deity, cp. Thomas's declaration: "My Lord and My God" Jn 20:28. It is true that Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" Mat 16:16, refers, no doubt, to Jesus as Messiah - it is clear however that Christ is no ordinary son; He is above the prophet Elijah, the prophet Jeremiah and John the Baptist - hence the contrast; 'Son' of the living God.

¹⁰⁷ See also *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie, p.177, for a summary statement of the relationship between general and particular.

be essentially that of the immanence and the transcendence of God. The immanence of God in creation necessitates no further act of God, merely the recognition of Being in the beings by those who are adequately attuned. The transcendence of God as inbreaking human history at a specific time and place necessitates, on the other hand, the personal activity of God as expressed through various modes but rarely, if ever, apart from the logos.

Again our view is that Macquarrie's outline and description of revelation which is generally possible and available, yet is experienced in particular concrete ways, is essentially that of 'creational revelation'. This he terms 'primordial' or 'classical' revelation and clearly such a revelation when appropriated has an immediate historical dimension in respect of the particularity of the appropriation. This historical dimension finds extension through the particular religious eventuality which follows as the product of primordial revelations to those who become the founders of such religions (based on their particular interpretation of the experience). Our contention here is that such historical extension of primordial revelation is not properly speaking historical revelation. Ambiguity is introduced by the claim that the historical experience of 'recognition' and 'appropriation' is itself the historical revelation of Being. It appears that Macquarrie's agenda is in some way to merge both natural theology and revealed theology, into one and similarly to merge both creational or natural revelation and historical revelation.

In the context of the Christian faith we find the basis for Macquarrie's merging of 'creational' and 'historical' revelation. He argues that 'creation', 'reconciliation' and 'consummation' are a fundamental unity and not three separate acts. They are the one movement:

"Creation, reconciliation and consummation are not three successive activities of God ... The three indeed are represented successively in the narrative presentation of the Christian faith, but theologically they must be seen as three moments in God's great unitary action. Creation, reconciliation and consummation are not separate acts but only distinguishable aspects of one awe-inspiring movement of God ...his love or letting-be, whereby he confers, sustains and perfects the being of the creatures."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Op. Cit. p.269

If these three movements are considered to be different aspects of the one primordial activity then Macquarrie's doctrine of revelation is given full and convenient facility. If creation and recreation are essentially the one reality, with recreation built in to creation as it were, there are no grounds to seek a further revelation than that already immanent and intrinsic to creation. Salvation becomes a matter of coming to awareness of the depth dimension implicit in creation. Indeed:

"God's saving activity is universal. It is as wide as creation because creating and reconciling are not separate activities but moments of the same activity."¹⁰⁹

Whilst there are many differences between Rudolf Bultmann's and Macquarrie's understanding of revelation (for example 'revelation' according to Bultmann 'is' Jesus Christ), Bultmann is similar in respect of the present issue in that: "There is no other light shining in Jesus than has already shined in creation and the law. Man should always have understood himself in the face of the revelation of creation and the law."¹¹⁰ And further Macquarrie adopts Justin Martyr's teaching that the logos had always been in the world and that in this same logos "every race of men were partakers."¹¹¹ He concedes that:

"It is true that at a given time in history the Logos had been made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth."¹¹²

But even so there was no added activity of reconciliation going on. "Rather, it is the case that at a given time there was a new and decisive revelation of an activity that had always been going on, an activity that is equiprimordial with creation itself."¹¹³

The historical revelation of the incarnation is marginalised in this way; but just what constitutes 'primordial revelation' in the case of Christianity? Macquarrie argues that the many revelations of Holy Being, before Christ, pointed towards

¹⁰⁹ Op. Cit. p.270

¹¹⁰ *Existence and Faith* - Rudolf Bultmann, Collins Fontana Library, Trans. S Ogden, 1964, p.100 Cp. also p.96f

¹¹¹ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.269, & *Apology* 1:45 - Justin Martyr

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

the hope of a decisive event in which God would come to his people openly and in fullness.

"The New Testament claims that this climax of God's reconciling work did come with the historical revelation in Jesus Christ. 'When the time had fully come, God sent forth his son'. This, for Christianity, is the 'classic' or 'primordial' revelation."¹¹⁴

And here we see the complete merging into one of primordial and historical revelation. The coming of Christ is conceded by Macquarrie to be historical revelation but it is at the same time the primordial revelation upon which Christianity is founded. This of course effectively means that it was not Christ who founded Christianity, as He is Himself the primordial revelation, rather it must have been the disciples, as they received this revelation.

The term 'the fullness of time' points to an historical basis of revelation, indeed Macquarrie states:

"The fullness of time is seen as a critical moment of history when God's reconciling work moves out into the open and takes a new and decisive leap forward toward building up that commonwealth of beings which would realise the potentialities of the creation."¹¹⁵

Macquarrie nonetheless still manages to hold the two types of revelation together in that he declares Christ to be an 'historical symbol'; historical symbols he finds to be particularly appropriate as expressions of Being because in them there is both an ontological and an existential element.

"The historical symbol has also an ontological import, if history is through and through existential, that is to say, if it has to do not with mere happening but with existence in its acting, becoming and being, then The theme of history is personal being. the historical symbol is a personal symbol ... we have already seen that personal being is the most appropriate symbol for Being itself."¹¹⁶

We see then that the historical revelation of the incarnation is submerged as a symbol of primordial revelation. It does appear that Macquarrie has built a

¹¹⁴ Op. cit. p.270

¹¹⁵ Op. Cit. p.271

¹¹⁶ Op. Cit. p.272

watertight case which nothing can count against. He at least concedes to the superiority of the historical symbol:

"The historical symbol is an existential-ontological one, presenting in a remarkable combination the revelation of both existence and Being."¹¹⁷

4.3 The Effects of Revelation

The effects of revelation are primarily that the one who receives the primordial revelation, attains to a new understanding of both himself and the world, and in this new understanding which finds its content in respect of the immediate existential symbols of the experience, and its theology, in respect of the interpretation of the encounter in terms of these symbols, he goes on to found a world religion. The followers of this religion, who themselves did not receive the primordial revelation, receive it throughout the process of 'repetitive thinking'¹¹⁴ whereby they turn back to the original revelation, through the holy scriptures which are written at some point. Through the contemplation of repetitive thinking they re-live the primordial revelation, receiving it for themselves.

Through either primordial or secondary revelation by repetitive thinking, the recipients are translated from inauthentic to authentic life which for Macquarrie, Heidegger (and Bultmann) is salvation. Through the process of authentic life men and women achieve their full potential and arrive at what Macquarrie terms 'selfhood'. Revelation, then, is essentially a soteriological reality although the element of judgement remains for those who do not accept the truth of what has been revealed to them.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Revelation in the Theology of Karl Rahner

Rahner's primary presupposition is that the sovereign, living and free God reveals Himself to man in and through human words, and at a specific time and place in human history. The proper seat of that revelation is the Roman Catholic church. Revelation, then, is God's business, man can in no way produce it. However, man's duty is to prepare himself for a possible revelation from God which may or may not be given. This he must do by the reflective discipline of the Philosophy of Religion, which Rahner calls the: "Fundamental-theological anthropology."¹

Rahner does not break the self-revelation of God down under two elements that is; God's side and man's side, as does Macquarrie. However, it is convenient to analyse Rahner's position in terms of this dualism, therefore we shall structure our study in respect of God's side as the free revealer, and man's side as the free receiver. As with Macquarrie, Rahner's theology of revelation is essentially ontological, it has primarily to do with the coincident reality of the Being of God and the being of man, and the precise relation between the two. Man's concern in revelation, however, is in respect of his own being and his - be all and end all - in the world; revelation is wholly a cognitive reality in terms of the precise quality of his consciousness.

¹ *Hearers of the Word* - Karl Rahner Revised J B Metz. Trans. R Walls. Sheed & Ward 1969 p.169 et. al.

5.1 - Revelation from God's point of view.²

Rahner considers that the revelation of God, from God's side, is theology. He states:

"In its original nature theology is not some kind of science, the constitution of which is created by man himself. In its origin it is always the self-illuminating hearing of the revelation of God Himself, which proceeds from God's free decree, through his own word. In the primary sense theology ... is the totality of divine speech."³

Theology, then, is the heard word of God. It must be said here that the context of this quote is a discussion on the relationship of theology and the philosophy of religion. The philosophy of religion is seen by Rahner as representing man's side of revelation but theology is itself revealed of God. This word of God addressed by God to man, albeit in human language, is the result of God's free will and grace. Theology rests on God's free revelation, but it takes place in the hearing of man, yet that hearing is of God's word itself. So God speaks and man hears; if either element is missing we do not have revelation. Our enquiry must now consider the how, what and where of God's speech itself. In the primary respect, God's revelation is a communication of His essential Being, to and in the being of man, who himself emerged from the Being of God; therefore revelation takes place in the primary unity of creator and creation. In that sense it can be said to be 'natural', and it is certainly 'creational'. As such it is always expressed indirectly through the symbols of man's essential being and having-being. In other words God reveals Himself through the things of the created World which man is, is in, and is bodied against. However, it is clear that Rahner holds revelation to be the free disclosure of God who is high and exalted above the world, in other words a wholly other transcendent God. Indeed, he dispels any suggestion of pantheism in respect of his 'anthropological theology' and states very clearly that "the revelation of God cannot be given a foundation by man, neither in its actuality or necessity nor in its inner essence."⁴ Revelation, which is a genuine theology, is the message from God which confronts man as an external word. Rahner is quite explicitly

² This heading is somewhat misleading as Rahner's methodology is anthropocentric.

³ *Hearers of the Word* - Karl Rahner, p.8

⁴ See *Hearers of the Word* p.9f, for a discussion of this point.

stating that revelation follows a path from above to below and not vice versa. This factor can be quite easily lost sight of when we come to discuss the concretisation of revelation in terms of man's transcendental openness.

Whilst it is (even if somewhat sparsely) demonstrated in Rahner's writings that revelation follows a downward path, it is still man who is enquiring about this revelation from God. It is man who is asking the metaphysical questions, therefore man stands before the 'possibility' of God's free revelation to him. He cannot, however, by any effort of his own turn the possibility into actuality.⁵ The possibility of revelation is two sided; the first being that God freely acts in self disclosure, by speaking to man. The second is that God remains silent. However if God chooses to remain silent, the very silence is a form of revelation to man, as he stands before it.⁶

The free self disclosure of God is the presupposition of the being of man as a finite spirit, it takes place (if it takes place) in terms of man's constitution and nature as spirit (luminous being). In the primary instance God reveals Himself in and through the delimitation of finite spirits.⁷ In the delimitation dynamic the nature of God is revealed as the interior, necessary reality of the delimited being. Through this free act of delimitation of finite spirits:

"The personality of God is displayed as the self disclosure of absolute being before human transcendence."⁸ This appears in man's consciousness as the question mark associated with all being.

⁵ The term 'possibility' is often used by Rahner. More often than not, the whole thrust of his argument is to establish the 'possibility' of something! For example; his argument in respect of universal salvation is not that all men 'will' be saved, but that it must be 'possible' that all men may be saved.

⁶ It is understood that, if man stands ever and obedient before an all sovereign and powerful God, he will interpret the silence as a form or mode of revelation. However, it appears from the nature of Rahner's epistemology that the silence might well be simply the revelation intrinsic to the primary delimitation of man's being - in other words: 'creational revelation'.

⁷ Rahner's use of the term 'delimitation' is synonymous with 'creation'.

⁸ *Hearers of the Word* - Karl Rahner, p.89

5.1.1 The concept of 'delimitation'

All delimitation, whether human or divine, comes about through intentionality as an act of free will. Indeed delimitation by its very nature is also an act of love (discussed below). Will, acting through love, is the only reason for the delimitation act:

"In the absolute delimitation of an accidental as absolute we experience will. Such a delimitation must be more than merely static insight. It must be will, for pure comprehension as such can find the basis of this delimitation only in the object itself. An accident as such however, provides no reason within its own 'thisness' to affirm it absolutely. Were its mere occurrence itself to be regarded as the reason of the absolute delimitation of its 'thisness', then this existence would be posited as necessary. For only such an existence can be the reason for an out and out affirmation. This existence would then be the necessary existence of an accident which is a contradiction. Thus the delimitation of an accident does not find the reason for itself unequivocally from the thing delimited as such. Will, however, is such a reason. The necessary absolute delimitation which posits existence in contrast to its accidentally is therefore will."⁹

Knowledge and being are equated in Rahner. Therefore the will is understood as an inner factor of knowledge, it is knowledge itself which is the primary factor in the delimitation of accidental finite spirits. The inner factor of knowledge which opens up being for existence is, however, effected by will. Knowledge, as the luminosity of being, is not nullified by the act of will in delimitation but indeed affirmed. This necessary and absolute affirmation of 'knowledge and will' takes place at the very foundation of human existence where in the same moment the luminosity of 'Being in general' is affirmed. Being in general, which is not to be thought of in any way as the total aggregate of all beings, but rather that essential unity which underlies all of being; such a unity is loosely referred to in Rahner's theology as the Being of God Himself.¹⁰

⁹ Op. Cit. p.86f, For a full discussion of 'delimitation' see pp.86-93.

¹⁰ What is being said here is that all of being is self-luminous and therefore open to being known. All beings including God are knowable, and since the Being of God and the being of man coincide in this luminosity, man is free, by the exercise of his will, to affirm or deny this condition for the possibility of his knowledge of God. It can be seen that if man affirms his own being, he at the same time affirms God's being and vice versa.

In terms of free will acting through intentionality, the essential Being of God and the essential being of man coincide in the knowledge or luminosity of (all) Being.

The inner condition of this luminosity is man's will with regard to himself. This appears to him as the condition for the possibility, and necessity, of the question about Being which he must ask, and thus as the condition for the possibility for the question about Being in general. The logic of this coincidence of God and man in terms of the luminosity of Being is that God can be known by man as an immediate facility of his (man's) delimitation as a finite spirit. The very nature of the finite spirit is that it exists in the knowledge and Being of God Himself, therefore knowledge of God is a necessary function of man's own essential nature. In this way it can be seen that man's ontology is essentially epistemic in respect of God and therefore knowledge of man is essentially knowledge of God.

Similarly, in terms of man's will to affirm self, the affirmation of self is at same time, necessarily, the affirmation of God.

According to Rahner, then, man has the inherent capacity in terms of his own essential constitution, to know everything there is to know about God. In other words God is self-luminous to man in terms of man's own luminosity of being. Elucidating this point further in terms of delimitation; God in free autonomous power delimits the finite in His act of Creation; this is the primary or first delimitation. In delimitation God reaches out to the finite spirits. Clearly He does that by standing in contradistinction from the finite, thus when finite intellect knows Him, such knowledge is based upon His own free delimitation. The free delimitation of God is passed on to man as his own constituted reality, his essential being, and the source and content of his essential knowledge (which in turn becomes the condition for the possibility of all other human knowledge). The very essential nature and form of the delimitation is the essential nature and form of man's being. In the dynamic of delimitation God's free will translates to man's free will. Rahner makes the point that because of this delimitation of the absolute Being (God), man's will corresponds to God's will and therefore man must necessarily affirm God as the reason and cause of everything. If, through the negative exercise of his

freedom, he denies and rejects God, he denies his own essential being. However, if through faith he affirms his reality in God, he is upheld by the power of God whilst remaining free, as God is free:

"Man, then in his necessary absolute attitude to his contingency (an attitude which confirms the luminosity of his being) affirms himself as the free deliberate delimiting of God. He knows himself to be supported by the free power of God. This implies that in the last analysis he does not face the absolute being of God (the ultimate horizon of his cognitive advance) as an immovable ideal which, 'semper quiescens', must always stand open to his assault, but as a free autonomous power."¹¹

Man's will, freedom and power, and his capacity to know and be known, is born in the delimitation of his person by the person of God. More generally, man emerges from God's absolute and infinite knowledge and consciousness as a derivative finite extension of this knowledge and consciousness; in this way God is the Father of the finite spirits.¹² In a sense, then, man is the knowledge of God on earth. It is interesting to think of the Biblical motif of the 'image of God' in this respect; 'man', created in the image of God, mirrors God on earth. Indeed, man, by virtue of his creation in this unity, 'is' God on earth, and as such must go forth and exploit it.

It is always understood that in Rahner, as in Aquinas, man knows God by analogy, because his own being bears direct analogy to God's being. (Therein leaving space for the dimension of faith in respect of the unity, or restoration of unity, with God). In this essential knowledge, man knows that God is the reason and cause of all being, including himself; he also knows that he is not himself God. Unless God stands in contradistinction to the finite, however, man could not exist as the essential (bi-valent) being he now is. In other words, if God is not distinct from and transcendent to His creation, man would not be man; but neither would man be man if his being was not in some way intrinsically coincident, continuous and indeed analogous with God's Being. The nature and power of this coincidence as understood by Rahner demands, of course, that there can be no such thing as an atheist (in the real sense). Because the coincidence of God and man occurs in God's and man's luminosity

¹¹ *Hearers of the Word* - Karl Rahner, p.88f.

¹² Cp. James 1:17 R.S.V. in respect of term "Father of lights"

of being (which is the realm of the open and fully accessible 'knowledge' of Being) man, who stands in the openness of being as open to Being, must necessarily (at least implicitly) affirm the existence and reality of God. This openness to Being constitutes man's infinite capacity for knowledge of Being in general. Indeed, according to Rahner, man already possesses, by virtue of his delimitation, a total implicit (non thematic and vague) knowledge of all being; this Rahner calls the 'pre-concept'. The pre-concept is the necessary condition for the possibility of any human knowledge whatsoever.

God has revealed Himself in respect of His power, His freedom, His will and His love (in terms of the precise nature of His intentionality) in His delimiting of the finite spirits (human beings):

"As a spirit, and as such a knowing absolute being, man stands distinct from this absolute being who is a free autonomous powerful person. This countenance of God is not an attribute resulting from the retrospective fitting out of absolute being with human features. The personality of God is displayed in the self disclosure of absolute being before human transcendence ... the cognitive encounter with a free person who thus subsists in Himself alone is such to allow the known to remain unknown. On account of freedom a person is disclosed ultimately only through the deliberate act of the person himself who is to be known ... Insofar as the free delimitation of God determines his personal relationship to us, the knowledge of this relationship is always dependent upon his own free purpose".¹³

Since God remains hidden in His primordial revelation of Himself in the primary delimitation of man as a finite spirit, further (secondary and historical) self revelation of God, who in primordial revelation is the 'known who remains unknown' is sought by man. Indeed, man's whole disposition is that of a listener for God's word of revelation in his personal history. Through the creational revelation of man's constitution as a delimited spirit he is able to recognise and receive the word of God in secondary, historical revelation. Man stands constantly and fundamentally before a God of revelation. A God moreover, says Rahner, who acts in history. So it is possible that God will and does proceed to reveal Himself in a way other than that which occurred in the free delimitation of man.

¹³ Op. Cit. p.89

The creation dynamic did not, and does not, exhaust God's free possibilities in respect of His creatures:

"God must still possess free scope for his free action towards his creatures, for this is the condition of any free delimitation at all, and of its recognition by the one who is limited ... on the other side too, the creature must still have room for material knowledge of such a fresh act of God towards it. In a word there must still be an object of a further free act as the object of a cognition that is not yet at an end".¹⁴

Rahner is saying that everything is not fully worked out concerning the relationship of God and man in the primary delimitation. Indeed this first free delimitation of the finite and accidental includes within it the fact that the further act of God in respect of the (still limited) creatures, cannot be simply the consequence or continuum of the first delimitation. The contingency of the primary delimited finite condition already implies changeability, so there must be the real possibility of a 'fresh free will of God'.¹⁵ It does appear that Rahner is saying that God may continue to delimit the finite and accidental creation in a quite novel way, not necessarily continuous with the primary delimitation. We see in this factor the introduction of the element of serious ambiguity in Rahner's argument. It is clear from the bulk of Rahner's argument that any secondary revelation must necessarily be continuous with the primary delimitation, and therefore the essential nature of man as constituted by that delimitation. This ambiguity develops into a major problem in respect of Rahner's theological development (which he explicitly addresses¹⁶). What is clear at this point is that Rahner claims that a secondary delimitation must necessarily be continuous with primary delimitation. Yet at the same time it must be fresh and novel and therefore discontinuous with primary delimitation.

This ambiguity is essentially in respect of the precise relationship of creational and historical revelation. The nature of the intrinsic problem which inheres this relationship is seen in this light. On the one hand, further delimitation which bears no principle of continuity with the primary delimitation (creational revelation) would necessarily translate human being to some other type of

¹⁴ Op. Cit. p.90

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ The nature of this problem is discussed in chapter 6, sec 3.2e

being (albeit more advanced). Secondary delimitation which is relevant to the being of man as man must be graspable by him in terms of his sphere of perception (which of course undergoes the widening of a delimitation through the grasping process). It seems reasonable that an historical revelation of the essential Being and personhood of God would be commensurate with the profound answers to man's metaphysical questions; the main thrust of Rahner's position advocates this. Indeed consistency is maintained in respect of the 'questions' as representative of primary delimitation and the 'answers' as representative of secondary delimitation. The questions, then, as the expression of the nature of primary delimitation, could be seen to be the whence, on the human side, of secondary delimitation which comes in and through the answers.

On the other hand if the principle of continuity is so strong as to virtually require that the secondary delimitation be identical with the primary delimitation then historical revelation, as merged completely with creational revelation, is a contradiction in terms. And further, God is not free to act in some new and fresh way in respect of world history nor indeed Heilsgeschichte.

If both the elements of novelty and continuity are to be maintained in full power, it must be conceded that ambiguity is inevitable. Such ambiguity is seen in the paradox of faith itself. Yet the superlative example is that of the incarnation in which we see something radically new in respect of human history, which is continuous and consistent with the corporeality of the primary delimitation of human being. At this point we have arrived at the essential nature of the concept of 'miracle'. The term miracle best expresses the precise nature of the relationship of primary and secondary delimitation in respect of creational and historical revelation. If miracle is understood as the inbreaking of the wholly other into human history, in such a way as to address essential human being and existence, then it must necessarily be ambiguous in nature and character.

The historical revelation of the incarnation concentrates the meaning of secondary delimitation in terms of man's fulfilment. At the same time of course man's fulfilment relates directly to his primary delimitation as the whence of this fulfilment. Rahner makes reference to the aspect of fulfilment in respect of man's unfulfilled transcendence in his primary delimited constitution: "To the

extent that man in his absolute, not yet finally fulfilled transcendence, stands before the free God, he stands in his primary ontological questioning, as the excellence of his essential constitution. He stands before the possibility of the free action of God upon him, thus before the God of a possible material revelation."¹⁷

This secures the view of a further delimitation (in terms of historical revelation) in respect of man's fulfilment, as an external material reality outside of his own power, and indeed as something radically new and even original:

"To the extent that every free act is always original, a once-for-all thing incalculable in terms of all that is 'external', such a revelation is not simply the continuance of a disclosure of being which has already begun, even if this disclosure has begun tentatively and along an unambiguous direction in man with his natural knowledge of God. It is not simply a continuance even if this natural knowledge of God is correctly understood and perfected only when it constantly knows itself to be referred back to the sovereign freedom of God and immersed within that freedom."¹⁸ The principle of ambiguity remains however in respect of the terms '(man stands in) the excellence of his essential constitution' and 'not 'simply' a continuance'. The aspect of continuity in some way and to some degree is retained, whilst at the same time the out and out novelty is asserted. The (secondary) "disclosure of being which has already begun" is entirely novel, and is not continuous with man's 'natural' knowledge of God in and through the primary delimitation of his (man's) being. Yet the principle of continuity is clearly seen in the logic of the fulfilment dynamic and in terms of the coincidentality of man and God.

In any event man is not simply placed before the Being of God as *semper quiescens*, but before that God who may possibly still undertake free action towards him. Clearly man has the cognitive capacity for such novel and fresh further knowledge in respect of his primary delimitation.

¹⁷ *Hearers of the Word* - Karl Rahner, p.91

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

What this means is that man, in his transcendence¹⁹, stands before a God who is a *mysterium inscrutabile*, whose ways are unfathomable and whose decrees are incalculable; yet at the same time man's transcendence is towards an intrinsically luminous Being, who is completely knowable. Man is open to this infinite knowledge of being. The most essential element of the first delimitation of the finite accident, which is man, is that he is a listener of God's word to him. Man is essentially a hearer of God. His proper activity is to listen for a possible further revelation of God. His duty is to prepare himself for such a possibility. He is the '*potentia oboedientialis*' for a supernatural revelation which must come in terms of his history.

The revelation 'must' come because, if the moment of standing before God coincides with the moment of a possible revelation of God, then some sort of revelation must in fact take place. That is to say, there are two possibilities from this coincidence: one, God speaks and two, God is silent. These are both forms of revelation. Man always essentially hears God's speaking or God's silence. If this were not so man would not be spirit; the nature of spirit is to hear also the silence of the one Living Free Spirit, who is God. Man, as spirit who has proceeded from the Living Free Spirit, by virtue of his creaturely, ontological constitution, is disposed towards and can never be indifferent towards a revelation which proceeds from the living God, either in speaking or in silence. So in virtue of his nature as spirit man constantly and essentially hears some form of revelation from God (if he listens).

Rahner is essentially saying in this respect that both God and man are free persons (man by virtue of the nature of the primary delimitation of the finite spirit) and: "whoever stands as one free person before another discloses himself ... precisely as the one who desires to be in the eyes of the other, either the hidden or the revealed".²⁰

It emerges that the underlying and essential factor in this revelatory dynamic (primary and secondary) is 'Freedom'. Freedom is the ground and purpose of delimitation. Freedom appears to be directly proportional to the degree of delimitation, as the concept and reality of limitation relates directly to the

¹⁹ What is meant by man's transcendence is man's transcendental experience whereby he reaches beyond his present knowledge and being.

²⁰ *Hearers of the Word* - Karl Rahner, p.92, see also note 4, p.93

concept and reality of freedom. It is the Free Being who, in some part, passes on the quality and reality of His freedom as person in the very act of delimiting the finite accidental spirits whom we call mankind. Delimited man, then, possesses the same essential freedom of spirit-person as God. A necessary and fundamental factor in this freedom is the continuing delimiting activity of the 'One absolutely Free Spirit' upon His primary Creation. The reason and cause of this great programme is the very nature of the absolute 'Free Person', which is 'Free Love' or 'Love in Freedom' flowing by 'Free Will', to all and every sphere of infinity.

The nature of freedom, then, is love; love serves through delimiting activity to the extent of its power, if its power is infinite then there is potentially infinite delimitation. Freedom is the true and real ontological ground of the delimiting activity, yet, apart from the necessary freedom of God, by its very processional nature freedom is and must always be contingent. Man then exists as a contingent being and he must affirm that he exists as such in an intelligible world whose ground is the infinite intelligibility of being.²¹

"man has proceeded from God through an act of creative freedom ... Thus when man affirms his own contingency he implicitly affirms that his ontological ground is a person whose creative relation to the world has its source in an act of freedom."²² God as this Free Being is capable of disclosing his hidden riches, the very deep riches of His Being, in further historical revelation, through His Word. This Word of secondary disclosure is clearly addressed to man as constituted by the primary delimitationary act. As much has been said about this primary delimitation as 'creational revelation', it remains to discuss more fully the element of secondary delimitation in and through 'historical revelation'. Since we have seen that the relationship between the two types of revelation is ambiguous, we shall discuss the act of secondary revelation under the heading of 'The historical aspect'.

²¹ We are interacting here with Gerald McCool's brief treatment of the subject in *A Rahner Reader*, p.22

²² *A Rahner Reader* - Gerald McCool, p.22

5.1.2 The historical aspect of God's self revelation

We have seen that there is an initial and fundamental self revelation of God in His first delimiting action (Creation). This revelation now inheres all of Creation as its inner reality and logic. The transfer of freedom from God to man in the creation act constitutes man's essential being as a free spirit (although finite and in this sense limited). The primary nature of spirit being, is knowledge, therefore spirit is luminous in that as an existent being it is capable of knowing absolutely and being known absolutely; it is in a sense 'see through'.²³ Further, since the cognitive (noetic) structure of finite spirit is constituted through primary delimitation it has an a-priori pre-conceptuality whereby it already possesses, as a fundamental aspect of its being, a kind of empty pre-knowledge of the totality of existent beings both mundane and supra-mundane.²⁴ It therefore perpetually stands in the face of this totality and generality of being, listening for a possible further revelation which will produce both meaning and fulfilment in respect of its being and existence.

It has already been said that this pre-concept (the grasp of being in general, which of course relates directly to God) is the necessary cognitive condition for the possibility of all further human knowledge. We might call this further a-posteriori knowledge, historical knowledge or knowledge from within human history; however, we have seen that man's fulfilment depends upon a further self-revelation of God which will address him (man) in terms of and within his own history. This historical revelation is radically new and fresh as the product of a further free act of God inbreaking human history, therefore it is not simply continuous with the a-posteriori process of natural knowledge, in respect of the pre-concept.

We have seen that according to Rahner man's whole duty is to be an obedient potency for this further revelation of God in his (man's) personal history. Man's absolute fulfilment and self realisation depend on this act of secondary delimitation through historical revelation, which God may or may not effect. From God's side this givenness of historical revelation is what we call 'grace' although clearly God's grace was also the essential element of creation; the

²³ My term.

²⁴ Discussed in sec 2.4a, cp. also Plato's concept of anemnesis and Bultmann's concept of pre-knowledge in this respect.

continuity of grace is understood if creation and re-creation are taken as an essential unity (perhaps we could distinguish between primary and secondary grace in referring to the former as 'universal grace' and the latter as 'special or particular grace'). The nature of this unity, if indeed such a unity exists, can be taken as a mode of expression of the relationship between creational and historical revelation. Whilst creation is intrinsic to, and therefore continuous with, re-creation, the dynamic of re-creation requires the secondary delimitation which is the product of historical revelation and nothing else.

a) The nature of historical revelation

If understood as an essential unity, creational and historical revelation could be seen to correspond to the duality of man's bivalent nature, particularly in respect of his being and his having-being. Creational revelation corresponds to and addresses man's being, and historical revelation corresponds to and addresses man's having-being. The analogy of being and having-being is discussed in section 2.3²⁵, we are concerned here with Rahner's understanding of the relationship of the supra-mundane mode of having-being (God) and the mundane mode of having-being which pertains to all appearances of being including man. These distinct modes could be rightly described as God's history and man's history. God's free activity is his historicity and man's existence as a free spirit who encounters the beings which appear to him, is his historicity. The beings which appear in the mundane realm reveal themselves as a necessary part of their being; this follows from the original unity of being and knowing which is the nature of the luminosity of being. In the mundane realm, then, man has all of the beings which appear revealed to him through the a-posteriori process which constitutes his own mundane personal history. In this way it can be seen that man's existence is necessarily epistemic and therefore revelatory. This revelation, which may be termed 'mundane historical revelation', is really the a-posteriori process of acquiring and growing in the creational revelation, implicit and intrinsic to the beings which appear. This process of mundane historical revelation in terms of the individual man's personal history, is appropriated through man's free activity of participation in being.

²⁵ For Rahner's discussion of 'having-being' see *Hearers of the Word*, p.45ff

The modes of having-being exist in two realities then, mundane and supra mundane. Clearly, the mundane finite reality is the place of general and universally available creational revelation. As the beings appear they are known as they are in themselves in and through the historical motion of the having-beings. Implicit in the being-present-to-self of the beings is the knowledge of God Himself, who is the supra mundane, absolute having-being; but this is a knowledge limited by the finitude of the primary delimitation. Our concern here however is with the historical aspect, or the having-being, of both God and man, and the relationship of these mundane and supra mundane historicities. It is helpful to look further into Rahner's understanding of the nature of history and historicity.

i) The nature of 'history'

Rahner states:

"Man is historical insofar as he is the one who acts in a freedom that originates in his transcendence with respect to God, that is according to the determination of his relationship with the absolute. Obviously, this factor belongs essentially to the historicity of man. Genuine historicity is there only where we find the uniqueness and unpredictability of freedom."²⁶

The essential element in history then is freedom and history is free activity, unique and unpredictable. As far as man is concerned this quality of freedom is determined in terms of man's relationship with God and his transcendental motion towards God. It seems clear then that nature has no history, because it is not free in this way. Indeed, its activity is by necessity to an apparently universal law. Nature is predictable it does not transcend itself but has its 'isness' as a consequence of the primary delimitation (to whatever degree) which in this case is termed by Rahner the initial configuration. History does not appear in respect of nature nor indeed of the 'isness' of being itself, but rather with the beingness or having-being of human beings. For history we need freedom:

²⁶ Op. Cit. p.133

"Historicity is found only where the intelligible acts of freedom necessarily extend in space and time, that is where they require space-time in order to become themselves. It is this sort of historicity which appears in man in virtue of his essential constitution. This is the historicity of a free person who subsists in himself ... Man is an historical creature."²⁷

The second element of the nature of history is personhood; history is the activity of free persons. It is therefore free and it is personal. Again:

"Historicity is found only where the act of freedom spreads out within the context of free persons in their diversity."²⁸

The same maxim applies to the supra mundane which is God's history or the mode of God's having-being. This is God's absolutely free activity which could be stated as the basis of all history and all delimitation:

"When he is known as the existent thing with absolute 'having being', God stands before man as the only one who acts freely, who has not yet exhausted the possibilities of his freedom towards finite man throughout the free delimitation of his finite thing. But free action is in an essential sense historical action. An initial general and metaphysical understanding of history shows it always to exist where free delimitation exists. It is a happening which cannot be deduced and calculated from a general preceding cause. Such a free non-derivable happening is always a unique, unrepeatable something, to be understood in terms of itself alone ... An historical event stands in contrast to a datum of natural scientific knowledge ... Thus, from God's angle revelation displays itself as an historical phenomenon."²⁹

Revelation, beyond the creational revelation of the primary delimitation, is quite clearly historical in nature, indeed it is of the essence of history itself because it is a free act of a personal God. However, the distinction (which appears to be absolute) between supra mundane history and mundane, human history, gives rise to the question of the nature of the connection between the two. Rahner poses this question as: where is the place of a possible (historical) revelation of God? "We are seeking to find the place of encounter between man and the God who may possibly reveal himself. This place is the

²⁷ Op. Cit. p.134

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Op. Cit. p.116

transcendence of man in its specifically human character."³⁰ Man's transcendence is his free motion towards God, therefore it is properly and positively his having-being or his history. The historical revelatory encounter takes place, then, in human history.

ii) Revelation as the relationship between God's history and man's history

Human history is the locale of a possible revelation from God:

"When we say that revelation is an historical process because it is the locale of any possible revelation we do not mean history in the general metaphysical sense but in the sense of human history. What human history is will not be simply defined, but will appear out of the demonstration of man's historical character in the midst of his transcendence. The historical character of man ... is to be grasped as a part of man's basic constitution."³¹

The secondary revelation of God which is, as God's free act, fresh and new, takes place in terms of the constitution of man, in his personal history. Revelation, then, is properly seen as the synthesis of God's history (supra mundane) and man's history (mundane) as it takes place in human consciousness; as it seeks to transcend itself as a cognitive epistemic receiver. We have, then, the presentation of the supra mundane to the mundane in an individual human history. God's absolute having-being and man's finite having-being coincide in historical synthesis, but precisely what is the vehicle of this coincidence? Clearly the vehicle or medium of the supra mundane and the mundane modes of history would require to be common to both distinctive realities. Rahner's answer:

"a supra-mundane existent thing can be presented to a finite spirit through the word. (By word) we now mean the conceptual symbol of the spirit directly applied to this (finite) thing ... The human word insofar as it always bears a reference to an appearance, hence can be the mode of revelation of each existent thing. Insofar as the human word as a bearer of a concept gained through the negation of a

³⁰ Op. Cit. p.120

³¹ Op. Cit. p.117

supra-mundane existent thing is heard as spoken by God, it is able to reveal the existence and inner possibility of such an existent thing."³²

Supra-mundane existence is accessible to mundane existence through the human word, the supra-mundane non appearing reality appears, in the appearance of the word. The supernatural modes of having-being which are normally beyond the world of the appearances become accessible and indeed definable through the negation of the limit in and through the word.

"Through the negation of the limit of any such particular and immediately accessible 'having being' and through the removal of the upper limit in the direction of the absolute being of God, supra-mundane things can be defined at least negatively."³³

iii) The human 'word'; as the coincident point of the supra-mundane and the mundane, and therefore the vehicle of historical revelation

"All existent things are fundamentally definable in terms of the sphere of appearance. This definition can only be achieved by negation. This definition does not mean that man can achieve it on his own in such a way that all things can be known by man in their inner possibility or even in their actual existence. On the other hand it has already been established that a supra mundane existent thing, cannot be in itself a receptive cognition, a supra-mundane existent thing can be presented to the finite spirit through the word."³⁴

The word is the only possible place for the negation of the limit which is set before man as the horizon of his knowledge, therefore it is the only possible medium of the revelation of the supernatural to the finitude. The word is the place of the only coincidence of the two realities, it is essentially consistent with primary revelation inherent within creation.

"The whole of supra-mundane existence is capable of comprehension in the word. For on the one hand the word does not represent the existent thing in itself, and on the other, through the negation which it is able to bear, it has the possibility of defining

³² Op. Cit. p.154f, see also note 3 p.154 - 'The Negation' is dealt with in sec 2.4d

³³ *Hearers of the Word* - Karl Rahner, p.151

³⁴ Op. Cit. p.154

even those existent things which are outside appearance, in terms of appearance."³⁵

The human word, then, has the capacity to bear the weight of God's revelation; it is the vehicle of revelation of the supernatural or, as Rahner puts it, it has the capacity to be the mode of revelation of every existent thing:

"The human word, insofar as it always bears a reference to an appearance, hence, can be the mode of revelation of each existent thing. Insofar as the human word as a bearer of a concept gained through the negation of a supra-mundane existent thing is heard, as spoken by God, it is able to reveal the existence and inner possibility of such a thing."³⁶

The human word as inherited and spoken by God becomes both the bearer of the supernatural and the means of opening it up to man. The human word is suitable because it has the capacity of revealing the inner possibility of the appearances and it can bear the negation, which is itself the very dynamic of the disclosure of the supra-mundane to the mundane. In and through the appearance of the human word, as spoken by God, God freely enters human history and in so doing encounters man in revelatory encounter. This entry is always at a specific point in space and time to a particular individual. As to the aspect of this individuality, Rahner states:

"There is no difficulty in principle arising from man's having to reckon with the possibility that such a revelation might not occur in every individual history of each man, but only in the history of special individuals. It makes no essential difference in these circumstances whether he (man) has to refer to a point in his own history or to a point in that of some other man - it is only necessary that he is able to recognise that a true revelation has been given at this point in human history."³⁷

What is clear is that historical revelation of this nature is always special, to a particular individual at a particular place and time, and never general or universal. For Rahner there is no possibility of any other means of revelation. A different means of revelation would require to annul the already established

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Op. Cit. p.155

³⁷ Op. Cit. p.159

structure of human knowledge, which is a unity of spiritual transcendence and sensible appearance. As long as man remains within the limits of the ontological structure, as Rahner understands it, any other possible kind of revelatory mode would require to be translated into the mode (i.e. the word) which is consistent with this essential structure, if that revelation is to determine his normal being and acting. In short, as far as Rahner is concerned, revelation must be contained in human speech.

iv) Summary

Through the 'negation' the supra-mundane enters the mundane human history in the word and at a particular time and place. Human ontology demands that this is so. The negation takes place in the liminal (transcendent) experience of man. So we have a relation between transcendence and historicity which has its appearance in the human word. Appearance is that which man encounters in the course of history. Appearance ordinarily denotes the whole intra-mundane existence, not only the objects directly open to sense perception, but man himself in all his being and action. And supra-ordinarily by negation, through that historical appearance which we call word:

"This word is in turn itself the synthesis of an intra-mundane, historical objectivity and a transcendental negation."³⁸

As such it is the locus of a possible revelation.

For man to grasp or receive this possible historical revelation he must be capable of transcending himself, man therefore is both finite and limited and absolutely transcendent and delimited. This absolute transcendence comes about by God's initiative. By His free act He further delimits man. This free act of delimitation takes place in the 'receptive place that is a human being' therefore the free act of revelation is already historical in itself.

It is important to grasp that the very revelation of God takes place in the human cognition and not in a pre-history of God Himself. The first delimitation did occur, as it were, in a pre-history (in respect of human history). It occurred only as a factor of God's own history therefore it took place in God.

³⁸ Op. Cit. p.86

Secondary delimitation takes place in man, and since man, by virtue of being 'spirit' is an historical being, secondary revelation must by necessity be historical in nature.

Rahner argues that the divine historicity occupies a specific place in human history. The divine historicity impinges upon the human historical process at a precise point in time and space. This specifies the very nature of the 'how' of God's further self revelation to the first delimitation (created finite spirit). It follows that the creature must turn towards that point if he is to hear the revelation. Since, in our opinion, there is no such thing as future history, then man must always turn back. This turning towards (or back) constitutes the inner nature of the dynamic of a possible revelation from the human side. (It is tempting to consider that this turning is in fact none other than the act of repentance.) Free revelation must appear at a given point, if it is not to snatch man up out of his normal mode of being. There may be a sense (and surely is) that man is radically changed by a revelation of God to him in his personal history, but that radicality remains within the bounds of humanity. If anything, it could be argued, man through becoming aware of his relation to God in a new and powerful way at the same time becomes acutely aware of his creaturehood and in so doing becomes 'more' radically human.

If man has to turn back to history to encounter a revelation from God, and in view of the reality that revelation is given to special individuals only, does it follow that man ought to engage in a factual investigation of history to ascertain if a revelation has been given? And if this is so then why does man have to reckon with a possible revelation from God in his own personal history? Rahner is saying that man, by virtue of his human constitution as a finite spirit 'must' listen for a possible revelation, within his own history. It is not essentially a question of any external search but rather a question of the essential constitution of man. Man is primarily an historical creature in terms of his transcendent openness to Being in general; in order to stand before being, man must turn to the appearances, this turning is an historical act in respect of an historical reality with man's own history being itself an appearance, as is the whole history of mankind. Since man's historicity constitutes the basis of his spirituality³⁹:

³⁹ Following from Aquinas's concept of "conversion to the phantasm" which Rahner adopts. See *Spirit in the World* pp. 237-379

"Turning towards history is thus not an attitude for man to adopt as he pleases, but is imposed upon man by his specifically human spirituality."⁴⁰

Indeed, Rahner argues that any conscious breaking away from his history would in fact constitute a contradiction of man's essential nature. The very essence of human cognition, then, is turning towards appearance; therefore man, in being conscious, constantly corroborates the turning towards something which is basically historical. To be spirit, man is fundamentally oriented towards his own history and the history of humanity in general which in turn is oriented towards a possible revelation of God.

A more difficult problem is: just how is man to recognise a human word spoken in history, as the speech of the supernatural God? The negation which transforms the mundane into the supra-mundane must demonstrate itself to be objectively valid; this must not be left to an arbitrary definition by man. In other words it is a part of God's initiative to make this distinction clear. It follows then that there must be some kind of qualitative difference in respect of the human word as used as the vehicle of the self revelation of God. The difference is that the human words used in revelation are at the same time God's words as He speaks in and through them, therefore they are qualitatively different to human words which God does not (in His free activity) speak in and through. What is actually said, by God, in human words is radically new and fresh and clearly discernible as being of a transcendent quality.

5.2 Revelation from man's point of view

In discussing God's side of revelation we have already covered much of the ground of revelation from man's side. We have also necessarily overlapped Chapter 3 - Rahner's epistemological ontology, and we must necessarily continue to do so, but from a different angle. We are concerned here with what Rahner calls the openness of being and the openness of man. The subject of openness subdivides as the luminosity of being, the analogy of 'having being'

⁴⁰ *Hearers of the Word* - Karl Rahner, p.160

(already in part discussed), and man as spirit. Concerning 'openness', Rahner states that his task is to demonstrate that the positive openness for a revelation which God may possibly give is part of the essential constitution of man. Man's essential being requires that he must listen for the message of God in terms of his (man's) personal history. Indeed man, whose whole duty is to be a 'potentia oboedientialis' for a further revelation from God is wholly oriented towards God who is the inner meaning of his historical existence, and the only possibility for the world. The only possible alternative to this is that God is the sheer contradiction of man and his world (therefore those who claim to be atheists must deal with God as the sheer contradiction).

The immediate task for Rahner is to arrive at a metaphysical analytic of man as one who has the capacity to hear a revelation. The nature of this capacity not only spells out for us man's side of revelation, it also spells out the essential being of man as a spirit, constituted by primary delimitation, whose dynamic of life is the necessary listening for God's word of revelation in human history. This ontological nature is such that man already has a pre-concept or vague pre-knowledge of what he is listening for, therefore he has the ability to recognise it if and when it appears.

5.2.1 The Capacity to hear

Because of man's essential constitution, he has the capability to hear a possible revelation from God. Indeed the listening for such a revelation, or the discerning of the silence if a positive revelation is not given, constitutes the basis of man's life. Therefore an analytic of man's capacity to hear such a revelation is no more than an analytic of man's essential being. We shall see that in Rahner, knowledge and being are equated, therefore such an analytic must be of an epistemological nature. We have already seen from chapter 3 that for Rahner, epistemology and ontology are an essential unity.

We are primarily concerned then, with the nature of man's knowing ability. How does man know? What is man's knowledge? How does his knowledge relate to the rest of his being and existence? What is the beginning and end of this knowledge? and so forth. We can say that every existent thing is a

category of knowledge and that there are two primary categories, which are: mundane knowledge and supra-mundane knowledge. These two categories are essentially related in an essential unity, indeed, supra-mundane knowledge is the necessary condition for the possibility of mundane knowledge. The epistemological starting point is man's necessity to ask metaphysical questions, this compulsion to ask questions is the basis of the anthropological orientation in Rahner's theology. Man is compelled to seek knowledge of the essential being of the things which appear to him, that is his science, and he seeks knowledge of the essential being of the supra-mundane things; for this he must listen for a possible revelation (and he is compelled to do so even if by various devices he tries to resolve the compulsion).

The dualistic nature of these two primary categories of knowledge corresponds to the bivalent nature of man's consciousness as he asks the metaphysical question. The metaphysical question is about individual existent beings and it is about Being in general. The former concerns the appearances and the later is about God, (Being in general, or more accurately, 'absolute having-being'). Another way of stating the phenomenon of man's desire for knowledge is that; man wants to know what everything is in the unity in which all is presented to him. In this we have both the particular and the general aspects. Being in general has not to be thought of as the aggregate of all existent beings but the unity, or one, in which all have their being.⁴¹ As has already been said, Rahner argues that our (universal) pre-concept or pre-knowledge of Being in general, which all human beings possess, is the necessary condition for the possibility of all other human knowledge.

a) The nature of the metaphysical question in respect of man's capacity to hear

With respect to man's capacity to hear, we are more concerned with the nature and direction of the answer to the metaphysical question rather than the question itself. Rahner asks: "What is the principle of a possible answer?"

And he states:

⁴¹ It is interesting to compare Plotinus's concept of 'the One and the Many' in this respect. Macquarrie refers to this in *In search of Deity* p.62

"The source of the answer must not reside within the question if it is to be the foundation upon which the answer can take its stand."⁴²

What is the source then? If a question is real it calls for a precise and particular answer, such a question always brings with it a certain background, an unambiguous foundation on which it is set, and from which the answer must proceed. But where is the general question of metaphysics to find its answer?

"From whence then is the principle of an answer to the general question about being to be taken when it calls absolutely everything into question including itself? ... There cannot be any other place than the question itself the point of departure must therefore be the question."⁴³

And the question is: "What is the being of that which is itself?" This is the question which is necessarily asked by man. This question therefore is the proper and indeed only point of departure of metaphysics. The question about being itself is the only self-sufficient starting point because it has actual and necessary existence in the enquiring mind of man. This question belongs to the essential being of man it is a part of his essential constitution. Therefore he must perpetually ask it. The specific questions which arise from this one, when answered, always leave another question in their place; to this there is no end. We have an infinite series of questions, and correspondingly man's cognitive faculty is of infinite receptive capacity.

But what of the unity of 'Being in general'?

"Every statement is a statement about some specific existent thing and is made against a background of a previous, although implicit knowledge of being in general. ... Every true proposition, every judgement, and every deliberate act, is not just the synthesis of two concepts along with the claim that the synthesis is legitimate, but the reference of such mental synthesis to a 'thing in itself' which validates it and the objective synthesis which it occupies. This opening up of the place of a thing-in-itself is nothing other than the antecedent knowledge of being in general."⁴⁴

⁴² *Hearers of the Word* - Karl Rahner, p.64

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Op. Cit. p.35

This antecedent, implicit knowledge of Being in general is clearly then the condition for the possibility of the knowledge of any thing-in-itself. We can only know a thing-in-itself against the background of, and from within the unity of, a pre knowledge (however vague or empty) of Being itself. Therefore every question is an enquiry from and in and essentially about 'Being in general', and analogically (as itself) of the things which exist. All knowledge of the things which have existence is by analogy to an implicit knowledge of Being in general.

At this point it does appear that all human knowledge is a revelation of God and that all that man need do to gain explicit knowledge of the essential Being of God, is follow the route of the enquiry along the lines of this or that particular science. But it must be borne in mind that scientific knowledge of the existent things which appear bears only analogy (albeit direct) to the being of God therefore there can be no epistemological certainty.⁴⁵ Further, Rahner is adamant that no amount of human effort could produce a revelation of the essential Being of God, this is given to man (or it may not be) only through God's free act of revelation in man's history. This problem is discussed more fully in chapter 6.

In summary, the source of man's hearing capacity is his own delimited constitution as formed in the creative act of God. His capacity to hear, which is basically his capacity to know, is bivalent in nature in terms of the mundane reality of the beings which appear and the supra mundane reality within which the things that appear have their essential being. This bivalence is seen in terms of the will of man in respect of self affirmation. Self affirmation, because of the bivalent nature of man as a finite spirit, is necessarily, at the same time, affirmation of God. The whence of the metaphysical quest as actualised in the asking of the metaphysical question, is the question itself. The principle of the answer is to be found in the question and the question itself is the only point of departure.

⁴⁵ The necessary element of faith is required, in gaining a knowledge of God from the appearances. For a discussion of Rahner's understanding of faith see chapter 7 sec 1.3

5.2.2 The equation of 'being and knowing' (luminosity of being)

We are working towards a general ontology of man in terms of man's essential cognitive structure as continuous, in some essential way, with the essential Being of God. Therefore man, in respect of his essential constitution, already has a kind of implicit knowledge of God. Otherwise put, if he knows himself he knows God, and to the degree he knows himself, he knows God. Further, if man has some kind of continuity of being with God in respect of his epistemology then he has, as it were, a kind of built-in capacity to hear God; if and when God reveals Himself in man's personal history.

Without covering the same ground as chapter 3, we must now consider further the nature of man's being in respect of man's epistemology. This involves, basically, a study of what Rahner means by 'man as a spirit'. We are seeking here to outline Rahner's answer to the questions: What does it mean that man is spirit? and What is the nature of this spirit? The answers to these questions should fill out for us Rahner's general ontology of man, which runs along the lines of a metaphysical anthropology.

Let us consider the first proposition of this subject:

"The nature of being is knowing and being known in an original unity, which we would like to designate 'being-present-to-self' (integrity) of the luminosity (subjective understanding of being) of the being of that which already exists."⁴⁶

We see two things here, 1 - Being and knowing form an original unity, and 2 - This proposition necessitates an ontological difference between being and existence. Existence and being are not the same. Being is understood as the 'quiddity' (thisness) of the existent thing, and existence as the 'beingness' or having-being, of the thing that exists. We deal under this heading with 1 and under the next with 2.

⁴⁶ *Hearers of the Word* - Karl Rahner, p.37

It would appear, then, that the nature of being is knowing and being known, being and knowing are the same thing. Being is self luminous, therefore it is knowable to others. Rahner says that a thing which is essentially unknowable in its being is a contradiction. There must therefore be a fundamental knowability of all existent things. This fundamental knowability as we have seen is placed within the essential being of the thing which is; in other words the being of that which is, is knowability. A thing which is, and the object of a possible cognition are one and the same thing. Everything which is, possesses in its own right, and by virtue of its being, an interior reference to a possible cognition, and so, to a possible knowing subject.

"The knowability is affirmed as the ontological definition, in the thing which is itself ... but if this interior reference of every existent thing to a possible cognition, is an a-priori and necessary proposition it can only be so because the being of that which is and the knowing of it, form an original unity... This is to affirm nothing less than being, as such, is knowing."⁴⁷

The original unity of being and knowing means that the cognitive reference to itself is part of the being of that which actually is, and conversely the knowledge which belongs to the concept of the essence of being is the, being-present-to-itself of the being which actually is. If we can say that in its original concept knowledge is self possession then anything which is, possesses itself in the measure in which it has being.

Rahner calls this original unity of being and knowing, the conscious being-present-to-itself of being. In other words, the being of that existent being which is self illuminating being is illuminated by it self. Knowability then, belongs interiorly and a-priori, in terms of the existing being itself, to the grasping of its essence. In this way it declares explicitly the horizon of its luminosity.

For Thomas Aquinas, knowability, as the being of the thing which is, belongs to the basic constitution of every thing which is. Being and knowing are 'unius generis' they arise from a single unified root.⁴⁸ For Rahner, being is knowing in itself and knowing is being-present-to-itself of the being of a thing. This

⁴⁷ Op. Cit. p.39

⁴⁸ See Op. Cit. p.41

reflection back into itself, which is a being's subjectivity is necessarily contained in its essential constitution. Knowledge then, is a coming to oneself or a turning to oneself and this turning is itself spirit. We discuss the ontological difference between being and existence under the next heading of 'Being and Having-being'.

5.2.3 Being and Having-being. (The analogy of having-being)

Rahner uses the term 'having-being' to formulate the concept of analogia entis. His thinking is that this analogy manifests itself in the sheer analogical manner in which each and every thing which is, returns to itself, can be present-to-itself, and therefore is a 'having being'. This 'having-being' represents man's existence, man's existence then is a cognitive activity of returning to himself and possessing himself, of being consciously cognisant of his being, in being-present-to himself. This is his beingness as differentiated from his essential being.

But just what is it that is analogical?

"It is not being that is analogical, but rather the rising of the difference between being and existent in their relationship to each other - in their self clarification - in the cognition of being, and in this sense in the having being of the existent ... For being is not something next to or above the existent, but the existent as relationship to itself as the state of self clarification ... and as unity of cognition and recognition."⁴⁹

We can gain a valuable insight into this concept by again referring to Aquinas:

"All things strive to return to themselves, want to come to themselves, take possession of themselves, because the having being which they desire comes to be in the measure in which they take possession of themselves. All activities, from the sheerly material to the innermost life of the Blessed Trinity are but modulations of this one metaphysical theme, of the one meaning of being; self possession, subjectivity ... 'self possession' however is itself realised through a double phase; a flowing outwards, an emanation. (An

⁴⁹ Op. Cit. p.47 note 1

exposition of its own essence from its own cause.) And a withdrawing into itself of this essence."⁵⁰

The having-being, then, is this two phase activity of emanating and returning. That is what beingness consists of, the precise quality of this beingness, however, remains to be discussed. I must be said here that having-being is an unfixed, variable quantity, there are degrees of having-being, the degree depending upon the ability of the existent thing to turn back on itself. That is; in the degree in which it is possible to reflect in itself and to be illumined by itself. There are grades of being, so not everything is in the same sense a 'having-being':

"The only thing which is an absolute 'having-being' ... is the pure being, in which the connotation of the concept of being itself is perfectly realised."⁵¹

Clearly this is the having-being of God. God therefore is the existent of the absolute 'having-being' and therefore pure self clarification. In God's case we have absolute identity where no further questioning is possible. God is therefore absolute spirit, man on the other hand not only asks questions about being but is in doubt about it (both of these factors being a part of his basic constitution). Therefore man is not absolute consciousness but finite spirit. The finite spirit of man however can now be seen to be continuous with the infinite, absolute spirit, of God. The nature of the finitude of man's spirit emerges out of his need to enquire about Being and this, along with man's having-being, is the foundation of a possible revelation by God. Revelation is the disclosure of the absolute to the finite spirit.

If revelation is the disclosure of the absolute spirit to the finite spirit, then, says Rahner, "two things are presupposed":

1

"That all that is can fundamentally be turned into a true speech, into an information addressed to the mind. Only on this condition can the possibility of imparting facts that are hidden in God, be considered at all."⁵²

⁵⁰ Op. Cit. p.47, see *Summa Contra Gentiles* 4.11 - Thomas Aquinas.

⁵¹ Op. Cit. p.50

⁵² Op. Cit. p.51

This ultimate union of being and knowing (God in his deity) is communicated, by virtue of its own nature, by the word.

"Only if the being of that which is, is 'logos', from the very start, can the incarnate logos utter in words, what lies hidden in the depth of God."⁵³

2

"Man must possess an openness for the self-utterance of the one who possesses being absolutely through the luminous word. This openness is the a-priori presupposition for the possibility of hearing such a word."⁵⁴

If man is to hear the word of God in revelation he must not only have the capacity to hear but also he must be open to the possibility of hearing. Further, this openness must be a part of man's essential constitution. Indeed we will see that this openness sums up what we mean by 'man as spirit'.

5.2.4 The Openness of Being (Man as spirit)

If we were to ask the little question; What is man? Rahner's answer would be "man is absolute openness to being in general".⁵⁵ Otherwise put 'man is spirit'. This finite spirit consists of openness to infinite and absolute spirit, and it is in some way continuous with it. This openness is man's transcendental with regard to Being in general. Transcendental, then, is the basic constitution of the being of man as spirit. What then is its nature? Its nature is essentially epistemological. Because man is a transcendental spirit he must ask the metaphysical question: What is the being of that which is, specifically and in general? This is a necessary question to man. The answer is found within the question, and again man must affirm this answer with equal necessity. The knowledge of Being in general is given then, with the question related to that human thought, speech and action, which make up man's existence in general.

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Op. Cit. p.53

⁵⁵ Ibid.

What is this knowledge which is given with the question? Rahner calls this the pre-concept.

a) The pre-concept

"The pre-concept is a capacity of dynamic self movement of the spirit given a priori with human nature, directed towards all possible objects."⁵⁵

It is interesting that the pre-concept, which clearly relates to a universal pre-knowledge of all that is, is described as a capacity of movement, it is a dynamic reality. This movement is by necessity directed to the things around man including his own body (which Rahner terms 'the corporeal organ'). Rahner states:

"It is a movement in which the particular object is grasped as an individual factor of this movement towards a goal, and so consciously grasped in a preview of this absolute breadth of the knowable."⁵⁶

In other words the particular is recognised within the general, or as Rahner puts it through the pre-concept the particular is recognised under the horizon of the absolute idea of knowledge. The pre-concept is set within the conscious sphere of the totality of knowable things. The nature of the capacity of the movement is the conscious opening up of the horizon within which the particular object becomes known. It is the disclosure of the breadth of the knowable, within which and through which the particular can be recognised and therefore known.

By defining more exactly the breadth of this horizon, which the pre-concept opens up and into which it sets the particular object of knowledge, Rahner describes the essence of the pre-concept more precisely. He says that although the preconcept is conscious it is not in itself an act of cognition, but a factor in an act of cognition, which is specifically directed towards a particular object. However, the pre-concept must be described as knowledge per se, even if it is only a condition for the possibility of knowledge. The object of the pre-

⁵⁶ Op. Cit. p.59

concept is Being, and thus the totality of the possible objects of human knowledge. The object then is a totality, indeed it is the absolute totality of all possible objects of knowledge, this is what forms the horizon within which the particular object is grasped. But what is the precise nature of this wholeness? Well, it is the totality of Being, or Being in general, this is not an aggregate totality but a unity of being. The horizon is a horizon of Being in general. This is what fills out the capacity for the cognitive motion involved in human knowledge. We are able to grasp the knowledge of the particular object because of the capacity of a total knowledge of the universal or general.

But the pre-concept is a capacity of dynamic self movement, it follows now that we must consider the precise nature of this movement.

b) The dynamic self-movement

The movement is two way, man reaches out to grasp the particular object bodied over and against him in the world, but in so doing he returns perfectly to himself. We will call these two elements of the motion; judgement and abstraction, respectively.

i) Judgement

Man is already in a world of things. External objects make up his environment which he gains experience of by sensation. Man feels, as it were, his environment but he does not only know it in this way, he also judges it, and in judging it he constitutes it for the first time as a world. In this way man differentiates himself in thought and deed from the things he uses. Man is the subject that stands over against the object. Man does not just come into cognitive contact with the things, his knowing is not a becoming one with them in a neutral centre between subject and object; in judgement he distinguishes himself from them.

In the comprehending and reaching out to the things, man as subject, returns completely to himself, as that which is differentiated from that which he reached out to grasp. That is the world. The faculty of judgement is the means

whereby man transcends the things and returns to himself as subject. In this way man's experience through sense becomes objective knowledge in thought. St Thomas calls this return to oneself as subject, in a self luminous antithesis of the sensible experienced object the 'reditio completa subjecti in seipsum'. In this perfect return to itself, Thomas sees the distinctive attribute of the spirit in contrast to all that is non spiritual. In this way man subsists and this subsistence manifests itself in all human events, it displays itself in every judgement, for in every judgement there takes place the reference of a known something to an object.

"And in so far as every judgement presents a claim to truth, it has in mind, as the object of its predication, something that is itself independent of the passing of judgement. It has in mind the object in its in-its-selfness ... in so doing the one who judges sets up the object of his judgement, and thus differentiating himself from the object, places himself apart from it ... in this way the one who judges comprehends himself in this separation from the object of his judgement... in every judgement he comprehends himself as a subject that subsists in itself."⁵⁷

Rahner is saying that man's awareness of himself and of being, specific and general, comes about in the cognitive activity of making judgements. Man's knowledge must however begin with sense experience and move through an abstraction of the concept from the particular object, culminating in the objective affirmation of the judgement. This objective affirmation sets the objects of sense experience over against him in the realm of being. Through this means man grasps his own independent reality.

This is what it means that man is spirit and as such a union of being and knowing. But he is not pure spirit because his knowledge must begin with sensation. He is a discursive knower who must progressively increase his knowledge of himself and being through the process of the ongoing enquiry. Man must carry on asking questions and because his thought is always expressed in judgements, and he must always be thinking something about something, this is the basis of man's subsistence. To be spirit man requires to be free and freedom is a-priori conceivable only when the actor occupies a position which is independent of that upon which he acts; it can be seen that

⁵⁷ Op. Cit. p.55

man is free because by accomplishing the perfect return to himself through his thought judgement, man is able to act freely on the object of his judgement as one who is freer than it.

"The fact that man is able to act freely upon the things in his world is a pointer to this conscious subsisting-in-himself of man in his cognitive activity."⁵⁸

The other side of this conscious subsisting-in-itself of the knowing human subject is the taking hold of the particular in concepts. The particular which is presented ultimately through the senses is brought to the level of concept. This comprehension or grasping of the particular as a concept is always against the background of a general concept. It is to a general concept that thought and action are directed:

"Precisely by knowing something about something, by being able to apply its general concept to an object present, the one who knows conceptually separates himself from this object present as from his object. He thus attains his conscious subsisting in himself."⁵⁹

This applying of the general concept to the particular is stated by Rahner as grasping the universal in the particular, and in Thomist epistemology this process is called the abstraction.

ii) The Abstraction

"By abstraction the universal is grasped in the particular, in the individual case whereby a condition of possibility of judgement and thus the possibility of conscious subsisting-in-oneself is provided."⁶⁰

Abstraction is to do with detachability, it is to do with loosening away from. Rahner says that abstraction is the recognition of this detachability of the 'thisness' that is given in the sense perception. The abstraction does not then belong to the essence of the particular thing which is realised as just this particular and no other. The abstraction is the recognition of the non-

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Op. Cit. p.57

⁶⁰ Ibid.

restriction of the 'thisness' that is given in the particular. The 'thisness' is grasped as a determination which fundamentally extends farther than just to this particular case in which it appears through the senses.

It must be said, however, that the grasping of the non-restriction of the definition of the thisness takes place by its restriction through the particular thing. The non-restriction is grasped in the restriction, as such, of the 'thisness' of the particular thing. Therefore a limit is experienced when the 'thisness' is experienced as an obstacle to any advance beyond itself. The non-restriction then, must have the capacity to go beyond this limit. A 'more than' the particular 'thisness' must be recognised:

"The restriction of the quiddity (thisness) experienced through the senses becomes known in the reaching out act whereby the individual sense object is seen, prior to this grasping, to be more than just this particular thing."⁶¹

"This more obviously cannot be an individual object of the same sort as the one the abstraction of which is supposed to have made this more possible ... this more can only be that being already mentioned as the fundamental cause of possible objects and of their encounter."⁶²

The 'more' relates to the opening up of the absolute breadth of possible objectivity. It relates to being in general. The pre-concept of being is the process of reaching out to grasp the 'more'. In each particular cognition the preconcept is the capacity of reaching out beyond the particular object and thus the means of grasping it in both its limitation and with reference to the totality of all other possible objects:

"This is because consciousness, by being close to the particular in order to know it, always reaches out beyond the particular as such. The pre-concept is the condition for the possibility of the universal concept, of abstraction which in turn makes possible the objectification of the datum of the sense perception and so of conscious subsisting-in-oneself."⁶³

⁶¹ Op. Cit. p.58

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Op. Cit. p.59

These are the terms of man's openness to Being and to Being in general. By the means of judgement and abstraction in terms of the pre-concept man is a transcendental spirit continuous with the absolute spirit. This is an ontological reality which involves both corporeal and incorporeal elements in its epistemological basis. There is very clearly a bivalence in respect of body and mind. There are really three levels of knowledge involved, firstly the pre-concept, which is the condition for the possibility of the other two, which are sensation or perception (knowledge through the senses) and by the process of judgement and abstraction, intellectual or spiritual knowledge.

If we now examine the openness of man further by enquiring into the precise nature of this 'more than' we find that from man's point of view we can only move into the negative dimension.

c) The negation

The 'more than' cannot be a being in the order of the beings of the world. If it were it would not be a more than. In respect of this 'more than' Rahner asks two questions and poses three possible answers:

1

"What is the absolute totality of all possible objects of knowledge within the horizon of which the particular object is grasped?"

similarly:

2

"What is the transcendental reference for human pre-conceptual cognition when it is grasping its particular object?"

The three possible types of answer are:

1. "A turning of this 'negation' into the absolute 'nothing' as the genuine truth of the cognizand, and which is ever to be discovered afresh."
2. "A constant concealment of this negation as that which is fundamentally outside knowledge."

3. "By this transcendental experience of the negation being expounded as the mode in which absolute reality makes itself present by perpetually withdrawing, and precisely thus drawing the intellect upon itself."⁶⁴

The negation is of course the negation of the limit of the finitude in respect of any particular object. This negation of the limit in this way appears to take the human epistemology into the place of non-being or no-thing, therefore it appears to human consciousness as a negative dimension of 'nothingness'.

All three types of answer can be conceded as having some force in the sphere of human existential reality. In his discussion following the statement of the three possible types of answer (which I have felt it necessary to quote in full) Rahner appears to twist the knife. He argues by use of what he refers to as the scholastic answer to the above questions, which corresponds to answer three, towards an affirmation and not a negation. He argues in terms of the pre-concept for the human grasping not of non-being but of unlimited being which is of course God. It must be conceded though that, from the bottom up, secondary delimitation is and must be conceived in negative terms as being outside of human perception and of the ordinary capacity of human cognition. Let us see how Rahner argues in this respect:

"Human cognition is related, at least at first, to that which is and thus to affirmation. To the extent, therefore, that knowledge of the finitude of the immediately given object of a cognition can be explained in terms of an affirmative knowledge (and thus in terms of a pre-concept which is related to affirmation, to being and not to non-being), to the same extent the transcendence cannot and may not be interpreted as a transcendence correlative to non-being. Further, a transcendence relative to non-being was not indicated as the pre-condition for the possibility of experiencing the inner finitude of the immediately given, present, and existent thing. Now because the pre-concept relative to 'more' is the particular object, it represents a sufficient and clear condition of the possibility of negation, of the transcendental experience of nothing (of no-thing) and thus of the knowledge of the finitude of the immediately perceived objective particular. Non-being does not precede negation, but the concept relative to the unlimited is in itself already the negation of the finite, to the extent that, as condition for the possibility of its cognition, and through its rising above the finite, it reveals, eo ipso, its finitude. The affirmation of the thing that is in

⁶⁴ Op. Cit. p.61

itself unlimited is therefore the possibility for negation, and not the other way around. Thus we are not required to assume a transcendence relation to non-being, which, preceding all negation and providing its foundation, would have to disclose the finitude of an existent thing for the first time. Positive unlimitation of the transcendental horizon of human knowledge automatically displays the finitude of all that does not fill up this horizon. That is, it does not destroy non-being, but the infinitude of being to which the preconcept is correlated discloses the finitude of all that is immediately present to sense. Thus to begin with we can deal only with the question whether the 'more' of the preconcept denotes merely a relative unlimitation, or the intrinsically pure unlimitation of being in such a fashion that this preconcept opens up a sphere beyond that of space-time sense-perception. Our first assumption contains a contradiction, though not in the pure content of the concept itself, as though the totality of the objects of human knowledge on the one hand were set in immediate conceptual contradiction to 'finite' on the other hand. The contradiction is between the setting of this assumption and its content. The recognition of the inner finitude of the totality of the objects of human knowledge certainly does demand a pre-concept that reaches out beyond this finitude, in order that this inner finitude can be grasped as such and not merely recognised as factually present. This pre-concept, reaching beyond the inner finitude of the human sphere of objects, beyond the level of sense perception (the pre-concept which alone can name a datum of this finitude as such) would have therefore to be directed towards non-being, because by presupposition it may not be directed to the infinitude of being. However, such a pre-concept relative to non-being has just been exposed as an unrealisable assumption. The pre-concept that is the transcendental condition for the possibility of an objectively possessed object, and thus of the subsisting-in-himself of man, is a pre-concept relative to being that is unlimited in itself. Thus the ultimate question that remains is whether this unlimited being can be and must be knowable, or whether this positively may be present to the intellect only by constantly turning away from it. Because this question is unavoidable, it has already been implicitly answered in the first supposition, for the complete denial of a question does not void the knowability of the material about which we enquire. The positive answer is not intended to obscure the specific insubstantiality of that which is positively experienced in the recognition of non-being in the experience of limitation. The intention is to make this present in terms of its hostile intractability towards the whole man who always lives in concrete fulfilment. To the extent that our first and most general question about being is only the formalised expression for every judgement contained in all thought and action, it can be said of that judgement that in it the pre-concept is made concerning being pure and simple in its unlimitation.

To the extent that judgement and free action are necessarily part of man's existence, the pre-concept of being pure and simple in its own intrinsically proper infinitude is part of the fundamental constitution of human existence."⁶⁵

The whole of human cognition is necessarily geared to affirmation. This is however involved with knowledge of what is, of finite objects. How then are we to think about that which is beyond the limits of the finitude, that which is 'more than' that which is relative to human perception? How can this appear as anything other than negative to human cognition? The very basis of the more is the negation of the finitude, the negation of the limit. Rahner concedes that the pre-concept relative to 'more' represents a clear condition of the possibility of negation of the transcendent experience of no-thing. He argues, however, that the negation of the finite is a part of the very constitution of the pre-concept. We must remember that the pre-concept is the condition of all other human knowledge in affirmation. How then can the basis of human cognitive affirmation be, itself, negation?

It is really a question of getting this the right way round, it is the affirmation of the thing that is in itself unlimited which is the possibility for negation and not the other way around. We have then a positive unlimitation of the transcendental horizon of human knowledge. It is this positive unlimitation that automatically displays the finitude of all that is. In other words it is the infinitude of being, to which the pre-concept correlates, which discloses the finitude of all that is. Thus we need not assume a transcendence relative to non-being and negation. In simple terms the pre-concept sorts this out for us by virtue of its intrinsic constitution. In the pre-concept the negative instance is, as it were, reoriented.

This deals with the negation for us but it does not destroy it. The negation is still the point of entry of the infinite into the finite, of the unlimited into the limited, of God's historical revelation to man, but it is so dealt with as to be accommodated to human cognition which is necessarily and always affirmative in its workings. Rahner is not denying that the pre-concept itself, in terms of the 'more' must be directed towards non-being. In other words the pre-concept opens up a sphere beyond that of space-time sense perception. This is

⁶⁵ Ibid.

demanded if the pre-concept is the means of human recognition of the inner finitude of the totality of the objects of human knowledge. It must reach out beyond the finitude in order that the inner finitude can be grasped as such.

What he is arguing is that the pre-concept, relative to non-being is unrecognisable to human cognition and therefore a contradiction in terms. Therefore the nature of the pre-concept must appear as relating positively, so rather than non-being we must think of unlimited being. The question still remains, of course, how can this positivity be presented to the intellect? Can it only be known by constantly turning away from it? Rahner states that the positive answer is not intended to obscure the specific insubstantiality of that which is positively experienced in the recognition of non-being in the experience of limitation.

Yet we come back to the bivalent nature of the pre-concept. In the judgement the pre-concept is made concerning Being, pure and simple, in its unlimitation, to the extent that judgement and free action are necessarily part of man's existence. So, finally: the pre-concept of Being, pure and simple, is its own intrinsically proper infinitude, and is part of the fundamental constitution of human existence. In this way the unlimited Being which is God is presented to us by Rahner.

d) God in the Pre-concept

The pre-concept, argues Rahner, is directed at God. It does not present God immediately, however, as the object of the intellect because the pre-concept as the condition for the possibility for objective knowledge, does not present any object at all along with itself. However the nature of the pre-concept, being the necessary condition for every human cognition and every human action, necessarily offers, if not presents, the existence of an existent thing of absolute 'having-being', which of course is God. In the pre-concept the cause of His specific possibility is unknowingly affirmed:

"It does not aim directly at God so as to present absolute being in its specific self, immediately and objectively. It does not make itself specifically an immediate datum. The pre-concept aims at the absolute being of God in the sense that the absolute essence is

always fundamentally affirmed through the former's unlimited breadth."⁶⁶

"Instead of saying the finite existent thing, affirmed as actually there, requires as condition for its existence, the existence of the infinite being of God, we merely say (meaning in fact the same thing); the affirmation of the actual finitude of an existent requires, as condition for its possibility, the affirmation of an *esse absolutum*, which takes place already in the pre-concept of being of general, through which the limitation of the finite existent is for the first time recognised as such."⁶⁷

5.2.5 Man as Spirit directed towards God

In this discussion about the openness of man to hear and receive the further revelation of God we discover that this very openness is the finite spirit which is man's essential being. Man is a spirit in direct relation and indeed in unity with the absolute Spirit of God. Man's whole being and existence as spirit is necessarily directed towards God (whether he knows about it or not). This to Rahner is a universal reality, without exception. Man's total objective knowledge is grasped against the background of the horizon of being in general. Knowledge and being are a unity and the necessary presupposition for all human knowledge is knowledge of God (indirectly) in the pre-concept:

"The intellect is intellect because it grasps all things ... this comprehension of all things against the horizon of being in general does not mean that man sums up the knowledge of particular objects retrospectively in a universal backward glance, but means that man is intellect (spirit) because a priori by his self movement towards being in general he grasps particular objects as parts making up this infinite movement of his. He sees them a-priori against that horizon of being in general through which man is perpetually receptive to the absolute being of God."⁶⁸

Man is spirit ever moving towards God, necessarily, by virtue of his constitution as a human being. Man moves towards God because the concept

⁶⁶ Op. Cit. p.64

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Op. Cit. p.65

of God is the ultimate in all knowledge, and because the illuminative pre-concept of Being in general, and hence of the absolute self-luminosity of Being, is the prior condition even of the initial conceptual cognition. Therefore in every particular cognition God is already implicitly known. This means that according to this reasoning all men have already implicit knowledge of God and are open to a further revelation. Indeed it could be said that this implicit knowledge of God constitutes man's spiritual being. Rahner says further:

"This basic constitution of man which he affirms implicitly in each of his cognitions and actions we designate as his spirituality. Man is spirit, that is he lives life in a perpetual reaching out towards the absolute, in openness to God. This openness to God is not a contingency which can emerge here or there at will in man, but is the condition for the possibility of that which man is and has to be, even in the most forlorn and mundane life. The only thing that makes him man is that he is forever on the road to God."⁶⁹

Again this applies across the board to all men even those who have turned aside from God, sin and 'fallenness' which, according to the New Testament requires a turning back to God in repentance, appears to have no ultimate meaning. Indeed, in the ultimate sense, this major factor in respect of 'Gospel coherence' of justification and forgiveness appears to be completely irrelevant. Rahner is saying that whether man wants to or not he is always the infinite openness to God, therefore the (universal) ground of a possible revelation from God is already and necessarily laid. All men are already in an implicit relationship with God, which can only be accepted or suppressed. It cannot, by virtue of its very nature, be broken. Rahner says further of revelation:

"A revelation from God is thus possible only if the subject to whom it is supposed to be addressed in himself presents an a priori horizon against which such a possible revelation can begin to present itself in the first place. Only if this horizon is utterly unlimited is a possible revelation not subject antecedently to law and restriction in respect of what it will be possible to reveal. A revelation which is supposed to reveal the depths of divinity, and which at bottom is the reflex objectification of man's calling to participate in nothing less than the supernatural life of God Himself, can only be conceived as possible if man is conceived as spirit ... And so the proposition about the necessary explicit transcendence of knowledge correlative to being in general as the basic constitution of man as spirit, is the first

⁶⁹ Op. Cit. p.66

proposition of a metaphysical anthropology, an anthropology that is slanted towards a philosophy of religion as foundation for the possibility of a verbal revelation."⁷⁰

All of this amounts to man as a 'potentia oboedientialis' for a possible revelation from God. Being is luminous and as such can be revealed in the Word. Man as spirit has an ear that is open to any word whatsoever that may proceed from the mouth of God.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

CONTRAST OF MACQUARRIE AND RAHNER'S VIEW OF REVELATION

6.1 Contrast of Macquarrie and Rahner, under 4 points

The contrasts of Macquarrie and Rahner are given their grounding by very different methodological approaches. Macquarrie, who began with the task of an enquiry into the suitability of existential philosophy as a medium of expression and understanding of systematic theology, develops the use of the phenomenological descriptive method. Rahner's theology, on the other hand, which may possibly be described as a variety of 'Transcendental Thomism' with other major influences from e.g. Immanuel Kant and Martin Heidegger, is based on the development of an epistemological and ontological metaphysic.

We consider the contrasts and indeed the similarities under four significant and major aspects.

6.1.1 Verbal Revelation by the Divine Logos vs. Revelation by the presence and manifestation of the 'numinous'

In Rahner revelation, which is a self-communication of the divine essence, comes through the Word and only through the word. In Macquarrie, on the other hand, revelation, which is not a communication of God's essential Being but rather an existential experience of the numinous quality of Holy Being, is received by man through his conative faculty, and not primarily his cognitive

faculty. In a sense we have a comparison of word and sacrament, of propositions, intellection, reason and mystery, awe and sensation.

a) Verbal Revelation by Divine Logos

We have already seen in the previous chapter that according to Rahner, there is no other possible mode of revelation than by God speaking in human words. Only human words have the adequacy to act as the gate of God's revelation in and to human history. Indeed man's whole life should be an obedient potential to hear the further possible revelation, which may or may not be given by the free and sovereign God. Man is originally constituted by God's speaking the word at Creation, and he is essentially constituted to hear the message of God in his own history.

Man is essentially a hearer of the word. Rahner states:

"If revelation is to be the disclosure of the absolute, by itself, to the finite spirit, then two things are presupposed. First that all that is can fundamentally be turned into a true speech, into an information addressed to the mind. Only on this condition can the possibility of imparting facts that are hidden in God, be considered at all. This at the very minimum is what we mean by revelation. The ultimate presupposition for God in his divinity, communicating to men through speech, that is through the word, is the ultimate union of being and knowing. Only if the being of that which 'is', is 'logos' from the very start, can the incarnate Logos utter in words what lies hidden in the depths of God."¹

Through revelation a message is communicated between two realities, the supra-mundane to the mundane. From the infinite to the finite, from God's Personal History to man's personal history, from the Spirit of God to the spirit of man. The supra-mundane reality coincides with the mundane reality at the precise point of the human word, as and when God speaks through it. Through the negation of the upper limit achieved in the word alone, the human spirit transcends itself to coincide with God's Spirit. The word, according to Rahner, is the conceptual symbol of the spirit, therefore it possess the possibility of

¹ *Hearers of the Word* - Karl Rahner, p.51, see also chapter 5 sec 2.4

defining the existent things which are both inside and outside appearance. It is indeed the mode of revelation of each and every existent thing. The whole of supra-mundane and mundane reality is capable of comprehension in the word. The human word, according to Rahner, has the capacity to bear the full weight of God's revelation of Himself to man. But just how can this be so?

It is not difficult to imagine the concept of the human word referring to and revealing the inner nature of the existent things which appear to us, but how precisely can it reveal the inner nature of the existent things which are supra-mundane? The answer is; through the negation.² The negation, claims Rahner, cannot take place in any other medium:

"Insofar as the human word as a bearer of a concept gained through the negation of a supra-mundane existent thing, is heard as spoken by God, it is able to reveal the existence and inner possibility of such a thing."³

"The only possible place for negation is in the word ... the whole of supra-mundane existence is capable of comprehension in the word."⁴

The human word, then, through 'the negation', is the gateway of supernatural revelation of the essential Being of God to mankind. Rahner argues strongly that there can be no other mode of revelation. A different means of revelation, he claims, would require to annul the already established structure of human knowledge, which is a unity of 'spiritual transcendence' and 'sensible appearance'. Man has a created or delimited ontological structure, as already discussed, and as long as this structure remains, (and it must if man is to remain human) any other form of revelation, if it were possible, would have to be translated into it, if it is to reach man's perception and have any meaning to him. "God can only reveal what man can hear."⁵ In other words it would have to be translated into human words, therefore revelation must be contained in human speech. The word is the only possibility of the synthesis of the two realities.

² For a more full discussion of "The Negation" see chapter 5 sec 2.4 d

³ The full quote can be seen in chapter 5 sec 1.2 a (ii)

⁴ *Hearers of the Word* - Karl Rahner, p.154f

⁵ Op. Cit. p.115

The word defines reality, both natural and supernatural. But it also inheres reality as its inner logic or inner principal, indeed, since knowledge and Being form an original unity, in Rahners thinking, and knowledge is considered to be in terms of reason and the logos, then the logos is the essential nature of the reality of all Being. With this in mind Rahner says of the Incarnate logos:

"Only if the being of that which is, is logos from the very start, can the Incarnate Logos utter in words, what lies hidden in the depths of God."⁶

It should now be clear as to why Rahner lays full emphasis on God's self revelation to man as coming only in and through the vehicle of 'human words'. The word as the symbol of the spirit is the inner principle of reality; it is the most essential part of the nature of being. The significance of this metaphysic for man is that revelation of the free and sovereign God not only constitutes man's essential being in the first place but that progressively it reconstitutes man's being through and in his personal history. We are not talking here of merely a change of self-understanding, as with Macquarrie, but of the completion of the ontological development of man as a hearer of God's word.

b) Revelation by the presence and manifestation of the 'numinous'

Macquarrie's understanding of revelation appears to be diametrically opposite to that of Rahner. It should be noted however, that both theologians have produced anthropological theologies, and as already stated, as they were both strongly influenced by Martin Heidegger, we might say that their starting points were relatively close. The theological development of both thinkers, particularly in respect of their respective doctrines of revelation, upon which both built their theologies, however, is radically different. Rahner's thinking betrays an essential idealism whilst Macquarrie's thought has the appearance of deriving from an underlying pantheism.⁷

⁶ Op. Cit. p.51f

⁷ Macquarrie denies, though not strongly, that he is a pantheist, but concedes that he may be a panentheist. It is fair to say that there are marked similarities between Macquarrie's understanding of panentheism or higher pantheism and Rahner's understanding of transcendental experience.

"In the religious sense of revelation", states Macquarrie, "the initiative in the disclosive experience is not man's, it lies with the knowledge which is to be disclosed, itself."⁸ Otherwise put it is the initiative of Being itself, or when thought of in the religious sense, Holy Being. When man is attuned through a certain psychological state or 'mood' he is conditioned to receive a revelation of Holy Being which simultaneously draws near to him in revelatory encounter. It does appear that any man who becomes suitably psychologically attuned will encounter Holy Being (in the psychological dynamic of the contrast of Being and nothingness). Macquarrie's strong assertion that it is Being itself, of its own initiative, which encounters the attuned one, is difficult to understand, as it strikes the mind as contradictory. According to Macquarrie, man experiences this initiative from beyond himself through a sense of 'numinous presence' which produces a wonder and awe of Being, which strikes him with the force of revelation.

Macquarrie borrows Rudolf Otto's term "*Mysterium tremendum fascinans*", as already discussed⁹, to describe the nature of the numinous presence. In an analysis of Macquarrie's and Otto's description of this numinous presence one is involved in a kind of vague but holistic understanding of the experience of Holy Being which is both mysterious and awe inspiring; this is an incomprehensible depth of numinous presence and manifestation which is a self communication of Holy Being; which as such is a self giving. Revelation, then, is a self giving of Holy Being which, as a disclosure of Being itself, seizes the whole being of man, and throws him to the ground, as it were. This awesome experience is conative rather than cognitive, it is not given in propositions or statements, but in a mysterious, subliminal presence which addresses itself primarily to man's emotions and not his mind. The encounter cannot therefore be expressed, at least initially within the bounds and limits of language. The content of revelation then, is a non definitive ontological experience rather than a logical cognitive encounter. However, Macquarrie argues that there is no excuse for remaining utterly vague about the content of revelation, it must be expressed in words in some way or other, at some stage, if it is not to remain a purely

⁸ See chapter 4 sec 1.2, for a discussion of the initiative of Holy Being in the revelatory encounter.

⁹ See chapter 4 sec 1.2 a

private affair. "It is like a bell ringing which eventually becomes words."¹⁰ All experiences of this mystical encounter of Being, if they are to be communicated to others, must be translated into human words, however, these are descriptive terms produced by the ingenuity of man, and never God's speech. In effect the descriptive accounts are the basis of the theological development which runs in tandem with the ritualistic and sacramental development, eventually resulting in a world religion. The question remains; Just what is the content of revelation in Macquarrie's view? The answer is that the content of revelation is 'Being', therefore the question becomes; What precisely is the nature of the Being which is revealed? At this point we are faced with methodological difficulty; if Being is an incomprehensible and awesome mystery, which Macquarrie asserts, then the phenomenon of Being as disclosed to man cannot be described in human language, in any immediate and direct way, rather it is a felt experience which 'must' remain essentially private. In the revelatory experience of Being, in which it takes the initiative and communicates itself, Being manifests itself in and through the particular beings. In this manifestation we see the openness of Being. Being opens itself to the beings in the elements of grace and judgement. This openness of Being is therefore the content of the revelatory experience which man 'participates in'; a fuller description is left to Otto which, at risk of repeating ourselves, we will summarise.

According to Otto the nature of the numinous is understood or rather suggested as it is reflected upon in the mind in terms of feeling. The encounter produces certain 'feeling states' which Otto calls 'affective determinative states'. The numinous grips the human mind with this and that determinative state. These determinative states are alternatively termed 'moods' which are occasioned by the presence of the *mysterium tremendum*. An example of one of these moods is when the feeling of the numinous comes sweeping like a gentle tide, which pervades the mind with tranquillity, producing a tranquil mood of deepest worship. On the other hand the element of awfulness can produce a shuddering and a tremor in the being of man this produces what Otto terms 'creature feeling' in the participant.

'Creature feeling' is a feeling of personal nothingness and abasement. The numinous quality which produces this tremor is the 'wrath of God' which seizes

¹⁰ Professor Macquarrie stated this to me in answer to my question; what precisely 'is' revelation?

a man with paralysing effect and produces in him 'the fear of God'. Macquarrie agrees that the 'the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom'.¹¹ Otto claims that this particular experience is the very ground and foundation of primitive religions. The wrath of God is really God's majesty, His overpowering might, it is this majesty which results in 'creature consciousness' in the mind of man. The mysterium which is beyond conceptuality is experienced then in feelings, which when we discuss them, become clear to us. In actuality however, the mysterium produces a stupor in the mind, a blank wonder which defies reason and words.

Revelation understood in this way is an intense and awful experience of the Mystery of Being, which through a variety of intense feeling states severely effects the psychology of the participant. At the end of the day little or nothing is said of the essential nature of the numinous itself, because it is an indescribable mystery, all that we have which is capable of description is the effect on the human mind. In reality this leaves us with a purely subjective view of God in terms of the affects on our own individual psychology and consciousness.

The significance of this kind of revelation, in respect of our theological understanding, is that God is an impenetrable mystery whom we can know nothing about, at least in respect of His own Being. Revelation then is experienced through our feelings and emotions. It is completely irrational and indefinable in human words, which would be completely inadequate and indeed unsuitable for the task. Revelation, thought of in this way, eventually translates into words and religious language. Yet, as already indicated these words are merely descriptions of the effects of the encounter with Holy Being in terms of human psychology. They have little or nothing to say about Holy Being itself. All that can be, objectively, said is that some mysterious force or energy produced the effects.

The contrast between Rahner and Macquarrie's understanding of revelation, in respect of the logos versus the numinous presence, can only be described as a stark contrast of directly opposite positions. Such a distinction throws light on the primary and underlying contrast of the different methodologies;

¹¹ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie, p.87, ref to Ps.111:10, Prov.1:7,9:10

metaphysics (with its definitive precision) and the phenomenological descriptive method (with its mystical obscurity) respectively.

6.1.2 The Transcendence of God who is wholly other versus The Immanence of Holy Being

The theological concept of the Self-Revelation of God makes little or no sense if what can be known of God is already available to man in terms of his own mundane reality. To make any kind of sense revelation must be the self disclosure of a 'wholly other', transcendent Being who is, until revealed, absolutely hidden from him. This factor poses a serious problem for the theological approaches of both Macquarrie and Rahner.

a) The problem of transcendence for Macquarrie

Macquarrie's problem is essentially one of method and approach; having laid aside metaphysics in favour of the existential/phenomenological descriptive method he cannot then utilise it in talking about God in His transcendence. His problem, then, concerns the adequacy and indeed relevancy of human language about God; conceived in ontological and existential terms as a transcendent 'Numinous Being' (who is present only in the mode of the 'Numinous'). Such a problem permeates and underlies all of Macquarrie's theology, often rendering it vague and obscure. The insufficiency of human words and therefore language structures, in this respect, renders human speech empty and meaningless in respect of God in His transcendent aseity. Holy Being cannot be talked about in its own terms. It simply 'bumps into' man, in silent revelatory encounter; with such force, however, that it throws him to the ground of his own being, and in so doing effects a profound change in his life and understanding. Yet the objective reality remains a brute 'bumping into' which cannot, in itself, be comprehended and therefore articulated.

What is eventually articulated (through a theology) is man's reaction, and the precise nature of his changed understanding, in respect of the revelatory experience. The Self-Revelation of Holy Being is articulated in terms of man

and not God; it is, in effect, no more than a description of the phenomenon of the revelatory encounter as it strikes the human subjective. Such is the basis of a new 'World' religion. The theological development which arises through time, in respect of the revelatory phenomenon, can be more properly termed an anthropology, as it is not primarily about God, but man. Indeed it is a description of man's reaction to, and 'participation' in, the Being which bumps into him. 'Participation' is a key concept in respect of the knowledge of Holy Being in Macquarrie's development. He asks:

"How are we to determine the meaning of the word 'being', how are we to show that it has an intelligible use in the context where we are employing it, and how precisely do we propose to relate it to the traditional religious word 'God'." ¹²

His answer is that:

"We ourselves 'are' and only in our participation in being can we think of it or name it and only on the basis of its self giving and self-disclosure to us can we know it." ¹³

We are able, then, to take cognition of Being only in relation to our own being through participation. We can think about it and name it because we participate in it. Our knowledge of it is, at best, relational, and, at worst, really only a deeper knowledge of ourselves. Human Language about Holy Being is no more than a description of the subjective cognitive reaction and interpretation of our participation in it. Meaning is derived from the precise nature and ethos of the 'effect' of the participatory experience of the revelatory encounter and not from the 'cause'. Through the revelatory experience man is gifted with a new way of describing his own being; which is, in effect, a transcendence of his old subjective. In reality, man can only talk about the immanence of Being as it is present and manifest in the beings which appear; more precisely, as it strikes his own subjective. Theology, understood in this way, is 'talk about the immanence of God' through a description of the hermeneutic activity arising from the effects in the having-being of the beings. Macquarrie's problem is that theology requires him to talk about the transcendence of God.

¹² Op. Cit. p.107

¹³ Op. Cit. p.106

b) Macquarrie's understanding of transcendence

Macquarrie states that Being which discloses itself to man is like nothing else, it is 'sui generis'. How then can we even begin to talk about it? It does not have a referent in the reality of the appearances. Macquarrie pours scorn on anthropomorphism, God does not exist as we do, indeed as far as our kind of existence is concerned God does not exist. He is not a thing and he is not a being, He is 'more than' a thing or a being and He has 'more than' existence. He is Being itself which is an utter transcendence and an impenetrable and terrible mystery. Macquarrie quotes Heidegger's statement: "Being is the transcendens pure and simple". However, whilst arguing that Being is a transcendens which as above all categories must remain mysterious, he asserts that Being is not just a blank incomprehensible. Being is not just nothing as far as this reality is concerned; the word 'Being' is not an empty word. The question is; How is the word to be given positive meaning? The answer lies in Macquarrie's concept of 'letting be'. Being 'is not' but 'lets be'. The nature of the 'letting be' is of course seen through participation in being as 'a' being; it is the beings who are 'let be' therefore we see the 'letting be' of Being actualised in the existence of the beings.

"Being is the incomparable that lets be and that is present and manifests itself in and through the beings."¹⁴

Talk about Being, then, translates to talk about 'letting be'. This ultimate 'letting be' is itself the essential part of the mystery of Being which is present to us in that we are those who are 'let be'. 'Letting be' is prior to existence therefore Being 'more than exists', it is a 'more than' in respect of all of the categorial existents including personhood. The transcendence of God, then, is a 'more than' which, in itself, cannot be talked about. It must be regarded as strictly incomparable, not falling under any of the usual categories of thought. Perhaps Wittgenstein sums Macquarrie's position up when he states:

"One can point but one can not say anything... God does not reveal himself *in* the world."¹⁵

¹⁴ Op. Cit. p.115

¹⁵ *In Search of Deity* - John Macquarrie SCM press 1984, p.176

c) Macquarrie's understanding of immanence

Macquarrie's view of revelation demands the transcendence of Being; and it follows that since the transcendent Being which confronts man in the revelatory event, is an incomprehensible mystery which does not impart any words (and therefore meaning) in the event, the theology which arises from the event is entirely in terms of man himself and not at all of the essential Being of God. Indeed it is only because man participates in Being that he is able to know Being itself. Presumably, when Being reveals itself to man, man receives and understands that revelation in terms of his own participation in Being. The interface of man's participation in Being and Being's participation in man clearly is the point of coincidence of the two realities.

The point of coincidence is the being of the beings which Being is present and manifest in, the beings and nowhere else. Therefore revelation has to do with the immanence of Being and not its transcendence (which man can never grasp). The theology which arises from this revelation, then, is properly speaking an anthropology. The mysterious transcendence serves only to thrust man into a new self orientation, concerning his own existence. The essence of this new orientation is the beholding and recognition of Being in the beings, therefore he sees the same things but in a profoundly deeper way.

How then does Macquarrie understand this immanent God who is manifest in the beings? He defines Him as:

"His immanence... refers to his indwelling of the creation, his presence and agency within the things and events of the world."¹⁶

"In the expressive and unitive modes of his being", states Macquarrie, "God is thoroughly immanent in the creation." Indeed, although we must leave discussion of creation to the next section, Macquarrie argues that God did not make the world, so much as it came into being through emanating from Him. The emanation of the Being of God extended beyond or indeed transcended

¹⁶ Op. Cit. p.127

Himself into the material space, time universe; which means that the universe is an extension of the very Being of God Himself. God is therefore not now external to the beings of the universe but internal and indeed intimate with them. The material universe, as an emanation from God, is a necessary part of God himself, and God is enriched by it and would suffer loss if it ceased to exist. God suffers with the beings and indeed their very suffering is in the ultimate sense his own suffering. Participation in Being is then participation in God Himself.

God, in his Primordial mode of Being, is the source of all the beings, this is the mode of being which is wholly other, supra-existent and utterly transcendent, yet when God comes out of his hiddenness to bring the universe into being and to reveal himself to the beings in terms of his (now) openness he is in his expressive mode which is of an intimate sharing of himself with the beings of the universe (which was from all eternity). Revelation, which must therefore be considered to be an expression of God's Being, is an event involving not primarily the transcendence of God, but His immanent, expressive mode of Being. We are contending, that whilst Macquarrie states quite clearly that he is concerned to oppose any one sided version of theism, that his conception of God is in purely immanentist terms and therefore one sided itself. Macquarrie's position appears to be based on an essential pantheism which seeks to marginalise the transcendence of God. A revealing statement in this respect is:

"I have more than once suggested that the divine transcendence might be conceived in a more dynamic way in analogy with human transcendence, namely, as God's capacity to go out from and beyond himself."¹⁷

The transcendence is not understood by Macquarrie in terms of God's aseity, but rather His going out from Himself. The question which Macquarrie must answer is; In respect of the revelatory dynamic, where is He going out from? the answer appears to be: from His immanence in the world!

He emerges and confronts man in the event of a mysterious and ontological revelation which is the revelation of Being to man, which in effect is the revelation of man to Himself. Otherwise put, it is the revelation of the presence

¹⁷ Ibid.

and manifestation of the Being of the immanent God to the being of man who already participates in Him (though inauthentically) and must now participate in a new and authentic way. It is little wonder that no new thing happens in revelation, what does happen is that man now recognises Being which was all the time there anyway, he just didn't see it, because it was too close! When he recognises it, through revelation, nothing essential changes; man does not in any way become a new being who is essentially changed by receiving knowledge of the essential Being of God (because that does not happen). What happens is that man is given a new self-understanding whereby he can now realise his true potential, which was always before him, but before the revelatory encounter, unrealisable in actuality.

Since revelation is an event involving the immanent God who is clearly limited by the finitude of the beings whom He indwells, we must derive the conclusion that - no free act of God is involved in revelation - It is an almost natural extension of the beings as they participate in the Being of God; which involves recognition of that which was, forever, already there. Macquarrie anticipates the implications of this criticism, firstly he states Thomas Aquinas' summation concerning God's absolutely sovereign freedom:

"Nothing apart from God has been from all eternity. We have shown that God's will is the cause of things, so then the necessity of their being is that of God's willing them. Next it has been established that there is no need for God to will anything but himself, hence there is no need to will an everlasting world. Rather the world exists just so long as God wills it to, since its existence depends on his will as its cause."¹⁸

This is clearly a statement of God's absolute freedom, Macquarrie finds it too arbitrary, he sees in this view, God portrayed as a somewhat capricious Monarch. He agrees that there can be no talk of God finding it necessary to do anything, there can be no force that can compel God to do things, if there were God would not be God. However he states:

"Whether we can properly talk of either necessity or freedom of God is doubtful... In any case... freedom has nothing to do with randomness or arbitrariness... Freedom is structured and purposeful, and to be free means to be able to move towards the goals that one

¹⁸ *Summa Theologiae* - Thomas Aquinas, 1a 36.1

has chosen for oneself... To be free is not to be able to act otherwise or to refrain from acting at all. The truly free person would not dream of acting otherwise than his own nature has determined. Freedom has nothing to do with unpredictability, that is caprice and is typical not of a free person whose character is rational and stable but of the unfree person who is blown of course by impulse and passing desires. If God is a God of love then he would not do anything but create... He freely creates because in so doing he is following his own nature which is loving and giving."¹⁹

Macquarrie's argument here concerning the nature of freedom, appears strained and unconvincing. It echoes with anthropomorphism as it draws an analogy between an existential understanding of human freedom and God's freedom. It is interesting to note that Macquarrie relates the freedom of God to an understanding of personhood; when he has elsewhere argued that strictly speaking God is not a person (He is beyond personhood).

Considering the argument or rather assertion of what freedom is and is not, Macquarrie is skating on thin ice. He wants to argue that The God who is imprisoned by the limits of the finitude because He is immanent, is in fact free. He does that by standing the concept of freedom upon its head. "Freedom", he states "is to be able to move towards the goals that one has chosen for oneself", which are determined by ones nature. Freedom, is not to be able to do otherwise. Whilst there is, no doubt, truth in this argument it is a most accommodating doctrine, which argues for necessity as being of the nature of freedom. The necessity, according to Macquarrie, is none other than the nature of God, which, to be free, He must comply with. But it is also in God's nature to utterly transcend the creation, in which case to comply with his nature means to be free from its necessity, which is to remain free to act upon the creation should He so will. In Macquarrie's reduction of God's freedom He is making a profound assertion that God is immanent in the creation and exists nowhere else in no other mode. In so doing Macquarrie strains against his own theological methodology, in respect of his 'dialectical theism'. Let us consider this understanding of freedom (based on the freedom of human persons) a little further, in terms of the concept of original sin. Macquarrie states elsewhere that original righteousness precedes original sin²⁰, this seems to be reasonable, but if it is so, then applying his rational of freedom man would never have

¹⁹ *In Search of Deity* - John Macquarrie, p.36

²⁰ See *Principles of Christian Theology* p.267

sinned, because he was completely free, (within the finite limits) and freedom requires action in accordance with and not against one's nature. By Macquarrie's definition, man, whose original nature was righteous and sinless, could not at the same time exercise his freedom, and commit sin, as sinning was contrary to his nature. Man's freedom, thought of in this way, did not allow him a free choice to remain righteous or to sin, and therefore it appears to be a contradiction, and if so Macquarrie's argument is fallacious. If God is free in the full sense then he must be free to act in a different and new way from his previous action. This is not necessarily arbitrary and certainly not capricious, it merely involves the concept of beginning and end, which may indeed have to do with God's long term goals and retain absolute consistency with God's loving creativity. Rahner's understanding of freedom is the motion of abstraction and judgement in terms of the epistemic dynamic in respect of other beings. Freedom in Rahner's understanding requires the capacity of abstracting to judge, and it is in the judging that the knower is a free spirit. If we extend this concept to God then God must be able to transcend the creation in order to judge it, and in the judging of it He radically demands and maintains His freedom.

d) From Pantheism to a higher Pantheism!

Macquarrie started out as a pantheist. He says as much in his *Festschrift* in the opening chapter "Pilgrimage in theology"²¹; and from his complete rejection of any possibility of God acting externally on the world in terms of intervention in its affairs he doesn't appear to have strayed much from his early path. His view is that we must understand God's action in the world in terms of the ordinary world process, within which, God's Being is closely and intimately integrated.²² Macquarrie, however, rejects pantheism as a viable alternative to classical theism; he defines it as "the view that all things in their unity constitute God, or that God is all things or is in all things."²³ He rejects this as being one sided and the dialectical opposite of Classical theism. Yet he concedes that at first

²¹ *Being and Truth*- Professor Macquarrie's *Festschrift*

²² He is prepared to concede the activity of God and man within a frame of reciprocity - it seems to us that such a condition is little more than a qualification of God's immanence.

²³ *In Search of Deity* - John Macquarrie, p.51

sight pantheism seems to be more satisfactory than classical theism. He does however clearly reject it:

"So pantheism, in spite of its attraction for certain types of people, tends to break down, being either reduced to atheistic materialism or else dissolving the world in a mystical acosmism."²⁴

Yet he goes on to say of pantheism:

"Pantheism is usually religious, frequently mystical and therefore it may be said to lean more towards theism than atheism. If we think of the so called 'higher pantheism' of the poets, we are led to much the same conclusions. Wordsworth had an intense awareness of the beauty and unity of nature, but his feelings were not directed simply to the physical universe. There was more to the world than its physical being. His sentiments were not only aesthetic and directed to the highest pitch of beauty which we call sublime and which, in its overwhelmingness, is not far from the Holy. His feelings were definitely religious, they had a sense of affinity with the surrounding reality, and we have seen that something like that lies at the heart of religion."²⁵

He continues by quoting a verse of Wordsworth poetry which he claims, shows that Wordsworth saw a deeper level of reality, than the material, in nature. This Macquarrie calls 'spirit' and likens it to God because, as he says, one witness said 'God is spirit'. Macquarrie uses this concept of higher pantheism, as seen in Wordsworth, to demonstrate that spirit (God) is found through mediation of the material/natural reality around us. True pantheism or higher pantheism Macquarrie claims, is not the mere identification of God and the universe.

"So in pantheism the natural world is not as such identified with God. The world may be mysterious and awe inspiring but it is hardly adorable. It becomes divine only when a new dimension of being is introduced and the world is seen as the manifestation of an indwelling spirit ...it is the presence of the spirit that divinizes the world."²⁶

²⁴ Op. Cit. p.53

²⁵ Op. Cit. p.51f

²⁶ Ibid.

Macquarrie rejects pantheism on the grounds that the pantheist fails to hold together spirit and matter in an indissoluble union, either one, ends up predominating. It does appear however, that this union is possible in 'higher pantheism' or 'panentheism' because this in effect is the dialectical synthesis of spirit and matter (transcendence and immanence). It appears that 'higher pantheism' bears some relation to Rahner's transcendentalism and therefore the plane or interface of the coincidence of the spirit of God and the human spirit, this is an interesting similarity. However, in the last analysis 'panentheism' or 'dialectical theism', may turn out to be nothing more than a frame whereby Macquarrie can talk about the transcendence of God whilst holding firmly to the belief in His total immanence. If this be the case then 'dialectical theism' is in fact the means of rationalising and marginalising the transcendence, rather than being a balanced synthesis of the two poles.

e) The problem of transcendence for Rahner

Rahner wants to affirm the real transcendence of God who is wholly other, absolutely and totally objective (external) to man. He wants to affirm that the purpose of man's being is as a listener for a possible revelation of the free and sovereign God, in his (man's) personal history. Such (further) revelation must come from outside; from God's transcendent otherness, and it must necessarily be a fresh and new disclosure of His essential Being.

We have the picture of a mysterious absolutely transcendent God who delimited the being of the creation from nothing, and who will further delimit the being of man through a fresh revelation of Himself. This new, fresh revelation of the person of the free God will come to man through the vehicle of human words in which God will speak. This secondary revelation inbreaks world history disclosing in an explicit thematic and definitive way, the nature of God, which, up until then, in creational revelation, was implicit and vague.

The problem that Rahner faces in developing, arguing, and affirming such a view has to do with his theological approach, and as such calls his whole theology into question as being inconsistent. The apparent inconsistency arises in respect of Rahner's starting point; he begins with the development of an anthropological metaphysic therefore his whole theology is anthropocentric in basis, indeed it is described rightly as an anthropological theology. It is the

very nature of Rahner's anthropocentric epistemological ontology which provides the bite in the neck, concerning the possibility of a further (new) revelation from a completely transcendent and mysterious God. Rahner defines the problem:

"If man is the infinitude of absolute spiritual openness to being in general, and if he must be this because in transcendent openness to being in general he is spirit first and foremost... then this proposition of our anthropology... is the very thing which would seem to make revelation to man impossible once again, in virtue of the basic spiritual constitution of man... If man is the infinitude of absolute intellectual openness to being... then all appears as knowability and to fall within the sphere of his transcendental openness."²⁷

This is an essential problem for Rahner, concerning the relationship between creational and historical revelation, and the possibility, and indeed necessity of a further revelation in man's history. If God's essential Being is open to being completely known by man in virtue of man's very constitution as a transcendent spirit, then it appears that no further revelation is required, and theologians should give themselves over to the domain of natural theology and nothing else. Revelation then is a matter of an a-posteriori, epistemic process in terms of creation. Rahner's articulation of his problem and his proposed solution is very enlightening especially when compared with Macquarrie's position as discussed above. We can do nothing better than to quote Rahner, at length, on this aspect. Rahner states that, if man, in his transcendental openness as a finite spirit, is the full measure of things, then:

"Everything is outstripped by the absolute breadth of man's (own) natural transcendence."²⁸

"Then the presentation by revelation of a specific object, because already falling 'a-priori' within the sphere of human transcendence, could have at most the significance of a contingent and temporary aid... Revelation would be an act of the God of the philosophers but not the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob... All of the content of revelation would fundamentally ... have to be interchangeable with knowledge derivable from the 'a-priori' structure of man... Revelation would merely be the first step of philosophy, merely the

²⁷ *Hearers of the Word* - Karl Rahner, p.71

²⁸ Ibid.

awareness of the 'absolute spirit' which breaks in on man at the level of imagination."²⁹

Rahner continues:

"Stated in general terms the difficulty we have in mind consists in the fact that our consideration so far would make it seem that there can be no such thing as a revelation in the sense of a free disclosure of something essentially hidden... So revelation could only be an immanent, necessary, unfolding of being."³⁰

"Revelation would be nothing other than the progressive spiritualisation of man himself. God himself would be intrinsically the one who was uncovered and manifest. Revelation could not be the free act of God because his light, of necessity, would always radiate and shine with every man. 'Light inaccessible' would have to be a contradiction because 'being-light' would by its nature shine upon all things."³¹

The essence of the issue here is the ontological differential between man and God. If God is to be God the ontological difference must be taken into full account. Just how this is to be done, to what extent and in which way, is what Macquarrie would call "the centre of all heresies". If the ontological difference is perceived to be too great then revelation of the essence of God to man becomes impossible to conceive. If, on the other hand the ontological difference is reduced to totally immanentist and pantheistic proportions there can be no revelation because nothing is intrinsically hidden from man and it is possible by his own (even diverse) means to work out God. As Rahner suggests this would appear to result in a humanist philosophy rather than a true theology.

Rahner must clarify his position as being consistent in this respect, he asks:

"How can a Christian anthropology and metaphysics expound the nature of man so that, without violating his transcendence relative to being in general ... or his interior luminosity of being, this

²⁹ Op. Cit. p.72

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Op. Cit. p.73

transcendence does not anticipate the content of a possible revelation."³²

"This free self disclosure of the personal God must remain possible with God having someone to whom he can utter his free word of revelation, with what he says being perceptible to man ... who knows what it means for him personally."³³

Rahner's concern is with the balance of the precise nature of the ontological difference. For revelation to be possible it has to be a disclosure of the hiddenness of the essential Being of God, on the one hand, and on the other, it must be within the capacity of man to receive it, in terms of his own essential being as a finite spirit. This precise relation can only be created in the primary delimitation, where man, as created in the image of God, is able, by his very constitution, to know The God who exists in a different reality from himself. If man is created as a spirit which is continuous, in some way, with God's spirit the problem is intrinsic to this essential relation. The very principle of continuity itself demands an epistemic coincidence whereby man, by virtue of his essential constitution, has epistemic accessibility to God, and the ability and capacity to know all there is to know about God through his own (a-posteriori) effort.

It appears that the negative answer to this question is also the place of the solution to the problem. We must realise that the relationship is of the finitude and the infinitude, in a sense then the solution is one of proportion. Rahner states: "...even as spirit man is finite... God is essentially the unknown to the finite spirit... The infinitude of God seems to be knowable only in the perception of the finite thing which 'is' (however)... The infinitude would remain unrecognised by man on his own because it is expressly grasped as such only in the transcendental experience of limitation, that is a negatio remotio of the finite at the cognition of which the excessus is known for the first time."³⁴

so:

"The infinitude of God is known only in the negatory experience of limitation of the finitude of the finite... it appears to be sufficiently

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Op. Cit. p.76

unknown, unrevealable, and shut up in its specific self ... so that ... a fresh disclosure of the infinite makes sense and still has something which may yet be revealed."³⁵

What Rahner is saying is that the infinitude of God is experienced only at the limitations of man's knowledge, which are the extent of man's finitude. In order for man to transcend his finitude he has to experience the negation of the limitation of his knowledge in respect of the infinitude in any perception of a finite thing. He has to go beyond that which 'is' in his perception. (We have seen already that the word is the only possible vehicle of such a negation of the limitation.) Rahner states:

"Man subject to the laws which govern his knowledge, cannot reach positive knowledge of the 'beyond' of the eternal world...in his own strength... in spite of the fact that the beyond present in his transcendental experience of limitation, is the condition of the possibility of his mundane knowledge."³⁶

We have then a reference to the pre-concept, whereby man has a total, though empty, vague, knowledge of all Being and indeed of Being in general (God). Therefore the question arises; "If man gained the whole definitive knowledge made possible by the preconcept, would he not have by his own right, arrived at an absolute knowledge of being in general"?³⁷ Rahner's answer is no, because it is not possible for man to achieve such a vast knowledge by his own efforts, there always remains a vast and indeed infinite beyond which must remain a mystery. Further whilst man is able through the pre-concept, at the point of the negation of the particular limitation, to recognise that which is beyond, he has not the strength to achieve the negation in his own right. Whilst in every cognition, in respect of the mundane reality, by means of the preconcept of Being in general, man does in a real respect gain knowledge of God. However, whilst the supernatural is involved, as the condition for natural knowledge, the reverse does not also apply.

Rahner proceeds to discuss the possibility of gaining knowledge of God through natural means in terms of a 'visio beatifica' sought in Nature Mysticism

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

and non Christian Mysticism. This visio beatifica seems to be the natural goal of man, whereby the essence of God is disclosed in a superior way to any possible revelation in mere words. Rahner states:

"The basic conception of all non Christian Mysticism is a direct grasping of the transcendence of spirit... that is, in a grasping not mediated through an object... Such a supreme knowledge of the absolute (possible for man through his own nature) fundamentally transcends any revelation of God in words." (or so it is said) ³⁸

"A mystical experience (usually dark night ecstatic) in which man by an ek-stasis, a standing outside himself, experiences the infinity beyond his own finitude, is regarded as an experience which surpasses and supersedes all revelation given in words... Mystical piety, even if only to the extent of a dark sensing of God in the limitless infinity of the spirit itself, which finds its springs in natural means and regards itself as unsurpassable, would always already have superseded any prophetic piety of the revealed word in its historical confinement." ³⁹

Rahner's whole thrust is to deny this kind of experience, as being incompatible with his whole position. It can not be established that such an ecstatic experience is supernatural, rather it is felt by Rahner to be a natural phenomenon and therefore it cannot possibly be a revelation of God. Such a mystical experience is ruled out as a possible alternative to Rahner's position. Indeed, Rahner argues against the validity of the inner possibility of a visio beatifica as a real, human, spiritual phenomenon. He claims that the visio beatifica cannot be unequivocally demonstrated to be the natural end of man:

"The possibility of such a thing offers no proof, at least not in an a-priori metaphysical anthropology which can proceed only from the essence and function of a transcendence which would have meaning and purpose only if there were or could be no such mysticism." ⁴⁰

Clearly, if this kind of mystical non-verbal experience of the numinous can be established as being a natural phenomenon in terms of human ontology, it could not also be considered to be a revelation of God. Only if the hiddenness of

³⁸ Op. Cit. p.77

³⁹ Op. Cit. p.78

⁴⁰ Op. Cit. p.81

God itself stands inviolate and distinct from finite beings can there be any possibility of an historical revelation:

"Not until we go beyond the free knowledge that God is more than what we have hitherto known of him by our human knowledge ... and discover that he can speak or remain silent, can we conceive of an actual speech (revelation) of God as it really is."⁴¹

f) The nature of the Transcendence of God in Rahner

i) The transcendence

The transcendence (of God) is that which is absolutely beyond the disposal of man; it is beyond the control of the finite subject both physically and logically. To say that God is transcendent is to say that He is absolutely different than the world (creation). To fail to understand this difference, claims Rahner, is the error of pantheism.⁴² This term 'transcendence' is present only in the mode of otherness and distance.

Rahner argues that the transcendent difference can not be understood as a difference of categorial realities, their difference is antecedent to them because they presuppose a space which both, contains and differentiates them; the categorial differences in no way establish their own difference from each other, nor are they themselves the difference. It is God who both establishes, and is, the difference of the world from itself. All difference comes from God and indeed God Himself is the difference of the difference:

"God to be sure is different from the world, but he is different in the way that he is different... difference is experienced in our original transcendental experience in such a way that the whole of reality is born by this term and this source and is intelligible only within it. Consequently it is only the difference which establishes the ultimate

⁴¹ Op. Cit. p.82

⁴² There is an element of truth in pantheism; it is a sensitivity to the fact that God is the absolute reality, the original ground and the ultimate term of transcendence. See *Foundations of Christian Faith* p.62

unity between God and the world, and the difference becomes intelligible only in this unity."⁴³

Rahner understands the transcendence as itself absolute difference. It is a wholly other different difference; conversely immanence is the difference in closest unity which we understand as similarity (similarity in difference).

ii) Naming the transcendence

We have seen that Rahner has named the transcendence "the absolute and ultimate difference". Rahner goes on to state that the term and the source by which the transcendence is borne can be called 'God', but there are a thousand other names for example; Being, Ground, Ultimate cause, revealing Logos, Abyss, Father of Jesus etc. It can be seen that it is a profoundly difficult task to precisely name the transcendence. In this difficulty we see the emergence of mystery. We seek to name the transcendence as we experience it and it is experienced as mystery therefore Rahner finally names it 'Holy Mystery':

"Mystery - because we experience it as that which cannot be encompassed by a pre apprehension which reaches beyond it and hence it cannot be defined. Holy - because when we speak of the transcendence which is the condition of possibility for categorial knowledge as such, we mean also and just as much, the transcendence of freedom, of willing and love."⁴⁴

Rahner is speaking of the transcendence of 'Person', who in absolute freedom exercises His will through love. Transcendence, then, is primarily; free, willing, loving Person. The essential character of the source of transcendence is love and absolute love demands absolute and unconditional freedom:

"A subject who is present to himself to affirm freely another subject means ultimately, to love... Transcendence as love, is a term which possesses absolute freedom and this term is at work in freedom, and in love, as that which is nameless and not at our disposal."⁴⁵

⁴³ *Foundations of Christian Faith* - Karl Rahner, Darton Longman & Todd 1987, p.63

⁴⁴ Op. Cit. p.65

⁴⁵ Ibid.

This transcendence, which offers itself, opens up our transcendence and never the other way around, we have no power to transcend ourselves to reach that which is beyond. We are therefore entirely at the disposal of the Transcendent God who moves in freedom and in love. It is this transcendence, which is present in freedom and in love, which Rahner means by the name 'Holy Mystery'. These two terms are a unity which bears an intrinsic difference, and expresses equally the transcendence of knowledge, freedom and love. Indeed nothing other than Holy belongs to this infinite term of love, and in saying 'Holy Mystery' we are saying God's love and freedom are beyond definition.

iii) The freedom of the transcendence (of God)

For God to be transcendent, He has to be absolutely and unconditionally free. In a sense, loving freedom is the character of the transcendence. Man's freedom is man's transcendence and God's freedom is God's transcendence and indeed God's freedom is the necessary condition of man's freedom. Man is in every way contingent on the Being of God, his being is accidental. Rahner states:

"The first metaphysical affirmation of an absolute necessity is, at one and the same time, the affirmation of human accidentality and abandonment."⁴⁶

"At the foundation of human existence there constantly takes place a necessary and absolute affirmation of the accidental reality that is man himself, that is, of will. At the same time however the luminosity of being in general is affirmed... From this it follows that ... the deliberate necessary delimiting of an accidental such as occurs in the affirming attitude of human existence towards itself, can be conceived only when it is itself affirmed as delimited by a free deliberate act of delimitation... This free primeval delimitation of the thing which is, that is man, can however be nothing but the delimiting of the absolute being of God."⁴⁷

Man in his necessary absolute attitude to his contingency affirms himself as the free deliberate delimiting of God, and Rahner says that man as a spirit stands

⁴⁶ *Hearers of the Word* - Karl Rahner, p.85

⁴⁷ Op. Cit. p.88

distinct from the absolute Being (God) who is a free autonomous powerful Person. This personality of God is displayed in the self disclosure of absolute Being before human transcendence.

The constitutional nature of the primary delimitation of man included the distinguishing of God from creation. God passes his freedom on to the being of man, that is the essence of delimitation, however in so doing God stands in contradistinction from His creation, and in His transcendence faces man as a free power from the very start. Therefore, there is always before man the possibility that God will reveal Himself in another, new way. God must still possess free scope for His free action towards His creatures. Indeed this is the very condition, says Rahner, of any delimitation at all. His creation, so far, may not be the exhausting of His free possibilities, indeed it cannot be. There must still be an object of a further free act of God.

Man, in the excellence of his constitution, stands before the free God and the possibility of the free action of God upon him through a material revelation. Rahner says that it is of decisive importance to man for him to see that he stands in transcendent openness towards a God who deals freely with him. Man's purpose in life is to listen for a further fresh revelation which will effect some form of further delimitation of his being.

The point is frequently made that the secondary revelation of the person of God in the history of man, is a 'fresh' revelation, it is something new, something different. This arises from a fresh free will of God. A fresh act of God from the depths of his transcendent mystery. How could man expect anything less from a free living spirit (person) who is at the same time a God who subsists in Himself alone.

iv) The person of the transcendence (God as person)

"Whoever stands as a free person before another forthwith discloses Himself... He discloses Himself precisely as the one who desires to be in the eyes of the other."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Op. Cit. p.92

In this light, man is always addressed by revelation, whether in speech or silence, of the free Person of God. Revelation does not come to man by virtue of his nature it is a product of a fresh free will of the Person of God Himself, and it is His essential hidden person that is disclosed:

"On account of freedom a person is disclosed ultimately only through the deliberate act of the person himself, who is to be known."⁴⁹

This fact determines the necessity of a further personal revelation of God to man if God wishes to be known by man. The relationship of man with God always involves free delimitation therefore that relationship must always be the product of God's loving will in His free purpose towards us. Man is always utterly dependent, then, upon the intention and free purpose of God.

It is necessary to consider further what Rahner means by the Person of God:

"The statement that God is a person, that he is a personal God is one of the fundamental Christian assertions about God."⁵⁰

Rahner thinks of the Person of God in two ways; firstly whether God in Himself can be called a Person and secondly whether He is a Person only in relation to us. If God is hidden from us in His absolute and transcendent distance, then it follows that He is a Person who does not enter into the kind of personal relationship with us which we presuppose in our religious activity; in our turning to God in prayer and in faith hope and love.

Clearly God who is the absolute ground of everything is radical originality. The Personhood of God is not an individual Personhood, so much is self evident. The assertion that God is the absolute Person, who stands in absolute freedom with respect to everything He has created as different from Himself is similar to the assertions that God is; absolute being, absolute ground, absolute mystery, absolute good and the absolute, ultimate horizon within which human existence is lived out in freedom, knowledge and action. All of these absolutes define God in terms of His self-sufficiency and not in relation to us. God is not an individual person because he does not experience Himself as defined in

⁴⁹ Op. Cit. p.89

⁵⁰ *Foundations of Christian Faith* - Karl Rahner, p.72

relation to another nor indeed is He limited by any other. Again he does not experience any difference from Himself because ultimately He is the difference, therefore personhood of the individual different type cannot apply to God. However Rahner is very strong that personhood must be asserted of God above all else:

"Obviously the statement that God is a person can be asserted of God and is true of God only if in asserting and understanding this statement we open it to the ineffable darkness of the Holy mystery... In this way we allow God to be person in the way in which he in fact wants to encounter us and has encountered us, in our individual histories, in the depths of our conscience and in the whole history of the human race."⁵¹

Rahner is clear that it is a gross error to consider that the absolute ground of all reality is something like an impersonal cosmic law, an unconscious and impersonal structure of things. He stresses that to talk of God as some kind of source which empties itself out without possessing itself, the notion of a blind primordial ground which cannot even look at us, is to talk of a notion whose model is taken from the context of the impersonal world of things. It does not, he says, come from that source in which a basic and transcendental experience is really rooted; namely from a finite spirit's subjective and free experience of itself. The constitution of the finite spirit always understands and expresses itself as having its origins in another. It cannot interpret this other as being impersonal, but as the free personal source of its person.

6.1.3 The Nature of Creation as a Revelation of God

a) Rahner - Creation as Primary Delimitation

Creation, for Rahner, is primarily about the passing on of God's freedom. This passing on of freedom to creatures, constitutes God's love as expressed in the revelatory act of delimiting that which is nothing, into free conscious, (though finite), spirits. "Delimitation", states Rahner, "comes about through

⁵¹ Op. Cit. p.75

intentionality as an act of free will". God's will is the cause of primary delimitation in creation, therefore, we have at the root of all created being a living conscious will. This act was a choice, and as a choice which was truly free, it may just as well 'not' have been made. There could, as the result of God's will, be nothing other than God. Before there could be anything then, there had to be the will for something to exist. This is Rahner's answer to Leibniz's question: "Why should there be something rather than nothing?" There is something rather than nothing because of the will of God.

Delimitation, by its very nature, as the passing on of freedom, is also an act of love. Will acting through love is the reason for delimitation in creation. What God wills to do in His act of delimitation is to disclose Himself to the beings that are delimited. The free self disclosure of God is the presupposition of the being of man as a finite spirit. Since the creative delimitation of all of creation is the result of the free act of God's will, then God's will is the inner factor in all of created being. Being comes to be, by God's will expressed through His loving free act.

Of course 'knowledge' is the nature and content of the revelatory, delimiting act. Knowledge opens up being for existence, however, being comes to be through will. The will of God and the knowledge of God are the two factors involved in the creative delimitation; indeed they come together in the delimited being, the will necessarily affirming the knowledge. This necessary and absolute affirmation of will and knowledge takes place at the very foundation of human existence. What this means in effect is that man must necessarily affirm the knowledge of God as his essential constitution. As he affirms his own being he must necessarily affirm God's own Being.

In terms of free will acting through a particular loving intentionality, the essential Being of God and the essential being of man coincide in respect of luminosity of being. Luminosity follows from the equation of being and knowledge. Being and knowledge are an essential unity therefore essential being is necessarily knowable and therefore luminous. The fundamental characteristic of being is luminous self presence. All being, of necessity, can be known, indeed all being is knowability; with the union of being and knowing constituting 'spirit'. Spirit is the luminosity of being, this is a luminous self presence. Because of the essential constitution of man, as a finite, delimited

spirit, created in the knowledge of God, man's own luminosity, his own self knowledge, is at the same time knowledge of God. Man's luminosity of being necessarily coincides with God's luminosity of Being therefore he has the infinite capacity to receive a revelation from God.

God in free autonomous power, then, delimits the finite; he reaches out to the finite spirits whilst standing in contra distinction to them. The free delimitation of God is passed onto man in terms of his very constitution, therefore when finite intellect knows God it does so based upon this free delimitation. Man is constituted by the primary self revelation of God in delimitation. Man's essential being is the product of revelation, whereby essential knowledge of God passes to man constituting him a listener for further delimiting revelation.

Man's will, freedom, power and capacity to know and be known is born in the delimitation of his person by the Person of God, and therefore man's being is continuous with God's Being, in the finite, and God is truly the Father of the finite spirits in creation and in recreation. His loving gift to man is man's freedom in relationship with God's freedom. All being is the knowledge of God but only man is a conscious cognitive spirit who has free will.

b) Macquarrie's view of Creation as Emanation

"Being (God) is not something that 'is' but rather a 'Letting-be' that is prior to 'is-ness'... (This) being is inseparable from beings - it is never the less the 'fons et origio' of all beings... (therefore) the beings are subordinate to and dependant on Being which lets them be."⁵²

God's letting-be is the way in which He goes out into His expressive mode of existence, this is essentially the moving out of primordial Being through expressive Being to bring into being a world of particular beings. According to Macquarrie, there is no such thing as an undifferentiated self enclosed Being (such a being could not really be called God and if there was such a being we could never know anything about it!). God now exists as the differential of all being; and we are at the root of the nature of the numinous presence of Being.

⁵² *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.211

The numinous is the immanence of Being in the beings; whilst Macquarrie states that this Being is 'letting-be' it is really the 'isness' of being itself. The 'isness' which somehow transcends the beings of its existence perhaps as the music transcends the orchestra.

Macquarrie states clearly that only a differentiated (immanent) God could be known, an undifferentiated wholly other transcendent God could just not be known by human beings. Such a transcendent Being, which we could not really call God, would be outside of the human perceptive sphere. Therefore for God to be God, he has to exist in differentiation, in the beings into which and through which he has come forth. Only an immanent God will do, and indeed can be known. But what is the nature of this knowledge? Surely it cannot in all honesty be called revelation? Only that which is utterly beyond human perception and therefore fully and absolutely hidden, could be revealed in the true sense. We contend that the immanence of God which is the Being of the beings, cannot be revealed, it can only be recognised. We propose, then, that Macquarrie's theology of revelation is in reality a theology of 'recognition'. This recognition, which of course may strike one with the force of something like a revelation, produces no new knowledge, as one would expect, merely the recognition of something which was up to the point 'unseen'. This results in seeing the same things in a different way!

What is the character of this new vision? Presumably the recipients become aware of being 'Let-be', they become aware of their dependence on Being, who creatively lets them be. This results in a new ultimacy in their being which, in turn, results in a new self-understanding. But what of the 'letting-be' itself, this expressive mode of God's Being? The letting-be is the creative activity which presumably continues to exist in the perpetual letting be of the isness of the beings. It would appear that the letting be in the expressive and even the unitive mode is essentially passive. It appears that the letting-be, lets be more evil than good; it is difficult to understand how the letting be of destruction can be creativity? It remains to consider just how the letting-be lets be in its primordial mode, the answer appears to be by emanation. The letting be lets be by an emanation of itself, indeed the emanation of the essential being of Being, appears to be the only understanding of the nature of creation that would be appropriate to Macquarrie's theology. He discusses two models of creation: 'emanation' and 'making'.

i) Emanation and Making

Macquarrie in effect argues for a balance to be struck between these two models which represent immanence and transcendence. Making is the Biblical model, which is of a transcendent God who makes everything in the world including the world itself. He makes either directly or by 'the word'. This analogy of making stresses the distance and difference of Being between God and His creatures, it represents the creation, as a free act on the part of God. Existence is seen under this model as consisting primarily in a relationship between Being and the beings. This is a relationship of a wholly other transcendent God and his creation which he made as 'good'. The image which Macquarrie associates with this model is that of a craftsman who makes an article for use.

The image which Macquarrie associates with emanation is that of the sun sending forth its rays. This is a concession to the transcendence of God as the sun clearly transcends its rays. However, emanation represents God as being immanent, and is understood as the dialectical opposite of 'making'. Through emanation God, as it were, changes into His creation and is no longer external to it. In the emanation process He has 'put himself into his creation', so much so that he has become vulnerable and has placed himself at risk.

Macquarrie considers that the 'making' model which represents God's transcendence is suitably modified by the concept of 'emanation':

"Our teaching has been that Being combines its transcendence as the mysterious act of 'letting-be' with its immanence as present and manifest in all the particular beings. The image of making presents us with the idea of transcendent letting-be, but, unless it is suitably modified, it may entirely miss the idea of an immanent presence. The image of emanation insists, on the other hand, that God really does put himself into the creation, so that the risk of creation really matters to him, and he is really involved in it and concerned with it."⁵³

⁵³ Op. Cit. p.219

There appears to be a confusion of terms in this summary. 'Letting-be' is equated with 'making' yet these concepts are definitely opposite. On the other hand, 'letting-be' and 'emanation' correspond appropriately and logically. Indeed the concept of letting-be seems to demand the 'emanation' model of creation; and in this case it has to do with the immanence and not the transcendence of God. In effect, Macquarrie appears to have a reductionist position in respect of the creation as 'made' by God.

The central and fundamental doctrine of 'creatio ex nihilo' undergoes the reduction of being understood as merely the result of a polemic with Platonic dualism; Macquarrie favours the idea of creation 'emerging' from a formless undifferentiated matter, as he considers that such a substance would be similar in nature to God in any case, so much so as to be indistinguishable. He does think that the doctrine is useful existentially because of the dialectical opposite of Being and nothing. Being is fragile and weak, the risk God took in letting Being be and indeed letting Himself be extended into the beings, is that at any time being may collapse into nothing. Nothing is that which opposes being and in this sense being came out of nothing and therefore has the nothing or the nullity as an essential element of its nature. If we were to allow that Being emanated from nothing however, we would have to say that God is nothing, this may be in order especially, as Macquarrie would have it that God is not an 'isness' he is not a being as we are beings and he is not a thing. However this nothing that opposes man's being and seeks to claim him back, appears to be an alien and evil element.⁵⁵

Macquarrie asserts letting-be's goodness:

"This letting-be is both his (God's) creativity and his love. It is out of his goodness that God bestows being on others, his self giving to the beings."⁵⁶

If being emanates from God as rays from the sun and God is therefore the source of being, then how can there be a risk in terms of nothingness? Especially if God is not arbitrary and external but close and intimately involved in the beings which he has lovingly let be. Macquarrie's position here appears

⁵⁴ It is interesting to compare Karl Barth's understanding of evil as 'das nichtige', in this respect. See C.D. 4.3

⁵⁵ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.225

to resemble that of Karl Barth whereby the nothingness is at war with God as it seeks to draw being back to itself. For Barth however, the *nichtige* is in opposition to God and not of His own nature as Macquarrie teaches. This does appear to be an instance of logical inconsistency in Macquarrie's thinking.

In contrasting the two models of 'making' and 'emanation' Macquarrie sought to strike a balance between the transcendent Creator and the immanent Creator, but this, excellent perspective fails to be borne out as Macquarrie makes it quite clear that God in no way is external to creation, and therefore Macquarrie's interest lies entirely with the immanence of God in creation as understood by the creatures themselves in terms of their own existence:

"We must get away from the idea that a doctrine of creation is intended to tell us about the production of beings who belong in a world, by a being who is outside of the world... The question is not, How did the world begin? or Who made it? but rather, What does it mean to be a creature?"⁵⁶

6.1.4 - The Epistemology of Revelation

We need not be detained by the process of outlining the elements of both Macquarrie's and Rahner's epistemology of revelation, as they are sufficiently well discussed elsewhere. We may therefore simply summarise their respective positions.

a) Rahner's epistemology of revelation

We may sum up Rahner's position by saying that if knowledge is Being, then the being we are, is already the knowledge of God, our creator. Our 'luminosity of being' which is our 'being present to ourselves', and our ability to behold and know ourselves is at the same time the luminosity of God's being. Therefore we coincide with God in terms of our luminosity, which is our spirit, and we are open to God's further revelation to us. Knowledge is in words, as words are the only vehicle capable of bearing the essential Being of God to the

⁵⁶ Op. Cit. p.212

essential being of man. Only in words can we reach beyond our limitation into the transcendental beyondness or otherness. This is achieved by the capacity of words to bear the negation, which is the only means of our going beyond our present limited being, and reaching out to the supra-mundane, transcendent reality.

Man must receive the first instance of knowledge through his senses before the spiritual abstraction may take place in the cognitive realm. Therefore his finitude still claims him and he must work to gain knowledge through discursive means which are open to perversion. A perfect and explicit knowledge of God, through the primary delimitation, is in this light, not possible for man. Secondary delimitation by further revelation in man's history, must take place if man is to rise above his finitude.

Involved in this epistemology of revelation, are the elements of knowledge, will, love and freedom. These elements are the essentials of the delimited reality; which is creation. Both the knowledge and the will, which are passed on to man, are free. God's loving intention and purpose are brought to focus in His willing the universe into being. Indeed God's loving free will is the reason, and the only reason, for the creative act. This free will is passed on to man as the essential inner factor of his constitution as a finite spirit, which consists of His faculty of abstraction, judgement and choice. Knowledge, however, is the substance of the Being. Being holds together in the unity of love; and love appears only as the increasing quality of freedom. The 'word' is the means of the communication of knowledge in freedom; without itself interfering with that freedom.

It is knowledge of God that is the constitution of spirit beings and it is the knowledge of the freedom which is passed on through the intentionality of God's gracious will. Essentially the knowledge of God, whilst coming through revelation by the word, is a knowledge of an incomprehensible mystery; a silence. It is a personal silence, because it is not alien but purposive in the unity of love, however, it is always transcendent, it is always the infinite depth. It is always that which is absolutely and ultimately beyond man as that which is wholly other. Man by virtue of his constitution as a spirit delimited by God must necessarily seek to know more of the essential Being of God through

God's spoken word in man's personal history or of God's silence, in terms of his (man's) metaphysical questioning.

b) Macquarrie's epistemology of revelation

Knowledge of God through revelation, according to Macquarrie, is of an object/subject kind. It is not an essential revelation of one person to another, but the presence of a terrible and awesome mystery which draws close to man by its own initiative, coincidental with man's psychological preparation or attunement, through the mood of anxiety. As man draws the ultimate in upon himself, at the same time ultimate Being draws near to man in numinous, mysterious, presence, which breaks in on man's awareness. In a sense what Macquarrie describes here is an 'anthropology' of revelation, whereby, man, for the first time, recognises the presence of Being, which was all the time, already manifest in the beings. This recognition constitutes, in our view, the essential nature of a new epistemology; for now man recognises, and therefore knows something, which was unrecognised and unknown before. This new recognition produces a new awareness and a resulting new self-understanding. Such an epistemological transformation is understood to be, at the same time, a transition from inauthentic to authentic life.

Man in this object/subject epistemological encounter is thrown to the ground of Being itself, to arise with a reoriented existence and a new, more ultimate and profound, identity. In this encounter there does not appear to be any increase of being passed to man, merely a new perspective on the world, including himself. Correspondingly no new knowledge is passed to man in any essential sense; he simply sees the same things in new depth.

6.2 Analysis

It can be seen that there are essential and fundamental differences between Macquarrie and Rahner. Perhaps the most basic is that of the difference between the 'word' and the 'numinous presence'. For Macquarrie, there can be no possibility of revelation through words. For Rahner there can be no

possibility of any other medium of revelation, human words are the immediate vehicle of the self-communication of God. This is so for Rahner because he understands the word as the coincident point of the Spirit of God and the spirit of man, for Macquarrie on the other hand, the coincident point is the beings themselves, therefore revelation takes on an 'event' nature as participation in being is the revelatory medium. If one fully participates in Being then one has an 'authentic life', but such a condition only arrives when one has come to the quality of consciousness which can only be described as 'nothingness'.⁵⁷

It is interesting to consider that this difference may be that of the difference between word and sacrament, words are heard and sacraments are participated in, yet whilst there is no doubt considerable force in such a comparison, it is unlikely that Macquarrie and Rahner would have thought in these terms. According to Rahner, the human word, through the 'via negationis' and at the same time the negation of the present limit, is the means of man's transcendental experience of both himself and God. Whilst the numinous ontological awareness, which is the essential element in Macquarrie's revelatory dynamic is a presentation of the immanence of God to man's consciousness which produces a new depth of ontological immanence in man's own being. This new depth is at the same time a new height which lifts an essential pantheism to a 'higher pantheism' or 'panentheism'.

Rahner's understanding of the word as constituting the inner principle and logic of the beings which appear is echoic of idealism, yet clearly Rahner is strongly influenced by the 'logos' motif in Scripture, on the other hand Macquarrie's whole thrust appears to derive from an underlying materialism complete with its characteristic deterministic lack of the freedom of persons including the Person of God. In this respect, we find Rahner's argument for the essential element of the freedom of the Person of God entirely convincing and Macquarrie's attempt at a rationalisation of freedom through redefinition, unconvincing.

Macquarrie's phenomenological mysticism takes us deeper into the immanence of Being whereby Being itself or 'Holy Being' or 'God' is understood as being so close to the beings which appear that He 'is' the beings which appear. This

⁵⁷ Both of these positions could be seen to have some scriptural warrant.

radical immanence is recognised through the sinister awareness of various affective states or conditions of the human mind. The depth of mystery and shuddering awesomeness of the realisation of such a closeness produces what Otto terms "a stupor in the mind, a blank wonder that defies reason and words". Such extreme immanence effects an ontological redefinition of the known reality which then acts as the centre of ontic and noetic reorientation. When given linguistic shape this is properly a theology of the radical immanence of God and not primarily an anthropology. Such a theology, in our view, is valid (though dangerously unbalanced) as God's immanence in creation 'is' radical, and indeed is arguably the radical facticity of the apparent reality. The theology of the radical immanence of God in creation, by its very nature, must rely on phenomenological description, which is its strength but at the same time its weakness as it is dependent on truth claims and involves value judgement on the basis of human psychology.

Rahner's theology, on the other hand, is properly a transcendental anthropology. Rahner is wholly concerned with human transcendence which presupposes the absolute transcendence of God, indeed God's free transcendence is the condition for the possibility of human transcendence. This position is consistently argued in Rahner's powerful metaphysic which is built upon the basic elements of the equation of knowledge and Being and the coincidence of divine and human spirit which is revealed in human language (words). Rahner's understanding of the transcendence of God is no less radical than Macquarrie's understanding of God's immanence.

Ironically, the exact same problem exists for both Rahner and Macquarrie in respect of the integrity of a real revelation of God to man. As we have seen with Rahner the problem exists in terms of his concept of 'luminosity of being' and the relative coincidence of the essential being of God and the essential being of man. If Being is essentially and wholly knowable and indeed has knowability as its essential nature, then no fresh revelation or disclosure is necessary or even, apparently possible. Whilst Rahner has dealt fully with this problem (see section 1.2 e) he fails to remove all doubt in the matter.

As far as Macquarrie's position is concerned, in respect of the knowledge of Being through participation and recognition, it is hard to see just how an historical revelation, which is in nature a disclosure or self communication of

God in terms of his transcendent hiddenness, in fact takes place. It seems rather, that God's radical immanence, which is His closeness to the beings, breaks into human awareness through participation and recognition, which is, of course, a form of disclosure, but can it be properly termed revelation.

We see too the stark contrast between Macquarrie and Rahner in terms of their respective understandings of the nature of creation. In Rahner's concept of delimitation and Macquarrie's concept of emanation the two opposite positions are seen, in foundational perspective, in respect of human creaturehood. In such a creation dynamic the essential element of creaturehood is that God enters into and is intrinsic to the human mind (as it seeks to transcend itself), in Rahner's case; and God enters into and is intrinsic to the human corporeal state, in Macquarrie's case (the fine arts are examples of human attempts to transcend this state).

Revelation is understood by both Macquarrie and Rahner as being an epistemological dynamic (as, of course, it is understood by most), the difference lies in the precise epistemic nature, as effected by the revelatory encounter. For Rahner, since knowledge is Being, revelation effects an essential and constitutional change in man, whereas for Macquarrie, since Being is necessarily in process of becoming (apart from revelation), the revelatory encounter produces only an attitudinal change which results in a new and richer perspective. Both would concede to revelation as opening the way to a higher consciousness, which to one is essential to increased being and to the other, non essential. Similarly, both would agree, though for different reasons, that revelation, variably understood, is of soteriological significance and indeed is salvific in power.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST OF MACQUARRIE AND RAHNER ON THE NATURE OF FAITH

7.1 - The Nature of Faith

7.1.1 The Nature of Faith in Macquarrie

Faith, according to Macquarrie, originates in the revelatory encounter of certain individuals, or prophets, with the numinous presence of Holy Being. This particularisation of the universal revelation of Being develops and perpetuates through a particular symbolism, ritual and doctrinal systematic theology into the proportions of a world faith or religion. The followers of a particular faith receive the revelation through repetitive thinking which involves a thinking back or meditation into the nature and content of the original encounter and its ritualistic/theological development. In, "The Faith of the People of God", Macquarrie states that faith has a four fold structure. Firstly, there is a basic element of commitment, which implies; loyalty, obedience, attachment and trust-towards. Secondly, the commitment is to an 'ultimate concern'. Thirdly, a commitment to our 'ultimate concern' involves the acceptance of some beliefs which arise from reflection on the ground of our concern. Fourthly, faith is always experienced as 'response'; it is not something that we can create ourselves.¹

¹ *The Faith of the People of God* - John Macquarrie SCM press 1978, p.11f

It can be seen that Macquarrie understands 'faith' in universal and general terms. Faith is primarily an ontological phenomenon, it is indeed an existential attitude towards 'Being', concerning the whole of man's own being. It is fundamentally a response to the revelation of Being which comes through a certain quality of man's 'ultimate concern'. Nothing new happens in respect of the revelation of Being but those who come to faith in and through this revelation come to see the 'same things' in a different way. Since Being reveals itself to man by its own initiative, there is an objective element to the resulting faith which is of course a subjective disposition:

"Faith is awakened in us by a reality outside of ourselves claiming the allegiance of that which is most deeply within ourselves."²

The revelation of Being which awakens man's subjective response, is then, of the initiative of 'Holy Being' itself. Yet the medium of the revelation appears to be the meditation of man in respect of his 'ultimate concern'. The nature of this meditation as an 'affective state', a mood, or a means of attunement, has already been discussed in chapter four. The precise term 'ultimate concern', which is borrowed from Paul Tillich, remains to be dealt with here.

For a definition of the term 'ultimate concern' we can do no better than quote Tillich in full:

"Ultimate concern is the abstract translation of the great commandment 'The lord our God is one; and you shall love the lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The religious concern is ultimate; it excludes all other concerns from ultimate significance; it makes them preliminary. The ultimate concern is unconditional, independent of any conditions of character, desire or circumstance. The unconditional concern is total: no part of ourselves or of our world is excluded from it; there is no 'place' to flee from it. The total concern is infinite: no moment of relaxation and rest is possible in the face of a religious concern which is ultimate, unconditional, total, and, infinite."³

² Ibid.

³ *Systematic Theology* - Paul Tillich, SCM press 1988 vol.1a p.11f - Tillich quotes Matt. 12:29 & Ps.139 R.S.V. Macquarrie cites this ref in his use of the term 'Ultimate Concern'.

Tillich goes on to say that "the word concern points to the 'existential' character of religious experience." He argues that the object of religious experience becomes at the same time the subjective of religious experience. The attitude of ultimate concern is that which the ultimate gives itself to. We have therefore an objective reality which is given context in the subjective reality of human attitude. We are primarily dealing with an attitude which is different because it has ultimate proportions. It is a total, existential attitude which concerns man's be-all and end-all. Nonetheless it is an attitude of the human mind, at the same time however:

"It is the object of total surrender, demanding also the surrender of our subjectivity while we look at it. It is a matter of infinite passion and interest' (Kierkegaard), making us its object whenever we try to make it our object."⁴

In terms of the objective reality itself, however, there is little but the most vague of descriptions, leaving the stress on a special quality of human consciousness as the focus and occasion of the revelation of Being to man and his response of faith. It must be understood however that this overwhelming and momentous event of revelation, and of grace, is not at any time held by Macquarrie to be anything other than by the creative initiative of Holy Being (God). Therefore, he considers the total existential attitude of ultimate concern, which he calls "faith", as being a gift from without:

"(Faith) ... is made possible, and so granted, by the gracious approach and self-disclosure of Being."⁵

The gift however is paradoxical in nature. God gifts His self-disclosure (revelation) to man, which awakens, and is the content of, faith, but man, to fully receive this gift, must work out its content in terms of his own cognitive understanding;

"faith does have its cognitive dimension, here again we meet the paradox of a gift which is at the same time a task. The knowledge of God in Christ is the gift of his revelation, but every disciple has a

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.345. See also *Studies in Christian Existentialism* p.247ff

duty to clarify and work out the content of his faith the best he can."⁶

We can say, too, that faith discovers a meaning for existence which is already given with existence, but not seen outside of faith:

"The difference between the attitude of religious faith and the attitude of the man without it is also clear. Religious faith, as faith in being, looks to the wider being, within which our existence is set, for support; it discovers a meaning for existence that is already given with existence. The alternative attitude looks for no support beyond man."⁷

The attitude of faith then is seeking ultimate meaning for life, clearly it seeks to make sense of existence, the sense, as seen through the new attitude, lies beyond man and his own resources. If the attitude of faith is on such a quest, for meaning and self fulfilment, it follows that it relates to the very heart of man's being.

"The attitude of faith arises from the very structures of human existence itself. It is not a luxury but arises from our innate quest for selfhood and for meaningful existence."⁸

Faith is therefore demanded by the very structures of human existence as the only facility for attaining wholeness and meaning for human life. In this root we have the very wellspring of the different faiths or world religions.

According to Macquarrie "religious faith" is a universal reality, it is 'faith in Being', therefore the great world religions, as being different expressions of this one reality, are all equally valid as ways to wholeness and meaningful existence, and therefore, presumably, to salvation. Religion, by Macquarrie's definition is an expression of the experience of 'Holy Being' touching human life, this is the experience of the holy, grasping man therefore:

"The essence of religion ...is the self-manifestation of Being as this is received and appropriated in the life of faith."⁹

⁶ Op. Cit. p.374

⁷ Op. Cit. p.80

⁸ Op. Cit. p.81

⁹ Op. Cit. p.161

Macquarrie contends that in all religion (which arises from this universal revelation of Being¹⁰) there is genuine knowledge of God and genuine grace. All religion flows from the self-giving of the one God in revelation. It follows that, if all religion flows from God, the different religions with their vastly varying doctrines and practices are merely different expressions of the one universal faith. This is 'Faith in Being', it is a faith arising and expressing a relationship with the 'immanence of God' as that immanence is present and manifest to man in nature, or more primordially in 'Being' itself.

a) How does this understanding of 'faith' relate to the self-revelation of God?

This question has its ground and its 'whence' in the above discussion, therefore it is already, primarily, addressed. Faith in any religious sense is the term which describes the relationship between God and man. Macquarrie is right in his statement that faith is man's response to God's self-revelation; he is also right in that the faith response arises in respect of the very centre and structure of man's existence and being. Further, faith has its subjective and objective elements, indeed the precise character of 'a faith' is a product of the coincidence of these two elements. The meaning and purpose of man's existence must be derived, and follow, from the nature of that coincidence. However, the articulation of the coincident interface depends on the nature of the accompanying hermeneutic. We are involved in the first instance and the last, as a result of the freedom which the gracious God confers on man, in non compulsory, interpretative activity. It is inevitable, this being the case, that some form and shape of pluralism will always be the order of the day. Yet it is far short of the mark to demand that God always reveals himself in the one way (although variably expressed) - this follows the line of reasoning which claims that God is One, and therefore all that he does in revelation always applies, universally, to all men. It seems clear that the precise nature of revelation is vital to the nature

¹⁰ Macquarrie does argue that a 'general' revelation is hardly possible; but only on the grounds that every human person does not necessarily receive the universally available revelation. General revelation therefore is not intrinsically impossible.

of the resulting or arising faith which follows, and the precise nature and character of a particular faith defines, for us, the nature of the relationship between God and Man, of which this 'particular' faith is the vessel. A universal faith whose structures apply generally, which arises from a universal 'natural' (or general) revelation, such as that which Macquarrie advocates, leaves us with a vague shadowy mystical and largely undefined relationship with God. Such roots in 'Ontological Mysticism' are conducive to agnosticism as they fail to define theism. The new existential attitude (faith) which results is concerned more with the re-definition of humanity than the Being of God. It is clear however, that those who come to the place (mood) of a universal nihilism, as those who do not believe nor have religious faith, are mostly, radically translated, through the revelatory encounter, to people of belief and faith. We contend that in reality this belief and faith rests entirely on the single doctrine that Holy Being (God) exists, and little else. This particular, root doctrine, is expanded, in due course, through the particular and available symbols (of Being), into a comprehensive ritualistic and doctrinal system, which gives form to a world religion.

Our argument is that this type of faith, which arises from the kind of (creational) revelation which Macquarrie teaches, has as its object, the 'immanence of God' in creation, and we have termed this type of theism; 'Ontological Mysticism'. Classical Theism, on the other hand arises from historical (logos) revelation, in which a certain, though not comprehensive, definition of God is given through the divine logos, as it encounters and enters the human logos. Such historical revelations come in many different forms culminating in the incarnation of the divine Logos Himself. Through the logos, God speaks explicitly and definitively to man, and He Himself Chooses the essential symbols through which man must understand and receive Him. For example, Bread and Wine and the Cross. In this instance the word defines the sacrament whereas in Ontological Mysticism the sacrament remains implicit, non thematic, and undefined; it remains at the level of 'feeling' and therefore emotion, rather than thought and therefore cognition, as is the case with Classical Theism.

In other words, the nature of faith which Macquarrie propounds involves the relationship with God in His immanence, in and through creation. This is a mystical vague and shadowy relation which finds major expression in the

relationship that man has with himself, with his inner and most essential being. Perhaps this could be expressed as a relationship with God-within-us. It is a finding of the way to full human realisation which Heidegger refers to as 'authentic life', through the new awareness and recognition of the ultimate reality of Being itself (God) as the principle of meaning and grace for finite being. Since no new knowledge of God is imparted through God's (Being's) self revelation to man, then authentic life cannot be brought about through anything additional or further to the knowledge already available to man. Therefore, it must, and indeed does, involve only a dispositional change in man. "Faith is an existential attitude", it is entirely by this attitude difference that man passes from inauthentic to authentic life. Through the divine 'numinous' encounter with Holy Being the existential attitude which was producing inauthentic life, is subject to a metamorphosis. In this way man receives a new vision (he sees the same things in a new way) but he does not receive any new knowledge of God, or indeed of himself, or the world he is a part of. He understands (or comes to) the same things in a different and new way whereby he now recognises Being (God). He has seen that, 'Being in total' exists; therefore 'God' exists for him, whereas before, God did not exist for him. Salvation, from within this particular thought frame, is understood as existential fulfilment, the achievement of full human potential through the choice of the right and most wholesome and indeed fruitful possibilities open to us. Salvation, appears to be, essentially, this worldly, relating to temporal, earthly, reality, with only a very fleeting and equivocal relation to the eschatological and ultimate reality which, we contend, lies before all of mankind.¹¹

b) How is this particular faith (that is, Macquarrie's understanding of faith) given expression in the praxis of those who hold it?

The universal, general faith which is available to all of mankind in and through the universal (though not universally received) revelation of Being to man, is an existential attitude whereby authentic life is achieved and lived in. In authentic

¹¹ It is interesting to note that the negative expression of the free existential choice leading to authentic life and fulfilment continues by increasing degree, in Macquarrie's view, to ultimate annihilation. Inauthentic life, then, leads to final annihilation. See *Principles of Christian Theology* p.366f

life, we live and move and have our being! The different expressions of this universal faith are the various great, world religions, which are therefore different understandings and articulations of 'authentic life'. To answer the question posed as our heading in this section, we must consider the specific religions, in terms of the praxis arising from the particular understanding of faith, in respect of the variances of cultural symbolism.

Our concern however, is not with the praxis itself, but with the question of 'how' this natural universal faith is given expression in terms of praxis. The praxis itself could be described, in general terms, as the coming to and the living in a unified existence of wholeness and completeness, where human potential is fully realised. "Authentic selfhood implies an attaining of a unified existence in which potentialities are actualised in an orderly manner and there are no loose ends or alienated areas."¹² The condition for this authentic selfhood and unified existence is the existential attitude of commitment and acceptance which is 'faith in being'. The man of (religious) faith is concerned with the wider being which is the context of his own being. This immediately implies community:

"The bond which holds together the people of God and constitutes them a community is different from anything like race, language or common interest. The bond is faith, and the people of God can be described as fundamentally a community of faith."¹³

The precise nature of the praxis is understood in terms of the nature of the bond.

The particular faith is given expression in the praxis of the particular community in terms of the nature and character of the particular bond that holds the community together. The existence of the particular bonding finds concrete actualisation in and through the institutions which grow up. We are saying then, that revelation produces the response of faith, which if true and authentic (and of course in its primary form, i.e. as given to the founder of a world religion) finds expression in and through the praxis of a religious institution which grows up around the particular faith expression. (Always in terms of the particular essential symbols of the particular culture of origin.)

¹² *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.77

¹³ *The Faith of the People of God* - John Macquarrie p.11

Community and institution follow from the revelation-faith event. The institution is what Macquarrie terms 'embodiment', this represents the necessary facticity of human existence. Paul referred to the facticity, or being-in-the-worldness, of human existents as the 'earthen vessels'. Macquarrie cites him: "we have this treasure in earthen vessels"¹⁴. These are the earthen vessels of our embodied existence:

"To exist is to exist as an embodied person, involved whether we like it or not in institutions, laws, customs and the like. Man's possibility is always inseparable from his facticity, and this means that he needs earthly structures - institutional, ritual, legal, customary, and of many other kinds - in which his spiritual activities can be channelled and stabilised."¹⁵

"(These) 'earthen vessels' of religion bring grace and revelation to bear on the life of a society within the world. Without such worldly means faith would remain vaporised and disembodied, and certainly no communal faith could long survive in such a manner, and still less could it be effective."¹⁶

The praxis of a particular revelation-faith, according to Macquarrie, is of the nature of earthly 'organisational structures'. The faith which produces authentic life, it appears, comes to rest in rather ordinary, and even secular apparatus. Macquarrie uses the term 'association' to describe community. An association is an "organisation established within society for the achievement of conscious and therefore limited purposes."¹⁷ The community of faith then, takes the form of an 'association' and an associations can not operate apart from institutions; but surely the elements of a religious institution are different from that of a secular institution?

"Among the structures of institutionalised religion, one would mention the ritual acts in which the cult embodies itself, the sacred books which are the repository of revelation, though not identical with revelation; the creeds and dogmas in which the common faith has expressed itself. There are also offices, for every religion ... has

¹⁴ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie pp.372-4 - Cor.4:7 R.S.V.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Borrowed from *The Modern State* by RM MacIver p.4f

¹⁷ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.375

its leadership and its special functions. Finally there must be a minimum of commonly accepted laws or rules, to ensure the coherence and proper functioning of the apparatus."¹⁸

It would appear then, that a religious association differs from a secular association only in the precise content and nature of its rituals, writings, creeds and dogmas. It is not surprising that there are essential structural similarities between religious and secular associations in respect of religions born from a natural revelation of the immanence of God. Such a revelation-faith event could be expected to issue forth in a religion which could not be easily distinguished from the normal structural shape of the particular culture and society of origin. Christianity which, in accordance with Macquarrie's schema, is primarily the expression of the revelation of 'Being' given to Jesus of Nazareth, finds its praxis in and through the institutions which are of the shape of Western culture.¹⁹

Macquarrie states:

"To recognise the necessity of earthly forms in religion is simply to accept who we are and where we are, this is more properly called 'worldly' Christianity than the kind of religion that aims at bypassing all institutional forms in the hope of expressing itself in a purely 'spiritual' manner."²⁰

What Macquarrie is arguing here, is that there can be no possibility of 'the kingdom of God' existing on earth. Therefore the praxis of 'God's people' (that is the followers of a major world religion), is an earthly praxis which exists within society and is in terms of the particular society's culture. The 'rituals' of religion will be taken from, and be similar to, the rituals of the particular culture of the particular society. The 'way' (via) to God appears to be a particular expression of the outworking of human society at large. It could be argued of course, that any society comes to be, through some Founder's revelation of

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Christianity appears to be embodied in the structures of Western culture; which is confusing as Jesus was born into, and presumably had His revelatory encounter in terms of the symbols of, Eastern culture? It does strike the mind that this factor counts against Macquarrie's schema of revelation, the alternative being that Western Christianity is a perversion of the original, primordial revelation given to Jesus.

²⁰ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.376

Being. However, the argument is a circular one in view of the scheme of events whereby any revelation of Being to a particular prophet (recipient) is given expression through the symbols of the particular social culture of which the prophet is a member. The question is then, which came first the culture or the revelation? And the circularity is seen as inescapable. This remains as a weakness in Macquarrie's position. The further theological weakness is the absence of an eschatological dimension in the equation:

"Presumably the eschatological idea (the kingdom of God) would not need the apparatus that man needs while he is still 'in via'. In his vision of heaven the writer of Revelation says, 'I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb'. Voltaire's hero in the land of Eldorado saw no temples and wondered if the people had any faith in God; he was told that they had indeed but that their worship was constituted by their daily work. But what might be true 'at the end' ... is not true of man as he actually lives in world history and to pretend that it is would be a strange kind of angelism. To try to escape or bypass historical institutions is impossible for two reasons - man's embodiment and also his sin."²¹

Macquarrie goes on to cite Calvin to support his case: "Calvin had a more realistic and less utopian view of the matter when he recognised that civil government is necessary to man's condition".²² Because of the fallen, sinful condition of man, Macquarrie argues, not unreasonably, for the necessity of religious institutions; but need the institutions be 'worldly'? Apparently so. Macquarrie argues that: "The faith of the community can continue and can make itself felt in the world, only if it is willing to embody itself in worldly institutions."²³

Clearly there is much truth in this argument, however, it is in the precise difference of the church (or the body of Christ) and the world, that the church's essential value and indeed meaning, lies. Therefore the church and indeed the individual Christian, which/who is in the world, is called, at the same time, to be separate from it. Such an imperative is echoic of the New Testament teaching that the kingdom of God is both here, in the present, and yet to come,

²¹ Op. Cit. p.376f & Rev.21:20 R.S.V. The Voltaire ref is to *Candide* chapter 18

²² Op. Cit. p.377; Calvin ref *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 4.20

²³ Ibid.

in the future. There is therefore the principle of ambiguity, in respect of the kingdom of God, which Macquarrie concedes in other respects, but denies in this one. The statement of Jesus: "My Kingdom is not of this world"²⁴ is also clearly understood to pertain to the structure and value of the Christian institution. Our contention here is that which is called 'eternal life', whilst still in the temporal realm, is styled in respect of the tension between realised and ultimate eschatology. Such a tension, which itself differentiates between those who are inside the Christian (faith) community and those who are outside, is not accepted by Macquarrie; apparently where there is embodiment in the world and sin, there cannot be the Kingdom of God, therefore he does not distinguish between the people of God and society as a whole. The institution of the church then, can be thought of as a worldly institution, and a normal aspect of the institutions of secular society. This is Macquarrie's 'via media' and as such it comprises the 'risk' of faith for the Christian community. This risk is involved in the life of faith lived in the earthen vessels of the world; it is in this factor that Macquarrie sees the greatness of the Christian faith:

"Part of the greatness of Christian faith is precisely its ability to take up the earthly and to make it the vehicle for holy being's self expression."²⁵

Macquarrie argues that Christianity is the most materialistic religion, epitomised by the incarnation itself. Macquarrie cites William Temple: "Christianity is the most avowedly materialist of all the great religions."²⁶ We have then a revelation, a faith, and a corresponding praxis of a materialistic and immanentist type, indeed such a mundane 'faith' praxis, which rests on the underlying concept of 'embodiment' can only be pantheistic; and as such fails to do justice to God's transcendence in historical relationship and juxtaposition with the earthen vessels of human finitude. In our view, what Macquarrie describes for us is 'natural religion' which is desperately poor of the supramundane, transcendent and infinite reality. Macquarrie's 'via media' is indeed strange; one must ask, just what is it the middle of? The term 'embodiment' would seem suitable as a catch word for Macquarrie's theology as a whole, as his whole materialistic, pantheistic expression is concerned with the nature and character of the 'embodiment' itself, and not with the self revelation

²⁴ Jn. 18:36 R.S.V.

²⁵ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.378

²⁶ Ibid: William Temple ref *Nature Man and God* p.478

of the transcendent God Himself! (which would clearly enrich man with a 'new' knowledge of God, which he was without access to, prior to God's revelatory act in his history).

7.1.2 - The Nature of Faith in Rahner

We have seen (see Chapter 5) that, according to Rahner, man is a "Potentia Oboedientialis" for a possible word of God spoken in his personal history; his essential being is that of a hearer of the word of God. It follows that the character of faith therefore, must be 'hearing'. Karl Weger says, in this respect:

"The character of faith as hearing is interpreted a-posteriori and empirically on the basis of certain dogmatic statements which reveal that what is addressed by this word of 'faith-as-hearing' seems almost to be a formal ability to understand some true statement that is comprehended insofar as it is made familiar to the hearer in a correct legitimate and suitable way."²⁷

The object of faith as far as the Roman Catholic church is concerned is the Church's doctrines; faith, for them, is therefore, belief in these doctrines. The reference to the a-posteriori and empirical mode of interpretation of the actuality of faith is the position of the RC Church. Rahner argues for an a-priori capacity to believe, and for God's revelation of Himself as primordially taking place at the finite level of the finite creature. The basic constitutive factor at this level is God's freedom which is passed on to man at his creation. Weger again:

"It is only possible if there is an ontological deification of man which is already present in freedom, even though it has not been accepted by that freedom in faith. It is possible, in other words, if the fundamental datum of man's ultimate sphere of knowledge and freedom within which he expresses his existence is transcendently deified. Faith can, in the sense of an analogous experience, be brought about by a lasting gift of grace by God to man, that is by means of this supernatural existential factor (which at the same time also contains the transcendental aspect of God's revelation of

²⁷ *Karl Rahner - An Introduction to His Theology* - Karl Heinz Weger, Burns & Oates London 1980, Trans; D Smith, p.102

himself). The spatio-temporal and historical revelation of God's word comes to man who is also, on the basis of his supernatural existential element, always a-priori and transcendently-oriented towards this word of God in history."²⁸

The key concept here is that of an "inner, a-priori, grace" whereby there exists within man a supernatural, transcendental element which corresponds to God's objective revelation. Otherwise put, there is both an internal (in man's being) and external, word of God. The internal being is the whence of the capability to receive and understand the external. Therefore, there is a supernatural transcendental a-priori faith capability, innate to man. This is faith-as-hearing.

a) Faith-as-Hearing - more precisely defined, in terms of the elements of its nature.

The elements are;-

1. Faith is courage.
2. Faith is hope.

Therefore faith is 'courageous hope'.

3. Faith is self-abandonment.
4. Faith, is total commitment to the person of Jesus Christ.
5. Faith as necessary for salvation.
6. Faith is 'inner grace'.
7. Faith lies between rationality and emotion.
8. Faith is identical with the realisation of freedom.

²⁸ Op. Cit. p.103

(faith is the united and fundamental totality of freedom itself)

Rahner's central tenet of the existential experience of faith is the concept of 'Courageous Hope'. The element of courage is a radical relation to the whole of human existence:

"Christian faith, contrary to popular impressions, is really a very simple affair and difficult only because it is the concreteness of something that we can describe as 'courage'. All this assumes that this kind of courage is understood in all its radicalness in relation to the totality of human existence."²⁹

By courage, Rahner means the reaching out beyond the marks of individuality, to the totality of existence. This courageous reaching is facilitated by a particular category of concepts. For example; Freedom, Love, Joy, Fidelity, Responsibility and Fear. These are not individual definitive terms; examples of terms that define individual reality are; Hydrogen, beetle, house etc. The first group of terms involves the whole person, they are radical in their meaning, they involve the human 'person' in reaching out beyond the individual, definitive, particular reality.

"When he is very busy a person can in fact allow himself to be driven by the variety of the individual things in his life and by the detailed knowledge of these things and of the particular moods they create; he can't forget himself in all the thousand details of what he is doing and what he has."³⁰

Yet it is not possible to be human and to continually and completely avoid the substantives of the first group, though man tries to suppress them they present themselves to his consciousness in the form of irritation and frustration. No human being can live only with the second group of terms, the first group are unavoidable because: "this whole existence of man as one and the whole is always imposed on the person; in his discouragement or irritation he cannot simply leave them (the first group of terms) aside as incomprehensible."³¹ Man cannot continually shut the door on the existential reality which involves the totality of his existence, in favour of the individuality which he wants to cling

²⁹ *Theological Investigations* - Karl Rahner, vol 18 p.211

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

on to. Being involved in Love, Freedom, Fidelity, Joy, Fear and Responsibility, in the totality of his being, even although their meaning is obscure and beyond him, he cannot avoid them, as they point to the totality of human existence.

"The term 'courage' is also one of those unavoidable terms which point to the mysterious totality of human existence. What is to be shown is that this courage, if it is understood in its necessity and radicalness, is precisely what Christian theology describes as faith."³²

In this respect Paul Tillich states:

"Faith is the state of being grasped by the power of being itself. The courage to be is an expression of faith and what 'faith' means must be understood through the courage to be. We have defined courage as the self affirmation of being in spite of non-being. The power of self-affirmation is the power of being which is effective in every act of courage. Faith is the experience of this power."³³

Courage, clearly is a part of what it means to be human there is a greatness within man which could be described as an inner grace, a supernatural transcendental element. Courage rises up from within, it is a universal phenomenon which applies to the religious and the irreligious alike. 'Courage' always points towards the mysterious totality of human existence.

Rahner considers that the principal terms for the Christian are; 'faith', 'hope' and 'love'. All three terms and each of them apart look to the one whole basic realisation of Christian existence. Each of these three terms acquires its radical and full meaning only when it is 'elevated' into the other two³⁴. The key term for this "age of creative freedom, (and) of openness towards the future" is "Hope".

"If... someone really and radically hopes, he also believes and loves, since hope has always also an element of knowledge of faith as a constituent of itself and only reaches its own plenitude when hoping means love for the other or when loving is hope for the other. If today perhaps hope is the 'principle' the key term, the term 'courage'

³² Op. Cit. p.213

³³ *The Courage to Be* - Paul Tillich, Nisbet & Co London 1955, p.163

³⁴ *Theological Investigations*- Karl Rahner, vol.18 p.214

promptly springs to mind. For courage in the last resort is hope, and hope is not hope if it is not courageous."³⁵

This kind of courageous hope is not a way of escape or a feeble consolation, it is dynamic in that it involves decision, deed, and venture. The courageous element is the key to the precise nature of this courageous hope. This courage represents the distance between the actual human capacity and power, to carry out the task of self actualisation, (salvation) and the actual, life's deed itself. It is then, the courage for the deed which relates to the totality of human existence in the face of the distance or gap between the actual and the possible.³⁶ This is where the hope comes in, and this courageous hope is faith. The context of this hope is freedom and it is a hope which is at the very heart of existence. Rahner states:

"This courageous hope ... is itself faith in the properly theological sense of the term."³⁷

Rahner states that whilst many theologians would agree that this hopeful courage has the character of trusting belief, they would shrink from describing it, as itself, faith. They concede that hopeful courage is essential for a person's existence but they argue that faith is assent to God's Personal revelation. Human hope, they say, is from below and thus cannot be accepted as faith. Rahner argues that this hope is in fact faith in God's revelation:

"Hope is centred on the uttermost reality, on everything, in fact on God Himself, transcending all particular individual realities and individual goods which man encounters in the course of his history... (this) hope is in God Himself. (The fact) that the movement of mind and freedom, transcending all individual realities that can be grasped successively, does not in the last resort peter out into the void or need eventually to come to a stop at any individual reality however significant, as the sole really possible fulfilment, at a 'creaturely' good, but will reach God Himself, the original fullness and creative ground of all individual realities; (and) that God Himself is the absolute future of our hope, (means) that these things do not amount simply to an obvious possibility of our own, but purely and simply (to) grace. God Himself is the innermost dynamism of this

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ The idea of the 'gap', in this respect, is of course a common existential principal, especially in the thinking of John Paul Sartre.

³⁷ *Theological Investigations*- Karl Rahner, vol.18 p.219

boundless movement of hope towards Himself. The very fact that God Himself thus becomes by grace the dynamism and goal of our hope means that revelation has taken place."³⁸

For Rahner, God is the ultimate ground of the hope which all men and women possess in order that they may live in a world which is in despair. They cannot give up the ground of their hope and they cannot continually avoid the act of hope which is the unconditional acceptance of their existence. God is the most real, the ultimate goal, whether this is known or not. Hope, which is faith, is a necessary constituent of human existence and it cannot provide a goal of its own creation, the goal already 'is', a-priori:

"And yet the ultimate ground of my hope in the act of unconditional acceptance of my existence, this I can reasonably call God. God is far from being thereby the projection of my hope into the void. For the moment I think of Him as a projection, He becomes meaningless and ineffective in my life. On the other hand I can no more give up the ground of my hope than I can surrender the hope itself. So God must be what is most real, what embraces and sustains everything. For only thus can he be the ground and goal of my hope as I conceive it in the act of trust by which I accept my own existence."³⁹

"Hope is the act whereby personal existence is accepted in trust and hope is therefore ... a letting go of oneself into the incomprehensible mystery of God."⁴⁰

This letting go of oneself on the basis of courageous hope through 'the act of trust' is faith as self-abandonment. Rahner understands this act of absolute trust and therefore self-abandonment, principally as being in the person of Jesus Christ:

"Christianity is convinced that, despite every reason for scepticism in man, we may with innocent trust and total abandon surrender ourselves to one man in absolute dependence."⁴¹

Rahner argues that there is no other historical personality in which mankind can trust that their hope is fulfilled, apart from Jesus. "We cannot find any other to

³⁸ Op. Cit. p.220

³⁹ Op. Cit. vol 19 p.14

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Op. Cit. p.16

name except the one presented by the witness of the apostles."⁴² Faith is then understood as absolute trust and dependence in/on another 'person' and that person, who has various names, can only be Jesus Christ. Faith then is total commitment to Jesus Christ:

"Faith occurs as a result of an absolute trust, by which one commits oneself to the other person and thereby embraces the rights and privileges of such a total self abandonment with a hope without reservations. This extends to all areas of existence, which on account of the absolute quality of this self abandonment, do not need to be seen in-toto nor to be specified in advance."⁴³

Jesus is trusted and hoped in as the Omega of the development of the universe, He is the meaningful conclusion to history. "The most diverse approaches to Him are all intended to be gateways to the one radical self-committal of the whole man to Jesus Christ, and it is only in this sense that they have any meaning at all."⁴⁴ In the explicit and ultimate sense faith must be in the person of Jesus Christ, and this faith is necessary for man to be saved. Rahner holds that no man can be saved outside of Christ, this indeed is one of the elements of Rahner's dilemma of salvation, the other being that God wills that all will be saved!

"We find ourselves then in the following theological position; genuine faith in revelation is necessary for salvation - mere 'good will' based on a purely natural knowledge of God is by itself quite inadequate for salvation and justification - But it is not immediately plain what exactly is meant by faith universally necessary for salvation."⁴⁵

Apparently there are two kinds of faith involved in Rahner's theology, one could be said to be 'ultimate courageous hope for existence' and the other 'explicitly Christian faith in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen'. Rahner claims that these are really two moments of the one Christian faith. The unifying factor is an inner dynamic of the grace of God in all men. This inner movement is of the character of the coincidence of the 'ultimate courage to hope for

⁴² Op. Cit. p.17

⁴³ Op. Cit. p.165

⁴⁴ Op. Cit. p.166

⁴⁵ Op. Cit. vol 16 p.53

existence' and 'ultimate faith in the risen Christ'. The central point however is hope:

"When there is such a courage for total hope in the success which itself is grace rooted in the incalculable freedom of another - of God - and precisely in this way hoped for in the ultimate courage of existence, then faith in the Christian sense is present and achieved in freedom."⁴⁶

All men have an inner experience of faith whether they are aware of it or not, according to Rahner a man has a thousand experiences which he does not reflect on and indeed represses and pushes to the edge of his consciousness; but a man is always summoned by divine grace, which lies ever before him and is continually operative in his life:

"Therefore grace not only possesses an inner point of connection with human existence but also a seed in every man out of which the whole history of human salvation and revelation may grow, both in Christianity and in all the great religions."⁴⁷

There is an inner movement of divine grace operating in all human finite spirits and this inner movement is itself a great mystery. This is a mysterious 'movement towards God' which all cannot ultimately resist. As for the Christian:

"From the inmost heart of his experience a Christian knows that he himself is sustained by this mystery in his trust and hope for the fulfilment of his being. So he calls this movement towards God at work within him 'grace', the Holy Spirit. The movement directed to the immediate presence of God he interprets as faith hope and love."⁴⁸

We might ask: Where is this inner movement of grace - which is faith - precisely located in the human subjective? Rahner's answer is that it is located between rationality and emotion - the cognitive and the conative elements of the finite spirit. Rahner says: "the notion of faith itself forbids one to regard it as an absolutely irrational phenomenon and to locate it outside the sphere of

⁴⁶ Op. Cit. vol 18 p.225

⁴⁷ Op. Cit. vol 16 p.10

⁴⁸ Op. Cit, p.15

reason"⁴⁹ Faith and rationality have something to do with each other. Rahner quotes Rom 12.1: "faith is a reasonable act of worship". Emotion is defined by Rahner negatively in respect of rationality: "emotion signifies everything in human consciousness, both individual and collective which escapes the control... of rationality."⁵⁰ Therefore whilst emotion is primarily in harmony with rationality the aspect of emotion which Rahner states as the other element of the in-between faith, is the part of the emotion which is not rational and therefore cannot be thought through and organised, therefore it cannot be adequately analysed. This definition of emotion includes feelings of the greatest variety:

"Particular moods and individual dispositions, patterns of behaviour biologically determined and conditioned by historical development, impulses and repressions, aggression and fears... unthought out ideals, opinions, realms of understanding which are biologically, radically or socially conditioned. A completely different category of emotion, however, must also be mentioned: the reality of freedom and its objective expressions in history."⁵¹

Faith, then, relates both to the rational and the irrational-emotion, the volitional aspect comes in also in respect of the aspect of emotion, which is 'freedom'. "Free decisions and objective expressions inevitably are based on something, and a condition of their possibility lies in all the emotional states described above."⁵² We can say, then, that Faith has three elements, which are; rationality, emotion and will. The 'in between' draws from some form and shape of synthesis, of the three.

Considering the relationship of faith and the particular type of emotion which is 'freedom', Rahner develops this to the point that faith and freedom are identical. He defines freedom as follows:

"The essential nature of freedom is not in itself a neutral possibility either to act or not to act with regard to this or that particular categorial object of choice experienced in an a-posteriori manner. Although freedom is always mediated through a particular categorial act, it consists much more in the capacity of the spiritual subject to

⁴⁹ Op. Cit. p.62

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Op. Cit. p.63

⁵² Ibid.

exercise definitive control over himself, even if this self-determination occurs in space and time, in the length and breadth of an individual's history and therefore cannot be tied down by personal reflection to a particular moment of a man's life. The subject and object of freedom is constituted by the whole man acting with ultimate decision. Freedom means the capacity to act once and for all for oneself without being a mere point of intersection of influences which come from without... if we take this concept of freedom for granted, then our thesis runs that according to Christian understanding the realisation of freedom is identical with faith."⁵³

Faith, then, is the "united and fundamental totality of freedom itself"⁵⁴ This means, for Rahner, that when a person unconditionally accepts himself for what he is and does not reject himself in a final denial, and does not utter an ultimate protest in total scepticism or despair, faith is present. It must be understood here that when a person rejects himself he also rejects God and if he accepts himself he also accepts God (and vice versa).

Rahner is arguing that faith is a 'free act'; the essential nature of this freedom exists in and through the transcendence of the finite spirit to the person of God. Freedom then is "freedom for or against God".⁵⁵ God is the goal of human freedom; awareness of this reality is experience of what is really meant by 'God'. Human transcendence, according to Rahner, is ordered to God in knowledge and freedom (freedom here of course is understood as emotion) therefore freedom and faith are identical.

"This transcendence is raised up by the self-communication of God and brought into direct contact with His presence... (therefore) if a man freely accepts himself as he is, even with regard to his own inner being whose basic constitution he inevitably has not fully grasped, then it is God he is accepting. As long as it is a matter of the conscious, though unreflective, acceptance of God in His authentic self-communication, the acceptance is of the self-revelation of God and is therefore faith."⁵⁶

⁵³ Op. Cit. p.65

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Op. Cit. p.66

⁵⁶ Ibid f

b) 'Anonymous faith' and 'explicit faith'

The whole question of 'anonymous Christianity' is dealt with in chapter 9, therefore the particular aspect of 'anonymous faith' need only be considered briefly here.

Rahner's definition of anonymous faith:

"By anonymous faith is meant a faith which on the one hand is necessary and effective for salvation(under the general conditions which are required for justification and final salvation) and on the other occurs without an explicit and conscious relationship (i.e. conceptual and verbal and thus objectively constituted) to the revelation of Jesus Christ contained in the Old and/or New Testament and without any explicit reference to God through an objective idea of God."⁵⁷

Rahner argues that such an anonymous faith can exist; which is sufficient for salvation. This mode of faith has, intrinsic to it, both the obligation and the dynamism to find full realisation in explicit faith. None-the-less the sufficiency for salvation does not demand the actualisation of this realisation provided that the person is not to blame for this non achievement. Rahner's underlying presupposition is that the universal and supernatural will of God is working for human salvation; because of this fact, the unlimited transcendence of man, which we have already seen as having its goal in God, is raised up by divine grace in order that the possibility of saving faith in revelation is made available. Man however, who is to be saved by this 'anonymous faith', must freely accept his own unlimited transcendence. (So lifted up to the presence of God.)

We are dealing then, essentially, with two factors, of such an anonymous faith, which are: the will of God for salvation and the transcendent character of the human spirit. Rahner models a synthesis of the first factor; the accepted doctrine that faith in the revelation of Christ (or faith in the person of Christ) is necessary for the salvation of sinners, in terms of the second factor; of human transcendence. This is what Rahner calls the inner movement of grace which is operative even in spite of the particular man who is unaware of it. The acceptance that is required for salvation is the acceptance of such a man's own

⁵⁷ Op. Cit. p.52

self in his own unlimited transcendence. In other words he accepts the inner movement, from below, as it were, as it is raised up by grace, albeit sub-consciously, to the immediate presence of God:

"If a person, by a free act in which he accepts himself unconditionally in his radical reference to God raised up by grace, also accepts the basic finality of this movement of his spirit, even if without reflection, then he is making a genuine act of faith."⁵⁸

This faith which is held to be genuine and sufficient for salvation is 'anonymous faith'. What's to be said then of 'explicit faith'? It does seem somewhat superfluous, by this line of argument. The answer is that 'historical Christian revelation' is the underlying basis and foundation of transcendental revelation. Indeed:

"If historical Christian revelation is understood as the process... by which the transcendent revelation becomes present to itself in history, then there exists no insuperable obstacle to the solution of the problem. Transcendent and historical revelation have a mutual reference: the former acquires historical shape in the other (similarly) ... historical revelation only realises its proper character through its transcendent counterpart, since it is only effective for salvation if through it the transcendent self-communication of God finds historical expression."⁵⁹

Because of the nature of this mutuality it is impossible for a person to have anonymous faith when its explicit (thematic) expression in Christian belief (explicit faith) is culpably rejected.

7.2 - Comparison of Maquarrie and Rahner

An essential similarity between Macquarrie and Rahner, concerning 'faith', is that they both understand it as being primarily and essentially implicit and universal, in respect of all of mankind. Both consider faith as being intrinsic to the very structure of human existence itself. They differ however in respect of

⁵⁸ Op. Cit. p.57f

⁵⁹ Op. Cit. p.58

the precise means of actualisation of faith in the individual life. Macquarrie argues that the faith, which is already a-priorily or innately rooted in the human subjective, is awakened by the encounter with the objective reality of Holy Being (either primordially or repetitively). The faith which was implicit or dormant in the human subjective becomes explicit and active through this, apparently, historical encounter. Faith then, according to Macquarrie, arises through some form of synthesis of subjective and objective elements. The objective encounter has the effect of transferring man's innate and a-priori knowledge of 'wider' Being from his sub-conscious realm to his conscious awareness; as his new principle of 'authentic' life. Rahner understands no such synthesis, for him faith is a gift of God which passes to man as intrinsic to his essential, delimited, constitution as a finite spirit. Faith is therefore a product which comes with the created constitution of man, under the guise of 'courageous hope'. It is true that faith or courageous hope can exist either implicitly or explicitly but all that is required to effect the transformation of the one to the other is that the individual courageously affirms his own total existence; there is therefore no necessity for an objective element.

A further essential difference is that, for Macquarrie, the object of faith is 'Being' (or wider Being), therefore he understands faith in terms of an ontological universality; which permits us to term his concept of faith as an universal 'natural faith'. For Rahner, on the other hand, the object of faith is always, and only, the person of Jesus Christ. Faith is always faith-in-Jesus-Christ either implicitly (anonymously) and consciously unknown, or explicitly and consciously known. Everyone therefore, is by definition, either a Christian or an anonymous Christian, irrespective of whether he is a member of another religion or is a (non culpable) atheist. It should be said however, that whilst Macquarrie's understanding of faith is ontological and general in its primordial nature, it can only be actualised in and through a particular religious community. It, therefore, becomes particular in this way, but at the same time it remains universal in that it is essentially faith-in-Being; the particularity pertains only to the particular nature and character of the expression of this universal faith. In the terms, 'natural faith' and 'anonymous faith', we sum up this particular difference between the two theologians.

7.2.1 - Faith as Self-Affirmation

We believe that it is safe to claim that the concept of 'self-affirmation', which is a key aspect of Rahner's understanding of faith, is also a fundamental though underlying element in Macquarrie's position. According to Macquarrie, the individual recipient of 'primordial revelation' becomes attuned to the reception of revelation through the mood of angst, whereby the individual comes to a nihilistic view of existence as meaningless and valueless. He comes to the place of nothingness in respect of his own being. It is from this affective state (of inauthentic life) that he is awakened to the wider context of Being itself, by the objective initiative of Holy Being. What he receives in this mystical ontological experience is a new 'self understanding' whereby he passes from a negative to a positive existential attitude. This, in effect, must be a kind of self-affirmation in the face of Being itself, whereby the individual involved, comes to a new acceptance of himself in the wider context of Being-in-total.

Such a one is transformed from despair to hope, which Macquarrie describes as an: "affirmation of the future"⁶⁰. This affirmation is understood by Macquarrie in general and universal terms in respect of human existence as a whole, however, it has meaning only in so far as it relates to the individual who (in faith) is hoping for the future; this affirmation then, must, by definition, involve the self-affirmation of the hopeful one. The difference between Rahner and Macquarrie, in this respect, is that the positive self-affirmation, in Macquarrie's view, arises from the dark, despair of nihilism, which encounters wider Being; whereas with Rahner, it arises from an inner courage of being, which merely asserts itself.

Heidegger's term which corresponds to Rahner's 'self-affirmation', is 'resoluteness', he states:

"This reticent self projection upon one's own most Being-guilty in which one is ready for anxiety is 'resoluteness'. Resoluteness as - authentic-being-one's-self, does not detach Dasein from its world, nor does it isolate it so that it becomes a free floating 'I'. Resoluteness brings the self right into its current concerned Being-

⁶⁰ *Christian Hope* - John Macquarrie, p.4

alongside what is ready-to-hand, and pushes it into solicitous Being with Others."⁶¹

This 'authentic life' attitude of 'resoluteness' echoes Macquarrie's 'new self-understanding' which results from the revelatory encounter with Being, and produces authentic life. Resoluteness also carries the sense of 'the courage to be'. Further, in Heidegger's discussion of Dasein's being as 'Care', he describes his concept of "Being-ahead-of-oneself"; this concept has to do with ones own potentiality for being, and as such, the concept of self-affirmation arises in terms of one's freedom of self-realisation:

"In Being-ahead-of-oneself as being towards ones own most potentiality-for-Being, lies the existential-ontological condition for the possibility of Being-free for authentic existential possibilities."⁶²

The self-affirmation which we are claiming as being in some way inherent in these Heideggerian concepts is clearly not an affirmation of the individual over and against others, rather it is an acceptance of the self as being with others. It is not, and can not be, an isolated attitude of the self, but rather it is a attitude towards the potentiality of authentic life as a Being-with-others in a self affirmatory, yet caring (for them) way. None-the-less what this 'Heideggerian' thought involves is man's facing up to the reality of his being-in-the-world with the sufficiency of force to release him from inauthentic to authentic life. This involves acceptance of the reality of his existence as a Being-in-the-world, and the affirmation of his individuality in the face of 'averageness' or 'everydayness', which seeks to swallow up his existence in banality.

7.2.2 - The concept of faith as 'Hope'

Hope, to Rahner, is the act of faith whereby a person unconditionally accepts his existence in its totality. Hope therefore, is the means of the affirmation of self, in the face of being in total; its concern is the gap between the actual task of self actualisation and the finite human power to carry out the task. Hope reaches out beyond itself to God, who is its ultimate ground; its power

⁶¹ *Being and Time* - Martin Heidegger, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1967, p.343f

⁶² Op. Cit. p.273

therefore lies, not in man, but solely in God Himself. It follows that hope can truly be called 'faith', and as such, of course, its capacity lies wholly within the range of human possibilities. Hope is the, apparently, innate facility in all human beings whereby they reach out beyond themselves and to Rahner all forms of this reaching out are essentially reaching out to God who is the ultimate goal of all reaching. Such reaching beyond is, according to Rahner, a supranatural transcendental capability, therefore hope is a supranatural element of 'inner grace' in man.

Macquarrie does not equate hope and faith as precisely as Rahner. In his book; "Christian Hope", he seeks to expose its nature, both as a universal human phenomenon and as a theme of the Christian Faith. It can be seen that whilst Macquarrie does not expressly treat hope and faith as synonyms, his treatment of 'hope' could equally apply to 'faith', and therefore he is comparable with Rahner in this area.

a) Hope as a universal human phenomenon

The nature of Rahner's universality of faith is equalled by Macquarrie's universality of hope. This universal hope in its various forms is directly related to 'Christian hope'; and the precise nature of the relation will be seen to be Macquarrie's equivalent of Rahner's 'anonymous faith'. Of this hope Macquarrie says:

"Before anything is said about the specifically Christian hope, we shall try to grasp the nature of hope as a universal human phenomenon, one which appears in many forms and has many objects from the most trivial to the most profound. Then, when we are in a position to go on to reflect on Christian hope, we shall be conscious of how it is related to all the other hopes of the human race, and we shall be less likely to fall into the error of separating it off as a highly peculiar kind of hope having nothing to do with the hopes that belong to our everyday life in the world."⁶³

⁶³ *Christian Hope* - John Macquarrie, Mowbrays, London 1978, p.2

And generally:

"If Christianity - or any other religion - brings revelation in the sense of disclosing the new and letting us become more aware of what had previously been hidden from us, then we must be careful to let it speak."⁶⁴

Clearly Macquarrie is arguing for the corrective of letting every religion speak, in order that there may be a general sharing of the particular expressions of Being in the various world religions. The universal hope which is differently expressed can then be seen in the different expressions, and the precise relation of one hope to the other will be clearly understood. It appears that all religions and therefore all hopes, according to Macquarrie, are equally valid. Yet, Macquarrie later states that: "Christ has opened a new hope for the human race" and "we must let that hope confront us in its own integrity."⁶⁵ It follows that, if the hope in Christ is new, and if it is for the whole human race, then it is for other religions, and for the irreligious as well as for Christians. This particular relation, which is very similar to the relation presupposed by 'anonymous Christianity', seems to be potentially explosive. If, on the other hand there is something new for the human race in the hopes of the other religions, this potentiality is defused; at the expense of making Christ merely one among many. It appears however that Christian hope, as presumably the hopes of the other religions, is ordinary and mundane and therefore it relates easily and harmoniously with human hope in general:

"If Christian hope is not related at the outset to the perspectives of human hope in general, then we run the great danger of falling into... the misunderstanding of Christian hope as something quite otherworldly in character and thus unrelated to the hopes of the mass of mankind."⁶⁶

Macquarrie argues that there is no absolute disjunction between the two kinds of hope. He states that: "We can come to an understanding of the Christian hope only because we already have from common experience some understanding of what hope is."⁶⁷ Again, this echoes the epistemological basis

⁶⁴ Op. Cit. p3

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

of 'anonymous Christianity' and, in Macquarrie's continuing statement: "If Christian hope has the unique depth and totality claimed for it, and is therefore truly revelatory, then in the light of it we shall be led to a new understanding of the hope that we have come to know in general experience."⁶⁸ We find a coincident epistemological point in the thinking of Rahner and Macquarrie.

Christian faith, in this line of reasoning, appears as the 'unique' fulfilment of the universal and general hope known to all of mankind in ordinary (general) experience. We see hope used in this context as being synonymous with faith, and the roots of this unique, Christian, faith are already innate and embedded in the whole of humanity. It is an easy step from here to the supposition that all religions and religious systems including irreligious systems are in fact anonymous expressions of Christianity, though Macquarrie would find such a supposition to be arrogant and in error. Yet he does appear to be advocating a universal implicit hope which becomes explicit in Christian hope. If this is conceded then Christian hope is not merely another particular expression of the universal human hope, nor is it an equivalent to the hopes of the other world religions, but rather it is a unique and superior hope, which points towards Christianity as a unique and superior faith. This point, of course, would be absolutely agreed by Rahner.

The coincidence of Macquarrie's 'implicit hope' and Rahners 'implicit (anonymous) faith' cannot be denied, indeed, the very wording of Macquarrie's discussion is so strongly echoic of Rahner, at this point, that it becomes impossible to distinguish the two. This is clearly seen in Macquarrie's statement concerning 'human hope':

"Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it is hope in a diffuse, implicit form. It is hope that has not yet been explicitly formulated in words. Perhaps this pre-reflective hope should not properly be called hope, but is rather the basis or condition of hope already there in the constitution of human existence as the fundamental tendency of the human being toward hoping."⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Op. Cit. p.4

Macquarrie is unequivocal that all the (implicit) hopes of the world ultimately converge in Jesus Christ. Christianity is the home where all hopes coalesce, it is therefore, the place of total hope:

"In modern times many positivistic philosophers have urged us to abandon ultimate questions, and confine ourselves to the limited problems with which the sciences can deal. But in spite of this man remains incurably a being with 'a sense and taste for the infinite' (Schleiermacher), a questioning being who keeps questioning no matter where his questions may lead. He has to find an orientation for himself in the world and so he looks beyond all the limited contexts of meaning for an all embracing context. ...(Ernst Bloch's statement) "where there is hope there is religion"...draws attention to the fact that isolated hopes tend to coalesce into a unified or 'total' hope."⁷⁰

And:

"If the line, 'where there is hope, there is religion', applies at all, Christianity with its vigorous starting point and its rich heretical history (of apocalyptic revolutionary movements) seems like a final emergence of what religion is - a total hope and an explosive one."⁷¹

This total hope reaches out beyond particular situations of hoping to embrace life as a whole, it reaches out to the wider and indeed the widest possible context. But what is the human motivation behind such a total hope? Macquarrie's answer is both positive and negative; man has an inherent drive towards transcendence and he desires to overcome the total threat to his life, which is of course, death. The threat of death should obliterate all other hope but it does not, man hopes in a 'beyond death'. "Death, according to Sartre removes all meaning from life it destroys the context in which hope lives."⁷² Macquarrie argues that death can be an inspiration to life, and he cites the deaths of both Socrates and Jesus as examples of this kind of death. Further he quotes Heidegger as maintaining that it is death that makes meaningful life possible. For meaning we require definitive shape, death sets the definitive boundary, which makes it possible for human life to constitute a finite whole.

⁷⁰ Op. Cit. p.17, Ernst Bloch ref *Man as His Own* - New York 1970. p.152

⁷¹ Op. Cit. p.18

⁷² Ibid; Sartre ref *Being and Nothingness* - Jean Paul Sartre, Philosophical Library New York, p.539

Death, in Heidegger's view (contrary to Sartre) is the very provider of meaning to existence, indeed 'death awareness' is the means of the transition from inauthentic to authentic life. This factor lies at the heart of Macquarrie's understanding of revelation. It does appear that in some way the motivation which draws all particular hopes to itself is that which hopes for life beyond death. This ultimate hope is a universal human phenomenon, which cannot be put down. In precise terms this must be a hope for the 'ultimate good' of all of humanity. Macquarrie quotes Pannenberg:

"The phenomenological analysis of man's life as we know it, shows that it is inherent in man to hope beyond death."⁷³

Hope then is an inherent human factor, which rises up in the face of the threat of death and annihilation, and hopes beyond it. This is the total hope which coalesces in Christian hope, but how is this so? Macquarrie states:

"If there is any validity at all to the sense of a constraining power called 'God' and which summoned Abraham from his home and worked on all those who came after, the lines converge unmistakably on Jesus Christ as the supreme manifestation of God, the God-man, the incarnate word."⁷⁴

Christ, according to Macquarrie, is the founder of the new people of God, and He is the fulfilment of the first people of God. He is also the fulfilment of the widespread aspirations, of all mankind, toward a fuller humanity. Macquarrie appears to agree with the Christian community in their view that Christ is the very meaning and goal of the cosmos: "Christ is both the founder and the fulfiller the beginning and the end, the agent of creation and the prototype of creation".⁷⁵ From this discussion it appears that Christ must be the fulfilment and ultimate goal of all religions, hopes and faiths; yet of this possibility, Macquarrie equivocates. Such equivocation and ambiguity in Macquarrie's position produces Christological reductionism in this respect.

What is clear, is that, for Macquarrie, Jesus Christ is the new total religious hope, and further, he claims that such a hope must include the (necessary)

⁷³ Op. Cit. p.22, Pannenberg ref *What is Man-* Contemporary anthropology in theological perspective. Fortress press Philadelphia, p.44

⁷⁴ *The Faith of the People of God-* John Macquarrie p.54f

⁷⁵ Ibid.

element of resurrection. How could any ultimate hope, in the face of death, be total in any sense without some form of continuity of life after death? In Christ's resurrection from the dead - into a new "spiritual body", the first of many brethren, total hope is complete. It must be argued that of all the prophets Christ's death and resurrection as the incarnate God, is entirely unique, therefore if hope cannot be complete apart from a hope in resurrection, Christianity is the ultimate religion of hope, and therefore, the supreme religion, and not merely one amongst equals. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ humanity is taken up to a new life of participation in God Himself. Macquarrie is no where clear, on just how this total and complete hope can be realised in any other world religion.

b) The relationship of hope to freedom

Hope, according to Macquarrie, (similarly to faith, according to Rahner) has three elements; cognitive, emotional and volitional. It is to the volitional element that we must turn in respect of hope's relationship to freedom:

"The relation of hope to freedom was already hinted at when noted that the emotional mood of hope relates to the environment as to something having fluidity and not yet rigidly determined in its shape. Such an environment is open to the possibility of change through human action. In a world where the course of events was already fully determined in advance, there would be no place for hope ... (there) could be no active hope dedicating the will and energies to chosen goals. Hope implies that there is... an empty space before us that affords us room for action. Thus hope is inseparable from human freedom and human transcendence."⁷⁶

Hope, according to Macquarrie, is an essential part of personal human existence, he says that where hope is denied freedom is denied and where hope is denied persons are destroyed." Where there is hope there is freedom and where there is freedom there is hope."⁷⁷

As we have seen, Rahner considers 'faith' and freedom to be identical. Freedom is real self-determination, the capacity and power to act once and for

⁷⁶ *Christian Hope* - John Macquarrie, p.8

⁷⁷ Ibid.

all for oneself. This defines faith as the act of self-affirmation and self acceptance. Faith is a free act which is essentially of the nature of the transcendent capacity of finite spirits to freely choose themselves and therefore freely choose God. This compares closely to Macquarrie's understanding in that if hope is denied then the human person is denied and in fact destroyed. The human transcendence required for truly personal existence and authentic life is dependent on freedom therefore it is dependent on hope. Again hope and faith, and now freedom, are seen to be a necessary unity in respect of both Rahner's and Macquarrie's usage of the terms.

This kind of hope and this kind of faith appear to be necessary products of the existential reality of created finite spirits. To be a human being in the world means to have this faith and this hope, whether affirmed or denied. Both this faith and this hope reaches beyond itself as it seeks to be free of its present limitedness. Indeed faith and hope, thought of in this way, appear to be the very dynamics of existential life; grounded in God's creative grace; in the 'inner grace' of Rahner and the divine 'letting be' of Macquarrie. The problem is that this type of hope and this type of faith are clearly inadequate in respect of human realisation and fulfilment. Such a concession is implicit in both Macquarrie and Rahner, in respect of the need for a further revelation of God. The change from inauthentic to authentic life, according to Macquarrie, takes place through the revelation of Holy Being by its own initiative; man, by his own powers can never achieve such a transition. According to Rahner Man's whole life is about listening for a further revelation of God in his personal history, clearly realisation and fulfilment depend upon this hearing of the word of God in secondary revelation. It appears then that freedom in the ultimate and supreme sense require a different type of faith and a different type of hope. This is what Macquarrie means by his concept of a new total and complete hope in Jesus Christ. It seems to us that this new hope and new faith, are a further, objective, gift of God, which as such are not implicit, innate and a-priori given with the creation of human being, but given through the free self-revelation of God in human history. We are not arguing that the new salvific hope and the new salvific faith bear no relation to the ordinary hopes and faiths of everyday human existence, indeed they are addressed to them, as the means of recognition and reception. We are contending, that the ordinary mundane faiths and hopes of the human race produce only a temporal and ephemeral freedom; ultimate freedom to participate in the Being of God both in this realm

and the next, requires the new 'supranatural' hope and faith, which is the gift of the saving grace of God; available through historical revelation, yet received through the capacity, which was the gift of creational revelation.

MACQUARRIE'S DEVELOPMENT AND UNDERSTANDING OF SYMBOL, IN INCARNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE.

8.1 The Articulation of 'Primordial Revelation' Through Hermeneutic Activity in terms of particular 'symbols'

Those who receive a primordial or classical revelation and who go on to found world religions, become necessarily and essentially involved in hermeneutic activity in respect of the symbols which have been given in the revelatory encounter. These, of course, are the available symbols in which Holy Being has presented and manifested itself, and through which it has addressed the particular recipient (or prophet). The recipient's conscious awareness, with respect to the precise nature of his hermeneutic, becomes the perceptive medium, in terms of the given symbols, of the religious community which will inevitably arise. As adopted, this medium, along with the given symbols themselves, become the structural basis of the particular developing religion. The shape and form of this religion and indeed, according to Macquarrie, all world religions, is given definition by these essential factors; which become concrete through rituals/sacraments, doctrine and eventually, institutions.

Clearly, in this fundamental theological development, based on the particular expressions of universal ontological revelation, we see the basis of

Macquarrie's religious pluralism. That which we contend is properly, the immanence of God in creation, Macquarrie understands as 'Being' itself, which is totally immanent in that it is, almost pantheistically, present and manifest in all of the beings which appear (to a greater or lesser extent), and it is nowhere else. The central concept in this position is the unity of the particular 'cultural' symbols and the variable hermeneutic activity (in respect of the different religions) concerning these essential symbols, through which Holy Being is made present and manifest.

8.1.1 Primordial Revelation and Symbol

Religions which arise from primordial revelation, as understood by Macquarrie, are particular expressions of the universal revelation of Being. The differences between the religions lie in the different symbols through which Being manifested itself to them, and in the particular nature and character of hermeneutic activity in respect of these symbols. This interpretative activity becomes embodied in a particular religious language, which, at the most profound level, translates into a particular and distinct theology. It is appropriate that Macquarrie should label the distinctly Christian section/part¹ of his major theological work 'Principles of Christian Theology', as 'Symbolic Theology'. The first part, which is universally applicable, he labels 'Philosophical Theology'. The discussion on primordial revelation, as universally applicable, falls under the first part.

In the primordial revelatory encounter, Being becomes present and manifest, to particular individuals, in the immediate symbols, presumably of the revelatory context. Whilst these particular symbols are not arbitrarily chosen by the particular individual, and indeed they are given, as chosen, by Being, they are not produced 'ex nihilo', as it were, but already exist within the particular cultural situation. Macquarrie states clearly that the recipient of primordial revelation sees 'no new thing'; what does happen is that he sees the same

¹ Christianity is understood as one of the different expressions of the (universal) primordial revelation of Being. The first part of this work is concerned with the universal aspects of existential and ontological reality - this section includes the discussion about primordial revelation itself.

things/symbols in a new way. He sees the chosen symbols, which were all the time around, in new depth; we have termed this new depth the 'depth dimension'.

a) The 'depth' dimension

Seeing the beings of our everyday world, including our own being, with new depths, appears to be the essential revelatory dynamic involved in primordial revelation. What appears to be seen, or perceived, (which was not seen, or perceived, prior to the revelatory encounter), is Being itself, or wider Being:

"... what is known is not another being, but rather being itself, the being which communicates itself through all the particular beings by which it is present, by which it manifests itself, and not least through the depth of our own being."²

There appears to be some kind of coincidence between the depth of our own being, which is unlocked by the revelatory encounter, and the depth of Being, which can be perceived in the particular given symbols. Clearly a radical transformation of the recipient's consciousness takes place in this experience, through which the synthesis of the depths of his own being and the depths of the symbols of the manifestation of Being becomes accessible to him as a new principle of existence or life. This new principle, in which the disclosed or opened up primordial depths of human being, is itself the subjective means of the disclosure and opening up of the depths of primordial being; in all of the other beings which appear (but most particularly in the given symbols). This new 'depth consciousness' is the medium of the self-communication of Holy Being as it is present and manifest in the beings and focused in the particular symbols.

This new 'depth consciousness' is what Heidegger refers to as 'essential' or 'primordial thinking'. The new depth appears to be a cognitive potentiality which is a kind of "thinking which answers to the demands of being".³ The new depth is reached or actualised through an "occurrence of being"⁴, which is Heidegger's equivalent term for primordial revelation. The actualisation of the

² *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.94

³ *What is Metaphysics?* - Martin Heidegger, p.47f

⁴ Ibid.

depth dimension in man's consciousness results in a new knowledge which Macquarrie claims is 'revealed knowledge': it is revealed knowledge because it was previously hidden to man's conscious awareness, yet it is not knowledge of a different type or order of being but rather a depth knowledge of the ordinary beings which are already present.

"What is revealed is not another being, over and above those that can be perceived by anyone. Rather, one should say that the one who receives the revelation sees the same things in a 'different' way. We might say that he sees them in depth ... he notices the features of the situation that otherwise escape notice, as if he saw an extra dimension in it."⁵

The recipient of primordial revelation becomes aware of the 'Being' that is present and manifest in 'the beings' of the ordinary situation, which take on the reality of essential symbols of Being itself. The 'depth dimension' is in nature a new symbolism, whereby Being (or God) is perceived as present and manifest in these particular symbols. Schleiermacher displays something of this depth dimension in his statement concerning revelation, in his second speech to the cultured despisers of religion:

"Every original and new communication of the universe to man is a revelation."⁶

The emphasis here is on the special understanding of new and original. Anything that is repeated or learned, is not new and original. Therefore, it is not revelation. The communication of the universe as a total entity breaks in creating new depths in man's consciousness transforming it from 'sin' consciousness to 'God consciousness' leaving man with the feeling of absolute dependence on God. This transformation of man's consciousness resembles the transformation that takes place in primordial revelation, as understood by Macquarrie.

The point here is that the depth dimension is an extension of the depths of man's potential for being. It is a product of man's sub-consciousness, which, called to his awareness by the deep abyss of his 'ultimate concern', undergoes

⁵ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.89

⁶ *On Religion - Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* - Friedrich Schleiermacher, Harper Torch Books, Harper & Low 1958, p.89

the metamorphosis of conscious articulation and expression in terms of the essential symbols of the particular man's being. What happens, in effect, is the transfer of the abstract, unthematic, abyss of Being, which initially presents itself as a nihilistic despair in man's consciousness, to the form of the concrete symbols, which are able to bear the weight of such an ultimate load. The symbols of man's new awareness are therefore the bearers of his shock of being, and at the same time the bearers of the presence and manifestation of God. This in itself produces the feeling of absolute dependence.

In the interpreted understanding of these given symbols, there exists, for the recipient, the objective synthesis of his own sinful reality (which produced the affective state of Angst within him, that is; of guilt and meaninglessness, which are the elements of his deep despair) and the grace of God in both forgiveness and judgement. The flow of the revelatory experience of the numinous presence in '*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*', through the perceptive consciousness of the recipient (or prophet) and in the precise shape of the particular, given, concrete symbolism, eventually finds expression through a distinct '*symbolic*' theology. There is a sense in which the two realities of God and man coincide in these (now) theological and indeed sacramental symbols; God's supramundane reality enters into man's mundane reality, in and through the symbols, with the force of something like '*transubstantiation*', or perhaps '*transfiguration*'. This transforming (and even salvific) coincidence of God and man changes the ordinary and mundane into the transcendent and divine, in such a way that the ordinary and mundane is left intact. Examples of such essential symbols, from the Christian faith, might be the person of the God-man Jesus Christ Himself and perhaps the cross, where God and man die together. The RC doctrine of transubstantiation, which developed, of course long after the initial Christ event, is particularly interesting in respect of the entry of God into the given symbols. The aspect of the '*depth dimension*' is variably understood by theologians; for example, the Dutch theologian G. C. Berkouwer understands what he calls the '*depth aspect*', to be, God's sovereignty, '*in*' man's responsibility. In the existence of the sovereignty of God within man's responsibility, the ultimate exists in the temporal as the essential basis of its reality and meaning.⁷ Rudolf Bultmann expresses a similar idea in his discussion of '*the depths of God*' and '*the depths of man*' (variably

⁷ Ibid.

understood as the abyss, the depths of the forces of life, the depths of Satan etc.). This is certainly, of two coincident realities, one infinite and the other finite, one of the depths of the great and infinitely creative power of God, and the other, the confusion of the depths of the abyss of death and devilish powers. He uses a musical metaphor:

"... we not only see a confused and senseless strife of powers, but also hear in all of the enigmatic and abysmal darkness the sound of one great and deep tone, which hovers everywhere, giving to everything, rest and security, and blending it all in one mighty harmony. It frequently happens that in listening to a piece of music we at first do not hear the deep, fundamental tone, the sure stride of the melody on which everything else is built, because we are deafened by the fullness of detail, the veritable sea of sounds and impressions which overwhelms us. It is only after we have accustomed our ear that we find law and order, and as with one magical stroke a single unified world emerges from the confused welter of sounds."⁸

Here we have an excellent example of the 'depth dimension' which bears a very considerable similarity to Macquarrie's understanding of it.

We can perhaps see something of the 'depth dimension' in the thinking of Karl Barth in respect of the word of God and the word of man. Barth argues that God's word, which is not to be identified with human words, is an event which, from time to time as it pleases God, enters the human words of proclamation whereby the human words are changed into the word of God in a similar way to the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. This is the event in which proclamation becomes real proclamation. In the event the language of man becomes the bearer of the proclaimed word of God, but the inconsistencies and errors of human language remain.

"Bread remains bread and wine remains wine. We should have to say in the language of the doctrine of the Lord's supper. The realism of sacramental consecration does not destroy the proper existence of the signs (symbols). But on the other hand through the new robe of righteousness thrown over it, it becomes, in this its earthly character a fresh event, the event of God speaking Himself in human events... real proclamation as this new event, in which the event of human

⁸ *Existence and Faith* - Rudolf Bultmann Collins: Fontana library 1964, p.28f

language about God is not set aside, but rather exalted, is the word of God."⁹

The word of God is, as it were, the depth dimension in the human words of proclamation. The human words remain fully human words but the word of God is (miraculously, according to Barth) heard in and through them. They become the (ordinary) vehicles of the supernatural and transcendent logos for the individuals who are chosen by God to be hearers. In this way God encounters man in and through the proclamation of his word in human words.

The 'depth dimension' could also be thought of in terms of Platonic dualism whereby 'the real' is the depth aspect of the beings which appear; indeed the appearances are a kind of shadow of the transcendent reality. The essential ontological and existential symbols, of the particular culture, as understood by Macquarrie, do appear to possess this kind of dualism. Whilst remaining, in themselves, a part of the ordinary time space world, they take on a new and powerful significance when chosen by Being, in the revelatory encounter. Whereas Barth, and indeed Rahner, consider that the dualism exists, when it happens, in terms of the logos, Macquarrie understands it in terms of material objects, for example; 'the burning bush', through which God was present and manifest to Moses. It is recorded however that God also spoke to Moses in words, therefore in this Old Testament instance of primordial revelation, there does appear to have been a unity of logos and material object. In Macquarrie's thinking, however, the word of God in revelatory encounters is substituted by the reactive, interpretative activity in the subjective consciousness of the particular prophet. What is vitally important here is that the power of significance of the symbols of the revelation experience lies in that they have been given, as the medium of revelation by Holy Being. The precise nature of the dualism in respect of the symbols lies in the precise nature of their givenness. In terms of this givenness dynamic, Being becomes focused in the particular ontological and existential symbols which have been chosen. In the factor of choice of symbols, the initiative of Holy Being, in the revelatory encounter, is preserved. concerning the givenness and the chosenness of the revelatory symbols, Macquarrie states:

⁹ *Church Dogmatics* - Karl Barth, vol 1.1 p.106

"There are...'classic' or 'primordial' revelations that give rise to communities of faith, so we may say that while everything that is has the potentiality for becoming a symbol of being, there are also classic symbols that establish themselves in a community of faith. These symbols are not arbitrarily adopted but associated with the classic revelation. they are not chosen by us but rather they are given by Being which has addressed us in and through them."¹⁰

b) Symbol

We come to the concept of 'symbol' itself. Having seen from above, and the whole thrust of Macquarrie's understanding of primordial revelation, that the revelatory event is completely devoid of words, it is all the more interesting that he develops his argument on the concept of symbol under the heading of 'the language of theology'. In respect of the symbolic expression of 'primordial revelation' the recipient is involved in a theological 'language event' and so too are the members of the community which he founds. In general, Macquarrie thinks of symbols as anything which stands for something else:

"In the widest sense of the word a 'symbol' is anything which is presented to the mind as standing for something else. In this broad sense, symbolism is all-pervasive of life, and there are almost innumerable kinds of symbols."¹¹

In this broad sense also, Macquarrie states that all language has a symbolic character. Further, that which serves between language and its ultimate referent may also be called a symbol. He gives the example of Christ as "the light of the world" (Jn 8:12), both, this language is symbolic and light itself is a symbol. Very important here is the fact that light possesses the actual properties of the nature of that which it symbolises. There is a definite connection between the symbol of 'light' and that which it symbolises. A symbol of this kind Macquarrie categorises as an 'intrinsic' symbol, whereas a symbol which does not have this connection, he categorises a 'conventional' symbol. Clearly there is a profound difference between the two types of symbol however, in Macquarrie's view, the difference is enigmatic, because some conventional symbols can be taken to participate in the thing they

¹⁰ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.143

¹¹ Op. Cit. p.135

symbolise, though artificially, through historical association. For example; a national flag is taken to be an inherent part of the Nation it symbolises, but clearly of itself it is not. Macquarrie also gives the example of the wheel, which in the West is the symbol of industry, and in the East is taken as the symbol of the cycle of existence. Both uses of the wheel are claimed to be intrinsic but they are so only by historical association, therefore they are not essentially so. Because of the necessary factor of 'historical association' the concept of intrinsic symbol becomes a relative concept, in respect of the particular culture. Therefore, the confusion between what is universally, ontologically intrinsic and that which is relatively intrinsic (and therefore 'conventional' in the true sense) results, itself, in an intrinsic problem; which is at the very root of the nature and reality of pluralism.

If it can be shown that there are a class of symbols which are unequivocally and universally 'intrinsic' in the absolute sense, this would have major implications for the validity of Macquarrie's case in support of religious pluralism. If any element of reality can be seen to be absolute, all systems of relativity are rendered less adequate or even possibly fallacious. One primary relation must remain as the principal moment of diverse elements however, and that is the relation between the absolute and the diversity itself. The necessary hermeneutic activity concerning an absolute, 'intrinsic' symbol (if it can be shown that such an entity exists) would itself, of necessity, be so diverse as to render it to be at least 'thought about or understood in different ways'. Yet of itself it could remain absolute, possessing its own integrity, and not necessarily merely the product of historical association (and therefore in essence a conventional symbol). It must be true, or so it would appear, that: "Religious symbols belong to a community of faith. The cross speaks to the Christian and the crescent to the Muslim, but without a participation in the history of the community no one could recognise what is conveyed in these symbols."¹²

This appears to be true, but is it completely so? If it is agreed that humanity is unable, by its own power, to realise itself, and that this inability, in its various elements and forms, is universal and leads to the utter despair of guilt and meaninglessness, which leads to nihilism, then the 'cross' does not seem to be

¹² Op. Cit. p.136f

so 'conventional', indeed it has a distinctly 'intrinsic' ring to it. The same can not be said, we believe, of the crescent.

Macquarrie does not agree, however, that there can be such a thing as a universally accessible 'intrinsic symbol', rather he proposes that there exists a symbolic ladder which rises from "the less widely to the more widely received symbols, from those which operate in the small group to those which have a wider accessibility."¹³ We arrive then at the symbols which have the widest possible accessibility:

"It is for this reason that so much stress has been laid ... on the language of being and existence, for this is something like a universally communicable language, arising as it does out of existential structures and experiences common to all human beings. In so far as religious symbols can be related to this language, they are also related to the world of common experience."¹⁴

The interpretative process concerning religious symbols then, develops from the linguistic root of the smallest group to the most widely understood, and therefore accessible language of the largest community (Nation). It appears however, that this development can not, through necessity, extend to the superlative group of mankind in total. In this, apparent, light, Macquarrie turns to consider the facet of hermeneutical reciprocity. Interpretation, he states, is a reciprocal affair, therefore two or more languages throw light on each other. Because the particular symbols in each case are illuminated by the language of existence and being, there is the possibility of some kind of universality. However, it is reasonable to think that, bearing in mind the category of 'intrinsic' symbols, it is the individual 'concrete symbols' which would require to be universal, and clearly they don't appear to be so. Being, is in itself, undeniably absolute and universal, the self-revelation of Being is the revelation of a universal reality and whilst the particular expressions of Being are distinct this principle of universality clearly underlies them. The concrete symbols are, in themselves, along with the related hermeneutic activity, a part of the expressive distinction. However, Macquarrie says of them:

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

"...these concrete symbols become in turn illuminating for relatively abstract statements of an existential or ontological character."¹⁵

It can be seen that whilst Macquarrie's underlying principle of universality is the primordial revelation of Being itself, and his underlying principle of pluralism lies in the particular expression of Being through the particular symbols, which are essential to the particular culture, the ultimate universality which the unity of these two factors demands, is found in linguistic and philosophical abstraction of an ontological and existential character. This is a movement from a primordial abstraction (in the mystery of the numinous presence of Being) to a concrete particularisation (in the particular concrete symbols) and back to existential and ontological abstraction (in religious language/theology). Macquarrie's scheme appears to have reasonable, although not watertight, adequacy, however, if it could be shown that there is such a thing as a universally, intrinsic, concrete, symbol, then his case, in our view, would be severely weakened.

Macquarrie is arguing, in effect, that there is no such thing as 'a universal particular (concrete) symbol', but there is a symbolic universality when the particulars are related to existential and ontological language and conceptuality. This (secondary) universality exists then in and through the abstract realm of existential/ontological conceptuality, which can be applied variably to the particular, concrete symbol, rendering it universal in relative terms. It remains to be seen just how 'religious symbols' are related to the category of existential and ontological, abstractive conceptuality and language.

Macquarrie's underlying presupposition in this respect, is that of the 'analogia entis':

"...let it be said that the general ground for any possible symbolising of Being by the beings must be some analogia entis."¹⁶

He divides his treatment of the 'analogia entis' into two perspectives:

1. From the view point of the particular beings looking towards Being, and
2. From the side of Being as it is present and manifest in the beings which it lets-be

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Op. Cit. p.138

We will consider Macquarrie's treatment in respect of this division, under several key terms, which are:

- i. Existential response
- ii. Similarity of relation
- iii. Prior enabling condition
- iv. Presence and Manifestation
- v. Adequacy, Range of participation, Hierarchy of beings, and
- vi. Paradoxicality

1. From the view point of the particular beings

According to Macquarrie symbols open up or illuminate Being to the beings, but just how is it possible that they can do so? How does the 'depth dimension' become recognisable and therefore accessible? Our outline of Macquarrie's answer is given under terms i. - iii..

i. Existential response

The symbol is, in a particular sense, a communication of Being, to the beings. It illuminates Being, in which it itself participates. The recipients of the illuminative communication have, of course, interpretative freedom, therefore the integrity and adequacy of their hermeneutic, would appear to be always a highly questionable matter. In Macquarrie's view however, there is a category of symbols which, by virtue of their own properties, evoke a certain existential response of a definitive nature:

"There are particular beings which can arouse in us the kind of response that is aroused by Being itself."¹⁷

This capacity to bear, in some way, the revelation of Being, demonstrates the existential and ontological appropriateness of certain symbols/beings, to stand for Being itself. An example of such a symbol would be 'goodness'. When human beings come across 'goodness' of any real moment, an emotional response is evoked whereby they enter an 'affective state' through which 'Being'

¹⁷ Op. Cit. p.139

(God) is disclosed to them. (The major influences on Macquarrie's thought in this respect are Martin Heidegger, C A Campbell, and Rudolf Otto¹⁸.)

"... it is the case that there are things, persons, qualities and so on that awaken in us such affective states as awe, reverence, loyalty; and it is in these states that Being discloses itself to us."¹⁹

This 'existential response', then, is an essential part of a symbol's nature as a symbol, whereby it has the power to evoke an emotional affective state in the recipient through which he is attuned towards the disclosure of Being. It appears that the attunement, as already discussed at length, is objectively, and not subjectively stimulated, if not produced, by these high order ontological symbols; we see now that the symbols of the revelatory encounter are not only used to manifest Being but, at the same time they facilitate and stimulate the receptive, affective state. In this way the immanence of God is revealed to man, and this seems quite acceptable, it is hard to understand however, just how this disclosure takes place by the initiative of Being itself. Initiative implies some kind of active part, but what could be the nature of an 'active part', in respect of these particular symbols? The answer can only be in the original creation of the symbols themselves and in the choice and givenness of the particular symbols in the particular revelatory encounter.

ii. Similarity of Relation

Macquarrie's second aspect is that symbols illuminate Being in terms of what he calls 'similarity of relation'. We must be clear at the outset that by similarity of relation, Macquarrie does not mean a similarity between Being and a particular being, although an affinity must exist between the two, but rather:

"The similarity is between a relation of beings and a relation of Being to a being."²⁰

¹⁸ In this respect see *Selfhood and Godhood* - C A Campbell - For Macquarrie's ref to Campbell see *Principles of Christian Theology* p.139

¹⁹ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.139

²⁰ Op. Cit. p.140

Similarity, of course, is the basis of analogy, and as such Macquarrie equates 'similarity of relation' directly with 'analogy of proportionality'; this is an analogy in terms of the concept of 'ratio'. He claims that of the four terms of proportion, three relate to the beings and the fourth to Being itself; he gives an example of what he means from psalm 103.

"As a father pities his children so the Lord pities those who fear him.' Here the image of the father is applied to God, on the ground that those who 'fear' him stand in a relation to him that is similar to the relation between a child and a father."²¹

Fatherhood, is the similarity of relation, but we are not talking about God as He is in Himself, but in relation to us. The first relation here is the earthly one of father and child it is to this relation that the relation of God and those who fear Him is similar. There is a ratio between these two relationships, the second being far greater than the first, but it is essentially similar to the first because it is a logical derivative of it. It is seen that the nature of this type of analogy is proportionality. However the father/child symbol when projected to the God/child proportion is inescapably anthropomorphic. The extension of the ordinary to the transcendent is achieved by logical deduction, which in our view, struggles for ontic credibility. If, on the other hand, the universally accessible symbol of father/child relationship is used by Being in the revelatory encounter, then the power in the symbol is supplied at the precise moment of revelatory dynamic; in which case the cognitive aspect of logical deduction is superseded by the conative element of 'feeling' and the analogy of proportionality is given new and vital force. Again, the revelatory experience is understood as being essentially emotional and not cognitive.

In both of these aspects; existential response and similarity of relation, the underlying presupposition is that of an essential principle of continuity between Being and the beings, but how can we know that this continuity exists? And precisely what is its nature? Macquarrie deals with this in his concept of 'prior enabling condition'.

²¹ Ibid.

iii. Prior Enabling Condition

"We have seen that Being 'is' neither a being nor a property, but since it is the condition that there may be any beings or properties at all, it is more 'beingfull' than any being or property."²²

Macquarrie is arguing that Being is the condition for the existence of the beings. The essence of this condition is God's (or Being's) 'letting-be'. God lets-be and therefore the beings 'are'. God, through letting-be, is the prior enabling condition for all being. Letting-be is the precise nature of the condition, and it is the essential basis of continuity between God and man. Indeed letting-be is the prior condition for the existence of all being, therefore our concept of God and our language about Him must take account of this underlying reality. The symbols of being then, have their power in that Being has let them be; this letting-be, as the prior enabling condition of the particular symbol is at the same time its inner logic, which ensures its power of analogy.

An example of just how Macquarrie understands the force of 'God as the prior enabling condition' is available, again, in the symbol of goodness:

"We have no understanding of what the word 'good' could literally mean when applied to God, for it must transcend any notions of goodness that we may have. Yet we are entitled to use it because it is more appropriate to say that God is good than that he is not good, for he is the prior enabling condition of all goodness whatsoever."

It is the force of appropriateness in respect of God's letting-be, as the prior enabling condition for the existence of the illuminating symbols, which acts together with the existential response to provide the nature and power of the kind of analogia entis which Macquarrie advocates.

2. From the Side of Being as it is Present and Manifest in the beings, Which it Lets-Be.

In this section we deal with terms; iv. - vi., although it will be seen that vi. must be considered as standing on its own, as a separate factor.

²² Op. Cit. p.141

iv. Presence and Manifestation

We have dealt with this aspect extensively elsewhere²³ and need not give much further consideration to it under the present discussion. Being is present and manifest in the beings, and indeed in all beings, and apparently, apart from this appearance of Being, the existence of Being is rightly described as 'nothing'. We can not know what nothing is in itself, we can only know it in relation to something, our principle concern therefore is in the nature of the relation. Clearly, some beings (symbols) have a greater capacity to make Being present and manifest than others. Macquarrie categorises the symbols which are most capable, in this respect, as 'classic symbols'. These symbols are associated with primordial or classic revelation, and are therefore particularly given by God. It follows that classic symbols will be more adequate in communicating or disclosing Being than others.

v. Adequacy: in terms of 'Range of participation in Being' and 'Hierarchy of beings'

Macquarrie states: "The test of a symbol is its adequacy in lighting up Being."²⁴ It does appear to be reasonable that the more adequate a symbol is in lighting up Being the more 'intrinsic' and universally accessible it will be. There can be little adequacy, in any real sense, attached to symbols which are esoteric to a small group! It seems to us, that if a symbol is powerfully adequate it will light up Being, equally, to all who behold it, and not just the particular culture of its origin. Indeed it would be capable of translation, without loss of power, to all distinct cultures. The reality is however, that the different religions are built on symbols which will not translate and are indeed often contradictory. This results in 'truth claims' to assert the superiority of one symbol over the other. The 'range of participation in Being' and the 'hierarchy of beings' can be discussed together as they are mutually dependant concepts. Concerning the latter, the different categories are determined in respect of their power to serve

²³ See chapter 4

²⁴ *Principles of Christian Theology* - p.143

as symbols of Being. Inanimate objects are at the bottom of the ladder and personal beings are at the top.

"In man, a material body and an animal organism are united with his distinctively personal being. This is the widest range of being that we know, and therefore symbols and images drawn from personal life have the highest degree of adequacy known to us."²⁵

Adequacy is also judged in respect of the degree of participation in Being that the symbol is capable of. Inanimate objects participate the least and (personal) human beings, the most. Human beings themselves then, are the most adequate symbols of Being. It seems reasonable to consider the individuals who have received a primordial revelation of Being, as, in terms of that revelatory experience, participating in Being more highly than all others; therefore they themselves would appear, by this criterion, to be the most adequate symbols of Being accessible to man. If we go further and consider that Christ was/is the incarnate Son of God, and as the second person of the Trinity God Himself; then, we must concede that He is the supreme symbol of Being, as God surely participates in Himself to an altogether superior order, than any other being. (As far as we are aware Macquarrie nowhere concedes this.)

As Macquarrie states, the concept of a hierarchy of beings is a very old one, from Origen to Augustine and beyond, however, Macquarrie's view is distinct in that its most essential criterion is (again) letting-be.

"... as one surveys the rising grades of being, the character of Being is itself more clearly manifested. For whereas the lowest or simplest beings 'are', the higher ones not only are but let-be, and this is peculiarly true at the level of man's personal being, with its limited freedom and creativity."²⁶

This aspect of personal being, of course, has to do with love, indeed Macquarrie argues that the essence of love is precisely letting-be, therefore love appears as a necessary attribute of the higher order of symbols.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Op. Cit. p.144

vi. Paradoxicality

Paradoxicality does not come under the second division but stands on its own, as a major feature of theological language. All symbols by their very nature are paradoxical.

"Just because symbols are symbols, that is to say they both stand for what they symbolise, and yet fall short of it, they must be at once affirmed and denied."²⁷

A symbol, then, is in itself a synthesis of tensions, and a religious symbol is at the same time, an existent in its own right, (as it is in itself), and an illumination of Being which it participates in. Macquarrie argues that a symbol cannot be absolute, it always falls short of what it symbolises:

"To absolutize a symbol is to identify it with its 'symbolizandum', and in the case of religious symbols this means idolatry, and all the distortions and errors that go with it."²⁸

A symbol which is absolutized and becomes an idol, fails to act as a symbol because it ceases to point beyond itself to wider Being, and indeed effectively captures its worshipers to a small complete (that is, no gaps) parochial existence of which it, though in itself lifeless in the full sense, is the centre. Perhaps this is what Sartre calls 'being-in-itself'. To live in such a state, is to live in sin and 'bad faith', this is the essence of inauthentic life.²⁹

On the other hand a symbol must have the ability in itself to disclose and illuminate Being (God), or it is not an adequate symbol. In this sense it is univocal and if it is not so it is an entity which is empty in respect of the Being which its purpose is to disclose and illuminate. If a symbol is equivocal it is a meaningless entity and if it is univocal it is an idol, therefore it is necessarily paradoxical in nature, as it is at the same time both of these opposites and neither.

²⁷ Op. Cit. p.145

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ See *Being and Nothingness* - Jean Paul Sartre

Macquarrie, sees in this paradoxicality of symbols, the answer to the, apparently, irreconcilable different and contradictory symbols, in respect of the different world religions. The weakness in this thrust, as we see it, is that he finds the solution to the contradictory nature of the distinct symbols, in terms of equivocation and not in terms of a synthesis of the equivocal and the univocal. In our view this leads to a reductionist position which is unsupportive of his 'symbolic theology' as a whole.

Our contention is that if a symbol is truly and really 'intrinsic' then it must be univocal, however it must be univocal in a way that, outside and apart from faith, retains the element of the equivocal, or else it becomes a compulsory presence of God. The nature of Faith demands paradoxicality. The greatest paradox must be the Christological enigma of the God/man, those who had the eyes of faith saw God in the man and those who didn't saw only a man.

8.1.2 The Concept of Symbol in Tillich and Dillistone

In comparison with Macquarrie, and with special consideration of the idea of an 'intrinsic' symbol.

a) Tillich

As may be expected there are remarkable similarities between Macquarrie's thinking on symbol and Tillich's. Both understand symbol in ontological terms, although Tillich is more free with his use of the term 'God', than Macquarrie.

There are, however, what must be seen as fundamental differences between the two. For example, Tillich's division of symbol and sign, is repudiated by Macquarrie, as a misuse of the English language.³⁰

Of the division of symbol and sign Tillich states:

³⁰ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.135; see esp note ¹⁰

"Special emphasis must be laid on the insight that symbol and sign are different; that, while the sign bears no necessary relation to that which it points, the symbol participates in the reality of that for which it stands. The sign can be changed arbitrarily according to the demands of expediency, but the symbol grows and dies according to the correlation between that which is symbolised and the persons who receive it as a symbol."³¹

Macquarrie refutes this distinction because, he says, it is at variance with good English usage. He gives the example of clouds as a sign of rain; clearly clouds participate intrinsically in the rain that is to follow. Whilst this is true in itself, it is one of a few exceptions, and therefore does not cancel out Tillich's important distinction here. In refusing to accept the precise distinction of sign and symbol Macquarrie, in our view, undermines the truth value, and therefore the adequacy and integrity of religious symbols, to stand for God. Macquarrie prefers the use of the term 'conventional symbol', to sign. His corresponding distinction being 'conventional' and 'intrinsic' symbols, as we have seen. Tillich argues that the distinction between sign and symbol is clear-cut, Macquarrie on the other hand argues that the distinction between conventional symbols and intrinsic symbols is not as clear cut as some make it out to be. (It is likely that this is a direct ref. to Tillich.)

The significance of our argument here, is that whilst Tillich seeks to strengthen the case for purely 'intrinsic' (and therefore universal) religious symbols, Macquarrie seeks to weaken it, and indeed render it, as a possibility of very little moment. In this way he rationalises the contradictory symbols of the various world religions, in support of his underlying pluralistic presupposition. If Tillich's view, in respect of his primary distinction can be seen to stand, then Macquarrie's case for equality of all (authentic) world religions, (arising from primordial revelation) is considerably weakened.

Before pursuing this significant difference, in terms of Tillich's development of symbol, we should give some consideration to the similarities, concerning symbol, in the two theologies.

³¹ *Systematic Theology* - Paul Tillich, vol 1 p239.

i) The similarities

Tillich agrees with Macquarrie in respect of the nature of symbol in terms of its ability to participate in God. He terms this, "participation in the power of the divine, to which it points."³² The power which Tillich rather vaguely refers to, corresponds with Macquarrie's term 'letting-be', although Tillich would not understand it in this way. Another area of essential agreement is that of the symbolic basis and nature of theology. Man can not talk directly of God but mediately through symbols; Tillich states that God is 'Being-itself', which is the only non-symbolic statement he will allow:

"... after this has been said, nothing else can be said about God as God which is not symbolic."³³

In this, any possibility of a 'Logos' theology is ruled out in favour of 'ontological, mystical symbolism'. Such a view would also appear to rule out the possibility of a direct revelation of God to man as being constitutionally impossible. This view, of course, is the antithesis of the whole Rahnerian, theological scheme. Tillich, although distinct in expression, is close to Macquarrie in the symbolic priority, in revelation. The symbols, as a product of the ontological structure of existence, are not however, themselves revelation, they are the mediatorial material of revelation, and as such the basis of the theological language which arises.

"The ontological structure of being supplies the material for the symbols which point to the divine life. However this does not mean that a doctrine of God can be derived from an ontological system. The characteristic of the divine life is made manifest in revelation. Theology can only explain and systematise the existential knowledge of revelation, in theoretical terms, interpreting the symbolic significance of the ontological elements and categories."³⁴

The theological articulation which produces a doctrine of God, is to Tillich, as with Macquarrie, an hermeneutical activity in terms of the ontological/existential symbols which are used as the material of revelatory

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Op. Cit. 243

encounter. The theological task is therefore essentially an hermeneutical activity and not a metaphysical activity. In this respect Tillich states:

"Theology has neither the duty nor the power to confirm or to negate religious symbols, its task is to interpret them according to theological principles and methods."³⁵

Another area of similarity between Macquarrie and Tillich concerns the paradoxicality of religious symbols:

"They are directed towards the infinite which they symbolise and toward the finite through which they symbolise it. They force the infinite down to the finitude and the finitude up to infinity. They open the divine for the human and the human for the divine."³⁶

Otherwise put:

"...any concrete assertion about God must be symbolic, for a concrete assertion is one which uses a segment of finite experience in order to say something about him. It transcends the content of this segment, although it also includes it. The segment of finite reality which becomes the vehicle of a concrete assertion about God is affirmed and negated at the same time. It becomes a symbol, for a symbolic expression is one whose proper meaning is negated by that to which it points. And yet it is also affirmed by it, and this affirmation gives the symbolic expression an adequate basis for pointing beyond itself."³⁷

For a symbol to be a symbol it must necessarily have a paradoxical nature. The 'depth aspect' and 'finite appearance' of a symbol, both affirm and negate each other. The symbols which communicate Being are dialectical in this way because they are a communication of entirely different realities which exist together by coincidence in the locus of the symbol. If Being was of the same order of reality as the beings there would be no paradox and no need for symbols. The reality of religious symbols then is a kind of proof of the existence of a wholly other transcendent reality. Macquarrie, later, develops this theme into what he calls "Dialectical Theism".³⁸

³⁵ Op. Cit. 240

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Op. Cit. p.239

³⁸ See *In Search of Deity* for this development

When Tillich asks, (what he calls) the crucial question: "Can a segment of finite reality become the basis for an assertion about that which is infinite?", he is seeking for a solid principle of continuity between the two realities. Macquarrie found this in his concept of "prior enabling condition", Tillich's answer is essentially similar: "It can because that which is infinite is being-itself and because everything participates in being-itself."³⁹ The key is that being-itself is the ground of all being, therefore continuity between the two realms is guaranteed as is the validity of the 'analogia entis'.

"The analogia entis gives us our only justification of speaking at all about God. It is based on the fact that God must be understood as being-itself."⁴⁰

It must be said that Tillich, who builds his theology around the structural frame of 'correlation', recognises the analogia entis as the only basis of theological articulation. In this he is somewhat dissimilar to Macquarrie who whilst recognising the absolute validity of this basis of the analogia entis, considers 'existential response' to be the major hermeneutical factor.

ii) The differences

Concerning the possibility of truly 'intrinsic' and therefore universal, symbols, it follows that we must look beyond meaning, in terms of the individual subjective, to the possibility of objective truth. This must be thought of in terms of the integrity of the, already defined, intrinsic symbol. Whilst Macquarrie is concerned with truth, his concern is not with the intrinsic truth of symbols, but with the truth of theological statements about them. Truth to Macquarrie is not owned by the symbols themselves, but refers to the statements concerning their interpretation. This is an essential difference between Macquarrie and Tillich. Tillich states:

"The truth of a religious symbol, has nothing to do with the truth of the empirical assertions involved in it, be they physical, psychological or historical. A religious symbol possesses some truth

³⁹ *Systematic Theology* - Paul Tillich, vol 1 p.239

⁴⁰ Op. Cit. p.240

if it adequately expresses a correlation of revelation in which some person stands. A religious symbol is true if it adequately expresses the correlation of some person with final revelation."⁴¹

Tillich is clearly very concerned with the intrinsic truth of religious symbols in terms of their revelatory adequacy. He says further:

"The judgement that a religious symbol is true is identical with the judgement that the revelation of which it is the adequate expression is true. This double meaning of the truth of a symbol must be kept in mind. (which is) A symbol 'has' truth: it is adequate to the revelation it expresses. A symbol 'is' true: it is the expression of a true revelation."⁴²

It follows from this understanding that there must be true and false symbols, in which case, in respect of false symbols, contradiction will arise between opposing symbols both of which are the subject of a truth claim. Theology will inevitably come across, and have to deal with, such contradictions. Tillich says of this: "theology may discover contradictions between symbols within the theological circle." and in this case, "theology can point out the religious dangers and the theological errors which follow from the use of certain symbols."⁴³ Macquarrie admits of no such possible contradictions with subsequent error; he wishes to maintain a relativism whereby symbols have no intrinsic truth in themselves, indeed he is concerned that if symbols were in themselves true, they would become idols. He states:

"Different symbols may complements one another rather than stand in contradiction. Of course there may also be irreconcilable different symbols. But we must avoid supposing that symbols are like theories, where presumably one is to be accepted, and the rest rejected as false. To exalt one symbol to the exclusive status is to forget that even the most adequate symbol falls short of what it symbolises."⁴⁴

This kind of exaltation of symbols, as Macquarrie chooses to call it, amounts to idolatry, Tillich however, argues that a symbol is true in itself and that this is its

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.145

power to be a symbol, this is its adequacy; therefore a true symbol cannot fall short of what it symbolises or it would not be a true symbol!

The contention here is about the integrity and value of religious symbols, Tillich is arguing for absolute and therefore intrinsic value whereas Macquarrie is arguing for relative value in respect of an (individual) subjective hermeneutic, which is profoundly and essentially influenced or conditioned by, what he terms, 'historical association'. Both begin at the point of ontological universality which Tillich extends to the ontological symbols. This extension requires a doctrine of objective absolute truth, and therefore universal applicability and accessibility of the symbols, which possess this truth intrinsic to their own nature (in themselves). Macquarrie on the other hand supports and indeed appears to secure his doctrine of religious pluralism by firmly opposing any form of absolutism in favour of a subjective relativism which produces 'relative truth' and eradicates the very meaning and therefore possibility of error, in this respect.

It must follow from Macquarrie's view, that 'Christ', whom he claims is a symbol of Being⁴⁵, in Himself falls short in respect of His adequacy to symbolise God; and therefore Christ's deity, as second person of the Trinity, is by implication, denied. Nor can Christ be a representative of God in any intrinsic or absolute sense, indeed according to Macquarrie, to absolutise Christ or to worship Him would be an act of idolatry. Clearly such a view lacks Christological tenability. Tillich supports his own view by the example of the symbol of 'fatherhood':

"...if God is symbolised as 'Father' he is brought down to the human relationship of father and child. But at the same time this human relationship is consecrated into a pattern of divine-human relationship. If 'Father' is employed as a symbol for God, fatherhood is seen in its theonomous sacramental depth. One cannot arbitrarily 'make' a religious symbol out of a segment of secular reality ... if a segment of reality is used as a symbol for God, the realm of reality from which it is taken is, so to speak, elevated into the realm of the holy."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Op. Cit. p.143

⁴⁶ *Systematic Theology* - Paul Tillich, p.240f

Fatherhood is seen then, in its capacity to say something of the Fatherhood of God, but also something is revealed of the holy character of human fatherhood. Human fatherhood is a true symbol of the nature of God as Father. Human fatherhood, in sacramental light, is, as a true and real symbol of God, holy in itself. The symbol, in revealing and saying something about that which it symbolises, discloses the true and essential reality of its own being.

Fatherhood, appears to have the qualities of an 'intrinsic' universally applicable symbol. It might well be argued that through historical association, for example, of a Father who beats his children, and does not provide for them, the intrinsic quality of fatherhood is unrealisable in the realm of human existence. If we were to consider the Rahnerian position, all children will already have a pre-concept of fatherhood which, as an a-priori factor, is already and essentially intrinsic. There is some support also from Bultmann's view of 'essential concepts'; fatherhood would certainly qualify as such, and therefore children would already have a vague, implicit though intrinsic knowledge of fatherhood, which whilst influencible by historical association, would surely retain its essential intrinsic quality. Our contention is that truly intrinsic, ontological and existential symbols do not lose their intrinsic power through historical association or any other relativistic system.

b) Dillistone

In the first chapter of "Christianity and symbolism"⁴⁷ Dillistone's essential task is to define the concept of symbol. Interestingly, his major concern is with the articulation of the difference between 'sign' and 'symbol'.

An analysis of Dillistone's understanding in this respect avails us of a profound insight into Macquarrie's perspective, not only of his understanding of symbol but also of his thinking in respect of revelation itself. It is helpful to structure our analysis then, in terms of this insight; and we will do so under three heads:

- i) The intrinsic nature of symbols
- ii) The state and condition of the subjective consciousness which connects with the precise quality of the symbol(s), and

⁴⁷ *Christianity and Symbolism* - F W Dillistone SCM press re-issue 1985

- iii) The nature of the relationship between these two (that is: consciousness and symbol) in terms of 'existential response'

i) The intrinsic nature of symbols

In his treatment of the nature of symbolism Dillistone deals fundamentally with the distinction between sign and symbol. Symbol itself is rooted in the wider concept of 'sacrament'; Dillistone chooses the narrower term as being the more meaningful and the most universally expressive:

"The word 'sacrament' no longer carries any of its original Latin associations into common speech: it immediately suggests definitions and philosophical enquires and theological battles and religious rites within the restricted sphere of the Christian Church. The term 'symbol' therefore is altogether more suitable."⁴⁸

Clearly the terms; sacrament, symbol and sign are closely related, there is something in the reality and significance of each that, as it were, indwells the others. The nature of the distinctions allows a profound insight into the intrinsic quality of each. The sacrament, from Augustine onwards became understood (in Platonic terms) as an outward and visible reality which was the means of penetration to the inner reality of the inner spiritual world.⁴⁹ The sign, on the other hand, is more pragmatic in its effects, it is only concerned with that which appears as the objective reality, and it is singularly used as a means of the efficient communication of 'this worldly' information.

"... a sign, as we think of it today, is usually practical in purpose. It is a shorthand way of communicating information, simply clearly and quickly."⁵⁰

A sign then, participates in only one reality whereas a symbol participates in two:

"At the root of the word (symbol) there is to be found the idea of throwing together or putting together: through a symbol, two

⁴⁸ Op. Cit. P.i6f

⁴⁹ See Dillistone's discussion in this respect. p.15

⁵⁰ Op. Cit. p.17

realities are related to one another, for in the symbol certain elements of each are to be found. The whole problem of the symbol is to define or describe this relationship."⁵¹

The symbol, to be a symbol, must participate in some way in the two different realities; it is, in itself, the interface of the synthetic tension between the two. For example, the Being of God and the being of man, can be thought of as polar opposites. The very polar nature is, according to Tillich, rooted in the divine life itself:

"While the symbolic power of the categories appears in the relation of God to the creature, the elements give expression to the divine life itself. The polar character of the ontological elements is rooted in the divine life."⁵²

Dillistone, in his treatment of the two realities, carries out an analysis of Oliver Quick's thinking in this respect, in terms of the categories of 'outward' and 'inward'. The outward category is of course the material reality which appears to us and Quick further divides this into 'instruments' and 'symbols':

"Some (objects) take their character from what is done with them; and these we will call instruments. Others take their character from what is known by them; and these we will call symbols."⁵³

We see, then, that symbols are primarily epistemological in respect of the two realities. The inward reality is 'symbol' and the outward reality is 'material'. Symbols then, can be seen to both exist in and transcend the material realm as they are both essentially material and essentially epistemological.

The divine reality is understood as being the ideal reality which enters into a relation with the worldly 'embodied' reality. Symbols signify the divine ideal as they point to the divine nature. At the same time, if they are natural and not artificial symbols they 'participate' in the divine ideal because they are its

⁵¹ Op. Cit. p.22

⁵² *Systematic Theology* - Paul Tillich, vol1 p.243

⁵³ Op. Cit. p16

outward embodiedness. Such a relation between two realities demands that natural symbols are intrinsic to that which they symbolise.⁵⁴

It must be seen however that the coincidence of the two realities exists in terms of 'inwardness' as far as man is concerned. The 'inwardness' is of the reality of the ideal itself yet because of the symbolic embodiment of this ideal in the 'outward' reality of which God is the ground of being, the inner ideal can never be merely a human notion. Though of in this way symbols of Being are always 'intrinsic' and cannot be robbed of this intrinsic quality by historical association.

i) 1. The difference between 'sign' and 'symbol'

In an analysis of S K Langer's book: "Philosophy in a New Key" Dillistone proposes that the difference between a sign and a symbol is that 'a sign indicates' and 'a symbol represents':

"This distinction between signs and symbols is most interesting (S K Langer's distinction) and in my judgement most valuable. According to it the sign indicates, the symbol represents: The sign transmits directly the symbol indirectly or obliquely: The sign announces, the symbol reminds or refers: The sign operates in the immediate context of space and time, the symbol extends the frame of reference indefinitely."⁵⁵

The symbol is not immediate and it has to do with how we conceive of a reality, therefore it has to do with thought and imagination. The sign on the other hand is a direct means of announcing or indicating the existence of a thing. A given example is that of wet roofs, as a sign it has rained; the patter of rain on the roof is a sign that it is raining; a fall in the barometer is a sign that it is going to rain. This is a past present and future sign of the existence of rain. This category of sign, is clearly 'natural', as demonstrated by our example. This understanding removes the confusion which Macquarrie sees between signs and intrinsic symbols. Natural signs are themselves a part of the condition which they announce or indicate, artificial symbols. For example, the blowing of a

⁵⁴ Indeed, Quick's term 'Natural Symbol' corresponds to Macquarrie's 'Intrinsic Symbol' and "Artificial Symbol" corresponds with 'Conventional Symbol'.

⁵⁵ *Christianity and Symbolism* - F W Dillistone, p.24

whistle to indicate that a train is about to move or, are not. In this way and in the light of the above, it can be seen that there is a very clear distinction between sign and symbol, signs rely on historical association whereas symbols are of a nature which removes them from such a (variable) context. In summing up Dillistone considers signs as relating to a lower consciousness and symbols to a higher consciousness. Sub-conscious life relies on 'archetypal images' and:

"As soon as we move up into the daylight of conscious life, we enter the realm of sign... the sheer practical needs of life lead to the employment of signs ... thus the ground work of all conscious life is the use of signs and this use is to be deprecated only when it stands in the way or takes the place of something higher or better."⁵⁶

"Finally there is the momentous step by which man advances from the sign to the symbol."⁵⁷

Symbols go beyond signs in that they make possible the conception of an object. Dillistone considers that symbols relate to the 'Transcending immediate consciousness', they are therefore to do with an altogether higher order of reality.⁵⁸ Dillistone differentiates between the higher order symbols in respect of those that pertain to corporate life and those that pertain to individual life. The former he considers to be 'analogical symbols' and the latter 'metaphorical symbols'. In respect of his thesis he states:

"My main thesis ... is that only as man cultivates a constant inter - relationship between these different levels of his experience and above all only as he maintains a constant dialectic between the two types of symbolism here defined can he move towards the fullness of his destiny in relation to God, nature and his fellow men."⁵⁹

A strong case is developing for the validity of the intrinsic nature of a certain class of symbols, if not all symbols (by definition). It appears, in this light, that Macquarrie's denial of the possibility of intrinsic symbols is somewhat less than tenable.

⁵⁶ Op. Cit. p.30

⁵⁷ Op. Cit. P.33

⁵⁸ See Dillistone's table p.36 of *Christianity and Symbolism*.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

ii) The state and condition of the subjective consciousness which connects with the precise quality of the symbols

We refer here, primarily, to what Macquarrie terms 'attunement' and Heidegger terms 'affective states'.

Dillistone argues (in respect of the aspect of intensity of symbols, and those of which he designates to be of 'contrast and novelty') that behind these symbols there lies an emotional experience, and further, that symbols of this kind always express a leap towards the beyond. There is always a tension involved with the subjective consciousness that connects with this kind of symbol.

"Intensity and metaphorical tension I have defined as the two essential principles of this class of symbol."⁶⁰

There is a new emotion involved here which has the nature of a 'metaphorical tension', as such this emotion produces a shattering experience. The metaphor, unlike the simile, relates to the unknown, it widens our view, it "shatters in order to widen" it "widens, transcends, overcomes, gives birth to the new".⁶¹ Novelty is an extremely emotional experience especially if an individual goes contrary to that which is acceptable to the mass of society. Such is a profoundly emotional experience which shakes his emotional life to its foundations.⁶²

"The symbol which expresses the new emotion, however, may be so intense so enigmatic, so highly individualised, that it becomes a locked mystery... the excessive use of the principle of intensity leads to the production of esoteric forms such as the riddle, the apocalypse, the mystery story."⁶³

Nonetheless:

⁶⁰ Op. Cit. p.35

⁶¹ Op. Cit. p.28

⁶² Op. Cit. p.32

⁶³ Op. Cit. p.35

"For the reinvigoration of the general life of mankind the altogether important factor is the imaginative and the metaphorical symbol. By means of this expression of emotion, man gains freshness of vision and renewal of energy and sees his world as a place of unlimited possibility and never-ending surprise."⁶⁴

What Dillistone is describing here, in terms of metaphorical tension is remarkably similar to Heidegger's understanding of 'affective states' and indeed Macquarrie's derivative of this, in his term 'attunement'. Clearly when one connects with the kind of symbols described, there is a highly emotionally charged encounter which could be said to result in some new form of self understanding. Yet Dillistone brings the encounter down to earth, so to speak, in so far as the whole experience relates primarily, not only to man's affective state, but also to his imagination. Dillistone understands nothing so grand as a revelatory encounter with Holy Being itself, in this respect, but rather an ordinary connection with a certain type of symbol, which produces 'the fresh beyond' in man's awareness. Since we are dealing here with a higher order of human epistemology which is the result of the intrinsically powerful symbols of God's creation, we can properly call the phenomena 'creational revelation'. Dillistone's extensive analysis is then, essentially, of the dynamics and nature of such a revelation, of the immanence of God in creation, without much pretence to being anything more.

In the final analysis, in this respect, we are concerned with the quality of man's subjective consciousness, which quite clearly is prepared in some way, even attuned. Whilst there is the objective phenomenon of symbols (or perhaps religious symbols) which represent God, and which man encounters, the whole impact of the quality of the symbol and the condition of man's imagination is taken by his subjective consciousness. This produces a profound change in man's understanding of both himself and of his reality.

He has gone beyond himself, transcended himself in this experience. We could say that the quality of his inner spirit coincided in encounter with the quality of a particularly powerful intrinsic symbol, which pointed to the reality of the great liberating beyond (Which we may call God).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

iii) Existential response

Dillistone's classification of metaphorical symbol involves 'images' or 'presentational symbols' which by their very nature evoke an emotional response in those who come in contact with them. The symbols of art are examples of emotionally charged objects, which draw the beholder into a moving emotional encounter:

"The symbols of art must be regarded as belonging to the realm of emotion... their chief quality is to be found in the fact that they are 'emotive' symbols. The man who succeeds in creating a symbol of this kind does so as the result of a deep emotional experience: Those who come in contact with the symbol likewise find themselves strangely moved by the encounter."⁶⁵

The point here is that the artist sought to communicate, through the symbolism of his art, the nature of his emotional experience. Those who will never meet the artist but who come across his work, are called to participate in the essential nature and ethos of his emotional encounter. This essence is communicated through symbol to the subjective emotional realm of the one who looks at his art.

We could say here that whilst the onlooker was in the right place to view the symbol, the communication was by the artist's own initiative and not the recipient's. We could say, further, that if the beholder was in the wrong frame of mind, the communication would be blocked.

Similarly the poet uses images through the medium of metaphor to evoke all sorts of emotional responses in the reader. "The (poetic) image ... is alive, evocative, intense."⁶⁶ The question is: Do natural symbols evoke such an emotional response? and if so can they be considered to be a communication of God or Being, by analogy to artistic symbols and poetic images?

In respect of the different types of symbols, S K Langer, as discussed by Dillistone, divides symbols into two types or forms, 'discursive forms' and 'presentational forms'. Discursive symbols represent determinate conceptions

⁶⁵ Op. Cit. p.20

⁶⁶ Op. Cit. p.22

and their relations; they have, as it were, one to one correspondence; they are clear cut, and obey certain definite rules. Not so with 'presentational symbols':

"... a presentational symbol is evoked by, and evokes, a new experience and may break certain recognised rules in order that new forms may be created."⁶⁷

Presentational symbols present themselves to the observer, but not in any recognisable pattern, they break with convention as they present the new. They deal in 'abstractive seeing', but they are not rational, rather they are emotional (even sensational) in ethos. They evoke a holistic response from the one in contact. This encounter leads to a new understanding in the subjective consciousness of the recipient. The symbols themselves have the power to evoke such an emotional response. The salient point is that this is a 'new' experience, going beyond the experience of the recipient. It seems that this type of symbol is intrinsic to the essential nature of two realities, revealing one to the other.

The communication, in respect of presentational symbols, takes place essentially in the realm of the response itself. In and through the existential response the communicated form which is first imposed on the symbol is transferred to the subjective consciousness of the beholder. If the form is of some aspect of the essential nature of God then that revelation is indirectly communicated to the recipient through the intrinsic form of the symbol. In our consideration, this is principally what Macquarrie understands as 'primordial revelation'. The symbols which have the power to communicate Being also have the power to reach into the emotional centre of the Beholder, effecting an attunement of his emotional state, to which the evocative communication is made. This communication is always of an 'ultimate' nature therefore it produces a new understanding in the recipient.

It must be made clear here that it is the immanence of Being in the intrinsic nature of the participative symbol that is communicated, and not the transcendence. This communication of the immanence does however cause the recipient to 'go beyond' himself, therefore his own being is transcended. The intrinsic symbol of Being has enabled the beholder to transcend his present

⁶⁷ Op. Cit. p.26

limitedness. Clearly a new understanding of the nature of reality takes place and if not blocked, a new pattern of living results.

8.2 Primordial Revelation verses Incarnation

In seeking to understand how Macquarrie relates his view of Primordial revelation to the Christian doctrine of Incarnation, we are essentially concerned with the consistency of Macquarrie's christology, and especially his position on 'the uniqueness of Jesus'. Our basic question concerns the deity of Christ. If Jesus of Nazareth is a recipient of 'Primordial revelation' then how can He be, at the same time, the incarnate God? If the person of Christ is understood as the greatest symbol of Being⁶⁸, then how can the symbol of the person of Christ itself receive primordial revelation through other, lesser, symbols? Indeed we might well ask how the incarnate God could possibly be a symbol of Himself. Macquarrie states quite clearly that he understands the person of Christ to be a symbol:

"In the central Christian doctrine of incarnation, it is a person who becomes the symbol of Being, the revelation of God. If anyone objects to Christ being called a 'symbol' on the ground that this detracts from the reality of incarnation, let it be remembered that God (Being) is present-and-manifest in the symbol, and it is hard to see how anything more can be meant by 'incarnation'."⁶⁹

If we remember that Macquarrie will not permit, as valid, the concept of a universal intrinsic symbol, then the symbol of the person of Christ, is merely a relative symbol in respect of historical association, and further, as we have already stated, according to Macquarrie a symbol always falls short of that which it symbolises, therefore Christ must fall short of deity. In any event Professor Macquarrie holds that Christ is Himself a symbol of Being, and indeed one of the most adequate symbols, as God is greatly focused in Him. One wonders; can this be said of the other founders of the great world religions? Are the prophets who have received primordial revelation, themselves, symbols of Being? Are they also to be thought of as 'Being'

⁶⁸ This is Macquarrie's view. See chapter 10

⁶⁹ Principles of Christian Theology - John Macquarrie p.143f

incarnate, in any special way? If so then they are all equally God incarnate, in the way that Christ is God incarnate, and if not, Christ is both unique and absolutely supreme!

To consider these questions more fully we must ascertain what Macquarrie's precise understanding of incarnation is. Further to that we must ascertain as to whether he considers the incarnation to be, itself, primordial revelation or whether he will allow the concept of historical revelation to be applied to it.

8.2.1 Macquarrie's Understanding of Incarnation

There are essentially five key concepts which make up the infrastructure of Macquarrie's understanding of the nature of 'incarnation', they are:

- a. All of being is, as a presence and manifestation of Being, an incarnation of Being.
- b. The human race has arisen out of the cosmos in the process of evolution.
- c. There is an open and infinite development of human beings.
- d. There is no qualitative difference between God and man.
- e. The deification of man ; 'raising a human being to God'.

a) All of being is, as a presence and manifestation of Being, an incarnation of Being (God)

This is Macquarrie's most basic presupposition in respect of the incarnation of God. His ontological framework lends itself very much to this concept of the ordinary beings, both animate and inanimate, as constituting a universal incarnation of Being itself. Macquarrie's preoccupation is therefore with the immanence of God as He is present and manifest in ontological symbols. According to Macquarrie, there is no such thing as a direct communication of God to man, the revelation of God is always in terms of the focus of His Being, in and through symbols. God's Being is supremely, made present and manifest in personal, human beings. It follows that there is no such thing as a mere man, all men have the capacity to be sons of God, therefore humanity is of a very high and developing order.

A complementary concept to Macquarrie's position was that of Athanasius (cited and adopted by Macquarrie); he held that the divine Logos has been embodied in the whole world:

"Perhaps it is only when we think of Jesus Christ as the true Man within the framework of a humanity upon which God has universally breathed his life and bestowed his image that we can see incarnation not as a great anomaly of history but as a natural step in the unfolding of creation. I may remind the reader of Athanasius' argument that if there is a sense in which the Logos has been embodied in the whole world, there is no difficulty in believing that the same Logos has been communicated in a man."⁷⁰

The parallel idea here, is that of the individual and particular incarnation of God in the man Jesus Christ, arising from the universal incarnation of God in all beings; and the individual and particular communication of the Logos in the man Jesus Christ arising from the universal embodiment of the Logos in the whole world. Incarnation can be considered to be a part of the natural development, or unfolding of creation; from universal to particular.

b) The human race has arisen out of the cosmos in the process of evolution

"The human race is linked to other living things and to the material cosmos in general in innumerable ways. It has arisen out of the cosmos in the process of evolution."⁷¹

It is safe to say that Macquarrie has been strongly influenced by the ideas of the process theologians and philosophers; especially, in this particular respect; Norman Pittenger and Charles Hartshorne. Macquarrie also subscribes to the concept of the evolution of the species and indeed the evolution of all being. Human beings, in his view, have evolved from lower orders of life, and continue to evolve to a higher order. This is conducive to an incarnation

⁷⁰ *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* - John Macquarrie SCM press/Trinity press international 1990, p.382 see also p.159 - Macquarrie cites Athanasius's *De Incarnatione*, 41, Oxford University press 1977

⁷¹ Op. Cit. p.361

through evolution and the existential process of being as becoming, from the ground up, as it were. It is an incarnation through the progressive development of a perfect humanity, from below to above.

c) There is an open and indefinite development of human beings

"..working with the idea of what modern anthropologies have termed the 'transcendence' of human nature, the idea that human nature is not a fixed essence but has an openness that seems to allow for indefinite development."⁷²

As has been discussed at length in other chapters, the concept of an infinitely transcending humanity, which manages to reach beyond its present limitations, is at the heart of both existentialism and transcendental Thomism (especially that of Martin Heidegger and Karl Rahner). This idea is particularly useful as a context and structure of the concept of 'incarnation from below'.

Man is forever transcending his limitations, surpassing himself, and moving from a lower to higher order, towards perfect and complete humanity. There is no such thing as human nature, because humanity is something unfinished and constantly in process of becoming. Christ is understood as the perfect 'archetype' man. He reached beyond all men and became perfect. "He was perfected in a process of becoming perfect".⁷³ And further:

"We recognise him as the representative human being, the word made flesh... He has attained this representative status not in a magical or instantaneous way, but through striving and the overcoming of temptation, though the striving was always in response to the gracious action of God."⁷⁴

In this way, through Christ's attaining off perfection, God becomes fully incarnate in a Man. Christ did not start out as the incarnate God however, He became God incarnate: "... the notion of degrees of incarnation, even in the personal growth and development of Jesus, has some probability."⁷⁵

⁷² Op. Cit. p.375

⁷³ Op. Cit. p.374

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Op. Cit. p.346

The 'becoming' of God incarnate in Christ through stages of a process, is demanded by the logic of process theology, if it is to retain its consistency (when applied to Christian theology, by Christian Theologians)

d) There is no qualitative difference between God and man

The complimentary statement to the above, is that the difference between God and man is one of degree rather than kind. This precept is also applied to the difference between Christ and other men. Macquarrie finds his centre of thought, in this respect, in Norman Pittenger who: "did not hesitate to say that the difference between Jesus and all other human beings is a difference of degree, not of kind."⁷⁶ And again:

"Just as I shied away from the doctrine that there is an 'infinite qualitative difference' between God and man, so I would not want to urge some absolute difference between man and the lower animals. It is a difference of degree rather than kind just as we said in the case of the difference between Jesus Christ and other human beings."⁷⁷

Whilst there is no infinite, qualitative difference between God and man, Jesus and other men, and man and beast, in Macquarrie's view, there is a very great, yawning gap between each of these categories. So much so that the difference of degree may be taken as a difference in kind. However the point is, that if there is no absolute difference then it is possible for each separate category to develop into the next. That is, Beast into man and man into God. What we are seeing here is virtually a monistic understanding of reality in respect of essential being. We all come from the One and must return to the One.

Macquarrie's understanding of incarnation is that of the bridging of the gap between man and God. According to Macquarrie, if the gap is qualitatively unbridgable incarnation would not be possible.

"It does seem to me that some theologians have made it more difficult because they have assumed a concept of God which

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Op. Cit. p.361

separates him so absolutely from the created order that the gulf between can never be bridged. If there is no affinity whatever between God and the human race, if God is 'wholly other' and separated from us by an 'infinite qualitative difference', then it seems to me that incarnation must be not only the 'absolute paradox' but a sheer impossibility."⁷⁸

If God is 'wholly other' then according to Macquarrie incarnation is not possible. Macquarrie has both Barth and Kierkegaard in mind, in respect of the above quotation. Macquarrie says of them:

"I think these two writers lacked an adequate doctrine of the divine immanence, and without such a doctrine the difficulties, in the ways of thinking of an incarnation are enormously increased."⁷⁹

It is clear that Macquarrie can not comprehend the possibility of the nature and dynamics of 'condescension' in respect of the transcendence of God inbreaking human history through incarnation. There can be no question of the resolution of the problem of the difference between the nature of God and the nature of man, taking place in the person of the God-man Himself. The central Christological problem of the two natures existing in one person, which is in itself the basis of Christ's soteriological integrity, is given the same treatment by Macquarrie as was given by the Enlightenment thinkers; it just is not possible. For Macquarrie, only that which is definitively 'this worldly' is possible. Therefore only a Christology from below will do.

e. The deification of man; 'raising a human being to God'

The question of incarnation, for Macquarrie, is not; 'how can God become a man?' But rather, 'how can man become God?' Man, through reaching out to God by ever transcending and surpassing himself, at some point, can become God. Incarnation in its fullest expression is a man being raised to God. Such a man would be a superman; the idea of a superman who can reach beyond, is found in the works of several philosophers especially Friedrich Nietzsche, Macquarrie cites him:

⁷⁸ Op. Cit. p.376

⁷⁹ Op. Cit. p.376

"In his view man is a thing to be surpassed, man is a rope stretched between beast and superman ... The most anxious ask today, 'How is man to be preserved?' But the question should be 'How is man to be surpassed?'. " ⁸⁰

Nietzsche was most surely anti Christian however Macquarrie sees certain parallels with his views and Christianity, particularly in respect of man's need for conversion and reaching beyond himself. Both Nietzsche and Christianity are seeking the realisation of the true essence of humanity. Macquarrie understands this reaching out as a 'reaching out to Godhood'; the superman is in fact the God-Man, Jesus Christ:

"Nietzsche's superman is a secularised and dechristianized version of the God-man. The superman like Sartre's man is the desire to become God and, above all to exercise divine power. The God-man by contrast, immerses himself in God and manifests God's presence in him in terms of love and service." ⁸¹

Macquarrie understands the true essence of humanity, in its fully realised state, to consist in the deification of man. This has happened in the case of Jesus Christ who is the first of a new higher order of 'deified' humanity. In an analysis of the thinking of the neo-Marxist Ernst Bloch Macquarrie discusses the development of man in the direction of deification and the future creation of a kingdom which must be the right kingdom, he states:

"This reference to a humanity that reaches out towards deification, and that connects with the 'kingdom' can scarcely be anything but an allusion to Jesus Christ. His kingdom is the 'right' kingdom because it is not a kingdom of power or founded on an ideology of power." ⁸²

Incarnation is seen in this light as a human being, raised to God and deified, therefore He, Jesus Christ, becomes the God-man by reaching beyond Himself to become God.

"To call him the God-man is to claim that in him human transcendence has reached the point at which the human life has

⁸⁰ Op. Cit. p.364 - Macquarrie cites F W Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* Dent 1933, pp.5&7

⁸¹ Op. Cit. p.365

⁸² Op. Cit. p.367 - Macquarrie cites Ernst Bloch's *The Principle of Hope*, Blackwell 1986 vol 3 pp.1196-7

become so closely united with the divine life that, in the traditional language, it has become deified."⁸³

If we bring these five elements together we gain a very good insight into Macquarrie's understanding of an incarnation 'from below' through the efforts of man, or rather 'the' man Jesus Christ. We have an essentially ontological and existential frame which, in this instance, gains much support from Rahner's development of transcendental Thomism. It must be said however that Macquarrie understands incarnation as a two way movement which involves both the transcending of man but also the transcending of God. In man's development God also surpasses himself. Macquarrie, in discussing God's surpassing of Himself states:

"... then as God fulfils his purposes he is not just perfecting the world as exterior to himself, but is increasing his own satisfaction and therefore 'surpassing' himself, moving on to new levels of perfection. As we ourselves move towards a more dynamic conception of God and think of him not as dwelling in a distant heaven in untroubled bliss but as transcending in the sense of constantly coming forth from himself, then the idea of incarnation will not seem to be some improbable speculation or some fragment of a fantastic mythology. Rather we can see it as the meeting point at which the transcendence of humanity from below... is met by the divine transcendence from above."⁸⁴

8.2.2 The Question of Primordial Revelation in Incarnational Perspective

Even if we agree that the difference between Christ and other men is one of degree and not kind, and if we accept Macquarrie's concept of incarnation, Christ is still in the unique position of having aspired to the highest order of the God-man. The event of this achievement took place in human history, therefore we can say that the incarnation of God in a man, who is the true man, is in itself historical revelation. Christ, who is "the very truth of humanity"⁸⁵ and the archetype of a new humanity: "But now the archetype took shape in an

⁸³ Op. Cit. p.370

⁸⁴ Op. Cit. p.380

⁸⁵ Op. Cit. p.374

actual human being and a new humanity was formed."⁸⁶ This essential archetype of deified humanity, must be the major revelation of God to mankind in human history. Christ then is the universal archetype and representative of this new humanity, and in this he is alone, unique and supreme.

Even from within such a Christology, from below, Christ must be conceded as being a universal symbol which is of major, essential and ultimate significance for all of mankind. Of this significance, Macquarrie states:

"Jesus Christ gets his significance from combining in himself universality with his particular historicity."⁸⁷

In the person of Jesus Christ then, the universal and the particular are combined, they have become one and the same thing, and this is the peculiar mark of His uniqueness. We must claim, at this point, that the Christ event, is a historical revelation which is at the same time particular and universally applicable and accessible. If Christ is a symbol of God, then He is, or at least He has become, an intrinsic symbol with universal signification. We consider this historical revelation further in terms of two concepts, which are:

- a) Christ as the 'focus of Being' on earth, and
- b) Christ as the 'perfect image of God' on earth.

a) Christ as the Focus of Being

"The incarnation is the supreme providential act or miracle of history. It will be remembered that the characteristic of such an event is that it focuses Being in its presence and manifestation, its advent and epiphany. Jesus Christ may be properly understood as the focus of Being, the particular being in whom the advent and epiphany take place, so that he is taken up into Being itself and we see in him the coming into one of deity and humanity, of creative Being and creaturely being. And what we see in Christ is the destiny that God has set before humanity."⁸⁸

Quite clearly this person who focuses Being, is Himself a special, revelatory symbol. In His person, is the supreme revelation of Being (God) and according

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Op. Cit. p.381

to Macquarrie above He is, at the same time, a revelation of the ultimate destiny of mankind. This incarnational revelation which is the supreme providential act or miracle, is surely of a different quality and type than 'primordial revelation' as defined by Macquarrie. Primordial revelation is ontologically universal becoming particular through particular symbols and the associated hermeneutic activity. Incarnational revelation, through which Being is focused in Christ, as a providential act, is historical revelation which is particular in terms of its historicity, but universal in terms of the intrinsic nature of its symbolism. Therefore it is significant for all of mankind, and not a particular culture alone. Christianity, as arising from incarnational or historical revelation in this way, is distinct from the religions which arise from primordial revelation in that it is a particularisation which is, at the same time, universal, whereas the other world religions are particularisations of the universal, which find reification in cultural particularity. Christianity then, can be seen to be the inverse of the others in that it is a movement from particular to universal, whereas they are movements from the universal to a particular.

Macquarrie discusses the universal as focused in the particular:

"...only if God makes himself present and known in and through the creation generally can there be a particular point in which he is present and known in a signal way. Jesus Christ would not be a revelation if he was only an anomaly in the creation. He is revelation because he sums up and makes clear a presence that is obscurely communicated throughout the cosmos. Elsewhere I have called him the focus of Being."⁸⁹

This sums up very well the precise relationship between general or primordial revelation, which is 'obscure throughout the cosmos', and particular or historical revelation in the person of Christ, who is the focus of Being. Clearly Christ is seen by Macquarrie to be unique, even if the difference from all other prophets is one of degree, He is 'Himself' revelation as He is Himself the deified Man; and therefore He is not at the same time a receiver of primordial revelation in the way that the other prophets are. Primordial revelation is the reaching out of Being to (attuned) man. Christ, however, according to Macquarrie, successfully reached out to God by overcoming his fallen sinful humanity, and in so doing realised both the full potentiality of human being and

⁸⁹ Jesus Christ in Modern Thought - p.381

Godhood. Christ's death is the greatest revelation because according to Macquarrie that was the precise point of his deification. This was His supreme act of self-giving, and self-giving is the likeness of God, therefore in this supreme manifestation of self-giving by the person of Christ, God was supremely manifested on earth. The self-hood of the human Jesus passes into Christhood through the death on the cross. By Macquarrie's own account, it does appear that both primordial or creational revelation and historical revelation come together in the person of Jesus Christ.

b) Christ as the perfect image of God

It appears that Macquarrie holds to something like Athanasius' physical theory in respect of the divine image. The pure image of God shines forth from Jesus:

"I think we could even say that if God is indeed a God who speaks, a God who communicates himself, then if he willed to communicate himself on this planet it would need to be in and through a human being or a human community. I believe that to some extent God's image remains vestigially in every human being, but the Christian claim is that in Jesus Christ that image has clearly shone forth."⁹⁰

Clearly this shining forth of God's image in Christ is a revelation of God on this planet. Jesus is different to others by degree, all men and woman carry, vestigially, the image of God, but in Christ it clearly, and therefore purely, shines forth for all to behold. The divine image shines in Christ because He sums up the whole range of created reality, or the whole range of the reality which God has let be, in Himself, and He transcends it through the possession of the spirit. It is the possession of spirit which, for Macquarrie, constitutes the image of God. Christ then is 'Being' in 'Himself' and therefore, in Himself, primordial revelation, which has been clarified, and now shines forth, universally available and accessible, in human history.

The divine image, which is God in Christ, is the potency of Christ's God consciousness. Macquarrie falls back on Schleiermacher's solution to enlightenment rationalism. Christ is different from other men because of the quality and extent of his God consciousness. In this theological reaction to

⁹⁰ Op. Cit. p.382

Kant we find ourselves thrust in to the area of the human subjective in terms of conscience. Christ had a deeper conscience indeed his was conscience at its deepest level:

"This deeper conscience is an awareness which we have in virtue of our status as rational and spiritual beings that if we follow some directions, we enhance our rationality and spirituality, if we follow others we diminish them... there is within us an archetype, an ideal, a lure which draws us on and in which we see fulfilled in a signal way in Jesus Christ."⁹¹

Christ then is the signal revelation of the essence of true humanity, through the clear shining forth of the image of God in Him. The divine image is the depth aspect in the man Jesus. In Him it is supremely clear, for all of mankind to see; but Christ is also the archetype man, therefore in Him, the union of God and man is achieved, and Christ is the archetype of a new humanity, which in Him, can reach God.

⁹¹ Op. Cit. p.374

RAHNER'S DEVELOPMENT OF ANONYMOUS CHRISTIANITY

9.1 - 'Anonymous Christianity' as the synthesis of Rahner's dichotomy

Anonymous Christianity, (otherwise called implicit Christianity) can be rightly designated the synthesis of the dipolar elements of Rahner's dichotomy. The two elements are:

- 1 It is God's universal will that all men will be saved. "...the scriptures tell (us) expressly that God wants everyone to be saved" (1Tm:4), and
- 2 There is no salvation outside of the church (meaning essentially that faith in Christ is necessary for salvation).¹

If the sovereign free and omnipotent God wills all men to be saved yet there is no salvation outside of Christ, then it follows that all men, who have not rejected the grace of God (as those of possibility 4, p284) must in some way be 'in' Christ. If they are not explicitly Christian then they must be implicitly Christian. Since 'anonymous Christianity' is the natural development of Rahner's theology in respect of salvation, we can give it due consideration in terms of its foundational factors, which are intrinsic to the essential ethos of his theological understanding. Because 'anonymous Christianity' is a logical development intrinsic to the very infrastructure of Rahner's whole theological position, it can be seen to be a doctrine which has great consistency in terms of

¹ *Theological Investigations* - Karl Rahner, vol 6 Baltimore; Helicon press, London; Darton Longman & Todd Trans Karl H & Boniface Kruger 1969, p.321

his theology as a whole. It can be seen also to have some extraneous power in terms of existential reality in respect of the concept of justice, and Biblically, in respect of an exposition of (highly selective) scriptural passages.

9.1.1 The foundational factors of 'anonymous/implicit Christianity'

The foundational factors are found within the following aspects of Rahner's theology; his epistemological ontology, the nature of saving faith, the nature of supernatural grace and the nature of incarnation. We will identify the factors from within these specific areas.

a) Rahner's epistemological ontology

There are several things inferred by this heading, the first being the fundamental unity of 'knowing' and 'being' in Rahner's thought (as discussed in chapter 3). It is also seen from Rahner's metaphysic, that being is equated to 'questionability'. Knowability, questionability and being are a unity which forms the essential content of the nature of finite (transcendental) spirit. The precise moments of man's existential knowability and questionability are the occasions of his transcendental spirit-in-the-world. The transcendental intelligence of man's spirit is man's essential being which is his 'being-present-to-himself'. In this precise self presence or luminosity of being, God is revealed to man in terms of man's own being. In the transcendental reality the being of man and the Being of God coincide, therefore, if man affirms his own being he at the same time necessarily affirms the Being of God. (Self-affirmation is discussed later under the aspect of faith.) In the cognitive act of this self-affirmation, man must necessarily affirm the knowledge of God as his essential constitution. This dynamic of human existence is the basis of what Rahner terms 'transcendental theism'.

i) Factor Number 1 - Transcendental Theism

Man's transcendental nature is such that God is present to him in his act of knowing which of course is also his act of being:

"Now in so far as every instance of intellectual knowledge and freedom on the part of the subject and his act is a 'transcendental experience', i.e. an experience of the intellect's unlimited rootedness in absolute Being, on the subjective side every instance of knowledge is a real, even if implicit, knowledge of God."²

Man's cognitive, subjective act always knows about God either explicitly or implicitly, this knowledge is a necessity of his transcendental nature. This is not to be thought of as an innate knowledge but rather as a living synthesis of a-priori and a-posteriori knowledge, which necessarily has God as its proper object (either recognised or unrecognised):

"It is true that there is no innate knowledge of God in the sense of an inborn conceptualised content, but never the less the conceptual and propositional knowledge of God is the objectification of that rootedness of the intellect in absolute Being which is always present to man's transcendental intellectuality; that rootedness which is a concomitant experience in every intellectual act, whether of knowledge or of freedom, irrespective of the particular object with which this act is concerned."³

The reality and existential of human intellect, and its act, comes forth from and is rooted in absolute Being (God). Therefore, as a man gains knowledge through the act of the intellect, of any object, he at the same time necessarily gains knowledge of God. This knowledge is essentially primordial revelation, which is universal because it is universally accessible by virtue of the essential human constitution in respect of God's creative, primary delimitation of finite spirits. The a-priori, implicit knowledge of God, otherwise termed 'the pre-concept of Being-in-general' constitutes both the necessary condition for the possibility of receiving any further a-posteriori knowledge through the cognitive act, and the hearing ear of man, for a further revelation of God in history.

² *Theological Investigations* - Karl Rahner, vol 9 Darton Longman & Todd 1972, Trans, G Harrison, p.154

³ Op. Cit. p.155

The a-posteriori element of the implicit universal knowledge of God constitutes man's transcendental experience of Him. Clearly, since this is a necessary knowledge there can be no such thing as an atheist in any real and absolute sense; the transcendental experience of God renders man a transcendental theist. The human will as the dynamic of choice to affirm or reject, however, is the determining factor in whether the implicit knowledge of God avails unto salvation.

"...it must always be borne in mind that a conscious or known reality present to man's mind may exist in the mode of free acceptance or free rejection, since man is not merely a being who is intellectually knowing but is also always a free being."⁴

The free rejection would constitute what is known as theoretical atheism; and the free acceptance, some form of implicit (or indeed explicit) Christianity. Whether the order is acceptance or rejection, God is present to man in his transcendental experience. This constitutes some form of transcendental theism. This also means that all men have some form of relationship with God, which constitutes either positively or negatively the reality of their lives. Rahner has drawn up a table of the possible types of fundamental relationship of man with God. He lists four possibilities.

Possibility 1:

"God is present in man's transcendental nature and this fact is objectified in a suitably and correctly explicit and conceptual theism and moreover is also freely accepted in moral affirmation of faith (in the practise of living)."

This is correct theism, both transcendental and categorial.

There exists a proper relationship with man and God, and this believer is a justified Christian.

⁴ Ibid.

Possibility 2:

"Both categorial and transcendental theism are present, man knows of God in his transcendental experience and also his reflection upon the latter is correct, but in his moral freedom he rejects this knowledge, whether as a sinner, denying God, or going on to reject the God whom he has correctly 'objectified' conceptually in real free unbelief."

This is ordinarily the category of 'atheist', although Rahner denies the possibility of atheism in the strict sense.

Possibility 3:

"The transcendental experience of God is present of necessity and is also freely accepted in a positive decision to be faithful to conscience, but is incorrectly objectified and interpreted."

This produces an inadequate and false idea of God. Such would be the case with other world religions. This is a form of atheism which Rahner and the Roman catholic Church believes to be 'innocent' and not therefore 'culpable'.

Possibility 4:

"The transcendental dependence on God is present; objectively it is interpreted falsely or insufficiently correctly in a categorial atheism, and this transcendental dependence on God is itself simultaneously denied in a free action by a gravely sinful unfaithfulness to conscience."⁵

This is culpable atheism which, because it is a denial of existence itself and therefore of the existence and reality of God, excludes the possibility of salvation.

⁵ Ibid. (Possibilities 1-4)

b) The nature of saving faith

We are concerned here with what Rahner terms 'implicit faith' or otherwise put 'anonymous faith'; such a faith, which is in Christ, is sufficient for salvation; Rahner does not equivocate concerning the necessity of faith for the justification of sinners and for salvation. This reality is essentially the second element of Rahner's dilemma. Much has been said concerning the nature of explicit faith in Chapter 7, what we are concerned with here is a further understanding of the nature of the minimum form of faith which will be effective for salvation, and which therefore is an essential element of the doctrine of anonymous Christianity.

i) Factor number 2 - Anonymous faith

Anonymous faith has been defined in chapter 7, and we need not do so again here. What is clear is that the individual who has anonymous faith has no explicit relationship with Christ, nor indeed God. Of course there can be forms of faith which are, apparently, 'in' God, as is the case with other world religions, but are not 'in' Christ. Rahner considers these forms to be those based on an inadequate and erroneous concept of God and as forms of explicit objective and categorial faith which are inadequate for salvation. However, implicit or anonymous faith if held in terms of possibilities two and three above, would still prevail for salvation.

What's involved in a genuine saving faith, is that a person must have at least implicit faith in God in terms of his (own) transcendental nature, which is at the same time a faith in his own being as a finite spirit. It comes down to the individual's conscience, which must not be offended against if implicit faith is to be real in the individual's life:

"...genuine faith in revelation is necessary for salvation. But it is not immediately plain what is exactly meant by 'faith universally necessary for salvation'. We are theologically justified in our definition of saving faith if we take into consideration that the teaching of the church allows a man the chance of being saved as long as he does not grievously offend his conscience by his actions,

even if he does not come, in the course of his life, to an explicit acceptance of the Christian message in faith."⁶

The apparent weakness of Rahner's consideration here is that, it appears that, justification depends on a person being free from 'sins of commission' (that is; the category of sin which will offend the individual's conscience); the question is however: Is there any person who has ever lived, apart from Christ, who has not offended against his conscience in this way?

In any event those who do not offend in this way, against their conscience, are saved, according to Rahner, by 'anonymous faith', and they are therefore anonymous believers. What Rahner is saying is that:

"because the universal and supernatural will of God is working for human salvation, the unlimited transcendence of man, itself directed of necessity towards God, is raised up consciously by grace, although possibly without explicit thematic reflection, in such a way that the possibility of faith in revelation is thereby made available."⁷

Based on this presupposition, Rahner holds that one can speak of a genuine faith in such a case, provided that the anonymous believer accepts his own unlimited transcendence which is raised up by God to His own presence. Anonymous faith then appears as a kind of vague empty faith which God mysteriously elevates by His own supernatural will and act, to that of saving faith. The emptiness is, as it were, filled out by God Himself in order that it may be acceptable to Him as a saving medium. Yet the anonymous believer is personally involved in the faith dynamic, because by accepting his own unlimited transcendent spirit which is oriented towards God he is at the same time accepting God in an act of implicit faith:

"If a person by a free act in which he accepts himself unconditionally in his radical reference to God raised up by grace, also accepts the basic finality of his spirit, even if without reflection, then he is making a genuine act of faith."⁸

⁶ *Theological Investigations* - Karl Rahner, vol 16 Darton Longman & Todd, Trans, D Morland 1979, p.53

⁷ Op. Cit. p.55

⁸ Op. Cit. p.57f

The faith which is referred to here is of course anonymous faith. Rahner's view is that such a transcendental experience is supernaturally raised up therefore revelation is implied; because this act of acceptance of a person whereby the person becomes present to himself is supernaturally elevated it must necessarily involve a revelation of God. This is what Rahner terms a transcendental revelation. Such a transcendental revelation which comes through the realisation of human transcendence, makes possible, and indeed offers, anonymous faith. The relationship of this transcendental revelation (creational revelation, which is realised a-priorily through the transcendental act of knowing) to historical revelation is stated by Rahner:

"Transcendental and historical revelation have a mutual reference: the former acquires historical form and shape in the latter, just as in other cases the transcendent being of man is mediated to itself through history. Historical revelation only realises its proper character through its transcendent counterpart, since it is only effective for salvation if through it the transcendent self-communication of God finds historical expression, the communication, that is, to which we give the name of the grace of faith and justification."⁹

In other words the explicit, categorial, historical revelation of God is addressed to the universal transcendental (primordial) revelation, which all men are in receipt of, by virtue of their constitution as transcendental finite spirits; whether they have reflected on it or are unaware of it. This means effectively that all men, provided they have not culpably rejected the historical or the transcendental revelations of God, or are explicit Christians, are living in anonymous faith as anonymous Christians. They are, in effect, justified pagans.

That which is essential to anonymous faith, is self affirmation, along with felicity and obedience to the individual's conscience. This is, in effect, faith in one's own transcendental nature, which Rahner considers as saving faith, because one's own nature is the expression of God in the finite realm. Faith in one's own transcendental nature is therefore an implicit, though genuine, faith in God Himself. Faith which is salvific, of course, must be in Christ. We shall see that the implicit faith described above is held by Rahner to be anonymous

⁹ Op. Cit. p.58

'Christian' faith and therefore constitutes the medium of 'anonymous Christianity'.

c) The nature of supernatural grace

It should be conceded that salvation of sinners is wholly and absolutely of the will and work of God. Man is saved not through his own limited (fallen) powers but by the supernatural grace of the free and sovereign God. This grace, as unlimited by creation, may operate in modes unknown to man. If this were not the case then, in the strict sense, God would neither be free nor sovereign. However, Rahner's basic presupposition is that: "God's universal will to save, objectifies itself in that communication of himself which we call grace".¹⁰ Supernatural grace, then, is the communication of the essential Being of God effected and empowered by God's will to save all of mankind. Grace is seen to be a form of universal revelation.

i) Factor number 3: Grace as a universal form of revelation, which is constant, continuous and inescapable

In this respect, Rahner states:

"I mean by the essence of grace the self-communication of God to the transcendent spirit of man. In virtue of this self-communication the transcendence of man is permanently and necessarily ordered to the direct presence of God, whether this be the object of conscious reflection or not."¹¹

All men are oriented towards God as their ultimate goal and destination, through this supernatural grace which is communicated to man in his transcendental experience and by virtue of his transcendental nature. Whilst, at no time is man's freedom abrogated, and he is free to accept or reject this self revelation of God, the universal dynamic of this grace is not dependent on man's acceptance and is continuous regardless of man's free choice. We have,

¹⁰ *Theological Investigations* - Karl Rahner, vol 14 Darton Longman & Todd, Trans, D Morland 1976, p.288

¹¹ *Theological Investigations* - Karl Rahner, vol 16, p.40

then, a universal revelatory grace of God which is continuous and effected only by God's will to save; which in itself is a continuous, unbroken and immutable reality.

In this context of 'anonymous Christianity' Rahner is arguing that there are two basic forms of revelation; grace (which corresponds to 'creational revelation') and incarnation (which corresponds to 'historical revelation'), the latter we deal with below, it is intriguing that Rahner considers these two forms to be, in their implicit mode, universal and indeed inescapable. In this respect Rahner states:

"We might apply the term anonymous Christian to every individual who, in virtue of God's universal will to save, and thereby in virtue of the supernatural existential (grace) is inescapably confronted with the offering of God's self bestowal and is totally unable to escape from this situation."¹²

It follows that every individual, whether Christian or non Christian, is justified through the grace of Christ, which is a universal self revelation of God. This primordial revelation in its implicit mode is the ground and basis for the 'justified pagan' who is an anonymous Christian. The precise nature of this revelation makes saving faith possible for the pagan and includes a certain category of (non-culpable) atheists.

What we have here, in effect, is an anthropological and anthropocentric (rational) justification from the source of a common grace which both Rahner and the church of Rome would call 'uncreated grace'.¹³ This particular brand of common grace has been elevated to the rank of saving grace. We have then, a soteriology which is essentially built on creational (general) revelation and a common (primordial) grace, both of which are intrinsic to the constitution of creation itself and in that sense 'a-priori' yet which are actualised by the 'a-posteriori' events of the epistemic history of the individual. We have then both ordinary and supernatural realities co-existing within the one frame.

¹² *Theological Investigations* - Karl Rahner, vol 14 p.282

¹³ For an understanding of 'uncreated grace' see *Concise Theological Dictionary* - Karl Rahner & Herbert Vorgrimler, Burns & Oats London 1983, - article on Grace.

In consideration of the anonymous faith of the pagan, which is the theological product arising from this framework of anthropological concepts, Rahner states:

"If we take these concepts of formal anthropology as read the possibility of personal faith in a 'pagan' makes two assumptions: (1) The supernatural grace of faith and justification offered by God to men need not be conceived of as an isolated intervention on God's part at a particular point in a world which is itself profane. On the contrary it can perfectly well be interpreted on the basis of God's universal will to save as a grace which, as offered (!), is a constantly present existential of the creature endowed with spiritual faculties."

And: (2) "This grace constantly implanted in the nature of the creature and the historical dimensions belonging to it as the dynamism and finalization of the history of man is, however, something of which man is aware in the manner upon which such a reality does impinge upon human awareness. This awareness does not ipso facto or necessarily imply an objective awareness; it is present in the a-priori formal objects, in the further levels of significance in the spiritual and intentional capacities of knowledge and freedom."¹⁴

The case for 'anonymous Christianity', or more accurately, 'anonymous Christians', is spelt out then, in terms of the supernatural revelatory grace intrinsic to the transcendental spirit of man. It remains to see what Rahner has to say about 'incarnation' in this respect.

d) The nature of incarnation

What we have been discussing above, in respect of supernatural grace, is really the precise quality of man's unlimited openness to God, and his natural tendency and orientation towards God. We have been exploring a further facet of creational revelation in terms of its essential nature as a universal necessity in respect of the 'uncreated grace' of God. Creational revelation, of course, is the epistemic content of man's conscious cognitive activity as he pursues his infinite quest for knowledge. It does appear, that in essence, this revelation is of the

¹⁴ *Theological Investigations* - Karl Rahner, vol 14 p.288

mode of ordinary, everyday, 'this worldly', knowledge. Man's transcendental journey towards God, then, is merely his ordinary pursuit of knowledge. Although Rahner would not consider that any knowledge is ordinary, because for man to have knowledge at all requires ontological coincidence with God, indeed God and man coincide in the cognitive act, therefore we have implicit faith which comes to be in the revelatory, a-posteriori procedure of questioning and gaining knowledge through answers. We have already seen that this elevation of the ordinary to the epistemologically supernatural, possess a great problem for Rahner and we approach the problem, in this instance, in terms of the question: If this is so then what possible need is there for a particular incarnation of God in Jesus Christ? Rahner puts the question in a similar way:

"...how does this tendency towards God, which is on occasion quite implicit and incoherent, and yet always completely permeates man's being and existence, include a reference to the incarnate God, to Jesus Christ."¹⁵

The fact of Jesus Christ is the most important and decisive fact of reality for man, argues Rahner, and it is the fact which has the most obvious relevance. This fact is the fact of historical revelation in the person of the Son of God, who is God incarnate. Our question then, becomes; what relevance has historical (particular) revelation to creational (universal) revelation which every man receives either, explicitly and thematically or implicitly and incoherently? And; what is the relationship of the two? For an answer we must look to Rahner's understanding of the nature of the incarnation itself. He states:

"If one takes seriously that God has become man, then - it must be said - man is that which happens when God expresses and divests himself. Man is accordingly in the most basic definition that which God becomes if he sets out to show himself in the region of the extra-divine. And conversely, formulating it from the point of view of man: man is he who realises himself when he gives himself away into the incomprehensible mystery of God. Seen in this way the incarnation of God is the uniquely supreme case of the actualisation of man's nature in general."¹⁶

¹⁵ *Theological Investigations* - Karl Rahner, vol 6 p.392f

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.393

We have then, a view of the incarnation from the bottom up, similar to that of Macquarrie's. The incarnation is the supreme achievement of the man Jesus Christ, in actualising His human nature and therefore in becoming divine. This actualisation, which clearly must have been in terms of creational revelation as understood by Jesus, takes place in human history, therefore, the ultimate effect of creational revelation in the person of Jesus, becomes historical revelation for mankind. In this way historical revelation arises out of creational revelation in its a-posteriori actualisation in the ultimate, supreme, human being, and it does not break in on human history from God's transcendent wholly otherness. The incarnation is the full realisation of the potential of human existence, and again it is a transcendental reality in terms of the immanence of God and not the transcendence. The man Jesus was that which happened when God set out to show himself, as all men are to a lesser degree. Jesus Christ, is, as Macquarrie would have it also, different by degree and not kind, in respect of all other human beings.

Christ achieved the ultimate realisation of God's incarnation in himself, and therefore became a new revelation of God to man.

"Now that his (man's) thinking is illuminated by the light of the revelation which has in fact been made in the historically accomplished reality of Christ, he can recognise this unapproachable height as that perfection of his own being."¹⁷

In a very real sense, if we accept Rahner's argument here, historical revelation is the natural, though ultimate, realisation of creational revelation. In effect, they are one and the same. It can be seen, that this view of the incarnation in no way detracts from the consistency of Rahner's case for anonymous Christianity, indeed, it counts towards it. Incarnation is a radical mode of man's spiritual being which eminently fulfils the transcendence of his being. It comes together with the revelation of grace, to produce the one continuous revelation of God which has the potential of saving all men, whether they are consciously aware of it or not. "This self-communication of God offered to all and fulfilled in the highest way in Christ ... constitutes the goal of all creation."¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Before man makes any move of affirmation or rejection of his transcendental experience of the revelation of God, his nature is stamped by God's will and it is therefore pre-determined in respect of the supernatural existential which is the universal grace of God. Man therefore necessarily experiences the reality of the content of this grace, implicitly and possibly incomprehensibly.

"This means that the express revelation of the word in Christ is not something which comes to us from without as entirely strange, but only the explication of what we already are by grace and what we experience at least incoherently in the limitlessness of our transcendence. The expressly Christian revelation becomes the explicit statement of the revelation of grace which man always experiences in the depths of his being."¹⁹

What is being said here is that since the revelation of grace is already 'in man', if he accepts himself he accepts Christ, therefore he is an anonymous Christian.

9.1.2 The exception: Culpable atheism

Rahner's doctrine of anonymous Christianity clears the way for the possibility of the salvation of all men and women, with one exception, that of 'culpable atheism'. Rahner categorises atheists as either 'innocent' or 'culpable'; this line of thinking is very much in line with the Church of Rome, since Vatican 2. The official view of the past has been:

"in scripture God's knowability seems so clearly given and atheism seems to give evidence so definitely of being man's most terrible aberration, that it was only thought possible to understand it as a sin in which a man freely turns away in the *mysterium iniquitatis*, evilly suppressing the truth which everywhere impinges in on him (Rom 1:8)."²⁰

In view of this, until recent times, it was held that it is impossible for any adult atheist to continue in this venial sin for any considerable length of time without becoming personally culpable. There could not be any possibility of 'implicit

¹⁹ Op. Cit. p.394

²⁰ *Theological Investigations* - Karl Rahner, vol 9 p.146

Christianity' for any length of time in an adult atheist. Things took on a new optimism however, at the second Vatican Council.²¹ What emerged was that "...not every instance of positive atheism in a concrete human individual is to be regarded as the result and the expression of personal sin... such an atheist can be justified and receive salvation if he acts in accordance with his conscience."²²

Rahner has adopted this view. The essential difference between a justified atheist and an unjustified atheist has to do with obedience to the particular individual's own moral conscience. This has already been discussed above (esp. under the fourth possibility (1.1 a)). Culpability seems to be a grave sinful unfaithfulness to the individual's own conscience; the transcendental dependence of God which self affirmation demands, is denied in this case, and therefore salvation is impossible. Culpable atheism consists of an ultimate 'no' to this transcendental dependence:

".. culpable atheism (exists) not necessarily merely in transgression in connection with any particular moral situation but in an ultimate 'no' to man's fundamental dependence upon God himself, that is, in a free 'no' to God himself."²³

Categorical atheism, therefore, is considered to be 'innocent' but transcendental atheism is always 'culpable'. In transcendental atheism God himself is really and truly rejected by a free decision, whilst in categorical atheism it is only the objective knowledge of God which is rejected. It appears to be possible to reject the objective knowledge about God and at the same time accept and affirm God himself. Categorical atheism can be the result of false or insufficient interpretation of the dependence on God in his transcendental presence. This type of atheism is innocent because it does not necessarily involve a denial of the person of God through gravely sinful unfaithfulness to the individual conscience. If such a real denial is also effected the wrongly interpreted revelation of God becomes culpable; this is so because the erroneous interpretation, in this case, is sinful, and the denial that follows is a rejection of

²¹ See Vatican 2 texts; Nos. 19-21 of chapter 1 part 1 of *Gaudium et spes*, and the 5th para of No. 22 of the same chapter, No. 16 chapter 2 of *Lumen Gentium*, and No. 7 of the decree on the churches missionary activity.

²² *Theological Investigations* - Karl Rahner, vol 9 p.147

²³ Op. Cit. p.157

God Himself because it is a rejection of existence as such. Such a one can not have implicit faith and is therefore not an anonymous Christian.

A culpable atheist who is blameworthy and unjustified is one who, in effect, banishes God from himself, through gravely and sinfully acting against his own conscience. This results in a wholly negative relationship with God. There is only bad will in this respect, and it is good will, at least, that is required for salvation. The atheist who acts in accordance with his conscience, and who seeks truth in respect of his moral consciousness, acts in good will:

"The person who accepts a moral demand for his conscience as absolutely valid for him and embraces it as such in a free act of affirmation - no matter how unreflected - asserts the absolute being of God, whether he knows or conceptualises it or not."²⁴

An anonymous Christian requires to accept and not offend against the moral demand of his conscience, this is understood to be positively in keeping with Romans 1:8 f.

9.2 Anonymous Christianity and the Divine logos

9.2.1 The beginnings: Justin Martyr

We are told that the 2nd century apologists sought to demonstrate the reasonableness of Christianity to the educated classes:

"They were particularly solicitous to make the Christian religion acceptable to the educated classes by stressing its rationality."²⁵

This rationality was understood as the divine logos which was present, as the universal principle of reason, in all men. The most notable of the apologists in

²⁴ Op. Cit. p.152

²⁵ *The History of Christian Doctrines* - L Berkhof Banner of Truth trust 1978, p.56

respect of this 'logos' doctrine was Justin Martyr (c 150 AD). J. N. D. Kelly says of Justin:

"His starting point was the current maxim that reason (the germinal logos) was what united men to God and gave them knowledge of Him. Before Christ's coming men had possessed, as it were, seeds of the logos and had thus been able to arrive at fragmentary facets of the truth. Hence such pagans as 'lived with reason' were Christians before Christianity."²⁶

The precise quote from Justin's Apology reads:

"We are taught that Christ is the first born of God, and we have shown above that He is the reason (logos) of whom the whole human race partake... and those who live according to reason are Christians, even though they are accounted atheists. Such were Socrates and Heraclitus among the Greeks, and those like them."²⁷

Christ, then, is understood as the universal logos who is present in reasonable men, and all such reasonable men whether before or without explicit knowledge of Christ are 'implicit Christians'. Indeed any utterances of truth of any man belongs to Christianity; such men were able to see the truth dimly through the implanted seed of the logos dwelling in them:

"Whatever has been uttered aright by any men in any place belongs to us Christians; for next to God we love and worship the reason (logos) which is from the unbegotten and ineffable God."²⁸

This divine logos is implanted in men by the grace of God, therefore any truth is, as of the logos, Christian truth, and Christian truth is the light that lighteth every man. Christ, then, is the rational factor in God, related to man's reason. He is the immanent reason of God, therefore all men of reason (and that must surely mean all men and women) as displaying this immanent reason of God must be, in this way, Christians. Even if they have never heard of the person of Jesus Christ.

²⁶ *Early Christian doctrines* - J N D Kelly A & C Black 5th ed 1985, p.96

²⁷ *Apology I.XLVI* (2-4) - Justin Martyr

²⁸ *Apology II>XII* (5) - Justin Martyr

The essential thesis that Justin argues for, however, is that there is an unbroken, intrinsic and essential continuity between creation (and creational revelation) and recreation (and historical revelation) in terms of the divine Logos who is operative both at creation and recreation. The, universal Logos then, is the essential link between these two realities. Macquarrie states, in this context:

"Not only St. Athanasius but St. Irenaeus and many other early Christian writers rightly connected the doctrines of reconciliation and creation. Both of these activities were ascribed to the Logos, eventually conceived as the second person of the triune God... and it was believed that what the logos does in reconciliation is continuous with what he does in creation."²⁹

The divine Logos is active and essential to the original creation, and the same Logos is active and essential to reconciliation or re-creation. At a point in human history the Logos had been made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth; as Macquarrie sees it, it was not Jesus Christ who was instrumental at creation but the, as yet, impersonal Logos. Macquarrie goes on to say:

"St. Justin explicitly deals with the objection made by opponents who pointed out that, according to Christian teaching, the logos had been incarnate in Jesus only one hundred and fifty years before his time, and demanded to know whether all who lived before that were irresponsible. St. Justin replies that the Logos had always been in the world, that the providential acts described in the Old Testament are to be ascribed to the agency of the Logos and furthermore that in this same Logos 'every race of men were partakers'."³⁰

Comparing Macquarrie's thinking in this respect, he argues that in the Logos becoming flesh there was a new revelation of a reconciling activity that had always been going on. His underlying presupposition is that creation and re-creation are equiprimordial, they have both been going on from the beginning. The vital bonding between the two is the Logos, which is universal in creation and particular in reconciliation. The Logos, then, is the medium of continuity between creational and historical revelation. It can be readily seen from this position that the Old Testament prophets, and indeed all (true) prophets of all religions are united by this same logos whom they all proclaim in differing

²⁹ Principles of Christian Theology - John Macquarrie p.269

³⁰ Ibid.

ways. Historical revelation is the revelation of 'the mystery hidden for ages': "the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages, but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations."³¹ God's saving activity which is from the beginning, and co-existent with creation (and indeed co-extensive with it) is universal through the universal Logos. Creation and recreation are, to Macquarrie, moments of the same activity. Therefore creational and primordial revelation are equally primordial and universal; the historical mode being the expression of the creational. This expression is potentially available to all men but only a few realise it; those who do, are the founders of religions in whom the Logos is intensely present and manifest. They are the focus of Being, Jesus Christ is understood as being the supreme focus of Being, in line with the other prophets and of the same order, as indeed of the same order as all men, but yet the superlative expression who became deified and understood as the son of God, the second person of the Trinity.

9.2.2 Rahner's understanding of the logos

We have already seen that the Logos is central to Rahner's concept of the human spirit as a transcendental reality. The logos is the essential factor in human epistemology, it is the medium of the coincidence of the divine and the human spirit; and of supernatural grace. Rahner, however, distinguishes between two categories of logos; divine eternal Logos, and human logos. It is the human logos that is the place of the coincidence of God and man, and it is through the human logos that man is able to transcend his own being (through the negation which is possible only in the logos). The Logos is 'essential being', therefore it is an ontologically primordial reality which is intrinsic to creation, in respect of finite spirits. It is a universal essential element in the human constitution, indeed it is 'the' essential element:

³¹ Ibid; Macquarrie quotes Col 1:26 & Rom 16:25&26

"Only if the being of that which is, 'logos', from the very start, can the incarnate logos utter in words, what lies hidden in the depths of God."³²

We have then, the idea of the primordial Logos of creation, being passed on to man as constitutive of the nature of his spirit. Coming forth from the primordial, eternal, divine Logos we have the being of the logos of man, and a primordial and essential unity of both logos realities. It is to this context that the incarnate Logos in the person of Jesus Christ appears.

Since there is a sense in which all finite spirits in the world are incarnations of God and as such, bearers of the Logos, Rahner must clarify what is meant by the term, and the reality, 'God became man', (or more precisely 'the word of God became man').

a) The Word of God became man

Rahner states:

"Beginning as early as the prologue of John's Gospel, Christian faith says that the word of God became flesh, became man. (Jn 1:14)"³³

There is immediately, in this reality, the closest association between the divine Logos and man. There is also the concept of God 'becoming something'. The question; what does it mean that God became man? is perhaps the vital question of the incarnation. Man is something that God can become, this says a lot about the nature of man, and it is a revelation of the reality of a God who according to classical theism, is immutable. Rahner takes the doctrine of God's immutability on board, and therefore, is left with the problem of an immutable reality which can change into something. However, we are only concerned here with two aspects:

- i) The nature of man which the divine logos becomes, and
- ii) The Logos which can become.

³² *Hearers of the Word* - Karl Rahner, p.51 See also note 1 chapter 6

³³ *Foundations of Christian Faith* - Karl Rahner, p.215

i) The nature of man which the divine Logos becomes

Rahner understands the subject and the predicate of the statement 'the Logos became man' to be mutually revealing, he states:

"For it is precisely in this statement that we understand for the first time what the Word of God really means ... because it is from the statement: God has offered himself to us in immediacy precisely in history and as a man, that we grasp that God, the incomprehensible abyss whom we call Father, really has a Logos, that is, really has the possibility of offering his very own self to us in history."³⁴

The nature of the Logos is itself the possibility of incarnation in human history. Human nature is also seen as being the able bearer of the divine Logos. Rahner is arguing that through the word becoming man we are able to define human nature, as we are able in some way to define God, in respect of His taking the finitude upon Himself.

The definition of human nature can not be achieved apart from God. Such a definition is impossible, Rahner states: "He is, as we could readily 'define' him, that indefinability which is conscious of itself."³⁵ This consciousness is, in nature, a universal orientation towards God:

"When we have said everything which can be expressed about ourselves which is definable and calculable, we have not yet said anything about ourselves unless in all that is said we have also included that we are beings who are oriented towards God who is incomprehensible."³⁶

Our whole existence is constituted by our relationship with God in respect of this necessary orientation which is human nature. All men must merely accept or reject the orientation, this acceptance or rejection is what it means to exist. The mystery of God whom all are oriented towards is at the same time the mystery of ourselves, acceptance or rejection of this double mystery is the very act of our existence. We are also a transcendent orientation and in the nature

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Op. Cit. p.216

³⁶ Ibid.

of our transcendence God's existence and ours come together. Human nature is therefore defined as:

"...the poor, questioning and in itself empty orientation towards the abiding mystery whom we call God."³⁷

Whilst this orientation is poor and empty it is also potentially limitless, the finite has an infinite potential in respect of its orientation towards the infinite mystery of fullness. It can be seen then, that the divine Logos can assume this empty potentially infinite orientation as it is prepared by God in respect of the eventuality of such an assumption. Humanity in its totality then is an obediential for the hypostatic union. It is summed up as that which can be assumed by the person of God.

"...anyone who understands that it is only a spiritual and personal reality that can be assumed by God... knows that this obediential potency cannot be an individual potency alongside other potencies in the structure of human being, but rather is objectively identical with man's essence."³⁸

In light of this kind of thinking human nature itself must receive the logos as 'the highest instance' in its own actualisation. Indeed, human nature is dependent on such an assumption (by the divine logos) in order to be meaningful. The incarnation 'is' the meaning of human nature therefore, a doctrine of anonymous Christianity, as a universal primordial reality, follows from the essence of assumed human nature, whether potentially or actually.

ii) The Logos which can become

The question here is: Why did the Logos become man? The answer is, that the Logos is God's immanent self expression to that which he created as other than Himself. It is God's reality going out of itself to assume the created reality as its own:

"The immanent self-expression of God in its eternal fullness is the condition which makes possible God's self-expression outwards and

³⁷ Op. Cit. p.217

³⁸ Op. Cit. p.218

outside of himself, and the latter is the identical revelation of the former."³⁹

"If this God expresses his very own self into the emptiness of what is not God, then this expression is the outward expression of his immanent word."⁴⁰

It seems that the point to human being is that the divine Logos 'will', as the self-expression of God, assume it; therefore, the Logos is itself the point and meaning of created human life. However, Rahner does state that there could have been men apart from the divine Logos, if this were not so there would be no free grace in the incarnation. God's self communication by incarnation would not be free if the possibility of the assumption of human nature was not open in that it may not necessarily happen. He argues that: "there can be the lesser without the greater".⁴¹ However, the greater is always the condition for the possibility of the lesser.

"... there could be men, that is the lesser, even if the Logos had not himself become a man. But we can and have to say nevertheless: the possibility that there be men is grounded in the greater, more comprehensive and more radical possibility of God to express himself in the Logos which becomes a creature."⁴²

It must be understood that the divine Logos is distinct from the human logos, and He is not just one who speaks words of God. If this were so he would be no different than some other prophet. Rahner states that:

"The man Jesus must be the self-revelation of God through who he is and not only through his words, and this he really cannot be if precisely this humanity were not the expression of God."⁴³

And further:

"This is not contradicted by the fact that there are also other men, namely we ourselves, who are not this self-expression of God becoming other. For 'what' he is as the self-expression of the Logos

³⁹ Op. Cit. p.223

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Op. Cit. p.224

and 'what' we are is the same. We call it 'human nature'. But the unbridgable difference is constituted by the fact that this 'what' in him is spoken as his self-expression, and this is not the case with us."⁴⁴

9.3 Christ in non-Christian religions

Arising from the presupposition that all are saved, with the exception of culpable atheists, through Jesus Christ and not apart from Him, it follows that Christ must be in some way present in other religions.

All that is said above concerning implicit Christianity applies in the case of the individuals of other religions, but the question here is: How can Christ be present and operative in other religions themselves? Rahner's answer is that He is present in individual non-Christian believers and hence in non-Christian religions through His Spirit. All faith including the faith of non-Christian believers is of the Holy Spirit:

"If there can be a faith which is creative of salvation among non-Christians ... then it is to be taken for granted that this faith is made possible and is based upon the supernatural grace of the Spirit. And this is the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son, so that as the Spirit of the eternal Logos he can and must be called at least in this sense, the Spirit of Christ."⁴⁵

We have then a universal operation of the Holy Spirit in every place and time, both within and outwith explicit Christianity. The Spirit has been communicated to the whole world and is universally efficacious in His salvific power. However, "The Spirit who has been communicated to the world, has himself... an intrinsic relation to Jesus Christ."⁴⁶

"Insofar as this Spirit always and everywhere brings justifying faith, this faith is always and everywhere and from the outset a faith which

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Op. Cit. p.316

⁴⁶ Op. Cit. p.318

comes to be in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. In this Spirit of his he is present and operative in all faith."⁴⁷

The vital thing to note, in Rahner's position here, is that the Spirit of Christ is not operative in the institutions of the other, non-Christian religions, which might of themselves be quite perverse, but in the individual believer who has some form of faith. The Spirit through this implicit faith brings to bear the merits of the incarnation the death and the resurrection of God in Christ; in respect of the justification of this believer, who may be believing in an erroneous knowledge of God. Rahner says, concerning the faith of this non-Christian believer: "Jesus Christ is always and everywhere present in justifying faith because this faith is always and everywhere the searching memory of the absolute saviour."⁴⁸ Rahner has in mind here something like Plato's concept of *anemnesis* whereby one remembers what one already implicitly knows. The searching memory constitutes the faith of non-Christian believers. Plainly speaking the searching memory constitutes an attitude of expectation and of searching and hoping, which is understood by Rahner as constituting an implicit though saving faith. The question which arises here is: Does the ritual and dogma of the non-Christian religion not constitute a serious distraction to this searching, hoping, memory? Is there no negative force which can act against this intrinsic a-priori reality of implicit faith in Christ?

It appears that to be human is to be oriented towards God and there is no possibility, apart from the extreme case of culpable atheism, of any other direction of orientation. Even negative and perverse religious rites cannot re-orientate the participant. It is seen that fallen and sinful human nature, which Rahner acknowledges, does not, in any essential way, count against this position.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

10.1 - The Case for Religious Pluralism

The basis of the case for the validity of religious pluralism in respect of the theologies of John Macquarrie and Karl Rahner has been outlined and discussed in chapters 2 - 9. Both Theologians work primarily within an ontological framework, developing existentially and epistemologically from this root, and from within this context. Religious pluralism arises, essentially and necessarily, from the general and universal revelation of Being, to the beings (more correctly, human beings); 'creational' revelation of this nature, although distinct in both theologies, is an essential unity of ontological, existential and epistemic elements. Such a revelation produces a kind of universal faith, explicit or implicit, which becomes particular and concrete, in Macquarrie's understanding, through particular (given) symbols, and in Rahner's understanding, through individual, existential epistemic activity. Pluralism is a function of the particular, historic expression of the universal source and ground, which is given facility through 'particular' symbols, in Macquarrie's case, and 'anonymous faith', in Rahner's case.

It is our view that the theologies of both thinkers shed very considerable light on the reality of religious pluralism, which by its very nature is a confusing entity. However, whilst it must be conceded that these distinct theologies are built in the form of brilliant and apparently consistent schemas, they possess, what we may term, serious ambiguities, in respect of the precise nature of the

transition from general to particular; and most especially in respect of 'historical revelation'. Such ambiguities, which are implicit within a large part of the preceding discussion, will be more fully articulated in the latter end of this chapter. We begin, however, with a review of the positions of both Macquarrie and Rahner, in respect of religious pluralism.

10.1.1 Macquarrie's view of Religious Pluralism

Macquarrie's whole theological development, which in our view is in the form of a religious apologetic, (perhaps in similar spirit to that of Schleiermacher) appears to be meticulously designed to accommodate the strongest positive justification and validity of religious pluralism. In this light it should be seen that Macquarrie is essentially a religious apologist and not a Christian apologist, and therefore his spirited defence is not primarily of Christianity but of all religions (including Christianity). Macquarrie's domain is the phenomenon of religion itself and therefore he rejects, almost of hand, the critics of religion; e.g. Barth, Bonhoeffer, Brunner, Robinson, and in this respect, to a lesser extent, Bultmann¹. Clearly Some of Macquarrie's criticisms of the above are well founded. It is also clear, however, that more often than not, Macquarrie's defence of 'religion in general', is at the (definitive) expense of 'religion in particular'; and most especially of the Christian faith. Indeed, from the point of view of the Christian Tradition, Macquarrie is often seen to be reductionist.

Before proceeding with the statement of Macquarrie's view of religious pluralism which we will discuss under the headings of a) Factors of diversity and b) Saviour figures, it is helpful to list a few relevant passages from his writings:

"The divine initiative in revelation and grace would seem to be present in some form in all religion, and is certainly not peculiar to Christianity."²

¹ For a discussion on this aspect see *Principles of Christian Theology* 2nd ed p153 - 161

² Op. Cit. p.149

"The essence of religion ...is the self-manifestation of Being as this is received and appropriated in the life of faith. We have assumed (in agreement with Catholic Christian teaching) that in all religion there is some genuine knowledge of God, genuine revelation and genuine grace, and we have turned away from the view (held especially by such Protestant theologians as Calvin and Barth) that there is no genuine knowledge of God outside of the Christian revelation."³

"...we can also see that there is an underlying unity, in that all of the religions stem from Being's self-manifestation as this is received in faith."⁴

"..all religions can be seen as variations on a fundamental theme the impinging of Holy Being upon the Being of man."⁵

"The catholic view recognises a genuine knowledge of God in the non-Christian religions, while the extreme Protestant view sees in them only error and idolatry. The two series or types make it clear that the Christian faith is continuous with non-Christian faiths, not discontinuous as Barth claims, and that there is no one exclusive revelation of God. We therefore utterly reject the view that one religion is true and all the rest false."⁶

a) Factors in religious diversity

Macquarrie offers three factors which account for the diversity of religions. The three factors constitute his answer to the necessary question: "why, if all religion flows from the self-giving of the one God, has he been so differently represented and worshipped in the multitudinous faiths of mankind?"⁷ The three factors are:

- i) The variation of symbolism
- ii) Psychology of the individual group
- iii) Variation in Being's own self-disclosure.

³ Op. Cit. p.161f

⁴ Op. Cit. p.164

⁵ Op. Cit. p.170

⁶ Op. Cit. p.171

⁷ Op. Cit. p.162

i) The variation of symbolism⁸

Essentially Macquarrie is concerned with what he calls 'symbols of Being' these are the most significant entities which have grown up or developed from within a particular culture. These symbols of the ultimate existence of a particular culture may be natural, for example; the sun, historical; for example, some great event, or even personal; perhaps a hero figure. When ultimate Being, approaches an individual in grace and revelation, its approach and manifestation is always indirect; and it follows that the medium of revelation will be the particular 'ultimate' symbols which are available in and through the particular cultural context. Macquarrie considers that some of these intermediate symbols are more adequate than others as bearers of, or in respect of the ability to focus, the revelation of Being, and some have greater potential for development than others. The highest order of symbols, in respect of adequacy, are human persons, perhaps followed by the objects which they use as instruments.

God's self revelation is mediated and understood in and through these particular symbols which are available within the particular culture yet chosen by God in the revelatory encounter. Whilst the particular symbols already exist as significant to the particular culture, they are seen in a new way as they manifest Being. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to consider that the hermeneutic activity in respect of these existing cultural symbols, which are now symbols of the self-revelation of Holy Being, is very much influenced by the existing culture, and derives from the strands of meaning and significance of the particular, cultural world view. To this existing scenario is added the new vision of the experience of the Holy, in numinous encounter; this coincidence of lesser and greater realities results in a particular, diverse, world religion with particular, diverse and distinct, tenets and rituals.

Macquarrie states:

"The variation of symbols goes a long way towards explaining not only the diversity of religions but also many of the distortions and perversions. All symbols, we have seen, have a paradoxical

⁸ Symbolism has, of course, already been fully discussed in Chapter 8

character and need to be both affirmed and denied. Where inadequate symbols are simply affirmed distortion takes place."⁹

The diversity of religions then, is largely due to, and directly proportional to, the diversity of symbols. What Macquarrie means, in respect of possible distortions and perversions, is that all symbols, however adequate, fall short, to some degree, of the great mystery of Being, therefore they must be denied to this degree. If they are not denied but rather absolutely affirmed they become idols and the religion becomes perverse.

Macquarrie argues that there is no such thing as an absolute or 'intrinsic' symbol of Being¹⁰, which means in effect, that if any religion does not deny its own symbols of revelation, as being less than absolute in themselves, and remains open to the possibilities of revelation through the symbols of another religion, it is perverse and not authentic. This (major) facet of Macquarrie's case, in itself effects a reductionist dynamic in respect of the validity of exclusivism and any exclusive truth claim. Exclusivism is written off, as a perversion and religious universalism is both demanded and secured. We have argued in chapter 8 for the validity and integrity of intrinsic symbols. If our case is accepted, then Macquarrie's argument in respect of the diversity of symbols is severely weakened.

ii) Psychology of the particular group

"Persons brought up within the same religious community, nurtured on the same classic revelation (primordial revelation) and the symbols in which it has found expression, may nevertheless respond in diverse ways, though all of these may be responses of faith. Religion, and indeed faith too, include the human response, and since no two human beings are completely alike, the nature of the response varies."¹¹

This factor, which accounts for pluralism within particular religions as well as the pluralism of religions itself, is a function of the human constitution in respect of the uniqueness of persons and therefore of the personal psychology

⁹ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.162

¹⁰ See chapter 8 for discussion concerning 'intrinsic symbols'.

¹¹ *Principles of Christian Theology* - John Macquarrie p.163

of individuals within a cultural group. Beyond individual psychology, Macquarrie considers the possibility of a common (group) psychology: "Perhaps there is also a psychology of groups, whole nations or races tending to have certain mental or emotional characteristics... So while major historical faiths may contain all kinds of variations due to individual differences, there may never the less be a kind of normative position which is typical of the group as a whole."¹²

Macquarrie claims here, that the response of faith is a highly subjective and individual reality, therefore, differences in doctrine and praxis are inevitably. There can exist, however, the entity of a normative group psychology, deriving from particular social and cultural forces. The limiting case of this pluralistic differentiation, is of course, the absolutization, exclusivism, and therefore claimed superiority of any one group, culture or religion. This is abhorred by Macquarrie as a perversion of true religion, which according to him, can only be universal.

iii) Variation in Being's own self-disclosure

By the term; 'variation in Being's self-disclosure', Macquarrie does not mean any form of special revelation, rather, he means that there are variations in God's initiative of disclosing Himself; for example there are ages of secularism where God seems to be silent or removed, and there are other ages where God's presence is abundantly and overwhelmingly clear. However the variation in Being's initiative is also considered as it's particular choice of symbols. Thus Macquarrie draws the conclusion that the variation in symbolism is by large degree a function of the free choice of God in revelation. Such a view requires the element of the real transcendence of Being and indeed a history of this transcendence in relation to the beings. In Macquarrie's argument that history belongs to Being, and not Being to history, however, we are drawn back to the immanence of Being-in-process. Nonetheless, the free initiatory choice of Being in respect of the revelatory encounters and their particular symbols, demonstrates the free and sovereign activity of Being (God) in some form of history of revelation. Since all genuine primordial revelations are considered to

¹² Ibid.

be equally valid, it follows that there must exist a pluralistic expression and form of manifestation of the universal reality.

b) Saviour figures

The prophets, who receive primordial revelation, become saviour figures to the particular culture of their origin. They themselves become personal symbols, though, according to Macquarrie, not equally. The difference, however, is one of degree and not nature. By degree, some religions founded by these saviour figures are greater and more authentic than others.

In Macquarrie's view all genuine world religions have in common two essential elements which represent the transcendent and the immanent realities. The transcendent element is the 'holy reality' and the immanent element is a human figure who has a special relationship with the holy reality. The human representative is able to transcend his humanity in order to reach the transcendent 'holy reality', and in this way becomes a saviour of others by being a bridge between the two realities. The saviour figure teaches humanity the nature of the holy, he communicates the holy to the culture or group of his own origins (and perhaps beyond). In discussing the two elements Macquarrie states:

"The first is the recognition of what I shall call a 'holy reality', in some cases the holy reality may be called God, but this particular word suggests a personal being, and in some religions the holy reality is conceived of as an impersonal Absolute... The second characteristic which we find in virtually all the world religions is a human figure who stands in a special relation to the holy reality. Perhaps this human figure has taught about the holy reality, or has brought some communication from the holy reality. Here I have in mind such figures as Buddha, Jesus, Moses, Krishna and so on."¹³

All of the prophets or founders of world religions mediate an understanding of 'Holy Being' to their followers. As personal recipients of primordial revelation, they themselves become mediators of that revelation to others. In a sense then, they alone stand between the two realities of God and man, therefore they

¹³ *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* - John Macquarrie p.418

themselves are the most adequate symbols of the greater to the lesser. This bivalency of two realities is forged into a unity in respect of the prophet's own subjective consciousness, before being issued forth to the ordinary realm of human existence. Clearly such special individuals are, necessarily, heavily involved in interpretative activity in terms of the precise relationship of the two realities; the particular 'lesser reality' being the culture and language of the individual prophet. Indeed theirs is the hermeneutic task concerning the great supramundane mystery and its translation, through symbol, to the mundane reality. There is, by this way of thinking, no such entity as absolute truth or universally intrinsic symbols, rather there exists, by necessity of the above factors, a relativism which is the incubator and perpetuator of religious pluralism. Religious pluralism, in this view, is seen as a healthy, natural and of course valid reality which renders any form of religious exclusivism to be unhealthy and perverse.

It must be stressed again that Macquarrie is not claiming that all of the saviour figures, or prophets, are equal, it will be seen that he considers Jesus to be of superior degree to all others. However, He is not of a different nature to them or indeed to any man; the difference between Jesus and other men and other saviours is that of degree and not quality. He did not begin life as a being of higher order but was a sinner, as other men. By personal effort He achieved a higher order of existence even up to the point of deification. Macquarrie states:

"The difference between Jesus Christ and other human beings including the saviour figures, is a difference within humanity. They have all shared that plastic raw material of the spirit that we call human nature, and each has fashioned it as he or she has been able."¹⁴

Macquarrie considers that in the aggregate of the saviour figures: "there is concentrated for us the greatest spiritual striving and aspirations that have been known on earth."¹⁵ Further:

"...all of these saviour figures were mediators of grace. We have seen what this means in the case of Jesus Christ, yet these others too

¹⁴ Op. Cit. p.420

¹⁵ Ibid.

were emissaries of Holy Being. They too had given themselves up to the service of a divine reality, who might work in them and through them for the lifting up of all creatures upon earth."¹⁶

Aggregately and pluralistically, (and never exclusively) mankind is lifted, or saved, from inauthentic to authentic life. Clearly if such an aggregate of grace is pluralistically effective it must be universally relevant to some, essential, degree. The question remains; how can the cross of Christ or the teachings of Mohammed be universally available and relevant to all of mankind? And how can the great number of exclusivist truth claims which are in direct contradiction to each other be resolved? For example Christians claim that Christ is the only begotten Son of God, and Muslims claim that 'God has no Son!' In this contradiction the essence of one religion is held to be the antithesis (and a blasphemy) of the other.

10.1.2 Rahner's view of religious pluralism

The basis of Rahner's religious pluralism is his concept of anonymous Christianity, as discussed in chapter 9. This is interwoven with the Roman Catholic position (as referred to by Macquarrie) since Vatican 2. According to Rahner the knowledge of God is a universal phenomenon in terms of the essential human constitution, the complimentary universal reality, concerning the will of God, is for the salvation of all men. These two aspects are essential ingredients of God's sovereign grace which is effected through the revelatory nature of (finite) human spirit; which is a quality of 'self-presence', through the 'luminosity of being' which derives from the essential unity of knowledge and being. All men, by virtue of their constitution as finite spirits, are necessarily oriented towards this grace of God and therefore towards God Himself; such orientation is actualised in the ordinary a-posteriori, process of growing in knowledge. Since knowledge and being are equated growing in the one is, at the same time, growing in the other. The condition of such growth is the pre-concept, and the route of such growth is the asking of metaphysical questions, which are essentially questions about Being. All knowledge is, at least implicit and at most explicit, knowledge of Christ, and the faith which demands self-

¹⁶ Ibid.

affirmation, is at the same time, implicit, saving faith in Christ. Therefore, all, apart from culpable atheists, are anonymous or implicit Christians; and it follows that all religions are systems of anonymous Christianity, to some degree and form. It also follows that all ideologies and philosophies are included in a wider all encompassing pluralism which has an implicit (though intrinsic) relationship with Christianity. The Christian world view and understanding of existence is an elevated higher order amongst a pluralistic existentiality.

a) Rahner's Four Theses - concerning non-Christian religions

In discussing what he calls 'open Catholicism', which is a new attitude towards the pluralism of religions and ideologies (powers) which have a different outlook on the world, Rahner states of 'pluralism':

"Pluralism is meant here as a fact which ought to be thought about and one which, without denying that - in part at least - it should not exist at all, should be incorporated once more from a more elevated viewpoint into the totality and unity of the Christian understanding of human existence."¹⁷

Rahner is referring to the pluralistic nature of modern life, but most particularly he is referring to religious pluralism. By religious pluralism he means the diversity of world religions and not the pluralism of Christian denominations. Rahner does, however, understand the pluralism of other religions as, in some part, a threat to Christianity, indeed there are two major threats to Christianity, which understands itself as 'the' religion "the one and only valid revelation of the one living God."¹⁸ These are; the pluralism of other world religions and 'the denial of religion in general'. Rahner states:

"This denial, organised on the basis of a state, represents itself as the religion of the future - as the decided, absolute secularisation of human existence excluding all mystery."¹⁹

¹⁷ *Theological Investigations* - Karl Rahner, vol 5 Darton Longman & Todd 1966, Trans Karl H Kruger p.115

¹⁸ *Op. Cit.* p.116

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

This new religion, which is 'the denial of religion', must be considered as a vital part of the pluralistic scenario facing Christianity, and within which Christianity has its being. Perhaps this negative religion which, according to Macquarrie's definition of a religion, would be an anti religion, is a key factor in any philosophy or theology of religious pluralism. A full blown doctrine of pluralism would have to accept 'the religion of denial' as an equal partner in a unity of diversity in respect of existential reality. This factor alone could be seen as a factor of major inconsistency which militates against the whole-scale acceptance of the validity and positivity of pluralistic belief/faith systems.

In any event Rahner groups all world religions together as forming a unity based on the common enemy of the denial of religion (which is a widespread secularisation of society). Yet he sees the fact of a pluralism of religion, even after two thousand years of Christian missionary activity as the greatest scandal for Christianity. The absolute claim of the Christian faith must now be in question, what is called for, according to Rahner, is "a Catholic dogmatic interpretation of the non-Christian religions"²⁰. Rahner proposes his dogmatic interpretation under four theses;

i) First Thesis:

This thesis represents the basis, in the Christian faith, of the theological understanding of other religions. The thesis states:

"Christianity understands itself as the absolute religion, intended for all men, which cannot recognise any other religion beside itself as of equal right."²¹

This follows from Christianity's view that valid and lawful religion does not follow from man's self interpretation of his world and existence, rather, it follows from the sovereign free action of God in revealing Himself to man:

"Valid and lawful religion for Christianity is rather God's action on men, God's free self-revelation by communicating himself to man. It is God's relationship to men, freely instituted by God himself and revealed by God in this institution. This relationship of God to man

²⁰ Op. Cit. p.117

²¹ Op. cit. p.118

is basically the same for all men, because it rests on the Incarnation, death and resurrection of the one Word of God become flesh. Christianity is God's own interpretation in his Word of this relationship of God to man founded in Christ by God himself."²²

It follows, from this basis, that Christianity has the right to enter into the existential reality of other religions, and judge them by its own reality and perspectives; and thus bring them into question. Its claim to absolute truth, based on the revelation of the Incarnate Word, is its valid and adequate criterion of judgement. It would appear from this thesis that there could be no tenable case for the openness of Christianity towards other religions apart from that of judging them as invalid and unlawful. Yet Rahner can agree all of the above and at the same time begin to construct a case for the positive reality of religious pluralism. He begins, still in the place of his first thesis, by a discussion of the first element of his argument, which is - chronology.

To be an absolute religion Christianity would have to have had a pre-history going right back to the beginning of humanity; and it has, or at least it lays claim to its origins in true Judaism and takes the history of Israel as its own. Yet the claim goes further back than Abraham, to Adam the first man. Adam was the first 'type' of Christ. However "the Christian religion had a beginning in history; it did not always exist but began at a point in time".²³

"It has not always and everywhere been the way of salvation for men - at least not in its historically tangible ecclesio-sociological constitution and in the reflex fruition of God's saving history in, and in view of, Christ. As a historical quantity Christianity has, therefore a temporal and spatial starting point in Jesus of Nazereth and in the saving event of the unique Cross and the empty tomb in Jerusalem."²⁴

Rahner argues that this absolute religion must come to men in an historical way, confronting them as the only valid religion. There is therefore a 'moment' when this confrontation takes place, the question is; is the moment of this existential demand of Christianity (the absolute religion), in historical tangible form, the same chronological moment for all men? If not, does this moment

²² Ibid.

²³ Op. Cit. p.119

²⁴ Ibid.

have, itself, a history? What Rahner is getting at here is the possibility of the existential demand of the absolute religion as existing in all periods of time before the Christ event (incarnation to resurrection). The 'moment' before the tangible historical manifestation of the absolute religion in Christianity, is somehow at the same time, an event in the pre-history of Christianity and suspended, in some way, until fulfilled in the historically tangible' moment. We have as it were, a kind of floating moment over all histories and cultures, and as such we must remain open as to the question of the precise point of the 'obligations demand' on men. The destiny of the 'moment' in all histories and cultures is of course the absolute religion in tangible form, which is Christianity, that much is categoric.

"From this there follows a deliberately differentiated understanding of our first thesis: we maintain positively only that, as regards destination, Christianity is the absolute and hence the only religion for all men. We leave it, however, an open question (at least in principle) at what exact point in time the absolute obligation of the Christian religion has in fact come into effect for every man and culture, even in the sense of the objective obligation of such a demand."²⁵

The second thesis follows on from this point.

ii) Second Thesis:

"Until the moment when the gospel really enters into the historic situation of an individual, a non-Christian religion does not merely contain elements of a natural knowledge of God, elements, moreover, mixed up with human depravity which is the result of original sin and later aberrations. It contains also supernatural elements arising out of the grace which is given to men as a gratuitous gift on account of Christ. For this reason a non-Christian religion can be recognised as a lawful religion without thereby denying the error and depravity contained in it."²⁶

This, of course, is an argument arising from 'anonymous Christianity', or more properly 'anonymous Christians', because it rests on the supernatural grace

²⁵ Op. Cit. p.120

²⁶ Op. Cit. p.121

given to individuals and not any particular non-Christian religion. The whole power of the case for a particular non-Christian religion's validity is that it contains anonymous Christians, therefore the religion itself can be, to a relative degree, in error and depraved.

Rahner's second thesis is not to be taken as advocating an unqualified legitimization of all non-Christian religions for all time. His argument is that they are lawful only up to the point when the Christian gospel really enters into their actual, historical, life situation. At this point their error would, or should, be seen. This precise 'moment' of entry however is not certain in respect of the precise point at which the moment occurs therefore it must remain an open question. Therefore the status of the non-Christian religion as being lawful or unlawful also must remain open. We need, at this stage, to define a lawful religion as Rahner understands it:

"A lawful religion means here an institutional religion whose 'use' by man at a certain period can be regarded on the whole as a positive means of gaining the right relationship to God and thus for the attaining of salvation, a means which is therefore positively included in God's plan of salvation."²⁷

The extent of this lawfulness is that a non-Christian religion is lawful only up to the point in which it comes into real historical contact with Christianity.

"We are here concerned with dogmatic theology and so can merely repeat the universal and unqualified verdict as to the unlawfulness of the non-Christian religions right from the moment when they come into real and historically powerful contact with Christianity (and at first only thus!)."²⁸

The two other factors in this thesis are the apparently 'a-priori' supernatural grace filled elements in non-Christian religions and the issue that the containing of error and depravity in a religion does not necessarily render it unlawful. The feature of God's absolute, free sovereignty rates high in Rahner's perspective in this area, to the extent of an almost universal predestinarian position. The burning presupposition is, as always for Rahner, God's will and serious determination that all men shall be saved. Every man who comes into the

²⁷ Op. Cit. p.125

²⁸ Op. Cit. p.122

world is then automatically pursued by God's supernatural grace. The serious salvific will of God towards all men is won by Christ, yet this:

"...is a salvation intended for those millions upon millions of men who lived before Christ - and also for those who lived after Christ - in Nations, cultures and epochs of a very wide range which were still completely shut of from the viewpoint of those living in the light of the New Testament."²⁹

Rahner is saying then, that in light of this supernatural salvific grace "every human being is truly exposed to the influence of divine, supernatural grace which offers an interior union with God"³⁰. This powerful influence exists regardless of the choice of the individual to accept or reject it.

There exists then a predestination which does seem to militate against man's real freedom to choose or reject God which Rahner seems to uphold strongly in other places throughout his theology, he states:

"It is furthermore impossible to think that this offer of supernatural, divinizing grace made to all men on account of the universal salvific purpose of God, should in general (prescinding from the relatively few exceptions) remain ineffective in most cases on account of personal guilt of the individual... we do have every reason for thinking optimistically of God and his salvific will which is more powerful than the extremely limited stupidity and evil mindedness of men."³¹

And further:

"Christ and his salvation are not simply one of two possibilities offering themselves to man's free choice; they are the deed of God which bursts open and redeems the false choice of man by overtaking it."³²

Of course, it is expected that the great many will freely accept God's salvation in Christ, but even in these cases it is grace that has won the victory, and not man of himself. Grace is at work in all men, even evil, primitive, unenlightened

²⁹ Op. Cit. p.123

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Op. Cit. p.124

and apathetic men. The supernatural grace which is powerfully at work in these men is also the salvific grace in Christ. Where sin already existed, says Rahner, grace came in superabundance. The nature of this grace, in its human interaction, is that whenever an individual makes a moral decision in his life this action is supernaturally elevated to the degree of a saving act. This interaction reflects the sovereign will of God in actual saving efficacy. The very ability to make a moral choice is supernatural. The right decision of human freedom is itself a gift from God.

We see again in all of these deliberations Rahner's strong emphasis on the 'individuals' within religions, Nations, cultures and epochs, and not the real moral status of the particular religion itself (apart from Christianity). However, there are several factors which link the individual (anonymous Christian) with the concrete form of a (any) religion. Essentially salvation must take place in a concrete form, just as supernatural grace must show itself and become a formative factor in the concrete. That concretisation must be in the social form and nature of a religion. Religion must be practised in a social form even though man's relationship with God is both individual and interior in reality. Concerning those who are outside of Christianity:

"If one were to expect from someone who lives outside the Christian religion that he should have exercised his, genuine saving relationship to God absolutely outside the religion which society offered him, then such a conception would turn religion into something intangibly interior, into something which is always and everywhere performed only indirectly."³³

Rahner considers that even the church would have no necessity or justification to exist if religion was singly an interior intangible reality. But man, possessing a social nature, could not be thought of as achieving and indeed possessing a saving relationship with God outside of society and community. Therefore it follows that God must include in his salvific plan the use of other religions whereby the Anonymous Christian, possessing implicit faith, can realise a concrete and tangible form of his relationship with God. In this sense non-Christian religions are legitimised as being included in the salvific will and purpose of God, and this, even in spite of their degree of error and depravity.

³³ Op. Cit. p.128f

Moving on to the second factor; that the degree of error and depravity in a non-Christian religion (or indeed the Christian religion itself in all of its diverse forms) does not render the religion to be unlawful. It must be seen that even though there are supernatural grace filled elements in non-Christian religions, this does not mean that these religions do not include aberrations which are both theoretically and practically harmful. Indeed such is always the case, to a greater or lesser degree, in a religion which is less than absolute. Rahner's case for the lawfulness of such religions is based loosely on the impurities and depravations which existed in Israel of the Old Testament. Even including these depravations and errors Israel was still held to be a lawful religion. Rahner claims that there was no objective criterion within the Old Testament religion for judging truth or falsehood, this, he states, was left to the consciences of the individuals. In the last analysis it was down to the individual to judge whether there were corruptions and moral errors in his religion.

Clearly there were corruptions in Israel as there are corruptions in Christianity, indeed the case is that any human society whether in accordance with the will of God or not will include corrupt elements.

"Hence it cannot be a part of the notion of a lawful religion ... that it should be free from corruption, error and objective moral wrong in the concrete form of its appearance, or that it should become the final court of appeal for the individual to enable the individual to differentiate clearly and with certainty between the elements willed and instituted by God and those which are merely human and corrupt... We must therefore rid ourselves of the prejudice that we can face a non-Christian religion with the dilemma that it must either come from God in everything it contains, and thus corresponds to God's will, or be simply a purely human construction."³⁴

And further:

"And since it does not at all belong to the notion of a lawful religion intended by God for man as something positively salvific that it should be pure and positively willed by God in all its elements, such a religion can be called an absolutely legitimate religion for the person concerned. That which God has intended as salvation for him reached him... in the concrete religion of his actual realm of existence and historical condition, but this fact did not deprive him

³⁴ Op. Cit. p.127

of the right and limited possibility to criticise and to heed impulses of religious reform which by God's providence kept on recurring within such a religion."³⁵

The non-Christian religions are considered to be valid, even including their internal corrupt elements, in so far as they are used by God as the available means of salvation for anonymous Christians. They are still, however, considered to be corrupt and in serious error from within themselves. Their validity and utilisation as a substitute for explicit Christianity, in the last analysis, is not considered by Rahner to be either normative or even desirable. Such a doctrine follows from the sovereign universal salvific will of God and the social nature of man; in recognition of the fact that the real entry of the explicit Christian Gospel into the religious and cultural history of largely non-Christian regions has either not yet actually happened or at least must remain an open question.

Theses three and four may be merely stated, as the greater part of Rahner's case for religious pluralism lies in theses one and two.

iii) Third Thesis

"If the second thesis is correct, then Christianity does not simply confront the member of an extra Christian religion as a mere non-Christian but as someone who can and must already be regarded in this or that respect as an anonymous Christian."³⁶

iv) Fourth Thesis

"It is possibly too much to hope, on the one hand, that the religious pluralism which exists in the concrete situation of Christians will disappear in the foreseeable future. On the other hand it is nevertheless absolutely permissible for the Christian himself to interpret this non-Christianity as Christianity of an anonymous kind which he does still go out to meet as a missionary, seeing it as a

³⁵ Op. Cit. p.129

³⁶ Op. Cit. p.131

world which is to be brought to the explicit consciousness of what already belongs to it as a divine offer."³⁷

10.1.3 Summary

The essential element of 'primordial revelation', in the theologies of both Macquarrie and Rahner, can be seen to be the context of their respective validations of religious pluralism. Indeed 'primordial revelation' which we maintain may be equated with 'creational revelation' is, for the two theologians, both origin and basis of religious pluralism itself. Since primordial revelation, as understood by Macquarrie and Rahner lies on the basis of both ontological and epistemological unity in respect of 'all' mankind and original unity and continuity with God, it can be seen that religious pluralism is a function of ontological unity in diverse expression and epistemic unity in diversity of context.

10.2 - The Relationship of Creational and Historical Revelation

The element of critique in this thesis, whether explicit or implicit is based essentially on the perspective that the positions on religious pluralism taken by Macquarrie and Rahner are rooted and grounded in their respective understanding of the self revelation of God through creational or natural revelation, which as such, is a universal phenomenon; universally available and accessible. Over and against this our contention is that whilst it may be conceded that world religions (with the exception of Judaism and Christianity) may have arisen through this form of revelatory encounter with the immanence of God, Christianity is a product of historical revelation and not primarily creational revelation. Yet it must be said that the distinction between the two types of revelation is not abundantly clear, and in every case that which is particular and special can only be so because of that which is general and universal. Historical revelation, therefore addresses itself to the context of

³⁷ Op. Cit. p.133

creational revelation; in Rahner's terms secondary delimitation is only possible because of primary delimitation, the one being continuous with the other. Nonetheless, we contend that ultimate salvation is an incarnational reality, necessarily involving the incarnation dynamic of the qualitatively different, transcendent God. We endorse the Chalcedonian Christological formula of the coming together of the two natures of transcendent and immanent proportions in the one person of Jesus Christ; in this equation we have available the nature of the incarnation interface between the two opposite poles. In the person of Christ and in the Christ event, we have in (developing) microcosm the principle and means of secondary delimitation in terms of primary delimitation, therefore Rahner can claim that the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity and vice versa³⁸. Historical revelation then, is not only inbreaking it is indwelling and if it is indwelling it is immanent and if it is inbreaking it is transcendent, therefore it is always, and must necessarily always be, ambiguous. This nature of ambiguity must not, however, be allowed to negate the very real dialectical distinction between the two types of revelation. Such a reduction does appear to be a function of both the theologies of Macquarrie and Rahner; although Rahner to a lesser extent.

Our underlying presupposition is that true religion, which must always be ultimate and absolute, is based on the living (faith) synthesis of historical and creational revelation, and not ever one type alone to the exclusion of the other. The reality of the transcendental plane of authentic, and indeed, eternal, life, lies somewhere between the two in both an ontic and noetic dimension which is not merely the transcendence of the immanent reality of appearance (which is, in essence, monistic Pantheism), nor is it a metaphysically constructed immanence of the transcendence, which is the short coming of the classical theism of past ages (this is essentially Deism).

Both Macquarrie and Rahner do not set out from such a synthesis but rather from an anthropological perspective and an anthropocentric focus, therefore, for their respective theologies to retain the power of integrity and consistency as Christian theologies, they must adequately demonstrate, with propriety, the priority of the principle of ontological and existential immanence. In order to do this they must necessarily view ontological transcendence, and the

³⁸ See Rahner's book *The Trinity* for the full discussion on the Rahnerian axiom that the immanent trinity is the economic Trinity and visa versa.

transcendence of God, through the spectacles of ontological and anthropological immanence. This requires some form of reduction of 'historical revelation', as understood by classical theists, in favour of some form of immanentist structure built around 'creational revelation'; termed, Higher Pantheism or panentheism (dialectical theism), in Macquarrie, and transcendental theism, in Rahner.

a) Macquarrie

Revelation for Macquarrie, is a 'bottom up' experience. The vague concept of man, who is on both a quest for meaning and a quest for grace reaching beyond himself to embrace the 'initiative' from beyond can not in any real way be understood as the Transcendence reaching down to man, in all of his (man's) pain and struggle, rather, it is man who reaches out to a passive transcendent Being-in-general. In all of this reaching to the 'more than' in order that he can find meaning which his finitude has lost (because it never really had it) Macquarrie understands the immanence of God, as 'Unitive Being', to be at work in the process of gathering the 'rising-beyond-itself' universe to a new and glorious ontological unity.

It seems to us that this 'reaching-beyond' is itself the dynamic of revelation, as understood and described by Professor Macquarrie, indeed the existential reaching-beyond of man, appears to be, for Macquarrie, God's means of transcending Himself. In this anthropocentric existential the 'depth dimension' as perceived in the primary dialectic of Being and Nothing, strikes man's whole being with the full force of God's immanence in creation. And here we have the dynamic motive of a new religion, which understands itself in the new symbolism which has been unlocked by a powerful psychology, which has burst forth from a bud, into the new bloom of a new species of flower. Such is the nature of being in becoming, which is the underlying basic principle of existential philosophy.

There can be no doubt that a revelation of God has taken place in this primordial experience; which is at the same time transcendental in that it is a reaching beyond man's present limitedness through some form of negation dynamic and perspective. It has reached beyond to the content of new

imaginative powers, which are the gift of this new perspective of the ultimate. The prophet/saviour figures who have come to this experience gain new vision of new horizons of being, through radical ontological metamorphosis. They see the same world in a new and different way, their eyes have been opened to the awful reality of Being-in-total, the all encompassing 'something' which is there, in place of 'nothing'. Being itself has become present and manifest, effecting the ontological radicalisation whereby they now derive meaning for their finite relations in terms of the particular symbolism of the immanent infinitude. The radicalisation, which is the motive force of the rise of a preceding world religion, is completed, in that they themselves become its major symbol. The new ontological and epistemic adequacy which is the product of this (particular) radicalisation becomes the ground and force of the particular religious existential which followers must, to some degree, reproduce, by repetition, in their own lives. In this way the primordial revelation passes to them and is concretised in a religious ritualistic praxis, and in the linguistic medium of a relative theology. One could, without difficulty, maintain the view that Macquarrie had either ignored or effected a total reduction of the concept of historical revelation. However, such a reduction is no more than the resolution of the two types of revelation into two elements of his concept of 'primordial revelation', which correspond to the two stage process of man's attunement and Being's numinous presence by its own initiative as discussed above. Historical revelation, is represented by the initiative of Being in the revelatory encounter and creational revelation is represented by the initiative of man in the attunement process. The precise relationship of these two elements can be defined in terms of Macquarrie's concept of 'letting-be'. The interaction of God's Letting-be and man's letting-be takes place in the revelatory experience; which is nothing more than the all encompassing and pervasive process of divine Letting-be in the first place. The process dynamic of being-in-becoming finds its power through divine energy, in the form of Letting-be, which is highly active in the creation dynamic (which merges with re-creation) but passive in the realm of historical interaction. There is therefore 'no new thing' revealed in primordial revelation. Primordial revelation can be seen as the resolution of the transcendence and immanence dialectic (of historical and creational revelation) through ontological mysticism, which is aesthetic rather than rational. In this, one could be forgiven for thinking that Macquarrie's construction is no more than a restructuring of the essential understanding and theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher in the

clothing of existential and process philosophy. We concede, however, that such a construction, if viewed within the right frame and the right attitude, is both brilliant and edifying for theology as a whole.

b) Rahner

If all men, by virtue of being transcendental spirits, experience in this transcendental realm, the real self-communication of God, there must exist a universal transcendental revelation, which must itself have a history. Such a history is of primordial revelation yet the history of primordial revelation is not historical revelation. Rahner admits the distinction yet seeks to merge historical and transcendental revelation in such a close unity which, in effect, obscures the distinction. A distinction, which Rahner does state clearly, is the distinction between transcendental revelation, which is in terms of human constitution as a personal, finite spirit, and 'natural revelation' which has to do with the inanimate part of creation. Our task here, however, is to consider the relationship between transcendental revelation and its relations and historical (categorical) revelation and its relations.

i) Transcendental revelation, and its relations

Transcendental revelation, as stated above, is essentially primordial revelation. It relates directly to God's creation of finite spirits, therefore it is primarily about the essential nature of persons as spirit beings, and not about corporeal existence as such. Transcendental revelation is a revelation of the word of God in human words, therefore it is a revelation 'in word'. The coincidence of the spirit of man and the spirit of God in man's transcendental realm exists in the word. We are discussing then a self-communication of God to man in terms of man's cognitive constitution (mind). Transcendental revelation is primordial in that it exists as a function of the creation of human mind. The human spirit, so created, is the image of God in the finite realm. Our concern therefore is with the ordinary functioning and functionability of the human cognitive faculty as it engages in normal epistemic activity. Rahner understands this epistemic activity as being possible only in terms of the transcendental reality wherein man is open to God; and further the existence of a pre-concept of Being-in-

total in the human mind, is the necessary condition for the possibility of the reception of explicit knowledge through man's openness. In his life as a finite spirit, oriented towards God, man continually steps beyond the limits of his present knowledge of being and of God; through his transcendental experience whereby he is ever moving towards God in a process of Divinization.

Clearly this process takes place in man's personal history, therefore, since it is a form of revelation of God to man which takes place in the moments of man's personal life, it has itself, a history and it is itself, seen in this way, historical. Yet, as already stated, we are not talking here about historical revelation, which is about objective events, but rather, about a history of man's realisation of primordial revelation in the moments of his cognitive transcendental experience. This could be called a history of man's spiritual luminosity.

God is open to man and man is open to God, this spiritual openness means that the Being of both God and man is essentially luminous. Man's transcendental experience is therefore a journey in the spiritual luminosity of God. This luminosity is the spiritual and cognitive reality of the coincidence of God and man mediated through the word. This effectively means that what man has disclosed to him, in the process of the moments of his ordinary cognitive existence, is a self-communication of God. Rahner understands this, primarily ordinary experience, as possessing a supernatural element whereby God really encounters man, in a self-communication of this kind, within man's subjective history. Rahner sums up transcendental revelation which he terms 'the transcendental aspect of revelation':

"First of all historical and personal revelation in word encounters the inner, spiritual uniqueness of man. God communicates himself to it in his own most proper reality as spiritual luminosity and gives man in his transcendence the possibility to accept this personal self-communication and self-disclosure, to listen and to accept it in faith, hope, and love, in such a way that it is not brought down to the level of the finite creature as such. Rather as a self-disclosure of God in his very self, it can really 'come' into man's midst. For the act of hearing, the acceptance of this self-disclosure and self-communication is borne by God himself through his divinization of man."³⁹

³⁹ *Foundations of the Christian Faith* - Karl Rahner Darton Longman and Todd 1978 trans. William V Dych p.171

This is a process of God, giving of himself in the closeness of man's subjective consciousness. We have in this process the a-posteriori outworking of the coming to fullness of the man's a-priori knowledge of God. In a sense, this could be considered a process of anemnesis, whereby man gains the explicit form of the knowledge which, in total, he already possesses in implicit (pre-conceptual) form.

In this process of what Rahner calls: "the absolute and forgiving closeness"⁴⁰, the supernatural grace of God is at work both justifying and sanctifying. In this forgiving closeness "God gives himself as the inner fulfilment of unlimited transcendental"⁴¹. The man who through faith, hope and love, accepts this closeness in self affirmation, is elevated beyond himself en-route to divinization and beatification. This particular beyond however, which may be understood as God's full answer to man's question, is a subjective beyond and not an objective beyond. The transcendental journey into God is a wholly subjective journey which God has pre determined, though not in such a way as prevents man's free choice of acceptance or rejection. Man's freedom is involved, in this transcendental experience of God, in that he is the interpreter, to himself and others, of this apparently supernatural experience which comes to him. The 'coming to' cannot be thought of as the inbreaking of an object into man's subjective, but rather as the a-posteriori, explicit realisation of that which is already implicitly held.

The history of this transcendental subjectivity is, as it were, a history of man's inner being in relation to God, and this must surely be a real history. But it is a cognitive and perhaps conative history which lacks objective events. Nonetheless it is history of the sequence of inner moments of transcendental experience.

"This inner self-communication of God in grace at the core of a spiritual person is destined for all men, in all of its dimensions, because all are to be integrated into the single salvation of the single total person. Therefore all transcendent subjectivity possesses itself

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Op. Cit. p.172

not for itself alongside history, but in this very history, which is precisely the history of man's transcendence itself."⁴²

Yet where does this history of man's transcendence take place? And precisely what is its relation to the other relevant histories? Salvation history in the world, the history of religion, and world history. Rahner relates these thus:

"As God's real self-communication in grace ... the history of salvation and revelation is coexistent and coextensive with the history of the world and of the human spirit, and hence also with the history of religion. Because there is self-transcendence on man's part through God's ontological and revelatory self-communication, the history of revelation takes place wherever this transcendental history has its history, and hence in the whole history of man."⁴³

It would appear from this that the history of transcendental revelation and the, categorial, history of salvation are respectively the subjective and objective elements of the same overall history of revelation. Therefore creational and historical revelation merge in the context of creational revelation, and therefore historical revelation undergoes a conceptual reduction in this way.

ii) Historical (categorial) revelation, and its relations

Rahner's reduction of 'historical revelation' proper is seen in that historical revelation for him is essentially the categorial mediation of transcendental revelation in the world. It is really the reification of a man's transcendental experience in the historical material of his life in the world. This mediation, in objective external form, is itself revelation, but the heart of this revelation is the inner transcendental revelation which finds expression in the historical life of the individual.

We have then a strange kind of historical revelation which proceeds from man's subjective and breaks into the world as it were. This does appear as a fairly full blown idealism. What is essentially real about historical revelation then, is the transcendental revelation which is its origin and base ground. The events of salvation history proceed in this way from inmost to outmost. There is

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Op. Cit. p.152

primarily no sense of historical revelation as the great acts of God which constitute the events of objective revelation which breaks in to man's subjective, from outmost to inmost. Revelation must be seen as primarily a-priori reaching out to a-posteriori outworking in the world. Rahner states:

"God's self-revelation in the depths of the spiritual person is an a priori determination coming from grace and is itself unreflexive. It is not in itself an objective thematic expression; it is not something known objectively, but something within the realm of consciousness. But none of this means that this a-priori determination exists for itself, and that in this a-priority it could only become the object of a subsequent reflection which would have nothing intrinsically to do with the a-priority of grace as such. Rather God's gift of himself, the gratuitously elevated determination of man, the transcendental revelation is itself always mediated categorically in the world, because all of man's transcendentality has a history. It takes place in the historical material of a person's life, but does not for this reason become simply identical with it."⁴⁴

The only objective element which inbreaks, it does appear, is the interpersonal reality whereby one person talks to another person about his own transcendental revelation. Or of course the more comprehensive reality of the other's historical acts in the concrete manifestation of his particular transcendental revelation as he interprets it. In this way, through interpersonal communication, the transcendental revelation as interpreted in absolute purity by Christ, and externalised in the events of his death and resurrection, passes objectively to others as objective historical revelation. Of course it must be conceded that historical revelation through this interpersonal communication is not universal but special, as it is not made to all men in the respect that it is not necessarily practically available to them. If an interpersonal communication of transcendental revelation is understood as the special revelation of individual persons expressed through their own self-interpretation. Then it seems reasonable to consider that every believer, if not every person, as one who has received and interpreted the revelation of God to him in his subjective consciousness, is a prophet. How then can religion talk of a special category of human beings, specially chosen by God, as prophets? If there is such a special category what distinguishes them from all other recipients of the real self-

⁴⁴ Op. Cit. p.172

communication of God in their transcendental experience? Rahner answers this question:

"In theological terms the 'light of faith' which is offered to every person, and the light by which the 'prophets' grasp and proclaim the divine message from the centre of human existence is the same light, especially since the message can really be heard properly only in the light of faith. Once again this light is nothing else than the divinized subjectivity of man which is constituted by God's self-communication. Of course the notion of the prophetic light implies that historical and concrete configuration of the light of faith in which the transcendental experience of God is 'correctly' mediated by concrete history and its interpretation. Looked at theologically and correctly, the prophet is none other than the believer who can express his transcendental experience of God correctly."⁴⁵

The answer lies in the purity of the self-interpretation of the transcendental self-communication of God. The category of persons who are prophets appear to be capable of a pure and correct objectification of God's revelation in their hermeneutic articulation. The pure and correct objectification of the revelation made to the prophets constitutes special categorial, historical revelation. This is received by others through 'interpersonal communication'.

We have then the introduction of the factor of corruption in respect of the purity of the transcendental self-communication of God to every man. Transcendental revelation is universal in that it is the universal act of God, through supernatural grace, in self-communication to every man's subjective consciousness, but it is not universally received, to the same degree of purity. Its process of concretisation is again, a hermeneutic activity which as, almost overwhelmingly subjective is capable of corruption and falsification. This corruption is no doubt caused through human sinfulness and guilt, yet Rahner conceding this point, minimalises it in that he understands this corrupted transcendental revelation in the form of historical revelation, as a form which is merely provisional en-route, as it were, to being perfected and purified:

"If the transcendental and supernatural experience of God necessarily interprets itself historically, and therefore forms a categorial history of revelation, and if this is present everywhere, then this means that such a history is always a history which is

⁴⁵ Op. Cit. p.159

provisional and not yet completely successful, and which is still seeking itself, and it means especially that it is a history of revelation which is permeated and made obscure and ambiguous by man's guilt in a situation which is co-ordinated by guilt."⁴⁶

Special historical revelation then, is co-ordinated through a guilt situation and therefore is not 'correct' and pure, in the case of the vast majority of persons who are not 'prophets'. Rahner says further of histories of categorial and special revelation that outside of the salvation history of revelation in the Old and New testaments these partial histories (of other religions) are impure and erroneous:

"In a history of guilt and of false religion they will always be shot through with a history of erroneous, sinful or merely human interpretations of this original transcendental experience which is present thematically and unthematically everywhere in history."⁴⁷

Rahner, in effect, maintains a minimalist view of the devastating effects of fallen human nature; which he utilises to facilitate the solution of the theological problem which his argument faces; in that universal transcendental revelation does not result in the universal historical concretisation of supernatural, subjective revelation. However, even such a minimalist concession appears to count against the authenticity of transcendental revelation, as understood by Rahner, and an element of (serious) ambiguity is introduced into his theological development.

Rahner is clear that the historical revelation of the Old and New Testaments, as 'the official' salvation history, is an absolutely pure form of historical revelation; yet the Old Testament is understood only in the light of the New. The criterion for the purity of historical revelation is, and can only be, the historical revelation of Jesus Christ;

"Not until the full and unsurpassable event of the historical self-objectification of God's self-communication to the world in Jesus Christ do we have an event which, as an eschatological event, fundamentally and absolutely precludes any historical corruption or any distorted interpretation in the further history of categorial revelation and of false religion... In Jesus Christ, the crucified and

⁴⁶ Op. Cit. p.155

⁴⁷ Op. Cit. p.156

risen one, then, we have a criterion for distinguishing in the concrete history of religion between what is a human misunderstanding of the transcendental experience of God, and what is the legitimate interpretation of this experience. It is only in him that such a discernment of spirits in an ultimate sense is possible."⁴⁸

All provisional interpretations are both judged and fulfilled in the full and pure interpretation of Jesus Christ. In Christ there is the full and complete revelation of God. The highest form of historical revelation is the Christ event which is the objectification in the personal history of Christ of His own self-interpretation of His own transcendental experience of God.

"The history of revelation has its absolute climax when God's self-communication reaches its unsurpassable high point through the hypostatic union and in the incarnation of God in the created, spiritual reality of Jesus for his own sake, and hence for the sake of all of us. But this takes place in the incarnation of the Logos because here what is communicated and expressed, namely, God himself, and, secondly, the mode of expression, that is, the human reality of Christ in his life and in his final state, and, thirdly, the recipient Jesus in grace and in the vision of God, all three have become absolutely one. In Jesus, God's communication to man in grace and at the same time its categorial self-interpretation in the corporeal, tangible and social dimension have reached their climax, have become revelation in an absolute sense."⁴⁹

10.3 Religious Pluralism and Religious Exclusivism

From the above it can be seen that both Rahner and Macquarrie effect a reduction of historical (special) revelation, through a dialectical synthesis which is weighed towards an anthropological and immanentist view. Such a reduction clears the way for the apparent validity of the universality of God's revelation to all men, cultures and nations, and of religious pluralism. Without such a synthesis religious pluralism could find no facility; especially from within Christian theology. The rejection of a synthesis of this, or similar, nature results in religious exclusivism, whether of Christianity or any other religion.

⁴⁸ Op. Cit. p.174f

⁴⁹ Ibid.

The relationship of pluralism and exclusivism is essentially that of the relationship of the universal to the particular. In Macquarrie's case all particular religions are equally valid, though variable, expressions of the universal reality of Being. The achilles heel of Macquarrie's theology in this respect, is that if this is the case, then all religions must be capable of being harmonised in respect of doctrine and praxis; there can be no such thing as an unresolvable contradiction between them. Macquarrie attempts just such a harmony in "In Search of Deity" but, in our view, falls far short of being convincing. In Rahner's case the particular expressions of the universal revelation and reality of God, with the exception of Christianity, are corruptions or perversions, to some degree or another, of pure religion. The revelation as understood and interpreted, and indeed lived out by Jesus Christ alone, is the only pure and absolute, particular form, therefore Christianity is the only pure and completely true religion; and as such the ideal and supreme light for all other religious perversions (other world religions including ideologies and non culpable atheists). The ambiguity in Rahner's position, in this respect, is that whilst religions other than Christianity are considered to be perversions of the truth, they still retain sufficient adequacy to be efficacious means of salvation for those individuals who have not seriously offended against their own consciences? The further ambiguities in Rahner's epistemological development are the real questions which hang negatively over the possibilities of any (fallen) human being possessing the ability not to offend against his own conscience, in the face of God; and whilst being both corrupt and perverse in their own being (as freely conceded by Rahner) they are still epistemologically oriented towards God, and therefore have the power to journey epistemologically towards Him?

In Schleiermacher's view⁵⁰ particularisation is a function of the diversity of creation itself which necessarily includes psychological differences. For him pluralism is the natural result of the diverse nature of the unity of the universe. Through this fundamental reality every individual has a different quality of consciousness which results in the complete particularisation of 'feeling'. There are however 'common feelings' which are the basis of particular religions, and there is a 'central feeling' or middle point of feeling, at which all of the particularisations converge. If there is a middle, in an ordered structure, there

⁵⁰ For Schleiermacher's thinking in respect of religious pluralism see his: *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* esp p.36 - p.252

must be an origin or starting point, and there is; there is a universal feeling of the sense of the whole, in the context of the fragmentation and this results in 'pious feeling'. Pious feeling, therefore, is the universal from which the particulars derive; the middle point, where they all converge, is the feeling of the sad longing for redemption and reconciliation; and of course this central feeling is the common feeling of Christianity. It follows that Christianity is the superlative and supreme religion at the centre of all the particular expressions of pious feeling, and therefore of all religions. The church then, is seen by Schleiermacher as the true mediator of all religion.

Schleiermacher has shown the possibility of the superiority of one of the particularisations over the others, and indeed any other possibility would be chaotic. Pluralism is natural and an exclusivism of a pure and central form is necessary due to corruption. The greatest evil arises from pluralism within the one common feeling of religion, therefore it follows that Christian pluralism is an evil corruption but a plurality of religions is natural, and therefore in order. Schleiermacher has, in our view, adequately demonstrated that pluralism within one religion and the pluralism of different religions do not follow from the same root, and are therefore of a different nature.

He has shown too, that it does not necessarily follow that all particularisations are of the same degree, and that one could not be superior to the others. In his view Christianity is 'a higher power of religion', this does not invalidate the other religions, it merely locates them as, to a variable degree, corruptions and therefore of a lower order. This view permits a valid exclusivism within a natural pluralistic context. It seems right that such a nature of exclusivism in a central coincident point is a natural function of an ordered universe, which God is drawing together. The alternative is a unity whose diverse expressions, in the dynamic of becoming, are becoming more and more chaotic, and are therefore becoming more and more remote and distant from the original unity. Such a becoming, by its very nature, is a becoming, which is more and more exclusivist and irreconcilable with the original unity. We are claiming then that an exclusivism within the order of the original universal unity, is necessary for redemption and reconciliation of the particularisations with the unity. The lack of such an ordered exclusivism necessitates a chaotic and irreconcilable exclusivism, which is an absolute exclusivism and the dialectically opposite pole of absolute unity. Religious pluralism, then, if not reconciled, develops to the

chaotic state of irreconcilable religious exclusivism. It also follows that the particularisation which is centrally concerned with, and whose nature follows from, the dynamic of reconciliation and redemption is of a higher order than the other particularisations.

10.4 Christology:- Universal Significance

The underlying presupposition of this thesis is that the person of Christ, as the Son of God incarnate, is the ultimate and absolute particularisation of the universal Trinity in the created order. We further accept the chalcedonian formula as the authentic fundamental statement of the essential nature of Christ. Therefore we disagree with Macquarrie's understanding that Christ, and indeed God, is qualitatively the same as all other men and women. Our contention is that, in keeping with Chalcedon, Christ is at the same time qualitatively distinct from human beings and qualitatively the same as human beings. The person of the God Man is himself the living synthesis of the transcendence and immanence of God. The true balance of transcendence and immanence involves the synthesis of a Christology from above and a Christology from below. Failure to achieve this balance results in the one-sidedness of some form of Docetism or Adoptionism respectively. In our view, the anthropocentric and immanentist theologies of both Macquarrie and Rahner demand and indeed produce 'low Christologies' which fall under the latter category. Macquarrie's theological development, as already stated, is in essence an apologetic in respect of late twentieth century secularism. It is, at the same time, a deconstruction of 'classical theism' and a reconstruction of Christianity along pluralistic lines and, of course, in the language and conceptuality of existential philosophy. Such a deconstruction effects a major Christological reduction. In line with the underlying existentialist presupposition that existence precedes essence, Jesus of Nazareth began life as an ordinary sinner, who by his own efforts in reaching beyond himself, achieved the realisation of the full human potential and was therefore deified. We have seen that Rahner has a similar Christological schema in terms of transcendental experience.

A balanced synthesis of historical and creational revelation, in respect of the inbreaking of God into human history through the process and dynamic of incarnation, and thereafter indwelling the creation in truly human being, requires a balanced Christology. Macquarrie quite clearly and commendably seeks to balance the elements of transcendence (as represented by classical theism) and immanence (as represented by various forms of Pantheism), indeed this is the stated task outlined in "In Search of Deity", which results in 'Dialectical Theism'; however, in our view, he singularly fails to do so, falling back on an extension of the immanentist element, which he terms 'Higher Pantheism' (another term for 'Dialectical Theism').

The superiority, at least of degree, of Christ is conceded by both Macquarrie and Rahner, and if Schleiermacher is right in that Christ's particular interpretation of the universe (or whole) in respect of His particular form of pious feeling, is the pure and uncorrupted 'central point of feeling' of all religion, (this is the feeling of redemption and reconciliation), then He is vitally and essentially relevant for all of mankind. Christianity ought then to be conceded as the (ultimate) way of salvation for mankind, and its particular symbolism - especially the tree (cross) and the person of Christ Himself - must be seen as 'intrinsic' and absolute, crossing all cultural barriers of all nations and groups.

10.4.1 The uniqueness of Christ?

The uniqueness of the particularisation of the universal reality of God, whether conceived in ontological terms or otherwise, of the incarnate Son of God, lies primarily, in that, in his being there existed (and exists) the ultimate dialectical synthesis of absolute transcendence and absolute immanence. In His person there was the unique merging of historical and creational revelation; and since this synthesis did not effect a compulsory presence of God on earth (at least before the resurrection appearances), it was presented as an ambiguous entity - it was possible both, through faith, to perceive Him as God and worship Him as such; and through unfaith, to perceive Him as an ordinary man and reject and despise Him.

Macquarrie does not easily, if at all, concede the uniqueness of Christ, nor, through the denial of the existence of any 'intrinsic' and absolute symbolism, does he hold to the uniqueness of Christianity. The transcendent aspect of Christ's essential nature is denied from the concept of pre-existence onwards; the eternal Divine Logos is, in some way, and to some degree, incarnate in all creation - especially focused in Jesus Christ. The Divine Logos did pre-exist creation, in some way, and it has been progressively incarnated in the beings of creation as God continually surpasses Himself, through becoming, in the time space realm. Christ, is understood by Macquarrie, to be the climax of this progressive incarnation of the Logos, as Being is supremely focused in Him.

"The Logos, as we have seen is understood to hover between identity and distinctness in relation to God. Now clearly this Wisdom or Logos is so close in being to God that it must share in the eternity of God. Thus John can say: 'In the beginning was the Word'. The Word pre-exists everything that has been created, for everything has been created through the Word. If then we are prepared to speak of God, there seems to be every reason for saying that God's Word is pre-existent. But does this not mean that Jesus Christ is pre-existent? ... Strictly speaking Jesus is the Word incarnate, so must we not say that prior to the incarnation, the word Pre-existed Jesus? Perhaps even during the life of Jesus the Word was more than Jesus."⁵¹

Macquarrie affirms that the pre-existence of the Word does not imply a personal pre-existence of Jesus Christ, such would be a denial of His true humanity. Further, the pre-existent Logos is not exclusively incarnate in Christ:

"If I were to offer a definition of 'incarnation', I would say that it is the progressive presence and self manifestation of the Logos in the physical and historical world. For the Christian this process reaches its climax in Jesus Christ, but the Christ-event is not isolated from the whole series of events. That is why we can say that the difference between Christ and other agents of the Logos is one of degree, and not kind."⁵²

According to Macquarrie Jesus Christ is not unique through the factor of pre-existence, nor was He unique through a virgin conception which resulted in His

⁵¹ *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* - John Macquarrie p.389

⁵² Op. Cit. p.392

birth. To Macquarrie such a thing is magical and cannot possibly be true because it would deny the validity of the true humanity of Jesus. Indeed:

"...if we suppose Christ to have been conceived and born in an altogether unique way, then it seems that we have separated him from the rest of the human race and thereby made him irrelevant to the human quest for salvation or for the true life."⁵³

Further, Jesus is not unique because He had special, a-priori, Knowledge of God. His knowledge of God and of himself in relation to God, if he was truly man, must have been what Thomas would call an 'acquired' knowledge, something learned through experience. He had no supernatural knowledge, nor was he the exclusive revelation of God to men, other prophets or saviour figures were also the means of God's revelation. There is no absolute difference between Jesus and these others.

"We remember the words of Jesus, 'I have come that they might have life, and have it abundantly' (John 10:10) ... I believe that these same words might express the intentions of the other saviour figures."⁵⁴

All religions have their human saviour figures and they share this position as one in common with Jesus. They are all, human beings, all sharing the same human condition. They were all seeking to achieve the highest possibilities of human potential. "In them is concentrated for us the greatest spiritual striving and aspirations that have been known on earth."⁵⁵ They are all also mediators of God's grace; all emissaries of Holy Being." They had all given themselves up to the service of the divine reality who could work through them for the lifting up of all creatures on earth."⁵⁶ The incarnation of God's word took place in them all. So what on earth is unique about Jesus Christ? The answer is That Christ is superior by degree only. This difference between Christ and the others is a difference within humanity. Yet one might ask did Christ not achieve deification? Whereas the others did not. This does not upset the equation as there is no qualitative or essential difference between God and man. Macquarrie's understanding of the relationship of the cosmos and God is

⁵³ Op. Cit. p.393

⁵⁴ Op. Cit. p.419

⁵⁵ Op. Cit. p.420

⁵⁶ Ibid.

essentially monistic, even animals are the same quality as God. Concerning the difference of degree however:

"Just as I shied away from the doctrine that there is an infinite qualitative difference between god and man, so I would not want to urge some absolute difference between man and the lower animals. It is a difference of degree rather than of kind just as we said in the case of the difference between Jesus Christ and other human beings, but a difference of degree can be quite decisive, and may be so great as to be virtually a difference in kind."⁵⁷

Macquarrie, in our view, equivocates in this instance, and in so doing comes dangerously near to losing consistency. He uses the argument of 'difference of degree and not kind', to validate the equality of the other saviour figures, of other religions, and then virtually withdraws the argument in the above statement. He is saying that Christ is different to all others by degree and not kind, with one breath, and with the next, that differences of degree of such magnitude are in effect differences of kind. This amounts to a formal contradiction at the heart of Macquarrie's Christology.

The soteriological significance of the qualitative difference of Christ is well argued in Athanasius's "De Incarnatione", in addition to this, it is our view that the synthesis of absolute qualitative difference and absolute qualitative similarity 'is' the perceivable 'difference of degree' in Christ. A further ambiguity exists in Macquarrie's position, in respect of Christ as being at the same time a receiver of primordial revelation and Himself a revelatory event of God. These two aspects are difficult to reconcile; if Christ is Himself a revelatory event of the highest order, how can He be merely a receiver of primordial revelation, equally with the other saviour figures? In any case, Macquarrie holds that through Christ's great transcendental effort, He, and He alone achieved human perfection, which is at the same time deification, that means He is unique amongst the other prophets and therefore it follows that Christianity must be both vastly superior to and unique amongst the other world religions.

This is never explicitly and unequivocally conceded by Macquarrie. Jesus, however, becomes the (only) adequately representative man, and in this reality

⁵⁷ Op. Cit. p.361

lies His significance for all of mankind. Further: "Jesus Christ gets his significance from combining in himself a universality with his particular historicity."⁵⁸ In this statement Maquarrie is seen to agree that the nature of the Christian particularisation as existing in the person of Christ is qualitatively different and superior because it retains the element of universality that is the dialectic of the universal and the particular lives in synthesis in the person of Christ therefore the person of Christ is universally accessible and available to all men. This means, in effect, that God's presence was supremely 'in' Jesus Christ, and in this He is the archetype man.

10.4.2 The universal significance of Christ's death and resurrection

It is not surprising that Macquarrie adopts the 'representative theory' in respect of Christ's life and atoning death. (Following in the footsteps of John Macleod Campbell, which he acknowledges.) Christ is the representative man. Christ is:

"The true human being who has fulfilled in his humanity the image of God, he is the representative of that authentic humanity which is striving for expression in every human person."⁵⁹

Christ is not a substitute but a representative, therefore the rest of humanity is not passive but active in working out their own salvation, in the light and strength of the grace given to Christ. "The Christian must consciously appropriate the work of Christ on his or her behalf, and take up the cross."⁶⁰ This, in effect, is a turning away from the temptations of the world, with Christ, and a turning towards the kingdom of God.

Again following Macleod Campbell, Macquarrie claims that Christ repented for the whole race, as their representative. Christians join with Christ in this perfect repentance, but what of those of other religions? The cross is the salvific event because the representative of the whole human race died in this perfect act of vicarious repentance as their representative, but how does this

⁵⁸ Op. Cit. p.381

⁵⁹ Op. Cit. p.401

⁶⁰ Op. Cit. p.402

prevail for non-Christian religions? How are they to actively appropriate this saving event in their own being?

If we are to avoid a kind of magical externalism, surely it would be necessary for men to receive and follow Christ, who as their representative is also the power of example for them? Macquarrie, nowhere addresses these (real and vital) questions. He agrees that in the life and existence of Christ, the archetype human being was achieved, and a new humanity was formed. Clearly a new humanity, which through Christ, could also reach out and finally achieve deification; but again how is this to come about for those who do not acknowledge and indeed deny Christ, in this respect? And what of the equality of the other saviour figures? It is clear that Macquarrie holds that the other saviour figures open up alternative means of salvation. In this we have yet another unresolved ambiguity.

Macquarrie does address the question: "Can Christians still claim that Jesus is the only son of God?" His thrust, in this respect is that since there are varying degrees and stages of incarnation, there are also many other sons of God of the same quality but not degree, as Christ. Only Christ, whom Macquarrie concedes as 'special', achieved the human transcendence whereby humanity was identified with divinity. Yet, still, he is not the only way of salvation?

Whilst Christ's achievement, up to and including the death on the cross, renders Him the vicarious representative of all mankind, His achievement including His atoning death, are not necessary for the salvation of the great majority, as the great mass of people are saved through other prophets and other (equally valid and adequate) religions.

In our view Christ's atoning death was both as the representative man and as the substitutionary man; both elements together in inseparable unity; this is not and can not be claimed for any other prophet or saviour figure, nor was any other saviour figure 'God', either pre-existent or by deification, therefore it follows that the soteriological significance of Christ lies in that He is the only ultimate and absolute saviour, and His is the only ultimate and absolute way for all of mankind.

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