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UNDERSTANDING TRADITION

Jesus Christ in the Writings of Gerald O'Collins

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Acknowledgements

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The bibliography is divided into four sections. The first section consists of selected works of Gerald O'Collins and is arranged chronologically in ascending order. The list includes all the books and articles I have used in this dissertation and the books and articles published from the year 2000 to 2007. O'Collins' bibliography until 2000 is published in STEPHEN T. DAVIS & DANIEL KENDALL (eds.), *The Convergence of Theology. A Festschrift Honouring Gerald O'Collins, S.J.* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001), pp. 370-398. The bibliographical list of O'Collins is divided into two groups: 1. books, and 2. articles. The second section contains selected secondary references. These are arranged in alphabetical order. This, too, is divided into two groups: 1. books, and 2. articles. The third section is Church documents and the last section consists of book reviews.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. The Purpose and Theological Relevance of this Dissertation

Since the time of the Second Vatican Council there has been an ever-increasing awareness in the Catholic Church of the need to be more open to the values of other religions. The various documents of the Council, many Papal encyclicals and other Church documents since the Council demonstrate the attitudinal change of the Church towards other religions. This positive change has resulted in establishing better relationships with people of other faiths and has also given rise to scores of problems for the Church. These problems arise because Christians recognize and acknowledge that the person of Jesus Christ is the unique and universal saviour. This confession of faith has generated considerable discussion among theologians, since the maintenance of such an absolute view raises real difficulties in the face of other religions and religious figures. One of the major difficulties concerns the question of whether one can profess and proclaim Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of all humankind while recognizing some beneficial role for non-Christian religions in the salvation of their adherents? What would such an acceptance mean for the Church's traditional faith in Jesus Christ as the saviour of the world? The answers to these questions have an inevitable impact on Christian self-understanding.

The immediate backdrop to our enquiry in this dissertation is the (inter-)religious milieu of my own missionary field. As a missionary to the Punjab, in North India, the constant challenge for me is to present Christianity in a place where a small group of Christians live amidst a majority of Sikhs and Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists. The greatest challenge for Christian missionaries in the Punjab[1] is to present their faith to the majority Sikh community who are also monotheistic in their belief.[2] The challenge becomes more sensitive when Christians become aware of

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[1] The presence of Christianity in the Punjab may date back to the arrival of John C. Lowrie in Ludhiana in 1834. Lowrie was a missionary of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America. See JOHN C. B. WEBSTER, *Dalits and Christianity in Colonial Punjab. Cultural Interactions,* in JUDITH M. BROWN & ROBERT ERIC FRYKENBERG (eds.), *Christians, Cultural Interactions, and India's Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002) 92-118, pp. 92-93. Conversions to Christianity in the Punjab came predominantly from the Dalits, such as the Mazhbi Sikhs, Chamars, and particularly the people belonging to the Chuhra community. Although there were Christians present in the Punjab from 1834 onwards, mass conversions are said to have begun from the year 1872 with the baptism of a man named Ditt. From then onwards, many people from the Chuhra community were converted to Christianity. See JOHN C. B. WEBSTER, *The Dalit Christians. A History,* Delhi: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1992, p. 46. See also JAMES MASSEY, *Dalits in India. Religions as a Source of Bondage or Liberation with Special Reference to Christians,* New Delhi: Manohar, 1995, pp. 95-97.

[2] Sikhism, founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1539CE) and nine other Gurus who came after him, is a religion that offers belief in *Ik Onkar* (one God). With the death of the last Guru (Guru Gobind Singh) in 1708, the human successors of the revelation of God, who were called Gurus, came to an end. The revelation of God through Guru Nanak and his successors was collected to form the scripture of the Sikhs, which is called *Guru Granth Sahib* or the *Adi Granth.* The *Guru Granth Sahib* (considered as the 11th and the last Guru) is understood as the living Guru. According to Sikhism, God is known to the humans through the Word (*Shabad*). The *Guru Granth Sahib* says: "God has no form, no colour, no material identity, and is revealed through the true Word" (*Adi Granth* 597). Since it is the living Word, God is

Sikhism and its religious practices and discover that the Sikh religion can, as it were, accommodate Christianity and the religious practices of its followers. In this context Christians inevitably ask themselves why they are apparently unable to provide the same degree of accommodation to Sikhism and its religious practices. Sometimes, indeed, the religious practices, welfare activities and charitable works of the Sikhs overwhelm Christian practices and compel Christians to ask whether their own practices can even be said to equal the Sikh commitment.[3]

Confronted with these realities, Christians necessarily turn to the question of their own self-understanding. This dissertation was born out of the quest for such understanding and the conviction that Christians everywhere are being called upon to come to a deeper and more nuanced appreciation of both the distinctiveness of their own tradition and its potential for the promotion of dialogue and cooperation with other religions.

Our guide in this quest is Gerald Glynn O'Collins S.J., a theologian who has consciously dedicated his theological career to the study of the person and significance of Jesus Christ. O'Collins offers a comprehensive discussion of the Church's understanding of Christ, one that ranges from the exegesis of the New Testament writings, over the entire theological tradition up to and including Vatican II, and which culminates in the contemporary challenge of interreligious dialogue. O'Collins not only studies the primary sources for Christology. He also engages in ongoing dialogue with theologians of all stripes, in an attempt to respond to their analysis and critique of the Christological tradition. By studying, O'Collins, therefore, we are engaging not simply with his work but also with the work of some of the most important contemporary Christological thinkers. In the course of our study, then, we were not only exposed to the essential features of O'Collins' thought on Christ. We were also confronted with the major challenges to contemporary Christology, including the challenge of interreligious dialogue.

2. The Limitations of Our Study

O'Collins has produced numerous books and articles, far too many to be summarized and evaluated in this study. We have therefore opted to restrict our enquiry to those writings that deal specifically with Christological questions. A theologian who seeks to know and understand the person of Jesus must inevitably acknowledge that it is a never-ending process of enquiry, and

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perceived as present in the community through the *Guru Granth Sahib*. See, JOHN BOWKER, *God. A Brief History*, New York, NY: DK Publishing, 2002, pp. 122-128 and for the quote, p. 128.

[3] According to the *Guidelines for Sikh-Christian Dialogue*, there are many areas where Christianity will find affinity with Sikhism, such as the emphasis on history, criticism of formal religion, spiritual revival, grace, scriptures, the communitarian character of the religion, the interest in service to humanity, egalitarian worship, and the understanding of God beyond the categories of gender. See W. OWEN COLE, JOHN PARRY & PIARA SINGH SAMBHI, *Guidelines for Sikh-Christian Dialogue (A Document of the United Reformed Church, London),* in *Vidyajyoti* 59 (1995) 611-616, pp. 613-61.

that when he/she has gone as far as possible, there is always more to be said and done. O'Collins remarks that, "[n]o one – and, especially, no theologian – has ever managed to describe fully, let alone explain comprehensively, the personal identity and saving 'work' of Jesus Christ: for the simple reason that it cannot be done." According to him "[w]e can never dare to claim, 'Now I really know who Jesus Christ is and what he has done for us'. The fascinating and awesome mystery of the One who is Son of God and Saviour will remain with us all the days of our life."[4] What we can offer here is, therefore, no more than a glimpse of Jesus.

3. The Organization of the Dissertation

In our analysis of the Christology of O'Collins, we discovered that, although he nowhere provides a comprehensive, systematic framework for approaching Jesus Christ, his work does exhibit a particular pattern. If one pursues the chronology of his writings one discovers that his earliest work was concerned with fundamental theology and dealt especially with *revelation*. From such writings he gradually shifted his focus to the person of *Jesus and his redemptive acts*. Finally, in the writings of the most recent period he also deals with the question of *Jesus' role in the salvation of all*. While this order is observable in the collection of his writings as a whole, when one turns to his particular books, especially those that deal with concrete Christology, this schema becomes more explicit. However, for O'Collins, just as in the case of the early Christians, Christ's death and resurrection is '*the central mystery*' around which the whole of Christology takes shape. This is the central point from which everything is to be understood: "Christology looks *backwards* (through Christ's life, the incarnation, the history of the Israelites and back to the creation) and *forwards* (through the coming of the Holy Spirit, the story of the Church, and on to the *eschaton,* the future consummation of all things)." In our research we follow the pattern followed by O'Collins - from revelation, through the being of Christ, incarnation, and the redemptive activity of Jesus, to the significance of Jesus Christ for all.

We have divided this work into four chapters. The objective of the first chapter is to determine the sources that O'Collins employs in his Christology. We begin with the primary source of revelation which is understood as the self-communication of God to humanity in and through the person of Jesus Christ. We make a distinction between foundational/fundamental revelation and dependent revelation. Tradition and Scripture are understood as sources for knowing Jesus. However, they are not considered as separate sources but as part of the one living revelation of God's self-communication. A discussion of O'Collins' understanding of religious experience is taken up to explain his concept of dependent revelation and his views on the transmission of the Tradition. We make a further distinction between Tradition and traditions and conclude that

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[4] GERALD O'COLLINS & DANIEL KENDALL, *Focus on Jesus. Essays in Christology and Soteriology,* Leominster: Gracewing, 1996, p. 17.

Tradition is inextricably bound up with (the) traditions. Christian art, literature, worship, religious experiences, etc., form part of these traditions. In the last part of this chapter we enquire into O'Collins' understanding of the origin and development of the doctrine of the Trinity. Here we examine how he presents the teachings on the Trinity as a source for knowing the person of Jesus and how the Trinity and the person of Jesus Christ are reciprocally related.

The second chapter deals primarily with the being and person of Jesus Christ (the incarnation). We investigate the various titles of Jesus Christ as a means to comprehend how O'Collins develops his Christology with a view to these titles. The Christological titles allow O'Collins to relate the Old Testament with the New Testament and to illuminate the relationship between Jesus and the pre-existent Son of God. This gives way to a consideration of the notions of pre-existence, existence and post-resurrection existence. We also examine the notion of kenotic Christology and how it serves to clarify the affirmation that Jesus was at once human and divine. We then turn to the Chalcedonian definition in its historical and theological context, with a view to reflecting on the significance and implications of the doctrine of the hypostatic union. This inevitably raises the question of the relationship between the divine and human properties of Jesus and his consciousness of his identity. The question of Jesus' 'full' humanity comes to sharp expression in the discussion of the extent and depth of his (human) knowledge, his own faith life, and his impeccability. We conclude this chapter by reflecting on O'Collins 'tests' for the credibility of the incarnation.

In our third chapter we delve into the nature and significance of the resurrection of Jesus in the works of O'Collins. We follow a similar pattern of enquiry into the resurrection of Jesus as we have done in the previous chapter. Hence, our discussion begins from the historical development of belief in the resurrection. We examine the resurrection narratives in order to understand how O'Collins defends faith in the resurrection. We then turn to early Christian claims about the appearances and the empty tomb. Our historical survey extends into the Patristic period, the Middle Ages and the Modern period. With O'Collins, we enter into conversation with several modern theologians in order to highlight and critically evaluate the problems involved in resurrection-faith. Finally, we investigate the significance of the resurrection. In fact, this investigation brings us to the heart of O'Collins' portrayal of Jesus Christ as God and Lord of all. This enquiry then opens out into the way in which the resurrection creates, as it were, the possibility for Jesus to be present in the Church and in the world, and to bring humanity to its ultimate destiny. We conclude this chapter with a reflection on O'Collins' own faith in the reality of the resurrection and his decision to take his own faith and the experience of others as 'evidence' for the resurrection.

The final chapter deals with O'Collins' understanding of salvation and redemption in Jesus Christ. To understand the nature and significance of salvation, O'Collins engages in a detailed

study of Scripture. Our enquiry begins with the notion of the 'necessity' of salvation and the rootedness of this necessity in the sinful human condition and original sin in particular. The discussion of the human condition and original sin points to the universal need of redemption, which in turn brings us to the consideration of the nature of the redemption, atonement and expiation brought about by the divine agent Jesus through his death and resurrection. The discussion of Christ's salvific work inevitably involves a consideration of the claim that he is the unique and universal saviour. This brings us to O'Collins' approach to the theology of religions. We conclude that O'Collins is progressive in his approach to the theology of religions and open to the newer theologies that attempt to come to terms with our contemporary pluralistic world. Here especially, we see the confirmation of an 'impression' of O'Collins that was continually reinforced as we progressed through his work, namely, that he is a theologian who is intent on building bridges between the classical teachings of the Church, especially regarding the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, and the contemporary world characterized by religious plurality and the persistent human need for redemption.

O'Collins, it might be said, has set himself the task of 'understanding tradition', with a view to making it meaningful in an ever-changing world that nevertheless continually exhibits a constant need for God's redemptive Word.

BACKGROUND TO THE CHRISTOLOGY OF GERALD O'COLLINS

Introduction

In this chapter our aim is to investigate the sources of the Christology of O'Collins in order to help us work out his understanding of the person of Jesus Christ. One can understand the theology of O'Collins when one looks at his writings in relation to his own life as a priest and his academic career. O'Collins begins his theology with an enquiry into the notion of revelation, which he regards as the basic source for the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Hence, we, too, shall begin with revelation, or more accurately, with O'Collins' understanding of revelation. Our enquiry will necessarily deal with Scripture and Tradition as sources, not as independent sources but as related to revelation and forming part of it. As religious experience is one of the important aspects of O'Collins' theology of revelation, we will also have a brief look at his understanding of religious experience and human experience as well. In the understanding of the person of Jesus Christ in the writings of Gerald O'Collins, one cannot disregard a discussion of the Trinity because it is ultimately Jesus Christ, as the face of the Trinitarian God, that he regards as the self-communication of God. Therefore, in the last part of this chapter we shall examine O'Collins' understanding of the Trinity which, however, will be treated as a source for the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Our search for the sources will, it is hoped, provide us with a framework for a conversation between the Christology of O'Collins and the contemporary Catholic theology of religions. Hence, this chapter and the next two chapters will attempt to examine O'Collins' (traditional) Christology in order to discover the possibilities it contains for the contemporary theology of religions. Let us begin with a brief biographical sketch of our author.

1. A Biographical Note on Gerald O'Collins

Gerald Glynn O'Collins, S.J., was born in Melbourne, Australia, in 1931. He joined the Society of Jesus in the year 1953 and was ordained a priest in 1963, the year in which the Second Vatican Council began.[1] He received his undergraduate degree from Melbourne University in

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[1] The priestly ordination of Gerald O'Collins in the year that the Second Vatican Council began may explain much of his interest in the theology of the Second Vatican Council. In a recent monograph, *Living Vatican II. The 21st Council for the 21st Century*, O'Collins reflects on the influence of this Council on his life and his writings. He writes as follows: "I experienced Vatican II as an injection of new life. I have tried [through this book] to convey the excitement of that time, which made me frequently remember the promise: 'See, I am making all things new' (Rev 21:5). I have tried to remind the older generation and convey to the younger what was achieved, just how important it was and remains, and to urge that full use be made of this heritage." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Living Vatican II. The 21st Council for the 21st Century,* Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006, p. 171.

1957 and Master's in 1959 for his thesis entitled *Aristotle's Theory of Hylomorphism.* He attained an S.T.L. from Heythrop College (now University of London) in 1967. He received a Ph.D. from Cambridge University in 1968 for his thesis entitled *The Theology of Revelation in Some Recent Discussion* in which he dealt with four modern approaches to God's self-revelation. He has taught at Weston School of Theology, Boston; at the University of San Francisco; the University of Notre Dame; and the Gregorian University, Rome. He was also guest lecturer at universities in Australia, Chile, Colombia, England, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Scotland. From 1974 onwards, he taught full-time at the Gregorian University in Rome, where he was dean of the theology faculty from 1985 to 1991. He worked as emeritus professor of fundamental and systematic theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University until 2006.[2] Presently he lives a retired life, dedicating his time to the writing of books in theology. The scope of his writings is so wide that it comprises "influential essays and books in New Testament studies, fundamental theology, spirituality, and theology proper, with his writings in theology covering such topics as revelation, the use of scripture, Christology, and the resurrection of Jesus."[3]

O'Collins is a classically trained world-renowned theologian, with an excellent mastery of both ancient and modern languages. He has written over thirty-seven books and over one hundred articles.[4] His most recent monographs are: *Living Vatican II: The 21ˢᵗ Council for the 21ˢᵗ Century* published in 2006 and *Jesus Our Redeemer: A Christian Approach to Salvation* published in 2007. Credit goes to him for the many symposiums on different themes that he has organised with many of the well-known theologians of recent times. O'Collins was responsible for the conducting of the 'Resurrection Summit' in the year 1996 in New York, resulting in the publication of *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus* in 1997. Further he conducted a symposium on 'Trinity' in the year 1998 which resulted in the publication of *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* in 1999, and another summit on 'Incarnation' in the year 2000 after which was published as *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God* in 2002. The last summit for which he was responsible was the "Redemption Summit' held in New York in 2003, the result of which is *The Redemption: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Christ as Redeemer* published in 2004.

Archbishop George Carey of Canterbury says that Gerald O'Collins is "pre-eminently a theologian of the incarnation and the resurrection. His knowledge of the scriptures is deep and

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[2] The details provided about Gerald O'Collins are from the curriculum vitae provided by the author himself.

[3] DANIEL KENDALL & STEPHEN T. DAVIS (eds.), *Preface* to *The Convergence of Theology. A Festschrift Honouring Gerald O'Collins, S.J.* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001) 3-11, p. 3.

[4] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jacques Dupuis' Contribution to Interreligious Dialogue,* in *Theological Studies* 64 (2003) 388-397, p. 388.

fertile, and his knowledge of academic studies no less than that. It is from these sources that he has produced some of the most penetrating and convincing writings of our day." Appreciating his position on the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, the Archbishop also says that, "O'Collins has been for thousands a sound guide to the treasures of scripture and a wise and patient interpreter of the Roman Catholic Church's appropriation of the teaching of the council."[5] Most of his writings are on the person of Christ, especially on the resurrection event. Difficult questions about the incarnation, birth, ministry, crucifixion, resurrection and work of salvation are all debated with scholarship and sensitivity to the mystery of the one who is at the heart of Christian life and thought. O'Collins is at his best in his defence of the teachings of the Church against arbitrary and polemical statements made by theologians. In his writings, he has engaged in discussion with such authors as John Dominic Crossan, John Hick, Hans Küng and Edward Schillebeeckx. While appreciating the number of fields he has dealt with in his scholarly writings, it may not be not be an exaggeration to say, with Nicholas King, that O'Collins belongs "fairly and squarely in the people of God. He is also, of course, a thoroughly pastoral person, wholly at home in modern culture…, and knows that as well as church and academy there is also that amorphous mass called society to consider when pondering the reading and the meaning of the Word of God."[6]

2. The Sources for the Knowledge of Jesus Christ

According to O'Collins, for "Christology, no less than for other sectors of theology, there is only *one* source, the self-revelation of the Triune God which reached its ultimate expression in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, which was then transmitted (and interpreted) through the apostolic traditions, and finally received its fixed record in the written scriptures." To arrive at a systematic account of Jesus, to know who he is, we need to scrutinize the traditions of the Church especially in the light of the written records, namely, the scriptures.[7] It is by knowing the Christ of the past, present and future that we come to the full knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The *Christ of the past* means the Christ of Christian origins. But to get to the Christ of Christian origins is not an easy task because Jesus Christ did not leave us an organised set of truths about his life and work. According to O'Collins, "Through the Old Testament preparation for his coming, the incarnation, his ministry, the crucifixion, the resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit, [Jesus Christ] did not so much communicate to the founding fathers and founding

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[5] GEORGE CAREY, *Foreword*, in STEPHEN T. DAVIS & DANIEL KENDALL (eds.), *The Convergence of Theology. A Festschrift Honouring Gerald O'Collins, S.J.* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001) 1-2, pp. 1-2.

[6] NICHOLAS KING, *Society, Academy, and Church. Who Can Read the Bible?,* in STEPHEN T. DAVIS & DANIEL KENDALL (eds.), *The Convergence of Theology. A Festschrift Honouring Gerald O'Collins, S.J.* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001) 139-156, p. 140.

[7] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, London: Geoffrey Chapman; Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1983, p. 5.

mothers of the Church some organized body of revealed truths but he left them wrestling with the mystery of his person and saving function."[8] Hence, what we have today to understand the 'Christ of Christian origins' are the Scripture and the Tradition which were organized by Christians at a later period and those traditions which remain unorganized even to the present times. Past Christian experience, then, involves the whole experience of the two thousand years of the history of Christian life, and the foundational experience of the life, death and resurrection of Christ, in the life of the apostles and all the believers who came after them.

The *Christ of present Christian experience*, according to O'Collins, is the Christ experienced in the doctrine, life and worship of the Church.[9] In his view, this Christian experience, which has its foundation in Christian history, is the contemporary Christian experience of Jesus with special reference to the 20th century and to Vatican Council II. In this experience he includes all the dogmatic and other magisterial teachings, the teachings of theologians, sermons, catechetical teachings, and all the artistic works and literature that make reference to Christology and form part of contemporary Christian experience. This experience also involves the present worship of the Church, which consists of the official liturgy and the devotional practices of the Christian community. He says:

> Among its main sources Christology also exploits what it can learn from the total Christian tradition of the past. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the lex orandi and lex vivendi of Christians have fed into their lex credendi, while the lex credendi has in its turn affected and shaped the former. It is at its peril that Christology neglects the accumulated traditions of worship (lex orandi) and lived experience (lex vivendi) from the past to concentrate simply on the official teaching and classic theology which in a special way articulated the lex credendi.

In this effort to understand Jesus, one cannot leave out the *Christ of the future*. According to O'Collins, "[t]o a degree we do our Christology more out of our hopes for the future than out of our Christian memories (of the past) and experiences (of the present). This is because Christ is not only the one whom we remember and experience but also the one whom we expect."[10]

O'Collins' conception of Christianity is all-embracing. Together with experience of the Catholic Church, the Christ experience of all Christians of all denominations is also a source for Christology. He says, "We need to respect the full range of Christian and Catholic experiences, expectations, teachings, reflections and activities which span *the present, the future* and *the past*."[11] In fact, the privileged source for the knowledge of Christ is the whole history of

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[8] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 12.

[9] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 5. O'Collins' view is a reflection of the view of the Second Vatican Council which says, "'What was handed on by the apostles' includes everything that helps the people of God to live a holy life and to grow in faith. In this way the church in its teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to every generation all that it is and all that it believes." VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dei Verbum,* 8, in NORMAN. P. TANNER (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* 2 (London: Sheed & Ward and Gregorian University Press, 1990), p. 974. (Unless otherwise stated, all references to conciliar documents quoted in this dissertation are from this edition).

[10] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 10.

[11] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 5.

Christianity, beginning from the Old Testament, and moving down through the centuries through the New Testament times, the Apostolic period, the time of the Fathers of the Church, and the various periods of theological development to the present times. For him, the Council of Chalcedon and its teaching on Christ's two natures and one person remains one of the most important documents in this regard.[12] This chapter and the last chapter will show how O'Collins is influenced by the Second Vatican Council and how he makes constructive use of it to find ways and means to make the story of Jesus Christ meaningful and significant for today. Our discussion here regarding the sources for knowing Jesus Christ will be limited to the three basic sources, since these include all others in some way or other. The three sources under consideration are the revelation or Self-communication of God, the Tradition of the Church, and the Scripture. In the course of our reflections on these sources, we will see also how O'Collins presents the Trinity as a source for knowing Jesus Christ. One thing that we need to bear in mind is that, for O'Collins, it is Jesus Christ himself who is the most significant source for Christology. O'Collins is insistent that there is not just one source but many sources for knowing Jesus Christ and that, therefore, "to reduce our 'intake' and concentrate absolutely on one source means selling short the 'total Christ' of Christian faith."[13]

2.1. Revelation

Revelation is one of the most important Christian categories. But the nature of revelation has been one of the most difficult Christian categories to explicate. A formal definition of revelation is very difficult to give, as one can find no unified presentation of its nature and meaning. The inability to explicate and come to a definitive definition of revelation could be attributed to the new meanings it receives as theology develops. This is because the definition depends on the progress that theology makes. Like philosophy, theology involves a never-ending, "radical reflection upon its own first principles, principles which become progressively clearer in the course of time."[14] Gabriel Moran says that the search for the meanings of revelation in the Catholic theology of the past until the Second Vatican Council found that "revelation is a universal phenomenon, present in the life of every individual and all religions." Unless there is revelation there cannot be theology; theology presupposes revelation. However, theology is needed to understand what is revealed. If this is so, and if theology presupposes revelation, how can theology explicate the meaning of revelation? According to Moran, when we are faced with such a dilemma we try to resolve it by adopting a particular philosophical position. However, he

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[12] GERALD O'COLLINS & DANIEL KENDALL, *Focus on Jesus. Essays in Christology and Soteriology,* Leominster: Gracewing, 1996, p. 18. In the second chapter of our enquiry we will deal particularly with the way in which the Council of Chalcedon projects Jesus Christ. This does not mean an exclusive use of Chalcedon without regard for the other Councils and magisterial teachings in O'Collins' search for Jesus Christ.

[13] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 13.

[14] GABRIEL MORAN, *Theology of Revelation*, New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1966, p. 24.

suggests that having recourse to philosophy alone is insufficient for understanding the meaning of revelation. Rather, one should take into consideration "artistic experience, psychology, social movements, family life and dozens of other phenomena."[15] This view seems to assume that an understanding of revelation involves not only theology and philosophy, but touches upon all aspects of the human condition. This is akin to O'Collins' own view.

Primarily, O'Collins understands revelation not as the "communication of a body of doctrine, a broadening or enriching of our knowledge of God. It is rather the saving self-revelation of God who calls us in Jesus Christ to enter by faith into a new relationship with him. The Son of God who became man reveals not a system to be understood, but a discipleship to follow. His 'truth' is not an object of intellectual reflection, but the way of life."[16] O'Collins appeals to *Dei Verbum,* promulgated by the Second Vatican Council, as a major source in clarifying his view of revelation.[17] Etymologically, the English word, revelation, means the "taking away [of] the veil" that obscures what was previously mysterious. This act of disclosure is the initiative of God.[18] O'Collins points out that *Dei Verbum* understands this disclosure of what was previously unknown "primarily [as] God's self-revelation, which invites the personal response of faith, and … secondarily [as] the communication of truths about God and human beings that would otherwise remain unknown."[19] Revelation is understood "as the personal self-revelation of the

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[15] GABRIEL MORAN, *The Present Revelation. In Quest of Religious Foundations*, New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1972, pp. 19-20.

[16] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Theology and Revelation,* Cork: The Mercier Press, 1968, p. 8.

[17] O'Collins says that, "In the history of Christianity *Dei Verbum* was the first conciliar document on God's self-revelation. Even if it also considered revelation, the First Vatican Council's *Dei Filius* (1870) was as such a constitution on faith." See, GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology*, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993, p. 57. According to him, one cannot overlook the other fifteen texts of the Second Vatican Council when dealing with revelation. "[I]n different ways they not only repeat and amplify the teaching from *Dei Verbum* on revelation, but at times they also add new and important points." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology*, p. 63.

[18] Etymologically the term 'to reveal' derives from the Latin word '*revelare*' which means 'to remove the veil' of anything which is hidden. "The word 'revelation' can designate both the act of communicating the hidden or the unknown as well as the contents of what is communicated." See JOSEPH J. BAIERL, *The Theory of Revelation,* Rochester, New York: Seminary Press, 1927, p. 20. The word 'revelation' suggests the removal of some obscurity, to make something visible, clear, and comprehensible, which had been until this time obscure, unseen and misunderstood. According to Paul Tillich, revelation means "the manifestation of something hidden which cannot be approached through ordinary ways of gaining knowledge." Revelation is "a special and extraordinary manifestation which removes the veil from something which is hidden in a special and extraordinary way." Tillich calls the hidden object 'mystery'. PAUL TILLICH, *Systematic Theology I*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951, p. 108. For John Baillie, the literal meaning of revelation is "the lifting of an obscuring veil, so as to disclose something that was formerly hidden." According to him, in one sense all valid knowledge can be regarded as revealed. He also says that all revelations are "from subject to subject." JOHN BAILLIE, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought,* New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1967, p. 19. According to F. Gerald Downing, what is veiled is the revelation of God himself and the veil is "the 'veil' of our own comprehension." According to him, for traditional Christians revelation is a gradual unveiling of God's self-revelation that they experience and it means "believing in salvation and sanctification, in being changed 'from glory to glory' (in ways that only become clear as they happen – and always may be mistaken) and trusting that 'in the end' we shall know as we are known, that the aim of God we argue about, is, we trust, ultimately, his self-revelation to us." See F. GERALD DOWNING, *Revelation, Disagreement and Obscurity*, in *Religious Studies* 21 (1985) 219-230, pp. 227, 228.

[19] GERALD O'COLLINS & MARIO FARRUGIA, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 97.

triune God who invites human beings to enter freely into a dialogue of love, so that through their response of integral faith they may receive salvation."[20] Hence, the motive of the self-revelation of God is the ultimate salvation of human beings.

While theologians accept the complex nature of the concept of revelation, many of them have tried to unravel it through various models. According to Alister E. McGrath, these models are not mutually exclusive. Rather they signify various aspects and emphases found in the Church's understanding of revelation.[21] In the following section, we shall outline the various models of revelation presented in the writing of O'Collins.

2.1.1. The Propositional Model of Revelation

According to O'Collins, Roman Catholic theology in the past, i.e., before the Second Vatican Council, understood revelation from a *propositional* perspective. The propositional view considers revelation as the communication of a set of divinely-authenticated facts or a body of information which is accepted by human beings as originating solely from God and as intended to enrich human beings' understanding of God.[22] This understanding, according to O'Collins,

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[20] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology,* p. 48.

[21] ALISTER E. MCGRATH, *Christian Theology. An Introduction,* Malden, MA; Oxford, UK, & Carlton, Australia: Blackwell, 2001, p. 202. McGrath distinguishes four models of revelation in Christian theology. (1) Revelation as doctrine: this is a conservative evangelical and Catholic neo-scholastic understanding of revelation which terms it as 'the deposit of revelation' or 'the deposit of truth'. In this model, revelation is seen in propositional terms. According to him, the First Vatican Council understood revelation in this sense. He considers Carl F. H. Henry, James I. Packer, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange and Hermann Dieckmann as proponents of this model. This understanding is criticized by George Lindbeck who describes it as "propositionalist" or "cognitive" and as "informational propositions or truth claims about objective realities." Lindbeck is of the view that this way of understanding revelation undervalues the experiential dimension, and the role of cultures in shaping human thought and experience. His own approach is the so-called "cultural-linguistic" Model. According to McGrath, this "cultural-linguistic approach denies that there is some universal unmediated human experience which exists apart from human language and culture." See ALISTER E. MCGRATH, *Christian Theology. An Introduction,* pp. 119, 203-204. Cf. also GEORGE A. LINDBECK, *The Nature of Doctrine. Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1984. (2) Revelation as presence: in this model, which appeals to the dialectical school of theology, revelation is understood as the "personal communication of God" in the believer. Through the self-giving of God and his personal presence in the believer, God reveals and communicates Himself to the believer. Revelation here is something that happens and the content of it is the person of God and not some idea or doctrine. What makes this form of revelation significant is the personal relationship established between God and the believer. McGrath ascribes this model to Emil Brunner. Cf. EMIL BRUNNER, *Truth as Encounter*, trans. AMNDUS LOOS, DAVID CAIRNS & T.H.L. PARKER, Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1964. (3) Revelation as experience: this model is represented by German Liberal Protestantism and was developed by people like F. D. E. Schleiermacher and A. B. Ritschl. It understands the revelation of God as an experience in the consciousness of human beings. McGrath points out that this model is opposed by George Lindbeck because it might be construed simply as an "experience of the self." It is also difficult to understand how there could be an experience which is common to all human beings if there is no mediation. (4) Revelation as history: the proponents of this model, especially Wolfhart Pannenberg, understand Christian faith to be "based upon an analysis of universal and publicly accessible history." History itself is considered as revelation, and history is the event where God's revelation takes place. According to McGrath, for Pannenberg the resurrection of Christ is the "central act of divine revelation in history." See ALISTER E. MCGRATH, *Christian Theology. An Introduction,* pp. 204-208.

[22] O'Collins says that Gerhard Gloege, a Lutheran theologian, described the Catholic position on revelation in the following words: "*Offenbarung ist Mitteilung bisher unbekannter Wahrheiten oder Tatsachen, die auf Grund göttlicher Autorität im Akt verstandesmäßiger Zustimmung angenommen werden*" (Revelation is the communication of hitherto unknown truths or facts which on the basis of divine authority are accepted in the act of rational assent." [The translation of O'Collins is found in GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology,* Chicago. Loyola University Press, 1971, p.

characterized the teaching of the First Vatican Council.[23] According to this perception, revelation was homogeneous with notions such as creed, correct doctrine or a collection of doctrines. When revelation is understood in these terms, the assent of faith means an assent to the doctrines.[24] The understanding of revelation as propositions undermined the 'personalistic' aspect of revelation, i.e., revelation understood in primarily relational terms. In O'Collins view, this limitation in the understanding of revelation was the effect of a Platonic and Scholastic understanding of anthropology. This understanding visualised "the process of man's believing affirmation of revelation in a hierarchy – with intellect and will in partnership at the top and the passions in a kind of helotry at the bottom." In the Platonic and Scholastic view, human emotions and instincts are not recognised, and it is taken for granted that divine truths can be known "by all with facility, with firm assurance and with no admixture of error (*ab omnibus expedite, firma certitudine et nullo admixto errore*)."[25] Another reason for the propositional view of revelation, according to O'Collins, is the consideration that language is capable of encapsulating truths independently of cultural presuppositions to "form a kind of noncreative medium for the preservation and transmission of revelation." In this sense revelation remains a collection of truths, which are passed on from one generation to the next in all its intactness. This means that revelation is not presented as something which happens but as something that endures.[26] In a

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24]). See also GERHARD GLOEGE, *Christliche Offenbarung. Dogmatisch,* in KURT GALLING (ed.), *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft* 4, 3rd edition (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1960) 1609-1610, p. 1609. Another Lutheran theologian, Paul Althaus, commented that Roman Catholic theology "entirely de-personalized and materialized the concept of revelation … The de-personalization of the idea of revelation is evident from the fact that they never say, 'God has revealed himself.' Revelation is intellectualized." See PAUL ALTHAUS, *Die Christliche Warheit* I, 1947, p. 286, as quoted in WERNER BULST, *Revelation*, trans. BRUCE VAWTER, New York, NY: Sheed and Ward, 1965, p. 22. However, Werner says that Althaus is not justified in saying that Catholic theology has de-personalized revelation. He maintains that Catholic theology, including the First Vatican Council, understands the content of revealed truths as first and foremost, God and his work of salvation, God revealing himself. However, according to him, there is a predominant and almost unanimous agreement in Catholic Theology to see revelation as "*divine* speech." See pp. 22-23.

[23] GERALD O'COLLINS & MARIO FARRUGIA, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology,* New York, NY, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press; London: Harper Collins, 1991, p. 206. According to O'Collins, during the time of the Enlightenment a distinction was made between truths of revelation and truths of reason. The truths of reason were understood to be accessible to human intelligence without any divine intervention. This distinction and the understanding of revelation as "information or 'propositional' truths disclosed by God" characterised the First Vatican Council, especially in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, *Dei Filius.* See Gerald O'Collins & MARIO FARRUGIA, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 97.

[24] However, O'Collins does not regard the First Vatican Council as having outrightly de-personalized revelation. He is of the view that, although there is a trend to de-personalize revelation, words which expressly speak of God 'revealing himself' suggest personalization. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology,* p. 24.

[25] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology,* p. 25. O'Collins is of the view that the propositional understanding of revelation in *Dei Filius* was influenced by St. Thomas Aquinas, who understood anthropology hierarchically. The hierarchical understanding of anthropology has even affected sacramental theology. David Power, while speaking about the importance of bodily actions in the Sacramental rites, says that Enlightenment philosophy fostered a disjunction between mind and body. While bodily action is essential to sacraments, this distinction tends to lead to a downplaying of the role of bodily actions in sacraments. Power points out that Aquinas emphasised the importance of both body and imagination for human beings in order "to have any access to knowledge or to the life of the spirit." See DAVID N. POWER, *Sacrament. The Language of God's Giving,* New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1999, pp. 120-121.

[26] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology,* p. 25. O'Collins says that the First Vatican Council portrayed revelation as "something which endures and remains rather than as something which happens." The Council said that

similar vein, John Baillie points out that Catholic theology employed a propositional theory of revelation which considered God as having disclosed a set of truths which are otherwise inaccessible to human reason. This understanding was mainly meant to preserve the "unity of doctrine throughout the Church."[27]

In opposition to this view, Modernists applied a naturalistic evolutionary philosophy to the concept of revelation.[28] Karl Rahner stated that the Modernists opposed the propositionalist view of the Church on revelation because it spoke of revelation as "the occurrence of an intervention of God 'purely from outside', speaking to men and conveying to them, through the prophets, truths in human statements which they could not attain by themselves and giving commands which they must follow." According to him, what Modernism opposed here was the "extrinsicism in the concept of revelation" which the Modernists (wrongly) assumed to be prevalent in the theology of that time. Rahner pointed out that, even at this time, the Church did not have a clear understanding of the concept of revelation, and that what the Church considered

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"[t]his supernatural revelation, according to the belief of the universal Church, as declared by the sacred council of Trent, is contained in written books and unwritten traditions, which were received by the apostles from the lips of Christ himself, or came to the apostles by the dictation of the Holy Spirit, and were passed on as it were from hand to hand until they reached us." See VATICAN COUNCIL I, *Dei Filius,* p. 806. See also, COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Decree on the Acceptance of the Sacred Books and Apostolic Traditions,* p. 663.

[27] JOHN BAILLIE, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought,* p. 29. According to Baillie, revelation understood in terms of propositions led to the "identification of revelation with the total content of Holy Scripture." Further, at the Council of Trent, the Catholic Church "defined that the whole Scripture, as well as a body of unwritten tradition, had been given *Spiritu sancto dictante,* at the dictation of the Holy Spirit." See also, COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Decree on the Acceptance of the Sacred Books and Apostolic Traditions,* p. 663.

[28] According to J. J. Heaney, Modernism which emerged in the latter part of 19th century and ended in the beginning of the 20th century held the following triple thesis: "(1) a denial of the supernatural as an object of certain knowledge … (2) an exclusive immanence of the Divine and of revelation ('vital immanence') reducing the Church to a simple social civilizing phenomenon; (3) a total emancipation of scientific research from Church dogma, which would allow the continued assertion of faith in dogma with its contradiction on the historical level." See J. J. HEANEY, *Modernism,* in BERNARD L. MARTHALER *et al.* (eds.), *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* 9, 2nd edition (New York, NY: Thomson & Gale, 2000) 752-757, p. 756. Pope Pius X condemned Modernism through his encyclical *Pascendi* on 8 September 1907. According to C. Bressolette, the two fundamental errors of the Modernists condemned by the Pope were, "agnosticism, which denies that rational demonstration can have any value in matters of religion; and 'vital immanentism,' which makes faith dependent on the religious feelings and needs of human beings." See C. BRESSOLETTE, *Modernism,* in JEAN-YVES LACOSTE (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology* 2 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005) 1049-1052, p. 1051. See also POPE PIUS X, *Pacendi Dominci Gregis (Encyclical on the Doctrines of the Modernists)*, in CLAUDIA CARLEN IHM (ed.), *The Papal Encyclicals 1903-1939* (Washington D.C.: McGrath, 1981) 71-98. As a further attack against all kinds of Modernist tendencies, Pope Pius X also required clerics to submit and assent to *Pascendi* through a *motu propiro,* '*Sacrorum antistitum'* which contained five propositions. "(1) God can be known and proved to exist by natural reason; (2) the external signs of revelation, especially miracles and prophesies, are signs giving certainty and are adapted to all men and times, including the present; (3) the Church was founded by Christ on earth; (4) there is a deposit of faith and the assertion that dogmas change from one sense to another one different from that held by the Church is heretical; (5) faith is not a blind sense welling up from the depths of the subconscious under the impulse of the heart and of a will trained to morality, but a real assent of the intellect to truth by hearing from an external source." See J. J. HEANEY, *Oath Against Modernism,* in BERARD L. MARTHALER *et al.* (eds.), *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* Vol. 9, 2nd edition (New York, NY: Thomson & Gale, 2000) 757-758, p. 757. See also POPE PIUS X, *Sacrorum Antistitum,* in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 2 (1910) 655-680. René Latourelle says that the Church, while condemning Modernism, "stressed the transcendence of revelation" and "the doctrinal character of the object of faith" because "Modernism was interested precisely in replacing the notions of supernatural revelation and immutable dogma by a religious development for which individual or collective religious awareness is the only rule." See RENÉ LATOURELLE, *Theology of Revelation. Including a Commentary on the Constitution 'dei verbum' of Vatican II,* New York, NY: Alba House, 1966, p. 289.

to be revelation was misunderstood by many, including the Modernists, who could not accept revelation as propositional truths.[29] However, according to Rahner, for the proponents of humanism and materialism, and those who regarded the human mind as the ultimate power which drives the world, what was a scandal was not the "*Deus absconditus* of Christianity," but the doctrine of a "*history* of revelation in which God himself prepared a single path beside the many others in the history of religion, and then himself appeared in the flesh and followed that path."[30] Rahner claims that there are two sides to revelation. Firstly, revelation constitutes the "supernaturally elevated transcendence" of the human being through grace, which is "always and everywhere operative" and through which human beings experience the transcendence of God. Secondly, revelation is historically mediated, i.e., it is the supernaturally transcendental experience which takes place in history and which, when taken as a whole, involves the whole of history. The theological reflection of a particular individual becomes part of that history, "though it does not constitute its primary basis or determine it."[31] This view of Karl Rahner forces us to take both divine and human factors into consideration when we seek to understand what we mean by revelation. This will ultimately direct our attention to another model of revelation, i.e., the model of the self-communication of God. Before turning to such a model, and while acknowledging that other objections can be raised against the propositional model of revelation,[32] as well as the evident shift that took place in the Second Vatican Council and in

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[29] KARL RAHNER & JOSEPH RATZINGER, *Revelation and Tradition,* New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1966, pp. 10-11. According to Karl Rahner, for Modernism, "revelation was another word for the inevitable development, immanent in human history, of man's religious needs, in the course of which these needs find objective expression in the manifold forms taken by the history of religion, and slowly grow to greater purity and comprehensiveness, until they attain their objective correlate in Christianity and the Church." See p. 10. We have opted throughout the dissertation to retain the language used in the original sources and not to attempt to reformulate with a view to inclusive language. In our own text, we have sought to use inclusive language.

[30] KARL RAHNER & JOSEPH RATZINGER, *Revelation and Tradition,* p. 11. Rahner is of the view that in the relationship that exists between the transcendent God and His creation, God is not to be seen as "a finite cause side by side with others in the world, but is the living, permanent transcendent ground of the self-movement of the world itself." He sees the same relationship, in its highest degree, between God and human beings in the history of revelation, the history which is "both the act of God and of man." According to him, if Catholic theology takes into account the "doctrines of divinizing grace and God's universal salvific will, the necessity of interior elevating grace for faith, and the Thomist doctrine of the ontological, transcendental significance of revelation," it can, without falling into Modernism, understand the history of revelation as the "history of that transcendental relation between man and God which is constituted by God's self-communication, or a supernatural kind, made to every mind by grace, but inescapably and always, and which in itself can rightly be termed revelation." See pp. 12-13.

[31] KARL RAHNER & JOSEPH RATZINGER, *Revelation and Tradition,* pp. 13-14.

[32] It would be worthwhile here to note a few more objections against the propositional view of revelation to add to what we have already mentioned. Gabriel Moran opines that this view portrays revelation as God revealing a set of propositions, a view which implies that what one believes is a finite and numerable set of statements. This means that in revelation there is no real contact between the one who reveals and the one who believes in what is revealed. See GABRIEL MORAN, *Theology of Revelation*, pp. 181, 119. Ray L. Hart maintains that, "[T]he *process* of revelation cannot refer to some special way of communicating a body of truth already won and therefore already shaped; and, as the terminus of process, to *assent* to such a body. No proposition would gain wider acceptance than the following one: 'the *content* of revelation is not a body of propositions to be accepted as the condition of faith'." See RAY L. HART, *Unfinished Man and the Imagination. Toward an Ontology and a Rhetoric of Revelation,* New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1968, p. 80. According to Avery Dulles, the propositional model is unacceptable for many reasons. Firstly, the propositional model claims its validity from the Scripture and the Scripture is considered as a collection of propositions which are infallible. But Dulles does not regard all propositions of the Bible as expressing revealed truth because they

Catholic theology, it is good to recall that one cannot completely dispense with the propositional view of revelation in Catholic theology.[33]

O'Collins maintains that the propositional view has its own place or value in the theology of revelation for the following reasons. Firstly, one needs to be aware that the propositional view does not simply depersonalize revelation because it does not negate the relationship that exists between God and human beings in revelation. Secondly, one needs to take into account the role of grace in revelation. A propositional view does not annul the actuality of the self-communication of God to human beings through grace that helps them to attain the beatific vision which is their ultimate goal. Finally, there can be no talk of revelation at all as long as the living experience of the relationship between God and human beings is confined to the sphere of human subjectivity. To speak meaningfully about revelation, it is essential that we develop notions such as 'revealed truths' and the 'content of revelation'. To put it differently, one needs to be able to formulate true statements about revelation when speaking of revelation. When we contemplate the social dimension of revelation, faith and human life, i.e., when we think of sharing the experience of revelation within the community and with those outside, this experience has to be formulated as true statements of faith.[34] O'Collins says that these formulations could be called 'propositionable' insofar as they help us to gain insight into revelation. Taking these points into consideration, we could justly say that revelation, understood in terms of propositions, enjoys its own particular place and that O'Collins upholds such an understanding. To further our discussion on revelation, we need to focus our attention on another model which is very closely related to the propositional understanding of revelation.

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are open to various allegorical and spiritual interpretations. Modern biblical criticism also finds different types of literary forms in the Scripture. Secondly, the "propositional model rests on an objectifying theory of knowledge", which is questioned today because propositions have very little part to play in communication. To understand propositions, we also need to take into account the various circumstances in which they are expressed. But such circumstances cannot be explained by propositions. Finally, the propositional model is highly authoritarian and requires "submission to concepts and statements that have come out of situations radically different from those of the contemporary believer." The propositions are from the Bible and Church's traditions which are held as revelation. These propositions need not illuminate the situation of the believer, and their life experiences. See AVERY ROBERT DULLES, *Models of Revelation*, pp. 48-51.

[33] Paul Helm classifies propositions into a variety of types. These include the following: (a) *statements* – These statements are "timeless or false once and for all." Their meanings will not change from context to context as in the case of sentences where the meanings may change from context to context. However, these statements can be variously expressed, while the meaning remains unchanged; (b) *eternal sentences* – These are sentences from which the meaning is eliminated. They have no propositional content as such. An example of this type of sentence is the theoretical sentence in mathematics; and (c) *form of words* – This is a formulation "in which something is propounded for consideration." It is hypothetical and open to consideration. There is no assertion in such a 'form of words'. These propositions have varying truth values. Helm, while he supports a propositional view of revelation, says that when theologians oppose propositional revelation, what they have in mind is the third kind of proposition, namely the 'form of words' that is proposed for consideration. Revelation in the Bible cannot be considered as propositions propounded for consideration. See PAUL HELM, *Revealed Propositions and Timeless Truths,* in *Religious Studies* 8 (1972) 127-136, pp. 128-131. He also says that what the theologians object to is "the idea that the Bible *expresses* propositions [in the same manner as *statements* (a)], not that it consists in them." See p. 132.

[34] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology*, p. 27.

2.1.2. The Personal Model of Revelation

According to O'Collins, there has been a gradual shift in the understanding of revelation from the propositional model to a *personal* model. In the personal model, revelation is conceived as an interpersonal encounter, or as God's self-revelation, which is "the gratuitous and saving self-disclosure of God who calls and enables us to enter by faith into a new personal relationship. Revelation is a person-to-person, subject-to-subject, I-Thou encounter."[35] The marked change in this view from the propositional understanding is that here the emphasis is laid on *Who* is revealed rather than *What* is revealed. According to O'Collins, this change of emphasis occurred together with the new understanding of the theology of grace. In this new understanding, which dealt with the justification and sanctification of human beings by God, the emphasis shifted from *What* is received to *Who* is received. In grace, what takes precedence is the 'uncreated grace' which is the indwelling of the Trinity, rather than 'created grace'. "The divine Giver comes with the gifts. Much more than being a matter of receiving 'things,' grace means a new personal relationship with God."[36]

O'Collins insists, however, that the two models of revelation about which we have spoken so far, are interrelated and "not mutually exclusive even if the second now proves more helpful and popular." Revelation conceived as personal encounter does not reduce revelation to simple personal experiences. In fact, personal encounter also involves the formulation of those things revealed by God in human terms so that they can be passed on. Hence, in the formulation of faith, emphasis is given to the divine-human dialogue, and revelation here is considered as *propositionable*. In the personal model, although the primary place is given to *Who* is revealed, the significance of *What* is revealed enjoys its proper place. "The communication of the truth *about* God remains an essential part of revelation, albeit always at the service of the personal encounter *with* God."[37] A fact that cannot be overlooked here is that although both of these models of revelation complement each other, they are strongly 'cognitive' and each "fails to

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[35] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology*, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981, pp. 54-55. Agreeing with the new understanding of revelation in the Second Vatican Council, René Latourelle said that, by means of revelation, "God enters into a person-to-person relationship with man: the divine I calls to the human Thou, speaks to him, carries on dialogue with him, reveals the mystery of his own intimate life in view of a communion of thought and love with the Divine Persons." See RENÉ. LATOURELLE, *Theology of Revelation. Including a Commentary on the Constitution 'Dei Verbum' of Vatican II,* p. 486. Karl Rahner makes a distinction between 'natural revelation' and 'true revelation'. In his understanding 'natural revelation' is the "disclosure of God and infinite mystery" to finite beings. Here God still remains a mystery, because this disclosure of God in his infinite mystery denies all the attributes of a finite being and keeps the finite distant from the infinite. But, in 'true revelation', "God speaks to man (Heb 1:1-2), makes known to him not merely what can be deduced at all times and in all places from the necessary reference of all earthly things to God that is the search for God and the challenge which this mystery presents to man, but rather all that remains unknown in and for the world even when the world is presupposed: the intimate being of God and his free, personal relationship with his spiritual creatures." See KARL RAHNER & HERBERT VORGRIMLER, *Theological Dictionary*, CORNELIUS ERNST (ed.), trans. RICHARD STRACHAN (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1968 [1965]), pp. 409-410.

[36] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology*, p. 55.

[37] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 55-56.

cover the full human condition and the scope of what God does for us."[38] Although the personal model speaks of revelation as our 'knowledge of' God rather than our 'knowledge about' God, it speaks of revelation in terms of knowledge. Even when one speaks of it as God's self-disclosure, the word 'disclosure' again involves 'knowledge'. Hence, when speaking about revelation, one cannot disregard its cognitive aspects. An end result of what we have said here is also that in revelation there is both a revealing of what has been under a veil and also a 'making available' of what is revealed, i.e., God himself is being made available in revelation.

O'Collins is of the view that from the time of the Second Vatican Council, a change occurred in the understanding of revelation which "recognizes revelation to be first the personal manifestation of the divine Mystery (upper case) and second the disclosure of divine mysteries (lower case) that were previously hidden from human knowledge and understanding."[39] In other words, in revelation prominence is given to humanity's meeting with God and not to their meeting with divinely authorized truths. This transition in the understanding of revelation also meant a change in the understanding of human faith. Faith is not just accepting revealed truths, but "the 'obedient' response of the whole person with the help of the Holy Spirit – head, heart, and actions – to the self-manifestation of God."[40] Faith means the complete submission of human beings to God's initiative.

2.1.3. The Salvation and Sacramental Model of Revelation

A notable change that took place during the Second Vatican Council with regard to the understanding of revelation, in comparison to the First Vatican Council, is that it "recognized the essentially salvific and sacramental nature of God's self-revelation, mediated through events (deeds) and words."[41] The *sacramental* nature of revelation points to the way "divine self-revelation occurs, [namely], through an interplay of deeds and words." The *salvific* nature of God's self-revelation suggests that through revelation God transforms and changes human beings and opens them towards the recognition of the self-manifestation of God in human

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[38] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 56-57. O'Collins does not, however, deny completely the understanding of revelation in the First Vatican Council as 'personal self-disclosure'. What he wants to affirm is the explicit understanding of revelation as the 'self-communication' of God in the Second Vatican Council. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Theology and Revelation*, pp. 10-11.

[39] GERALD O'COLLINS & MARIO FARRUGIA, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity,* p. 97. A similar idea can be found in the writings of William Nicholls. He says that, "Revelation means, then, that God of his own free will and because he loves us has drawn aside the veil that hides him from us, and has shown himself to us as he is. Just as we must not in the slightest degree minimise the fact that revelation is God's act and not man's achievement, so we must not in any degree minimise the completeness of the act of revelation when it comes, for both errors minimise the love of God to men. God reveals *himself*." See WILLIAM NICHOLLS, *Revelation in Christ*, London: SCM Press, 1958, p. 44 as quoted in F. GERALD DOWNING, *Has Christianity a Revelation?,* p.11.

[40] GERALD O'COLLINS & MARIO FARRUGIA, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity,* p. 97. See also VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dei Verbum*, 5, p. 973.

[41] GERALD O'COLLINS & EDWARD G. FARRUGIA, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, p. 206.

history.[42] O'Collins states that the Scripture, the Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed emphasise the language of salvation rather than the language of revelation. Theologians like Gerald Downing have given prominence to 'salvation' rather than 'revelation' or 'communication', and see revelation as the whole event of the saving activity of God's self-communication, which includes the experience of the self-communication of God by human beings.[43] However, O'Collins notes that authors such as Edward Schillebeeckx[44] work with the language of 'revelation' rather than the language of 'salvation'. The question here is which of these terms should be allowed to play the dominant role and whether either could be left out. From what we have seen so far, 'revelation' seems to designate the cognitive side of 'salvation'. O'Collins sees other possibilities as well. Firstly, he sees 'revelation' as the "initial encounter with God and the first call to faith," and 'salvation' as "the whole subsequent working out of this initial experience, the transformation that follows when we accept God's word and allow it to change our lives." Secondly, he sees them together in the one salvific act of God. This means that salvation takes place in and through the divine self-manifestation of God. Hence, revelation is 'both informative *and* effective'. To clarify this further, O'Collins makes use of the words of St. Paul who says that "the word of God is living and active" (Heb 4:12). According to him, these words of Paul indicate that the word of God both communicates something and effects something, i.e., it "brings about a saving communion between God and human beings."[45]

Two possibilities derive from our considerations thus far. On the one hand, we can see the dominance of 'salvation' over 'revelation' without, however, the exclusion of the revelatory side. To emphasise salvation means to give prominence to the manifestation of God in Christ as Saviour and to help find answers to the questions of suffering, evil, sin and death. On the other

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[42] GERALD O'COLLINS & MARIO FARRUGIA, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 97-98.

[43] According to F. Gerald Downing, salvation is an alternative to revelation because revelation is "not able to convey to us the full richness of Christian life and faith." See F. GERALD DOWNING, *Has Christianity A Revelation?*, p. 274. He also says that, "The logic of words like 'save' means that it and they are well suited for the theological interpretation of the historical events of the life, death, resurrection and glory of Jesus of Nazareth. They are much better suited than words like 'reveal'." See p. 283. He finds that, in the New Testament, words that connote 'saving activity' such as 'saving' and 'redeeming' takes precedence and priority over words such as 'communication', 'revealing', and 'making known'. See pp. 291-293.

[44] Schillebeeckx saw the human response to revelation which shows itself in their faith as being part of the content of revelation. He also says that "[r]evelation … is God's saving activity in history experienced and expressed by believers in answer to the question about the meaning of life." EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX, *The Problem of the Infallibility of the Church's Office. A Theological Reflection,* in *Concilium* 3 (1973) 77-94, p. 77. In these words of Schillebeeckx, one detects an affirmation about the necessity of the human interpretation of God's revealing activity in revelation. O'Collins points out that the word *meaning* in the above statement suggests the language of 'revelation' rather than the language of 'salvation', since it is a reference to human reason which searches for, and obtains, meaning from God. Here, he says that, for Schillebeeckx, revelation does not directly refer to salvation from problems, evils, sufferings, sin, etc., but to something related to human reason. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology*, p. 57.

[45] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 57-58. O'Collins says that such a dynamic understanding of revelation as both communicative and effective is also found in the Old Testament. "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not thither but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and prosper in the thing for which I sent it." (Is 55:10-11).

hand, it is also possible to give pride of place to 'revelation' while not neglecting the element of salvation. In doing this, we make clear that God's self-revelation extends much further than mere communication or information.[46]

2.1.4. The Self-Communication Model of Revelation

For O'Collins, there is a need to see revelation and salvation as interrelated and interchangeable, as expressed in the *Constitution on Divine Revelation* of the Second Vatican Council.[47] O'Collins points out that the Council used the terms 'salvation' and 'revelation' interchangeably and that, for the Council, "the history of revelation is the history of salvation and vice versa." But for O'Collins, a better choice of expression, instead of the terms 'salvation' and 'revelation' used by the Council, is divine *self-communication* which embraces both the revealing and saving activity of God which takes place within human experience. This takes into account both the divine and human aspects of revelation. By choosing the self-communcation model O'Collins places emphasis on the revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ to human beings as a person to person relationship. This choice may be understood very much in line with John Baillie's understanding of the contemporary understanding of revelation. He says that presently our understanding of revelation has changed from that of "*from* Subject to subject" to "*of* Subject to subject." In his view, what God reveals to us is not just a "body of propositions" but God Himself. According to Baillie, it is Archbishop William Temple who helped develop such an understanding of revelation in line with his idea of 'revelation in events.'[48] Baillie also suggests that Wilhelm Herrmann of Marburg, already in 1887, had a similar understanding of revelation as the self-revelation of God.[49]

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[46] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology*, p. 58.

[47] Vatican Council II says that, "[t]he pattern of this revelation unfolds through deeds and words bound together by an inner dynamism, in such a way that God's works, effected during the course of the history of salvation, show forth and confirm the doctrine and the realities signified by the words, while the words in turn proclaim the works and throw light on the meaning hidden in them. By this revelation the truth, both about God and about salvation of humankind, inwardly dawns on us in Christ, who is in himself both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation." See VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dei Verbum 2,* p. 972.

[48] JOHN BAILLIE, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought,* pp. 32-33. According to Iremonger, William Temple held that the "fatal mistake in much of Christian history has been to look on 'revelation' as though it were given in the form of *propositions*, to be held as 'revealed truths'… Revelation, he says, is to be found in the coincidence of divinely guided *events* with divinely enlightened appreciation." According to F. A. Iremonger, the biographer of William Temple, it is from Father Herbert Kelly that Temple got this understanding of 'revelation in events'. Critically looking at the propositional understanding of revelation, Father Kelly maintained that it was the growth of legalistic interests in the Western Church that led to the tendency to see the sacred books as authoritative statements. See F. A. IREMONGER, *William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury. His Life and Letters,* 6th impression, London: Oxford University, 1956 [1948], p. 532. It is worthwhile to quote one passage that discloses Temple's understanding of revelation in terms of God revealing Himself: "What is offered to man's apprehension in any specific revelation is not truth concerning God but the living God Himself." See WILLIAM TEMPLE, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, *Nature, Man and God. Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of Glasgow in the Academical Years 1932-1933 and 1933-1934,* London: Macmillan, 1934, p. 322.

[49] JOHN BAILLIE, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought,* p. 33. Concerning revelation as the self-revelation of God, Herrmann wrote the following: "The thoughts contained in Scripture are not themselves the content of revelation … On the contrary, we must already be renewed and redeemed by revelation before we can enter into the thought-world of

Revelation seen as the self-communication of God, according to O'Collins, is also suggested in the First Vatican Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith.* While it dealt with revelation, the Constitution held that revelation consisted in the self-revelation of God to human beings. The Constitution stated that, "It was, however, pleasing to his wisdom and goodness to reveal *himself* [*se ipsum*] and the eternal laws of his will to the human race by another, and that a supernatural way."[50] Hence, in O'Collins view, revelation involves the revelation of the one who is revealed, the real act of revelation and also those who receive the revelation. It involves an inter-personal relationship between the God who reveals and the human beings to whom God is revealed.[51] What O'Collins proposes here is to see "revelation as part of the total process of *experiencing the divine self-communication.*" In this totality of revelation and in this act of the self-communication of God, experience is the "place where the individual subject and the community meet God. 'Self-communication' reminds us that revelation always entails grace, that active *presence* of the triune God who delivers us from our evils and comes to share with us the divine life."[52] Hence, revelation takes places in an inter-personal relationship between God and human beings. In line with this view of the inter-relationship between God and human beings, O'Collins dismisses the distinctions between 'Christology from above' or 'high Christology' (descending Christology), which gives greater importance to the divinity of Christ, and 'Christology from below' or 'low Christology'(ascending Christology), which gives greater emphasis to the humanity of Christ. In the same way, he dismisses the distinction between 'ontological Christology' which is concerned about "who and what Jesus is in himself" and 'functional Christology' which "focuses on his saving work for us."[53] He dismisses a clear-cut distinction of these because he understands that one cannot think of Jesus Christ in terms of either one point of view while denying the other. That is to say, when one does Christology, one has to deal with both Jesus' being as well as his saving activity. O'Collins' dismissal of a clear-cut distinction also may be due to his interest in understanding the revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ where the inter-personal relationship of God with human beings is

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Scripture. What then is the content of revelation, if it is not the doctrines of Scripture? There should surely be no doubt among Christians about the answer. One must have practised much unfruitful theology and been subjected to much bad teaching if one hesitates at all. For the Christian, and indeed for devout men everywhere, who seek God alone, it goes without saying that *God* is the content of revelation. *All revelation* is the self-revelation of God." See WILHELM HERRMANN, *Der Begriff der Offenbarung*, 1887, 2nd and rev. ed., reprinted in *Offenbarung und Wunder*, Giessen: Töpelmann 1908, p. 9ff., as quoted in JOHN BAILLIE, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought,* p. 33.

[50] VATICAN COUNCIL I, *Dei Filius,* p. 806. The emphasis in the quote is mine.

[51] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 59.

[52] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 59.

[53] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus,* New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 16-19. Christology from below belongs to Antiochian school and is attributed to the Synoptic gospels. Christology from above belongs to Alexandrian school and is attributed to the Gospel of John. However, according to O'Collins, the distinction attributed to the gospels is not so watertight, but in the gospels they complement each other because one finds both divine and human elements of Jesus Christ in the gospels. Hence, O'Collins encourages having a combination of both types of Christology. See, pp. 16-17.

emphasized. God's revelation is a reciprocal relationship with human beings where human beings respond to God's revelation in and through the person of Jesus Christ.

This amounts to saying that revelation is the self-communication of God experienced by human beings, i.e., that revelation 'includes its recipient'.[54] This experience of the self-communication of God affects the entire existence of human beings and is experienced in different degrees in view of their capacities, the latter encompassing such things as the senses, the intellect, feelings, will, and memory. In O'Collins' view, "*history is the means par excellence* by which the divine self-communication has entered and continues to enter human experience."[55] In history revelation is experienced by human beings. However, we need to ask whether all human experiences involve also revelation. We shall deal with the role of experience in revelation at a later stage.

2.1.4.1. The Christ-Centredness of Revelation

A notable characteristic of Vatican II's portrayal of divine self-revelation, alongside its sacramental and salvific characteristics, according to O'Collins, is its *Christ-centredness*. According to *Dei Verbum*, Christ is the climax of the divine self-revelation.[56] It is Christ who reveals, he is the revealed and he is the content of revelation. In the words of O'Collins, "Christ is simultaneously the Revealer (or, with the Holy Spirit, the primary agent of divine self-revelation), the Revelation (or the visible, incarnate 'process' of divine self-revelation), and, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the primary 'content' of revelation."[57] He also says:

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[54] According to Joseph Ratzinger, "[r]evelation is fully present only when, in addition to the material statements which testify to it, its own inner reality is itself operative in the form of faith. Consequently revelation to some degree includes its recipient, without whom it does not exist. Revelation cannot be pocketed like a book one carries around. It is a living reality which calls for the living man as the location of its presence." See KARL RAHNER & JOSEPH RATZINGER, *Revelation and Tradition,* p. 36.

[55] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 59.

[56] *Dei Verbum* says that "Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, sent as a human being among humans, 'speaks the words of God' (Jn 3:34) and accomplishes the work of salvation which the Father gave him to do. … This is why Jesus completes the work of revelation and confirms it by divine testimony. He did this by the total reality of his presence and self-manifestation – by his words and works, his symbolic acts and miracles, but above all by his death and his glorious resurrection from the dead, crowned by his sending the Spirit of truth." See VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dei Verbum 4*, pp. 972-973.

[57] GERALD O'COLLINS & MARIO FARRUGIA, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 98. See also KARL RAHNER & JOSEPH RATZINGER, *Revelation and Tradition,* p. 36. Ratzinger here says that "[t]he actual reality which occurs in Christian revelation is nothing and no other than Christ himself. He is revelation in the proper sense." Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler are of the view that it is in Jesus that revelation ended and that Jesus is the fullness of revelation. They say that, "The history of revelation comes to its absolute climax when the divine self-communication, through the hypostatic union in God's Incarnation (the substantiality of which intrinsically includes God's personal and spiritual communication as a union with a created spirit), culminates in the created spiritual being of Jesus; for here he who is expressed (God), the mode of expression (Christ's human nature in its being, life and conclusiveness) and the recipient (Jesus as he who is blessed and sees God) have become absolutely one personality (not a neuter identity). In Jesus, both God's gracious communication to men and its self-declaration in the tangible, bodily, social dimension have reached their climax, have become Revelation." KARL RAHNER & HERBERT VORGRIMLER, *Theological Dictionary,* CORNELIUS ERNST (ed.), trans. RICHARD STRACHAN, 3rd print (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1968), p. 412.

> The whole Christ-event was and remains the fullness and completion of divine revelation. Having spoken and acted through the visible presence of his incarnate Son (and the mission of the Spirit), God had and has nothing greater to say, nothing more to reveal, and no other agent of revelation who could be compared with, let alone match, Christ. In that sense the historical revelation through Christ is full, unparalleled, and unsurpassable in principle; to use the language of the Letter to the Hebrews, this saving revelation has happened 'once and for all' (Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10). God can and will call up subordinate mediators of revelation, but they can and will never be like Christ either in kind or degree. His divine identity puts him qualitatively beyond any possible 'rival' in the work of revelation (and salvation).[58]

According to O'Collins, the climax of the self-communication of God occurred when "God's saving word came through the history of Israel and then – in a definitive fashion – through Jesus of Nazareth and the experiences in which he was involved. Christians now experience God's self-communication reaching them through preaching, sacraments and other ritual actions which interpret and re-enact those past events."[59] Every Christian now experiences the revelation of God as a member of the worshipping community, which is the Church. O'Collins also says that "we do not yet enjoy the fullness and completion of revelation" and that the final vision of God is yet to come.

2.1.4.2. Foundational Revelation and Dependent Revelation

When O'Collins speaks of the definitive revelation he also makes a distinction between 'foundational revelation' and 'dependent revelation', based on the distinction made by *Dei Verbum* and other documents of the Second Vatican Council between 'past' and 'present' revelation.[60] In his view, "the definitive revelation of God communicated through Christ and his apostles can be appropriately called 'foundational' revelation. The present revelation that we

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[58] GERALD O'COLLINS & MARIO FARRUGIA, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity,* p. 99. Considering the difficulties in dialogue, J. Saldanha says that one needs to nuance the affirmation of Christ being the fullness of revelation. According to him, *Logos*, which is the Word, was with the Father from all eternity and is infinite fullness. But when the Word took the nature of human being in a particular culture, time and place, it necessarily involved limitation. He also sees limitation in the public ministry of Jesus because it was cut short. He is of the view that "the fulness of divine *Logos* can never be fully expressed in a human life, however long. Even what we know of the short life of Jesus is very incomplete … and the Church has not grasped it fully, but progresses towards 'a daily more complete and profound awareness' of it." JULIAN SALDANHA, *Problematic Issues in Interreligious Dialogue*, in *Mission Today* 1 (1999) 29-36, p. 34.

[59] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 71.

[60] According to O'Collins, besides *Dei Verbum*, other documents of the Second Vatican Council allude to past and present revelation. Regarding past revelation: while preaching the gospel, bishops draw "out of the treasury of revelation things new and old" (*Lumen Gentium* 25, p. 869). "In revealing himself to his people, even to the extent of showing himself fully in the incarnate Son, God has spoken in terms of the culture peculiar to different ages. The church likewise, living in various conditions of history, has adopted the discoveries of various cultures to spread and explain the news of Christ in its preaching to all nations, to explore it and understand it more deeply, and to express it better in liturgical celebration and in the life of the varied community of the faithful" (*Gaudium et spes* 58, p. 1109). Regarding texts that allude to present revelation: "He [Jesus] is present through his word, in that he himself is speaking when scripture is read in church" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7, p. 822); in Christian worship "God is speaking to his people; Christ is still proclaiming his good news" (ibid., 33, p. 827); regarding the manifestation of Christ, we read the following: "By the very fact of revealing Christ, the church reveals to people their real situation and the truth about their total calling" (*Ad gentes* 8, p. 1018) and, the Church is "the universal sacrament of salvation which at the same time brings into effect the mystery of God's love for humanity" (*Lumen Gentium* 48, p. 887). See also GERALD O'COLLINS, *Revelation Past and Present,* in R. LATOURELLE (ed.), *Vatican Two. Assessment and Perspectives Twenty Five Years After (1962-1987)* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989) 125-137, p. 126.

receive now can be called 'dependent' revelation, inasmuch as it depends on the foundational figures of Christ and his apostles."[61] O'Collins is of the view that, according to the Second Vatican Council and other postconciliar documents, revelation, which is the self-communication of God through Jesus Christ, has reached its full and definitive climax in the past." However, while saying that it is definitive, O'Collins says, the official Church documents do not hesitate to portray the divine self-communication as something happening now through the liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Nos. 7, 33), the prayerful reading of the scriptures (*Dei Verbum*, No. 25), missionary activity (*Ad gentes*, No. 8), the signs of the times (*Gaudium et spes*, Nos. 4, 11), the Christian education of very young children (*Catechesi tradendae*, No. 36), the lives of saintly persons (*Lumen gentium*, No. 50) and so forth." O'Collins states that, according to the Church, this dependent or "Present revelation *actualizes* the living event of the divine self-manifestation, but it *does not add* to the 'content' of what was completely and fully revealed through Christ's life, death, resurrection and sending of the Holy Spirit."[62] Hence, according to the teachings of the Church, the end of the apostolic age is the climax of the foundational revelation. After the period of the apostles, there begins the time of dependent revelation which continues in the Church and in the life of Christian believers. This is to say that, with the foundational revelation, "God's last word has been uttered, the Church was founded, and the writing of the inspired Scriptures (which recorded the foundational experiences and interpretations of the divine self-communication) likewise came to a close."[63] The revelation that we have today in the Church through the proclamation of the Word, the liturgy, etc., is the

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[61] "Foundational revelation was mediated through the apostles, they testified to that divine self-manifestation in Christ which was definitive, normative and not to be completed by anything less than the final coming of the Lord. Dependent revelation is the continuing and lived renewal of the revelation experienced by the apostles. It is the encounter in faith with the self-revealing God which occurs 'now' and points back to the unique revelation that took place 'then'." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *A Neglected Source for the Theology of Revelation,* in *Gregorianum* 57 (1978) 756-768, p. 756. The distinction made between foundational revelation and dependent revelation by O'Collins may be compared to the distinction that Walter E. Wyman sees in Ernst Troeltsch's understanding of revelation. According to Wyman, Troeltsch made a distinction between the 'productive' revelation of the founding figures of religion and the 'reproductive' revelation of the followers of the founding figures of religion. See WALTER E. WYMAN JR., *Revelation and the Doctrine of Faith. Historical Revelation within the Limits of Historical Consciousness*, in *Journal of Religion* 78 (1998) 38-63, p. 57. See also ERNST TROELTSCH, *The Christian Faith (Based on lectures delivered at the University of Heidelberg in 1912 and 1913),* GERTRUD VON LE FORT (ed.), trans. GARRET E. PAUL (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 41. According to Troeltsch, there are stages of revelation. First of all there is *foundational and central revelation* which is the Bible or "the history to which it witnesses." Secondly there is *progressive revelation*, which is "the historic traditions of the church and the modern world of religious feeling." Finally there is *contemporary revelation*, which is the "contemporary religious experience." See p. 40. It is worth noting that Troeltsch is of the view that, in the present times, one can no longer speak of "Christian and non-Christian revelation" but only of higher and lower revelations. See p. 41.

[62] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Revelation Past and Present,* pp. 129-130. O'Collins says that, with Jesus' "appearance, 'the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God at hand' (Mk 1:15). Revelation is here and now in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The divine self disclosure is no longer mediated through events and words which – as it were – make a certain independent sense apart from the person of the revealer." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Theology and Revelation*, p. 26.

[63] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 195. According to the Second Vatican Council, "Jesus completes the work of revelation and confirms it by divine testimony. He did this by the total reality of his presence and self-manifestation by his words and deeds, his symbolic acts and miracles, but above all by his death and his glorious resurrection from the dead, crowned by his sending the Spirit of truth … The Christian dispensation is the new and definitive covenant. It follows that it will never pass away, and that no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our lord Jesus Christ." See VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dei Verbum 4*, pp. 972-973.

dependent revelation which draws Christians towards the complete manifestation of the divine truth.[64] The denial of present revelation is a denial of the Holy Spirit's active role as a mediator of the risen Christ down through the ages of history and Tradition. Such a denial also means that 'faith' is only an assent to revealed truths given in the past and is not man's "full obedience given to God revealed here and now through the voice of the gospel."[65]

O'Collins points to several reasons for the underestimation of, and opposition to, the idea of God's active revelation in the present. There is, first, the classical view that "revelation closed with the death of the last apostle." However, as O'Collins points out, the Second Vatican Council did not use this adage in *Dei Verbum*. It rather chose to proclaim that the self-revelation of God reached its definitive climax with Jesus Christ and the foundation of the Christian Church. This suggests that the Fathers of the Council wanted to consider revelation as a 'living reality'. Secondly, there is resistance to the teaching of the Council Fathers that the revelation of the 'foundational truths' must be understood "primarily" in terms of "the personal Truth (in the singular) which is the divine self-disclosure" that reached its climax with the self-manifestation of the tri-personal God in Christ. O'Collins is intent on establishing that it is the personal encounter with the foundational truth that gave rise to the 'content' of revelation or the 'deposit of faith'. The unwillingness to accept revelation as a present reality, according to him, arises from the false assumption that such an acceptance involves the recognition of an 'addition' to the content of revelation. Thirdly, it has been suggested that to accept revelation as a living reality may result in the admission of 'private revelations' which might also lead to the false understanding that there could be additions to the content of revelation. This, O'Collins says, is only possible where there is a one-sided attention to the "divine self-disclosure through created realities and ordinary human experiences." According to him, nothing can be added to the fullness of God's self-revelation in Christ. This fullness of revelation in Christ "takes precedence over any divine manifestation in the created world of everyday experience."[66]

According to O'Collins, the notion of dependent revelation allows us to acknowledge that revelation is not a 'closed' event, which terminated with the death of the Apostles. Revelation is

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[64] According to Julian Saldanha, the distinction between foundational revelation and dependent revelation could be attributed to the Second Vatican Council because it made a distinction between revelation in Christ and revelation in the Church. The council stated that, "Whereas Christ exists as 'the fullness of all revelation' (DV 2), 'the Church constantly moves forward towards the fullness of divine truth' (DV 8)." See JULIAN SALDANHA, *Problematic Issues in Interreligious Dialogue*, p. 33. According to the joint statement of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, "the fullness of truth received in Jesus Christ does not give individual Christians the guarantee that they have grasped that truth fully. In the last analysis truth is not a thing we possess, but a person by whom we must allow ourselves to be possessed. This is an unending process." See PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELISATION OF PEOPLES, *Dialogue and Proclamation, Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, Vatican, 1991, p. 49.

[65] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Revelation Past and Present,* pp. 128-129.

[66] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Revelation Now,* in *Tablet* (21 May, 1994) 616.

an ongoing process in the life of the Church. When the Holy Scripture is read in the Church, Christ himself speaks, and the Holy Spirit remains as the one who continuously guides and moves the Church into all truth.[67] What the Second Vatican Council asserts is that "no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ,"[68] which means that no other future event will supersede the Christ event. O'Collins insists that foundational revelation[69] is the fullness of revelation which took place once and for all in Christ as "reported and interpreted in the New Testament." He understands dependent revelation as revelation which is "constantly brought to life through the liturgy, personal prayer and a thousand other means until the end of time." Hence, on the one hand, there will be no more revelation since it has "reached its definitive peak". On the other hand, revelation takes place even now as it continues in the life of the Church in dependence on the foundational revelation.[70] In one sense, the Christ-event is the completion of revelation in principle. But, in another sense, as far as the final vision of God is yet to be realised, we will continue to enjoy revelation in the present until the fullness and completion of revelation ultimately takes place in the eschatological future. This double-edged view might be seen in the words of St. Paul when he says that, "Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part: then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood" (1 Cor 13:12). According to O'Collins, the "definitive disclosure of God's transforming love in Christ may not be reduced to past fact but remains also an ever present and ever-new reality."[71] In the life of the Church, the proclamation of the Word of God, the Liturgy and the Sacraments become the source and means through which revelation takes place in the present. It is through these realities that the faithful in their everyday life become aware of the self-communication of God in and through Jesus Christ.

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[67] VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7, p. 822. See also *Dei Verbum* 21, p. 979.

[68] VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dei Verbum* 4, p. 973.

[69] The National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States used the terms 'revelation' and 'manifestation' or 'communication' to distinguish between past and present revelation. However, O'Collins says that these terms are synonymous and that the Second Vatican Council used them interchangeably. So, for example, the Council said that "by the very fact of revealing [*manifestando*] Christ, the church reveals [*revelat*] to people their real situation and the truth about their total calling" (*Ad Gentes* 8. p. 1018). Such language obviously does not make the distinction between past and present revelation very clear. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Revelation Past and Present,* pp. 130-131. Aylward Shorter prefers to speak of 'foundational' and 'participant' revelation. He says that, "Our experience of Jesus Christ in the events and relationships of our own life really participates in the foundational revelation bestowed on the apostles and living on effectively in the tradition." See AYLWARD SHORTER, *Revelation and Its Interpretation,* London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983, p. 141. The term 'participant' presents certain problem. For O'Collins, if one uses the term participant, it may be difficult to distinguish between the way in which the apostles participated in the foundational revelation and in the way we participate in the "revelation available now." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Revelation Past and Present,* p. 132.

[70] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Revelation Now,* p. 616. O'Collins here says that unless Catholics accept revelation as past and present, they will not be able to appreciate the liturgy of the Church, especially the Eucharist. "The Eucharistic 'bringing to mind' or anamnesis allows the salvific revelation effected once and for all by Christ to prove itself continually the redemptive reality in our midst and at the heart of our lives … The dependent revelation which happens now in liturgy draws its whole vitality from the foundational revelation that gave birth to the Christian community."

[71] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Revelation Now*, p. 616.

2.1.4.3. The End of Foundational Revelation

According to O'Collins, foundational revelation ended with the death of the last apostle, somewhere towards the close of the first century.[72] The period of foundational revelation included the life, death and resurrection of Christ, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the apostolic period. The apostolic period and the foundational role of the apostles consisted of the recording of the kerygmatic formulas, the proclamation of the gospel by the apostles, the entry of new believers, the founding of the Church, the shaping of the essential sacramental and moral life of the Church, and the writing of the New Testament.[73] The end of foundational revelation with the apostolic period does not mean that there was any new revelation or reception of new truths during this period. During this period, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the apostles assimilated what was already revealed and experienced it in their lives. It was also a period of expressing, and providing a normative interpretation of, the revelation of the self-communication of God in Jesus which the apostles had directly experienced in their lives. Hence, in O'Collins' view, with the close of the apostolic age the "period of foundational revelation, in which the activity of the original witnesses brought about the visible Church and completed the written word of God, was finished."[74] However, Karl Rahner is of the view that foundational revelation ended with the resurrection of Christ. He says, "While textbook theology usually says that revelation was closed with the death of the last apostle, it would be better and more exact to say that revelation closed with the achievement of the death of Jesus, crucified and risen."[75] But O'Collins states that this view underplays the significance of the recipients of revelation and gives greater significance to the content of revelation. According to him, revelation has a reciprocal significance, i.e., revelation is primarily a *personal* encounter, and *what* is revealed – or the 'content' – is secondary. Hence, for him, "revelation is not properly there before being adequately accepted and lived out by the recipients."[76]

2.1.4.4. Uninterrupted Revelation

To emphasise the reality of dependent revelation, O'Collins says that there is a continuous and uninterrupted divine 'speaking' that leads one to faith and also to a deeper knowledge of divine truths.[77] He says, "Revelation and salvation did not grind to a halt at the end of the apostolic era,

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[72] This is the view held by the anti-modernist decree of *Lamentabili* in 1907 which condemned the modernist proposition that revelation was not completed with the apostles. See PIUS X, *Lamentabili*, in *Acta Sancta Sedis* 40 (1907) pp. 470-478.

[73] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology,* p. 94.

[74] GERALD O'COLLINS & MARIO FARRUGIA, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 101.

[75] See KARL RAHNER, *The Death of Jesus and the Closure of Revelation*, in *Theological Investigations 18. God and Revelation*, trans. EDWARD QUINN (London: Sarton, Longman & Todd, 1984) 132-142, pp. 140-141.

[76] See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Revelation Past and Present,* p. 135.

[77] GERALD O'COLLINS, *A Neglected Source for the Theology of Revelation,* p. 757. See also *Dei Verbum* 2, 9 and 25, pp. 971-981. To speak of the continuity of revelation, Gabriel Moran points to the understanding of 'grace' in sacramental

but continued and continues in dependence upon the unique and normative apostolic experience of and witness to Jesus Christ."[78] What we have here is a distinction (without division) between the revelation in Christ and the revelation that we have today. Terminologically this contrast could be made between the revelation of Christ in the founding of the Church, and the present revelatory experiences in the continuing life of the Church, or between the saving revelation that took place in Christ and the experience of that revelation in the life of Christians today.[79] The Second Vatican Council spoke of revelation in the present tense, as taking place in the life of the Church and its activities. Christ continues to act through the Holy Spirit in the Church and in its missionary endeavour and reveals God to human beings.[80] This being said, however, it is nevertheless difficult to reconcile the claim that there is continuing revelation or present revelation with the claim that, from the time of the death of the last apostle, "no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ."[81] The latter claim clearly affirms that what the apostles originally experienced and witnessed was the definitive revelation which cannot be repeated. However, according to Aylward Shorter, the revelation witnessed by the apostles and the divine life that Christ came to give is available to all. "The self-revelation of God to those who 'saw' Christ in the flesh is still a living and active power among those who have not 'seen' him" (Jn 20:29).[82] Hence, what was already revealed is present revelation to those who, so to speak, 'avail' themselves of it.

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theology. He says that contemporary sacramental theology does not understand grace as if stored up in Christ and distributed to those who fulfil certain requirements. He holds that "[i]n Christ's bodily humanity at the resurrection, the transformation by Spirit began in full; in Christ's body there has been nothing to stop it ever since. In the Christian life of worship, Christ's revelatory-redeeming activity brings the believer into contact with the continuing event of salvation. The Word still speaks a word which like all human words is to a degree revelatory and effective, that is, effective because it is revelatory and revelatory because it is effective." GABRIEL MORAN, *Theology of Revelation*, pp. 120-121.

[78] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 101. He also says, "Between the present revelation given with Christ's death and resurrection and the revelation to come there is continuity. … The revelation we experience will be consummated by the revelation we await." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Theology and Revelation*, p. 42. See also 1 Cor 13:12; Rom 8:16,18,19, 23. But the consummation of revelation will take place at the final coming of Jesus Christ. See 1 Cor 1:7; 2 Thes 1:7; Tit 2:13; Heb 9:28; Mt 7:10; 1 Cor 16:22 and 1 Cor 15:20-28.

[79] According to Orthodox theology, although supernatural revelation came to its close in Christ, his state has a dynamic character. The revealed Christ still continues his work within creation to make that revelation perpetual and to lead believers towards the ultimate union with Jesus, i.e., towards their deification. This is done through the spiritualization of the believers with the help of the Holy Spirit, through the means of the Church, Tradition and Scripture. See DUMITRU STANILOAE, *The Experience of God*, trans. IOAN IONITA & ROBERT BARRINGER, Brookline, Massachusetts, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994 [1998], pp. 35-36.

[80] To speak of how revelation takes place today, the Second Vatican Council borrowed the phrase 'God as he reveals' (*Dei Verbum* 5, p. 973) from the First Vatican Council document *Dei Filius*. According to Aylward Shorter, the use of the present tense in the Second Vatican Council is not accidental. It uses the present tense many times. For example, Christians who are called to be adopted sons through Jesus Christ make their response to God "as he reveals himself" (*Diginitatis Humanae* 10, p. 107); the Church is called to "communicate to humanity the fruits of salvation" (*Lumen Gentium* 8, p. 855); Christ "offers to the human race through his Spirit the light and strength to respond to its highest calling" (*Gaudium et Spes* 10, p. 1074). See also AYLWARD SHORTER, *Revelation and Its Interpretation*, p. 140.

[81] *Dei Verbum* 4, p. 973.

[82] AYLWARD SHORTER, *Revelation and Its Interpretation,* p. 140.

Paul Tillich says that while the apostles experienced Jesus Christ in an "original revelatory ecstasy," the generations that followed them met the Jesus who had been received as the Christ by the apostles. He calls this revelatory experience of the following generations dependent revelation, i.e., continuous revelation in the Church. The original reception of the revelation is permanent and unchangeable but the spiritual reception of the original revelation by the following generations is transformative.[83] However, it is to be noted here that, according to O'Collins, the dependent revelation that the Christians have today is also a direct experience of the self-communication of God. He understands all experiences of the revelation of God to be direct and immediate. For him, "there is no such thing as a second-hand, indirect, mediate experience." Christians know that the self-communication of God which they experience today is 'what' happened in the past, in historical events and persons, especially in the person of Christ, and that their religious history is based on the history of Jesus. The revelation that took place in history is experienced directly by Christians today through the preaching of the Gospel, the celebration of the Sacraments, catechesis, religious arts and in many other ways.[84] Hence, in view of the fact that revelation is being experienced and that Christians are being illumined by those experiences, it is possible to say that revelation continues today without interruption. Aylward Shorter describes this dependent revelation as 'participant' revelation or 'derived' revelation, because via the tradition Christians truly participate in the foundational revelation given in Christ. He maintains that our knowledge is the fruit of an accumulation of experiences, and the outcome of the experiences of many people. This means that there is a need to accept the existence of something prior to our knowledge itself, if that thing is to be known by us. The tradition is the place where foundational revelation is found and in which it is preserved for the continuation of revelation in human experience.[85] Such a tradition is necessary for any religion if it is to continue to, even if its claims have no historical basis at all.

According to O'Collins, the attempt to personally appropriate a faith statement involves two steps. There is, firstly, a discovery of something of its earlier or original meaning and, secondly, the postulation of another meaning by the one who appropriates it. He describes this as *personally paraphrasing* faith statements.[86] Likewise, when one analyses revelation along these lines, it become clear that, with regard to continuing revelation or dependent revelation, one,

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[83] PAUL TILLICH, *Systematic Theology I*, 140. Here he says that while Jesus Christ remains the immovable point of reference in the history of revelation, the act of referring (the spiritual reception by new members) is never the same. Hence, "[t]he history of the church is not a locus of original revelations in addition to the one on which it is based. … Rather, it is the locus of continuous dependent revelations which are one side of the work of the divine Spirit in the church." This side of the revelation he calls "illumination" which is the cognitive side of ecstasy, i.e., dependent revelation. According to him, this revelatory situation exists whenever the divine spirit moves the human mind and spirit, in meditation, in prayer, etc. See pp. 140-141.

[84] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 101.

[85] AYLWARD SHORTER, *Revelation and Its Interpretation*, pp. 141-142.

[86] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 176.

firstly, comes to know of the original revelation that took place at a particular time in the history of salvation and, secondly, one finds new meaning in it or is illuminated by it. This makes the transmission of what has been revealed possible, and allows one to see revelation as a dynamic process which people continually experience in their lives.

2.1.4.5. The Individual Experience of Revelation

We have already noted the change in the understanding of revelation from a propositional model to a self-communication model since the time of the Second Vatican Council. The Council advocated a model of revelation in which there is a person-to-person relationship of God with human beings, which in that sense involves the religious experiences of human beings. In view of this shift in the understanding of revelation, it is relevant and apt to ask whether it is consistent with such a view to speak of the religious experience of individual Christians, especially the private and personal experiences of remarkable individuals such as St. Augustine, St. Teresa of Avila, etc., as revelatory. The question we try to answer here pertains also to the question of whether all human experiences[87] have a religious and revelatory dimension.

In our discussion of the self-communication model of revelation, we saw that, according to O'Collins, revelation is an inter-personal relationship and that it cannot take place outside human experience. He says:

> That revealing and saving history takes place within human experience, if it is to take place at all. Revelation entails the divine Revealer, the act of revelation and those who receive revelation. Likewise salvation entails the Saviour, the act of salvation and the saved … If God is revealed and salvation takes place, that revelation *comes to* the community (and individuals) and people *experience* salvation. In this sense revelation and salvation simply cannot happen *outside* the experience of human beings. Experience … is the place where God's revelation and salvation have occurred and will continue to occur.[88]

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[87] According to O'Collins, it is very difficult to understand the concept of experience because it is through experience itself that we understand the questions of life. The general characteristics of the concept of experience, according to him, are: (1) experience is paradoxical and ambiguous; (2) experience is a process or a series of sub-experiences and a condition; (3) experience is objectively learned through time and subjectively revealed in particular experiences; (4) experience involves direct and immediate contact between the subject which is experiencing and the object which is experienced but without denying that this process involves presuppositions; (5) experience is characterized by particularity and is never general or universal; (6) experience has an active and passive component; (7) while the evidence of experience shows itself directly, all experiences remain partial; (8) one can categorize experiences as good or bad and positive or negative; however, there are no absolutely negative experiences; (9) every experience involves the totality of the person experiencing it; (10) there is an interplay between experience, thought and language, and they form a "distinguishable but inseparable unity"; (11) experience is always an interpreted experience; (12) the interpretation of experience helps to discover its meaning and every experience has some meaning; (13) although experiences are personal, they are communicable; (14) the transmission of a group's experiences is tradition. On the one hand, tradition helps us to evaluate new experiences; on the other hand, new experiences modify the transmitted tradition. For a detailed discussion of human experience and its general characteristics, see GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology*, pp. 108-117. See also GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 32-52. Here he lists these characteristics under three headings: (1) the subject, (2) the experience itself, and (3) the consequences.

[88] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 59.

O'Collins' view is an affirmation that the saving revelation of God continues to occur in the individual experiences of human beings and that it can take place only at this level. This is so because revelation is something that happens between persons and within persons.[89] In this respect, O'Collins observes that some misunderstanding was caused by *Dei Filius* (1870) and *Pascendi* (1907) when they confronted and condemned those who denied revelation in external signs and those who considered internal experience as the only credible sign of revelation.[90] This view encouraged the misconception that divine self-communication can be encountered 'outside' human experience. However, he notes that this misunderstanding was rectified by the Second Vatican Council in its teachings on revelation in *Dei Verbum* when it spoke of revelation as something that took place in the history of Israel. The council stated that the Israelites "experienced the ways of God" in their history of revelation and salvation.[91] This was an acknowledgement by the Council of the experiences of spiritual realities in the lives of the people of Israel.

The aspect of revelation as experienced in the lives of human beings can be witnessed in the writings of people, such as Michael Schmaus, who maintain that "Man's experience of himself, which because of man's nature contains in itself the experience and awareness of God, is the starting point for that divine self-communication which theology usually calls 'supernatural' revelation."[92] In his view, revelation is a combination of divine initiative and the response of human beings to that initiative, and hence, there is the necessity of a receiver to whom something is revealed. He says, "In revelation something pertaining to God is shown to man. If there were nobody to whom something was shown, the act of showing would be an empty gesture. Man's response therefore is part of God's revelation."[93] This is to say that human beings are connected to revelation in two ways, i.e., in its descent as God's disclosure of Himself to human persons, and in its ascent as human beings' response to that disclosure through their

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[89] GERALD O'COLLINS, *A Neglected Source for the Theology of Revelation,* p. 759. O'Collins also holds that when one considers "the essentially personal and interpersonal character of revelation, non-experienced revelation would be a simple contradiction in terms." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology*, p. 108.

[90] While dealing with the heresies of the Modernists, Pope Pius X condemned those who said that "it is not possible or not expedient that man be taught, through the medium of divine revelation, about God and the worship to be paid Him," and those who held that "divine revelation cannot be made credible by external signs, and that therefore men should be drawn to the faith only by their personal internal experience or by private inspiration." See POPE PIUS X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis,* 6, 14, pp. 73, 76. See also VATICAN COUNCIL I, *Dei Fide,* canon. nos. 2 & 3.

[91] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology,* pp. 108-109. See also VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dei Verbum, 14.

[92] MICHAEL SCHMAUS, *Dogma, Vol. 1, God in Revelation,* London: Sheed and Ward, 1995 [1968], pp. 22-23. The facts of man's nature, his origin from God, his image and likeness to God, and his belongingness to God, take him beyond what is natural and give him a positive capability to receive what is supernatural. The experience of God is immanent in man and this leads him to a religious consciousness. It is in this experience of God immanent in man that God communicates Himself to man through an 'inner illumination'. In this experience of God, man has the capacity and freedom to accept or reject what God communicates. See pp. 23-24.

[93] MICHAEL SCHMAUS, *Dogma, Vol. 1, God in Revelation*, p. 26.

experience and faith. O'Collins states that human experiences convey the revelation of God through signs and symbols, and that these are the medium through which one encounters the revelation of God.[94] The human senses play a vital role in these experiences of revelation. To support his arguments about the self-communication of God taking place at the level of human experience, O'Collins gives two examples, one from the Scripture where the Christ experience is mentioned as happening by means of the human senses (1 Jn 1:1-3), and the other from the writings of St. Augustine where he speaks about his own experience of revelation at every level of his senses. In these O'Collins observes examples of the experience of the foundational revelation and the experience of dependent revelation. He also sees these as examples of both the individual and communal experience of revelation. In John what we see is the experience of foundational revelation in as much as it conforms to the concrete forms of experience that the apostles had, i.e., the true experience they had of hearing, of seeing, and of touching Jesus in their life. This was also a "collective experience" of the first community of the apostles. In the case of St. Augustine, we also see a direct and individual experience of revelation, one which involves the senses. However, it is a dependent revelation in as much as Augustine depended for his experience on the foundational revelation experienced by the apostles or the first witnesses.[95] Our point here is that human beings experience revelation individually and that this experience is mediated by their human capacities, including the intellect, feelings, will, and so on.

2.1.4.6. The Collective Experience of Revelation

While making a distinction between individual and communal/collective experiences, one needs to remind oneself that even in communal experiences the emphasis is on the individual. O'Collins emphasises the fact that "no one [finally] can do our experiencing for us. There is no such thing as second-hand experience. Experience has to be direct and first-hand, or else it simply doesn't really happen." The point here is that we cannot speak of experience outside of individual human beings. Even in the case of our experience of Jesus who is revealed to us, "[w]e experience him for ourselves or not at all. We pray to him ourselves or not at all. No one else, not even the dearest or closest person in our life, can take our place here. We do our

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[94] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology,* p. 108.

[95] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 61. For O'Collins, the most striking passage in the Scripture on human experience (here apostolic experience) of the self-communication of God is found in the first letter of John where it says: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us – that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (I Jn 1:1-3). St. Augustine seems to point towards the human experience of revelation when he says, "You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours." See, SAINT AUGUSTINE, *Confessions X, 38,* trans. HENRY CHADWICK, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 201. (O'Collins quotes this passage as *Confessions* X, 27 in *Fundamental Theology*, p.60).

praying to and our experiencing of Jesus personally."[96] If, in every experience, the individual is the one who is experiencing, one may legitimately ask whether there is such a thing as collective experience at all. According to O'Collins, in the case of collective experience, the community "shares experiences, expresses them (through rituals, monuments, books, art, and other means), and may, in fact, cling to one deep experience as the very *raison d'être* for its existence." In his view, in Deuteronomy (Dt 26:5-9), which is also the first formula of the faith, in this case, the faith of Israel, we have a great example of the community's shared experience. But O'Collins also remarks that there are those, including the author, P. G. Wodehouse, who would object to the concept of 'collective experience' because in a community experience, for example, a prayer meeting, everyone may not be having similar experiences or may not be responding to the experiences in that meeting in a similar fashion. Everyone may experience the same meeting in a different way. However, O'Collins is of the view that there are collective experiences although the individual responses to those experiences may vary.[97]

Where revelation is concerned, however, emphasis must be laid on the human experience of the ultimate and on the absolute climax of the self-communication of God which took place in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. This foundational aspect of revelation continues to serve as the basis for present – and dependent – revelation, especially in the lives of outstanding Christians. In their experience of revelation, they experience what was already revealed through the intervention of God in Jesus Christ. This experience affects every judgement in their daily lives, and leads them into deeper faith as well as determining their actions.[98] However, it remains a fact that these further experiences do not add to the content (the objective body of truths) which was once and for all completed with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and with the death of the last apostle. The "closed deposit of faith" remains the same always and everywhere and no experience or visions can add anything to it.[99] But these experiences, both individual and communal, contribute towards the formation of a community of believers who share a common destiny.

2.1.4.7. Human Experience and Revelation

O'Collins is of the view that "*all* human experience entails an ultimate, religious element, [that] it bears a primordial, transcendental revelation and can become a consciously religious experience to constitute an historical self-communication of God." Hence, all the experiences of human beings have the potential to express God's revelation and his saving grace in a specific

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[96] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Experiencing Jesus,* London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1994.

[97] See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Theology and Experience,* in *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 44 (1977) 279-290, pp. 282-283.

[98] GERALD O'COLLINS, *A Neglected Source for the Theology of Revelation,* p. 758.

[99] GERALD O'COLLINS, *A Neglected Source for the Theology of Revelation,* p. 758.

way.[100] Here it may be worthwhile to quote once again what O'Collins says, namely, that revelation is, in fact, "part of the total process of *experiencing the divine self-communication*" and that "'[e]xperience' recalls the place where the individual subject and the community meet God."[101] O'Collins enquires into the writings of René Latourelle and Gabriel Moran to understand the feasibility of such a view. Latourelle, as we have mentioned earlier, spoke of revelation in terms of a person-to-person relationship between God and man. Moran insisted on the revelatory experience of individuals when he wrote that, "Revelation is what happens between persons and exists only as a personal reality. If there is revelation anywhere in the Church today, it can only be in the conscious experience of people."[102] Moran insists that it is to "human experience" that one must 'look' if one is "to grasp anything that can be grasped about revelation."[103] Moran faults Christian theology because "its concept of revelation is not developed from human experience but dictated by Christian sources."[104] In his view, one must look to "artistic experience, psychology, social movements, family life and dozens of other phenomena" to understand the true nature of revelation.[105] O'Collins critiques Moran's view by pointing out that the latter's distaste for a theology that is grounded in 'chapel' (i.e., a particular religious tradition), leads him to downplay prayer or other spiritual activities as sources for revelation.[106] This criticism reflects O'Collins own interest in establishing prayer as a source of revelation. In his view, one of the sources to know Jesus' own understanding of God is his

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[100] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 62.

[101] See quote no. 52 of this chapter.

[102] GABRIEL MORAN, *Theology of Revelation,* p. 120.

[103] GABRIEL MORAN, *The Present Revelation. In Quest of Religious Foundations*, p. 77. However, according to Moran, most of the Orthodox Christian traditions may object to the appeal to human experience as the most ultimate category for revelation because that would mean bringing God down to, or regarding Him as being at, the human level. This would be to make human experience, or the human mind which is in itself limited, the ultimate measure of all things. See p. 77, 81.

[104] GABRIEL MORAN, *The Present Revelation. In Quest of Religious Foundations*, p. 34. According to him, the Second Vatican Council also followed the paths of Protestantism in holding revelation to be an "event and interpretive words." The concern of the Church, according to him, was to maintain its traditional stance. He says, "Roman Catholicism and most of Protestantism, despite the talk about events available as events, rely on the stable given which exists in the form of words. Were anyone to start looking for a revelation in the events available as events, that is, in the day-to-day experiences of his life, he would have to reject any document from the past pretending to define revelation." See pp. 32-33.

[105] GABRIEL MORAN, *The Present Revelation. In Quest of Religious Foundations*, p. 20. Moran is of the view that "[t]he real meaning of revelation cannot be found in the bible or other theological sources. Only some wider human experience (which, of course, can include theology) can establish the meaning of revelation." See p. 21.

[106] GERALD O'COLLINS, *A Neglected Source for the Theology of Revelation*, p. 758. O'Collins also says that Moran's overdependence on experience seems to draw his line of thought towards a kind of nature religion. So, for example, Moran says that, "if Buddha, Jeremiah or Jesus were alive today they would be saying: … Look what is happening. Don't trust my pronouncements but listen to what your flesh and blood whisper. It is ecstatically attractive and agonizingly fearful but do not pull away. You are not alone; nature including human kind envelop you. And the one who sent me still lives in the body of man." See GABRIEL MORAN, *The Present Revelation. In Quest of Religious Foundations*, pp. 228-229.

prayer life.[107] He is also of the view that people with a highly developed spiritual sensibility can show us how they experience dependent revelation in their lives. He takes up the example of Bonhoeffer's experiences, especially the experiences that he records in his letters from prison, to show how God reveals himself in the experiences of exceptional individuals in their solitude, sufferings and prayer lives.[108] He also points to particular biblical passages where there is mention of people coming to the full knowledge of revelation in their lives.[109] Hence, he subscribes to the idea that, in the study of revelation, one should have recourse to autobiography and the other recorded experiences of exceptional individuals who are "known to be close to God" because they contain their revelatory experiences.[110] By taking this view, O'Collins makes it clear that he regards the religious experiences of remarkable individuals as (potentially) revelatory. The lives of such individuals manifest contemplation in action. Indeed, according to O'Collins, their lives "become a constant religious experience,"[111] something manifested to the highest degree in Jesus who lived continuously in the presence of God the Father.

However, our question here is whether *all* human experiences are revelatory. In this respect, our enquiry here leads us on to an examination of the human condition, i.e., humanity's ultimate questions and experience of life. In Christology, according to O'Collins, there cannot be a sharp separation between community worship, human experience (the human condition), and the scriptures. In his view, the victims of this world remain the "privileged signs and symbols" of Jesus and "[a]ny contemporary Christology would miss much if it systematically ignored the major forms of human experience and specifically, the presence of Christ mediated through the world's victims."[112] An analysis of the human condition which, according to O'Collins, is best described as "a flight from death, absurdity and hatred, and a search for life, meaning and love,"

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[107] O'Collins points out that there are three sources to understand what Jesus meant by God: "(1) the use of Jewish scriptures he inherited; (2) his own experience of growing up in rural Galilee; and (3) his own life of deep prayer." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Lord's Prayer*, New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2007, p. 5.

[108] GERALD O'COLLINS, *A Neglected Source for the Theology of Revelation*, pp. 763-768. See also GEOFFREY B. KELLY, *Revelation in Christ. A Study of Bonhoeffer's Theology of Revelation,* in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 50 (1974) 39-74. In this article Kelly analyses Bonhoeffer's theological perspective and his theology of revelation. He states that, in view of Bonhoeffer's writings, and especially because of his links with liberalism and orthodoxy, his interest in the ecumenical movement, and "the focal influence he has exerted on the theology of the post-war era, Bonhoeffer's theology will contribute to the development of the theology of revelation." To come to this conclusion and to arrive at a systematic approach to his theology of revelation, Kelly looks at his writings from a Christocentric perspective which he tries to affirm in this article.

[109] The passages from the Bible which point to the revelation of God to believers in the present time include the following: John says that all those who hear Jesus are "taught by God" (Jn 6:45); "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth" (Jn 16:13); Paul says that all those who are led by the Holy Spirit are sons and daughters of God (Rom 8:14); Paul's prayer that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you" (Eph 1:17-18). See also GERALD O'COLLINS, *A Neglected Source for the Theology of Revelation*, p. 768.

[110] GERALD O'COLLINS, *A Neglected Source for the Theology of Revelation,* p. 768.

[111] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology,* p. 117.

[112] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Today. Christology in an Australian Context,* Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986, p. 19.

will allow us to understand the nature of human beings and lead us "to reflect on the God who is the source and goal of our existence."[113] O'Collins says that religious experience involves two aspects which are inseparable, namely, the human person becoming conscious of ultimate reality, i.e., God, and, through this, coming to know themselves. In other words, religious experience is, at one and the same time, the experience of ourselves and of God. It is worth recalling here that O'Collins endorses Karl Rahner's view of the incarnation as both "a free act of divine self-communication," and "the absolute culmination of humanity's openness to the infinite God."[114] The incarnation, therefore, serves as the greatest manifestation of these two aspects of experience. It is the supreme moment at which the human person opens himself to the self-revelation of the Ultimate. With Rahner, O'Collins also holds that all human experiences are open to the infinite.[115] In his words, "We are able to encounter God because all human experiences are already primordially religious. In any experience whatsoever we experience at least minimally ourselves and God."[116] It is his view that, "In every experience there is an ultimate (and hence a religious) element. In all experience there is this ultimacy which relates human persons to God … There is an absolute and ultimate … ground, horizon and concern found in all human activities." For O'Collins, this ultimate or ground or horizon, which is "the *a priori* condition for the possibility of any human experience," is identified with God. Hence, in all the activities of human beings, in his view, "God is revealed and we are revealed to ourselves." The human experience of this horizon is called '*transcendental* experience' because it goes beyond every act of knowing and willing by human beings. In this transcendental experience there is also the self-revelation of God which O'Collins calls '*transcendental*

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[113] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Today. Christology in an Australian Context,* p. 4.

[114] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Today. Christology in an Australian Context*, p. 2. Karl Rahner notes that "God's self-communication is, therefore, communication of freedom and inter-communion between the many cosmic subjectivities. Hence, this self-communication necessarily turns in the direction of a free history of the human race, and can only happen in free acceptance by these free subjects and in a common history … [T]his free acceptance or refusal on the part of individual free beings does not really determine the actual event of self-communication but, more exactly, only determines the attitude adopted by the spiritual creature towards it; of course, normally only that is called self-communication, which is accepted freely and hence beatifies, i.e., only the successful, accepted self-communication of God." See KARL RAHNER, *Theological Investigations 5, Later Writings,* trans. KARL-H. KRUGER, London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1969 [1966], p. 174.

[115] According to Karl Rahner, man is a knowing subject who has transcendental experience, i.e., he is the subject of knowledge and he has within him the possible and apprehensible object of knowledge. "In spite of the finiteness of his system man is always present to himself in his entirety … In his openness to everything and anything, whatever can come to expression can be at least a question for him … [M]an shows himself to be a being with *infinite* horizon." For Rahner, "man is and remains a transcendent being, that is, he is that existent to whom the silent and uncontrollable infinity of reality is always present as mystery. This makes man totally open to this mystery and precisely in this way he becomes conscious of himself as person and subject." See KARL RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity,* trans. WILLIAM V. DYCH, New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1984 [1976], pp. 31-35. He also points out that the knowledge that man has of God is "a transcendental knowledge because man's basic and original orientation towards absolute mystery, which constitutes his fundamental experience of God, is a permanent existential of man as a spiritual subject. This means that the explicit, conceptual and thematic knowledge, which we usually think of when we speak of the knowledge of God or of proofs for God's existence, is a reflection upon man's transcendental orientation towards mystery." See p. 52.

[116] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology,* p. 118.

revelation' (*a priori*).[117] This transcendental revelation takes the form of '*historical* revelation' (*a posteriori*) "through concrete experiences and free decisions of communities and individual persons."[118] In effect, what is being claimed is that in all human experiences there is an aspect of the religious experience of the ultimate, and that the ultimate is revealed to the human beings in every experience. According to O'Collins, we may at times 'misinterpret' some of our experiences as negative, but they, too, may ultimately turn out to be positive religious experiences. When we analyse human experience in this way, and regards it as a quest for - and as oriented towards - the primordial experience of God, we may conclude that all human experience is potentially revelatory of the self-communication of God, which is God's infinite love. However, when we reach this conclusion, a further question confronts us. If all human experiences are revelatory and may therefore be, in that sense, religious experiences, then what is the significance of the distinction between human experience and religious experience?

O'Collins seems to answer this question by saying that, in properly religious experience, what we experience is God revealing himself. So, for example, he writes that, "Experiencing Jesus is not, of course, the same sort of thing as experiencing the people we love, live with, or work with even though it is partly through our daily personal contacts with them that we can experience him." Experiencing Jesus is different from experiencing others because our interaction with Jesus today is an experience with the invisible whereas with others it is an experience with the visible. However, O'Collins also says that experiences with the visible can lead one to an experience of the real presence of Jesus.[119] Hence, while we may say that all human experience has a religious significance, we are, at the same time, able to speak of religious experience proper. However, one may still argue that all our experiences with the invisible need not always be a God-experience, or an experience of ultimate reality. One may also argue that, if all human experiences are in some way religious experiences, one should describe all human beings as religious, even those who do not believe in God. O'Collins seems to resolve this problem by saying that, "Whether or not they realize this consciously and accept it willingly, all human beings receive the transcendental experience of God's primordial self-communication. This self-communication sets up the conditions for men and women to decide consciously for or against God."[120] O'Collins is here distinguishing 'transcendental experience' from the 'historical experiences' of human beings. He points out that "transcendental revelation assumes the shape of historical revelation in and through the concrete experiences and free decisions of communities and individual persons." This means that in and through their historical experiences human beings experience transcendental revelation. O'Collins allows that the term

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[117] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 48-49.

[118] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 50.

[119] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Experiencing Jesus,* p. 28.

[120] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 50.

'religious' could be applied to "all those experiences of depth which consciously concern our ultimate purposes and relationship with the holy God. Such profound limit-experiences characterize human life, even if they are not always and necessarily identified as religious."[121] These profound limit-experiences which concern our ultimate purposes and which may be understood as experiences of God, according to O'Collins, are limited numerically. They are also not the exclusive experiences of a few people but they are experienced by all differently. Hence, the term 'religious' extends to all those who have such profound experiences of depth.

> In all knowing, willing and acting we experience the reality of God and ourselves. A primordial divine self-communication takes place. This self-communication summons us to 'obey' and hear with a primordial faith the reality, truth and goodness we encounter. We can call this dimension of every experience the primordial revelation which invites our primordial faith. This revelatory/believing aspect, found in every human experience, need not be expressly identified as such.[122]

O'Collins' view in this regard accounts for his openness towards the experiences of people of other religions, as well as the experience of those people who have no faith in a transcendent God, as sources for seeking the knowledge of God's self-revelation.

2.1.4.8. The Means, Mediators and Transmission of Revelation

Having said that all human experiences have some revelatory significance, it is now time to examine O'Collins' view on the mediators of revelation. In reflecting on the means of revelation, O'Collins makes two distinctions, namely, a distinction between 'common and uncommon experiences', and a distinction between 'positive and negative experiences'. All of these may relate to the past, the present (passing), or the future. Common experiences are those experiences which people have in their ordinary life situations, such as 'states of anxiety or joy', 'political catastrophe', the fall of kingdoms, 'human troubles and sicknesses, false accusation, loneliness, persecution', death, etc. Uncommon experiences are extra-ordinary experiences, such as visions, dreams,[123] theophanies (e.g., the theophanies experienced by Moses), the ecstasies[124] of prophets, the exodus of Israel, etc., which may be considered at times as completely new experiences and unique. According to O'Collins, the Old Testament contains ample examples of both these types of experiences in the life of Israel. His view is that both the Old and the New Testaments support the idea that "all manner of ordinary and extraordinary experiences mediate God's saving

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[121] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 50, 51.

[122] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 51-52.

[123] O'Collins notes that there are difficulties in describing dreams, such as the ones Joseph had in the Old Testament (Gen 37-41) and negative experiences, such as, suffering, evil, etc., as revelatory. However, he admits that they, too, are revelatory. Speaking about the mediatory role of positive and negative experiences, he says, "Pope John and the Second Vatican Council belong among the latter-day signs of the times, but so too do Auschwitz and the holocaust." He also maintains that "the Christian Scriptures and human experience agree: evil, including sin, can form the means by which the divine revelation takes place." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 65, 66.

[124] O'Collins mentions that ecstasy does not convey the revelation of God in its fullest sense because in ecstasies there is a reduction of human beings' awareness or consciousness of what takes place. There is also an 'unusual psychological intensity' and even some sort of abnormality in ecstasy. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 67.

revelation." These range from the 'ordinary' experience of the crucifixion to the greatest of all extraordinary experiences which is the resurrection.[125]

The mediators of revelation, according to O'Collins, are various and include prophets, Christ, the apostles, and preachers. Among these mediators, there are those people who have uncommon experiences and others who have common experiences. He also distinguishes between institutionalized (e.g., bishops, priests, etc.,) and non-institutionalized (e.g., prophets) mediators through whom people experience the self-communication of God. O'Collins does not limit these mediators to the scriptures and to Christian history but includes among them the non-Christian religions. He says that the "history of Christianity (and non-Christian religions) shows a constant line of men and women whose special gifts helped to convey God's saving word to others: saints, founders of religious movements and families, great artists, outstanding Church leaders, prophetic figures and the rest."[126]

While considering the immense significance of biblical history and Christian history as means of supernatural revelation, O'Collins also emphasises the need to recognize nature or the created reality as a medium of divine revelation.[127] In this respect, he is in harmony with the view of the Second Vatican Council regarding what it means to speak of the biblical history of revelation, i.e., the history that consists of God's works and words.[128] The biblical history of revelation concerns "events which certainly occurred" (the events of secular history or the deeds of men and women) and which were experienced by believers and non-believers alike, but which were then understood and interpreted by believers in theological terms as "divinely authorized" and which were subsequently recognized as having salvific value. When evaluating the significance of both *works* and *words* as means of the self-communication of God, O'Collins seems to favour works over words.[129] By works, O'Collins means "God's activity for human salvation in history." He distinguishes here between general (or universal) salvation history which is the whole history of the human race, and special (or official) salvation history which is the history

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[125] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 62-63, 64.

[126] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 67.

[127] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 72-73. Here he notes a shift between the First Vatican Council and the Second Vatican Council in the understanding of nature as a medium of supernatural revelation. The First Vatican Council considered the mediatory role of nature before biblical history. See VATICAN COUNCIL I, *Dei Filius,* Chapter 2, p. 806. The Second Vatican Council subordinated nature to biblical history, which spoke of revelation of God firstly in the history of salvation. See VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dei Verbum,* 2-6, pp. 972-973.

[128] O'Collins refers to the Second Vatican Council: "The pattern of [this] revelation unfolds through deeds and words bound together by an inner dynamism, in such a way that God's works, effected during the course of history of salvation, show forth and confirm the doctrine and the realities signified by the words." See VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dei Verbum* 2, p. 972.

[129] Robert Dentan also favoured works above words. He argues that, "[t]he first, and most distinctive emphasis in ancient Israel's religion was upon the fact that God has acted, and continues to act, in history." While for the people of the ancient Near East, God's revelation was in 'nature', and for the Greeks it was in 'thought,' for Israel it was in God's action in their 'history'. See ROBERT C. DENTAN, *The Knowledge of God in Ancient Israel,* New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1968, pp. 230-231.

of God's activity recorded in the Bible.[130] According to O'Collins, Wolfhart Pannenberg deserves special mention here for his promotion of history as the most significant theological category for the discussion of the Christian theology of revelation.[131] Pannenberg held that "it is in history itself that divine revelation takes place, and not in some strange Word arriving from some alien place and cutting across the fabric of history."[132] According to O'Collins, Pannenberg's "basic axiom [is] that 'history'… and not the word of God, the kerygma or anything else … forms 'the most comprehensive horizon of Christian theology.'… By 'history' Pannenberg means history in the ordinary sense."[133] O'Collins says that, according to Pannenberg, God's self-revelation did not take place directly in a supernatural way but "indirectly through God's deeds in history."[134] O'Collins points out that there are thinkers, such as James Barr, who give priority to words over works.[135] However, the choice for works over words seems to be a natural outcome of O'Collins'

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[130] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology*, p. 87. While dealing with the notion of salvation history, O'Collins refers to the need to investigate different terminologies used by theologians in the twentieth century, such as, "'supra history,' 'metahistory,' 'history of promise,' 'primal history,' 'history of revelation,' 'history of the transmission of traditions,' 'redemptive history,' and 'facts of salvation'." On this topic O'Collins' reviews include the contributions of Martin Kähler, Karl Barth, Gerhard von Rad, Alan Richardson, Karl Rahner, Jürgen Moltmann, and Wolfhart Pannenberg. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology*, p. 82.

[131] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Revelation as History*, in *Heythrop Journal* 7 (1966) 394-406, p. 395. For a detailed discussion of revelation as history see also GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology*, pp. 81-101, 115-131. According to O'Collins, Pannenberg's view of revelation through history was a reaction against the existentialist, "'word' theology which dissolves 'history into historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*) of existence'," and a reaction against Martin Kähler's view of the content of faith as something supra-historical. O'Collins says that, according to Richardson, "this tradition proposes a 'a flight into a realm of *Heilsgeschichte*,' 'where the critics cease from troubling and the faithful are at rest'." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology*, p. 117; GERALD O'COLLINS, *Revelation as History*, p. 395. Cf. also ALAN RICHARDSON, *History Sacred and Profane*, London: SCM Press, 1964, p. 134. According to Richardon, "there is only one history, and that if it is incredible that the acts of God were worked in it, then the revelation in Christ cannot be salvaged by recourse to a Heilsgeschichte that runs parallel to secular history, never really intersecting it, and inaccessible save through some extra-historical perception known as faith." See p. 134. One discerns the same kind of opposition to this sort of dualism in Ernst Troeltsch when he deals with the relationship between the historical-critical method and dogmatic method in theology. According to Troeltsch, this dualism consisted of "[t]he division of the domain of history into one area devoid of miracles and subject to the normal working of historical criticism and another area permeated by miracles and accessible to study only through methods based on inner experience and the humble subjection of reason …. The construction of such a concept of history and the establishment of a separate methodology for the history of dogma or the history of salvation, with special conditions independent of ordinary history, is the basic presupposition of the dogmatic method in theology." See ERNST TROELTSCH, *Religion in History*, trans. JAMES LUTHER ADAMS & WALTER F. BENSE (with an introduction by James Luther Adams), *Fortress Texts in Modern Theology*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991, pp. 22-23.

[132] WOLFHART PANNENBERG, *God's Presence in History*, in *The Christian Century* 98 (1981) 260-263, p. 262. He also said that "there is no direct conceptual approach to God, nor from God to human reality by analogical reasoning, but God's presence is hidden in the particulars of history." See p. 261.

[133] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology*, p. 116.

[134] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Revelation as History*, p. 397. Pannenberg says that, "the theological assertion of a direct self-revelation of God cannot be justified… through his name, his Word, or through Law and gospel. … [What we have is] an indirect self-revelation of God as a reflex of his activity in history." See WOLFHART PANNENBERG, *Introduction,* in WOLFFHART PANNENBERG; ROLF RENDTORFF, TRUTZ RENDTORFF & ULRICH WILCKENS (eds.), *Revelation as History,* trans. DAVID GRANSKOU & EDWARD QUINN (London, Sydney: Sheed and Ward, 1969 [1961]), pp. 13-14. While discussing on religions, Schleiermacher seems to exhibit the superiority of Christianity and its merit over other religions on the basis of Christianity's insistence of considering God's revelation as a totality of history. FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER, *On Religion. Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers (Fifth Speech: On the Religions),* trans. RICHARD CROUTER, New York, NY, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 189-223.

[135] Maintaining that words have priority over works, James Barr said that "[f]ar from representing the divine acts as the basis of all knowledge of God and all communication with him, they represent God as communicating freely with men,

preference for the self-communication model of the revelation of God rather than for the propositional model of revelation. He is of the opinion that, in the particular events of salvation history, especially concerning the self-communication of God in the person of Jesus Christ, "action has priority over word, the effected reality over any interpretation of it."[136] O'Collins, then, affirms that salvation history is the outstanding medium of divine revelation. However, O'Collins' option for works/history, does not do away with the significance of words. He says:

> It seems impossible to explain God's self-revelation merely as indirect, through his mighty deeds in history … The fourth Gospel, for example, presents us with words which reveal God directly … Jesus bears witness by his words to what he has 'seen' and 'heard' of God, revealing his Father and himself through what he says no less than through what he does. His words are 'spirit and life'; they create knowledge and faith in those who receive them. … [T]he early Christians did not recognize the revelation as coming through the event in isolation nor through the 'Word in isolation' … The words of Jesus at the Supper no less than the deed of Calvary conveyed to them what God did then in Christ.[137]

Hence, according to him, a well-balanced account of revelation should take into account both word and event. He also differentiates various events of history as related to the self-communication of God in differing degrees.[138] Further, he states that those events which are related to the revelation of God and which are acts of God in history, are in some sense "independent of the world and created causality," and are characterized by a religious claim, moral values, and a sense of mystery.[139]

The enormous significance that O'Collins attaches to experience and to mediators of revelation, in his excurses on revelation, prompts us to ask a number of questions. While there is not even a

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and particularly with Moses, before, during, and after these events. Far from the incident at the burning bush being an 'interpretation' of the divine acts, it is a direct communication from God to Moses of his purposes and intentions. This conversation, instead of being represented as an interpretation of the divine act, is a precondition of it." See JAMES BARR, *Revelation through History in the Old Testament and in Modern Theology,* in *Interpretation* 17 (1963) 193-205, p. 197.

[136] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 74-75. Two people who favour words over works, according to O'Collins, are James Burtchaell and Stephen Neill. Burtchaell maintained that for Israel the important thing was reflection of her history and not the history. He said, "Nothing in Israel's history is that peculiar. Israel was a people that knew the same ups and downs which befell other nations. What made her peculiar was not her history but her historical reflection." See JAMES TUNSTEAD BRUTCHAELL, Review of Robert C. DENTAN, *The Knowledge of God in Ancient Israel,* New York, NY: Seabury, 1968, in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30 (1968) 607-608, p. 608. Stephen Neill opines that in the Gospel Luke who was both historian and theologian combined and brought together history and theology. While objecting those who hold the view that there is no connection between the salvation history and ordinary history Neill also maintained that "*Heilsgeschichte* [salvation history] and secular history are the same history; each from a different point of view is the story of God's providential government of the nations." See STEPHEN NEILL, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1961. The Firth Lectures,* 1962, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985 [1964], pp. 267-268.

[137] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Revelation as History*, p. 406.

[138] According to O'Collins, "Some events or series of events (as well as persons) reveal more of the divine concerns and interests than others. In this sense not all ages, cultures and histories have an equally immediate relationship to eternity. To deny that there exist such various degrees of engagement with the world and its multiform history logically leads to deism." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 76.

[139] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 76. For O'Collins, the event of the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus in the history of salvation is an 'act of God' which is different from other events of human history in degree, possessed of a religious claim, and characterized by moral values for those who accept this event, and a great sense of mystery.

hint of doubt about his recognition of Jesus Christ as the fullness of revelation,[140] we may ask whether his insistence that all human experiences are in some way religious experiences and hence, revelatory of God's self-communication, and his portrayal of Jesus Christ as a 'mediator' of the self-communication of God, do not run the risk of trivializing the factual event of the self-communication of God in Jesus Christ and the person of Jesus Christ as the fullness of revelation. In other words, the question here is whether there is a danger involved in portraying Jesus Christ primarily as a mediator of revelation rather than highlighting his role as the fullness of revelation. Do we not risk placing Jesus Christ on a par with other mediators of revelation when we give so much prominence to experience as well as to other mediators of revelation? In response, it might be said that O'Collins' insistence on history/events as means of revelation and his assertion of the self-communication model of revelation put paid to any such doubt about O'Collins' view of Jesus Christ as both mediator and the fullness of revelation.

A further issue here concerns the role of the community in mediating the self-communication of God and its role in transmitting what is revealed. According to O'Collins, "As the visible bearer of tradition, the community of believers transmits their collective experience."[141] This is done through Christian practices such as, liturgy, prayer, etc. This is to say that the Christian community, in its practices of piety, carries forward the experience of the self-communication of God to the following generations. They are also mediators of the revelation of God.

2.2. Tradition

Among the sources for knowing Jesus Christ, Tradition and Scripture occupy a central place. The Council of Trent declared that supernatural revelation is contained in written books and unwritten traditions. The Council also held that this revelation which was received by the apostles from the lips of Christ himself or through the dictation of the Holy Spirit, was passed on to the next generations until the present times.[142] A treatment of Tradition and Scripture as separate sources risks seeing them either as independent sources, or as secondary to revelation proper and therefore as mere 'vehicles' for transmitting the content of revelation. To avoid these pitfalls, O'Collins suggests that we see revelation as a 'personal event', as something that happens and is living, instead of saying that revelation is 'contained' in the scriptures or

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[140] O'Collins says that "It is because with Jesus Christ the completion of history has already set in that the Christ-event, although a single historical occurrence, has an absolute value in revealing God. In it the God of Israel has definitively revealed himself and is manifested as the one God of all men. Since this revelation has anticipated the end of history, no subsequent event can supersede it in any essentially new way. Thus 'the eschatological character of the Christ-event is the basis of the fact that there will be no further self-disclosure of God going beyond this event'." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Revelation as History*, pp. 400-401.

[141] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology,* p. 44.

[142] COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Decree on the Acceptance of the Sacred Books and Apostolic Traditions,* in NORMAN P. TANNER (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* 2, p. 663. This same decree was affirmed again at the First Vatican Council. See *Dei Filius*, *Chapter 2,* p. 806.

traditions.[143] However, the positive affirmation that Scripture and Tradition revelation may encourage a misunderstanding of their roles as transmitters of the self-communication of God. Our examination of these two sources must necessarily be brief, but is essential in view of their importance to our present enquiry, i.e., the sources for knowing Jesus Christ.

2.2.1. Human Traditions

For O'Collins, "Christian tradition is 'truly human' as well as 'truly divine.' … That revealing and saving self-communication of the Triune God does not do away with the essential structures of human reality but occurs within the whole historical, social *and traditional* context of earthly life."[144] Tradition, according to O'Collins, is the "transmission of a group's experiences. A wide range of symbols meditate socially the collective experience of a whole people, of a particular culture … and of the Church herself. The various monuments of tradition symbolize and express a group's identity."[145] According to him, tradition in the ordinary sense of the word "shapes the whole cultural existence of men and women. In fact at this level 'tradition' is almost synonymous with a society's whole way of life or, in a word, with its culture… Tradition fashions *the bond between successive generations in a society*." This means that O'Collins understands tradition as an inclusive expression of a human society's whole life. Although these traditions are modified during their transmission to new generations, the substratum of the tradition remains permanent, making the tradition "the principle of continuity, identity and unity in any human society." Hence, tradition transcends both the history of individuals and the history of a group. Tradition "covers the collective experience of a group here and now, as well as all those expressions of experience which one generation transmits to another. … In receiving, changing and handing on its tradition, a social group acts as the collective subject, interpreter and administrator of its tradition." Therefore, tradition might be described as the cumulative experience of a community.[146] According to O'Collins, "tradition belongs essentially to the social and historical existence of all human beings." He is of the view that one cannot think of human life without giving any significance to tradition. When one generation passes on their tradition, which includes their particular "norms, attitudes and behaviour patterns," to another, there is a possibility that "the newcomers may challenge, reject and modify traditions which they receive, but they can never do so totally." This is because "permanence and hunger for permanence are as essential a feature of human experience as change and a yearning for change."[147] Hence, according to O'Collins, human traditions are at the same time permanent and changing.

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[143] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 200.

[144] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 195.

[145] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology,* p. 116.

[146] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 193-194.

[147] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 193.

2.2.2. Christian Tradition

In the following section we shall speak of Christian tradition with a capital 'T' and of traditions with a small 't' in order to distinguish between that which is fundamental to Christianity and that through which the foundational revelation is passed on to succeeding generations. In this section we shall be speaking of the second type of traditions in order to distinguish the Christian tradition from other human traditions. Christian tradition is different from "tradition in 'ordinary' human affairs." Tradition in ordinary human affairs has nothing that is absolute and has no unsurpassable value. With the passage of time, the traditions of, for example, a nation, might change. However, what is specific to the Christian understanding of tradition, according to O'Collins, is that "Christians look back through their history and tradition to a definitive and *absolute point of reference*, an unsurpassable climax in the first century of our era." In his understanding of tradition, the specificity and the unsurpassability in the Christian tradition is in what Christians believe: "Christians, … believe the coming of Jesus Christ to be the definitive climax of the divine self-communication, trust that the Church which he founded will not disappear in the course of history, and … acknowledge the Holy Spirit as the invisible bearer of their essential tradition."[148] As far as this saving revelation of God is concerned, it is handed on from one generation to another in the same way as other human traditions are handed on, namely, through "customs, beliefs and practices." In this way the Christian tradition is kept alive. However, one cannot neglect the fundamental element involved in the handing over of Christian tradition through human customs and practices, i.e., the divine reality of the self-communication of God. Hence, O'Collins speaks of both the foundational revelation that ended with the apostolic times and which includes the Scripture, and the dependent revelation by means of which Christians live and experience the foundational revelation today.[149] Tradition is the 'deposit of faith' which is "the definitive revelation of God given in Jesus Christ and entrusted to the Church to be preserved and proclaimed with fidelity"[150] that is transmitted to the generations. The original or the foundational revelation remains intact while being transmitted, because the Spirit of Christ guarantees "the Church's essential fidelity to the original experience of the divine self-communication in Christ."[151] According to O'Collins, in the Church's traditions

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[148] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 194.

[149] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 194-195.

[150] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Deposit of Faith*, in A. RICHARDSON & J. BOWDEN (eds.), *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1983) 152-153, p. 152. O'Collins says that the legal term, 'deposit of faith', was used by the Pastoral Letters "analogously to the apostolic tradition (behind which was the divine self-revelation in Christ) that had been committed for safe-keeping and preaching to the disciples of Paul (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12, 14)." See p. 152.

[151] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 206.

decline and corruption, as well as progress, are present. "Some *tradita* may turn out to be mere 'traditions of men' (Mk 7:8) which distort or misrepresent the true Tradition."[152]

2.2.3. The Tradition within the 'traditions'

O'Collins makes a distinction between "the *active process* of tradition (*actus tradendi*) and the *object* or content of tradition (*traditum*)." In the active process (*actus tradendi*) of transmitting the tradition of the self-communication of God the whole people of God are involved. The process takes place through the use of Scripture, the celebration of the Eucharist, administration of the sacraments, catechism, etc. The object (*traditum*) of this active process, according to O'Collins, consists at the visible level of "all the things, activities, and memories that make up the total reality of the Church."[153] At its invisible level it is the "truth and reality of the risen Christ divinely present among us."[154] Elsewhere O'Collins distinguishes between Tradition (*Traditum*) and traditions (*tradita*). This distinction is in conformity with the distinction made by the Faith and Order Commission (1963) between Tradition and 'traditions.'[155] For O'Collins, Tradition (*Traditum*) is the sum total of "Scriptures, doctrines, liturgical practices, ethical norms and ideals, actual patterns of behaviour, methods of organization," etc., that the Christian community passes from one generation to another, and which may be said to encompass the entire existence of the Church at the three levels of "teaching, life and worship."[156] This is the foundational revelation of the divine self-communication of God in Jesus Christ, or "the Catholic faith that comes to us from the apostles," or "the purity of the Gospel."[157] According to *Dei Verbum*, "The expression 'what has been handed down from the apostles' includes everything that helps the people of God to live a holy life and to grow in faith. In this way the church, in its teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to every generation all that it

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[152] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 208-209.

[153] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 202-203.

[154] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 205.

[155] P. C. RODGER & L. VISCHER (eds.), *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order. The Report from Montreal 1963,* in *Faith and Order Papers* 42 (London: Word Council of Churches, SCM Press, 1964). The Commission, however, distinguished three types: (1) *Tradition* (with Capital T), which "meant the Gospel itself, transmitted from generation to generation in and by the Church, Christ himself present in the life of the Church"; (2) *tradition,* which "meant the traditionary process"; and (3) *traditions,* which "is used in two senses, to indicate both the diversity of forms of expression and also what we call confessional traditions, for instance the Lutheran tradition or the Reformed tradition." See p. 50. According to Yves M.-J. Congar, traditions are "determinations, normative in conditions which we shall have to examine and not contained formally in the canon of Scripture. They may originate with Jesus, the apostles, or the Church, and thus may be respectively divine, apostolic, or ecclesiological. They may be permanent or temporary in character. We may infer that, without prejudice to their dogmatic implications, their principal concern is worship and discipline." Tradition, for him, is "The transmission of the whole Gospel, that is the whole Christian mystery, in any form: Scripture, the (spoken) word, confessions of faith, sacraments and acts of worship, customs and prescriptions – all these, together with the reality which they convey or produce. This transmission may further be taken either in its objective sense as the content transmitted; or as the act of transmitting." See YVES M.-J. CONGAR, *Tradition and Traditions. An Historical and a Theological Essay,* trans. MICHAEL NASEBY & THOMAS RAINBOROUGH, London: Burns & Oates, 1966 [1960 & 1963], p. 287.

[156] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 208.

[157] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 209.

is and all that it believes."[158] Tradition (with capital 'T') is understood as the foundational revelation or "the truth and saving reality of Jesus Christ" which is just 'one' reality. O'Collins says that the Tradition "is the saving presence of Christ engaged in a process of self-transmission through his Holy Spirit in the continuing life of the Church."[159] Traditions (with small 't') are 'many,' and are considered as means through which the one Tradition is disclosed, preserved and actualized. The actualization takes place in and through liturgy, sacraments, preaching, teaching, witnessing, etc.[160] These traditions take many historical forms and exhibit considerable diversity. However, all of them do not have "equal value in genuinely expressing and actualising the foundational revelation."[161] Some may have limits and defects. Therefore, the value of traditions, according to O'Collins, "must be appropriated, checked, translated and renewed in every generation of Christianity."[162] The value of the traditions is judged from what it contains, i.e., the presence of the one Tradition.

2.2.4. The Criteria for Judging the Validity of 'traditions'

The commonly accepted criteria for judging the genuineness of the 'traditions' in playing the role of communicating the foundational revelation or Tradition to the next generations are the following: the Magisterium; Universality, Antiquity and Consent; *sensus fidelium*; Christian continuity; the Creeds of the Church; Apostolicity; the Scripture; and the Risen Christ. (1) The first of these criteria, the Magisterium, is the living teaching office of the Church which guides the believers in "a creative fidelity" to the Tradition passed on from one generation to another. But O'Collins says, the pope and bishops in their magisterial role do not constitute an ultimate criterion. They are bound to adhere and submit to Christ's saving revelation.[163] (2) The second

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[158] VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dei Verbum*, 8, p. 974.

[159] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 205.

[160] P. C. RODGER & L. VISCHER (eds.), *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order. The Report from Montreal 1963,* p. 52.

[161] Karl Barth is of the view that particular traditions may misrepresent the message of the risen Christ. See KARL BARTH, *Church Dogmatics, II.2. The Doctrine of God,* G. W. BROMILEY & T. F. TORRANCE (eds.), trans. G. W. BROMILEY; J. C. CAMPBELL; IAIN WILSON; J. STRATHEARN; HAROLD KNIGHT & R. A. STEWART (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1967 [1957]), p. 482. Here Barth plays with a word 'delivery' which we use for handing over the tradition, to point out that there is a possibility of misrepresenting the tradition while handing it on from one generation to another. Negatively, it is used in the sense of Judas delivering (handing over) Jesus to the Jews to be put to death. Positively it is used in the sense of the apostles in their ministry delivering (handing over) faithfully "the unchanged and undiminished message of Jesus, the record of His words and deeds and death and resurrection, the knowledge of the will of God manifest in Him for the being and ordering of the Church." Barth says that in handing over the traditions, the apostles were exposed to the danger of misrepresenting it. To emphasize this fact he refers to Mk 7:7-13 where Jesus warns the disciples about following the practices of the Pharisees and Scribes in pursuing the commandments of God.

[162] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 209. According to O'Collins, the Tradition which is the foundational one and which is to be identified from the traditions, is described by the Roman Canon "as 'the Catholic faith that comes to us from the apostles', what the Council of Trent calls 'the purity of the Gospel', or what the 1963 meeting of the Faith and Order Commission names as the Tradition within the traditions." See p. 209.

[163] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Criteria for Discerning Christian Traditions*, in *Science et Esprit*, 30 (1978) 295-302, p. 297. The Second Vatican Council says: "The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether in its written form or in that of tradition, has been entrusted only to those charged with the church's ongoing teaching function, whose

criterion is universality (oecumenicity), antiquity and consent. This is the Canon of Vincent of Lérins which is a threefold means for testing Catholicity, namely "*teneamus quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*" (that which has been believed everywhere, always and by everyone).[164] According to O'Collins, the value of traditions can be judged according to whether those traditions have the consent of everyone and if they are accepted everywhere and at all times. This would mean that, "what was universally believed by everyone at the beginning was the pure, unadulterated truth. Errors came later. Hence we should presume that ancient traditions which were universally and commonly believed carry the truth and that novelties involve falsehood."[165] However, O'Collins also points to certain limitations in the Vincentian Canon and observes that it needs to be qualified in some respects. Hence, he rewrites the Canon and includes the most important qualification as follows: "What has been believed everywhere, always and by everyone *precisely as part of the saving Gospel of Christ* – this is truly and properly Catholic." This qualification is necessary since the Christian Tradition is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and no other. The purpose of this (revised) criterion is to allow the Church to judge whether a 'tradition' has preserved the Christian Tradition from being influenced by false beliefs during the process of transmission.[166] (3) The third criterion is the *sensus fidelium*. This refers to the "*collective* mind of the *whole* Church which appeals to the guidance of the Holy Spirit for "discernment and judgment in matters of faith." This criterion involves the whole Church in the process of examining its faith and practices.[167] (4) The fourth criterion is continuity with the apostolic Church. It means to be true to what the apostolic Church has handed down to the generations after them. However, continuity does not mean immutability. "Changes in contemporary experiences, questions, interests and language can demand that certain Christian traditions be revived, modified or dropped, but without losing continuity with the essential message inherited from the past." Through continuity what is preserved is the "revealing and saving divine self-communication" with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (5) The Creeds of the Church, such as the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed, also provide a criterion whereby the key articles of faith can be ascertained. (6) The criterion of

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authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching function is not above the word of God but stands at its service, teaching nothing but what is handed down." See *Dei Verbum*10, p. 975.

[164] REGINALD STEWART MOXON (ed.), *The Commonitorium of Vincentius of Lerins* (Cambridge: University Press, 1915), p. xxxii. For a detailed discussion of the limitations of the Canon, see pp. xxxii-lv.

[165] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 211.

[166] After adding many qualifications to the Vincentian Canon, O'Collins rewrites it in the following words: "What we can discover to have been believed and practiced *at least* sometimes, in some places and by some Christians as part of the good news and which promises once again to be *life-giving* – that can truly and properly direct our discernment of present traditions and experiences." However, O'Collins points out that Newman considered this Canon as inadequate because it does not give "any satisfactory result. The solution it offers is as difficult as the original problem." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 215. See also JOHN HENRY CARDINAL NEWMAN, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (6th edition with a foreword by Ian Ker), Notre Dame, Indiana, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989.

[167] Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 12.

Apostolicity refers to the first witnesses of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ whose "apostolic experience, faith and proclamation" constitute a criterion for judging the validity of particular traditions. Apostolicity is also related to authority in the Church, in the figure of the bishop who serves as the inheritor of the apostolic mission. (7) The Scripture is a decisive criterion for testing the validity of traditions.[168] O'Collins says, "Whether in testing established traditions, interpreting experiences, and judging proposed innovations or other Christian activities, the Bible is vital. … Since it normatively records the foundations of Christian faith in the experience and testimony of Israel and the apostolic Church, the Bible provides Christians with a mirror and test of their self-identity." Since it is the word of God, when one is true to the Scripture one is true also to the truth of Christian identity.[169] (8) The final – and, for O'Collins, the primary - criterion is the risen Christ. This is in conformity with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council which declared that the *primary sign* of God's revelation is to be found in the 'crucifixion, resurrection and sending of the Holy Spirit.' Hence, O'Collins says:

> If the crucified and risen Christ serves as the primary sign of revelation, he should also be the primary criterion for testing the Church's traditions which seek to express and re-enact that revelation. In both cases the final authority must be personal, the divine self-communication in Christ, and not some abstract principle like continuity or apostolicity.[170]

What we have said above about the traditions and Tradition makes it clear how important it is to distinguish between them. The Tradition is synonymous with the revelation or the self-communication of God in the person of Jesus Christ. This Tradition, which was the definitive revelation of God, is still being handed on to generation after generation in human history. The traditions then might be said to be more or less synonymous with the historical processes by means of which the Tradition is handed on and assimilated, and by means of which human beings respond to revelation in faith.

2.3. Scriptures

A reflection on the sources for knowing the person of Jesus Christ would be incomplete if one failed to reflect on the relationship between revelation and Sacred Scripture, since Scripture serves as the main source for the knowledge of the self-communication of God. O'Collins says that since Jesus did not leave any written document in his brief period of ministry, the "knowledge of Jesus depends principally upon the four Gospels."[171] He insists that, "despite its

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[168] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Criteria for Discerning Christian Traditions,* pp. 299-301. See also GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 210-224.

[169] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 221.

[170] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 223.

[171] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus,* in MIRCEA ELIADE (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion* 8 (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1987) 15-28, p. 15. O'Collins says that, according to the synoptic gospels, Jesus' ministry lasted only about one year and according to the Gospel of John two to three years. Hence, it is hard to find much detail about Jesus elsewhere. According to Roch A. Kereszty, "Theology, and in particular, Christology, is not a mere mental construct based on a number of dogmatic definitions (even less on consensus statements of biblical scholars) but intellectual reflection on the

high doctrine of biblical inspiration, Christianity is a religion of the word, not of the book. God's living word, above all in the form of the incarnate Word, takes precedence over the inspired book." He further insists that one cannot identify revelation with Bible and that revelation "goes beyond the scriptures."

2.3.1. Scriptures and Revelation

O'Collins points out that there is a substantial difference between the scriptures and revelation. He is of the view that,

> The Bible illuminates constantly the divine and human mystery. It is indispensable for Christian existence, both collectively and individually. Nevertheless, revelation or the living word of God is a larger reality than the Bible and is not limited to the Bible. It is a gross error to identify revelation with the scriptures. God's living and authoritative word is not subordinate to a written text, even an inspired one.[172]

Revelation differs from the Bible in so far as it is "a living interpersonal event" that "happens when human beings respond in faith to the divine self-communication they experience." However, scriptures are not interpersonal events. They are "written records which, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, came into existence through the work of some believers at certain stages in the foundational history of God's people."[173] The revealed content of the scriptures is God's self-communication to all people given through various mediators such as prophets and, ultimately, through Jesus. Another difference between revelation and the scriptures is that while the self-communication of God was given to "*all* the people," "the special impulse to write the scriptures was a charism given only to those who under the guidance of the Holy Spirit helped to compose the sacred texts," although they were written for the sake of everyone. To emphasise the difference, O'Collins says that, even with regard to the writers of the sacred scriptures, "revelation and the charism of inspiration did not coincide." It is also to be noted that, in opposition to the fact that there is continuity in the case of revelation which is for all, the charism of inspiration to write the scriptures was given only to a few individuals, and that, too, only for a limited period of time.[174] Moreover, as O'Collins points out, the "Bible also records matters that do not seem to be connected, or at least closely connected, with divine revelation," such as rituals, descriptions of human love (the 'Song of Solomon'), ancient religious traditions,

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reality of the crucified and risen Christ who lives in his Church and, through the Holy Spirit, he himself guides the Church's understanding of his mystery." See ROCH A. KERESZTY, *Jesus Christ. Fundamentals of Christology,* New York, NY, St. Pauls, 2002, p. xiii.

[172] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology,* pp. 130-135. Here he also says that it is because revelation is not limited to the Bible and is larger than the written text that *Dei Verbum* considers revelation and tradition before Scripture. The view of revelation as larger than the sacred Scripture leads O'Collins to suggest that, "God's revelation reaches non-Christians without their reading or hearing the Bible. To some extent at least their religious environment and personal experience can mediate to them the truth about God and our human condition." God speaks to non-Christians outside of the Bible. See p. 134.

[173] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology,* pp. 129-130.

[174] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology,* p. 130.

ritual practices, customs, etc. Materials such as these say more about the human condition than about revelation. However, O'Collins also states that while such materials are not to be regarded as containing explicit revelation, they do have a degree of religious content. The difficulty is that the precise extent of this content is difficult, if not impossible, to measure. This last point alerts us to a certain tension in O'Collins' view. If human experience is indeed revelatory, as O'Collins insists, then it is difficult to disregard these less 'explicit' materials. O'Collins addresses this issue when he points out that "an inspired record is one thing, [and] revelatory 'content' is another."[175] This recognition does not contradict the claim that the whole of Scripture is revelatory.[176] However, O'Collins insists that Scripture "was not and is not the only means for receiving the divine revelation." There was revelation even before the Scripture was written (especially to the Israelites), and it takes place even today through the reading of materials such as the autobiographies of saints. He also maintains that "God's revelation reaches non-Christians without their reading or hearing the Bible … Only those out of touch with non-Christians and their world will deny the evidence for the divine saving and revealing activity on their behalf. God speaks to them through means other than the Bible."[177] It is important to note the fixed character of the Scripture. While traditions may change constantly, Scripture remains the same and becomes the reference point for testing all the established traditions, understanding the experiences of people, and evaluating new and projected changes and other Christian activities.

2.3.2. Tradition and Scripture: An Ecumenical Challenge

The discussion of the role of traditions and Scripture in transmitting the self-communication of God inevitably involves a consideration of the controversy between Catholics and Protestants on this point. Basing himself on the teaching of the Council of Trent, which saw Tradition as 'the source of all living truth and all regulation of customary observances,' or as 'the Gospel,'[178] O'Collins says that, "we can expect to find revelation expressed, recorded and actualised through various traditions, as well as through the inspired Scriptures." This position is opposed to the classical Protestant position of 'Scripture alone' (*sola Scriptura*). According to the Protestant view, all human traditions are subject to Scripture since Scripture is considered as the only authority in matters pertaining to salvation. According to O'Collins, Protestants gave such an authority to Scripture alone because they saw the activity of the Holy Spirit only in the

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[175] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology,* pp. 131-132.

[176] VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dei Verbum* 25, p. 980.

[177] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology,* p. 134.

[178] The Council of Trent (1545-1563) taught that, "[t]he foundation of all saving truth and moral discipline is the Gospel. This truth and discipline is contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions, which latter have come down to us at the dictation of the Holy Spirit by unbroken succession from the mouth of Christ himself or his apostles; hence we receive and venerate both scripture and tradition 'with equal piety and reverence'." See H. CUNLIFFE-JONES (ed.), *A History of Christian Doctrine* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), p. 404. See also, COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Decree on the Acceptance of the Sacred Books and Apostolic Traditions,* p. 663.

interpretation of the scriptural text and not in the "visible, historical community with its inherited traditions and authoritative magisterium." For them, the Bible constituted the sole "rule of faith." This rejection of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the magisterium resulted in the Protestant practice of giving greater importance - and even exclusive autonomy - to the scriptures, allowing private interpretation of the scriptures and sometimes even giving greater emphasis to reason alone as the sole criterion for judging the validity of revelation.[179] Catholics, however, held that the Holy Spirit was active in the traditions of the community and in the authoritative teachings of the magisterium. Among the objections that Catholics put forward against the view of 'Scripture alone', the following are particularly significant. Firstly, Scripture nowhere makes a claim for its exclusive monopoly over revelation. Secondly, the form-critical method in the study of both the Old and the New Testament has shown that Bible is the "product of the community's traditionary processes." Thirdly, it is by means of an appeal to traditions that the Church recognized and ultimately constituted the inspired biblical list or the canon. In the understanding of O'Collins, both Scripture and Tradition have their place as sources for knowing the person of Jesus Christ. He also points out that "the overwhelming majority of Protestant Reformers never in fact based their belief and practice solely on the Scriptures."[180] O'Collins seems to place tradition over Scripture. He says, "Understood *either* as the active process *or* as the object handed on, tradition includes Scripture rather than simply standing alongside it. In both senses tradition is much more extensive than Scripture." The emphasis on tradition is due to the inclusive characteristics he finds in tradition. He considers tradition as "the whole aggregate of customs, beliefs and practices which give Christians their continuity, identity and unity."[181]

The upshot of the above discussion is that the Tradition is communicated and expressed within traditions, and that the divine self-communication of God in and through traditions has to be acknowledged if we are to know the person of Jesus. David Brown remarks as follows about the need to go beyond the scriptural text when understanding revelation: "A Christianity that confines God's revelatory acts to the narrow compass of Scripture, even when this is expressed in terms of the effect of that Scripture upon us in the here and now, I find less and less plausible, the more I become aware of the historical situatedness of that text."[182]

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[179] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 196-197. Some of the objections that O'Collins put forward here against the Protestant view of *Sola Scriptura* are: that the Bible never claims anywhere that it contains all revelation independently of tradition; that the Bible is a product of the community's traditionary processes which included Hebrew and apostolic traditions; and that it is the tradition which recognized these scriptures as inspired and removed the non-canonical books. He is of the view that those who separate the Bible from tradition are in fact diminishing its value and impact by taking it out of its natural setting.

[180] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 197-198.

[181] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 204, 203.

[182] DAVID BROWN, *Tradition and Imagination. Revelation and Change,* Oxford, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 7.

Although we have limited our enquiry into the sources for knowing Jesus to Revelation, Tradition and Scripture, it would seem that they include everything and that each one enters into the field of the other. Hence it would not be wrong here to say together with O'Collins that, "In Christology the material will overlap and criss-cross in various ways. It is always possible to see how a different order might have been followed or a different selection of material made."[183] It is also clear that the exclusion of any one of these sources will inevitably result in an incomplete portrait of Jesus and, by extension, affect the appropriation of Jesus in faith.

2.4. The Doctrine and Theology of Trinity as a Source for Christology

In the past there was a tendency to do christological studies without any reference to the Trinity and vice versa. However, according to O'Collins, "Any total approach to Jesus Christ which omits the Trinity cannot claim to be fully Christian"[184] for, "the whole story of Jesus showed a Trinitarian face … [H]is history transposed to the human level the interpersonal life of the triune God."[185] He also says, "Whether in the foundational or in the dependent stage, revelation primarily means a gracious call to enter by faith here and now into the mystery of a relationship with the Triune God."[186] This is to say that when dealing with Christology one needs to look into every aspect of Jesus Christ, from his pre-existence to his resurrection and even beyond resurrection to his final coming and to the final consummation, from a trinitarian perspective. However, this is also to be done without giving into any type of false dichotomy between Christology and trinitarian theology.[187] O'Collins points out that the doctrine of the Trinity is something very central to the Christian faith, but because of the difficulty in understanding it, writers and preachers avoid it.[188] If one looks into the life of the Church, into the sacraments that

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[183] Gerald O'Collins, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 13.

[184] Gerald O'Collins & Daniel Kendall, Focus on Jesus. Essays in Christology and Soteriology, p. 28.

[185] Gerald O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* p. 35. Referring to the past disregard of theologians for a Trinitarian approach in Christology O'Collins says, "Nowadays the widespread appreciation of the Trinitarian face of the whole story of Jesus – from his virginal conception and baptism right through to the resurrection, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and his coming in glory at the end – functions against such a failure to ground christology in trinitarian doctrine." Gerald O'Collins, *The Holy Trinity. The State of the Questions*, in Gerald O'Collins; Stephen T. Davis & Daniel Kendall (eds.), *The Trinity. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 1-25, p. 3.

[186] Gerald O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 200.

[187] Gerald O'Collins, *The Holy Trinity. The State of the Questions*, p. 3.

[188] Gerald O'Collins, *Grappling with the Trinity,* in *The Tablet* 242 (1996) 606, p. 606. According to O'Collins, in current publications there is a desire to 'rehabilitate' belief in the Trinity as the very heart of Christian life. But an excessively rational understanding of the Trinity seems to have led some theologians and Christian philosophers of religion to apparently marginalize the trinitarian faith. He points to people like Immanuel Kant and F. D. E. Schleiermacher who considered trinitarian faith as irrelevant. Immanuel Kant said that, "The doctrine of the Trinity, taken literally, has no practical relevance at all, even if we think we understand it; and it is even more clearly irrelevant if we realize that it transcends all our concepts – Whether we are to worship three or ten persons in the Deity makes no difference: the pupil will implicitly accept one as readily as the other because he has no concept at all of a number of persons in one God (hypostases), and still more so because this distinction can make no difference in his rules of conduct. On the other hand, if we read a moral meaning into this article of faith … it would no longer contain an inconsequential belief but an intelligible one that refers to our moral vocation." See Immanuel Kant, *Religion and*

the Church celebrates, into the life of its faithful, and into the prayers that the people recite, one discovers that faith in the Trinity is at the very heart of Christian life. A Christian is initiated into the life of faith in the name of the Holy Trinity through the reception of the Sacrament of Baptism and lives his/her Christian life in the ultimate hope of being united with the Holy Trinity. Our discussion of the Trinity here is an important one because without such a discussion it is impossible to know the person of Jesus Christ wholly. However, our discussion here will be limited because our attention will de devoted mainly to the person of Jesus Christ. In any case, many of the points that we will discuss here will resurface and become clear as we continue our reflection on the person of Jesus Christ. Our basic source for understanding the Trinitarian view of O'Collins will be his work, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity.*

2.4.1. The Sources for the Knowledge of the Tripersonal God

For O'Collins, "to be a Christian is to believe in, experience, and worship God in a trinitarian way." A knowledge of the Tripersonal God, the Trinity, is possible only if one directs one's attention towards three inter-related areas, namely: "(1) the historical experience of salvation which the scriptures record and which teachers in the Church have interpreted through the centuries; (2) the testimony of public worship; and (3) the experience of practicing discipleship today."[189] In other words, it is on the basis of the whole life of the Church, namely, its faith,

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Rational Theology, trans. A. W. WOOD & G. DI GIOVANNI, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 264. Speaking about the formation of the trinitarian faith which, according to him, arose not from the "combination of utterances concerning the Christian consciousness" but probably from "the utterances of Christ Himself and of the Apostles concerning Him," Schleiermacher says that this doctrine of the Trinity "would no more be 'a doctrine of faith' in the really original and proper sense of that phrase than the doctrines of the resurrection and ascension of Christ; and it would resemble these last also in this respect that our faith in Christ and our living fellowship with him would be the same even if we had no knowledge of any such transcendent fact [Trinity] and even if the fact itself were different." But according to him, "the main pivots of the ecclesiastical doctrine – the being of God in Christ and in the Christian Church – are independent of the doctrine of the Trinity." See FRIEDRICH DANIEL ERNST SCHLEIERMACHER, *The Christian Faith,* trans. H. R. MACKINTOSH & J. S. STEWART, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928, p. 741. Karl Rahner said that one should not "overlook the fact that, despite their orthodox confession of the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere 'monotheists'. We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged. Nor does it help to remark that the doctrine of the *incarnation* is theologically and religiously so central for the Christian that, *through it*, the Trinity is always and everywhere inseparably 'present' in his religious life." See KARL RAHNER, *The Trinity*, trans. JOSEPH DONCEEL & J. FEOMER; M. LOHNERED & T. F. O'MEARA (eds.) (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1970 [1967]), pp. 10-11. According to O'Collins, "Bernard Lonergan used to comment wryly on the theology of the Trinity by changing the final 'no proof' in a traditional concise formulation of the doctrine of the Western Church: 'The Trinity is a matter of five notions or properties, four relations, three persons, two processions, one substance or nature, and no understanding'." See B. LONERGAN, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. M. J. O'CONNEL, New York, NY: Crossroad, 1989, p. ix as cited in GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Holy Trinity. The State of the Questions*, p. 2. But in O'Collins' view, the emphasis laid by these people on "the practical irrelevance of trinitarian faith" may be exaggerated. See p. 2.

[189] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* pp. 1-4. For O'Collins the word 'seeking' has a specific meaning. "Trinitarian faith seeks a knowledge and understanding that in this life will never be conclusive or exhaustive. It seeks to worship the tripersonal God with an adoration that will be fully realized only in the final kingdom. It seeks a just society that can never completely come in this world." See p. 4. James J. Buckley and David S. Yeago point out that the Church, the Bible and the Liturgy are the means of knowing the Trinity. They say that [t]he triune God … is the God attested and discerned in the Church's liturgy of Word and Eucharist, whose marks we find throughout the cosmos but who is self-identified as the God of Israel, incarnate in the singular Jesus, drawing near to give life in the Spirit's Pentecostal mission to the world through the Church." See JAMES J. BUCKLEY & DAVID S.

worship and praxis, that one comes to a knowledge of the tripersonal God. The upshot of this fact, as O'Collins points out, is that, "Trinitarian faith and theology express themselves … as knowledge, worship, and action. Hence, apropos of the Trinity, we can distinguish (1) faith seeking 'scientific' understanding, or *fides quaerens intellectum scientificum,* (2) faith seeking worship, or *fides quaerens adorationem*, and (3) faith seeking social justice, or *fides quaerens iustitiam socialem*." For O'Collins, knowledge of the Trinity, like knowledge of the person of Jesus Christ, is mediated through the whole history of revelation and salvation. However, the Trinity must not be defined purely from human experience because, "[t]he tripersonal God's self-revelation controls and should be seen to control any human responses and descriptions, and not vice versa. Human experience must not be taken as a 'source'."[190] O'Collins' view of how knowledge of the Trinity is achieved, recalls Irenaeus who insisted that knowledge of God is achieved through the Church and its worship. Speaking of Irenaeus, Thomas F. Torrance comments as follows:

> Knowledge of the truth of God or the truth of the Gospel is not given in an abstract or detached form but in a concrete embodied form in the Church, where it is to be grasped with the normative pattern of the faith imparted to it through the teachings of the apostles, and is therefore to be grasped only in unity and continuity with the faith, worship and godly life of all who are incorporated into Christ as members of his Body.

According to Torrance, for Irenaeus, the Church is the right place to seek knowledge about God because it is to the Church that the deposit of faith, the Holy Sprit and the ministry of the Gospel are given.[191]

2.4.2. The Trinity in Scripture

According to O'Collins, the theology of the Trinity cannot be complete without reference to the Old Testament because this book contains categories that allow us to express and elaborate the doctrine of the Trinity. Although one cannot find the term 'Trinity' in the Bible, there is evidence for the concept. O'Collins uses images and notions such as Father, Wisdom, Word and Spirit of God from the Old Testament to reflect on the Trinity. In his view, in the Old Testament, "the God of the psalms" provides the best answer to the question of who God is. As he says, "Over the centuries Catholics have learned more of God from praying the psalms than from studying the

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YEAGO (eds.), *Knowing the Triune God. The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI & Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), p. 14.

[190] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Holy Trinity. The Debate Continued,* in *Gregorianum* 83 (2002) 363-370, p. 365. However, O'Collins also says that, "anxiety over projection should not lead to the other extreme and any tampering with the fact that human experience is the inevitable medium (not source) through which the divine self-revelation takes place." See p. 365.

[191] THOMAS F. TORRANCE, *The Trinitarian Faith. The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church*, Edinburg: T & T. Clark Ltd., 1998, pp. 32-33. See also IRENAEUS, *Against Heresis* I.XV, XVIII, in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 339-341, 343-344.

teachings of general councils of the Church."[192] Praying the psalms gave the Israelites knowledge of the God who cared for them and for their redemption. It is a fact that in the psalms and in other texts of the Old Testament, "Besides knowing God to be 'apart' and 'beyond', the Israelites knew God to be 'near', with them, and even 'within' them." God was someone who was very near to Israelites in their daily life and activities. The Ark of the Covenant was a symbol of His continuous presence among them, which demonstrated also that he moved along with them. That is why, in O'Collins' view, although there are many names for God in the Old Testament,[193] the metaphor, 'God is a Father' (Dt 32:6; Is 63:16; Jr 3:19), is the most fitting one to designate the first person of the Trinity. This expression is used a little more than 20 times.[194] In O'Collins' understanding, the full significance of this name became evident with the life,

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[192] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 126-127. O'Collins here also says that "[u]ntil recently only a small minority of Catholics and other Christians could read, much less be moved to study the teachings of the councils. Yet, indirectly, through worshipping together and living their faith, most Christians absorbed those teachings."

[193] There are various names for God in the Old Testament. Some of the Hebrew names for God are, *el* (God), *eloah* (god), *elohim* (gods). All these names were used in biblical times for the one true God. These names were also sometimes used for other gods. The personal name and the name which set him apart from other gods as the true God is YHWH (used around 6,800 times meaning, I am or I am that I am), which has other variants in the Bible such as *yhh*, *yhw*, and *yh*. It is thought that this name was used from the time Yahweh revealed himself to Abraham. The name *adon* (Lord) and *adonai* (my lords) were also used frequently in the Old Testament for God. The combination of these names was also used, such as, *yawh elohim*, *adonai yywh*. Many other names used for God are, *el elyon* or *elyon* (the Most High), *el olam* (the everlasting God), *el roi* (the God of seeing), *el shaddai* (the almighty God). The names used to praise God are, *yhwh jireh* (Yahweh provides), *yhwh nissi* (Yahweh my banner), *yhwh shalom* (Yahweh of peace), *yhwh tsidkenu* (Yahweh our righteousness), *yhwh shammah* (Yahweh is there), *yhwh sebaot* (Yahweh of armies), *yhwh rapha* (Yahweh heals), and *yah raah* (Yahweh is my shepherd). See JACOB A. LOEWEN, *The Names of God in the Old Testament*, in *The Bible Translator* 35 (1984) 201-207, pp. 201-207. The Greek name used for God in the New Testament was, *Ho theos* (God, god) referring to the one supreme God. It also could refer to individual deities, people as divine beings, important things and people, idols, female deities, and Christ as God. Another name used for God in the New Testament is *Ho kurios* (master, owner, Lord) which referred to the owner of possessions, master of a house, the lord of the harvest, master of salves, husbands, person in high position, and any deity. See JACOB A. LOEWEN, *The Names of God in the New Testament*, in *The Bible Translator* 35 (1984) 208-211, pp. 208-209. Only a very few times did the use the name *kurios* for Jesus before his resurrection. But after his resurrection it was the most popular name. The name, Lord, is also interchangeably used for Jesus and God which often causes ambiguity. See p. 210. There are other expressions which are sometimes used for God such as, the Most High, the Highest, the Majesty on High, Majesty in Heaven, and the Blessed. See p. 211.

[194] According to Raphael Patai, "[t]he God of Judaism is undoubtedly a father-symbol and father-image, possibly the greatest such symbol and image conceived by man. Nor can there be any doubt as to the psychological need answered by this image. This, together with the great moral imperatives, was the unique contribution of prophetic Judaism to mankind." See RAPHAEL PATAI, *The Hebrew Goddess*, New York, NY: Avon Books, 1967, p. 9. as quoted in JOHN W. MILLER, *Biblical Faith and Fathering. Why we call God "Father"*, New York, NY & New Jersey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989, p. 41. After comparing the portraits of God employed in ancient Near-Eastern patriarchalism and mythologies, W. Miller concludes that it is only in biblical tradition that the father-god is truly and "fully in charge of the cosmic home." See JOHN W. MILLER, *Biblical Faith and Fathering. Why we call God "Father"*, p. 43. The use of the biblical portrait of God as father has been critiqued by many, especially feminist theologians. The objection against such a use is that it is demeaning to women because "males are permitted to regard themselves as god-like in ways females cannot." See p. 5. See also ELIZABETH A. JOHNSON, *She Who Is. The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, New York, NY: Crossroad, 1992; RUTH C. DUCK, *Gender and the Name of God: The Trinitarian Baptismal Formula,* New York, NY: Pilgrim, 1991. Against the negative view of feminist theologians about calling God Father, R. Kendall Soulen questions whether there is any single instant in the New Testament "where Jesus appeals to the authority of the Father to underwrite male privilege." He says, "[w]hatever may be the case with other fathers or fatherhood in general, this Father is implacably opposed to every diminution of women for the sake of male privilege." See R. KENDALL SOULEN, *The Name of the Holy Trinity. A Triune Name*, in *Theology Today* 59 (2002) 244-261, p. 255.

death and resurrection of Jesus, and the birth of the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit.[195] The naming of God as Father reflected God's involvement in the history of Israel (Dt 32:6), its kingly leaders (2 Sm 7:12-16) and its righteous people (Tb 13:3-5). It encompasses God's covenantal relationship with the people but it contains no reference to any type of physical generation.[196] It referred only to "God's free and creative choice of the people."[197]

In the Old Testament, Wisdom, Word, and Spirit served "as personified agents of divine activity." In O'Collins' view, the roots of the naming of God as Father, Son and Spirit are found in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, "Wisdom [*Hokmah*], Word [*Dabar*], and Spirit [*Ruah*][198] functioned, frequently synonymously, to acknowledge the transcendent God's nearness to the world and to the chosen people … In their creative, revelatory, and redemptive involvement, Wisdom, Word, and Spirit took on divine roles, while staying clearly within God's control."[199]

Even though there are references to a trinitarian understanding of God, what the Old Testament ultimately proclaimed was a monotheistic faith. Bernard Piault says that the name *Elohim*, used for Yahweh in the Old Testament is a plural term in Hebrew. But he says that this use of name does not in any way go against the monotheism of Israel and does not reveal the Trinity. The plural signifies "the plural of intensity or of excellence and majesty, meaning that the God of

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[195] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity,* p. 129-130.

[196] It would be fitting to note here what Farrugia and O'Collins say, namely that "YHWH is utterly beyond the sexual activities typically attributed to ancient deities. The sense that God is literally neither male nor female and transcends any creaturely representation stood behind the OT prohibition of visible divine images made of stone, metal, or wood." See MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity,* pp. 130-131.

[197] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* pp. 12-14, 23. O'Collins says that, although there are maternal similes used in the Old Testament for God, it does not use the word 'Mother' to designate God, and there is a relative absence of the feminine language and image. God is graphically compared with a woman who suffers in childbirth (Is 42:14), with a midwife (Ps 22:9-10) and with a mother who comforts the suffering (Is 66:13) etc. See pp. 12-13.

[198] According to Bernard Piault, the oldest account of Wisdom was in terms of a human quality (Ex 28:1-3). Wisdom assumed a religious character at a later stage because of the influence of prophets and was considered as distinctive characteristic of Yahweh (Is 28:29). He also says that for the chosen people of Israel, "Wisdom represented the certainty that Yahweh was present among them." See BERNARD PIAULT, *What is the Trinity?,* in LANCELOT C. SHEPPARD (ed.), *A Faith and Facts Book* 17 (London: Burns & Oates, 1959), pp. 20-21. Piault says that 'Word' in the Old Testament was closely connected with Wisdom with the creative, enlightening and judging qualities. Action is attributed to the Spirit in the Old Testament and it is said to dwell with men and women. Piault says that the Spirit is "not a distinct person in God but a force, a creative or sanctifying power which comes forth from him to carry out in the world the work which he wishes to accomplish there, particularly when his actions assume a religious character." See p. 24.

[199] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, p. 32. What is important to note here is that the names 'Wisdom, Word and Spirit' are expressive of divine activity toward the human race. According to O'Collins, they are "not abstract principles but vivid personifications… The vivid personifications of Wisdom/Word and Spirit, inasmuch as they were both identified with God and the divine activity and distinguished from God, opened up the way toward recognizing God to be tripersonal." See p. 34. The word Wisdom occurs 318 times, and 'Spirit' is used nearly 400 times in the Old Testament as a "way of articulating the creative, revelatory, and redemptive activity of God." See MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 132.

Israel is the only true God."[200] Speaking about how the trinitarian belief evolved, St. Gregory of Nazianzen said:

> The Old Testament proclaimed the Father quite clearly, and the Son only dimly. The New Testament revealed the Son and allowed us to glimpse the divinity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit dwells among us and shows himself more clearly. When the divinity of the Father was not yet recognized it would not have been prudent openly to proclaim the Son; and when the divinity of the Son was not yet admitted it would not have been fair to impose … a new burden on men by talking to them about the Holy Spirit.[201]

When we turn towards the New Testament understanding of the Trinity, according to O'Collins, it is clear that there were early attempts to "identify YHWH as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. … Christian faith does not replace Israel's faith but develops and expands it." For O'Collins, "[t]he New Testament and post-New Testament Christian language for the one God, now acknowledged to be tripersonal, flowed from the Jewish scriptures. The doctrine of the Trinity was deeply Jewish in its origins." But in the New Testament there was a modification of Jewish faith and language in the light of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.[202] In the New Testament, we are first of all faced with the question of how and when the disciples of Jesus revised their inherited Jewish faith in one God. O'Collins says that the disciples revised their faith "with, in, and through the resurrection of the crucified Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit."[203] Hence, he affirms that the complete story of Jesus "showed a trinitarian face."

O'Collins seems to give special attention to the virginal conception in his discourse on Trinity. He is of the view that what one can discern right from Jesus' conception is that he was divine and human and that he 'showed a trinitarian face.' In his view the conception of Jesus was virginal and, hence, he rejects the views of those who say that the accounts of Matthew and Luke regarding the virginal conception are simply fiction. The emphasis given to the virginal conception in the tradition was intended to accent Jesus' divine origin and identity. However, the

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[200] According to Bernard Piault, Israel knew of God as one living God. They were however prepared to receive the perfect message of the Trinity. However, "no hint of this mystery was given before the coming of Jesus. It was not until much later that, taught by the New Testament, Christian teachers turned to the Old Testament and applied to God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit." See BERNARD PIAULT, *What is the Trinity*, p. 25, 27.

[201] GREGORY OF NAZIANZEN, *Fifth Theological Discourse*, no.26. as quoted in BERNARD PIAULT, *What is the Trinity?*, pp. 27-28.

[202] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 132-133.

[203] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 124-125. Gordon D. Fee says that one may not find a fully developed doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament, but one may find it as "experienced reality." He is in reality speaking about St. Paul's experience of the only living God through Jesus Christ and the Spirit. He says that the denial of trinitarian language in the New Testament "seems very often to preface denials about the *deity* of Christ and/or the Spirit as well, not to mention denials of the *personal nature* of the Spirit." See GORDON D. FEE, *Paul and the Trinity. The Experience of Christ and the Spirit for Paul's Understanding of God,* in STEPHEN DAVIS; DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS (eds.), *The Trinity. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* (Oxford/New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999) 49-72, pp. 49-50. It is to be noted here that James Dunn challenged Fee for not providing strong arguments for the use of trinitarian language in St. Paul. He criticised "Fee's somewhat glib assumption that Paul's theology can be properly described as trinitarian … to make use of a later term [Trinity], without addressing or clarifying the issues involved in that term… is to erect an orthodox flag without an adequate flagpole." See JAMES D. G. DUNN, *Review of God's Empowering Presence. The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* by Gordon D. Fee, in *Theology* 99 (1996) 151-152, p. 152.

tradition did not diminish the fact of his humanity despite emphasising his divinity by claiming that Jesus was born of a virgin.[204] O'Collins holds that the "particular event of the virginal conception can be expected to yield meaning not only about Christ's divine filiation but also about his relationship with the Holy Spirit."[205] O'Collins and Farrugia say that, "[I]t was Jesus who personally triggered the development from Jewish to Christian monotheism, or belief in one God now distinguished into three persons." During his public life, it was Jesus who himself implicitly spoke of his divinity and his filial relationship with the Father.[206] Bernard Piault supports this view of O'Collins when he says that the new teaching about and the revelation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit takes shape around the person of Jesus and that "it is through Jesus that the Three-in-One is to be imprinted on the mind and heart of man."[207] St. Paul, by attributing the terms 'Lord' and 'Son of God' to Jesus (Rom 1:4), Mark through his 'baptism Christology' where Jesus was declared by God to be 'my beloved Son' (Mk 1:11), Matthew and Luke through their 'conception Christology' where the unique action of the divine Spirit at the conception of Jesus was presented, and other authors who even speak of a 'preexistence Christology' (Jn 1:1-18), asserted beyond doubt the divinity of Jesus and his trinitarian face.[208] The trinitarian faith also could be signified by other concepts. The concept of Emmanuel (God with us), signifies the presence of YAWH with his people. Another place where trinitarian language might be discerned is Jesus' declarations about his divine authority, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given me", and his affirmation about his presence among the believers, "I am with you always to the close of age" (Mt 18:20). According to O'Collins, the Trinity is revealed especially in the paschal mystery:

> The doctrine of the Trinity is grounded in God's self-disclosure in the whole Easter mystery… It was precisely in the crucifixion and the resurrection that the tripersonal God was powerfully engaged against sin and for our deliverance … The Resurrection revealed that the tripersonal God was/is present in suffering and on/around the cross.[209]

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[204] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, p. 36.

[205] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, p. 38.

[206] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS , *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 133. O'Collins says that, "the evidence from the ministry [of Jesus] makes it clear that Jesus himself understood his relationship to God as sonship." Jesus possessed a unique and exclusive knowledge of the Father (Mt 11:27). This reflected "a mutual knowledge and relationship of Jesus precisely as the Son to the Father, a mutual relationship out of which Jesus reveals, not a previously unknown God, but the God whom he alone knows fully and really." See p. 43. With regard to the second person of the Trinity, Farrugia and O'Collins say that, "[b]y expressly identifying Jesus with the divine Wisdom, as did St. Paul (I Cor 1:24), Justin Martyr, and many other writers of the early centuries, Christians made a decisive leap in taking this personification to be a distinct divine person." See MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 131.

[207] BERNARD PIAULT, *What is the Trinity*, 36. Bernard here also suggests that it was towards the end of Jesus' life and mission that the whole of this message was given. It took him "nothing less than the whole of his earthly life to draw the attention of the Jews to the very special relationship which he claims with God." It was a gradual revelation of the mystery.

[208] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* p. 37. The chronology followed here is the chronological sequence of the writers of the New Testament: from Paul, through Mark, Matthew, and Luke, to John.

[209] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, p. 51.

According to O'Collins, there are a number of triadic formulas, ranging from simple to the more formal, in the writings of St. Paul (also see 1 Cor 12:4-6; Eph 4:4-6) which bear witness to the Trinity. The letter to the Romans opens with what we might describe as a kerygmatic/credal tradition in which St. Paul seems to place the order as God (the Father),[210] the Son, and the Spirit (Rom 1:3-4).[211] The second letter to the Corinthians ends with a benediction which is an elaborate trinitarian formula: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you" (2 Cor 13:13). There is also a triadic synopsis of salvation history found in St. Paul which follows the baptismal formula of Matthew.

> When the fullness of time had come, God sent (*exapesteilen*) his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under law, so that we might receive adoption as sons [daughters]. And because you are sons [and daughters], God sent (*exapesteilen*) the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' (Gal 4:4-6).

Although a tripartite formula was used for baptism in the first century of Christianity, it did not offer "a full-blown doctrine of God as three in one and one in three."[212] O'Collins says that St. Paul witnesses to a soteriological view of the Trinity because it is from his tripersonal God that "initial adoption, ongoing guidance, and future inheritance" come (Rom 8:14-17).[213] In all this, however, Paul remains monotheistic and does not move away from the faith in one God which is professed in the *Shema* (Dt 6:4). "Christological monotheism does not tamper with the confession that 'there is one God'."

When we consider the Johannine writings, we can see John using the Father/Son language very frequently. In John Jesus is addressed as 'Son' 17 times and as 'Son of God' 9 times. The Christological title that finds greatest favour in John is *Logos* or the 'Word'.[214] In his work as

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[210] Paul seems to use 'God' exclusively for Father, except for a few occasions where it is used for Jesus (Rom 9:5; Phil 2:6 and Tit 2:14). See BERNARD PIAULT, *What is the Trinity*, p. 48. Piault also contents that Paul applied the title 'Son' to Jesus in its fullest sense as the 'Son of God'. Other titles used by Paul for Jesus are 'Christ, the Wisdom of God' and 'Christ the Lord'. The third person in the Trinity is given less space in the writings of Paul. The Holy Spirit is mentioned only in a practical sense, that of a mission to bring the life of God and of Christ to the faithful. See pp. 52-66.

[211] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* p. 65. The early Christians in their prayer addressed and identified God as the Father of Jesus Christ. "Thus the Christians, while continuing to be monotheistic by maintaining faith in one God (e.g. Gal 3:20), the same God for Jews and Gentiles alike (Rom 3:29-30), now included in their new form of monotheism Christ the Son of God and the Holy Spirit (*Pneuma*). Thus Christian faith became 'christological' and pneumatological." See MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS*, Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 137. Gordon D. Fee says that, the "primary issues of Paul's 'economic trinitarianism' are christological and pneumatological." He also says that "Paul's understanding of salvation was triadic, and the triad was divine." See GORDON D. FEE, *Paul and the Trinity. The Experience of Christ and the Spirit for Paul's Understanding of God,* p. 50.

[212] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS*, Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 137-138.

[213] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* pp. 65-68. According to William J. Hill, the primitive *kerygma* of the New Testament is "soteriological, with foundations for a Christology; to the extent that the trinitarian dimension appears at all, it does so in function of the latent Christology, and so as a third level of understanding… There is no doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament in the sense of an understanding of triunity." See WILLIAM J. HILL, *The Three Personal God. The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation,* Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988 [1982], p. 29.

[214] The use of 'Word' has a marked resemblance to 'Lady Wisdom' in the Old Testament. But the choice of John is to use Word instead of Wisdom. O'Collins suggests a few reasons for this choice. First of all, Sophia (Wisdom) was

'Son', Jesus is the revealer of God as Father. In John, the Holy Spirit, who has an individual identity, comes from Jesus and is sent by Jesus (Jn 7:39; 15:26; 19:30-34; 20:22). But this sending of the Spirit depends on the Father (Jn 15:26). Although, in John, Jesus and the Spirit are called *Paraclete* (1 Jn 2:1 and Jn 14:26), the Spirit is not equated with Jesus but has a separate identity since the Spirit is called *another Paraclete*.

Overall, a brief assessment of the New Testament shows that the revelation of the tripersonal God must be situated within the context of the death and resurrection of Jesus. But in the fourth Gospel the incarnation and the public ministry of Jesus are also contexts of this revelation, which means that right from the beginning Jesus manifested a trinitarian face.[215] Our assessment also points to the fact that our understanding of the Trinity cannot be developed without recourse to the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In other words, our understanding of Trinity has its point of departure in a Christological consideration. We also note that a complete picture of the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be established from the scriptures alone. A full doctrine of the Trinity can be attributed only to a later period in the life of the Church. In the following section we shall look into the way this doctrine was developed over a period of time.

2.4.3. The Origin and Development of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Christian Period

Our understanding of Trinity very much depends on how we understand Christology in the New Testament. "It is from the core of a christological approach that the trinitarian vision of the Apostolic Fathers and their successors unfold."[216] Thus, we return to christological considerations when we deal with the Trinity and its development in the early Christian period.[217] One should also bear in mind that even before the completion of the New Testament there were debates about Christ and the Trinity. We also need to bear in mind that much of the doctrine originated in the wake of the heresies that developed during the early Christian period. Hilary of Poitiers speaks about the problems created by heresies in the following words:

> The guilt of the heretics and blasphemers compels us to undertake what is unlawful, to scale arduous heights, to speak of the ineffable, and to trespass upon forbidden places. And since by faith alone we should fulfill what is commanded, namely, to adore the Father, to venerate the Son with Him, and to

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personified as Lady Wisdom and so it would have been awkward to speak about this female figure 'becoming flesh'. Secondly, Wisdom was described as woman sought by Solomon (Wis 8:2, 9, 16). In the New Testament Jesus is portrayed as taking the role of Solomon rather than Wisdom. Thirdly, in Hellenistic Judaism the law of Moses was identified with Wisdom. This meant that the use of Wisdom would mean considering the law of Moses (Torah) as God. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* pp. 78-79.

[215] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, pp. 81-82.

[216] BORIS BOBRINSKOY, *The Mystery of the Trinity. Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition*, trans. ANTHONY P. GYTHIEL, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999 [1986], p. 198.

[217] Bobrinskoy is of the view that the "christocentrism of the Fathers does not contradict their fundamental theocentrism: it is always the Father who is the Principle of the divine activity in the world, and who manifests Himself in His incarnate Son and His life-giving Spirit." He also says that "St. Ignatius insists on christocentrism as necessary to all authentic Christian thought: for him, the knowledge of God is Jesus Christ." See BORIS BOBRINSKOY, *The Mystery of the Trinity. Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition*, pp. 198, 199.

abound in the Holy Spirit, we are forced to raise our lowly words to subjects which cannot be described. By the guilt of another we are forced into guilt, so that what should have been restricted to the pious contemplation of our minds is now exposed to the dangers of human speech.[218]

One cannot pinpoint exactly who was the first theologian of Christianity. However, early Christian writings suggest that St. Justin Martyr may well qualify. He was a converted philosopher. With St. Irenaeus, he wrote against the early Christian heresies. Together, they were the first authors to produce a theology. Here one may also note that their works did not come forth "out of any desire to produce a comprehensive theology, but grew out of the necessity to deal with a dangerous and persistent heresy."[219] To understand the development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the first three centuries after the resurrection of Jesus, while the Christian canon was still being formed, O'Collins examines the writings of St Justin Martyr (d. ca.165), St Irenaeus (d. ca. 200), Tertullian (d. ca. 220), and Origen (d. ca. 254).[220] However, before we begin our exposition of the Fathers we need to say something about early Christianity.

O'Collins says that the "Christians, while continuing to be monotheistic by maintaining faith in one God (e.g. Gal 3:20), the same God for Jews and Gentiles alike (Rom 3:29-30), now included in their new form of monotheism Christ the Son of God and the Holy Spirit (Pneuma). Thus Christian faith became 'christological' and 'pneumatological'." This belief in the three persons was experienced in their worship, and especially in baptism. However, the trinitarian formulae used in Baptism did not indicate a full-blown doctrine of the Trinity but only suggested "a certain unity (the name), distinction and equality between 'the Father', 'the Son', and the 'the Holy Spirit'."[221] In the *Didache* we have the Trinitarian baptismal formulae used by the early

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[218] St Hilary of Poitiers, *The Trinity*, 2.2, trans. Stephen McKenna, in Bernard M. Peebles *et al.* (eds.), *The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation,* Vol. 25 (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1954), p. 36.

[219] Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies. Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church*, Massachusetts, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000, p. 42. He also says that one of the causes for the development of Christian theology was the delay of the expected imminent return of Christ, for which they had to find some explanation. See p. 43.

[220] Although O'Collins limits his choice of the early Church Fathers, we do not underestimate the fact that even before these Fathers, we have people like bishop Clement who, in the last years of the first century, repeatedly referred to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit together. In a context of apostolic mission, exhorting against all strife, divisions, wars and schisms he says, "[h]ave we not [all] one God and one Christ? Is there not one Spirit of grace poured out upon us? And have we not one calling in Christ?" See Clement, *Epistle to the Corinthians* XLVI., in Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 17. The early second-century writer, Ignatius, also uses a certain type of trinitarian language when he says, "[f]rom his power Jesus Christ will deliver you, who has founded you upon the rock, as being chosen stones, well fitted for the divine edifice of the Father, and who are raised up on high by Christ, who was crucified for you, making use of the Holy Spirit as a rope, and being borne up by faith, while exalted by love from earth to heaven, walking in company with those that are undefiled." See Ignatius, *Epistle to the Ephesians* IX, in Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 1, p. 53. According to Roger E. Olson and Christopher A. Hall, these and other documents such as *The Didache* and *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* employed trinitarian language. These were "seeds that will later sprout in the thought of an Athanasius or Basil." See Roger E. Olson & Christopher A. Hall, *The Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI & Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), pp. 16-20.

[221] Mario Farrugia & Gerald O'Collins, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 136-137.

Christians.[222] In the following sections, we shall look into the development of the trinitarian theology in the Apostolic Fathers.

2.4.3.1. The Trinity through the Eyes of St. Justin Martyr

St. Justin the Martyr, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, tried to answer the questions of the Jews about the divinity of Christ. Here we also find his ideas about Christ's relationship with the Father. While affirming the divinity of Christ, he anticipated the problem of the defence of monotheism by Christians before Jews who could not accept Jesus as divine. To point out the distinction between Father and Son, Justin used different ways to speak of Christ, such as 'Lord', 'God the Son of God', and 'the Word'. Justin used the analogy of the relationship between the sun and the sunlight to describe the inseparable and indivisible relationship and the generation of the Word (Christ) with the Father.[223] O'Collins notes that here Justin "anticipated a question that was to be long debated in the fourth century, the consubstantiality (or being of 'one substance') of the Father and the Son (or Word) in that they share the same essence or *ousia*."[224] According to O'Collins, Justin Martyr, besides identifying Jesus with the divine Wisdom and introducing the metaphor of the *Light from Light*, also discovered the trinitarian meaning in Gen 1:26: "Then God (*Elohim*) said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness'." For Justin, the plural used here suggested at least two divine persons. However, O'Collins is of the view that the plural of *Elohim* here is a 'plural of intensity' or a reference to the "nondivine beings who compose God's court." The notion of the Son of God as being in the second place and the Holy Spirit as being in the third place was also introduced by Justin in his *First Apology*. Justin said:

> Our teacher of these things is Jesus Christ, who also was born for this purpose, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, … and that we reasonably worship Him, having learned that He is the Son of the true God Himself, and holding Him in the second place, and the prophetic Spirit in the third, we will prove. For they proclaim our madness to consist in this, that we give to a crucified man a place second to the unchangeable and eternal God, the Creator of all; for they do not discern the mystery that is herein, to which, as we make it plain to you, we pray you to give heed.[225]

O'Collins is of the view that this position of subordination was opposed to the orthodox position, which maintained the "equality in communion between the three divine persons." He

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[222] The Baptism formula in the *Didache* reads as follows: "In regard to Baptism – baptize thus: After the foregoing instructions baptize in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in living water. If you have no living water, then baptize in other water; and if you are not able in cold, then in warm. If you have neither, pour water three times on the head, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." *The Didache* 7, in WILLIAM A. JURGENS (trans. & ed.), *The Faith of the Early Fathers. A Source-book of Theological and Historical Passages from the Christian Writings of the Pre-Nicene and Nicene Eras,* Vol. 1, Collegeville, Minnesota, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970, p. 2.

[223] O'Collins notes that in the Nicene Creed the image of *Light from Light* was added on the basis of the idea of Justin.

[224] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, p. 89.

[225] JUSTIN MARTYR, *The First Apology* XIII, in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 1, p. 167.

also says that Justin "did not always clearly distinguish the Spirit from the incarnate Logos."[226] J. N. D. Kelly also holds that St Justin and many others had not made a distinction between the Spirit and Logos.[227] According to O'Collins, this distinction is clearly stated only in the fourth century at the Council of Constantinople I (381). While speaking about the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit, he notes that Justin had an inclusive view regarding the "revealing and redeeming role of the Logos/Son and of the Holy Spirit in the lives of non-Christians."[228] The trinitarian confession of Justin is found in his credal formulas where he confesses the true God, the Son and the Holy Spirit. One of his confessions reads as follows: "Both Him [called the 'most true God'], and the Son (who came forth from Him and taught us these things, and the host of other good angels who follow and are made like to Him), and the prophetic Spirit, we worship and adore, knowing them in reason and truth, and declaring without grudging to everyone who wishes to learn, as we have been taught."[229] According to O'Collins, the initial contribution of Justin was invaluable to Trinitarian teaching. However, he points out that "[h]is sense of the ineffable transcendence of the Father and Creator of all things led to a certain subordination of the Son – and of the Holy Spirit." However, his views about the mission of the Son, the Logos, and especially the theme of the 'seeds of the Word'[230] and the Logos being

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[226] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* pp. 90-91. O'Collins holds that, according to Justin, "the Son, sharing in the same essence (*ousia*) and mind of God, was/is truly divine. His presentation of the Son as the Logos, who creates, organizes, and affects the whole cosmos, allowed for a positive view of the religious situation of non-Christians." See pp. 95-96.

[227] Kelly says that "the second-century fathers had not altogether made up their minds as to the identity of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation… [Their view] was that what had become incarnate in the Blessed Virgin, as narrated by St Mathew and St Luke, was divine Spirit. We have a clear assertion of this in a well-known passage of St Justin, where the Spirit mentioned in Lk.1,35 is identified with the Logos. A similar teaching was put forward, though more hesitantly, by St Irenaeus; and Tertullian and St Hippolytus were also among its exponents." See J. N. D. KELLY, *Early Christian Creeds,* 2nd edition, London: Longmans, 1960 [1950], pp. 148-149.

[228] Justin's inclusive language was that "all human beings share (at least partly) in the Word, understood more along the lines of reason or the interior word than that of the expressed, spoken word." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* p. 93. Justin said that "[w]e have been taught that Christ is the first-born of God, and we have declared above that He is the Word of whom every race of men were partakers; and those who lived reasonably are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists; as, among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus." See JUSTIN MARTYR, *The First Apology* XLVI, in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 1, p. 178.

[229] JUSTIN MARTYR, *First Apology* VI, p. 164. In his liturgical formula of baptism Justin Martyr used the trinitarian formula in the order of Father (God), Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit. Peter Widdicombe holds that, in his descriptions of baptism in two instances in the *First Apology*, 61, "Justin says that baptism is performed in the 'name of God, the Father and Lord of all.' In the first instance, the sentence continues: 'and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit'; in the second instance, the reference to God 'Father and Lord of all' is followed a few lines later with the words 'in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus'." See PETER WIDDICOMBE, *Fatherhood and the Conception of God in Early Christian Literature,* in *Anglican Theological Review* 82 (2000) 519-536, p. 524. One can understand that this use of the formula as found in Matthew (Mt 28:19) suggests that Justin had used this to indicate his understanding of the Trinity where Jesus was placed in the second and Holy Spirit in the third position.

[230] See JUSTIN MARTYR, *Second Apology* VIII, p. 191. Commenting on this passage O'Collins observes that "Justin's theme of the seeds of the Word returned in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council (the decree *Ad Gentes*, 2), in a 1975 apostolic exhortation from Pope Paul VI (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 53), and in further texts and documents from Catholic leaders and theologians as they struggled with the issue of the Church's mission to and its dialogue with the members of other religions. It is this context which has configured Jacques Dupuis's reflections on the universal and

shared by the whole human race,[231] give us a positive view about the religious situation of non-Christians.

2.4.3.2. St. Irenaeus' Understanding of the Trinity

Irenaeus,[232] the first biblical theologian, basing himself on the Gospel of St John, held that the Logos eternally coexisted with the Father 'before' truly becoming flesh. Grounding himself in St Paul, he maintained that Jesus was the "last or second Adam who draws together in one great trinitarian project the whole story of creation and salvation." He also spoke of the Spirit as the one who publicly disclosed to mankind the saving activity of the Father and the Son.[233] Irenaeus in fact expanded the dyadic confession of Paul (1 Cor 8:6) to include the Holy Spirit. He said about those who held orthodox faith the following:

> For to him all things are consistent: he has a full faith in one God Almighty, of whom are all things; and in the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom are all things, and in the dispensations connected with Him, by means of which the Son of God became man; and a firm belief in the Spirit of God, who furnishes us with a knowledge of the truth, and has set forth the dispensations of the Father and the Son, in virtue of which He dwells with every generation of men, according to the will of the Father.[234]

Ireneaus also held that Word and Wisdom or Son and Spirit were with the Father right from the moment of creation as his own two hands.[235] He was opposed to the errors of Marcion who considered the Creator God of the Old Testament as a mere 'demiurge' and cruel deity. Marcion said that the God of the Old Testament could not to be identified as the merciful 'Father' preached by Jesus Christ.[236] However, Irenaeus defended the identity of the God of the Old

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powerful presence of the Word of God." See MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 19.

[231] Justin says, "[w]e have been taught that Christ is the first-born of God… He is Word of whom every race of men were partakers; and those who lived reasonably are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists." See JUSTIN MARTYR, *First Apology* XLVI, p. 178.

[232] Irenaeus, generally believed to be a native of Smyrna and a disciple of Polycarp, is also considered to have met Justin before he went to Gaul for ministry as bishop of Lyons. Montgomery Hitchcock says that the many passages about the Holy Trinity in his treatise "convince us that Irenaeus' confession of faith in the Trinity Holy and Undivided of Three Persons and One God was not merely the distinguishing feature of his belief, but the real foundation of his doctrines of God and man." See F. R. MONTGOMERY HITCHCOCK, *Irenaeus of Lugunum. A Study of His Teaching,* London: Cambridge University Press, 1914, p. 106.

[233] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* p. 96. O'Collins says that, "[b]y confessing the Son's eternity, Irenaeus assigned to him a central attribute of God." See p. 98.

[234] IRENAEUS, *Against Heresies,* IV.XXXIII.7, in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 1, p. 508.

[235] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* p. 99. This terminology about the two hands of God, according to O'Collins, could raise a question regarding the relationship of the Son and the Spirit, as their mission could be a parallel mission. But he also says that Ireneaus had a kind of vertical trinitarian mind when he spoke about how the salvation of human beings took place first through the Spirit to the Son and secondly through the Son to the Father. See pp. 101-102.

[236] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 128. Marcion had rejected the Jewish Scriptures and all the writings of the New Testament except Luke and 10 letters of Paul. However, Irenaeus maintained the authority of the Jewish Scriptures and the four gospels and used the Jewish scriptures to speak of the God of the Jewish people against the heresies of Marcion. Marcion was condemned in the Nicene-

Testament (YAWH) as 'the Father' of Jesus Christ. He was against the division of God into two, one good and another just, and maintained that there is only one God. O'Collins says that Irenaeus confessed the eternal existence of the Son when he said that the "Son of God did not then begin to exist, being with the Father from the beginning." In this way, Irenaeus rejected the Arian heresy in advance.[237] To understand the generation of the Son from the Father he used the analogy of thought coming from our mind.

Irenaeus held that God was invisible and incomprehensible, but that he is known by many modes. He used the image of the two hands of God to expound his trinitarian faith. He said:

> It was not angels, therefore, who made us, nor who formed us, neither had angels power to make an image of God, nor any one else, except the Word of the Lord, nor any Power remotely distant from the Father of all things. For God did not stand in need of these [beings], in order to the accomplishing of what He had Himself determined with Himself beforehand should be done, as if He did not possess His own hands.[238]

According to O'Collins, for Irenaeus the transcendence of the Father is protected by the mediatory role of the Word and it is the Word who reveals the Father. As in the case of Justin Martyr, Irenaeus speaks of the ongoing presence of the Word as the only revealer of the Father to the entire human race. He says, "The Word, who existed in the beginning with God, by whom all things were made, was also always present with mankind."[239] According to O'Collins, this has great significance for the consideration about the themes of revelation and the salvation of all human beings.

When we speak about the Holy Spirit in Irenaeus, O'Collins argues, it is important to bear in mind his analogy of the hands which we mentioned above. This analogy may indicate the parallel missions of the Son and the Spirit. It is also possible to speak of human salvation on a vertical trinitarian line – from the Spirit to the Son and from the Son to the Father.[240] According to O'Collins, Irenaeus had insisted on a trinitarian 'rule of faith' for the unity of all Christians. Irenaeus wrote:

> The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: [She believes] in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the

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Constantinopolitan Creed by the confession that there is only "*one* God, Father almighty, *maker* of heaven and earth." See p. 128.

[237] IRENAEUS, Against Heresies, III.XVIII.1, p. 446. See also GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* p. 98.

[238] IRENAEUS, *Against Heresies,* IV.XX.1, p. 487.

[239] IRENAEUS, *Against Heresies,* III.XVIII.1., p. 446.

[240] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* pp. 101-102. The passage that supports this vertical trinitarian line is: those who are saved "ascend through the Spirit to the Son, and through the Son to the Father, and that in due time the Son will yield up His work to the Father." IRENAEUS, *Against Heresies,* V.XXXVI.2, p. 567.

Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God.[241]

According to O'Collins, there is much talk about the Son in Irenaeus but very little about the Holy Spirit. Irenaeus stresses the universal mediatory role of the Word in revealing God. Catherine Mowry LaCugna notes that Irenaeus' "interest was not – and could not have been – in the 'intratrinitarian' relations but in the relationship of God to the world."[242] Irenaeus is especially concerned about the guidance of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in enabling humanity to attain the end of their existence. The vertical trinitarian line is the way to this end.

2.4.3.3. Tertullian on the Trinity

Turning to Tertullian, O'Collins states that his trinitarian language emerged from his opposition to polytheism and Gnostic divisions of divinity. In O'Collins' view, "To Tertullian we owe the language of God as 'Trinity' and that of the 'three persons and one divine substance' or nature. Along with the theological clarity of his language went a certain disparaging of philosophy as productive of heresies."[243] Tertullian also opposed Marcion for trying to divide God. But he had to wrestle with the question of whether the divinity of the Son and of the Spirit was compatible with monotheism. Against the Marcionists, he spoke about the unity of God and said, "In order, however, that you may know that God is one, ask what God is, and you will find Him to be not otherwise than one … 'God is not, if He is not one'."[244] Faced with the modalist 'monarchialism' of Noetus, Praxeas and other heterodox Christians, who denied the distinctions within the divinity and defended the monarchy of God, Tertullian spoke of God's one 'substance' and three distinct but undivided 'persons'. To oppose Praxeas and support the distinctions in God he used the creation story and said:

> He[God] had already His Son close at His side, as a second Person, His own Word, and a third Person also, the Spirit in the Word, that He purposely adopted the plural phrase, 'Let *us* make;' and, 'in *our* image;' and, 'become as *one of us*.' … In what sense, however, you ought to understand Him to be another,…on the ground of Personality, not of Substance – in the way of distinction, not division. But although I must everywhere hold one only substance in three coherent and inseparable (Persons), yet I am bound to acknowledge, from the necessity of the case, that He who issues a command is different from Him who executes it.[245]

O'Collins says that "In writing of one divine substance (*substantia*) in three persons, Tertullian was the first Christian writer to exploit the term person in theology, the first to apply *Trinity*

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[241] IRENAEUS, *Against Heresies,* I.X.1., p. 330.

[242] CATHERINE MOWRY LACUGNA, *God for Us. The Trinity and Christian Life*, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991, p. 27.

[243] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 23.

[244] TERTULLIAN, *Against Marcion*, I.III., in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), p. 273.

[245] TERTULLIAN, *Against Praxeas*, XII., pp. 606-607. Kevin B. McCruden says that "the monarchian position, no less than Tertullian's own, constituted a sincere attempt to arrive at an authentic understanding of the trinitarian mystery." See KEVIN B. MCCRUDEN, *Monarchy and Economy in Tertullian's Adversus Praxeam*, in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55 (2002) 325-337, p. 325.

(*Trinitas*) to God … and the first to develop the formula of *one substance in three persons*." Tertullian used the word *substantia* (previously used in Latin as *essentia* and in Greek as *ousia*) to indicate the "common fundamental reality shared by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" and the word 'person' (*persona* in Latin and *prosopon* in Greek) to indicate "the principle of operative individuality."[246] O'Collins also tells us that Tertullian used material analogies to show the differentiate the triune unity of God:

> For God sent forth the Word,… just as the root puts forth the tree, and the fountain the river, and the sun the ray. … But still the tree is not severed from the root, nor the river from the fountain, nor the ray from the sun; nor, indeed, is the Word separated from God. … For the root and the tree are distinctly two things, but correlatively joined; the fountain and the river are also two forms, but indivisible; so likewise the sun and the ray are two forms, but coherent ones. … Now the Spirit indeed is third from God and the Son; just as the fruit of the tree is third from the root, or as the stream our of the river is third from the fountain, or as the apex of the ray is third from the sun. … In like manner the Trinity, flowing down from the Father through intertwined and connected steps, does not at all disturb the Monarchy, whilst it at the same time guards the state of the Economy.[247]

With regard to the relationship of the Son with the Father, according to O'Collins, Tertullian emphasized the Son as brought forth but undivided from the Father. The Father as 'being greater', the Son as *Ratio* (Word in God's mind) and as *Sermo* (the Word as spoken), were also used by Tertullian. Like Justin, Tertullian also identified Wisdom with the second person of the Trinity. O'Collins is of the view that Tertullian also "had an inclusive view of Reason/Logos 'extending to all things' and being active in the Old Testament dispensation right from the time of Adam."[248] He notes that, like Justin and Irenaeus, Tertullian also spoke of the Son being active in the economy of creation and salvation and emphasized the Son's true incarnation.

2.4.3.4. Origen's Trinitarian Teachings

Regarding the development of Trinitarian doctrine in Origen, O'Collins says that he stressed the unbegotten and underived character of the Father. Against the adoptionists who said that Jesus was a mere creature adopted by God, Origen maintained the eternal generation of the Son and believed that the generation of the Son was not a corporeal generation, for he said,

> For we do not say, as the heretics suppose, that some part of the substance of God was converted into the Son, or that the Son was procreated by the Father out of things non-existent, i.e., beyond His own substance, so that there was a time when He did not exist; but putting away all corporeal conceptions,

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[246] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* pp. 104-105. O'Collins says that, "the standard trinitarian formula has remained *three persons*, whereas *one nature* and *one essence* have often replaced Tertullian's *one substance*."

[247] TERTULLIAN, *Against Praxeas*, VIII., pp. 606-607. G. C. Stead says that these analogies "seem to divide the substance; but this impression will disappear if we interpret *substantia*, not in the light of Aristotelian metaphysics, but by the illustrations which Tertullian himself presents of *substantiae* which admit of a kind of distribution and plurality which does not constitute a division." See G. C. STEAD, *Divine Substance in Tertullian*, in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 14 (1963) 46-66, p. 66.

[248] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, pp. 107-108.

we say that the Word and Wisdom was begotten out of the invisible and incorporeal without any corporeal feeling, as if it were an act of the will proceeding from the understanding.[249]

Although Father, Son and Holy Spirit are of the same substance, Origen sometimes argued that there are degrees of divinity. He said, "We say that the Son and the Holy Spirit excel all created beings to a degree which admits of no comparison, and are themselves excelled by the Father to the same or even greater degree."[250] According to O'Collins, this subordinationism came about because Origen thought of the Father as the ungenerated source for the mission of the Son who was the 'subordinate' Mediator.[251] Origen also maintained that the Holy Spirit, too, was not a created being, for he said, "up to the present time we have been able to find no statement in which the Holy Spirit could be said to be made or created."[252] O'Collins maintains that "Origen saw the Holy Spirit as derived from the Word, called the three divine persons *hypostaseis*[253] (in the sense of (a) three individual subjects and not in the sense of (b) three 'substances'), and underscored the 'unbegotten' character of the Father."[254]

According to O'Collins, Origen's trinitarian teaching of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as three *hypostaseis* was inherited by Arius and the Alexandrians. But Arius furthered the subordinationism of the Son and the Spirit present in the teachings of Origen and said that the Father is the only true God because he is unoriginated and unbegotten. Arius wanted to preserve

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[249] ORIGEN, *De Principiis* IV. 28, in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), pp. 376-377.

[250] ORIGEN, *Comm. In Joannem* 13:25, in HENRY BETTENSON (trans. & ed.), *The Early Christian Fathers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969 [1956]), p. 233.

[251] Kilian McDonnell, while reflecting on the subordinating language used by Origen when speaking about the Holy Spirit, says that "Origen's subordinating language is either an expression of a relation of origin, or of an economic function, and is not ontological." See KILIAN MCDONNELL, *Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?,* in *Gregorianum* 75 (1994) 5-34, p. 35. Considering Origen as the one who initiated the steps to a full trinitarian doctrine, McDonnell says that "Origen is a blazer of trails, erecting rough structures, as befits a pioneer: the first to write a trinitarian treatise, the first to thematize the Spirit, without conceiving pneumatology as a tract apart." See p. 33.

[252] ORIGEN, *De Principiis* I. III. 3, in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 4, p. 252.

[253] Alastair H. B. Logan says that Origen was the first theologian to produce a coherent Trinitarian theory. He suggests that the term *hypostases* was first used by Origen and by the pagan philosopher Plotinus simultaneously. Both of them may have received this idea from their teacher Ammonius Saccas who was an Alexandrian Platonist. Another source of the three *hypostases* theory according to Logan is Numenius of Apamea, the second-century Pythagorean. His theory of 'three principles' derived from Plato Timaeus was criticized by Plotinus. Plotinus suggested that probably the Gnostics and the Valentinians used the concept of hypostases in their Platonic interpretations. From these Logan comes to the conclusion that this terminology, which was derived from the Platonic metaphysical scheme, may have been used first by the Valentinians and later by Origen through the influence of Ammonius and Numenius, to refute the position of the Monarchians. See ALASTAIR H. B. LOGAN, *Origen and the Development of Trinitarian Theology,* in LOTHAR LIES, *Origeniana Ouarta. Die Referate des 4. Internationalen Origeneskongresses* (Innsbrucker theologische Studien 19), Innsbruck: Tyrolia (1987) 424-429, pp. 424-427.

[254] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* pp. 109-110. In the case of Origen, O'Collins would say that, "[a]lthough he would not call the Son and the Holy Spirit inferior in power, Origen favoured a certain 'subordination' that highlighted the place of the Father as the ultimate principle." See p. 110. It was Arius who argued for an absolute monarchy of the Father. Arius taught that the Father created the Son before creating all other things. See p. 112.

the monarchy of God[255] and proposed a "real difference of identity between the Father and the Son" by denying the unity of essence. Arius, in fact, held that the Son was the only one directly created by the Father before the beginning of the world, who in turn created all others.[256] Hence, Arius located the Son/Logos in the upper berth of the hierarchy of the created, but saw him as less than God. Ultimately this was the denial of the Son being coeternal with the Father.

2.4.3.5. The Doctrine of the Trinity in Nicaea I and Constantinople I

Arianism, which brought about a crisis in regard to trinitarian doctrine, reached a certain conclusion in the councils of Nicaea I (325) and Constantinople I (381) with the drafting of the Nicene-Constantinoplolitan Creed. For O'Collins, the importance of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed lies in the fact that, "In both the East and the West, this was and remains the most significant confession of faith in the tripersonal God."[257] O'Collins says that Nicaea spoke of "Jesus in divine terms protologically ('through whom all things came into existence, things in heaven and things on earth'), incarnationally ('came down'), and eschatologically ('will come to judge living and dead')." Nicaea also affirmed the oneness of essence (*homoousios*) of the Son with the Father, the Son's being coeternal with the Father, and the Son as begotten.[258] O'Collins is of the view that Nicaea was very clear about its teaching on Christ's divinity, but there were difficulties with the three terms of *ousia* (being, reality, essence or substance), *homoousios* (of the same essence/substance) and *hypostasis* (this term had two meanings attached to it: (1) the primordial essence and (2) the individuating principle, subject or subsistence). The two different senses in which *hypostasis* was understood, caused misunderstanding between Western (Latin) Christians who understood *hypostasis* as one divine essence and Eastern (Greek) Christians who considered it as an individuating principle which meant that there were three *hypostaseis*. This ambiguity in understanding *hypostasis* resulted, on the one hand, in the Westerners regarding Greek thinking as amounting to 'tritheism', and on the other hand, in Greeks regarding Western thinking as amounting to a return to Jewish

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[255] T. E. Pollard suggests that the monotheism of Arius was not biblical monotheism but the "Absolute of the philosophical schools." Arianism did not have the "conception of a God who acts in history of creation, election, self-revelation, redemption, and sanctification; its God is absolutely transcendent, unknown and unknowable, infinite and immutable, without beginning or origin, One who cannot touch the life of the world in any way except through a created intermediary." See T. E. POLLARD, *The Origins of Arianism*, in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 9 (1958) 103-111, p. 104. (Here there is also a suggestion that Arius was influenced by Aristotelian philosophy rather than by the Platonic philosophy prevalent in the 3rd century).

[256] Arius argued that the Word could not belong to the Father's substance. He said that the Son was an exalted creature, elevated above all others, but still a creation of God. Some of his arguments are: "If there never was a time when the Son was not, and if He is eternal and co-exists with the Father, then you are saying that He is not a Son at all, but the Father's brother"; "even if the Saviour be a creature, God were able merely to speak and thereby undo the curse"; etc. See ATHANASIUS, *Discourses Against the Arians*, in WILLIAM A. JURGENS (trans. & ed.), *The Faith of the Early Fathers. A Source-book of Theological and Historical Passages from the Christian Writings of the Pre-Nicene and Nicene Eras,* Vol. 1, pp.327-329.

[257] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, p. 115.

[258] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, p. 116.

monotheism and Sabellianism[259] because it did not allow personal distinctions.[260] Along with the supporters of Arius, there were also many others who opposed the use of *homoousios* because they misinterpreted the term.[261] It was Basil, St Hilary of Poitiers and Athanasius who brought an end to the problem by correctly interpreting *homoousios* to mean the identity of the essence between the three persons. The term *ousia* was understood to mean the common essence shared by Father, Son and Holy Spirit. According to O'Collins, there was also a shift here from the understanding of Nicaea as the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis* were no longer used as equivalents. *Ousia* meant divinity or the one identical essence of God and the three *hypostaseis* or *prosopa* meant individual personal subsistences with their particular properties of God. This change of usage was seen in the writings of the Cappadocian Fathers.[262]

Trinitarian doctrine stabilized in the fourth century, especially with the formulation of the creeds in the First Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople. They "started not with one divine substance that was then said to subsist in three persons, but with the Father, the source of unity from whom we can then move and confess the Son and the Spirit." The First Council of Constantinople officially adopted the trinitarian terminology and reaffirmed the Nicene confession of the divinity of Jesus and also affirmed the divinity of the Holy Spirit against Pneumatomachians and

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[259] The Sabellians held that there is no personal distinction between the Father and the Son/Logos and saw them as identical. St Basil of Caesarea opposed the view of the Sabellians and said that those who did not allow a personal distinction between Father and Son were falling into Judaism and Sabellianism.

[260] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* pp. 116-118. Karl Rahner finds two meanings for the word *hypostasis* in the official doctrines of the Church. First of all, it is 'subsistence' which the Church does not make any attempt to explain. According to him, a theological understanding of this would be that of "identical godhead (divine 'essence') which we attribute to the three." It can also mean givenness (the Father gives to the Son and to the Holy Spirit in the self-communication of God) or it could mean "three relative concrete ways of existing of the one and the same God." The second way of understanding *hypostasis* is to see it as 'person'. Here, too, the official doctrine of the Church does not say anything except what is said already about the *hypostasis*. This means that there is no particular explanation given for the term, person, in the official doctrines. Both the words *hypostasis* and 'person' are used synonymously. Rahner says that to refer to 'person' as involving some elements of 'consciousness' also would be wrong as "there exist in God only *one* power, *one* will, only one self-presence, a unique activity, a unique beatitude, and so forth. Hence self-awareness is not a moment which distinguishes the divine 'persons' one from the other, even though each divine 'person' as concrete, possesses a self-consciousness." See KARL RAHNER, *The Trinity*, pp. 73-75. Sarah Coakley, denies two types of understanding of the 'person' in the modern analysis of the Trinity. She is of the view that 'person' should neither be considered in the way that analytic philosophers of religion understand the 'person' as individual (as if there are three individuals in the Godhead which leads to tritheism) nor in the way some understand the 'person' as 'relations'. See SARAH COAKLEY, *'Persons' in the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity. A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion*, in STEPHEN T. DAVIS; DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS (eds.), *The Trinity. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* (Oxford, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999) 123-144, pp. 123-124.

[261] The main reasons for opposing the use of *homoousios* were: (1) this word was never used in the Bible; (2) this term was condemned already in the controversy surrounding Paul of Samosta; (3) it gave rise to Sabellian modalism: Father and Son as identical both in substance and as personal subjects; and (4) it could be also applied to material things which could be cut into pieces as separate objects. GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* pp. 118-119.

[262] According to Harold O. J. Brown, the Cappadocians made two points: "(1) on the one hand, God is one, a unity (not a uniformity), who reveals himself as possessing a single will, a single activity, a single glory. Neither the Son nor the Spirit was played off against the Father, as Athanasius and the Westerners feared might happen. (2) On the other hand, this one God is a triad, or trinity, of *hypostases*." See HAROLD O. J. BROWN, *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church,* p. 150.

the Macedonians[263] who had rejected the divinity of the Holy Spirit.[264] These Councils "confessed the 'ONE God, the Father almighty' and the 'ONE Lord Jesus Christ,' but neither Nicaea I nor Constantinople I apparently felt the need to specify their faith 'in the Holy Spirit' as faith 'in the ONE Holy Spirit." Comparing the creeds of these Councils and the use of the name of the 'Father' (four times in Nicaea and six times in Contantinople), O'Collins suggests that they provided a "genetic approach to the tripersonal God with the divinity streaming from the Father to the Son and to the Holy Spirit."[265] Speaking of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, O'Collins says:

> [The] credal confession presents a divine communication in creation and salvation history that presupposes an eternal communion within God: the Father, the only begotten Son, and the 'proceeding' Holy Spirit. In particular, God's self-communication *ad extra* through the missions of the Son (who 'came down from heaven' and 'became man') and the Spirit (who 'spoke through the prophets' and effected the incarnation) in the history or 'economy' of salvation presupposes and reflects the self-communication *ad intra:* the eternal generation of the Son and procession of the Spirit. Thus the 'economic' Trinity or Trinity in creation and history on which the Creed largely focuses reveals the immanent Trinity and is identical with it.[266]

The inclusion in the Constantinoplitan Creed that the Son was begotten from the Father *before all ages* suggests the pre-existence of the Son. The use of this phrase, which arose from Eastern thinking, was avoided in the Nicaean Creed because of the fear of misinterpretation by Arians as it has a temporal connotation. O'Collins also observes in the Constantinopolitan Creed references to the double generation of the Son (from the Father and Mary) already found in the writings of Irenaeus. Another significant feature he finds in this creed is the mention of the Holy Spirit's "activity and relationship to the Son" in terms of the virginal conception. This, he says, was to affirm the divinity of the Son against the adoptionist heresy.[267]

But what is remarkable about Constantinople I is that it made a definitive statements about the divinity of the Holy Spirit as having a distinct identity from the Father and Son. It proclaimed

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[263] The Pneumatomachians (those who fight against the Spirit) were those who opposed the godhead of the Holy Spirit. They argued that since the Scripture does not speak of the Holy Spirit as God or as creature, or as eternal, no one could call the Holy Spirit God. They also maintained that since the Word made all things, the Holy Spirit, too, was a creature. Another argument was that if the Holy Spirit came from God just as the Son came from God, "then there would be two sons and hence two brothers in the Trinity." See BERNARD PIAULT, *What is the Trinity?*, pp. 109-110.

[264] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* pp. 120-121. Arianism, which denied the divinity of the Son and considered Son to be a creature, also had denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit was considered even more creaturely.

[265] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, pp. 121-122.

[266] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, p. 126.

[267] Adoptionism is a variant of monarchianism which denies any duality or plurality in God. Adoptionism which was begun by Theodotus the Tanner at the closing of the second century as a reaction against gnosticism, holds that "Jesus is a man endowed with a special power from God, and thus in a way adopted as God's Son." Theodotus who was a Christian, but was excommunicated later on, proclaimed that "Jesus was only *psilos anthropos*, 'a mere man' who received the Spirit of God in a special way at his baptism." This heresy is present in contemporary Christianity too. Friedrich Schleiermacher, for instance, held that Jesus was a man with the "most sublime God-consciousness." Abrecht Ritschl considered him as "endowed with the most perfect sense of duty." For John A. T. Robinson, "Jesus was 'the man for others' perfectly transparent to God." See HAROLD O. J. BROWN, *Heresies. Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church,* pp. 95-96.

that the Holy Spirit proceeds (*ek-poreuestai*) from (*para*) the Father. O'Collins observes that, "By confessing that the Spirit proceeds from, but is not begotten by the Father, [the Council of Constantinople] makes it clear that the Father is not Father to the Spirit but Father only to the Son." The Council also affirmed the equality in divinity of the Holy Spirit because the Creed said, *"who with the Father and the Son is together worshiped and together glorified*." But O'Collins notes that the Creed avoided calling the Spirit 'God' just as it calls the Son 'true God from true God'. It also did not speak of the Spirit as of one substance with the Father. [268] It was in a post-conciliar synod in 382 that Pope Damasus confessed the Trinity as "uncreated, consubstantial (*homoousios*) and coeternal."

From what we have discussed so far, it is evident that trinitarian doctrine evolved very slowly with the Fathers of the Church playing a major role, especially in dealing with the heresies of the early Christian period. The process reached a definitive conclusion with the drafting of the Nicaea-Constantinoplitan Creed. O'Collins notes that the Creed proclaimed the self-communication of God *ad extra* and *ad intra*. The Creed gives one the knowledge of the internal relationship that exists in the Trinity and also the Trinity's relationship with us which is revealed through God's self-communication in the history of salvation. O'Collins says:

> [The] credal confession presents a divine communication in creation and salvation history that presupposes an eternal communion within God: the Father, the only begotten Son, and the 'proceeding' Holy Spirit. In particular, God's self-communication *ad extra* through the missions of the Son (who 'came down from heaven' and 'became man') and the Spirit (who 'spoke through the prophets' and effected the incarnation) in the history or 'economy' of salvation presupposes and reflects the self-communication *ad intra*: the eternal generation of the Son and procession of the Spirit. Thus the 'economic' Trinity or Trinity in creation and history on which the Creed largely focuses reveals the immanent Trinity and is identical with it. [269]

2.4.4. The Trinitarian Doctrine after Constantinople I

O'Collins says that in the development of the Trinitarian doctrine, Athanasius, who was a contemporary of the Cappadocians, spoke of the eternal relationship of the Father and the Son in order to establish the eternal existence of the Son. He maintained that while the Spirit derived its divine nature and existence from the Father, the Spirit is sent on mission by the Son which meant that the Spirit was in the Son as the Son was in the Father. "Just as the Son is the only-begotten, so also the Spirit, given and sent by the Son, is one and not many… the Gift who is said to proceed from the Father, because He shines forth from and is sent from and is given by the Word, who is confessedly from the Father." [270] This in effect was to say that the Holy Spirit

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[268] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, p. 124.

[269] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, p. 126.

[270] ATHANASIUS, *Letter to Serapion of Thimuis* 1.20, WILLIAM A. JURGENS (trans. & ed.), The Faith of the Early Fathers. A Source-book of Theological and Historical Passages from the Christian Writings of the Pre-Nicene and Nicene Eras, Vol. 1, p. 335. This statement of Athanasius gave rise to various questions. First, if the Spirit is derived from the Father, is the Spirit also a Son and a brother to the Word? Second, if the Spirit is a brother how could only the Word be begotten? Third, if the Spirit is of the Son, is the Father a grandfather? But these questions were rebutted by Athanasius

was not begotten from the Father. Athanasius concluded that while speaking about any person in the Trinity one must always speak in terms of the relationship that one person has with the other two. He also emphasised the unity in trinitarian activity, i.e., "the Father does all things through the Word in the Holy Spirit. Thus the unity of the holy Triad is preserved."[271] According to O'Collins, this unity in divine activity makes it difficult for believers to understand the distinctive persons of the Trinity as it is not possible to point out the particular distinctive elements that make them distinct. This may lead one back to rigid monotheism and monarchialism.[272]

We also note how O'Collins takes into account the contributions made by the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil the Great (c.330-379), Gregory of Nyssa (c.330-c.395) and Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389), in the development of trinitarian doctrine. The influence of their teaching on the first council of Constantinople is also to be noted. O'Collins says that like Athanasius, the Cappadocians also insisted that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and was not begotten by the Father. According to O'Collins, going a step further, they initiated the understanding of the trinitarian theology which proclaimed coequal and coeternal *hypostaseis* i.e., the three persons of the Trinity sharing in the one divine essence (*ousia*).[273] They also spoke about the interpersonal communion (*koinonia*) of the Trinity which is relational.[274] O'Collins says that one can find in the Cappadocian theology of the Trinity an intimation of the *perichoresis* (cyclical movement) which was associated with the theology of St John Damascene. But he seems to fear that this way of understanding the relationship within the Trinity could lead to the danger of tritheism. However, the Cappadocians argued for the unity within the Trinity by emphasising the point that "one of the persons (the Father) relates to the other two as the source or 'cause' of their divinity." But this led to the 'mon-archy' of the Father and the subordination of the Son and the Spirit. O'Collins is of the view that this 'mon-archy' did not mean the superiority of the

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when he said that one should not merely think in human terms about God. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, p. 129.

[271] ATHANASIUS, *Letter to Serapion of Thimuis* 1.28, p. 336 According to O'Collins, this unity in divine activity makes it difficult for believers to understand the distinctive persons in the Trinity as it is not possible to point out the distinct elements which makes them distinct.

[272] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, p. 130.

[273] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 141. According to J. T. Lienhard, it is the Cappadocian fathers who in response to the Arian heresy taught that, "God is one *ousia* in three *hypostaseis*, thus both preserving Christian monotheism and accounting fully for the biblical confession of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." But he also says that "the precise phrase 'one *ousia*, three *hypostaseis*' is rare in the writings of the Cappadocians." In his view there are also some other words used to mean that which is one and three in God, such as *physis* (nature) *theotês* (deity) which designate what is one in God and *idiotêtes* (properties) and *prosôpa* (persons) to indicate what is three in God. See J. T. LIENHARD, *Ousia and Hypostasis. The Cappadocian Settlement and the Theology of 'One Hypostasis'*, in STEPHEN DAVIS; DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS (eds.), *The Trinity. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* (Oxford, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999) 99-121, pp. 99, 120. According to Frances Young, the formula of "one *ousia* and three *hypostases*" first appeared in *Adversus Arium et Sabellium*. See FRANCES YOUNG, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983, p. 85.

[274] Basil said in his *De Spiritu Sancto* that "we cannot conceive of either [Father or Son] apart from their relationship with each other." See Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 6.14.

Father but 'unity and distinction'.[275] The Cappadocians also spoke of the Trinity in the same sequence of Father, Son and Spirit.

St. Augutstine's trinitarian theology is mainly found in his treatise *De Trinitate*. O'Collins suggests that his trinitarian theology began from the unity of the divine being in one essence and moved towards the three persons, whereas the Cappadocians went from three persons to the one essence.[276] Augustine used two analogies of love and of the highest human faculties to explain the Trinity. He modelled the interpersonal relationship of the Trinity on Trinitarian love.[277] According to his teaching, O'Collins says, "[t]he Father is the Lover, the Son the Beloved, and the Holy Spirit the mutual Love that passes between the Father and the Son."[278] Basing himself on the biblical understanding of man as the image of God, he also considered the human soul and its highest faculties of memory, intelligence and will as the best analogy for the Trinity.[279] Augustine saw the Holy Spirit as "the fruit and reality of mutual love." O'Collins says that Augustine spoke of the "Father as Being, the Son as Consciousness, and the Spirit as Love" because he said, when one loves something there are three things involved, namely, "the lover, the beloved, and the love."[280] O'Collins argues that the psychological analogy of "self-presence, self-knowledge, and self-love" helps to overcome any tritheism but encourages a modalist view of God. Augustine spoke of the procession of the Holy Spirit originally and primordially from the Father. Both Father and Son are considered as the Principle from whom Holy Spirit proceeds. He says, "Father and the Son are the Principle of the Holy Spirit, not two Principles; but as the Father and the Son are one God, and in relation to the creature are one Creator and one Lord, so they are one Principle in relation to the Holy Spirit." He also speaks about the unity of God when he says that, "in relation to the creature, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are

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[275] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* pp. 132-133. See also GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Holy Trinity. The State of the Questions*, p. 9.

[276] Michel René Barnes is of the view that "Augustine's theology of the Trinity is centred on divine unity conceived in terms of the inseparable activity of the Three (the traditional Nicene understanding of divine unity), the epistemic character of the Incarnation as the decisive revelation of the Trinity, and the role of faith in leading forward our reflection of the Trinity." See MICHEL RENÉ BARNES, *Reading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity,* in STEPHEN DAVIS; DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS (eds.), *The Trinity. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999) 145-176, p. 175.

[277] SAINT AUGUSTINE, *The Trinity*, 8.8.12, trans. STEPHEN MCKENNA & BERNARD M. PEEBLES *et al.* (eds.), *The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation,* Vol. 45 (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963), p. 263.

[278] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 141. According to Farrugia and O'Collins, Eastern Christians have at times criticized this analogy of Trinitarian love because they considered it to mean the depersonalizing of the Holy Spirit. They said that this did not clearly show the identity of the distinct person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Love that the Father and the Son give to each other.

[279] SAINT AUGUSTINE, *The Trinity*, trans. STEPHEN MCKENNA, & BERNARD M. PEEBLES *et al.* (eds.), *The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation,* Vol. 45, 9.8; 10.10.14-16, pp. 282, 308-310.

[280] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* p. 136. See SAINT AUGUSTINE, *The Trinity*, trans. STEPHEN MCKENNA, & BERNARD M. PEEBLES *et al.* (eds.), *The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation,* Vol. 45, p. 271.

one Principle, as they are one Creator and one Lord."[281] O'Collins suggests that Augustine spoke of the Spirit as having proceeded from the Father through the Son. Hence, the Son is an agent of the Father. This view was accepted by the Eastern Fathers. However, they opposed the view that the Spirit proceeded from Father and the Son (*Filioque*), as if they formed one Principle, because such a concept made the Son equal to the Father, amounting to a double origin of the Spirit. They considered that the Father was the ultimate source from whom both the Son and the Spirit derived. According to O'Collins, the Eastern Fathers were more concerned with opposing the subordination of the Holy Spirit here.[282] He says that Augustine acknowledged that our language is insufficient to speak of the Trinity in a final way.[283]

2.4.5. Current Challenges to Trinitarian Theology

O'Collins remarks that the 'classical' questions of Trinitarian theology are still with us. As he puts it:

> If you save the threeness of God, will you lose a sense of the divine unity? If you save the unity, will you lose a sense of the divine threeness? And yet the divine Trinity must not be reduced to the model of a loving family or a very united committee. Such human comparisons fall short. Unlike the Trinity, two parents with their only child do not share in the one individual divine being or nature. The three Persons must not be misrepresented as three individual people, for the communion within the tripersonal God is infinitely closer than the community that can exist between human persons.[284]

Attempts to resolve the thorny issue of the threeness and the unity of the triune God have often led to misinterpretation and misunderstanding. According to O'Collins, "applying to God our language for persons is not a straightforward affair… Those who insist on personal language must give some account of what they mean by *person*."[285] In his view, one of the most challenging issues is the theologising of the personal identity of the Sprit. O'Collins is of the view that many have downplayed the personhood of the Spirit and have turned "the Spirit into an 'aspect' of the Father and Son, a 'mere' enigmatic and impersonal power or personification for divine action in the world."[286] A question related to the Spirit concerns its origin and its place in the Trinity, i.e., the question about the double procession of the Spirit. The answer to this question has brought about a rift between Western and Eastern Christianity and a commonly

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[281] SAINT AUGUSTINE, *The Trinity*, trans. STEPHEN MCKENNA & BERNARD M. PEEBLES *et al.* (eds.), *The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation,* Vol. 45, p. 194.

[282] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, p. 140.

[283] In his *De Trinitate*, Augustine said: "in truth, since the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father, and the Holy Spirit, who is also called the Gift of God, is neither the Father nor the Son, then certainly there are three. Therefore, it was said in the plural number: 'I and the Father are one.' For He did not say, as the Sabellians do, 'is one.' But when it is asked three what, then the great poverty from which our language suffers becomes apparent. But the formula three persons has been coined, not in order to give a complete explanation by means of it, but in order that we might not be obliged to remain silent. See SAINT AUGUSTINE, *The Trinity*, trans. STEPHEN MCKENNA & BERNARD M. PEEBLES *et al.* (eds.), *The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation,* Vol. 45, pp. 187-188.

[284] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Grappling with the Trinity,* p. 606.

[285] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, p. 175-176.

[286] See Footnote no. 1 of GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Holy Trinity. The State of the Questions,* p. 1.

agreed answer to resolve this rift has so far eluded the churches. Although O'Collins seems to take sides with the Western view about the procession of the Holy Spirit, which is to understand procession as both from the Father and the Son, he also respects the fear of Eastern Christians that in the Western view there is a possibility of neglecting or subordinating the Spirit. He holds that Eastern Christians "remain strongly Trinitarian in their faith because they experience the life and living witness of the Spirit in the Church." His fear is that in the christocentric approach of the West there is a danger of christomonism where the "Spirit becomes the Spirit of Christ rather than the Spirit of (God) the Father," i.e., the subordination of pneumatology to Christology. [287]

Another divisive issue in Western Christianity is the naming of the three persons in the Trinity. There are proposals to rename the Trinity in various ways.[288] But, according to O'Collins, to try to suppress the traditional name of the Trinity would mean a failure and a loss rather than an achievement because the alternative names run the risk of being impersonal. In his view, we do not have an adequate language that can express, talk about or name God. The names of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are seen as the best names to express the truth of the mystery of the Trinity, and the suppression of these traditional names, according to him, "would mean loss rather than gain."[289] O'Collins seems to favour the use of these names for several reasons. They express the relationship of Jesus as the Son to God his Father (*Abba*); the trinitarian formula is found in the New Testament (the command to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19)); the formula was used in the initiation rites and creeds in early Christianity. While "not arguing for an *exclusive* use of male names" for the first person of the Trinity and pointing to the specific experience of God as Father in the life of Jesus, O'Collins says that "[f]idelity to Jesus calls on believers to name God primarily … as 'Father', which entails acknowledging Jesus himself … as 'the Son of God'."[290]

Another challenge is that of people's varying interest in the doctrine of the Trinity. Richard P. McBrien says that, "[f]or too many Christians, the doctrine of the Trinity is only a matter of intellectual curiosity, on the one hand, or a somewhat arbitrary test of faith, on the other…

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[287] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Holy Trinity. The State of the Questions*, p. 13.

[288] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* p. 191. According to O'Collins, the following are the proposals to rename the Trinity: "Source, Word, and Spirit; Creator, Christ, and Spirit; Creator, Liberator, and Comforter; Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; God, Christ, and Spirit; Parent, Child, and Paraclete; Mother, Daughter, and Spirit; Mother, Lover, and Friend; Spirit-Sophia, Jesus-Sophia, and Mother-Sophia; and Father, Child, and Mother" See p. 184. O'Collins says that, "the doctrine of the Trinity has helped to divide Eastern from Western Christianity. Nowadays within the West itself a further divisive issue has arisen: the naming of the three persons." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Holy Trinity. The State of the Questions,* p. 13.

[289] O'Collins is of the view that "[r]enaming the persons of the Trinity in different ways could well mean saying something different and changing beliefs." Alternative names for the Trinity, such as, Creator, Liberator, and Comforter" may "suggest a monopersonal God" and the use of another triad, 'Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier" which is grounded in Christian tradition, "fails to distinguish Christianity from other religions in the way that naming 'Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit' does." "The names of 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit' tie Christian faith firmly into the revealing and saving history that culminated in the events of the first Good Friday and Easter Sunday." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Holy Trinity. The State of the Questions*, p. 16-17.

[290] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Holy Trinity. The State of the Questions*, pp. 14-16.

Accordingly, the mystery and doctrine of the Trinity is often relegated to an entirely marginal place in the total Christian schema."[291] However, O'Collins is of the view that, at present, there is a renewed interest in the Trinity among theologians although there was a lessening of interest for some time. There is also the Church, which in its worship and especially in the celebration of the Sacraments, continues to give a central place to Trinitarian faith. In worship, as a community of believers, Christians experience the tripersonal God, and in their works as a community, they witness to the communion of the Trinity. Ultimately, O'Collins would say that, "[w]hen engaged with the Trinity, theology more than anywhere else should be an exercise of 'faith seeking understanding', with 'understanding' entailing intellectual expression but also coming from and issuing into a worship and practice which are profoundly Trinitarian."[292]

A contemporary challenge for the theology of the Trinity is to determine its relevance for the theology of religions and inter-religious dialogue. According to O'Collins, people like Justin Martyr, Origen, Athanasius of Alexandria, etc., tried to develop a Logos Christology to dialogue with non-Christians. But the emphasis on the Logos and 'the seeds of the Word' encouraged "a kind of christomonism, which left out of the picture the work of the Holy Spirit and hence could prove non-trinitarian." However, people like Jacques Dupuis emphasised the universal working of the Holy Spirit in God's salvific plan and so tried to recognize the working and manifestation of the Trinity in other religions as well.[293] We shall, however, deal with this aspect at a later stage in our final chapter when we investigate O'Collins' views on inter-religious dialogue from the perspective of his Christology.

Another issue to be addressed is the way in which trinitarian faith deals with modern atheism, agnosticism, and secularism in the world. Referring to the views held by Walter Kasper and Michael J. Buckley, O'Collins states that, "the trinitarian confession is the only true answer to contemporary disbelief, widespread sense of meaninglessness, and the endangered human condition." Faith in the Trinity, according to O'Collins, is of great importance pastorally and "uniquely fosters human freedom and dignity."[294] Yet another issue is the question posed by Catherine LaCugna about the shift from the 'economic Trinity' (extra-trinitarian) to the 'immanent Trinity' (intra-trinitarian), i.e., the question about the relationship between the revelation and communion of God with human beings in salvation history and the communion

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[291] RICHARD P. MCBRIEN, *Catholicism*, London: Chapman, 1994, pp. 321-322.

[292] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Holy Trinity. The State of the Questions*, p. 23.

[293] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Holy Trinity. The State of the Questions*, p. 18.

[294] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Holy Trinity. The State of the Questions*, p. 19. Michael J. Buckley related the work of many theologians regarding the existence and attributes of God to the study of metaphysics and early scientific cosmology. Cf. MICHAEL J. BUCKLEY, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism,* New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1987. Also Cf. WALTER KASPER, *The God of Jesus Christ,* trans. M. J. O'CONNEL, New York, NY: Crossroad, 1989.

of God within the Godhead itself (the eternal communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit).[295] The enquiry is about whether the God who is revealed in the history could also reveal the eternal communion in the Trinity. According to O'Collins, although Karl Rahner's trinitarian perspective, which conceives the economic Trinity and immanent Trinity as one and the same thing,[296] may be the best solution, it also poses difficulties since there are concepts which are not equally applicable to both the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity. For instance, our understanding of the immanent and economic Trinity with regard to the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, which is a conclusion mainly derived from various biblical passages (Jn 7:39; 15:26; 19:30-34; 20:22 and Ac 2:33), may not correspond with some other passages. Other passages (e.g., the account of the virginal conception, and the baptism of Jesus) suggest a different view by positing, as it were, the procession of the Son from the Father and the Holy Spirit. There is, the need for great caution here. Dealing with Trinity, one is also faced with the question of the unity of the Trinity's action in the economy of salvation. The question is whether all three persons act together, whether one could distinguish the actions of each person in the Trinity, and whether those actions could show forth their threefold particularity.[297] Here O'Collins is referring especially to the Trinitarian theology of Moltmann who tried to combine the theology of the Trinity with the theology of the cross.[298] In doing so Moltmann maintained that the three persons in the Trinity experienced the suffering and death on the cross differently. He also said, "[I]n the cross, Father and Son are most deeply separated in forsakenness and at the same time are most inwardly one in their surrender."[299] To all these issues, according to

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[295] LaCugna complains that many people today think of the Trinity only in terms of the relationship that exists between the persons of the Trinity and not in terms of the Trinity's relationship with the world. This, she concludes, is the reason many are not engaged in a discussion of the Trinity. She says, "[t]he highly abstract approach to Trinitarian theology has led some theologians to reject the whole idea of a doctrine of the Trinity because it strikes them as a presumptuous prying into something about which we know nothing: God's 'inner' life. There is no doubt that a one-sided approach to the doctrine of the Trinity has kept it on the fringe, quite unrelated to other theological doctrines, much less to the Christian life." See CATHERINE MOWRY LACUGNA, *God for Us. The Trinity and Christian Life*, p. 2.

[296] Karl Rahner maintained that "the 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic Trinity'. See KARL RAHNER, *The Trinity*, p. 22. This important contribution of Karl Rahner is today called 'Rahner's Rule'. According to Roger Olson, this name was given by Ted Peters. See ROGER OLSON, *Wolfhart Pannenberg's Doctrine of the Trinity*, in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990) 175-206, p. 178. See also TED PETERS, *Trinity Talk. Part I*, in *Dialog* 26 (1987) 44-48, p. 46.

[297] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Holy Trinity. The State of the Questions*, pp. 19-21.

[298] Moltmann held that "Christian theology is [hence], inescapably and of inner necessity, trinitarian theology; and only trinitarian theology is Christian theology." See JÜRGEN MOLTMANN, *The Future of Creation*, trans. MARGARET KOHL, Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979, p. 81. He also said that "[t]he place of the doctrine of the Trinity is not the 'thinking of thought', but the cross of Jesus. …The theological concept for the perception of the crucified Christ is the doctrine of the Trinity. The material principle of the doctrine of the Trinity is the cross of Christ. The formal principle of knowledge of the cross is the doctrine of the Trinity." JÜRGEN MOLTMANN, *The Crucified God. The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology,* trans. R. A. WILSON & JOHN BOWDEN, London: SCM Press, 1974, [1973] pp. 240-241.

[299] JÜRGEN MOLTMANN, *The Crucified God. The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology,* p. 244. Here Moltmann says, "[i]n the cross, Father and Son are most deeply separated in forsakenness and at the same time are most inwardly one in their surrender." He also maintained that, "[i]f the cross of Jesus is understood as a divine event, i.e. as an event between Jesus and his God and Father, it is necessary to speak in Trinitarian terms of the Son and the Father and the Spirit." See p. 246.

O'Collins, one will find an answer only when one takes faith as one's point of departure. "Believers experience the tripersonal God, when they gather to worship in communion and witness/work together in the fruitful practice of a life worthy of their trinitarian faith."[300] Hence, O'Collins suggests a threefold approach of study, worship and practice for understanding and faith in the Trinity.

2.4.6. The Significance of Trinitarian Doctrine for Christology

According to O'Collins, even in the first centuries of Christianity, when Christians tried to understand the Trinity from the point of view of salvation history (the economic Trinity), there was also an undercurrent which focused attention on the inner reality of the Trinity (the immanent Trinity). The missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit mirrored the distinctions within the Trinity although their unity was expressed in terms of one divine essence, power and substance (*ousia*) and three persons (*prosopois*). In 451, the Council of Chalcedon "defined Christ to be one 'subsistence (*hypostasis*)' or 'person (*prosopon*)' in two 'natures (*physeis*),' without turning aside to describe in detail what any of these three terms meant."[301] After Chalcedon, Boethius (d. ca. 524) caused some changes in trinitarian theology when he, in his work, *On the Person and Two Natures of Christ,* "defined *person* as 'an individual substance of a rational nature'."[302] In his view, within the Trinity, all three persons realize their personhood in various ways because "they have distinct positions" within the divine life: "the Father eternally 'generating' the Son and 'breathing' the Spirit, the Son being 'generated' … and the Spirit being 'breathed'." O'Collins is of the view that it is from this time on that the terms '*breathing'* and '*spiration*' were introduced into trinitarian theology.[303] Later on Richard of St. Victor defined person as "the incommunicable existence of an intelligent nature."[304] He argued that for mutual love to be perfect it has to be shared with a third person. According to him, this perfect love is found in God where "there is a movement from self-love (the Father) to mutual love (the Father and the Son) to shared love (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)."[305] The most striking feature in the further development of trinitarian doctrine was the unilateral decision of the Western Church

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[300] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Holy Trinity. The State of the Questions*, p. 24.

[301] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, p. 142.

[302] See MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 158.

[303] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* p. 143. O'Collins says that, for Boethius, 'person' "highlighted the individuality and rationality of the reality that is the centre of action and attribution. Boethius' rational individual is the 'someone' who acts and who is also the subject to whom we attribute things." St. Thomas Aquinas added to this concept of person 'the supreme value of personhood'. But René Descartes saw 'person as a unique subject of consciousness and self-consciousness'. Immanuel Kant saw the 'person' as the subject of freedom, a moral end in itself and never a means to an end'. "The philosophical input from Descartes, Kant, and John Locke led to the emergence of a … typically modern notion of person as the subject of self-awareness and freedom – in belief, person as the self-sufficient ego or the conscious and autonomous self." See MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 158-159.

[304] RICHARD OF ST. VICTOR, *De Trinitate,* 4.22.24.

[305] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 143.

to add *Filioque* (which meant that the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son) to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. This addition to the creed "contributed to the severing of relationship between Eastern and Western Christianity," beginning from the time of Patriarch Photius of Constantinople (d. ca. 895).[306] However, O'Collins is of the view that the original Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381) "did not state that the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone. In confessing that the Spirit proceeds from *the Father*, it refers to One who has that name precisely because of the generation of the Son. In effect, the Creed confesses that the Spirit proceeds 'from the Father and the Son'."[307]

According to O'Collins, there were two changes in the doctrine of God by the time of Richard of St. Victor: (1) the first person of the Trinity was being represented in art and literature; and (2) there was the beginning of a movement towards rationalism. Two very important features in the development of Trinitarian doctrine between the eleventh and the seventeenth centuries were devotion and art which gave greater significance to the suffering, crucifixion and death of Jesus. Parallel to the importance given to the humanity of Christ, there was also an effort to strengthen the image of Jesus' divinity and his place in the Trinity. O'Collins says that "[t]he strong Christ of Trinitarian life belongs to a renewed appreciation of the tripersonal God that began in the tenth century, led to the institution of the Feast of the Holy Trinity in 1334, and was reflected in art – not least in the new willingness to portray God the Father."[308] Thus, according to O'Collins, artistic representation of the Trinity played a significant role in understanding God as Trinity.

According to O'Collins, Aquinas was the main figure in developing the classic medieval theology of the Trinity. He did not accept the human analogy of love to explain the Trinity because this presented God as if in need (need of love). But he said that God is beyond all needs. Like Augustine, he gave priority to knowledge over will and, hence, "he preferred the analogy of the Son's generation being like our thinking and that of the Spirit being like the inner fruit of love."[309] He explained the Trinity in terms of the "event-like attributes of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" or, in the terminology of Scholastic tradition, the trinitarian *notions* or *properties*. He

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[306] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* p. 138. According to O'Collins, the term *Filioque* must have been already interpolated into the text of the creed at the Third Synod of Toledo in 589. "It was undoubtedly added in 675 by the Fourth Synod of Braga." It was adopted in Rome soon after the year 1000 A.D. O'Collins says that this addition may have been made to "shut out Sabellian denials of true personal distinction within the godhead." See p. 138.

[307] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Holy Trinity. The State of the Questions*, p. 11.

[308] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 142. To show how Trinitarian belief grew by means of 14th century art and literature, Farrugia and O'Collins give the example of the poet Dante who in his *Paradiso* "envisioned God as utterly active, with 'spinning' or 'circling' symbolizing the completely actualised divine perfection; in the divine spinnings, the Holy Spirit 'proceeds from' or is 'breathed by' both Father and Son." See p. 143. According to Farrugia and O'Collins, in the West the most important iconography which represented the Trinity was the 'Throne of Grace' which showed the "Father holding the cross with the Son dead on it and the Holy Spirit hovering over them. One cross links the three figures; their unity is also expressed by their being turned towards each other." See p. 144.

[309] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, p. 144.

used inner-trinitarian and atemporal events such as begetting and spiration (or breathing) to say that God is tripersonal. He also maintained that this generation and spiration did not divide the substance or produce a new substance. For Aquinas, God is relational and the relations - which exist in themselves - are not "added to already existing substances." O'Collins sums up the trinitarian theology of Aquinas' in the following way:

> There is one divine nature, substance, or essence. There are two processions, although it is preferable to speak of the generation of the Son and the spiration/breathing of the Spirit. There are three persons, *hypostaseis* or subjects. There are four (subsistent) relations, or orderings of the divine persons among themselves that constitute them three persons in one God: paternity, filiation, active spiration, and passive spiration. Paternity constitutes the Father, filiation the Son, and passive spiration the Spirit. Active spiration, which belongs to the Father and is somehow shared by the Son, does not form a new person. There are five notions or properties of the Trinity, event-like attributes that ground the relative identities of the three persons. The Father is unoriginated, generative and breathing; the Son is generated and breathing; the Spirit is breathed. Thus we have a fivefold scheme for trinitarian theology, to which respect for this ultimate divine mystery added no proof: 'There are five notions, four relations, three persons, two processions, one nature, and no proof'.[310]

O'Collins also takes into account the theologies of later centuries in his account of trinitarian theology. It is his view that Martin Luther's understanding of the Trinity raised some difficulties because in it he pictured Christ as the one who carried the sins of the world and as the one who became "the object of divine anger on the cross."[311] According to O'Collins, the Reformation and Enlightenment periods have also influenced trinitarian faith.[312] He also takes into account the contributions made by personalist philosophies and human sciences. O'Collins states that, "antitrinitarianism lives on among modern exponents of liberal Christology, who present Jesus as differing from other human beings in degree and not in kind. He goes beyond us, they say, only because of his higher degree of holiness but not because, as a divine person, he belongs to

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[310] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* pp. 146-147. Catherine Mowry LaCugna says, "[i]n past-baroque Catholicism, if the topic of the Trinity was covered at all in seminary and theological education, this often went no further than requiring students to memorize the 5-4-3-2-1 formula, a mnemonic device for retaining the essential elements of Augustinian-Thomistic doctrine of the Trinity: God is five notions, four relations, three persons, two processions, and one nature." See CATHERINE MOWRY LACUGNA, *God for Us. The Trinity and Christian Life*, pp. 167-168.

[311] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* p. 153. According to O'Collins, Martin Luther had adopted the three-article structure of trinitarian faith of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in his catechism. But Luther's teaching had its difficulties as he pictured Christ as the one who carries the sins of the world and as the object of divine anger on the cross. This amounted to presenting Jesus as if he had committed sin and was being punished for them. O'Collins says that, "Luther even wrote about a war between God (the Father) and God (the Son)." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* pp. 153-154. According to O'Collins, this language of war between the Father and Jesus could also be found in the works of Jürgen Moltmann. He spoke of a type of war taking place on Calvary within the Trinity – a war that pits the Father against the Son, with the Holy Spirit playing a reconciling role. While discussing the death of Jesus, Moltmann says, "[a]s a 'blasphemer', Jesus was rejected by the guardians of his people's law. As a 'rebel' he was crucified by the Romans. But finally, and most profoundly, he died as one rejected by his God and his Father… The Cross of the Son divides God from God to the utmost degree of enmity and distinction." See JÜRGEN MOLTMANN, *The Crucified God. The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology,* trans. R. A. WILSON & J. BOWDEN, London: SCM Press,1974, p. 152.

[312] O'Collins also says that René Descartes' notion of person as a unique subject of consciousness and self-consciousness and Immanuel Kant's notion of person as the subject of freedom had influenced trinitarian belief. When these were applied to the doctrine of the Trinity one was inevitably left with tritheism: "three autonomous subjects living

an infinitely different kind of being, God."[313] The absence of any divine attributes in Jesus naturally offers no possibility to consider Jesus as belonging to the Trinity and makes trinitarian theology non-existent. Clearly, it is only through faith in the divinity of Christ that one is ever able to propose a trinitarian theology.

In our exposition of the trinitarian face of Jesus Christ we have seen how O'Collins tries to understand the Trinity as a source for knowledge of Jesus Christ. The divine self-communication is the self-communication of the Trinity which comes to ultimate expression in the person of Jesus Christ. According to O'Collins, once we have knowledge of God, we have knowledge of the Trinity and knowing God will always involve knowledge of Jesus. Hence, he says,

> If we know God, we are in fact knowing the Triune God. There is no God apart from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In any authentic religious experience we encounter a double reality: ourselves and the Trinity. However obscurely, the experience of divine revelation will always entail Christ as object along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Every genuine acceptance of the divine self-communication is an acceptance of Christ.[314]

O'Collins states that in the past one could avoid Trinity while writing on Christology and vice versa. But the present interest in the "trinitarian face of the whole story of Jesus – from his virginal conception and baptism right through to the resurrection, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and his coming in glory at the end" – shows the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity to understand Christology.[315] Hence, it is necessary and becoming that one understands and believes in the Trinity to understand the person of Jesus Christ. Understanding the Trinity does not stop with the knowledge of Jesus Christ but goes forward and helps us understand God's life with human beings. Hence, LaCugna says, "[t]he doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately therefore a teaching not about the abstract nature of God, nor about God in isolation from everything other than God, but a teaching about God's life with us and our life with each other."[316]

Conclusion

In this chapter we have sought to uncover the preliminary steps which, according to Gerald O'Collins, are essential to knowledge of the person of Jesus the Christ. We began by briefly sketching the biography of O'Collins, and providing an overview of his works. Secondly, we have tried to describe his view of the sources for knowing the person of Jesus, beginning with

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and working together in a quasi-social unity." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* pp. 155-156.

[313] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* p. 153. John Hick in his presentation of Jesus sees him not as the Son of God but as an "ideal of human life lived in faithful response to God" See JOHN HICK, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate*, London: SCM Press, 1993, p. ix.

[314] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 118. C. A. Evans says that, "[a]part from the divine identity of Jesus as the Son there could not be a Trinity – at least not in the traditional Christian sense." See C. A. EVANS, *Jesus' Self-Designation 'The Son of Man' and the Recognition of His Divinity*, in STEPHEN T. DAVIS; DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS (eds.), *The Trinity. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, p. 29.

[315] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Holy Trinity. The State of the Questions*, p. 3.

[316] CATHERINE MOWRY LACUGNA, *God for Us. The Trinity and Christian Life*, p. 1.

the primary source of the self-revelation of the triune God. We have found that, for O'Collins, revelation is not the disclosure of some doctrine or the communication of some authenticated facts about God, but the self-communication of God in the person of Jesus Christ, which is God's saving activity for human beings. O'Collins upholds a personal, saving, sacramental and self-communication model of revelation which takes place in God's words and deeds among us. This is to say that, revelation includes 'revelation of the one who is revealed, the real act of revelation and also those who receive revelation'. This revelation is Christ-centred. In our exposition of the idea of revelation we also discovered the distinction that O'Collins makes between fundamental/foundational revelation which ended with the apostolic times and dependent revelation which we have after the apostolic times. In describing what is dependent revelation we have come to understand that, according to O'Collins, revelation is a continuous process taking place in the life-experience of human beings. Further we have argued that, according to him, every human experience is in some sense religious experience and so revelatory of God's self-communication.

We then proceeded to make a brief enquiry into the two main sources for the self-communication of God, Scripture and Tradition. However, we maintained that, according to O'Collins, these are not separate but form part of the one source which is revelation. However, when dealing with tradition, O'Collins makes a distinction between 'Tradition' which is the fundamental revelation or the Gospel, and 'traditions' which are the means through which or within which the Tradition is contained and transmitted to the next generations. O'Collins does not limit revelation to the written word or to Scripture alone. Revelation is also to be found in tradition and at times for him tradition is synonymous with revelation. Our consideration of tradition reinforced the claim that revelation is related to human experience. Traditions, which are packed with human experiences of the past, and the history of human beings which are filled with traditions, are means through which God continuously self-communicates in the life of every human being.

Our exposition of the sources did not stop with revelation, tradition and Scripture. We have also attempted in this chapter to see how we can know the person of Jesus Christ through the knowledge of the Trinity. In so doing we have seen how the whole of trinitarian doctrine was developed from the period of the Old Testament, New Testament and throughout the history of the Church. The trinitarian understanding in the Scripture was developed further in the early Christian period and reached a conclusive stage in the form of the doctrine of the Trinity in the Nicaea-Constantinopolitan Creed. From then on, many great theologians sought to understand the mystery of the Trinity but were unable to comprehend the whole reality. We have also seen how art and literature helped in the understanding of the Trinity when believers sought to depict the Trinity by means of them. There were also periods when the Trinity was neglected. The renewed interest in the Trinity in our day does not change the fact that many of the same challenges and difficulties still persist.

It is clear from our study that, for O'Collins, it is important to understand the person of Christ to come to a full knowledge of the Trinity and vice versa. C. A. Evans says that, "The recognition of Jesus' divine status was a long process, culminating in the creeds affirming the Trinity and the full humanity and full deity of Jesus."[317] Faith in the Trinitarian doctrine is faith in the self-communication of the Trinity in history and above all in the history of Jesus. The Church, through its councils, has sought to define the mystery of the Trinity. Theologians have sought to understand this mystery of the Trinity but have never come to a satisfactory conclusion. As O'Collins observes, "Trinitarian faith seeks a knowledge and understanding that in this life will never be conclusive or exhaustive. It seeks to worship the tripersonal God with an adoration that will be fully realized only in the final kingdom."[318]

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[317] C. A. EVANS, *Jesus' Self-Designation 'The Son of Man' and the Recognition of His Divinity*, p. 46.

[318] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,* p. 4.

CHAPTER TWO

TOWARDS A DOCTRINAL UNDERSTANDING OF
THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST

Introduction

In our exposition of the sources of Christology in the previous chapter, we have discovered that we arrive at the knowledge of Jesus through Revelation, and the Scripture and the Tradition in particular. This means that one cannot disregard any aspect of salvation history when dealing with the person of Jesus Christ. In our exposition of the sources we also dealt briefly with religious experience and human experience as means of revelation. We argued, too, that we need to take into account the Trinitarian aspect in our enquiry into the person of Jesus Christ. It is by knowing the mystery of the Trinity, which is the knowledge of the self-communication of God and his saving activity revealed in history through the revelation of the three persons in God that we come to the fullest possible knowledge of Jesus. However, we need to accept that the knowledge that we have of the mystery of the Trinity, even if it is partial, is attained through the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

We shall now turn our attention to the heart of our exposition, that is, the understanding of the *person* of Jesus Christ. Therefore, in this chapter, we shall attend to the person of Jesus Christ from a doctrinal point of view, although, according to O'Collins, "[t]o transcribe adequately the story of Jesus is an impossible dream."[1] The writings of O'Collins, as he himself suggests in his recent book, *Living Vatican II: The 21st Council for the 21st Century,* are centred on the person of Jesus. He expresses this thought very clearly when he speaks about the Second Vatican Council's influence on him and his being indebted to the Council. He says, "[t]he name of the Lord brings me to my third[2] and greatest debt to Vatican II – the decision to centre my theological work on Jesus in an unqualified way."[3] As we begin our exposition, we take note also of the dimension of the early Christian community's understanding of Jesus. O'Collins states that "[b]oth the biblical and the liturgical texts of Christians take up salvation as a more primary category than revelation."[4] This is to state that, according to the early Christians, the natural

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[1] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ*, p. 2.

[2] O'Collins admits that the Second Vatican Council influenced him in three ways. *Perfectae Caritatis* (Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life) influenced him to retrieve the spirit and aims of St. Ignatius, the founder of his Congregation. Secondly, the Council helped him to discover what public worship means. It helped him to understand how in liturgy the tripersonal God was venerated and how the death and resurrection of Jesus was celebrated. Thirdly, the Council led him to focus his writings on the person of Jesus Christ. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Living Vatican II. The 21st Council for the 21st Century,* New York, NY; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006, pp. 16-17.

[3] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Living Vatican II. The 21st Council for the 21st Century,* p. 17.

[4] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 170.

order for knowing Jesus originated from what Jesus did (the salvific action of Jesus), then moved to who he was (the person and being of Jesus), then extended and further back to revelation as such. That is to say, there was a movement from 'Saviour' to the 'Son of God'. The early Christians moved from Jesus' death and resurrection to the person of Jesus and his divinity. Critical enquiries into the age and the formation of the canonical gospels have shown that early Christian Christology evolved through a process of thinking and reflection that started with the experience of Easter (Mark) and went on to a reflection about the nature of the person of Jesus. However, in presenting their gospels, Matthew, Luke and John placed the premises of their Christology at the beginning of their gospels. Even in this process one can follow a gradual movement towards what we may call more basic postulates – Matthew reaches back to Abraham (Mt 1:1)), Luke reaches up to God (Lk 3:38), and John begins with a reflection on the very nature of God (Jn 1:1). In brief, the interpretation of faith shifted from the Christ of Faith to Jesus of history and to Jesus as the Son of God/the Word. The shift in emphasis between these three poles has characterized christological discussions ever since. However, for the purposes of our study, we shall try to understand the person of Jesus Christ in a reverse order because, "His value and significance were grounded in his being."[5] We shall move from the being of Jesus Christ and his historical life to his redemptive action through his death on the cross, because that would be in continuity and conformity with what we have already done in the first chapter and consonant with what we will do in our further exposition. Our goal is, in the end, to apply our findings about Jesus Christ and his salvific acts within the context of the Catholic theology of religions. This also seems to be the order that O'Collins follows in his writings. If one pursues the chronology of his writings, one discovers that the earliest of his writings were concerned with fundamental theology and dealt especially with revelation. From such writings, he gradually shifted his focus to the person of Jesus and to his redemptive acts. Finally, in his most recent writings he deals with the question of Jesus' role in the salvation of all. While this order is observable in the collection of his writings as a whole, when one turns one's attention to particular books, especially those that deal with concrete Christology, this order becomes more explicit. However, we also ought to mention here that, according to O'Collins, just as in the case of the early Christians, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is '*the central mystery*' around which the whole of his Christology takes shape. It is from this central point that "Christology looks *backwards* (through Christ's life, the incarnation, the history of the Israelites and back to the creation) and *forwards* (through the coming of the Holy Spirit, the story of the Church, and on to the *eschaton,* the future consummation of all things.)"[6] Since we have already dealt with

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[5] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 170.

[6] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 32. According to Bernard Sesboue, the development of Christology was from the Resurrection to the Incarnation. He says, "[t]he point of departure for the explicit Christology of the New Testament is the Resurrection of Jesus, which sets the divine 'seal' on his pre-Easter journey and confirms all his claims. … On this foundation, which contains within itself all future developments of Christology, the reflection of the faith of

revelation in our approach to the sources, our particular focus in this chapter and the next is the person of Jesus Christ. In this chapter, we deal with only the person of Jesus Christ from the point of his being. In the next chapter, we shall deal with Jesus' redemptive act, i.e., his death and resurrection through which he obtains the salvation of all. However, we begin with some preliminary enquiries concerning the development of Christology.

1. The Development of Christological Thought

While we regard revelation, scripture and tradition as major sources to identify Jesus Christ, it is also important to enquire how Christological thinking and doctrines took shape. Christology[7] is a systematic and theological approach to the person, being and the works of Jesus Christ. It must reflect on the person, work and significance of Jesus Christ for the life of those who, through belief or unbelief, are connected to him. The reflection on his being and his works, which began in the early stages of Christianity, took a formal shape in the teachings of the Councils of the Church. While no one can deny the role of the Councils in shaping these teachings, it is also important to see some of the other elements that contributed towards the development of Christological thought.[8] This analysis will also provide us with the evidence to affirm that the Christology of O'Collins can be characterised as traditional and intra-ecclesial.

1.1. The Rationale behind Christological Enquiry

A systematic and rational account of what Christians believe about the person of Jesus Christ answers the basic question regarding the distinctiveness of Christianity. A response to queries by non-Christians, or by anyone for that matter, concerning the faith of Christians, demands that

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the disciples, as it is set forth in the New Testament, was to effectuate a movement going from the end of Jesus' journey to its beginning." See BERNARD SESBOUE, *Christ/Christology*, in JEAN-YVES LACOSTE (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology* I, New York, NY: Routledge, 2005, 285-295, p. 287.

[7] Christology, according to Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, in a strict sense, deals with the 'Person' of Jesus Christ. His redemptive action comes under another theological term, soteriology. However, there is internal unity between Christology and soteriology. According to them, Christology is connected to Trinitarian theology and hence, "economic is the immanent Trinity and vice versa." See KARL RAHNER & HERBERT VORGRIMLER, *Theological Dictionary*, pp. 78-79.

[8] John Macquarrie mentions experience, revelation, scripture, tradition, culture and reason as formative factors of theology. He begins with experience because, according to him, "some experience of the life of faith precedes theology and may indeed be said to motivate it." He also says, "it is the experience of existing as a human being that constitutes a primary source for theology; not just explicitly religious experience, but all experience in which a religious dimension is discernible." See JOHN MACQUARRIE, *Principles of Christian Theology*, London: SCM Press, 1977, pp. 5, 6. Macquarrie is of the view that the enquiry into the person of Jesus has to deal with the theological question, "'Who *is* he?' rather than 'Who *was* he?' For we are concerned here with a present or continuing reality, a reality which did not come to an end with the death of Jesus." According to him, throughout many generations Christians have experienced the resurrection of Jesus and his living presence. Hence, an enquiry into the person of Jesus has to deal with experience of Jesus in the present. See JOHN MACQUARRIE, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought,* London: SCM Press, 1990, p. 5. According to E. L. Mascall, present experience is of great significance for the knowledge of Jesus Christ. He says, "the Christ whom we know today as the historic Christ is basic to our faith, but we do not depend for our acquaintance with him on the research of historians and archaeologists. He is also the heavenly Christ, and as such is the object of our present experience, mediated through the sacramental life of the Church." See E. L. MASCALL, *Jesus. Who He Is and How We Know Him*, London: Darton Longmann & Todd, 1985, pp. 38-39.

one understand and clarify everything that is believed about the person of Jesus Christ. Hence, the object of Christology is Jesus Christ. According to O'Collins, the interpretation of Jesus or Christology is motivated by three things. Firstly, it is motivated by "our personal identity, deepest needs and final destiny."[9] He is of the view that our search for our own identity coincides with our search for the divine. He says that acknowledging Jesus as the mystery of God's presence amidst human beings means accepting our own existence, nature and goal. Hence, Christology deals with human existence, Christ's personal identity and what Jesus Christ means for human beings and their salvation, and what Christians ultimately need to do when they accept him as their saviour.[10] Secondly, Christology is motivated by the inner life of the community of faith, which is the Church. The Church, its membership, and its teachings have meaning only when they are based on the foundational figure and on the belief that he is God and saviour. Finally, Christology is motivated by our relationship with other world religions as far as the salvation of their members is concerned. Our interpretation of Jesus will involve a discussion about his salvific significance for the people of other religions. An approach towards other religions invites Christianity to dialogue with other systems of belief, something which, according to O'Collins, will "sharpen our perception of what accepting Jesus of Nazareth as Son of God and Saviour essentially entails." According to him, dialogue is "effective for *distinguishing* between primary elements and secondary accretions in the faith we profess in Jesus Christ."[11]

1.2. The Early Christian Motive behind Christology

According to O'Collins, the motive for Christians to make theological enquiries and to develop official teachings about Jesus was the 'experience of salvation' they began to encounter through him. This experience of salvation involved "the forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the new life of grace in community." To the early Christians, two things, namely, the divine and the human natures of Jesus Christ, made this experience of salvation a possibility. Many Fathers of the Church taught that it was necessary for Jesus Christ to be divine and human for the salvation of human beings.[12] This is to say that the incarnation of Jesus, his being truly divine

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[9] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 2.

[10] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 2-3.

[11] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 4.

[12] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 154-155. O'Collins finds support for his argument in Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil of Caesarea. Irenaeus said, "[u]nless man had overcome the enemy of man, the enemy would not have been legitimately vanquished. And again: unless it had been God who had freely given salvation, we could never have possessed it securely. And unless man had been joined to God, he could never have become a partaker of incorruptibility." See IRENAEUS, *Against Heresies,* III.XVIII.7, in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 1, p. 448. Against the teaching of Marcion and other heretics, Tertullian affirmed that it was necessary for Christ to be both divine and human. Cf. TERTULLIAN, *On the Flesh of Christ* V, ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 3, pp. 503-520. According to O'Collins, this teaching of Irenaeus and the teaching of others received its classical formulation from Gregory of Nazianzus who said, 'the unassumed is the unhealed'.

and truly human, made redemption possible for human beings. According to O'Collins, the teachings of the Fathers of the Church also held that it was not only for the salvation of human beings but also for their deification that the two natures of Jesus Christ were necessary.[13] O'Collins finds the thought of Athanasius especially meaningful in this discussion. To Athanasius, the idea of 'new creation' was parallel to the notion of deification. He argued that Jesus Christ was divine because his saving activity brought about a 'new creation'. The line of his argument was that only God is the author of creation and hence, Jesus Christ, who brought about a new creation, was also divine. Further, he stated that just as God created everything in the beginning through the Word, the Word also brought about human renewal through assuming of human nature.[14] While attempting to explain the necessity of the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ in terms of 'salvation', according to O'Collins, the Fathers of the Church also explained it in terms of 'revelation'. In order to reveal God to human beings, Jesus Christ had to be divine because only a divine person could reveal God.[15] Hence, for the early Christians, salvation and revelation were two specific themes to describe the necessity of incarnation and the two natures of Jesus Christ.

1.3. The Scriptures as Point of Reference

While we uphold Tradition "within the mass of traditions", and past and present religious experiences in the search for the person of Jesus, the immediate source for the early Christians to acquire knowledge about Jesus was the scriptures. To describe Jesus in terms of salvation and revelation, the early Christians made use of the scriptures they received, both the Old Testament[16] and the New Testament. Hans Hübner tells us that the early Christians proclaimed and interpreted Jesus on the basis of their experience of events in which Jesus was the central

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[13] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 156-157. Irenaeus said, "[f]or it was for this end that the Word of God was made man, and He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been taken into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the son of God." See IRENAEUS, *Against Heresies,* III.XIX, in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 1, p. 448. According to O'Collins, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine of Hippo, Cyril of Alexandria, Leo the Great, and Thomas Aquinas taught similar views on the question of the deification of human beings and the necessity of the Son of God assuming the human nature.

[14] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 157.

[15] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 157. Irenaeus said, "[f]or in no other way could we have learned the things of God, unless our Master, existing as the Word, had become man. For no other being had the power of revealing to us the things of the Father, except His own proper Word." See IRENAEUS, *Against Heresies,* V.I.1, in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 1, p. 527.

[16] According to O'Collins, the early Christians depended on the "ideas, beliefs, and expectations of Judaism" that are found in the Old Testament to articulate their faith and convictions about Jesus. The major source of their theological language was the Old Testament. However, they also had some secondary sources, such as non-canonical Jewish pseudepigrapha, the Qumran writings, the Letter of Aristeas, fragments from Hellenistic-Jewish authors, the works of Philo and Josephus, the Palestinian and the Babylonian Talmud, Middle Eastern literature, Graeco-Roman thought, and non-canonical literature from Hellenistic Judaism. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 22-23.

figure. They also used the images and concepts from the scriptures they inherited.[17] Even today the Scripture and its interpretation has priority over everything else in doing theology. Speaking about the importance of the scriptures for theology, the Second Vatican Council said that the "sacred page" is "the soul of theology."[18] According to Joseph A. Fitzmyer, it is necessary to use both the Old Testament and the New Testament in theology.[19] According to Avery Dulles, Scripture becomes very important because the "deeds of God in salvation history are not Christian revelation except as taken up into the preaching and memory of the Church, which treasures Scripture as a privileged text."[20] Karl Rahner in fact exhorted systematic theologians to engage in exegesis and biblical theology because he said that it is the job of "a dogmatic theologian to use all available means for listening to the word of God wherever it is pronounced – and where better than in Holy Scripture?" He is of the view that the exegesis that dogmatic theologians make, should convince the specialists in exegesis.[21] He held that Biblical theology "should be the source of dogmatic theology and so also of Christology." However, Rahner also said that a transcendental hermeneutics that starts from dogma tells us that the "Church's Christological dogma never claims to be an adequate condensation of Biblical teaching."[22] Pope Pius XII, in his encyclical *Humani Generis*, said that theologians should always go back to the sources of divine revelation, which are Scripture and Tradition, because the doctrine of the living Teaching Authority is found in them either explicitly or implicitly. Theology is kept fresh when theologians study these sources; however, their speculation becomes sterile if they do not use them.[23]

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[17] HANS HÜBNER, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments 1,* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990, p. 44-70, as explained by O'Collins in GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 22.

[18] *Dei Verbum* 24, p. 980. It also said that the sacred Tradition and "sacred scripture of the two testaments are like a mirror in which the Church, during its pilgrimage of earth, contemplates God, the source of all that it has received." *Dei Verbum* 7, p. 974. Pope Leo XIII spoke about the importance of scripture in the following way: "For those whose duty it is to handle Catholic doctrine before the learned or the unlearned will nowhere find more ample matter or more abundant exhortation, whether on the subject of God, the supreme Good and the all-perfect Being, or of the works which display His Glory and His love. Nowhere is there anything more full or more express on the subject of the Saviour of the world than is to be found in the whole range of the Bible." See POPE LEO XIII, *Providentissimus Deus* 3, in CLAUDIA CARLEN (ed.), *The Papal Encyclicals 1878-1903* (Washington DC: McGrath, 1981) 325-339, p. 326.

[19] Fitzmyer says, "the faith of Christians in the twentieth century is not based solely on what exegetes or theologians can reconstruct as the inner dispositions of Jesus of Nazareth or even on the gospel that he preached as reconstructed by historical research. It is rather normed by the figure of Jesus of Nazareth as passed on to us by the early Christian Church in that Tradition that is enshrined in the Scripture. The two have to be kept in tandem: Jesus of Nazareth as the definitive revealer of God his Father *and* the early testimony to him in the Christian kerygma and its Scripture. These two in tandem, supply the vitality both for Christian faith and Christian theology." See JOSEPH A. FITZMYER, *Scripture, the Soul of Theology,* New York, NY, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994, pp. 86-87.

[20] AVERY DULLES, *The Craft of Theology. From Symbol to System,* New York, NY: Cross Road, 1992, p. 81.

[21] KARL RAHNER, *Theological Investigations,* Vol. 5, *Later Writings*, trans. KARL-H. KRUGER, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966, p. 77.

[22] KARL RAHNER, *Theological Investigations,* Vol. 1, *God, Christ, Mary and Grace*, trans. Cornelius Ernst, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974, p. 154.

[23] POPE PIUS XII, *Humani Generis* 21, in CLAUDIA CARLEN (ed.), *The Papal Encyclicals 1939-1958* (Washington DC: McGrath, 1981) 175-184, p178.

In the early Christian period there were objections to the use of the Jewish scriptures and some versions of the New Testament. Heretics like Marcion rejected the whole of the Jewish bible, and the Gospels except Luke and some other writings of the New Testament.[24] O'Collins holds that in opposition to what Marcion and other heretics held, Irenaeus affirmed the Christological value of the Old Testament and emphasised that the God of the Old Testament was identical to the God of the New Testament, the Father of Jesus Christ.[25] Irenaeus not only made use of the scriptures to emphasise the 'redemptive and revelatory' value of Jesus Christ but also employed the contrasts made by Paul between the first and second Adam (Rom 5:12-21) to highlight the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ. One of the prominent titles that highlighted the humanity of Jesus Christ, 'Son of man,' was used by Ignatius of Antioch even before Irenaeus.[26] O'Collins maintains that Origen, Tertullian, Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexandira, and other Church Fathers used this term to indicate the humanity of Christ. Later, Thomas Aquinas and theologians of the medieval period employed the term in the dyad, 'Son of man' – 'Son of God', to refer to the humanity of Jesus Christ.[27] In the New Testament, Paul spoke of Jesus Christ as both 'Son of God' and 'born of woman' (Gal 4:4), and sometimes he was referred as both 'Son of God' and 'descended from David' (Rom 1:3). John in his prologue described the Word both as 'God' (Jn 1:1) and as becoming 'flesh' (Jn 1:14). It is difficult to understand how the early Christians who were Jewish in their origin and monotheistic in their belief could make such a parallelism in their writings and belief.

O'Collins suggests that it was in the second century that a shift in the Christian language started taking place. The shift was from the pre-philosophical language of the New Testament to a more philosophical language leading to doctrinal debate about Jesus Christ. The role of philosophy was to clarify and interpret Christian beliefs on the basis of scriptures. This shift in the language

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[24] Marcion was expelled from the Christian community in 144. He accepted only one of the gospels and a few other writings from the New Testament, i.e., Luke and ten letters of St. Paul. GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 158. Marcion's teachings made a deep impression because he emphasized and based his teachings on the scriptures, though selectively and one-sidedly. While to other Gnostics and heretics the God of the Old Testament was a spiritual power together with other spiritual powers, to Marcion, the God of the Old Testament was an 'adversary.' "The cardinal feature of Marcion's position is that in place of the concept of a fallen world (original sin) he substitutes the idea of an *alien* God." It is against this background of "his emphasis on the authority of Scripture, combined with his very limited selection of texts as Scriptures" that the early Christians drew up the first canon of the New Testament and acknowledged the other parts of the Scripture. See HAROLD O. J. BROWN, *Heresies. Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church*, p. 63.

[25] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 159. Cf. IRENAEUS, *Against Heresies,* V, xvii, in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 1, p. 544-546

[26] Speaking about the coming together of Christians at the Eucharist, Ignatius says that the communion of all Christians is in the name of "Jesus Christ, who is of the race of David according to the flesh, the son of man and Son of God." In this statement he distinguishes Jesus Christ as both son of man and Son of God." See IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *The Letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch. To the Ephesians,* 20, trans. GERALD G. WALSH, in ROY JOSEPH DEFERRARI *et al.* (eds.), *The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation*, Vol. 1, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1947, p. 95.

[27] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 160.

also brought about certain difficulties. One of the greatest difficulties that the Church went through during this period was to understand the two natures of Christ. There were differing opinions. Arians considered the Son as inferior to the Father and as a creature because the Son was an 'image' of the invisible God and the 'first-born' of all creation (Col 1:15). Athanasius used the scriptural text of 'I and the Father are one' (Jn 10:30) against Arian teachings. Cyril of Alexandria, appealing to the scriptures (1 Cor 8:6 & Phil 2:9-11), taught that the Son's involvement in creation demonstrated his divinity because man is not the agent of creation. He also made use of the 'Word becoming flesh' (Jn 1:14) to teach that God remains immutable while being able to assume human nature. According to O'Collins, Cyril called this "'the economy of the Saviour', 'the economy of the flesh', 'the economy of the incarnation' or simply, 'the economy'." [28] Heretics like the Ebionites did not attribute divinity to Christ while others, like the Docetists, questioned the humanity of Jesus and spoke of only an apparent body or a heavenly body. The Docetists denied the truths of incarnation and the death of Jesus. According to O'Collins, an exploration of both the divinity and humanity of Christ started from the time of Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origen, but they were careful in preserving the monotheistic faith.[29] In all their teachings, Scripture remained supreme and philosophy had a clarifying and

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[28] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 160-161.

[29] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 169-170. O'Collins says that Justin, in his *Dialogue with Trypho,* held that 'God has begotten of himself a rational Power' which in the scriptures was called the 'Glory of the Lord', Son, Wisdom, Angel, God or Lord. Justin compared the generation of the son to the rays of the sun, which further on was turned into the image of 'Light from Light' to be included in the Creed. According to O'Collins, something that is very important in Justin is his contribution to the debate on the "consubstantiality of the Father and the Son in sharing the same essence or *ousia*." Justin also held a type of subordination of Jesus to the Creator of all things, when he spoke of him as 'another God' alongside the Creator. He in fact wanted to protect the absolute transcendence of God, and hence, he developed the theme of the intermediary roles of the Son. However, he did not deny the pre-existence of the Logos as the universal mediator or creation. See pp. 170-171. According to O'Collins, Irenaeus maintained the integrity of Christ's humanity and divinity when he developed the following themes: "(1) the salvific (and revelatory) reasons for humanity and divinity being united in Christ; (2) the value of his prehistory (in the OT) and human history (in the four Gospels); (3) the Adam/Christ antithesis in which the new head recapitulated the unified divine project of creation and redemption in one great history of salvation; (4) Christ's double generation, the ineffable and eternal generation from the Father and the temporal generation from Mary. Irenaeus also upheld the eternal pre-existence of the Son with the Father. He taught against the Gnostics and defended the view that the Word became really flesh." See p. 172. For Tertullian the acceptance of the divinity of Christ did not mean the abandoning of monotheism. He was against modalist monarchianism, which sought to uphold the absolute monarchy of God the Father. The modalists supported a strict monotheism and "claimed that any 'trinitarian' interpretation of the story of creation and salvation (1) referred only to the several ways (or 'modes') in which God acts externally and (2) did not describe anything about the inner divine life." According to modalism those actions did not reveal the inner life of the divine. Tertullian taught against the 'patripassian' doctrine, which held that it was the Father and not the Son who was incarnated, and defended the notion of God's unique substance (*substantia*) and three distinct but undivided 'persons'. He also taught against Sabellianism, which held that Father in the Old Testament, the Son in the incarnation and the Holy Spirit at Pentecost were "three manifestations of one God, three different relationships which the one God assumed successively in creation, redemption, and the sending of the Spirit." According to O'Collins, Tertullian is the first Christian writer to use the term 'persona' in theology, the first to apply 'Trinitas' to God and the first one to develop the formula 'one substance in three persons'. See p. 173. Origen held for the eternal generation of the Son against the adoptionists who held that Jesus had no divinity and was a creature adopted by God. In his Trinitarian teaching, Origen taught that "the Father, Son, and Spirit were three hypostases or distinct subsistent realities who share in one divine nature." This same idea was used later on by Arius. But O'Collins says that although Origen did not consider the Son and Holy Spirit inferior in power; he defended a certain subordinationalism that saw the Father as the ultimate principle. (Arius also held this same view but he absolutalized the subordination of the Son and Holy Spirit by calling the Father the only true God, and went so far as to call the Son a creature while denying his

interpreting role. O'Collins' understanding of the great importance of Scripture in Christology and his desire for the best use of Scripture for theology in the present times is quite significant, especially when one looks at the way he has developed a scheme of principles for theological use of the Scripture.[30] He maintains that the faith of Christians in Jesus and fidelity to the scriptures are interdependent. Hence, the fidelity of Christians "to the scriptures is inseparable from their fidelity to their origins in Jesus Christ as absolute Revealer and Saviour." He also holds that "Biblical authority is derived from the period of foundational tradition and the foundational revelation that reached its climax with Christ and his apostles."[31]

While it is true that we accept the authority of the Bible, there are also many who question its normative value for a variety of reasons, including its culture-specificity, historicity, 'inhuman' ethical directives, its likeness to other 'classic texts', etc.[32] There are yet others, like Gordon Kaufmann, who question the authority of the Bible and maintain that today we cannot sustain the traditionally-held authority of the Bible.[33] According to Franics Schüssler Fiorenza, the collapse of scriptural authority arose from the impoverishment of modernity, which is characterized by (1) secularisation where "religious world views have lost their power to integrate society" and (2) alienation where the complexity of modern society "overtaxes the individual's power to integrate their lives."[34] He also points out that this secularisation and alienation has led to freedom and pluralism, which in turn has led to professionalization and the growth of different disciplines. In theology, these developments gave rise to the historical method and to specialization, which gradually led to an exclusively literal reading of scriptures

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eternity). Origen became notorious when he maintained "the Platonic view that the human soul of the Logos existed prior to the incarnation, being created with other human souls who likewise pre-existed their historical, earthly lives." According to him, in the incarnation the sinless human soul was united with the Logos and the flesh. See p. 175-176.

[30] O'Collins prescribes ten principles for the coherent and consistent use of scripture: 1. principle of faithful reading; 2. principle of active hearing; 3. principle of community and its creeds; 4. principle of biblical convergence; 5. principle of exegetical consensus; 6. principle of metathemes and metanarratives; 7. principle of continuity within discontinuity; 8. principle of eschatological provisionality; 9. principle of philosophical assistance; and 10. principle of inculturation. See GERALD O'COLLINS & DANIEL KENDALL, *The Bible for Theology. Ten Principles for the Theological Use of Scripture,* New York, NY, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997, pp. 6-7.

[31] GERALD O'COLLINS & DANIEL KENDALL, *The Bible for Theology. Ten Principles for the Theological Use of Scripture,* pp. 8, 9.

[32] For more information on the critical reading of Scripture, see RICHARD B. HAYS, *Scripture-Shaped Community. The Problem of Method in New Testament Ethic,* in *Interpretation* 44 (1990) 42-55; ELIZABETH SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins,* London: SCM Press, 1995 [1983]; SALLIE MCFAGUE, *Metaphorical Theology. Models of God in Religious Language,* Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982.

[33] Kaufman maintained that "the Bible no longer has unique authority for Western man. It has become a great but archaic monument in our midst. It is a reminder of where we once were – but no longer are. It contains glorious literature, important historical documents, exalted ethical teachings, but it is no longer the word of God." See GORDON KAUFMAN, *What Shall We Do with the Bible*, in *Interpretation* 25 (1971) 95-112. Wolfhart Pannnenberg claims that "[t]he dissolution of the traditional doctrine of Scripture constitutes a crisis at the very foundation of modern Protestant theology…. The concentration upon Scripture and renunciation of the secular sciences had already set in motion the process that resulted in the dissolution of the Scripture principle." See WOLFHART PANNENBERG, *Basic Questions in Theology,* trans. GEORGE H. KEHM, London, SCM Press, 1970 [1967], p. 4.

[34] FRANCIS SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *The Crisis of Scriptural Authority. Interpretation and Reception,* in *Interpretation* 44 (1990) 353-368, p. 355.

that had no concern whatsoever about its application to concrete life and no interest in other scriptural senses such as the allegorical, analogical and tropological.[35] Historical research and the influence of historical sciences on scriptural reading have, according to him, made the meaning of the texts historical and "the question of the authority of the past has become related to the question of the meaning of the past in its relation to the meaning of the present. The issue of authority becomes integrated with the issue of meaning."[36]

O'Collins is well aware of these modern trends, but he insists on the authority of the Bible, understood, however, not in the sense of an 'absolute' authority but in the sense that "its authority is derived from and relative to the Holy Spirit, Christ, and his apostles." Hence, what is significant here is the relationship that exists between the authority of scripture and faith in Jesus Christ and particularly the "'identity of Jesus that is the basis for scriptural authority."[37] The point we want to establish here is that, according to O'Collins, there is a relationship between faith in Jesus and the interpretation of scripture, and that from the time of the earliest ecclesiastical authors (e.g., Justin Martyr in the second century) scripture was the basic text (and continues to be the most important text) for interpreting and reflecting on the person of Jesus Christ. Just as the immediate source for Christology in the early stages of Christianity was the interpretation of scriptures, it remains the most important source today as well. The emphasis here on the scriptures does not mean that Christology can be done without giving importance to the Tradition. Hence, one needs to take into account the historical process that naturally added important aspects to the development of Christology.

1.4. The Phases of Christological Development

Christianity, according to O'Collins, is both a historical and a 'reasonable' religion and hence involves both historical knowledge and philosophical reflection.[38] The inspired texts that the early Christians used, were read and interpreted with special attention to the exigencies arising from their political, cultural and pastoral situations. O'Collins mentions four major factors which constituted the context in which scripture was used to witness to Jesus, namely "the debate with Jews, the political climate (of toleration and imperial involvement in church affairs replacing active persecution), doctrinal and other inner-church controversies, and the influential presence of various philosophical and wider cultural grounds."[39] Analysis of history makes it clear that it is only of those individuals or only of those groups of people who were prominent in

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[35] FRANCIS SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *The Crisis of Scriptural Authority. Interpretation and Reception,* pp. 355-357.

[36] FRANCIS SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *The Crisis of Scriptural Authority. Interpretation and Reception,* p. 358.

[37] GERALD O'COLLINS & DANIEL KENDALL, *The Bible for Theology. Ten Principles for the Theological Use of Scripture,* p. 12.

[38] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 28.

[39] GERALD O'COLLINS & DANIEL KENDALL, *The Bible for Theology. Ten Principles for the Theological Use of Scripture,* pp. 163-164.

one way or other that a history is written or recorded. One of the reasons for their prominent place in history is that they are held in high esteem by those who come after them: "from a purely historical point of view the truly historic element in any great figure is the discernible personal influence which he exercises upon later generations."[40] Even in the case of myths, only a few characters become prominent and important for people, while others are relegated to the background as they have importance only in so far as they are related to the prominent figure. Hence, while speaking of Jesus, although our knowledge of His "earthly life and work is limited and fragmentary," from what we have in history we have come to know that at least He was a figure of great importance to a group of people who lived at a particular period of time.[41] But our challenge in understanding the person of Jesus is to locate him in history. What history tells us about the person of Jesus would only be that he was a human being who lived at a particular time and who had attained prominence in a community. According to O'Collins, the question that Jesus asked to Philip, 'Have I not been with you so long, and yet you do not know me?', tells us of the difficulty involved in knowing the person of Jesus who lived 2000 years before us.[42] For O'Collins, to know the person of Jesus and his work one should examine several factors, namely, Jewish history, i.e., the antecedents, the origins of Christianity, the gospels, and the growth of Christological reflection and teaching down through history. Besides the aforementioned writings, the data regarding the life and person of Jesus come from non-Christian sources as well, such as the Roman writers Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, the Jewish historian Flavius, the philosopher Lucian of Samosata, and the Babylonian Talmud.[43] It is

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[40] MARTIN KÄHLER, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ*, in GREGORY W. DAWES (ed.), *The Historical Jesus Quest. Landmarks in the Search for the Jesus of History,* Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2000, 216-238, p. 231.

[41] According to Darrel L. Bock, in the first centuries only people from the upper class were literate. Those who knew writing wrote only about the major events and what was of interest to the upper class. "Historical woks tended to focus on the major figures and events of interest to the upper class." See DARREL L. BOCK, *Studying the Historical Jesus. A Guide to Sources and Methods,* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002, p. 46. For Block, three reasons make the mention of Jesus in the extra-biblical sources surprising. (1) We do not have records of numerous major figures of this period. See p. 46. Speaking about the reporting of the trial and execution of Jesus, F. F. Bruce says that there is not even a single record about Pontius Pilate who was the Prefect of Judaea or any other officials from Judaea having sent anything to Rome. He also says that even if a report were sent to Rome, it would be unlikely that it would still exist. See FREDERICK FYVIE BRUCE, *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament,* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984 [1974], p. 19. (2) We have very few sources from first-century Judea beyond the Jewish historian Josephus, the Jewish philosopher Philo, and the Dead Sea Scrolls of Qumran. Non-Jewish sources where we find a mention of Jesus are Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger. (3) From the perspective of the Roman empire Jesus was an insignificant figure – a religious leader in a vast empire. See DARREL L. BLOCK, *Studying the Historical Jesus. A Guide to Sources and Methods,* pp. 46-47. For a detailed description of the sources, See JOHN P. MEIER, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Vol. 1, The Roots of the Problem and the Person,* New York, NY: Doubleday, 1991, pp. 56-111.

[42] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 48.

[43] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 2. Bock points to a few other sources where the mention of Jesus is to be found: two brief notes from Thallus and Peregrinus, a Syrian philosopher Mara Bar Sarapion, and two Rabbinic texts. See DARREL L. BOCK, *Studying the Historical Jesus. A Guide to Sources and Methods*, pp. 52-61. In his view, the history of Jesus includes the Gospels and other New Testament writings, the emergence of a new community, and "the different items that go to make up the whole Christian tradition: creeds and other official doctrines; liturgical worship in its great diversity; millions of lives which have taken their inspiration from Jesus; … preaching and theological reflection on Jesus (right down to twentieth-century scholars and

almost impossible to know anything about the physical appearance of Jesus because "[p]hysical data about Jesus is almost nil. However, one famous source is the Shroud of Turin, a piece of cloth … and bearing the image of a man."[44] While O'Collins firmly affirms that the Gospels and history can provide us with substantial knowledge about Jesus, he acknowledges that we cannot arrive at a full knowledge of the historical person Jesus. O'Collins divides the history of Christological development into four different periods based on the major shifts and the characteristics of those periods. In the following section, we take up a brief appraisal of the major currents and major influences of the history of this development.

1.4.1. The New Testament Period (Pre-Philosophical Stage)

During the period of the writing of the New Testament, the reporting about the identity of Jesus started with reflection over his 'post-existent' life. A new experience of the new status of Jesus after the resurrection demanded from his disciples due attention and worship. The new phase of his existence and the dignity and power ascribed to Jesus implied also the revelation of his relationship with his Father. This new state of affairs in the first half of the first century led Christians to invent new titles for Jesus, such as 'Son of God' and 'Lord', which pointed to

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documents produced by the World Council of Churches and the International Theological Commission); private prayer and personal experience of Jesus; the art, literature, plays, and films that have come into existence around him." He also takes into account the responses that Jesus evoked from Jews, Muslims, Hindus and other non-Christians. See p. 2.

[44] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus,* p. 17. The Shroud of Turin was believed to be used to wrap the body of Jesus after his crucifixion. According to Antonio Cassanelli, "the Shroud is in the form of a cloth strip, yellowish-white in colour, 4.37 meters long, 1.11 meters wide and 1.450 Kg in weight. It shows, close to each other at the head, the front and rear imprint of the body of a man." He also says, that "[a] thousand-year-old tradition has recognized this Shroud as the burial-sheet of Christ, and today science states that this is an admissible claim." See ANTONIO CASSANELLI, *The Holy Shroud. A Comparison Between the Gospel Narrative of the Five Stages of the Passion (Flagellation, Crowning with Thorns, Way of the Cross, Crucifixion and Burial), and the Shroud as Evidence,* Leominster: Gracewing, 2002, pp. 15-16. In 1977, a commission which looked into the scientific examination of the Shroud, in its report said that the "Shroud was hand-woven, and conforms to the normal usage in the middle east of 2000 years ago." But there are also controversial reports concerning the Shroud. The laboratories of Oxford, Tuscon and Zurich argue for a dating between 1260 and 1390 in the Christian era. Hence, Cassanelli says that there is on our behalf "a strict duty to be extremely prudent until definitive conclusions can be reached." See p. 17. O'Collins admits that in his earliest work he considered the notion of the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin to be "ridiculous.", but that further reading and study led him to reconsider the case. On the basis of the inconclusive scientific analysis and tests and the sometimes positive elements that emerged from those tests which support the authenticity of the Shroud, O'Collins came to the conclusion that one may assume the authenticity of the cloth until this has been disproved. According to him, what is important about the cloth is its significance to Christian belief in Jesus Christ as Son of God and Saviour and its theological implications. O'Collins is of the view that the Shroud encouraged faith in the resurrection of Jesus and his divinity. If, however, the Christian message were absolutely proved scientifically, then faith would have a reduced value (if any). He says that "absolutely tangible guarantees from the Shroud or any other source would rule out, not rule in, real Christian belief in Jesus as our risen Lord." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p.102. He further states that some of the scientific enquiries made on the Shroud and the crucifixions of Jesus' time suggest that it was of a crucified Jew belonging to the first century. Science is not able to explain many of the details of the Shroud. To O'Collins even when scientific enquiries are inconclusive, the Shroud is important because it can at least provide some information regarding the body of Jesus. He says that if this is the Shroud in which the body of Jesus was wrapped then we know something about his physical appearance from it, that "he was bearded, had long hair, weighed about 175 pounds (80 kilograms) stood about 6 feet (1.82 meters) tall, and as the marks of the body indicate – was right handed." The Shroud also is an affirmation of the Christian belief in the suffering and death of Jesus. Above all these, according to him, the Shroud has helped many Christians "to recognize the exalted Son of God in the crucified Jesus." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* pp.104-105. It is worth noting that an analysis of the Shroud conducted in 1988 which dated it from about the thirteenth-fourteenth century has been disputed. There is still no conclusive evidence about the shroud.

Jesus' risen status, his new life, power, and authority on the divine level. Whereas the title 'Son of God' pointed to his relationship with the Father, the designation 'Lord' indicated his relationship with human beings or the Church in general. O'Collins says that the creedal formulas of Paul and the early Christians that spoke about the new state of Jesus' life after the resurrection set off a "never-ending process of evaluating the personal identity and saving function of Jesus Christ."[45] This process and the desire to find the origin of Jesus' identity gradually cleared the way for Mark, in his Gospel, which dates from around the year AD 65, to take the account of Jesus back to his baptism. Later on, based on Mark's Gospel, Matthew and Luke began their narration from the infancy narratives. Finally, John, in his Gospel went as far back as possible, to Jesus' pre-existence. In all these, according to O'Collins, what we find is the concern of the early Christians to "interpret and express Christ's origins and his divine 'pre-existence'."[46] In the Gospels and particularly in the later New Testament writings, the movement was from 'post-existence' to 'pre-existence'.

1.4.2. The Period of the Fathers & the First Councils (Popular-Philosophical)

According to O'Collins, further Christological development was necessitated by the many problems concerning "*false interpretations* of Christ, struggles for *the right terminology* to use in reference to him, and *differing methodologies*." This phase lasted almost to the end of the seventh century – until the Council of Constantinople III. This period had to deal with heresies, mainly with docetism (Christ only appeared to be human), adoptionism (God the Father adopted Jesus as his Son), sabellianism (God is only a single person and hence, Son and Spirit were modes of God's appearance), arianism (the Son was a perfect creature), Nestorianism (refusal of the Marian title *Theotokos* – 'Mother of God' which affirmed the unity of the human and the divine in Jesus – in order to affirm the full humanity of Jesus), and monophysitism (Christ's human nature was absorbed into his divine nature).[47] The Greek terms that played significant roles in the Christological development were *ousia, hypostasis, physis and prosōpon*.[48] In the Councils of this period, the discussions revolved around the unity of the human and divine natures in Christ. The conciliar decrees affirmed that Christ is fully human and fully divine and that these natures were united through the hypostatic union. It was also affirmed that Christ possessed two wills, namely, human and divine. According to O'Collins, two methodologies were used to interpret Jesus. The School of Alexandria with people like Origen and St. Cyril of Alexandria followed a "descending Christology 'from above'." They were concerned with a

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[45] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 15.

[46] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 16.

[47] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* pp. 16-18. Here we make only a mention of these heresies and the terms. They will be dealt with subsequently in our further research.

[48] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* pp. 16-18. See also GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 164.

'Logos-sarx' (Word-flesh) Christology and began from the pre-existent Logos. They emphasised the Word as the ontological subject of the activities of Christ and insisted on the ontological unity of Jesus Christ. The humanity of Jesus Christ was, however, downplayed.[49] The School of Antioch with people like Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius followed an "ascending Christology 'from below'." They were concerned with a 'Logos-anthropos' (Word-man) Christology and emphasised the humanity of Jesus Christ and stressed history and reason in order to validate the claims for his humanity. However, their problem was the unity of the two natures in Jesus Christ. O'Collins says that the Council of Chalcedon brought about a synthesis between the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools by insisting that there is unity as well as distinctiveness of the two natures in Jesus Christ.[50]

1.4.3. The Middle Ages (Theology in Aristotelian Categories)

According to O'Collins, the Middle Ages was a period during which theologians shifted their focus from Christ's ministry, death and resurrection to incarnation by employing philosophical categories, a tendency initiated by the Council of Chalcedon. The theological emphasis during this phase was on the divinity of Jesus Christ. Theologians sought to explain concepts such as the hypostatic union, and to clarify issues such as Jesus' knowledge, his human consciousness, his possession of the beatific vision, etc. The focus on his humanity came only from popular devotions, such as devotion to the Sacred Heart, the Christmas Crib, the Stations of the Cross, etc.[51] O'Collins also suggests that medieval Christology had three lines of development – "academic, monastic, and popular." It was popular because some people gave prominence to popular piety and to other related elements. It turned monastic because people like St Bernard of Clairvaux (considered to be the last of the Fathers), St Francis of Assisi, St Anselm of Canterbury, etc., developed a Christology that was spiritual and mystical.[52] According to Kereszty, during this period, "the attention shifted from the mystery of Christ to its personal appropriation in the spiritual life of the monk – in technical terms, from 'objective' to 'subjective' redemption'." To take an example from one of the aforementioned saints, St. Bernard in his Christology worked out a correspondence between the history of Jesus Christ and the human

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[49] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* pp. 18-19. O'Collins considers St Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth as followers of Alexandrian school. See also ROCH A. KERESZTY, *Jesus Christ. Fundamentals of Christology,* pp. 235-236. According to Kereszty, the Alexandrian School had produced Orthodox theologians such as Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria, on the one hand, and, on the other, disputed teachings such as Arianism and Apollinariansm. He also says that the Christology of the Alexandrian School was predominantly Johannine because it was based on the Gospel of John, especially the notion of the Word becoming flesh in Jn 1:14.

[50] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* pp. 18-19. According to O'Collins, the Christology of Pannenberg and Edward Schillebeeckx reflect undercurrents from the Antiochene school. See also ROCH A. KERESZTY, *Jesus Christ. Fundamentals of Christology,* pp. 236-239. Kereszty says that the strength of the teachings of the Antiochene school lies in the fact that they emphasised the "full humanity of Christ and the active role of the man Jesus in our redemption." However, their failure was in clarifying the ontological unity of Christ. See p. 238.

[51] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* pp. 19-20.

[52] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 203.

soul's spiritual progress. Hence, according to him, all the stages in the life of Jesus, from his birth to the sending of the Spirit, were helps towards meeting various needs of the human soul.[53] During this period, especially with St Anselm and Abelard, a greater interest in soteriology can be discerned. Although there were people such as Cyril of Alexandria, St Gregory of Nazianzus and Athanasius, who related redemption to Christ, O'Collins says, Anselm's book *Cur Deus Homo*[54] was the first work to be devoted solely to the redemptive activity of Christ. Anselm was of the view that 'satisfaction' or punishment was necessary for every sin because sin was an offence against the divine honour. According to him, Christ made satisfaction for the human sins, which restored the divine honour and removed the imposition of punishment on sinners. However, O'Collins points out that many theologians who followed Anselm, such as Aquinas, Calvin, and others attributed punitive elements to Anselm's theology of redemption. He is of the view that Anselm rejected punishment in his theology of redemption. O'Collins maintains that Anselm was the forerunner in separating Christology from Soteriology, a separation which later flowered in the theology of the Protestants. However, according to him, while Anselm made a distinction between Christology and Soteriology he did not reduce Christology to Soteriology. From the time of the Reformation, however, theologians such as Philip Melanchthon and Martin Luther, etc., tended to reduce Christology to Soteriology. O'Collins says that in the theology of Rudolf Bultmann Christology was completely reduced to Soteriology.[55]

The most prominent theologian of the Middle Ages who dealt with Christology was Thomas Aquinas. His theology developed a Christology 'from above' and to him the personal union between the Word of God and human nature was the most "'fitting' consummation of human perfection." He used philosophical categories to develop his Christology. The *Summa theologiae* contains a threefold Christological analysis, devoted to "the grace, the knowledge, and the 'offices' of Christ." Supernatural or habitual grace perfected the human nature in Jesus and so human nature enjoyed the highest perfection in him. Since Aquinas argued for the greatest perfection in Jesus Christ he also ascribed perfect knowledge to him, to the extent that he held that Jesus enjoyed the beatific vision from the moment of his conception. Aquinas situated the redemptive role of Jesus in his task of being the mediator between God and human beings,

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[53] ROCH A. KERESZTY, *Jesus Christ. Fundamentals of Christology,* pp. 251-252.

[54] *Cur Deus Homo*, one of the most important works among the first three works of Anselm, was completed while he was in exile in Capua (1098). In this work on soteriology he answers two questions: (1) "For what reason or necessity did God decide to make himself man?" (2) "For what necessity and for what reason, has God, who is nonetheless all powerful, assumed the humble condition and the infirmity of human nature in view of its restoration?" The answer to this question was that the human being is in a sinful state, which brings death. In this condition human beings cannot avoid sinning, and they need forgiveness. Hence, in order to re-establish life it was fitting that "divine and human nature meet each other in the form of one sole person." See COLOMAN VIOLA, *Anselm of Canterbury,* in JEAN-YVES LACOSTE (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology* I, New York, NY: Routledge, 2005, 45-50, p. 48.

[55] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 20-21. We will come back to the Soteriological discussion in the next chapter. For a detailed study on the plan of salvation, See JAROSLAV PELIKAN, *The Christian Tradition. A History of the Development of Doctrine III – The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)*, Chicago, London: The University Chicago Press, 1978, pp. 106-157.

which was exercised in Jesus' threefold office of priest, prophet and king. Like St Bernard, Aquinas also took an interest in the mysteries of Jesus' life, ministry and redemptive work. However, after Aquinas the interest of theologians in the life and ministry of Jesus died out gradually. According to O'Collins, it was from the time of Francisco de Suárez (1548-1619) that the public life of Jesus Christ came to be largely unnoticed in Christology.[56] O'Collins is of the view that, just as in the case of the Church Fathers, the Christology of Aquinas was a combination of biblical exegesis and philosophy (based on Aristotle) and that it stood above later christologies which disregarded the mysteries of Christ's life. The emphasis of his Christology was on the incarnation. It was a Christology from above but one which dealt at great length with the resurrection.[57]

The interest in the saving work of Christ that began with St. Anselm dominated theological development during the period of the Reformation. According to O'Collins, there were certain important developments that helped further shape soteriology and especially the theme of the infinite merits of the saving work of Jesus Christ. (1) The institution of the Feast of Corpus Christi in 1264, while it encouraged faith in Christ's presence in the Eucharist, also helped to promote faith in the expiatory and infinitely meritorious role of the death of Christ on the cross that now was made available in the celebration of the Eucharist. (2) The excessive importance given to the doctrine and practice of indulgences,[58] which offered remission of temporal punishments attached to sins even after receiving forgiveness through the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation, gave an impetus to faith in the infinite merits of Jesus Christ's redemptive act. While there was emphasis on 'works', such as almsgiving, prayer, pilgrimages, etc., there was also an understanding regarding the infinite value of the redemptive act of Christ. (3) The discovery by Columbus of the New World, and the arrival of Europeans in the Americas raised questions about the redemptive role of Christ in regard to those who never even heard of Christ's saving work.[59] The greatest concern of Martin Luther (1483-1546), with whom the Reformation began, was grace and justification of sinners. O'Collins says that Luther "based his doctrine of justification on a fourfold 'only': '*solo Christo*' (by Christ alone), '*sola gratia*' (justification by God's grace alone), '*sola fide*' (by faith alone and not by works), and '*sola scriptura*' (by the authoritative word of the Bible alone and not by human traditions)."[60] According to O'Collins, Luther opposed metaphysical Christology. However, he accepted the

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[56] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 203-205.

[57] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 207.

[58] For a detailed study of indulgence, See B. POSCHMANN, *Penance and the Anointing of the Sick,* New York, NY: Herder, 1964; *Indulgences*, Sacramentum mundi, New York, NY: Herder, 1969, pp. 3, 123-129; A. LEPICIER, *Indulgences. The Origin, Nature and Development,* New York, NY: Benziger, 1906; JARED WICKS, *Martin Luther's Treatise on Indulgences,* in *Theological Studies* 28 (1967) 481-518.

[59] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 208-209.

[60] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 209.

doctrine of Chalcedon and emphasised the soteriological motive of its two-nature teaching. The Council of Trent took up the question of justification. In its decree, it taught that through his death on the cross Christ merited for us justification and made satisfaction for our sake to God the Father.[61] Benjamin Drewery says that, according to Trent, justification starts "with the prevenient grace of God through Jesus Christ" to which the sinners respond freely. "The *final* cause of justification is the glory of God and Christ; the *efficient* is the merciful God; the *meritorious* is Jesus Christ by His passion; the *instrumental* is the sacrament of baptism; the *single formal* cause is the righteousness of God – not that by which He Himself is righteous, but that by which He makes us righteous'."[62] Trent in its teaching aligned 'satisfaction' with 'punishments' and spoke of God being 'appeased'. By doing this, the Council introduced penal aspects to the theory of satisfaction, something which was not emphasised during the time of St. Anslem.[63] The Council also taught the 'real and substantial' presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. It taught that "the 'sacrifice of the Mass' is a 'representation' of the historical 'bloody sacrifice' on the Cross, with 'salutary efficacy' for the remission of daily sins and 'truly propitiatory' for the gravest."[64] O'Collins says that although Protestants did not accept the teaching of the Council regarding Eucharist, they had no difficulty in accepting its language of punishment and propitiation, especially while speaking about Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. Protestants, such as Luther and Calvin, used this language of punishment in the sense that Jesus took upon himself the guilt of human sin and suffered as a substitute. They saw it as a punishment meted out on the cross by God the Father to the extent that it was considered as a war between God the Father and God the Son.[65]

1.4.4. The Modern Period – Christology under Duress of Scientific Progress

O'Collins acknowledges that shifts and developments in a variety of academic disciplines, such as philosophy and history, inevitably influenced Christology from the seventeenth century onwards. We shall limit our enquiry here to O'Collins' examination of the most important of these shifts.

1.4.4.1. The Anthropological Turn

According to O'Collins, the first major shift that affected modern Christology was René Descartes' 'anthropological turn', a turn that was mediated to later centuries by Immanuel Kant and his followers. This led to the consideration of the "consciousness of individual subjects and

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[61] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 211.

[62] BENJAMIN DREWERY, *The Council of Trent*, in HUBERT CUNLIFFE-JONES (ed.), *A History of Christian Doctrine,* Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1978, 403-409, p. 406.

[63] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 211.

[64] BENJAMIN DREWERY, *The Council of Trent*, p. 409.

[65] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 211.

their experience of themselves" as the only criterion significant for Christological arguments. Kant saw all external realities such as God and soul as, in some sense, the products of the human mind and gave greatest significance to the human (cognitional) subject. This anthropological turn influenced Schleiermacher who, by means of his 'anthropocentric theology', tried to establish Christian truth on the basis of the "experience and self-consciousness of the individual". The upshot of this was to reduce Christology to "Jesus' unique God-consciousness."[66] According to Schleiermacher, Jesus is not the incarnated divine person but the one who enjoyed a perfect 'God-consciousness'. He said that, "*[t]he redeemer, then, is like all men of the identity of human nature, but distinguished from them all by the constant potency of His God-consciousness, which was a veritable existence of God in Him.*"[67] Later on, the influence of the anthropological turn and the emphasis on the subject of knowledge was manifest in John Henry Newman's argument for the existence of God on the basis of the experience of the 'voice of conscience'.[68] According to O'Collins, the influence of this emphasis on subjective knowledge led Karl Rahner to hold that human beings in their self-transcendence are able to go beyond the immediate data of their sense perception towards the Absolute. This led Rahner to look upon "incarnation not only as the divine self-communication in the person of the Son but also as *the* limit-case in what is possible to humanity in its dynamic openness to the Absolute."[69] Rahner regards the 'hypostatic union' as the ultimate and fundamentally unsurpassable instance of self-transcendence. He says, "[t]he God-Man is the initial beginning and the definitive triumph of the movement of the world's self-transcendence into absolute

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[66] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 213. For Schleiermacher, religious experience consists primarily in the "consciousness that the whole of our spontaneous activity comes from a source outside of us just in the same sense in which anything towards which we should have a feeling of absolute freedom must have proceeded entirely from us." See FRIEDRICH DANIEL ERNST SCHLEIERMACHER, *The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. MACKINTOSH AND J. S. STEWART, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1968 [1928], p. 16. Cf. also JÜRGEN MOLTMANN, *The Way of Jesus Christ. Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, London: SCM Press, 1990, pp. 59-63. According to him, for Schleiermacher, "religion is situated in the 'feeling' of the human person" and religious experience is the 'feeling of absolute dependence'. See p. 59.

[67] FRIEDRICH DANIEL ERNST SCHLEIERMACHER, *The Christian Faith*, p. 385. He also said that "to ascribe to Christ an absolutely powerful God-consciousness, and to attribute to Him an existence of God in Him, are exactly the same thing. The expression, 'the existence of God in anyone' can only express the relation of the omnipresence of God to this one." See p. 387.

[68] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 213. According to Newman, his own existence, his conscience, and the created world spoke of the existence of God. He said "the being of a God … is as certain to me as the certainty of my own conscience, though when I try to put the grounds of that certainty into logical shape I find a difficulty in doing so in mood and figure to my satisfaction … If I looked into a mirror, and did not see my face, I should have the sort of feeling which actually comes upon me, when I look into this living busy world, and see no reflection of its Creator … Were it not for this voice, speaking so clearly in my conscience and my heart, I should be an atheist, or a pantheist, or a polytheist when I looked into the world." See also JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, *Apologia pro vita sua, Being A History of His Religious Opinions*, Martin J. Svaglic (ed.), New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990 [1967], pp. 216-217. Newman also reflects on how the experience of human beings in the world bears witness to a profound mystery which is beyond human solution. See p. 217. Newman also says that "even the unaided reason, when correctly exercised, leads to belief in God, in the immortality of the soul, and in a future retribution." However, he maintains that when one speaks about the "the faculty of reason actually and historically," there is a tendency "towards unbelief a simple unbelief in matters of religion." See p. 218.

[69] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 214.

closeness to the mystery of God."[70] The upshot of what we have stated here is that the anthropological turn led to a theology that saw Christology primarily in terms of its significance for human subjectivity.

1.4.4.2. Scientific Objectivity

The second shift that affected Christology, beginning from Descartes and Galileo Galilei[71] and later developed by Isaac Newton,[72] was the search for scientific objectivity. According to O'Collins, Newtonian physics and the obsessive interest in absolute objectivity issued in an emphasis on reason rather than belief. It was only with the introduction of the General Theory of Relativity by Albert Einstein that the object-subject relationship in all knowledge was seen again from its proper perspective. However, O'Collins is of the view that although many abandoned the notion of achieving pure objectivity, there are still people, especially in historical studies, who keep this trend alive. According to him, John P. Meier reflects this tendency especially in his multivolume work, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, because in it, he aims merely to describe the 'facts' relating to Jesus without explaining the purpose of his life.[73] This way of emphasising only facts and empirical data marginalizes one's belief in, and the importance given to, dogmatic statements.

1.4.4.3. Enlightenment, Deism and the Theory of Evolution

The Christology of the twentieth century evidenced a mingling of Enlightenment thought, deism and the theory of evolution, says O'Collins. According to John H. S. Kent, this was a period of social and intellectual change in which Christianity underwent a transformation. The twentieth century saw the emergence of a post-Christian society, which "no longer accepted the claim of

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[70] KARL RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity,* trans. WILLIAM V. DYCH, New York, NY: Crossroad, 1978 [1976] (1999 print), p.181. While comparing the process of the self-communication of God and the process of world history, he says, "[t]here is perhaps no particular difficulty in conceiving of the history of the world and of spirit as the history of a self-transcendence into the life of God. In its ultimate and highest phase this self-transcendence is identical with an absolute self-communication of God, which signifies the same process as seen from God's side." See p. 198.

[71] Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) was an astronomer and physicist who regarded mathematics as the heart of physics. He was responsible for the introduction of the telescope into the study of astronomy. He was condemned by the Church because of his support for Copernicanism (the view that the sun is the centre of the universe, instead of the earth). He demanded freedom for the study of natural phenomena and advocated human freedom of inquiry and expression. See ANDREW BELSY, *Galileo Galilei* in TED HONDERICH (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 304.

[72] Isaac Newton (1642-1727), considered the greatest scientist of all time, is also thought to be the forerunner of all physical sciences. He was much interested in mathematics and experiments. He was also interested in theological and other important fields of study such as chronology and alchemy. According to R. Ravindra, the real interest of Newton "lay in a wide and comprehensive knowledge that he hoped to acquire through alchemy and theology, and …. he viewed his scientific studies only as amusing diversions." He also says that while Newton was a monotheist, he strongly opposed Trinitarian belief. Although he argued for the autonomy of nature and revelation, he regarded his study of natural philosophy as an enquiry into the works of God. See RAVI RAVINDRA, *Newton, Isaac,* in LINDSY JONES (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd edition, Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2005, 6588-6589, pp. 6588-6589.

[73] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 214-215.

the Churches to possess an immutable, clearly defined body of revealed religious knowledge about both God and man."[74] Enlightenment[75] stressed the use of human reason for the knowledge of God and so became antagonistic to "divine revelation, religious tradition, and their authority." In line with this tendency, the doctrine of the Trinity was contested on account of its inaccessibility to reason, and Jesus was portrayed as at best a teacher of wisdom and the "perfect example of moral perfection." Albrecht Ritschl, Adolf von Harnack, and the neo-Kantian liberal theologians were strongly influenced by this way of thinking. O'Collins notes that some contemporary theologians, too, play down the eschatological character of Jesus and portray him in narrowly historicist categories (e.g., as a Cynic-style philosopher or an ethical teacher).[76] Deism[77] emerged at about the same period in the British Isles, Europe and North America. This movement, too, emphasised the supremacy of reason in matters of religion and denied revelation, miracles, and all other extra-ordinary acts of God in human history. To deists, it was God who created the universe. However, after creation God had no role in, and never interacted with, the world. This starting point inevitably meant that Deism denied any and all sub-acts of God, such as incarnation, the virginal conception, miracles and resurrection. In contemporary Christology, O'Collins sees traces of Deism in the writings of Edward Schillebeeckx on Christ's

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[74] JOHN H. S. KENT, *Christian Theology in the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, in HUBERT CUNLIFFE-JONES (ed.), *A History of Christian Doctrine,* Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1978, 459-591, p. 461.

[75] The Enlightenment was a rationalist and liberal cultural movement, which began around 1690 and continued till the French Revolution in 1789. Basically enlightenment was characterized by empirical investigation in natural sciences and the quest to replace authority by critical reason. Its influence on theology was evident in the attack on revelation, ecclesiastical authority, dogma, etc. Reason became "the principal criterion of truth." See ANTHONY LEVI, *Enlightenment,* in JEAN-YVES LACOSTE (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology* I, New York, NY: Routledge, 2005, 477-479, pp. 477-478.

[76] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 216-217. The authors who have proposed a radical re-imaging of Jesus on the basis of historical research include F. GERALD DOWNING, *Christ and the Cynics. Jesus and other Radical Preachers in First-Century Tradition,* Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988; JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN, *The Historical Jesus. The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant,* Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991. Daniel J. Harrington provides an overview of the various images of Jesus found in recent scholarship. What follows is a list of these authors, their preferred image of Jesus, and the most important elements they call upon to argue their case: (1) E. P. Sanders – Jesus an eschatological prophet – the action of Jesus in the Jerusalem temple and apocalyptic writings. Cf. E. P. SANDERS, *Jesus and Judaism*, Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985. (2) S. F. G. Brandon – Jesus as a political revolutionary – reports about rebels against Rome. Cf. S. F. G. BRANDON, *Jesus and the Zealots. A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity*, New York, NY: Scribner's; Manchester, UK; University of Manchester, 1967. (3) M. Smith – Jesus as a magician – Greek magical papyri. Cf. M. SMITH, *Jesus the Magician*, New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1978. (4) Harvey Falk – an Orthodox Jew and Pharisee of the Essene community – the Dead Sea scrolls. (5) Harvey Falk – Jesus as a Hillelite – Hillel-Shammai debates. Cf. HARVEY FALK, *Jesus the Pharisee. A New Look at the Jewishness of Jesus,* New York, NY; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1985. (6) Geza Vermes – Jesus as a Galilean charismatic and holy man like Honi the Circle-Drawer and Hanina ben Dosa – writings of Josephus and rabbinic accounts. Cf. GEZA VERMES, *Jesus the Jew. A Historian's Reading of the Gospels*, Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1981; GEZA VERMES, *The Gospel of Jesus the Jew,* Newcastle upon Tyne: University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1981; GEZA VERMES, *Jesus and the World of Judaism,* Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984. (7) B. D. Chilton – Jesus as a Galilean rabbi – targums. Cf. B. D. CHILTON, *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible. Jesus' Use of the Interpreted Scripture of His Time,* Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1984. See DANIEL J. HARRINGTON, *The Jewishness of Jesus. Facing Some Problems,* in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49 (1987) 1-13, pp. 3-4, 7-8.

[77] Deism, according to J. C. A. Gaskin, is a "philosophical belief in a god established by reason and evidence." Deists did not believe in extraordinary revelation. According to them, the creator does not respond to human prayer and their needs. See J. C. A. GASKIN, *Deism,* in TED HONDERICH (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 182.

virginal conception and resurrection. Deists were partially successful in discrediting the authority of the scriptures. According to O'Collins, deists accepted the evolution theory of Charles Darwin and applied it to all forms of life and even to the cosmos, in a fashion which left little or no room for the Christian belief in creation. The most significant person to use evolutionary theory in defense of Christianity, according to O'Collins, was Teilhard de Chardin who, in the scheme of "cosmogenesis, anthropogenesis, and christogenesis detected an evolving spiritualization of matter, in which humanity and the entire universe move towards the final consummation in Christ as the omega-point." For Teilhard, Christ was then the intrinsic goal of both cosmic and historical evolution.[78]

1.4.4.4. Philosophical Pluralism and Historical Consciousness

O'Collins contends also that in the modern world the emergence of philosophical pluralism affected Christology, especially in the Western world. Today Greek philosophy, which once had an exclusive hold over theological reflection, has become one school among others including "analytic philosophy, existentialism, idealism, neo-Thomism, phenomenology, philosophical hermeneutics, pragmatism, process philosophy, and transcendental philosophy." The emergence of philosophical pluralism influenced Christology in many ways. The 'new' philosophies were employed to reject belief in Christ's divinity (G. W. F. Hegel) and the existence of God (Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx), and to argue against the historicity of the Gospels (Friedrich Strauss).[79]

The recourse to scientific methods in historical research towards the end of the eighteenth century, especially when applied to the Bible, was extremely significant for Christology. Historical consciousness almost replaced metaphysical thinking because every truth had to be physically and historically verified. This turn to history was reflected in the quest for the historical Jesus that was initiated by Hermann Samuel Reimarus[80] and continued by people such as Ernest Renan, D. F. Strauss, and Adolf von Harnack. This quest, pursued by rationalists, humanitarians, and liberal Christians did not reach a consensus. O'Collins notes that Catholic theology took little interest in the discoveries and debates about the history of Jesus until the

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[78] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 218.

[79] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 218.

[80] It was Hermann Samuel Reimarus, in the 18th century, who initiated historical Jesus research by portraying Jesus as a would-be political leader. See ROY A. HARRISVILLE & WALTER SUNDBERG (eds.), *The Bible in Modern Culture. Baruch Spinoza to Brevard Childs,* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002, p. 53. Reimarus wrote that after Jesus' death his disciples stole away his body and cooked up a false story about his resurrection and established the Church. In Reimarus' view there is no credibility in the account of the resurrection and he suspects especially the accounts of the watchers at the tomb. But Reimarus did not say that Christian religion is without merit or that it has no moral value. See also PETER DE MEY, *Historical Criticism and the Resurrection of Jesus. A New Tendency in Recent Scholarship,* in *Louvain Studies* 23 (1998) 246-273, p. 247; GREGORY W. DAWES, *The Historical Jesus Quest. A Foundational Anthology,* Leiden: Deo Publishing, 1999, p. 56. According to O'Collins, although Reimarus' work was rejected by many, it contributed towards "recognizing clearly that the real Jesus of history and the Christ preached by the Church were not necessarily the same." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology,* p. 172.

Second Vatican Council. According to him, the Constitution on Divine Revelation encouraged theologians to consider the Bible as 'the very soul' of their research and give pride of place to 'salvation history'. He finds this emphasis of the Council now reflected in the works of theologians of the more recent period, such as Walter Kasper, Hans Küng, Schlillebeeckx, John Sobrino, etc., who have used the findings of biblical research to develop their Christologies.[81]

1.4.4.5. The Role of Historical Research

Historical research has sought to examine the person of Jesus, his background, his earthly life, his bringing of a new religion, and the origins of Christianity. However, the questions we need to answer here are: How well can one know the history of Jesus and where are we to locate him? What is the advantage of knowing the historical person of Jesus? Is it necessary to know the history of Jesus or how much history does one need to have faith in Jesus?.[82] Regarding historical research, O'Collins makes three points. First, one must "distinguish that history which was actually lived and experienced from the historical reconstruction and interpretation which historians can offer us." In the case of Christology, this means that we must distinguish between 'the historical Jesus' who is (or was) the actual Jesus in time and space, and the 'Jesus of history'. "In the case of the latter, we deal with the picture of Jesus' life and death … which historical research produces."[83] Secondly, "the historical methods and research which concern Christology are mainly identical with the work of biblical scholars." O'Collins insists that theologians "should not rely so much on marginal scholars who promote possible, sometimes barely possible, theories." Instead, "one is better advised to follow widely accepted results coming from mainline exegetes."[84] Finally, according to O'Collins, historical research involves "*particular* persons and *contingent* events," and needs to be distinguished from philosophy which investigates "*general* truths, *universal* norms and *necessary* principles." When we deal with the person of 'Jesus Christ', history is concerned with the particular i.e., 'Jesus', whereas it is the domain of philosophy that deals with the universal i.e., 'Christ'. "To call Jesus 'the Christ' or by the name 'Christ' is to state that he belongs to the present and does so everywhere and for everyone. It is to state that he enjoys an absolute and universal value which lifts him beyond the relative and particular aspects of his history."[85]

According to O'Collins, there are four major requirements if we are to engage in historical research about the life of Jesus: "(a) That we have access in some degree to the whole of our

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[81] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* pp. 22-23.

[82] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 6.

[83] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 28.

[84] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 29. Some of the biblical scholars O'Collins seems to agree with are: C. K. Barrett, Günther Bornkamm, Raymond Brown, Hans Conzelmann, J. D. G. Dunn, Joseph Fitzmyer, R. H. Fuller, Martin Hengel, Joachim Jeremias, Xavier Léon-Dufour, C.F.D. Moule, Rudolf Schnackenburg and Heinz Schürmann.

[85] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 29.

subject's life and development; (b) that some chronological framework can be established; (c) that we have some access to his motivation and psychology; (d) that in our portrayal we are able to make use of biographical 'types'" – i.e., some form of categorization that allows us to situate the person in question into some sort of 'type' (e.g., social reformer, antisocial recluse, etc.). However, O'Collins points out that in the case of Jesus all these requirements cannot be fulfilled because our sources are limited.[86] What we have are the gospels, which according to O'Collins, offer "an amalgam of believing witness and historical reminiscence" that elicit the reader's faith. The Gospels, according to him, then, are neither devotional literature belonging to Christian worship nor ordinary historical sources.[87]

While upholding the significance of the data provided by the gospels and certain historical evidences about Jesus, O'Collins is also concerned about the maximalization and marginalization of it by some theologians. He is of the view that the apocryphal and non-canonical gospels maximalized the data in the gospels because they tried to supplement and revise the facts and figures about "Jesus' birth, life, teaching, death and resurrection" found there.[88] However, people like Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Sören Kierkegaard and Rudolf Bultmann minimalized the importance of the historical data found in the gospels. O'Collins' comments on Bultmann and Lessing are instructive in this regard.

According to Bultmann, the teaching of St. John and St. Paul about the crucifixion provides us with the essential kerygma for faith and theology. That is to say, according to Bultmann, faith and theology rested on a minimal amount of history, namely, knowledge of the existence and crucifixion of Jesus.[89] But O'Collins refutes this view by saying that "[i]f no historical detail of Jesus' story matters other than his sheer existence and crucifixion, why should we not look for the saving event in one of the thousands of others who died at the hands of the Romans by this sadistic form of execution?"[90] Against the view of Bultmann he also argues that the kerygma of St. Paul included things other than the crucifixion of Jesus, such as his last supper, burial, post-resurrectional appearances, etc. Hence, O'Collins does not support the view that only the existence and crucifixion of Jesus are sufficient elements for faith and theology. O'Collins also maintains that, from the writings of Bultmann, it is clear that he knew "a good deal about the historical Jesus." He understands Bultmann's view about the crucifixion as the only necessary

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[86] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology*, p. 174.

[87] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology*, p. 175.

[88] See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 5. O'Collins also believes that some of the work produced in the past, such as the 'lives' of Jesus, sermons and meditations on the gospels, and classic films like Franco Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* involved a maximalization of the historical data provided by the gospels.

[89] RUDOLF BULTMANN, *The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus,* in C. BRAATEN & R. HARRISVILLE (eds.), *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ. Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus,* New York, NY Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964, 15-42, p. 20.

[90] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 6.

means for faith in Jesus as having its origins in his concern to develop a portrait of Jesus that was 'theologically neutral'. That is to say, Bultmann insisted on Christianity's beginning at Easter and saw the earthly life of Jesus from the point of view of Judaism (Jesus as a rabbinical teacher), and hence, related to the Old Testament. O'Collins' suggests that Bultmann's minimalization of the necessity of historical data amounts to a type of docetism because "it appears to trivialize Incarnation out of a preoccupation with the present proclamation."[91]

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing hesitated to believe in the miracles of the past since there were no more reports of miracles happening in the eighteenth century. He maintained that the only proof that we have at present for those miracles is human testimony, and those truths of history cannot be demonstrated today. Lessing did not deny the fact that Jesus performed miracles. However, he says that these miracles do not evoke in him a faith in Jesus. He maintains that, "since the truth of these miracles has completely ceased to be demonstrable by miracles still happening at the present time, since they are no more than reports of miracles … I deny that they can and should bind me in the least to a faith in the other teachings of Christ." He is of the view that "[i]f no historical truth can be demonstrated, then nothing can be demonstrated by means of historical truths. That is: *accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason.*"[92] O'Collins objects to this view by saying that, "although [historical truths] cannot be demonstrated by mathematical calculations, repeated scientific experiments, or philosophical logic, historical truths can certainly be established beyond any reasonable doubt."[93] In the same vein, O'Collins also states that many people, such as Joachim Jeremias, Stauffer, Cullmann, Pannenberg, etc., manifest an excessive trust in the power of historical research to find the truth about the historical Jesus. Jeremias, for example, developed a method for arriving at the historical Jesus which involved five 'bulwarks': "literary criticism, form criticism, our new knowledge of first-century Palestine, our knowledge of Jesus' mother tongue (Aramaic) and the rediscovery of the eschatological character of Jesus' message."[94] He opposed the view that the kerygma is the basic element for faith in Jesus and maximalized the significance of the gospels. He said:

> Every verse of the Gospels tells us that the origin of Christianity is not the Kerygma, not the Resurrection experience of the disciples, not the Christ-idea, but an historical event, to wit, the appearance of the Man Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and His message. … The gospel that Jesus proclaimed precedes the Kerygma of the primitive community. … Whatever utterance the Kerygma presents itself to us, its origins are always to be found in the message of Jesus.[95]

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[91] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology*, p. 177.

[92] GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING, *On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power,* in HENRY CHADWICK (trans.), *Lessing's Theological Writings*, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1956, p. 53.

[93] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 8.

[94] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology*, p. 179.

[95] JOACHIM JEREMIAS, *The Present Position in the Controversy Concerning the Problem of the Historical Jesus,* in *The Expository Times* 69 (1957-1958) 333-339, p. 336.

However, Ernst Käsemann argued against this maximalization and insisted that one must not make a clear-cut and arbitrary division between the kerygma and the Gospels. He said, "[i]n the New Testament, didache is not so separated from kerygma as to be associated primarily with the transmission of the tradition about Jesus. … This kind of arbitrary restriction and distinction tends to make us think of different strands of tradition – a concept which would not seem to be at all tenable for the Synoptists."[96] Against these extreme positions, O'Collins adopts what can best be described as a moderate view where, first of all, he admits the necessity of historical research, and secondly, the use of both the Gospels and the kerygma as data for such research. He maintains that to prove the existence of any historical person, one will need historical proofs. Moreover, those who do not make use of the data provided by a particular culture and currents of thoughts cannot consider or engage in a meaningful academic discussion about the person in question.[97]

1.4.4.6. The Role of Philosophy

O'Collins maintains that for "Christology we need both the data and truths of history and the help and truths of philosophical reason." However, he regards philosophy as having a secondary role because, according to him, Christian theology presupposes that Christian faith in the risen Jesus as the Saviour of the world and Son of God is true. Hence, Christology does not need any more proof for its "truths about Christ's resurrection, saving function and divinity." What it requires from philosophy are clarifications about the meaning and presuppositions of these truths. Even here he underscores the limits of philosophy because he says that only theological faith can adequately answer the many questions that it tries to address. Philosophy helps Christology, firstly, by providing certain concepts and terms and, secondly, by helping to "organize Christology into a systematic and coherent whole."[98] In a broader sense, O'Collins regards both theology and philosophy as having the same object – "what is ultimate in reality." However, they differ in their sources. Theology has divine revelation communicated through salvation history and Jesus as its source and "deals with historical ultimates, which center on Jesus as the Saviour and the Redeemer." In contrast, the source of philosophy is autonomous reason which "seeks the basis and ground of things that happen repeatedly and everywhere."[99]

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[96] ERNST KÄSEMANN, *New Testament Questions of Today*, trans. W. J. MONTAGUE, London: SCM Press, 1969 [1965], pp. 25-26.

[97] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 9.

[98] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 29. According to O'Collins, the questions that are to be addressed by philosophy are: "How could an innocent man's atrocious death do anything to expiate and lift the burden of human guilt? What universal elements in human life does Christ's resurrection respond to? What basic experiences and hopes make it possible to believe in and interpret more fully his resurrection? In the common situation shared by human beings what makes them candidates for salvation? When we confess Jesus Christ to be true God and true man, what ultimately enters into our account of divinity and humanity? Can we think of God in such a way that we can 'become' something and, specifically, become matter as John's gospel affirms ('The Word became flesh')?" See pp. 29-30.

[99] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Philosophy and Theology*, in *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 46 (1979) 170-176, p. 171.

While theology gives priority to God, philosophy gives priority to human existence and its ultimate condition. Hence, according to O'Collins, although both look towards the ultimate, their subject matters and their way of dealing with the ultimate are different. He also points out that there is a difference in the results of both philosophy and theology. Whereas in philosophy the coming generation of philosophers can build on the results of previous philosophers, in theology the essential remains the same and "does not tolerate an increase." As theology "seeks to understand the divine revelation accepted in faith, theology does not experience in any essential way cumulative and progressive gains in the human interpretation and expression of the truth about God."[100] However, he shirks from making excessive claims about the differences between theology and philosophy and endeavours to expound on the relationship between both disciplines. Theology makes use of philosophy to "reflect, argue coherently and systematically, and induce and deduce conclusions in the light of the data." Philosophy does enjoy a freedom that is not possible for theology. The "authority in philosophy is reckoned to be unaided human reason" and it is "*free* from traditional, biblical and communitarian authority."[101] However, the analysis of the past demonstrates that philosophy also depends on the philosophers of the past and their philosophy for their content and language. In the final analysis, O'Collins pleads for "a certain interdependence alongside a separate identity" for the two disciplines.[102] Concerning the use of philosophy in the theology of Incarnation he says, "[i]t is not that any true or worthwhile philosophical ideas about humanity can ever be genuinely 'alien' to the good news revealed in Jesus Christ, but the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of the Son of God will fire and fuse these ideas into a new framework."[103] Philosophical concepts and ideas change when they are used in theology.

Having examined O'Collins' reflections on historical methodology and its significance for Christology, let us turn our attention to his understanding of the person of Jesus, beginning with his discussion of the titles ascribed to him.

2. Christology in the Titles and Images of Jesus

In this section, we shall discuss briefly the titles attributed to, and the images used of, Jesus. According to O'Collins, these "contribute to our understanding and interpretation of him, by

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[100] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* p. 26.

[101] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Philosophy and Theology*, p. 172.

[102] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology,* pp. 27-30. O'Collins takes a moderate view and opposes those such as Pascal who claims that faith must humiliate reason and that greater importance must be given to the 'heart' above reason, Kierkegaard who regarded faith as overcoming reason, and Kant who held that knowledge must give way to belief.

[103] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Philosophy and Theology*, p. 175.

providing some access to the mystery of his person."[104] The first Christians sought to proclaim and interpret Jesus by articulating their convictions about him in the light of "the ideas, beliefs, and expectations of Judaism which we primarily come across in the OT."[105] O'Collins makes a distinction between functional and personal titles in the case of Jesus.

2.1. Functional Titles

There are five titles used to identify Jesus that are functional in character. According to O'Collins, speaking of Jesus in these terms "meant more about his doing than his being. While they indicated something about his ontological identity 'in himself', these terms highlighted his saving role 'for us'."[106] These titles are ascribed to Jesus from the point of view of his redeeming work.

2.1.1. Christ

The earliest known Christian writing about Jesus is that of St. Paul; he used the title '*Christ*' and identified it with the name of Jesus. Paul used 'Christ' 270 times in his letters[107] "but never considers it necessary to argue explicitly that Jesus is 'the Christ' whom Israel expected." The honorific title Christ (*Christos* in Greek and *mashiach* in Hebrew) meant 'anointed one' and this meaning arose from the practice of anointing kings (e.g., a king was called 'the Lord's anointed,' I Sam 16:6), the ordination of the Aaronic priesthood (e.g., a high priest's head was anointed, Ex 29:1-9) and the installation of prophets (e.g., Elijah was commanded to anoint Elisha, I Kg 19:16).[108] A 'king' was considered to be a Messiah and his role in the Old Testament was always

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[104] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Images of Jesus and Modern Theology,* in STANLEY E. PORTER *et al.* (eds.), *Images of Christ. Ancient and Modern* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 128-143, pp. 129-130. See also GERALD O'COLLINS, *Images of Jesus. Reappropriating Titular Christology*, in *Theology Digest* 44 (1997) 303-318, p. 303.

[105] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 22. According to O'Collins, the images and concepts of the early Christians were also illuminated by non-canonical Jewish pseudepigrapha, the corpus of writings from Qumran, the Letter of Ariteas, fragments from Hellenistic-Jewish authors, the works of Philo, Josephus, and the oral rabbinic traditions of the Babylonian Talmud. See p. 23.

[106] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 45. According to Jaques Dupuis, the various categories of Christological titles include the messianic (Christ, Servant of Yahweh), functional (Prophet, Saviour, Lord), and ontological (Word of God, Son of God). In his view, the New Testament Christology is primarily functional and not ontological. He also says that the Christological titles can neither be underestimated nor can they be exaggerated. "A Christology of titles can never constitute by itself a complete Christology... Incomplete in itself, a Christology of titles has the added inherent drawback of saying little about the concrete human story of Jesus; to that extent it runs the risk of remaining abstract." See JAQUES DUPUIS, *Who Do You Say I Am? Introduction to Christology,* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994, pp. 19-20.

[107] The term *Christos* is used 531 times in the New Testament. According to Larry W. Hurtado, the title *Christos* evolved from the Jewish usage of the Greek word for the Hebrew word *mashiach*, which meant anointed. "Most frequently Paul uses *Christos* on its own to refer to Jesus (about 150 times; e.g., 1 Cor. 15:3; Rom. 10:4); but he also used the term in varying combinations with others: 'Christ Jesus,' 'Jesus Christ,' 'Jesus Christ our Lord,' and 'Our/the Lord Jesus Christ' (examples of all appear in Rom. 1:1-7)." He also says that when 'Christ' is used by Paul on its own, it always refers to Jesus. See LARRY W. HURTADO, *Lord Jesus Christ. Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity,* Cambridge: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003, p. 99.

[108] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 25. O'Collins says that the *munus triplex* (triple office of king, priest and prophet) of the Old Testament later helped in recognizing these offices in Jesus. "Already present in the writings of the Fathers and medieval theologians, this theme of Christ's 'triple

linked with divine election, with the house of David and with an everlasting dynasty (Ps 89:3-4). In Judaistic understanding, this Messiah whom they hoped for, would be their liberator. There is only a faint reference to the suffering Messiah in the Old Testament.[109] According to O'Collins, the first Christians saw in Jesus the fulfilment of the promise of the Messiah. He also says that, "Jesus himself interpreted his person and activity messianically."[110]

2.1.2. High Priest

The 'priestly' office was ascribed to Jesus – as the *High Priest* - although he himself was not born into the priestly class of Levites. Jesus was appointed by God 'after the order of Melchizedek' (Heb 5:6, 10). However, according to the author of the Letter to the Hebrews, "[t]he efficacy of his sacrifice, his mediation of the new covenant, the perfect consistency between his human life and cultic activity, his divine identity, and his direct appointment by God made Jesus' priesthood quite superior to the Levitical one (Heb 6:20-10:18)."[111]

2.1.3. Last Adam

The image of Jesus as 'the *last Adam*' or 'the new Adam' referred primarily to his saving and salvific function. But this image of Adam, according to O'Collins, had both negative and positive connotations in the Old Testament. Negatively, the scriptures understood Adam as the one who brought death to human beings through his sin (Dan 7:13-14). Positively, Adam, referred to the one who is 'above every living being in the creation' (Sir 49:16). In the Old Testament, there was an expectation of the appearance of an Adam-like figure at the close of the messianic age. This image allowed Paul to present Adam foreshadowing the figure of Christ (Rom 5:12-21).[112] The image of Jesus as the 'new Adam' that Paul had employed in his writings, was used in the Second Vatican Council (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 22), and more recently by Pope John Paul II in one of his encyclicals (*Redemptor hominis*, n. 8).[113]

2.1.4. Wisdom

The first Christians also used the theme of '*wisdom*' to articulate their experience of Jesus. O'Collins says that the Book of Proverbs personified the divine attribute or function of wisdom,

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office' was developed by John Calvin (1509-64), many Protestant scholars, John Henry Newman (1801-90), and the Second Vatican Council in its 1964 Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (LG 34-6)." See p. 26.

[109] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 28. According to O'Collins, the concept of suffering is found above all in the Servant Songs of Second Isaiah (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). But, according to him, it is not clear whether the identity of the servant meant Israel as a nation, an individual or both. It is in the final song that we find reference to his suffering, death, and burial. It also speaks about his exaltation and the vicarious value of his suffering for the people. See p. 29.

[110] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 31.

[111] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 31.

[112] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 31-33.

[113] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Images of Jesus and Modern Theology,* p. 134.

which existed before the world was made as having revealed God, and acted as God's agent in creation (Pr 8:22-31) Similar ideas were also found in other texts (e.g., Wis 8:4-6; Sir 1:4-9). According to O'Collins, the New Testament gave various meanings to the Old Testament term 'wisdom' in its accounts. In Jn 1:1-2, wisdom reflected the pre-existence of Jesus. In 1 Cor 1:17-18, 24-25, wisdom was used to understand Christ as "reflecting the divine glory, mirroring light, and being an image of God." In Jn 1:3, wisdom gained the cosmic significance of Christ as God's agent in the creation of the world.[114] But, according to O'Collins, the New Testament does not apply the "themes of Lady Wisdom and her radiant beauty" to Christ. He is also of the view that the New Testament makes an explicit equation of Jesus with divine wisdom (Luke considers Jesus as 'filled with wisdom' (Lk 2:40)).[115]

2.1.5. Word

In the New Testament and in the Christian thought, the word commonly used to refer to Jesus was 'the *Word*' or *Logos*. O'Collins makes a comparison between 'wisdom' and the 'word' and says that, like wisdom, the word is with God from the beginning (Gen 1:1; Jn 1:1); it is creative (Gen 1:1); and it "expresses God's active power and self-revelation towards and in the created world."[116] For O'Collins, the use of 'Word' presents various christological possibilities. (1) It gives the possibility of identification and distinction: identification because a word spoken is an extension of the person and so becomes identical with the person; distinction because a word spoken has an independent existence from the speaker. Hence, Jesus was both identified with God and distinct from Him. (2) God was uttering this word from the beginning and that shows the eternal pre-existence of the Word, the Logos-Son. (3) A word reveals the speaker and his/her mind. Hence, the word signifies the revelation of God and when we consider Jesus as the Word, this would signify the revelation of God through the Son. (4) The use of Logos helped Christians to dialogue with the thinkers of other religions because the idea of Logos provided some common ground with Jewish, Platonic, and Stoic strands of thought. But the difference with

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[114] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 37-38.

[115] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 39. According to O'Collins, it is not only in the New Testament that one finds the use of 'wisdom' referring to Jesus but also in later writings. The Church Fathers described Christ as 'Wisdom'. With a few exceptions, like Irenaeus who identified wisdom with the Spirit of God, most people identify wisdom with Jesus.

[116] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 40. According to O'Collins, John uses 'word' instead of wisdom to refer to Jesus because of various reasons. 1. The word *Sophia* was personified as Lady Wisdom (e.g. Pr 1:20-33) and so it would have been awkward to use it for Jesus who was a male. 2. In Hellenistic Judaism, the Torah was identified with wisdom and hence to identify wisdom with Jesus would be to equate God with the Torah. 3. The other New Testament writers prepared the way for the prologue of John by using the word logos for God's revelation through Christ. See pp. 41-42. James D. G. Dunn says, "Inquiry into the identification of Jesus as the Logos in John 1 has tended to concentrate too much on the Jewish and Hellenistic background and to give too little prominence to the earlier Christian talk of the word of God. But if the Fourth Evangelist was writing near the end of the first century … then it is *a priori* likely that the previous sixty years of Christian thought on the subject had exerted as strong an influence on him as any other line of thought." See JAMES D. G. DUNN, *Christology in the Making. A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation,* London: SCM Press, 1980, p. 230.

Christianity was that the latter believed in the 'Logos made flesh'. (5) By calling Jesus Word and Wisdom of God, Christians indicated the divinity of the Jesus of history, His pre-existence with God and also that he was the last Adam.[117]

2.2. Personal Titles

According to O'Collins, there are other words and phrases from pre-Christian Judaism which were very significant when used to interpret who Jesus was, including Son of man, Son of God, Lord, Saviour and God. A few other images presented by the scripture and traditions could also be taken note of here, such as Good Shepherd, Divine Lord, Suffering Servant, Eschatological Prophet and Lamb of God.[118] But we restrict our discussion to the titles Son of Man, Son of God, and Lord due to their specific usage in the scripture and later Christian tradition, and to the extent that they help us to understand the person of Jesus.

2.2.1. Son of Man

When we consider the *sonship* of Jesus we find that Mark gives two possibilities, Jesus as the *son of Mary* (Mk 6:3), which presents him as human, and as Son of the most high God (Mk 5:7), which portrays him as divine. The title 'Son of man' (*bar nash(a)* in Aramaic) appears sixty-nine times in the Synoptic Gospels and a dozen times in John, indicating a roundabout way of referring to oneself.[119] In the Old Testament, it did not indicate individuals but symbolized the angels (Dan 7:13-14) or "the righteous and persecuted Jews who will be vindicated and given authority by God" (Dan 7:18). But in Daniel, this did not refer to any suffering of the son of man nor did it refer to a messianic picture of the son of man as a deliverer. In the New Testament, the term referred to Jesus' humble condition (Mk 2:10), his suffering, death and resurrection (Mk 9:9), and his future coming with power (Mk 8:8). O'Collins says that "[t]he 'Son of man' (rather than Messiah or Son of God) was Jesus' characteristic way of referring to himself, just as he characteristically called God 'Father' and characteristically spoke of his mission as being in the service of God's 'kingdom' or rule."[120] The early Christians used 'Son of man' to mean the humanity of Christ. As we saw above, Ignatius of Antioch used it to emphasise the divinity and

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[117] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 42-44.

[118] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Images of Jesus and Modern Theology,* p. 128.

[119] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 63.

[120] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 62-63, 65. There are many scholars who are of the view that none of the three places in which Jesus is shown as Son of man in the Gospels were actually sayings of Jesus. But O'Collins is of the view that there are reasons to accept that they were spoken by Jesus himself: (1) No one other than Jesus applies this title to himself except in Acts 7:56; (2) There are multiple attestations of the term in the Gospels. It is not only Mark but also Luke and Mathew who use it. (3) This term had some Jewish background but the Church did not develop it further. (4) Sometimes the use of the term implied an apparent differentiation between the figure 'Son of man' and Jesus. In Luke's version, we find Jesus saying, 'Everyone who acknowledges *me* before men, the *Son of man* also will acknowledge before the angels of God' (Lk 12:8). Here a difference is shown between 'me' and 'Son of man'. But this difference is only intended to show the oneness of the Jesus of the present and of the future. See pp. 64-65.

humanity of Jesus Christ.[121] O'Collins also points out that this title ('Son of man') was used by Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexandria, Thomas Aquinas, etc., "as a standard way for denoting the human nature of Christ."[122]

2.2.2. Son of God

In the Old Testament, *divine sonship* was attributed to various subjects: angelic beings, the chosen people of Israel, the kings of the chosen people, to certain righteous persons, and to men who cared for widows and orphans. There are also other traditions, for example, in Egypt, where rulers were called sons of God. Divine sonship or the title 'Son of God' meant two things: belonging to God/adopted by God, or being commissioned by God to fulfil a mission. The sonship that was attached to God's covenant with David, where God legitimated the son of David, was not a physical sonship but an adopted sonship, which established a connection between kingship and divine adoption (Ps 89). But according to O'Collins, 'son of God' used in this context did not connote messianic expectations and was not an Old Testament messianic title. Johannine literature used 'Son' and 'Son of God' very frequently to encourage readers to believe in Jesus as the Son of God. According to O'Collins, the oldest Christian document calls Jesus 'God's Son' (1 Thes 1:10) and Paul uses it at various places in his letters (17 times) as if it were customary for the early Christians to use this title. O'Collins holds that "[a]t any rate, Jesus' resurrection and its aftermath led the early Christians to call him 'Son of God' as being uniquely related to the Father for the salvation of the world."[123] There is no explicit reference to Jesus calling himself 'Son of God'. An important passage where Jesus calls God his Father is found in Mt 11:27 where the Son claims to have a unique knowledge of the Father. More than the use of 'Son of God' for himself, Jesus is seen addressing God as the 'Father' in the Synoptic Gospels (fifty-one times).[124]

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[121] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 159. See also footnote no.24.

[122] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 159.

[123] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus,* p. 19. See also GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 113-117. According to James D. G. Dunn, "[n]one of the other titles or ways of assessing Christ… has had both the historical depth and lasting power of the 'Son of God'." He also says that, "in the controversies of the third, fourth and fifth centuries it was the understanding of Christ as Son of God which provided the absolutely crucial category in defining the nature of Christ's pre-existent deity, with 'Son' replacing 'Logos' as the more suitable language in formulating the relationships of the divine persons within the Godhead …, and the definition of 'sonship' growing steadily more precise – not merely 'son of God', but God's only Son [*monogenes*], a term rescued from the Gnostics by Irenaeus; 'begotten not made', one of the central thrusts made at Nicaea against Arius; 'begotten before all ages', an assertion of the eternal generation of the Son which became a regular feature of the post-Nicene creeds." See JAMES D. G. DUNN, *Christology in the Making. A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation,* p. 12.

[124] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus,* p. 17. Also See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 121-123. There are different occasions on which Jesus ascribes sonship to others, e.g., 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God' (Mt 5:9).

According to O'Collins, Jesus used the language of divine sonship to show that, as the 'Son of God' he was above other human beings. In his speech and action, in revealing the truth about God, in forgiving sins, and in his obedience, Jesus showed that he was 'the Son'.[125] "Yet Jesus' consistent distinction between 'my' Father and 'your' Father showed that he was not inviting the disciples to share with him an identical relationship of sonship." Paul expressed this distinction regarding the sonship of the disciples with the word 'adoption' (Gal 4:5) and John used the term 'children of God' (Jn 1:12). According to O'Collins some of the 'son of God' passages of St. Paul referred to the pre-existence of Christ. But St. Paul gives greater attention to the event of Christ's resurrection in presenting the divine sonship of Jesus. In O'Collins' view, in one of Paul's passages (Rom 1:3-4), the use of traditional, credal material suggested that Christ became Son of God or was adopted as Son of God after his resurrection. But he also says that St. Paul may not have meant to say that Jesus was found suitable "and thus *became* God's Son for the first time at the resurrection. The passage itself calls Jesus God's 'Son' *before* it goes on to speak either of his descent from David or of his designation as Son of God."[126] John uses the title 'Son of God' (twenty-two or twenty-three times in the Gospel). John considers the Son as pre-existent and sent by the Father (Jn 3:17); as one with the Father (Jn 10:30); loved by the Father (Jn 3:35); as having divine power to give life and to judge (Jn 5:21-22). According to O'Collins, some of these references to the 'Son of God' have their origins in Jesus' preaching, and the Johannine language of God's 'only Son' has its source in Jesus' preaching itself.[127]

2.2.3. Lord

Another title that was used in the New Testament for the crucified and risen Jesus was '*Lord*'. St. Paul used 'Lord' and *Kyrios* 230 times to speak of Jesus in an eschatological context. O'Collins says that St. Paul split the monotheism of the *Shema* (Dt 6:4-5) in his writing (I Cor 8:6) where he used 'God' for Father and 'Lord' for Jesus, and in fact expanded the *Shema* to include Jesus by using 'one Lord'. When Paul used 'Lord' for Jesus Christ, he "put Jesus as Lord right alongside God the Father: 'For us there is *one God, the Father*, from whom are all things and for whom we exist*, and one Lord, Jesus Christ,* through whom are all things and through whom we exist (I Cor 8:6)." O'Collins says that "Paul's redefining of Jewish monotheism also involved acknowledging Christ as agent of creation."[128] St. Paul in his greetings to communities also used 'Lord' where he considered "'the Lord Jesus Christ' on a par

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[125] Jaques Dupuis says that "[t]he title Son of God, with the definite ontological meaning it will gradually take on when applied to Jesus, will become the privileged and decisive way in which to express his true personal identity." See JAQUES DUPUIS, *Who Do You Say I Am? Introduction to Christology*, pp. 69-70.

[126] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 130.

[127] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 133-134.

[128] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 137-138.

with 'God our Father' as the joint source of 'grace and peace'."[129] In St. Paul, Jesus is shown as Lord of all and supreme over all the universe. The early Christians also changed the Old Testament usage regarding 'the day of Yahweh', which had the meaning of Israel's final restoration, into 'the day of the Lord' to mean the final coming of Jesus. According to O'Collins, "[b]y taking over the OT language of the 'Lord' and 'the day of the Lord', the NT puts Christ in his doing and being on a par with God."[130]

O'Collins says that both titles, Son of God and Lord, "refer to the risen, exalted Christ as having a life, power, and authority after death (a 'postexistence') on the divine level. The starting point for Christology was Christ's existence after death." It was from here that Christians moved backward to Jesus' baptism, conception, birth and childhood, and to his pre-existence.[131] According to him the triad, 'Christ, Lord, and Son of God' moved ahead in the history of the Church after the Council of Nicaea and took a central place in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. These titles continue to have prominence even today. For O'Collins, all these images and titles are useful for the community of the faithful. He says that "[s]ince they openly express what our loyalty to [Jesus] means for us, our Jesus-images inevitably enjoy this public function of calling on others to respond to him in an imaginative, worshipping, and committed fashion." According to him, when we put these images "into a sequence we offer a scheme for studying the dramatic stages of Jesus' pre-existence, birth, life, death, and resurrection." The various stages of the being of Christ are seen as: pre-existence of the Son as the Word or Wisdom; birth of Jesus as the Incarnated Son; life of Jesus as a Jew, a Healer, Evangelizer, Good Shepherd; death of Jesus as Suffering Servant and son of Man; and resurrection of Jesus as Son of God and Lord of all.[132] Looking through all these images and titles of Jesus, what we come to know is the whole person of Jesus Christ, his humanity and divinity, in a way that is different from systematic theology. A true Christology cannot avoid understanding the person of Jesus from the perspective of these images and titles. In the following section, we shall examine O'Collins' understanding of incarnation.

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[129] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Images of Jesus. Reappropriating Titular Christology*, p. 308.

[130] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 141. O'Collins says that most of the terms or the titles that we have used (Son of God, Lord, Messiah/King, Priest, Last Adam) are masculine terms because of Jesus' maleness. But the New Testament did use neutral names such as Word, Alpha and Omega for Jesus. It also applied to Jesus the female image of Lady Wisdom. Hence, he says that, "we can rightly spot the need to recognize a certain 'feminine' aspect of Jesus … God, of course, simply transcends sex and gender in a way that is not true of Jesus in his maleness. Nevertheless, Paul, other NT writers, and post-NT Christians knew that they were employing a thoroughly feminine image when they expressed Jesus' divine identity as 'the Wisdom of God." See p. 142.

[131] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus,* p. 19.

[132] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Images of Jesus and Modern Theology,* pp. 131, 142-143.

3. Jesus as God-Incarnate

In this section our interest is to understand the person of Jesus in terms of his 'being'. Our consideration shall encompass O'Collins understanding of the pre-existence, incarnation and the post-resurrection existence of Jesus Christ. We shall defer consideration of Christ's ministry and death until the final chapter where we shall deal with Christ's saving work. It is within the context of this discussion that O'Collins approach to the early life of Jesus really comes into its own.

3.1. The Pre-existence of Christ

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed confessed the eternal and personal existence of the Son of God prior to the incarnation. This is a belief that is shared by all Christians, both Eastern and Western. When one speaks of the pre-existence of the Son, one in fact deals with 'Christology from above', which goes back as far as St. John, and moves forward through the writings of Cyril of Alexandira and Thomas Aquinas, who affirms the pre-existence of the Logos who came down to become a man.[133] According to O'Collins, "[t]he personal pre-existence of the Word, Wisdom, or Son of God is a necessary element in any orthodox affirmation of the incarnation of the 'Word becoming flesh'… Belief in Jesus' divinity stands or falls with accepting his personal pre-existence within the eternal life of the Trinity."[134] The belief in the pre-existence of the Son of God does not mean a belief that, through incarnation, a new person came into existence, i.e., the birth of Jesus of Nazareth was not the coming into existence of a new being. According to O'Collins, belief in the pre-existence is a "belief that Jesus of Nazareth was/is personally identical with the Son of God, who has existed from all eternity and who entered the world to be revealed in human history."[135] It is a belief in the Son's existence as an eternal Subject within the oneness of God whose history "cannot be derived from the history of human beings and their world. Christ's personal being did not originate when his visible human history began." Pre-existence, according to O'Collins, means "that Christ personally belongs to an order of being other than the created, temporal one. His personal, divine existence transcends or goes beyond

[133] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christ. Pre-existence of,* in BERNARD L. MARTHALER *et al.* (eds.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 18 (Washington, 1989) 92-93, p. 92. According to O'Collins, 'Christology from below' as developed by people like W. Pannenberg, H. Küng, E. Schillebeeckx, W. Kasper, and J. Sobrino, questioned whether Jesus was conscious of His divine identity and his personal pre-existence as the Son, Word and Wisdom of God. O'Collins says that, "a Christology 'from below' certainly does not as such exclude belief either in Christ's divine identity or in His personal pre-existence." See p. 93.

[134] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Incarnation. The Critical Issues,* p. 3.

[135] GERALD O'COLLINS & EDWARD G. FARRUGIA, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology,* p. 190.

temporal (and spatial) categories; it might be better expressed as trans-existence, meta-existence, or, quite simply, eternal existence." [136]

According to O'Collins, because of some difficulties in understanding the pre-existence of Christ, some authors take a soft view of it. He points out how John Macquarrie sees the pre-existence of the Son as something very difficult to understand, as if Jesus was chosen from the beginning and pre-ordained in the mind of God.[137] Macquarrie in fact equates Christ's pre-existence with the pre-existence of all other human beings in the eternal mind of God in the sense that God pre-destined all human beings before the foundation of the world. According to O'Collins, another view that Macquarrie seems to suggest is that Christ's being was there previously "in the evolving of the cosmos, the history of the human race, and the particular history of Israel."[138] O'Collins is of the view that such things could be said about any human being, but cannot be used to explain the pre-existence of Jesus.

St. John in his prologue and St. Paul in his letters speak about the pre-existence of Christ. St. Paul says that 'when the fullness of time had come God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law' (Gal 4: 4). St. Paul depicts the pre-existent Christ as being sent by the Father (Rom 4:4), becoming poor (2 Cor 8:9), emptying himself, taking the form of a slave and being born in human likeness (Phil 2:7). The most important thing that St. Paul does to effect faith in the pre-existence of Christ is to identify the 'God' of the Shema Israel ("Hear, O Israel: The Lord

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[136] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, London: Continuum, 2002, pp. 14-15. The First Council of Nicaea stated that 'there never was [a time] when he was not' or that Christ 'always existed'. The Council of Constantinople added 'before all ages' to speak about the pre-existence of Christ.

[137] According to John Macquarrie, one cannot find anything substantial with regard to the pre-existence of Jesus in the synoptic gospels. The only evangelist who refers to it is John, and if one looks outside the Gospels some references are found in Hebrews, 1 Peter, Ephesians and Revelation. Hence, "there is hardly a strong case for claiming that pre-existence is essential to christology." See JOHN MACQUARRIE, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought,* p. 388. Commenting on the passages which refer to the pre-existence of Jesus in the Gospel of John, Macquarrie asks, "[i]f Jesus Christ were personally pre-existent, would not that undermine his true humanity?" He asks whether it would not be wrong to ascribe to Jesus of Nazareth, a human person, descriptions such as 'I am the living bread', 'I am the true vine', 'I am the light of the world', and so on, which are appropriate to divine being. He says that when one says together with Paul that 'God was in Christ', this would amount to admitting belief in Jesus Christ who was "from the beginning in the mind and purpose of God." According to him, the genuineness of Jesus' humanity would have been threatened if one believed that "Jesus consciously pre-existed in 'heaven', almost, if one may say so, like an actor in the wings waiting for the moment when he must go on to the stage of history." See pp 120-121. Macquarrie bases this idea of the pre-existence of Jesus as a purpose in the mind of God from the beginning on the New Testament words, 'definite plan and foreknowledge of God' (Acts 2:23) and develops it by appealing to Karl Barth. While making a distinction between the elect in Jesus and the non-elect, Barth counts the election of Jesus together with the other elect by God but distinguishes him from the other elect in so far as His election is seen as "the beginning of all the ways and works of God." See KARL BARTH, *Church Dogmatics,* Vol. 2/2, *The Doctrine of God,* G. W. BROMILEY & T. F. TORRANCE (eds.), trans. G. W. BROMILEY *et al.* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), 1957, p. 350.

[138] Macquarrie develops this idea from the modern evolutionary understanding of the world where the universe is seen as originating from a burst of energy many billions of years ago. This origin is seen as something already determined. Hence, according to him, "the earth, the human race, yes, Jesus Christ himself were already latent, already predestined, in the primeval swirling cloud of particles." The uniqueness of Jesus seems to be lost in this view of things, since Jesus himself becomes part of evolution. In Macquarrie's view, Incarnation is seen as the completion of a process which in Christian understanding comes to completion in Jesus Christ. But the Christ event is not only an isolated event; it is one in a whole series of events. Hence, he says, "the difference between Christ and other agents of the Logos is one of degree, not of kind." See J. MACQUARRIE, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought,* pp. 391-392.

our God is one Lord" (Deut 6:4)) with the 'Father', and 'Lord' of the Shema Israel with 'Jesus'. He says, "for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (I Cor 8:6). According to O'Collins, these passages and other passages of St. Paul (2 Cor 8:9, and the most important christological passage of Phil 2: 6-11), together with the prologue of John, "present a pre-existent Christ taking the initiative, through his 'generosity' in 'becoming poor' for us and assuming the form of a slave'."[139] Refuting Macquarrie on the basis of these passages, O'Collins says that one cannot reduce the pre-existence of Christ to simple divine intention. He says that "[t]he Son of God personally pre-existed everything that was created and all human history. He was not a simple possibility or idea which eventually became actualized as a person with an incarnation in 5 BC."[140] But O'Collins also says that through these passages, St. Paul was more interested in giving greater importance to what Christ came to do through his incarnation, i.e., how he saved the people from sin and enabled them to become adopted children of God. St. Paul was more concerned about the post-existence of Christ, than with the theme of his pre-existence.[141]

Another problem that O'Collins tries to counter is the maximalization of the meaning of the pre-existence by those who suggest "a kind of real pre-existence for Jesus' humanity." According to O'Collins, many New Testament scholars say that the earthly Jesus was conscious of his Sonship and expressed his divine authority and his unique relationship with God the Father in his words and actions during his ministry. The question here is whether the earthly Jesus was aware, in his human consciousness, of his pre-existence and whether he was aware of "existing eternally before his human conception and birth."[142] Here the problem is that of identifying the person (self) of Jesus with his human mind and memory, by means of which scholars try to show the continuity of the mind and memory between the pre-existent Son of God and the earthly Jesus. Through this, they seem to show that the humanity of Jesus pre-existed. But O'Collins is firm in stating that one cannot consider the pre-existence of the humanity of Jesus. According to him, firstly,

> The humanity of Jesus, which includes his mind and memory, came into existence only with his conception and birth. There was no pre-existent humanity; his human mind and memory were not there 'before'. [Secondly] the human mind and memory have a physical aspect in them. Although not reducible to and fully explained by the brain and its functions, mind and memory do not work alone and in isolation from the brain.[143]

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[139] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 127.

[140] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 16.

[141] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 22.

[142] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 17-18.

[143] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 19.

O'Collins says that a belief in incarnation, or a belief in a pre-existent divine being taking the form of a human being was a startling novelty during the period of early Christianity because such a belief was un-Jewish in nature and against Jewish belief in monotheism.[144] But according to O'Collins, the early Christians depended on the Jewish faith and scriptures and used the language and figures of the Old Testament to articulate their convictions about Jesus, such as the pre-existence and incarnation of Jesus. The themes of 'word', 'wisdom' and the appearance of 'the angel of the Lord' in the Old Testament had a particular influence on the Christian belief in the pre-existence of Jesus. In the Old Testament, 'word' and, in a particular way, 'wisdom' personified the "creative, revealing and saving activity of God" which were later on attributed to Jesus by the Christians. O'Collins says that Christians also saw "the visible coming among them of a pre-existent divine person" in the Old Testament theophanies. In the Old Testament the appearance of God was also seen as the appearance of the 'angel of the Lord'. These theophanies also helped Christians to formulate their "belief in the incarnation of a distinct, pre-existent divine person."[145] In O'Collins' view, what was already evident about the pre-existence of Jesus in light of the Old Testament was made clearer through the letters of Paul in the New Testament.[146]

O'Collins is of the view that a belief in the pre-existence is important to Christians because this belief expresses the divine love for every human being in the world. He says,

> The coming and personal presence of the pre-existent Son of God uniquely expresses the divine desire to be with us, to share our sufferings and redeem us from our desperate situation. Anything less than this might well leave us wondering how much we matter to God… the doctrine of personal pre-existence contributes vitally to the full power of the incarnation message.[147]

According to O'Collins, the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ holds together the doctrines of creation and redemption, where the Creator and Redeemer become personally identical.

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[144] According to G. Vermes, the Jesus of the Synoptics is not an "other-worldly figure, but one that is firmly planted in our universe of man." Jesus' deification took place in a step-by-step way, starting from the miraculous birth. According to him, the formal deification was achieved at the Council of Nicaea. He also says that for "Palestinian Jews no human being, not even one celebrated as 'son of God', could conceivably share the nature of the Almighty." See GEZA VERMES, *The Changing Faces of Jesus,* p. 207.

[145] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 19-21.

[146] James D. G. Dunn speaks of the pre-existence of Christ as an embodiment of divine Wisdom and says that "[h]e who espouses a Wisdom christology does not assert that Christ was a pre-existent being, but neither does he assert that Christ was simply a man used by God, even in a climactic way. He asserts rather that *Christ fully embodies the creative and saving activity of God, that God in all his fullness was in him, that he represents and manifests all that God is in his outreach to men*… while we can say that divine wisdom became incarnate in Christ, that does not mean that Wisdom was a divine being, or that Christ himself was pre-existent with God, but simply that Christ was (and is) the embodiment of divine Wisdom, that is, the climatic and definitive embodiment of God's own creative power and saving concern. Herein we see the origin of the doctrine of incarnation." See JAMES D. G. DUNN, *Christology in the Making. A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation,* p. 212. O'Collins says that, according to Dunn, "no evidence establishes clearly a pre-Christian notion of an individual, heavenly figure who pre-existed and was made flesh. Thus the NT doctrines of Christ's personal pre-existence and Incarnation remain unique and unparalleled in religious beliefs up to the first century A.D. In pre-Christian Judaism, Wisdom and the *Logos* are only vivid metaphors for God's own attributes and activities and do not dilute the strong Jewish monotheism. Wisdom and the *Logos* are only personifications, not truly distinct persons." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christ. Pre-existence of,* p. 93.

[147] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 22-23.

3.2. The Incarnation and the Death of Jesus

Literally incarnation or *incarnatio*[148] means enfleshing. According to O'Collins, it is the belief that God became flesh. He explains it as:

> The Word or Son of God was 'made flesh' or 'in-carnated' by assuming a complete human nature and not simply an external bodily form... The primary meaning is the 'classical' doctrine: the eternal Son of God took flesh from his human mother; hence the person known as Jesus of Nazareth was and is at once fully human and truly divine; his history is the 'enfleshed' story of the Son of God, and no 'mere' theophany or transitory appearance of God.[149]

O'Collins considers three important early Christian writers who witnessed to the incarnation through various idioms and who have given us the primary meaning of incarnation. (1) Paul speaks of the Son as the one 'who was in the form of God' and took the initiative of becoming a slave in the form of a human being (Phil 2:6-7). (2) The author of Hebrews speaks of the Son as 'the reflection of God's glory and the stamp of God's very being', and who as the final revelation of God played his role in the creation (Heb 1:1-3). (3) John in his prologue uses the phrase, 'the Word became flesh and made his home among us; and we saw his glory, the glory of the Father's only begotten Son' (Jn 1:14) to speak of incarnation. O'Collins says that, according to John, incarnation is the ultimate revelation of God.

> The Incarnation forms the once-and-for-all, supremely decisive moment in God's saving and revealing dealings (of 'life' and 'light', respectively) with the Jewish people, with all people (John 1.9, 12-13), and with the whole cosmos. God is now personally disclosed in one, and only one, individual, born at a specific time (normally reckoned as around 5 BC) to grow up in a particular place, Nazareth (John 1.45-6).[150]

From the above discussion, we understand that the primary meaning of incarnation is the belief that the Son of God, the Word, took flesh and became man at a particular time and in a particular place called Nazareth. According to O'Collins, there are also some extended usages of incarnation, which differ from the primary meaning we have seen above. In its extended use, incarnation can be applied in a negative way to those who embody an evil quality and in a positive way a good quality or a highly religious quality embodied in a person's character.[151]

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[148] The Latin word *caro* means flesh. Incarnation means "putting on or taking on of flesh." It means Word, the Second Divine Person becoming man in the womb of the Virgin through the operation of the Triune God. It also means "the wondrous, singular, and eternally permanent union of the divine nature and the human nature in the one Person of the Word." See E. A. WEIS, *Incarnation,* in BERNARD L. MARTHALER *et al.* (eds.), *The New Catholic Encyclopedia,* Vol. 7 (New York, NY: Thomson & Gale, 2003) 373-375, p. 373.

[149] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 1-2. See also, GERALD O'COLLINS & EDWARD G. FARRUGIA, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology,* p. 103.

[150] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 2-3.

[151] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 4-5. O'Collins tries to analyse the notion of incarnation outside Christianity. According to him Plato understood incarnation as pre-existent souls being incarnated for a time in human bodies. But Plato's understanding of incarnation differed from the primary meaning on four grounds: (1) There is no freedom in choosing an embodiment. It is almost like the Indian view of reincarnation where one's embodiment in another is determined by the merits or demerits of one's previous existence. (2) The soul or spirit that embodies in the human being is not a person or a divine person. (3) The embodiment can take place in any other bodies which are lower than human beings, such as animals. (4) This incarnation or reincarnation is not meant for the good of others or to save the world. See pp. 9-10. O'Collins finds some similarities between the incarnation of Jesus and that of Krishna, the *avatar* of Vishnu in Hinduism who comes to the earth to destroy evil and is worshipped by a community of believers. But he

One cannot forget to speak of the problem that arises for Christian monotheistic belief while speaking about the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity. Incarnation puts the second person on a par with God and demands a new understanding for those who believe in a monotheistic God. According to O'Collins, it was Jesus himself who began to develop and transform the Jewish belief in monotheism into the present Christian belief in distinctive persons in one God. The historical data found in the Gospels of Mathew, Mark and Luke supported Jesus' claim of "an authority and identity on a par with God," at least implicitly.[152] But there are doubts about the claims of Sonship that Jesus makes in the Gospels. What is certain from the Gospels and the preaching of Jesus is that he announced the Kingdom of God, the heart of which was the message of "deliverance from evil and [a] new age of salvation as already present and operative but not yet complete." According to O'Collins, all his teachings were to point towards this message and "Jesus himself was inseparably connected with the inbreaking of the divine kingdom. With his personal presence, the rule of God had come and was coming."[153] But the question that O'Collins asks here is whether Jesus ever claimed, "at least by implication, to being more than human and someone with a unique relationship to the God whom he characteristically called 'Abba' or 'Father'?" O'Collins affirms that Jesus implicitly claimed that he was more than a human being and hence says,

> A startling, if mainly implicit, claim to more than human authority emerged from various aspects of Jesus' ministry for the kingdom: his freedom in changing and radically reinterpreting the law given by God to his people; his forgiving sins through his words and actions; his taking over the Temple in Jerusalem; his favourite self-designation as 'Son of man', in particular to claim for himself the divine prerogative of sitting in judgement on all people at the end. Repeatedly Jesus testified to himself as decisive for human beings' final relationship to God; their future salvation, so he stated, depended on their present relationship to him… When preaching his message of 'my' or 'your' '(heavenly) Father' Jesus at times showed that he understood himself to stand in a special, even unique, relationship to God.[154]

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says that whereas in Christianity there is only one incarnation and that, too, only in human form, there are many incarnations in Hinduism which even take the form of lesser beings. He also says that Christian incarnation is the Son of God really taking on a true material body whereas an *avatar* is only apparently material. According to him, *avatars* have superhuman powers and come to defeat evil after which they are either killed or return miraculously. But for Jesus the conflict with evil powers led to his sacrificial death and final resurrection. See pp. 10-11.

[152] With the word, 'implicitly', O'Collins wishes to say that, "Jesus did not go around explicitly proclaiming 'I am consubstantial with the Father,' or 'I am the second person of the Trinity.' Of course, centuries of reflection and debate transpired before Christians settled on such language as their common orthodox teaching about the identity and significance of Jesus. But there was a starting-point for the development of such teaching in Jesus' self-evaluation that his words and deed implied." See MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 133.

[153] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 133-134.

[154] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 134. Stephen T. Davis says that there are some popular apologists who defend the incarnation by saying that Jesus was either mad, bad or God. They say that if the claim of Jesus to be divine Son of God was not true then he must either be a 'lunatic or a moral monster.' And they conclude that since Jesus was not a lunatic or moral monster he was a divine person. See S. T. DAVIS, *Was Jesus Mad, Bad, or God?,* in STEPHEN T. DAVIS; DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS (eds.), *The Incarnation. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002) 221-245, p. 221. Davis is of the view that although such an argument may seem silly, it could be used to prove belief in the incarnation. Here, to prove his argument and to prove that the claim of Jesus to be divine is implicitly true, he uses the sayings of Jesus himself as well as the post-Easter experiences of Christians who formulated such a belief in the initial stage of Christianity. Davis says that "by his words and deeds, Jesus implicitly saw or experienced

Some scholars, according to O'Collins, consider Jesus no more than a 'prophet-like holy man or at the most a charismatic healer or exorcist' who never claimed divine status. They suggest that the followers of Jesus elevated him to the divine status in a gradual process in the first century. O'Collins says that, for Geza Vermes, "the 'real' Jesus had little or nothing to do with the Incarnate Word of John's gospel, the cosmic Lord and Redeemer of Paul's epistles, and the risen Christ of Mathew, Mark, Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. Jesus 'rose from the dead' only in the sense of rising in the minds and hearts of his disciples."[155] But O'Collins disagrees with this understanding of Jesus by Vermes. He is of the view that the earthly Jesus implicitly claimed a divine status and that the "post-Easter image of Jesus was partly supported by the earthly Jesus' own self-image." He holds that there is a need to understand the implicit claims of Jesus in detail. However, one should not consider them as "'low' in the sense of concerned only with relatively unimportant matters," but consider them as "'high' or concerned with extremely important matters."[156] He also refutes the claim of a gradual elevation of Jesus to divine status by the early Christians and points out how St. Paul used 'Lord' (*Kyrios*) 230 times in his letters,

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himself as divine, as having a unique relationship of divine sonship to God." See p. 233. According to him, this does not mean that Jesus tried to formulate such an idea throughout his ministry. It was during the crucial events of his life that he formulated this idea of his status as Son of God, such as during his baptism, temptation, transfiguration, and passion. First of all, to prove the implicit claims of Jesus as Son of God, Davis looks at the early Christian worship of Jesus. In their worship Jesus "was already understood to be risen and exalted to God's right hand in heaven, active in the community by his Spirit, and coming in the future as ruler and judge of the world." He says that the first Christians, who were Jews and who had a monotheistic belief, and for whom to believe in another God was something impossible, were already including Jesus in their worship and considered it as worship of God. Hence, he concludes that the claim of Jesus was already an accepted fact to the early Christians and that they believed in those claims. See pp. 234-235. M. M. Thompson says that, "early Christians apparently moved easily between the 'poles' of offering worship and reverence to Jesus, on the one hand, and understanding him as fellow pilgrim on the other… they were easily able both to confess him as 'Lord' and to speak of him as 'brother'." See MARIANNE MEYE THOMPSON, *Jesus and His God*, in MARKUS BOCKMUEHL (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2001) 41-55, p. 53. Secondly, Davis gives five reasons to prove the implicit claims of Jesus as Son of God: (1) Jesus assumed for himself the divine prerogative to forgive sins. (2) Jesus' intimate addressing of God as *Abba* (Father) which showed a unique relationship to God. (3) Jesus spoke with authority unlike any other prophets or religious teacher. (4) In the Synoptic Gospels he claimed to be the Christ and the Son of the Blessed (Mk 14:61-62). (5) Jesus spoke of the coming 'Son of Man' first of all to 'determine our final status before God' and secondly to judge all human beings at the end of history which was a divine role. See pp. 240-243.

[155] GERALD O'COLLINS, Review of GEZA VERMES, *The Changing Faces of Jesus* (London: Lane the Penguin Press, 2000) in *The Tablet* (2000) 895-896, p. 895. Vermes says that the greatest features of the Synoptic portrait of Jesus are that he was "a charismatic healer and an exorcist, teacher and Champion of the Kingdom of God." He says that "[t]he fact that Jesus was admired, or suspected, as a potential Messiah started a complex process of theological speculation which in the course of three centuries culminated in the elevation of the carpenter from Nazareth to the rank of the second person of the triune Godhead, the Holy Trinity." See GEZA VERMES, *The Changing Faces of Jesus*, London: Lane the Penguin Press, 2000, p. 222. G. Stanton says that some authors and members of the Jesus Seminar, like R. W. Funk and Crossan, are of the view that Jesus should be seen primarily as a wisdom teacher. Crossan seems to go a step further when he says that Jesus was a Jewish Cynic. But Stanton says that, "those who portray Jesus primarily or solely as a wisdom teacher or Jewish Cynic have built dubious hypothesis upon dubious hypothesis." According to Stanton, "[t]he more vigorously the gospel traditions are sifted and weighed, and the more rigorously the Jewish and Graeco-Roman world of the first century is explored, the clearer it becomes that Jesus of Nazareth fits no formula. It is a mistake to try to portray Jesus primarily as a prophet, or as a wisdom teacher, or as a healer." See G. STANTON, *Message and Miracles*, in MARKUS BOCKMUEHL (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 56-71, pp. 64-65, 70.

[156] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 135.

which were written as early as around AD 50 to AD 62.[157] This extensive use of 'Lord' meant that the early Christians already attributed divinity to Jesus.[158]

O'Collins says that, right from the beginning of Christianity, there was opposition to its central doctrine concerning the Incarnation of God. In the 'low Christology' of the Ebionites, Adoptionists and Arians, Jesus was considered as differing "in degree but not in kind from other human beings."[159] According to O'Collins, this low Christology took many forms and from the time of the Enlightenment, and especially in the 19th century, liberal theologians began to understand Incarnation as "some general truth about the human condition." Some began to "interpret incarnation as a possibility for all men and women, or at least for all human beings open to their ultimate potential."[160] Here, O'Collins is critical of authors like G. W. F. Hegel, D. F. Strauss, D. H. Lawrence, Joseph Campbell and John Hick for proposing incarnation as a general possibility. Hegel saw Incarnation in a universal sense (as God appearing in every rational, human being) and did not consider it as an individual and unique event. He "understood

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[157] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 136. According to O'Collins, in the New Testament the use of *Kyrios* had various meanings: (1) it was a respectful way of addressing other people; (2) it was a form of address for a teacher or a rabbi; (3) it suggested authority in the sense of a power to perform mighty works; (4) it was a form of address for a master; (5) it was a form of address for political leaders who were said to have divine power; and (6) it was used to call upon gods who were thought to have rights over human beings. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 138-139.

[158] According to Raymond E. Brown, there are many passages in the New Testament which imply that Jesus is divine. The passages where explicit use of *theos* is made for Jesus are: Heb 1:8-9; Jn 1:1 and Jn 20:28. See RAYMOND E. BROWN, *Jesus, God and Man. Modern Biblical Reflections,* Milwaukee: Bruce, 1967, pp. 23-27. According to him, Jesus is called God in the New Testament. The use of *theos* to address Jesus, which is found in the early second century was a continuation of such practices, which were already in use in New Testament times. "'Jesus is Lord' was evidently a popular confessional formula in New Testament times, and in this formula Christians gave Jesus the title *kyrios* which was the standard Septuagint translation of YHWH." But he also says that we cannot assume that every time *kyrios* appears, it is used consciously as a translation of Yahweh. What he affirms is that "in general the New Testament authors were aware that Jesus was being given a title which in the Septuagint referred to the God of Israel." See p. 29.

[159] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Incarnation Under Fire,* in *Gregorianum* 76 (1995) 263-280, p. 263. The Ebionites were a Jewish Christian sect of the first to the fourth century who considered Jesus as their Messiah and as the true prophet but who was selected or anointed as Christ "due to His eminent virtue achieved under the guidance of the Spirit received in the baptism of John." See F. X. MURPHY, *Ebionites,* in BERNARD L. MARTHALER *et al.* (eds.), *The New Catholic Encyclopedia,* Vol. 5 (New York, NY: Thomson & Gale, 2003) 31-32, p. 31. The Adoptionists or the Monarchians considered Christ as a mere man, adopted as Son of God for his merits. One of its proponents, Theodatus of Byzantium (2nd c.), held that "Jesus was a man born of the Virgin by the Father's will, who lived like other men, only more piously." The Adoptionists held that it was at the time of his baptism that Jesus became 'the higher Christ', and some others were of the view that it was at the time of resurrection that Jesus was deified. See M. SIMONETTI, *Adoptionists,* in ANGELO DI BERARDINO, *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (Cambridge: Clarke, 1992), p. 11. Arianism originated in the 4th century from the teachings of a priest, Arius. He negated the divinity of Christ because he saw only the Father as the true God. He held that "God is by necessity not only uncreated, but unbegotten and unoriginate." Jesus was considered God only by participation in grace or by adoption and hence a creature with a beginning. The Council of Nicaea (325) condemned Arianism by proposing *homoousios* (one substance with the Father) in its creed. See V. C. DE CLERCQ, *Arianism,* in BERNARD L. MARTHALER *et al.* (eds.), *The New Catholic Encyclopedia,* Vol. 1 (New York, NY: Thomson & Gale, 2003) 660-664, pp. 660-661. O'Collins says that the term *homoousios* which gave greater importance to the divinity of Christ, raised a question regarding the true humanity of Jesus. According to him, Apollinaris of Laodicea, a supporter of Nicaea, in fact "reduced Christ's full humanity by apparently suggesting that at the incarnation the divine Logos (or Word of God) assumed only a body and itself took the place of the human spirit." It was against this that the Council of Constantinople taught that Christ had a true human soul. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus,* p. 20. See also GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 16-17.

[160] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 5.

incarnation to be a general truth about the human condition – namely, the highest form of religious representation or image that synthesizes the contradictions between the human and the divine."[161] David Friedrich Strauss, the disciple of Hegel, held that the "unity of divine and human cannot be restricted to one exemplar (Jesus) but is realized in "the whole race of mankind."[162] D. H. Lawrence saw "any lovely and generous woman" and "any clear and fearless man" as a god and as an incarnation of God. For Lawrence only three people were seen in that way, the mythical figure Helen of Troy, the French courtesan Ninon de l'Enclos, and Jesus. This meant a belief in many incarnations and a questioning of the reality and uniqueness of Jesus' incarnation. Joseph Campbell considered Jesus as a universal hero like Gautama Buddha or Mohammed who brings a message for all people.[163] According to O'Collins, John Hick is the "most prominent English-speaking proponent of liberal Christology." He says that Hick "presents Jesus as differing from us only in degree and not in kind." For Hick, Jesus was an "ideal of human life lived in faithful response to God." He understands Jesus in the same way as he understands any other spiritual leader. However, he sees him as the best example of someone who is open to the divine spirit, and who differs from others only in the degree of this openness to the divine. O'Collins says that many of Hick's arguments against Christological doctrine are the up-to-date expression of the old, low Christologies.[164]

It is not only 'low Christologies' that one has to confront when one tries to understand incarnation in the present period of Christianity. One is also faced with proposals that the

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[161] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 5. Daniel P. Jamros says that, "[i]n Hegel's theory, God appears as human thinking; even Jesus incarnates God's presence in this way. The incarnation thus becomes a rational truth instead of a supernatural mystery. But since rational truths are universal in scope, applying to all instances of the phenomena they describe, divine incarnation should occur wherever human thinking occurs. Hegel's position would then imply a universal incarnation rather than a unique one restricted to Jesus alone. His position would also challenge the very existence of Christian theology, which acknowledges a revelation centered on a unique mediator between God and humanity." See DANIEL PETER JAMROS, *Hegel on the Incarnation. Unique or Universal?,* in *Theological Studies* 56 (1995) 276-300, p. 277.

[162] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 6. This meant that Incarnation was not limited to one single human being but to the whole human race. This also seems to have been the way that Strauss understood Hegel. But Jamros says that Strauss did not precisely understand the Hegelian understanding of the universality of God as an eternal idea expressing itself in human beings. Strauss seems to have understood universality in a collective sense, "according to which all human beings taken together correspond to God's universality." See DANIEL PETER JAMROS, *Hegel on the Incarnation. Unique or Universal?,* pp. 278, 280.

[163] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 6-7.

[164] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Incarnation Under Fire,* p. 264. Hick saw incarnation as metaphorical rather than literal. According to him, in itself "the incarnation of God in the life of Jesus" is "a metaphorical statement of the significance of a life through which God was acting on earth. In Jesus we see a man living in a startling degree of awareness of God and of response to God's presence." See JOHN HICK, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate,* p. 106. According to Hick, Jesus did not claim to be divine but his divinity was ascribed to him later on by Christians. It was when the expectation of his second coming faded that he was "gradually elevated within the Gentile church to a divine status." See pp. 4-5. What Christians attributed to Jesus as 'soft' divinity was transformed into 'hard' metaphysical claims about Jesus being the incarnation of the "second person of a divine Trinity." See p. 36. Hick's view is that Christians should free themselves from the bonds of the dogmas and practices of the Church, which were developed over the centuries. They should understand Jesus, "as a man who was exceptionally open to the divine presence and who thus incarnated to a high degree of the ideal of human life lived in response to the Real." In his view, this understanding would help Christians to have a global outlook and see "Christianity as one among a number of different perceptions of the divine and that Jesus was a great human prophet and servant of God." See p. 152.

mystery of the incarnation is simply a myth. O'Collins points to those who "argue that the 'incarnation' claims from the New Testament and such subsequent Christian confessions as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381 should be understood as 'myth', in the sense of being merely a non-historical, religious truth about ourselves which has been communicated under the form of talk about a divine being coming among us."[165] Attempts have also been made to recover the historical Jesus of Nazareth through scientific use of the earliest sources, particularly that of Mark's gospel. O'Collins notes that, initially, "this search was carried on by the unorthodox – by rationalists (who removed the miraculous element from Jesus' story and denied his divinity), by humanitarians (who stressed his ethical teaching at the expense of everything else), or by liberal Christians (for whom church membership was often unimportant)."[166] David Friedrich Strauss, Ernest Renan and Adolf von Harnack were among those who looked for the historical Jesus behind the christological doctrines of St. Paul and the early Church. However, as O'Collins points out, such attempts did not produce the desired effect and there was no agreement on the portrait of the historical Jesus. As a result, there were protests against the whole idea of the quest. Albert Schweitzer protested by highlighting eschatology as the key to the Gospel message. Rudolf Bultmann downplayed the theological relevance of the human history of Jesus and fixed his attention on the Christ preached by the Church.[167]

3.3. The Post-Resurrection Existence of Christ

According to O'Collins, Christology started with the 'post-existent' Jesus because after his death the disciples began to experience and worship him as "risen to new life, exalted in glory, and existing in power and dignity on the divine level." He also mentions that two titles of Jesus (*Kyrios* or 'Lord' (Rom 10:9; Phi 2:9-11) and 'Son of God' (Rom 1:3)) in the creedal formula of Paul clearly implied that Christological thinking began with 'post-existence'.[168] However, one must never isolate the pre-existence and incarnation of Christ from His life, death and resurrection and the permanence of His existence. As he puts it, "[t]he coming among us of the Word of God should be viewed dynamically and seen as closely intertwined not only with its antecedents but also, and even more, with what was to follow."[169] Paul connected both the pre-existence of Christ and his death and resurrection, the sending of the Holy Spirit, and his final coming at the end of times. O'Collins says that both the writings of St. Paul and the Gospel of John provide a complete picture of the intertwining between Christ's pre-existence and post-

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[165] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Incarnation. The Critical Issues,* in STEPHEN T. DAVIS; DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS (eds.), *The Incarnation. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002) 1-27, p. 1.

[166] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus,* p. 21.

[167] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus,* p. 21.

[168] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 14.

[169] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 27.

existence. In order to speak adequately of the whole story of Jesus Christ, O'Collins also takes into account the prayers of the Church, and especially the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (used by both Eastern and Western Christians), and the Apostles' Creed. He says that all these "put the incarnation in the dynamic context of an extended story." Moreover, O'Collins turns to the Christian traditions to understand how the incarnation of Jesus is dynamically related to His continuity and permanence.[170]

Since we believe in the incarnation of Christ and his eternal pre-existence but not in the pre-existence of the humanity of Jesus, the question arises as to whether the humanity of Jesus will cease to exist at the end of human history. Indeed one can ask whether the humanity, which started with the incarnation, ceased already with his resurrection. The question here is whether the humanity of the incarnated Jesus remains forever after the resurrection.[171] When considering the pre-existence of Christ, we said that the humanity of Jesus began only from the time of his incarnation and not before it. The continuity that we find between the pre-existence (Word of God) and incarnation (in Jesus of Nazareth) is a personal continuity. The continuity that we speak of now is the continuity of the human nature between the pre-resurrection and the post-resurrection Christ.

According to O'Collins, the First Council of Constantinople made three additions to the Nicene Creed when it said that the Lord Jesus Christ now 'sits on the right hand of the Father', will come again 'with glory' to judge the living and the dead, and that of his 'kingdom there will be no end'. It could be argued that the first two additions signified the equality in divinity of Jesus Christ with the Father and that the third signified that his future coming would be with divine

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[170] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 29-31. According to O'Collins, down through the centuries, after the death of Jesus, one could see how the Christian thinkers connected the pre-existence of Jesus with His death and resurrection. Hyppolytus in his *Apostolic Tradition* connected Jesus' pre-existence with his resurrection. Athanasius of Alexandria (d. 373) related the incarnation of Jesus to all that happens later in his life till resurrection. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) spoke of Jesus' pre-existence as 'before all ages' and related it to his death on the cross. See pp. 31-33. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologiae*, spoke of incarnation and related it to Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Martin Luther (1483-1546), by using the Apostles' Creed in his catechism, showed how incarnation must be seen from the context of its antecedents and aftermath. O'Collins says that Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), in his "Spiritual Exercises," took the retreatants from incarnation to the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is not only theologians but also poets and painters like T. S. Eliot (1888-1965), W. H. Auden (1907-1973), and others who have sought to depict incarnation in connection with death and resurrection, or Bethlehem with Calvary. See pp. 34-35.

[171] Peter Forrest is of the view that the classical and kenotic accounts of incarnation agreed that the second divine person continued to exist at the incarnation. See PETER FORREST*, The Incarnation. A Philosophical Case for Kenosis,* in *Religious Studies* 36 (2000), 127-140, pp. 127-128. Stephen T. Davis insists that the various works that Jesus did during his life, such as speaking with authority, forgiving sins, dying on a cross, and being raised from the dead, were not something that normal human beings do. Hence, what a believer in incarnation would say is that Jesus was not entirely a 'normal human being' but he was 'truly a human being'. See STEPHEN T. DAVIS, *Logic and the Nature of God,* London: Macmillan, 1984, p. 125. Forrest also holds that there is no permanent kenosis. However, he argues against those who hold that Jesus lost his humanity when he resumed his normal divine powers or when he was exalted. He says that, "the exalted Christ can be human while having the normal divine powers even though the purpose of the Incarnation required that Jesus, while on earth, did not have these powers." See PETER FORREST*, The Incarnation. A Philosophical Case for Kenosis,* p. 134.

glory. O'Collins suggests that it was to counter the view of Marcellus[172] who limited the "existence of the Son to a period of incarnation", that the Council of Constantinople made the third addition. O'Collins holds that through this addition, "the Council wanted to confess something about the eternal life of the tripersonal God [namely, that the personal distinctions within God remain for all eternity] rather than precisely about the permanent status of the human condition assumed by the Son at a certain point in history." However, he also seems to say that the third addition, which has reference to the endless kingdom of Christ (Lk 1:33), could be understood as referring to the continuity of the existence of the humanity of Jesus.[173]

According to O'Collins, there are two ways of seeing the permanence of incarnation. In the first instance, the Son of God "continues to have the same nature or individual humanity with which he had operated in his pre-risen state, even if that given nature has been dramatically transformed and glorified." This view is based on the argument that the mind and memory, which are parts of the human nature of the earthly Jesus, continue to exist in the risen Jesus. But O'Collins says that this argument creates a problem in so far as we have no "access to any human mind and memories of the risen Christ. We have only limited access to his mind and memories during his earthly existence." He says that, there is no reference anywhere in the Gospels where the risen Christ appears to his disciples and recalls any of his previous experiences. In all the appearances, it is the memories of the disciples that are evoked; the disciples are asked to remember past events.[174]

The second way to see the permanence of incarnation is by looking at how Jesus effected salvation for us. O'Collins says that, "[w]hen the Gospel writers present a continuity between the pre-Easter and the post-Easter Jesus, they do so not in terms of some continuity *within* his own mind and memory, but rather in terms of his revealing and redemptive activity *for us*." According to him, the risen Christ who meets and commissions his disciples and who sits at the right hand of the Father to intercede for them is the same Jesus who lived his human life. Christians believe that they would rise with Jesus at the end of times and would have a glorious body. This belief would be meaningless if Jesus was not resurrected with a glorified body and if the humanity of Jesus had not continued to exist after the resurrection.[175] The saving impact of

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[172] Marcellus of Ancyra (d. 374) was a bishop and he opposed Arianism in the Council of Nicaea. But he was condemned for holding a type of Monarchianism. Although he admitted the eternity of the Logos, he denied an eternal generation of God, holding that the "Logos became Son at the Incarnation only." He also held that "at the consummation of the world, both the Son and the Spirit will reenter the Godhead, and there will be the absolute Monad again." Hence, according to him, Jesus' human existence will end when the goal of incarnation is achieved. See V. C. DE CLERCQ, *Marcellus of Ancyra*, in BERNARD L. MARTHALER *et al.* (eds.), *The New Catholic Encyclopedia,* Vol. 9 (New York, NY: Thomson & Gale, 2003) 139.

[173] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 38.

[174] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 39.

[175] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 39-40. According to O'Collins, Paul sums up his view on the permanence of the humanity of Christ in terms of His redemptive activity for us, when he says, "He was handed over for our sins and was raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25).

Jesus affects everyone. The resurrected Jesus saves them, but as the one who has not left behind his human nature. "In his glorified humanity, the risen Jesus is the agent … through whom human beings will be raised and enjoy divine life for ever."[176]

According to O'Collins, it was necessary for the Son of God to assume our human nature in order to live and realize a human history. He also says that one cannot speak about Jesus' resurrection without accepting His bodily humanity in a glorified state. His human condition, which He assumed at the incarnation, continues to remain eternally, but in an exalted state, for the salvation of human beings. O'Collins questions the view of those who look at resurrection in a kenotic way. If one looks at resurrection in the same way as the kenotic understanding of incarnation, where incarnation is seen as the abandoning of divine powers by Christ, then one may see resurrection as the abandoning of the human nature by Christ in order to resume the lost divine powers.[177] Our belief in Jesus' resurrection as involving a glorification of the humanity of Christ does not allow us to understand resurrection in a kenotic way.

O'Collins says that the titles, 'Son of God' and 'Lord', given to Christ and used by St. Paul have various connotations.

> [These titles] refer to the risen, exalted Christ, who now enjoys life, power and authority after death (a 'post-existence') on the divine level. There are differing nuances. The first title points to his unique relationship to God his Father in the work of bringing salvation to human beings. 'Lord', however, expresses more the link between the risen and exalted Christ and his worshipping community or the

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[176] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 41. Karl Rahner points out that for human beings to attain salvation, it is necessary to go through the mediation of the humanity of Christ, which is eternal. He says, "this created human nature is the indispensable and permanent gateway through which everything created must pass if it is to find the perfection of its eternal validity before God. He is the gate and the door, the Alpha and Omega, the all-embracing in whom, as the one who has become man, creation finds its stability. He who sees him, sees the Father, and whoever does not see him – God become man – also does not see God." This shows us how important it is for the believer to believe in the continuity of the humanity of Christ for the achievement of his salvation. Rahner also says that, "Jesus, the Man, not merely *was* at one time of decisive importance for our salvation, i.e. for the real finding of the absolute God, by his historical and now past acts of the Cross, etc., but – as the one who became man and has remained a creature – he is *now* and for all eternity the *permanent openness* of our finite being to the living God of infinite, eternal life; he is, therefore, even in his humanity the created reality for us which stands in the fact of our religion in such a way that, without this act towards his humanity and through it (implicitly or explicitly), the basic religious act towards God could never reach its goal." See KARL RAHNER, *Theological Investigations, Vol. 3, The Theology of the Spiritual Life,* trans. KARL-H. & B. KRUGER, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967, pp. 43-44.

[177] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 41. According to C. S. Evans, many theologians, including some kenotic ones, seems to think of the glorified Christ as resuming the properties of omnipotence and omniscience, which were given up freely by Jesus at the time of incarnation. According to him, this view creates a dilemma. On the one hand, if the glorified Christ does not assume these properties then the kenotic understanding itself faces trouble as such an account of glorification would mean permanent loss of the properties from the divine person. But, on the other hand, if the glorified Christ resumes these properties, one may ask why then an incarnate God cannot have such properties. Ronald Feenstra is of the view that it was necessary for Christ to empty himself of these properties in order to assume a bodily existence as a human being. Having become a human being, however, it is possible for him to have those qualities restored to him by the power of God the Father. But Evan opposes this view and asks why, if these properties could be restored at a later time, the Son could not have become embodied with these qualities. See C. STEPHEN EVANS, *The Self–Emptying of Love. Some Thoughts on Kenotic Christology,* in STEPHEN T. DAVIS; DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS (eds.), *The Incarnation. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002) 246-272, pp. 264-265.

individual believers… But both titles illustrate how the 'post-existence' of the risen Christ provided the starting point for Christology.[178]

Thus, we could conclude from what we have said so far that O'Collins supports the belief in the pre-existence of Christ as the Word or Wisdom. He is against all those who hold the pre-existence of the humanity of Jesus. He also maintains the belief in the post-existence of the humanity of Jesus in a glorified form after his resurrection. We are now in a position to examine O'Collins' understanding about the self-emptying of Christ in the incarnation.

4. Incarnation as *Kenosis*

When one says that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took the form of a human being, one can ask what exactly happened to God in incarnation. The first question is about how God could become man.[179] What did the incarnate Son of God empty himself of or sacrifice, in assuming the human nature? We also have to take into account the question of the 'why' of the Son of God's assumption of human nature, the fallen nature of humanity. This enquiry must also direct itself to the question of whether Jesus could have sinned. This question arises from the following fact:

> The Church has taught, from the beginning, that the Son of God did not assume human nature as it was before the Fall, or an ideal form of human nature, but the human nature of Adam's offspring, subject to the consequences of original sin. Thus the human nature of Jesus is mortal and capable of suffering.[180]

If this is so, then how could Jesus be fully human[181] without original sin and personal sin? We shall discuss the question of sin at a later stage in this chapter. Let us look first, however, at the notion of kenosis.

O'Collins seeks to explain *kenosis* by means of a parable borrowed from Kierkegaard according to which a king is in love with a poor maiden. His love makes him leave all the comforts of his riches to become poor like her in order to become one with her status. The king feels that elevating her to his status or showing his own power and might would be imperfect love and deception. Hence, for a union of love with that poor maiden, the king descends from his status by wearing a poor man's clothing to equal the status of the poor woman and goes to her own village.[182] Translating this parable to the incarnation, O'Collins concludes that God has to

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[178] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 15.

[179] For a brief overview of authors who contest incarnational faith, see, BRIAN HEBBLETHWAITE, *The Incarnation. Collected Essays in Christology,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 1-20.

[180] ROCH A. KERESZTY, *Jesus Christ. Fundamentals of Christology,* p. 385.

[181] According to Frances Young, "[i]f Jesus was an entirely normal human being, no evidence can be produced for the incarnation. If no evidence can be produced, there can be no basis on which to claim that an incarnation took place." See FRANCES YOUNG, *Can there be any Evidence?*, in MICHAEL GOULDER (ed.), *Incarnation and Myth. The Debate Continued* (London: SCM Press, 1979) 62, p. 62.

[182] THOMAS C. ODEN (ed.), *Parables of Kierkegaard* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 40-45 as explained in GERALD O'COLLINS *Incarnation*, pp. 55-56. To explain incarnation, Brian Hebblethwaite also uses the same parable of Kierkegaard. See BRIAN HEBBLETHWAITE, *The Incarnation. Collected Essays in Christology,* pp. 4-5. Hebblethwaite notes that this is only a parable and fails on many accounts. The king in the parable only changes his

become equal with human beings if He is to love them. Equality with human beings becomes a condition of, and a requirement for, God's self-gift in love. In the case of the king, he might still be deceiving the maiden by wearing his worn-out attire, which is only an outer cover for him. But in the case of incarnation, O'Collins says, his human form or "his 'servant-form is not mere outer garment'." The Son of God "must suffer all things, endure all things, make experience of all things. He must suffer hunger in the desert, he must thirst in the time of his agony, he must be forsaken in death."[183] This is to state and to emphasise that in the incarnation Christ became truly human in order to live the life of human beings.

4.1. Kenotic Christology

One of the fruitful ways to understand the mystery of incarnation is through kenotic Christology.[184] It is a "doctrine of the person of Christ, which sought to understand him in terms of a *kenosis* or self-emptying of the Logos, whereby it was able to manifest itself in the finite life of a human being."[185] Kenotic Christology "arose out of a real desire to deal seriously with the newly emerging conception of personality and the critical restudying of the New Testament that emphasized the reality of Jesus' humanity." This was a shift from the ontological understanding of the Chalcedonian doctrine of person to a more psychological consideration.[186] Kenotic Christology emphasises the humanity of Jesus Christ but it takes into account the traditional understanding of the incarnation of Christ. What it really does is to remove the elements of docetic tendencies,[187] which had dogged the classical understanding of the incarnation. Both

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clothes and goes to the village of the woman, but in the case of the incarnation it is not just a changing of clothes but "God's coming himself incognito." See p. 5.

[183] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 57.

[184] Kenotic Christology was associated with theologians such as Gottfried Thomasius (1802-1875), Peter Taylor Forsyth (1848-1921) and Hugh Ross Mackintosh (1870-1936). See LUCIEN J. RICHARD, *A Kenotic Christology. In the Humanity of Jesus the Christ. The Compassion of Our God*, Washington: University Press of America, 1982, p. 158. Alan Neely is of the view that although kenotic Christology has ample meaning for mission theology, mission theologians have not explicated it for a number of reasons. "In the first place, kenotic Christology since the third century has been the raw material of sometimes intense controversy. It is easier, of course, to debate the image of kenosis than to emulate it. In the second place, when kenosis is overly accentuated, it raises unnecessary and unanswerable philosophical questions. Furthermore, the kenosis tradition for many is associated with certain theological points of view, now generally discredited, that flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries." See ALAN NEELY, *Mission as Kenosis. Implications for Our Times,* in *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 10 (1989) 203-223, p. 217.

[185] JOHN MACQUARRIE, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought*, p. 245.

[186] LUCIEN J. RICHARD, *A Kenotic Christology. In the Humanity of Jesus the Christ. The Compassion of Our God*, p. 158.

[187] One of the first Christian heresies and an offshoot of Gnosticism, Docetism (deriving from the Greek word *dokeo* meaning 'seem' or 'appear'), held that Christ only appeared to be a man and that his life, suffering, death and resurrection were not genuine but apparent. This docetic wrapping of Christ's humanity was based on the idea that all material realities in general and the human body in particular are impure and cannot have any direct contact with what is transcendent and divine. This comes from the basic assumption of the gnostics who saw reality as an interplay between two fundamental principles, i.e., the interplay between spirit and matter, soul and body, good and evil. The dualistic view of Gnosticism even denied the biblical doctrine of creation because it could not accept that God who is fundamentally a spiritual entity could be the source for the material world. Hence, the Gnostics held that the human spirit emanated from the divine and the material world and that the human body arose from an inferior being, which they called the Demiurge. In view of its roots in Gnosticism, Docetism could not contemplate a union of what is human and

classical and kenotic accounts of the incarnation agree that at the incarnation the second person of the Triune God remained divine. While kenotic Christology emphasises human powers in Jesus, the classical account maintains that the Word never ceased to have normal divine powers (the normal powers of the divine to know and to act which exceeds that of human beings).

4.2. *Kenosis* and the Divine and Human Powers of Jesus

The 'traditional' kenotic account of the incarnation does not ascribe the normal divine powers of omniscience and omnipotence to Jesus. Peter Forrest suggests that the kenotic position is often a "quasi-kenotic version of the classical account, according to which Jesus had normal divine powers but chose not to exercise them."[188] This means that in the incarnation Jesus used only normal human powers. Peter Forrest is of the view that Gottfried Thomasius (1802-1875), the earliest proponent of kenotic Christology, was in fact a proponent of a quasi-kenotic understanding of the classical account of incarnation. This is because he considered the 'omni' attributes – omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence – not as essential divine attributes of God but as "manifestations of the essential divine attributes."[189] However, the main argument against kenotic Christology is that "the 'omni' attributes are essential divine attributes, so divine persons cannot lose them, whether they want it or not. A similar objection is that to be

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divine in Christ. See GEOFFREY PARRINDER, *A Concise Encyclopedia of Christianity,* Oneworld: Oxford, 1998, p. 88; ROCH A. KERESZTY, *Jesus Christ. Fundamentals of Christology,* p. 223; HAROLD O. J. BROWN, *Heresies. Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church*, p. 40. According to O'Collins, "[s]ince they dismissed his body as only apparent or really 'heavenly', Docetists in effect excluded Christ's true incarnation and death. To eliminate every link between the evil demiurge (or creator of the material universe) and Jesus the Saviour, Marcion attributed to him a merely heavenly body. Valentinian Gnostics admitted that the Saviour had assumed only what was to be saved and hence no physical body." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 170. The emergence of this first heresy in the Church gave way to the earliest Christian creed by Ignatius of Antioch in which he emphasised that whatever the New Testament accredited to Jesus, i.e., his birth, suffering, death and resurrection, were true and not just an appearance. See PHILIP SCHAFF, *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes, Vol. 2, The History of Creeds,* Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966, p. 11-12. Roch A. Kereszty says that in the contemporary theological climate there is a tendency to see a close similarity between Jesus and the gods of Hinduism such as Rama and Krishna without emphasising the historical nature of Jesus and the non-historical natures of the Hindu gods. For such theologians their similarity consists in the fact that all of them appeared to be divine. Kereszty is of the view that such an understanding represents docetism in contemporary theology. ROCH A. KERESZTY, *Jesus Christ. Fundamentals of Christology,* pp. 224-225.

[188] PETER FORREST, *The Incarnation. A Philosophical Case for Kenosis,* p.127.

[189] PETER FORREST, *The Incarnation. A Philosophical Case for Kenosis,* p. 129. Forrest thinks that Stephen T. Davis is also a proponent of the quasi-kenotic classical account of the incarnation since he, too, considers omniscience and omnipotence as not essential to divinity. See p. 129. According to Davis, omniscience is a property of God. However, he questions whether God would not be God without the property of omniscience. He says, "the fact that I believe both that Jesus Christ was God and that Jesus was non-omniscient leads me to deny that omniscience is essential to God." He also says that "[t]hough I doubt that omniscience is an essential property of God, it may in some sense be true that no being which is non-omniscient simpliciter (i.e. which is not omniscient in any sense) can be God. But even if this is true, I do not think that Jesus Christ was non-omniscient simpliciter. In other words, I believe it is quite possible for an essentially omniscient being temporarily to take non-omniscient form and all the while still be the same essentially omniscient being. This is exactly what I believe God did, or more precisely what the Second Person of the Trinity did in Jesus Christ." He says further that Jesus "voluntarily and temporarily became non-omniscient in order to become truly man." See STEPHEN T. DAVIS, *Logic and the Nature of God,* pp. 124-126.

unchanging is essential to being divine, so divine persons could not lose any attributes, even if not considered essential on other grounds."[190]

The central concern of kenotic Christology, one may say, is to move from a God who has all the 'omni' attributes of the divine to a state where he abandons all these attributes out of love for human beings but retains sufficient power to be still called divine.[191] This, however, is to attribute some sort of limitation to the Godhead. Traditional Roman Catholic theology could not accept a kenotic theory that allows any form of limitation within the Godhead. It understands *kenosis* "as a process within the humanity of Jesus, as the veiling of the fully divine nature in human flesh."[192] However, according to Lucien Richard, Hegel's understanding of God did encourage a shift among some Catholic theologians. Hans Küng, for example, reinterpreted classical Christology on the basis of Hegelian Christology. Hegelian Christology sees incarnation "in the pattern of humiliation and exaltation. The human, the finite, the negative becomes a divine element in God himself. *Kenosis* is the pattern of the inner life of the Trinity."[193]

Kenotic Christology is plagued with difficulties and there is no consensus about the precise meaning of *kenosis* or, by extension, about its compatibility with the classic doctrines of Trinity and incarnation. For the purposes of our enquiry, we shall restrict ourselves to the self-emptying that was required for the incarnation. Our real concern is the problem of the distinction between the power and knowledge that belonged to the pre-incarnate Word and the power and knowledge that belonged to Jesus. In short, the question is what the incarnated One emptied himself of, and whether he could have abandoned anything at all.

4.3. The Origins of the Kenotic Understanding of Incarnation

The biblical source for *kenosis* is St. Paul who wrote, "Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, [*heauton ekenosen*] taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:5-8).[194] According to O'Collins, these verses speak of Jesus' divine existence prior

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[190] PETER FORREST, *The Incarnation. A Philosophical Case for Kenosis,* p.130.

[191] PETER FORREST, *The Incarnation. A Philosophical Case for Kenosis,* pp.131-132.

[192] LUCIEN J. RICHARD, *A Kenotic Christology. In the Humanity of Jesus the Christ. The Compassion of Our God*, p. 169.

[193] LUCIEN J. RICHARD, *A Kenotic Christology. In the Humanity of Jesus the Christ. The Compassion of Our God*, p. 170. See also JOSEPH FITZER, *Hegel and Incarnation. A Response to Hans Küng,* in *Journal of Religion* 52 (1972) pp. 240-267.

[194] This text, according to O'Collins, tells us what incarnation did to the Son of God and how it led him to his death on the cross. According to him, exegetes have interpreted this text in different ways. They find an equivalence between Jesus' being 'in the form of God' with Adam and Eve being created 'in the image' and 'after the likeness of God'. They also argue that Adam and Eve's effort to 'become *like* God' was like Jesus' 'being *equal* to God'. However, in the case

to assuming the human condition, the human condition that he inherited from Adam[195] and Eve. But what is meant by the words 'he emptied himself'? This emptying, first of all, meant self-limitation. O'Collins says that the choice of God to embody a human condition "necessarily involved the willingness to assume certain limitations." By taking human form, he was sharing in the limited powers and limited way of acting of human beings. Physically he had to depend on others, especially on his mother, for his growth. His death, too, was a limitation to which he assigned himself because in death he showed his powerlessness under the impact of human violence and sin.[196]

However, the question remains as to whether the Son of God divested himself of divine powers in the incarnation. Kenotic theorists consider this self-emptying as the Son of God's temporary abdication of his divine powers at the time of incarnation in order to become completely human, with a view to resuming them at the end of his earthly life. But according to O'Collins, this view is incompatible with the Christian idea of God. The Son, who is one of the three persons in the Trinity, cannot abandon his powers, even for a moment, because God is "intrinsically and essentially unchangeable." If the second person of the Trinity loses his divine powers, he could never be called God. This idea of one member of the Trinity losing the divine powers would mean tritheism since it would indicate that the three do not share the same divinity but only live in harmony. Hence, O'Collins is of the view that a strong kenotic understanding of incarnation threatens the unity of God. He also holds that if Jesus were to empty himself of his divine powers this would raise the possibility of losing these permanently.[197]

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of Adam and Eve, they succumbed to the temptation and tried to seize the fruit, but "Jesus made no such wrongful attempt to seize a share in divinity." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 58.

[195] According to O'Collins, the "[t]alk of Jesus as the New Adam has its background in Judaism, seems to have been developed by Paul (Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15), flourished in the writings of St Irenaeus, was taken up in John Henry Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*, entered into the last and longest document from the Second Vatican Council (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 22), and has surfaced in the teachings of Pope John Paul II (e.g. in his 1979 encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, n. 8)." He also notes that John Macquarrie makes an exaggerated claim for this title when he suggests that Adam Christology will emphasise the "'complete humanity of Christ' and rescue Christology from the pervasive tendency to docetism under which it has long suffered." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Images of Jesus and Modern Theology*, in STANLEY E. PORTER; MICAHEL A. HAYES & DAVID TOMBS (eds.), *Images of Christ. Ancient and Modern* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 128-143, pp. 133-134. See also John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought*, p. 359. Although Macquarrie emphasises the humanity of Christ as an antidote to docetism, he does not entirely neglect the theme of the divinity of Christ. He is of the view that the Adam Christology of St. Paul (Phil 2:6-7) gives prominence to Christology from below. However, according to him, one must not remain in a 'Christology from below' and should rather move towards a 'Christology from above'. He says, "[t]he christology 'from below' is incomplete because it considers only the unfolding of the human, the exfoliation of the immense potentialities of the creature made in the image and likeness of God." He understands that St. Paul always emphasised the view that human beings are weak and needed divine grace. See pp. 63-64. The movement from a Christology 'from below' towards a Christology 'from above' can be seen in Hans Urs von Balthasar who says, "the raising of *a* man to the unique, the only-begotten, calls for the yet deeper descent of God himself, his humbling, his *kenosis* or emptying, right down to the binding of himself by entering into one man, *a* man who, unique though he is, does not cease to be a man among men." See HANS URS VON BALTHASAR, *A Theology of History,* New York, NY: Sheed & Ward, 1963, p. 11.

[196] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 60.

[197] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 61-62. O'Collins argues against those who say that at the time of incarnation the Son divested himself of his divine powers and that after his death he resumed those powers and abandoned his humanity. According to him, this view goes against the permanence of the humanity/incarnation of Christ. Some others,

4.4. Jesus' Threefold Exercise of Powers

According to O'Collins, when we speak of the self-emptying of the Son we have to distinguish a threefold exercise of powers in the life of the earthly Jesus. Firstly, the Son exercised his divine powers together with the other persons of the Trinity, for example, in the conservation of the created universe. Secondly, the Son exercised his divine powers, even as he acted in a fully human manner, for example, in miracles when he healed the sick by touching and by speaking with authority, etc. Finally, there were some actions which involved only the exercise of Jesus' human powers, for example, his eating, drinking, weeping, falling asleep, etc., which highlighted Jesus' self-emptying and taking the role of a humble servant.[198] The self-emptying of Jesus implies, according to O'Collins, the distinction that we find in the exercise of the divine and the human powers in the life of the earthly Jesus.

4.5. *Kenosis* on Two Levels

The self-emptying of Jesus can be seen from two perspectives. In the first place, we might consider this as the non-exercise by Jesus of the divine powers or his decision not to make demands on others to consider him as divine. As a human being he did not exercise his divine omni attributes. O'Collins says that some kenotic theories are supported by exegetes who compare Christ Jesus as being 'in the form of God' to Adam and Eve created in the 'image and likeness of God'. The attitude of Jesus is contrasted with that of Adam and Eve who sought to 'become like God' (Gn 3:5) – to 'take possession of' divinity. If one understands this contrast between the attitude of Jesus and that of Adam with respect to the possession of divinity, one may understand what is meant by the words, 'something to be seized' or 'taken possession of' (*harpagmos*). Jesus, although he was divine, did not wrongfully "attempt to seize a share in divinity." Although he belonged to the sphere of the divine he did "not want to exploit or retain egoistically or to his own advantage his divine prerogatives and privileges."[199] This, we could say, amounted to a self-emptying of the divine powers. Secondly, on the human level, Jesus emptied himself of his divine powers by his willingness to accept the human condition, and then, as a human being, he also emptied himself of his human powers by not exercising all his human capacities. Instead, he submitted himself in obedience to the Father and to other human structures. This amounted to the emptying of his independence and the submission of his self-identity to the will of others. The humble life he accepted as a member of a poor family

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who hold kenotic theories, however, exercising more caution, say that although the Son possessed divine powers, he did not exercise them during his earthly life. But O'Collins refutes this view by arguing that the divine powers are not acquired and cultivated through practice, but belong to God necessarily. Finally, according to O'Collins, when the Council of Chalcedon said that both the divine and human natures are preserved in the incarnation, it ruled out even the cautious form of the kenotic theory.

[198] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 63.

[199] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 58.

(emptying of earthly glory), the acceptance of a celibate life (emptying of attachment to a single family and emptying of his generative powers to dedicate himself completely to God's kingdom and for the love of all), the identification of himself with servants and people of the lowest strata (emptying of human desire for power over others), and his submission to the will of his Father even by accepting death on the cross (emptying of every earthly glory and independence),[200] could be seen as the emptying even of his human capacities and power. The first level of self-emptying is "an act of self-emptying, in virtue of which He became Man," while on the second level it is "a continuous act or habit of self-humiliation on the part of the Incarnate One, which culminated in the endurance of death on the cross."[201] From the perspective of these two aspects of self-emptying, one may conclude that the "life of Jesus the Christ was consummately and consistently a life of self-emptying, a life of service."[202] According to Donald G. Dawe, "[a] self-limiting relation to man and the whole world is not a unique event in the life of God; it is a basic quality of his life. *Kenosis* is not something that just happened once in Christ; it is something that has marked the whole history of God's dealing with men. The *kenosis* of Christ is the ultimate expression of God's kenotic love for man, but it is not an example isolated from the rest."[203] The *kenosis* of God shows forth the two natures of Jesus Christ, and discloses to us in a direct and accessible way how God wishes to be known in and through him.

5. The Credibility of the Incarnation

According to O'Collins, there are those who think that incarnation is incredible, impossible and beyond all understanding. O'Collins says that the Platonists rejected incarnation because they saw God as pure spirit and separate from the material world.[204] The Stoics rejected incarnation

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[200] According to O'Collins, "death on a cross is a radical sign of one's being truly human, death takes away any suspicion that the 'being born in human likeness' means not a genuine likeness but only a mere likeness, as if he only appeared to be human but was not truly so." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 58.

[201] ALEXANDER B. BRUCE, *The Humiliation of Christ. In its Physical, Ethical, and Official Aspects,* Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1881, p. 16. According to him, this first level of self-emptying is at the level of the Christ's pre-existence which signified "a firm determination not to hold fast and selfishly cling to equality of state with God." He also says that when Paul taught about the *kenosis* of Christ, it was not his intention to teach that Christ was truly God, but that he did not want to enjoy the advantages of being divine. Paul's intention was to teach Christians to keep themselves away from esteem and the desire to exalt themselves. See p. 17. The second level of *kenosis* emphasised, according to Bruce, "not the humanity of Christ, but the servile, suffering character of His life as a man." Paul's intention here is to admire the "humility of the man Christ Jesus." See p. 19.

[202] ALAN NEELY, *Mission as Kenosis. Implications for Our Times*, p. 214.

[203] DONALD G. DAWE, *The Form of a Servant. A Historical Analysis of the Kenotic Motif*, Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1963, p. 195. He also says that "[k]enosis is the characteristic of God's being and action in every respect…. Kenosis is the key to the saving action of God. His characteristic act in salvation is not one of self-assertion but rather of self-negation. In contrast to all human attempts at self-salvation, God saves in a gesture of radical self-giving. God limits himself, taking upon himself the incompleteness, brokenness, and sin that separate men from him. Free self-limitation is the characteristic of God's every act, indeed, of God's own person." See p. 200.

[204] According to Augustine, the Platonists did not believe that Jesus was made flesh. Speaking about the books of the Platonists, he says, "I read there that the Word, God, is 'born not of the flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God'. But that 'the word was made flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1:13-14), I did not read there." SAINT AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, trans. H. CHADWICK, New York, NY: 1991, p. 121.

because they saw God as already immanent in the universe. Hence, the Son of God could not take on the human condition or a material form. There were, however, some philosophical currents, which supported incarnation. Dionysius' notion of 'the good' by its very nature 'disseminating or sharing itself' suggests how the self-communication of God in the creation could again prompt God to "self-sharing by the personal self-giving that was the incarnation." O'Collins also sees a possibility of faith in the incarnation when he considers "the dynamism of the human spirit and its openness to the infinite." Within this framework, it is possible to conceive of Christ as "the limit case for humanity in its dynamic openness to the infinite God, as the fullness of all being and all goodness."[205]

O'Collins suggests three tests to weigh the credibility of incarnation. First, a belief in the incarnation of the pre-existent Son of God has to cohere with some known realities, "above all about the ultimate reality of God and ourselves." One may not understand it if it does not cohere with a known fact, or if it is presented as something that is totally new. O'Collins takes Justin Martyr's dialogue with Trypho as an example here. Justin proved his faith in the incarnation by showing that his faith cohered, at least partially, with the faith Trypho had about God and the human condition as found in the Hebrew scriptures.[206] O'Collins is of the view that this coherence could also be witnessed in the imagination of painters, poets, musicians, etc. One's belief in the incarnation could even be coherent with one's imagination of Jesus as beautiful. O'Collins says that one could sum up one's belief and conviction in the claim that "the incarnation is too beautiful not to be true." Second, belief in the incarnation ought to be tested pragmatically. This means that one has to see faith in the incarnation from a practical point of view, i.e., whether this faith has helped believers to have a better relationship with God and others, and whether it has any universal significance. Pragmatically this will indicate that the contemporary behaviour of believers, their work and service to the suffering, are motivated by faith in the incarnation. Third, in order to test the credibility of incarnation, one has to 'verify' it by relating it to corresponding data. One has to 'verify' whether belief in Jesus as the Son of God, in his claim of authority, in the vision of God which pervaded his ministry, his moral perfection, etc., has any corresponding support in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.[207] If all of these can be verified in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, then faith in the incarnation is strengthened. In conclusion, one will be able to say that these three tests support faith in the incarnation

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[205] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 127.

[206] In order to prove the virgin birth of Jesus, in his dialogue with Trypho, Justin Martyr makes use of the Old Testament passage from Is 7:14, and asserts that this passage certainly proves that it is after the occurrence of an event that a prophecy is properly understood. See C. D. ALLERT, *Revelation, Truth, Canon and Interpretation. Studies in Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho* in J. DEN BOEFT *et al.* (eds.), *Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae* 64 (Leiden, 2002), p. 45.

[207] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 128-131.

Having discussed the basic elements pertaining to the person of Jesus Christ and incarnation, we now move on to O'Collins' understanding of the person of Jesus Christ from a doctrinal point of view.

6. Questions Regarding the Nature/s and Person of Christ

In tune with the general understanding of the Church regarding the definition proposed by the Council of Chalcedon (451) regarding the person of Jesus Christ, O'Collins understands the Council as the definitive conclusion to the christological controversies of the early centuries of Christianity.[208] Like all Christians we, too, consider the Council of Chalcedon as having provided a conclusive definition for Christology. In what follows, we seek to clarify O'Collins' understanding of this definition. In order to do so, it is fitting that we first recall the definition of the Council:

> Therefore, following the holy Fathers,
> we all with one accord *teach* men to acknowledge
> ONE AND THE SAME son, our Lord Jesus Christ
> at once complete in divinity and complete in humanity,
> truly God and truly man, consisting also of a rational soul and body;
> of one substance (*homoousion*) with the Father as regards his divinity;
> and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his humanity;
> like us in all respects, apart from sin;
> as regards his divinity, begotten of the Father before the ages,
> but yet as regards his humanity begotten, for us and *for our salvation*,
> of Mary, the Virgin, the God-bearer;
> ONE AND THE SAME Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten,
> recognized in two natures (*physeis*),
> without confusion, without change, without division, without separation;
> the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union,
> but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved,
> and coming together to form one person (*prosōpon*) and subsistence (*hypostasis*),
> not as parted or separated into two persons,
> but ONE AND THE SAME Son and only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ;
> even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him,
> and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us,

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[208] The Council of Nicaea insisted on the divinity of Christ and the Council of Constantinople on His humanity. Before the Council of Chalcedon, the Council of Ephesus (431) supported the unity of divinity and humanity when it upheld the title *theotokos* (mother of God), which was introduced in order to show the unity of divinity and humanity in Jesus from his conception. Nestorius argued against the title *theotokos* and held that there was only a moral union between the humanity and divinity of Christ and not a personal union. But the council of Ephesus opposed Nestorius and supported the title *theotokos*. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus,* p. 20. O'Collins summarizes the sequence of the teachings of the first councils of the Church in the following words: "Christ is divine (Nicaea); Christ is human (Constantinople I); the human and divine elements are personally united (Ephesus); yet this personal unity does not destroy or reduce the integral individuality of either the human or the divine nature (Chalcedon). Against four successive errors [The errors are of Arius who held that the Son was perfect creature and at best a demigod who is subordinate to the Father; of Apollinaris of Laodicaea, who held that in the incarnation the Logos assumed only a body and denied that Jesus had a human soul or mind; of Nestorius, who in order to defend the full humanity of Jesus opposed the Marian title *Theotokos* and held for a moral unity rather than a personal unity between the divinity and humanity of Christ; and of Eutyches, who held that Christ's divinity absorbed his humanity (this is also called the Monophysite heresy according to which the one divine nature (*physis*) swallows up Christ's humanity).] these Councils moved to affirm both the full divinity and full humanity of Christ and the union which preserves the proper distinction between his two natures." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 16-18. For a brief presentation of the various heresies, which formed the background to the first four councils, see also RICHARD P. MCBRIEN, *Catholicism,* pp. 469-477.

and the creed of the Fathers has handed down to us (DS 301f.).[209]

Although the definition of the Council of Chalcedon is considered as the principal point of reference for orthodox Christology, O'Collins acknowledges its limitations. He is in agreement with Karl Rahner who says that every dogmatic is not simply an endpoint but also a starting point for further reflection.[210] Although Rahner sees the definition of Chalcedon as the reference point for encountering the 'ineffable truth' of our salvation, and the formula 'one person and two natures' as the basic formula of Christology,[211] he argues that an incompleteness persists which the formula does not resolve.[212] What remains obscure in the formula of the two natures of Christ is the "unconfused unity of the 'natures'." This is the result of "the formal generality and abstract emptiness of the concept."[213] O'Collins regards the Chalcedonian formulation as limited for the following reasons. Firstly, it is not a creed used in Christian worship but a teaching. Secondly, it does not give much importance to the humanity of Jesus but gives priority to His divinity. It says nothing about the crucifixion and resurrection. It also does not make a distinction between the earthly and glorified state of Jesus. Thirdly, it leaves an option for Christians to decide whether they should use the 'two-natures' terminology or other terms such as 'truly God and truly man', which the early Christians had used. Finally, basing himself on Piet Schoonenberg, he maintains that Chalcedon seems to present Christ as an object of knowledge.[214] That being said, however, O'Collins employs this definition in his quest to understand the person of Christ. According to him, the essential message that this definition seeks to convey is that "'[t]he human is so united with the divine in Christ, that the *one* Christ can be confessed to be both truly God and truly man'." The emphasis of Chalcedon is "on the

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[209] The definition of Chalcedon is presented by O'Collins in, GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 172.

[210] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 172. Karl Rahner considers the definitions of the magisterium as the beginning and not the end because of the limited nature of human knowledge and the unlimited character of divine truth. He says, "[t]he clearest formulations, the most sanctified formulas, the classic condensations of the centuries-long work of the Church in prayer, reflexion and struggle concerning God's mysteries: all these derive their life from the fact that they are not end but beginning, not goal but means, truths which open the way to the – ever greater – Truth." He also says of the traditional formula that it "preserves its significance, it remains precisely living, by being expounded… Anyone who takes seriously the 'historicity' of human truth (in which God's truth too has become incarnate in Revelation) must see that neither the abandonment of a formula nor its preservation in a petrified form does justice to human understanding. For history is precisely *not* an atomized beginning, ever-anew; it is rather … a becoming-new which preserves the old and preserves it all the more as old." However, when history moves on, there is also reflection that departs from the formula in order to discover the old formula again. See KARL RAHNER, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 1, pp. 149-150.

[211] KARL RAHNER, *Theological Investigations,* Vol. 1, p. 158.

[212] KARL RAHNER, *Theological Investigations,* Vol. 1, p. 151.

[213] KARL RAHNER, *Theological Investigations,* Vol. 1, p. 174. Rahner says that this concept is vague because, "the supreme particularity, the incomprehensibly profound, unique *Mysterium*, which decides my destiny and that of the world, on which absolutely everything in heaven and on earth depends because it declares God's own destiny and takes up into this the destiny of the world" is expressed in one of the "most general concepts of formal ontology." However, according to him, the concept of unity achieves "density and fullness from what is united" because what faith professes is "a substantial, lasting, indissoluble, hypostatic unity, the belonging of the two natures to one and the same Person as its very own in virtue of its being the selfsame." See pp. 174-175.

[214] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 172-173. Cf. also PIET SCHOONENBERG, *The Christ. A Study of the God-Man Relationship in the Whole of Creation and in Jesus Christ,* New York, NY: Herder & Herder, 1971, p. 63.

oneness of Jesus Christ."[215] The Council of Chalcedon made the greatest contribution to the understanding of Christ as one person in two natures. Let us look more closely at O'Collins' understanding of the 'person' and the 'two natures' in Christ.

6.1. One Person

According to O'Collins, the explicit teaching of Christ as one person began when the Council of Chalcedon defined his being as *prōsopon* or *hypostasis,* a term that caused controversies in the centuries before the Council.[216] He is of the view that the Chalcedonian teaching about Jesus Christ as one person in two natures, which remains normative for mainstream Christianity, was not something completely new. According to him, the Chalcedonian definition was represented in the Christology of Irenaeus, who provided the formula of 'one and the same'.[217] O'Collins is

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[215] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 174.

[216] The Latin word *persona* and the Greek word *prōsopon* mean the mask of an actor or a 'face'. Paul McPartlan says that the first person to apply *prōsopon* in speaking about the Trinity was Hyppolytus (c. 170 – c.236). See PAUL MCPARTLAN, *Person*, in JEAN-YVES LACOSTE (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology,* Vol. 3 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005) 1227-1231, p. 1228. In the initial stages of Christianity there were confusions with regard to the employment of certain terms to explain Christian belief in God. The Greek words *hypostasis* and *ousia* (substance) were used synonymously to speak about the distinction and unity of God. According to Christopher Stead, the term *ousia* had various meanings such as existence, category or status (definition), substance (principle of permanence), immaterial reality, matter, form, unchanging reality, stuff (e.g., gold, bones, flesh, etc.), character, etc. See CHRISTOPHER STEAD, *Divine Substance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 133-156. Stead also points out that some writers, influenced by Platonic thinking, avoided using *ousia* for the existence of God because God is 'beyond substance' (*epekeina tēs ousias*). See p. 161. According to G. L. Prestige, the first man to use the term *hypostasis* to describe the persons in the Trinity was Origen and it was used to argue for the unity of God. See GEORGE LEONARD PRESTIGE, *God in Patristic Thought*, London: S.P.C.K., 1952 [1936], p. 179. However, it was Tertullian who introduced the term 'person' in Christian theology to explain Trinity. See KARL HEINZ NEUFELD, *Person,* in WOLFGANG BEINERT & FRANCIS SCHUSSLER FIORENZA (eds.), *Handbook of Catholic Theology* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1995) 527-531, p. 528. The use of the term *hypostasis* was ambiguous in the fourth century. Arius used it as 'substance' to show the distinction between the Father, Son and Spirit. Arius had maintained that there are three *hypostaseis* in God or three substances. The Council of Nicaea (325) in its creed used the terms *hypostasis* and *ousia* to affirm that the Father and Son are of one 'substance.' Because of the confusion and misunderstanding that was produced by the use of *hypostasis* and *ousia* in Nicaea, R. P. C. Hanson says that, "the Creed produced by the Council of Nicaea was a mine of potential confusion and consequently most unlikely to be a means of ending the Arian Controversy." See RICHARD PATRICK CROSLAND HANSON, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God. The Arian Controversy* 318-381, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988, p. 168. Hanson also claims that "[t]he search for the Christian doctrine of God in the fourth century was in fact complicated and exasperated by the semantic confusion, so that people holding different views were using the same words as those who opposed them, but unawares, giving them different meanings from those applied to them by those opponents." See p. 181. The use of the terms *hypostasis* and *ousia* to mean different substances was opposed by the Synod of Sardica (342) which claimed that there was only one *hypostasis* of the Father, Son and Holy Sprit. Athanasius in his fight against Arianism maintained that while there is only one substance (*hypostasis*) or being (*ousia*) of God, the Son was different from the Father. Athanasius was the first one to theorize the term 'person'. McPartlan says that, in order to avoid misunderstanding, Athanasius refrained from using the term *hypostasis* for the three persons of the Trinity. The Cappadocian Fathers Basil, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, while fighting Sabellianism, maintained that each divine person was true being and that they were not different roles taken by the one divine monad. To emphasise that the different persons were concrete beings, they used the term *hypostasis* instead of *prōsopon* which had the meaning of 'role'. According to Neufeld, while trying to explain Trinity and the relationship between Father, Son and Spirit, in the ecumenical councils of the fourth and fifth centuries, the term 'person' won out against the ambiguous Greek terms *hypostasis* and *prōsopon*. In Christology the term 'person' was used from the time of Chalcedon "to express the unity of Christ in contrast to the diversity of the divine and human natures." See KARL HEINZ NEUFELD, *Person*, p. 528.

[217] IRENAEUS, *Adversus Haereses, III, 9.1*, in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON, *Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol.1, p. 422.

of the view that it was Tertullian who began to use the term 'person' and to teach about the distinction of persons in the Godhead. In his understanding, in the Godhead the distinction between the 'persons' did not destroy the unity of substance and monarchy.[218] In so far as incarnation is concerned, according to Tertullian, the "two distinct 'substances' are joined in one 'person', without the substances being mixed to form some impossible *tertium quid*… Instead 'the property of each substance remains intact'." O'Collins also says that Tertullian was firm in upholding the "true divinity of the distinct person, the Word or Son of God."[219]

According to the Council of Chalcedon, the principle of unity between the human and divine natures of Jesus is 'one person and subsistence'. O'Collins explained the two natures and one person with the expression, "[*t*]*hat which* acted revealed a duality (the divine and human natures), but *he who* acted was one (the one person of the 'one and the same Son and only-begotten God the Word')."[220] In his view, the first person who offered a classical definition of 'person' was Boethius who defined it as an 'individual substance of a rational nature.'[221] This definition encompassed individuality and rationality but "had nothing to say about the freedom, history and inter-relatedness of persons." Later on, medieval theology added the characteristic of incommunicability to Boethius' definition. According to him, various people at various times added some aspect to the meaning of person, such as 'self-consciousness' (Rene Descartes), 'will and its freedom' (Immanuel Kant), etc. O'Collins synthesises the progress in the understanding of 'person' and describes it as "*this* rational and free individual, who is the subject and centre of action and relationships and who enjoys incommunicable identity, inalienable dignity, and inviolable rights."[222] Hence, in O'Collins' view, the notion of 'person' can be

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[218] Against the heretical view of the divided Godhead of Praxeas, Tertullian argued for the unity of the Godhead. He taught "the three Persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: three, however, not in condition, but in degree; not in substance, but in form; not in power, but in aspect; yet of one substance, and of one condition, and of one power, in as much as He is one God." See TERTULLIAN, *Against Praxeas II,* in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON, *Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 3, p. 598. For the use of 'person' to identify the Father and the Son, see also, Vol. 6, p. 601. According to McBrien, "it was Tertullian's formula, one person in two natures, which the council [Chalcedon] took over and made its own, although without any detailed elaboration." He also says that, according to the Council's definition, the "'person' is the 'who' of the union, namely, the eternal Son of God. The 'natures' are the 'what' of the union. Accordingly, Jesus is consubstantial with the Father and also substantially one with us." See RICHARD P. MCBRIEN, *Catholicism,* p. 477.

[219] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 173-174. See also TERTULLIAN, *Against Praxeas*, IX, ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 3, pp. 623-624.

[220] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 180.

[221] In theology, the concept of person is the most suitable term to speak about the Trinity. According to Neufeld, from the time of the Council of Chalcedon the term 'person' was used in Christology to speak about the unity of Christ. In theology this concept arose not from a philosophical discussion on the 'essence' of God but from the inference of God's action in the salvation history. This term came into use in philosophy from the time of Boethius and was henceforth mostly used with reference to human beings. According to Neufeld, the anthropological use of this term has largely pushed the theological understanding to the background. Today 'person' denotes primarily the freedom and autonomy of human beings. The 'person' is "the centre out of which the action of human beings emerges." Hence, the application of this term to God today amounts to tritheism because it "would mean that in God there are three centres of action and therefore three gods." See KARL HEINZ NEUFELD, *Person*, p. 528.

[222] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 235.

understood as follows: "(a) Persons are distinct and individual beings, (b) who enjoy rationality and freedom, (c) exist and act in relationship with other persons, (d) experience their self-identity in such a relational existence, (e) and have an inalienable dignity."[223] For O'Collins, relational existence, i.e., (c) and (d) of the above, serve as the best interpretation of person in theology.[224] This view is held by people like Schillebeeckx and it helps one to understand the persons in the Trinity in a better way, because it is "in their relational existence that they have their self-identity."[225]

When the Council spoke about the person of Jesus Christ, according to O'Collins, it "did not literally describe Christ as a 'divine person'. What it did was to speak of one *hypostasis,* which united the two natures of Christ. For him, what the Council of Chalcedon taught is that "the incarnate Word of God is only one individual but has two 'things', his divine and human natures." With the term *hypostasis,* the Council almost identified the human person of Jesus with the pre-existent divine person of the Logos when it said 'one and the same Son and *only-begotten God the Word*'. It was in fact the Second Council of Constantinople which interpreted "the unity of subject in Christ by identifying the principle of union as the pre-existing Logos."[226] Hence, what we mean by *hypostatic* union is that,

> A fully human existence was 'enhypostatized' in the Word. Christ was not a human person, but a divine person who assumed a complete human nature without assuming human personhood. The divine person of the Logos identified with a full humanity to the point of 'personalizing' that particular example of human nature.[227]

This means that "Jesus Christ was (and is) then a man, a human being and a human individual, *but not* a human person."[228] By incarnation, we mean that the Word of God acquired the characteristics of a genuine human being in addition to his divinity, which he possessed from eternity. "His loving 'descent' from heaven 'altered' him by adding the human nature through which he could operate visibly and humanly. But his humanity did not and does not have the independence that would constitute a second (human) person alongside the divine person of the Word of God."[229] But the Son's not being a human person does not in any way diminish his humanity or deprive his humanity of anything. O'Collins says that it is not necessary for a full

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[223] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 180.

[224] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 181.

[225] According to Schillebeeckx, "being a person entails interpersonality." In the case of God also, he prefers to speak in these terms. If God is personal, "he is bound to be in one way or another 'interpersonal' as well." Hence he says that the "Trinity is the plenitude of God's personal, absolute unity of being, and that God is therefore, without any becoming … none the less eternal youth and intrinsic dynamic Life, not an impassive self-contemplator." He sees the persons in the Trinity as having relational existence. See EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX, *Jesus. An Experiment in Christology,* trans. HUBERT HOSKINS, New York, NY: Crossroad, 1979, p. 662.

[226] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 182.

[227] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 182.

[228] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 182.

[229] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 154.

humanity to be identified with the presence of human personhood. "Human characteristics and 'perfections' come at the level of nature and of a given individual's qualities as a human being" and at that level there is no contribution made by personhood.[230] Compared to what we mean by 'person', which signified a rational individual, the meaning of *hypostasis* as one individual had a greater application. "Every person is a *hypostasis* but not every *hypostasis* (e.g. an individual dog or tree) is a person."[231] Hence, what one could say is that the incarnate Word of God is an individual (person) with two natures, divine and human, He is a human being but not a human person. The Word of God had all the natural endowments and all the essential characteristics of a human being, but He did not become a human person. "He is one 'who' but has two 'whats'. The 'oneness' we acknowledge with reference to the person, the 'twoness' with reference to the natures'."[232] O'Collins sums up his understanding of the 'person' of Jesus Christ in the following way:

> Jesus Christ was (and is) (a) a distinct and individual being, who (c) existed and acted in relationship with others and (d) experienced his self-identity in such a relational existence – above all, in and through his unique relationship to the One he called 'Abba'. As *divine* person he had no independent centre of consciousness and freedom, but participated with the Father and the Spirit in one intellect and will. Yet through his humanity (b) Jesus Christ enjoyed his own rationality and freedom. Lastly, his existence as Son of God (e) gave his person an absolutely sovereign dignity.[233]

O'Collins says that if incarnation had meant the teaming up of the person of the Son of God with a person already existing, one could not say that He became truly human by taking the form of flesh. If such were the case, the result would have been a relationship between the person of the Son of God, a divine subject, and the person of the Son of Mary, a human subject. This would mean that there are two persons and two sons, which cannot be then considered as a genuine incarnation because this would be showing "Christ as a temple of the divine Word or as a person filled with the divine Spirit. Such a Christ might differ in degree from others so graced by God, but not in kind."[234] Hence, according to O'Collins, the incarnation is the assuming of the human nature by the divine person and not the joining of two individual persons.

6.2. The Two Natures

Following upon various christological heresies, which arose in the early centuries of Christianity, the Council of Nicaea, in its creed, professed that the Son is 'of the substance (*ousia*) of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father', and rebutted the challenges regarding Christ's divinity and the pre-existence of the Son. The Council condemned those who opposed

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[230] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 182.

[231] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 66.

[232] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, pp. 153-154.

[233] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 183.

[234] MARIO FARRUGIA & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 154.

the pre-existence of the Son and those who held that he was created and is of 'different *hypostasis* or *ousia* from the Father'.[235] Later on, to come to an agreement on the problems concerning the two natures of Christ, in the Council of Ephesus, the Antiochenes taught that Christ was "'perfect God and perfect man', maintaining his double generation (in eternity from the Father and in time from his mother Mary), and teaching a double consubstantiality (divine with the Father and human with his mother)." They also endorsed the Marian title of *Theotokos* and confessed "Christ to be one *prosōpon*[236] and two natures (*physeis*) in an 'unconfused union' (*henōsis*)." The Council of Chalcedon used the terms 'natures' (*physeis*) and 'person' (*prosōpon*) or 'subsistence' (*hypostasis*), without however giving a proper definition to them. [237] According to O'Collins, the principal churches of the East and the West accepted the understanding of Christ as one person in two natures.[238]

6.2.1. The Divine Nature

Nicaea and Chalcedon taught that Christ was 'one substance with the Father'. O'Collins says that by using the notion of the same 'substance' or 'nature', the Council expressed its belief that all the divine attributes that were assigned to the Father were also assigned to the Son.[239] One gets notions of God and His characteristics first of all "from what has been revealed and interpreted about God through the experience of the community and individuals… in the OT and NT history." Most of the attributes of God that the Church uses in its creeds, liturgy and teachings are biblical and historical. O'Collins also says that the notion of God gets its meaning from personal religious experience.[240] He says that in the course of our lives, through our prayer and personal experience, some changes take place in our beliefs regarding the characteristics of God. Although our experience of God changes, God remains the same as "both infinitely beyond us and yet intimately related to us." O'Collins describes these biblical and historical attributes and the characteristics known experientially as divine attributes which are received 'from the

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[235] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 177.

[236] *Prosōpon* initially meant the mask worn by an actor on a stage to resemble a character. Later on it meant the face of someone or someone's public 'persona'. O'Collins says that during the third to the fifth centuries *prosōpon* or persona indicated an individual human being. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 67.

[237] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 191-192.

[238] Some groups of Christians did not accept the Chalcedonian understanding of Jesus as one person in two natures. According to O'Collins, by avoiding the terminology used in Chalcedon, some schisms between the churches have been overcome in the twentieth century. Thus, in an agreement between the Coptic Pope Shenouda III of Egypt and Pope Paul VI in 1973, a new terminology 'perfect God with respect to his divinity and perfect man with respect to his humanity' was used instead of 'two natures' of Christ. This put at rest the longstanding schism with some Christians of Egypt who had not accepted the language of 'two natures' since the year 451. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 69. O'Collins also says that many Christians who had accepted the language of 'two natures' actually misunderstood it as "two of the same kind or two more or less equal species of the same genus, 'nature'." See p. 70.

[239] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 178.

[240] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 225.

bottom up'.[241] According to him, a second way in which we gain notions of God is through the better analysis of these attributes in Platonic, Stoic and Aristotelian thought, which he describes as received 'from the top down'.[242] A divine person would have a totality of all the characteristics which are gained 'from the bottom up' and 'from the top down'.

According to O'Collins, the doctrine of incarnation means that we recognize all those characteristics of the divine in Jesus of Nazareth, which are required for divinity. One who believes in Jesus sees Him as the One who has all these attributes of divinity. One's faith in Jesus as the ultimate, all-determining reality, and as the one who effects ultimate salvation, moves one to consider Him as divine.[243] According to O'Collins, John Hick and Joseph Campbell, among others, hold a soft view on the incarnation of Jesus; they say that incarnation is a general possibility and that God has been disclosed in Jesus in a new and final way. In the soft view of incarnation, Jesus is portrayed as the embodiment of the power of God and as a representative of God who works for the salvation of all, rather than as God's self-communication. This only presents Jesus as a revealer of God or a representative of God. But O'Collins says that "[t]he full doctrine of the incarnation acknowledges in Jesus not just epistemological transcendence (which portrays him merely as God's revealer, embodiment, or representative), but also a genuine ontological transcendence. He is 'beyond', and comes to us 'from the beyond'."[244] It is the divine characteristics found in Jesus that make one believe that Jesus is God and also make all other human beings different from Jesus. One could say that God is present and active in all human beings but one cannot say that all the characteristics of the divine are found in every human being. O'Collins says that the recognition of all the divine characteristics in Jesus moves Christians to believe that by truly becoming incarnate God became one with us and gave us our value. He says, "A Jesus who is not divine, means that God

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[241] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 226. The biblical, historical and experiential portrayals of God exhibit two kinds of divine characteristics. "(1) On the one hand God is supremely mysterious, indefinable, or even unknowable. God dwells beyond our sense experience 'in approachable light', without beginning or end (= eternal). The deity is beyond the material world (= utterly spiritual) and all its categories of gender and class: infinitely wise, holy, apart, untouchable, and yet necessarily the 'object of our adoration. (2) Along with these transcendent attributes, God is also, on the other hand, 'within' or immanent: personal, relational, perfectly loving, and intimately compassionate; the creator of all things and lord of history, who is nevertheless, 'closer' to us than we are to ourselves."

[242] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 226. The philosophical version highlights the characteristics essential for divinity: "God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent (yet beyond all space and time with their limits), the creator and sustainer of everything, perfectly free and perfectly good… the ground of all being and of all life. God is subsistent Being itself, the uncaused cause or unmoved mover, the one necessary, infinite Being who is utterly self-sustaining, self-determining, and therefore totally self-explanatory. In every way complete, ultimate, and unconditioned, God is infinitely simple and profoundly uncomplicated… The absolute source of all that is true, good and beautiful."

[243] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 179.

[244] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 227. The soft view of incarnation, which could be considered as a type of neo-Arianism, reduces the qualitative differences between Jesus and other human beings. This might be said to be present in Teilhard de Chardin's evolutionary theory where Jesus Christ is understood as the supreme unfolding of the material world.

was really unwilling to become human and did not after all set such a value on us."[245] Being of one substance with the Father and holding all the attributes of the divine, Jesus is truly a divine person. His incarnation and his self-emptying to become a human being make us understand more fully the nature of God and His love. Without incarnation it would have been impossible for human beings to arrive at a greater knowledge of the value they have before the divine and the relationship they have with the divine.

6.2.2. The Human Nature

The Council of Chalcedon also taught that Jesus was 'complete in humanity'. O'Collins says that from the Middle Ages to modern times, more importance was given to the divine nature of Christ than to his human nature. Jesus "was often represented during his earthly life not as being genuinely human but as the Son of God wandering around in human disguise." When we hold that Jesus is consubstantial with the Father and with human beings, it does not mean that his divinity or his humanity is in any way diminished. Jesus remains both truly divine and truly human. The divine nature of Jesus did not diminish his human nature, but rather "enhanced and fulfilled the human nature."[246]

When we speak about the humanity of Jesus, in fact what we do is to attribute to him all that we know religiously and culturally of what human being is. According to O'Collins, the necessary properties that make someone a human being are bodily existence with all its functions, the capacity for knowledge (intelligence), the capacity to make independent decisions (free will), the capability to "feel and express emotions" (affectivity), and the ability to relate to the past (memory).[247] He is also of the view that human beings are always on the move towards becoming human, i.e., being human is to be open and to be in dynamic process. He believes that "[h]uman beings are open-ended projects, called to develop dynamically, discover meaning, follow up insights, actualize potentialities, deepen their self-understanding as well as their relationships with others, and through experience to grow continually from cradle to grave."[248] They ought to be social beings because of their interdependence although they have independence in many things. They are also limited beings, limited to time and space, limited in intelligence and knowledge, limited in being either male or female, and finally limited in their life. All of this makes them dependent on the social structures and so open to relationship with others and open to what is infinite, God.[249] In O'Collins' understanding, these are the types of

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[245] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 228.

[246] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 174-175.

[247] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 229.

[248] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 229.

[249] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 230.

limitedness and independence that contribute towards our recognition and admission of Jesus as a human being.

Although the author of the letter to the Hebrews speaks about the divinity of Jesus in a high sense in the letter to the Hebrews (Heb 1:8f.), he writes about Him as 'being made perfect' (Heb 2:10; 5:9; 7:28). This suggests a form of development. O'Collins says that "[i]n the case of Jesus and indeed of all other human beings it could be better to speak of 'becoming human' rather than of 'being human'." Hence when one speaks about the Chalcedonian understanding of Jesus as 'complete' or 'perfect' in his humanity, one should consider it in the sense of 'becoming human'. This means that one should understand Jesus' being 'truly man' with all its attributes of growth, freedom, limitations, sexual differences, and cultural differences. One also has to take into account the social aspects of Jesus' life, i.e., how Jesus lived in relationship with others in a community, and the world. This is to speak of the limitedness and finiteness of Jesus as a human being in a corporeal existence. The finiteness of Jesus' human nature also concerns the finiteness of Jesus' gender. One cannot speak of Jesus' humanity in a general way or as showing universal characteristics of human being. O'Collins says that "being human means being specific: male or female, Jew or Gentile… To deny such specific characteristics of Jesus as his maleness and his Jewishness would be tantamount to denying his genuine humanity."[250]

To restrict the humanity of Jesus to what we know about all other human beings, according to O'Collins, is to delimit the complete picture of the humanity of Jesus. His crucifixion, death and resurrection place the humanity of Jesus in another realm which human beings may achieve, and reveal to them the "'best' or 'highest' possibilities for an authentically human life."[251] Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection bespeak the finiteness of human beings. They also make us aware that there are many more characteristics and properties of divinity and humanity in Jesus than those that one would ordinarily attribute to humanity and divinity from one's prior knowledge of God and human beings. According to O'Collins, the humanity of Jesus (incarnation) has great pastoral significance: (1) through it the Son of God experiences what it means to be human; (2) through it he represents human beings to God as one among us, which would not have been possible if he was an alien; (3) through it Jesus is able to show to human beings how they should live, act, suffer, and pray; (4) through it Jesus shows us how God loves us and how He personally understands us; (5) through it Jesus shows us an example of how we can follow him 'with faith and hope because he shares our human condition'; and (6) through it He indicates something about our redemption.[252]

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[250] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 231.

[251] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 175-176.

[252] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 230-231.

The uniqueness of Jesus consists in his being both human and divine. But O'Collins asks whether there was anything unique in Jesus' "way of being human, acting as a man and expressing his humanity", which made him unique in sharing God's life. He says that in principle we need to accept that the divinity of Jesus was not completely hidden from His humanity. Jesus, through His words and deeds during His ministry, had shown that he had unique authority and compassion which He shared with God, and also that He knew and revealed through those words and actions the authority and compassion of God. And hence, O'Collins says, "[t]he earthly Jesus was the human way of being God and acting as God. He was the human face of God (2 Cor 4:6), the historical symbol expressing God to us and for us."[253]

O'Collins says that, in the New Testament, the divine in Jesus' life is portrayed in terms of both hiddenness (Phil 2:5-8) and presence (theophany model - Titus 3:4), each of which led to various types of problems concerning the divinity and humanity of Christ. According to him, there are unusual occasions when God intervenes in history relative to particular people at a particular time through which we come to know of the divine presence. However, he also notes that people like David Hume oppose such views and maintain that God makes himself known not through unusual divine activities but only through the usual course of nature. But, O'Collins says, Christians see incarnation not as an unusual event but as the personal engagement of God in a particular human being. Hence, according to O'Collins, "the human life and history of Jesus could serve as the supreme medium of God's presence, self-revelation and self-communicating love."[254]

One problem that we can see when we consider the human finiteness and the divine infiniteness is the difficulty in understanding how both of these could exist simultaneously in one person. O'Collins points to the position of people who oppose Jesus' sharing two natures on the grounds that "Christ's being truly divine would threaten the integrity of his humanity." He refutes this position by insisting that although there is a huge gap between the infinite and the finite, there is nevertheless a relationship between them. He indicates this relationship by saying that there must be something spiritual about matter such that they are related; otherwise God could not have created matter/the world. This relationship of the spiritual/divine with the material can be seen in a better way when we consider the creation of human beings in the image of God, in view of which something divine is credited to every human being. If this is the type of relationship that exists between the divine and the human being, and if the Logos could assume humanity, according to O'Collins, "there must be something human about God."[255]

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[253] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 176.

[254] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 177-178.

[255] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 233.

In the instance of Jesus, since he is both divine and human, there would seem to be a sort of contradiction between many of his properties because, on the one hand, in terms of his divinity he is infinite, all-knowing and all-powerful, but, on the other, in terms of his humanity he is finite, limited in knowledge and power. However, O'Collins says that there is no blatant contradiction here. A blatant contradiction can take place only when mutually incompatible properties are "attributed to the same subject at the same time *and under the same aspect.*" But in the case of Jesus this is not so. However, O'Collins does acknowledge that it is beyond human conceptuality to understand and describe incarnation completely. If we cannot completely describe what we mean by God, how can we completely describe what we understand about God and man, or the God-man Jesus Christ?[256]

6.2.3. The Mode of Union: The Hypostatic Union

Up until now, we have been discussing the definition of Jesus Christ as one person in two natures by the Council of Chalcedon and O'Collins' interpretation of it. The difficulty that we now have is to understand how this union of two natures took place in Jesus. According to John Webster, the center of gravity of the definition is not the natures considered in isolation from each other, but rather the event of their union in the one subject, Jesus. The definition starts from the union of the natures in the one person and hypostasis of which they are predicated, rather than from an attempt "to construct a psychologically credible person by first defining and then uniting two distinct natures."[257] This union is not something that is natural and fully understandable with analogies. It is something that is known to God alone and it is a mystery.[258] The classical term used in this regard is 'hypostatic union', a union which took place between a divine person or *hypostasis* (with its pre-existent divine nature which is shared eternally with the Father and the Holy Spirit),[259] and the human nature that this divine person assumes at the time of incarnation. This union is a unique event, "an instance of itself, and in no sense a complement, completion, or parallel to any other realities. The hypostatic union is not the most

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[256] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 234.

[257] JOHN WEBSTER, *Incarnation,* in GARETH JONES (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004) 204-226, pp. 222-223.

[258] Brian E. Daley says that, "[t]here never was and never will be another Christ: his coming, his very being, is not the product of the natural functioning of things either divine or human, but something much more mysterious and unpredictable, 'a mode of adaptation planned by God'." See BRIAN E. DALEY, *Nature and the Mode of Union. Late Patristic Models for the Personal Unity of Christ,* in STEPHEN T. DAVIS; DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS (eds.), *The Incarnation. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002) 165-196, p. 192.

[259] According to Brian E. Daley, the Greek theologians of the early Church did not understand 'person' in its modern understanding, when they spoke of the hypostasis of Christ, or of the three 'hypostases' of the Trinity. To them, the person was not "an independent subject, constituted by a unique and unrepeatable focus of self-consciousness, practical autonomy, and some measure of psychological freedom… [Instead] hypostasis was essentially a particular individual within a universal species, identifiable as such or such a thing by the qualities it shared with similar individuals, yet marked off as unique by a set of characteristics all its own." See BRIAN E. DALEY, *Nature and the Mode of Union. Late Patristic Models for the Personal Unity of Christ,* p. 194.

exalted instance of human self-transcendence, of humanity's being 'in God' or of the immanence of God in creation."[260]

We have already said that the divine and all-spiritual God relates to what is material in many ways, especially through creation. The Old Testament witnesses to the way in which God relates to persons (patriarchs, prophets and to the community of Israel) and non-personal realities (taking possession of a land, being enthroned on Zion, etc.). But in the Old Testament we cannot find a God who takes possession of a person permanently. However, according to O'Collins, the Old Testament understanding of a certain type of permanence of the glory of God 'returning' to, 'filling' and 'residing' in the Temple (Ez 10:3-4), "prepared the way for belief in the personal presence of the Son of God in Jesus."[261]

O'Collins says that from the late fourth century problems developed regarding the understanding of the union of two natures of Jesus. The most important problems were the denial of the divinity of Jesus (Arianism) or his humanity (Appollinarians). Against these denials, the union of the 'two natures', human and divine, in 'one person' which was the principle of unity, had to be asserted. According to O'Collins, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa presented this unity by means of the Stoic language of 'mixing' and 'blending' two natural substances, which become one without losing their characteristic natures. But this imagery turned Christ into a type of 'divine-human hybrid' and portrayed Christ in material categories. The imagery of 'mingling' and 'blending' continued to exist in the christologies of the early centuries until the time of Chalcedon which said that Jesus was revealed in two natures, without their being 'blended or changed'.[262]

6.2.4. Analogies of Hypostatic Union

When one deals with the question of the hypostatic union, it is clear that one cannot understand it from ordinary human experience. However, we could ask whether it is possible for one to understand this union in analogical terms. Could one understand this union in the same way as the union of the soul and body that take place in a human person or in some other way? It is worth examining some of the analogies that, according to O'Collins, contribute to an understanding of the hypostatic union.

6.2.4.1. Soul and Body

One of the analogies employed to reflect on the union of the two natures of Jesus was the analogy of the union of soul and body in human beings. This was developed by Augustine of Hippo and Cyril of Alexandria, and later endorsed by the Athanasian Creed, which said, "[j]ust

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[260] JOHN WEBSTER, *Incarnation,* p. 223.

[261] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 90.

[262] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 91-92.

as rational soul and flesh are a single man, so God and man are single Christ."[263] According to O'Collins, this analogy between the union of the divine and human in Jesus, and the union of the soul and body in a human being possesses some positive aspects. Both are mysterious, and involve both "spiritual and material components and unequal partners." However, there are also some difficulties in this analogy. One problem that we face when we compare the hypostatic union with the union of the soul and body of the human person is that whereas in the hypostatic union there is a union of two natures (human and divine), this is not the case in the union between the body and soul. Another difference is that in the instance of body and soul, their union is the union of two incomplete 'substances', which become complete only at their union. But in the case of the union between the divine and the human in Jesus, it is the union of two complete substances or natures. In the case of the first union, the two components are of lesser status than what is found in the hypostatic union. In the case of death, the body and soul are separated, but in the case of the hypostatic union this does not happen. Finally, in the case of the hypostatic union, the union between the body and soul becomes one part (the humanity of Christ) while the other part is the divine nature of Christ.[264] For all these reasons, according to O'Collins, this analogy does not explain the hypostatic union.

6.2.4.2. Bride and Bridegroom

Another analogy, similar to the analogy of the body and soul, is the 'union between the bridegroom and the bride' found in the Song of Songs in the Old Testament. This analogy considers Christ's human soul as the bride and the incarnate Word as the bridegroom. The analogy suggested that the divine Word embraced the humanity when it became flesh.[265] But, according to O'Collins, this analogy also does not suit the hypostatic union, because in it there are two distinct persons, whereas in the hypostatic union there is only one person in two complete and perfect natures. He also states that "the incarnation entails an eternal, inseparable

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[263] JOHN NORMAN DAVIDSON KELLY, *The Athanasian Creed. The Paddock Lectures for 1962-3,* New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1964, p. 20. According to Kelly, the Athanasian creed compares the hypostatic union to the unity of a human individual. He says that the human individual "is made up of two distinct, and even disparate, elements, rational soul and body; yet in some mysterious way he remains a single, absolutely indivisible entity. It is not implied, we should observe, that the rational soul in man corresponds to the divinity of Christ, the flesh to His humanity." The point of reference here is that two distinct substances are united to form one single person. See p. 99. He also says that St. Augustine used the same phraseology of the Athanasian creed, which said, "[j]ust as one man is rational soul and flesh, so the one Christ is God and man (*sicut enim unus est homo anima rationalis et caro, sic unus est Christus deus et homo*)." See p. 100.

[264] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 93-94.

[265] M.W. Elliott points out that some early Christian writers spoke of the Word as the figure of the Groom in the Song of Songs. The Groom was considered as the agent or person in Christ who continues to play the initiating role towards souls, drawing them into following him. Christ was presented as the groom, holding out love to an ideal bride. "Set out in all his magnificence, he is depicted as the initiator of salvation, the Spirit-provider, the holder of a tension of two extremes, the buffer between God and Humanity, the perfecter of a salvation-history, the condescending one, the one with beautiful virtues, the cosmic ruler who reflects in himself the harmony of creation." See MARK W. ELLIOT, *The Song of Songs and Christology in the Early Church 381-451,* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000, p. 51. Elliot notes that "[t]he Bride is often understood by the Fathers as Christ's humanity in the sense that she as the Church is the body of Christ, or that she is identified with the prepared humanity which the Word assumed." See p. 120.

union between humanity and divinity, whereas the union of body and soul inevitably breaks down (at death) and the union between lovers frequently does so."[266]

6.2.4.3. Scripture – The Word of God in the Words of Men

The Second Vatican Council in its Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*) proposed an analogy between the two natures of Christ and the two essential elements of the scriptures, i.e., the Word of God and the words of men. It said, "God's words, expressed through human language, have taken on the likeness of human speech, just as the Word of the eternal Father, when he assumed the flesh of human weakness, took on the likeness of human beings."[267] According to O'Collins, this analogy is apt to be used to understand the incarnation because in this the incarnate Son of God, who is truly divine and human, is analogously seen like the scriptures, which is a result of the combined work of God and the inspired human authors. The Pontifical Biblical Commission, which saw the scriptures along these same lines, said that the human authors of the scriptures were limited in their capacities and resources.[268] O'Collins says that this analogy between the incarnation and the scriptures, which also points to the limited capacities of the human authors, is suitable to express the limited character of the incarnation because in the incarnation the Son of God assumed our human nature and remained to that extent limited. He also says that "[t]o allege that Christ's humanity in itself enjoyed and enjoys unlimited or infinite capacities and resources would be to cast fatal doubt on its genuinely human status."[269] Hence, this analogy helps to overcome the alleged fear about the reality of the humanity of Jesus Christ.

6.2.4.4. The Church – A Spiritual/Invisible and Visible Reality

Another analogy is that between the incarnation and the Church. Pope Pius XII in his encyclical, *The Mystical Body of Jesus Christ*, proposed an analogy between the visible humanity and the invisible divinity of Christ, and the visible and invisible properties of 'the Mystical Body', which is the Church. He said:

> Christ, Head and Exemplar of the Church 'is not complete, if only His visible human nature is considered…, or if only His divine, invisible nature…, but he is one through the union of both and

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[266] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 94-95.

[267] VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dei Verbum 13,* p. 977.

[268] According to the Pontifical Biblical Commission, the interpretation of the Bible should be "as faithful as possible to its character both human and divine." Speaking about the fundamentalist interpretation of scriptures, (a fundamentalist interpretation starts from the principle that the Bible, being the word of God, inspired and free from error, should be read and interpreted literally in all its details), the Commission says that, "[t]he basic problem … is that, refusing to take into account the historical character of biblical revelation, it makes itself incapable of accepting the full truth of the incarnation itself. As regards relationships with God, fundamentalism seeks to escape any closeness of the divine and the human. It refuses to admit that the inspired word of God has been expressed in human language and that this word has been expressed, under divine inspiration, by human authors possessed of limited capacities and resources." See PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, in *Origins* 23 (1994) 497-524, pp. 500, 510.

[269] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 95-96.

one in both… so is it with His Mystical Body' since the Word of God took unto Himself a human nature liable to sufferings, so that He might consecrate in His blood the visible Society founded by Him and 'lead man back to things invisible under visible rule'.[270]

According to O'Collins, the Second Vatican Council also presented the Church as a "mysterious spiritual reality appearing as a visible organization" in a fashion similar to the way that Christ's human reality manifests his divinity. The *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* said:

> This society [the Church], however, equipped with hierarchical structures, and the mystical body of Christ, a visible assembly and a spiritual community, an earthly church and a church enriched with heavenly gifts, must not be considered as two things, but as forming one complex reality comprising a human and a divine element. It is therefore by no mean analogy that it is likened to the mystery of the incarnate Word. For just as the assumed nature serves the divine Word as a living instrument of salvation inseparably joined with him, in a similar way the social structure of the church serves the Spirit of Christ who vivifies the church towards the growth of the body.[271]

These analogies cannot explain everything since they involve dissimilarities as well. In the case of the analogy between the Scripture and its human authors, and the divine and human natures of Christ, one is sure to find dissimilarities. While we speak of the scriptures we understand that they are produced by many authors; however, in the case of Jesus, the divine and human natures of Christ are united in one person. In the analogy of the Church, too, there is a difference. While the Church is one mystical body or person, there are many members within the Church.[272] Hence, while dealing with these analogies one cannot consider them in their literal meanings; rather, one has to be aware that they are only means to understand the reality of the hypostatic union of the incarnation.

6.2.4.5. *Perichoresis*

The last analogy with which O'Collins calls upon to help towards understanding the hypostatic union is based on the relationship that exists in the Trinity, the so-called *perichoresis* (going around) or "the reciprocal presence and interpenetration of the three persons in the Trinity." This idea of *perichoresis* was developed by John Damascene to show the intimate and eternal love relationship that exists between the three persons in the Trinity. But when *perichoresis* is applied to the hypostatic union in Christ it is not used to show the relationship between persons (since there is only one person), but to show the relationship between two natures. Hence, according to O'Collins, this analogy cannot be properly used in the case of Christ because we cannot talk of the interpenetration of Christ's two natures. For him, "[s]uch an analogy taken from the inner life of the Trinity to illuminate the union between Christ's divinity and humanity seems misleading rather than enlightening."[273]

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[270] POPE PIUS XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi 64,* in CLAUDIA CARLEN IHM, *The Papal Encyclicals 1939-1958* (Washington DC: McGrath, 1981) 37-63, p. 50. See also *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 35 (1943) 193-264, pp. 223-224.

[271] VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Lumen Gentium* 8, p. 854.

[272] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 96-97.

[273] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 98.

To understand the mode of union between the divinity and humanity of Christ, one needs analogies. However, these analogies do not properly convey the reality of the divine and human natures in Jesus and there are many differences and nuances in the propositions of these analogies. According to O'Collins, although these analogies may not provide a complete picture of the hypostatic union, they do help us to deepen our understanding of the truths and give us fresh insights.[274]

7. The Divine and Human Properties in Jesus Christ

In the assuming of the human nature, the second person of the Trinity, according to O'Collins, "acquired the mental and volitional life of a human being. In that sense the incarnation brought a 'gain' in his mental and volitional powers. The Son was now capable of human thoughts, as well as of human desires, moral inclinations and freely chosen purposes."[275] This acquisition helped Jesus Christ to experience, to think, to decide and to act in human terms. Although the acquisition of these makes Jesus independent in many ways, they do not constitute a second person. The two minds and two wills still demonstrate the unity of Jesus' one person.[276] Like the letter to the Hebrews (4:15), the Council of Chalcedon taught that Jesus is like us in all things 'yet without sin'. Hence, while speaking about the earthly Jesus, it is also necessary to look into his divine and human properties because it is important to know how far he was like human beings. The question of the nature of the human knowledge of Jesus is problematic because our faith in Jesus Christ is also a faith in God who knows all. This is often described as the question of the two minds in Christ and it raises doubts about the 'singleness' or unity of his person. This question has been put as follows by Richard P. McBrien:

> How much like us is Jesus if he knew exactly what the future held for him, down to the finest detail? We face the future with wonder and hope, and sometimes with fear and dread. Jesus would have experienced none of these human emotions if he knew, with factual certitude, precisely what the Father had in store for him, and especially that the Father would raise him from the dead 'on the third day'.[277]

O'Collins' attempt to answer this question comes to expression in his consideration of the self-consciousness of Jesus, his sinlessness and his faith.

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[274] According to Brian E. Daley, "[i]n Christ, the particular and contingent character of the 'mode of union' reveals and embodies ultimate and universal things, the eternal, unknowable substance and nature of God, and also reveals and embodies human reality, human nature in its fullest perfection." See BRIAN E. DALEY, *Nature and the Mode of Union. Late Patristic Models for the Personal Unity of Christ,* p. 196.

[275] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 79.

[276] The Third Council of Constantinople taught that the divine and human properties are preserved in Jesus Christ: "one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no separation, no division; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single subsistent being; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten Son, Word of God, lord Jesus Christ." THIRD COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Exposition of Faith,* in NORMAN. P. TANNER (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils,* Vol. 1 (London: Sheed & Ward and Gregorian University Press, 1990), pp. 127-128.

[277] RICHARD P. MCBRIEN, *Catholicism,* p. 548.

7.1. The Two Wills of Jesus

O'Collins says that the Third Council of Constantinople taught that there are "two natural volitions or two wills" in Christ, divine and human, "which undergo no division, no change, no partition, no confusion." The divine will and human will in Jesus Christ are not in opposition to each other. The Council of Constantinople describes his human will "following, and not resisting or struggling, rather in fact subject to his divine and all-powerful will."[278] The Council also taught that there are two energies or ways of operation (divine and human) in Christ, in opposition to the teaching of Monothelitism.[279] The background to this teaching of the Council on two wills, according to O'Collins, may be the consideration of many Christians that some of the sayings of Jesus, such as the prayer of Jesus at Gathsemane – "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mk 14:36) – indicate the presence of two wills in Jesus. O'Collins is of the view that most Christians interpreted this passage as: "[n]ot what I as man will, but what you and I as God will." When this passage is interpreted in this way, one might conclude that there was a sort of discord or even a tension between the human will of Jesus and the divine will he shared with the Father, because his human will desired not to die. However, the Council, while distinguishing the divine and human wills in Jesus, also taught that there was perfect harmony in the operation of these wills. O'Collins holds that the basis of this conciliar teaching was the assertion of the New Testament "that Jesus as a matter of fact (*de facto*) lived a sinless life of perfect obedience to his Father's will."[280]

7.2. The Two Minds of Jesus

O'Collins also turns to the teaching of the Third Council of Constantinople on the two wills of Jesus in order to understand the knowledge of Jesus. He says that there are two minds in Jesus, the divine mind commonly shared by the three persons of the Trinity, and the human mind he received at incarnation. The two minds in Jesus are at two different levels. "The divine mind is uncreated and eternal, whereas his human mind was created at a certain point of time." From the time of the incarnation, Jesus began to know through "two different cognitive systems, a divine and a human way of knowing." According to O'Collins, these two systems have a qualitative difference. The human mind is created and therefore limited in its capacity to know, and acquires

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[278] THIRD COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Exposition of Faith,* p. 128.

[279] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 80. Monothelitism, a 7th century Christological heresy, said that in Christ there was only one operation, *energeia*, proceeding from a unique will, *monon thelēma*. Severus of Antioch had held that because Jesus was a unity, in him "the divine and human natures were so coordinated that one could speak of one will and one action." Against the doctrine of two wills and two activities in Christ, which was defended by Eulogius of Alexandria, the Monothelitists held that there was "one sole will proceeding from one sole subject willing." Monothelitism was condemned by Pope Martin I. See G. OWENS, *Monothelitism,* in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 9 (New York, NY, 2003) 816-817, pp. 816-817.

[280] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 85.

knowledge gradually. But the divine mind is uncreated and has unlimited capacity and knows all things. Secondly, the human system could be 'switched off' (in sleep and unconsciousness), but the divine system is always on. Thirdly, during the incarnation, the divine mind and consciousness possessed and had access to the human mind and consciousness, but not vice versa.[281]

7.3. The Knowledge and Self-consciousness of Jesus

An issue that did not surface during the Council of Chalcedon and did not have much bearing on traditional Christological thinking was the matter of Jesus' human knowledge, and his double consciousness and freedom. The Council had affirmed that in Jesus there was only one person. However, according to O'Collins, to believe in Jesus as "one who was 'completely human'" implied that "Jesus had human knowledge and a distinct centre of human consciousness."[282] When we deal with the consciousness of Jesus, we are faced with certain questions, such as was Jesus conscious of his own divinity or identity? Was he aware of his mission? Did he know about his own death and resurrection and that it would bring salvation?

7.3.1. Various Approaches to the Knowledge of Jesus

O'Collins says that some of the Church Fathers feared that it would be sinful to think that the knowledge of Jesus was limited, and hence they argued that Jesus only appeared to be ignorant in some of his actions (cf. Mk 5,30), but that he really knew his powers. Medieval theology, according to O'Collins, maximized the scope of Jesus' knowledge and spoke of his knowledge through the beatific vision. It developed a threefold scheme: *scientia visionis*, that Jesus had the beatific vision of God and through it the knowledge of all created realities; *scientia infusa*, that Jesus had infused knowledge as in the case of angels; and *scientia experientiae*, that Jesus acquired knowledge from experience in the normal way all other human beings acquire it.[283] O'Collins' view is that the Scholastic theologians, on the basis of the Greek principle of perfection,[284] held this maximal view because they believed that an absolute perfection of man

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[281] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 81-82.

[282] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 183.

[283] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 184.

[284] According to Nigel Turner, the Greek word *teleios* used today as a Christian term for 'perfection' did not have this meaning in the Mystery religions or among the Stoics. This word was used to mean 'without blemish' or 'full grown' for sacrificial victims. Plato used it for 'adult human beings'. In the case of prayers, it meant 'fulfilled', in the case of numbers, it meant 'complete', and in the case of gods, it meant 'powerful to answer prayer'. In the Biblical Greek in the LXX it was used for sacrificial animals and for moral integrity. In New Testament usage it meant 'perfect in heart', 'obedient to God', 'committed to His service' (Mt 5:48, 19:21). For St. Paul, *teleios* meant "a walk 'in Christ' and steadfastness of faith" (Col 2:5). Perfection in Christian life is future-oriented. "That which is *teleios* is ahead, it is to be (1 Cor 13:10)." See NIGEL TURNER, *Christian Words,* Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1980, pp. 324-329. The Early Church used *teleioi* for the baptized; however, later it came to be used for Lord's Supper and *teleion* meant Eucharist. See JOSEPH BINGHAM, *The Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Vol. 1, London: Chatto and Windus, 1875, p. 43. To understand divine and human perfection, Cf. GEOFFREY WILLIAM HUGO LAMPE (ed.), *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), pp. 1381-1382. Hence, the usage of the term *teleios* to refer to the perfection of God is not in

required that he embrace all possible knowledge. Hence, the idea is that Jesus, as a perfect man, from the first moment of his conception, must have had full knowledge of everything "through the beatific vision and infused ideas."[285] However, Raymond E. Brown holds that such a view arose from the belief that the Gospels portrayed Jesus as having extraordinary knowledge. He is of the view that most contemporary theologians do not admit that Jesus had infused knowledge.[286] Karl Rahner, among others, refuses to attribute 'infused' knowledge to Jesus. However, these theologians do admit Jesus' direct knowledge of his Father and of his own identity as divine, which they consider as "pre-reflective, primordial consciousness." O'Collins supports this view by stating that a beatific vision is not necessary to have direct contact with the divine reality.

Karl Rahner is of the view that the knowledge attributed to the historical Jesus in the theological tradition "embraces and exhausts all past, present and future reality" and also indicates Jesus' "possession of the direct vision of God as it is experienced by the blessed in heaven."[287] Although he does not disregard the teaching of the *magisterium,* which maintains this view, Rahner has some reservations about it and points out that today such an idea seems to be contrary to the very nature of the real humanity and historical nature of Jesus. This contradiction

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keeping with the proper sense of the word. One cannot speak of the perfection of God in a future sense as that which is going to be perfected. Hence, the principle of perfection used for human beings cannot be used for the perfection of God. The oldest definition of the Greek word *teleios*, an equivalent of the Latin word *perfectus* (finished), was provided by Aristotle. According to him, this word had three meanings: (1) that which contains all the parts, (2) that which is good and which can no more be bettered by anything else, and (3) that which has already achieved its purpose. According to St. Thomas Aquinas all are moving towards perfection. He says, "[b]ecause it belongs to the best sort of being to achieve the best sort of effects, failure to direct the beings created to their full perfection is not consonant with God's absolute goodness. Now the highest perfection of any being consists in the attaining of its end." See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia.103.1., T. C. O'BRIEN (ed.), London: Blackfriars, 1975, Vol. 14, p. 7.

[285] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 184. See also GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus,* p. 25.

[286] According to Raymond Brown, when we speak about the knowledge of Jesus, one should be aware of two things: (1) In the Middle ages the theory of Jesus' beatific vision was to solve a problem, namely, "[a]lthough one could not suppose that the divine (non-conceptual) knowledge of the Second Person of the Trinity was functional in the human mind of Jesus (which operated with concepts), the Gospels portrayed him as having extraordinary knowledge about God, the future, etc. – might he not have had the beatific vision which gave him such knowledge?" But he says that "the church has officially explained that the Gospels do not give us literal accounts of the ministry of Jesus, but narratives into which the post-resurrectional theological insights of the Christian preachers have been read back. … In fidelity to this church statement a Catholic may maintain that a true post-resurrectional insight into Jesus' extraordinary identity as Son of God has been given expression in the Gospels in terms of extraordinary knowledge during the ministry. This theory obviates the need of positing Jesus' beatific vision." See RAYMOND E. BROWN, *The Importance of How Doctrine is Understood*, in *Origins* 10 (1981) 737-743, p. 743. (2) Some Catholic theologians, like Rahner, Ratzinger and Lonergan, have reinterpreted the theory of Jesus' beatific vision without producing any indication of ecclesiastical disapproval. Brown even comments that some of these authors have even suggested "Jesus' non-conceptual awareness of his divine self through the hypostatic union." See p. 743.

[287] KARL RAHNER, *Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-Consciousness of Christ*, in KARL RAHNER, *Theological Invesitgations,* Vol. 5, *Later Writings*, trans. CORNELIUS ERNST (London: Darton, Longmann Todd Ltd., 1974[1974]) 193-215, p. 194. This idea finds support in the encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi,* where an explicit knowledge about all people of all ages and places' is attributed to Jesus. The encyclical says, [t]o Him has been given 'power over all flesh'; 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Him' abundantly. He possesses with such clarity and comprehensiveness that it surpasses similar celestial knowledge found in all the saints in heaven." See POPE PIUS XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi 48, in* CLAUDIA CARLEN IHM, *The Papal Encyclicals 1939-1958*, p. 46. Cf. also *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 35, p. 230.

is manifest in the tension that exists in the interpretations of exegetes and in the statements of the magisterium and dogmatic theologians. Rahner says that some scriptural texts may be seen as a basis to argue against the theological tradition, including those dealing with the development of Jesus' consciousness (Lk 2:5), his ignorance of eschatological matters (Mt 24:36), and the identification of him as a man belonging to his own age, spirituality, and religious spirit. While Rahner assumes the hypostatic union as the basis for the dogmatic statements on the knowledge and self-consciousness of Jesus, he also states that just as the doctrine of the hypostatic union is based on scriptural texts, these dogmatic statements on the knowledge of Jesus, too, are based on scriptural texts.[288] He maintains that, in the case of Jesus, one ought not to speak about the 'beatific vision' because, firstly, it is not necessary that "direct contact with God must always be beatific", and secondly, the facts of Jesus' suffering, death and being forsaken by God on the cross go against any wishful thinking that he enjoyed the beatific vision of the blessed. According to him, if we accept infused knowledge in Jesus it reduces our arguments for the genuineness of his human existence.

According to O'Collins, Thomas Aquinas held that the earthly Jesus' knowledge included the beatific vision that the blessed have in heaven, from the first moment of his conception. But, for O'Collins, this view is not acceptable for the following reasons. (1) Jesus would not have genuinely suffered if through his human mind he had known God immediately in a beatifying way. (2) Such a vision would have made it difficult for the free operation of Jesus' human will because such visions involve total knowledge. He says that in earthly history, one needs "some limits in our knowledge and some uncertainties about the future" in order to exercise freedom. (3) In his temptations and trials, Jesus remained obedient to God. However, the possession of the beatific vision would have ruled out struggles on the part of Jesus because trials and temptations would have been meant only for edification. (4) If one considers the beatific vision of Jesus, it would be difficult to understand how knowledge developed slowly in him as in the case of all other human beings. (5) To understand how Jesus had a beatific vision from the first day of his conception is difficult to understand because his brain at that time was only in a single-cell stage. (6) Some Gospel passages refer to the limit of his knowledge (e.g., "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mk 13:32)). Hence, it is difficult to maintain that Jesus had complete knowledge of everything and even of the future.[289] (7) The Council of Chalcedon insists "on Christ's human nature preserving

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[288] KARL RAHNER, *Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-Consciousness of Christ,* pp. 198-199.

[289] According to R. P. McBrien, "[a]lthough there are indications in the New Testament that the early Church thought Jesus to be in possession of unlimited and infallible knowledge, the weight of the evidence seems to be on the other side." See RICHARD P. MCBRIEN, *Catholicism,* p. 549. He is of the view that there are evidences in the New Testament about his limited knowledge as well as unlimited knowledge. But he is more inclined to think that Jesus had an unlimited knowledge. He says, "[t]o suggest that Jesus did not have unlimited knowledge, that he was ignorant of many

the 'character proper' to it.[290] Hence, such extraordinary knowledge arising out of the beatific vision should not be attributed to Jesus.

All of this being said, however, many authorities have attributed the beatific vision to Jesus,[291] though the Catechism of the Catholic Church does not do so.[292] Still others deny the beatific vision to Jesus, but accept a kind of infused knowledge.[293]

7.3.2. Jesus' Knowledge of His Identity and Mission

The question of the knowledge of Jesus also involves the matter of his awareness of his personal identity and mission, and whether he knew that he was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. According to O'Collins, the answer to this could be that,

> [Jesus] knew that he stood in a unique relationship to the Father and that as Son he had a mission of salvation for others. These were not discoveries to be made, but primordial facts of his consciousness. His basic awareness of his Sonship did not mean observing the presence of God, as if Jesus were facing an object 'out there'. It was rather a self-consciousness and self-presence in which he was intuitively aware of his divine identity.[294]

One of the arguments that O'Collins puts forward to prove that Jesus was intuitively aware of his own identity is the understanding that there is a higher degree of consciousness in a higher being. The humanity of Jesus, because the Word assumed it, attained the highest degree possible for any created reality. Hence, as the highest being, he would have been aware through his

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things and in error about others, is not to suggest at the same time that Jesus was a man without extraordinary intellectual strength and vision. On the contrary, Jesus displayed an exceedingly novel and courageous degree of conviction on the most central matter of all, the Kingdom of God." See p. 552.

[290] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 84.

[291] Pope Pius XII said that "the knowledge and love of our Divine Redeemer, of which we were the object from the first moment of His Incarnation, exceed all the human intellect can hope to grasp. For hardly was He conceived in the womb of the Mother of God, when He began to enjoy the beatific vision, and in that vision all the members of His Mystical Body were continually and unceasingly present to Him, and He embraced them with His redeeming love." See POPE PIUS XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi, 75,* p. 52. Karl Rahner suggests that the "dogmatic theologian and also exegete are not permitted to doubt the binding, although not defined, doctrine of the Church's magisterium which states that the human soul of Jesus enjoyed the direct vision of God during his life on earth. But… this does not mean that the exegete engaged in the work of fundamental theology must or even can positively take this theological doctrine into account." See K. RAHNER, *Theological Investigations,* Vol. 5, trans. KARL-H. & B. KRUGER, London, 1969 [1966], p. 215.

[292] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 84. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* does not speak of a beatific vision of Jesus, but it says, "[t]his human soul that the Son of God assumed is endowed with a true human knowledge. As such, this knowledge could not in itself be unlimited: it was exercised in the historical conditions of his existence in space and time. This is why the Son of God could, when he became man, 'increase in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man' and would even have to inquire for himself about what one in the human condition can learn only from experience. This corresponded to the reality of his voluntary emptying of himself, taking 'the form of a slave'." See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 472, Vatican, 1994 (Bangalore: Theological Publication of India, 1994) p. 93.

[293] J. Galot says that "[t]here is no basis for the claim that Jesus enjoyed the beatific vision during his mortal life, for neither Scripture nor Patristic Tradition attest to it." According to him, when St. John refers to Jesus as having seen the Father, he in fact refers to the vision Jesus had prior to his earthly life. But he also says that "we must recognize that Jesus manifested eminent knowledge that is inexplicable in natural terms in the area of religious doctrine, and that he possessed information stemming from a superior source concerning persons and events on various occasions during the course of his public ministry." See J. GALOT, *Who is Christ? A Theology of the Incarnation,* trans. M. A. BOUCHARD, Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1980, pp. 354, 361-362.

[294] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 185.

higher degree of consciousness, of his being and identity.[295] But O'Collins also says that since Jesus was human, there were also limits to his knowledge including the knowledge of his 'self', which developed only gradually. Moreover, Jesus was aware of his mission, and "went willingly to his death and at least to some extent, he knew and intended that death to bring God's salvation to others." However, according to O'Collins, one cannot ignore "certain limitations and probable changes in his knowledge of his mission and destiny." One could say that Jesus admitted that he was not aware of the end (Mk 13:32), and that he seemed to have changed his initial awareness of his mission from the proclamation of God's kingdom to an awareness that it was his death that would establish the kingdom. However, O'Collins is of the view that there are difficulties even in understanding this shift in Jesus' understanding of his mission. In conclusion, O'Collins agrees that Jesus "had a primordial awareness of his self-identity and basic mission and that both in his articulation of these primary facts and in 'other' areas of his human knowledge he was limited, grew and changed."[296] Hence, although there are difficulties in understanding whether the earthly Jesus had full knowledge, one could posit that there were limits to his knowledge in so far as he was fully human and that his knowledge developed as in any other human being.

7.4. The Faith of Jesus

When one holds that Jesus had knowledge of his self-identity and that he was aware of his mission, and when one knows that Jesus was aware of a unique relationship with the Father, one thing we need to ask is whether Jesus was a man of faith. It is important to ask such a question because he was both human and divine. O'Collins is one of the strongest proponents of the view that "Jesus had the gift of faith."[297]

According to Kendall and O'Collins, traditional Christology did not raise the question of the existence of the faith exercised by the earthly Jesus. "It seems to have been widely taken for granted that his divine identity and his human knowledge of God were such as to rule out the possibility of genuine faith."[298] O'Collins says that medieval theologians considered Jesus as having the beatific vision and so denied that Jesus had faith because, to them, this vision and the act of consciousness were in opposition to each other. According to them, "Jesus did not believe, he simply *knew.*" O'Collins is of the view that a denial of the beatific vision of Jesus opened the

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[295] According to Rahner, the "Hypostatic Union implies the self-communication of the absolute Being of God – such as it subsists in the Logos – to the human nature of Christ which thereby becomes a nature hypostatically supported by the Logos. The Hypostatic Union is the highest conceivable – the ontologically highest – actualization of the reality of a creature, in the sense that a higher actualization would be absolutely impossible. It is the absolutely highest manner of being there is apart from God." He also says that, "what is ontologically higher cannot be lower on the plane of consciousness than what is ontologically lower." Hence, Jesus as the ontologically highest being, had the highest consciousness. RAHNER, *Theological Investigations,* Vol. 5, pp. 205-206.

[296] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 186-188.

[297] AVERY DULLES, *Jesus and Faith,* in STEPHEN. T. DAVIS, & DANIEL KENDALL (eds.), *The Convergence of Theology. A Festschrift Honouring Gerald O'Collins, S.J.* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001), 273-284, p. 273.

[298] DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Faith of Jesus*, in *Theological Studies* 53 (1992) 403-423, p. 403.

way to understanding Jesus as having faith.[299] Kendall and O'Collins say that many theologians recognize exemplary faith in Jesus.[300]

According to Kendall and O'Collins, there are two words, 'to believe' (*pisteuein*) and 'faith' (*pistis*), which are very common in New Testament. But none of the authors of the New Testament described Jesus as the subject of faith. The phrase, the 'faith of Jesus Christ', or some phrase similar to it, occurs eight times in the Pauline letters. But usually the 'faith of Jesus' is interpreted as 'faith in Jesus' or 'our faith in Jesus'. There are vivid and convincing references in the Synoptic gospels where Jesus spoke about faith (e.g., Jesus questioned the disciples about their lack of faith (Mk 4:40)). The Letter to the Hebrews lists the people of faith (Abel, Abraham, Moses etc.) and ranks Jesus as the highest, as he who became the "pioneer and perfector of our faith" (Heb 12:2).[301] This is the only reference, according to O'Collins, where the earthly Jesus is made "the explicit subject of the verb 'to believe' or [where the NT] clearly characterizes him by using the corresponding noun 'faith'."[302] According to him, the Greek translations of this text do not include 'our' faith. The 1985 New Jerusalem Bible translated Heb 12:2 as, "Jesus who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection." In all these texts, Jesus is not seen as the example of faith but as the one who initiates our faith, as the one on whom our faith depends.[303]

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[299] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus,* p. 25.

[300] According to Kendall and O'Collins, the theologians who saw Jesus as a believer include Gerhard Ebeling, James Mackey, Jon Sobrino, Karl Rahner and Wilhem Thüsing. According to Ebeling, "faith is manifestly not Christian faith if it does not have a basis in the historical Jesus himself. And it is likewise not Christian faith if it is not we ourselves who in faith are concerned with Jesus." He also says that "[i]f the quest of the historical Jesus were in fact to prove that faith in Jesus has no basis in Jesus himself, then that would be the end of Christology." See G. EBELING, *Word and Faith,* Great Britain, 1963, pp. 204, 205. James P. Mackey says that "the historical Jesus, who can be discovered at the end of any quest…[is] a man of faith, … inspiring to similar faith those with whom he came in contact, so that they in turn could inspire others. That was his life. That was the faith for which he lived and died." See JAMES PATRICK MACKEY, *Jesus the Man & the Myth. A Contemporary Christology,* London: SCM, 1979, p. 171. According to Sobrino, the faith of Jesus grew from one stage to another. "The faith of Jesus has had a concrete history that has made him different. It has not been an abstract history, however, a history of ideas that has been giving shape to a different conception of God, the kingdom of God, sin, justice, love, and power. Instead it has been a real history. The history of Jesus' faith has been mediated historically through the history of his praxis in the midst of a conflict-ridden situation." See J. SOBRINO, *Christology at the Crossroads. A Latin American Approach* trans. J. DRURY, Maryknoll,, NY: Orbis Books, 1978, p. 95. Wilhem Thüsing is of the view that "[t]he concept, the 'faith of Jesus', can only be understood in the New Testament sense within the framework of a unique mission and as faithfulness to that mission… [The] faith of Jesus is… oriented towards the inclusion of those who imitate Jesus in his *pistis*." See W. THÜSING, *New Testament Approaches to a Transcendental Christology*, in K. RAHNER & W. THÜSING, *A New Christology*, trans. D. SMITH & V. GREEN, New York, NY, 1972, p. 153. These defenders of the faith of the earthly Jesus, according to Kendall and O'Collins, do not see the "possibility of recognizing in the earthly Jesus a commitment and confession that are *analogous* to ours." See D. KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Faith of Jesus*, p. 404.

[301] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 191.

[302] DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Faith of Jesus*, p. 422.

[303] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 191.

According to Kendall and O'Collins, Jesus had shown the best example of 'believing in' God (*credere in Deum*)[304] by his obedience and self-commitment to God whom he called 'Abba'. They say that "[p]ublicly this 'believing in' was lived out in Jesus' total openness to and unconditioned trust in the divine kingdom that was breaking into the world… Not only Jesus' actions but also some of his sayings reflect this dimension of his faith" (e.g., "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this sycamine tree, 'Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you" (Lk 17:6)). In his private life, Jesus' act of faith was expressed most strongly in his life of prayer, which showed his "strong relationship of faith in God."[305] As we have already mentioned, the views of some authors proposing the beatific vision in Jesus or a kind of infused knowledge in him, would rule out personal faith. According to Kendall and O'Collins, the evidence provided by the Synoptic gospels supports the view that Jesus was aware of his identity as the Son of God and as the final agent of the salvation of human beings. O'Collins says that Jesus' essential judgements about his own person, his identity and mission were not objects of his faith or something that he got from his faith. They were something that he got from knowledge that developed gradually in him.[306]

If this is so, where might we locate the faith of Jesus? An answer could be found in Mackey who says,

> [Jesus' faith] was a faith that had its deepest roots in the most ordinary experience of everyday life. The man Jesus – apart from his tradition, of course, which had already tried to verbalize this faith – had no more 'information' about God than could be gleaned from the birds of the air, the farmers in their fields, kings in their castles, and merchants in the market place. For this very reason, because it had its roots in the most ordinary experience of everyday life, his faith was extraordinarily radical.[307]

This is to say that the confession of faith of Jesus was in the Creator who is revealed to all people in their daily experiences of life. This is the faith rooted in the history of the life of the chosen people of God. The "'object' of Jesus' faith, [is] that *fides quae* in God the loving and provident Creator which we express in the opening words of the Creed and which Jesus expressed in terms of the Shema." Hence, according to Kendall and O'Collins, the content of Jesus' faith is found in the creeds of the Hebrew Bible and it is not different from what devout Jews believed. According to them, it is not only the past and the present that became the object of Jesus' faith. "Jesus [also] believed and hoped for what he did not yet see." In conclusion, Kendall and O'Collins say that the faith of Jesus was different from that of later Christians and also his contemporaries because "he knew and could not in the technical sense of the word

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[304] Kendall and O'Collins say that, according to Aquinas, faith involves both voluntary commitment and cognitive content. This means two things: the content of faith or the object of faith (*fides quae*), which involved *credere Deum* (believing *that* God exists) and *credere Deo* (believing in *what* God has revealed); and the act of faith (*fides qua*), which involved *credere in Deum* (believing *in* God). See Daniel Kendall & Gerald O'Collins, *The Faith of Jesus*, p. 405.

[305] Daniel Kendall & Gerald O'Collins, *The Faith of Jesus*, pp. 416-417.

[306] Daniel Kendall & Gerald O'Collins, *The Faith of Jesus*, p. 419.

[307] J. P. Mackey, *Jesus the Man & the Myth. A Contemporary Christology,* p. 171.

confess the existence of God. At the same time, Jesus' confession of faith could coincide substantially with that of contemporary and earlier Jews."[308] Hence, there are similarities and differences in the content of the faith of Jesus, Jews and Christians.

7.5. The Sinlessness of Jesus

One of the questions that arise when we say that Jesus was fully human is whether there was any possibility that Jesus sinned and whether, as divine person, he was immune from sin. Christians believe that Jesus was perfect in every way. According to Richard Glaister, perfection is sinlessness.[309] According to O'Collins, Jesus was sinless *de facto* and *de jure*. The New Testament clearly affirmed that Jesus was sinless (Jn 8:46), and the Council of Florence taught that Jesus was born without original sin. But the New Testament does not say anything clear about the sinlessness of Jesus *de jure*. The view that, in principle, Jesus could have sinned is based on the argument that Jesus was tempted (Mk 1:13). In O'Collins' view, the Synoptic gospels portrayed "Jesus as having an overwhelming sense of the presence of God and an unreserved openness to the divine kingdom. Jesus was totally given to the service of the divine kingdom. Since that was so, all temptations were bound to fail." Moreover, it was through the Holy Spirit, who elevated the humanity of Jesus to the Son of God, that Jesus exercised his human freedom. Hence, to say that there was a possibility for Jesus to sin would be to make the action of the Holy Spirit deficient.[310] O'Collins says that an absolute impeccability in principle arises from something intrinsic to Jesus. The problem then, is to reconcile an absolute impeccability with Christ's humanity. He holds that if we do not accept sinlessness in principle in the case of Jesus, we would be putting God in "deliberate opposition to God; one divine person would be capable (through his human will) of committing sin and so intentionally transgressing the divine will." This requires one to maintain that since Jesus was divine he was incapable of sinning.[311] O'Collins says that one should not judge the moral integrity and faultlessness or sinlessness of Jesus only on the basis of his human nature. One has to take into consideration his divine nature, which he shares with the other persons of the Trinity. The sinfulness of one person of the Trinity is incompatible with his divine status, because God

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[308] DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Faith of Jesus*, p. 419. According to them, the faith of Jesus could be understood as that which is found in the Shema (Dt 6:4) and which was quoted by Jesus (Mk 12:29-30). They also say that, "The Synoptic Gospels do not contain any suggestion that Jesus had special sources of knowledge about the religious history of his people. Nor do they contain any suggestion that Jesus refrained from confessing the old creeds with his fellow Jews." See p. 420.

[309] According to Richard Glaister, it is not easy to prove that Jesus was sinless because we only know a part of his historical life. There is also the problem of the inward life of Jesus about which we have no clue. However, his sinlessness can be testified by the presence of the spirit in Jesus' self-consciousness. The Spirit was his constant companion. It can also be understood from the Gospels that "Jesus was weighed down by no sense of sin." See RICHARD GLAISTER, *Perfection (of Jesus),* in JAMES HASTINGS & JOHN A. SELBIE (eds.), A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924 [1908]) 337-341, p. 337.

[310] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 86.

[311] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 268-269.

cannot sin. "[T]he status of Jesus' moral goodness and impeccability is not to be examined simply and solely in terms of his human nature"[312]

Another argument that O'Collins puts forward is that, when one speaks of the human will in general terms, one must acknowledge that human beings are prone to sin. However, in the case of Jesus, the human will was assumed by the Son of God; hence, his will was unlike that of others. Hence, according to O'Collins, Jesus' will is *de jure* without sin. The Council of Chalcedon taught that Jesus was fully human. O'Collins says that "to be fully human is to be fully and in principle virtuous" and perfect. It is sin, which is the transgression of God's loving plan for us that make human beings imperfect. But as far as Jesus was concerned, all his activities were oriented towards God's loving plan and there was no transgression of that plan. Hence, in principle, he was sinless.[313] Regarding the question of Jesus' freedom in choosing good and evil as a human being, O'Collins says that one needs to consider "conscious self-determination as the essence of freedom. To be free is to be personally determined from within and not by some compulsion either from without or from within" and capable of "consciously going beyond oneself in love and living in communion." Since Jesus was in free communion with the life of the Trinity, and acted freely through his human will with personal determination and in conformity with his relationship with the divine will of the Father, there was no possibility of sin.[314] All these arguments about Jesus' sinlessness, in fact and in principle, originate from the fact that he was fully divine and fully human.

Summary Conclusion

In this chapter our aim was to examine how O'Collins understands the person of Jesus from a doctrinal point of view. The motive behind Christology is the concern to understand our own identity as believers and members of the Church and also to understand our relationship with people of other faiths. Initially, we said that O'Collins agrees with the general understanding of the movement of Christology as a movement from the work of Jesus Christ to his person and being. We began our enquiry with an understanding of the development of Christological thought down through the Christian centuries. Our analysis has indicated that Christology began its development from the experience of salvation that the early Christians had. They attributed their experience of salvation to the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. Their immediate source for doing Christology was the Old Testament, which gave them images of God and divine figures. We also saw that the scriptures were the first and immediate source for doing Christology in early Christianity. This remains the case today and the Church has consistently maintained that the scriptures remain the most important source for Christology. However, this

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[312] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 86.

[313] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* p. 270.

[314] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ,* pp. 270-271.

does not exclude the consideration of tradition or the engagement with philosophy. Philosophy provides categories to understand the theological claims about the person of Jesus Christ.

We saw that O'Collins established a relationship between the Christological titles found in the New Testament and the images and titles found in the Old Testament. These titles included Christ, High Priest, Adam, Wisdom and Word, which were later used by Paul and the early Christians to address the Son of God. O'Collins also examines other titles used for Christ, such as Son of man, Son of God, Lord, Saviour and God, as well as a range of images including Good Shepherd, Divine Lord, Suffering Servant, Eschatological Prophet and Lamb of God. For O'Collins, all these titles helped Christians to affirm the divinity and humanity of Jesus.

O'Collins sees incarnation as the personal and ultimate disclosure of God's revelation or His self-communication in the person of Jesus. He is firm in stating that the incarnation of Jesus is unique and hence different from all other proposals concerning the idea of incarnation. The incarnation of Jesus does not in any way blur the inherited Jewish belief in a monotheistic God but only shows that there are distinctive 'persons' in God. O'Collins is of the view that Jesus implicitly claimed that he was more than a human being and had some awareness of his divinity. He refutes the claim of those who oppose Jesus' divinity and also those who say that he was elevated by the early Christians to divine status from the status of a mere prophet, a wisdom teacher, a charismatic healer or a carpenter. He is completely against those who argue for low Christology where incarnation is seen as a possibility for any human being to achieve. He also opposes those who hold that Jesus differs from other human beings only in degree. O'Collins is firm in holding the Church's belief in the pre-existence of Christ but disagrees with those who claim pre-existence for the humanity of Jesus. He holds that the humanity of Jesus continues in a glorified form after his death and resurrection. He is of the view that the Christian belief in the resurrection of the dead is based on the fact of the continuity of Jesus' humanity. He is against those who say that Christ left his humanity at the resurrection just as he abandoned his divine powers when he became human.

O'Collins understands the concept of *kenosis*, when applied to the incarnation, to mean that the Son of God accepted the limitations and finiteness of human beings as his own. This was not a discarding of the powers of God but a sharing in the limited powers of human beings. He is opposed to those who propose the view that the Son of God gave up his divine powers when he assumed human nature and regained them at the time of his resurrection.

O'Collins sees the Council of Chalcedon as having shaped the definitive statement on the person of Jesus. It is on the basis of this definition that he tries to understand Jesus. However, he does not disregard the teachings of the Fathers of the Church and those who defended the Church's faith in Jesus as divine and human. In his view, the principle of unity between the human and divine in the incarnation is the one divine person. He holds that there is only one person and not two persons in Jesus. The union is between the two natures of Christ, divine and human; there is

no suggestion of a union between two persons. According to O'Collins, one comes to know the divinity of Jesus when one recognizes the attributes of God in him. It is also the case that one knows his humanity when one recognizes the attributes of humanity in him. Jesus has all the attributes of God, and hence, according to O'Collins, he is not a representation of God but the self-communication of God. He also says that incarnation helps us to understand the nature of God and also our true value in God's eyes. Jesus' human nature is seen with all its dynamic characteristics of relationship and with all human attributes of growth, freedom, limitations, sexual difference, and cultural differences. His human nature also includes limitedness and finiteness. O'Collins disagrees with the idea that there cannot be a simultaneous presence of the human and divine in the person of Jesus. He uses the analogies of the union of body and soul, bride and bridegroom, Scripture and Church, and *perichoresis* to understand the hypostatic union. However, he admits that these analogies are inadequate for understanding the full reality of this union, though they are the best means available to have some glimpse of the reality behind Jesus' humanity.

O'Collins is able to answer questions regarding both the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ by means of his understanding of the exercise of divine and human powers in Jesus. He also believes in the 'two wills' and 'two minds' of Jesus which operate harmoniously in him. He understands the knowledge of Jesus as arising from two systems: from the human cognitive system, which was limited in many ways, and the divine cognitive system, which had unlimited capacities. But he is against the view of Aquinas who says that Jesus had an unlimited knowledge through the beatific vision. He says that knowledge was limited in Jesus in so far as he was a human being and developed in knowledge like any other human being. By denying the beatific vision, O'Collins also states that Jesus was a man of faith. The object of Jesus' faith is God the Father and the content of Jesus' faith is what is found in the Hebrew Bible, in the 'Shema Israel'. Basing themselves on the biblical passage concerning the temptation of Jesus, some say that Jesus was in principle capable of committing sin. But O'Collins says that Jesus cannot sin because he is God and part of the Trinity for whom sin is inconceivable. Here he is of the view that, to understand the impeccability of Jesus, one should give priority to his divine nature. Finally, for O'Collins, belief in the incarnation of Jesus can be tested on the basis of the criteria of coherence and pragmatism, and through the verification of aspects of Jesus' divinity.

Basing himself on the teaching of the Church, O'Collins tries to explain from Scripture and tradition the person of Jesus. He defends the faith of the Church in the person of Jesus and opposes all those who oppose the teachings of the Church. We can only conclude that O'Collins has an intra-ecclesial understanding of the person of Jesus and that his Christology is characterised by a concern to do justice to the Church's doctrinal tradition.

THE NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Introduction

O'Collins' numerous scholarly books and articles have made it abundantly clear that his theological work centres on Jesus Christ, but they also make it clear that the centre of his Christology is the death and resurrection of Jesus. According to him, "[a] number of theologians, such as Jean Galot and John Macquarrie, still find a central focus in the incarnation. Others, such as Hans Küng, James Mackey, Edward Schillebeeckx and Jon Sobrino, take the mystery of Jesus to be the heart of the matter. Walter Kasper,[1] Wolfhart Pannenberg and others (myself [O'Collins] included) defend a paschal Christology for which the events of Good Friday and Easter Sunday are decisive."[2]

According to O'Collins, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are unified in their significance and the "the second event (resurrection) *also* throws light on the significance of the first (crucifixion)."[3] This means that any approach to the resurrection should recognize the significance of the crucifixion for Jesus' followers and the way in which it, too, affects their lives. There are not many details available regarding the historicity of Jesus' execution date, his trial, the last words he spoke, and the immediate happenings after the crucifixion. Even if they are available they are not always indisputable. Nevertheless, one thing that we can be certain of is that he died a secular death because he was killed "outside the proper place of religious men, away from the temple, any synagogue or other such sacred zones where men venerated God's special presence." It was a this-worldly death.[4] But this "radically secular death" of Jesus is interrelated with the resurrection. The relationship between, and the unity of, the death and resurrection events can be seen from the very fact that, after the crucifixion, which was a 'stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles' (1 Cor 1:23) and which was a shattering blow to the disciples, new events, such as the appearances of the risen Lord and the discovery of the

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[1] About the centrality of the resurrection in Christian faith Walter Kasper says, "[a] Christian faith which was not also a faith in the Resurrection, would be of wood not iron. With the faith in the Resurrection stands and falls the Christian concept of God. The Easter faith is therefore not a supplement to belief in God and in Jesus Christ, it is the entirety and essence of that belief." See WALTER KASPER, *Jesus the Christ*, trans. V. GEEN, London: Burns & Oates, 1977, p. 145. According to Richard P. McBrien, prior to Vatican II most attention was given to the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross rather than the resurrection and redemption. See RICHARD P. MCBRIEN, *Catholicism*, New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1994, p. 428-429.

[2] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Today. Christology in an Australian Context*, pp. 11-12.

[3] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1983, p. 113.

[4] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Theology of Secularity*, Dublin: Mercier Press, 1974, p. 60.

empty tomb, were necessary to "catalyse the disciples' robust faith in the risen Lord."[5] Hence, O'Collins argues that the unity of the death and the resurrection is a necessity in itself and for the emergence of faith in the risen Jesus. O'Collins is supported in this view by many outstanding theologians.

Karl Barth, for example, acknowledges the unity of these events when he observes that the life of Christians is closely connected to both the death and resurrection of Christ. To be a Christian is to share in both aspects of his existence.[6] These events are also interrelated because "[w]hat was a degradingly secular death became the moment at which the transcendent Creator-God began through Christ's resurrection that final work of transforming man and his world." It is in the death and resurrection of Jesus that the "intertwining of secular and religious themes – of the wretched profanity of Calvary with the sacred silence of the empty tomb" takes place.[7] According to Karl Rahner, in spite of the temporal distance between the events of the death and resurrection of Jesus, one can understand these realities only when one values the intrinsic relationship and the unity that exists between them. Death is subsumed into the event of the resurrection and so there is, in a sense, not really the beginning of a new life of Jesus. The resurrected life of Jesus is "the permanent, redeemed, final and definitive validity of the single and unique life of Jesus who achieved the permanent and final validity of his life precisely through his death in freedom and obedience." Rahner is of the view that the soteriological value of Jesus emerges only when we take his death and resurrection together.[8] Schillebeeckx says much the same thing when he observes that, "[j]ust as the death of Jesus cannot be viewed apart from his life, so his resurrection cannot be separated from his life and death." This is because "Christian faith in the resurrection is in fact a primary evaluation of [Jesus'] life and his death on the cross, a way of knowing how to recognize the intimate, irrevocable, irreformable significance of the message and the practice of Jesus for the rule of God. The resurrection is voided of its meaning if this aspect is neglected."[9]

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[5] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 115.

[6] The Christians' sharing in the death and resurrection of Jesus is explicated further by Karl Rahner as, "He who in his corporeality is a member of Christ and as such moves forward to the raising of the dead by the power of God pronounces sentence of death upon himself… [Christians] cannot place themselves afresh under forces which they have once and for all escaped as they belong to Christ in their corporeality. Conversely, they cannot escape the service in which they have been placed once and for all as they belong to Christ in their corporeality. They cannot exist in their corporeality as only the victims of death can exist. They have the risen Christ behind them and before." KARL BARTH, *Church Dogmatics, Vol. 3, The Doctrine of Creation 2,* G. W. BROMILEY & T. F. TORRANCE (eds.), trans. HAROLD KNIGHT; G.W. BROMILEY; J. K. S. REID & R. H. FULLER, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1968 [1960], pp. 307-308.

[7] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Theology of Secularity*, pp. 61-62.

[8] KARL RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. WILLIAM V. DYCH, New York, NY: Crossroad, 1978, p. 266.

[9] EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX, *I Believe in Jesus of Nazareth. The Christ, the Son of God, the Lord*, in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 17 (1980), 18-32, p. 26.

Theology since Vatican II has tended to give ever-greater importance to the event of the resurrection. Richard McBrien notes that the theology of the contemporary period, "in keeping with the results of modern New Testament studies, more commonly understands the resurrection as central to, not simply confirmatory of, Christian faith, and as the beginning, not the end, of the story."[10] David L. Mueller comments that O'Collins' "comprehensive approach to the centrality of the resurrection of the crucified Jesus represents an important contribution to the vast and growing Roman Catholic literature on this subject."[11] O'Collins' conviction regarding the centrality of resurrection faith is reflected in his declaration that, "[w]ithout the resurrection Christians can hardly suffer an essentially Christian identity crisis, because they will have little or no Christian identity."[12] In what follows, we shall examine O'Collins' approach to the resurrection from a variety of aspects including its historicity, the nature of the claim of resurrection, the witnesses to the resurrection, and the significance of the doctrine for Christianity.

1. The Difficulties in Understanding the Resurrection

According to O'Collins, what the resurrection is all about is rather difficult to explain in any exhaustive fashion. There are various reasons for this difficulty. First, from the outset, Christians were compelled to make use of metaphorical language to describe the event, including, for example, the claim that he was "'woken from the sleep of death' or 'put back on his living feet.'" Secondly, the resurrection has a "'not yet' character: until resurrection becomes fully a reality for the human race and its world, the resurrection of Christ is not yet completed." Thirdly, the resurrection of Jesus is directly related to the notion of God. Hence, "any attempt to describe adequately the resurrection would be as misguided as any attempt to describe God adequately."[13]

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[10] RICHARD P. MCBRIEN, *Catholicism*, New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1994, p. 299. In the previous chapter we have already mentioned that the growth of Christology was a backwards movement from the death and resurrection of Jesus to his divinity and pre-existence. Hence, resurrection became the focal point of the beginning of Christology. McBrien speaks about this movement as follows: "It was because of the early Church's faith in the resurrection that it came to acknowledge the *divinity* of Jesus. And once the Church acknowledged the divinity of Jesus, it began laying the foundations for the doctrine of the *incarnation*, which sees Jesus as the Word made flesh (John 1:14). From the doctrine of the incarnation the Church was led ineluctably to the *preexistence* of Jesus (John 1:1; Philippians 2:5-9) and to the question of his relationship to the whole of *creation* and to the *history of salvation* (Colossians 1:15-20; Romans 8:19-22; Ephesians 1:9-10,22,23). He is indeed the 'first fruits' (1 Corinthians 15:20) of the 'new creation' (2 Corinthians 5:17), which is the *Kingdom of God*." See p. 430.

[11] DAVID L. MUELLER, Review of GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, New York, NY; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987, in *Review & Expositor* 85 (1988) 577-578, p. 578. Mueller parallels the work of O'Collins on the resurrection with the works of Protestant scholars. He says that "[i]t is obvious that there can never be any substantive theological conversation or rapprochement between these two communions [Catholics and Protestants] apart from some fundamental agreement on the reality and significance of 'Jesus Risen.' Father O'Collins deserves our thanks both for his contribution in this regard and for facilitating the ecumenical dialogue regarding the resurrection of Jesus." See p. 578.

[12] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Some Theologians and Easter*, in *America* 130 (1974) 286-287, p. 287.

[13] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Easter Faith. Believing in the Risen Jesus*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 2003, pp. vii-viii.

Without neglecting such difficulties, O'Collins is prepared to describe resurrection as "the unique act by which God transformed and raised forever the person Jesus to his right hand."[14] A comprehensive statement of his view of the resurrection and the basic Easter claim as this comes to expression in the New Testament and post-New Testament tradition is contained in the following statement: "[A]fter his crucifixion and burial, through a special divine action that set the ultimate seal of approval on his life and work, Jesus was personally delivered from the state of death; with his earthly body transformed and taken up into a glorified existence, he initiated the end of all things for all human beings and their world. The post-resurrection appearances … showed how Jesus' resurrection was not only primarily 'for him' (*pro se*) but also secondarily 'for us' (*pro nobis*)." Nevertheless, according to him, this claim is "often been disputed, both explicitly and implicitly, both in part and in whole."[15] For O'Collins, two things are involved in the resurrection. First, the post-resurrection existence of Jesus is a transformed and glorious state. This existence has a "personal continuity with his prior earthly, bodily existence." Second, this new state of existence anticipates the eschatological fulfilment when everything comes to an end and God creates everything new. This eschatological nature of the resurrection makes it a "unique event, which is qualitatively different from all events within history, including the greatest miracles… The final mystery exceeds even the mystery of the world's origins."[16] In a similar vein, Rahner declares that the resurrection is not "a return to life and existence in time and space as we experience it" because resurrection has to be understood in terms of the "salvation which is in God's hands, incomprehensible and known only in hope." According to him, resurrection is the continuity of Jesus' person and his cause, which highlights the "*victoriousness* of his claim to be the absolute saviour." Faith in the resurrection is "faith which knows itself to be a divinely effected liberation from all the powers of finiteness, of guilt and of death, and knows itself to be empowered for this by the fact that this liberation has taken place in Jesus himself and has become manifest for us."[17] Schillebeeckx, too, understands the resurrection of Jesus as "primarily the coming to light on the great day of something that already

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[14] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting the Resurrection. Examining the Major Problems in the Stories of Jesus' Resurrection*, New York, NY; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988, p. 23.

[15] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Resurrection. The State of the Questions*, in STEPHEN T. DAVIS, DANIEL KENDAL & GERALD O'COLLINS (eds.), *The Resurrection. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997) 5-28, pp. 5-6. Although Rudolf Bultmann, on the basis of Paul's letter to Romans (Rom 4:25), considers the cross and the resurrection as forming part of one cosmic event, he thinks that the historical fact of the resurrection from the dead is not conceivable. He says that "the resurrection of Jesus cannot be a miraculous proof by which the sceptic might be compelled to believe in Christ. The difficulty is not simply the incredibility of a mythical event like the resuscitation of a dead person – for that is what the resurrection means, as is shown by the fact that the risen Lord is apprehended by the physical senses." Bultmann is of the view that the resurrection cannot be proved because it is different from the resuscitation of a corpse and because it is an article of (eschatological) faith. However, according to him, the cross is always proclaimed jointly with the resurrection. See RUDOLF BULTMANN, *New Testament and Mythology. The Mythological Element in the Message of the New Testament and the Problem of its Re-interpretation,* in HANS-WERNER BARTSCH (ed.), *Kerygma and Myth. A Theological Debate*, trans. REGINALD H. FULLER (New York, NY: Harper & Row 1953) 1-44, pp. 38-41.

[16] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 114-115.

[17] KARL RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, p. 268.

existed in his life and his death: his communion of life with God, which even death could not destroy… It is not only the prolongation of this union beyond death; it is the joyous entry into the realm of God, the elevation of Jesus to Lordship."[18] It is already clear that, for O'Collins and many of his contemporaries, the meaning of the resurrection is related to human existence and the human condition and to God's work on humanity's behalf. The glorification of Jesus serves as the first instance and example of humanity's hope for communion with God. However, throughout Christian history the significance of the resurrection has been approached from a variety of angles. In what follows, we shall sketch, with O'Collins, the understanding of the resurrection in various periods of Christian theological reflection. We shall begin, however, by examining the major objections to the very idea of resurrection.

2. Objections to the Historicity of the Resurrection

Nicholas Thomas Wright says that scholars have proposed various objections to the historicity of the resurrection. The first objection is that we have *no access* to the event of the resurrection. Willi Marxsen, for example, contends that it is not possible to prove resurrection historically because there were no witnesses to the alleged event.[19] The only extant 'proof' for the resurrection is the faith of the disciples.[20] He therefore regards the resurrection narratives as products of the early church and as expressions of Easter faith rather than as reliable records of the resurrection as such. Wright objects to this view by pointing out that historians often have to deal with objects to which have no direct access and that much scientific enquiry is done precisely in this manner.[21]

Ernst Troeltsch gives expression to a second objection to the historicity of the resurrection when he asserts that there is a need for at least an analogy drawn from our experience in order to declare that an event is historical. However, in the case of the resurrection, there is *no analogy* available. The resurrection was, as it were, an event in the life of the believing community and it was from this event that the Church took its shape.[22] Wright argues that the rise of the early church itself is, as it were, proof of the historicity of the resurrection. As far as the argument from analogy is concerned, Wright goes so far as to argue that "if we are to speak truly about the early church, we must describe something for which there was no precedent and of which there

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[18] EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX, *I Believe in Jesus of Nazareth. The Christ, the Son of God, the Lord*, p. 26.

[19] According to John Dominic Crossan, there is no mention of anyone (disciples) seeing the actual resurrection in the gospels, but there is a mention in the gospel of Peter about the enemies of Jesus seeing the resurrection. JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus*, New York, NY: Harper, 1996, p. 190.

[20] WILLI MARXSEN, *The Resurrection of Jesus as Historical and Theological Problem*, p. 50.

[21] NICHOLAS THOMAS WRIGHT, *The Resurrection of the Son of God. Christian Origins and the Question of God*, Vol. 3, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003, pp. 15-16.

[22] ERNST TROELTSCH, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 2, Tübingen: Mohr, 1912-1925, p. 732.

remains no subsequent example. …. Ironically, then, it is precisely the uniqueness of the rise of the early church that forces us to say: never mind analogies, what happened?" For Wright, then, "the early church by its very existence forces upon us the question which we, as historians, must ask: what precisely happened after Jesus' crucifixion that caused early Christianity to come into being?"[23]

A third possible objection to the resurrection is that there is *no real evidence* for the event. According to Wright, this objection arises out of a post-Bultmannian trend in New Testament studies. Although Bultmann insisted on a critical interpretation of the resurrection, he separated faith from history and, in view of this separation, attributed an insignificant role to factual events. Galvin justifies this position of Bultmann by stating that to Bultmann "[t]he purpose of the texts [biblical texts] is to awaken faith, not to provide objective historical information."[24] This view becomes clear from Bultmann's declaration that the "event of Easter, insofar as it can be referred to as a historical event alongside of the cross, is nothing other than the emergence of faith in the risen one in which the proclamation has its origin. The event of Easter as the resurrection of Christ is not a historical event." Bultmann also dismissed the need of historical facts to arrive at faith. As he put it, "Christian faith … is not interested in the historical question."[25] Since Bultmann, other authors have dismissed the historical grounds for resurrection faith, including Gerd Lüdemann and John Dominic Crossan.[26] However, Wright is of the view that none of these authors deal adequately with the question of how Christianity began and how it took the shape it now possesses. Hence, their objections to the study of the resurrection as a

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[23] NICHOLAS THOMAS WRIGHT, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, p. 18.

[24] JOHN P. GALVIN, *Jesus Christ*, p. 302.

[25] RUDOLF BULTMANN, *New Testament and Mythology. The Problem of Demythologizing the New Testament Proclamation,* in SCHUBERT M. OGDEN (ed.), *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984) 1-43, pp. 39-40. See also HANS-GEORG GEYER, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ. A Survey of the Debate in Present Day Theology,* in C. F. D. MOULE (ed.), *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1968).

[26] JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN, *The Historical Jesus. The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991, pp. 395-416. Crossan finds it difficult to believe in the resurrection because there are great discrepancies in the resurrection account. He says that if all the accounts about the passion and burial "derived from composite memory and historical recall, it is quite remarkable that an almost hour-by-hour remembrance prevailed for the death and burial of Jesus but an almost total discrepancy prevailed for what was, I would presume, even more important, namely, the extraordinary return of Jesus from beyond the grave to give the disciples their missionary mandate and apostolic commission." See JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN, *The Birth of Christianity. Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately after the Execution of Jesus*, San Francisco: Harper, 1998, pp. 395, 550-573. See p. 571. Crossan also is of the view that the Kingdom movement which began at the time of Jesus continued even after his death and his presence was experienced by those who knew him before (the disciples) and who heard about him after his death as the one who empowered them. And hence, he says, "Easter faith is no more or less a mystery than any other faith, but it did not start on Easter Sunday. It started among those first followers of Jesus in Lower Galilee long before his death, and precisely because it was faith as empowerment rather than faith as domination, it could survive and, in fact, negate the execution of Jesus himself… An empty tomb or a risen body susceptible to food and touch were dramatic ways of experiencing that faith. Trances or ecstasies were dramatic ways of experiencing that faith. Risen appearances, as in the last chapters of the gospels, were dramatic ways of organizing and managing that faith." See JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus*, pp. 209-210.

historical phenomenon do not hold ground.[27] Wright also notes that while there are people who object to the notion of the historicity of the resurrection event, there are still others who object to the historical study of this event from a theological point of view. So, for example, Hans Frei opposed historical examination because resurrection is the ground and centre of Christian faith.[28] He is of the view that one has to assert the bodily resurrection of Christ and recognize his eternal identity "religiously rather than metaphysically, for metaphysical schemes, like myths, change but the Word of God abides."[29] Wright, however, insists on the need for historical examination of the resurrection claims and opens the discussion to other historians, including historians from other religions. To do otherwise would be to close the epistemological circle and to restrict 'access' to the historical background of Christianity.

Richard R. Niebuhr stated that both theologians and biblical scholars "have felt obliged to remove the resurrection of Jesus from its central position and place it on the periphery of Christian teaching and proclamation, because the primitive resurrection faith conflicts disastrously with modern canons of historicity."[30] According to C. F. Evans, "the resurrection appearances and the empty tomb lie so deeply concealed within the traditions that they can be glimpsed only very indirectly, so that the principal difficulty here is not to believe, but to know what it is which offers itself for belief."[31] All that one is able to gather from the history of the resurrection is the fact that something had happened to Jesus after his death and that the tomb was found empty. This led to further claims regarding his appearances to various people and their personal transformation, which ultimately formed into faith in the resurrection. The historical problem consists essentially in the fact that there are no eyewitnesses to the event of the resurrection as such. McBrien says that the answer to the question whether it was a historical event must be in the negative "if by *historical* one means an event that could have been photographed as it was occurring." However, "to concede that the resurrection was not a historical event in our ordinary sense of historical event (something open to scientific investigation and verifiable by neutral witnesses) does not mean that the resurrection was not a *real* event for Jesus with *historical implications* for others." To overcome such difficulties, he describes resurrection as *transhistorial* or *metahistorical* rather than *unhistorical* because

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[27] NICHOLAS THOMAS WRIGHT, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, p. 20.

[28] NICHOLAS THOMAS WRIGHT, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, p. 21.

[29] Cf. also HANS W. FREI, *Theology and Narrative. Selected Essays,* GEORGE HUNSINGER & WILLIAM C. PLACHER (eds.), New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 205-206. The resurrection which is the centre of Christian faith, according to Frei, is at the same time both "glorious and disconcerting to Christians right from the beginning of the formation of the Christian community… glorious because it is the heart of the good news of salvation, disconcerting because it is utterly mystifying to our ordinary understanding and belief." See. p. 201.

[30] RICHARD R. NIEBUHR, *Resurrection and Historical Reason. A Study of Theological Method,* p. 1.

[31] CHRISTOPHER FRANCIS EVANS, *Resurrection and the New Testament*, in *Studies in Biblical Studies*, second series 12, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970, p. 130.

resurrection is an event beyond time and space and "the reality of the risen Lord is also a reality which transcends history."[32]

O'Collins acknowledges that it is difficult to conceive of the reality of the resurrection when we look at it from the point of view of the laws of nature where cause and effect constitute the reality of anything. However, he points out that while the guiding principle of contemporary science (both the physical and the human sciences, including history) is 'probability', they do not rule out the possibility of "even startling novelty." Hence, while "an event such as the resurrection may be highly improbable," it is not "*a priori* impossible."[33]

3. The Evidence for the Resurrection Claims

In order to establish the fact of the resurrection and to have at least a moderate understanding of it, one is required to make an assessment of the claims made about the risen Jesus. What we know of the resurrection is based on three major sources – the earliest forms of the profession of faith by early Christians in their worship; the witness of the apostles, especially of Paul; and the resurrection accounts found in the gospels.[34] We shall now examine these sources in line with the approach followed by O'Collins.

3.1. The Early Christian Claims

O'Collins recognizes the difficulties arising out of the fact that there were no real witnesses to the resurrection event.[35] With Fitzmyer, he acknowledges that "neither Luke nor any of the other evangelists has depicted anyone *witnessing the resurrection*, i.e. visibly perceiving God's act of raising the dead Jesus. For no one witnessed it, and that is not implied even in Matt 28:2b, where the angel of the Lord descends from heaven and rolls back the stone from before the tomb's entrance, a detail unique to the Matthean Gospel."[36] Resurrection has, therefore, to be explained

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[32] RICHARD P. MCBRIEN, *Catholicism*, pp. 434-435.

[33] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 75.

[34] JÜRGEN BECKER, *Resurrection of Christ. Biblical Theology*, in JEAN-YVES LACOSTE (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, Vol. 3 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 1370-1372, p. 1370.

[35] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 109.

[36] JOSEPH FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)*, p. 1537. Joseph Fitzmyer also says that one cannot assume the witnessing of the disciples to the resurrection "even in Mt 28:2b, where the angel of the Lord descends from heaven and rolls back the stone from before the tombs, entrance" which is a detail found only in Matthew. See p. 1537. According to Fitzmyer, what is missing in the New Testament about the witnesses to the resurrection can be 'found' in the apocryphal gospel tradition. In the Gospel of Peter § 35-42 there is an elaborate description of the resurrection. However, Fitzmyer says that according to H. Koester, what the apocryphal gospel describes was an effort to explain later questions about the things that had happened. See JOSEPH FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)*, p. 1538. Cf. HELMUT KOESTER, *Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels,* in *Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980) 105-130, p. 126. Koester says that several features of the Gospel of Peter "are the result of secondary development. But there are indications that the basis of the Gospel of Peter was a very early form of the passion and resurrection narratives." See p. 126.

by the claims made by the people who encountered the Risen One. The grounds for the claims, according to Fitzmyer, are then the new experiences that the disciples had in their lives, such as the appearances of the risen Jesus, the empty tomb, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.[37] Prior to these experiences they had some ideas about the Jewish faith in the resurrection and the Old Testament allusions to the resurrection. The disciples also had memories about their life with Jesus. These were the elements on the basis which they interpreted the later happenings, i.e., the appearances and the empty tomb.[38]

According to O'Collins, "the first Christians worshipped their God as a God of resurrection."[39] Resurrection belief was visible in Jewish prayer-life from the first century B.C., especially in Jewish benedictions. The second benediction spoke of God as "'the God who makes the dead live'." It was the belief of many Jews and Pharisees, though not of the Sadducees, that there would be a general resurrection after the end of history. This Jewish belief in the general resurrection undoubtedly contributed to early Christian belief in the new and glorious life of Jesus. Hence, early Christians interpreted the event of the resurrection "as the beginning of the general resurrection" (1 Cor 15:20-23; Col 1:18; Acts 26:23).[40] However, according to O'Collins, while the Jewish belief contributed to the faith of the disciples in the risen Jesus, a fact that is proved by the New Testament which spoke about the resurrection as happening 'according to the Scriptures' (1 Cor 15:4), "it was only after they came to know Jesus' resurrection that the first … generation of Christians looked to their inherited Scriptures to support and interpret the Easter faith they already enjoyed."[41] This meant that the belief of the early Christians in the resurrection of Jesus came first and foremost from their knowledge of

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[37] An extensive examination of the resurrection accounts in the New Testament is made by Reginald H. Fuller. See REGINALD H. FULLER, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives,* New York, NY: Macmillan, 1971. Raymond E. Brown provides a chart showing the similarities and differences of the gospel accounts of the resurrection. See REYMOND E. BROWN, The Resurrection of Jesus, in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, RAYMOND E. BROWN, JOSEPH A. FITZMYER & ROLAND E. MURPHY (eds.), Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990, p. 1376.

[38] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, pp. 90-91. Schillebeeckx is of the opinion that with the death of Jesus "the common life in fellowship, shared by the earthly Jesus with his disciples" came to an end. After some time, the same disciples began to have fellowship with Jesus through their belief in the resurrection. However, it is not clear what took place between the death of Jesus and the proclamation of the resurrection by the disciples and the early Christians. According to him, "[n]owhere does the New Testament say that the resurrection is itself this event." He also maintains that it is "[n]ot the resurrection but some sort of gracious self-manifestation of the dead Jesus" that led the disciples to proclaim "'Jesus is back, he is alive', or 'He is risen'." See EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX, *Jesus. An Experiment in Christology*, p. 331.

[39] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 109. Schillebeeckx says that the "idea of Jesus' resurrection was not suggested to the Christians directly by apocalyptic, but by his earthly career and ministry, based on his identification with the cause of God." Hence, according to him, "Jesus' living and dying on earth suggested to Christians, in virtue of their experiences after Jesus' death, the idea of the resurrection or of the coming Parousia of Jesus, while on the basis of their faith in the risen or coming crucified One they relate the story of Jesus in the gospels; in other words, these gospel stories of Jesus are themselves a *hermeneusis* of Jesus' Parousia and resurrection, while belief in the Parousia or in the resurrection was engendered by things remembered of the historical Jesus." See EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX, *Jesus. An Experiment in Christology*, trans. HUBERT HOSKINS, New York, NY: Crossroad, 1995 [1974], p. 401.

[40] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Man and His New Hopes*, New York, NY: Herder & Herder, 1969, p. 84.

[41] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, p. 96.

Jesus' resurrection and only secondly through relating it to Jewish belief in resurrection and the general resurrection of the dead. Hence, O'Collins claims that the "Easter experience of the first Christians greatly developed and dramatically reshaped the old wineskins of the available resurrection language."[42] Basically there was a shift from the traditional understanding of a general resurrection to a modified one with the claim of the resurrection of an individual, the resurrection of Jesus. However, O'Collins asserts that the claims made by the early Christian community and the New Testament establish the fact that resurrection of Jesus was indeed an 'event'. This is evident in Paul's statements to the effect that 'God the Father raised him from the dead' (Gal 1:1); 'God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power' (1 Cor 6:14); 'if you confess with your lips that Jesus is the Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved' (Rom 10:9).[43] The early Christians bore witness to this event in many ways. According to Jürgen Becker, the earliest testimony is to be found in (a) those expressions in the New Testament, such as, 'him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord' (Rom 4:24; 8:11; 2 Cor 4:14; Gal 11:1), which attributed to God the act of raising of Jesus from the dead; (b) invocations, such as, 'Our Lord, come!' (1 Cor 16:22) and 'come, Lord Jesus' (Rev 22:20); and (c) the exaltation hymns about Jesus as the ruler of all realities (Phi 2:6-11; 1 Tim 3:16).[44]

According to John P. Galvin, the resurrection narratives in the New Testament may be divided into two categories: first, the stories concerning the empty grave and the appearances of the risen Jesus, and second, some brief formulas, which speak about Jesus' resurrection. The second category evolved gradually in the early Christian communities.[45] O'Collins is of the view that the resurrection formulae in Paul (1 Thes 1:10; 4:14; Rom 1:3f.; 10:9, etc.) and in the Acts (2:22-24. 32f., 36; 3:13-15; 4:10-12; 5:30-32) originated in the thirties, in the early stages of Christianity. In the Acts, these resurrection formulations have only "minimal theological content" and say nothing about the salvific value and expiatory character of the death of Jesus. Hence, O'Collins regards them as belonging to Christian antiquity. Although the kerygmatic and creedal expressions in the letters of St. Paul exhibit a more theologically developed expiatory

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[42] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus,* p. 84. See also G. W. E. NICKELSBURG, *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Inter-testamental Judaism*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972; According to Perkins, in the Old Testament, resurrection symbolism began to appear first in the context of the apocalypse in Dan 12:1-3. An understanding of resurrection also may be seen in terms of the idea of Sheol in connection with judgment and punishment. In Daniel it is used in the context of the vindication of the just. As regards the Jewish view, Philo of Alexandria saw it in terms of the immortalizing of the soul. There are also traces of it in the Greco-Roman myths, especially the survival of the soul and images about immortality. However, Perkins says that "[t]he preaching of resurrection may well have been – as it seems to have been known by Christianity's second-century opponents – a distinctive feature of the Christian group." PHEME PERKINS, *Resurrection. New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection*, pp. 37-62 especially p. 62.

[43] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 110.

[44] JÜRGEN BECKER, *Resurrection of Christ. Biblical Theology*, p. 1370.

[45] JOHN P. GALVIN, *Jesus Christ*, p. 298.

and salvific content (e.g., 1 Cor 15:3) than those in Acts, O'Collins maintains that these too belong to "early Christian preaching and confessions of faith."[46] Taken together, the formulae of the Acts and St. Paul demonstrate that "[a]t the very origins of Christianity we do not find some general truth ('God is the Father of us all') or some basic moral injunction ('Let us love one another as brothers and sisters'), but a specific message proclaimed by Peter and the other apostles: the crucified Jesus had been raised from the dead."[47]

O'Collins attempts to overcome some of the common misunderstandings concerning the formulae of the resurrection. According to him, the resurrection language of St. Paul and the early Christians indicate that the formula 'God raised Jesus from the dead' offered certain factual information and was not just a statement about a new commitment on the part of the early Christians to 'walk in newness of life' (Rom 6:4). He also maintains that this proclamation was not meant to give expression to "some inner meaning of Jesus' earthly history." He opposes the idea of Bultmann whom, he suggests, reduced the meaning and significance of the resurrection to an expression of the meaning of the death of Jesus rather than considering it as an event in its own right.[48] By countering these views, O'Collins seeks to highlight the fact that the resurrection was a historical event and that the earliest Christian witnesses, through their proclamation, were endeavouring to make a 'factually informative statement' concerning what God had brought about after the death of Jesus. The Easter message was primarily centred on the fact that "God had done something to and for the dead Jesus, raising him from the dead to a transformed and definitive life of glory." Although resurrection meant a "change in the believers as a resurrection *with Christ*",[49] their resurrection language was, above all, intended to communicate the event of the resurrection of Jesus, an event that was the fruit of divine intervention.[50]

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[46] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 111.

[47] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 112.

[48] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 112. Bultmann says that "the resurrection is no mythical event that makes the meaning of the cross credible, but it is also believed even as the meaning of the cross is believed. In fact, faith in the resurrection is nothing other than faith in the cross as the salvation event, as the cross of Christ. Hence, one cannot first believe in Christ and then on that ground believe in his cross." See RUDOLF BULTMANN, *New Testament and Mythology. The Mythological Element in the Message of the New Testament and the Problem of its Re-interpretation,* p. 39.

[49] According to O'Collins, Paul speaks of a traditional belief among Christians that with baptism they shared in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (Rom 6:3-4). He says, "[d]eath and burial take on here an extended meaning: being plunged into the waters of baptism sacramentally re-enacts Christ's own dying and being buried." He also says that the kerygmatic assertion of the death and burial of Jesus gives us the basis for finding a religious meaning to Jesus' death and resurrection. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical and Systematic Study of Jesus*, p. 85.

[50] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 113-114.

3.2. The Resurrection Narrative of Paul

According to O'Collins, the first narrative of the resurrection in the New Testament is provided by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians.[51] The text reads as follows: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. The he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me" (1 Cor 15:3-8). This testimony, O'Collins says, reflects the basic structure of a primitive creedal formula. The confession is intended to provide historical ('died' and 'was buried') and scriptural ('in accordance with the scriptures') support for the fact of Jesus' resurrection. Paul seems to list all the resurrection appearances known to him. O'Collins suggests that they were probably known to Paul from his first visit to Jerusalem in 36 A.D. Although many details are missing in the resurrection account given by Paul in comparison to the Gospels, the mention of the appearances to James and the four hundred brethren are found only in Paul.[52]

In Paul's account of the resurrection, together with the verbs 'he died' and 'was buried', what takes prominence according to O'Collins is the three expressions – "'he appeared', 'he was

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[51] O'Collins believes that the first letter to the Corinthians was written in A.D 54 or 55, i.e., ten years before Mark's gospel came into existence and thirty years after the resurrection event took place in A.D. 30. He dates back Paul's conversion to 33 A.D. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, p. 4. Galvin also supports the view of O'Collins with regard to the antiquity of first Corinthians. He says, "[t]he core of this passage, fixed in wording when Paul received it, may be retraced to within a few years of the crucifixion. Neither its original language (Aramaic of Greek) nor its geographical origin (Damascus, Antioch, and Jerusalem are the chief possibilities) can be determined with certitude. Nonetheless, the antiquity of the formula is beyond question." See also JOHN P. GALVIN, *Jesus Christ*, pp. 299-300. According to Reginald H. Fuller, the resurrection narratives found in the Gospels are not the earliest traditions. He, too, regards 1Cor 15:3-8 as the first narrative. But he also says that Paul was citing a tradition already in existence because of the use of non-Pauline terms. REGINALD H. FULLER, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*, New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1971, pp. 9-10. According to J. Jeremias phrases such as "for our sins"; "he was raised"; "on the third day"; and "the twelve" are non-Pauline. See JOACHIM JEREMIAS, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1966, pp. 101-102. Fuller is of the view that Paul received this formula "at any time or place between his conversion near Damascus… and his arrival in Corinth. Ca. A.D. 49." His most favourable view is that he got it in Antioch before A.D 50 or somewhere close to A.D. 40 in Damascus. Another possibility is that he received it in Jerusalem in A.D. 36 when he visited the city after his conversion. See REGINALD H. FULLER, The *Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*, p. 10. Gerd Lüdemann who takes up historical study of the resurrection event also holds that the text of Paul is the oldest. See GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, trans. JOHN BOWDEN, London: SCM Press, 1995, p. 9.

[52] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, pp. 4-6. O'Collins here notes some limitations in the resurrection account given by Paul. (1) Paul does not say anything about the surprise of Peter and the others during the appearances; (2) there is no mention of initial doubts during the Easter appearances; (3) nothing is told of the change of attitude after the appearances; (4) no details are given about dates, the words of Christ, or the empty tomb. See also GERALD O'COLLINS, *Easter Faith. Believing in the Risen Jesus,* p. 47.

raised' and 'on the third day in accordance with the scriptures'."[53] Christ is the subject of the four verbs, 'died', 'was buried', 'has been raised', and appeared'. These verbs and expressions, O'Collins says, convey "factual information about what happened to Jesus as well as expressing or at least implying the religious significance of what happened."[54] To him, the phrase, 'he appeared' (*ōphthē*), could be translated as "(1) 'Christ was seen', or (2) 'Christ appeared, let himself be seen, showed himself'." Paul used this same word *ōphthē* also to mean 'seen' (1 Cor 9:1). This 'seeing', according to him, also meant 'revelation' – *apokalypsis* (Gal 1:12, 16), which meant the disclosure of divine reality. In the Septuagint *ōphthē* indicated 'coming into view of something that was hidden' (Gen 8:5); "*persons* who *freely* allow themselves to be seen" (Ex 23:15; 34:20); and theophanies to people like Abraham (Gen 12:7) and Moses (Ex 3:2f.). Drawing upon the use of the term *ōphthē* in the Septuagint and other references to the term in the New Testament (Mk 9:4 – sudden appearance of Jesus; Acts 2:3 – appearance of tongues of fire), O'Collins suggests that St. Paul wanted to speak about the reality of the resurrection and its revelatory significance. He is of the view that the events of the appearance of Jesus "constitute revelation… As a technical term *ōphthē* underlines in the first place the objective action of the risen Christ in disclosing himself, but also secondarily implies a subjective perception which includes some kind of visual component." Nevertheless, he resists seeing the appearances as mere 'visions'.[55] According to Galvin, the word *ōphthē* highlights the "active role of Christ, who lets himself be seen by chosen witnesses."[56] O'Collins suggests that the phrase 'he was raised' (*egēgertai* and the other verb for resurrection *anistēmi*) denoted being put back on one's feet, standing up and being made to stand up.[57] According to him, "Paul's language about 'raising' and 'rising' forms an analogical way of speaking about an event which remains hidden from him in its inner nature."[58] O'Collins states that the phrase 'the third day in accordance with the scriptures', speaks of the date and the "chronology of the resurrection" based on Jesus' own predictions about the killing of the Son of Man and his rising to life after three days (Mk 8:31;

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[53] According to Fitzmyer, "the *basic content* of the resurrection narrative" was part of the early Christian proclamation and it included "Christ died … was buried … has been raised … and appeared…" See JOSEPH A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV),* p. 1533.

[54] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, p. 84.

[55] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, pp. 8-9. According to Fuller, the appearances in 1Cor 15:5-7 are "not necessarily physical seeing, not necessarily visions in a subjective sense (involving, for example, ecstasy or dreams), but revelatory self-disclosure or disclosure by God of the eschatologically resurrected Christos." He also says that the word *ōphthē* used by Paul has to be interpreted in an eschatological sense. When it is interpreted in such a way it "includes the thought, not only that the resurrection of Christ is revealed in the resurrection appearances… but that these appearances also disclosed that the future general resurrection would occur through Christ." He mentions also that the emphasis of the language of the appearance in Paul is not on the subject but on the object, i.e., it "accentuates not the experience of the recipient, but the revelatory action of Christ of God." The only exception that he finds about the use of *ōphthē* to mean 'vision' is in Paul's encounter with Jesus at Damascus. In all other places it is used to signify revelation. See REGINALD H. FULLER, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*, pp. 31-33.

[56] JOHN P. GALVIN, *Jesus Christ*, p. 301.

[57] See DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christ's Resurrection and the Aorist passive of egeiro*, in *Gregorianum* 74 (1993) 725-735, pp. 727-735.

[58] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, pp. 9-10.

9:31; 10:33f.) and also the temple sayings (Mk 14:57f.; Acts 6:13f.; Mt 26:60f.; Jn 2:19-21), which contained references to the death and resurrection.[59] While doubt persists with regard to the predictions in Mark, i.e., whether they were coloured by the actual events and, hence, largely created by the early church, O'Collins is of the view that they may well go back to the historical Jesus.[60] The date (on the third day) of the resurrection, according to O'Collins, is not very clear.[61] In his view, the empty tomb is the most important witness to the time of the resurrection. Another element that O'Collins finds important in Paul's account is the list of witnesses which he says is the "most valuable single piece of testimony provided by the New Testament for the assessment of the resurrection."[62]

3.3. The Resurrection Narratives in the Gospels

O'Collins takes up the resurrection accounts in the gospels as depicted by Joseph Fitzmyer. They are six in number. O'Collins also uses Fitzmyer's list of the resurrection narratives to assess the significance and role of the female witnesses, especially Mary Magdalene.[63] Fitzmyer identifies the resurrection appearances in the gospels as follows. (1) The conclusion of the gospel of Mark (Mk 16:1-8) – here, three women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, discover the empty tomb and are asked by a young man to go and tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus will meet them in Galilee. (2) The conclusion of the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 28:1-20) – here, two women, Mary Magdalene and another Mary, discover the empty tomb and are met by an angel and Jesus who tells them to go and inform the disciples about it. In this account Jesus meets the eleven disciples in Galilee at a later time and tells them to go and baptize. (3) The

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[59] According to Galvin, 'on the third day' "is applied to the resurrection itself, not to the discovery of the empty tomb or to the initial appearances." See JOHN P. GALVIN, *Jesus Christ*, p. 300.

[60] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, p. 11.

[61] O'Collins says that it was a belief at the time of Jesus that, after death, the soul departed from the mortal remains only after three days when the decay set in. Hence, the resurrection on the third day may have meant the raising of Jesus before any corruption took place. O'Collins also mentions some of the allusions made to resurrection in the Old Testament, such as Jonah (Jonah 2:1 – referred in Mt 14:40); Israel's hope for national restoration (Hos 6:1-2), and Ps 16:10. However, O'Collins is not ready to accept St. Paul referring to Jesus' resurrection as the fulfilment of Ps 16:10. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, pp. 13-14.

[62] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, p. 16. Many question the reliability of the list of the witnesses of St. Paul. However, Hans von Campenhausen supports its reliability. See HANS VON CAMPENHAUSEN, *Tradition and Life in the Church. Essays and Lectures in Church History*, trans. A. V. LITTLEDALE, London; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1968, p. 45. In this book he states that "a theology of the resurrection must abandon the old and foolish attempt to restrict reason to such an extent that the only way out is, apparently, to believe. It must also, for its part, be ready to forego doubtful 'proofs,' used by reason supposedly historical in its working, or a psychological, or logical or even sceptical reason, to facilitate faith in the resurrection and to make the truth of God somewhat more 'probable.' No reason is capable of it, and faith has no need of so perilous an assistance." See p. 89. Rudolf Bultmann holds the same view as Karl Barth who says that one cannot prove the resurrection with the list of witnesses given by Paul. Karl Barth, according to Bultmann, held that Paul's intention in providing witness was not to speak about the historical credibility of the resurrection but to say that he, too, proclaimed the resurrection just as the early Christian community did. He also maintains that resurrection is not a proof to lead one to faith in Jesus Christ. See RUDOLF BULTMANN, *New Testament and Mythology. The Mythological Element in the Message of the New Testament and the Problem of its Re-interpretation*, p. 39.

[63] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting the Resurrection. Examining the Major Problems in the Stories of Jesus' Resurrection*, pp. 24-25.

conclusion of the Gospel of Luke (Lk 23:56b-24:53) – this consists of five episodes: the women who find the empty tomb and two men in gleaming clothes go and tell about it to the disciples after which Peter goes to the grave to confirm what they said; the disciples who were going to Emmaus meet the risen Jesus; the risen Jesus shows himself to the disciples and their companions in Jerusalem; Jesus asks the disciples to go and witness to him in their preaching; and in Bethany Jesus ascends to heaven. (4) The "real conclusion of Johannine Gospel" according to Fitzmyer (Jn 20:1-29) – here, Mary Magdalene discovers the empty tomb and informs Peter and the beloved disciple. The risen Jesus meets Mary, and later, the disciples except Thomas, in Jerusalem. (5) An appendix to the Johannine Gospel (Jn 21:1-23) – here there is the appearance of the risen Jesus to Peter, the beloved disciple, and the other five disciples who were fishing on Tiberias. Here Peter was asked by Jesus to look after his sheep. (6) The Marcan appendix (Mk 16:9-20) – here, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and the two disciples who later report it to the rest of the disciples. Here, too, Jesus commissions the eleven disciples to preach the Gospel after which he ascended to heaven.[64]

The accounts of the resurrection in the gospels show significant differences and one of the accounts (Mk 16:9-20) is an appendix added at a later date as an attempt to bring about a concordance of all the narratives.[65]

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[64] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting the Resurrection. Examining the Major Problems in the Stories of Jesus' Resurrection*, pp. 24-25. See also JOSEPH FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)*, pp. 1535-2537. According to Zane C. Hodges, C. H. Dodd classifies the resurrection narratives found in the Gospels into two major classes and a collection of doubtful accounts. Some accounts are 'concise' types which are clear and contain only the essentials. This group consists of Mt 28:8-10; Mt 28:16-20; and Jn 20:19-21. Class two consists of 'tales' which "exhibit the traits of the skilled storyteller who, by means of the effective use of detail, seeks to awaken the imagination of the reader and recreate the scene for him." This group includes Lk 24:13-35 and Jn 21:1-14. The next group consists of accounts, which are doubtful in nature, and includes Mt 16:14-15; Lk 24:36-39; Jn 20:1-17; and Jn 20:26-29. Hodges thinks that the analysis of the resurrection in these classes is based on the basic elements found in the accounts, i.e., "(a.) the situation: Christ's followers bereft of their Lord; (b) the appearance of the Lord; (c) the greeting; (d) the recognition; (e) the word of command." However, he considers the analysis of Dodd as weak and of doubtful value. See ZANE C. HODGES, *Form-Criticism and the Resurrection Accounts*, in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 124 (1967) 339-348, pp. 341-343. Cf. also C. H. DODD, *The Appearance of the Risen Christ. An Essay in the Form-Criticism of the Gospels*, in D. E. NINEHAM (ed.), *Studies in the Gospels. Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955) 9-35, p. 11.

[65] According to Galvin, there is unanimity in the Gospel accounts with regard to the finding of the empty tomb by women two days after the crucifixion. However, they differ in "[t]he number and names of the women, their motivation in visiting the tomb, the events that occur in their presence, the number of heavenly figures whom they encounter, the message they receive, and their reaction to these events all." Only Mathew speaks about the Roman guard, only John speaks about the two disciples running towards the grave, etc. are some other differences. Galvin is of the view that "[t]hese differences, which reflect the evangelists' theological perspectives cannot be completely harmonized on a historical level." See JOHN P. GALVIN, *Jesus Christ*, p. 299. According to Philip A. Cunnigham, the Gospels do not give a uniform picture of all the happenings that took place after the burial of Jesus. According to him, although resurrection was something unexpected, within a short span of time, through their personal experiences, the disciples were convinced of the fact of the resurrection. The Gospels narrated these personal experiences of the resurrection as 'appearances'. However, the narratives about the resurrection contain many disparities as regards the location, the witnesses, and what was said. There are, however, a few common elements such as the fact that the witnesses were already believers in the ministry of Jesus, the initial non-recognition of the risen Jesus, and the presence of Jesus at the fellowship meals which turned into a ritual meal for his followers and the Christian community. See PHILIP A. CUNNINGHAM, *Jesus and the Evangelists. The Ministry of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels,* New York, NY; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988, pp. 192, 193-194.

According to Fitzmyer, the Gospel accounts of the resurrection stand in contrast to the passion narratives which are largely in agreement with one another. Whereas the passion narratives emerged as a continuous account of events, "[t]he need of a *continuous story* of the appearances of the risen Christ neither emerged nor could have been seen as crucial."[66] The conflicting reports of the location of the appearances – Jerusalem and Galilee, the differing accounts of the visits of women to the tomb and their numbers, the irreconcilable number of people/holy men seen at the tomb, and the divergent views on the ascension of Jesus, are among the most significant variations.[67] However, according to O'Collins, the resurrection narratives are not bereft of common elements, such as the sorrow of the disciples, Jesus' appearance, greetings, identification of the self, the words he spoke giving the disciples comfort and joy, his commissioning of them with a mission, the recognition of Jesus by the disciples, etc.[68]

According to O'Collins, the discrepancies and contradictions in the accounts are seen by many as indications of their reliability. However, he does not regard such indicators as sufficient proof of the reliability of the accounts because such blanket approval of the inconsistencies simply ignores historical enquiries about how those accounts were developed and transmitted and also what may have been the role played by the evangelists in forming the texts.[69] Hence, he advocates an assessment of the historical background of the resurrection narratives in order to discover how they acquired their present form. O'Collins divides the appearance accounts into two groups. The first group consists of accounts that correspond to the Pauline account about the risen Jesus meeting the disciples, such as Mt 28:16; Lk 24:33, 34; Mk 16:7. The second group involves personal appearances such as Emmaus story (Lk 24:13-35), and the story of Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:11-18). What differentiates the account of Paul from the Gospel narratives is the use of various words by the risen Lord in the Gospels.[70] O'Collins is of the view that irrespective of the factual nature of the appearances, the historical authenticity of the words attributed to Jesus in the Easter narratives can hardly be claimed. (1) The Easter narratives make brief statements about isolated events which are full of "unexplained, inconsistent and

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[66] JOSEPH FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)*, p. 1535. Fitzmyer is in agreement with what V. Taylor says about the absence of the need for a continuous story of the resurrection. Taylor said that in the case of the resurrection there were isolated stories while the stories of the passion were in continuous form. For the stories of the resurrection "the immediate need was assurance about a new and astounding fact. Was it true that Jesus had risen and had appeared to His own? To satisfy this clamant need single stories were enough; there was no demand for a continuous story such as the modern man desires. Testimony, witness-bearing to the fact of the appearances, was the first essential for preachers and hearers alike. We can understand therefore that different cycles of stories would have become current at various centres of Palestinian and Syrian Christianity, but that there would be no continuous account which traced the succession of events from the Tomb to the final parting of Jesus from His disciples." He also mentions that there was a preference for local stories. See V. TAYLOR, *Formation of the Gospel Tradition. Eight Lectures,* London: Macmillan, 1935, pp. 59-60.

[67] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, pp. 18-19.

[68] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, p. 22.

[69] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, p. 19.

[70] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, p. 25.

historically implausible details." (2) The theme of the narratives is not related to the events mentioned in the body of the gospels. (3) The pressing issue of the resurrection for the evangelists is the call of Jesus to a mission to the whole world. However, this has little claim to historical authenticity since, in the early Christian period, such a mission was not given any importance. "Convictions about the Church's mission to the whole world were arrived at gradually and then read back into the resurrection narratives." (4) As far as the words of the risen Jesus are concerned, in each of the gospels the evangelist's own mind and the characteristics of their own writings can be discerned in the pronouncements.[71] Nevertheless, according to O'Collins, the Gospel accounts need not be regarded as later and expanded versions of such stories as found in Paul's account. Firstly, there are other examples of extended accounts in the New Testament which were previously in abbreviated form (e.g., Acts 10:34f.), and secondly, the appearances to Peter and James are not elaborated in the Gospels. However, one thing that can be observed, according to O'Collins, is that there are two kinds of narrations of the appearances, shorter ones, which are 'personal,' and longer ones, which are 'mission' appearances to groups of disciples.[72]

Besides the Pauline formulas and the Easter narratives of the Gospels, there are other resurrection claims in the New Testament. The missionary speeches in Acts, such as 2:31-32; 3:15; 4:10; 13:30, 37, centre on the theme of resurrection. The claim is also made through various idioms, such as Jesus' being 'alive' (Lk 24: 5, 23; Rom 14:9), 'exalted' (Phil 2:9), 'exalted at the right hand of God' (Acts 2:33; Rom 8:34; Col 3:1; Heb 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22), and 'enter[ing] into his glory' (Lk 24:26; 1 Tim 3:16). O'Collins holds that all these claims at least speak about the ultimate and glorious destiny of Jesus after his death.[73]

3.4. The Appearances of the Risen Jesus

The resurrection narratives in Paul and in the Gospels recount the appearance of the risen Jesus. The appearance is "the major catalyst which led the first Christians to accept and proclaim his resurrection." O'Collins believes that the confession of faith made by the disciples in the resurrection is based on sense knowledge. He supports this hypothesis by appealing to the use of *the language of sight* as well as the use of the terms 'hearing' and 'touching' in the narratives. (1) In the appearances, the language of sight is used many times. The term *ōphthē*, used four times by St. Paul in 1 Cor 15:4-8, could mean 'he was seen by' (the witnesses) or 'he was made

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[71] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, p. 26. To point out the characteristics of each evangelist, O'Collins takes up the example of Matthew whose conclusion of the Gospel, he says, looks like his own construction with theological reflections about baptismal practice and belief in the presence of the risen Jesus in Christian community meetings. See also C. F. EVANS, *Resurrection and the New Testament*, p. 84.

[72] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, pp. 27-28.

[73] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, p. 84.

manifest' by God. However, according to O'Collins, almost all the translations of the passive form of the verb 'see' (*horaó*) signified that the initiative for this seeing came from Christ. In normal usage, in the Gospels the active form of 'to see' refers to the activity of the witnesses. The other verbs, such as *phaneroō* (manifest) and *deiknumi* (show), in the Easter narratives, signified a 'visible perception' of the resurrected Jesus. He also sees this language of sight in the Emmaus incident (Lk 24:16, 31) and in the story of the ascension (Acts 1:9).[74] (2) Jesus is represented as 'speaking' to the disciples in the Easter narratives and, in the case of Paul, he *'hears'* the voice of Jesus (Acts 9:4). (3) There are occasional uses of the sense of *'touch'* in the narratives, such as in the case of Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who 'took hold of' the feet of Jesus (Mt 28:9); the disciples who were invited to 'handle' him (Lk 24:39), and Jesus' invitation to Thomas to 'touch' him (Jn 20:27f.).[75]

The New Testament terminology of 'sight' seems to be the most important aspect for O'Collins in explaining the reality of the resurrection appearances. According to O'Collins, some people explain these appearances and the later proclamation by the disciples in psychological terms. We shall return to this point at a later stage when we deal with the problems concerning the appearances. However, at this point, we need to mention that O'Collins disagrees with this explanation and holds that "[i]t took an objective encounter with the risen Jesus to catalyse the disciples' faith in him and proclamation of his resurrection." He says that the verb 'to see' in biblical Greek means some real seeing with the eyes. Hence, in the appearances there is some kind of real sense perception of something outside the subject.[76] However, he is cautious in his approach and does not see the risen Jesus as an external object. He also considers the appearances as eschatological visions called 'Christophanies' which, while differing from ordinary vision, are "totally *within* history and the structures of the present world." These Christophanies were due to the initiative of Christ and they involved the personal participation of the witnesses. The appearances also demanded faith on the part of the witnesses (2 Cor 4:13f.). O'Collins supports this appeal to faith with regard to the resurrection by alluding to Aquinas. Aquinas said that "[i]t would seem fitting that the disciples saw Christ's resurrection, for their role was to act as witnesses to this resurrection. The Apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power. Eye-witness testimony offers the surest evidence… for the certitude of their faith the disciples saw Christ's ascension: He was lifted up

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[74] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 116.

[75] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 117.

[76] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 118. For a detailed explanation of the term see (*horaō*) See K. DAHN, *See, Vision, Eye*, in COLIN BROWN (ed.), *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 3 (Exeter, UK: The Paternoster Press, 1978[1971]) 511-518.

as they looked on. An equal amount of faith is demanded by his resurrection."[77] O'Collins says that faith in the risen Christ came not just by seeing alone, but by setting aside doubts and fears, and by recognizing the risen Christ. The disciples' faith and proclamation also involved their association with their Jewish faith in the resurrection, familiarity with the Jewish scriptures, the proclamation and signs done by Jesus during his ministry, and the action of the Holy Spirit. However, the Easter appearances were the catalysts in leading the disciples to faith in the risen Jesus.[78]

3.4.1. The Features of the Appearances

O'Collins states that the appearances of the risen Jesus had certain specific features. (1) The appearances were on the initiative of Jesus, i.e., he appeared to people and allowed himself be seen by others. (2) The appearances have an 'ordinariness' and are not extra-ordinary experiences taking place in an ecstasy like the one Peter had (Acts 10: 9-16) or in dreams, such as Joseph had (Mt 1:20-21). They also do not take place in the night like the vision of St. Paul (Acts 18:9). The circumstances are very normal and there is no suggestion of apocalyptic glory. The only exception to this ordinariness is the experience of St. Paul on the Damascus Road where there is a sort of apocalyptic glory shining from heaven (Acts 26:13; 9:3; 22:6, 9). However, even this exception is not mentioned by St. Paul in his writings when he speaks of his encounter with the risen Jesus. (3) The appearances were revelations, which required faith from those who saw him. (4) The appearances to the believers, such as Peter, Mary Magdalene, and other disciples were unique experiences because no one after them could experience them as they did. This is because in the post-Easter appearances they recognized the identity of the Jesus whom they had followed.[79] (5) Those to whom the risen Jesus appeared, received a mission to testify to that experience and to found the Church. It is they who are commissioned to found the church and they differed from subsequent followers in this sense. (6) The appearances mentioned in the New Testament referred to the "language of sight" with words like 'appeared' (1 Cor 15:5-8) and 'saw' (1 Cor 9:1). According to O'Collins, although the Greek term *horaó* (see) could mean intellectual perception (e.g. 'see but not perceive' in Mk 4:11-12), in the normal sense "'seeing' and 'appearing' include some visual component" (e.g. Mk 9:4). In the case of the Easter appearances, O'Collins is of the view that it implied a visual component

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[77] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, 3ᵃ, 55, 2 .1., in C. THOMAS MOORE (ed.), *St Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologiae, Vol. 55, The Resurrection of the Lord* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1976), p. 41. See also GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 119.

[78] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 119-120.

[79] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, pp. 91-92. See also GERALD O'COLLINS & DANIEL KENDALL, *The Uniqueness of the Easter Appearances, in Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 54 (1992) 287-307, pp. 289-293; GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, pp. 20-22.

because here we are dealing with the appearance of the bodily resurrected Jesus in space and time.[80]

3.4.2. The Challenges to the Reality of the Appearances

According to O'Collins, there are many, who challenge the reality of the appearances of the risen Jesus. Objections to the appearances and thereby to the event of the resurrection itself began almost from the beginning of Christianity and the New Testament itself witnessed such objections and doubts (Mt 28:11-15). Those who do not accept any sort of miracles such as, the Deists object to the event of the resurrection and the appearances and term them as unnatural. In this section, we take up a few of them in order to clarify and understand the view of O'Collins' conception of the resurrection.

3.4.2.1. The Appearances as an Experience of Conversion and Forgiveness

According to Schillebeeckx, the aspect of forgiveness of sins and conversion of the disciples in the New Testament has something to do with the experience of the resurrection because preaching about forgiveness is mentioned together with the Easter appearances in many of the appearance accounts. He concludes from this that, after the death of Jesus, the disciples went through an experience of forgiveness and 'encountered grace'. This new experience made them conclude that Jesus was alive because "[a] dead man does not proffer forgiveness. A present fellowship with Jesus is thus restored."[81] Schillebeeckx is of the view that this experience, first enjoyed by Peter and then, on his initiative, by the other disciples, made them speak about the appearances. Hence, the 'appearances' were in fact a way of telling about what Jesus did to the disciples.[82] He does not see appearances as the real basis for the Easter faith of the disciples.

According to Schillebeeckx, the appearance accounts of the risen Jesus have various functions. In particular, they legitimate the mission of the disciples to proclaim reconciliation to the world and make disciples of all nations, and thereby serve as the foundation of the apostolic faith.[83] Furthermore, the reports about the appearances signify the "grounding and legitimation of the Church's mission to the whole world…. Such accounts in the gospels reflect the Church's self-

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[80] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, pp. 92-93. O'Collins also points out that the appearances to the disciples going to Emmaus and to the 500 believers in Paul are distinct because those disciples are not commissioned with a mission and are not foundational figures.

[81] EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX, *Jesus. An Experiment in Christology*, p. 391.

[82] EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX, *Jesus. An Experiment in Christology*, pp. 389-390. Schillebeeckx says that, "the reporting of what occurred in the guise of appearances indicates that the process whereby Peter and his friends were brought together again after their dispersal was felt by them to be an act of sheer grace on God's part." He also says, "the fact that this conversion is presented in the form of an appearance vision serves to underline the divine endorsement of the Christological affirmation. Christianity arises out of the message and total career of Jesus, up to and including his death and, along with that, out of a renewed offer on God's part, after Jesus' death, of salvation through the heavenly Jesus, which meant that the disciples' return to Jesus became a return to the living, crucified One." See p. 390.

[83] EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX, *Jesus. An Experiment in Christology*, p. 357.

understanding: the local congregations of Christ see themselves as grounded upon, and sent into the world in the power of, their faith in the risen and living Jesus."[84]

According to O'Collins, Schillebeeckx, reduces the event of the resurrection by relating it to prior events during the life of Jesus. This is not to deny that Schillebeeckx, in fact, believes in the bodily resurrection of Christ. This belief is evident in his refutation of the people who identify the resurrection of Jesus with a kind of "renewed life and Easter (Christian) faith of the disciples after the death of their Master." As he puts it, "no Easter experience of renewed life was possible without the personal resurrection of Jesus – in the sense that Jesus' personal-cum-bodily resurrection … 'precedes' any faith-motivated experience."[85] Nevertheless, O'Collins is of the view that Schillebeeckx risks reducing the resurrection event to a "verbal expression of prior events." In short, Schillebeeckx seems to value the appearances in view of other events that the disciples experienced during their life with Jesus.

O'Collins argues against the position of Schillebeeckx concerning the appearances on a number of grounds. (1) If it is on the basis of the 'renewed offer of forgiveness' of their failures that the disciples arrive at their faith in the risen Jesus, then it would have been better to associate such things with God because it is God who forgives. The experience of forgiveness would not have clarified the status of the risen Jesus in the way the real appearances did. However, according to O'Collins, Schillebeeckx does not accept the actual appearances of the risen Jesus. (2) O'Collins is of the view that forgiveness takes place only in conscious and real contact with the one who grants forgiveness. However, the claim for forgiveness is questionable when real appearances are ruled out. (3) There are no indicators of the disciples' 'concrete experience of forgiveness' in the New Testament. It is only a marginal theme. (4) Schillebeeckx does not do justice to the appearance account in St. Paul (1 Cor 15:5-8) by means of which Paul legitimates his mission, Schillebeeckx nowhere speaks of a real appearance in this regard and denies the legitimation of St. Paul's mission by the 'appearance' of the risen Jesus. Hence, O'Collins claims that whatever has been said by Schillebeeckx in speaking about the appearance "is not what Paul intends to say but what Schillebeeckx wants him to say." [86] His view is that St. Paul is an apostle because he saw the risen Lord (1 Cor 9:1). He also says that if what Schillebeeckx says is correct, then one has to see St. Paul as an "extraordinarily incompetent and confusing writer." O'Collins

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[84] EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX, *Jesus. An Experiment in Christology*, p. 386.

[85] EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX, *Jesus. An Experiment in Christology*, pp. 644-645.

[86] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 121-122. According to Schillebeeckx, in 1Cor 15:3-8 "[t]he 'appearances', and thus the *ôphthè* terminology (which plays no part elsewhere in Paul's writings, or in the remaining context of 1 Cor. 15) give clear expression here to the apostolic *kerygma* as 'the universal faith of the Church'. Paul is not listing witnesses to the resurrection here – a notion foreign to him. He is providing a list of authorities who all proclaim the same thing, namely the crucified One is alive." This means that his reference to the 'appearance' indicates only the *kerygma* of the Church and not the reality of the appearance of the risen Jesus. See EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX, *Jesus. An Experiment in Christology*, p. 348.

observes that, for two thousand years people have believed that the conversion of Paul was the result of the risen Jesus appearing to him. Moreover, the other evangelists who were converted used 'appearance' and not 'grace' (*charis*) to speak about their conversions and what led them to real faith in the risen Jesus.[87]

Schillebeeckx remarks that his hypothesis about 'appearances' represents a break with the traditional understanding. To him, "the appearances as such are, after all, not an *object* of Christian faith."[88] However, O'Collins objects to this position by saying that although in general they were not objects of faith, the New Testament credal passages do include the appearances (1 Cor 15:5; Lk 24:34). He points out that appearances are *the major means* for the original witnesses to arrive at Easter faith and that even today the apostolic witness to the appearances have served as the means for people to come to faith in the risen Christ. Schillebeeckx holds that a simple appearance of Jesus does not prove anything. However, O'Collins says that it would at least prove the reality of Jesus' resurrection and that he is truly living. It also contributes to faith in the risen Lord, as in the case of Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (Mt 28:1-10) Peter, Cleopas, etc. (Lk 24:13-35) and Paul (Acts 9:1-19). [89]

3.4.2.2. The Appearances as 'Ordinary' Experiences of Christians

John Macquarrie views the appearances to the disciples as on a par with the encounters that later believers had with Jesus, [90] a view supported by Louis Evely.[91] However, O'Collins maintains that the experiences of the risen Jesus by later believers that are mentioned in the New Testament differ from the experiences of the first disciples. Later believers experience him in the gathering for meals and worship, i.e., they know him while 'reading the scriptures', in the 'forgiveness of sins', and in 'the breaking of the bread'. O'Collins insists that when we speak about the experiences of later generations of believers, we do so only in terms of analogies and not in terms of the reality of the appearances. O'Collins is of the view that it is wrong to give equal value to the apostolic experience of the appearances and to the experience of Christians who come after the apostles. To him, the later experience cannot be treated as if it were on a par with that of the original experience of the disciples for a number of reasons. (1) With St. Paul the real experience of the appearances came to an end (1 Cor 15:8). (2) For St. Paul, it is not through

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[87] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 122-123.

[88] EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX, *Jesus. An Experiment in Christology*, p. 710.

[89] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 123-124.

[90] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 124. See also JOHN MACQUARRIE, *The Scope of Demythologizing,* London: SCM Press, 1960, p. 86. According to him, Paul in his account of the appearance of the risen Christ "regards this appearance as on a par with earlier appearances to other believers. It is not unreasonable to suppose that it is also on a par with the encounters which subsequent believers may have had with the risen Christ." He also says that Bultmann solves this problem by considering the appearance as myth. The purpose of such a myth is "to bring to expression the significance of Christ for the existence of the believer." See p. 86.

[91] LOUIS EVELY, *The Gospels Without Myth*, New York, 1971, p. 165.

an appearance but through the indwelling of the Spirit and through faith and baptism that later believers are incorporated into Christ. (3) John spoke of the end of the apostolic age as the end of those who saw the risen Christ. Later believers, according to him, are those 'who have not seen and yet believe' (Jn 20:29). (4) All the disciples, except Paul, to whom Jesus appeared, identified him with the earthly Jesus. To identify Jesus in such a way was possible only to those who had known him in his earthly life. (5) Only the apostles who witnessed the appearances are called to the mission and the founding of the Church.[92]

O'Collins observes that none of the resurrection appearances took place in dreams. Nor did they transpire in the night. The resurrection encounters are never spoken of as 'visions' in the New Testament.[93] In the Easter stories and the appearances of the risen Jesus, especially those of Luke, Jesus is seen as truly a man, Jesus of Nazareth. Since the characteristics attached to visions are almost entirely absent, and since the experiences with the risen Jesus are not much different from other ordinary experiences with people, according to C. F. Evans, "the story is at the furthest possible remove from the category of a heavenly vision of the Lord in glory."[94]

3.4.2.3. The Generalization of the Appearances

John Hick generalized the appearances experienced by the disciples, comparing them to "near-death experiences" or to the bereavement experiences of people who have lost their immediate relations. He says that these types of near-death experiences have become common in recent years in view of improved medical skills by means of which 'clinically dead' people can be resuscitated.[95] O'Collins is of the view that people like Hick sees the post-Easter appearances too scientifically and generally, and deny them their nature of "'special' or once-and-for-all experiences and events."[96] He finds no reasons for such generalizations beyond the scientific world-view that refuses to accept any 'extraordinary' events such as the Easter appearances.[97] He

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[92] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 125.

[93] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, p. 21.

[94] C. F. EVANS, *Resurrection and the New Testament*, p. 105. For Evans, "faith in the resurrection is historically based and at the centre of Christianity. For the apostles it arose from a combination of irrefutable empirical evidence and the power of grace to recognize the necessary inferences from it; for others it arises from the irrefutable evidence of the Gentile mission and the inference that only the resurrection of Jesus could have brought Jews to commit themselves to it, and from the changes brought about in human character." See p. 114.

[95] JOHN HICK, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate,* London: SCM Press, 1993, p. 24.

[96] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Resurrection. The State of the Questions*, p. 10.

[97] O'Collins tells us that Wayne Proudfoot makes a distinction between descriptive and explanatory reductionism that may explain why some people see the resurrection appearances as 'waking visions' or 'near-death experiences'. Descriptive reductionism does not give value to the accounts provided by those who receive religious experiences. However, in explanatory reductionism, while the experiences of the subjects are accepted, there is a misinterpretation of those experiences such as we see in John Hick who regards the Easter-appearances as waking visions or as bereavement experiences. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Resurrection. The State of the Questions*, p. 10. For explanation about the distinction made by Proudfoot, See WAYNE PROUDFOOT, *Religious Experiences,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, pp. 196-198. O'Collins finds this type of reduction of experience to psychological terms in Michael Goulder. See MICHAEL GOULDER, *Did Jesus of Nazareth Rise from the Dead?*, in STEPHEN BARTON & GRAHAM

refutes this generalization of the appearances as 'waking versions' of 'near-death experiences' by pointing out that such experiences are reported by people who were revived from clinically dead status and not by people who are healthy, such as Peter, Paul, and Mary Magdalene, the original witnesses to the appearances.[98] Secondly, the appearances of the risen Jesus to the eleven disciples and to the five hundred believers in the New Testament bear no resemblance to 'near-death experiences' or 'waking visions' since the latter involve only individuals and not groups. The comparison of the experiences of the appearances with the bereavement experiences of loved ones also falls short. Jesus' extraordinary claim about his authority (equivalent to God's own authority) and his unusual and shameful death by crucifixion makes it very different from the normal deaths of people, and hence, cannot be compared with other deaths. O'Collins concludes the discussion by stating that the analogies given by Hick seem to present the "post-resurrection experiences in 'normal' human and religious terms." While admitting the need of analogies to explain extraordinary and unique events, and to establish the uniqueness of the resurrection and the post-resurrection encounters, O'Collins cautions that partial analogies cannot explain the appearances scientifically as might be the case with other experiences.[99]

3.4.2.4. The Resurrection Appearances as Psychological Phenomena

A number of attempts have been made to explain the resurrection appearances as the fruit of a range of psychological phenomena.

(a) The appearance as a moment of epiphany: While Lüdemann spoke of the stories of Peter's denial and the Easter experience as being possessed of a "high content of historical truth,"[100] he

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STANTON (eds.), *Resurrection. Essays in Honour of Leslie Houlden* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1994) 58-68. According to him the basis for the belief in the resurrection depends on two things, namely *seeing* Jesus and the report about the *physical* details of the risen body and the empty tomb. However, he says that there are many reasons to doubt these two things. He is of the view that, "[t]he appearances are to be explained psychologically; the concrete physical details arise from disputes within the Church." See p. 58.

[98] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Resurrection. The State of the Questions*, p. 11. O'Collins here also mentions that Evan Powell used various examples of near-death experiences to hypothesize the survival of Jesus after his crucifixion. However, Powell says that he is only speculating on these lines and that the reader should interpret resurrection on the basis of faith. His interpretation is based on the research done by Melvin Morse of the University of Washington on the near-death experiences of various people. Morse comes to the conclusion that there are nine experiential traits of near-death experiences. See EVAN POWELL, *The Unfinished Gospel. Notes on the Quest for the Historical Jesus*, Westlake Village, California: Symposium Books, 1994, pp. 323, 331-332.

[99] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Resurrection. The State of the Questions,* pp. 11-13.

[100] GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, p. 90. To prove the historicity of the denial of Jesus by Peter is difficult, and some argue against its historicity. It is sometimes seen as an anti-Petrine tradition. According to Lüdemann, Günter Klein explains its unhistoricity on the basis of a biographical interpretation, which sees the three-fold repetition of the denial as being associated with the changes in Peter's career: "first he was a member of the circle of the Twelve, then he was an apostle, after that a member of the college of the pillars and finally a lone figure." See GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, p. 92. See also GÜNTER KLEIN, *Die Verleugnung des Petrus*, in *Günter Klein, Rekonstruktion und Interpretation*, in *Beitrage zur evangelischen Theologie*, 50 (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1969) 49-90, pp. 74-90. Martin Dibelius is of the view that Peter himself narrated his denial of Jesus in the context of the Easter experience. See MARTIN DIBELIUS, *From Tradition to Gospel*, New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971[1919], p. 215. Nevertheless, Lüdemann is of the view that the denial was a historical fact. While examining the three-fold denial of Peter (Mk 14:54, 66-72), he says that this tradition of "the denial once

explained the appearance of Jesus to Peter and others on the basis of "depth-psychological research into mourning."[101] To explain the experience of Peter, Lüdemann compared it with the reports of other mourners involving the vision of images of their deceased loved ones.[102] According to Lüdemann, after the death of Jesus, a guilt feeling afflicted Peter because he had denied Jesus yet experienced forgiveness, about which he mourned. However, later on, in "a moment of epiphany," Peter replaced the "beloved dead person" with whom he had previously lived and whom he knew was now dead with "a living and vital image of Jesus." This 'epiphany' experience broke the mourning process of Peter abruptly. Remarkably, this experience of Peter effected and "infectious" and "incomparable chain reaction," leading to further appearances to others.[103] Mourning is usually a gradual process and comes to a conclusion. However, in the case of Peter, the process of mourning was incomplete because of the sudden experience of the resurrection. Lüdemann finds the psychological explanation for the abrupt ending of Peter's mourning in the latter's need "to make Jesus unconditionally alive again, because he could not bear his mourning." Lüdemann relied on a study undertaken at Harvard University to bolster his case. According to this study, the causes hindering the mourning process were: "1. sudden death; 2. an ambivalent attitude to the dead person associated with guilt feelings; and 3. a dependent relationship."[104] Lüdemann argues that all these elements were present in the case of the disciples, especially Peter.[105] Hence, he concludes as follows:

> The mourning hindered by the three factors mentioned was enormously helped in the case of Peter by a 'seeing'. The mourning first led to a real, deeper understanding of Jesus, and this in turn helped toward a new understanding of the situation of mourning. Recollections of who Jesus had been led to the recognition of who Jesus is. Seeing Jesus thus already included a whole chain of theological conclusions.[106]

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circulated in an isolated form independently of the passion narrative, as the link between the two only took place at a later stage, and that there was a tradition … of a denial of Jesus by Peter. *This might have a historical nucleus, since it is inconceivable that the community would have invented such a humiliating legend about its leader*." He arrives at the historicity of the denial from multiple reasons: (1) Peter had moved away from Jesus in Jerusalem after his arrest like the rest of Jesus' disciples and (2) the fact of the betrayal by Judas showed a type of tension among the disciples especially with regard to Jesus' decisive journey to Jerusalem. See GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, pp. 90, 92-93.

[101] GERD LÜDEMANN, *The Resurrection of Jesus. History, Experience, Theology*, trans. J. Bowden, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994, p. 97. An abridged and easy to read version of this book appeared later in 1995 with the title *What Really Happened to Jesus.* To explain the experience of Peter, Lüdemann used the research undertaken at Harvard University into the mourning processes of 43 widows and 19 widowers.

[102] GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, p. 93. Lüdemann cites examples presented by Yorick Spiegel in his book about the mourners having hallucinations, auditions and the feeling of the presence of the dead person. Cf. YORICK SPIEGEL, *Der Prozess des Trauerns. Analyse und Beratung*, München: Kaiser, 1997, pp. 171-173.

[103] GERD LÜDEMANN, *The Resurrection of Jesus. History, Experience, Theology*, pp. 100, 99, 174.

[104] GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, p. 94.

[105] According to Lüdemann, the three factors that made mourning difficult were true in the case of Peter and the disciples because: "1. the crucifixion of Jesus happened unexpectedly and suddenly; 2. the relationship of the disciples to Jesus was marked by ambivalence and guilt feeling: Judas betrayed Jesus and then committed suicide; Peter denied Jesus and wept bitterly; 3. a dependent relationship of the disciples to Jesus can be seen in the fact that most had left their work and homes to go with him." See GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, p. 94.

[106] GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, p. 95.

Lüdemann is also of the view that the appearance to the twelve mentioned in 1 Cor 15 is distinguishable from the appearance to Peter. However, according to him, "*from a historical point of view – the resurrection appearance to the twelve disciples is completely obscure.*"[107] Hence, he does not simply equate it with Peter's experience.

(b) The appearance as mass psychosis or collective hallucination: Lüdemann compares and identifies the appearance of Jesus to the 500 brethren (1 Cor 15:6) with the Pentecost experience of the disciples (Acts 2:1-13). He sees both as instances of "*an ecstatic experience.*" He says that the appearance to the 500 "*was an enthusiastic experience of a large crowd of people which was understood as an encounter with Christ.*"[108] The basis for his argument here is research into mass psychology, especially that undertaken by Gustav Le Bon. According to Le Bon, while human beings may differ on the levels of intelligence, morality and conceptuality, they resemble one another to a far greater extent where instinct and emotions are concerned. At the psychic level of instinct and emotions, the capacity for thought is easily lost and imagination and images that need no interpretation make their appearance. This can occur at both an individual and a group level.[109] The case of the 500 brethren who 'saw' Jesus might well be an instance of an 'infectious' mass psychosis.

(c) Paul and the appearance as an hysteric vision: In dealing with the appearance of Jesus to St. Paul, which is referred to in many places (1 Cor 9:1; Gal 1:15f.; Phil 3:8; 2 Cor 4:6; Acts 9:1-19; 22:4-16; 26:9-18), Lüdemann holds that vocabulary employed, such as 'seen' (1 Cor 9:1); 'reveal' (Gal 1:15); and 'knowing' (Phi 3:8), shows that "Paul is emphasizing different aspects of the same thing" – a theological interpretation of the appearance. According to him, "'*Jesus appeared to Paul' means that Paul saw the risen Jesus in his glory, which need not tell against an inner vision of the outward vision. This vision was felt to be an extraordinary event and a revelation*."[110] For Lüdemann, visions are "appearances of figures, things or events, or perceptions of voices and sounds which have no objective reality for the senses." Hence, what Paul saw in his experience need not have had any objective reality and cannot be explained as pertaining to this world. Therefore, it is best explained in psychological terms. Lüdemann finds parallels to such visions in the Old Testament, in Judaism, in Hellenistic and Roman circles

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[107] GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, p. 95. According to Lüdemann, in early Christianity, only St. Paul had experience of the resurrected Jesus similar to the experiences of the disciples. He considers the faith of the early Christians in the resurrection as self-deception and a non-event. He says, "[a]lthough early Christian faith confesses the resurrection and the church is built on it, historical research shows with definite clarity that Jesus was not raised from the dead." See GERD LÜDEMANN, *The Resurrection of Christ. A Historical Inquiry,* New York, NY: Prometheus Books, 2004, pp. 153, 190.

[108] GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, p. 98.

[109] GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, p. 99. See also GUSTAVE LE BON, *Psychologie der Massen,* Stuttgart: Kröner Verlag, 1895 [1982], pp. 13, 43-44.

[110] GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, pp. 103-105.

during the New Testament period, and even in the New Testament.[111] According to him, during the initial period of Christianity visions were part of normal life and they were considered to be inexplicable and mysterious. However, according to him, today one must approach the Easter appearances from a psychological point of view. Lüdemann takes his lead from Carl Holsten who says that every vision is a reproduction of what is already present in consciousness. These general conditions were fulfilled in the case of Paul. Firstly, the "Jewish ideal of the Messiah as a national redeemer" may have already been present in his consciousness. However, in the vision that he saw, the traditional image of the Messiah was necessarily adapted to account for the crucifixion of the redeemer. This was the fulfilment of what Paul longed for unconsciously, namely, to find in Jesus the Messiah he longed to see. Secondly, Lüdemann describes Paul as an epileptic who "had an extremely excitable and restless character." Finally, he portrays Paul as a fanatic Jew whose persecution of the Christians had its roots in a psychologically-induced behavioural pattern that "finally released itself in a vision of Christ."[112] Analysing the appearance in these terms, Lüdemann suggests that a 'vision' was indeed possible and that it is also possible to say with C. G. Jung that "Saul was unconsciously a Christian even before his conversion." This meant that St. Paul "would have had a Christ complex of which he was unconscious."[113] Lüdemann supports his analysis of the Damascus account by appealing to another account of Paul, i.e., his mention of his 'heavenly journey' in 2 Cor 12:1-10 which he also sees as a vision. His argument is that Paul was a visionary and had visions at different times. He concludes from the analysis of these accounts that, "*Paul had often visions. We must assume that his conversion experience before Damascus, in which the risen Christ appeared to him, was also a vision.*"[114]

Lüdemann regards the appearance to Peter and Paul as "original visions, because they took place without *external* catalysts." Peter's vision arose from a failed process of mourning which catalysed a series of appearances to others (mass hysteria), while the vision of Paul had its roots in a 'Christ complex' that sought relief through the vision of Jesus. God should not be considered as the author of these visions and they ought to be viewed as "psychological processes which ran their course with a degree of regularity – completely without divine intervention. At the same time, this means that the assumption of a resurrection of Jesus is

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[111] GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, p. 117. Lüdemann, however, is aware that there are people who are opposed to seeing the appearance of Jesus in psychological terms. According to him, Hans Kessler , for example, is opposed to the explanation of the appearance in psychological terms because he says "there are no indications whatsoever that early Christianity derived Easter faith from inner psychological events. And in any case a purely psychological explanation fails to do justice to the seriousness, the religious claim of the texts." See HANS KESSLER, *Sucht den Lebenden nicht den Toten. Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi in biblischer, fundamentaltheologischer und systematischer Sicht,* Dusseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1987, p. 221, as translated and found in GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, p. 118.

[112] GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, pp. 118-119.

[113] GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, p. 128.

[114] GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, p. 126.

completely unnecessary as a presupposition to explain these phenomena. *A consistent modern view must say farewell to the resurrection of Jesus as a historical event.*"[115]

O'Collins is critical of Lüdemann's use of depth psychological research into mourning to understand the appearances of the resurrected Jesus to Peter and to others, because he is of the view that although Lüdemann acknowledges the unique claims about Jesus' identity and mission made by those witnesses, he does not use them in his analysis. O'Collins also points out that the examples of the 43 widows and widowers used by Lüdemann differ from the case of Jesus because he died a 'shameful and horrible death'. This fact was also underdeveloped in Lüdemann's analysis.[116] O'Collins also questions the use of the psychological hypothesis in analysing the appearances to both Peter and Paul because, according to him, scholars have grave "doubts about the possibility and value of writing psychobiography of long-dead figures." According to O'Collins, even though Lüdemann appeals for a historical reconstruction of the resurrection accounts, his reconstruction is seriously flawed at various points.[117] This view of Lüdemann's work, he says, is validated by the contradictory positions taken by Lüdemann, i.e., while he asserts that the validity of the resurrection claims depends on what is 'historically probable', he also emphasizes that 'historical proofs are not enough'. O'Collins' own concern is to argue that resurrection faith is something that cannot be absolutely proved from a mere analysis of the historical data, and that the psychological account cannot provide a foolproof means to explain the appearances of the risen Christ.[118]

3.4.3. The Appearances and the Christian Experience of the Resurrection

According to Rahner, faith in the resurrection was a general belief of the people of Israel at the time of Jesus and so it was not something new taught by Jesus.[119] O'Collins agrees with this claim and with Rahner's reminder that both the New Testament and the doctrinal tradition of the Church portray our faith as dependent on the testimony of the apostolic witnesses "who 'saw' the risen Lord." Hence, for Rahner (and O'Collins) "our faith remains tied to the apostolic

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[115] GERD LÜDEMANN & ALOF OZEN, *What Really Happened to Jesus,* p. 126.

[116] GERALD O'COLLINS, Review of GERD LÜDEMANN, *The Resurrection of Jesus. History, Experience, Theology*, trans. JOHN BOWDEN (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), in *Theological Studies* 57 (1996) 341-342, p. 342.

[117] O'Collins points out certain doubtful elements in the reconstruction of Lüdemann: "that the experience of the forgiveness of sins is primary in the 'earliest Christian Easter faith'; that 1Corinthians 15:6 and Acts 2:1-13 derive from the same collective, ecstatic experience of the Spirit; …. That the first disciples did not know where Jesus was buried and that the empty tomb stories are merely conclusions from the Resurrection message," etc. See GERALD O'COLLINS, Review of GERD LÜDEMANN, *The Resurrection of Jesus. History, Experience, Theology*, p. 342.

[118] Although O'Collins appreciates the insightful comments present in Lüdemann's work, his reserved position and disagreement with the significance of this work is visible in the comment he makes about the one who translated the book: "John Bowden's translation is, as usual, simply magnificent. It is regrettable that this talent serves a book that many scholars, not least Lüdemann's own Protestant colleagues at the University of Göttingen, find outrageously deficient." See GERALD O'COLLINS, Review of GERD LÜDEMANN, *The Resurrection of Jesus. History, Experience, Theology*, p. 343.

[119] KARL RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, p. 278.

witness." This means that the same privilege and status given to the apostles who first witnessed the 'appearances' of the resurrected Jesus cannot be given to other witnesses, even to those mystics to whom also he 'appears' in their visions.[120] Rahner also maintains that we "do not stand simply and absolutely outside of the experience of the apostolic witness" because "we hear the message of the resurrection which we believe with God's 'grace' and with the interior witness of the experience of the Spirit." According to him, we experience the resurrection because of our own transcendental hope in the resurrection. However, this transcendental hope in the resurrection takes place only in and through the witness of the apostles and hence our experience of the resurrection is not independent of the testimony of the apostles.[121] This sort of analysis is evident in O'Collins' distinction between 'foundational' and 'dependent witnesses' of the resurrection. The present experiences of the Easter faith which we enjoy are ultimately based on the witness of the 'foundational witnesses'. O'Collins, too, points out that Christian experience of the resurrection is necessary for faith in the risen Jesus. Reviewing a book by Richard Swinburne, O'Collins points out that personal experience "allows one to move beyond the probabilities of historical evidence to embrace and live Easter faith."[122]

The views of Rahner and O'Collins about the importance of the Christian experience of the resurrection are helpful for distinguishing the resurrection of Jesus from the one that Christians hope for. What makes the hoped-for resurrection of human beings different from the resurrection of Jesus, according to Rahner, is that through his resurrection Jesus became 'Lord' and 'Messiah'. What we gain is a participation in the fullness of Christ's divinity. Our resurrection also differs from Christ's resurrection in the sense that it is "graced with God's self-communication" while that of Jesus comes from the relationship he has with God, i.e., the hypostatic union.[123] Having reflected on the appearances of the risen Christ as evidence for the resurrection, we must now turn our attention to that other controverted evidence, namely, the empty tomb.

3.5. The Empty Tomb

3.5.1. The Evidence for the Empty Tomb

According to O'Collins, although the discovery of the empty tomb of Jesus provides a secondary sign, it is not an essential ground for faith in the resurrection of Jesus because "an empty tomb is an ambiguous phenomenon."[124] Rahner says, "[a]n empty tomb as such and by itself can never

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[120] KARL RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, p. 274.

[121] KARL RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, p. 275.

[122] GERALD O'COLLINS, Review of RICHARD SWINBURNE, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* (New York, NY: Oxford University, 2003), in *Theological Studies* 65 (2006) pp. 677-678, p. 678.

[123] KARL RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, p. 278.

[124] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 126.

testify to the meaning and to the existence of a resurrection."[125] However, together with the claims of the appearances, it confirms the authenticity of the resurrection. The tradition of the finding of the empty tomb can be supported by several arguments. The first involves the multiple attestations to this story in the gospels. These stories are found in two textual traditions, one found in Mk 16:1-8; Mt 28:1; Lk 24:10, 23 and the other found in Jn 20:1, 11-13; Jn 20:18.[126] A second argument is the fact that the earliest adversaries of the Christian movement explained the empty tomb as a case of theft (Mt 28:11-15), an explanation that is itself a proof that the tomb was empty. Thirdly, there is no early testimony in the Christian or non-Christian circle to suggest that the sepulchre still contained the remains of Jesus. Fourthly, according to O'Collins, the non-occurrence of any preventive measures from any authorities to counter the preaching of Jesus' resurrection and the finding of the empty tomb in Jerusalem signifies the genuineness of the empty-tomb tradition.[127]

3.5.2. The Challenges to the Tradition of the Empty Tomb

O'Collins reflects rather extensively on the work of those who contest the historicity of the empty-tomb tradition. Let us examine the arguments involved.

3.5.2.1. The Tradition of the Empty Tomb as a Legend

Norman Perrin and Hans Küng are prominent among those who have questioned the credibility of the empty tomb.[128] Perrin pointed out that many scholars see the tradition merely as an 'interpretation of the event' of the resurrection instead of considering it as "'a description of an aspect of the event itself'."[129] Küng observed that "*historical criticism has made the empty tomb a dubious factor and the conclusions of natural science have rendered it suspect.*"[130] According to Küng, there are many divergences between, and problems with, the stories of the empty tomb, which made it impossible to counter the claim that the empty-tomb stories are "*legendary elaborations of a message of the resurrection.*"[131] However, he is aware that there are exegetes who maintain that the empty tomb is historically probable, i.e., at least the possibility of an empty tomb without reference to the resurrection. But he disagrees that this would in any way

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[125] KARL RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, p. 267.

[126] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 126; GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, pp. 93-94.

[127] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 126.

[128] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Resurrection. The State of the Questions,* p. 13.

[129] NORMAN PERRIN, *The Resurrection Narratives. A New Approach,* London: SCM Press, 1977, pp. 82-83.

[130] HANS KÜNG, *On Being a Christian*, p. 366.

[131] The differences could be seen in the witnesses and their statements. "The stories of the tomb are concerned originally only with the women and not with the disciples, the appearance statements with the latter and not the former. The stories of the tomb describe appearances of angels and not of Christ, the appearance statements again the opposite." See HANS

help to prove the resurrection. He says that "the empty tomb alone even in the light of the stories *cannot provide any proof of the resurrection* or justify any hope of the resurrection."[132] However, O'Collins does not accept Küng's position and supports his own view on the historicity of the empty-tomb tradition by identifying thirty-seven scholars who, according to him, at least do not consider it as a legend.[133] Küng's position is that *"[t]he corporality of the resurrection does not require the tomb to be empty. God raises the person in a new, different, unimaginable, 'spiritual corporality.' ... the decisive thing is the new, eternal life in that ultimate, hidden reality which we call God*."[134] Küng's position seems to have been inspired by his emphasis on the significance of the resurrection rather than on the reality of the resurrection.

3.5.2.2. The Devaluation of the Testimony of the Women

O'Collins notes that, among the witnesses to the resurrection, priority is given to the witness of Peter and Paul, but very little attention is devoted to the historical facts about women witnesses, especially Mary Magdalene. Although many people, such as Pope Leo the Great and Hyppolytus of Rome, highlighted her importance, many others, including Celsus and modern authors such as Ernest Renan, Giuseppe Ricciotti, John Dominic Crossan and Küng have downplayed her significance.[135] O'Collins claims that Küng not only downplayed the value of women witnesses by refusing to see them as disciples but also reduced their number to just one – Mary Magdalene.[136] O'Collins acknowledges that women witnesses counted for less in first-century Judaism.[137] He also acknowledges, with Crossan, that women's testimony was not considered

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KÜNG, *On Being a Christian*, p. 364. Cf. also HANS KÜNG , *Credo. Das Apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis – Zeitgenossen erklart,* London: SCM, 1993, pp. 104-105.

[132] HANS KÜNG, *On Being a Christian*, p. 365.

[133] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Resurrection. The State of the Questions*, p. 14. The list is an enlarged one from his list in *Jesus Risen* where he mentions about 30 scholars. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 123.

[134] HANS KÜNG, *On Being a Christian*, p. 366.

[135] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting the Resurrection. Examining the Major Problems in the Stories of Jesus' Resurrection*, p. 23. According to Giuseppe Ricciotti, the faithfulness and generosity of Mary Magdalene and other women, and their presence at the tomb could be admitted as facts. However, he is not ready to accept the testimony of women. See GIUSEPPE RICCIOTTI, *The Life of Christ*, Milwaukee: Bruce, 1949, p. 653.

[136] Küng says that "the series of witnesses in its original form could even be reduced to that one woman whom all the Gospels unanimously present as a single witness and whom John makes the sole original witness: Mary Magdalene (Mary, the mother of Jesus, oddly enough, plays no part at all among the witnesses of the resurrection)." See HANS KÜNG, *On Being a Christian*, p. 364.

[137] O'Collins, *Interpreting the Resurrection. Examining the Major Problems in the Stories of Jesus' Resurrection*, p. 22. Cf. also FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. HENRY ST. JOHN THACKERAY, Vol. 4, Books I-IV, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961. Josephus said, "Put not trust in a single witness, but let there be three or at least two, whose evidence shall be accredited by their past lives. From women let no evidence be accepted, because of the levity and temerity of their sex; neither let slaves bear witness because of the baseness of their soul, since whether from cupidity or fear it is like that they will not attest the truth." See p. 581. According to O'Collins, in the early Christian period people like Origen and those who opposed Christianity regarded the women's testimony in the New Testament with scorn. O'Collins opines that Ernst Renan saw "Mary Magdalene as the (hallucinated) witness, whose love made her imagine that Jesus was personally risen and whose testimony convinced the other disciples." See GERALD

reliable. Indeed, basing himself on the attitude towards women's reliability, Crossan argues that the story of the empty tomb is a creation of Mark who combined the story of the burial by Joseph of Arimathea and the women at the tomb, which was not in fact mentioned in the *original stratum* of the Gospel, the Gospel of Peter. He says, "[i]t was Mark himself who created the empty tomb story and its failed anointing as a fitting climax to the literary and theological motifs of his gospel." However, according to him, the three women in the created story are as real as the three men mentioned.[138] In response, O'Collins says that the reliability of the witness of women is as true as the reliability of the story of the burial by Joseph of Arimathea.[139] He also says that "the central place of women in the empty tomb stories speaks for their reliability. If these stories had simply been legends created by early Christians, they would have attributed the discovery of the empty tomb to male disciples rather than to women."[140]

While he is aware of the arguments against the witness of Mary Magdalene,[141] O'Collins appeals to a wide range of authors to defend his view of its value.[142] Taking together the story of the

O'COLLINS, *Interpreting the Resurrection. Examining the Major Problems in the Stories of Jesus' Resurrection*, pp. 22-23.

[138] JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus,* New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1996, p. 185.

[139] According to O'Collins, Crossan denied the presence of women at the death and burial of Jesus. Based on this, Crossan also concluded that Jesus was buried by the enemies of Jesus that included Joseph of Arimathea as well. See GERALD O'COLLINS & DANIEL KENDALL, *Did Joseph of Arimathea Exist?*, in *Biblica* 75 (1994) 235-241, p. 237.

[140] GERALD O'COLLINS*, The Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Some Contemporary Issues*, Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1993, p. 23. Raymond E. Brown, although he accepts the reliability of the presence of Joseph of Arimathea in the story of the burial, doubts whether he was a follower of Jesus. In fact, he is of the view that Joseph of Arimathea should not be seen on a par with the women who followed Jesus. Nevertheless, if one admits his story there is no denying the possibility of admitting the story of the women because the gospels speak of all of them as those who were involved in the burial of Jesus. Brown thinks that Joseph of Arimathea was not presented as a follower of Jesus by Mark. He is different from the Twelve and the women followers of Jesus because he was not a Galilean and was not involved in the passion narratives. His name is mentioned in all the Gospels and was considered to be a prominent member of the city. Brown also says that Mark in his Gospel wanted to present him as a member of the Sanhedrin, and so belonging to the same group who brought testimony against Jesus, which means that he was not presented as a follower of Jesus. According to him, the words that he was one "who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God" (Mk15:43) may also represent him among the opponents of Jesus like those who mocked Jesus and the sympathisers like the centurion and women from Galilee who may also have been 'looking for' (*prosdechesthai*) the Kingdom. Hence, according to Brown, "there is a possibility and even likelihood that Mark is not describing Joseph as a disciple." But Brown sees him as a pious Sanhedrist. Brown's doubt about his credentials is strengthened when he asks whether Joseph gave Jesus an honourable burial. There is no mention of the cooperation of the women and Joseph at the burial. The women seem to have not cooperated with him at the time of the burial but rather chose to come in the morning and do the needful. See RAYMOND EDWARD BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah. From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, Vol. 1, New York: Doubleday, 1994, pp. 1213-1219.

[141] See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting the Resurrection. Examining the Major Problems in the Stories of Jesus' Resurrection*, p. 26. Cf. also CHARLES HAROLD DODD, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953, pp. 440-443. C. K. Barrett, when dealing with the Gospel of John, reserves the central place for the beloved disciple, which according to O'Collins is a reduction of the significance of the women witnesses. Cf. CHARLES KINGSLEY BARRETT, *The Gospel According to St. John. An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, London: SPCK, 1958, p. 466. Rudolf Schnackenburg had also subordinated the witness of women to that of the male disciples because he said that the encounter of Mary with Jesus was a prelude to the appearance of Jesus to the disciples and the granting of the Spirit and authority to them. RUDOLF SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel According to St. John. Commentary on Chapters 13-21*, Vol. 3, New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987, p. 321.

[142] O'Collins understands the work of Rudolf Bultmann, Edwyn Hoskyns, and Joseph Fitzmyer as supportive of women witnesses, especially of Mary Magdalene. According to O'Collins, among the six resurrection narratives that Fitzmyer

empty tomb and the appearances, O'Collins has the following to say about the testimony of women, especially of Mary Magdalene:

> Though it can be said that post-resurrection appearances are not as such the *object* of Easter faith, but rather the primary historical *catalyst* of it, nevertheless the Church has always recognized the essential importance of the appearance tradition. One who accepts this tradition should agree that women were the first or among the first witnesses. In this tradition women, especially Mary Magdalene, have a lead role. Above all, in John 20 Mary Magdalene is the human figure who holds the events together.[143]

It is a fact that, already from the early Christian period, the value of the witness of women was contested. This resulted in a reduction of emphasis on both their testimony to the resurrection and the tradition of the empty tomb. However, O'Collins numbers himself among those who regard their witness as extremely significant, especially in the case of Mary Magdalene.

3.5.2.3. The Problem of the Composition of Mk 16:1-8

One of the challenges in proving the historicity of the empty-tomb tradition is the argument that the empty-tomb narrative in Mark is a narration and interpretation of the early Christian proclamation about the risen Jesus. O'Collins points out that Yarbro Collins[144] proposes a parallel with stories from antiquity concerning "ancient individuals said to have been 'translated' into immortal and heavenly life." However, he challenges this hypothesis wrong on several

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mentions, the mention of Mary Magdalene is found in five of them, and that, too, as the first witness. Cf. JOSEPH FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV). Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, pp. 1535-1537. Bultmann considered the recognition by Mary Magdalene of the risen Jesus at the call of her name as an important consideration for the value of her witness. The message of her to the disciples about what she saw is considered by him as the core of Easter Faith. Cf. RUDOLF BULTMANN, *The Gospel of John*, trans. BEASLEY-MURRAY & GEORGE RAYMOND, Oxford: Blackwell, 1971, p. 688. Hence, for Bultmann Mary Magdalene was a real witness. O'Collins thinks that Edwyn Hoskyns is also in line with others we have mentioned here in his attitude towards the witness of Mary Magdalene. According to him, her name is the first one to be used by the three Synoptic Gospels and in the Easter narratives and the Gospel of John gives the witness of "the woman who stood by the Cross and discovered the empty tomb, and who announced her discovery to the two disciples" full emphasis. Cf. EDWYN CLEMENT HOSKYNS, *The Fourth Gospel*, London: Faber and Faber, 1950, p. 542. There are also yet others, especially feminist theologians, who are supportive of the women witnesses. Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, in order to challenge those who devalued the witness value of women, emphasised the fact that the women witnesses, especially Mary Magdalene, were faithful to Jesus all through his suffering and death, and then in proclaiming the resurrection. Schüssler-Fiorenza finds two traditions about the post-resurrection accounts co-existing side by side. One is about Mary Magdalene as primary witness (Matthew, Mark, John) and the other about Peter (Paul and Luke). Cf. ELIZABETH SCHÜSSLER-FIORENZA, *In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, London: SCM, 1983, pp. 322, 332. Pheme Perkins is of the view that the men and women witnesses have equal status in their commission to witness. She says, "Mathew gives Peter primacy in the gospel as spokesperson for the disciples, as guardian of Jesus' interpretation of the Law, and as representative of the typical disciple, but he does not place Peter above the others. He is firmly anchored within the circle of disciples to whom the ministry of the post-Easter church is entrusted." She also takes the importance given to Mary Magdalene in the Gospel of John (Jn 20:18) as a proof for his acknowledgement of the equality of the witnesses of the resurrection. See PHEME PERKINS, *Resurrection. New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984, pp. 131, 177. For the above analysis of different authors, See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting the Resurrection. Examining the Major Problems in the Stories of Jesus' Resurrection*, pp. 23-38.

[143] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting the Resurrection. Examining the Major Problems in the Stories of Jesus' Resurrection*, p. 37.

[144] The reference here is to an article by ADELA YARBRO COLLINS, *The Empty Tomb in the Gospel According to Mark*, in E. STUMP & T. P. FLINT (eds.), *Hermes and Athena*, Notre Dame, Indiana: University Notre Dame Press, 1993, pp. 107-140.

points. Firstly, the examples given by Collins involve non-historical (mythical) figures. Secondly, these examples are drawn from Graeco-Roman literature. However, the notion of a significant influence of Graeco-Roman literature on Mark[145] is contested because Mark is concerned with how the Jewish scriptures and Jewish religious motifs are fulfilled by Jesus.[146] Thirdly, the suggestion that Mark might have created a fictional narrative about the empty-tomb raises questions about his "moral probity," but also about the "gullibility" of the early Christians who set about repeating this fiction as if it were a factual narrative.[147] Fourthly, like the early Christian tradition in general, Mark was not "terribly creative." He was more concerned to work with existing material than to devise new narratives.[148] Finally, according to O'Collins, many people believe that Mk 16:1-8 was based on some pre-Marcan passion narrative.[149]

On the basis of his analysis of the exegetical evidence, O'Collins is, therefore, inclined to regard the tradition of the empty tomb as having a basis in history.

3.5.3. The Significance of the Empty Tomb

O'Collins regards the tradition of the empty tomb as charged with theological significance.

First, the empty tomb is a statement about the way in which God redeems human beings and the world. The corpse is the symbol of human sin. The raising of it announced the final redemption that God will give to human beings and shows forth the meaning of redemption, i.e., redemption is "*not* [an] *escape from a wicked world, but God's willingness to transform this material world*

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[145] According to O'Collins, Yarbro Collins finds support for the Graeco-Roman influence on Mark from two authors. David E. Aune is of view that Hellenistic and Jewish literary forms adapted with modifications could be found in the New Testament gospels and letters. According to him, Norman Perrin considered the Gospel of Mark as very close to other literary analogues. See DAVID E. AUNE, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment,* Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1987, pp. 22-23. Vernon K. Robbins also attends to the mingling of Greco-Roman and Jewish tradition in Mark. He says, "a basic dimension of the 'messianic' nature of Jesus' activity in Mark arises from the adaptation of the autonomous stature of the teacher in Greco-Roman tradition and the subsequent importation of this emphasis on autonomy into Jewish tradition where God had been the dominant autonomous figure." See VERNON K. ROBBINS, *Jesus the Teacher. A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark*, Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984, p. 119. However, O'Collins mentions that people like John Drury and James Swetnam are very cautious about these authors' approach to the Graeco Roman influence. For more critical evaluations, See JOHN DRURY, Review of D. E. AUNE, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1987), in *Journal of Theological Studies*, 41 (1990) 204-206. According to James Swetnam, Robbins saw the account of Mark "as an intermingling of Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions." See JAMES SWETNAM, Review of V. K. ROBBINS, *Jesus the Teacher. A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984), in *Biblica*, 66 (1985) 136-139, p. 138.

[146] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Resurrection. The State of the Questions*, pp. 15-16.

[147] HUGO MEYNELL, *On New Testament Scholarship and the Integrity of Faith*, in *New Blackfriars* 76 (1995), 127-140, p. 135.

[148] E. P. Sanders is of the view that Mark and the pre-Marcan tradition needed stories of Jesus criticizing the law for which the Jews criticized him. This type of inclusion of stories could be found also in the Christian tradition to speak of their disputes with the Gentiles. However, he says that "the Christian tradition was not terribly creative. A saying is taken from here, a setting from there, and a conclusion added. These modifications, at least in Mark, result in a depiction of serious legal disputes between Jesus and other interpreters." See E. P. SANDERS, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, London: Penguin, 1993, p. 218.

[149] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Resurrection. The State of the Questions*, p. 16. See also GERD LÜDEMANN, *The Resurrection of Jesus. History, Experience, Theology*, pp. 111-121, 231.

with all its history of sin and suffering." O'Collins is of the view that those who have a negative attitude to the material element in human beings may deny the significance of the empty tomb. They might consider the resurrection of Jesus as a separation of his soul and the assumption of another (earthly) body or a reincarnation of Jesus' soul. However, taking as one's starting point a positive attitude towards, the transformation of the corpse at the resurrection becomes the greatest example of the spiritualization of matter into the life of God. Hence, O'Collins says:

> In creation God produces the material world. In the incarnation matter is personally united to the Son of God. In the resurrection the corpse of Jesus is raised and transformed to become the risen Christ, whose glorified humanity has been divinized in the highest possible way. When risen from the dead, Jesus remains truly human. Yet his resurrected humanity (which is both spiritual *and material*) now enters into the divine life (Rom 6:10) in the most intense manner.[150]

Secondly, the empty tomb speaks of the significance of the corpse of Jesus from two points of view: (a) it was through this corpse that Jesus redeemed the world, and (b) it was the body of the Son of God while he lived in this world. It was therefore necessary that his humanity "share in a glorified existence and belong to the enduring work of redemption." Thirdly, the empty tomb signifies "*the personal continuity* between the earthly Jesus and the risen Christ." Jesus' identity is not changed with the transformation in the resurrection. Lastly, the empty tomb can activate faith in those who are well disposed to believe.[151]

The upshot of the above is that the empty tomb serves as a reference point for the continued existence of Jesus and the transformation that took place through the resurrection. It also points towards the hope for the transformation of every human being and the whole of creation at the eschaton.

4. The Resurrection in the Patristic Period

According to O'Collins, resurrection was not a prominent theme in the patristic period and among early Christian writers. The earliest known authors, such as the author of the Epistle of Barnabas (c. 85) and Clement of Rome (c. 90) did not treat resurrection as a distinct theme. The Easter kerygma about the resurrection of Jesus found in 1 Cor 15:3ff, which became one of the most important testimonies to the resurrection, was not given particular attention during this period. The early Christian period in fact witnessed strong negative reactions to the idea of resurrection, including outright denial of it. Jewish leaders called it a lie (Mt 28:11-15), there was scorn and scepticism against it in Athens (Acts 17:32), and misunderstanding about it within the Church (1 Cor 15:12ff). However, Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, argued against

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[150] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 128.

[151] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 128-129.

the charge of the Jews regarding the body-snatching by the disciples mentioned in Matthew,[152] and Tertullian in his *De Spectaculis* includes the story of the disciples taking away the body of Jesus as proof for the resurrection because people made wrong assumptions about the resurrection of Jesus.[153] The Gnostics did not believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ and spoke only of his heavenly exaltation. According to O'Collins, this opposition to the bodily resurrection prompted Christians to affirm the incarnation of the Word truly 'becoming flesh'. The Gnostics opposed also the appearance of the risen Christ to Peter and considered him merely as the recipient of special revelations.[154] Origen, in his *Contra Celsum*, countered the oldest literary attack on Christianity by Celsus, a second-century pagan philosopher, who had, in his *True Discourse* (c. 178), compared the resurrection to 'the legends' about Pythagoras and Heracles, etc., returning from the dead.[155] Celsus argued that if Jesus wanted to prove his resurrection he ought to have appeared to the people who condemned him.[156] He also doubted the integrity of the Easter accounts in the Gospels because of internal contradictions. He denied the possibility of resurrection for anyone since he viewed human existence as the imprisonment of the spirit in the body. Origen replied to these objections by saying (a) that the case of Jesus' resurrection is different from that of mythical figures (*Contra Celsum*, II, 56); (b) that there was no evidence for the hysterical condition of Mary Magdalene in the scripture and that the appearance took place during the day and not at night which negated any sort of hallucination (*Contra Celsum*, II, 60); (c) that the reason for not appearing to others was a way of revealing the divinity of Jesus because it is only the human characteristics that are visible to all and not the

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[152] JUSTIN MARTYR, *Dialogue with Trypho* CVIII, in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 1, p. 253.

[153] Tertullian in *De Spectaculis* mentions the incident of the body-snatching by the disciples as if it really happened. He says, "[Jesus] is He whom you purchased from Judas! This is He whom you struck with reed and fist, whom you contemptuously spat upon, to whom you gave gall and vinegar to drink! This is He whom His disciples secretly stole away, that it might be said He had risen again." See TERTULLIAN, *De Spectaculis (The Shows)*, xxx, in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 3, p. 91.

[154] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 8-9. According to Pheme Perkins, the Gnostics considered Peter as the true Gnostic. However, he says that Irenaeus opposed this view and said that the Apostles did not teach Gnostic doctrine at any time. See PHEME PERKINS, *The Gnostic Dialogue. The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism*, New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1980, p. 115. See also Irenaeus, Adversus Heresies III xii, 1-7, in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 1, pp. 429-433. The Gnostics did not believe in the resurrection because they thought that Jesus only possessed a spiritual body and not a material body. Hence, they taught that at the cross only the spiritual body or an image of Jesus was crucified. They compared resurrection to transfiguration, and the appearance of Jesus to Peter as visions. See PHEME PERKINS, *The Gnostic Dialogue. The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism*, p. 117, 114.

[155] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 9. See also ORIGEN, *Contra Celsum*, II, 55, 63, trans. HENRY CHADWICK, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953, pp. 109-110, 114.

[156] According to Origen, Celsus said that while Jesus was alive he had shown himself to many but after the resurrection he showed only to one woman. He said, "*if Jesus really wanted to show forth divine power, he ought to have appeared to the very men who treated him despitefully and to the man who condemned him and to everyone everywhere.*" He also said: "*At the time when he was disbelieved while in the body, he preached without restraint to all; but when he would establish a strong faith after rising from the dead, he appeared secretly to just one woman and to those of his own confraternity… When he was punished he was seen by all, but by only one person after he rose again; whereas the opposite ought to have happened.*" ORIGEN, *Contra Celsum*, II, 63, 70, pp. 114, 120.

divinity; (d) that 'graced powers of perception' were needed for human beings to see his glorious state, which was available only to the disciples who experienced the resurrection (*Contra Celsum*, II, 70); and (e) that the divergences in the resurrection accounts were due to the varieties of expressions given to the resurrection by the disciples. O'Collins points out that although Origen did not complete his work on the resurrection, he tried to justify the notion of resurrection by countering the objections of Celsus,[157] and in so doing demonstrated his recognition of its importance to Christian life.[158]

According to O'Collins, Athanasius (c 296-373) also spoke of the impact of the resurrection on the followers of Jesus, especially on virgins, ascetics and martyrs; and Augustine found evidence of the resurrection in its own capacity to draw many to believe in it.[159]

In light of such testimony, O'Collins opines that the patristic period verified the resurrection in several ways, i.e., through the "faith of Christians, as well as the quality of their moral practice."[160] He also says that, during this period, resurrection was seen as a ground for the Christians' hope of their own resurrection.[161] This aspect of hope in the resurrection of Christians, according to O'Collins, is found also in Clement of Rome. In order to strengthen this hope, Clement spoke of the "process of resurrection" which was always taking place in nature.[162] The patristic period viewed the hope for resurrection in association with the final judgment and the importance of ethical commitment. According to O'Collins, this is the reason why the apologists gave such great significance to martyrdom in their writings. For Christians, hope for resurrection from the dead offered a motive for suffering in the face of the threat of cruel

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[157] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 10-13.

[158] ORIGEN, *Contra Celsum*, V, 57, pp. 308-309.

[159] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 14. See also ATHANASIUS, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 48, in PHILIP SCHAFF & HENRY WACE (eds.), *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* Vol. 4 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), p. 62; AUGUSTINE, *The City of God*, in PHILIP SCHAFF (ed.), *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), pp. 481-482. Augustine is of the view that if some people have believed in the resurrection that itself should motivate others to believe in the credibility of the resurrection of Christ.

[160] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 14.

[161] J.N.D. Kelly is of the view that in the patristic period there was an understanding of the resurrection of Jesus as the basis for the belief in the resurrection of every Christians. From the point of view of Origen, according to Kelly, resurrection helps Jesus to share in the glory of God, and this will also have an effect on the "elect" because through the vision of God after the resurrection they will share in the same glory of God. JOHN NORMAN DAVIDSON KELLY, *Early Christian Doctrines*, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1958, p. 470. For Kelly's treatment of the resurrection and eschatology in the early Christian period, see pp. 459-489.

[162] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 15. To understand the resurrection, Clement gives certain analogies, such as the night changing into day, the seed sprouting in the earth and growing fruits, and the death of an Arabian bird called the phoenix and its new birth. See also CLEMENT OF ROME, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, xxiv, xxv, ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 3, pp. 11-12.

execution. This in turn, at a later stage, motivated them to engage in the 'living martyrdom' that led to the establishment of monasticism. However, O'Collins points out that the emphasis during this period was on the resurrection of the self and not of Christ.

A later development during this period was the expression of the resurrection in artistic form – using the symbol of Phoenix (a mythical bird which dies in the fire and is reborn from the ashes), Daniel among the lions, the resurrection of Lazarus, etc. O'Collins also points out that in the patristic period a distinction was also made between the resurrection of the flesh and the changes taking place in nature. Tertullian insisted that the resurrection must be differentiated from destruction. As he put it, "for change is one thing, and destruction is another. But it will not be another if the flesh is to be changed in such a sense as to be destroyed… There is no possible means of combining the opposites, change and destruction."[163] Hence, O'Collins says that the hope the Christians built on the resurrection of Christ was that "[i]n the case of the resurrection of our flesh, … there will be a change rather than a real destruction involving the substitution of another bodily existence."[164]

Another feature of this period, according to O'Collins, was the celebration of the resurrection of Christ in the liturgy of the Church – in the Eucharist, in the Sunday liturgy and in the Easter liturgy. He says that during "the first centuries of Christianity the liturgical experience of redemption through Jesus' resurrection remained vitally alive."[165]

We may conclude from what we have said so far that during the Patristic period, according to O'Collins, the theme of the resurrection of Jesus was in the early stages of development and the emphasis was much more on the impact on the Christians hope of resurrection from the dead than on the resurrection of Jesus as such.

5. The Resurrection in the Middle Ages

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Christological controversies of the early stages of Christianity led the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) to develop classical formulations about the person of Christ – one person and two natures. However, the Council did not state anything about the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Because of this, according to O'Collins, in the

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[163] TERTULLIAN & ERNST EVANS, *Tertullian's Treatise on the Resurrection*, 55, trans. ERNST EVANS, London: SPCK, 1960, p. 165. Tertullian opposed any dualistic view that saw the death and resurrection only in a spiritual sense. He spoke against those who held that death does not involve the separation of the body and soul. See TERTULLIAN, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh,* xxx, in ALEXANDER ROBERTS & JAMES DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. 3, pp. 558-559.

[164] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 16.

[165] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 21.

period after the Council of Chalcedon theological discussions were obsessed with the issue of the Incarnation to the exclusion of the resurrection. Only a very few theologians, such as Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) and Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274), paid real attention to the resurrection.[166] O'Collins takes up the *Summa theologiae* (Part 3, questions 53-56) of Aquinas[167] to understand the resurrection in the Middle ages. Aquinas began the examination of the resurrection from his own Easter faith, which O'Collins opines, is the right point of departure, one also employed by people like Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Rahner. Pannenberg pursued another path, i.e., he began from the New Testament to reach the Easter faith. Aquinas gives five reasons for the resurrection of Christ: "(a) to commend the divine justice, (b) to instruct our faith, (c) to raise our hope, (d) to set in order the lives of the faithful, and (e) to complete the work of our salvation." O'Collins points out that these five reasons reveal three things. "Reasons (b) and (c) suggest our *subjective* appropriation of Christ's resurrection through the decision to believe and hope. Reasons (d) and (e) concern the role of that resurrection in so-called *objective* redemption. Reason (a) connects the crucifixion and resurrection as the two events which make up the one paschal mystery."[168] Hence, from the point of view of believers, resurrection has both subjective and objective elements and it leads to their own salvation. As we have mentioned already in this chapter, O'Collins, too, sees the death and resurrection of Christ as one unity. He finds this aspect of unity also in the liturgy of the early Church where these two events were seen as actualized in baptism and the Eucharist. Aquinas also dealt with the question of the rising of Jesus on the 3rd day, which he said was appropriate to the God-man, since an immediate resurrection confirmed our faith in his divinity. O'Collins also points out that Aquinas made a distinction that was not made by the Church Fathers between the resurrection of Jesus and the raising of people described in the Old Testament and the gospels (e.g., Lazarus). In the case of Jesus, what is at stake is resurrection, whereas in the case of others it is resuscitation, the resumption of biological life in time and space. However it is not clear whether he also made a third distinction with regard to the final general resurrection of all.[169] In the case of the witnesses to the appearance of the risen Christ, according to O'Collins, Aquinas makes a distinction between the official witnesses (i.e., those who received the 'foundational revelation', in O'Collins' terms) and those who encounter God in Christ through the official witnesses (i.e.,

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[166] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 21-22.

[167] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae. A Concise Translation*, TIMOTHY MCDERMOTT (ed.), (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1989), pp. 535-537.

[168] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 22-23.

[169] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection,* pp. 25-26.

those who receive 'dependent revelation', in O'Collins' terms).[170] O'Collins speaks of the appearance to Paul as the last official appearance. He says, "[t]hat 'last of all' encounter closed the series of appearances by the risen Christ which gave Paul and a limited number of others the unique, unrepeatable and non-transferable task of officially witnessing to the resurrection (Acts 10:40f.) and of founding the Church (Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14). No later Christians would ever again either have precisely the same experience or receive the same role as witnesses and founders."[171] According to O'Collins, Aquinas was of the view that there is no need of any scientific evidence for the resurrection. All that is needed is faith in it. He also believed that faith in the resurrection came from God's initiative. Finally, O'Collins says that, for Aquinas, "'Christ's resurrection' functions as the 'efficient and exemplary cause of our resurrection' inasmuch as 'Christ's humanity, according to which he rose again, is as it were the instrument of his divinity and works by its power."[172]

It follows from our discussion that O'Collins acknowledges the very significant role played by Aquinas in understanding the resurrection during the Middle Ages. Aquinas emphasised the resurrection in Christology by giving prominence to Easter faith and moving towards stressing the unity of the death and resurrection, distinguishing the resurrection of Christ as perfect and that of ours as imperfect, showing the fundamental difference between the first witnesses and the later witnesses, and refusing to argue that the resurrection could be demonstrated scientifically. Aside from Aquinas, however, medieval theology tended to treat the resurrection only incidentally and exhibited a much greater concern with the doctrine of the incarnation. Resurrection faith was but one element, so to speak, of faith in God's incarnate Son.

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[170] There are people who do not make any distinction between those who are primary witnesses of the appearance and the secondary witnesses. For example, John Macquarrie considers the appearance of Jesus to Paul on a par with the appearances of him to other believers. He says, "[i]t is not unreasonable to suppose that it is also on a par with the encounters which subsequent believers may have had with the risen Christ. In all this, it is difficult to pin down anything more objective than psychical events in the minds of believers." See JOHN MACQUARRIE, *The Scope of Demythologizing. Bultmann and His Critics*, London: SCM Press, 1960, p. 86.

[171] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology*, 89. O'Collins makes a distinction between the original witnesses who identify the risen Jesus and are given the mission to found the Church, and the secondary witnesses who continue the mission and keep the Church in existence. O'Collins says that "[o]nly those who have known him during his earthly ministry can acknowledge the risen Lord in his final glory to be one and the same person as Jesus of Nazareth. … Peter, Paul and other apostolic witnesses who meet the risen Christ have the mission to testify to that experience and found the Church." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?*, New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1978, pp. 58-59. Louis Evely calls the resurrection appearances apparitions and says, "[t]he apparitions of which the apostles speak are apparitions that we ourselves can experience." LOUIS EVELY, *The Gospels without Myth*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971, p. 165.

[172] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 29. For Aquinas "Christ's resurrection doesn't properly speaking earn our resurrection, but it effects it and sets the pattern for it… Christ's resurrection acts in virtue of God's power in him: a power which extends not only to the raising of bodies but to the raising of souls." See also THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae. A Concise Translation*, Question 56, art. 1, pp. 536-537.

The theology of the resurrection did not show any significant development up to the onset modernity. O'Collins suggests that any comprehensive study of this period would have to examine non-theological sources such as the veneration of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the Crusades, liturgical texts, art and literature, Easter sermons and funeral sermons, in order to gain an adequate picture of the popular understanding of this article of faith. From the eighteenth century onwards, however, there is evidence of the gradual erosion of Easter faith, especially with the rise of Deism and Enlightenment thought. Generally speaking, there was growing scepticism with regard to the possibility of resurrection.[173] The studies on the 'historical Jesus' initiated by the posthumous publication of the writings of Reimarus often maligned belief in the resurrection and rejected it as being based on a falsehood. There were authors, such as William Paley (1743-1805) and Giovanni Perrone (1794-1876) who sought to counter this trend but the spirit of the age was by no means sympathetic to orthodox belief.[174] We might say here that while, in the first centuries of Christianity, there were difficulties in understanding the person of Christ from the point of view of his divinity and humanity, in this period faith in Christ's resurrection was systematically eroded.

6. The Resurrection in the Modern Period

O'Collins explores the theme of the resurrection in the modern period by scrutinizing the writings of a number of prominent Protestant and Catholic theologians. A comprehensive study of these authors is clearly beyond the scope of this dissertation. We shall attend to O'Collins' own summary analysis of their work with a view to portraying O'Collins' understanding of their contributions.

6.1. Karl Barth

O'Collins acknowledges the role of Karl Barth in the renewed interest in the theme of resurrection. According to O'Collins, Barth always attached great importance to the resurrection

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[173] According to Alister E. McGrath, G. E. Lessing said that since he did not have first-hand experience of the resurrection event he should not be asked to believe in it. He doubted the reliability of the reports of the witnesses. To him, it is not possible to believe in the report of the miracles of Jesus since this would mean faith in the authority of others and would not be based on one's own experience and reasoning. He said, "I do not for one moment deny that Christ performed miracles. But since the truths of these miracles have completely ceased to be demonstrable by miracles happening in the present, they are no more than reports of miracles. … I deny that they could and should bind me to have even the smallest faith in the other teachings of Jesus." See GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING, *Über Den Beweis Des Geistes Und Der Kraft*, in Karl Lachmann (ed.), *Gotthold Ephraim Lessings Sämtlichen Schriften* (Berlin: Goschen'sche Verlagshandlung, 1897), 4-8, 20, as found in ALISTER E. MCGRATH, *Christian Theology. An Introduction,* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001, p. 398.

[174] According to William Paley, "[t]he history of the Resurrection of Christ is a part of the evidence of Christianity… That it is completely certain that the Apostles of Christ, and the first teachers of Christianity, asserted the fact… Every piece of Scripture recognizes the Resurrection. Every epistle of every Apostle, every author contemporary with the Apostles, of the age immediately succeeding the Apostles, every writing from that age to the present, genuine or spurious, on the side of Christianity or against it, concur in representing the Resurrection of Christ as an article of his history." See WILLIAM PALEY, *A View of the Evidences of Christianity*, Vol. 2, London: Faulder, 1805, pp. 191-192.

but shifted his stand concerning its significance in his middle and later writings. In the middle stage, he considered resurrection as a 'non-historical happening' and deemed it to be revelation.[175] However, later on, while he continued to affirm the revelatory significance of the resurrection, he no longer regarded it as united with revelation, and insisted on the factuality of the event. O'Collins is of the view that through this he safeguarded the "actual event of the resurrection as 'history'."[176] Nevertheless, Barth does not give priority to the 'historical dimension' but rather to 'faith' in the resurrection event, the acknowledgement of which, O'Collins says, arises not through historical research but "through the intervention of the Holy Spirit." What O'Collins finds difficult to digest is the ambiguity of Barth's views on the historicity of, and historical enquiry into, the resurrection. He claims that resurrection is a historical reality but at the same time denies the possibility of arriving at it through historical research. O'Collins also points out that the way in which Barth speaks about the historical reality of the resurrection and the appearances to the disciples, basing himself on the New Testament accounts, amounts to a sort of reduction of the resurrection to the "resuscitation of a corpse" because, "Jesus Christ, he declares, is 'risen – bodily, visibly, audibly, perceptibly in the same sense in which he died'."[177] This way of seeing the objectivity of the resurrection in terms of sense perception, according to O'Collins, is due to the fact that Barth takes the 'Easter chronology and topography' in the New Testament too literally. O'Collins' critique is that "[i]t is fatal to allege that the objectivity of the Easter appearances stands and falls with an ordinary

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[175] In the initial stages of his writings Barth said that the raising of Jesus from the dead was not an event in history but revelation. He says, "[t]he visible significance of His life cannot be understood apart from the disclosure and revelation of the invisible glorification of the Father. This is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead." He further says that through the resurrection "the invisible totality of the new man Jesus, that is, in the concrete, corporeal person of the risen Jesus, the direction in which His visible life had moved is reversed… This reversal or transformation is not a 'historical event' which may be placed side by side with other events." See KARL BARTH, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. EDWYN C. HOSKYNS, London: Oxford University Press, 1968[1933], p. 203.

[176] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 35-37. Barth says, "[t]he resurrection is the revelation; the disclosing of Jesus as the Christ, the appearing of God and the apprehending of God in Jesus… The Resurrection is therefore an occurrence in history, which took place outside the gates of Jerusalem in the year A.D. 30, inasmuch as it there 'came to pass', was discovered and recognized. But inasmuch as the occurrence was conditioned by the Resurrection, in so far, that is, as it was not the 'coming to pass', or the discovery, or the recognition, which conditioned its necessity and appearance and revelation, the Resurrection is not an event in history at all." See KARL BARTH, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 30. He also maintained the importance of the history of the resurrection in the New Testament and said, "while we could imagine a New Testament containing only the history of Easter and its message, we could not possibly imagine a New Testament without it. For, the history and the message of Easter contains everything else, while without it everything else would be left in the air as a mere abstraction. Everything else in the New Testament contains and presupposes the resurrection. It is the key to the whole." KARL BARTH, *Church Dogmatics, Vol. 3, The Doctrine of Creation 2,* p. 443.

[177] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 39-40. Karl Barth says that it is important to emphasise the "concrete objectivity of history of the development of the Easter faith in the disciples. According to him our faith in the resurrection should be as objective and concrete as our faith in the death of Jesus." He says, "[i]f Jesus Christ is not risen – bodily, visibly, audibly, perceptibly, in the same concrete sense in which He died, as the texts themselves have it – if He is not also risen, then our preaching and our faith are vain and futile; we are still in our sins." See KARL BARTH, *Church Dogmatics, Vol. 4, The Doctrine of Reconciliation, 1,* G. W. BROMILEY & T. F. TORRANCE (eds.), trans. G.W. BROMILEY, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1967[1958], pp. 351-352.

sense-perception of the risen Christ."[178] A too literal interpretation of what the resurrected Jesus did (all the physical details about the risen Jesus) and the insistence that the words found in the Gospels are the words actually uttered by Christ, is what O'Collins calls "overbelief"[179] and "overinterpretation," which he says, is often caused by the influence of art. "Such overbelief also entails holding that he quite literally took and ate a piece of broiled fish (Lk 24:42f.), and that more or less gaping holes remained in the hands and side of his risen body (Jn 20:20, 25, 27)."[180] Another point to be noted in Barth, according to O'Collins, is the shift from seeing the cross and resurrection as being almost identified to seeing the resurrection as illuminating the cross. About their relationship to each other Barth says, "one cannot believe in the Cross of Christ otherwise, and one cannot understand the Cross of Christ otherwise than from his resurrection. All that in the crucifixion of Christ was done by God in a hidden way is by the resurrection set in the *light* and put into *force*."[181] O'Collins says that, for Barth "Jesus' death lacks any autonomous or absolute significance, and is to be properly understood in the light of Easter."[182] O'Collins notices a change of stance in Barth's approach to the empty tomb. In his early work, he was not concerned about it[183] but in his later writings he admits the necessity of believing in the empty tomb in order to have faith in the living Christ. As we have seen, O'Collins himself insists that it is important to believe in the empty tomb and in the bodily resurrection because it "bears directly on what we hold about the personal existence of the risen Christ."[184]

According to O'Collins, the most significant contribution of Barth is his understanding of the actuality of the reconciliation brought about by Christ's death and resurrection, though Barth views this as the penal substitution for the sins of men offered by Jesus as a representative

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[178] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 40.

[179] O'Collins describes the 'underinterpretation' of the New Testament propositions as "underbelief." Underbelief consists of saying that the resurrection was "no more than an expression of the disciples' inner life…. They spoke and wrote of his 'resurrection,' but this was only a way of talking about the rise of their faith… They wanted to articulate their newly-found moral commitments, not make factual claims about the fate of Jesus after Good Friday." GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?,* p. 42.

[180] GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?,* pp. 46, 47.

[181] KARL BARTH, *Credo*, trans. ROBERT MCAFEE BROWN, New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962, p. 102. For him, the substance of Easter as well as Christmas is Good Friday.

[182] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 41.

[183] Barth does not make his position clear about the empty tomb in his early writings. He says, "[t]he tomb may prove to be a definitely closed or an open tomb; it is really a matter of indifference. What avails the tomb, proved to be this or that, at Jerusalem in the year A.D.30?" See KARL BARTH, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1933, p. 142. According to McGrath, "Barth was quite clear that the empty tomb, taken by itself, was of little value in laying the foundation for faith in the risen Christ. The absence of Christ from his tomb does not necessarily imply his resurrection: 'He might in fact have been stolen, he might have only appeared to be dead'." See MCGRATH, *Christian Theology. An Introduction*, p. 401.

[184] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 41.

before God.[185] For him, "[t]he resurrection constituted the Father's new verdict in vindicating the crucified Jesus and setting our justification in force." While O'Collins agrees with his idea of the representative character of Jesus' death, he disagrees with the idea of penal substitution because he is of the view that one cannot justify the transfer of the culpability of personal sins to another person.[186] O'Collins is of the view that Barth's understanding of the resurrection takes us "beyond the negativity of divine self-humbling which Christ's death on the cross implied"[187] and shows the positive aspects of the atoning death of Jesus ad the fulfilment of certain conditions. These conditions include: (a) the necessity of a new act of God; (b) the requirement of a divine intervention distinct from God's intervention in the atoning death of Jesus on the cross; (c) the inevitability of an event closely related to the meaning of the cross – the freedom that men and women enjoy in the future through the resurrection is related to the cross because Calvary gave man freedom from the past; (d) the need of an event taking place in time and space – an event taking place in history; and (e) the necessity of the act of God forming a unity with the preceding event, the death on the cross.[188] O'Collins also recognizes that, for Barth, resurrection not only has a retrospective effect but also has an effect on the present and the future. In fact, resurrection removes the separation between the past, present and future. Hence, the definitive reconciliation brought about by Christ is for people of all times. Another point of significance in Barth, according to O'Collins, is his understanding of the resurrection as the revelation of God to the disciples. It is in the resurrection that Christ as God was "wholly and unequivocally and irrevocably manifest."[189] Through the resurrection, the person, role and function of Christ are disclosed, he is revealed as the representative of humanity, and salvation history is made known to the disciples and others.[190]

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[185] O'Collins is of the view that both Karl Rahner and Bultmann saw the death and resurrection of Christ as reconciling human beings. See KARL RAHNER, *Death*, in KARL RAHNER (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Theology. The Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1975) 329-333, p. 332. For Bultmann, "[c]ross and resurrection form a single, indivisible cosmic event which brings judgment to the world and opens up for men the possibility of authentic life." However, he points out that the resurrection cannot prove the cosmic and eschatological significance of the cross. See RUDOLF BULTMANN, *New Testament and Mythology. The Mythological Element in the Message of the New Testament and the Problem of its Re-interpretation,* p. 39.

[186] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 43-44. See also GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 145-157.

[187] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 44. Barth says, "Christians are those who in virtue of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ really have the situation of Israel behind them, who are really liberated from the Law which finally can only accuse and condemn them by confirming that they are sinners." See KARL BARTH, *Church Dogmatics, Vol. 3, The Doctrine of Creation 2,* p. 304.

[188] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 44. See also KARL BARTH, *Church Dogmatics, Vol 3, The Doctrine of Creation 2,* p. 304-324.

[189] KARL BARTH, *Church Dogmatics, Vol 3, The Doctrine of Creation 2,* p. 449. According to Barth the doubts and disbelief of the disciples about Jesus were completely dispelled in the encounter with the crucified and risen Jesus Christ. Jesus "was among them as God Himself." See p. 449.

[190] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 46.

Generally speaking, O'Collins is very appreciative of Barth's approach to the resurrection. However, he is critical of Barth's refusal to allow historical examination to support the legitimacy of faith in the event of the resurrection.

6.2. Rudolf Bultmann

Taking his lead from David Friedrich Strauss,[191] Bultmann was convinced that in the modern scientific age it is impossible to believe in miracles, and hence, belief in the objectivity of resurrection is unfeasible. For Bultmann, then, faith does not arise out of objective historical facts. Objective facts, such as the appearance of Jesus to the disciples, the empty tomb, and the witness of the disciples to the resurrection, do not constitute Christian faith. Faith only looks to that which is concerned with our ultimate significance and existence here and now. To Bultmann, resurrection is not an event open to historical verification, but an "eschatological event par excellence."[192] O'Collins is of the view that Bultmann denied the historicity of the resurrection because of his rigid understanding of the natural sciences and their insistence on the uniformity of the laws of the universe. He advocated that, in the same fashion as natural scientists, theologians and historians should look upon history as "a closed continuum" of cause and effects. The resurrection, like other miracles, would disrupt the closed system of nature and hence cannot be regarded as forming part of history. As it is not tenable to consider resurrection as an event in history, he takes resurrection as a myth. In fact, the existentialist and modern scientific character of his worldview make him judge the whole of the New Testament as a myth and hence, unintelligible and unacceptable to modern men and women. In his view, the value of the resurrection is united to the value of the cross. O'Collins says that, in Bultmann's view, the disciples' "proclamation of the resurrection does not ask us to accept some new, miraculous event which took place after the crucifixion, but to see the victorious value of the cross." For Bultmann, the resurrection as an event has no independent value other than the value it has together with the event of the cross. Faith in the resurrection is born of the *kerygma*. Christ is

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[191] David Friedrich Strauss (1808-74) did not accept the historicity of the resurrection. See DAVID FRIEDRICH STRAUSS, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, PETER C. HODGSON (ed.), trans. GEORGE ELIOT (London: SCM, 1972), p. 737. Reimarus influenced Strauss because he had stressed that miracles do not establish articles of faith, and that they are improbable and incredible. See HERMANN SAMUEL REIMARUS, *Fragments*, CHARLES H. TALBERT (ed.), trans. RALPH S. FRASER (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 230. Strauss questioned the historicity of the resurrection and considered it as a legend. He maintained that the disciples of Jesus may not have known where the body of Jesus was and so they believed and declared that he was risen. It was the conviction of the disciples that they had seen the risen Jesus and spoke to him. See DAVID FRIEDRICH STRAUSS, *The Old Faith and the New*, trans. MATHILDE BLIND, Vol. 1, Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1997, p. 82. According to him, when the miracle element is subtracted from the resurrection story, what is left is the element of theft. See DAVID FRIEDRICH STRAUSS, *Herman Samuel Reimarus and His Apology,* in *Reimarus. Fragments*, CHARLES H. TALBERT (ed.), trans. RALPH S. FRASER (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1970) 44-57, p. 48.

[192] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 47. Cf. also RUDOLF BULTMANN, *New Testament and Mythology. The Mythological Element in the Message of the New Testament and the Problem of its Re-interpretation,* p. 40.

alive only to those disciples who believe.[193] The resurrection originated in the faith of the primitive Church.[194] According to O'Collins, Bultmann holds that Christ is alive only in and through the kerygma.[195] However, he does not explain where Christ is when proclamation does not take place. O'Collins says that, "[a]lthough the kerygma and the faith it elicits do not create the risen Christ' existence, we are not allowed to ask about his existence apart from the *kerygma* and faith… [His] talk about Jesus being present in the *kerygma* seems almost equivalent to eternity being present in the *kerygma*." This inevitably leads one to ask whether the risen Christ of Bultmann really is a risen Christ.

Both Barth and Bultmann agree on the centrality of Christ's resurrection, the ineffectiveness of historical investigation to legitimate Easter faith, and the unity of the cross and the resurrection. They differ, however, in (a) their idea of revelation – for Barth, *kerygma* is distinguished from and based on revelation, but for Bultmann revelation is *kerygma*; (b) the reality of the resurrected Jesus – for Barth the resurrected Jesus is an objective reality but for Bultmann the reality of Jesus' existence was confined to *kerygma* and faith; (c) the Easter faith of the first disciples – Bultmann is unable to explain it because he believes that Easter faith is found in the *kerygma*, while Barth maintains that the Easter faith of the disciples arose from their objective encounter with the risen Christ; and (d) the belief in the empty tomb – Bultmann considered it as a legend but Barth saw it as a sign of Christ's bodily resurrection.[196]

6.3. Wolfhart Pannenberg

For Pannenberg, the resurrection of Jesus is an anticipation of the end of history when all will be resurrected. In the words of John P. Galvin, Pannenberg views "[t]he resurrection [as] the key to interpreting both Jesus himself and human history as a whole."[197] The most significant element

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[193] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 49. Regarding miracles, Bultmann said that just as in the case of His contemporaries Jesus believed in divine intervention and that He did things which were miracles to the mind of His contemporaries. See RUDOLF BULTMANN, *Jesus and the Word*, trans. LOUISE PETTIBONE SMITH & ERMINE HUNTRESS LANTERO, London: Collins, 1958, p. 173.

[194] RUDOLF BULTMANN, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, New York, NY: Scribner, 1958, p. 213. Bultmann said that "[t]he real Easter faith is faith in the word of preaching which brings illumination. If the event of Easter Day is in any sense an historical event additional to the event of the cross, it is nothing else than the rise of faith in the risen Lord, since it was this faith which led to the apostolic preaching. The resurrection itself is not an event of past history. All that historical criticism can establish is that the first disciples came to believe in the resurrection." The only history that a historian can arrive at is the history of the "personal intimacy" which the disciples had with Jesus during his life on earth. See RUDOLF BULTMANN, *New Testament and Mythology. The Mythological Element in the Message of the New Testament and the Problem of its Re-interpretation,* p. 42.

[195] Bultmann said, "Christ meets us in the preaching as one crucified and risen. He meets us in the word of preaching and nowhere else. The faith of Easter is just this – faith in the word of preaching." See RUDOLF BULTMANN, *New Testament and Mythology. The Mythological Element in the Message of the New Testament and the Problem of its Re-interpretation,* p. 41.

[196] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 52-56.

[197] JOHN P. GALVIN, *Jesus Christ*, p. 305.

in the theology of Pannenberg is, then, his appeal to universal history. As he expressed it, "[h]istory is the most comprehensive horizon of Christian theology. All theological questions and answers are meaningful only within the framework of the history which God has with humanity and through humanity with the whole creation – the history moving toward a future still hidden from the world but already revealed in Jesus Christ."[198] According to Alister E. McGrath, for Pannenberg, "revelation is essentially a public and universal historical event which is recognized and *interpreted* as an 'act of God'." Such an understanding of revelation, McGrath thinks, reduces faith to insight and obscures the function of the Holy Spirit in revelation.[199] In O'Collins' view, Pannenberg portrays resurrection as an objective historical event. While Barth and Bultmann did not believe in historical enquiry into the resurrection, Pannenberg showed himself a staunch supporter of such enquiry,[200] provided historians undertook it without a priori excluding the possibility that the dead could be raised. Pannenberg regarded the appearances, witnesses, and the empty tomb as elements supportive of the reality of resurrection. Indeed, he insists that the disciples would not have been able to proclaim the resurrection if the tomb in Jerusalem had not been empty.[201]

O'Collins shares Pannenberg's view of the resurrection as the anticipation of the end of universal history. For the disciples, the resurrection of Jesus was the anticipation of all that they had traditionally hoped for, namely, that *all* will be raised from the dead (both in body and soul) at the end of time. O'Collins asserts that this understanding was maintained by Clement, Justin, Athenagoras, Tertullian, Aquinas, etc., the early creeds which spoke of the general resurrection as the "resurrection of the flesh" and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381) which spoke of the "resurrection of the dead." In all of these cases, the link is consistently made to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.[202] The resurrection of the dead would mark "the ultimate consummation of God's plan for the whole of creation and the final completion of Christ's

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[198] WOLFHART PANNENBERG, *Basic Questions in Theology*, trans. GEORGE H. KHEM, Vol. 1, London: SCM Press, 1970[1967], p. 15.

[199] ALISTER E. MCGRATH, *Christian Theology. An Introduction*, p. 402.

[200] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 58. Pannenberg said, "[i]f we would forgo the concept of a historical event here [in the case of the resurrection], then it is no longer possible at all to affirm that the resurrection of Jesus or that the appearances of the resurrected Jesus really happened at a definite time in our world. There is no justification for affirming Jesus' resurrection as an event that really happened, if it is not to be affirmed as a historical event as such." See WOLFHART PANNENBERG, *Jesus-God and Man*, trans. LEWIS L. WILKINS & DUANE A. PRIEBE, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970[1964], p. 99.

[201] WOLFHART PANNENBERG, *Jesus-God and Man*, p. 100.

[202] GERALD O'COLLINS & MARIO FARRUGIA, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 232. During the early Christian period and in the Fathers of the Church the creeds were in the form of a rule of faith. In the rule of faith, there is mention of the general resurrection of the dead. Tertullian described the general resurrection as "the resurrection of the flesh." See JOHN NORMAN DAVIDSON KELLY, *Early Christian Creeds,* New York, NY: Longman, 1960, p. 85. The Old Roman Creed (see p. 102); the Creed of Milan (see p. 173); Aquileia, Ravenna, and Turin (see p. 174); Augustine of Hippo (see p. 176); the Eastern Creeds of Jerusalem (see p. 184); Apostolic Constitutions (see pp. 186-187); Mopsuestia (see pp. 187-188); etc., also described the general resurrection as the "resurrection of the flesh." However, the general resurrection came to be mentioned as "the resurrection of the dead" in the Constantinopolitan Creed. See pp. 297-298.

saving work." According to O'Collins, the general resurrection has always been understood in connection with the future coming of Christ as judge of the living and the dead. This final coming constitutes the "ultimate act of history and hence God's final word on the whole universe."[203]

What distinguished Pannenberg from other theologians is the relationship that he found between the traditional expectation of a general resurrection and the visions the disciples had about the risen Christ. The disciples interpreted their visions in terms of their traditional belief in the resurrection of the dead.[204] The great merit of Pannenberg is that he saw the resurrection as an historical event, called for historical enquiry into this event, and defended the view that that the Easter experiences of the apostolic witnesses had a basis in history.

6.4. Willi Marxsen

Like Bultmann, Marxen paid little attention to historical research. The resurrection is not an event, according to Marxsen, because no individual witnessed the event. The reports about it are secondary explanations and not eyewitness accounts. 'Jesus is risen', according to him, is a statement about the reality of faith in Jesus, "expressing pictorially 'the miraculous nature' of this faith." According to O'Collins, faith, for Marxsen is a miracle, and not the resurrection.[205] What matters for him is faith and not how one (for example, Peter) comes to that faith, or the reasoning behind that faith. Marxsen reduces history to sense perception, indeed to such an extent that only that which is perceptible becomes an event in history. Hence, he cannot speak of the resurrection as an historical event. The resurrection is to understood as 'the cause of Jesus'[206] (the offer of faith), which continues and becomes effective in people's lives in the present.[207]

O'Collins objects to the reduction of the resurrection to 'the cause of Jesus' since this approach cannot ground the distinction between Jesus and other significant figures in history (e.g., Socrates) whose thought and ideals are effective in the lives of people even today. What Marxsen offers is little more than a "Jesuology" (imitation of Jesus - discipleship), devoid of the

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[203] GERALD O'COLLINS & MARIO FARRUGIA, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 232.

[204] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 60.

[205] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection,* p. 63. See also WILLI MARXSEN, *The Resurrection of Jesus as a Historical and Theological Problem*, C. F. D. MOULE (ed.), *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, in *Studies in Biblical Theology*, second series 8 (London: SCM, 1968) 15-50. For Marxsen the case of the resurrection is an uncertain historical event. He also believes that one cannot take refuge in faith in the case of the resurrection. See. p. 25.

[206] WILLI MARXSEN, *The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth*, Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1970, p. 183.

[207] WILLI MARXSEN, *The Resurrection of Jesus as a Historical and Theological Problem*, p. 147.

crucifixion, the resurrection and the Holy Spirit.[208] According to O'Collins, "Marxsen's understanding of *history* betrays an old-fashioned positivism for which the admissible historical record consists of a concatenation of facts attested by (sense) experience. History deals with 'events.' These, for Marxsen, must lie within the inherent human possibilities of sense perception and – in principle – be phenomena open to the public."[209] Hence, in the case of the resurrection, there is no place for history and historical evidence since there is nothing perceptible in the event.

6.5. Jürgen Moltmann

O'Collins describes the theology of Moltmann as a "word of promise theology," as distinct from Barth's "word of God theology." In order to understand the cross and the resurrection, according to Moltmann, one must take into account what God had promised, revealed and done in the history of Israel. Moltmann regards resurrection as an event in history which really took place in the life of Jesus and portrays it as central to Christian belief. The confession of Christ as Lord and Christ as risen are inseparable. "A Christian faith that is not resurrection faith can therefore be called neither Christian nor faith." Moltmann also maintained the unity of the cross and the resurrection. However, he saw them as distinct, having their own particular places, since "[t]he resurrection can neither be reduced to the cross, as showing its meaning, nor can the cross be reduced to the resurrection, as its preliminary. It is formally a question of a dialectical identity which exists only through the contradiction, and of a dialectic which exists in the identity."[210] He, in fact, saw the cross and resurrection as contradictory, the former giving expression to distance from God, the latter giving expression to the closeness to God.[211] To him, the resurrection was both revelatory and redemptive, but only in relation to the promise of the final future for all. Hence, the full significance of the resurrection is not simply in history or in the negative present. Rather, it constitutes "a new possibility altogether for the world, for existence and for history."[212] However, what is negative in history and in the present (injustice and evil) will be transformed in the future fulfilment of the promise. Unlike Barth who saw the resurrection as the revelation of what is yet to be, Moltmann saw the risen Jesus as the beginning of a process which is yet to be fulfilled.

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[208] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 64-65.

[209] GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?*, p. 114.

[210] JÜRGEN MOLTMANN, *Theology of Hope. On the Ground and the Implications of A Christian Eschatology*, trans. W. LEITCH, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969[1965], pp. 166, 200.

[211] Moltmann says that the self-identification of Jesus after the resurrection is the "act of self-revelation of Jesus." According to him, "[t]he fundamental event in the Easter appearances … manifestly lies in the revelation of the identity and continuity of Jesus in the total contradiction of cross and resurrection, of god-forsakenness and the nearness of God." See JÜRGEN MOLTMANN, *Theology of Hope. On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, p. 199.

[212] JÜRGEN MOLTMANN, *Theology of Hope. On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, p. 179.

O'Collins objects that this view runs the risk of a reduction of everything that the risen Jesus has revealed.[213] On this reading, the appearances did not communicate the final revelation of God, did not manifest the redemption achieved through the cross and resurrection, and did not bring anyone to Christian faith through the kerygma. The disciples would have understood the appearances and interpreted them to others in terms of their belief in the eschatological fulfilment. Hence, knowledge of the resurrection led to the proclamation of the eschatological future of the whole people.[214] For Moltmann, the appearances of the risen Christ were mainly auditory experiences. However, O'Collins is of the view that they were not primarily auditory (e.g., in 1 Cor 15:5-8 - the risen Christ does not say anything) but visual experiences. O'Collins also points out that, according to Moltmann, the risen Christ is identified with the crucified Jesus and the one who is yet to come to fulfil the promise of the new Kingdom of God. The promise of the new kingdom grounds the apostolic mission to the world. One might say that Moltmann understands the cross and the resurrection almost exclusively in terms of eschatology, and that the "resurrection subjects world history to an eschatological process." In effect, O'Collins says that "[i]n Moltmann's approach eschatology swallows up history."[215] The resurrection in history is the beginning of the fulfilment of the promise of God and what is yet to come, the new kingdom of God, and the motive behind the Easter experiences of the disciples and their missionary endeavours.

6.6. Karl Rahner

The starting point of Rahner's theology of the resurrection is the human situation, especially the experience of death. In Rahner's words, "a correct starting-point for a genuine theology of Easter is probably a correct understanding of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, that is, a true theology of death."[216] Basing himself on Martin Heidegger's idea of human existence as "being-towards-death", Rahner speaks of death as determining the life of human beings. In death "the fundamental decision which a man has made in regard to God, the world and himself, and which dominates his whole life, receives its definitive character."[217] In the case of Jesus the negative

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[213] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 72.

[214] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 9. See also JÜRGEN MOLTMANN, *Theology of Hope. On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, p. 188.

[215] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 70, 76.

[216] KARL RAHNER, *Theological Investigations*, *Vol. 4, More Recent Writings*, trans. Kevin Smyth, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966, p. 127.

[217] KARL RAHNER, Death, in KARL RAHNER (ed.), *Sacramentum Mundi. An Encyclopedia of Theology*, Vol. 2 (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1969) 58-62, p. 61.

dimension of death (the pain and ignominy) was transformed; death itself was transformed into life.[218]

O'Collins appreciates Rahner's appeal to Heidegger but he expresses reservations about the compatibility of Heidegger's understanding of *Dasein* as "*Existenz*" with "no fixed nature" and the Christian understanding of personhood and resurrection. According to Rahner, "Christ, in his life and death, belongs to the innermost reality of the world… When the vessel of his body was shattered in death, Christ was poured over all the world; he became actually, in his humanity, what he had always been according to his dignity, the heart of the world, the innermost centre of creation."[219] According to Rahner, death opens the possibility for Jesus to be the centre of the whole world and its ontological destiny. According to George Vass, "Christ's death on the cross is not only the fulfilment of the Incarnation, but also an opening to the whole of mankind – to the cosmos in its entirety."[220] O'Collins states that the positive understanding of the death of Jesus which characterises Rahner's thought, allows us to see how the cross and resurrection can be related to one another. However, he also cautions against the emphasis Rahner places on Jesus' death as the event that renders him the centre of the cosmos. This emphasis reduces the significance of the resurrection and suggests that death is the centre of the world and the event that henceforth determines the cosmos. However, while O'Collins has reservations about Rahner's claim that the event of "the resurrection is the manifestation of what happened in the death of Christ."[221] He acknowledges that Rahner overcomes this problem by attaching the idea of the divinization of the creature to the resurrection of Jesus.[222]

O'Collins also questions Rahner's suggestion that the incarnation implied both the death and resurrection. There is a danger here that the distinctive characteristics (and contribution) of both of these events will be swallowed up if they are seen as aspects of the incarnation.[223] However, Rahner acknowledges that the incarnation comes to its fulfilment only through the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus, Rahner says that "[t]he incarnation itself is a divine movement which is fully deployed only in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ."[224] Rahner sees faith

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[218] KARL RAHNER, *On the Theology of Death*, New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1963, p. 70.

[219] KARL RAHNER, *On the Theology of Death*, p. 66.

[220] GEORGE VASS, *A Pattern of Doctrines 2. The Atonement and Mankind's Salvation*, BILL IRESON (ed.), *Understanding Karl Rahner,* Vol. 4 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1998), p. 8.

[221] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 79-80. Cf. also KARL RAHNER, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 4, pp. 128f.

[222] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 80. Cf. also KARL RAHNER, *Resurrection*, in KARL RAHNER (ed.), *Sacramentum Mundi. An Encyclopedia of Theology*, Vol. 5 (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1969) 323-333, pp. 331-333.

[223] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 81.

[224] KARL RAHNER, *Redemption*, in KARL RAHNER (ed.), *Sacramentum Mundi. An Encyclopedia of Theology*, Vol. 5 (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1969) 425-433, p. 428.

in the risen Christ as being brought about through the founding witnesses, the primary orientation of human beings towards a life after death, and through the help of the Holy Spirit.[225] He displays little concern for the historicity of the resurrection event. The Easter faith of the disciples is faith in the glorified existence of Christ, a faith effected by the extraordinary, unrepeatable, joyful and real experience of the risen Lord.[226] According to O'Collins, Rahner sees the resurrection as the onset of the divinization of humanity and the climax of revelation.[227]

6.7. Hans Küng

For Hans Küng, "Easter is an event primarily for Jesus himself," and its significance for his disciples consists in the possibility that it offers for a new relationship of faith with him: "Jesus lives again *through God – for their faith*."[228] Küng resists the idea that resurrection is best approached in light of the human longing for life after death and pleads for an enquiry into the historicity of the incarnation which that is without "prejudices of faith or unbelief."[229]

O'Collins notes that Küng appears to contradict himself when he writes elsewhere that, "Christian faith can reveal new depths, perhaps the decisive depth, to the scholar. History entirely free of presuppositions is *a priori* impossible."[230] However, O'Collins regards Küng above all as an apologist for Christian faith and suggests that what Küng really opposes is "*false and unproductive* prejudices *before* examining the evidence for and the difficulties against Christ's resurrection."[231] Küng makes much of the speed with which Christianity grew, a success story which is particularly remarkable in view of the scandal of Christ's crucifixion. In his view, the preaching of the disciples and their persistence could only have been motivated by their conviction that he was risen. Not surprisingly, Küng's rejects merely psychological explanations for the disciples' belief in the resurrection.[232] However, while he defends the corporeal

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[225] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 83. See also KARL RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, pp. 274-275.

[226] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 82-83.

[227] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 85-86.

[228] HANS KÜNG, *On Being a Christian*, trans. EDWARD QUINN, New York, NY: Image Books Doubleday, 1976, p. 352.

[229] HANS KÜNG, *Eternal Life? Life after Death as a Medical, Philosophical, and Theological Problem*, trans. EDWARD QUINN, New York, NY: Doubleday, 1984, p. 125.

[230] HANS KÜNG, *On Being a Christian*, p. 165.

[231] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 87-88.

[232] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 89-90. See also HANS KÜNG, *On Being a Christian*, p. 345. Hans Küng speaks against the psychological objection to resurrection in the following way: "Would it not have been very much simpler for the primitive community to proclaim Jesus not as risen but merely as one of those martyr-prophets whose tombs for that very reason were being reconstructed and cared for at the time of Jesus and who were venerated as intercessors? Why is it that, contrary to these tendencies of the time, no cult arose at the tomb of Jesus? Would not such a proclamation have been much better understood by his

resurrection of Jesus, he denies "any bodily continuity between the earthly and risen existence of Jesus." Hence, the only continuity that he sees between the earthly and the risen Jesus is "at the level of soul or spirit. The new, 'heavenly' body totally replaces the one which ended in the tomb."[233] Accordingly, he says, "[t]here can be identity of the person even without continuity between the earthly and the 'heavenly,' 'spiritual' body. Resurrection is not tied to the substratum – a priori constantly changing – or the elements of this particular body. The corporeality of the resurrection does not require the tomb to be empty." Consequently the empty tomb is not a necessity for Easter faith.[234] O'Collins opposes this views and upholds the empty-tomb tradition for faith in the resurrection.

Küng does defend the multiple appearances of the risen Christ to the foundational witnesses. The disciples became foundational witnesses precisely because of their unique experience of those appearances. O'Collins agrees with Küng on this point and acknowledges that Easter faith did not simply take its lead from the witness of Peter.

6.8. Jon Sobrino

According to O'Collins, the "hermeneutic locale" that Sobrino uses to understand the resurrection is the "'history of suffering'." Resurrection is understood in terms of the triumph of justice and the victory of the suffering victims. Sobrino sees the resurrection as a novelty within history, something which cannot be understood merely by applying the principle of analogy, i.e., the epistemological method of knowing something new on the basis of something known previously.[235] (O'Collins points out in this regard that even analogy allows for difference and novelty.)[236]

According to Sobrino, human suffering and the search for justice are the starting point for understanding the resurrection. The crucifixion of Jesus had thrown the disciples into a personal and theological crisis because they felt that God had abandoned the one who had identified himself with the divine. However, the appearances of Jesus made clear to them that their

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contemporaries than a proclamation about someone raised up before the general resurrection of the dead – which, after the preceding events, was bound to seem suspicious from the outset?" See HANS KÜNG, *On Being a Christian*, pp. 371-372.

[233] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 91.

[234] HANS KÜNG, *On Being a Christian*, p. 366.

[235] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 94. See also JON SOBRINO, *Christology at the Crossroads. A Latin American Approach, trans.* JOHN DRURY, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978, p. 249.

[236] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 94.

assumption was wrong. For Sobrino, the appearances were the catalyst which triggered the mission of the disciples to proclaim and to transform.[237]

The mission of Jesus was "the proclamation and inauguration of the Reign of God on behalf of the poor and outcast." Jesus' resurrection, understood as liberation from death,[238] is a symbol of this utopian ideal. Nevertheless, within liberation theology, it is not the resurrection but the 'Kingdom of God' which functions as the ultimate symbol.[239] That being said, the proclamation of the resurrection gives liberative hope to the poor and to those who are denied justice. "[I]t indicates the present sovereignty of Christ over history by generating human beings who are not history's slaves but its sovereigns." It also generates the freedom to follow Jesus in the reality of history by the practice of love, and it enables men and women to live joyfully in the midst of history by living for others and receiving from others.[240] As Sobrino points out, however, "[t]he resurrection is a still unfinished reality. It is still in the process of fulfilment insofar as its saving efficacy is concerned. In its historical structure, then, the revelation of God effected in Christ's resurrection is a promise. Jesus' resurrection cannot be comprehended merely by broadening the conception of history because it is not a possibility *in* the world and *in* history but a possibility *for* the world and *for* history."[241]

There is a danger here of overemphasising the role of human beings in the achievement of liberation, at the cost of reducing the actual significance of what Jesus has already achieved through the resurrection. O'Collins points out that, for Sobrino, the resurrection can only be 'verified' through praxis. As Sobrino himself puts it, "it is possible to verify the truth of what happened in the resurrection only through a transforming praxis based on the ideals of the resurrection."[242] At this point, O'Collins raises the question of what happens if one is unable to transform the world. In such a case, the resurrection remains unverified because of our inability to bring about transformation. Hence, O'Collins argues that one should not consider transforming praxis as the only criterion for verifying the claims about the resurrection.

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[237] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 95-96. See also JON SOBRINO, *Christology at the Crossroads. A Latin American Approach*, pp. 269, 252, 254.

[238] JON SOBRINO, *Systematic Christology. Jesus Christ, the Absolute Mediator of the Reign of God*, in JON SOBRINO & IGNACIO ELLACURIA (eds.), *Systematic Theology. Perspectives from Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 137, 139.

[239] JON SOBRINO, *Jesus the Liberator. A Historical Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. PAUL BURNS & FRANCIS MCDONAGH, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005, pp. 123-124. Sobrino says that [t]he resurrection of itself possesses great power for expressing the ultimate meaning of history, final utopia and radical hope, but it does not possess so much power for showing how we have to live now in history and guide toward utopia." See JON SOBRINO, *Jesus the Liberator. A Historical Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 124.

[240] JON SOBRINO, *Systematic Christology. Jesus Christ, the Absolute Mediator of the Reign of God*, pp. 139-140.

[241] JON SOBRINO, *Christology at the Crossroads. A Latin American Approach*, p. 252.

[242] JON SOBRINO, *Christology at the Crossroads. A Latin American Approach*, p. 255. According to Sobrino, "an existentialist interpretation is not enough to capture the meaning of Jesus' resurrection. The proper hermeneutics must

7. The Theological Significance of the Resurrection

Throughout our enquiry, we have been confronted with a wide range of approaches to the resurrection of Christ, depending upon the particular author under consideration. The time has now come to provide a systematic overview of the theological significance of resurrection faith as it emerges from O'Collins' survey of, and response to, his major conversation partners. This overview will also serve to bring together the elements that are characteristic of O'Collins' own approach to this most central theme of his theology.

7.1. The Resurrection as an Event in History

The approach to the resurrection as 'history' takes its lead from the study of the New Testament accounts.[243] This approach focuses on the origin, sources, formation, editorial arrangement, and final shape of the texts relevant to resurrection. From this vantage point, the resurrection is above all an event in history. Those who treat the resurrection in this fashion are in general agreement about a number of points, such as the acceptance of 1 Cor 15 as the earliest account of the resurrection, the new mode of existence of Jesus after the resurrection, and the understanding of resurrection faith as inseparable from the historical origins and realities of the resurrection.[244]

However, according to O'Collins, this approach is not unproblematic because of the tendency among some scholars to limit their investigations to the literary traditions. O'Collins is of the view that even if the evidences are limited, there is a need to historically investigate the Easter events. He says, "[f]aith in the crucified and risen Jesus cannot exist without some historical knowledge", although this knowledge varies in those who believe.[245] Nevertheless, such enquiries should not be one-sided[246] because "historical truths are not the only kind of truth."

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include an attitude toward the attendant mission, toward the kind of praxis that will move the cause of Jesus forward (though the exact nature of that praxis may not be spelled out clearly)." See p. 238.

[243] O'Collins mentions the names of Raymond Brown, C. F. Evans, Reginald Fuller, Xavier Léon-Dufour, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Norman Perrin and Béda Rigaux as those theologians and exegetes who support the model of the resurrection as history.

[244] GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?*, pp. 11-12. Reginald Fuller says that he is one among others, like Raymond Brown, Leon Xavier Dufour, and Gerald O'Collins, who share the consensus view about the Easter traditions, especially in considering 1 Cor 15 as the first resurrection account, and the historicity of the empty tomb. See REGINALD FULLER, Review of GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (Valley Forge: The Judson Press, 1973), in *Interpretation* 29 (1975) 325-326, p. 325.

[245] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Easter Faith. Believing in the Risen Jesus*, p. 30.

[246] According to Robert C. Ware, a historical understanding of the resurrection is a necessity. However, he says, "an integral conception of the concrete reality of Jesus Christ and his significance for Christian faith should not be lured into a one-sided historical-critical perspective." He is of the view that presently there is a shift in the focus of historical research from a negative one to a positive one. This positive trend has "laid bare the theological, kerygmatic and worldview motivations and the largely 'symbolic' character of the textual traditions and the events which they narrate." The present understanding, hence, is that resurrection of Jesus is "a *religious* reality, in the strictest sense of the word, a reality of the soul and Spirit; it cannot adequately be dealt with in the categories of natural or historical sciences but

One needs to remind oneself that "everything that is historical is real, but not everything that is real is historical." Historical enquiry must not be equated with reality.[247] While historical enquiry is necessary our faith does not rest entirely on the facts of history. There is also a need for divine illumination. "Without the grace of an interior divine illumination that accompanies the external presentation of the Christian message, no amount of historical knowledge, even the most extensive and sophisticated knowledge and even the best available biblical exegesis, will ever by itself bring about faith."[248]

7.2. The Resurrection as Redemption

To deal with the theology of the resurrection is to reflect on its significance for the past, present and future. In O'Collins words, the resurrection of Jesus "presents itself as a reality not only 'before us' (*ante nos*) and 'beyond us' (*extra nos*) but also 'for us' (*pro nobis*)."[249] This approach finds expression in the view of the resurrection as redemption.

O'Collins points out that this approach has been operative from the time of St. Paul who shifted his focus from the *future* (eschatological) perspective of the saving impact of the death and resurrection in his earliest writings (1 Thes 4:13-18 in A.D. 50) to the *present* life (2 Cor 5:15 in A.D. 55) and to the *future* and *present* in (Rom 8:11 in A.D. 57) in his later writings. Paul spoke about the 'timing' (present and future), the 'beneficiaries' (not only Christians but the whole created world), and the 'causality' (death and resurrection of Jesus) of redemption.[250] Barth's idea about God's reconciling will being effective through the resurrection of Jesus[251] seems to have influenced O'Collins to portray the redemptive effect of the resurrection as, among other things, an experience in this present life which contributes to one's personal transformation. So, for example, he asserts that "[r]esurrection faith is fully real only when it is a faith experience of Jesus now." This is to say that it is only when one experiences the risen Christ in his/her personal life that one can truly be said to believe in the resurrection. O'Collins sees Rahner as an

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requires specifically *theological* conceptions." See ROBERT C. WARE, *The Resurrection of Jesus, II. Historical-Critical Studies*, in *Heythrop Journal* 16 (1975) 174-194, p. 183.

[247] GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?*, pp. 15-16.

[248] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Easter Faith. Believing in the Risen Jesus*, p. 31.

[249] GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?*, pp. 22-24. O'Collins sees this approach represented in the writings of such authors as F. X. Durrwell, Stanislas Lyonnet, and David Michael Stanley who were inspired by St. Thomas Aquinas' work on justification, and also the works of Karl Barth and H. A. Williams.

[250] GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?*, pp. 17-21.

[251] Barth is of the view that "[i]n Jesus Christ God … has publicly bound and committed Himself to man." KARL BARTH, *Church Dogmatics, Vol. 4, The Doctrine of Reconciliation 3,* G. W. BROMILEY & T. F. TORRANCE (eds.), trans. G.W. BROMILEY, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961, p. 297.

advocate of this approach, especially in his insistence on the "eternal significance of the humanity of Jesus for our relationship with God."[252]

7.3. The Resurrection as Revelation

The understanding of the resurrection as revelation is one of the most significant theological approaches to this theme, and one that may yet contribute much to contemporary discussions of the theology of religions. This approach requires a more extensive treatment than the others under consideration. According to O'Collins, "in theology the notion of revelation and redemption intertwine almost inextricably."[253] He quotes Pannenberg in support of this view: "For the man who is disposed to an openness toward God, revelation in its deepest sense means salvation, fulfilment of his destiny and his very being."[254] O'Collins describes redemption as "the essential co-ordinate of revelation."[255] These go hand in hand where the self-communication of God is at stake.[256]

7.3.1. The Theological Background to Resurrection as Revelation

For his discussion of the resurrection as revelatory, O'Collins draws upon the theological reflections of Barth, Bultmann, Moltmann and Pannenberg. He regards Karl Barth as the initiator of this approach. Barth considered "'the revelation of God as the decisive category of theological thought'." He also affirmed the view of the resurrection as revelation. According to O'Collins, Barth maintained that resurrection cannot be grasped by means of any category other than revelation. Indeed, resurrection was "absorbed into revelation."[257] Nonetheless, O'Collins says that Barth changed his position about the resurrection and revelation in his later writings and highlighted the specificity of the resurrection. O'Collins attributes this shift to Barth's concern to safeguard the reality of the event of the resurrection in history.[258] Bultmann, according to O'Collins, also considered resurrection as an element of revelation.[259] Moltmann

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[252] GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?*, pp. 22-24. Cf. also KARL RAHNER, *Theological Investigations*, *Vol. 3, The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, trans. KARL-H. & BONIFACE KRUGER, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967, p. 35. For a detailed treatment of the theme of the eternal significance of the incarnation, death and resurrection, see pp. 35-57.

[253] GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?*, p. 25.

[254] WOLFHART PANNENBERG, ROLF RENDTORFF, TRUTZ RENDTORFF & ULRICH WILCKENS (eds.), *Revelation as History*, trans. David Granskou & Edward Quinn, London: Sheed & Ward, 1968, p. 156.

[255] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical and Systematic Study of Jesus*, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, 104.

[256] GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?*, p. 25.

[257] GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?*, pp. 26-27.

[258] GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?*, pp. 27-28.

[259] GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?*, p. 28. See also RUDOLF BULTMANN, *New Testament and Mythology. The Mythological Element in the Message of the New Testament and the Problem of its Re-interpretation*, pp. 40-41

was concerned to point out how the revelation of the triune God took place in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Pannenberg stressed the importance of the totality of history as the locus for divine self-revelation and portrayed the resurrection as the anticipation of the end of all history.[260]

7.3.2. Resurrection and Revelation in the New Testament

In addition to the use he makes of the theologians mentioned above, O'Collins also draws upon the New Testament for his analysis of the revelatory dimensions of the resurrection. According to O'Collins, St. Paul "defines the God worshipped by Christians as the God of the resurrection." This is the basic truth, according to St. Paul, from which all other truths evolve. The foundational confession of Christians is that Jesus rose from the dead. All other doctrines unfold from this one.[261] While Paul begins by speaking about the resurrection as the disclosure of the future of Christians (1 Thes 1:10), he later extends this to the future of Israel (Rom 4:25-5:11) and finally to the future of the whole world (Rom 8:18-25). As we move on from Paul to the Acts of the Apostles and the gospels, we see that the resurrection is the event which reveals not only the true nature of Jesus and his mission, but also the nature of God, human existence and the world.[262].

O'Collins sees Mark as the one who presented the resurrection in a framework that anticipates what the Second Vatican Council understands about revelation, i.e., namely, that it is a matter of "deeds and words."[263] The concluding verses of Mark (Mk 16:1-8) contain a wealth of information about the character of divine revelation. The experience of the women at the tomb is characterized by three sets of contrast: (i) the contrast between darkness/light – darkness representing crucifixion and death, light representing the overcoming of death and darkness through the resurrection; (ii) the contrast between absence/presence – the absence of the body of Jesus and the personal presence of Jesus; and (iii) the contrast between silence/speech – the silence of the women and the words of the heavenly figure. O'Collins regards the reactions of

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[260] GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?*, p. 29. Pannenberg, while he rejects "a direct self-revelation of God through his name, his Word, or through Law and gospel", affirms "an indirect self-revelation of God as a reflex of his activity in history." See WOLFHART PANNENBERG, ROLF RENDTORFF, TRUTZ RENDTORFF & ULRICH WILCKENS (eds.), *Revelation as History*, pp. 13-14. O'Collins view resembles that of Walter Kasper who says the following: "Jesus' resurrection is not only God's decisive eschatological act, but his eschatological revelation of himself; here it is finally and unsurpassably revealed, who God is: he whose power embraces life and death, existence and non-existence, who is creative love and faithfulness, the power of the new life, on which there is complete reliance even in the collapse of all human potentialities. The resurrection of Jesus is the revelation and realization of the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus. In raising Jesus from the dead God proved his faithfulness in love and thus finally identified himself with Jesus and his work." See WALTER KASPER, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 145.

[261] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 148.

[262] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical and Systematic Study of Jesus*, 97-98.

[263] VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dei Verbum*, 2, p. 972.

the women (the "flight, trembling, astonishment, silence and fear" at the message of the angel) as "proper reactions to the climax of divine revelation which has occurred in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus." "In Mark's Gospel, the crucifixion and resurrection stand against each other. But they interpret and 'reveal' each other and may never be separated."[264] For Matthew, the Easter revelation includes the appearances, the words of Jesus, the commissioning of the disciples to preach and baptize, the revelation of the Trinity (the commission is to baptize in the name of the Trinity), and the promise of Jesus' ever-abiding presence in the community. This abiding presence of Jesus and the "ongoing revelatory experience of the risen Lord" is strengthened further in the Gospels of Luke and John. This takes place in the personal experiences of Jesus in: "(1) the eucharist, (2) meal fellowship, (3) the forgiveness of sins, (4) the reading, hearing and reception of scripture, (5) the dynamic operation of the Holy Spirit, and (6) the experience of faith."[265] Summarising the way in which the resurrection accounts expound the theme of revelation, O'Collins comments as follows: "In the various resurrection narratives the theme of revelation (through words and events) surfaces repeatedly, as does the conviction that divine help must be available before human beings can perceive God's supreme disclosure in the resurrection of Christ."[266]

7.3.2.1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Lord

The resurrection of Jesus, according to O'Collins, disclosed the relationship between the Father and the Son, and also the fact that it was the Son of God who became human.[267] O'Collins sees the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God even in Paul's missionary zeal which was motivated by the special and "personal revelation of the Son" that he received in his meeting with the risen Jesus. The title "Lord" used in early Christianity also signified Christ's sharing in the divine being. The acceptance of Jesus' lordship was intimately connected to the achievement of salvation. Paul's hymn of exaltation in his letter to the Philippians is an invitation to accept and give glory to Jesus Christ as the Lord (Phil 2:8-11). The resurrection narratives in the Gospels, too, speak about the revelation of Jesus as Lord, and call for worship (e.g., Mary Magdalene worships Jesus (Mt 28:9) and Thomas calls Jesus Lord and God (Jn 20:28)). O'Collins understands that the resurrection revealed and identified Jesus as the Son of God and demanded worship of Him as the Lord.[268] F.X. Dürwell says that the resurrection of Jesus "established Son of God; he was so already, but now he was established 'Son of God in the glory of power',

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[264] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Easter Faith. Believing in the Risen Jesus*, pp. 72, 75, 76.

[265] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Easter Faith. Believing in the Risen Jesus*, pp. 86, 88. Cf. also GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, London: Darton, Longmann & Todd, 1973, p. 78.

[266] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Easter Faith. Believing in the Risen Jesus*, p. 87.

[267] F. X. DURRWELL, *The Resurrection. A Biblical Study*, trans. ROSEMARY SHEED, with an introduction by CHARLES DAVIS, New York, NY: Sheed and Ward, 1969, p. 125.

[268] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 150.

established in the existence proper to the Son of God. The Resurrection was not merely a coming back to life, but a birth into a new life which Christ did not have in his bodily humanity."[269] With the affirmation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the names attributed to God began to be attributed to Jesus Christ as well.

The resurrection was also the vindication of the future kingdom of God that Jesus preached about during his ministry. It was the exoneration of the kingdom of God which had apparently failed with the crucifixion and death of Jesus on the cross. According to O'Collins, this reassertion of the kingdom through the defeat of the apparent failure of Jesus' ministry and preaching "fully justified the personal authority with which Jesus had spoken of the kingdom and which he had claimed over the Sabbath, the temple, the law, the forgiveness of sins, final judgement and human salvation."[270] Hence, the resurrection meant the acceptance and assertion that Jesus was the Messiah and it made known the meaning of the person of Jesus, his ministry, his death, and his new mode of existence.

7.3.2.2. The Revelation of the Trinitarian Face of God

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was also the revelation of God as Trinity. O'Collins says that while in the baptism of Jesus there was a sort of appearance of the Trinity (Mk 1:10f.), there is no explicit mention of the appearance of the Trinity in the resurrection. However, there are good reasons for regarding the resurrection as indeed a revelation of the Trinity. In the pre-Pauline formulations God the Father is portrayed as the one responsible for the resurrection of Jesus (Gal 1:1) and the post-exaltation of Jesus takes place to give glory to God the Father (Phil 2:11). In the case of the early Christians it was acknowledged that it is the Holy Spirit who guided them to give glory to Jesus (1 Cor 12:3). Luke and John saw Christ and the Holy Spirit as distinct from each other, and regarded Christ as the one who sent the Holy Spirit. Hence, O'Collins understands the early Christians and the evangelists as proposing a Trinitarian interpretation of the resurrection. Nevertheless, he warns that one should not understand the formulations of early Christianity as a completely developed understanding of the Trinity. At this stage there was only a vague perception of the three persons of the Trinity which developed slowly. But one cannot disregard the fact that the fully developed Trinitarian doctrine depended heavily on the initial understanding of the early Christians. O'Collins says that what is at stake here is the understanding of the Trinity as the 'economic Trinity', i.e., the Trinity disclosed in the history of salvation – in the history of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.[271] It is in and through the paschal mystery that we know God the Father as the "Giver", the Son as the "Given", and the Holy

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[269] F. X. DURRWELL, *The Resurrection. A Biblical Study*, pp. 125-126.

[270] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical and Systematic Study of Jesus*, p. 98.

[271] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 151.

Spirit as the "Self-giving." To understand the Trinity in this way, according to O'Collins, means to "recover a sense of how the original Christian belief in the tripersonal God was clearly based on the resurrection of the crucified Jesus." Each time Christians make the sign of the cross, they link the events of Good Friday and Easter Sunday with the Trinity.[272]

7.3.2.3. The Revelation of the Ultimate Destiny of Creation

We have already noted that the resurrection threw light on the future and the destiny of the whole human race. The question remains whether the resurrection also reveals something about the material world and its destiny. According to O'Collins, this question is significant because human beings belong to the material world. From the point of view of Christian belief in the bodily resurrection, the answer to this question cannot be in the negative. For O'Collins, it is clear that material creation is also, as it were, implicated in the resurrection. He finds confirmation for this view in St. Paul's letter to the Romans (Rom 8:21-23) where Paul speaks of the setting free of the whole creation. The Book of Revelation affirms this position when it speaks of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev 21:1). According to O'Collins, the resurrection of Jesus is intimately related to 'newness' in the Bible. He notes the presence of such remarks as "I am doing a new thing" (Is 43:19), "God's new covenant of friendship" (Jer 31:31-34), "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you" (Ez 36:26). The resurrection of Jesus is the culmination of this process of renewal, the bringing of "the dead Jesus to new, transformed life." "Jesus' rising from the dead [also] empowers us to walk in a new way (Rom 6:4) and to sing his new song of joy, 'Alleluia'."[273] While one may legitimately expected that the material universe will form part of the transformation of human beings, the nature of this transformation is not completely clear. It is also not clear whether the resurrection has already brought change to creation in the way that it has effected transformation in human beings thanks to their faith in the risen Christ.[274] However, O'Collins suggests that the physical miracles that take place in the world, the use of material elements in the sacramental life of the Church through which they participate in the risen life of Christ, and the responsible behaviour of some Christians towards the environment, help us to recognize what the resurrection reveals about the dignity of the whole of creation. To conclude, O'Collins points out that the resurrection revealed Christ as the agent of creation and as the one who has already changed the created world. It also

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[272] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp.152-154.

[273] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Experiencing Jesus*, pp. 100-102.

[274] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 154-155. O'Collins points out that Gregory of Nyssa and Ambrose wrote about the effect of the resurrection as having already taken place in the material world.

revealed that we expect a new creation, which will be the final purpose towards which the whole creation is moving.[275]

7.3.2.4. The Revelation of Christ's Continued Presence in the Church

The resurrection of Christ reveals his continued presence in the Church, which is the community of people who have faith in the resurrection. The origin of the Church cannot be understood without the resurrection because without the resurrection there would not be a faith community. Through the resurrection Christ brought about a faith community that began to live in the hope of the coming of God's Kingdom. Although there are people, like Pius XII and Moltmann, who maintain that the Church was born from the side of the crucified Jesus,[276] according to O'Collins, Jesus' crucifixion and death alone cannot explain the existence of the Church. The Church can only be explained by the paschal mystery as a whole. The Church is the place where the presence of Christ is experienced at its highest, especially in its prayer life. It is here, in the power of the Holy Spirit, that Christians exalt the Lord. O'Collins opines that the resurrection also revealed the function of the Church as his living sign and witness to all humanity.[277] At this juncture, O'Collins also brings the sacramental life of the Church under the purview of the resurrection because it is grounded on the resurrection. By being baptised into the crucified and resurrected Christ, Christians become new members of the faith community and move towards active participation in the salvific mission of God. According to O'Collins, the imperative and the mission that Christians receive through the grace of baptism is to bring justice and liberation to all humanity. He also links the Eucharist with the resurrection because it is through the Eucharist that we participate in the resurrection (cf. 1 Cor 11:23). This also means that the Eucharist is the visible sign through which Christ becomes fully present to us. O'Collins holds that the "Eucharist renders the resurrection present in an even fuller sense when Christians

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[275] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 155-156.

[276] PIUS XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi (On the Mystical Body of Christ)* 29, in CLAUDIA CARLEN IHM, *The Papal Encyclicals 1939-1958* (Washington DC: McGrath, 1981) 37-63, p. 42. Moltmann maintains that when one inquires into the origin of the Church one is led to believe that it began from the day of the Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the Easter visions of the disciples. However, Easter is related to the cross of Christ. Hence, in this framework, "it is correct to see the origin of the church in the crucified Jesus. 'Having established the Church in His blood, he fortified it on the day of Pentecost with special power from on high.' 'It begins in the wounded side of Christ on Calvary, goes through the 'tempering' of the Pentecostal fires, and comes onward like a burning blood.' See JÜRGEN MOLTMANN, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit. A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. MARGARET KOHL, New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1977, p. 86.

[277] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 157-158. According to O'Collins, there is an obvious missionary motif in the Easter narratives of the New Testament. The mission of proclaiming the good news to the whole world is given to the disciples by the risen Jesus during his encounter with them. This means that the "resurrection established the *kerygma*." O'Collins regards Bultmann as the most important theologian to highlight this dimension of resurrection faith. From Bultmann's point of

recognize the risen Jesus not only in his sacramental body on the altar but also in his ecclesial body gathered in prayer." He extends the meaning of this link between the resurrection, the Eucharist and the ecclesial body to another imperative for Christians, namely, to care for others who are in need. In O'Collins' understanding, "the risen Christ is personally and effectively present" in the administration of the sacraments and the sacraments are the means to a personal encounter with him.[278] He also brings the liturgy into the sphere of the resurrection. He is of the view that "[a] liturgically based Christology will take shape around the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus and the basic Christian faith that proclaims: 'Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life'." [279] In O'Collins' understanding then, the existence of the Church, the liturgical life of Christians, and their commitment to the care of others all reveal the meaning of the resurrection.

7.3.2.5. The Revelation of Love

According to O'Collins, authors such as Hans Urs von Balthasar and Karl Rahner say little about the relationship between the resurrection and love. Joseph Ratzinger, however, saw belief in the resurrection as 'faith in the love that has conquered death.'[280] This is eminently true in the case of Jesus because in him the power of God's love overcame his death and brought about his resurrection. O'Collins points out that, according to Ratzinger, the resurrection is brought about by the Father's love for Jesus and Jesus' love for human beings. The central point revealed by the resurrection is the love of the Father for Jesus. For Ratzinger, love is stronger than death wherever there is a willingness to sacrifice life for the sake of love. This type of power, according to him, is found only in Jesus. No other human being has the capacity to overcome death.[281] O'Collins points out that Pope John Paul II also spoke about the relationship between the resurrection and love when he declared that "the Son of God, … in his resurrection experienced in a radical way mercy shown to himself, that is to say the love of the Father which is more powerful than death."[282] The resurrection not only shows the power of God's love, but also helps the disciples and others to identify Jesus when he appears to them, such that they are

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view, one might say, it is possible to speak about the reality of the real presence of Jesus in the Christian *kerygma*. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?*, pp. 33-34.

[278] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 159,160.

[279] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Today. Christology in an Australian Context*, p. 12.

[280] JOSEPH RATZINGER, *Einführung in das Christentum. Vorlesungen über das Apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis*, München: Kösel-Verlag, 1969, p. 249.

[281] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 190. See also JOSEPH RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, p. 234.

[282] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen. An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, p. 192. See also JOHN PAUL II, *Dives in misericordia (On the Mercy of God)* 8, in CLAUDIA CARLEN IHM, *The Papal Encyclicals 1958-1981* (Washington DC: McGrath, 1981) 275-298, p. 286.

able to say, 'It is the Lord' (Jn 21:7).[283] The story of Mary Magdalene also speaks of the love that helps her to realize the risen Lord at the tomb. O'Collins says, "[i]n the Gospel no other encounter with Jesus matches the contrast between Mary Magdalene's expectation and the outcome. She expects at most to be helped to find a missing corpse. Instead she learns that death has no final power over Jesus, and that she is to bring to the disciples the ultimate good news: 'I have seen the Lord'."[284]

7.3.2.6. The Universality of Revelation

Reflecting on the reports about the appearances of the risen Jesus in different geographical locations, first in Jerusalem (Luke and John 20) and then in Galilee (Mark, Matthew, and John 21) and then again in Jerusalem (Acts 1), O'Collins says that there are different implications to these appearances. For Luke the movement from Galilee to Jerusalem signifies revelation which began and is fulfilled in Jerusalem. However, for Matthew there is a movement away from Jerusalem because it is an unbelieving city. Hence to him, "[r]evelation no longer makes Jerusalem its centre, but has moved from there to Galilee and will move from Galilee to the rest of mankind." [285] This means that resurrection in fact opens the possibility for the revelation of God to the whole of humanity and indeed to the whole cosmos. C. F. Evans also points to the Matthean understanding of the universal character of the resurrection.[286] In treating of Pannenberg's understanding of the resurrection as the anticipation of the end of history, we mentioned that O'Collins, too, saw the resurrection as the event which spoke of the revelation of God in the whole of history, an event which will culminate in the second coming of Christ and the general resurrection of the dead. According to him, in the eyes of the Second Vatican Council, these two future events reflect the "central vision of early Christians: the Last One or Christ as the *Eschatos*, for whom we wait together, has priority over the last things or the *eschata*." He says that while the Council saw the Church as the pilgrim people traveling towards Christ, the focal point, and the *eschata* as its final destiny, it "set the final future of the Church within the ultimate destiny of all humanity. The whole of humanity is moving towards its final good, Christ's heavenly kingdom in which all people are to be united as one 'family beloved of

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[283] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Meeting the Risen Lord,* in *America* 148 (1983) p. 237.

[284] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Meeting the Risen Lord*, p. 237.

[285] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Easter Jesus*, p. 23.

[286] Evans says that "[i]n Mathew's gospel alone it has been emphasized that during the days of his flesh, both Jesus and his disciples have been confined in their mission to Israel (Matt 10.5f.; 14.24); so it is emphasized that through his exaltation his scope and theirs have become universal and stretch to the end of time." See CHRISTOPHER FRANCIS EVANS, *Resurrection and the New Testament,* p. 84.

God and of Christ their Brother (*Gaudium et Spes*, 32). With Christ as the focal point, humanity as a whole and the created cosmos will be transformed and fulfilled."[287]

O'Collins' understanding of the resurrection and its revelatory significance for the destiny of humankind raises an interesting line of thought. If Christ is the focal point and the ultimate destiny of the whole of humankind and if the Church is seen as falling within the sphere of the ultimate destiny of the whole humanity, one may legitimately ask how and in what way the Church, and it alone, can serve as the mediator of that ultimate destiny. According to O'Collins, many theologians, in their reflection on the theology of religions, err by moving from the historical Jesus to the cosmic Logos. While he acknowledges that the notion of Wisdom or Word has greater religious appeal than the limited history of Jesus, he is not convinced that the theology of the Logos opens many possibilities for dialogue with other religions. In his view, while the history of Jesus may be limited, the truth of the Logos is too general. What does open possibilities for dialogue is the resurrection. He says: "[w]hat links the specific history of Jesus with the general truth of the eternal Logos is the event of the resurrection. Through that event a particular human life not only was seen to have had but also assumed universal and absolute importance… It is the resurrection that effectively shows that the specific, limited story of Jesus was in fact the earthly history of the eternal Logos."[288] Up until now, however, the truth of incarnation has taken precedence over the truth of the resurrection in interreligious dialogue.[289]

8. The Appropriation of Resurrection Faith

Towards the end of our first chapter, which dealt with the sources for knowing the person of Jesus, we mentioned in passing the role of art and literature in communicating to us the revelation of God in and through the person of Jesus. In his opening address during the 2005 Leuven Encounters in Systematic Theology (LEST) in Leuven, O'Collins emphasised the importance of art and literature in Christology. His paper on "*The Cross over Bethlehem*" depicted how art and literature could be profitably used to understand and interpret Christology. He is very insistent that imagination and art have their role to play in enabling us to understand and interpret the resurrection. He therefore opposes the views of those (like Küng) who question

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[287] GERALD O'COLLINS & MARIO FARRUGIA, *Catholicism. The Story of Catholic Christianity*, p. 232. See also VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Lumen Gentium*, 51, p. 891; *Gaudium et Spes*, 32, p. 1088.

[288] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Today. Christology in an Australian Context*, New York, NY; Mahwah, NJ: 1986, pp. 50-51.

[289] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Today. Christology in an Australian Context*, pp. 73-74. O'Collins notes that Paul Knitter also testified to the fact that in inter-religious dialogue the truth of the resurrection was largely ignored. See for Knitter's comments about the resurrection of Jesus, PAUL KNITTER, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions,* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986, pp. 197-200. In his evaluation of the resurrection he says, "[t]he resurrection of Jesus, in all its authentic mystery and power, does not necessarily imply 'one and only'." See p. 200.

the use of imagination in the case of the resurrection. Speaking of the resurrection, Küng claims that "there is nothing to be depicted, imagined, objectified… The reality of the resurrection itself therefore is completely *intangible* and *unimaginable*."[290] In opposition to this view, O'Collins suggests that contemplation and art can help towards the appropriation (in faith) of the resurrection. He says that "painters and sculptors can entice us to reflect on the risen life more imaginatively and with less cool rationalism."[291] Contemplatives, ascetics and mystics, through their lives and work, can also illuminate this great mystery. O'Collins makes particular mention of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Teresa of Avila and Francis of Assisi.

O'Collins insists that experiential knowledge, too, is vital for the appropriation of resurrection faith. It is in worship, especially in the Eucharist, that one personally experiences and grows in faith in the risen Jesus. Easter faith, then, according to O'Collins, is a personal experience of "the presence of Christ." He observes that "[o]ver the centuries the Easter language, with its accompanying gestures of worship, has not been a 'neutral' conduit which merely reports the experiences of the faithful; it has proved *the* catalyst of fresh Easter experience for each succeeding generation of believers." Our Easter faith grows through what "we see, hear, touch, taste and smell" in worship.[292] The liturgical experience, in turn, must find expression in the holy lives of Christians and their committed work for others. Here O'Collins draws inspiration from the work of liberation theologians like Jon Sobrino who identifies the active presence of the risen Jesus in those who work for the liberation of the crucified of this world. It is in the experience of those who have faith in the risen Jesus, according to O'Collins, that past events and contemporary experience blend together in order to "reveal how the risen and living Jesus … shows himself *the* Interpreter and the Transformer of what human beings must typically endure and live through." In other words, the experience of the resurrection is manifest in the transformation of human beings, and these transformative experiences are evidence for the ongoing presence of the risen Jesus.[293] In the final analysis though, it is ultimately the Holy Spirit who forms our faith in the Risen Christ and it is He who makes "the risen Christ credible, present and experienced." The "cumulative experiences of the risen Christ through his Holy Spirit offer [believers] a coherent, meaningful and truthful vision for worship and life."[294]

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[290] HANS KÜNG, *On Being a Christian*, p. 350.

[291] GERALD O'COLLINS, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?*, pp. 70-71.

[292] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Easter Faith. Believing in the Risen Jesus*, pp. 58, 60, 61.

[293] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Easter Faith. Believing in the Risen Jesus*, pp. 62, 64.

[294] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Easter Faith. Believing in the Risen Jesus*, p. 65.

Conclusion

Our inquiry in this chapter was dedicated to the nature and significance of the resurrection in the work of O'Collins. It is clear that he is a staunch defender of "Jesus' personal and bodily resurrection from the dead." As Paul Gwynne observes, "O'Collins is a committed defender of the historicity of the empty-tomb tradition and the theological coherence of the belief that Jesus' corpse was raised."[295] In view of his belief in the resurrection, O'Collins describes his own investigation into the resurrection event as an "exercise of 'Easter faith seeking understanding (*fides paschalis quaerens intellectum*)'." He also maintains that it is "the resurrection of the crucified Jesus which created and sustains the essential Christian identity."[296] In dealing with the resurrection, O'Collins relies, as always, on the scriptures, the whole history of the experience of believers, the doctrinal tradition, and the reflection of theologians throughout the centuries.[297] However, his recourse to these sources does not obscure his own personal experience of faith in the resurrection. As he puts it, "with respect to resurrection-faith, sheer reason and good sense alone fail to prove decisive. Nor are they final. One has belief in the risen Christ without fully understanding the resurrection."[298]

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[295] PAUL GWYNNE, *Why Some Still Doubt That Jesus' Body Was Raised*, in DANIEL KENDALL & STEPHEN T. DAVIS (eds.), *The Convergence of Theology. A Festschrift Honouring Gerald O'Collins* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001), 355.

[296] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Risen, An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 4-5. According to Richard R. Niebuhr, "[t]he resurrection of Christ has been allegorized and volatilized in nearly every imaginable way, but the fact remains that neither Jesus himself nor the Christian community can manifest a distinctive character or true identity apart from the resurrection event itself, where faith, hope and love are given their vindication and new birthright." See RICHARD R. NIEBUHR, *Resurrection and Historical Reason. A Study of Theological Method,* New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957, p. v.

[297] Cf. Chapter two of this dissertation.

[298] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Some Theologians and Easter*, p. 287.

SALVATION AND REDEMPTION IN JESUS CHRIST

Introduction

In the foregoing chapters, we have analysed the Christology of Gerald O'Collins in order to understand its significance especially in our contemporary period and in the context of the discussions on the theology of religions. Our analysis has revealed that O'Collins' writings are centred on the person of Jesus Christ and that he stands firmly within the classical Christological tradition. Moreover, his works present a primarily *intra-ecclesial* understanding of the person of Jesus. It is, therefore, not surprising that O'Collins presents Jesus as the universal saviour. With this as our background, the concern of this final chapter will be whether such a Christology allows any openings for a renewed Catholic approach to the theology of religions and whether problems concerning the theology of religions can be meaningfully addressed from within the framework of traditional Christology. In other words, we would like to enquire whether the Christology developed by O'Collins might provide a means both to affirm one's faith in Jesus as universal saviour and to engage in meaningful dialogue with our contemporary pluralistic context. More specifically, although our enquiries in the previous chapters have helped us to understand the Christology of O'Collins as firmly established in the classical Christological tradition, we need to investigate his understanding of the meaning and necessity of salvation and how this relates to the theology of religions. In what follows, we will take up the issue of salvation as understood by O'Collins. Our enquiry will also dwell briefly on current discussions on the theology of religions with a view to gaining a more holistic understanding of the issue at hand.

1. Complexity of the Enquiry

In our pervious chapters, we approached the person of Jesus Christ from the point of view of his divinity and humanity. The divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ and his saving works are affirmed by the Scripture and Church teachings. According to O'Collins, while the New Testament emphasised Jesus Christ's saving work (functional Christology), the teaching of the Church from the early Christian period and especially the Council of Chalcedon, emphasised the two natures of Jesus Christ (ontological Christology).[1] He maintains that when one speaks of Jesus Christ one should affirm both his being and his saving work, because "the salvific work of

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[1] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, p. 19.

('Christ for us') is not separable from his person and being ('Christ in himself')."[2] However, there is a problem while speaking about Jesus Christ and salvation; the problem is whether one should begin from the divinity of Jesus or from the deed of redemption.[3] O'Collins is of the view that if one follows the Nicene Creed, one has to begin with the divinity of Jesus, and that if one follows the liturgy of the Church, one has to begin from the redemption. To O'Collins, "liturgy generally highlights the saving of work of Christ more than profession of faith in his person. It is soteriological rather than Christological." The Scripture, too, places greater stress on the redemptive aspects of Jesus Christ. When it comes to the Christology of O'Collins, we are faced with an ambiguity about which order he takes up. The ambiguity is especially present in those books which deal with the person of Jesus Christ because, in these, the starting point for his approach seems to change from one work to the other.[4] As we mentioned elsewhere, what we have done so far is to follow the general order that O'Collins employs in the bulk of his writings, i.e., he moves from revelation and the being and person of Jesus Christ to his redemptive work. Hence, this chapter on salvation comes as a natural follow-up of the discussion on the person of Jesus Christ as this generally appears in O'Collins' writings.

One of the major problems we face in the enquiry is the difficulty in arriving at a definite and absolute answer to the questions asked about the salvation of all. O'Collins calls the self-communication of God in Christ and his saving work 'the messianic mystery' rather than 'the messianic secret'. He is of the view that "[a] secret can be revealed once and for all; a religious mystery invites a lifetime of reflection in which there can never be definitive statements and truly final conclusions… The messianic mystery of Christ's saving work, precisely as mystery, means that we can never expect to argue everything out in complete detail. At the same time, this 'yes-but' situation may never be an excuse for blatantly inadequate or simply inaccurate

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[2] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, p. 279.

[3] Cf. COMMISSIO THEOLOGICA INTERNATIONALIS (INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION), *Quaestiones selectae de Christologia (Select Questions on Christology)* IV. A. 1, in *Gregorianum* 61 (1980) 609-632, pp. 623-624. O'Collins uses the terms salvation and redemption interchangeably. In our exposition, too, we use these terms interchangeably.

[4] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 133-134. O'Collins offers examples from the liturgy and devotional life of the Church where the deed of redemption is emphasised more than the affirmation of the divinity of Jesus as the Son of God. The examples that he provides are from the Prefaces in the liturgy of the Latin rite, Eucharistic acclamations, veneration of the Cross on Good Friday, and the refrain used in the Stations of the Cross. He says, "[o]bviously the response of worship implies the divine identity of Christ's person. But the emphasis is on salvation." These aspects persuade O'Collins to examine first the deeds of Jesus and then his person. According to O'Collins, historically also this order of enquiry was followed, i.e., movement was from experience of what Jesus did to faith in Jesus Christ. See p. 134. However, O'Collins does not seem to be consistent with this order of enquiry in his writings. While his order of enquiry in *Interpreting Jesus* is from the deeds of redemption to the person of Jesus Christ, the order is reversed in one of his later writings, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus.* However, he has placed resurrection almost at the beginning of the book. While speaking about the starting point of theology, Frances M. Young opines that the "formal starting point of theology has traditionally been an account of God himself." However, she suggests that "historically speaking, the effective starting-point for Christian theology has in fact been redemption." See FRANCES M. YOUNG, *Redemption – The Starting-point of Christian Theology,* I, in *The Expository Times*, 88 (1976-77) 360-364, p. 360.

claims."[5] This statement makes it abundantly clear that, according to him, while an absolute answer to the question about salvation escapes our human thinking and interpretations there is a prospect of arriving at some convincing conclusions. However, we must bear in mind how futile it would be to look for absolute answers to the questions raised by theology of religions on the salvation of all. In this concluding chapter our enquiry is directed to finding an adequate understanding of O'Collins' view on salvation from the point of view of Christians and to search for a possible answer to the questions posed by the theology of religions.

2. The Necessity of Salvation

O'Collins is of the view that Christian faith always speaks about the requirement of redemption for all human beings because of the encompassing and ever-present reality of evil and sin in the world. The redeemer Jesus Christ and the redemptive character of his work is what distinguishes Christianity from other religions. This is affirmed by Hans Küng as well who says, "The 'distinctive' feature of Christianity, which sets it apart from all other religions, does not lie in its natural rational character but in its redemptive character: for everything is governed by the basic opposition of sin and grace and precisely in that way related to the 'mediator' Jesus of Nazareth."[6] O'Collins comments that the enslavement of human beings by hostile powers, their suffering in exile, their constant fear of death, etc., which are caused by sin, need to be overcome. However, the ultimate element from which redemption is required is human sin. Sin, according to O'Collins, enslaves all human beings.[7]

2.1. The Sinful Human Condition

O'Collins holds the view that a discussion on salvation ought to begin from the events of the redemption; however, his enquiry begins from an overview of the human condition,[8] which

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[5] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. ix. According to Gabriel Daly, "[t]he doctrine of redemption has been remarkably resistant to development by speculative accumulation and the normal ebb and flow of theological dialectic. Unlike the doctrine of the person of Christ the doctrine of the meaning of his passion and death seems to have its receptive centre in us at a pre-conceptual level. Myth rather than metaphysics is its most appropriate vehicle of expression." See GABRIEL DALY, *Theology of Redemption in the Fathers,* in WILFRED HARRINGTON (ed.), *Witness to the Spirit. Essays on Revelation, Spirit, Redemption* (Dublin: Irish Biblical Association, 1979) 133-148, p. 135.

[6] HANS KÜNG, *Christianity. The Religious Situation of Our Time*, p. 711.

[7] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Redemption. Some Crucial Issues*, in STEPHEN T. DAVIS, DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS, The *Redemption. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Christ as Redeemer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 1-22, p. 2.

[8] O'Collins is inspired by the title of the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* of Pope John Paul II in his explication of the salvific work of Jesus Christ. However, he works the theme out in the reverse order beginning from '*homo*' and ending with '*redemptor*'. In his encyclical the Pope begins from Jesus as the redeemer and moves on to speak about the contemporary human condition created by the technological and scientific advancement that turns against its own inventors. He speaks also of the mission of the Church to work towards the redemption of human beings by being united with them just as Christ is united with the Church. See JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptor Hominis,* especially 9, 16, and 18, in CLAUDIA CARLEN IHM, *The Papal Encyclicals 1958-1981* (Washington D.C.: McGrath, 1981) 245-273, pp. 251, 257-259, 261-263.

reflects his view that the central problem is sin, understood as the essence of the human predicament addressed by salvation.[9] The Scripture portrays the deliberate disobedience to the will of God by the first man and woman,[10] Adam and Eve (Gen 2),[11] as the reason behind the present human condition of sin. Sin brought about the "loss of familiarity with God" leading to an inexorable fate of death which is "a grievous sign of sin."[12] Moreover, according to O'Collins, the Scripture speaks about the continuity of sinful actions by humankind and their personal responsibility and culpability for the sins they commit. The Old Testament understands

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[9] In the discussion about salvation, the general order is to begin from the redemptive activity of Jesus Christ and to move on to speak about the need of salvation. However, O'Collins begins from sin and the human condition, which according to O'Collins, is objected to by various people. First, "Christian preachers, theologians, and spiritual writers have often made the valuable observation that we cannot 'really know' the malice of sin until we deeply appreciate how our salvation came through the suffering and death of Christ." However, O'Collins begins from sin because of his conviction that St. Paul begins from sin and moves towards salvation. For Paul the sequence is: 'universal sinfulness' (all are guilty (Rom 3:23)), "righteousness or justification (Rom 3:24-5:21), God's saving act through Christ (Rom 8:1-4), life according to the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:5-17), and the rest." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 44. Second, O'Collins says that Eastern Christianity blames the West for considering sin as the beginning point and correlating "liberation from sin with the cross." In their view redemption cannot be reduced to the liberation of humanity from sin through the cross and death of Christ. It should respect the value of the resurrection and the work of the Holy Spirit in the redemptive work. In their terms, this is the 'divinization' of human beings. However, O'Collins is of the view that starting from sin does not exclude other aspects, such as resurrection, the work of the Holy Spirit and divinization. Third, some people, while speaking about salvation, give prominence to 'suffering' which is seen as a universal phenomenon. Regarding the tendency to begin with suffering, see FRANCES YOUNG, *Suffering*, in ADRIAN HASTINGS; ALISTAIR MASON & HUGH PYPER (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (Oxford, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000) 687-689; M. MCCORD ADAMS, *Evil, Problem of,* in EDWARD CRAIG (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 3 (London: Routledge, 1998) 466-472; JOHANN BAPTIST METZ, *The Future in the Memory of Suffering,* in JOHANN BAPTIST METZ (ed.), *New Questions on God* (New York, NY: Herder & Herder, 1972) 9-25. O'Collins is of the view that although salvation from suffering is necessary, one cannot say that salvation is necessary from all types of suffering, because there are certain sufferings which are for the good of human beings, for e.g., suffering for spiritual growth. He holds that "sin and suffering are radically connected... But it is above all the power, pollution, and alienation of sin that call for the redemption of human beings and their world." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 45-47. See also ROBIN C. COVER & E. P. SANDERS, *Sin, Sinners*, in DAVID NOEL FREEDMAN, *et al.* (eds.), *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992) 31-47; ALISTER MCFADYEN, *Sin,* in ADRIAN HASTINGS, ALISTAIR MASON & HUGH PYPER (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000) 665-668; *Sin*, in F. L. CROSS & E. A. LIVINGSTONE (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 3rd edn., 1997 [1957]) 1505. Fourth, salvation is seen as satisfying the hunger of the human heart for a life that is full and which endures forever. The hunger and thirst is for the "God who is total Life, Meaning, and Love" or the "fullness of truth, goodness, and beauty" which are to be found ultimately in God. According to O'Collins, St. Augustine's idea of human beings' aspiration to find ultimate rest in God because "our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee [God]" and Karl Rahner's idea of human beings being "oriented towards God" are similar to this understanding of salvation. See ST. AUGUSTINE, *Confessions,* I. 1., in PHILIP SCHAFF (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 55; KARL RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity,* p. 44. However, O'Collins says that even when Augustine and Rahner spoke of the human hunger for union with God, they could not stop short of speaking about the impact of sin. Augustine knew how sin could be a hindrance to the union with God and Rahner wrote extensively, dedicating one whole chapter to sin and guilt in his *Foundations of Christian Faith*. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 47.

[10] O'Collins says that the first sin of Adam and Eve represents the personification of the collective sin of the first human beings who "through their sin drifted away from what God intended for them and so left to their descendants a world which lacks what God wanted, a world in which manifold evil hampers the proper exercise of freedom." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 52.

[11] According to O'Collins, "'Adam and Eve' symbolize not only the dignity of human beings made in the image of and likeness of God ... but also their solidarity in sin from which the Redeemer comes to deliver them." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 115.

[12] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 49.

sin as rebellion against God and the breaking of the covenantal relationship with God. In the New Testament Jesus considered sin as coming from within the human person (Mk 7:20-23; Mt. 5:27-28), and St. Paul personified sin as the "cosmic force of evil that enters into human beings through their submission to it." St. John in his Gospel understands sin in terms of one's relationship to Christ. For John, sin is "choosing of darkness, hatred, and falsity, rather than light, love, and truth" that is, "refusal to 'come' to Christ and believe in him." Hence, those who refuse to come to belief in Christ are sinners. The Christocentrism of John implies a counterpoint, i.e., "Sinners are 'children of the devil' (1 Jn 3:8)."[13] According to O'Collins, St. Augustine saw sin as breaking the 'eternal law', "an egoistic love of self, associated with a deep unwillingness to love God" or pride, and a "'turning away from God and a turning toward creatures'." Sin understood in this way means that, through sin, "The creature turns to selfishness as opposed to interdependence and interconnectedness, two fundamental characteristics of God's creation."[14] O'Collins concludes that in the Christian tradition the discussion of sin always oscillated between "a 'legal' and a relational understanding." Today sin is understood by the Church in personal and relational terms. Sin is a turning against oneself, others and God.[15] O'Collins explains sin by means of a threefold typology of the human condition.

2.2. The Threefold Typology of the Human Condition

O'Collins explains the human condition of sin with the help of a threefold typology of the human person as oppressed (*homo servilis*), contaminated (*homo contaminatus*) and wounded within (*homo egocentratus*). He describes the oppressive forces which make human beings into candidates for redemption 'oppression from without'. This includes the mystery of evil,[16] suffering, sin and death, demonic forces and law. All of these are considered to be 'outside powers' that destroy human beings.[17] The Bible speaks of liberation from these oppressive powers in various ways: as light to those in darkness (Jn 1:79); liberation of the captives (Jn 4:18); healing of the sick and liberation from satanic forces (Lk 13:16); etc. St. Paul speaks of

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[13] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 55.

[14] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 57. Cf. also ST. AUGUSTINE, *Contra Faustum* XXII. 27, in PHILIP SCHAFF (eds.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* Vol. 4, p. 283.

[15] Pope John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation on *Reconciliation and Penance* saw sin as "the radical cause of all wounds and divisions between people, and in the first place between people and God." See JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Exhortation on Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church Today* 4, in *Origins* 14 (1984-1985) 432-458, p. 436.

[16] According to Immanuel Kant, the world is constantly in the grasp of evil, and evil is as old as human history. He understands that "the world began with something good: with the Golden Age, with life in Paradise, or an even happier life in communion with heavenly beings." For him, evil is something that has come into the world because of "an accelerating fall." See IMMANUEL KANT, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, in ALLEN WOOD & GEORGE DI GIOVANNI (eds.), *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 30-192, p. 45.

[17] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 136.

the oppressive forces of sin and death (Rom 5:12, 14, 17, 21; 6:6ff.), and the law (Gal 3:13). According to O'Collins, Christian teaching, liturgy, theology, spirituality and art continue to portray the need to save human beings from different kinds of oppressive forces.[18] The human condition of being contaminated by sin and the need of being cleansed from sin and guilt is another significant theme in the Old Testament and New Testament (e.g., cleansing from sin - Ps 51:2; Is 6:5-7 - and baptism understood as the washing and sanctification of human beings - 1 Cor 6:11). Another feature of the human condition that the scriptures often speak is the 'failure to love' or "inner wounds, sickness and hard-heartedness" (Ez 36:25; Mk 7:21-23; Rom 1:31; 7:17, 20) caused by sin making human beings incapable of love and necessitating redemption.[19] An examination of the human condition, according to O'Collins, helps one to realize that evil and sin from within and without make human beings candidates for salvation. The threefold typology of the human condition is also described in the form of the history of human suffering[20] and fear from which human beings seek liberation.

O'Collins suggests that the threefold evil of oppression, contamination and failure to love does not completely damage the divine image in human beings. He says that "[w]hat was free, pure and good in the divine creation could never be completely wiped out." Hence, according to him, redemption was not a "rescue operation as if the initial scheme of creation had simply failed. Redemption was not a totally new start."[21] However, the human condition requires redemption

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[18] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* pp. 136-137. O'Collins is of the view that in our contemporary world the oppressive forces wear new masks, such as drugs, sexual drives, greed for possessions, which affect human beings individually and communally. He calls the economic powers and scientific technology that keep the majority of people under slavery demonic powers which are "the principalities and powers" with new faces. Other forces that keep human beings under bondage are: "uncontrollable greed, exploitation, institutional injustice, the arms race, revenge, attacks and violence of all kinds." He is of the view that "[a]nxiety and impotence in the face of evil forces 'out there' have not disappeared; they have simply relocated." In his understanding, idol worship, which is the root cause of sin in the Old Testament, is replaced in modern times by reverence for new idols, such as "National Security, Communism and the Gross National Product." See p. 137.

[19] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 138-139.

[20] Edward Schillebeeckx deals extensively with the human condition and also with the idea of suffering in the major religions of the world and ideologies in, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, before he examines the issue of salvation, which is the answer to suffering. He says that, "[i]n all cultures and societies known to us, men have used very different categories and human conceptions, theoretically, and above all in practice, in their attempts to cope with their experience of the history of human suffering. Even against the background of meaningful, joyful and satisfying experiences and hoped-for salvation, the history of suffering among man, and indeed in the animal world and throughout the universe, is the constant theme of every account of life, every philosophy and every religion; and today even of science and technology." See EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX, *Christ. The Experience of Jesus as Lord,* p. 671. According to Schillebeeckx, all religions, though they differ in their treatment of the suffering of human beings, have one thing in common, i.e., all of them reject dualism, the existence of two supreme principles, one good and other evil. Manichaeism held a dualistic view of the relationship between matter and spirit, and good and evil. In human beings the good was always trying to emancipate itself from the bad. See pp. 672-673. Jürgen Moltmann and Johann Baptist Metz also dealt with the human condition from the purview of suffering. Moltmann, in fact, develops a theology of the cross to understand the meaning of suffering. See JÜRGEN MOLTMANN, *The Crucified God. The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology,* London: SCM Press, 1974; JOHANN BAPTIST METZ, *Faith in History and Society. Toward A Practical Fundamental Theology,* trans. DAVID SMITH, New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1980 [1977], see especially, pp. 100-153.

[21] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 140. The Second Vatican Council teaches that the image of God in human beings (Gen 1:26) is not completely destroyed by sin. Sin brought man to a lower state but did not destroy him, it pushed

and a redeemer because, left to themselves, human beings cannot free themselves from oppression, contamination and inner wounds, i.e., there is no self-redemption. But the fact that human beings require salvation does not deny the reality of the existence of people who reject the need of salvation and those who hope for self-redemption. O'Collins identifies two kinds of people when speaking about self-redemption. On the one hand, there are people who refuse to admit that they commit sin and are so optimistic about their life that they do not see the need of a redeemer, i.e., they are self-reliant people and are confident about their own ability to achieve everything in their life. On the other hand, there are also people who feel utterly dejected and are pessimistic about their ability to attain anything in their life on earth. These people feel that, left to themselves, they cannot be redeemed. In their case, redemption is possible only on the initiative of an outside redeemer. According to O'Collins, all of these point to the fact that we require someone from beyond to free us from the human condition of sin, suffering and mortality.[22]

2.3. Original Sin and the Universal Need for Redemption

In Christianity, besides and above the threefold typology of the human condition of sin that makes human beings candidates for redemption, there exists the notion of 'original sin'. Considering the elaborate and extremely controversial discussions of original sin that have taken place, it is improper to make a hasty attempt to understand this notion here. We restrict our discussion of original sin as a background to O'Collins' view of salvation. Reflection over original sin[23] began from the established practice of baptising children and adults, with a view to the remittance of sin, in the early Christian period. The immediate cause of this reflection was the question about the necessity of infant baptism, a practice surrounded by controversies even today.

The most significant discussion about original sin took place between St. Augustine of Hippo and the disciples of Pelagius.[24] The disciples of Pelagius maintained that the human person "can

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him away from his completeness. The Council says that the effect of sin on human beings is that it "diminished them and prevented them from attaining their fulfilment." See SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Gaudium et Spes*, 13, p. 1076.

[22] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 61-62.

[23] "Original Sin is the state or condition in which, because of the sin of Adam and Eve, all human persons are born. The term has two references: the initial, 'ongoing' sin of Adam and Eve (*peccatum originale originans*), and the subsequent 'originated' universality of human sin (*peccatum originale originatum*)." The biblical basis for original sin is the account of the first sin of Adam and Eve (Gn 2:8-3:24). The basis for the doctrine in the New Testament is St. Paul's letters (1 Cor 15:21-23 and Rom 5:12-21). See RICHARD P. MCBRIEN, *Catholicism,* p. 184. According to Roger Haight, "[t]he term original sin has had simultaneously two inter-related referents: the originating sin at the dawn of human existence, often called the fall, and the damaging effects of that sin resulting in a sinful condition of the whole race. The recognition of this sinful condition is a matter of faith. The doctrine of sin depends on some form of revelation." See ROGER HAIGHT, *Sin and Grace,* in FRANCIS SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA & JOHN P. CALVIN (eds.), *Systematic Theology. Roman Catholic Perspectives,* Vol. 2 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991) 77-141, p. 85.

[24] St. Augustine was the first theologian to deal with original sin in detail. Although he has no systematic work on original sin, Augustine is understood to have maintained that the guilt of Adam and Eve is shared by all human beings.

take the initial and fundamental steps towards salvation by his own efforts, apart from Divine grace" because of their ability to choose good. Human beings are able to choose good because their nature is created by God. The Pelagians are alleged to have denied the reality of original sin and the need of God's grace in attaining remission from sin.[25] According to O'Collins, Pelagians understood original sin as merely a "bad example of Adam and Eve, which had not interiorly harmed their descendants." Hence, infants do not inherit sin, and their baptism is meant only to make them members of the Church.[26] Augustine refuted Pelagians on two accounts: First, the practice of child baptism for the forgiveness of sin proved that infants, too, were born in an inherited state of sin. Second, the faith that Jesus Christ came to save the whole of humanity meant that all were in need of salvation and that through baptism all, including infants, were brought into the life of Christ and gained access to God.[27] Augustine's view on original sin was based on the writings of St. Paul who taught that through the sin of Adam "death spread to all men because all men sinned" (Rom 5:12). Augustine's teaching and his influence on the members of the assembly that gathered to discuss the issue of original sin bore fruit at the Council of Carthage (418), which upheld three positions: physical death was the consequence of sin; there is need of infant baptism; and all who die in original sin without being baptised are condemned to eternal punishment.[28] In the context of the Protestant Reformation and the controversies concerning the doctrine of Justification, the Council of Trent took a definite stand with regard to the original sin by upholding original sin.[29] Hence, today one could rightly say

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See B. V. MILLER, *The Fall of Man and Original Sin,* in GEORGE D. SMITH (ed.), *The Teaching of the Catholic Church. A Summary of Catholic Doctrine,* Vo. 1 (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1960) 320-358, p. 343.

[25] *Pelagianism*, in F. L. CROSS & E. A. LIVINGSTONE (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd edn. (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997 [1957]) 1248-1249, p. 1248.

[26] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 64-65.

[27] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 66. According to Augustine, everyone had to receive baptism and those children who die without baptism could not gain eternal life. See ST. AUGUSTINE, *Contra Duas Epistolas Pelegianorum*, I. 40[xxii]-41[xxiii], in PHILIP SCHAFF (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* Vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 390.

[28] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 67. See also JOSEF NEUNER & JACQUES DUPUIS, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, nos. 501 & 502, 6th ed., Bangalore: Theological Publication in India, 1998, p. 183. After the Council of Carthage, the Second Council of Orange (529), Pope Innocent III in his letter to Humbert, Archbishop of Arles (1201), and the Council of Trent (1546) upheld the doctrine of original sin. Discussions on original sin took place later in the encyclicals of Popes and in the Ecumenical Councils. See JOSEF NEUNER & JACQUES DUPUIS, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, nos. 503-517, pp. 183-190.

[29] According to O'Collins, leaders of the Protestant Reformation, like Martin Luther, John Calvin, etc., overemphasised original sin. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 69. B. V. Miller is of the view that "[w]ith the coming of Protestantism in all its many forms, the whole dogma of original sin became once more the subject matter of attack, denial, and controversy. Some of the Protestant theologians attenuated its importance and its effects, others exaggerated them beyond all measure, even going so far as to say that human nature was wholly corrupted and free will destroyed." According to Miller, the Council of Trent taught against the errors and defined the doctrine of original sin more accurately. See B. V. MILLER, *The Fall of Man and Original Sin,* p. 343. The Council of Trent was of the same view as the Protestant Reformers concerning the cause of original sin which was Adam's sin and its effect on all human beings. However, the Council was against the view of the Protestants with regard to concupiscence, and taught that original sin is not concupiscence but "the lack of original righteousness (justice) and holiness." See RICHARD P. MCBRIEN, *Catholicism,* pp.188-189. The controversy between Catholics and Protestants remained focussed on the doctrine of 'justification' in which the doctrine of original sin remained one of the most

that all contemporary discussions concerning original sin draw upon the teaching of St. Augustine and the Council of Trent.

Today, theologians such as Roger Haight, hold that the current Catholic theology of original sin is witnessing a fundamental change "and is marked by considerable pluralism," because the doctrinal expression of Augustine's time does not seem to suit the present situation and the present conceptions of the world.[30] These changes mean that the credibility of such a teaching is questioned today. Haight is of the view that in modern times the reinterpretation of the doctrine of original sin has taken place mainly on three levels: (1) The new approaches in biblical studies, especially the use of the historical-critical method, has enabled theologians to rethink the scriptural basis for the doctrine of original sin; (2) patristic scholarship and the renewed study of Augustine have helped us to understand how the doctrine was developed and how it might be reinterpreted on the basis of the teachings of the Council of Trent; (3) through a method of correlation, contemporary systematic theology tries to reinterpret the doctrine in order to make it more understandable and to bring the "doctrine into dialogue with current theological conceptions of human existence that are themselves informed by scientific and philosophical thought."[31] According to Haight, Piet Schoonenberg correlated original sin with the 'sin of the

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important aspects. In the recent past, common declarations have taken place in which Catholics and Protestants have reached agreements on certain aspects of this doctrine. For example, after long years of discussions over the doctrine of justification the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation issued a joint declaration in which they set out their agreement on certain points related to the role of faith and works in justification. See CATHOLIC CHURCH AND LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification between the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church (Augsburg, 1999),* in *One in Christ* 36 (2000) 56-80. Catholics and Evangelicals issued a document entitled 'Gift of Salvation' in 1997 in which they agreed upon the fact that "justification is not earned by any good works or merits of our own; it is entirely God's gift." They also agreed that there are differences in understanding the notion of justification on which they ought to work together to bring about unity between the churches. See EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS, *Gift of Salvation*, in *First Things*, 79 (1998) 20-23, pp. 21, 22. These declarations are good examples of agreement on different issues that have been haunting the churches for centuries.. However, even after these joint declarations and concerted efforts to bring about unity between the churches, differences persist which still need to be overcome. According to C. Stephen Evans, "differences between Christians remain, and remain important, a fact that is acknowledged by all sides in the discussions." See C. STEPHEN EVANS, *Catholic-Protestant Views on Justification: How should Christians View Theological Disagreements?,* in GERALD O'COLLINS; STEPHEN T. DAVIS & DANIEL KENDALL (eds.), *The Redemption. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Christ as Redeemer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 255-273, p. 257. In the case of the Catholic-Lutheran Joint Declaration, according to Avery Dulles, although there is understanding with regard faith and works in the doctrine of justification, there are seven instances where the declaration seems to go against the anathemas of the Council of Trent. For example, he says that in this declaration the teaching of the Council of Trent that the recipients of justification are not passive but cooperate freely, is denied. A second objection is that while the Council of Trent sees justification and sanctification as two sides of the same coin, the declaration seems to go along the Lutheran way by seeing "justification and sanctification as two distinct but inseparable aspects of God's saving action." See for these and other objections, AVERY DULLES, *Two Languages of Salvation. The Lutheran-Catholic Joint Declaration*, in *First Things*, 98 (1999) 25-30, pp. 27-28.

[30] The reasons for the shifts in the Catholic theology of original sin, according to Haight, are: "our knowledge of the age of the planet; our sense of the evolution of the species; our growing knowledge of our continuity with other forms of life; our psychological views of the destructiveness of guilt; our attempts to formulate a more positive view of matter, the human body, sexuality, and emotion; the inadmissibility of guilt without responsibility." See ROGER HAIGHT, *Sin and Grace*, p. 86.

[31] ROGER HAIGHT, *Sin and Grace*, p. 87. For a detailed bibliography of works dealing with present trends in the understanding of original sin, see ROGER HAIGHT, *Sin and Grace*, p. 87.

world', which has accumulated in the history and which is the 'situation' in which all are born.[32] Juan Luis Segundo places original sin in the purview of the evolutionary process where it is seen as an element of "a permanent structure of human existence always in tension with grace."[33] Haight is aware of the fact that today many people deny original sin as such but acknowledge its 'reality', so to speak, as part of personal sin. To those who hold this view, "the doctrine of original sin is simply that all are sinners and depend absolutely on God's power of grace for the salvific exercise of freedom."[34] All these trends show that today there is much discussion about, and a variety of interpretations of, original sin. However, one definite element that almost all these discussions highlight is the personal dimension of original sin and the need to be saved from this human condition through the grace of God.

The teaching on original sin down the centuries, especially by St. Paul, St. Augustine, and the Councils, emphasising the sinful condition of all human beings, encourages O'Collins to consider the commonality of human beings in their sin and the need for their salvation. He is of the view that "original sin points to a basic *solidarity* in sin and salvation shared by 'us' human beings."[35] This brings us to the awareness that, from the beginning, human beings stand united in a situation in which they are imprisoned by sin, oppression, contamination, hardheartedness, and alienation from God, and in need of a universal saviour to bring about salvation from this situation. Original sin, according to O'Collins, sums up the threefold human condition and highlights the universal need for redemption and a redeemer. He believes that bodily death is "the primary sign and consequence of original sin." Only a spiritual rebirth through baptism could overcome this consequence of sin. According to O'Collins, the Church teaches that this rebirth into grace through baptism "is no natural right or personal achievement but God's free gift through Christ." Hence, in the perception of O'Collins, the teaching on original sin not only tells the story of the solidarity of human beings in sin but also of their solidarity in the call to supernatural life through the redeeming action of the saviour Jesus Christ. He says, "the doctrine of original sin underlines humanity's need for Christ's grace: there is no way to true fulfilment and eternal life except through him."[36] O'Collins' understanding of the human condition and

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[32] Cf. PIET SCHOONENBERG, *Man and Sin. A Theological View*, trans. JOSEPH DONCEEL, London: Sheed and Ward, 1965 [1962], pp. 177-191.

[33] ROGER HAIGHT, *Sin and Grace*, p. 88. See also JUAN LUIS SEGUNDO, *Evolution and Guilt*, trans. JOHN DRURY, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974.

[34] ROGER HAIGHT, *Sin and Grace*, p. 88. See also ALFRED VANNESTE, *The Dogma of Original Sin*, trans. EDWARD P. CALLENS, Brussels: Vander, 1971; BRIAN O. MCDERMOTT, *The Theology of Original Sin. Recent Developments,* in *Theological Studies* 38 (1977) 478-512. McDermott argues in his article that some theologians, such as Karl-Heinz Weger, Karl Rahner, Charles Baumgartner, Maurizio Flick, Zolton Alzeghy, Sharon MacIsaac, and Pierre Grelot, understand original sin as a distinct reality. However, other theologians, such as Urs Baumann, Alfred Vanneste, Karl Schmitz-Moormann, Juan Luis Segundo, Dominiciano Fernandez, and G. Vandervelde do not consider original sin as a distinct reality.

[35] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 141.

[36] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 67.

original sin makes it abundantly clear that, for him, all human beings are in need of salvation and that Jesus is the only saviour.

The emphasis here on original sin is not intended to deny or downplay the fact and impact of personal sins. While original sin is regarded as inherited and as therefore not involving a deliberate offence against God, personal sins involve deliberate choice and offence against God. While through original sin the beatific vision of God is lost, personal sin necessarily involves personal punishment.[37] O'Collins' emphasis on original sin is intended to highlight the impact of original sin on the *whole human race* and humanity's *solidarity in sin* which makes all of us candidates for salvation.

2.4. The Recipients of Salvation

An exposition of the human condition and original sin tells us much about the recipients of salvation. O'Collins believes that there are personal and collective needs for salvation. Individually, in the Old Testament, salvation could mean blessings on people (e.g., the gift of a son - 1 Sam 1:1-2:11; the blessing of a father - Gen 27:1-29); and deliverance from wicked people (Ps 20:9), enemies (Ps 7:109), trouble (Ps 34), dangers in war (Ps 18), and death (Ps 86:13).[38] The New Testament speaks of deliverance from physical danger (Ac 23:24), sin (Lk 1:18), sickness (Lk 8:48) deformity (Mk 3:4), demonic possession (Mk 1:34), death (Mt 14:30), the power of wealth (Mk 10:25-26), evil and the evil one (Mt 6:13). The gift of a son is also considered as a saving intervention of God (Lk 1:67-79).[39] In the Old Testament, the group's need of salvation is stressed, such as Noah and his family who were saved from the destructive flood (Gen 6:5-9:19); the family of Joseph who were saved from starvation (Gen 37-50); the whole people of Israel being saved from slavery under other kingdoms and other people (Ex 14:1-15-21; 1 Sm 11:13), and from famine and death (Ps 33:19). While salvation is at times restricted to the people of Israel as a nation, there are also instances of a universalistic view of the salvation of the whole people, but in a centralist form. For example, the call of Isaiah is a universal call for all the Gentile nations to salvation, but Jerusalem is the centre (Is 2:1-4) towards which all nations move. There are also occasions when salvation is understood in terms of moral conversion, such as in the case of the conversion of the Nineveites at the preaching of the prophet Jonah (Jon 3:1-10), where a change of religion is not envisioned.[40] The New

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[37] Pope Innocent III distinguished between original and actual sins: "original which is contracted without consent and actual which is committed with consent." Because original sin is without consent, the remittance also takes place without consent through baptism. However, actual sin which is done with consent needs personal consent for its remittance. See POPE INNOCENT III, *Letter to Humbert, Archbishop of Arles*, in JOSEF NEUNER & JACQUES DUPUIS, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, no. 506, p. 184.

[38] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Salvation,* in DAVID NOEL FREEDMAN *et al.* (eds.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992) 907-914, pp. 907-908.

[39] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Salvation,* p. 910.

[40] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Salvation*, p. 908. O'Collins also points out many examples from the Old Testament to support the argument that the Hebrew scriptures maintained a certain sense of universalism with respect to the redemptive work

Testament, too, stresses the common need of salvation rather than the need of individual salvation. It is from the power of sin (Mt 1:21), death (Lk 1:79), and cosmic powers (Gal 4:3, 9) that the community needs salvation. O'Collins holds that the letter to the Hebrews sums up the human condition that calls for liberation through Jesus from "bondage to sin, the devil, death, and the fear of death" (cf. Heb 2:14-18). The solidarity of all human beings in sin and the need of deliverance from this condition is emphasised by Paul who says that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:24).[41] A perusal of O'Collins' list of the needs that inspire the longing for salvation, and the recipients of salvation, both in the Old Testament and New Testament, reveal that no one is excluded from the clutches of the bonded human condition and that both as individuals and as a community there is real need of salvation. O'Collins' analysis also highlights that the salvation brought about by God is not specific to one group of people, but inclusive of all people and the whole world. However, one cannot ignore the centralist form of salvation that O'Collins perceives in the scriptures.

3. The Nature of Salvation

When one speaks about the nature of salvation, one is in fact talking about the goal of salvation made possible by the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[42] The goal is the redemption or the deliverance of human beings and the universe from all forces of sin and evil in order for humankind to be finally admitted to eternal happiness in the presence of God. According to O'Collins, the final goal of salvation is "a totally fulfilling union with God through Christ."[43] In what follows, we shall examine the notion of salvation from various points of view, especially from the point of view of the scriptures.

3.1. Salvation in the Old Testament

According to O'Collins, salvation has material/this-worldly and spiritual/other-worldly dimensions. In the Old Testament, the prototype of salvation is the deliverance of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land. Material prosperity, national prosperity, freedom from slavery, protection of one's goods, rightful patrimony, victory over battle, peace with other people (Is

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of God. The main examples are of the holy pagan Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-22); the queen of Sheba (1 Kg 10); the stories of Ruth, and Job. O'Collins considers the story of the flood in the Old Testament as expressing God's saving will for all the creatures on the earth (Gen 1:1-19).

[41] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Salvation,* p. 910.

[42] According to O'Collins, salvation cannot be considered only from the point of view of the death and resurrection of Jesus. It has to be seen from the perspective of the whole Christ-event, from the conception to Jesus' resurrection from the dead. O'Collins says, "the victorious impact of the incarnation began with the conception and birth of Christ. The interlocking of all people and all things means that the personal and physical presence of the Son of God changed at once the whole material world." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 121. He also points out that the presence of the Magi (Mt 28:19-20), the story of Christ's descent from Adam (Lk 3:38), and the title Saviour given at his birth (Lk 2:11) allude to the "universal significance of the salvation Jesus is bringing." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 123-124.

[43] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 47.

2:1-5) and harmony with nature (Is 11:1-9), etc., are understood as this-worldly salvation. The spiritual dimension was symbolized in the bringing back of Israel from exile and the offer of a new life (Ez 37:1-14), the cleansing of people from their sins and giving them new hearts (Ez 36:22-32), the presence of God in the temple and the coexistence of people in God's presence (Jer 31:17), etc. Salvation also possessed a future-oriented element because people awaited extraordinary interventions from God, such as some new divine action for Israel (Am 7:1-9), a renewal (Hos 2:6-7), the birth of a new Davidic king (Is 9:2-7), a new covenant (Jer 31:34), etc. O'Collins points out that some of the prophetic expectations about the future pointed towards an eschatology that took "the form of apocalyptic hopes for resurrection of the dead and new life with God in a transformed world" (e.g., Is. 26:19).[44] Hence, the Old Testament vision of salvation involved both material and spiritual dimensions. The chosen people were to experience these in their lives at different periods of time.

3.2. Salvation in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the earthly dimension of salvation takes a back seat. However, there is a mention of earthly goals such as deliverance from political oppression (Lk 13:1-5), and national salvation (Lk 24:21). According O'Collins, the New Testament understanding of the salvation in the present takes into account the practical concerns of the poor and the needy, and the establishment of a just world for them. The spiritual dimension of salvation consisted in "'the rule of God' and 'the kingdom of heaven'." The ministry of Jesus through preaching, teaching and healing, "initiated the final saving intervention of God" (Mt 12:28) through the forgiveness of the sins of men and women.[45] O'Collins says that the idea of salvation in the Acts is more direct. There we find the claim that "whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:21). Conversion and baptism meant deliverance and the forgiveness of sins and the bestowal of the gift of the Spirit. For Paul salvation means freedom from sin, the law, death, and cosmic powers. It also means life in Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit, peace with God, justification, new creation, reconciliation and life as adopted sons and daughters. O'Collins is of the view that the present experience of salvation is "only a fragmentary anticipation of the full and final salvation to come from God." In many places Jesus speaks of the final coming of redemption (Mk 8:35; 13:13; Lk 21:28). The future salvation is sharing in the glory of Christ (Rom 8:17). The consummation of salvation takes place at the second coming of Christ when all things will be made new (Rev 21:1-22:5).[46] Salvation is finally understood as the resurrection of the bodies of human beings. From that time on, there will be no more death. However, the nature of this transformation has not yet been disclosed to human beings. It can be known only if one

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[44] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Salvation,* p. 909.

[45] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Salvation,* p. 911.

[46] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Salvation,* p. 911.

experiences the resurrection oneself. According to O'Collins, St. Paul points to the possibility of knowing about the transformation at the resurrection and what the future holds for each one when he says, "[w]hat no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him, God has revealed to us through the Spirit" (I Cor 2:9-10).[47] O'Collins also points out that the transformation that takes place in human beings through resurrection is different from the resurrection of Jesus. O'Collins maintains that "Christ differs from all other human beings in that he is a divine person who assumed the human condition and had the unique role of being the Saviour of the world. … The redemptive goal of the incarnation needs to be respected, and that justifies the scope of the empty tomb." Further, O'Collins argues that "[Jesus'] personal identity and redemptive function make it plausible that Christ's dead body should be 'incorporated' immediately into his risen existence, and hence, that he would enjoy 'more' bodily continuity than we will."[48] Whatever be the form that human beings take at the resurrection, one thing is clear. O'Collins regards the resurrection of human beings as their final redemption. O'Collins clearly relies on the scriptures to develop his notion of salvation. While there is ample evidence in the scriptures for understanding salvation as a present reality experienced by people through the death and resurrection of Christ, the ultimate expression of salvation is understood as a future event.

3.3. Salvation and Deification

O'Collins notes that a number of theologians belonging to Eastern Christianity summarize the whole process of salvation as 'divinization'[49] or 'deification' (*theosis*), which is a sharing in the divine life. Deification is considered as sharing in the loving relationship that exists in the Trinity, but not in the divine substance. Hence, salvation means seeing God 'face to face' and the completion of "being made 'in the image and likeness' of God." O'Collins says that "becoming 'like God' will make redeemed men and women perfectly good, with the qualification that in

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[47] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 251.

[48] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 252, 253-254.

[49] For a comprehensive understanding of divinization, See, JULES GROSS, *The Divinization of the Christian according to the Greek Fathers,* trans. PAUL A. ONICA, Anaheim, CA: A & C Press, 2002. According to Gross, divinization is the essence of the Greek Fathers' soteriology. He says, "The whole redemptive work of Christ, from the incarnation to the resurrection as well as the action of the Holy Spirit and of the church which continues this work, converge on deification as the completion of our salvation." Although the Greek Fathers do not define *theosis,* to them, "the divinization of the Christian is not an identification with God; it is only an assimilation, a very eminent restoration of the original divine likeness. This assimilation certainly involves conformity of a moral nature. The Christian participates by grace in the perfections that God possesses by nature, such as wisdom, impassibility, and love." In divinization the Spirit's role is significant. "The Spirit transforms the soul to the image of the Logos, the natural Son of God, thus making the Christian an adoptive child of God." The Holy Spirit conforms the soul to the image of God both morally and physically: "it is a veritable partaking of the divine nature and of the divine life. Of the essential perfections of divinity, namely, unbegottenness and incorruptibility, only the latter is communicable to creatures. To partake of the divine nature is thus, above all, to partake of incorruptibility." Thus, the Greek Fathers, according to Gross, identify "the terms *deify* and *immortalize.*" See pp. 271-272.

this 'deification' such properties will belong to them contingently and not essentially."[50] The second letter of Peter considers this sharing as God's call to "life and godliness," and "to his own glory and excellence." It is a call from corruption to "become the partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:3-4). O'Collins is of the view that this text encouraged "the notion of the ultimate happiness of the redeemed as seeing God 'face to face'" and became "the key text for the master theme of Eastern theology, divinization."[51] According to him, "[a]ll divine giving is self-giving." What is given by God is the 'self-gift of love'. Jesus reveals himself and the Father in his love (Jn 14:21; Jn 15:15). According to O'Collins, love involves self-manifestation. "Love prompted the divine self-manifestation, a self-manifestation in Christ that has saved human beings."[52] He also is of the view that there is a future dimension to this loving revelation, which is the final appearing of Jesus Christ (Tit 2:13). At the final coming of Jesus Christ, "both redemption and revelation will reach their definitive consummation" (cf. also 1 Jn 3:2). Ultimately, he says, this "redeeming love works through the personal operation of the Holy Spirit and the initiative of the Father."[53] From the above discussion, it is clear that, according to O'Collins, salvation - which is understood as divinization by Eastern Christians - is the process through which one shares in the divine life of the Trinity. It takes place at the initiative of God and includes both the redemption of human beings and the self-revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ, which will find its definitive consummation at the final coming of Christ.

4. The Language of Salvation

The language of salvation or redemption, which has its roots in the OT, was used by the Christian communities to speak about the saving activity of Christ who bought us 'at a price' (I Cor 6:20) with his 'precious blood' (1 Pet 1:18-19) on the cross. His blood was the ransom paid for the redemption of many.[54] The Christian community also used other notions and categories for the redemptive work of Jesus for the salvation of human beings, such as expiation and sacrifice. Before we analyse the metaphors of salvation, it is important to point out the

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[50] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Redemption. Some Crucial Issues*, p. 6.

[51] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 197. According to O'Collins, the Christians in East and West read 2 Pet 1:3-4 in different contexts. "While the East characteristically starts with eternal life as the origin of everything, the West often approaches God as the source of freedom for individual human persons. The East dwells on the whole 'economy' or history of relations between God and creatures, while the West insists on the individual's response to God." See GERALD O'COLLINS & MARIO. FARRUGIA, *Catholicism. The History of Catholic Christianity,* p. 203.

[52] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 198.

[53] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 198.

[54] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Redemption. Some Crucial Issues*, p. 8. O'Collins mentions that some people literally treated the metaphor of 'ransom' to speak about the hopeless situation from which Jesus saved human beings by paying a price to the devil. However, according to him, St. Gregory of Nazianzus protested against such a literal use of the metaphor. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Redemption. Some Crucial Issues*, p. 9.

connection between the theme of salvation and the points we have already developed in our previous chapters.

4.1. The Threefold Typology of Salvation

According to O'Collins, in almost all the pages of both the Old Testament and New Testament and in the liturgy of the Church one finds the mention of salvation[55] and the need for salvation. However, he laments that while there is clearly developed terminology regarding Christology and the person of Jesus Christ, there is lack of a unified view concerning salvation or soteriology from the point of view of conciliar clarifications.[56] Just in the way O'Collins outlined the human condition through the threefold typology he explains salvation by explicating some key terms or metaphors, or the threefold typology of salvation, such as redemption, atonement and reconciliation, and expiation,[57] which are in certain sense interchangeable and overlapping. However, he cautions that the overlapping of their meanings and inter-changeability does not mean that they are "variant ways of saying the same thing." They have their particular meanings and denotations.[58]

4.1.1. Salvation as Redemption

According to O'Collins, the term 'redemption', which had a basis in the Old Testament concept of 'buying back' and '*ga'al*' was used inter-changeably with the term 'salvation' and two less prominent terms – 'liberation' and 'deliverance' – to mark rescue from physical and spiritual dangers (e.g., salvation of the world through Christ (Jn 3:17), salvation from enemies (Lk 1:71); and God as Saviour (Is. 45:15, 21; Lk 1:47)). O'Collins holds that the term 'salvation' became the central focus in the summary text of Luke's Gospel and Acts where Luke speaks about the

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[55] According to O'Collins, there are many terms in Hebrew in the Old Testament which express the meaning of salvation: "*nāsal* ('deliver'), *pālat* ('bring to safety'), *pādāh* (var. *pāda*, 'redeem'), and *mālat* ('deliver'). Two major salvific terms are *gāal* ('redeem,' 'buy back,' 'restore,' 'vindicate,' or 'deliver') and *yāša* ('save' 'help in time of distress,' 'rescue,' 'deliver,' or 'set free'). The LXX translates *yāša* as *sōzō* ('save') 138 times." "The NT uses the very *sōzō* ('save,' 'keep from harm,' rescue,' 'heal,' or 'liberate') 106 times, and its compound *diasōzō* 9 times. The corresponding nouns *sōtēria* ('salvation'), *sōtēr* ('savior') and *sōtērion* ('salvation') turn up 45, 24, and 4 times respectively. We find the very *ruomai* ('rescue') 15 times in the NT, which also uses many other terms ('freedom', 'justification,' 'life,' 'reconciliation,' 'redemption,' 'resurrection,' and 'rule of God') to express salvation." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Salvation,* pp. 907, 910.

[56] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, p. 279.

[57] According to Gordon D. Fee, Paul uses redemption, *hilasterion* (means of atonement), reconciliation and justification as metaphors of salvation. He also says that historic Protestantism preferred the term 'justification' almost to the exclusion of other terms. See GORDON D. FEE, *Paul and the Metaphors for Salvation. Some Reflections on Pauline Soteriology*, in STEPHEN T. DAVIS, DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS, The *Redemption. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Christ as Redeemer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 43-67, p. 49.

[58] Gordon D. Fee says that, "although metaphors do indeed give expression to *one dimension of a reality*, no one of them is adequate to embrace *the whole of that reality*." See GORDON D. FEE, *Paul and the Metaphors for Salvation. Some Reflections on Pauline Soteriology*, p. 49.

universal significance of salvation through Jesus (Lk 4:12).[59] While the terms redemption and salvation were used interchangeably for the saving action of Jesus Christ, the terms Redeemer and Saviour became the two preferred titles for the person of Jesus Christ in post-NT Christianity. O'Collins says that at times in some of the hymns of the Church, 'redemption' was associated with the past act of Jesus and 'salvation' with the present and future activity of Jesus.[60] Nevertheless, there are instances where salvation is also seen as a past act. Hence, there is no exclusive use of the term salvation for the present and future activity of Jesus. Although one cannot find a hard and fast distinction between the two in their use in biblical, liturgical, and theological texts, O'Collins prefers the term salvation over redemption because "the former term seems richer and broader in meaning, especially in what it implies about the purposes, character, and image of God (and of the Son of God)."[61] To him, salvation has a broader meaning because it takes into account the whole saving activity in the life of a person in this world and in the life to come, i.e., God saves human beings from the dangers of this world and from eternal punishment.

4.1.2. Salvation as Atonement and Reconciliation

The term 'atonement,' which came to be used from the sixteenth century, speaks of an interpersonal relationship in which one becomes reconciled with another. When we apply this to Jesus, it means that through his death and resurrection humanity was made 'at one' with God. However, according to O'Collins, this term came to be used in a narrower sense at a later period. It meant making amends for the offences committed and the actions that were required to attain reconciliation.[62] Reconciliation, especially in Paul, denoted a transition of human beings from a state of alienation from God to a state of friendship and love which takes place on the initiative of God in and through Jesus Christ (Rom 5:10-11). However, according to O'Collins, "Paul does not present Christ as a distinct agent. It is God the Father who emerges as the sole active protagonist and who (in and through Christ) has accomplished our reconciliation."[63] For Paul reconciliation also had a cosmic dimension because through the Christ-event the whole cosmos

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[59] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 4-5. In the New Testament, God the Father is called saviour eight times and Christ is identified as saviour sixteen times. But in the New Testament it is Moses who is called redeemer (Acts 7:35) and not Christ. According to O'Collins, the term redemption, "drawn from the world of slavery and commercial transactions, became a biblical and traditional metaphor for describing the saving work of Jesus in delivering humanity from sin and evil… While never giving the title 'Redeemer' (*lutrotes*) to Christ, the NT call him 'our redemption' (*apolutrosis*) (1 Cor 1:30)." See, GERALD O'COLLINS, *Redemption*, in ADRIAN HASTINGS; ALISTAIR MASON & HUGH PYPER (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000) 508-601, p. 508.

[60] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 7-8. The title of a book by Paul Fiddes presents salvation as both past and present. See PAUL FIDDES, *Past Event and Present Salvation. The Christian Idea of Atonement,* London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1989.

[61] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 10.

[62] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 11.

[63] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 13.

was reconciled (Rom 11:15).[64] O'Collins is of the view that the cosmic reconciliation in Paul (Rom 11:15 and 2 Cor 5:19) could imply the whole of humanity and extend even beyond humanity (Col 1:19-20).[65] He also points out that "only conscious and willing agents can, properly speaking, be at enmity and then reconciled with each other in a new, peaceful situation." However, O'Collins believes that "[i]n the NT, 'reconciliation' does not point to God being changed or reconciled to human beings; rather it is God or God through Christ who effects reconciliation by changing us." What interests us here is that, through the term 'reconciliation', O'Collins speaks about the salvation of *all* in and through Christ, and also about the human need of a conscious move towards conforming to the plan of God which is made possible through the death and resurrection of Christ. Conformation to the plan of God, according to him, is a process which began with the incarnation of Jesus and continues to take place through the "deliverance from evil," the "cleansing by means of Christ's sacrifice," the "transformation by his love," "the activity of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the world," and ultimately and definitively "through the resurrection of human beings and their world."[66] Thereby, O'Collins brings the whole of humanity and the whole world under the purview of salvation. Although the initiative comes from God, he also speaks about the need of a conscious move towards that salvation on the part of human beings.

4.1.3. Salvation as 'Means of Expiation'

Another term, 'expiation' (*hilastêrion* used in Rom 3:25 and Heb 9:5), which refers to the means or place of 'propitiation' or 'an expiation'[67] or 'a means of expiation',[68] was designated in the LXX as the 'mercy seat' or "the golden cover on the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies." The 'mercy seat' was smeared with blood on the 'Day of Expiation or 'Yôm Kippûr' in order to symbolize the cleansing of the contaminated 'mercy seat' and the washing away of the sins of Israel. According to O'Collins, in Rom 3:24-25, the crucified Jesus took the place of the 'mercy seat' and removed the contamination of the sins of the whole of humanity and thereby became

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[64] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 11. Commenting on 2 Cor 5:19, Fitzmyer says that reconciliation concerns not only the relationship between human beings and God but also the whole universe. He says, "The providential aspect of Israel's 'rejection' has been the extension of reconciliation with God to all other human beings, and even a cosmic extension of that effect to the whole universe." See JOSEPH A. FITZMYER, *Romans,* in *The Anchor Bible* 33 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1993), p. 612. According to O'Collins, there is a problem concerning reconciliation because if it is considered as a realized fact on the initiative of God one could ask whether human beings have any role in achieving reconciliation.

[65] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 14. Victor Paul Furnish is of the view that, for Paul, in 2 Cor 5:19, which says that 'God, in Christ, was reconciling the world', the objects of God's reconciling act, which is the '*world*', are all human beings. However, in Rom 11:15 the object of God's reconciliation, 'the *world*', signified the Gentiles. See VICTOR PAUL FURNISH, *II Corinthians*, in *The Anchor Bible* 32a, New York, NY: Doubleday, 1984, p. 319.

[66] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 14-15.

[67] JAMES D. G. DUNN, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998, p. 213.

[68] JOSEPH A. FITZMYER, *Paul and His Theology. A Brief Sketch,* 2nd ed., Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989, p. 64.

'the expiation'. He is also of the view that when Paul and John used 'expiation' for Christ (Rom 3:25; 1 Jn 4:10), they did not signify "*our making amends* or atoning for our sins, still less of *our appeasing* the divine justice or propitiating an angry God. It is God who through Christ lovingly deals with our sins."[69] Hence, expiation ultimately rests on the initiative of God and through it human beings are saved from the stain of their sins.

Through these metaphors O'Collins speaks of salvation as an initiative from God to save all human beings and the whole cosmos from the effect of sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Human beings attain salvation by conforming to the plan of God which itself is realised through the initiative of God in and through Jesus Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit.[70] One thing that surfaces while clarifying these metaphors is the emphasis that O'Collins lays on the initiative of God in bringing about the salvation of human beings.

4.2. Salvation as Revelation and the Self-communication of God

In our first chapter we gained an insight into the interchangeability of the terms 'revelation' and 'salvation' from the time of the Second Vatican Council (*Dei Verbum 2*) and the conviction that this is due to the salvific nature of God's self-revelation. We also saw that God's self-revelation reveals God's will to open them towards the recognition of His self-manifestation in human history. In addition, we learnt that, according to O'Collins, revelation and salvation are understood in equal terms, i.e., although there is the possibility of placing emphasis on either of them, neither is considered as having prominence over the other. To avoid the overemphasis of one over the other and to see revelation and salvation as inter-related and interchangeable O'Collins chose the term 'divine self-communication' used by the Second Vatican Council. While divine self-communication in the person of Jesus Christ signified both the revealing and saving aspects of the revelation of God in history, O'Collins understands that it took place once and for all. Following this argument, if we accept the view of O'Collins that revelation and salvation are interchangeable, and further, that both of these terms may be seen as interchangeable with the 'divine self-communication' of God, which took place in and through the person of Jesus Christ, then, one does not have any other possibility than to accept Jesus Christ as the one and the only saviour because it is through him that both the revealing and the saving activity took place. We highlighted this point in our first chapter when we said that

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[69] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 16-17.

[70] According to Gordon D. Fee, the Pauline understanding of 'salvation in Christ,' "is the outworking of the Trinity and has 'a people for God's name' as its goal. The means of salvation is the death of Christ on the cross, an event of such monumental proportions that it cannot be embraced by a single metaphor. Its simplest expression is that 'Christ died for our sins'." He also holds a similar view to that of O'Collins about redemption. He says that the work of Christ on the cross "is evidenced by our *redemption* from enslavement to sin and the law and our *adoption* as God's own children and heirs, by Christ's being set forth as a *hilasterion* (place/means of atonement) in our behalf, by God's *reconciliation* of his enemies to himself, and by God's *justifying* the ungodly, not reckoning their trespasses against them by instead offering forgiveness and pardon. In the end, all of this is made effective by the Spirit." See GORDON D. FEE, *Paul and the Metaphors for Salvation. Some Reflections on Pauline Soteriology*, pp. 66-67.

revelation or the divine self-communication of God is Christ-centred. Moreover, when we say that the saving nature of the divine self-communication consists in the fact that it changes human beings and helps them to recognize the self-communication of God in and through Jesus Christ in human history, it follows that human beings are saved when they recognize or are led to recognize and accept the revelation of God in and through the incarnation of God in the person Jesus Christ. Hence, in O'Collins' view, Jesus Christ is the universal saviour and the salvation of human beings takes place only through the recognition of Jesus Christ as the saviour. We need to further clarify this position by analysing O'Collins' understanding of salvation and the universal significance of Jesus Christ. However, our point here is that, according to O'Collins, the self-communication of God or the revelation of God in the person of Christ constitutes salvation.

5. The Agents of Salvation

Self-redemption is something that does not fit with the biblical perspective. According to O'Collins, the scriptures speak about salvation as being effected through some agents. Divine and human actions are reconciled in this regard in the Bible. We shall explore in the following section who the agents of salvation are and the nature of their role according to O'Collins.

5.1. Human and Divine Saviours

The Old Testament speaks of human deliverers, such as Abraham who pleads for the deliverance of the people of Sodom (Gen 18:16-33) and Moses who delivers Israel from Egyptian oppression (Exodus). There are many others who are also agents of salvation. The most prominent among them are Gideon (Jdg 8:22), Samson (Jdg 13:5), David (2 Sam 3:18), and the kings (Hos 13:10). However, the role of God remains prominent and preeminent, and it is ultimately God who takes the initiative and saves people both as individuals and as nation.[71] In the New Testament, human agents of salvation are identified as those who preach the message of salvation, such as the disciples of Jesus (Mk 3:13-19) and Paul (Rom 1:15-16) etc., whose preaching announces salvation to all. However, it is God who is called saviour (God as saviour 8 times and Jesus as saviour 16 times). The New Testament affirms that human beings cannot truly be regarded as saviour (Lk 1:1, 10-11) and that there is no salvation except through Christ (Acts 2:38; 5:31; and especially 4:12). According to O'Collins, "Acts makes the universal and absolute claim that all, both Jews and gentiles, are to be 'saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus' (Acts 15:11)." He also says that there is an alignment of 'God' and 'Jesus' as Saviour in the New Testament that reaches its pinnacle in the phrase: "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit 2:11). This second and final appearance of Jesus in glory is understood as our ultimate hope of salvation. According to O'Collins, self-redemption is not something that the scriptures promote. Nonetheless, human beings are not mere spectators in

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[71] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Salvation,* p. 908.

bringing about salvation. They share in the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Christ (e.g., Gal 2:20),[72] the saving activity of God. It is God who initiates and saves all human beings through Jesus Christ; God is the primary agent of salvation.

5.2. The Saviour Jesus Christ and His Indispensability

O'Collins takes a clue from St. Anselm to point out the indispensability of the God-man Jesus Christ for the salvation of human beings. Anselm is of the view that there must be satisfaction or punishment for every sin committed. What God wants is not just punishment for sin but the restoration of order in creation.[73] Restoration of this order is possible only through Jesus Christ. O'Collins summarises the argument of Anselm as follows:

> [S]ince all sin offends the honour of the infinite God, the reparation must have infinite value – something of which finite human beings are incapable. Moreover, they have nothing extra to offer God, since they already owe God everything. Thus Anselm concludes to the 'necessity' of the incarnation. Only the God-man can offer something of infinite value; the hypostatic union confers such value on the human acts of Christ. Only the God-man has something to offer; being without sin, Christ is exempt from the need to undergo death and hence can freely offer the gift of his life as a work of reparation for the whole human race.[74]

According to O'Collins, the Fathers of the Church maintained two basic convictions: the dire need of a divine saviour for the redemption of human beings, and the inevitability of the personal presence of the Son of God among human beings as the only way to bring about salvation. These two things pose a question about how one could believe that the person Jesus of Nazareth was both divine and human, whether such a divine and human person was necessary for the salvation of human beings, and how one could establish that he brought about the salvation of human beings.[75] The first part of this question was answered in our second chapter

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[72] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* p. 145.

[73] St. Anselm of Canterbury says, "If where wickedness tries to disturb right-order Divine Wisdom did not provide for the making of satisfaction and the exacting of punishment, then in the universe (which God ought to order) there would occur a certain marring as a result of the violation of the order's beauty; and God would seem to fail in His governance. Just as these two results are unfitting, so they are impossible; therefore either satisfaction or punishment must follow upon every sin." See ST. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Cur Deus Homo? (Why God Became Man)* I. 15, in JASPER HOPKINS & HERBERT RICHARDSON (eds. & trans.) *Anselm of Canterbury,* Vol. 3 (New York, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1976) 49-137, p. 73. St. Anselm also maintained that the restoration of human nature "could not have been brought about unless man repaid what he owed to God. This debt was so large that, although no one but man owed it, only God was capable of repaying it, assuming that there should be a man identical with God. Hence it was a necessity that God should take man into the unity of his person, so that one who ought, by virtue of his nature, to make the repayment and was not capable of doing so, should be one who, by virtue of his person, was capable of it." See ST. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Cur Deus Homo? (Why God Became Man)* II.18, trans. JANET FAIRWEATHER in, BRIAN DAVIES & G. R. EVANS (eds.), *Anselm of Canterbury. The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 260-356, p. 348.

[74] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Redemption. Some Crucial Issues*, p. 9. According to Hans Küng, Schleiermarcher held the same view. Küng says, "[a]ll that is finite needs the mediation of something higher for its redemption, and this 'cannot be purely finite. It must belong to both sides, participating in the Divine Essence in the same way and in the same sense in which it participates in human nature.' Therefore [Jesus] is not the only mediator but the unique mediator." See HANS KÜNG, *Christianity. The Religious Situation of Our Time*, London: SCM Press, 1995, p. 707. Cf. also FRIEDRICH DANIEL ERNST SCHLEIERMACHER, *On Religion. Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. JOHN OMAN with an introduction by RUDOLF OTTO, New York, NY: Harper & Raw, 1958, p. 247.

[75] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 81.

where we dealt with the natures of Jesus Christ. An argument that we can restate here in particular is about the exercise of the divine and human powers by Jesus from which one could, from an ordinary person's viewpoint, understand how the divinity and humanity were blended in Jesus Christ. Whereas Jesus needed only human powers to do some things, such as touching the lepers or breaking bread together with those who were close to him, he required powers that were beyond human capabilities to do other things, like curing the sick, raising the dead, etc. These facts about Jesus establish that he was both divine and human. The inability of human beings to effect their own salvation and the need of the intervention of God explain the need of the saviour Jesus Christ. The intervention of God to save human beings took place in the form of a personal relationship. O'Collins says that "[t]he human life of Jesus transposed to the level of human beings and their history the unique, filial relationship that exists eternally between Father and Son within the divine life. It was not the divine substance or nature as such that was incarnated or took on the human condition. Rather it was a person-in-relationship, the eternal Son of God, who assumed fully our human condition and lived out a genuine human history." He is of the view that the Church Fathers saw this relationship between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit in human history which made Jesus the redeemer of all. He says, "due to his Son-Father relationship, all his actions enjoyed a unique value and efficacy. It was his personal identity-in-relationship which meant that he could achieve what the fathers of the Church repeatedly highlighted: namely, deliver us from sin and death and bring us forever as adopted sons and daughters into the divine family."[76] Having answered the first two parts of our question, we now turn to the final part of the question, i.e., the question of how one can understand that Jesus Christ brought about the salvation of human beings.

5.2.1. Jesus Christ and His Saving Work

The history of the salvation of human beings and their world, which began from the time of the first fall and extends through the regular intervention of God through signs and wonders, and through many agents, such as prophets and kings, came to its ultimate fulfilment in His own self-revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. Salvation is understood by O'Collins from the purview of the whole history of God's revelation, especially in the divine and human mystery of Jesus Christ. O'Collins presents the whole story of Jesus Christ's saving work in eight stages: conception and birth, infancy and manhood, public ministry, death, descent to the dead, resurrection, the coming of the Spirit, and the parousia. However, in view of the constraints of space, we shall reduce examination of these eight elements under three subsections.

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[76] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 82.

5.2.1.1. The Story of Jesus as the Whole Story of Redemption

According to O'Collins, redemption cannot be restricted to the death and resurrection of Jesus, but extends to the whole history of incarnation, life, death and resurrection taken together.[77] It involves the whole redeeming work of the person Jesus Christ, which will ultimately come to its consummation with His eschatological coming.[78] O'Collins argues that through his birth Jesus became part of human history and began the transformation of the interconnected spiritual and material reality of the whole of creation. According to him, the Fathers of the Church connected the salvific value of the incarnation with the whole story of Jesus Christ under the authority of the Scripture. The gospels related the story of the incarnation to the passion and death of Jesus. For example, the question of the Magi concerning the whereabouts of the newborn king of the Jews (Mt 2:2) was answered at the crucifixion of Jesus when he was named as the 'king of the Jews' on the cross (Mt 27:11, 29, 37, 42). St. Paul also spoke of salvation in these terms, connecting both incarnation and death (Gal 4:4-7). It is the view of O'Collins that the liturgy that follows Christmas Day, such as the feasts of St. Stephen, St. John, and the Holy Innocents, abounds with the redemptive significance of the nativity of Jesus and links it with the death and resurrection.[79]

5.2.1.2. Redemption through the Birth, Ministry and Death of Jesus

As we have already mentioned, in O'Collins' view, the redemptive impact of Jesus is not limited to the birth, death and resurrection. He says that some theologians have left out the life and ministry of the historical person Jesus and dealt only with his birth and crucifixion.[80] One cannot disregard the universal significance of the birth of Jesus. The messages that were given, and the incidents that took place after the birth of Jesus, especially the presence of the Magi, pointed

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[77] Gabriel Daly says that for Irenaeus "the Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection of Christ are all of a piece, all taken up into the one sweep of divine love for man." See GABRIEL DALY, *Theology of Redemption in the Fathers,* p. 139.

[78] According to O'Collins, human redemption cannot be restricted to the death and resurrection of Jesus. The whole history of incarnation, life, death and resurrection is to be taken together to speak about the redemption. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 82. According to Brian Daley, the Fathers of the Church spoke of salvation not only in terms of Jesus achieving it for human beings but also in terms of "something Jesus brought about *in his own person*… It is the very person of Jesus, which … achieves the full revelation of God's grace and glory in the fallen world, remaking the damaged image… or bringing it … from simply being an image to being God's full likeness. It is in Jesus' own humanity, as Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine insist, that the process of the transformation and liberation of human nature is revealed, which for us begins in this life as growing freedom from the passions, and will reach its climax at the end of time in bodily resurrection." See BRIAN DALEY, *'He Himself is Our Peace' (Ephesians 2:14). Early Christian Views on Redemption in Christ,* in STEPHEN T. DAVIS, DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS, The *Redemption. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Christ as Redeemer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 149-176, pp. 165-166.

[79] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 84-87. O'Collins states that Christian preachers, such as Augustine of Hippo and John Donne, poets like St. Robert Southwell, John Milton and T. S. Eliot, and artists like Master Bertram of Minden, Benedetto Bonfigli, etc., had connected Christmas with Easter. In his inaugural address to the *Leuven Encounters in Systematic Theology* (LEST V) in Leuven, O'Collins presented these facts to show the link between the birth of Jesus and his death. The paper was entitled *The Cross over Bethlehem* (unpublished).

[80] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 94.

towards the universal significance of Jesus' birth. As was the case with the birth of Jesus, the scriptures, preachers, artists, etc., also speak about the redemptive impact of the life and ministry of Jesus. During his life Jesus preached that the Kingdom of God and the reign of God were both already present (e.g., Mt 12:28) and a future event (Mk 1:15). His parables, the call to repentance, the signs and wonders he worked, etc., proclaimed salvation as divine forgiveness and the transformation of human beings towards a new life. According to O'Collins, "[i]n his person and presence, God's rule had come and was coming." These were also indicators that "in proclaiming salvation through the present divine rule, Jesus repeatedly claimed or at least implied a personal authority that can be described as setting himself on a par with God."[81] The high point of the redemptive work of God was the trial, the crucifixion and death of Jesus. O'Collins says that from the time of early Christianity there was the belief that Jesus Christ 'died for our sins' (e.g., 1 Cor 15:3). He believes that there are indications that Jesus knew about his impending death and the meaning and efficacy of his death, namely, that it was an atoning sacrifice for the sake of all human beings. However, he also points out that there is a possibility that the meaning and efficacy of the death on the cross may have been more than Jesus himself would have known.[82] Nevertheless, O'Collins thinks that by preaching the theme of God's kingdom (which involved the idea of future suffering), Jesus showed that he knew about his future suffering and that it would bring salvation to all. He says, "since Jesus interpreted his death in terms of the coming kingdom, he saw that death as a saving event; for he had consistently presented the equation: the kingdom = human salvation."[83] For O'Collins, it is clear that the whole story of Jesus, his birth, ministry and death, pointed towards the salvation of human beings.

5.2.1.3. The Universal Significance of Jesus Christ's Salvific Work

While we have sufficient material here to believe that Jesus' life and death was a saving event, one question that surfaces is whether the effect of his redemptive action reached all human beings. O'Collins suggests that if one takes into account the face value of the 'words of institution' at the last supper, one can understand that Jesus' sacrificial death was a representative act for the sins of human beings that brought about a new covenant with God. He points out some features that support a positive response to the question especially by an evaluation of the 'institution words' of the Eucharist found in the scriptures. From an overview

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[81] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 96, 98.

[82] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 100. According to O'Collins, the possibility of Jesus not knowing the full meaning or the efficacious nature of his death is maximalized by people like Joachim Jeremias. According to Jeremias, the conclusion that Jesus died for our sins is an interpretation of an historical event. Hence, one can question whether such an interpretation is correct or has "been arbitrarily imposed upon the events, or whether there was some circumstance in the events which caused this interpretation to be attached to it." See JOACHIM JEREMIAS, *The Problem of the Historical Jesus,* Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1964, p. 13, as found in GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 100.

[83] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 102.

of the texts O'Collins thinks that there is general agreement between the texts concerning the blood of Jesus being poured out 'for you' (Lk 22:19-20; Mt 26:26-28; 1 Cor 11:23-25) which could be indicative of including both Jews and Gentiles in the new covenant of salvation. However, the text in Mark differs as he omits "for you" and speaks about the blood of the new covenant as being "poured out for many" (Mk 14: 23-24), which when it is adopted by Mathew is qualified with the phrase "for the forgiveness of sins."[84] O'Collins explains Jesus' universal intention in the whole 'institution words' from three points of view. First, the particular and characteristic way in which Jesus acted throughout his lifetime – his being obedient to God the Father, available to the needs of all kinds of people, showing mercy to the sinners, healing the sick, entering into relationship with non-Jews, describing as 'brother, sister, and mother' "whoever does the will of my Father in heaven" (Mt 12:50),[85] the final sacrifice for others on the cross, etc., – meant that his life and mission until his death on the cross were universal in scope and implied that salvation was meant for all.[86] Second, contemporary (i.e., contemporary to Jesus) ideas about the expiatory significance of the suffering or martyrdom of someone to atone for the sins of others, such as those found in Maccabean literature, could explain the universal intention of Jesus. Third, formulations of faith that expressed early Christian convictions, especially that the death of Jesus was meant 'for us' as atonement for sin (1 Thes 5:10; Rom 4:25), do not find any background in the Jewish expectations. To add to this, the early Christians proclaimed that the crucified Jesus was their Messiah, which would have been in normal circumstances scandalous and offensive because of the criminal background of crucifixions at that time. Their convictions provided them the means to understand that the death on the cross was a sacrificial and representative action to atone for the iniquities of all. According to O'Collins, such interpretations would not have triggered the conviction that Jesus was saviour if the disciples had not recognized the representative character of Jesus' sacrifice and if Jesus himself had not made any claims about the value of his sacrifice.[87]

O'Collins also speaks about the element of salvation in reflecting on Jesus' descent to the dead. He says that although there is no explicit reference in the Scripture to Jesus "having won victory *in* the underworld," early Christianity presented Jesus "as having descended to break open the gates of the underworld, defeat, and trample underfoot Death and Hades. … During his stint in

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[84] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 103.

[85] According to Mathew Palachuvattil, in the narrative of Mt 12:46-50, Jesus portrays the disciples as "members of his family." He says that "[t]hrough this narrative unit, the paradigm family is re-defined as the basic paradigm of discipleship. The two-edged definition given by Jesus offers clear ideas regarding the essential constituent of the identity of the disciples of Jesus, namely, their relation to God as Father and their readiness to do his will. The definition of discipleship, in this instance, extends beyond the narrative characters who are identified as disciples." See MATHEW PALACHUVATTIL, *"The One Who Does the Will of the Father" Distinguishing Character of Disciples according to Matthew. An Exegetical Theological Study,* Rome: Gregorian University Press, 2007, p. 213. Ulrich Luz is of the view that "'Disciples' are not only the twelve disciples of the earthly Jesus; discipleship occurs at every place where his power becomes operative among people." See ULRICH LUZ, *Matthew 21-28. A Commentary*, Vol. 3, trans. JAMES E. CROUCH, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005, p. 625.

[86] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 104-105.

[87] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 105-106.

Hades he announced to the dead the salvation he had achieved, and then brought the righteous out of captivity and up to heaven." O'Collins is of the view that, according to this understanding, the beneficiaries of deliverance were primarily the saints of the OT, which was then extended also to include the pagans by some Eastern writers.[88] The decisive moment of salvation, according to O'Collins, was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The unity of the death and resurrection and their saving effect was proclaimed especially by St. Paul in expressions such as "Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom 4:24-25). St. Paul also declared the universal impact of the death and resurrection. He maintained that both human beings and the created nature shared in the redemption that was brought about by Jesus (Rom 8:18-25). The activity of the Holy Spirit, according to O'Collins, in the sphere of redemption is also important. He says that, after the events of the death and resurrection, a sort of transformation took place in the relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit who was active in the ministry of Jesus is co-sent by God the Father and the Son Jesus Christ into believers. Moreover, the Holy Spirit is present in the world at the present time. Thus he says, "In a multiplicity of ways he remains powerfully, if mysteriously, present to the community of believers and the whole world."[89]

In our second chapter we dealt with the titles of Jesus Christ in order to understand his person and natures. Our study has revealed that these titles point towards Jesus' saving characteristics. According to O'Collins, the approximately 130 titles in the New Testament speak about his identity as well as his redemptive functions. The verbal and visual images of Jesus, along with their connecting stories, speak about the character of God as well as help "in actualizing the past in the present and so ensuring that redemptive events in the past have their saving impact on the present situation."[90] O'Collins employs some of the titles to explain the eight stages of the saving work of Jesus. "At his birth he was already acknowledged as King; he grew to manhood as Boy or Servant; in his ministry he showed himself to be Messiah and Teacher; he died as the Suffering Servant and the Lamb of God; he descended to the dead as New Adam; he rose from the dead as the Resurrection and the Life; with the Father he acted as the Life-giving Spirit; he will come in glory as the Saviour."[91]

The portrayal of the saving work of Jesus in eight stages demonstrates that the salvation he brings is the fruit of his entire life, his birth, ministry, death, resurrection and final coming. This life clearly has universal significance. In the following section we propose to examine the three ways in which O'Collins sees how Jesus redeems the world.

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[88] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 107-108.

[89] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 110.

[90] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 111.

[91] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 115.

5.2.2. The Threefold Typology of Jesus' Saving Work

O'Collins understands the salvation brought about by Jesus Christ from the perspective of a triple key: transforming love, victory/liberation, and expiation. It is not easy to make a clear-cut and absolute distinction between these perspectives or to differentiate them from themes we have already discussed. Hence, it is important to keep in mind that this triple key is not meant to exhaust the saving significance of Jesus. However, it does help us to grasp more readily the salvific character of the person of Jesus Christ and his work.

5.2.2.1. Salvation as Transforming Love

The Johannine Jesus, in his dialogue with Nicodemus, points out the reason why God chose to send his Son into the world. Jesus said, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). According to O'Collins, one of the ways to understand salvation is through the model of divine love because this love provides the creative energy to move us towards the ultimate goal of our existence which is redemption.[92] The motive or the goal behind the redemptive action of Christ is to gratify the human desire for "community and connection" with the love of God, which takes place ultimately in the resurrection of human beings and their vision of God. O'Collins thinks that the goal of redemption is the divinization of the humanity, that is to say, sharing in the inner life of God that is eternal love. Hence, "Jesus repeatedly pictures the goal of redemption as a joyful banquet that will never end, a feast of love when all will rejoice together in the kingdom of God" (Mt 8:11).[93] The redeeming love of God is characterized by the initiative of God and his free self-giving to human beings.[94] "This free self-giving entailed a new presence that effected a communion of life and love. Visibly sharing his presence, Christ brought about results that were and remain life-giving and life-enhancing – in a word, salvific."[95] According to O'Collins, the *speech* (and presence) of Jesus are very relevant to this model of redemption. The gospels are concerned with Jesus' language of love to the people. His speech was characterized by a power which had the effect of transforming those who listened. Jesus is like a merciful doctor dealing with the sick patients (the sinners; see Mk 2:17). He acts like a teacher (Rabbi) to his students but with a love and an authority that transforms others. He represents divine love as akin to a

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[92] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 181.

[93] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation,* pp. 116-117. See also GERALD O'COLLINS, *Redemption. Some Crucial Issues*, p. 5. For a detailed view about the saving love of God, see GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, pp. 287-295. He understands love as unconditional, beyond full reason and mysterious, creative and re-creative, other-directed, revelatory, reconciling and uniting, providing joy, and beautiful.

[94] According to Fernando Ocáriz, Lucas F. Mateo-Seco and José Antonio Riestra, "Redemption is a product of love, and it is a divine initiative; it is also the product of suffering and death: God experiences pain and death in the Humanity of the Word." See FERNANDO OCÁRIZ, LUCAS F. MATEO-SECO & JOSÉ ANTONIO RIESTRA, *The Mystery of Jesus Christ. A Christology and Soteriology Textbook*, trans. MICHAEL ADAMS & JAMES GAVIGAN, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004 [1994], p. 293.

[95] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 184.

father's love for his son in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-35).[96] The most important feature of the love of Christ is that it is self-sacrificing love, a love that takes on all kinds of risks, even at the cost of his own life. The suffering that Jesus undertook is seen as the greatest self-sacrifice for the sake of love.[97] According to O'Collins, the love of Christ, expressed in his self-sacrifice, produces the fruits of newness of life, and brings unity among people. He exemplifies this fact by the group that gathered at the burial of Jesus (Mk 15:39-47). O'Collins says that "[l]ove involves freely giving and receiving in the union of reciprocal relationships."[98] This reciprocity is found especially after the crucifixion and resurrection in the responses to the call Jesus made. During his life Jesus called people to discipleship, which was realised by the disciples and others in a special way after the resurrection in and through their fellowship with the risen Jesus. This fellowship gave them a new identity and admission into his redeeming love. O'Collins argues that the unity which the redeeming love of Christ brings about extends beyond the boundaries of religions, societies and cultures (Gal 3:27-28). It also brings lasting joy to those who are redeemed, which is portrayed through the images of marriage and the banquet in the New Testament.

5.2.2.2. Salvation as Victory and Liberation

The salvation brought about by Jesus Christ is also interpreted in terms of victory and liberation[99] through his death and resurrection. Jesus' ministry often consisted of victorious conflict with evil and demonic powers. His death was understood by the New Testament as victory over forces of evil, sin and death. O'Collins states that the New Testament celebrated Jesus' death as victory (the victory of the Lamb – Rev 5:6-14), and the post-New Testament celebrated it as victory especially in the worship of the Church (e.g., *Exultet* of Easter).[100] Even today the imagery of victory over powers of evil and death is used to speak about salvation. However, he says that there are people who consider this imagery as mythological and

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[96] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 184-187. Pope Pius XII writes, "The mystery of divine Redemption is first and foremost a mystery of love, that is, of the true love of Christ for His heavenly Father, to whom the sacrifice offered on the Cross in loving obedience renders most abundant and infinite satisfaction for the sins of mankind … It is, moreover, a mystery of the merciful love of the August Trinity and the Divine Redeemer for all mankind." See POPE PIUS XII, *Haurietis Aquas (Encyclical on Devotion to the Sacred Heart)* 2, in CLAUDIA CARLEN IHM, *The Papal Encyclicals 1939-1958* (Washington D.C.: McGrath, 1981) 292-313, p. 296.

[97] According to Peter Abelard, "our redemption is that supreme love which is in us through Christ's passion … so that we fulfill all things from love rather than from fear of [God]." See PETER ABELARD, *Expositio in Epistolam ad Romanos,* III, iii, as quoted in GABRIEL DALY, *Contemporary Perspectives on Redemption Theology*, in WILFRED HARRINGTON (ed.), *Witness to the Spirit. Essays on Revelation, Spirit, Redemption* (Dublin: Irish Biblical Association, 1979) 149-165, p. 150.

[98] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 193.

[99] O'Collins prefers the word liberation over freedom. He is of the view that in their usage both have been corrupted by their misuse in society and politics. However, liberation is an "'action word', which implies struggle and vibrates with mobilizing power. The freedom brought by the crucifixion will not keep; it cannot be stored or refrigerated. It remains always in process – something just received, something to be prayed for and worked for." See GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Calvary Christ*, London: SCM Press, 1977, p. 79.

[100] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, pp. 117-119.

unrealistic because they believe that one cannot justify the redemption brought about by the suffering of Jesus Christ in the face of "all the injustice, violence, cruelty and senseless suffering which millions of human beings endure." However, O'Collins finds an answer to this objection by analysing the *not yet* and *already* characteristics of Christ's redemption. The New Testament speaks of Christ's victory in the past tense (e.g., Col 2:15) as well as in the future tense (e.g., I Cor 15:22ff.).[101] Hence, although historically Christ's death brought victory, the effect of it will be fully realized in the future. The liberation that Jesus brings about demands a commitment from human beings; to be vigilant that one may not go into slavery again (Gal 5:1). According to O'Collins, through the death of Jesus one is initiated into a process of transformation which will be completed only at the final resurrection. Hence, "there is at present no such thing as being liberated; there is only becoming liberated."[102]

5.2.2.3. Salvation as the Expiatory Sacrifice on the Cross

In the third model, O'Collins presents salvation as the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the high priest on the cross, through which as a representative he offered himself once and for all for the redemption of all human beings.[103] Christianity teaches this finality of the sacrificial death of Christ. The Council of Trent taught that "[Jesus], then, our Lord and God, was once and for all to offer himself to God the Father by his death on the altar of the cross, to accomplish for them an everlasting redemption." It also taught that this sacrifice is 'represented' in the Eucharist.[104] It says, "In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner … on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner."[105] Hence, it is clear that the sacrifice of the Mass is not a repetition of the once and for all sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. This aspect is emphasised by people like Ludwig Ott who says,

> In the Sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacrifice of the Cross the Sacrificial Gift and the Primary Sacrificing Priest are identical; only the nature and the mode of the offering are different … according to the Thomistic view, in every Mass Christ also performs an actual immediate sacrificial activity, which, however, must not be conceived as a totality of many successive acts but as one single uninterrupted sacrificial act of the Transfigured Christ. The purpose of the Sacrifice is the same in the Sacrifice of the Mass as in the Sacrifice of the Cross; primarily the glorification of God, secondarily atonement, thanksgiving and appeal.[106]

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[101] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 144.

[102] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Calvary Christ*, p. 82.

[103] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation*, p. 119.

[104] JOSEF NEUNER & JACQUES DUPUIS, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, no. 1546, p. 587.

[105] JOSEF NEUNER & JACQUES DUPUIS, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, no. 1548, p. 588.

[106] LUDWIG OTT, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, trans. PATRICK LYNCH, Cork: The Mercier Press, 1955, p. 408. Some Protestants seem to misunderstand the sacrifice of the Mass as repetition and not as 're-presentation'. For example, according to Wayne Grudem, the Protestants from the time of the Reformation do not participate in the Roman Catholic Mass because "it would seem to be an endorsement of the Catholic view that the sacrifice of Christ is repeated

The Council of Trent teaches the propitiatory and the universal character of the once and for all sacrifice on the cross. The sacrifice is meant for the forgiveness of the sins of all. The expiatory model takes into account various themes, such as "expiation from guilt, purification from the contamination of sin, or reparation for (and of) a disturbed moral order."[107] According to O'Collins, this model of Christ's redeeming work has been played down by some people recently because of the inability to accept the expiatory effect of Jesus' sacrifice.[108] O'Collins explains the model in two points: (a) Christ's sacrifice on the cross as both priest and victim was a representative act that led to the expiation of sins and the establishment of a new covenant between God and human beings. This has its basis in the Old Testament where sacrifices were considered to expiate sins and establish communion with God. In the Old Testament, the primary direction of the sacrifices was from God to human beings. This means that the initiative was from God. (b) Through the sacrifice on the cross, Christ atoned for human sin and restored the moral order that was disturbed by the objective harm caused by sin. Here the necessity of a representative becomes ever more evident. The subjective guilt of human sin remains personal and un-transferable and personal repentance is necessary for forgiveness even though it is God (an external agent) who pardons sinners. However, in the case of the objective harm caused by human sin (moral disorder), reparation can be made by the sinners or a representative. Hence, the expiatory suffering of Jesus as a representative was effective both to atone for human sin and to re-establish the moral order.[109] O'Collins notes that the atonement made by Jesus does not exempt sinners from repentance and that they "need to ratify this deed by accepting with gratitude the fact that he representatively made amends on their behalf."[110] Paul Tillich holds a similar view about atonement and says that "atonement is always both a divine act and a human reaction."[111]

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every time the mass is offered." See WAYNE A. GRUDEM, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 578.

[107] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 145.

[108] O'Collins refers to the *World Conference on Mission and Evangelism* in 1980 which took up only one aspect of the Christological tradition in its discussions, i.e., the historical Jesus. They did not however deal with the expiatory significance of the cross or its significance as atonement. See WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, *Your Kingdom Come. Mission Perspectives. Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism,* Geneva, 1980, p. xi.

[109] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, pp. 146-147.

[110] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, p. 148. See also GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Calvary Christ*, pp. 100-101.

[111] PAUL TILLICH, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 2, Existence and the Christ*, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1957, p. 170. Paul Tillich also holds that in atonement there is a subjective and an objective element. In atonement "[t]he divine act overcomes the estrangement between God and man in so far as it is a matter of human guilt. In atonement, human guilt is removed as a factor which separates man from God. But this divine act is effective only if man reacts and accepts the removal of guilt between God and man, namely, the divine offer of reconciliation is in spite of guilt." According to him, "[t]he subjective element makes the process of atonement partly dependent on man's possibilities of reaction. In this way a moment of indefiniteness is introduced into the doctrine of atonement. This is why the church instinctively refused to state the doctrine of atonement in definite terms." See p. 170. Tillich lays down six principles of the doctrine of atonement: (1) the processes of atoning takes place on the initiative of God and God alone; (2) "there are no conflicts in God between his reconciling love and his retributive justice"; (3) "the divine removal of guilt and punishments is not an act of overlooking the reality and depth of existential estrangement"; (4) "God's atoning activity

According to O'Collins, one of the objections to the doctrine of expiation is that it "appears *to set limits to the divine mercy*." The question here is whether the expiatory and representative suffering of Jesus was necessary, whether it was not enough for divine mercy to allow sinners themselves to set the moral order right. O'Collins responds to the objection by stating that, on the one hand, the suffering of Christ on the cross and His resurrection revealed "the divine mercy 'in its fullness.'… On the other hand, this 'mystery of mercy, supremely revealed in Jesus Christ' also entails 'reparation for evil'."[112] Baptism, according to O'Collins, through which a human being is freed from sin and created anew in Christ through the Holy Spirit, shows very clearly how past events "enjoy a saving impact in the present."[113] It is through the ritual of Baptism that the saving work of Jesus Christ is publicly manifested in the baptised and he/she is initiated into his saving work. There are also other difficulties in understanding the doctrine of expiation. St. Anselm introduced a legalistic understanding of salvation through the theory of satisfaction.[114] Others like John Calvin, Karl Barth, etc., emphasised too strongly the significance of the sacrifice on the cross by upholding penal substitution theory. They understood the cross of Jesus as a punishment meted out on the Son of God, as if Jesus was enduring punishment.[115]

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must be understood as his participation in existential estrangement and its self-destructive consequences"; (5) "in the Cross of the Christ the divine participation in existential estrangement becomes manifest."; and (6) "through participation in the New Being, which is the being of Jesus as the Christ, men also participate in the manifestation of the atoning act of God" i.e., human beings participate in the suffering of Christ. See pp. 173-176.

[112] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* pp. 148-149. According to Pope John Paul II, mercy is revealed in the cross and resurrection. "The paschal mystery is the culmination of this revealing and effecting of mercy, which is able to justify man, to restore justice in the sense of that salvific order which God willed from the beginning in man and, through man, in the world." See POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Dives in Misericordia (On the Mercy of God)*, 7, in CLAUDIA CARLEN IHM, *The Papal Encyclicals 1958-1981* (Washington D.C.: McGrath, 1981) 275-298, p. 284.

[113] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 64.

[114] St. Anselm of Canterbury used the theory of 'satisfaction' to describe the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus to restore the divine 'honour' destroyed by human sin. According to him, there should be satisfaction for sins and the satisfaction should be proportionate to the sins. See ST. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Cur Deus Homo? (Why God Became Man)* I. 15, 19, 20, in JASPER HOPKINS & HERBERT RICHARDSON (eds. & trans.) *Anselm of Canterbury,* Vol. 3, pp. 72-88. According to O'Collins, this theory was later criticised because it considered salvation legalistically. However, there are many who support the view of Anselm. According to Walter Kasper, Anselm's theory has to be understood in terms of Germanic feudal system and is in accord with biblical thought and imagery regarding God's righteousness. See WALTER KASPER, *Jesus the Christ,* p. 220. O'Collins personally prefers not to use 'satisfaction' and 'honour' because he says that they are open to misunderstanding today.

[115] Those who hold the penal substitution theory maintain that God the Father punished His Son as a sinner for the sake of guilty humanity. O'Collins says that while Alexaner of Hales, St. Thomas Aquinas and some medieval theologians continued to maintain punitive elements in the expiation model, it was at the time of John Calvin that this way of understanding of Christ's sacrifice reached its climax. His view was that in this sacrifice Jesus became a penal substitute which helped to turn away the anger of God and win divine favour for the fallen race. Karl Barth, too, exaggerated the punitive element in the doctrine of expiation and said that in the sacrifice on the cross Jesus became the object of God's anger. He said that at Golgotha Jesus stands "burdened with all the actual sin and guilt of man and of each individual man, and is treated in accordance with the deserts of man as the transgressor of the divine command." See KARL BARTH, *Church Dogmatics II. 2. The Doctrine of God,* p. 758. Moltmann interpreted the cry of Jesus on the cross (Mk 13:34) as the rejection of Jesus by God. He says, "As a 'blasphemer', Jesus was rejected by the guardians of his people's law. As a 'rebel' he was crucified by the Romans. But finally, and most profoundly, he died as one rejected by his God and his Father." See JÜRGEN MOLTMANN, *The Crucified God. The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, p. 152. Wayne A. Grudem, a contemporary Evangelical theologian says that "[a]s Jesus bore the guilt of our sins alone, God the Father, the mighty Creator, the Lord of the universe, poured out on Jesus the fury of his wrath: Jesus became the object of the intense hatred of sin and vengeance against sin which God had patiently stored up since the

O'Collins would object to such views because such theories erode our understanding of Jesus Christ's sacrifice and redemption. According to O'Collins, "Propitiation and punishment versions of redemption fail, however, on two major scores: "their monstrous view of God and their misuse of the New Testament."[116]

6. The Unique and Universal Saviour

Our discussions so far have been centered around the necessity of salvation, its nature and the way in which salvation was brought about by God through the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The discussions have also touched upon the indispensability of the saviour Jesus Christ and the universal significance of the salvation effected in him. The universal human condition of sin called for salvation through the help of an agent and mediator Jesus Christ who is both divine and human. We have understood from the scriptures that Jesus Christ saves human beings and the world and that he is the unique and only saviour. The position of O'Collins with regards to the universality and uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the saviour could be attributed to the New Testament statement: "There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim 2:5-6).[117] In this section we wish to examine how O'Collins deals with current issues in the Catholic theology of religions.

Our enquiry into the works of O'Collins reveals that his work on salvation is primarily based on the scriptures. Our discussions also have assisted us in affirming the position of the New Testament and the Christian belief that Jesus Christ, through his sacrifice on the cross, mediated our salvation and became the saviour of all. O'Collins says that if one accepts the position of the New Testament one can have no other saviour, i.e., "there is no plurality of redeemers."[118] His view is that in so far as the New Testament and the first Christians are concerned, they understood and acknowledged Jesus' "redemptive role to be universal (for all without exception), unique (without parallel), complete (as One who conveys the fullness of salvation), and definitive (beyond any possibility of being equalled, let alone surpassed, in his salvific function)." This view is recapitulated in the axiom: "'*extra Christum nulla salus* (outside Christ

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beginning of the world." See WAYNE A. GRUDEM, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine,* Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Pres, 2007 [1994], pp. 574-575. There are also Catholic theologians who hold such extreme views. Hans Urs von Balthasar, for example, saw Easter as the raising of "the already stinking body of the sinner from the grave." SEE HANS URS VON BALTHASAR, *Love Alone,* trans. ALEXANDER DRU, New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1969, p. 120. C. H. Dodd in his treatment of 'atonement' linguistically argued against considering God the Father as an avenging and wrathful God against sin. See CHARLES HAROLD DODD, *The Bible and the Greeks,* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935, pp. 82-95.

[116] GERALD O'COLLINS, *The Calvary Christ*, p. 96.

[117] There are more references in the New Testament to support the mediatory role of Jesus Christ, such as Jn 3:16-17; Rom 5:8-10; 8:1-4; Gal 4:4-5, etc. A classical text that supports an exclusive claim concerning Jesus' mediatorship is Acts 4:12 which states: "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

[118] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Redemption. Some Crucial Issues*, p. 17.

no salvation)'."[119] O'Collins contends that in fact the universal claim of Jesus as the saviour of all began from faith in Jesus' resurrection which gave rise to idea of the general resurrection towards the end of the world (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:20-28). Faith in the redemptive role of Jesus at the consummation of history also brought about faith in his redemptive role for everyone even in the present. O'Collins uses five evidences from the New Testament to substantiate the belief in Jesus as the universal saviour: (1) the function of the Holy Spirit who acts everywhere as the 'Spirit of Christ' (Rom 8:9), working for the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles, and thus operating beyond the baptized; (2) the universal dimension of Jesus' preaching in which he associated the arrival of God's kingdom with his own person; (3) the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ seen as God's historical solidarity with all men and women in the world; (4) the understanding of Jesus as the creative Word and the agent of creation which speaks about his universal role in creation and salvation; and (5) the universal presence of Christ as divine and as divine Word, the acceptance of which leads to faith in him as the universal saviour.[120] On the basis of this data, O'Collins feels entitled to position himself within the purview of the New Testament and the traditional teachings of the Church concerning the saviour and salvation.

7. O'Collins' Approach to the Theology of Religions

In view of O'Collins' adherence to classical Christological schemes, one must ask whether his Christology allows any openings for a renewed Catholic approach to the theology of religions and whether problems concerning the theology of religions can be meaningfully addressed from within the framework of traditional Christology. In order to formulate an answer to this question, we must recall some of our findings up until now.

7.1. A Traditional and Intra-Ecclesial Christology

We have examined extensively the writings of O'Collins and his critical engagement with scores of theologians to understand his Christology. We have seen that his Christology is rooted in Tradition and Scripture and faithful to the teachings of the Church. Every major point that we have examined in this dissertation showed how deeply O'Collins' Christology has been shaped by the tradition and how intent he is on remaining true to the Church's teachings. There is a clear structure and method in his treatment of every issue relating to the person of Jesus Christ, including the use of the Scripture and Tradition and the practice of evaluating the theological developments that have taken place in the history of the Church. Our analysis has demonstrated that his Christology is deeply and profoundly traditional and intra-ecclesial. However, we have come across a few elements that support O'Collins' openness to other religious traditions and

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[119] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 224-229.

[120] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 218.

their inherent values. O'Collins says that, "it is significant for me as a Roman Catholic that official teaching has become more cautious and less precise about the Church's role in mediating grace to those who are not baptized Christians; the mystery in God's plan to save all must be respected."[121] O'Collins here seems to notice a certain ambiguity in the teaching of the Church with regard to the salvation of others. Let us look at this somewhat more closely.

7.2. A Christology of the Revelation of God

One of the important aspects that runs through the Christology of O'Collins is the interest he has shown in affirming faith in the teaching of the Church with regard to the definitive revelation of God in and through the person of Jesus Christ beyond which there is no further revelation. This interest is evident from his earliest writings – beginning with the first book he published on revelation – to his latest book on salvation. As we have seen in our enquiry, the highlight of O'Collins' Christology is the revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. All matters concerning Jesus Christ, his incarnation, death, resurrection, and finally the salvation that he brings about, are seen from the point of view of God's self-revelation. Thus, Jesus Christ is the revelation of the Trinitarian God and it is in and through him that everything is revealed. One can observe in O'Collins' writings how the self-communication of God in history is understood as a gradual process that definitively takes place in and through the person of Jesus Christ. The revelation of Jesus itself is presented as a gradual revelation through his incarnation, death, resurrection and the final coming. This gradual process of revelation is further shown to be progressive when he makes the distinction between two types of revelation. While the revelation of God is completed in the person of Jesus Christ, which he understands as the fundamental/foundational or 'past' revelation, it still continues to show progress through the activity of the Holy Spirit in the teachings of the Church, liturgy, missionary activity, etc., by drawing Christians to the fuller manifestation of the divine truth, which he regards as dependent revelation or 'present' revelation. An examination of the notion of dependent revelation shows that, according to O'Collins, revelation is given to all and takes place in the individual and communal religious experiences of human beings. O'Collins understands all human experiences as "already primordially religious"[122] and potentially revelatory of God's self-communication. This allows him to answer (at least in a partial way) the question of whether the religious experience of the people of other religions has any salvific value.

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[121] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, p. 236.

[122] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology,* p. 118. It is quoted already in chapter one of this dissertation. See quote no. 115.

7.3. A Christology of Revelation and Salvation

O'Collins is of the view that the Second Vatican Council, especially in its Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum,* 2), used "the two distinguishable but inseparable dimensions of the divine self-communication, revelation and salvation," interchangeably. The Council in its many documents (*Lumen Gentium*, 16, 17; *Ad Gentes*, 3, n. 2; *Nostra Aetate,* 2) also used this double terminology or similar words (e.g., 'truth and grace' (*Lumen Gentium*, 8)) to speak about "the revelatory and salvific activity of God" in other religions.[123] Based on what these documents said about the significance of revelation and salvation vis-à-vis other religions, O'Collins argues, "It seems difficult to accept this teaching from *Ad Gentes* and even more … from *Nostra Aetate* and, at the same time, deny that the religions are in some sense a means of salvation for their members … Such teaching seems incompatible with any talk about Christ being Saviour of all but not revealer to all."[124] What O'Collins says is that Jesus is both saviour and revealer to all. However, he does not stop with Jesus Christ, but gives due importance also to the divine initiative of the Father and the role of the Holy Spirit. So, he insists that one has to keep in mind the following three basic principles when one deals with Jesus Christ and the theology of religions:

> First, there is only one economy of saving revelation which invites human faith. At the same time, this one economy leading to faith assumes a plurality of 'ways' known to God (*Ad Gentes*, 7; see also *Gaudium et Spes*, 22). Second, revelation and salvation are two distinguishable but inseparable dimensions of the divine self-communication. Hence Christ is both universal Revealer and universal Saviour. Third, the initiative for the supernatural salvation of the whole of humanity comes from the Father. The 'christifying' and 'spiritualizing' of the world must always be understood in a trinitarian fashion.[125]

When one reads this view of O'Collins concerning the Church's teaching on other religions, together with his positive and supportive approach to the views of Jacques Dupuis,[126] concerning

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[123] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 233-234.

[124] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christ and the Religions*, in *Gregorianum* 84 (2003) 347-362, p. 350.

[125] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christ and the Religions,* p. 354.

[126] O'Collins was associated with Dupuis from the year 1971 and took responsibility for reading and censoring the book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (JACQUES DUPUIS, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism,* Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2001 [1997]). See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jacques Dupuis. His Person and Work,* in DANIEL KENDALL & GERALD O'COLLINS (eds.), *In Many and Diverse Ways. In Honour of Jacques Dupuis* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003) 18-29, p. 19. Together with this article O'Collins has also written two other articles to clarify and support Dupuis' views on the theology of religions. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jacques Dupuis's Contributions to Interreligious Dialogue*, in *Theological Studies* 64 (2003) 388-397; GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christ and the Religions*, in *Gregorianum* 84 (2003) 347-362. References to Dupuis' viewpoints are also found in some of his books. See GERALD O'COLLINS, *Living Vatican II. The 21st Council for the 21st Century*, pp. 15, 129, 144 (O'Collins reproduces a postconciliar document *The Synod of Bishops 1974* by Jacques Dupuis in this book. See pp. 173-201); GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 219, 229, 235-236. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to examine the relationship between O'Collins and Dupuis. Our point here is that O'Collins own Christological principles are largely compatible with the views on the theology of religions developed by Dupuis. O'Collins did not explore the theology of religions in any systematic fashion and his role as a defender of Dupuis does not prove that his own views are simply the same as those of Dupuis. The critique of Dupuis has largely focused on his

the theology of religions, it becomes evident that his Christology is not averse to Dupuis' views because he is of the opinion that they are based on the teaching of the Church. By supporting Dupuis, O'Collins indicates not only that he regards Dupuis as standing within the tradition (at least as far as his fundamental theological 'options' are concerned), but also that it is possible to accommodate the saving values of other religions while standing firm in one's belief that Jesus is both universal revealer and universal saviour. O'Collins' Christology of revelation and salvation would support the claim that God is also revealed to others and that they are saved, but only in and through Jesus Christ. His theology of religions may be summarized as follows: The *saving* and *revealing* activity of God are inseparable and constitute one history of divine self-communication. Christ is the saviour of all people and revealer to all people. He is the source and agent of revelation and salvation for the whole world.

7.4. A Christology of Presence

One of the ways in which O'Collins is able to enter into a discussion with the theology of religions is through the Christology of presence. A discussion of the universal presence of Christ would involve an enquiry into the whole life of Jesus Christ, beginning from his pre-existence[127] and extending to his post-resurrection existence in the life of the Church, as well as identifying Christ as the Logos and Wisdom present in the world. It would also involve a discussion about the presence of Christ everywhere, through the activity of the Holy Spirit. However, we limit ourselves here to two important aspects, i.e., the presence of Christ as the Logos and his post-resurrection existence. Our second chapter demonstrated that Christ is to be understood in terms of the Logos and Wisdom. Many scholars of the theology of religions identify the presence of Christ in other religions as the presence of the Logos and as Wisdom. For O'Collins, too, Christ is present everywhere as Logos and Wisdom. He says:

> As the last Adam … and the head of a new humanity, Christ is present wherever there are men and women. He is priest-prophet-king for the whole world. Identifying him as the divine Logos and Wisdom entails acknowledging his all-pervasive presence in the universe. There neither is nor can be any situation outside or without Christ. By creating and sustaining the world, the Logos-Sophia intimately accompanies everyone and everything.[128]

O'Collins points out that there is an advantage to speaking about the presence of Christ as Wisdom because it helps to break the monopoly of the Jewish-Christian scriptures on wisdom.

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views on the mediatory role of the Church with respect to non-Christians. Neither he nor O'Collins have ever questioned the doctrine concerning the universal salvific significance of Jesus Christ.

[127] According to Larry Hurtado, "The preexistence passages [of Paul] reflect two key christological convictions: (1) Jesus' origins and meaning lie in God, above and before creation and human history, making his appearance an event of transcendent significance (e.g., Phil. 2:6-8; 2 Cor. 8:9); and (2) Jesus' agency in creation corresponds to his central role in redemption (1 Cor. 8:6), expressing his unique significance and the unity of divine purpose in creation and redemption." See LARRY W. HURTADO, *Lord Jesus Christ. Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003, p. 126.

[128] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, p. 307.

According to him, "[i]n one form or another, at least some wise teachings and ways of life turn up in all cultures, societies, and religions. Being found everywhere, sapiential modes of thought make an obvious bridge between the adherents of Christianity and others. Christian faith can see in all genuine wisdom the saving and revealing presence of Christ."[129] Hence, seeing Christ as Logos and wisdom, opens up possibilities to speak about the presence of Christ among other traditions. However, as we stated in the previous chapter, O'Collins is aware of the limitations of the theology of the Logos, especially when one relates it to the limited history of the historical Jesus. The problem is that while the truth of the Logos is a general truth having universal significance, the history of Jesus (the human history) is a limited one. In other words, "the divine activity of the Logos, while always related to the humanity assumed at the incarnation, is not limited to that humanity." This means that the difficulty is with the two levels of existence of the Logos, the Logos with universal significance having no limitations, and the Logos which is incarnated and is historically limited. In other words, the problem is in fact related to the humanity of Jesus. While the Logos pre-existed the incarnation and exists eternally, "the human nature, while always present in the divine plan, did not actually 'pre-exist' the incarnation."[130] Hence, the question here is how one can use an inclusive language that embraces both the Logos and the incarnation. The way out of this problem, according to O'Collins, is to speak about the presence of the resurrected Jesus in the whole world. The resurrection of Jesus "links the specific history of Jesus with the general truth of the eternal Logos."[131] Through the resurrection the particular human history of Jesus receives a universal significance. The resurrection relates the earthly history of Jesus as the history of the eternal Logos. O'Collins' understanding of the permanence of the incarnation, based on the teaching of the First Council of Constantinople which we discussed in our second chapter, may prove to be an additional solution to this problem.[132] In the resurrection there is a continuity of the humanity of Jesus Christ in a glorified form. Hence, it is the resurrected Christ present in the world that is inclusive of the glorified humanity of Jesus, which opens the possibility for the salvation of all human beings. It is the same Christ who is present in the world through the Holy Spirit for the salvation of all. O'Collins is fully supportive of the position of Dupuis and Pope John Paul II concerning the activity of the Spirit beyond the visible Church. He says:

> This activity of the Spirit reaches and enriches the members of various religions in and through their religious life and practice. There is no other way possible, since that is where Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, and others live and worship. Since these religions contain elements of truth and goodness … and the Spirit of God is mysteriously but powerfully present in them, adherents of these religions

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[129] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christ and the Religions,* p. 361.

[130] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christ and the Religions,* p. 357.

[131] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Today. Christology in an Australian Context*, pp. 50-51.

[132] See also the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon concerning the two natures of Christ as well as the teaching of the Third Council of Constantinople on the two wills and two minds of Jesus Christ already discussed in our second chapter.

can reach salvation by following the ways proposed to them. In some sense their religions are ways of salvation.[133]

O'Collins sees the possibility of other religions as means of salvation. One may, however, note here that there are still questions concerning the salvation of others which need answers. When one affirms the incarnation, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and declares that salvation was brought about by him through his death and resurrection, is it sufficient to speak of the salvation of others only in terms of the universal presence of Christ through the Spirit, Wisdom and Logos? Without admitting and believing in the traditional teaching concerning the humanity of Jesus Christ, can one speak of the salvation of others since it is precisely in becoming a human being and suffering on the cross that Jesus Christ brought about salvation? If we speak only of the Sprit of Christ being universally active, or Jesus Christ being present through Wisdom and Word, we seem to limit and reduce the significance of the incarnation and death of Jesus for our salvation. The objection to these notions is precisely that they were the ways in which God's activity in the world was understood and spoken about before the incarnation of Jesus Christ took place. Hence, when one speaks of the salvation of all in terms of these notions, one may be neglecting the incarnational aspect and failing to recognize the history of Jesus. When one believes in Jesus Christ he/she has to recognize that it is only through accepting traditional faith in the person of Jesus, who was incarnate, died and rose for the salvation of all human beings, that one can attain salvation. Any notion that reduces the significance of, and belief in, the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus for the salvation of human beings may fail to convey the full reality of God's will for human beings.

8. Tracing O'Collins' Attitudinal Change

One can witness in O'Collins' writings a change of attitude from a pure traditionalist to an open-minded theologian seeking to understand and take account of the shifts in the Church's approach to other religions as well as the theology of religions. His support for the views of Dupuis concerning the value of other traditions shows that his Christology is open to new possibilities in approaching others. Although O'Collins was never directly involved in a dialogue with other religions, his own personal experience with other Christians and people of other religions seem to be the most important factor behind the shift in his attitude.[134] The factors responsible for this shift consist of the changing attitude of the Church from the time of the Second Vatican Council; his association with people belonging to different faiths, especially during his teaching career; the insights he gained from reading the scriptures of other religions; the many seminars he

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[133] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jacques Dupuis's Contributions to Interreligious Dialogue*, p. 395. O'Collins uses the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* of Pope John Paul II to speak of the value of other religions as means of salvation. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, # 86.

[134] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Living Vatican II. The 21st Council for the 21st Century*, p. 110.

conducted; and his travels through many countries where the majority of people belong to religions other than Christianity. While he describes openness to other Christians as a "cozy and comfortable" position and as offering "a better chance of growing together as true and honest followers of Christ," he finds relations with Jews and other religions more complex.[135] The shift in O'Collins' attitude could be illustrated in the following sequence. In *Foundations of Theology* (1971), especially in the discussion on *Dei Verbum*, his understanding of revelation was limited to Christianity and his dialogue was exclusively with European Catholics and Christians.[136] His visits to Japan and India in the 80^s and his contact with other religions in these countries seem to have brought about a change in this exclusivist attitude. Hence, in *Fundamental Theology* (1981), his comments on *Nostra Aetate* and *Gaudium et Spes* reflect his understanding of the revelatory and salvific self-communication of God beyond Christianity. In this book he devotes a chapter to the question of the relation between Christ and non-Christians. O'Collins' more universal perspective in this book is drawn from the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and Karl Rahner's approach to the salvation of non-Christians.[137] Besides the teachings of Vatican II, the reflections of Pope John Paul II on the mysterious and powerful presence of Christ everywhere (*Redemptor Hominis, 11, 13*), helped O'Collins to present Christ as the source of salvation for all in his book *Interpreting Jesus* (1983).[138] In *Retrieving Fundamental Theology* (1993) he reflected on Christ beyond Christianity in terms of the two missions of Christ: in his salvific role as the Christ, and through the action of the Holy Spirit (the mysterious presence of the Holy Spirit).[139] In *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus* (1995) he emphasized the role of Christ as redeemer of all and as universally present through the Holy Spirit, and as Word and Wisdom.[140] In the three articles published to clarify the work of Dupuis' *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, O'Collins emphasised the role of the Trinity in the salvation of all. In these articles he also supported the view of Dupuis about the 'reign of God' rather than the Church as the decisive point of reference concerning the salvation of all.[141] In *Living Vatican II: The 21st Council for the 21st Century* (2006), he goes so far as to say that the Holy Spirit's activity should not be seen as limited to the life of all human beings, religions and cultures but also to common action among the followers of various

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[135] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Living Vatican II. The 21st Council for the 21st Century*, p. 124.

[136] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Foundations of Theology,* pp. 47-63.

[137] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Fundamental Theology*, pp. 114-129. See also KARL RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith,* pp. 311-321.

[138] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus,* pp. 202-208.

[139] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology. The Three Styles of Contemporary Theology,* pp. 79-86.

[140] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, pp. 298-323.

[141] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jacques Dupuis. His Person and Work,* pp. 18-29; GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jacques Dupuis's Contributions to Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 388-397; GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christ and the Religions,* pp. 347-362.

religions for the promotion of human welfare.[142] In *Jesus Our Redeemer: A Christian Approach to Salvation*, O'Collins advocates a unified approach to the salvation of others by pointing towards the universal presence of Christ through the Spirit, as Word and as Wisdom. He brings together, revelation and salvation, the two distinguishable but inseparable dimensions of the self-communication of God in and through the person of Jesus Christ.[143] Finally, in a forthcoming book, *Salvation for All: God's Other Peoples*, O'Collins will present the "universal presence of the risen Jesus (along with the Holy Spirit) and his role as universal Wisdom" as the possibility for the salvation of all.[144] However, the universal presence of the risen Jesus as Wisdom is something that he has already spoken of in other books as well. One will have to wait and see what new possibilities will emerge in the new book. One could nevertheless conclude that while O'Collins firmly believes in the traditional teaching of the Church that Jesus is the universal saviour, his enquiry into the salvation of others is still open to various possibilities. He is progressive and positive in the understanding of God's revelation to others and one cannot yet pronounce on his final word on the subject.

Conclusion

Subsequent to our enquiry into the Christology of O'Collins and our description of it as traditional and intra-ecclesial, we have, in this chapter, analysed his understanding of salvation in order to find possibilities to address the issues that arise in the theology of religions today. Our enquiry began with a discussion of the basic problem of the sinful human condition through a threefold typology and original sin, which necessitates universal salvation. We also have analysed the nature of salvation through a threefold typology of redemption, atonement, and expiation. A further enquiry showed that salvation is possible only through the intervention of God himself revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Through his saving work, i.e., through his incarnation, ministry, death, and resurrection, Jesus Christ brings about the salvation of all. As Jesus Christ is the one who brings about salvation for all, he is understood as the unique and universal saviour and his saving work as having universal implications. This aspect of Christian faith in the universal significance of Jesus Christ prompted us to inquire how O'Collins responds to the questions posed by the theology of religions concerning the salvation of all and the role of Jesus Christ in bringing about the salvation of the people belonging to other religions. We concluded that while O'Collins stands firmly within the traditional teachings of the Church concerning Jesus Christ as the universal saviour, he moves with the Church in his attitude

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[142] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Living Vatican II. The 21st Council for the 21st Century*, p. 132. Cf. also POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, 32-41.

[143] GERALD O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer. A Christian Approach to Salvation*, pp. 218-237.

[144] AMAZON.COM, Review of GERALD O'COLLINS, *Salvation for All. God's Other Peoples* (Awaiting Publication), http://www.amazon.com/Salvation-All-Gerald-OCollins/dp/0199238901/ref=ed_oe_h/104-1398896-0868731?ie=UTF8&qid=1188555569&sr=1-26 (access 09.02.08).

towards other religions. However, we see a gradual movement in his writings towards accepting other religions, too, as revelatory and as possible ways of salvation for their adherents through the mysterious presence of Christ in them as Wisdom and also through the activity of the Spirit. In his Christology, the two main hermeneutical keys that open possibilities to reflect on the salvation of others and the revelatory and salvific significance of other religions, seem to be the following. First, there is a need to understand the self-communication of God in the religious experience of people of other religions. Second, there is a necessity to recognize the presence of the risen Christ in other religions as Wisdom and also through the activity of the Spirit. A Christology of revelation and salvation as experienced by all in their religious experience and a Christology of Christ's presence in other religions helps one to see other people and other religions as compatible with the Christology developed by O'Collins. However, we have also pointed out that while it is important to recognise the importance of the presence of the risen Christ through the activity of the Holy Spirit and as Wisdom, one should not minimalise the importance of the humanity of Jesus Christ.

Résumé

As we come to the end of our journey with the works of O'Collins, it is fitting to recapitulate here what we have done and briefly evaluate his Christology. Our research into the Christology of O'Collins consisted of four parts. Our goal in the first chapter was to enquire into the sources of his Christology. According to him, to know Jesus Christ is to know the Christ of the *past* (the Christ of Christian origins), the *present* (the Christ of present Christian experience) and the *future* (the Christ of the *eschaton*). There is only one true source for the understanding of Jesus Christ, namely, the self-revelation of the triune God that took place in a final and definitive way in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have seen that, for O'Collins, revelation is not the disclosure of a number of doctrines or the communication of some authenticated facts about God, but the self-communication of God in the person of Jesus Christ, which is God's saving activity for human beings. Revelation includes the 'revelation of the one who is revealed, the real act of revelation and also those who receive revelation'. O'Collins makes a distinction between fundamental/foundational revelation which ended with the apostolic period, and dependent revelation which characterises the post-apostolic period. The notion of dependent revelation highlights the fact that revelation is an ongoing process taking place in the life-experience of all human beings. We have also argued that every human experience is in some sense potentially a religious experience and so revelatory of God's self-communication. In our analysis of the sources, we dealt with Scripture and Tradition, which according to O'Collins, are not separate sources but form part of the one source which is revelation. When dealing with tradition he makes a distinction between Tradition which is the fundamental revelation, and the Gospel and traditions which are the means through which or within which the Tradition is contained and transmitted to succeeding generations. O'Collins does not limit revelation to the

written word or to the Scripture alone. Revelation is related to human experience and human traditions. According to O'Collins, Trinitarian doctrine illuminates the person of Jesus Christ and vice versa. Faith in Trinitarian doctrine is faith in the self-communication of the Trinity in history in and through the person of Jesus Christ.

In the second chapter we looked at the person of Jesus Christ from a doctrinal point of view, as this developed by O'Collins in his writings. Our examination of the development of Christology from the beginning of Christianity provides us with a picture of how the Christian experience of salvation led to faith in the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. To understand the person of Jesus Christ, we also looked into O'Collins' analysis of his many titles, including Christ, High Priest, Adam, Wisdom and Word, Son of Man, Son of God, Lord, Saviour and God, as well as some images such as, Good Shepherd, Divine Lord, Suffering Servant, Eschatological Prophet and Lamb of God. According to O'Collins all these titles helped Christians to affirm the divinity and humanity of Jesus. O'Collins sees incarnation as the personal and ultimate disclosure of God's revelation or his self-communication in the person of Jesus. He is firm in stating that the incarnation of Jesus is unique and that it does not do away with the monotheistic belief of the Old Testament. O'Collins is of the view that Jesus implicitly claimed that he was more than a human being and had some awareness of his divinity. He refutes the claim of those who oppose Jesus' divinity. He affirms the belief in the pre-existence of the divinity of Jesus Christ but disagrees with the theories of the pre-existence of the humanity. He also believes that the humanity of Jesus continues in a glorified form after his death and resurrection. We also examined the concept of *kenosis* in the incarnation. According to O'Collins, this notion means that the Son of God accepted the limitations and finiteness of human beings as his own. This was not a discarding of the powers of God but a sharing in the limited powers of human beings. The basis of O'Collins' understanding of the person of Jesus Christ at the doctrinal level is the definition of the Council of Chalcedon. In his view, in the incarnation the union is at the level of the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ but not at the level of persons. There is only one person in Jesus Christ and it is the principle of unity. Jesus has all the attributes of God, and hence, he is not a representation of God but the self-communication of God. Incarnation helps us to understand the nature of God and also our true value in God's eyes. The human nature of Jesus Christ is understood to have all the dynamic characteristics of relationship and all human attributes of growth, freedom, limitations, sexual difference, and cultural differences. His human nature also includes limitedness and finiteness. O'Collins uses the analogies of the union of body and soul, bride and bridegroom, scripture and Church, and *perichoresis* to understand the hypostatic union although these analogies are inadequate to explain the full reality of this union. He uses the teaching of the Third Council of Constantinople on the two wills and two minds operating harmoniously in Jesus to insist on his true divinity and humanity. The knowledge of Jesus is understood as arising from two systems: from the human cognitive system, which was limited in many ways, and the divine cognitive system, which had unlimited capacities.

However, he is against the view of Aquinas who held that Jesus had unlimited knowledge because of his beatific vision. O'Collins maintains that knowledge was limited in Jesus in so far as he was a human being and developed like any human being. By denying the beatific vision to the man Jesus, O'Collins also states that Jesus was a man of faith. He also holds that Jesus was sinless and that a correct understanding of his impeccability must take as its point of departure his divine nature. The doctrinal analysis of O'Collins' Christology makes clear that he has an intra-ecclesial understanding of the person of Jesus and that he is intent on bringing others to real faith in the incarnation.

Subsequent to our enquiry into the being and person of Jesus Christ, the third chapter investigated the nature and significance of the resurrection of Jesus. O'Collins is a fervent defender of the personal bodily resurrection of Jesus. His defence of this article of faith is built upon Scripture and tradition but extends as well to his own personal experience of faith. We examined the scriptural tradition regarding the appearances of the risen Lord, the empty tomb, and the theological significance of the resurrection claims. O'Collins develops his own theology of the resurrection by means of extended conversations with scores of theologians. Notwithstanding the many objections to the historicity of the resurrection and the problems with respect to the evidences proffered in its support, O'Collins maintains that faith in the resurrection is faith in a historical fact which has boundless implications for the life of Christians and the whole of creation. According to O'Collins, however, the case for the historicity of the resurrection is not sufficient for Easter faith. O'Collins' approach to the resurrection is completely in line with the teaching of the Church. The resurrection reveals Jesus' divinity. He is disclosed as the Son of God, and his trinitarian face is made manifest, as his love for all, and his continued presence in the Church. O'Collins attaches great importance to the testimonies of the founding witnesses who had direct experiences of the risen Jesus and sees the role of the dependent witnesses as the transmission of resurrection faith to the next generations in and through worship and work.

Our enquiry in the final chapter was directed to O'Collins' understanding of salvation and its relevance to the theology of religions. We began with an analysis of the basic problem of the human condition of sin by proposing a threefold typology of sin and reflecting on the notion of original sin. The reality of sin, according to O'Collins, necessitates God's universal saving deed. Salvation is possible only through the intervention of God himself, as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Salvation is effected by means of the incarnation, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. Here, too, our analysis of O'Collins' writings revealed that he stands firmly within the traditional teachings of the Church, as regards both his understanding of Jesus Christ as the universal saviour and in his attitude towards other religions. However, we detected in his writings a gradual shift towards the acceptance of other religions as revelatory and as possible ways of salvation for their adherents through the mysterious presence of Christ in them. His

Christology provides us with two hermeneutic keys to reflect on the salvation of non-Christians and to understand the revelatory and salvific significance of other religions, i.e., God communicates God's Self to others in their own religious experiences; and the risen Christ is present in others as Wisdom and through the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Our investigation of the person of Jesus on the basis of the works of O'Collins, an eminent scholar and a firm believer in the person of Jesus, has proved to be both a very interesting and a very enriching experience for us. Though one can never know the person of Jesus completely, our research on O'Collins has provided us with insight into some of the most important aspects of traditional Christology, its struggles against many heresies and the problems that have plagued it since its inception. This enquiry has taken us back to the beginnings of Christianity and has helped us to understand the person of Jesus as Christians of the past have understood him. Our research has also given us an awareness of modern Christological thinking, thanks to O'Collins' discussions of critical issues in modern Christology. Our enquiry has therefore helped us to better understand the person of Jesus and the contemporary challenges to faith in him. It is clear to us that O'Collins is intent on affirming the reality of God's self-revelation in the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He does this by means of a thorough and very systematic use of the sources of Scripture and Tradition.

O'Collins sees the whole history of the salvific work of God as a source for knowing Jesus.[145] This means that for him the revelation of God in Tradition and Scripture is the point of departure for Theology. Nevertheless, he does not neglect human experience in general. Throughout his work, he bears witness to his fundamental concern, namely, to engage in *fides quaerens intellectum.*

In their quests for the historical Jesus many authors have depicted the person of Jesus and his works in their own style and in accord with their own agendas. As Albert Schweitzer put it, "it was not only each epoch that found its reflection in Jesus; each individual created Him in accordance with his own character."[146] However, our enquiry into the works of O'Collins has made it clear that his Christological project is shaped above all by the Church's tradition of faith as this comes to expression in the Scripture, the Magisterium, the councils (especially the

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[145] Commenting on O'Collins' *Interpreting Jesus*, Gerald M. Fagin says that O'Collins "emphasizes that Christology should call on sources beyond the NT and Church councils, sources such as art, liturgy, contemporary teaching, and life experiences. He makes effective use of such sources, including an interesting discussion of the Shroud of Turin and the symbol of the blood of Christ." See G. M. FAGIN, Review of GERALD O'COLLINS, *Interpreting Jesus*, (New York, 1983) in *Theological Studies* 45 (1984) 563-564, p. 563.

[146] A. SCHWEITZER, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus. A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, 2nd ed., London, 1936, p. 4.

council of Chalcedon), and the living faith of Christians throughout the centuries. It should be noted, however, that his deference to tradition does not deter him from confronting other thinkers, including even Aquinas (regarding Jesus' possession of the beatific vision) on the question of the incarnation and resurrection. His frequent and free use of the works of the Fathers of the Church and the teachings of the councils highlights their relevance to many contemporary controversies.[147] O'Collins' works are often used as textbooks for students of theology[148] and he does indeed seem to be engaged in a sort of catechesis that aims to effect faith in those who read him.

O'Collins stands within the tradition and affirms the traditional teaching that Jesus Christ is the unique and universal saviour. He is aware that the Church cannot in any way dilute its position concerning the person of Jesus when it enters in dialogue with other religions. He is also aware of, and uncomfortable with, the positions taken by the pluralist theologians of the theology of religions. Nevertheless, in his most recent work (which has been shaped by the thought of Jacques Dupuis), he has sought to forge new ways of relating to the non-Christian religions by an appeal to such themes as the universal presence of Christ as Logos and Wisdom, and the permanence of the glorified humanity of Christ in view of the resurrection. It seems fair to say that there is evidence of a new openness in O'Collins' writings, one apparently born out of his personal experience with other religions and his dialogue with scores of other theologians.

O'Collins' work is not unproblematic. His writings are sometimes repetitive, both in their choice of themes and in the commentary provided. Another difficulty is that while he is open to dialogue with other religions, his writings are nearly always written from an intra-ecclesial perspective. Most of his writings are oriented exclusively towards the Christian community and are clearly intended to promote Christian self-awareness and to form Christian identity. Yet another difficulty is that while O'Collins includes human experience as a source for knowing the person of Jesus, he is almost completely engrossed in arguments based on the teachings of the councils and teachers of the past. On the one hand, he insists on the importance of the relationship between revelation and experience when he speaks about the self-communication of God, but, on the other hand, he seems to neglect experience in practice and to give prominence to the cognitive (or propositional) dimension of faith.

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[147] William L. Portier says that, "[i]f you are looking for the latest incarnation of Luther at the Diet of Worms or for the lonely heroism of the Romantic genius or the Enlightened truth seeker, you will be disappointed with O'Collins' Christology. He writes, in the presence of those who have gone before, as a custodian of a living tradition who hopes to contribute to it his 'own tiny accents." See PORTIER, M. L., Review of GERALD O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus* (Oxford, 1995), in *Modern Theology* 14 (1998) 153-154, p. 153-154

[148] Many reviewers of O'Collins' books (J. Knight, D. S. Cunningham, P. J. Bernardi, W. L. Portier, etc.), say that they are meant for students of theology. Speaking about his work on *Incarnation*, P. Helm points out that he "is firmly rooted in biblical and patristic teaching." See P. Helm, Review of GERALD O'COLLINS, *Incarnation* (London, 2002), in *Theological Book Review* 15 (2003) 69.

That being said, however, O'Collins stands out as an exponent and a teacher of Christian faith, both the faith of lived Christian experience and the faith that has come to expression in the Church's rich doctrinal and theological tradition. Writing in the Festschrift for O'Collins that was published in 2001, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, described him as "for thousands a sure guide to the treasures of scripture and a wise and patient interpreter of the Roman Catholic Church's appropriation of the teaching of the [Second Vatican] Council." Carey goes on to note that O'Collins' home is clearly "his own beloved church," but that, from there, "he is able to reaffirm other Christians … through going deeper into the faith received from the fathers and saints of the church."[149] Carey's words are an apt summary of both the style and the goal of O'Collins' work. He both embodies and seeks to understand the tradition that he has received and made his own.

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[149] George Carey, *Foreword*, in DANIEL KENDALL & STEPHEN T. DAVIS (eds.), *The Convergence of Theology. A Festschrift Honouring Gerald O'Collins* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001) 2.