KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT LEUVEN FACULTY OF THEOLOGY



UNDERSTANDING TRADITION

Jesus Christ in the Writings of Gerald O'Collins

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Promoter

by

Prof. Dr. Terrence MERRIGAN

Jose George Palakuzha

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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 Punjab¹ 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

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 selfunderstanding. 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

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." 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

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.

CHAPTER ONE

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

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

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." 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. 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

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." 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. 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*." In fact, the privileged source for the knowledge of Christ is the whole history of

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." 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

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." 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." O'Collins appeals to *Dei Verbum*, promulgated by the Second Vatican Council, as a major source in clarifying his view of revelation. 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. 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." Revelation is understood "as the personal self-revelation of the

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,

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

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

[&]quot;[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." 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

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 selfcommunication 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.

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.

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. 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." 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." and a gradual shift in the understanding of the Trinity, rather than 'created grace'. "The divine Giver comes with

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

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." 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." 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

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 Schillebeeckx44 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

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

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." 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 clearcut 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

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." 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. 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." He also says:

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." 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

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.

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 selfmanifestation, 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

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

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 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 revelation⁶⁹ 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.

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 selfcommunication 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,

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.

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,

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 experiences⁸⁷ 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

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." 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." 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

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 VATICAL 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

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." 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. 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. 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

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

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." 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,"

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

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.

howledge 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*). This transcendental revelation takes the form of 'historical revelation' (*a posteriori*) "through concrete experiences and free decisions of communities and individual persons." 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 selfcommunication 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

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." 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, '23 theophanies (e.g., the theophanies experienced by Moses), the ecstasies '24 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

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. 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. 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. 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

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'

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." 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

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.

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.

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.

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

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." 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

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.

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." 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 selfcommunication 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." According to O'Collins, in the Church's traditions

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.' 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." 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." 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

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. (2) The second

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

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. 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. (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." He insists that, "despite its

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." 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,

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

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

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." 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" 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." 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." 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. 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

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." In other words, it is on the basis of the whole life of the Church, namely, its faith,

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 wrily 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'." 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

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, '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,

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

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." 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

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

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." 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). 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

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. 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." Thus, we return to christological considerations when we deal with the Trinity and its development in the early Christian period. 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

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'." In the *Didache* we have the Trinitarian baptismal formulae used by the early

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.

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

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' and the Logos being

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 firstborn 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

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." 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. 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

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 .

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*

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

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

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." 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,

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

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 God²⁵⁵ 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

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 Sabellianism²⁵⁹ 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

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-

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 Macedonians²⁶³ 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

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." This in effect was to say that the Holy Spirit

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

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.

ARIO 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

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*." 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." 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

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...

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." 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

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

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." 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." 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

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 Constantinopole (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." 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

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." According to O'Collins, the Reformation and Enlightenment periods have also influenced trinitarian faith. 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

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.

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

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." 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."

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.