

NOTE

WHAT IS LOGOCENTRIC THEOLOGY?

Seely Beggiani's stimulating article "A Case For Logocentric Theology"¹ has treated a question which is fundamental from several points of view. Most important, of course, it has broached the issue of the meaning of Jesus Christ for the rest of us men. And this is always a timely and critical question, one which must always be asked with renewed urgency as well as from a constantly moving point of view. It is an inquiry which can never be exhausted and which remains the perennially central concern of Christian preaching and theology.

The major objective of the article seems to be a genuinely kerygmatic one: to bridge the apparent distance between Jesus and ourselves in order that we might more readily recognize and respond to His significance. At least two general tendencies are available in the tradition for bringing Christ closer to us. One of these is to emphasize the human dimensions of Christ, the other to predicate Christological characteristics of men. It seems clear that the approach of Beggiani's paper, while not excluding the first, is that of rethinking the second option. Thus, instead of a Christology "from below," we end up with a quite unique "anthropology from above." The following is intended to be a critique of the manner in which this rethinking is carried out.

We may distill from the article three distinct, though closely related, themes which seem to raise problems for theological anthropology as well as for Christian preaching. The first of these is the kerygmatic and hermeneutical assumption that the notion of the Logos, seen almost in disassociation from the humanity of Christ, can serve more suitably and intelligibly than Christ's human nature as the basic category for the Christian's understanding the source of his sanctification.² In response to this, I shall argue below that there is a disjunction implied here which is kerygmatically self-defeating precisely because it is theologically unsupportable, especially by way of appeal to Rahner's theology of the symbol.

The second theme, correlative to the first, is the notion that the Logos relates or can relate to each human individual in a manner similar to or side by side with and "approximating" the hypostatic union; it is hypothesized that each man has a "potential" for such an exhaustive

¹ Seely Beggiani, "A Case For Logocentric Theology," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 32 (1971) 371-406.

² Since Beggiani's article consistently relates the word "sanctification" to the Logos, I will follow this usage, even though it seems to overlook tendencies in the New Testament and in Trinitarian theology to appropriate sanctification to the Spirit.

union with the Logos. In support of this contention, Beggiani points out that Rahner employs the term "formal causality" in explaining the structure of the Incarnation as well as that of grace and glory. There are, however, several questions implied in this position which require clarification. The first of these is whether the concept "hypostatic union" should be the starting point of Christian anthropology or even of Christology. Should not both Christological and anthropological considerations be placed in the framework of a more general doctrine of God's relation to the creature?³ It will be suggested below that in such a more general context the question of whether we are *each* constituted by (or whether we each have a "potential" for) something like the hypostatic union becomes superfluous and misplaced.

The second unanswered question here is implied in the first. Why discuss the relationship of the Logos to individuals without first elaborating on the relationship of the Logos to creation and humanity as a whole? Without denying the reciprocal priority of species and individual, perhaps it would be less to the point to determine how we, as individuals, are patterned after Christ's connection with the Logos than it would be to grasp how *mankind and its history* relate to the risen body and the humanity of Christ, and thus how men participate in a corporate dimension of the self-expression of the Logos. This latter approach seems to have biblical support.⁴ Moreover, it is the path which Rahner takes in "The Theology of the Symbol" when he states that the *Church* "continues the symbolic function of the Logos in the world."⁵

The third difficulty in this second theme is the use of Rahner's notion of formal causality as the middle term for assimilating grace to the structure of the Incarnation. Here some clarifications are necessary from the point of view of Rahner's starting point in the more general context of God's relationship to creation as such.

The third central theme of the article received little elaboration, but it is perhaps the most crucial. This is the conclusion that the redemption wrought by Christ is appropriated by way of exemplary causality. This position is reached, it seems, only by way of excluding the human nature of Christ as the "ground" of sanctification and by hypothesizing that the "actual link of justification and sanctification is . . . our union with the divine Logos Himself."⁶ Thus redemption by way of following the example of Christ is the residue of this prior contention.

³ Cf. Karl Rahner, "Current Problems in Christology," *Theological Investigations* 1 (Baltimore, 1961) 163-64.

⁴ E.g., Eph 1:10; 1:22-23; Col 1:15-20; Jn 1:2-3.

⁵ Karl Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol," *Theological Investigations* 4 (Baltimore, 1966) 240.

⁶ Beggiani, *art. cit.*, p. 374.

Now aside from all the subtleties inherent in the notion of exemplary causality (especially in the intersubjective arena, where the distinction between exemplary and other types of causality becomes quite nebulous), the viability of this notion in Beggiani's presentation is also contingent upon the two previously mentioned assumptions. Consequently, our estimation of this soteriology will depend ultimately on how we evaluate the thesis that "Logocentric" theology will make Jesus Christ more meaningful to us than that theological anthropology which envisions His human nature as the ground of sanctification.

KERYGMATIC VALUE OF "LOGOCENTRIC" THEOLOGY

We may begin, then, by examining the insinuation that a "Logocentric" theology would have more kerygmatic value than a theological anthropology which centers on the humanity of Christ. It immediately strikes one as a possibility that Beggiani's "anthropology from above" fails to escape some of the hermeneutical deficiencies of both the excessively "vertical" as well as of the exaggeratedly "horizontal" Christologies. On the one hand, it is difficult to see how man's understanding of himself (which is what anthropology is all about) can be made any more meaningful by unmediated reference to the Logos (a notion which is quite obscure in itself) than by reference to the mediating humanity of Christ. It is the notion of mediation which is really the issue here. For, as I shall explain in more detail later, the very meaningfulness and *immediacy* of the Logos must be *mediated* by the humanity of Christ both ontologically (for itself) and ontically (in itself) in order that the "Logos" itself be clarified internally as well as externally. And, on the other hand, as in horizontalism, it is questionable whether de-emphasizing the "uniqueness" of Christ is as significant a theological task as Beggiani supposes. Uniqueness in Christ is not incompatible with His total continuity with the human race. The question of Christ's sinlessness should not enter into consideration too early. For man (as the article correctly understands Rahner on this point) is essentially self-transcendence. Now if we understand Christ as absolute self-transcendence (a fact which excludes "sin" inasmuch as it involves living in full accord with one's possibility), does this make Him discontinuous with us even though He is unique? Even if it is stated that He differs from us as condition from conditioned or ground from grounded in respect to redemption, this does not remove Him from our own sphere of reality (any more than the highest of any genus is removed from the sphere of that genus).

Nevertheless, the basic reason for my reservations about the value of this "Logocentric" theology for Christian proclamation is a more basic-

ally theological one and not directly hermeneutical. Let us recall one of the conclusions of the paper: "the ontological relationship or ground of each supernaturally elevated individual is not with the human nature of Christ but with the divine Logos."⁷ I take this disjunctive statement to mean that man is justified not by participation in the human nature of Christ but by *unmediated* union with the Logos. If this is an accurate interpretation, however, the statement is replete with problems.

Beggiani supports this proposition by appealing to Rahner's theology of the symbol: "it would seem as a logical consequence of the theology of symbol that either Christ should have been the only human created or that *each human being* should be given the opportunity of being an adequate and true symbol of the divine Logos."⁸ And further, "Man is either linked to the Logos in a way similar to Christ or he is no symbol at all."⁹ (Note the "similar to" rather than "continuous with.")

While these statements seem objectionable from a number of points of view, at this point I shall attempt only to show that Beggiani's position is in no sense the "logical consequence" of Rahner's theology of the symbol.

The above formulation, to the effect that it is not the human nature of Christ but rather direct union with the divine Logos (by way of formal causality) that causes sanctification, seems to rest ultimately on a disassociation of symbolized from symbol which Rahner actually finds repugnant.¹⁰ For, as Beggiani's article also notes, the human nature of Christ is the fullest possible expression or exteriorization of the Logos. It is therefore the perfect symbol, inasmuch as it is the definitive embodiment of the internal reality of the Logos Himself. It is not an extrinsic or dispensable reality over against the Logos. It coincides with the Logos to the extent that the Logos comes to full expression there "in the other," as Rahner, following Hegel, would say. What then would be the kerygmatic significance of prescinding from its most perfect expression when speaking of the Logos? After all, as Rahner suggests, some form of mediation is essential not only in order to express one's reality to others but even more fundamentally to clarify one's reality to oneself in order that what we call "self-possession" might be possible.¹¹ In this same sense, then, the Logos is "most fully Himself," i.e., possesses Himself completely, by way of giving Himself over to another—the human nature of Christ. Now Beggiani's article seems to have as its quite legitimate

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 393.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 392 (italics mine).

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Cf. Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol," pp. 230 ff.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

objective the relating of the Logos most intimately to our "sanctification." This intimacy with God in sanctification, it is maintained, comes about essentially by way of direct union with the Logos rather than with the human nature of Christ. But this statement seems to be premised on the assumption that these two diverse realities are not really one. In this connection, on the other hand, Rahner states: "The only way in which Christ's *concrete* humanity may be conceived of in itself as diverse from the Logos is by thinking of it *in so far as* it is united to the Logos."¹²

The whole thrust of Rahner's reflections on the symbol is to show how immediacy must be mediated,¹³ and that it is precisely and only in being mediated symbolically that immediacy to oneself as well as to others can be experienced. Thus, the human nature of Christ, symbolic of the Logos, does not stand between the latter and ourselves so as to make our access to the Logos indirect.¹⁴ On the contrary, it is that reality through which the Logos becomes most immediate to us (precisely because He is by that fact most immediate to Himself). It seems that perhaps Beggiani has at this point fallen back into an extrinsicist approach to the symbol. For the role of Christ's humanity in mediating to us the divine Logos is thrust aside and instead there is posited an unmediated and individualized relationship with the Logos on the part of each man (giving Christ the role of the best or exemplary union).

According to Rahner's view of symbol, however, the fact that my own relationship to the Logos is mediated by the human nature of Christ implies that I am even more immediately related to the Logos than any unmediated connection would allow. (The implications of this for ecclesiology and sacramentology are obvious. It seems that Beggiani's approach, by overlooking this notion of mediation, would eventually dispense with the need for both.)

Further, apart from the mediated immediacy of the Logos in Christ's human nature, none of us could ever draw near to or be drawn near by the Logos. The depth of Rahner's theology of the symbol lies in its dispensing with the notion that mediation necessarily involves lack of immediacy. This is perhaps why he never puts forth the question whether the "supernaturally elevated individual" is immediately related to the

¹² Rahner, "Current Problems in Christology," p. 181.

¹³ It would perhaps be more accurate to say that symbol is a mediation *to* immediacy. "For the true and proper symbol, being an intrinsic moment of the thing itself, has a function of mediation which is not at all opposed in reality to the immediacy of what is meant by it, but is a mediation *to* immediacy" (Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol," p. 244).

¹⁴ From the viewpoint of eschatology also "the humanity of Christ will have eternal significance for the immediacy of the *visio beata*" (*ibid.*).

Logos rather than to the humanity of Christ. Such a dilemma is inconceivable in his view of symbolic mediation.

Beggiani's paper states further:

If the main purpose of creation is for God the Father to carry on a dialogue of speech and love through the Logos with the man Christ, and if we are sons of the Father alongside the human Christ, then again our *immediate* ground of union should be with the Logos. *Otherwise*, our dialogue would be with the human intellect and will of Christ *and not* with the Logos and the Spirit of the Father.¹⁵

All of this is said as if the human will and intellect of Christ can be prescindend from when speaking of the reality of the Logos. According to Rahner's vision of the symbol, however, in our dialogue with the human will and intellect of Christ we are not removed from immediate dialogue with the Logos. On the contrary, the human will and intellect of Christ symbolically mediate the immediacy of the Logos and thus make the dialogue possible. That this intimate dialogue is further mediated by Church and sacrament follows explicitly in Rahner's thought.¹⁶

Beggiani hypothesizes that the ground of our sanctification is not the humanity of Christ but rather direct union with the Logos. However, from another (more traditionally philosophical) point of view, also mentioned by Rahner, the human nature of Christ is inevitably the "ground" of our salvation. For inasmuch as the highest degree of any actuality is the ground of all other actualities of the same order,¹⁷ it would only follow that the unsurpassable "sanctification" of the humanity of Christ by the Logos would also render His human nature the *Grund* (condition and cause) of the sanctification of our humanity also. In order, then, to dismiss the humanity of Christ as the ground of our sanctification, one must tangle with this most elusive but persistent philosophical-theological axiom.

For these reasons alone it would appear that the case for an unmediated Logocentric theology, if it has theological support at all, is at least quite inconsistent with Rahner's theological reflections.

¹⁵ Beggiani, *art. cit.*, p. 393 (italics mine).

¹⁶ Cf. Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol," pp. 240 ff.

¹⁷ Cf. Karl Rahner, "Der eine Mittler und die Vielfalt der Vermittlungen," *Schriften zur Theologie* 8 (Einsiedeln, 1967) pp. 230-31: "Die Mittlerschaft Christi 'bewirkt' den Heilswillen Gottes gegenüber dem einzelnen Menschen, insofern das Höchste und Letzte einer Tat immer auch ihr *Grund* genannt werden muss, die Geschichte der Selbstmitteilung Gottes in ihm irreversibel geworden und so als eschatologisch siegreiche geschichtlich erschienen ist und jeder einzelne Mensch als Glied der Menschheit gemeint ist, an die sich die Selbstmitteilung Gottes wendet" (italics mine). Further, "das Höchste und Letzte dieses einen von Gott gewollten Ganzen alles andere bedingt und trägt" (*ibid.*).

PROBLEM OF FORMAL CAUSALITY

The second element which we have isolated for criticism is Beggiani's tendency to predicate the Logos of individuals by way of a formal causality similar to, or side by side with, that of the hypostatic union. The difficulty here has three levels. (1) Should the hypostatic union be the starting point for Christian anthropology or even for Christology? (2) If the Logos is in union with the rest of us, should this union be predicated first of individual men or rather of mankind and its history seen in the light of the risen body of Christ? (3) In what sense is the concept of formal causality analogously applicable to both the Incarnation and grace? This third question will be answered, I hope, in our discussion of the first two.

1) For the simple reason alone that the concept "hypostatic union" is the precipitate of a precarious and burdensome controversy, one suspects that it should not be taken up prematurely into discussions of Christian anthropology and Christology. This is not to deny that it remains a normative and delimiting theological element. But neither it nor any other dogmatic statement should become the isolated starting point for construing theological ramifications which may not have been even incipient in the original formulations.

Instead, it might prove more fruitful again to follow Rahner's pattern of locating both Christological and anthropological considerations within the sphere of the more fundamental question of God's relation to the world, to creation as such. If we follow this line of thought, I think we may understand why Beggiani's question is neither explicitly considered nor even intimated in Rahner's work—in spite of the article's efforts to find support there.

Both Christology and theological anthropology should be seen in terms of the single mystery of God's Self-gift to His creation.¹⁸ This relation of God to creation is the one absolute and essential mystery of Christian faith.¹⁹ If the notion "hypostatic union" is extrapolated from this general context and predicated (even analogously) primarily of God's relation with each individual rather than of His dealings with creation and history as a whole, such a maneuver is arbitrary and quite superfluous. For the hypostatic union is properly seen as the "prerogative" of humanity and history, not of individuals as such.²⁰ We should

¹⁸ Cf. Rahner, "Current Problems in Christology," pp. 163-64; and "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," *Theological Investigations* 4, 36-73.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁰ In Rahner's thought, even when the hypostatic union is seen as the propriety of Jesus as an individual, its meaning in terms of the one mystery of Christian faith is not simply that it elevates one human to total union with the Logos, but that it expresses something decisive about God's Self-communication to His total creation. If the hypostatic

maintain a rigid containment of this notion within the bounds of the single mystery of Christian faith and not allow it to be excised and isolated as a separate theological starting point. The notion "hypostatic union," in other words, should initially be understood as a derivative of the theology of creation and history²¹ and not primarily as the central category of the attempt to understand the ontological constitution of men as individuals.

2) If this perspective is sustained, the second phase of our difficulty can be resolved. For in the context of the one mystery of God's Self-communication to the world, the notion of a highly individuated union of the divine Logos with discrete human selves apart from the conditioning mediation of the human Christ becomes superfluous and unintelligible. And the attempt to multiply the "potential" for the hypostatic union by the total number of human individuals completely overlooks the particularity and uniqueness of this actuality in elucidating God's relationship with His entire creation and with human history. It seems to be both biblically and theologically more consistent to begin with an inquiry as to how the Logos relates first to creation and to history. "The old speculation about the Logos, which ascribed to Him an activity and history in creation 'before Christ but Christlike'...would be well worth rethinking, after being purified of its subordinationist elements."²²

To initiate Christian anthropological reflections with the attempt to discover how the Logos relates to the separate individualities first of Christ and then of the rest of us runs against the grain of both biblical and Chalcedonian theology. For the Logos with which we are united as individuals is first and foremost the Logos which has come to expression in creation and history of which Jesus Christ is a climactic dimension—and only in this climactic sense "hypostatically" one with the Logos. The Logos, then, does not merely assume individuals; He assumes a human history. And this human history "is part of an entire history of the world before and after it, and, what is more, the fullness of that history and its end."²³

union is consistently dealt with as such, then the "problem" of Jesus' "difference" from the rest of men causes no embarrassment. For in this context the hypostatic union is not so much intended as a quality which makes Jesus different from the rest of us, as it is understood as a decisive point in the history of God's gift of Self to creation. We have approached the hypostatic union too often from the wrong set of co-ordinates. Beggiani tries to resolve the problem of Jesus' "uniqueness" from within such a framework by multiplying in us as individuals that quality which makes Jesus "different." Rahner, on the other hand, exploits that which is unique about Jesus in terms not of its individualistic implications but of its universal-historical significance.

²¹ Rahner, "Current Problems in Christology," p. 167.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

Notice that Rahner speaks of the Logos primarily with reference to such global concepts as "humanity" and the "entire history of the world." If individuals are in any sense the Self-expression of the Logos, it is only in the sense that they are part of a history and creation which only as a whole is capable of adequately symbolizing the Logos. In this framework, then, hypostatic union refers to that "single" point in *history* where the process of the Self-expression of the Logos becomes in some way definitive and irrefragable.²⁴ According to Christian faith, this point is Jesus Christ. But even in the historical Jesus the Logos is not in every sense completely bodied forth. After all, we still have to make sense of the risen body of Christ; perhaps we may speak with Moltmann of the "future of the risen Christ"²⁵ and consequently of the future aspect of the incarnation of the Logos in history and creation.²⁶

At any rate, Beggiani is entirely correct in seeking out a way to express the intimacy of individuals with the Logos. And the use of the theology of symbol is quite legitimate if properly understood. However, if we are, simultaneously with Christ, symbolic of the Logos, this has to be qualified in two respects. First, we as individuals are part of an even more primordial medium in which the Logos comes to expression: humanity and its history understood in terms of the body of Christ. And second, the humanity of Christ remains the condition and ground (because the climax) of the world's capacity to symbolize the Logos.²⁷

It seems to me that the hypostatic union is misunderstood if it is seen primarily as the "model" or supreme example of the sanctification of individuals; nor should it be stated without qualification that the hypostatic union is a reality which is structurally approximated by individuals who open themselves to God's grace. The hypostatic union understood in terms of a general doctrine of God's relation to His creature is a climactic and unsurpassable (though not temporally conclusive) event in respect to creation as a whole. "Is it not possible," Rahner asks, "so to conceive of Time and History theologically . . . that one has conceptually stated the Christ of Chalcedon when one has said of him that he is the fullness of times, who as their Head definitively recapitulates the aions and brings them to their head?"²⁸

It is a mistake to think of *individuals* as having a "potential" or an "existential" for the hypostatic union. The term "existential" as used

²⁴ Cf. Karl Rahner, "Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World," *Theological Investigations* 5 (Baltimore, 1966) pp. 178-84.

²⁵ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (New York, 1967) pp. 139-229.

²⁶ That the Incarnation itself has a history is often overlooked. Cf. Karl Rahner, "Dogmatic Questions on Easter," *Theological Investigations* 4, 130-33.

²⁷ Cf. Rahner, "Der eine Mittler und die Vielfalt der Vermittlungen," pp. 230 ff.

²⁸ Rahner, "Current Problems in Christology," p. 167.

by Heidegger and Rahner does indeed refer to the individual's structural orientation in terms of this or that possibility. And Beggiani is quite correct in restricting this term to its individualistic tonality. But this is precisely why the term is inapplicable in depicting the orientation of men to the hypostatic union. For it is not individuals as such but humanity and its history which possesses anything like a "structural" orientation toward the hypostatic union.²⁹ Consequently, to hold out the hypostatic union as a possibility for individuals other than Christ is to divest it of its universal historical significance and to distract us from the more central theological task of locating the hypostatic union in the sphere of the one great mystery of God's rapport with His entire creation. It is quite legitimate, of course, to speak of the individual's "existential" for union with God (supernatural existential) in grace and glory, but this is quite distinct from "human nature's" potential for the Incarnation. To say that man has a potential for the hypostatic union is not to say that men do.

What we need, then, as Rahner notes, is a "picture of the world in which the *one* Christ, the one Christ as *man*, seems meaningful."³⁰ It is not necessarily a historical individual that men will find most proximately meaningful. Perhaps most of the time it is a "picture of the world" which is the immediate source of meaning to us. What theology has to do is offer an intelligible interpretation of Jesus Christ as that unique³¹ element in such a picture which gives it coherence and guarantees its integrity. Thus, His "uniqueness" can become that which explains instead of that which always needs explaining.

3) But what is to be said of Beggiani's use of Rahner's concept of formal causality? The article states:

If we accept the theology of symbol and that human beings are truly symbols of the divine Logos, there must be a causal connection along the lines of formal causality. . . . We are claiming that theology of symbol presupposes a union of formal causality which we call hypostatic union in Christ, and anyone who shares in Christ's humanity, which is the very symbol of the Logos, must also have a union of formal causality.³²

²⁹ Moreover, it seems inappropriate to speak even of Jesus as having an "existential" for the hypostatic union. If it is in Jesus that "human nature's" orientation is actualized, this means that the hypostatic union is much more than the fulfilment of the individualistic category "existential." On this point see Rahner's own clarifications to the effect that it is human nature and not individuals who realize a "potentiality" for the hypostatic union: "On the Theology of the Incarnation," *Theological Investigations* 4, 110.

³⁰ Rahner, "Current Problems in Christology," p. 198.

³¹ The word "unique" need not imply that the Incarnation is a *special* case of God's relation to the creature. In fact, Rahner prefers to discuss the Incarnation in the general categories of the God-creature relation: distance-proximity, image-concealment, time-eternity, dependence-independence ("Current Problems in Christology," p. 165).

³² Beggiani, *art. cit.*, p. 392.

Here again, what needs to be clarified is whether and in what sense it is proper to speak of "human beings" (rather than of human nature) as symbolic of the Logos through formal causality. The article oscillates throughout between individualistic and generic understandings of man. The central impression given, however, is that the sanctification of individuals by the formal causality of uncreated grace is parallel to and side by side with (though a deficient mode of) what we call the hypostatic union.

While Rahner uses the concept of formal causality in reference to both the Incarnation and grace and even sees an analogy here, the analogy must be properly understood. Beggiani himself suggests at one point that the analogy is one of intrinsic attribution: this would be acceptable if it means that man participates in the *one* reality of God's bestowal of Himself on Christ's humanity. And yet it seems that the article fails to exploit the participative connotations of this view of analogy and its significance for the mediatorial significance of Christ. Instead the *Logos* (unmediated) becomes the isolated "analogate" which is dispensed in various degrees to human individuals by way of "formal causality." On the other hand, Rahner's position seems to be simply that the manner in which God bestows Himself on individuals (as uncreated grace by way of formal causality) is homogeneous with and continuous with (but not in every aspect parallel to) the manner in which He gives Himself to the humanity of Christ. The hypostatic union designates that point in the process of God's Self-bestowal where God gives Himself irrevocably.³³ Thus, if the term "hypostatic union" refers primarily to this unsurpassable moment of God's gift of Self to creation, then it is meaningless to speak of individuals as being analogous to or approximating the hypostatic union insofar as it is such a climactic reality. I am not saying that men cannot "approximate" Jesus Christ. For insofar as He stands for human self-transcendence and for God's acceptance of a human individual, all men can strive toward or "approximate" His reality. It is only insofar as He is *absolute* human self-transcendence as well as complete acceptance of a man by God, and therefore hypostatically one with God, that He is beyond approximation. Thus we can no more have an individual "potential" for the hypostatic union than the conditioned can have a "potential" for becoming the condition.³⁴

The analogy of grace to the Incarnation in terms of formal causality is not to be seen as that of two realities closely related but side by side.

³³ Rahner, "Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World," p. 183.

³⁴ "... the hypostatic union does not differ from our grace by what is pledged in it, for this is grace in both cases. . . . But it differs from our grace by the fact that Jesus is our pledge, and we ourselves are not the pledge but the recipients of God's pledge to us" (*ibid.*)

The analogy lies in the fact that they are two aspects of a single mystery: God's Self-communication to creation.

For this reason the question whether the Logos assumes a "human person" in the case of individuals other than Christ should not arise. It is sufficient, at least in Rahner's schema, to state that the Logos assumes all of human history in some way when He assumes the history of one individual. The extent to which the rest of history is assumed as the symbolic self-exteriorization of the Logos depends, of course, on the free decisions of men to participate in the body of Christ. Thus, the symbolization in question is not a mere given but a task also. And our individual decisions have the immediate result of affecting not only our private "symbolic" value but more fundamentally that of humanity as such in relation to the Logos as mediated in Christ's humanity.

REDEMPTION BY EXEMPLARY CAUSALITY

A final remark must be made concerning the paper's conclusion that redemption occurs primarily by way of exemplary rather than efficient causality.

My first problem here has to do with what is meant by "primarily." From what point of view? Beggiani has already hypothesized that "justification" takes place by way of an unmediated implication of individuals with the Logos after the manner of formal causality. What needs explaining, then, is the tradition concerning the priority in redemption of the human, historical Christ. Beggiani tries to resolve this difficulty, it seems, by way of distinguishing between redemption and justification—placing "justification" by the Logos first in the order of formal causality while giving "redemption" by the human Christ a priority in the order of exemplary causality.

If I am giving an accurate reading, however, there seems to be a departure from Rahner's theological position, cited approvingly in the paper, that the "economic" Trinity *is* the immanent Trinity—and that therefore Jesus Christ *is* the Logos. In other words, there again appears here a tendency to disjoin the reality of Jesus Christ from the reality of the Logos as regards redemption. On the one hand, the Logos is seen as the unmediated ontological source of individual "sanctification"; on the other hand, the historical Jesus is (merely) an external model for imitation. In accord with Rahner's axiom, however, I would have to maintain that the human Christ embodies to such an unsurpassable degree the reality of the Logos that whatever "sanctification" emanates from the Logos originates by that very fact in Jesus Christ. Consequently, Jesus' salvific significance cannot be primarily that of exemplary causality, at least in the peculiar sense in which Beggiani employs the term.

And yet, again, if "redemption by exemplary causality" is situated in

the context of a theology of creation, it may take on a meaning which *is* primary. In a biblically oriented theology of creation Jesus Christ can be taken as exemplar. He is the model after which creation (and therefore redemption) is structured. Now by "creation" we do not mean simply a reality which is already finished. Nor when we say that Jesus is exemplar of creation do we mean exclusively that He is the model in the mind of God as God creates. Jesus Christ is also exemplar of creation in the same primal sense when He is seen as a model to be imitated by men in history. For if creation continues today by way of "self-transcendence" of individuals, and if such "self-creativity" is patterned after the example of the historical Jesus, then this exemplary causality of Jesus in history tends to coincide with the creative causality of the Logos in the primal-ontological sense of "creation." And this shows even more concretely how the reality of Jesus *is* the reality of the Logos as exemplar of creation. Thus, if redemption is seen in continuity with creation, then exemplary causality can become a central category of Christian soteriology.

In conclusion, I would simply make the observation that Christian theology has always been intrinsically Logocentric—and perhaps in a more "immediate" sense than Beggiani imagines. For inasmuch as the humanity of Christ (and all that this implies in terms of Church, sacrament, and the life of charity) mediates to us the immediacy of the divine Logos, we are more intimately related to the Logos than any unmediated "union" could conceivably allow.³⁵

At the end of these reflections, however, we are still only at the threshold of the most important question: Are we ready to take seriously the implications of our encounter with men when humanity is understood as mediating the immediacy of God Himself?

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³⁵ Cf. Rahner, "Der eine Mittler und die Vielfalt der Vermittlungen," p. 234: "Es ist ja klar, dass alle Vermittlung Vermittlung zu Unmittelbarkeit ist und nicht ein Mittleres, das sich zwischen die zu Vermittelnde schiebt und sie also trennt... Hebt die Vermittlung des Menschen Jesus zu Gott die Unmittelbarkeit zu Gott nicht auf, sondern konstituiert sie gerade diese...."