

AGENDA

My comments in 'Eucharistic Devotions' on the heritage from the past, and my suggestions in 'Eucharistic Proclamation' as to how we should face the future, give at all events a certain concreteness to what I consider in the next section - 'The Present and the Past'. We saw in the first chapter how an attempt has been made, by some of those who favour the traditional theology of the eucharistic presence, to emancipate the Tridentine decrees from dependence upon any particular philosophy - or, more accurately, to make those decrees depend only upon a certain 'philosophia perennis' whose precise content was left undetermined. By this time, it should be clear that I cannot accept so facile a resolution of the contrast between the formulae of Trent and my own opinions. What is to be made of such contrasts? What is the status of decrees like that, and what is the status of the process I have called 'confrontation'? Questions of the sort I have already had to consider when examining the theological heritage of the past concerning the theology of marriage (Birth Regulation, 170-171); and when evaluating the effects upon intellectual honesty of a view of the ecclesial past common among Roman Catholics (Apologia pro Charles Kingsley 164-169). I must now investigate the matters more thoroughly and offer an answer in greater detail. Readers may well have encountered a recent debate by two Catholic theologians, Hans Küng and Karl Rahner, on an allied topic: the existence of 'infallible propositions' in the church. To give what I have to say both a concreteness and a link with present tensions in the church, I mean to take this debate as a starting point for my own account of the matter. I disagree with both sides in it, and my disagreement leads naturally in the next of these three sections - 'The Ecclesial Circle' - to what I want to put in place of a presupposition they have in common. This presupposition is an acceptance of what I call privileged loci or sources of belief, sources which provide of themselves an end to doubt and a certainty of truth. I reject such privilege, offer another pattern, and what I offer exhibits analogies with more than one philosophical tradition of our time - indeed, it is the terminology of one of the traditions that prompted the title of this section. The conclusions of these two sections are applied in the last section of all to the matter of disagreement and identity in belief, and in particular to the specific points of difference in eucharistic theology which have been considered. Here, the threads of earlier chapters are drawn together, be it those of a general character like Understanding and Confrontation, or the particular issues of worship and theology that have divided what has been written here about the Eucharist from what has been written elsewhere. What is the range of difference? The boundary of confrontation? The task of understanding? The title of the section - 'Agreeing to Differ' - indicates that these questions are not going to get answers of the clarity and definiteness I have been trying to show are no more than specious. The answers I do offer lead us back to the central place of ritual for the Eucharist, which is seen as embodying in a profitable way the tensions which have emerged and endured throughout the book.

Section 4 : THE PRESENT AND THE PAST

An earlier section of the book had a similar title. There, after dissenting from older and newer theories of the eucharistic presence, I was trying to get some things clear before beginning my own account: and I spent the section on describing and criticising

ways in which the religious past can be accommodated to the present preferences of believers. My dissatisfaction provided a starting-point for an exposition of what I wanted to put in their place, and the notions I introduced of understanding and confrontation played their part in what followed. What did follow was an account of the eucharistic presence that is at least prima facie different from what has been common among Roman Catholics, and the account has touched a whole range of activities in worship, belief and speculation. Having spent the bulk of the book on this account, I must now return in its last stage to the theme of the earlier section: what are my own views about the relation between past and present in religious belief? The necessity of such a return seems obvious enough, given what I have written about the process I call 'Confrontation', for this seems to set no bounds to dissent. But if no bounds are set, what is left of one content of belief, and how is the content safeguarded from mere caprice? Traditional safeguards have, it would seem, been jettisoned by me: what have I to put in their place?

The answer I offer will have to be rather long. The problem we face here is, as I see it, wider in its connotations than any purely theological solution, however apparently effective, can do justice to it. For the remainder of the book, in fact, I shall be concerned with the question, and with the application of the answers I suggest to the specifically eucharistic topics we have been considering so far. I set down here the main stages in my argument as they occur in this and the next two sections. The present section is concerned with the relation between Past and Present in religious belief among Roman Catholics. Put in that way, the theme invites dissipation into generalities, so I have chosen a recent and specific debate as an occasion for what I have to say. The Swiss theologian Hans Küng has, as is well known, written a book in which he denies the doctrine of Papal infallibility (and, indeed, any infallibility in the Church at all). Not surprisingly, a great deal of discussion has followed, and an important stage in it was the exchange of articles between Küng and the German theologian Karl Rahner. Each of the two disputants has now published an anthology of articles more or less favourable to his own position: Rahner, in Zum Problem Unfehlbarkeit; Küng, in Fehlbar?, which also contains a rather unwarrantedly monumental bibliography of the controversy. I must make it clear from the start that I am using the debate as an occasion for stating my own views: I am picking and choosing among its themes, not offering a full description of it. My choice has been made, not only to give a concreteness to what I have to say, but also because I think that this debate, both in the status of the disputants and in its very limitations and obscurities, provides a clear example of what divides Roman Catholics today, and of what is the range of content and of dissent on the issue. My intention, then, is to use some points in the debate as occasions for explaining what I think are the attractions and the weaknesses of the view of present and past associated with Roman Catholicism, and for giving my own account of the relationship. I begin by showing how the positions defended by Küng and Rahner respectively instantiate more general attitudes towards past and present, and how each of the disputants gives a privileged, 'ultimate' status to a certain source or locus of belief. My next stage is to show that, for all this giving of privilege, both Küng and Rahner are prepared to manipulate and to deprive of force what they have declared to be privileged. Moreover, this manipulation (which is not acknowledged to be such) is dictated by considerations that are not specifically theological at all: the 'Confrontation' is secular in origin, and religious assertions do not escape the processes of revision to which secular assertions are subject. To accept privileged sources or loci of belief is to deny this openness, and the possibility of secular influence; it is in fact to display certain preferences which earlier chapters traced and blamed in traditional eucharistic doctrine.

The present section, then, contends that each side of the debate professes to accept some privileged source of belief, but turns out to be ready to dispense with it under pressure; that the pressure is secular, and the body of religious assertions open to reevaluation; and that belief in privilege, while attractive, is attractive for the wrong reasons. My own thesis, that there is no privileged locus at all, is developed in the next section. An obvious objection is that it opens the door to scepticism, and the section begins with an appraisal of that objection. I suggest that both Rahner's defence of infallibility and Kung's attack on it fail by domesticating and clericalising an issue that cannot be confined to matters overtly religious. My own denial of privilege and my assertion of openness to revision I illustrate with analogies drawn from two philosophical traditions of our own day; and I link my contentions with what was said in earlier chapters about the multiplicity of heterogeneity of religious language. This heterogeneity, however, is spread out in time, and I go on to show that my thesis does not involve a repudiation of the past: on the contrary, I assert the liberating force of the past, and its fruitful tension with the present. What I deny is that there is any privileged locus of belief which is able to resolve the tension and to decide issues once for all between past and present: and I try to show that no supposed decision-procedure can escape from the set of mutually complementing and correcting activities in religious belief that I call 'The Ecclesial Circle'. The section ends with an observation that will prove important in the last section of all, where differences in belief are examined: many religious topics do not provide issues that are as clear-cut as some drawn from less exalted areas of discourse; we cannot dispense with the various activities and assertions religion yields, but we must acknowledge that they are under-determined by evidence to a degree that is peculiar to them.

The conclusions reached are applied in the last section of all to religious disagreement. The section brings together themes that have run through the book, and estimates the particular disagreements met there. One mark of them has been the claim by both sides to a fundamental identity with what is believed to be of enduring value in a common tradition. I submit that such claims, like claims to likeness or unlikeness in belief, or faith in the endurance of The Gospel, are themselves part of the process of correction and complementation we have met so often; they help to make up the ecclesial circle, they are not privileged comments on it. Variation and dissent in religious belief are to be expected, if what was said about belief in earlier chapters is true: so the assessment of such differences, the place of absolute certainty in credal formulae, and the need for different traditions to examine their own pasts as well as each other, are also examined. I then consider what I have been attacking throughout the book as a fundamental mistake in eucharistic theology, old and new - the divorce between appearance and reality known as 'phenomenalism'. I point out what values it seeks to defend, and what dangers lie in its rejection: dissent is displayed as more than a straightforward contradiction. To refuse the specious attractions of phenomenalism is to accept an unresolvable tension in eucharistic belief, and I conclude by suggesting where the tension can most profitably be placed: in ritual, where past and present, society and individual necessarily meet; ritual, which is neither removed from life nor reducible to it.

So I turn to my account of Past and Present in religious belief, and I state at the outset where I think the main difficulty lies. As I have suggested, unease may be felt at the nature and range of what I have called 'Confrontation'. I sympathise with those who have felt so, but I consider the feeling to be misdirected: it is not confrontation that lies at the root of the problem, but what

I have called 'Understanding'. We have already seen what this involves - the use of all our skills to let the past speak to us on its own terms, in its own distinctiveness, and the struggle not to blur that distinctiveness in order to make the past fit our own pre-suppositions. Activity like this, however, cannot be conceived as an investigation into the past which leaves everything in the present as it is. We set out from our own point of view to understand the past; but the expression of what we find - the very making of it intelligible - calls for concepts and language that are not only adequate to their subject but also available to us, who seek understanding. Our language and our concepts have to be stretched as we face the past, and we ourselves are changed thereby. We can no longer face the present without some evaluation of what we have seen went before it: Understanding contains in itself the seeds of Confrontation. The point is not confined to religion, for any area of human experience shows as much - for instance, we cannot read Shakespeare's Roman plays as our grandfathers did, if only because our world is not theirs. Just so with religious belief, we face a past that is not simply a credal or cultic survival, but a heritage we regard as having a claim upon us. The very act of facing seriously the distinctiveness of such a past, the very act of extending our concepts and language thereby, puts upon us the burden of assessment and discrimination: and the terminology of 'Understanding' and 'Confrontation' is meant to say as much,

I have already pointed out that an awareness of problems involved in understanding the past has been late in developing. We should, then, not be surprised if we find traditional views of the matter disconcertingly simple. Indeed, at first sight the relation between past and present seems to have been decided for Roman Catholics already. Roman Catholicism - it is one of the characteristics of its style - offers two things here. The first is a standard by which religious assertions over the span of time are to be measured. The standard is the teaching authority conferred by Christ upon the Church, exercised from day to day by the Bishops, and finding its most specific expression in the solemn decrees of General Councils and of Popes. In these, under certain apparently clear conditions, the authority imparted by Christ is expressed in the preservation from error of what is proclaimed in the decrees. We may call this 'propositional infallibility'. But the teaching authority is also a guarantee of an identity persevering through time. What is taught, what Councils or Popes decree, does not go beyond the deposit of faith, the datum of revelation: explicitation and development there may be, but neither addition nor a failure to remain identical. It is hardly surprising that disagreements should have arisen in the Roman Church over positions like these, and that both sides in the recent debate should have tried to make more room for that temporal spread and diversity of belief I have already stressed. How each does it, deserves our attention.

Küng's general position concerns the claim made by the Roman Church that, under certain circumstances, assertions can be uttered on matters of faith which are of themselves divinely preserved from error. He rejects the claim, whether made for the Church as a whole or for the Pope in particular. What concerns me here about his rejection is a point of method: he challenges his opponents to produce a proof of their case in terms of the scriptural evidence available. When he does this, he is advocating a norm of true belief that he holds should be used throughout theology. The Christian message itself is the norm; and this, although not identical with particular sentences of Scripture, received its initial precipitate in the New Testament. It is in the biblical message that proof must be sought, because that message cannot be put on a par with conciliar or papal definitions; it and it alone is the ultimate criterion (norma normans). This methodological position of Küng finds an opposed position in Rahner's critique of his general thesis. Faced with the challenge

made by Küng, Rahner makes as one of his replies the claim that the provision of such a proof is not a necessary condition for him as a theologian to hold the doctrine. The present faith of the Church is a starting-point that must be respected by any Catholic theologian, and that faith includes belief in infallibly guaranteed propositions.

If we prescind from the qualifications each side makes to its case, the disagreement seems at first sight sharp enough. Indeed, it is a disagreement that will turn out to reflect a more general difference of attitude towards present and past. For the moment, let us set down the disagreement briefly. Küng appeals to an initial and privileged expression of the Christian message in the New Testament: we might call this appeal the argumentum ab initio. Rahner, on the other hand, regards the present state of belief in the Church as a privileged starting-point, as a source or locus to which appeal may be made: we might call this appeal the argumentum a praesenti. Moreover, he appeals to this privileged locus to justify belief in yet another privileged source, namely certain propositions solemnly formulated by authority in the Church. What I wish to notice at once about this contrast is that neither Küng nor Rahner regards the privileged locus he favours as beyond questioning: each turns out to be quite ready to revalue it, although less ready to admit as much. I examine first the attitude of Rahner, then that of Küng.

Rahner's defence of propositional infallibility is naturally expressed in a nuanced and subtle way (for instance, in his 'Zum Begriff', which appeared shortly before the controversy with Küng), but he is right to take what I have called the argumentum a praesenti as part of theology as traditionally practised by Roman Catholics. The appeal to the general sense of what is now believed by the Church to be revealed by God is only a more specific form of the confidence that Christ is with the Church always. And to make the appeal in support of the doctrine of propositional infallibility is peculiarly suitable, since that doctrine is essentially a yet more specific form of the confidence that inspired the appeal in the first place. In other words, the pronouncements by Pope or by Council that are counted as infallible are not to be seen in isolation from the general guidance given to the Church through the ages (Rahner makes the point at e.g. 'Replik', 55-57; it is of course a commonplace of Vatican II; less so of Vatican I). The attractions of such a view are undeniable, and we shall see more of them. What offsets them, and what offsets the argumentum a praesenti as a whole, is the fact that the present is not self-contained, but a product of a past that was itself once present. What is the argument to make of disagreements between one 'present' and another? (It is worth pointing out that it is not the 'admission of past errors' in the Church that is the trouble; not all may admit that the later position is nearer the truth. What is undeniable, what has to be explained, is the fact of the disagreement). Rahner in other words, is faced as any other theologian is with the task of evaluating the normative power of utterances which at first sight make an absolute claim for assent. Like other theologians, he can solve the difficulty created by the disagreement in one of two ways: he can declare that some recalcitrant statement in the past (or part thereof) was not after all an exercise of infallibility; or he can distinguish within an admittedly infallible statement between what is imposed and what is not. Rahner leaves the former course open when he asserts, as following Vatican II, that nothing is taught as infallibly proclaimed unless a claim to absolute assent as to divinely revealed truth is explicitly made. Unfortunately, he (like others) leaves unsolved the question as to how the presence of so explicit a claim is now to be recognised, and how it has been recognised in the past. The more obvious criteria like emphasis in language or claims to divine guidance will not do, for (to take but one example) they are present in a document like Casti Connubii, the

encyclical letter of Pius XI on marriage, which theologians in general do not count as infallible. I touch here a theme that will concern us again as the chapter goes on, and I would make at this point two comments. The first is that those who wish to emancipate themselves from peremptory but embarrassing declarations in the ecclesial past have every interest in setting exigent standards of explicitness for the claims made by those declarations. The second is more a matter of logic than of pragmatics. 'Explicitness' is itself an attribute open to subsequent review, it is not self-authenticating. That a given decree is considered to measure up to a standard of explicitness or to fall short therefrom, is not something which textual exegesis alone can decide: rather, the verdict is part of a more general process by which one age in the Church seeks to come to terms with another. I suggest that Newman, criticising the interpretation put by Gladstone upon the decrees of the First Vatican Council on the papacy, may have had something like this in mind. He wrote that 'the exact interpretation of them /i.e. of Papal and Synodal utterances/ is a work of time' (Letter to the Duke of Norfolk). A recent account, judicious and well-documented, of how the weight of papal utterances is assessed, and of what consequences follow, has been given by McHugh. At the risk of seeming ungrateful, I must observe that my own difficulties, for what they are worth, can still be put. Ecclesiastical declarations have a natural tendency to puffed-up and over-emphatic language, and a process of subsequent deflation is just as natural. But how the process takes place, is another matter: the subdivisions of commitment that have been gradually excoagitated by curial theologians, more particularly over the last one hundred and fifty years, may well be useful here, but they cannot, without anachronism, be extended to the whole range of declarations bequeathed us by so long and so varied a past. Better, they can be so extended: but the extension is then only reassessment camouflaged as exegesis.

So much for the first way of dealing with declarations from the past. In practice, it is the second way that Rahner chooses - the distinguishing in Church decrees between what is and what is not authoritatively imposed. Indeed, he is rightly credited with a good deal of refined and discriminating interpretation of doctrine in this sense - for a conservative's objections to it and for Rahner's answers, see Höfner and Rahner. What I want to show here is how a theologian who admits both propositional infallibility and the argumentum a praesenti deals with the legacy of belief from the ecclesial past. I want to discern the pattern of his revaluation, its limitations, and the motives that inspired it. I have chosen a specific instance, and my investigation - which has to be lengthier than I should like - will concern the attitudes Rahner has expressed at various times to theological questions raised by the origin of man. My reasons for choosing this example will become clear soon enough; for the moment, it is enough to remember that the example does provide us with an undoubted change in belief, and with the need to accommodate it.

The three writings of Rahner which I consider span a period of some fifteen years. The first ('Theological Reflexions on Monogenism') appeared about 1952; the second ('Hominisation') in 1958; the third ('Evolution and Original Sin') in 1967. I shall refer to them here as 'M', 'H' and 'E' respectively. Let me begin with a brief statement of some (only some) points made by Rahner in the three compositions. The first was written shortly after the Encyclical letter Humani Generis of Pius XII (1950). This had given a cautious tolerance to a theological acceptance of evolution, but had denied that a similar liberty existed with regard to polygenism, a theory that would deny the origin of all men from a common ancestor, or take 'Adam' in the biblical account as standing for a group rather than an individual. Such a view, the encyclical asserted seems irreconcilable

with the doctrine of original sin as a real sin committed by one individual and passed on to all others by generation. In other words, monogenism, the origin of all mankind from a common ancestor, should be accepted. Rahner contends that the language of the encyclical is guarded enough to warn us against trying to prove the direct assertion (as opposed to the presupposition) of monogenism either by Scripture or by the statements of the Council of Trent about original sin (M236-239). Neither Scripture (252-261) nor Trent (244-246) proves on examination to be concerned with making such an assertion. On the other hand, we cannot but admit that the notion of salvation and damnation in Scripture are conceived in terms of unity of stock (274-279); and, if we interpret away Paul's words in Romans 5 about the one Adam, we must be consistent and reject original sin as well, understanding the text as a mythological presentation of the human condition (284-285). Given the Encyclical itself, we must say that the doctrine of monogenism is 'theologically certain'. Rahner admits that this notion is not without difficulties, but uses it to state that the doctrine must be given an internal (but not in itself irreformable) assent (233-234).

The second item, half-a-dozen years later, was not concerned directly with monogenism, but with (among other topics) the theological view of the evolutionary origin of man. Rahner makes the general claim that, where the interests of theology and of natural science overlap, it is the teaching Church that decides in the last analysis the range of its own competence (H, 11-14); a fact which does not prevent there being a genuine dialogue between the two disciplines. One reason for the interest of theology in evolution, and for the tensions that the topic has caused, is the scriptural account of man's origin (22-26, 32-33). However, the force of this account can be rightly appraised only if its literary form is correctly identified; otherwise we shall read into the biblical story what we are not entitled to read (33-35). For Rahner, the account in Genesis is aetiological: that is, it states a cause for things being as they are at present, a cause that lies back in the past (36). Aetiology can be mythological: that is, its assigning a cause in the past need be no more than a vivid expression of what is perceived in the present. Catholic theology, however, demands that the aetiology here be historical: the reference to an earlier event is genuine, although the account of it does not derive from the external features of the event itself (36-44). An instance of how this concept is applied comes near the end of the work. The paradisiacal state of the first man, found in both Scripture and conciliar documents, need not have been of any duration, nor need the appearance of "unfallen Adam" have been perceptibly different from what science would say of early men: the scriptural or conciliar statements are concerned with what should have been rather than with what was (H, 101-105).

The third writing, about fifteen years after the first, offers a later view of Rahner on the question of monogenism. He submits that the creation stories in Genesis cannot provide a proof, for scholars agree that their literary form excludes such argument (E, 30). The Council of Trent presupposed monogenism, but did not authoritatively assert it, as the decree was concerned with errors about original sin, not with the number of our first parents (32). Rahner submits that belief in original sin is not incompatible with belief in polygenism. Indeed, once the evolution of man has been deemed theologically acceptable, it is an arbitrary invocation of God's power to limit the evolution to a single couple (32). Nor need we think that the unity of mankind is endangered by polygenism: the concrete genetic unity is found on the level of population (where selection occurs), not of individuals (32-33). Nor need we feel that original sin must have been the sin of one couple only. There is no definite answer we can give: what matters is to admit that one couple might have decided the lot of all, or that the group as a whole sinned. In neither case is

there any question of a subjective guilt being passed on to descendants, only a blocking of the grace-transmitting function of the group (E,33-35).

I had better begin by admitting some incomprehensions. I do not understand what Rahner means by our being obliged to offer an internal but not irreformable assent to certain doctrines: the project seems to place our estimate of truth at the service of our will in a way that, if it meant anything, would mean something dishonest. Again, I am at a loss to understand Rahner's contention that the Church draws the boundaries of her own competence in matters where theological and scientific interests overlap. That such an inter-disciplinary pecking-order was once accepted, I should of course not want to deny; but I am obliged to add that, since it is precisely the conflicts between religion and science that have been one of the ways in which the former disposition of disciplines has become obsolete, we now need something more than assertion here from theologians. In fact, the theme of man's origin shows us how important is the relationship between religious claims and secular discoveries, and to see what Rahner has to say on the matter will be the next stage in our investigation. We have already seen that he draws a distinction between what an ecclesial document asserts and what it pre-supposes. The distinction enables him to emancipate the Council of Trent from its apparent commitment to monogenism by claiming that presupposition, not assertion, is found there. He makes a general point that where A has been defined and B is, as he puts it, compresent to the definer's mind, the weight of the definition extends to B only where the connection between A and B is so immediately evident and indissoluble as to make any separation of intention impossible (M,242). What he writes here bring to a point the uneasiness I feel:

'Suppose we were to ask the definer in such a case "Are you affirming what was in fact compresent to your mind just as absolutely as what you properly defined, and are you doing so for the very reason that this latter is what you are defining?" Then in this given case he would have to reply, "I must think about this first, i.e. I must first reflect on the connection between what is defined and what is merely compresent to my mind (as a matter of fact, first and foremost)" ... '

What conceivable sense, I ask, can be made of such a dialogue? How are the interlocutors supposed to distinguish between compresence and definition? If it is a matter of reflexion and introspection, how are we to know that they are reflecting or introspecting successfully? More seriously, is not the whole hypothesis vitiated from the start by anachronism, by a defiance of what history - of what understanding - is about? What sense can be attached to a dialogue in which (say) we ask the Tridentine fathers questions about matters that in a Tridentine context make no sense? Rahner's speculations about the origin and original state of mankind are prompted by considerations that are utterly alien to the authors of the decree he is supposed to be interrogating. The whole project defies time and defies sense: it is like talking of asking Pericles whether his funeral speech means that he would approve of nuclear disarmament. What sounds like a question is only a rhetorically formulated and idle speculation. Trent does indeed reject beliefs that would deny original sin; or that would make it affect Adam alone; or that would make its effects bodily only; or that would make the sin no longer one in origin, passed on by generation not imitation, and incurable by human means. But all these rejections take the form of asserting what is regarded as doctrine sanctioned

by Scripture, Councils, and earlier writers; and this doctrine includes the initial paradisiacal state of our first parent, its loss through that parent's sin, the perceptible consequences of that loss, in body as well as in the order of grace, and the transmission of sin by generation. For us, unlike the Tridentine Fathers, this is a very mixed bag of teaching, and we cannot avoid the burden of discrimination: here as elsewhere, understanding leads to the need for confrontation. But we cannot disguise confrontation as understanding, as Rahner does when he distinguishes 'what is properly defined' from 'what is compresent to the definer's mind'. He is importing the distinction, not discovering it, and he is importing it for secular reasons. To speak of 'definition' and 'presupposition' or 'compresence' as Rahner does is not to investigate the views and intentions of the Tridentine Fathers; it is to evaluate what they declared, to discern in it what is deemed to be valid for us today, and to filter out what we can no longer believe. I do not want to assert that it is impossible to seek the intentions of conciliar documents, but I do want to assert that what Rahner is doing here partakes of 'Confrontation' far more than it partakes of 'understanding'. And I also want to assert that the impulse to confront the traditional doctrine is not religious in its origin, but secular: we know more than our ancestors did about the past, about the world, and about old stories. We do not believe what they did, so we must confront what they have bequeathed to us.

I have taxed Rahner with a lack of a sense of time in his hypothetical dialogue about a conciliar decree. In this and the next section I shall be developing the point about theology in general, so it will be useful here to notice how the lack makes itself felt in the second writing of Rahner's we have examined. The creation narratives in Genesis are said there by him to be of the literary form of 'historical aetiology', which is contrasted with 'mythological aetiology' (H, 36-37). First of all, the distinction hardly survives the qualifications made to it: the causal event in the past is genuine, but we are told that the form of expression in the narrative is not derived from the outward and historical features of the event itself (H 39). How we are to interpret the remainder of the event thus stripped of its 'features', we are not told; the task seems as vacuous as our earlier task of distinguishing definition from mental compresence. And when we learn that the extraneous features include the paradisiacal state of man's origin (H 103), and (in Rahner's third writing) the very existence of common ancestor (E 32-33), we are surely entitled to ask where history stops and mythology begins. Yet the question need never have been put in the first place. 'Historical aetiology' is not some category which a piece of writing bears upon its face in the way that it might bear 'comedy' or 'war-song'. Rather, the term 'aetiological' serves to express our own evaluation of the accounts, and the limited credence we are prepared to give them. We no longer expect from old stories (be they in the Bible or not) information about the world that is a privileged form of information we can get elsewhere. We can respect the narratives for the way they speak to our condition about man's dignity, plight and hopes; but we do not respect them so much as to take seriously assertions there that clash with what we have good reason for believing on other grounds. We sum up this attitude by calling the narratives 'aetiological': it is important to remember that confrontation as well as understanding is involved in this nomenclature. Were understanding alone involved, a dispassionate examination of Genesis ought to reveal the extent of its aetiological commitment, if I may so put it, to matters like the unicity in origin of human stock, or even the existence of a specific and historical sin. Can it be seriously contended that such an examination would do anything of the kind?

I have expressed my unease at what seems an odd lack of awareness by Rahner of the past and its problems. I have other points to make, but they will be better made after what I now have to say about the position defended against him by Küng. I turn to this, and to the limitations set by Küng to the privileged locus he defends. It is well known, he rejects propositional infallibility, nor will he agree with the type of appeal I have called the argumentum a praesenti ('Im Interesse' 29-31; compare 'Bilanz' 435-438). But his own use of the 'biblical message' as a privileged norm of belief leads him to difficulties analogous to those Rahner has to face. For an obvious question must be put: how does the biblical criticism accepted by Küng affect the Scriptures as a source for this biblical message? To be sure, he does not defend biblical inerrancy or fundamentalism (see his Infallible? 209-221). But he is in the position of any theologian who accepts a critical approach to the Bible. There is a whole family of admissions for him to make about a 'biblical message'. We need mention only a few of the admissions, for they are notorious enough, and some have already been noticed. Assertions made in the Gospel about the words and deeds of Jesus cannot (to put it mildly) be taken as invariably reliable. Discourses attributed to him include promises of an imminent coming in glory that we cannot take at its face-value. Attitudes are expressed to unbelievers that many now find unacceptable. Present concerns for justice among men and for ways of attaining it can be linked with the New Testament only by a deftly selective reading of texts there. More generally (I make the point here because it never seems to get made), we have to face the simple fact that, whatever else the New Testament is, it is a precipitate of the first years of a society. What kind of witness can such a record provide for later and more complicated times in the society? We have only to read the Fioretti of St. Francis of Assisi to understand that the problem is not confined to the Bible.

I repeat here the remark made in my discussion of Rahner's position: it is not the superiority of the newer over the older treatment of the Bible that sharpens the problem, but the difference between them. Küng, although professing to take the biblical message as the ultimate criterion (norma normans) of belief, is critically aware of the content of the New Testament, and is therefore prepared to discriminate in what he reads there. Indeed, his discrimination goes further than an application of historical or philological criteria. He is prepared to take with quite a large pinch of salt texts and attitudes found in the New Testament that are of the mandatory and peremptory cast he dislikes in the Roman Church today. He claims, indeed, that faith in the early church found free expression in 'abbreviative- recapitulatory' propositions, often in a context of worship - 'Come, Lord Jesus' or 'Jesus is the Lord' are offered as examples (Infallible? pp.144-146). However, what we have here is what we have had so often before - Confrontation expressed as Understanding: Küng has revalued the past, and given preference to some elements over others. To depict the early church as expressing belief freely in liturgical formulae is to overlook a good deal of what the New Testament has to offer us - the phraseology of the "Council of Jerusalem" in Acts 15, the violence of Pauline language, and the monotonous rancour of Book of Revelation are only a few of many counter-examples. We cannot, of course, look in the New Testament for the apparatus of technical definitions that came later, but we can look, and look successfully, for a propensity to impose beliefs, to cut off dissentients, and to claim divine authority for doing so. When Küng passes over all this, he is doing something analogous to what Rahner did with the Council of Trent. He has set up a privileged locus of belief, but has none the less confronted it and revalued its force.

We have now reached the second stage of our argument in this section. Rahner and Küng have alike proved willing to revalue their inheritance, and in the very parts they deem privileged: why have they done so? As I see it, the revaluations have been the results of a pattern of argument known as modus tollens: that is, a conjunction of assertions entails a certain conclusion; the conclusion is rejected; so at least one of the conjoined assertions must be rejected as well. And what has been, for Rahner, Küng and others, the cause of rejection is the weight of evidence and of experience, neither of which is specifically theological at all. It is the pressure of the secular that has demanded a change, and that has been the stimulus for redrawing the boundaries of theological competence. I concede that the changes are not presented in this light, but are shown rather as the results of a scrutiny of the data of revelation - a closer investigation of literary forms in the Bible, a distinction between assertion and presupposition in conciliar documents. It is all bravely said, but I am reminded of what the Greek logician Chrysippus wrote to a contemporary: 'Send me your theorems, I'll soon find proofs for them!'. An unfortunate impression is conveyed that, as secular knowledge advances further suitably closer investigations of the sacral will reach further suitable conclusions. We are back to a fault repeatedly noticed: an exercise in confrontation is presented in terms of Understanding. Both Küng and Rahner approach Scripture and its content with reservations to their acceptance, and with an acknowledgment of its cultural limitations; and both of them set bounds to the kind of message they regard it as capable of passing on to us. Their attitudes are inspired by greater knowledge of the world and of its behaviour; of literature and of history; of tall stories and propensities to over-assertion. They cannot reasonably be said to be inspired by a dispassionate examination of the past that shows - who would have thought it - that Trent was open to Darwinism all the time, only nobody noticed; or that the results of biblical criticism were in fact embodied in the 'biblical message' itself, had anyone bothered to look. Once the change is made, the past may be re-examined; but it is the secular in its widest sense that inspired the change to begin with. I write 'in its widest sense' because of course I do not want to limit its influence to discoveries in science. We have only to think of Christian attitudes to toleration, social justice or marriage to see how wide-ranging the pressure is. As I have pointed out on numerous occasions already, the effects of such pressure are not always acknowledged by those who have felt it.

If my contention about the motives for change be correct, then the whole notion of a privileged locus of belief is called into question. In its place, we shall have to admit that there is no isolating of sacral utterances from all contact with the secular, and no exempting of them from the processes of Understanding and Confrontation. We shall have to acknowledge an essential openness in religious belief to what is not specifically religious, and the impossibility of setting even its most solemn pronouncements apart from the whole pattern of activity - appraisal, modification, development, acceptance, rejection - that constitutes our own rational and human interaction with the world: we shall have to give a place to what the Cambridge Platonists called human reason - 'the Candle of the Lord'. To develop this theme will be my concern in the next section; for the remainder of the present section, I want to show how belief in privileged loci shows itself in Catholic tradition, and what are its attractions and limitations. My first step is to notice something that gets noticed all too little: theologians who are prepared to exercise critical techniques upon the Bible prove surprisingly shy at applying such techniques and reservations to the Councils of the Church. Rahner, for example, was already setting bounds in 1952 to the theological content of the creation-stories in Genesis, but he alleged as a reason for this the wording

of the Encyclical Humani Generis (M,236); we must conclude that the latter is inflexible for him in a way the former is not. He does indeed, in the same paper, spend a substantial time on the Scriptural evidence for monogenism; but he seems a good deal more exercised over Trent and other councils than over the biblical texts they quote. His distinction between 'assertion' and 'presupposition' was devised to circumvent rather than to contradict the conciliar decree; but his remarks about the biblical significance of blood and soil are later, as we have seen, jettisoned without comment, and the reader is left with a bare citation of the critical approach to the narratives in Genesis (E,30). The contrast is sharp; but it is a perfectly understandable consequence of a general wish to exempt religious belief from the processes of Understanding and Confrontation. Paradoxical as it may sound, a critical view of the Scriptures is in the interests of those who, like Rahner, admit propositional infallibility and use the argumentum a praesenti. A critical view of the Scriptures seems to remove them in their exoticism from the world of belief that we ourselves inhabit, and sets off to apparent advantage the papal or conciliar decrees that "really mean what they say". Once we extend the critical process to them, we are in deeper waters. Admit the limitations of Trent, confront its assertions, and what excuse have we for not exercising the same critical and secular discrimination on the Church and its beliefs as we find them today?

The greater delicacy shown towards conciliar and papal decrees is then, I suggest, an instance of the wish to preserve the Church's proclamation of belief from the pressure of the secular. Just so, we can best understand the attraction of such a view of the Church if we look at the sharpest form taken by the acceptance of what I have called privileged loci of belief: I refer, of course, to the doctrine of papal infallibility. With the details and qualifications of that doctrine I am not here concerned, but rather with the historically conditioned pattern of preference it exhibits. The turmoil of the French Revolution and the advent of modern communications had strengthened the central organisation of the Church at the expense of its regional structures. The nationalisms of the nineteenth century, and the growth of a secularism linked with the findings of contemporary human knowledge, gave the person of the Pope a symbolic value. He was, we might say, almost a 'cultic picture' of what the faith was and of what it had to endure, a palpable source of certainty amid doubt and danger. The Vatican definition of 1870 simply focused upon the papal office what was then conceived as the task of the whole Church - the defence of a menaced heritage in the face of the world - just as belief in the definition reinforced the structure of the Church that had led to its formulation. What I now suggest is that the doctrine displays with unique clarity unscrutinised preferences implicit in the acceptance of any privileged loci of belief at all. I wish to state what I think those preferences are; and I want to show that they are preferences we have met already.

The first presence is for 'polarisation'. That, we have seen, is a process in which related but not identical distinctions are confused by the introduction of a dichotomy of which the terms become 'gathering-points' for the members of the different distinctions. I suggested there two examples of such polarisation: "Mind and Body" and "Church and World". Just such a polarisation informed theological speculation at the time of the Vatican decrees: secular knowledge and change were regarded as at best alien to the Church's concern and as more often inimical to it. But a polarisation of the sort is implicit in the acceptance of any privileged source or locus of belief: knowledge and assertions concerned with it have to be opposed to what is found or expected elsewhere. Change is part and parcel of secular knowledge, for that knowledge grows by a willingness to face new evidence and to revise and to develop in the light of what is accepted.

But if religious knowledge be conceived in terms of privilege, change will be something that, far from needing no explanation, will need explaining away. In consequence, assertions deemed to be privileged will need to be insulated from the barrage of argument or evidence that might call for revision or rejection. Which brings us to the second preference bound up with belief in privileged loci, a preference that is a consequence of the 'polarisation' which was the first: we can call it 'hypostatization', using the name we used when we encountered it earlier. In itself, the word means the making of things or independent realities out of the members of a distinction. But its attraction is best understood if we see hypostatization as a way of defending certain values against their reduction to something felt to be inadequate. The defence takes the form of 'embodying' the values in something separated from the context in which the values were accepted, something upon which an isolated and independent existence can be conferred. Polarisation leads naturally to hypostatization: once 'the Church' has been set against 'the World', and seen as a source of certainty amid doubt and error, it is a short step to concentrating the certainty conveyed by the Church into specific utterances guaranteed against error. The two preferences go together, and lead to a result which resembles all too closely the result to which the preferences led earlier in the book. A legitimate belief that Christ is with his Church, and a legitimate concern that the Good News should be proclaimed by the Church, lead to the setting apart of certain assertions as divinely preserved from error. Here is hypostatized that concern and that belief; here Christ's promises have a localised and tangible fulfilment; here the believer is faced with a real presence of Christ's power, embodied in specific assertions.

We have, of course, come back to familiar ground. The preferences implicit in the acceptance of any privileged locus of belief turn out to be the very preferences that were implicit in the acceptance of transubstantiation. 'Polarisation' was noticed there repeatedly, where the conception of the eucharistic presence in terms of disguise was held to misrepresent distinctions that were genuine. Hypostatization showed itself even earlier, in the analysis of the philosophy involved in transubstantiation and the attempt to safeguard the eucharistic presence from reduction, by removing it from Christ's life in the Church, has been a constant object of criticism. We should not be surprised at the analogy between belief in privileged loci and belief in transubstantiation, for one and the other seek to safeguard what is valuable, but do so in the wrong way. In the theology of the Eucharist, a proper acknowledgment of Christ's real presence passes over into an isolating of the presence that divorces appearance from reality and sign from signified. Here, a proper acknowledgment of Christ's presence in the Church passes over into an isolation of certain privileged assertions from the rest, and into the situating in them of Christ's presence and power in such a way as to close the assertions to that revaluation which is part of what we mean by knowledge. As I proposed a theology of the eucharistic presence that tried to avoid this defect, so I wish to propose an account of present and past in theology that will try to avoid the isolation of privileged utterances and the manoeuvres entailed by it. To this formulation I now turn.

Section 5 : THE ECCLESIAL CIRCLE

There is no privileged locus. There is no source, be it Scripture, Conciliar or Papal decrees, or any part of them, which is immune to the processes I have called Understanding and Confrontation. The thesis I now wish to explain and defend apparently opens the door to scepticism. Where is doubt to stop? What limits can be set to

confrontation? The quest for statements immune to revision, or for sources of knowledge immune to error, is found in more places than theology. Descartes, as we have already seen, took 'I think, therefore I am' as an instance of the former, and the clarity of mathematical reasoning as an instance of the latter; and in our own time G.E. Moore offered assertions like 'I have a hand' as examples of knowledge proof against all sceptical corrosion. On Moore's suggestion I shall have something to say in the next section; as for Descartes, I have already pointed out that more than one philosophical tradition today regards his method as sharing too many of the presuppositions of the scepticism he means to combat. To seek escape from solitary doubt by a quest for knowledge that resists doubt, is to ignore the artificiality of such solitude, and to overlook the dependence of doubt and of knowledge alike upon the community of language and action within which questions can be put, problems solved, and mistakes admitted. I have already noticed the stress laid in philosophical thought today upon the relation between individual and community; I have tried to show its relevance to the theology of the eucharistic presence, and the distortions to which it may be subjected. Here, I must stress its importance for a right appreciation of present and past in theology, and for an understanding of why, in my opinion, belief in privileged loci must be abandoned, precisely because such a belief involves a turning away from the tension of community to an apparently impregnable but in fact un-informative privacy.

I illustrate this assertion from the debate we took in the last section, as our starting point. Rahner objects to what Küng wants to put in place of infallibility - a 'fundamental remaining in the truth despite errors' (for Küng's account of this, see Infallible? 175-193). His objections include two that deserve our attention here. One is that remaining in the truth must find expression in true propositions, and that (when all distinctions have been drawn between 'fundamental directions' and formulated propositions, and when every allowance has been made for the ambiguity of the latter) there are propositions to which an absolute assent must be given. Rahner offers an example: 'each man is to be respected in his own dignity and to be loved as a neighbour' ('Kritik, 39-41). The second objection touches the need in the Church for some decision-procedure in cases of conflict: is it, as he puts it, to be the professor or the bishop? (Kritik, 47-48). With the justice of these objections to Küng I am not here concerned, although the themes they touch will of course concern us. First of all, the example of an indubitable proposition offered by Rahner is less than happy. A maxim of the sort is not adequately appraisable in isolation, since its apparent obviousness comes from the indeterminacy in which are left the interpretation and application implicit in its moral words. 'Practice' is not some dispensable postscript to maxims of this kind, it is part of what they mean, and we are entitled to ask what practical assent has been given to the supposedly indubitable proposition by the Church over the centuries. In certain contexts - those of a private and cultic character for instance - assent may be found, as far as such limited contexts can be said to have left the initial proposition untouched. But we do not have to go very far into life to realise that in many respects the proposition was notoriously not assented to in any normal sense, and that if some assents are given now when once they were not, the cause lies in what I have called 'the pressure of the secular'. Rahner's first objection counts against privilege, not for it.

Rahner's second objection - the need for a method of decision in cases of conflict - reveals even more clearly that the quest for privileged loci is beside the point. We might, faced with his objection, be tempted to think that Küng's 'fundamental remaining in the truth' is too modest; that (reacting against triumphalist claims in the Church at odds with history) he has surrendered claims that can still legitimately be made. In fact, the reverse is the case. Rahner's objection that a

decision-procedure is needed, like his previous objection that 'propositional infallibility' must be defended, only narrows and clericalises the problem of error, it does not solve it. The problems of adjudicating between professors and bishops, or of dealing with cases where Councils or Popes turn out to be retroactively on the wrong side, are for professionals only, and the very nature of the cases and of the ensuing manoeuvres proves as much (one thinks of Rahner's distinguishings over monogenism). It is Küng's claim that, intentionally or unintentionally, sets the crueller standard for the Church, for his 'fundamental remaining in the truth' involves the whole of life, and the whole Church's response to it. Consider a paradigmatic anecdote. Everyone has heard of the failings of Pope Alexander VI, and everyone has learned to distinguish these from the infringements of the 'propositional indefectibility of the Church'. Fewer will have heard that Alexander accepted the first shipment of gold from Peru for the ceiling of the basilica of St. Mary Major at Rome. Whatever he did, it might be objected, he raised no 'dogmatic' problems by doing so; he could err all the way to the 'Esquiline and not compromise any privileged propositions', however these be described. But does this not show that the whole anxiety to preserve privilege in this way is misplaced? And that zeal for the preaching of the Good News is distorted when it is held to demand such privilege? What, after all, of the Church - the corpus christianorum, call it what you please and distribute its responsibility as you will - in the face of the plundering that began in the days of the shipment of gold and went on? Are we to say that, throughout all this, the Church did 'remain fundamentally in the truth'? I am in favour of an affirmative answer, should the need be felt for one, if only because we can see thereby the extreme modesty of the claim such an answer can defensibly make. But should we think the question unreal, let us ask ourselves how many, until recently, would have regarded Alexander's accepting the gold as a greater scandal than his personal irregularities? The question is real enough - but we shall never answer it at all by pointing to particular propositions, as if those were the vehicle of guaranteed truth. Never, that is, unless we agree to isolate artificially one of the many and interrelated ways in which belief is expressed. To do justice to present and past in the Church, we must abandon this isolation, and see all the Church and its activities in terms that are no longer conceived as privileged in the way to which exception has here been taken.

I have linked belief in privileged loci with the enterprise of finding propositions immune to sceptical attack, and I have noticed the disfavour shown by philosophers today to that enterprise. What I want to put in place of such privilege has, I think, affinities to what has been suggested elsewhere in philosophical contexts. There are two philosophical traditions I have in mind here, and both have already been encountered in earlier sections. It is no part of my purpose to describe them in detail, but I think that many readers will understand my own position better if I try to show where philosophical resemblances to it can be found. One of the traditions is concerned with analysing and articulating what is involved in the enterprise of understanding and interpreting the past, an enterprise on which so much stress has been laid in these pages. 'Hermeneutic' or 'hermeneutics' is the name usually bestowed on it. Over the last century, during which the problems of interpretation have been seen more clearly, a great deal has been written on these philosophical themes; one is at times moved to say, a great deal too much. At the risk of seeming to simplify ludicrously a complicated matter, I cite a passage, not from a philosopher, but from the classical scholar A.E. Housman. It shows in plain language something of what I have in mind, and it will link the preoccupations of this philosophical tradition with themes that have run through the book so far. Housman is writing of the circularity involved in determining the grammatical rules of Greek and Latin from the manuscripts in which the classics have come down to us:

"In part, those rules are formed by our own induction from what we find in the MSS ... now every rule ... is sometimes broken by the MSS ... and the critics may then say that the MSS are wrong, and may correct them according to the rule. This state of affairs is paradoxical ... we are working in a circle ... but, as Lachmann says, the task of the critic is just this, to tread that circle deftly and warily." (p.145).

Where the philosophical attack on scepticism looked for some absolute beginning, some Archimedean point where our knowledge can be securely based, we are offered here the image of a circle where there is no absolute beginning—we begin where we are, because we can begin nowhere else. We form rules in the light of evidence and experience, devising hypotheses and then seeing how they stand up to what evidence is available. As Housman points out, the rules we make may cause us to reject testimony of the very sort that led us to make the rules in the first place. There is no leaving this circle of invention, discovery and emendation; it is only in the circle that we can do anything at all. Now textual criticism raises problems that are more restricted than those raised by a general quest for an understanding of the past, but the circular image is present in the wider activity as well: hypothesis, evidence, and interpreter interact, whether the field be secular or religious. Indeed, it is just this circular image that is implicit in what I have written between Present and Past in theology, and about Understanding and Confrontation. Understanding is an activity which acknowledges the otherness and distinctiveness of the past: in this way, we acknowledge too the limitedness and particularly of the present. To exercise understanding is to extend the words and concepts in which we come to know things and to express our knowledge; and it is to open ourselves to the burden of evaluating the past which we seek to understand and the present which is and has to be our starting-point. The enterprise of understanding necessarily starts from where we are, but it does not stop there. The process by which we seek the meaning of what faces us is not a matter of making it homogeneous with our own initial presuppositions, nor is it a matter of denying those presuppositions; the latter enterprise does not make sense, and the former does not lead to understanding. As in textual criticism, so in understanding our procedure is circular: our starting-point is itself changed by the very exercise for which it was an indispensable preliminary. It is the phrase 'the hermeneutical circle' used to describe the pattern of interpretation that I have adapted for the title of this section, in which I claim to discern a similar pattern in the Church. The general point of the philosophical analogy I have drawn should be familiar enough after what I have written in this and earlier chapters. There is no going outside the circle of interpretation: no timeless access to what is past, no discovery in what is interpreted that leaves unchanged the one who interprets. What is understood may well tax the powers of the investigator, and call for an extension of his understanding, a 'fusion of horizons' with what he seeks to interpret; but there is no interpretation which can be given from one point of view as valid once for all for every other. Like all other hermeneutical generalisations, these demand for their acceptability a certain human complexity in what is being interpreted: the reinterpretations of (say) the story of Napoleon are of a different order from denials that he ever went to Russia or died at St. Helena. What interests me in this philosophical tradition is the denial of privileged entry-points to the circle of interpretation, and the insistence that the activity of interpretation is one which is necessarily conditioned by the starting-point of the interpreter, and necessarily affects that starting-point as it proceeds.

I have conceded that the hermeneutical tradition in philosophy is not one which has made much overt contact with the analytic

tradition dominant in English-speaking countries: yet I would add that 'traditions' are more easily labelled than identified, and that some writers - Winch and Apel, for example - are aware of resemblances not immediately obvious here. As I have already suggested some resemblances myself in a theological context between analytic and 'continental' preoccupations, I should now like to complement what I have written about hermeneutics with a word about similar interests in the later philosophy of Wittgenstein. We saw in the passage I have just mentioned something of his insistence upon the setting of a shared form of life and activity if signs and acts of communication are to make sense. One of the most striking ways in which this insistence shows itself touches the relation between rule and instantiation. Consider the application of classifying words to objects. Time and again in the Philosophical Investigations, the temptation is displayed of making the application of a rule - in our case, the giving or withholding of a name - into a matter of comparing the object with a private, mental sample and so allowing or disallowing the rightness or wrongness of the application. And time and again, we are urged not to say 'what it must be', but to look at what it actually is; to see that irremediably private criteria are will o'the wisps (for how can they be wrong?); to get back to the rough ground of agreement and disagreement among users of a common language as to the status of objects with which they are confronted. We have neither a capricious bestowal of names upon objects that admits of no rule; nor a pre-existent link between name and object that needs only to be inspected; nor a rule that calls for the comparison of objects with a standard privately owned by the speaker. Rather, we have 'a multitude of paths going off in every direction'. To put matters in Aristotelian terms, we have a potentiality in objects to be classified according to many different rules, and the potentiality is actualised in one way rather than another by the factual concurrence of speakers as to how names are to be bestowed, the reasonable measure of success they have in agreeing over results. Once again it is the elements in this philosophical reasoning germane to my own theme that interest me here. Rule and instance are seen as mutually complementing each other; neither provides some absolute starting-point from which the other is to be deduced. Again, we have seen that rule and instance call for the setting of a shared life and language, and for a reasonable measure of agreement in results. Yet neither is the agreement an absolute starting-point for the discernment of the setting (for without the setting what should we be agreeing about?), just as the setting is not an absolute starting-point for the agreement (for without the agreement, what setting would be left?). Once more, a philosophical tradition bears witness against the admittedly attractive belief that scepticism can be avoided only by the acceptance of some absolute starting-points for knowledge, some points which stand apart from the processes to which the rest are subject. My own objection to privileged loci in religious belief is, I submit, of a piece with what we have seen of the two traditions. And the term I have adapted from the hermeneutical tradition, 'the ecclesial circle', points to what I want to put in the place of privilege.

Both of these philosophical traditions will show analogies with what follows, and the second of them in particular will concern us in the final section of the chapter, where the range of disagreement in belief is discussed. For the moment, I wish to notice that the hermeneutical tradition shows an awareness in a way that the Investigations does not of the temporal spread of human knowledge, and of the problems raised by attempts to interpret something which is profoundly alien to the initial understanding of the interpreter. I have already made the point about the 'temporal spread' of knowledge in what I have written on Understanding and Confrontation. I feel obliged to develop it here to avoid a possible misunderstanding. Throughout the book, I have had to evaluate elements in the legacy of eucharistic belief our age in the Church has inherited. It is inevitable that my expressions of dissent should have been more conspicuous than those of agreement, and in fact the very terminology

I have used can suggest a clash with the past that would minimise the importance of what has been inherited. How likely this misunderstanding is, I do not know, but I feel obliged here to stress that such a dismissal of the past is quite alien to what I have been putting forward. So I turn to this point, and to illustrations of it from what has gone before.

From the third chapter onward, I have pointed to the temptation there is for us to be selective in our memories of the past, so as to make it homogeneous with our present. That there are also temptations in the other direction - temptations to see a clean break with the past where none exists - I readily admit. Indeed, one and the other kind are tributes to the importance the past can have: to gloss over its difference from the present, or to stress its discontinuity with the present, are alike proofs that the past is felt to matter, and that the present is felt to be in some way 'menaced' by it. It was with the temptation to homogenise past and present that I was particularly concerned, for I detected the results of yielding to it in eucharistic theology; and my examination in this chapter of the relations between Present and Past in religious belief has been made after we have seen, in preceding chapters, concrete examples of those relations. Time and again, I have urged the need to let the Past speak to us in its own terms, and not to disguise the fact that, when it does, we may be obliged to make a judgment of acceptance or rejection. To say all this is not to belittle the Past. On the contrary, it is to proclaim its liberating power. Ignoring or suppressing the past is an indispensable ingredient for any tyranny; one might almost define a slave as one who is deprived of any sense of time beyond the present and its obligations. 'Understanding', in the sense I have used the term, is meant to expose us to the salutary friction of the past. To seek homogeneity at the cost of sacrificing understanding is to eliminate the friction. Without the friction of the past, our present becomes the end-product of a process we know nothing about; the inner logic of it, its strengths and weaknesses, remain opaque. We are given a 'packaged' present, and deprived of the insight into the structure of our inheritance that is a necessary condition for an informed freedom of manoeuvre, even where the manoeuvre is one of rejection. To seek understanding is, as I have stressed so often, not compatible with evaluating what we have understood. To be free to choose, we need to know what our choices are; we need to know how time has worked, because we live in it. Neither a pretence that the past is homogeneous with the present, nor an outright rejection of it, will give us the freedom it can help us to acquire; both manoeuvres prevent the past from communicating with us in its own terms. A right relation between Present and Past cannot be stable, if only because it calls for activities of investigation and appraisal that change and develop those who engage them. In fact, we can go back yet again to the debate between K ng and Rahner for an illustration of this lack of stability. In the last section, I claimed to find on each side a distinctive pattern of argument. Here, I suggest that the two patterns can be taken as complementing each other, can be taken as legitimate if incomplete observations about religious belief. K ng's appeal to the 'biblical message' as contained in Scripture - the argument ab initio, as I called it - can be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the otherness of the past, and as a reminder that secular knowledge, with its own laws, is needed to understand it. In other words, his appeal can be taken as asserting the abiding value of the past, and the possibility of appealing to its value as a protest against the proliferation of fanciful beliefs associated with the Church of Rome. Antiquam exquirite matrem is an adjuration which looks back through present failure to a lost ideal, and it is no wonder that it should be heard in religious matters. Yet Rahner's appeal to present belief - the argumentum a praesenti, as I have called it, - has its own value, as it can be taken as a legitimate refusal to accept the religious past without question. It is in the present that the good news is to be preached, and it is in the present that can come the 'pressure of the

secular' to which I have alluded. Rahner's pattern of argument can be interpreted (benignly, perhaps) as a plea for confronting our legacy as well as understanding it. Understanding and Confrontation are distinct, if not divided, and the difference here between Küng and Rahner - a difference in preference that goes far beyond the boundaries of theology - can serve to remind us of the fact.

Yet my citation of this debate as a confirmation of my own thesis may seem to some readers only to bring out more clearly an uneasiness they have felt, an uneasiness which perhaps Rahner's second objection awakened. If present and past are each acknowledged to have a value, and yet can be opposed like this, must there not be some norm of adjudication between them? Must not the process of confrontation carry with it some method of decision, or open the door to doubts that do not admit of resolution? To begin an answer to these questions must be the next stage in my argument. I say 'begin', because it is the final section of this chapter that will be specifically concerned with differences in belief: none the less, what has already been written should point to a way in which I think the question has to be answered. I notice in the first place that the processes of understanding and confrontation must not, on pain of misunderstanding, be conceived simply as activities conducted by an isolated individual in the face of a body of tradition. To see that this is so, we need only go back to something pointed out in the third chapter: the essentially multiple and communal activities in which religious belief is expressed. Speculation, worship, credal formulae, social habits and preferences are all places where belief is embodied, and no one of them can be regarded in isolation from the others. Past and present can be related in all these settings, and the activities of estimation conducted by one person are only part of the wider range of processes of evaluation that covers the whole motley of religious activity in the Church of which he, but so many others too, is a member. What I have written in this section about the lack of privileged loci of belief should now be complemented by what I wrote earlier about the multiplicity and variety of those loci. The circular image I have suggested is the image of a circle that is essentially heterogeneous. No one activity that makes up the circle can be isolated from the rest, or can claim to be exempt from those processes of correction and complementation to which all are subject. Some examples I have already offered of the processes should here be recalled: the retraction of assent to forms of devotion; benign interpretations of the past; 'selective amnesia'; the embodiment of certain preoccupations in patterns of worship; 'cultic pictures', and their greater or less accord with what is preached. These, and others I have mentioned, show the sheer variety of forms which belief can take, and I submit that they also show how each form is open to influence from others, and how none can claim a privilege that the others lack. In other words, the answer I have to offer to the request for a method of decision is that there is indeed a multitude of methods, the variety of which can be seen if we look at what does happen in the Church; but that none of these methods can claim exemption from the circle of activities, mutually correcting and corrected, of which it is a part.

It is not hard to see that the position adopted by Küng in his debate with Rahner does not provide any such exemption or privilege. The consequences of his acceptance of biblical criticism for his 'biblical message' we have already considered; but the appeals he makes against the notion of infallibly uttered propositions in the Church fare no better. At one point, he calls for a proof of propositional infallibility in terms of 'the great Catholic tradition'. At another, he claims that early Councils of the Church were accepted, not because of some antecedent quality that dispensed with their examination, but because examination showed them to be at one with the original Christian message. In neither instance do we escape the circle: the qualifying of a tradition as 'Catholic', or of a council as 'scriptural', is an evaluative

exercise that is one among many other activities, it is not the use of an isolated and privileged criterion. Rather, the exercise will be spread out in time and space, over the Church, and will show itself in the multiplicity of ways I have dwelt on. Nor does Küng escape the circle in his observations about the need for 'defensive formulae' in times of crisis. The very diagnosis of a situation as a crisis is an exercise in Understanding and Confrontation, and the verdict passed is still part of the circle, still open to revision. Nor do the formulae supposedly uttered in times of crisis fare any better, in fact they suffer the same disabilities as Rahner's ethical maxim we encountered earlier. What a slogan says tells us little of how it is applied - a shameful period in the history of the Church had for its watchword the unexceptionable motto Instaurare omnia in Christo.

If Küng's position does not offer us any privileged point that escapes from the 'circular' process I have suggested, neither does Rahner's. True enough, he defends propositional infallibility against Küng, and so defends just the kind of privilege I have been attacking. But we have already seen that he is able, when under pressure from secular investigation, to dissolve the apparent force of decrees made by a Council, decrees which are among the privileged loci he defends: they do not escape from the circle either. I have already stated his position, and given my reasons for disagreeing with the distinctions he draws. I mention the matter because I suspect that there is a further uneasiness some readers may have felt here, an uneasiness which touches the examples I chose when criticising Rahner and Küng: for the former, it was the origin of man that was the seat of change, while for the latter it was biblical criticism. Are not such cases, it might be urged, unfairly chosen? Both biblical criticism and investigations into the origin of man are essentially secular, and so their contact with religious belief is peripheral at best. The acceptance of their conclusions may have taken too long a time, and matters of prudence may have been mixed up with matters of fact, but it is not with the substance of belief that they are concerned. To weight this objection is the next step in my argument: it will lead us to some observations about religious language that will be a bridge between this section and the next.

I chose the examples I did quite deliberately, because the effects in them of what I called 'the pressure of the secular' were especially clear. The reason is simple enough. Biblical criticism and investigation into man's origin are alike in bringing into sharp focus the respective claims of religious tradition and secular discoveries. The nature of the contents of a sacred book; the reliability of its assertions as descriptions of physically perceptible events; the claims made on our belief by scripture and tradition, and the evaluation of those claims by other, secular standards - in all these, we have a number of assertions to which past and present have given different answers; and I have alleged that the difference has been caused by the interaction of tradition with life, not by a close scrutiny of what tradition has bequeathed. That, the change once made, we should describe it in terms of dispensing with non-essentials, or as a ceasing by religion to make claims outside its own field, is natural enough, for (as earlier observations about 'amnesia' have shown) we prize continuity and identity in these matters. But, as I have submitted, we are simply redistributing our emphases when we make such claims, we are not making a dispassionate inventory of our beliefs: 'non-essentials' and 'own field' are part of the circle of activity, just as what they appraise is past. We can confirm the justice of this verdict if we recall briefly some of the ways in which the pressure of the secular can be met, for their very crudeness will point to the need for the frank acknowledgment of the pressure, and of the changes it brings. Crudest of all is fundamentalism, the claim that religious topics are exempt from the criteria and arguments used else-

where. The move is one that secures impregnability at the cost of emptiness; we are in the position of the philosophical sceptic, who is irrefutable simply in the sense that there is nothing in what he says to refute. Much less crude, and much more inviting, is the position that allows secular criteria to be applied to the religious heritage, but lays down in advance what the result of their application ought to be. Much Roman Catholic activity in biblical matters has been spent here - one thinks in particular of pronouncements under Pius X. Two other attempts to camouflage change can be mentioned, one of which holds that questions once answered with 'Yes' need not now be answered with 'No', but simply refused as improperly put: I have already given my reasons for rejecting this 'Fallacy of Replacement'. The other seeks to rob changes of their force by contending that they affect the manner of presentation only, not that which is presented. Paul VI set the fashion for domesticating in this way the post-conciliar upheaval. But the popularity of the argument should not obscure its triviality. I shall be returning to it in this and the next sections, and it is enough for the moment to notice how it appeals to a distinction between form and content, or between meaning and expression. Distinctions of the sort are legitimate enough, but they call for a subtlety and discrimination that make their blunt employment in the appeal only embarrassingly naive.

I said that I chose my examples of change deliberately, because they brought the difference between past and present into sharp focus. The sharpness was due to the proximity of claims made by religious tradition or by secular investigation to some form of empirical consequence: thus, Rahner was quite right to assert a prima facie clash between Genesis and Palaeontology. But for much theology, the consequences of change are remote from empirical consequence, and the contrast between old and new will be of a different kind, and may well be far more elusive than emphatic statements of the contrast might suggest. Change may turn out to be conceptual, and so to demand a new vocabulary; subsequent harmonisations of discordant formulae may put obstacles in the way of a re-appraisal of the whole topic, and make it difficult to state just where the novelty of new opinions lies. The christological debates of the fifth century are an obvious example of what I have in mind, where the points at issue are not always located by us where they once were, and where categories used do not seem to bear any obvious relationship to those that are living for us today. Sometimes, theological change can show itself in the death of a controversy that once seemed vital - the seventeenth-century debates over predestination seem a fair instance. In all such areas of belief, the pressure of the secular is less insistent, and the temptation is all the greater to withdraw a system of religious assertions from all contact with whatever might disturb it. The penalty of yielding to the temptation is an evacuation from what is asserted of any content whatever: words are manipulated, but to no apparent purpose. Again, it is not difficult to think of an example - I have already suggested that the theory of transubstantiation, divorced from its philosophical setting, can lose the uneasiness of fit it still has in the speculations of Aquinas, and dwindle into just such an uninformative game with words.

I could sum up the matter by referring yet again to the debate between Küng and Rahner. The former was taken to task by some of his adversaries for having rested part of his argument upon the irremediably problematic and ambiguous character of propositions, and of their limitation by the historical setting of their utterance: his reasoning here, it was alleged, lacked finesse and solidity. I concede the defects of his assertions here, but my own observations are of a different order. Propositions vary greatly in their ambiguity, and are ambiguous for a variety of reasons; but it is not in propositions as such that the trouble lies for theology, it is in their subject-matter. We have far less here of the friction and limitation that fruitfully

restrict propositions of a humbler sort. What we gain in dignity we lose in sharpness, and any account of differences over religion must face the fact.

The circle, then, is heterogeneous not only in the activities that compose it, but in the content and character of what is expressed in those activities. Some areas of belief impinge readily on experience, others do not. The nature of change will vary with this other heterogeneity, and so will the role played by propositions in it. Yet I should not want my insistence upon the 'circular' pattern of mutual support and correction to be taken as an attempt to go behind propositions by claiming Christ himself as in some way or other the truth wherein the Church abides, and as the ultimate criterion for what must be true in the Christian Church. It is, naturally, not a matter of denying that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, but rather of denying that we are thereby provided with some criterion or object of belief that enables us to escape from the circle. We are not, and we cannot be, for faith in Christ is mediated and expressed in just that variety of activities which make up the circle, and some of those activities involve propositions. However, contentions of the sort can serve some useful purposes, and I end this section by stating them. I pass over as obvious by now the way in which a phrase like 'faith in Christ as the truth' can remind us of the limitations of propositions formulated in religious discourse, and of the fact that they form a part only of the whole range of life and practice in the Church. More deserving of mention is the way in which we can be reminded of the sheer multiplicity there is and has been of modes of change, decision and disagreement in the Church. To let the ecclesial past speak to us in its own terms is to be aware of how wide a range of activities and ideals has made up what we call the Church. The reality of the variety can be seen by us as analogous to the reality of the Incarnation itself, and to the 'scandal of particularity' associated with it. We are back with the tension between past and present that was first encountered in observations on understanding and confrontation. The past is of the Church richly varied, the present in the Church needs the past to be understood but cannot be reduced to it. The relationship between them has no model - deductive, legal, or historical - which can do it justice. It is to this uniqueness, I submit, that talk of Christ as the truth in which we believe can direct us. The talk does not and cannot exempt us from the human expressions and articulations of belief, but it can serve to remind us that faith in his abiding presence is not to be translated into the bestowal of indefeasible privilege upon this or that locus of belief, or upon this or that structure of the Church. It can help us face the fact that, with religion seizing the minds and hearts of man as it can do, its under-determination in matter is likely to be made up for by an over-determination in manner: so that its assertions need to be taken by believers with an affection tempered with scepticism.

Section 6 : AGREEING TO DIFFER

'Affection tempered with scepticism': the phrase points to the tension with which the preceding section ended. The Good News is to be loved; but its proclamation takes forms that are liable to be under-determined by evidence and over-determined in manner. The tension, of course, is only a result of the general thesis that there are no privileged sources of belief, none that can escape the 'circular' process of interpretation and evaluation. I have suggested that the denial of privilege in this sense is part of a general awareness of our time, an awareness of how many problems are raised by the understanding of one age in another, and an awareness of the often unconscious processes by which those who interpret manage to adjust and to accommodate that which they seek to understand. The awareness that brings its own burden, and

a bleakness of its own as well. As Von Hügel put it seventy years back, a greater knowledge of the biblical and religious past obliges us to admit:

'The slow, very late, very difficult, never simply spontaneous growth and persistence, in the human race and in any one human soul, of the sense and practice of mental accuracy, with regard to the apprehension and attestation of factual things and events' (Historical Element', 43)

Nor must the acknowledgment stop in the past: the present weight of the burden has been well expressed in a recent work which (unusual distinction) has a theologian and a logician for its joint authors:

'Modern knowledge has formulated a mass of ... generally accepted propositions, most of which answer questions that would never even have occurred to men of earlier times ... We have had to pay dearly for the advance ... In all previous ages, man possessed a knowledge of himself and of the world that was meagre but in its own way complete ... Only gradually since the opening of the modern age with its knowledge - that is, since about 1600 - did it become obvious that new, exact knowledge had to be purchased at the cost of renouncing a general view of man in the world ... The more it was acknowledged that such a renunciation ... was unavoidable, the more palpable became a tragic sense of truth (Wahrheitspathos), which still redounds to the credit of knowledge today. The insight has been achieved that, while earlier ages possessed a unitary knowledge of men and the world, they possessed it only in appearance. That satisfying insertion of man into his world had been achieved at the cost of truth, and men were now prepared to pay the price of renouncing that satisfaction' (Kamlah and Lorenzen, pp.144-146)

The reality of the Wahrheitspathos is seen in the hesitant and provisional modes of speech encountered so often today in theological writing, and so much less often in the past. Here, surely, is a 'pressure of the secular' that has had palpable results.

The present section, it hardly needs saying, will not resolve the tension, or find some way round the denial of privilege. Its purpose is to apply the results of the two preceding sections to the matter of dissent in religious belief, and to ways in which embodiment is given both to faith in Christ's promises and to belief that the Gospel now preached is in some way the Gospel first proclaimed by the Apostles. Now the matter of variety and identity in belief has arisen in this book because of my criticism of beliefs about the eucharistic presence traditional among Roman Catholics. I shall, then, be concerned with the specific issues of dissent that have occupied us throughout the work; and I will endeavour to draw together the various themes of the work, in this its final section. Inevitably, there will be a fair number of references in what follows to earlier passages, but the section itself is of a piece with what has already been written, and can be read continuously as a development and application of it.

In rejecting the existence of privileged loci of belief, I have never denied the attraction such privilege has when it offers a tangible source or utterance where doubt or debate may have a definitive

stop. Nor, of course, do I deny the existence of creeds, formularies, authoritative interventions and the rest: I could not make the denial even if I would, for they exist. What I have insisted is that these and all other manifestations of belief be regarded as part of the 'ecclesial circle', and that no such manifestation can be regarded as putting an end to the multiplicity of processes which compose the circle, and which affect and are affected by each other. Propositions, however solemnly enunciated, stand in need of acceptance, in the sense of needing to become part of the life of the Church, where they will prove viable or non-viable as the case may be. Nor, in saying this, am I covertly bestowing privilege upon 'the life of the Church': for if an enunciated proposition is accepted, the acceptance is not some independently produced criterion, but is itself a product of (among other things) the pronouncement it accepts. I should like to elaborate the point by returning for a moment to the debate between K ung and Rahner. My comments on it were not exegetical, but I take K ung to be holding a view resembling my own when he denies the existence of 'a priori infallible propositions' in the sense of propositions that have no intrinsic need of subsequent examination or verification. What needs making clearer than K ung does is the difference between infallibility as thus conceived and standards like "authentic attestation of the truth of the Gospel" that he wishes to put in its place (e.g. Infallible? 206). The difference lies in this: the traditional standard has about it what I have called elsewhere a 'perspicuous concreteness'. Where infallibility is attached to this or that source of propositions under certain circumstances - where, in other words, a privileged locus of the sort is admitted - the verification that infallibility is being exercised should be a matter of seeing that the source and the circumstances are what they should be. Criteria of the second sort, on the other hand, which call for 'authentic attestation of the Gospel' or something else of the kind, will demand an examination of the proposition itself, and so its incorporation into the circular process I have suggested. Not, of course, that the contrast is in practice absolute: we have seen how Rahner, apparently investigating a source of assertions, is in fact revaluing what is asserted there. Once more, my rejection of privilege is not so much a novelty as an acknowledgment and articulation of what already obtains.

Novelty or not, however, the rejection of privileged loci does admit an unresolvable tension into religious belief conceived as being exercised in the setting of a church. Disagreement here is not just a failure to agree - that has never been difficult to obtain on religious topics - but is a clash of opinion where each side claims in some sense a continuity of its assertions with what has been taught in a particular religious tradition, and tries to vindicate for those assertions a place in the concrete and historical development of that tradition. Each side in such debates experiences a tension between the ideal and the actual in the common tradition to which each side claims to belong. A belief in Christ's promises to the Church must begin in the actual setting of what the Church has been and is, for otherwise the belief will lose all contact with the course of the Church's history. A loss of contact like this is, of course, not in the least impossible, but it puts an end to the concept of a Church altogether, and so to the tension we are discussing. We have here an instance of what we have already seen: the existence of procedures and standards presupposes a certain measure of agreement in concrete results of their application. At the same time, the reality, past and present of the Church obviously cannot be taken to show that what is the case ought to be the case. More generally, I submit that belief in the promises does indeed involve belief that the Gospel will be preached and that in the long run it will not be overcome: but that this belief cannot claim to evade the circular process, or to achieve an inexpugnable body of propositions amid doubt. The belief touches 'the long run'; but 'the long run' is not a privileged measurement of the time to be taken by the process. It is itself part of

the process, pointing to the mutually connected activities of enquiry and of revaluation of which we have seen so much. Much the same can be said of the 'fundamental remaining in the truth despite error' which Ktng wishes to attribute to the Church. We are not given, nor can we be given, a privileged measure for assessing how fundamental the remaining is, just as we cannot be given a measure of how long the run will be in which the proclamation of the Good News will not be overcome. There will always be a lack of fit between Christ's promises and the Church as it is. The re-discovery in our own time of the sense of 'The Last Things' in the early Church gives us an insight into what this lack of fit involves. What I have called 'the pressure of the secular' is only part of a general openness of the Church to life, and to what life involves. I have already noticed the unhappy 'polarisation' of religious and secular knowledge at the time of the First Vatican Council, when the former was considered as an unchanging deposit to be preserved from the hostility and fluctuations of the latter. My own thesis has denied this polarisation, but it should not be interpreted as making the rôle of religious belief into no more than a passive acceptance of successive changes dictated by growth in knowledge elsewhere. The acceptance is real, and I have stressed it because it is so often denied. But it is not the whole story - to think that it is would mean giving a privileged status to one, secular, point in the circle. The Biblical parables of the seed and the leaven suggest a better and more complex account: an interaction which is continuous and which leaves neither participant unaltered. The denial of privileged loci as I have conceived it is not a surrender to religious scepticism, but an acknowledgment of the task that lies upon religious belief.

The tension I accept as unresolvable in the Church naturally shows itself in religious dissent. and this book has provided a variety of examples of dissent in matters concerned with beliefs held by Roman Catholics about the eucharistic presence. Before turning to the specific points of difference that have emerged in the course of the book, I wish to spend some time stating my views on what I think are important issues of a more general sort, issues raised by the whole matter of religious dissent. My first step is to notice that the question 'how far can dissent go among members of the Church?' is not one that can be answered straightforwardly - to believe it could be is to believe in the existence of some yardstick of belief exempt from the processes of understanding and confrontation. Any assertion can be subjected to a variety of tests, and the extent of its agreement gauged with scriptural or other sources, or with present experience: but any test used is itself open to investigation and emendation. To deny privilege is not, of course, to deny the importance of arguments based on history, consistency or experience, when older assertions are revalued or when newer assertions are put forward for discussion. Yet neither these, nor the test of 'viability in the Church', provides a criterion that escapes the circular process. Indeed, we can go further, and link this general assertion with what has been claimed at earlier stages of the book. Something has already been said of the underdetermination of religious assertions by evidence, the multiplicity of forms in which religious belief finds expression, and we touch a point here from much earlier in the book - the way in which there is felt to be a 'looseness of fit' between religious belief and the words or actions into which the belief is translated. We can link these characteristics with yet another earlier observation - how different attitudes in religious belief may, thanks to inspired forgetfulness and variety of context, manage to co-exist in one and the same believer. Give all this, we should not regard a plurality and discord in belief among members of a church as an unfortunate accident, to be eliminated by argument, force, or submission: they are natural manifestations of what religious belief and church membership are like. Credal formulae, like forms of worship, ought to allow a range of development and of interpretation among their users, for the simple reason that they exist to be used in the first

place; a willingness to employ them is part of their acceptance. That situations may arise where items in a formula are felt to need deletion, is true enough; just as situations may arise where a religious community is so divided in its attitude to a formula that its recital becomes an exercise in equivocation rather than a profession of what is held in common. Not all situations, however, are of this sort, and the use of credal or liturgical formulae should respect the themes of underdetermination, multiplicity of expression, looseness of fit, and the co-existence of different attitudes in concreto in individual believers.

Discussions of the range of religious disagreement will get nowhere if they do not begin with this concrete and particular situation in which dissent takes place. It is not, to mention a point made earlier, that the actual situation of the Church gives a warrant for its own continuance. But it is in such situations that belief gets expressed in worship, creeds, and behaviour; it is here that the good news is proclaimed, or its proclamation confronted; and it is here, among people who have inherited a particular pattern of belief (an inheritance which is theirs by a variety of chances), that differences arise or die away. To formulate possible patterns of dissent in the abstract is to miss the historically conditioned and yet open situation in which dissent actually occurs; and my remarks on the abiding value of the past are meant to show something of what dissent in concreto can mean. It is not a matter of denying the reality of dissent within a Church, or of claiming that dissent need never lead to a sundering of union: such contentions would be remarkable indeed. But it is a matter of noticing the variety and multiplicity of means in which the heirs to a common tradition, divided in their verdicts on an element in their inheritance, and divided in ways that matter for them, can show their community for all that. It may be a heritage of worship or organisation that they share; uneasinesses that they have in common; priorities that they both allot to certain manifestations of religion; or a vocabulary and a pattern of thought that gives each side a way of making sense of its beliefs. Of these and other possible ways in which community may be shown, not all are likely to be present where dissent is serious, but it is in the concrete setting within which exist these 'patterns of community' that dissent needs to be appraised.

But must not a discussion of the range of religious dissent within a church concede that some propositions are not doubted? And does not the admission of an indubitable core of assertions amount to a reinstatement of the privilege which has been denied? I have already claimed that supposedly obvious credal propositions are not to be taken in isolation, but are to be estimated in the particular setting of practice and development to which they are subjected in any one age of the Church. However, I wish to examine the matter of indubitable propositions again here: it will continue some remarks already made, and will throw light on the matter of dissent among those who claim to belong to the same religious tradition as their opponents. I begin by recalling a type of proposition offered by G.E. Moore and mentioned earlier: 'I have a head' and 'this is my hand' were put forward by him as examples of what we know beyond any doubt. His attack upon scepticism was criticised by Wittgenstein at some length in his later work On Certainty. Not, of course, that he entertained doubt as to the truth of Moore's propositions: rather, for him the whole apparatus of doubt, error and confirmation has no application here, as no method of verification could provide anything clearer. Our talk and the standards that accompany it get their meaning from the rest of our proceedings; it is not a matter of holding fast to one proposition, but to a nest of them. What counts as adequate evidence for us is not something distinct from this or that body of linguistic and human activity in which we engage, and to describe the language-game involves describing the standard of adequacy. Now, as we have already seen, the operation of linguistic rules demands

a reasonable measure of agreement in the community of users, and the breakdown of such agreement robs the community of content. Doubt cannot be universally and continually exercised; part of the frame of reference within which doubt is exercised is the truth of some empirical propositions. To the 'game' we play, certain doubts do not belong; but we have not chosen to play this game rather than another, and life consists in being content to accept many things.

This may give some idea of the position defended by Wittgenstein (though I would point out that On Certainty is written in a circling and accumulative manner which makes quotation difficult). It seems to me to throw light upon the matter of agreement and dissent in religious belief, because it points to the 'paradigmatic' quality of what is held to be beyond doubt. Certain propositions exemplify the way we reason and conclude - they are beyond doubt in the sense that a good reason for ending doubt is like that. To possess such propositions does not mean that there will be no further disagreement, but rather that it is the propositions in question that set the stage and provide the terms within which disagreement and its resolution can take place. However, the account raises problems as well as providing suggestions. In the first place, am I to say that 'paradigmatic' propositions of the sort are privileged, in the way that I have so far denied? Hardly, because the characteristic of privileged loci has been their exemption from the circular process of understanding, confrontation, revaluation and the rest. The paradigmatically certain propositions, on the other hand, are not some exempt and externally guaranteed form of knowledge, they are rather indications of what believers hold religious knowledge to be; they are not emancipated from the ecclesial circle, they serve to display how the circle works. Yet the question I have put does point to a problem which, I have already suggested, is not examined by Wittgenstein as closely as we should like: communication or the use of language where the terminal points are radically different; (for something on the matter, see Philosophical Investigations, p.228; On Certainty §§ 62-65, 94-99). Does the abandonment of 'paradigmatic' propositions put an end to continuity in belief? Can dissent about them even be conceived in the setting of an accepted religious heritage? Does disagreement of this sort make an exchange of views no longer possible in the way it was when the exemplary propositions were accepted by both disputants?

As I see it, we must assert here yet again what has been asserted so often already: there is no breaking of the circle; the circle includes the concrete reality of the Church as it has developed; this reality does not provide a guarantee that what has developed is what ought to be the case. Wittgenstein's concept of what I have called a paradigmatic proposition does not, as I see it, give us a means of separating a special class of propositions from the rest. To use the language of his Tractatus, we show what our activities are by the pattern of the doubts we admit, we cannot state where lie the boundaries of those activities and doubts. Where the boundaries change, what we are doing has changed as well, and changed to an extent that it did not in the face of lesser disagreement. An example I have in mind is the early Christian belief - central to the first preaching - that Christ's redemptive actions occurred 'to fulfil the Scriptures'. We have only to read passages like the Journey to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) to see what part it played in their faith; and we have only to read Matthew's Gospel to see how precise the fulfilment was meant to be (Matthew 21:1-8) is a classic example). We have retained the phrase 'according to the Scriptures' in the Creed, but we no longer hold ourselves bound to believe it in the sense it was once believed, and believed by the very men who provided that 'biblical message' which a theologian like K'ung regards as the norm for assessing everything else. Our abandonment of the older belief, of course, is not an isolated act, it is part of a pattern of activity and standards where we are at home and where the early Church was not. We have 'the

tragic sense of truth' to bear, and an awareness of historical limitations we cannot disown. What was once central to our belief is no longer, because our activity, in belief and elsewhere, is now so different. For an instance of the contrast at its starkest, we can go to "Peter's Pentecost Sermon" in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Christ is there proclaimed as risen, and the Apostles as witnesses thereof; but the tomb to which the crowd's attention is directed is not that of Jesus, but of King David, and the resurrection of the former is urged from an otherwise unfulfilled prophecy by the latter (Acts 2:22-37).

In the face of such profounder differences, and their 'changes of boundary', should we still claim a continuity in what is taught, an identity with the Church over the ages? That claims of the sort and related counter-claims are themselves part of the process of change and confrontation, and that so is the wish to establish a continuity with those who first preached the Gospel, are points that I hope do not need to be argued now. What we might rather notice is how confrontations and changes of the sort already encountered take the form time and again of what we might call a stretching of the unit of intelligibility. An example will make clear what I have in mind. 'According to the Scriptures' no longer connotes for us the fulfilment, item by item, of prophetic matter in the Old Testament; we no longer expect that each component of it should be significant or intelligible 'prophetically' as once we did; rather, we see a general pattern of sin, suffering, death, and victory over them, in Old and New Testament alike. The unit of intelligibility has been stretched, our reading of our heritage is less close. A second example of stretching the unit of intelligibility occurred in Rahner's successive exegesis of the creation - narratives in the Book of Genesis. Where Trent had seen a theological solidarity of mankind as dependent on one originator, Rahner ends by seeing only a solidarity for which some collective unity at the level of the species would be enough. Rahner's distinctions here between assertion and presupposition were blamed for expressing confrontation in the guise of understanding. We can now be more precise and blame him, not of course for having stretched the unit of intelligibility in scriptural and conciliar sources, but for having claimed that the sources are already doing the stretching themselves. For a third example, we can go to earlier criticism of texts from Aquinas on the eucharistic presence, which saw in them an embarrassing over-elaboration of elements in the symbolism of eating: we could express the criticism now as a plea that too narrow a unit of intelligibility had been taken by Aquinas. However, after these examples, the question might be put whether a sufficiently great difference in extent between units of intelligibility might not make idle a profession of common membership of a church; and to this question an affirmative answer must surely be given. Quite another question is at what stage of difference a community dissolves, and, given what I have already written, I can hardly claim to say what answer should be given to that. Once again, I must submit that the question can be met only by our going to the concrete reality of the community in question, where the activities of the ecclesial circle are exercised; and that we should recall yet again how the reality of the community as it is does not license us to hold that this is what it should be. We are back to the tension encountered so often, and attributed to our denial of privileged loci of belief, and so of methods of decision which can escape what I have called the circular process to which all manifestations of belief are subject. One of the ways in which the tension shows itself to be irreducible is the uncertainty of the model according to which the 'development of doctrine', and identity or difference therein, are conceived. Is it to be deductive? rhetorical? legal? None of the models satisfies, although each has its own attractions; none of the models can satisfy if it be construed as an attempt to reinstate the privilege I have attacked. We come back to the two patterns of argument favoured respectively by King and Rahner in an earlier section: one can correct the other, but neither can provide an

all-sufficient pattern or model.

Some readers may have found a certain inverted familiarity in my observations about disagreement in religious belief. I have pointed to the underdetermination of belief by evidence; the need for credal activities to allow a fair span of difference among those who share in them; the need to consider dissent in the concrete historical setting of its occurrence; and the way in which fundamental changes in activity can show themselves in a redistribution of certainty among propositions. These observations I regarded as the working out of consequences of a more general approach to knowledge and communication, an approach to which I drew analogies from recent traditions in philosophy. However, some philosophers among these traditions have followed a path in the opposite direction. Instead of analysing religious disagreement in terms of philosophy, they have gone to religion for analogies in discussing disagreements of a secular character. For example, it is sometimes contended that where two scientific theories are in a profound disagreement, their respective supporters will see differently the experiments to which they have recourse, and will attach different meanings to terminology which they have in common. Debate cannot decide the issue; one party must try, by persuasion, to convert the other. Is not my own position of a piece with Kuhn's, and if so, how can I allow a rational resolution of differences at all? I must resist the temptation to turn aside for a critique of Kuhn's view; the temptation is the more easily resisted because (apart from much else) what he writes seems to take an oddly simplified view of both scientific and religious differences. Under-determination is indeed more than a trait of religion, it is a fact of language and of life; but what matters is its degree, and it is the extent of underdetermination in religious belief, and the variation in the extent, that have been my concern. Where the comparison of certain scientific disagreements with religious differences seems to me to fail, is in leaving the religious side of the analogy so vague. That some changes in religious belief are 'conversions' is undeniable; but the sheer multiplicity and variety of religious expression we have repeatedly noticed should warn us against construing all such changes after so drastic a pattern of dissent. Indeed, my earlier remarks about the Fallacy of Replacement were meant to show that religious belief can have 'empirical residues', and that such residues can be the occasion for disagreement of a kind other than 'conceptual'. Nor are we given guidance on two points where Kuhn's analogy limps badly. First, religious belief has an essential spread over time, as we have seen; its past has a prima facie claim on its present, and a continuity with the past is part of what present faith asserts. Secondly, the dissenting parties in religious disagreement continue in existence. We do not still find Aristotelians and Galileans arguing about the laws of motion in the twentieth century, but we do still find Catholics and Protestants arguing over issues that divided them at the Reformation.

I have mentioned the religious analogy drawn by Kuhn and others because it can remind us of problems raised by any profound difference of opinion, religious or not, and because a sense of the limitations of the analogy can bring out the variety and heterogeneity of any one religious tradition. Just as 'conversion' is a description misleadingly used of much religious controversy, so is it misleading to regard a religious tradition - a Church, say - as homogeneous in content and as proclaiming its beliefs in credal formulae only. That different Christian Churches are aware of the heterogeneity, and are trying to understand the range and content of each other's beliefs, is well known: one might almost define the oecumenical movement as an endeavour by the Churches to make their differences less like the description offered by Kuhn. Among the issues recently discussed by representatives of the Church of England and the Roman Church, one has been the Eucharist, and readers may have wondered why this book has made no mention of the discussions, or of the declaration that followed. The

omission has been deliberate. One reason, already mentioned in the Introduction, is that my own approach to the subject has not been that of a professional theologian, to whom the conduct of such discussions has been held to belong. Another reason is that I am not clear that the discussions have taken account of topics which, I have submitted in these pages, are of the first importance. That a common Report was produced seems of little significance, as far as its content goes: as I have already suggested, formulae need placing in the life and practice of a community to be open to worth-while appraisal. If the Report is anything, it is a topic for assimilation or elimination by each side, it is not an inventory of common beliefs. Moreover, and this touches the heart of my uneasiness, the Report seems to pay scant attention to the 'temporal spread' of religious belief, and to the variety of its interrelated manifestations. Readers will be familiar enough with my contentions in the matter by now, and I would add only this. The fact of such discussions is indeed significant, but I do not see how the findings can be unless each side practises understanding and confrontation on its own past, and openly states the results achieved.

It seems hardly likely that we shall get anything of the sort, but if my submissions so far in this book have any value, oecumenical activity must include one's own past among the objects of its attentions. It is more than creeds that must be considered, it is the whole motley of forms in which belief has found expression, and the present state of belief must be acknowledged to be correlated in a variety of ways with the course that belief has previously taken. What we have inherited is itself a product of confrontation, and we need to be aware of this if we seek to understand the inheritance of others. I have been offering examples and to spare of confrontation with earlier forms of Roman eucharistic belief. To keep the balance, I offer two texts that the Church of England might like to understand and confront. Neither is 'professionally' theological, which makes the reaction they exhibit all the more significant for the assessment of divergence and continuity. Both are from Englishmen abroad in the nineteenth century, and both concern the Mass. One is from Haydon the painter, who passed through Rouen in 1814:

'Our faculties were overwhelmed by the ceremonies of their impressive religion. The tinkling of the bell here, where they believe in the actual presence, seemed to go to their hearts; - down they all dropped, and remained as if awed till it was over.' (Haydon, 232)

The second is from Richard Wilton, a clergyman, and was written in 1858:

'To see three priests at once kneeling down and worshipping the elevated wafer and cup of wine, chanting all the time an unintelligible jargon, ... was most sad ... Oh thank God for our pure, Protestant Church!' (Young, 157)

That the facing of the variety and multiplicity in our heritage can be salutary, seems obvious enough; but it would be a mistake to make the value of the past into no more than a source of stimulus for the present. To face items in our heritage is no guarantee that we shall be able to place them or to accommodate them, and my remarks here and elsewhere in the book about 'Understanding' are not intended to mean that every sympathetic attempt to understand the past is bound to be successful; the possibility of defeat, or of near defeat, cannot be ruled out. To make this admission is not to go back on what I have written about the liberating power of the past. On the contrary, that power affects even what eludes our understanding or our sympathy in the past. The very admission of defeat has value, for it acknowledges

the complexity of our inheritance and the obligations it entails. If belief has a past, it has a future as well, a future in which others may find a word spoken where we can hear nothing. An admission of defeat is not a licence to obliterate: 'Destroy not', as some of the Psalms have for their title.

For each side to examine its own past beliefs seems indispensable, not just for a better understanding of this or that religious difference, but for a grasp of what oecumenical activity is aimed at. 'Unity' and 'identity', like 'essentials' and 'expression' are concepts that form part of what I have called 'the ecclesial circle'; they are a function of what activity is practised, they are not independent criteria for assessing progress made or work still left undone. The very ideal of unity, the very claim for identity in faith with that delivered to the apostles, are limited by the setting in which they were conceived: and we have already seen how alien to our own was the concept of accordance with the Scriptures held in the apostolic Church. To investigate the fortunes of such ideas over the centuries is a task calling for historical and interpretative skills; but the use of the ideas in the present will lack coherence if there is no investigation of the sort to give it roots in the past.

I have made observations of some length on the general topic of disagreement in religious belief. I now turn to the specific matters of disagreement that have emerged in the course of my account of the eucharistic presence; to look back on them, and to discern in them an instantiation of the points I have been making in these last three sections of the book, will bring what I have to say to a conclusion. Two warnings should precede what follows. One touches references to earlier parts of the book. They are unavoidably numerous here, but they need not interrupt the course of the argument. The other is a general remark on what has been written: its exercise of understanding and confrontation upon other beliefs does not mean that it ought to escape the application of the processes to itself.

For many readers, the most conspicuous example of religious disagreement in this book will have started in its first chapter, of which the very title 'Against Transubstantiation' showed how great the disagreement was going to be. The Council of Trent provided the first passage quoted, which came from its decree on the eucharistic presence, and was shown to be textually similar to a passage in the writings of Aquinas where the eucharistic change is examined by him. The first chapter went on to claim that the eucharistic theory of Aquinas abuses philosophical distinctions to the point of nonsense, and derives what content it appears to possess from a specious divorce of appearance from reality. Other counts on the indictment came later, but the first chapter, by denying sense to what Aquinas wrote and in particular to the concept of transubstantiation, disagreed with a Council that had not only used the phraseology of Aquinas but had declared the term 'transubstantiation' to be most fittingly used by the Church. What is to be said of the disagreement? I can begin by returning to an attempt, already mentioned in the first chapter, to emancipate the decree at Trent from dependence upon the speculations of Aquinas. All the Council demands, it is alleged, is a distinction between appearance and reality that any sound philosophy must concede, so its binding force is not restricted by the setting in which the decree was enunciated, nor does the binding force extend to one particular system of philosophy. We ought to be cautious about moves like this, after what we saw of Rahner's dealing with Trent, and the poverty of any such argument should, I hope, be obvious enough by now. It is indeed possible to ask what range of opinions about the eucharistic presence was recognised as orthodox by the Council: this is a matter for historical

investigation, where evidence can be sought and assessed. I have not attempted to make the investigation, and simply acknowledge here that it raises genuine questions. But this genuine enquiry is quite distinct from the manoeuvre of suggesting that Trent relies on some 'perennial philosophy' that all wise men accept. This is not an enquiry, it is an exercise in anachronism for which no justification is or could be offered. The distinction between appearance and reality is genuine enough, but it will do what the eucharistic theory of Aquinas wants it to do only when the terms of the distinction have been given an improper independence of their own - when distinction has become dissection. To claim that, even though this be true of the theories of Aquinas, it need not be true of the decree at Trent, is to attribute to words a meaning that is independent of the pattern and setting according to which they are used: and we have seen that the recurrent danger for religious language is just this cutting off of words from their moorings. To think we can discern a timeless content in what Trent (if not Aquinas) asserts, even where the language used by the Council has been shown in its original employment by the theologian to be an abuse, is to misunderstand the rôle of language, and to look for an access to belief that is 'privileged' in the sense to which so much exception has been taken.

However, it is not only illogical to attempt emancipations of the sort here, it is irrelevant to the problem that must be faced. The issues raised in my confrontation with traditional eucharistic belief are wider. What began as an attack on the eucharistic theory of Aquinas went much further than a negative analysis of the use he made of Aristotle's account of change. The area where fault was found was extended, and so were the complaints. Earlier medieval writers were shown to be manipulating terms in a way that, in its very crudity, showed even more clearly points made about the 'hypostatizing' by Aquinas of distinctions legitimate enough in their origin. And theologians of our own time, who profess to have abandoned the scholastic tradition, and whose theories have been blamed for novelty, were seen to rely yet again upon the old abusive distinction between appearance and reality. Their abuse found expression in 'The Fallacy of Replacement', where the criteria for applying words were unwarrantedly suspended. But my critique went further still. A propensity was discerned in Aquinas to expressing the eucharistic presence in terms of disguise or camouflage rather than of sign. A consequence of this was the use of imagery and expressions that were saved from being cannibalistic only by a tacit evacuation of sense from the words employed. Yet once again, the dissent I expressed went far beyond the particular in which Aquinas used concepts drawn from disguise. A particularly crude form of the fault was seen in one of the earliest medieval writers on the eucharistic presence, in a medieval profession of orthodoxy, and in medieval legends. Nor was the pattern of error medieval only, for the Missale Romanum preserved to our own day prayers of similarly embarrassing import, and both devotion and the instruction of children have shown themselves unhappily liable to lapse into imagery that needs forgetting. The danger is a perennial one in eucharistic language, and it would not be difficult to accumulate texts, whether ancient or modern, that are saved from being cannibalistic only by a suitably vigorous exercise in 'selective amnesia'. Consider but one Father of the Church, St. John Chrysostom, and but one work of his, the Homilies on St. John's Gospel; what he has to say about the sixth chapter includes passages that raise all and more than all the problems raised by what we have seen Aquinas write. Christ, he tells us, in order to urge us to greater love, 'let those who desire him, not just see him, but touch him, eat him, fix their teeth in his flesh, entwine with him, satisfy every desire' (In Joannem, hom.46, para.3; MG 59/260; the English translation has it at vol.2, p.399). Just so, in our own day, a well-meant but disconcerting endeavour has been made to domesticate eucharistic excess of this sort, for which see Pousset. His linking

of eating with love receives, or so I think, an adequate comment in the room of the Tate Gallery where Dali's curious 'Autumn Camibalism' is exposed. Dates of composition matter little here, for the objections I have raised are not concerned with one stage only in eucharistic speculation, they can be put wherever the imagery of the Eucharist, in speculation or in any other way, is dissected and worked to death. As I have pointed out more than once, we have lost our innocence when it comes to interpreting religious and cultic language, and what language we do use is liable to be overheard and to be taken at its face value. We can no longer face the problem by applying to the imagery of one age the philosophical abuses of another, as Aquinas does, for example, in his treatment of the eucharistic words. The imagery of the sixth chapter of St. John needs understanding in terms of its own cultural setting, and in terms of what our own words mean, it cannot be taken 'literally' as an account of a substantial eating camouflaged by accidents; the interpretation defies history, let alone sense.

To sum up, the confrontation I have exercised on eucharistic belief began with the Decree at Trent, and with the theory of Aquinas that provided the background to the decree, but it did not stop there. Its attack on abused distinctions between appearance and reality, or on the substitution of disguise for sign in eucharistic theology, were part of a more general complaint that traditional eucharistic belief, in both cultic and credal forms, gave a primacy to the image of transformation over the image of eating, conceived the eucharistic presence on the model of Christ's presence in his earthly life, the 'Galilean presence' as I called it, and in a way to which ritual was basically irrelevant, and isolated that presence from the presence of Christ in the members of the Church, which is his Body. The range of confrontation is indeed far-reaching; but my submission will be that it is no isolated exercise in dissent, but an articulation of what is already taking place in the Church and its worship.

The course of argument in the book provides the grounds I have for making this claim. I have traced the traditional account of the eucharistic presence, not only in conciliar and theological sources, but in what I called its 'cultic picture'. Here was expressed, in rite, gesture, custom and objects, the primacy of transformation, the Galilean presence, the detachment of the Eucharist from Christ's presence in the Church. Here too the starkly simple division of office in the Church between priest and laity was embodied, while the concomitant eucharistic devotions displayed the presence of Christ in terms so closely bound with the spatial as to remove the consideration of that presence from the Church in the world. To this older picture a contrast is offered, not only by the cultic picture of the new rite of the Mass, but by the various changes that have come over the Church, changes which touch the rôle of the priest, the recovered insight into the meaning of the apocalyptic element in the Gospels, a greater awareness of the presence of the Church in the world and of its ritual expression, and an enrichment of the imaginative and symbolic expression provided by the rite of the shared meal and the analogies it connotes. I claim that the novelty of my account of the eucharistic presence, and of my polemic against older accounts, lies not so much in the content of the account as in its providing a conceptual articulation of what has been and is occurring in the Church. There is, of course, no question of claiming that my account is the only articulation which could be offered; but I have repeatedly affirmed that an articulate and reflexive awareness of activity and life is the burden of our age, and I affirm now that what I have written can be construed as an attempt to provide something of the sort for ecclesial and

eucharistic changes that are with us already. If my suggestions be rejected, the task still remains of providing a structure and articulation for what has been happening, or at all events of providing a protest against its ever having happened at all. Such an articulation can hardly be in traditional terms; as I have already suggested, the theories offered by Aquinas sit very uneasily to eucharistic activity as now found in the Church. Something else is needed, and I have at least offered something else.

Nor should the account I have put forward be regarded as novelty and nothing more, for it claims to be doing justice to eucharistic themes, that were obscured in the older 'cultic picture'. I have already written of the liberating power of the past, and of the knowledge it can afford as to the composition of what we have inherited. Instantiations of this principle can be found in the cultural and biblical investigation of the imagery of eating, and in the consequent allotting of primacy to eating over transformation in the imagery of the Eucharist. The older cultic picture was provided by a ceremony which, both in its content and in its physical disposition, preserved many elements of the rite in a state of atrophy, and did scant justice to the variety in liturgical rôle, to the teaching functions of worship, to the fruitful tension between worship and life, or to the part played in worship by Scripture. Here the newer picture can claim a greater faithfulness to ancient origins. Like the changes in liturgy and in the Church, my account of the eucharistic presence has not been offered as a revival of the past: but it has been put forward as, among other things, a recovery of a heritage partly obscured or lost. If this be so, however, a question must be put concerning the elements in that heritage which have been confronted. Are they beyond salvage? Is their rejection total, or can they be recovered in another guise? The question is fairly important, for the answer offered to it will touch the very nature and extent of the confrontation that has been made. To attempt an answer to it must be my next step.

A confusion between signs and disguises was what I attributed to the views I have been attacking, and this confusion I have seen as one manifestation of an error I have pursued throughout the book - a divorce between appearance and reality that turns a legitimate distinction into an error, an error which can be encountered in more than one philosophical tradition. The technical name is phenomenalism, and I blamed both older and newer theories for falling into it. Phenomenalistic tendencies in the theory of transubstantiation were obvious enough, but the error was traceable even in eucharistic theologies of a different cast. A denial of meaning to words, and a distinction between reality and 'secular experience' were made in the name of Christ's place in God's plan, but the newer theories ended, for all protestations to the contrary, where the older had done. If anything had been confronted here and found wanting, in eucharistic theology, it is phenomenalism, so that will be a suitable topic on which to ask whether the confrontation is absolute. The aim of what follows, I add at once, is not to suggest that there is some deeper (or higher) level on which the error and my own proposals can meet, for suggestions of the sort can mean anything or nothing: rightly or wrongly, I persist in my rejection of any phenomenalistic approach to eucharistic theology. What I should rather do is acknowledge the values that phenomenalism here has tried to express, and the dangers that are attendant upon its denial. Once more, I am not suggesting that 'the values' are outside the circular process, or can be grasped or expressed in a way that eludes the process. I am commenting on another theory; my own is necessarily open to comment itself.

Phenomenalism involves discontinuity. Things are not what they seem; the criteria for the application of descriptions like 'bread'

break down; a presence is conceived of which the ritual expression drifts towards the spatio-temporal, while the setting required for expression of the sort is necessarily absent. By asserting discontinuity, phenomenism speaks against any 'single vision' of the world that would make what is open to immediate and public observation the only reality. Consider this 'discontinuity'. That the world we see and make and use can also provide a manifestation of what is everlasting, so that the signs used by religion rely upon some innate openness in the world to God; that man's relation to God can never be reduced without remainder to a description of his relations with others in human society; that Christian belief holds to an intervention of the divine in history, and prays for the coming of the kingdom: all these involve a discontinuity, all these deny a purely man-centred intelligibility of things. It is to all these that phenomenism can, in its own way, bear witness. Obviously I do not agree with its way, and consider that I have already done justice to these values in non-phenomenalistic terms. But it is not with the witness as such that I quarrel. More precisely, there is no isolating a 'witness as such', no pointing to a discontinuity where the phenomenistic presentation can be disregarded. As I have pointed out so often, we cannot by-pass language like this, although we can sympathise with the anxieties that appear in a theory. It is in language however, that a theory is expressed, because it is in language that the concepts, anxieties and aims of it become manifest. And so it is in language and through language that I have found fault with the theories I have opposed. As I have already suggested, the trouble with phenomenistic theories is that they go on too long. Regard the term 'transubstantiation' as no more than a reminder of the breakdown of eucharistic language, and what reservations we have would touch the setting of the term rather than the term itself. But we know by now that this is simply not how Aquinas used the term: it comes at the end of an adaption of Aristotle, and goes with conclusions about the nature of the eucharistic presence that, whatever their value, are far more than acquiescences in linguistic incapacity. If phenomenism bears witness to a legitimate discontinuity, it does so perversely. It does so (to go back to the analogy of Chapter II) in much the way that philosophical scepticism, by its very paradoxes, bears witness to the need for caution and open-mindedness towards the problems of real life. How the advantages and disadvantages of a phenomenistic approach to eucharistic theology will be balanced, is a question that cannot be answered in the abstract. The balance will depend upon factors that are not specifically theological, such as the structures of language that prevail in an age and the controversies that are then deemed important. Most of all, perhaps, it will depend upon what patterns of thought and speculation are alive at any one time. Thus, it is no accident that the eucharistic theology of a neo-scholastic like Colombo was found to be speciously tidy in a way that the theology of Aquinas was not, for the former is manipulating ideas that have lost the central place they once had in speculation. Whether we like it or not, the ecclesial and conceptual setting of theology has changed so much that a repetition of phraseology from Aquinas can be no more than archaism, and can do no justice to the place of Aquinas as a philosopher, let alone to the theology of the eucharistic presence.

Having acknowledged that phenomenism can bear witness to values in eucharistic belief, I go on to acknowledge that a rejection of the error can (though, of course, I think need not) compromise values in that belief. How this can be, I have already tried to show. Just as phenomenism, for all its faults, witnessed to a discontinuity, so the denial of it can, for all its merits, obscure the acknowledgment of the discontinuity where it ought to be made. The intervention of God believed in by Christians is embarrassing in its generosity, and involves the tragic sense of life and death, where a conflict and victory cost so much. The eucharistic sign of all this is set in the context of the imagery of sacrifice and of eating which touches man so

closely, and which has led to such abominations. We tread here on ground that is known to be dangerous; the more temptation, then, to leave it for somewhere more salubrious. I have already noticed that stressing the sign-giving function of the Eucharist can lead to a reduction of the rite to human convention. Whether such a reduction happens will, once more, depend upon factors not immediately theological. A sensitivity is needed to the need for growth into eucharistic belief while experience of life extends, and for the belief itself to be allowed to give a structure to experience while going beyond it. The balance must be held between an awareness of community and behaviourism, between the 'distancing' of a rite from everyday life and its harmful separation therefrom, between intelligibility and triteness. The very choice of analogies and language carries with it theological connotations. I have suggested that eucharistic devotions themselves, so much part of the older tradition, can be seen as defences of ideals that could be endangered by what has, in ritual and in theory, taken that tradition's place. In making this suggestion, and acknowledging the danger, I have claimed none the less to detect in the devotions a 'polarisation' of the eucharistic presence that is ultimately inimical to the signifying function of the rite, and indeed to ritual altogether. I repeat my claim here, because I do not think that the dangers latent in what I have put forward are to be avoided by any reinstatement of the phenomenalism to which I have taken exception. I concede that the problems faced by the older view are not abolished by its abandonment, but I insist that any 'polarisation' of the eucharistic presence of Christ goes with a confusion of sign and disguise that can never do justice to what is first and foremost a ritual we celebrate.

My disagreement with traditions in eucharistic theology, however, must not be separated from another theme that has run through these chapters: the essential plurality and variety in the manifestations of religious belief. My remarks earlier in this section about credal formulae, and about the need for them to accommodate a reasonable width of diversity, are of a piece with earlier observations on the 'spread' of belief throughout different activities, and on the 'looseness of fit' there is felt to be between belief and any one of the forms in which it may find expression. Plurality, I have suggested, is a natural characteristic of religious belief, not a paradox to be eliminated. Oecumenism, we might say, needs exercising within the church itself between disputing parties, and one of its effects should be not so much to eliminate differences as to discern where the differences lie. A straightforward answer to that question can rarely be given. We have already seen that the mere presence of qualifiers like 'spiritual' or 'substantial' will not illuminate matters: imagine trying to solve by such means the medley of early medieval opinions discussed at the end of the second chapter! All the patience and sympathy involved in understanding something alien will be needed, and the range of enquiry must extend far beyond vocabulary and formulae. Moreover, there must be an acknowledgment of that underdetermination of belief already noticed. Inevitably, decision and taste will play a part, here as elsewhere in religious belief, in deciding what positions will be adopted. Limitations of the sort should not be construed as obstacles that, as it happens, impede agreement, but rather as clues to the nature of the disagreement itself. When argument is found to have reached the end of its resources we ought to draw conclusions about our subject-matter rather than about the impotence of reasoning. After all I have written, I can hardly be accused of denying that argument has a place here, and that so has the displaying as clearly as possible of what a particular position is, and of how it is linked with theory and with practice. But there is another 'looseness of fit' to consider, which in its turn puts a limit on the quest for identity in belief, and upon its attainment by argument. To acknowledge it is not to do anything out of the ordinary. It is simply to admit that man's search for God can take a multitude of forms; that both the forms and the accounts given of them

can exhibit absurd and undesirable features; and that nonetheless those who use such forms can, by some instinct or 'cunning of religion' if we may adapt Hegel's phrase, exhibit in their lives, in their sense of what matters, and in their reaction to the crises of life, a rightness and a fulness that seem to sit very loosely indeed to their religion or to the accounts given of it - a rightness and a fulness they might be at a loss, not only to articulate or to defend, but even to link with what their religion claims to make them do and believe.

We need, then, to be cautious in evaluating the worth of religious activity in terms too closely tied to a scrutiny of credal or ritual formulae. This conclusion can be illustrated with reference to one subject of criticism in preceding chapters: the 'Galilean presence' of Christ. I gave the name to attempts, in word or in ritual, to interpret the eucharistic presence in terms of Christ's presence during his life on earth; and I submitted that such an interpretation did not accord with a regard for the ritual of the Eucharist, with its signifying function, or with a sense of the presence of Christ in the Church. These are criticisms I have no intention of retracting, but I have no intention either of dismissing out of hand the faith or devotion that has found expression in forms of the sort. Any formulation of the eucharistic presence will be defective, and will be felt to sit loosely to belief, and to the love of Christ which inspires it. His presence in the members of the Church eludes formulation as much as does the eucharistic presence which is a sign of it; whatever pattern the expression takes will be defective, and should be acknowledged to be. To say all this is not to conceal defects, nor is it to claim that prayers conceived in terms of the 'Galilean presence' should be an indispensable part of worship. It is to acknowledge the looseness of fit just described, and to acknowledge that the course and chances of history play their part in determining what forms of worship and expression find favour. But, as I have insisted, the course of development is not self-justifying, and caution towards established forms of eucharistic activity does not dispense us from confronting them. I have already suggested that traditional eucharistic devotions like Benediction, Exposition, and Processions are too closely tied to a defective theology for comfort. I drew there a distinction between them and prayer before the Reserved Sacrament. The distinction I would express here by saying that such prayer is less bound to the categories of space and concealment, and that the Galilean presence has not received in it the physical and ritual elaboration it has received in the others. The values of 'transcendence' and 'recollection', to which I have suggested that eucharistic devotions bear witness, appear in consequence to better advantage in this form of prayer, and the balance of loss and gain need not be here what it is in the rest of them. The distinction I have drawn points to the dangers implicit in the 'Galilean presence', and does not deny that they exist for this form of eucharistic devotion as well; indeed, I have already given examples of what the dangers are. Here, as elsewhere, debate in the abstract cannot take the place of experience and experiment in the life and customs of a religious tradition. The habit of prayer is difficult enough to acquire at any time, and we should be chary indeed of disturbing unduly a setting where, for all its defects, the habit has been long established. Neither, of course, should we behave as if it could be established nowhere else.

I have given reasons for tempering the criticism of a eucharistic tradition with an acknowledgment of the pluralism that should show itself in this as in other areas of religious belief. My position needs distinguishing from one that we have encountered in various forms: the contention that two opinions are basically one; or differ only in terminology; or that the newer puts into

Lord, the Church itself is a sign of God's love for the world through him. Neither ritual nor the Church is self-contained. Change or reformation in rite or in the Church, whatever their merits, must be appraised ultimately in terms of that which they signify, not for their own sake. Yet neither is the eucharistic ritual a dispensable flourish in the Church's work for men, since that work goes beyond the humanly achievable to Christ himself, whose death the Eucharist shows forth until he comes again. The temporal spread in religious belief shows itself in the eucharistic rite, which has the pathos of any rite that seeks to proclaim in humanly perceptible means what transcends them. The looseness of fit between forms of religious activity, the incapacity of language, the paradox of the sign that remains real while conveying a greater reality - all that is clear, and unavoidably clear, in our obedience over the centuries to Christ's command at the Last Supper. The willingness to obey, and so to share in the Breaking of the Bread, is the first step in eucharistic belief, and the openness I advocated earlier for credal formulae is true above all of the eucharistic rite itself. The willingness to obey the command, the willingness to use the credal formula or prayer, the willingness to claim identity with those who first preached the Risen Lord who had appeared to them - these are not personal reactions to an existing body of opinion whose identity admits of independent measure, they are activities which help to constitute that unity themselves. The 'successive analogies' drawn from eating that were mentioned in an earlier chapter should allow participation at a multiplicity of levels for those who share in it, just as Matthew numbers doubters even among those to whom the command to proclaim the Good News was first given (Matt.28:17). And this multiplicity, which we have encountered so often in these pages, should show itself in a willingness to let preference and taste play their part in the shaping of ritual, along with those other considerations that we have already discussed. It is not a matter of making taste into a privileged source of eucharistic belief (although we might profitably ask why so much eucharistic devotion has been in such execrably bad taste), but rather of allowing a human, mortal variety to be seen in the rite we celebrate. Diversity may reach a point where any sharing in the Eucharist becomes paradoxical. But we should not be over-eager to admit such diversity, nor to refuse to share in a rite because the form seems inadequate to us. We may be right to feel uncomfortable; but there are many ways of sharing, and (as we have often noticed) any ritual is liable at times to demand a judicious forgetfulness. The preferences and pleasures of others in such matters surely deserve consideration in eucharistic contexts if they deserve it anywhere. A moderate hedonism in liturgical matters is desirable, and the very plurality of language and style in modern life we have noticed should enable all worshippers to find something somewhere sometimes to their taste, just as plurality will impose the duty at other times of benignly tolerating what they can hardly welcome. If we stumble on forms of worship that seem comically inapposite, we can always smile while we tolerate. Pluralism and a sense of humour have, with damaging consequences, been absent from eucharistic argument, a place where they should be specially at home.

To give priority to ritual in eucharistic speculation is not only to admit the tensions of which I have spoken, it is to place the object of one's considerations between past and future. Its heritage can neither be wished out of existence nor treated as a court of final appeal; and its prospects cannot be deduced in the abstract or planned in advance. Speculations must return to the rite, a sign of the tradition into which we have entered and of the hope that is ours. We need here sympathy and discrimination for what the past has bequeathed, for what the present needs, and for what the future may bring, much as we should need them in restoring an ancient church. We should need them to make the original lines of the building emerge again from

well-meant but unsatisfying obstructions, while contributions and growth over the intervening centuries were not disregarded. And we should need the same sympathy and discrimination as we sought to put the ancient church to its living use, a place where prayer is and has been valid. Speculation can go only so far; it is to the life embodied and transcended in ritual that we must return. Many readers will know Philip Larkin's poem Church Going, where the casual visitor confronts all alone 'a tense, musty, unignorable silence, brewed God knows how long'. The conclusion of the poem puts better than I can the point on which I want to end:

'though I've no idea
What this accoutred frowsty barn is worth,
It pleases me to stand in silence here;
A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognised, and robed as destinies.
And that much never can be obsolete,
Since someone will forever be surprising
A hunger in himself to be more serious,
And gravitating with it to this ground,
Which, he once heard, was proper to grow wise in,
If only that so many dead lie round.'

From: The Rt.Rev. Alan C. Clark
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His Lordship the Bishop of Ripon

6th June 1975

What follows is the last three sections of the last chapter of
THE
IN THE BREAKING OF/BREAD, shortly to be published, by Dr. P.J. Fitzpatrick

(Durham University). It is a long and detailed analysis of Roman Catholic Eucharistic belief, and it is unsatisfactory to present final chapters which rely heavily on the argumentation of the whole work.

Nevertheless, as Dr. Fitzpatrick speaks to a wider theme which concerns so closely our own preoccupations, I thought it of immense value to transcribe them. Perhaps it would help to show the headings of Chapter V:-

- Sect. 1 : Agenda
 - 2 : Eucharistic Devotions
 - 3 : Eucharistic Initiation
 - 4 : The Present and the Past
 - 5 : The Ecclesial Circle
 - 6 : Agreeing to differ
- } Not included

I have used some part of Section 1 and all of Sections 4, 5 and 6. I must ask you to regard them as confidential until the book is published - else an injustice, apart from more material considerations of copyright, would be committed against a friend and colleague. Forgive this "admonition" - but it is aimed rather at those who might get their hands on a very original piece of thinking which is going to make a noisy impact on the religious scene.

Ever yours in Christo,

Jean Macpherson
(Dictated by Bishop Clark, and
signed in his absence)