

3. Revelation means everywhere the communication of unusual knowledge, of something particular. In the Biblical revelation the particular character of this knowledge is not only one of degree, but it is fundamental and unconditioned, to such an extent that one hesitates to call it "knowledge" at all. This radical "otherness" of the Biblical revealed knowledge comes out clearly in three characteristics.

(a) Natural acquisition of secular knowledge makes us masters of that which we know.... But in revelation the opposite is the case. God, through His revelation, becomes Lord over me; He makes me His property;... In revelation God makes Himself my Lord, and in so doing He makes me "truly free".

(b) Ordinary knowledge has the effect of enlarging me, or, more exactly, my "sphere", but it does not transform me, myself. It enriches me, but it does not change me.... The knowledge of revelation does not add to my knowledge; it does not make me "educated"; it does not enlarge my "sphere", but it transforms me myself; it changes the one who receives it. For this process of transformation the Bible uses the strongest expressions possible: rebirth, the death of the old, and the resurrection of the new man.

(c) Ordinary knowledge, which is always knowledge of an object, for this very reason always means that I remain alone with my knowledge.... In revelation, however, the exact opposite takes place: since God makes Himself known to me, I am no longer solitary; the knowledge of God creates community, and indeed community is precisely the aim of the divine revelation....

(4) Hence in the Biblical revelation the concern is not only -- as in other religions -- with the communication of some knowledge which is important for life, but with life itself. The darkness of which the revelation makes an end is death, disaster, ruin, destruction; the light which it brings is salvation and life. Revelation is the communication of life, not merely an intensification of the life that already exists; nor is it merely an enrichment of knowledge, but it is the transformation of that which is evil and destructive into saving, eternal life. That is why, as we have already said, the history of revelation is the history of salvation, and the history of salvation is the history of revelation.... Revelation is not concerned with "something", but with myself, and with God Himself, namely, with my salvation and with His dominion over me and His communion with me. God Himself in His love gives Himself to me, and in so doing He does away with the darkness, the godlessness and lovelessness, the bondage and misery, which constitute the "lost state" of mankind without God.

5. Revelation means always and everywhere a knowledge that is unexpected, something that has not gained by our own efforts but, in one way or another, is always a gift, a "disclosure", which we could not have expected. The Biblical revelation, however, means the unexpected in unconditional form -- indeed, that which could never have been expected.