

The Transfiguration of Christ: its Eschatological and Christological Dimensions

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Introduction

The Transfiguration of Christ—both the narrative (Matt 17:1—8, par.) and the feast we celebrate on 6 August—has such an importance in the Eastern Church today that we do not always realize that it emerged relatively late in the theological thought of the first centuries of the Church. However, if it took the Church several centuries to realize the central importance of the Transfiguration to Christian life, modern western Christianity seems to have forgotten it. In a world where men are tempted to seek the goal of human destiny in systems worked out by the human mind alone—be these systems philosophical or technological—we are tempted to focus on what can be accomplished here and now and tend to ignore the reality of death, which frustrates the plans of so many individuals. Christians, to say nothing of the world as a whole, must be reminded that, however laudable activity to better the human lot here and now may be, the ultimate goal of the human race is bound up with what God has wrought in Christ Jesus. The interpretation of the Transfiguration, as the Church's awareness of its importance grew, makes a fascinating chapter in the history of theology. A re-examination of the past role of the Transfiguration in Christian thought may help Western Christians to recapture in our own lives the fascination which this event from the life of Christ once had for the whole Church. God's revelation at this unnamed mountain is as important for understanding human destiny in Christ today as it was to Peter, James and John.

The early centuries of Christian theology make scant mention of the Transfiguration. However, it is possible to identify, scattered throughout much of Patristic writing, extensive use of themes which would later be incorporated into theological reflection on the Transfiguration. The passages which would later influence the Fathers writing on the Transfiguration are to be found not so much in the gospel account itself as in St. Paul: the Fathers draw much upon 2 Cor 3:16—4:6, Phil 3:20—21, John 1:14—18, or other texts that refer to the glory or light of God which shines through Christ to illumine all men. Gregory of Nyssa's *Vita Mosis*, especially with its mystical reflection on the ascent of Sinai and the revelation of the mysteries of God to Moses in the cloud¹ makes

extensive use of Colossians and Hebrews without ever once alluding to the Transfiguration. Yet Nyssa's work was to have profound influence on the development of hesychasm in the Eastern Church.²

The reason for the paucity of references to what would seem to be rich material for theological speculation is hard to find. Perhaps it is based on the fact that the Transfiguration did not enter the Church's liturgical calendar until relatively late. Though the Feast in the Eastern Church dates from the time of the dedication of the Church of the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor some time in the fourth century, it is unknown in the Church of North Africa of the fifth century and not mentioned as a Feast in the West until the time of St. Isidore in the seventh century³. Yet there is enough material available for one to make some sure observations.

This essay will begin with an overview of the role of the Transfiguration in the apologetical writings of the fathers. Then the use of the Transfiguration in the Fathers, as well as in their mediaeval heirs, will be examined according to two basic categories. The first, *Apotheosis of Man through the Glory of the Incarnate Word*, represents a trend in the theology of the Eastern Church, which developed an anthropology focusing on the transformation of man and the universe through the divine condescension. This we may call the anthropological-christological dimension of the Transfiguration. The second, *Pledge of Future Glory*, represents the tendency of the Latin Church to be concerned with the ethical and historical consequences of man's response to what God has done for man and the world through Christ. We may call this the eschatological dimension.⁴ Finally, there will be an application of a synthesis of these two categories to Christian hope.

Early Polemics and Apologetics

The use of Scripture in polemics is simply the 'quotation or citation of Scripture for the purpose of sustaining an argument.'⁵ It can be found in any age of the Church. The danger is that the interpretation of the text may be forced by the use to which it is put. The Fathers and their successors were not averse to citing Scripture for the purpose of intellectual one-upmanship. But the polemical usage of the Transfiguration reflects important concerns in the development of theology.⁶

A common apologetic use of the Transfiguration reflects the Church's concern from earliest times to insist on the harmony between the Old Testament and New Testament while emphasizing the difference between the Old Testament and what God has done in and through Jesus Christ. (Origen's *Contra Celsum* is an outstanding example of polemic directed to this end.)

Irenaeus notes that neither Moses nor Elijah saw the face of God. Instead they received a sign of his presence: Elijah heard the 'still small voice' (1 Kgs 19:12) and Moses saw only the back of God as the Lord

passed by (Exod 33:20–23). The glory of God which Moses was not allowed to see is now revealed to both Moses and Elijah. What was impossible under the former covenant is now possible through Jesus⁷.

Tertullian uses the Transfiguration for one of his arguments against Marcion's rejection of the Old Testament. He argues that Christ is shown to be greater than Moses and Elijah by the manner in which they are presented while at the same time making it clear that there is continuity between the Old and New Testaments. The Transfiguration is the fulfilment of God's promise to Moses, that Moses would be able to look upon God. Moses once spoke to the Lord face to face in some analogical sense and had the reflected glory of God shine from his face; at Mt. Tabor Moses again speaks to the Lord (here understood as Jesus) and sees the cloud and glory which had once been revealed on Sinai. Therefore, the Old Testament is confirmed as an indispensable witness to the New Testament and Jesus is shown by the Transfiguration to be greater than Moses and Elijah, for he is the Lord whose glory Moses beheld on Sinai. If God, with visible glory and a voice from the clouds, formed a people on a holy mountain, it is more than fitting that he should reveal his new covenant in a like manner⁸. Furthermore, the Transfiguration is proof that the fullness of revelation resides in Christ, who intended to make all things known to his disciples by his Transfiguration⁹. For Clement of Alexandria the unity of the Old and New Covenants is a symbol for the hypostatic union¹⁰. St. Ambrose takes the clothes of Jesus to represent Sacred Scripture by whose transformation the glory of the Word is revealed through the Law and the Prophets to the disciples¹¹.

Tertullian and Jerome, himself an ardent polemicist, also use the Transfiguration in anti-docetic arguments. For Tertullian the event of Mt. Tabor is proof that the senses do not lie¹². Jerome is anxious to refute the docetism of the Origenists, as well as trying vigorously to dissociate himself from them. (It is curious that he considered Origen docetic given the strong anti-docetism of *Contra Celsum* IV.19). The change of Christ's face and clothing is proof for Jerome that the physical nature was not an illusion. For Mark says that Jesus's garments became whiter than any fuller on earth could have made them. Now a fuller works with the material (wool), not the immaterial; therefore, on the basis of Mark's analogy, it was the material human form of Jesus that had to have been transfigured¹³. If Jesus's human nature had been an illusion, then it should have vanished when the 'true' spiritual nature was made manifest¹⁴. Furthermore, since both Enoch and Elijah—the latter is present with Jesus—had been taken up in the flesh, one has additional proof that the future glory of the saints, which has been manifested in the transfigured Christ, will be of the flesh¹⁵.

The polemical and apologetic use of Scripture has never disappeared. But the emergence of critical methodology at the end of the eighteenth century has moved apologetics in a different direction as far

as exegesis is concerned and it is now seen only in the subtle guise of defending positions that arose during the Reformation.

Apotheosis of Man through the Glory of the Incarnate Word.

Theological reflection in the Alexandrian school began with the Godhead and pondered the consequences of the divine self-emptying. One of the important questions raised by this point of view was 'What does it mean to say that we will see God "face to face"?' (1 Cor. 13:12; cf. 1 John 3:2). Origen, in his many allusions to 2 Cor 3:18, finds the answer in the perpetual contemplation of the glory of Christ, the image of God whereby the Christian becomes transformed into God's likeness (*katoptrizomenoi tēn autēn eikona metamorfoumetha apo doxēs eis doxan*¹⁶). The veil of Moses (2 Cor 3:13) is the obscurity of the Old Testament which becomes lifted when we turn to Christ. Then, as it was for Moses, it becomes possible for us to behold the glory of God¹⁷.

Gregory of Nyssa was much influenced by the thought of Origen. Drawing on the reflection just mentioned as well as on Origen's commentary on Exodus, Gregory finds in Moses the type for the soul in its journey towards the unknown, just as Moses journeyed toward the promised land. In following Moses' career, from his flight into the desert to his ascent of Mt. Sinai, one has the type for the progressive disengagement from carnal life whose corporality weighs so heavily on the human soul. In Moses's vision of the Tabernacle he was shown a figure of the divine Word which contains all things; it is the object of contemplation whereby one is drawn into the realities of the celestial world. When Moses descends the mountain with shining face, he has exchanged his tunic of skin (an allusion to Gen 3:21) for an ethereal tunic. The total symbol for the incessant transformation of the human soul into God by an infinitely growing participation which is never fully achieved¹⁸.

Theological reflection on the life of Moses and the image of Moses and Christ in 2 Corinthians 3 had a lasting effect on the Greek Fathers' interpretation of the Transfiguration. For Origen the six-day journey and ascent of the mountain of Transfiguration represent the soul's transcendence of things of this world in its journey toward the eternal. 'After six days' signifies 'after this world' (*meta ton kosmon touton*)¹⁹. The cloud which descends after Peter's proposal to build three booths stands for the more divine Tabernacle wherein Jesus, the incarnate Word, has his eternal dwelling. The voice from the cloud is an instruction to all who hear to contemplate the mysteries of the eternal Tabernacle, if one wishes to be transformed into that state necessary for eternal life. Moreover, this mystery is made available to everybody²⁰.

In a similar manner Gregory of Nazianzen sees a parallel between Moses on Sinai and Peter on Tabor. The ascent is difficult and not everyone can make it. But Peter is privileged, like Moses, to ascend the mountain, enter the cloud, talk with God, receive the Law and make

laws. In this way Peter receives the faith on which the Church is founded²¹

For the Cappadocian Fathers in general the vision of God was necessarily a trinitarian revelation. We cannot know the Trinity without the Incarnation nor can we see God without the Incarnation, for Christ is the image of the invisible Father²². Under the aspect of special knowledge imparted by the vision of the Word's glory the emphasis of the commentaries on the Transfiguration shifts from reflecting on Christ's glory to a reflection on the change that takes place in the witnesses of the Transfiguration. The glory of the Word is with Christ from the first moment of the Incarnation. Therefore, no change could have taken place in him; it must have occurred in the disciples. The notion is already implicit in Origen: the *Logos* appears to each in accord with the capacity to receive of the believer²³. Similarly Nazianzen claims that the special vision is not for everybody.

From the fifth century until the fourteenth the Transfiguration was to play an increasingly important role in Eastern Christian theology. For Pseudo-Dionysius (fifth century) it signifies the glorification of the Christian by his participation in the intelligible light of Christ²⁴. Maximus the Confessor (seventh century) says that in the Transfiguration Christ's created nature is penetrated by his uncreated nature; that is, the human *nous*, human soul and human body are all transfigured. Deified man is penetrated in a like manner by grace²⁵. In John Damascene (eighth century) the emphasis is on the change of perception, for Christ did not become what he had not previously been. The disciples were vouchsafed a vision of the inaccessible light of God shining through Jesus. The vision was possible because of that light of God which illumines all men (see John 1:9)²⁶.

No discussion of the Transfiguration in Eastern Christian thought would be complete without mentioning Gregory of Palamas (1296—1359). From Nyssa Palamas took the mystical reflections on the glory of God's light which Moses experienced at Sinai. He integrated this with the Transfiguration of Christ, thereby transforming the centuries-long tradition of hesychasm in Eastern monasticism. He sought to show that the light which shone forth from Jesus on Mt. Tabor is the same as the light which dwells within all men. By contemplation the Christian may come to a direct inner vision of God such as the disciples experienced. (Gregory borrows here from Origen's notion of contemplating the glory of the Father reflected in Christ.) Created man cannot directly behold the divine *ousia*, which is inaccessible. Rather, God is 'seen' by means of the *dynamis* or *energeia* that come to the visionary. The difficulty which arose for both Eastern as well as later Latin theologians was whether the divine *energeia* by which the adept beheld God were created or uncreated. If the energies were created, and if man could not see the divine essence, then it would seem that Gregory was denying the possibility of seeing God face to face, something which

had been so important for earlier theologians²⁷

One has to remember that throughout the development of reflection upon the Transfiguration in the Eastern Church the emphasis had always been on the transformation of the disciples: Jesus himself necessarily could not have changed from a state he did not possess to a new state. The solution to the difficulty seems to be that what unites the Christian to Christ is the life of Christ itself. The living Christ imparts both grace and the *energeia* of his divine *hypostasis* to the human soul. The *energeia* make possible the deification of man; this in turn makes the vision possible.²⁸

In sum, the light on Mt. Tabor, in the Eastern tradition, was regarded as the inner light already present in man, the means by which man can see God, if he but learn how, and the way to man's own participation in the Godhead. However the orthodoxy of Gregory of Palmas is finally judged, the theological reflection on the Transfiguration reached a high point with him never to be repeated. The thought elaborated in the East, however, had some influence on the more restrained treatment of the Transfiguration in the Western Church to which we now turn.

Pledge of Future Glory

As already noted, the Latin Fathers tended to concentrate on the ethical and historical aspects of man's response to God's saving act in Christ Jesus. The historical aspect, namely the pledge of the future glory of those who take part in the resurrection, dominates Western exegesis. One finds this expressed in the thought of Tertullian²⁹, Jerome³⁰, Hilary of Poitiers³¹, Leo the Great³² and Bede³³.

In St Ambrose one finds a subtle difference to the above-mentioned in approach owing to the influence of Origen.³⁴ Ambrose takes the ascent of the mountain to mean that we need to make the mystical ascent towards God. It is only when we have reached the summit that we will see the glory of the divine Word in his triumph over death.

Augustine's *Sermones de Scripturis* 78 (and, in part, 79) represent his only extensive comment on the Transfiguration. Here he too seems to have been influenced by Origen, possibly through Ambrose³⁵. Augustine wishes to say that because Jesus is the light which illumines every man who comes into the world, the real change that takes place at the Transfiguration is the spiritual transformation of the disciples. Elsewhere, Augustine seems to have virtually no interest in the Transfiguration. Indeed he at one point relegates the event to a series of examples of the lowest level of vision, the corporal³⁶.

There appears to be no significant development in Latin thought of the aforementioned ideas until the High Middle Ages. By this time it was taken for granted that the purpose of the Transfiguration was to show the future glory of the resurrected Christ and the glory that awaits all God's righteous³⁷. In contrast to the Greeks, who were interested in the

significance of the Transfiguration for man's apotheosis, the medieval Latin thinkers appear to concentrate on what is revealed at Mt. Tabor.

Richard of St. Victor (died 1173) interprets the presence of Moses and Elijah to mean the need for the Old Testament to confirm those teachings of Christ which deal with sublime and transcendent truths, as opposed to those truths which can be confirmed by experience³⁸. The early Dominican theologian Hugh of St. Cher says of Matthew 17, 'In hoc capite agitur de fide, & effectu fide.' Christ's transformed face is his divinity while his clothes are our humanity. The revelation is mediated by the cloud which descends, the luminous cloud which is the grace that illumines and refreshes the human mind.

In addition to his commentary on Matt 17:1--8, St. Thomas Aquinas devotes a question of the *Summa Theologiae* on the life of Christ to the Transfiguration (3^a III, q. 45). As is evident from both the *Catena Aurea* and question 45 of the *Tertia pars* Aquinas is familiar with Origen, Chrysostom, John Damascene, and Jerome, as well as with the Victorines and their treatment of the subject. From Chrysostom we see the influence on Aquinas's statement that the disciples received the vision of the Transfiguration in order to be strengthened for Christ's coming Passion³⁹. Aquinas observes that the splendour of the Transfiguration is a function of Christ's *essentia*, not of his *modus essendi*⁴⁰. Though he does not refer to Maximus the Confessor one sees the same idea present that we saw above, namely that Christ allows the glory of his divinity to penetrate his created nature. Aquinas also develops the common Latin notion that the Transfiguration presages man's future glory. At the same time he notes that the purpose of bringing men to glory is to permit them to see God face to face⁴¹. The latter point may well be due to the influence of the Greek Fathers.

St. Thomas's reflection on the Transfiguration can be seen in other aspects of his theological thought in the *Summa Theologiae*. By the Transfiguration Christ reveals that he is the perfect image of the Father, through his identity of nature⁴². This perfect image is according to the likeness of the divine glory, according to which man will know God as Act⁴³. God can be seen face to face—that is, be known to man—only to the measure and extent that the human mind has been illumined by God. This illumination is a function of the revelation of the divine light itself⁴⁴.

In short the tendency of the Latin tradition has been to regard the light which shone through Christ at the beginning of his journey to Jerusalem as a foreshadowing of the eternal light which will shine through all men at the general resurrection⁴⁵. It is no accident that critical exegesis of the last two hundred years in the Western Church has mostly focused on the eschatological significance of the Transfiguration, whether it regards the Transfiguration as an event from Christ's lifetime or as a Resurrection appearance narrative retrojected into an account of the lifetime of Jesus.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion has shown that in the Transfiguration Christian thinkers of both East and West have found imagery which is relevant to the question 'What has God done for man through Christ Jesus? When we look at both traditions we see that the Transfiguration can be taken as both an eschatological and a christological event. While it may be fun to indulge in speculation about the future (in the manner of apocalyptic literature or its modern imitators), such speculation is a game anyone can play without profit unless there are certain controlling factors. The problem is that the future is veiled and unless this veiled future can have some bearing on the present, it tells us nothing. The totally future can have no relevance to the present. Therefore, as Karl Rahner has noted, all genuine eschatological statements must of their nature be Christological, because '... *Christ* himself is the hermeneutical principle of all eschatological assertions'⁴⁶. If we are to derive some understanding of what it means to be human both here and now as well as *sub specie aeternitatis* we have to grasp well that we are, though as yet incomplete, granted a pledge of future glory. This involves an ongoing interior transformation. Hence, what we look to draws us on, changes us as we approach our goal'⁴⁷. If we accept the Transfiguration of Christ as a genuine eschatological revelation, then it is possible to see how the divergent interpretations could have arisen. The Eastern tradition growing out of the mysticism of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa wanted to follow the ascent of the soul toward the hidden God. The light of the Transfiguration was a good vehicle for expressing the access to the way. In the development of hesychasm the Eastern Fathers concentrated on the manner in which the potential for man's future apotheosis was relevant to his present spiritual aspirations. In the West, by contrast, the Transfiguration was taken as a promise about man's future. The future is distant and incalculable, but its mystery is made known as the goal of man's hopes, the answer to his existential dilemma of being unable to do the willed good or avoid the undesired evil (cf. Rom 7:15. 19.23).

Through Christ God touches every moment of every man's life. In Mark's gospel the disciples are represented as knowing Jesus during his lifetime but unable to grasp the significance of the Cross. Jesus must instruct his followers in the Way of the Cross, but because the Cross does not become relevant for them until after the death of Jesus they miss the point of the revelation at the mountain. The disciples have mistaken the content of apocalyptic accounts of the future with the reality of the future. They do not realize that the future's essential hiddenness precludes the possibility that Jesus can be showing them a picture of what is meant to be. Naturally the nature of Christ and his mission must be presented to them in terms they can grasp. But the voice from heaven, by pointing to the as yet unfulfilled mission of Jesus, preserves the hidden character of the eschatological revelation while asserting a christological reality.

The knowledge and goal of hope provides strength for the present, for what is already begun in us by God contains the seeds of the future of man toward which that beginning is directed⁴⁸. In the gospels the event at the mountain shows Jesus filled with eternal glory even as he moves in the flesh through the world of his disciples. In that sense it must belong to the lifetime of Jesus. The glory that shines through Jesus is also the eternal glory which the 'saints in light' will inherit. In that sense it is the future and belongs to the hope of the resurrection. Jesus's role as mediator of the community also expresses his double existence—present to the community in time and present to the Father in eternity. Jesus continues to be with his faithful as teacher, intercessor and guide and yet he has also passed beyond the bounds of this life and recovered for them man's lost glory which he will impart to them, even as he now gives them the vision of what will be.

Men are caught up in this moment of eschatological revelation at the mountain. God has revealed what has already been begun in man through the Christ event. Faith in his saving activity gives us the pledge of grace that will be redeemed by the gift of eternal glory (Rom 8:11.23; 2 Cor 1:22, 5:5). It is humbling revelation. The curse brought upon us for heeding the tempter's words 'you will be like gods', whereby we daily attempt to supplant God's will with our own, will be removed; we will receive as a gift what the human race has never been able to achieve of its own desiring. We may not rest complacently with the present knowledge that we have been touched by the glory of God. In the process of our becoming fully human we must be fully conformed to the image of Christ which has been planted within us. In Jesus Christ, the eternal Word become man, we are all called to follow this path of glory back to its source, even if it means accepting the way of the Cross and taking the full consequences of our contribution to the pain and suffering that can arise from the human condition. If we can freely acknowledge our complicity in the suffering of Christ and conform ourselves to his wounds, then we are assured, in the words of St. Paul, that '... this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal' (2 Cor 4:17—18).

1 *Sources Chretiennes* (= SC) 1 bis, 364A, 381A.

2 Meyendorff, J. *Introduction à l'Etude de Gregoire Palamas (Patristica Sorbonensis 3)*, Paris: Seuil, 1959, 196—99. Meyendorff, J. *St Grégoire et la mystique orthodoxe*, Paris: Seuil, 1959, 41—45. While one should not minimize the influence of Origen on hesychasm, it is often difficult to prove with great certainty (Meyendorff, J. *Introduction*, 196). Often Origen's influence is mediated by Gregory of Nyssa (Daniélou, J. *Grégoire de Nyssa. Contemplation sur la Vie de Moïse ou Traité de la Perfection en Matière de vertu* (SC 1 bis. Paris: Cerf, 1955. 26).

3 PL 85:806. See Pintard, J. 'Remarques sur la Transfiguration dans l'oeuvre de Saint

- Augustin. Une influence de l'Orient?' *Studia Patristica* II (1972) 335. Nevertheless, it is odd, that with all of Nyssa's fascination with the glory of God, that he should have made no use of the imagery of the Transfiguration.
- 4 Pintarj, J. *Remarques*, 335; Habra, G. *La Transfiguration selon les Pères Grecs*, Paris: Editions S.O.S., 1973, 17. It should be noted that neither of the latter categories is the exclusive property of the Eastern or Western Churches respectively. They should not be interpreted as diametrically opposed positions.
 - 5 Heimann, D.F. 'The Polemical Application of Scripture in St Jerome', *Studia Patristica* 12 (1975) 309.
 - 6 The earliest use made of the Transfiguration for polemical or apologetic purposes can be found in Scripture itself, in 2 Pet 1:16—21. While there is no agreement as to whether the account herein contained is drawn from the Synoptics or a separate tradition, it is clear from the context that the writer of 2 Peter is appealing to the Transfiguration in order to authenticate his own apostolic authority (see Coune, M. 'La Transfiguration dans l'exégèse des sept premiers siècles,' *Assemblées du Seigneur* 28 (1963) 65—66.
 - 7 Irenaeus, *Contra Haereses* IV.20.10 (PG 7:1038—39).
 - 8 Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* IV.22, *Corpus Christianorum—Series Latina* (= CCL) 1:600—04.
 - 9 Tertullian, *De praescriptionibus adversus haereticos* XXII.6 (CCSL 1:203—04). Elsewhere Tertullian writes that the revelatory words 'hear him' are proof of the unity of the Father and the Son (*Liber adversus Praxeam* XIX.4, CCL 2:1185; see *ibid.* XXIII.3, XXIV.3, CCL 2:1192, 1194).
 - 10 *Excerpta ex scriptis Theodoto* II—IV (SC 23, 19.1—27.3).
 - 11 *Expositio in Lucam* VII.13 (CCSL 14:219).
 - 12 *De Anima* XVII.13 (CCSL 2:806).
 - 13 Jerome, *In Matthaeum*, 3.17.2, (CCSL 77:147).
 - 14 'Sic et Dominus noster in monte transfiguratus est in gloria, non ut manus ac pedes caeteraque membra perderet, et subito in rotunditate vel solis, vel sphaerus volveretur: sed eadem membra solis fulgore rutilantia, apostolorum oculos praestingerent ...' (*Contra Johannes Hierosolymitanum ad Pammachium*, 29, PL 23:397—98).
 - 15 *Contra Joannes Hierosolymitanum*, 29 (PL 23:398). Although later authors do not have the same anti-docetic concerns as Jerome, the apologetic importance of Moses and Elijah continues, 'Hugh of St. Cher and St Thomas Aquinas take for granted that the presence of the two figures signifies the fulfilment of Law and Prophets in Christ (*Hugonis de Sancto Charo Opera Omni Tomus Sextus. In Evangelia secundum Matthaeum, Lucam, Marcum & Joannem*, Venetis: Apud Nicolaum Pezzana, MDCCLIV, 59; cura P. Raphaelis Cai, O.P.: *S. Thomas Aquinatis super Evangelium S. Matthaei Lectura*, editio V revisa, Taurini: Marietti, 1951, 219—in par. 1428 Aquinas gives six possible explanations for the appearance of Moses and Elijah). John Calvin, who is here taken as a representative of the Reformation, takes the presence of Moses and Elijah to signify that Christ is the end of the Law and the Prophets (*Ioannis Calvini Opera quae supersent omnia ad fidem editionum principium et authenticarum ex parte etiam codicum*, Vol. XLV. *Commentarius in Harmoniam Evangelicam*, Brunsvigae: A. Schwetschke, 1891, 486). John Lightfoot in the seventeenth century comments that the transfigured Christ is the splendour of the gospel in the face of the Law and the Prophets (*Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae in Quatuor Evangelistas*, Leipzig: Carpzov, 1679, cited in Poole, M. *Synopsis Criticorum aliorumque Sacrae Scripturae Interpretum et Commentatorum*.... Vol. IV. *Complectens quatuor Evangelia & Acta Apostolorum ex recensione Johannis Leusden*, Utrajecti: Johannis Ribbii, Johannis van de Water, & Francisci Halma Sociorum, 1686, 433).
 - 16 Origen takes *katoptrizomenoi* to mean 'reflect' in the active sense of 'contemplation' rather than in the passive sense of 'to reflect, as in a mirror'. See

- Crouzel, H. *Théologie de l'Image de Dieu chez Origène*, (Théologie. Etudes publiées sous la direction de la Faculté de Théologie S.J. de Lyon-Fourvière, 34), Aubier: Montaigne, 232—233.
- 17 Origen. *De principiis*, I, 1, 2 (PG 11:122).
- 18 SC 1 bis, 364A.
- 19 Origen. In *Lucam*, SC 87, Frag. 65.
- 20 SC 1 bis, 381A.
- 21 Gregory of Nazianzen, *De moderatione in disputando*, XVIII (PG 36:193—96).
- 22 Se Lossky, V. 'Le Problème de la "Vision face à face" et la Tradition patristique de Byzance', *Studia Patristica* 2 (1957) 524—25.
- 23 In *Matthaeum*, XII. 37—38 (PG 13:1067—72).
- 24 *De divinis nominibus* 1.4 (PG 3:591—92).
- 25 *Ambiguorum Liber sive de variis difficilibus locis SS. Dionysii Areopagitae et Gregorii Theologi* (PG 91: 1273, 1360).
- 26 *Homilia in Transfiguratione*. XII (PG 96:564).
- 27 Meyendorff, J. *Introduction*, 279—310; Meyendorff, J. *Grégoire Palamas*, 120—25; Lossky, V. *Problème*. 524. For a summary of Gregory's contemporaries' difficulties over the question of the difference between divine essence and energy see Meyendorff, J. *Introduction*, 132—134, 141—145, 147—148. The Latin opposition to Gregory is based on his supposedly saying that the imparted energies preclude the blessed ever seeing the divine essence of Benedict XII's declaration on the Beatific Vision (D—S 1000).
- 28 Vision is a function of the Incarnation. See Meyendorff, J. *Introduction*, 223—56; Lossky, V. *Problème*, 528.
- 29 *De resurrectione mortuorum* LV. 10 (CCSL 2:1002).
- 30 In *Matthaeum*, III.17.8 (SC 259, 34); *Contra Joannem Hierosolymitanum*, XXV] (PL 23:395).
- 31 In *Matthaeum* 17.1 (SC 258, 60—63).
- 32 *Sermo LI, sive Homilia habita sabbato ante secundum Dominicam Quadragesimae, cap. III* (CCSL 138A:299).
- 33 In *Marci Evangelium Expositio*, 9.2 (CCSL 120:543, 545).
- 34 Pintard, J. *Remarques*, 338—39.
- 35 *ibid.* 337—40.
- 36 Here Augustine divides the types of vision into the corporal ('secundum oculos corporis'), the imaginative ('secundum quod imaginamur ea quae per corpus sentimus'), and the spiritual. To the first type belong Abraham's vision of angels at Mamre, Moses and the burning bush, and the disciples' vision at Tabor. An example of the second is Isaiah's temple vision. The third refers to the genuine apprehension of truth and wisdom 'secundum mentis intuitum' (*Contra Adimantum* XXVIII.2, PL 42:171—72).
- 37 See, for example, Hugh of St. Cher, In *Marcum* 9:2 (Venetis: MDCCLIV, 104); Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelium S. Matthaei Lectura* (Taurini: Marietti, 1951, 217) and *ST* 3a, q.45, a.4, ad 3.
- 38 In *Matthaeum*, (PL 196:57).
- 39 John Chrysostom, *Homilia in Matthaeum* 56 (PG 58:550); *ST* III, q.45, a.1c.
- 40 *ibid.* a.2c.
- 41 *ibid.* a.4 (espec. ad 4).
- 42 *ST* I, q.93, a.1, ad 2.
- 43 *ibid.* a.5c.
- 44 *ST* I, q.12, a.5. This divine illumination is what makes possible both the knowability of things and of God. As Pieper puts it, 'Die Helligkeit und Lichtheit, die aus der schöpferischen Erkenntnis Gottes in die Dinge einströmt, zugleich mit ihrem Sein ... diese Helligkeit, sie allein, macht die seienden Dinge gewahrbar für menschliches Erkennen' (Pieper, J. 'Über das "negative" Element in der Philosophie des heiligen Thomas von Aquin', in *Philosophia Negativa*, München: Kösel-Verlag, 1953, 26).

- 45 It is not necessary to dwell on the contribution of later Western commentators, as they do not advance beyond the work of the medievals in this discussion. One finds in Calvin an echo of Origen: just as God did not appear to the patriarchs as He was in Himself, but only insofar as they could endure, so Christ appears under external symbols, so that the disciples may taste according to the limited capacity of their flesh what cannot be fully comprehended (*Ioannis Calvini Opera* XLV, 485—6). With Hugo, Grotius and Maldonatus one finds reflected the critical concerns aroused by the study of biblical languages, namely the use of the meaning of words within a given text as interpreted by other biblical uses of that word. So, on the basis of Dan 10:6, Hab 3:4 and other texts they conclude that *morphè* refers to the *facies rei exterior*. Hence, it is not the body of Jesus that is changed by his Transfiguration but rather his external aspect and figure (Grotius and Maldonatus as cited in Poole, *M. Synopsis*, 432).
- 46 Rahner, K. 'Hermeneutics of Eschatological Assertions', in *Theological Investigations* 4, London: DLT & New York: Seabury, 1966, 342—43.
- 47 Compare Rahner. 'It is the nature of *eschata* to be hidden. Eschatological revelation concerns the making known of the existence of hidden realities so that they can no longer be ignored. But insofar as the future as such is concerned, it cannot be presented as a known inevitable, or man loses the essential free side of his nature. All eschatological assertions address man as a totality. However, we do not yet experience our total being, finding ourselves still in the process of shaping our destinies. Hence revelation of the last things addresses both something begun in us which we can know at this moment, as well as something which awaits us when our being achieves total fulfilment.' Rahner, K. *Hermeneutics*, 329, 333, 340—41.
- 48 Rahner, *Hermeneutics*, 336. '... (B)iblical eschatology must always be read as an assertion based on the revealed present and pointing towards the genuine future, but not as an assertion pointing back from an anticipated future to the present' (*ibid.*, 337).

A Threat to Due Process — The War Crimes Act 1991

Aidan O'Neill

In Act One of 'A Man for all Seasons', Robert Bolt's play about Thomas More's pilgrimage to martyrdom, More's impetuous son-in-law, William Roper, argues that the Devil does not deserve benefit of law. In the course of the discussion More pushes Roper into the stark claim that obstacle to the conviction of the Devil must be overcome, even if it meant failing to follow due process of law. Roper, in his hunger and thirst for justice, declares that he is prepared to tear down every law in England in so worthy a cause. More, with his finely-tuned jurisprudential mind, answers him:

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