

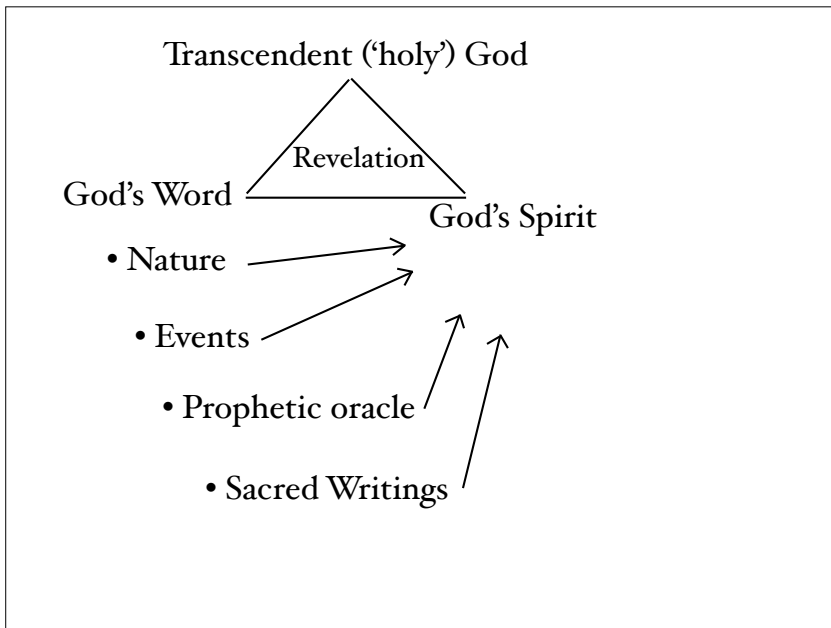
1

God Sanskrit Ghu ('called' 'calling') + To ('The one')

Religious Experience is God Centre – Heart Experience of Communion with God

God 'The Heart and the Beyond of Everything'
(Teilhard de Chardin)

2



3

i. Human experience points to love as the nature of Being and therefore of God

We have a natural urge to want to know, but we discover that everything which we come to know is contingent. It does not have within itself sufficient reason for its existing. There must exist a Reality ['God'] which is not contingent, and is the creating source, the sustaining ground and the final goal of all that we experience, including ourselves.

4

Our urge to know is itself propelled by our longing to be in communion with all that is. For we are made for love. Love is an experience of our interconnection, our communion with everything else that is also becoming. The other remains other, but another to which and to whom we belong. And this is because everything we experience is drawn towards the Other in whose being we all participate, the One 'in whom we live and move and have our being'(Acts 17:28).

5

We are attracted outwards to ever more intimate communion with the world around us, and when we experience love (the word we use for this communion), we are attracted inwards to plumb the depths of the inner world which love discloses.

Our experience is that our instinctive desire to be in love (to give and receive love and to enjoy communion) connects us to reality. Our desire, however, is limitless.

6

If there is no object that can satisfy this desire, it is in the final analysis absurd. In the choice between absurdity and Mystery why not choose Mystery which points to the existence of the infinite One with whom ultimately we long to be in communion: the one we call 'God'?

In the words of Augustine: 'You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless till they rest in you'(Confessions I.1).

7

As Saint Paul states: 'Ever since the creation of the world God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things God has made'(Romans 1:20).

However, there are as many concepts of God as there are minds that conceive. For God cannot be observed directly and put to the test and be subject to our comprehension and definition. Many concepts of God are clearly erroneous:

8

- the so-called 'god' who controls the world from outside;
- the so-called 'god' who is exalted at the expense of humanity;
- the so-called 'god' who upholds vested interests justifies the successful, supports apartheid, patriarchy, hypocritical piety, immature dependency and infantile illusions.

9

- 'God' as a projection of our fears: fate, stars, demons
- 'God' as a projection of our needs: self-indulgence, prestige, power
- 'God' as support for our insecurity: anchoring a meaningless life in submission to a power-object

This is a distraction because it ignores or masks our heart's desire

We can avoid false religion by being an agnostic

A better way is through authentic religion.

10

Rejection of false gods, however, does not justify the failure to explore the implications of our experience and to open ourselves to the mystery revealed there.

We must remember, however, as we explore the question of God, that all concepts of God without exception are exploratory ('heuristic'). They are born of longing and shaped by religious experience.

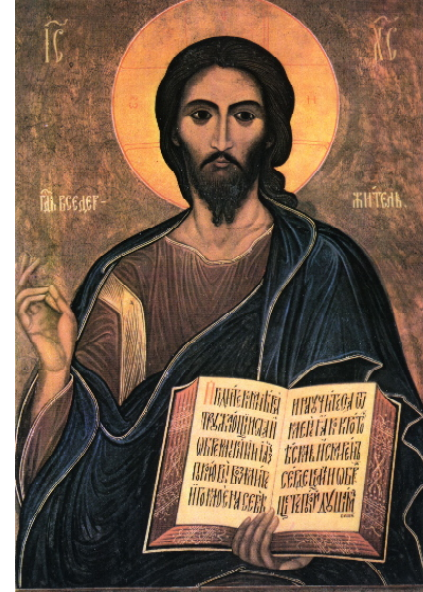
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In conceiving God we dare to reach beyond what we do know to the transcendent mystery. In all areas of discovery, concepts are best fitted for defining and eliminating wrong approaches. This is especially true of our concepts of God. They assist in keeping us on the right track, facing the right way; they do not contain the journey's end; they cannot define the Infinite. God remains on the mountain; no golden calf, no set of words, can substitute for him and for the surprise and demands of God's presence and action in our lives. It is right to speak of God, but we must pray that we make some sense, and not too much nonsense as we do.

12

The writings of Jesus' disciples demonstrate that because of their experience of Jesus they came to a new way of conceiving God and so to a new appreciation of creation. To believe that there is only one God is to believe in the interconnectedness of everything; it is to believe that there is one source of everything; that everything that exists participates in the being of this one God; that every insight into the truth by anyone is an insight into God; that all people, whatever their race, enjoy revelation, because all owe their being to this one Creator and Sustainer of life.

13



14

Jesus is God's perfect human word

God's Word-made-flesh

He received everything from God - life, word, Spirit.

His Spirit is his love-communion with God whom he calls 'Father'

His Word and Spirit reveal God as LOVE

'The Law [Torah] indeed was given through Moses;
the gift of Truth came through Jesus the Christ.'

No one has even seen God.

It is God's only Son, who is in the bosom
of the Father, who has made Him known'(John 1:17-18).

15

Priestly Celibacy

In this reflection we will **not** treat the following topics

- 1. The history of clerical celibacy, including the complex economic considerations that caused lay princes to insist on celibacy in order to keep control of the benefices in their own hands.
- 2. The negative reasons for upholding celibacy:
 - fear of the feminine
 - insistence on cultic purity (from the Jewish law)
 - the idea that sex is somehow impure

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- 3. The wisdom of the current Church law that insists
- that only males be ordained,
- and only males who are judged to have the charism of celibacy.
- 4. The wisdom of the discipline that will not allow to continue in ministry a man who discerns that he does not in fact have the gift of celibacy and that to continue struggling to be celibate is destructive of himself and dangerous to those to whom he is ministering.

17

As disciples of Jesus each of us is invited to let Jesus love through us. From the beginning, Jesus invited some to love, like him, in a celibate way.

They gave up the intimacy of having a sexual partner and a family of their own, not, in the words of Tony Philpot, to live ‘a grim resentful bachelorhood with lots of built-in compensations’, but to be in the community a sacrament of the total and undivided dedication of Christ in love to the Christian community and to each member of the community without distinction.

19

Priestly Celibacy

The central love of Jesus’ life was his loving communion with God. His choice not to marry and have a family led his opponents to make fun of him, accusing him of being a eunuch. He made this choice, however, ‘for the sake of the kingdom of heaven’(Matthew 19:12).

His celibate love cast into sharp relief the mystery of his communion with God. It also gave a special power to his witness of God’s special, personal and unconditional commitment to each person.

18

The Priest and the third Christian millennium 1999

‘The call to become, like Jesus, a *‘hostia’* underlies the compatibility of the commitment to celibacy with the priestly ministry in the Church. It implies the incorporation of the priest in the sacrifice with which “Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her so as to make her holy”(Ephesians 5:25-26).

The priest is called to be “a living image of Jesus Christ, Spouse of the Church”(J-P II PDV [*I will give you shepherds*] n. 22) and to make his entire life an offering for her.

20

Some definitions and presuppositions.

1. A celibate is committed to remain unmarried and to endeavour to forego all directly wilful indulgence in genital sex, whether with others or alone.
2. Devaluation of celibacy is linked to a devaluation of sexuality. Both stem from a divorce of sexuality from the sacred.

21

Some definitions and presuppositions.

3. There is a lack of wisdom in casting celibacy as a scapegoat for all the intra-personal and inter-personal tensions in clerics and religious. In fact, unless personal agendas other than sexuality are attended to, 'genital encounters', whether in or out of marriage, will not alleviate the tensions. They may even compound them.

22

4. Whereas 'genital sex' is not for celibates, they are human beings and so celibates are necessarily sexual and relate as such.
5. Celibacy should be a way of loving: an authentic way of promoting one's own and other people's spiritual growth. This is excellently presented in Integrity in Ministry: a document of principles and standards for Catholic Clergy and Religious in Australia, which stresses the importance of a celibate being close to the people, calling this closeness 'one of the strengths of the Australian Church'. At the same time it contains much good advice concerning the respecting of appropriate boundaries.

23

- Mature persons are generative. That is, they are able to spend their life in creative communion which is life-giving both to themselves and to those to whom they relate.
- To be generative, a person must have experienced intimacy: the kind of loving and being loved which is experienced as being the fruit of being deeply known and accepted by another whom we intimately know and accept.

24

- To be truly intimate one must have a sense of one's personal identity: a sense of self that is experienced as being affirmed by another who is significant to us.
- A so-called celibacy which avoids these stages of maturing will never become generative, and so will never become a way of loving.

25

7. Henri Nouwen warns us of the dangers of the exercise of power by a person who is frightened of intimacy:

Celibate Loving

'The temptation of power is greatest when intimacy is a threat. Much Christian leadership is exercised by people who do not know how to develop healthy, intimate relationships and have opted for power and control instead.'

26

He also reminds us that people whose consecrated love for God is lived out in a celibate way of loving can make good leaders.

In the name of Jesus

'When we are securely rooted in personal intimacy with the source of life, it will be possible to remain flexible without being relativistic, convinced without being rigid, willing to confront without being offensive, gentle and forgiving without being soft, and true witnesses without being manipulative.'

27