

VATICAN II ON DIVINE REVELATION¹

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Abstrak:

Konsili Vatikan II (1962-1965) merupakan Konsili Ekumenik pertama dalam Gereja Katolik yang merumuskan suatu doktrin tentang pewahyuan kristiani secara menyeluruh, yakni dalam Konstitusi Dogmatis tentang Wahyu Ilahi (*Dei Verbum*). Dokumen yang sangat penting ini merupakan hasil kompromi sekaligus sebuah sintesis antara kesetiaan pada tradisi Gereja dan keterbukaan terhadap perkembangan dan penemuan baru zaman ini, suatu ketegangan yang senyatanya menjadikan Gereja sungguh sebagai suatu paguyuban yang hidup. Dengan kembali ke sumber-sumber Kitab Suci, Tradisi dan Magisterium, *Dei Verbum* menampilkan kebaruan pemahaman akan pewahyuan (dan iman). Pewahyuan pertama-tama dilihat sebagai misteri pemberian diri Allah kepada manusia dalam sejarah yang memuncak dalam pribadi Yesus Kristus.

Keywords:

Mystery, self-manifestation, historical, personal, Jesus Christ

1. Introduction

Based on the biblical and patristic notion of revelation, following in the footsteps of the Council of Trent and of the First Vatican Council, the Second Vatican Council (11 October 1962 - 8 December 1965)² in *the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* sets forth the authentic doctrine on divine revelation and its transmission. The preface of the Constitution, although sober and short, is very profound. The opening phrase "*Dei Verbum religiose audiens et fidenter proclamans*"³ is one of the most important formulations in the text. The phrase *Dei Verbum* that serves as the title of the Constitution expresses the theme and the whole of its content. "This phrase, the *Word of God*, refers first of all to revelation, that first intervention by which God steps out of his mystery and speaks to humanity to disclose to it the secrets of divine life and to communicate to it his plan of salvation."⁴

Reflecting the great development, which had taken place in theology since Vatican I, *Dei Verbum* furnishes the solid foundation for a dogmatic discourse on revelation and the distinctive aspect of Christian revelation. All the essential points of revelation: its nature, aspects, dimensions and depths are conceived in a Trinitarian perspective by placing Jesus Christ, the Revealer and the Mystery revealed, as the center and the key for interpreting all the mysteries of salvation, all the Christian realities and the meaning of human beings' existence. The Dogmatic Constitution of

Vatican II on divine revelation is the first time an Ecumenical Council's document has studied the basic and absolutely main categories of Christian revelation.⁵

However, it is true that Christian doctrine on revelation cannot exclusively be reduced to the doctrine of Vatican II on revelation. *Dei Verbum*, which is a point of arrival, summarized the whole theological discussion on the fundamental points of Christian revelation that had not everywhere arrived at their full degree of maturity. In other words, the text of *Dei Verbum* is the result of many compromises. Nevertheless, "the fundamental compromise which pervades it is more than a compromise; it is a synthesis of great importance. The text combines fidelity to Church tradition with an affirmation of critical scholarship, thus opening up anew the path that faith may follow into the world of today."⁶ It is obvious that *Dei Verbum* basically provides foundations of our study of the Christian doctrine on revelation. However, it is not our intention here to analyze the whole Constitution. To answer the main question of our study: what is Christian revelation, we shall consider only chapter I which concerns and describes revelation in itself. Before making a detailed analysis of the mystery of divine revelation, its nature and object of God's self-manifestation, we shall examine the history of the Constitution as background for our analysis.

2. *Dei Verbum* in the Making

The Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* was officially promulgated by Pope Paul VI on 18 November 1965, twenty days before the Second Vatican Council closed. *Dei Verbum* equaled in importance the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) as the most fundamental documents produced by Vatican II. It is "the source document of the council's efforts" and "the hermeneutical key to all the other texts."⁷ Other documents of Vatican II will have more obvious practical effects for Christians within and outside the Church, but all depend on the faith in God's word to men, that is divine revelation, which the Council has spelled out in *Dei Verbum*.⁸ René Latourelle whose work stands as a major Catholic contribution to theology of revelation comments that "it was the first time that a council had systematically studied the nature and specific characteristic of the prime and fundamental Christian reality,"⁹ God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

The idea of having a Constitution on the themes of revelation has been in the early beginnings of the preparations for the Council. According to Joseph Ratzinger, "there were three motifs that came together in the struggle for a Constitution on Revelation."¹⁰ The *first* was "the new view of the phenomenon of tradition, which had been developing from the beginning of the 19th century."¹¹ The *second* source of the Constitution on Revelation was "what emerged ever more clearly as the theological problem of the application of critical historical methods to the interpretation of Scripture."¹² The *third* motivating element was "the most positive one: namely, the biblical movement that has grown stronger and stronger since the turn of the century and has already brought about a fundamentally new attitude to Scripture in

large areas of Catholic Christendom, giving rise to a new familiarity with it and an ever-increasing tendency, both in theology and piety, to go back to it.”¹³

Dei Verbum itself is the result of the work of long controversial discussions. Its history had begun with the pre-conciliar consultation in 1959. Having announced his intention on 25 January 1959, of calling a council, John XXIII appointed the following 17 May, a preparatory commission headed by Cardinal Domenico Tardini, the secretary of state. This commission had the task to establish a contact with the Catholic episcopates with a view to seeking advice and suggestions; to collate the proposals made by the various departments of the Roma curia; and to set down guidelines for issues to be discussed at the Council after listening to the opinions of the theological and canonical faculties of Catholic universities. From this worldwide consultation, there emerged some major issues that were proposed for discussion at the Council: the problem of the nature of revelation, ways of transmitting revelation, and the relationship between the Church’s magisterium and God’s word.¹⁴

In the preparatory Theological Commission, with Cardinal Ottaviani as president and S. Tromp, S.J., as secretary, the idea of including the problems of revelation in the schema on the Church was considered, but immediately dropped. Thus there first emerged a *Schema compendiosum Constitutionis de fontibus Revelationis*, developed in 13 points, which was sent to members of the Theological Commission but was not fundamentally amended. A special sub-commission was formed with the job of drawing up a schema on the sources of revelation. The text of the schema was finished and after further revisions on 22 June 1962, it was sent to the Central Commission to be examined. The result of all this work was a *Schema Constitutionis dogmaticae de fontibus Revelationis* in five chapters, which was finally approved by John XXIII on July 1962 and sent out to members of the Council prior to discussion within the Council itself.¹⁵

The *Schema De Fontibus Revelationis* composed of five chapters: 1) The Twofold Source of Revelation; 2) Inspiration, Inerrancy, Literary Genre; 3) Old Testament; 4) New Testament; 5) Sacred Scripture in the Church. When the Council debated this first schema on 14 November 1962, it met with severe criticism. The reasons that were pointing to a denial of the schema were determined in the first chapter. It was concerned with the significance of replacing “*partim - partim*” by “*et*” of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. The equivocal use of the phrase “double source” was pointed out that such formulation had doctrinal consequences that saw the Scripture and Tradition as independent sources. A good number of the Fathers who declared the schema to be unacceptable as such demanded that it be replaced by a more concise, more pastoral and more ecumenical text.¹⁶

A vote was taken on 20 November, to decide whether the schema should be returned to the commission to be rewritten. The result was affirmative by 60%; but according to the regulations set up beforehand, a two-thirds majority was required

for this somewhat drastic step. It was at this point that Pope John XXIII made his famous intervention: on his authority, the document was remitted. He decided to have the schema revised by a special commission that was named on 25 November 1962. It was called the "Mixed Commission" because it was made up of members of both the Doctrinal Commission and the Secretariat for the Unity of Christians together with consultors and cardinals of the pope's choosing. Cardinal Ottaviani and Bea were appointed chairmen and Tromp and Willebrands secretaries.

Since that day, the problem of the material content of Scripture and Tradition remains an open problem, one which theologians and exegetes can continue to explore in depth. The Council, for its part, chose to explore a different route, stressing rather the organic unity of Scripture and Tradition, as well as the intimate relationship between Scripture, Tradition and the Church.¹⁷

To be able to proceed quickly, the commission was divided into five sub-commissions, each dealing with one of the schema's five chapters that had to be reworked. In the session between 25 November and 7 December 1962, there was a general agreement of principle on the following matters: 1) the basic structure of the new document particularly as the title had been changed to *De Divina Revelatione*; 2) the drafting of an "introduction" aiming to set out the doctrine on revelation; 3) the title of the first chapter, *De Duplice Fonte Revelationis*, being replaced by *De Verbo Dei Revelato*.¹⁸ "The treatment in general became less philosophical, more biblical and historical. More stress was laid on modern methods of interpretation of Scripture, in accordance with the forward-looking doctrine of the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* of 1943."¹⁹

The mixed commission completed its work in March 1963 and the Fathers were informed of the results in May of the same year, but in the course of the second session of the Council there was complete silence regarding the schema on revelation. Instead, it underwent further revision in a sub-commission set up within the doctrinal commission on 7 March 1964.²⁰ After many revisions, the commission and sub-commission finally produced a new text that now had an introduction, which sought to give the schema a pastoral emphasis, and six chapters: 1) *De Ipsa Revelatione*; 2) *De Divinae Revelationis Transmissione*; 3) *De Sacrae Scripturae Divina Inspiratione et Interpretatione*; 4) *De Vetere Testamento*; 5) *De Novo Testamento*; 6) *De Sacra Scriptura et Vita Ecclesiae*.

This new schema was discussed in the course of the third session of the Council. "As a whole, the text pleased the Fathers by its balance, its biblical flavor, its Christocentric character, the large treatise on Tradition, and finally by the freedom granted to theologians in the investigation of disputed questions."²¹ Even though the Council approved the schema almost unanimously, there were also many amendments presented by the Council Fathers. Thus the Theological Commission or the appropriate sub-commission began immediately on the revision of the text based on the observations made by the Fathers, particularly on Chapter I and II. The

revised text was sent out to the Fathers on 20 November 1964, but was only put to the vote in the Plenary Assembly of the Council in the last session.

In the fourth session of the Council, there were some votes that were taken on the text. The modifications of detail suggested by the Fathers and requested by Pope Paul VI, without changing the substance of the text, improved it considerably in its expression. After having been voted upon chapter by chapter on 29 October 1965, the results were as follows: 2081 *placet* (approved), 27 *non placet* (not approved) and 7 votes were invalid; in the eighth public session of the Council on 18 November 1965, the decisive vote was taken with the following result: 2350 total votes, 2344 *placet*, 6 *non placet*. On the same day, Pope Paul VI solemnly promulgated the Constitution *Dei Verbum* which deals in 6 chapters: 1) with revelation itself; 2) with its transmission in Tradition; 3) with the inspiration and interpretation of Holy Scripture; 4) with revelation as attested by the Old Testament; 5) with revelation in Jesus Christ as the New Testament proclaims and applies this; 6) with Holy Scripture in the life of the Church. With the signatures of the pope and of all the members present the document became a Dogmatic Constitution.

3. The Mystery of Divine Revelation

“One of the most important events in the struggle over the Constitution on Revelation was undoubtedly ... the return to what actually happens in the positive sources, before it was crystallized into doctrine, when God “reveals” himself, and thus a re-appraisal of the whole nature and basis of Christian existence.”²² To describe what Christian faith means when it speaks of revelation, *Dei Verbum* went back to the comprehensive reality of the deeds and words of God, that is the mystery of God’s self-revelation that culminates in and through Jesus Christ. That is the fact which dominates both the two Testaments and to which the Church responds in faith. “We announce to you the eternal life which dwelt with the Father and was made visible to us (cf. 1 Jn 1,2)” (*DV* 1). “In his goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of his will (cf. Ep 1,9) by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature (cf. Ep 2,18; 2 Pt 1,4)” (*DV* 2).²³

Article 2 of the Constitution seems to state first of all the fact of revelation, that is the self-manifestation and self-communication of God, the Absolute Mystery, in the economy of salvation. “Instead of the legalistic view that sees revelation largely as the issuing of divine decrees, we have a sacramental view, which see law and grace, word and deed, message and sign, the person and his utterance within one comprehensive unity of mystery.”²⁴ Here Vatican II cites the Pauline term of *sacramentum* [“μυστήριον” (mysterium) in the Greek text]. “The theme of *mystery* and *Gospel* is the principal theme St. Paul uses to reach to the very heart of the idea of revelation.”²⁵ If in the theology of St. Paul the idea of mystery refers to the divine

plan of salvation as manifested and realized through Jesus Christ, in the Epistle of the Ephesians this divine plan of salvation is enlarged upon in a universal and cosmic dimension. "He has let us know the mystery of his purpose, according to his good pleasure which he determined beforehand in Christ, ... that he would bring everything together under Christ, as head, everything in the heavens and everything on earth" (Ep 1,9-10). Here the idea of mystery includes "the universality of salvation, ... the unity of mankind in the one Christ, the cosmic dimension of what is Christian, the relation of revelation to history, and finally its christological center. For the mystery of God is ultimately nothing other than Christ itself."²⁶

"Having affirmed the fact of revelation, the Constitution *Dei Verbum* stated that it was essentially a divine initiative and a pure act of grace like all the rest of the work of salvation."²⁷ Revelation must be called an effect of God's good will. It is free and gratuitous initiative on the part of God and not the result of any constraint or previous request on the part of man. It is a work of love and proceeds from the goodness and wisdom of God. It is grace.²⁸ Concretely, if the mystery of divine revelation is Christ, thus the Christ-event is the free gift of God, that is "the self-offering of God to the world in history."²⁹

Here revelation is seen basically as dialogue between God and man. Stepping out from his invisible and hidden mystery (Col 1,15; 1Tim 1,17), God who is love (1 Jn 4,8) speaks to men as friends (cf. Ex 33,11; Jn 15,14-15), lives among them (cf. Bar 3,38) and invites them into fellowship with himself. There is a basic structure of communication. "Revelation is communication between God, who reaches out from his own mystery, and humankind, which is saved and transformed in the dialogue of love."³⁰ This self-communication of God, whose climax came with Jesus Christ and the events of his life, death, and resurrection, is not self-indulgent activity, but aims at our salvation.

"If one compares the text of Article 2 with what was said at Vatican I (Denz. 3004 f.), it becomes clear how much Catholic theology has benefited ... from the theology of Karl Barth,"³¹ not only in the emphasis to the personal and theocentric starting point, but also on the basis of his Trinitarian understanding of revelation. For Karl Barth (1886-1968), "the Trinity stands at the beginning of theology and undergirds every doctrine of Christian faith."³² All and each of the mysteries of our faith including the mystery of divine revelation have sense only with the point of departure in the Trinity. *Dei Verbum* speaks of revelation by first having a reference to God himself in the Trinitarian concept. "The movement of revelation proceeds from God (the Father), comes to us through Christ, and admits us to the fellowship of God in the Holy Spirit."³³ Stressing the Trinitarian perspective, explicitly in Article 2 but also in the whole Constitution, Vatican II gives the most complete, the richest, and the most suggestive expression of Christian revelation. The mystery of divine revelation is not an "isolated mystery" but is a "far-reaching economy" which "arises from the Father's initiative, enters into history and has its culmination

in Jesus Christ, who is the fullness of revelation; it then continues on, under the action of the Holy Spirit, in the ecclesial community, through tradition and Scripture and under the sign of expectation of the eschatological consummation."³⁴

The merit of Vatican II is to make in close relationship three principal mysteries of Christianity: Trinity, Incarnation, and Grace. Moreover, although the text *Dei Verbum* has been composed in a definitely Christocentric view, it presents the doctrine on revelation in which Christ is described as the mediator of revelation and the fullness of revelation itself without overlooking the theocentric and pneumatological dimensions.

If, however, one wishes to consider it as Christocentric, then this should, at any rate, be understood wholly in the original Pauline sense: Christ stands in the center as the mediator, his "place" is characterized by the mediating word *per*; he enfolds us in the dimension of the Spirit, and our being in him means at the same time that we have been led to the Father. Thus, on the one hand, the pneumatological dimension is not overlooked here, this emerging naturally from a Christology of the resurrection as a correction to a one-sided Christology of Incarnation, and at the same time the theocentric position is given appropriate emphasis, towards which the Christocentric view, properly understood, is necessarily orientated.³⁵

4. The Object and Nature of Divine Revelation

Giving appropriate emphasis to the theocentric character, it is clear that *Dei Verbum* is in accordance with the emphasis of Vatican I that sees that the subject and source of revelation is God himself. Nevertheless, instead of speaking of the abstract values "wisdom and goodness" and "the eternal decrees of his will", *Dei Verbum* uses a concrete and personal term. It is true that through revelation God communicated a body of truths, but for Vatican II, if God chooses to reveal himself, it doesn't mean other than God himself gives himself. Thus the object of revelation is God himself.

Furthermore, instead of the simple "to reveal" of Vatican I, *Dei Verbum* uses two verbs: "to manifest" and "to communicate". In Article 6 Vatican II says: "Through divine revelation, God chose to show forth and communicate himself." It is obvious that the Council's intention is "to personalize revelation"³⁶, that is both a self-manifestation and a self-giving of God in person. "Before he makes something known, namely, his salvific design, God himself manifests himself."³⁷

Revelation is the active and constitutive manifestation of God, which is concretely realized by means of history and the Incarnation from the beginning. According to Vatican II, the manifestation and self-giving of God begins in the creation of the world. God "from the start manifested himself to our first parents" (DV 3). "The created universe constitutes a first presence and a first manifestation of God: it is a permanent testimony of himself to humanity inscribed in the universe he has created (Rm 1,19-20)."³⁸

Although it affirms the manifestation on the part of God by the testimony of the created world, addressed to all men, the Council, however, does not call it a natural revelation thus differing it from a supernatural one like Vatican I did (cf. Denz. 3004). The Council simply states the fact of the self-testimony of God in creation without pausing to make it clear but directly beginning with a summary that describes the historical and personal revelation. The Council just seems to declare that the very God who through the Word creates all things (cf. Jn 1,3) is the same God who manifests himself in human history.³⁹ Moreover, Vatican II's affirmation of the self-testimony of God in creation has to be placed in a Christological context, which emphasizes the unity of divine action (*DV* 6): from the beginning "creation was already oriented towards salvation."⁴⁰

To define the object of revelation, Vatican II begins with the personal revelation of God and salvation in Jesus Christ. This personal revelation in Jesus Christ is the culmination of the historical revelation to the patriarchs that is separated from the creation and treated as a new action. The Council does not call the self-testimony of God in creation "revelation". Vatican II uses the technical term "revelation" in the strict sense for the historical revelation. "After the fall of our first parents, God granted the hope of a salvation to come: this light of salvation, cited by Genesis, is the proto-gospel. With the promise, whose salvific implications are universal, the history of salvation is begun."⁴¹

"At the time he had appointed, God called Abraham in order to make of him a great nation (cf. Gn 12,2)" (*DV* 3). After the patriarchal age God instructed this people through Moses and the prophets. He taught them to recognize him, the one living and true God, as a Father who takes care of his children and as a just judge, and to wait for the Savior promised by him (cf. *DV* 3; 14). "The essential revelation of the Old Testament is both promise and instruction. Over the centuries, God formed his people in this way and traced out the paths of the Gospel. Israel knew God, not abstractly, but by experiencing the way of God in history."⁴²

The Council gives the appropriate emphasis to the importance of the Old Testament but at once orientates it towards its fullness in Jesus Christ. "The principal purpose to which the plan of the Old Covenant was directed was to prepare for the coming of Christ, the Redeemer of all and of the messianic kingdom" (*DV* 15). Thus, after dealing with the preparation of the Gospel as the historical context, the Council immediately returns to the theme of Christ as Mediator and fullness of revelation. In article 4 the Council cites the text of the Epistle to the Hebrews (1,1-2) and precisely understands it in the historical perspective. Jesus Christ is the peak of revelation.

The quotation from Heb 1 shows, on the one hand, the continuity of divine history with men: the word of God in Christ continues his words through the fathers and the prophets; but at the same time it reveals what is truly new in the New Testament: instead of words, we have *the* Word. Christ no longer speaks merely

of God, but he is himself the speech of God; this man is himself and as an entity the Word of God that has made himself one of us.⁴³

The self-manifestation and self-communication of God in Jesus Christ allows the profound truth about God. In Christ, “through his words and deeds, his signs and wonders, but especially through his death and glorious resurrection from the dead and final sending of the Spirit of truth” (DV 4), we learn who God is: i.e., the Father who creates us and loves us as his children; the Son and Word who invites us to become adoptive sons and daughters of our Father; and the Holy Spirit who gives us a new life as children of God. The object of revelation is God himself and his salvific plan through Christ, the Word made flesh, and in the Holy Spirit. “Revelation is essentially a revelation of persons: the revelation of the mystery of the life of three divine persons, the revelation of the mystery of the person of Christ, and the revelation of our life as adoptive children of the Father.”⁴⁴

After having defined the object of revelation, the Constitution *Dei Verbum* outlines its nature. The Constitution retains the “analogy of language”⁴⁵ or “analogy of word”⁴⁶ present throughout the Old and New Testaments, in the whole theological tradition, and in the documents of the Magisterium. “Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (cf. Col 1,15; 1Tim 1,17) out of the abundance of his love speaks to men as friend (cf. Ex 33,11; Jn 15,14-15) and lives among them (cf. Bar 3,38), so that he may invite and take them into fellowship with himself” (DV 2).⁴⁷ Our God is the God who has spoken to humanity: he speaks to Abraham, to Moses, to the prophets, and through them, he speaks to his people. Our God is the God who speaks to the apostles and to us through Jesus Christ, his beloved Son.⁴⁸

Christian revelation, according to Vatican II, is basically a dialogue, as is indicated in the words *alloquitur* and *conversatur*. It is as a *colloquium inter Deum et hominem* (DV 25). God enters into communication with man in order to invite him into fellowship with himself. Here the quotation from Jn 15,14-15: “You are my friends, ... I shall no longer call you servants, ... I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father” is given to stress this nature of revelation. If God, out of the abundance of his love, enters into dialogue with man, his creature, this can only be in order to invite him to a communion of divine life and with God to “share in the divine nature” (DV 2). That is the intention of revelation. It proceeds from love, develops in friendship, pursues a work of love and seeks to introduce man into the society of love that is the Trinity.⁴⁹ “The Council increases the number of scriptural quotations and references so that we understand revelation as the manifestation of God’s agapē.”⁵⁰

The plan of revelation, “God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death and to raise us up to life eternal” (DV 4), is realized “by deeds and words having an inner unity” (DV 2). Deeds (*gesta*) and words (*verba*), events and interpretation, works and words, “form an organic and indissociable whole; it is an economy that reaches its fullness in Christ, the Word made flesh.”⁵¹ By offering a new view of the

relation between the deed and the word in the structure of revelation, Vatican II would like to “overcome neo-scholastic intellectualism, for which revelation chiefly meant a store of mysterious supernatural teachings, which automatically reduces faith very much to an acceptance of these supernatural insights.”⁵²

The Council then explains how deeds and words are reciprocally reliant and assist one another. On the one hand, “the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words” (DV 2); on the other hand, “the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them” (DV 2). However it must be noted “the union in question here is a union of *nature*, not always a union in *time*” and “the proportion between word and work can be variable.”⁵³ By stating first of all that revelation is effected by a close union of deeds and words, Vatican II “expresses the all-encompassing nature of revelation”⁵⁴ in its concrete, active and constitutive realization.

Furthermore, “by insisting on the works and words as the constitutive elements of revelation and upon their intimate union, the Council emphasizes the *historical* and *sacramental* character of revelation: events explained by the word of the prophets, Christ, and the apostles.”⁵⁵ To communicate Himself and to invite man to a communion of Trinitarian Love, God steps out of his mystery, takes a hand in human history and gives the interpretation and mutual support that exists between word and work. It is through this self-manifestation and self-giving that “the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ” (DV 2). He is at once Mediator and Fullness of revelation. He is the eternal Word of God, the only Son of the Father, and the Epiphany of the Father (DV 4). Christ is himself the sign and content of Christian revelation.

It is clear that according to Vatican II, Jesus Christ is both the beginning and the last word of revelation. Nevertheless, emphasizing the definitive character of the revelation that has taken place in Christ⁵⁶, the Council does not speak about the “closeness” of the revelation but understands it in an eschatological context, “before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (DV 4). There is “an increasingly profound assimilation and an increasingly rich and adequate formulation of the mystery that has been revealed.”⁵⁷

5. Conclusion

By considering the doctrine of Vatican II on divine revelation, finally we may answer the main question of this study: what is Christian revelation. The revelation described by Vatican II is the initiative of the living God and a manifestation of his personal love in human history to open up to human beings the secret of his intimate life in order to invite them into the reciprocal love of Trinity. Since the beginning God has already invited man to know his mystery. Considering it in the Christocentric perspective, creation is understood in the fundamental and universal context of revelation.

However, the God of Christian revelation is not simply a God of creation but a God who comes and intervenes, acts and saves in human history. The economy of revelation is not other than the actual attitude, words and deeds; God desires to enter into personal contact with human beings to which the Old Testament and New Testament witness. God's self-manifestation and self-communication in history is both the promise that began with the Abraham's call and fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Stressing the historicity of Christian revelation, immediately this implies the most specific feature of Christian revelation; God's self-manifestation and self-giving comes through the incarnation of the Son of God in the midst of humanity. Christ not only brings revelation but he is the revelation of God himself in person, the word made flesh.

Jesus Christ is both the revealing mystery and the revealed mystery, both the mediator and the fullness of revelation (DV 2 and 4). The Christian concept of revelation has come to refer more radically to the mystery of the gift of God's own self to the world in and through Jesus Christ. In other words, the content of Christian revelation is fundamentally the very reality of divine self and his plan of salvation with Christ himself as the center. So, to speak about Christian revelation, there is no other way but examining Jesus Christ as revelation.

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Catatan Akhir

- ¹ This article is taken from the writer's doctoral dissertation entitled *The Incarnate Word of God: Christian and Islamic Doctrine on Revelation, A Study in Comparative Theology* at the Faculty of Theology at the Gregorian University in Rome, 2005.
- ² Vatican II lasted for four sessions: 1) 11 October - 8 December 1962; 2) 29 September - 4 December 1963; 3) 14 September - 21 November 1964; 4) 14 September - 8 December 1965.
- ³ All the Latin texts of *Dei Verbum* in this study are taken from Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, edizione bilingue a cura di Peter Hünermann, Bologna 2000.
- ⁴ René Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, New York 1987, 456.
- ⁵ Cf. Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 484-488.
- ⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, "Origin and Background, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation", in *Commentary of the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. 3, Herbert Vorgrimler, gen. ed., New York 1969, 164.
- ⁷ René Latourelle, "Dei Verbum, Commentary", in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, René Latourelle and Rino Fisichella, ed., New York 1994, 2000², 218.
- ⁸ Cf. R. A. F. MacKenzie, "Revelation", in *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, gen. ed., New York 1966, 107.
- ⁹ Latourelle, "Dei Verbum, Commentary", 218.
- ¹⁰ Ratzinger, "Origin and Background", 155.
- ¹¹ Ratzinger, "Origin and Background", 155.

- ¹² Ratzinger, "Origin and Background", 157.
- ¹³ Ratzinger, "Origin and Background", 158.
- ¹⁴ Cf. Rino Fisichella, "Dei Verbum, History", in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, René Latourelle and Rino Fisichella, ed., New York 1994, 2000², 215.
- ¹⁵ Cf. Fisichella, "Dei Verbum, History", 215.
- ¹⁶ They had been probably influenced by the three other schemas which were rivals to the official document that had been privately circulated. "The first had been drawn up by the Secretariat for the Unity of Christians with decisive contributions from Stakemeier and Feiner; the second, *De Revelatione Dei et Hominis in Jesu Christo Facta*, had been prepared at great speed and was submitted by Karl Rahner with the support of the Episcopal conferences of Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands; the third was a paper produced by Yves Congar, entitled *De Traditione et Scriptura*." (Fisichella, "Dei Verbum, History", 215-216.)
- ¹⁷ Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 454.
- ¹⁸ Cf. Fisichella, "Dei Verbum, History", 216.
- ¹⁹ MacKenzie, "Revelation", 107-108.
- ²⁰ "This sub-commission was consisted of seven fathers (Charue, Florit, Barbado, Pelletier, van Dodewaard, Heuschen, and Butler) and nineteen experts (Betti, Castellino, Cerfaux, Colombo, Congar, Gagnebet, Garofalo, Grillmeier, Kerrigan, Moeller, Prignon, Rahner, Ramirez, Rigaux, Schauf, Semmelroth, Smulders, and Turrado); Ratzinger and van den Eynde were later added to the group of experts. Charue was appointed chairman and Betti secretary." (Fisichella, "Dei Verbum, History", 217.)
- ²¹ Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 454.
- ²² Ratzinger, "Origin and Background", 170.
- ²³ "Placuit Deo in sua bonitate et sapientia seipsum revelare et notum facere sacramentum voluntatis suae (cf. Ep 1,9), quo homines per Christum, Verbum carnem factum, in Spiritu Sancto accessum habent ad Patrem et divinae naturae consortes efficiuntur (cf. Ep 2,18; 2 Pt 1,4)" (Denz. 4202).
- ²⁴ Ratzinger, "Origin and Background", 171.
- ²⁵ Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 59.
- ²⁶ Ratzinger, "Origin and Background", 171.
- ²⁷ Latourelle, "Dei Verbum, Commentary", 219.
- ²⁸ Cf. Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 458.
- ²⁹ John O'Donnell, "Trinity and Revelation", in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, René Latourelle and Rino Fisichella, ed., New York 1994, 2000², 1131.
- ³⁰ M. Cristina Carnicella, "Communication", in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, René Latourelle and Rino Fisichella, ed., New York 1994, 2000², 187.
- ³¹ Ratzinger, "Origin and Background", 170.
- ³² O'Donnell, "Trinity and Revelation", 1129.
- ³³ Ratzinger, "Origin and Background", 172.
- ³⁴ René Latourelle, "Revelation", in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, René Latourelle and Rino Fisichella, ed., New York 1994, 2000², 934.
- ³⁵ Ratzinger, "Origin and Background", 172.
- ³⁶ Latourelle, "Revelation", 219.
- ³⁷ Latourelle, "Revelation", 219.
- ³⁸ Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 464.
- ³⁹ Cf. Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 464.
- ⁴⁰ Ratzinger, "Origin and Background", 173.
- ⁴¹ Latourelle, "Dei Verbum: Commentary", 221.
- ⁴² Latourelle, "Dei Verbum: Commentary", 222.

- ⁴³ Ratzinger, "Origin and Background", 175.
- ⁴⁴ Latourelle, "Dei Verbum, Commentary", 219.
- ⁴⁵ Latourelle, "Dei Verbum, Commentary", 219.
- ⁴⁶ Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 459.
- ⁴⁷ "Hac itaque revelatione Deus invisibilis (cf. Col 1,15; 1 Tim 1,17) ex abundantia caritatis suae homines tamquam amicos alloquitur (cf. Ex 33,11; Io 15,14s) et cum eis conversatur (cf. Bar 3,38), ut eos ad societatem Secum invitet in eamque suscipiat" (Denz. 4202).
- ⁴⁸ Cf. Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 459.
- ⁴⁹ Cf. Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 460.
- ⁵⁰ Latourelle, "Dei Verbum, Commentary", 220.
- ⁵¹ "It should also be noted that *gesta* has a more personalist resonance than *facta*. It is also has its equivalent in the related phrase *opera et verba*, works and words, which always emanate from a personal center (*DV* 2 and 4). These gestures or indissociable works of God are, e.g., in the OT, the exodus, the covenant, the founding of the royal line, the exile and captivity, and the restoration. In the NT, they are the actions of the life of Christ, especially his preaching, miracles, examples, and passion. The words are the words of Moses and the prophets who interpret the divine gesture in history. They are also the words of Christ himself stating the meaning of his actions. Finally, they are the words of the apostles, witnesses, and authorized interpreters of the life of Christ." (Latourelle, "Dei Verbum, Commentary", 220).
- ⁵² Ratzinger, "Origin and Background", 172.
- ⁵³ Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 462.
- ⁵⁴ Latourelle, "Dei Verbum, Commentary", 220
- ⁵⁵ Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 462.
- ⁵⁶ "The Christian dispensation, therefore, as the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away and we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Tm 6,14 and Ti 2,13)" (*Dei Verbum* 4).
- ⁵⁷ Latourelle, "Dei Verbum, Commentary", 223.

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