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THE FINALITY OF CHRIST IN A WHITEHEADIAN PERSPECTIVE

I

The finality of Jesus Christ is first a historical question. It is my conviction that in our day we can affirm this finality only if we can make historical sense out of this claim. To make historical sense out of this claim one must write some kind of universal history in which the central and decisive role of Jesus Christ is made to appear. I can here offer only an outline sketch of such a history.

My purpose is to address myself to the christological problem from a Whiteheadian perspective. Since I do think from this perspective, this is a thoroughly congenial task. On the other hand, the relation between Whitehead's philosophy and a sketch of universal history is neither simple nor obvious. Hence, I shall preface my outline of the sketch with a few remarks on the approach to history to which I am led by my Whiteheadian perspective. I will present the relevant points simply as a series of theses without attempting any justification.

First, only individual entities are actual. Statements about groups or societies of individuals must always be related finally to particular individuals.

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Second, all individual entities are subjects. There is no such thing as an actual entity that is merely an object.

Third, all individual subjects are momentary in duration. Each is an actual occasion of experience which is to be thought of neither as infinitesimal nor as extended through any considerable period of time.

Fourth, all actual entities have certain common structural characteristics. This means that ontologically there are important identities between an occasion of human experience and an occasion of electronic experience.

Fifth, within the context of these identities there are vast differences among the actual entities.

Sixth, every occasion takes account of its past, but the way in which it does so is finally its own decision. That is, one of the features common to all actual entities is the influence upon them of all that is in their past. A second feature common to all actual entities is that the influence of the past upon them does not amount to total determination of their own self-actualization.

From these ontological principles I draw the following conclusions about history.

First, there is no strictly ontological distinction between history and nature. We cannot erect any distinction between historical events and natural events into an absolute duality.

Second, there are in fact great differences between historical events and natural events. The amount of similarity and the types of dissimilarity are to be worked out in detail and not from any a prioristic position.

Third, differences of major importance are to be found among natural events and among historical events as well as between natural events in general and historical events in general.

Fourth, this means that there are differences among human occasions of experience that are almost as great as the differ-

ences between human occasions in general and subhuman occasions in general.

Fifth, history is ultimately the history of subjects in their subjectivity and not the account of events externally viewed or reconstructed.

Sixth, the kind of existence known to any given subject depends chiefly upon his particular past as that is embodied in his culture. This means that man is primarily formed by history.

Seventh, the most important subject of historical inquiry is the emergence of new forms of existence. If it can be claimed historically that Jesus Christ is final, this must mean that the mode of existence given in him stands in peculiar relation to all other modes of existence.

I should add that I do not suppose that the understanding of history in which Jesus appears as final is one that is neutral or objective. I assume that only the Christian sees history in this way. However, this does not mean that the Christian experiences himself as imposing some special interpretation upon resistant data. Rather, the Christian finds this the most adequate and illuminating understanding of the data. To him it seems that it is rather the non-Christian historian, with his tendency to belittle the historical centrality of the Christ-event, who distorts the historical material with which he works. The problem of perspective is a universal one. Our concern should be to attain a genuinely adequate perspective rather than a generally accepted one. The claim that this genuinely adequate perspective is given us in Jesus Christ is another formulation of the claim that Jesus Christ is final.

At this point I turn to my outline of a sketch of the history of human existence.

I assume that the transition from animal to human existence was a gradual one and that if we had before us today all the

creatures who followed each other in this evolutionary development, we could not draw any clear line between those we would call subhuman and those we would call human. On the other hand, my impression of the evolutionary process is that from time to time fateful thresholds are crossed that lead rather rapidly to dramatic new forms.

The threshold whose crossing it is best to associate with the emergence of man is that of language. Man shares consciousness and intelligence, in the sense of the ability to learn from experience, with much of the animal world. Rationality in the sense of a distinctively human faculty depends upon language but is far more restricted. It depends upon a marriage of intelligence and language that played a minor role among precivilized men. In its origins language probably functioned primarily in the service of the unconscious rather than as a means of improving man's technical control or rational communication. The symbolizations expressed in the language of primitive men even today are hardly intelligible as means of pragmatic adjustment to the environment.

The emergence of reason is roughly to be correlated with the rise of civilization. Prior to this point, I suggest, the superior intelligence of man in relation to animals and the peculiar characteristics of his physiology can explain his superior achievements without reference to any major role of language. But the kind of division of labor and organization involved in civilization requires a high level of rationality. Language was brought into the service of intelligence. Consciousness thereby achieves considerable autonomy in relation to the unconscious.

It would be tedious to repeat at every point in this sketch that the transformations of existence to which I refer occur gradually. I do not mean that there was at one point a precivilized human community in which language served exclusively for symbolization of meanings controlled by the unconscious

and that there then suddenly emerged another in which large segments of life were controlled by reason. Probably from very early times there were important flashes of reason and sometimes relatively sustained uses of language in the service of intelligence. Equally within the great cities of antiquity there were undoubtedly myriads of individuals in whose lives reason played a very small role. Nevertheless, corresponding to the social, economic, political, and technological contrasts between primitive, tribal life and Egyptian or Mesopotamian civilization, we must posit a radical change in the kind of existence known to the individual.

The difference can be described in terms of myth. By myth I mean language in the service of unconscious symbolization. In this respect it resembles dreams. Although many of the actions of precivilized man expressed intelligence, his verbal accounts of these intelligent actions were not characteristically rational. His world of meanings was pervasively mythological. In the ancient civilizations mythological meanings remained dominant, but in certain areas of life rational meanings asserted themselves with great effectiveness.

From the point of view of the history of existence the next great transition is that in which influential men appeared who insisted on rationalizing the system of meanings by which men lived. I assume that this could not have occurred until reason had demonstrated its powers in ever-widening areas of life, and I also assume that those who undertook to rationalize the meanings by which men lived were still deeply influenced by unconscious meanings. Nevertheless, we have here one of the really great turning points of universal history.

I am describing in my own way what Karl Jaspers and Lewis Mumford describe as the Axial Period of history. Jaspers shows that between 800 and 200 B.C. man entered a new phase of his historical existence in China, India, Persia, Palestine, and

Greece. He holds that the kind of existence that there arose is still fundamentally our existence today, that the problems then raised and the types of answers then considered still constitute the context within which we wrestle with basic human problems.

I am persuaded that Jaspers is very nearly correct and that his insight is extremely important for our understanding of our present situation of a common worldwide history. Nevertheless, I believe that his presentation (and that of Mumford as well) is misleading in crucial respects.

First, by correctly emphasizing the remarkable parallels between the several separate developments from archaic to axial man, Jaspers leaves the impression that their differences are relatively unimportant. Second, by emphasizing how we still live in the context established by axial man, he underestimates the significant developments that have taken place within this context as they affect our basic existence. Since Jaspers' failure in these two respects prevents the crucial question of the finality of Jesus from receiving an appropriate context of discussion, I take it as my task to show both that there are major differences in the forms of existence known to the several axial peoples and that at least in the case of Jesus, developments of utmost importance for human existence occurred after 200 B.C. In doing this, I consider myself to be supplementing rather than contradicting Jaspers' basic insight.

My view is that all the axial peoples shifted the seat of existence from the unconscious to the conscious. All of them rationalize their received symbol systems. For all of them this meant an entirely new mode of existence bringing quite new kinds of problems and possibilities. Yet each of these peoples moved into this new existence by asking quite different questions and by rationalizing in quite different ways. Hence the modes of existence into which they entered, while parallel and

roughly equal in depth and power, were qualitatively quite diverse. I can only try to remind you of these differences by reference to three of them: the Indian, the Greek, and the Hebrew.

In India axial man turned from the attempt to manipulate the outer conditions of life by magical incantation to the attempt to know and save himself in his inwardness. He was convinced that success in the outer world was ultimately futile, that it left man in an endless cycle of existence in which every pleasure is but the prelude to pain and the whole succession is without meaning. Indeed, his critical reflection persuaded him that the whole outer world is only the world that appears, and that reality must be sought in some other way than through the senses. As he turned inward into his own subjectivity, he found that that, too, in all its particularity belongs to the world of appearance. The ultimate subject of his own experience, the self or Atman, is wholly undifferentiated and unindividualized. The realization that the true self is unaffected by the endless flux of the phenomenal world is the goal of much Indian thought and life, for through it man achieves freedom from the suffering of the world.

I realize that at best I have spoken of only one of the great Indian schools. Yet I think that it is typical and that in important respects all of them move in the same direction. All of them turn inward in their quest for reality and release, and all of them believe that this reality is other than the differentiated and individualized existence of the ordinary consciousness.

The Greek development, despite its occasional points of contact with Indian thought, is fundamentally different. The fundamental effort of axial man in Greece was to order his world rather than to transcend it. This order was achieved in the first instance aesthetically. The terrible and fascinating mythical powers were transformed into beautiful and intelligible

persons who were objectified and distanced for admiring contemplation. This freed everyday life and reflection to become open to nature and man as they are given in sense experience, and especially in vision. Personal excellence had to do in large measure with the excellence of the appearance to others of the man in question, both in the sense of physical beauty and of excellence of action.

Within this context of an aesthetically distanced world, reason as such came into its own. The detachment of aesthetic contemplation allows one to be formed in his experience by the forms that are present in the objects themselves rather than imposing meanings upon them from one's previous experience or unconscious needs. This contemplation of form made possible in its turn reflection upon forms, the attempt to conform thought to pattern found objectively in it. The brilliant achievements of Greece in mathematics, philosophy, and natural science are the amazement of the world. Finally, the achievements of reason led to reflection about reason itself and to a prizing of reason as such that is likewise peculiarly Greek. For one major segment of Greek thought human excellence came to be defined as excellence of rationality. The ideal man was the perfectly rational man.

The problem of abrupt characterization is even more acute with the Greeks than with the Indians because the Greek achievement was one which encouraged a more radical internal diversity than the Indian. The understanding of rationality among those who prized it varied greatly. Others protested against reason in the name of pleasure. Still others revolted more radically and sought to regain wholeness at the level of the unconscious in Dionysian orgies. Nevertheless, for schematic purposes it is helpful to think of the Greek achievement in terms of the formal ordering of the world, first by aesthetic distancing, and then in terms of rational speculative reflection.

The understanding of man that accompanied this development was likewise one that approved aesthetic and rational excellence.

The Hebrews carried with them into their axial period ideas about deity that were left behind by both Indians and Greeks. Ideas about divine lawgivers and covenants between men and gods can be found in the primitive mythologies of many peoples, but in most cases the transition to the axial period involved the rejection of such mythical thinking. Among the Hebrews, in contrast, the axial development consisted in the ethicizing and historicizing of such thinking rather than its rejection. The process of axial transformation was constituted initially by reflection about the tribal deity, a reflection in which Yahweh came to be understood as the personal creator of heaven and earth who acted in history to reveal to man his righteous will. In interaction with this God, man also discovered himself as a person with responsibility to obey. He became aware of himself in his inwardness as he knew himself to be known of God. And he came to understand that finally he stood before God as an individual man and not only as a part of a covenant community.

For the Indian the great central image is that of the relation of appearance and reality; the phenomenal flux on the one hand and the abiding subject on the other. For the Greek the crucial categories are found in the forms apprehended in visual experience and the relations among them. For the Hebrew existence came to be in the I-Thou encounter with God that brought into being a kind of personhood that was also capable of I-thou relations with other men.

In basic respects this prophetic understanding of existence became a fixed part of Israel's peculiar life. For some it was closely associated with expectation of the earthly triumph of the righteous, an expectation doomed to continual frustration by the actual course of history. The growing antithesis between what was and what should be led to the transformation of the

prophetic hope into an apocalyptic hope. The vindication of the righteous refused by history is still assured by the justice of God, but now by a wholly supernatural overcoming of history. For others the individualistic elements in the prophetic message allowed for an understanding of the vindication of the righteous in terms of individual judgment after death. Here the tension between the is and the ought is relaxed just enough to require men to come to terms with the conditions of possibility in actual social life, although their dealings there are to be guided not by considerations of prudence within that context, but by the demand of God presented in the law.

Apocalypticism and Pharisaism are both legitimate children of propheticism. The former maintains the extremism of the prophets, the refusal to accept the occurrences of history as a measure of the true reality, and the insistence on the ultimate victory of God. Pharisaism, on the other hand, maintains the prophetic concern for righteousness in the here and now and understands much better than apocalypticism that each individual stands responsible before God.

For both apocalypticism and Pharisaism God is experienced in his absence. For Pharisaism the presence of God to history is primarily in the past; for apocalypticism, in the future. Whereas the prophets had known God in his immediate presence to them in judgment and, to a lesser extent, in grace, the Pharisees identified God's will with the law. In so doing they absolutized a mixture of prophetic and archaic principles and treated this mixture as beyond critical analysis. The apocalypticists refused to any existing reality such sacred authority and absolutized instead a future state. But both failed to maintain the purity of the prophetic vision in which God alone is sacred or absolute.

Jesus appears in this context as a new prophet. Yet he does not represent only the revival of propheticism. He is like the

prophets in his sense of God's absolute presence to him, but he goes beyond the prophets in his claim of personal authority. He speaks out of his own existence as that is formed in his personal knowledge of God rather than as a spokesman for the message entrusted him by God.

As a new prophet Jesus is also the consummation and transformation of both apocalypticism and Pharisaism. As an apocalypticist he proclaims the coming of the kingdom in such a way that in the very proclamation the kingdom itself is brought near. As a Pharisee he proclaims the absolute demand of God for human righteousness in such a sense that the law itself is transcended and set aside. In the radical intensification of the essential genius of each, Jesus brings into being a mode of existence that fulfills the central thrust of prophetism in a way that is fundamentally unsurpassable.

This then is the direction in which I believe the finality of Jesus within the context of the Hebraic achievement is to be understood. Jesus shows us radically what it means to exist from God and for God. We are incapable of imagining any more complete embodiment of this mode of existence, and certainly history has offered us none to date. Where we find the closest approximations to this achievement we find also those who most emphasize their dependence on Jesus and their remoteness from reproducing his existence. While we cannot assert as historians that Jesus' achievement will not be matched in the future, it is virtually certain that any approximation to such matching will show his influence. Hence this possibility does not challenge the finality of Jesus.

These claims are, of course, seriously disputed by Jews (and Moslems) who are also heirs of the prophetic tradition. I cannot carry on here a discussion of their counterclaims. I do believe that the major reasons for continuing rejection of the finality of Jesus by Judaism (and perhaps also by Islam) are

to be found in two areas, both essentially extraneous to the claim I am making. First, the behavior of Christians, and especially their behavior toward Jews, has made openmindedness toward the claim of Jesus exceedingly difficult for the Jew. Second, the doctrine of Jesus' deity, however it may be explained by sophisticated theologians, is necessarily an affront to Jews and, indeed, also to many others. How Judaism will react to the claim of Jesus when it can view this claim without pressure from the sanctions and violence of a "Christian" majority and dissociated from metaphysical dogmas about him, remains to be seen.

The crucial question is that of the relation of Jesus to those modes of human existence attained in other axial transformations. It is far more difficult to claim that Jesus is the fulfillment of Indian or Greek existence. Yet something can and must be said here, too.

In the case of the Greek achievement we are not condemned simply to speculation. The great success of Christianity was among persons who were heirs of Greek civilization. Furthermore, on the whole the Greeks carried with them into their new Christian faith a continuing positive appreciation of their Greek heritage. They experienced Christianity as the consummation and transformation of their existence.

Against this rather obvious reading of history two important objections can be raised, and even in this very brief compass I accept some responsibility to indicate how I would counter them. First, it is possible to view the Christianity of the Hellenistic world as more fundamentally a product of that world than a result of the impact of the Jewish Jesus. In this case the victory of Christianity is simply another step in the evolution or devolution of the religious life of Greek civilization. It represents an absorption of Jewish elements into that civilization but not a transformation or completion

by a fundamentally new principle introduced from without. My response to this is that despite the immense influence of Hellenistic culture upon Christianity the fundamental institutional, liturgical, and ethical patterns that won out in the struggle within the church are better understood in terms of their Hebraic background than in terms of their Hellenistic background. More important, the canonization of the Old and New Testaments represented the victory of the Hebraic side of the spiritual struggle and insured that progressively its peculiar thrust would play a larger rather than a smaller role in the general self-understanding of Christendom.

Second, one may well argue that although the Hebraic development as consummated in Jesus won out over the decadent Hellenism of the first and second centuries, this tells us nothing of its relationship to that healthy Hellenism of the classical period. From this point of view it may be claimed that the mentality embodied in the great philosophers is more comprehensively adequate and offers a more final resting place for the human spirit than anything that has come out of Israel. Even if this is not true in just the form in which reason expressed itself in Plato and Aristotle, the philosophical program to which they gave brilliant expression and profound impulse stands beyond Jesus and finally in judgment upon him. Even if Jesus shows us what it means to live from God and for God, only philosophical reason can judge whether that kind of existence is based upon reality or illusion. In this case, whatever happened eighteen or nineteen centuries ago, it is in principle the rational, critical, reflective spirit of the Greeks that paves the way for the supreme achievement of mankind rather than Jesus.

Against this extremely important criticism of the claim for the finality of Jesus a very complex and thorough counterargument is required. I can here only indicate the directions such an argument must take. It must show both the dependence of

rational activity on something more fundamental than itself and the intrinsic limits of reason. I would argue, on the one hand, that participation in Christian existence liberates the reason to its fullest freedom and, on the other hand, that reason by itself can establish nothing whatsoever with respect to the meaning and purpose of existence.

We turn now to the kind of claim that can be made for the finality of Jesus in relation to the Indian achievement. Here too we must take note of a strong and persuasive counterclaim that it is in Indian religion and philosophy that Western existence must find its completion. In the discussion of the contributions of the East and of the West to the coming world civilization it is often proposed that whereas the West can contribute its technology, the East, and especially India, must provide the spiritual wisdom.

The argument for Indian superiority can be briefly outlined. According to this view Jesus is recognized as a truly great spiritual teacher. It is even possible to accept the view that he is true revelation of God and even Son of God. However, the Western mind has made of this correct interpretation an exclusive claim which is inevitably unacceptable to others who have found God in other forms. Indian thinkers, in contrast, have recognized the plurality of forms in which the holy power manifests itself to man and the plurality of ways in which men of diverse gifts and temperaments can and should approach God. Thus Indian thought can give ample place for the whole Christian experience without excluding others, whereas Christians are unable to be equally open to other manifestations of God and paths to salvation.

The claim for the superiority of Indian thought is a serious one with great appeal also in the West. Christians must listen carefully and recognize the truth in the criticism of their *all* too often condemnatory and imperialistic attitude toward other

religions. Nevertheless, Christians must also respond by reformulating and reaffirming their claim of the finality of Jesus if not of their own form of belief and existence.

There is first the low-level historical fact that in the interaction between Western and Indian culture the dominant influence in the life of the spirit has thus far been from West to East. This might, of course, simply mean that technological superiority involved some kind of compulsion upon the Indian mind to accept also other dimensions of influence, but I think this can be shown to be a superficial view. Few leaders of contemporary India would wish to give up the kind of humanism and humanitarianism which in recent times has been developing under Western influence. They prefer instead to see this as a natural development of their own tradition and to belittle the contribution of the West to its emergence. Likewise, if India is to survive in the modern world, she must enter into a concern for history that is far more Hebraic than Indian in its origins. Or again, the understanding of the relation of man and nature that underlies technology and its effective application to the problems of life involves the spiritual dimension of man. In the West the appropriate spiritual climate was formed by a synthesis of Greek and Hebraic achievements in which I have argued that the Hebraic in its peculiarly Christian form was the controlling principle. As India moves increasingly toward the incorporation into her total life of Western technology she must also adopt and adapt elements from the Western synthesis.

These highly pragmatic considerations are, of course, not decisive. The discussion needs to be conducted at another level, the level of the relation of the modes of existence of the two communities. Here it is my thesis that the mode of existence formed in the I-Thou relation to God is able to transform and fulfill the mode of existence to which Indian spiritual inward-

ness and mysticism has led. Without denying or belittling the value of the serenity and compassion in which Indian religion at its best eventuates, the Christian can and must affirm that the richly personal existence that fulfills itself in love for the neighbor can incorporate the values of Indian existence in a still higher synthesis.

Early in this chapter I noted that I could not suppose that the view of history in which the finality of Jesus Christ appears is a neutral or impartial one. This view of history is given to one who sees history in a perspective already formed by Jesus Christ. It is finally a confession rather than an argument, although a great many arguments may go into its self-explanation. Hence, I do not at all suppose that I or any one else can by critical description alone win all intelligent and rational men to the acknowledgment of Jesus' finality.

On the other hand, I do believe very strongly in the potential value of such an account. I believe that the encounter with Jesus has or can have on many persons an extremely potent effect that is often inhibited or dissipated by their inability to adopt formulations of Jesus' finality that they have been led to suppose are essential to its existential acceptance. The task of apologetics must at least be that of the removal of unnecessary stumbling blocks.

In this connection I am increasingly persuaded that we must radically dissociate, at least initially, the finality of Jesus and the Christian church. The Christian church certainly witnesses to that finality, but we should not suppose that the acknowledgment of that finality must necessarily involve identification with any existing Christian institution. Perhaps the next phase of the historical vindication of the finality of Jesus may not involve further extension of the institutional church. Perhaps it may be instead that Hindus, without ceasing to be Hindus, will find in Jesus the fulfillment of Hinduism. If so Hinduism

will also be transformed. In such a transformation, I am convinced, many features of Western Christianity would be duplicated or paralleled, but certainly not all. And we should not suppose that we of the West have the wisdom to discriminate the aspects of our form of Christianity that are universal in character.

II

There is a second dimension to the claim of the finality of Jesus. From the very beginning Christians have affirmed that God was present to and in Jesus in a preeminent way. Furthermore, Christians have believed that this presence of God to and in Jesus involved the distinctive initiative of God and was not simply a function of the peculiar virtue of this man.

The theological problems to which this conviction has given rise are notorious. When we affirm the primacy of the divine initiative in determining the divine presence, the genuine humanity of Jesus becomes doubtful. He appears more as a vessel or puppet than as a truly human person. On the other hand, the insistence on his full humanity tends to imply that God's presence was a consequence of Jesus' acts in relation to God and to his fellow man, that any man who acts as Jesus acted would know the same presence.

The church has officially rejected both the curtailment of the primacy of the divine initiative and the limitation of Jesus' full humanity. Christians have been convinced that what happened in Jesus cannot be explained simply as the result of the excellence of one human will. On the other hand, they have insisted that the human freedom and responsibility must not be denied. My belief is that here the church has shown sound judgment and that it is our task to maintain the dual affirmation.

Given this duality there are two possible approaches. One may start with the act of God and attempt to understand the humanity secondarily, or one may start with the full humanity and attempt to understand how God acted on and in that person. Roughly, these are the approaches of Alexandria and of Antioch. The creeds represent a compromise between these, but the typical orthodox interpretations of the creeds are Alexandrine. This Alexandrine victory expresses itself most clearly in the doctrine of the impersonal humanity of Jesus.

I believe this Alexandrine victory to have been exceedingly unfortunate, and I deplore its implied perpetuation in the slogan of the World Council of Churches. The Antiochenes were far more faithful to the Bible in their insistence on recognizing the fully personal humanity of Jesus. They lost out in part because they had available to them no conceptuality for explaining how God could at his own initiative be genuinely present to and in a man without displacing some element in the personal humanity of that man. The philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead offers us at this point new possibilities that have not yet been sufficiently explored. Hence the rest of this section is devoted to an attempt to indicate briefly how from a Whiteheadian perspective a Christian can affirm the special presence of God to and in a man without reducing the man's full personal responsible humanity on the one hand or minimizing the divine initiative on the other.

Whitehead's language is not easy, and this difficulty is rooted in the fact that his vision of reality differs markedly from that which, in spite of the twentieth-century scientific revolution, is still the common sense of Western man. Hence I must make a brief attempt to invite you into the strange new world of Whitehead's vision.

In the first sentence of his greatest work, *Process and Reality*, Whitehead wrote, "These lectures are based upon a recurrence

to that phase of philosophic thought which began with Descartes and ended with Hume." This tradition was one which began with the immediately given human experience as the basis for all reflection and all understanding of whatever is. It is, thus, subjectivist. The clue to reality is first and foremost experience itself in its full subjectivity. Whitehead shares this subjectivism.

However, the subjectivist tradition culminating in Hume regarded the data of experience as being qualities and qualities only. This leads in all consistency to solipsism, for if all that is given to the experiencing subject is qualities, he can have no basis for arriving at any notion of other entities than himself. Whitehead appeals to the fact that all of us are absolutely certain that our experience in any given moment does not exhaust reality, as indicating that the real data of our experience are not qualities but other entities. This modification of the subjectivist tradition causes Whitehead to characterize his position as a reformed subjectivism.

The only clue that we can have as to the nature of these other entities that we are constantly experiencing is our own experience. Hence Whitehead speculates that like ourselves they are actual occasions of experience. "Actual occasion of experience" is his technical term for the final individual entities which alone are fully actual. Everything else is either an aspect of such an occasion or a society of such occasions. Thus, the real individual things are all subjects, and each subject has as its data other subjects.

This statement needs to be qualified in one respect. An occasion of experience occurs in a moment and then is past. In the moment of its occurrence it enjoys subjectivity, but when it is past, that subjectivity is past, too. It is always as past that a subject functions as the datum for another subject, and such a past subject may properly be called an object. This means that the fundamental mode of real relationship is that

in which an occasion of experience has as its data objects that are past occasions of experience. This relationship Whitehead calls a prehension. Every real, direct relationship between men or between man and God is a prehension. If we are to understand what it must mean to speak of a relation between a man and God, we must grasp what is involved in a prehension.

The example of a prehension most readily accessible for reflection is the relation of a momentary occasion of human experience to a predecessor occasion. Consider for example your own experience in the moment in which I finish this sentence and the immediately preceding occasion of your experience. There is, I assume, an immense amount of continuity. Most of what you were feeling in the earlier moment you were feeling in the latter. This continuity did not depend upon conscious recall of the earlier experience by the latter. Rather it seems to flow into the latter, almost to continue itself in the latter. The high degree of this continuity was a function in part of the preceding occasion which, we will suppose, intended that an attitude of attention would be continued, and partly of the subsequent occasion which reaffirmed the intention to be attentive. Most of the meanings present in the earlier occasion recurred in the latter. Thus there was massive continuity of feeling and meaning between the two occasions.

In Whitehead's view we cannot speak of this simply as a continuation. The later moment of experience is a new experience, however similar it may be to the earlier. What is given in one occasion, if it is to be present also in the later occasion, must be reenacted there. The extent to which that reenactment occurs is determined partly by the earlier occasion and partly by the later one. For example, in the earlier moment you might have decided to shut me off because what I have to say is not worth attending to. In that case there would be much less reenactment in the subsequent occasion of the feelings (perhaps

of strain and annoyance) that had characterized the preceding experience. On the other hand, such a decision made in one moment might in a split second be reversed, so that the new occasion would after all reenact much of the experience of its predecessors.

When we are considering the weight of the influence of the earlier occasion on the later, we may speak of causal efficacy. Every occasion has causal efficacy for its successors. That means that in every moment of my experience I cannot help but be influenced by my past. I cannot choose not to be the person who has had those past experiences or to be now as if I had not had those experiences. However, it is very important to understand also what is not meant by causal efficacy. Causal efficacy does not mean that the past determines just how I will be influenced by it in the present. For example, in the illustration I gave before, your experience in the moment you reversed your decision to stop listening was clearly not determined by the previous decision to stop listening, but the experience in that moment was still quite different from what it would have been if the earlier decision had not occurred. The later occasion is necessarily affected by the earlier, but the way in which it is affected is by no means settled by the character of the earlier occasion. Causal efficacy is real but not totally determinative.

Viewed from the side of the new experience, the matter may be put as follows. The new experience mustprehend all its predecessors. They jointly constitute its initial data. But it may select from the total richness of the initial data as to the aspects of their experience that it will reenact. These aspects become its objective data, that is, by these selected qualities it objectifies its initial data, and only in this selected way are these past experiences allowed to become actively effective in the new occasion. The principle of selection is the subjective aim of the

new occasion, that is, the conscious or unconscious purpose that guides it to the attainment of some definite outcome.

I have been speaking of the relation of a momentary occasion of human experience to its predecessor. I selected this because we can think of this relation more easily than of any other. But we must remember that this is only one instance of a prehension. All real relations in the universe, from the electronic level to the divine are prehensions and are to be understood in fundamentally the same way. Every new occasion must take account of the past by reenacting it in some way, but just how it reenacts the past is never wholly determined by that past. Thus the past has causal efficacy for the future, and this explains the massive continuity in nature, but the present always determines just how that past will be effective, and this explains the spontaneity, unpredictability, life, and mentality, that are also real factors in the universe.

According to Whitehead God should not be viewed as an exception to the categorical scheme. Hence he must be understood as prehending all other entities and being prehended by them. Prehension involves selective reenaction. Hence something of what is present in each moment of my experience is a reenaction of some element of the divine experience. God is causally efficacious in every experience; or in other words, in every moment everyone prehends God.

This prehension of God is never trivial. On the contrary, it is absolutely essential to and decisive for the becoming of each occasion. I mentioned that the principle of selection from the initial data is the subjective aim of the new occasion. Whitehead shows that this subjective aim must have also an initial phase and that this initial aim can only be understood as derived from God. Thus the fundamental purpose of self-realization around which each new moment of experience actualizes itself is a part of God's causal efficacy for it. Apart from this

causal efficacy of God for the new occasion it could not occur at all.

The initial aim derived from God for each occasion is the ideal possibility for that occasion given the total situation. In its self-actualization the human occasion approximates that ideal only to some relative degree. For this failure to actualize in each moment the ideal possibility afforded us by God, we are, of course responsible, since the final self-determination of each occasion is its own.

Since every occasion receives its initial aim from God, the diversity in the relations with God in respect to this aim enjoyed by different persons lies in two factors. The first is the diversity of aims, and the second is the diverse degrees of approximation of the outcome to the ideal aim. For these reasons Whitehead's philosophy is open to the supposition that the aims provided by God for the successive occasions of Jesus' experience were markedly different from those provided by God for other persons. It is also open to the supposition of an identity or virtual identity of Jesus' self-actualization with the ideal aim, that does not appear elsewhere in history. Obviously, the factual judgment that Jesus was in these respects unique or even unusual cannot be made on philosophical grounds alone—only the judgment that such differences are possible.

This does not exhaust the ways in which the relation of God to Jesus may have been special. Although the philosophical scheme only requires that every occasion apprehend God in some way, and its derivation of the initial aim might suffice, Whitehead believes that at least many occasions apprehend God in other ways as well. Consider again the apprehension by yourself in one moment of your immediately preceding experience. Part of what you apprehend is the purpose that past had for this present, but in addition you apprehend many other feelings and meanings as well. Furthermore, in some instances it may even

be the purpose of the earlier occasion that it be fully felt in its successor.

In the same way God may be experienced by a human occasion in terms of other aspects of his divine experience besides his specific purpose for the becoming occasion. Furthermore, it may in some instances be the ideal aim for the new occasion that it apprehend God in a peculiarly full and rich way. If this is the case, we may suppose that Jesus was unusual or unique in the way in which God willed to present himself to him and in the fullness with which in conforming himself to God's ideal aim for him, he received that presence.

If we understand "incarnation" in an Antiochene sense rather than in an Alexandrine one, I believe that Whitehead's conceptuality allows for an explication unmatched in Christian history. That is, if we assume the full personal humanity of Jesus, then the problem of understanding incarnation is the problem of understanding how God can be genuinely, personally present in one human individual in a way he is not present in all. Whitehead's doctrine of apprehension as the one mode of real relation offers us an invaluable clue.

When I apprehend in one moment of my experience the immediately preceding experience, I reenact that experience more or less fully. That means that that experience actually recurs in the new experience. It is incarnate there. This does not mean that the subjective immediacy of the past experience, its integrity as a unique individual entity, recurs. That would be impossible. Every experience is a single individual unrepeatable entity, and as that actuality it can never recur. But its qualitative character, its intentions and aims can and do recur, and recur as the contribution of that past entity. Indeed, each new occasion is constituted by the recurrence in it of that which has occurred in its past. Thus the past is *really* present, not only to

but also in the present, giving to that present most of the richness and depth it enjoys.

One element in that reenacted or incarnated past, we have already seen, is God. But except for the unconscious derivation of the initial aim from him, most occasions of human experience reenact little if anything of the divine life. Perhaps any such reenactment is not in accordance with God's aim for them. But we may suppose a case in which God does aim to be the main content of that which is reenacted or incarnated from the past, so that an occasion of human experience would not so much reenact its own human past as some important aspect of the divine actuality. In such a case surely we could say with full literalness that God was incarnate in that human experience. If our historical evidence apprehended in faith warrants the claim that God was uniquely and decisively present in Jesus, Whitehead's philosophy enables us to understand the character of such a relationship.

Further, with this conceptuality we can see how God could be in Jesus on his own initiative without loss of the full personal freedom appropriate to Jesus' humanity. The initial aim is given by God, and only where God gives an initial aim that includes the primary effectiveness of the causal efficacy of his own experience can that experience have that efficacy. Jesus must be understood as selected for such a relation to God. On the other hand, the selection as a recurring act of God must in its turn be seen as dependent upon Jesus' response, and that response is not determined but only made possible by God's initiatory act.

Finally, the conceptuality of prehension allows us to avoid the common danger of supposing that if God is in Jesus, some aspect of Jesus' humanity must be thereby displaced. It is the essential character of an actual occasion of experience that its

constituent elements are the presence in it of other entities. The presence in me of other entities does not violate my unique individuality and self-determination but rather makes that individuality and self-determination possible. There is no displacement, there is rather empowerment. Hence, if Jesus prehended God not only in his receiving of the initial aim but also in other and more unusual ways, that means a vast enrichment of the past out of which in each new moment Jesus' own unity of experience came to be formed. The presence of God in Jesus would mean incomparable increase in his personal freedom and humanity.

III

Any adequate discussion of the finality of Jesus from a Whiteheadian perspective would not only have to develop the points made above much more fully but also introduce additional dimensions. In the first part of the chapter I argued that the kind of existence embodied in Jesus is historically final. Yet this in itself, even if it were successfully demonstrated, would leave many unanswered questions. These hinge especially on the relationship of the existence known by those who accept Jesus to Jesus' existence. There is, first, the question of the qualitative resemblance and difference of these modes of existence and, second, the question of the way in which the one gives rise to the other. In the second part of the chapter I argued that Whitehead enables us to understand the way in which God was present to and in Jesus. This gives rise to the question as to how God is present to and in the believer and further the question as to how the believer's relationship to God is related to his relationship to Jesus. The affirmation of the finality of Jesus normally involves the claim that through faith in him man enters into a final relationship also with God.

I believe that Whiteheadian conceptuality has rich possibilities for illuminating these questions in all their interconnections, but it is obviously impossible to carry out such a program in the space remaining in this chapter. I shall instead limit my remaining comments to one topic, involved in the foregoing questions but by no means exhausting them. That is the question of the relationship of the believer to Jesus. Of course, one part of this relationship is the believer's knowledge of Jesus' life and its impact on those who knew him. But for many Christians there has seemed to be some sense in which Jesus was present to them other than at this informational level. My thesis is that this sense of presence may not be altogether illusory.

Philosophically the issue hinges on the question of the causal efficacy of past events for the present or, in other words, the way in which a present occasion of experience prehends past occasions of experience. My belief is that Whitehead shows us the possibility of the unmediated prehension by a present entity of other entities in the past, even the distant past, and that the experience of some Christians seems to involve this kind of experience of Jesus. Because of the incredulity with which such an affirmation is likely to be met in our day, I will offer a brief suggestion as to the way in which it can be defended.

Once again we must consider the character of causality, but here with specific reference to time. This is a subject on which common sense and philosophy are alike profoundly confused. If you consider typical models for the understanding of causality you may conclude either that the cause is contemporary with the effect or that the cause is prior to the effect. If I take a rigid stick and push an object with it, the motion of the stick as cause seems to be contemporary with the motion of the object as effect. On the other hand, if I push a ball, the motion of the ball caused by my shove seems to come after the shove.

Positivistic philosophy since Hume has decided to solve the problem of cause by rejecting the category. We can describe either concomitant or successive changes and indicate statistical correlations between them. On this basis predictions can be made. There is nothing more to be said, for no additional relation between the changes can be observed.

Hume's critique of causality clearly shows that the fundamental notion underlying the term does not arise from sensory observation of environmental changes. Rather it arises in the immediacy of human experience itself. I find that the relation between the openness of my eyes and my visual experience gives itself to my experience as a causal one. I cannot but believe that certain events in the eye have a profound causal efficacy for my experience of color. Likewise I cannot but believe that my thoughts have a causal influence on my hand as I write these words. I experience my experience as both effect and cause of other events in my body. If I am told that this is a matter of statistical correlation only, I remain incredulous.

These causal relations between my eye and my experience and between my experience and the motion of my fingers involve temporal succession. We might not be able to recognize this introspectively, but physiologically it is well established. Messages are communicated through the nerves at a fantastic but finite speed. Cause precedes effect. This is further supported by the examples of causality I employed earlier where I spoke of the impact of one momentary human experience upon its successor. In this relationship, clearly, temporal succession exists between cause and effect.

If now we take the notion of causality as it arises in subjective personal experience and speculate that something like it obtains also among the real individual entities in the rest of nature, we find interesting and useful confirmation. According to the theory of relativity, the contemporary is defined precisely as the

unrelated. All real physical relations obtain between the past and the present. The possibility of causal efficacy between contemporaries is excluded.

Thus far I have argued for one simple point that many would gladly have conceded, namely that causal relations always involve time and that the cause always precedes the effect. It has been necessary to elaborate the argument because the doctrine that the cause precedes the effect has far stranger consequences than we ordinarily recognize, and my further speculations hinge on the acceptance of these strange consequences.

If the cause is always in the past of the effect, this means that something that no longer exists, and indeed *only* something that no longer exists, has efficacy in the present. Common sense avoids the offense of this doctrine by assuming that although the entity that functions as cause has ceased to exist, it has only just now ceased to exist. One thinks of the impulse as beginning in the past but continuously moving into the future. As long as the idea of a continuum of motion is uppermost, the scandal of a causally efficacious past seems tolerable. However, we now know that neither in the nervous system nor in the subatomic world can the idea of continuous motion be employed. There are discrete occurrences that cease before they become effective for successors. The cause is really in the past of the effect as something finished and discrete.

If we genuinely recognize that all the causal influences on the present are past, then we must grant to the past some significant status. It is not enough, although certainly true, to state that the past is now nonexistent. It is a very peculiar type of nonexistence, namely, a causally efficacious nonexistence.

Once an entity has changed from the status of being presently existent to that of being nonexistent, there is no ontological necessity for supposing a further change from being a causally efficacious nonexistent to being a nonefficacious nonexistent.

If a past event of 1/10 second ago can exercise direct causal efficacy for me now, what of a past event of one second ago? Is there in principle any difference?

So long as we take our models for conceiving causal efficacy from billiard balls, whatever the philosophical possibilities, our instinctive answer is that the causal efficacy of the earlier event exhausted itself in its contribution to its immediate successor and is now only indirectly effective. But we have seen that at the level of billiard balls the concept of causality is at best misleading. If we turn instead to the fundamental basis of reflection on causality, our own immediate experience, and if we divorce ourselves from the prejudices derived from Newtonian mechanics, the answer seems to be quite different.

When, for example, a childhood experience vividly returns to consciousness with much of its emotive tone after years of being consciously wholly forgotten, how are we to understand what has happened? Are we to suppose that the full richness of that moment has been actually present in every intervening experience? This would require us to think of the unconscious as possessing a completeness of retention of every past experience that staggers the imagination and seems profoundly implausible. Or are we to think of the brain as having retained a physiological analogue of that experience utterly intact through all these years and then as suddenly releasing it. This attributes to the brain a kind of storage capacity that even its amazing complexity cannot begin to justify. What seems to occur is that the distant past experience itself is directly causally efficacious in the present experience.

I grant that the thought of immediate influence of a remote past event on the present is as baffling to our ordinary ways of thought as is the unchanged presence of that remote past in the unconscious or in the brain through all the intervening experiences. My argument, however, is that this strangeness is the

product of failure to recognize that all causal efficacy is of the now not-existing. Once this is really understood, the question of temporal proximity can be seen as a secondary one. Since our experience seems to give us numerous instances of the influence of past experiences other than the immediately preceding one on present experience, and since there is no ontological difficulty in affirming this kind of relation, I wish quite simply to assert its occurrence.

Now we must ask whether the only past experiences that can affect our present experience are those we identify as our own. In terms of the general Whiteheadian framework there is no reason to suppose that this would be the case, and Whitehead himself thought that there is empirical evidence that this is not the case. He refers to instances of mental telepathy as indicating the immediate influence of other persons' experiences upon us. I will not argue about this much-disputed matter except to say that I am personally convinced that the resistance to acceptance of the evidence in favor of mental telepathy arises from basic assumptions as to its impossibility rather than from any lack of empirical evidence. Since Whitehead's philosophy both allows the possibility and provides a thoroughly intelligible explanation of how it occurs, I am persuaded of its factuality.

Normally, mental telepathy seems to be the prehension by one experience of an immediately preceding experience of another person. Since we have seen that prehensions may occur of past experiences that are not temporally proximate, and since we are now affirming that there can be prehensions of experiences of other persons, we are finally prepared to ask whether the prehensions of the experiences of other persons must always be of immediately past experiences, or whether they too may be of the more remote past. Once again there is nothing in Whitehead's philosophy to preclude such pre-

hensions of remote past experiences of other persons. Whether or not such prehensions occur is a purely factual question.

It cannot be denied that some persons report experiences that they understand as of this sort. Some sensitives seem to be able to describe experiences associated with the past history of objects presented to them. Occasionally persons have reported vivid experiences of the way a particular landscape appeared in past times. Claimed memories of previous lives could well be interpreted in these terms without resort to the hypothesis of transmigration. Some sense can be made of the depth psychological doctrine of a collective unconscious if we posit a direct unconscious prehension of innumerable experiences of the remote past.

I realize, of course, the great amount of incredulity that must be overcome before any of these phenomena or theories can gain serious attention in our day. That they have nevertheless continued to play some role in modern life and that students have been persuaded of the factuality of remarkable phenomena, whatever explanation is to be accorded them, suggests to me that human experience is far richer and more complex than ordinarily recognized. My conviction here again is that we should at least approach these phenomena with an open mind and that Whitehead's philosophy enables us to do so. When we do so, we gain some empirical support for the speculation that there are immediate prehensions of remote past experiences.

I assume that the vast majority of such prehensions are unconscious, and that most of these are trivial in their influence upon the present. On the other hand, some that are unconscious, may yet have important effects. Others may dimly qualify consciousness, and on very rare occasions some may even enter into vivid consciousness. If we continue our speculation as to how it happens that some of these past events have a significant direct influence on the present, we will do best to

generalize from those less rare occasions on which an event in our own past suddenly becomes vividly present to us. This sometimes occurs without any apparent cause in the present. However, it is more often triggered by some aspect of the present situation. We speak of being reminded by something. Or we are guided by a skilled psychologist down a chain of associations, or under hypnosis a suggestion of the hypnotist is effective in causing us to reenact some part of our past.

This general discussion of the causal effect of the past upon the present is intended to set a context in which it becomes possible to take seriously the claim of some Christians that Jesus is immediately and effectively present in their lives. I am arguing that the unmediated prehension of past occasions even in the lives of others is possible. I would suggest that an attitude of expectancy, attention, and belief would be likely to facilitate such prehension and to determine which elements of the past should be prominent in their causal efficacy upon the present. Where such an attitude of expectancy, attention, and belief directed toward Jesus is shared with a community, as in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the possibility of the effective presence of Jesus to the individual believer is still further heightened. But the same presence might occur in private prayer, or even when there is no observable occasion for its occurrence in the immediate situation.

In itself the presence of Jesus to the believer proves nothing about his finality. If a case is to be made for finality, it must be in terms of the consequences in our existence of his presence and especially the consequences for our relationship to God. For the Christian the relationship to Jesus is experienced as the one adequate ground for his relationship to God. That this is true can only be confessed, not argued.

THE FINALITY OF CHRIST IN AN ESCHATOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The affirmation of the finality of Christ is at best a theological option. However, it is a dubious option. For truth is an attribute of its occurrence, and Christ's finality does not occur when Christ is being affirmed as final. The history of Christology is the graveyard for just such direct claims about Jesus of Nazareth, because direct claims have no essential capacity to evoke a living faith. Jesus was believed to be anointed by God for the fulfillment of a mission. Yet the history of theology has been the history of the adulation of his person, and grandiose claims for Christ have lacked an essential connection with "what really happened." The titles of Jesus express a quite different reality when considered as events of disclosure than when considered as predicates of Jesus' person.

The first important break with Christology as direct claim for Christ came in the Protestant Reformation, when theology replaced what had become honorific personal titles with titles which indicated what he really did, titles bearing upon his functions, his offices, generally called the offices of prophet, priest, and king. The second and even more decisive break with the history of Christology has occurred in modern times in the realization that the person of Jesus functioned within an