

# Visio: the Method of Robert Crouse's Philosophical Theology<sup>1</sup>

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There can be no return to Eden. The natural good can be restored and sustained, the beast can be tamed, but...only by the gifts of grace in the supernatural virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Paradise is possible only if the soul is “transhumanised” (“*transumanar*” is Dante’s word); only if the intellect is enabled by faith to fix its vision upon the eternal Good; only if the will is strengthened by hope to pursue that Good; only if the powers of the soul are united in that eternal Charity, that divine *amor* which moves the sun and the other stars. “That is not only theology for the end of time, but anthropology for the here and now.”<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

One of the two scholars who share with Robert Crouse devotion both to Platonism and the organ remarked that all his writings were also musical compositions.<sup>3</sup> Robert’s lectures, sermons, and scholarly publications were polished works of art characterised by economy, harmonic balance, linguistic precision, and structural beauty. This held true for all his contributions to twenty-seven<sup>4</sup> years of the Atlantic Theological Conference which came to a perfect conclusion with the words I have just quoted. His “Response” was part of the consideration of *Christian Psychology: The Formation of Souls*, the abiding focus of his work; he was commenting on Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, for him the unsurpassed poetic synthesis of pagan and Christian wisdom and literary beauty; and he, Professor Esolen, and Dante were speaking of the Last Things. Robert spoke then, as always, of the end of time ever manifest in the transitoriness of temporal things, coming in the cosmic, human, and individual future, and present in the eternal now of the Divine Diagram and of the Trinitarian structure the unity of Person confers on *anthropos*.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was presented to “Recognizing the Sacred in the Modern Secular: How the sacred is to be discovered in today’s world,” the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Atlantic Theological Conference, June 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011, University of King’s College, Halifax. It is published in *Recognizing the Sacred in the Modern Secular. How the sacred is to be discovered in today’s world*, edited by Susan Harris and Nicholas Hatt (Charlottetown, St Peter Publications, 2012), 115-148 and will be published in a collection of Robert’s papers for the Atlantic Theological Conference being edited by Neil Robertson.

<sup>2</sup> Robert D. Crouse, “Response to Anthony Esolen,” *Christian Psychology: The Formation of Souls*, Proceedings of the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Atlantic Theological Conference, June 24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008, edited Susan Harris & Daniel Wilband (Charlottetown: St Peter Publications, 2009), 115–131 at 131. These are Fr Crouse’s last published words to the Atlantic Theological Conference which he helped found in 1981. He addressed 27 of the conferences.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Gersh, the other is Werner Beierwaltes.

<sup>4</sup> I cannot fail to note the perfection of twenty-seven as three times nine. Once (1988) Robert delivered important concluding remarks rather than a paper or a response.

The Conference has begun to take a new direction in the recent meetings at which Robert was not present.<sup>5</sup> However, the conclusion, which his response gave to the past he had fundamentally shaped, invites and enables us to consider what has been accomplished. I undertake this because thirty years of a conference with published reports is an astonishing accomplishment unmatched in Canada which compels celebration, and because, by celebrating this, we see something of the scope and unchanging character of Robert's theological work. However, there is another reason to outline the history. Through the course of the conferences Robert's judgment on a most important and timely matter does change, and I must speak about that in the concluding part of this paper. After my sketch of our history, I shall speak first of what Fr Crouse taught in his theological papers, then of his method, and finally of what changed for him in the course of the three decades which his contributions spanned.

It seems to me that the Conference has gone through three phases, which I shall name "Anglican", "Western Christian", and "Eschatological", and is now moving into another phase, one which reflects the diminution of Anglicanism and Western Christianity in Atlantic Canada, and the growth of Eastern Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and secularity here, and the power of non Christian religions and cultures globally. I shall follow the 2004 Conference by calling this new phase "Multicultural". The completed phases approximately correspond to the three decades of its working: the 1980s, the 1990s, and the first ten years of the new millennium.

Although the Anglican phase began with a conference on "A Need for a Catholic Voice in the Church Today" and drew only on local talent, it immediately established three characteristics which have abided. First, despite the title and location, St Peter's Cathedral, Charlottetown, founded to be and continuing as the Tractarian lighthouse in the Anglican Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, it was not a party affair. The first speaker was the strongest Evangelical Anglican voice in Atlantic Canada, Dr R.A. Ward, and he preached on the necessity of the atonement as divine propitiation. Later Dr Ward would be succeeded by leading English, American, Swedish, and Australian Evangelical theologians.<sup>6</sup> Second, and in accord with this, we were engaged in a process of self-education. More stunning even than the increasingly distinguished theologians, scholars, and church leaders from ever more distant parts which the Conference attracted was the extraordinary learning undertaken by those educated here. I cannot fail to

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<sup>5</sup> The 2004 and 2009 conferences considered Judaism and Islam alongside Christianity both historically and in relation to present actuality, see *Multiculturalism and Religious Freedom*, Proceedings of the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Atlantic Theological Conference, Fredericton, June 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004, edited Susan Harris (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 2005) and *Changing our Mind on Secularization. The Contemporary Debate about Secular and Sacred in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, Proceedings of the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Atlantic Theological Conference Charlottetown, June 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009, edited Wayne J. Hankey & Nicholas Hatt, both online and printed (Charlottetown: St Peter Publications, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Most notably, but not exclusively: Dr Roger Beckwith, Dr Philip Hughes, Bishop FitzSimons Allison, Dr James I. Packer, and Bishop E. Donald Cameron.

mention David Curry's work on the lectionary which is unequalled in the Anglican world, but this is only indicative.<sup>7</sup> Canon law, scriptural interpretation, literature, the history of doctrine, church history, liturgy, iconography, all these, and more, drew devoted and careful labour. Third, the work was equally theoretical and spiritual. Development of the life of prayer, and growth in charity, went with self-education, for the sake of building religious community. For me the moment which most revealed how knowledge and charity were growing in us simultaneously was Fr Crouse's sermon at the 1985 conference on "The Prayer Book." From the pulpit of St Peter's Cathedral during High Mass in the presence of the Warden of Latimer House, Oxford, that Evangelical epicentre, he preached on "The Eucharistic Doctrine in the Prayer Book." Using the copy of Cranmer's works formerly owned by the first Rector of St Peter's, employing no other words than Cranmer's, and to his own joyful astonishment as much as to that of his hearers, Robert exhibited a doctrine which was undeniably Catholic.

For the first decade of this Conference, all this work, learning, thought, and spiritual growth were dedicated to reconstructing the basis of the Anglican Church through revivifying its forms in the face of contemporary criticism and problems. I am not afraid to say that nothing nearly equal to this was enterprised elsewhere in the two hundred years since the party divisions within Anglicanism became fixed. Moreover, theoretically at least, the effort was successful. Why it failed to arrest the self-destruction of the Anglican Communion, Fr Crouse explained to us repeatedly, and to that we shall turn in due course, but, now I must say something about the other two phases.

After the Conference dealt with essentials of institutional Anglicanism: initiation (1982), ecclesiastical polity (1984), the Prayer Book (1985), the Lambeth Quadrilateral (1987), the interpretation of Scripture (1988), the Thirty-nine Articles (1989), the doctrines of atonement and sacrifice (1990), a second phase emerged. Its concern was larger than Anglicanism; it expanded to consider problems before Western Christianity as a whole: the environment, tradition and the development of doctrine, the challenge of secularity, anthropology, reformation and reform, the person of Christ, political theology, ordination, iconography. In the course of these, Robert's papers changed their tone in a way so strikingly exhibited in his words with which I began, and with which he ended his speaking to us. Sometimes this was because of the topics adopted by the Conference in the new millennium: Christ as Alpha and Omega (2000), the Journey home (2001), Providence (2002), and that to which we are being led, friendship with God and one another (2005). Because of this direction in the topics, I name this phase of the Conference, Eschatological. But there is another reason Robert's papers, both in the meetings devoted to these topics, and in others beginning already in the 1990s, turned to teaching us how to live in end times, how to live, as the first Christians did, in the

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<sup>7</sup> David P. Curry, "Doctrinal Instrument of Salvation: The Use of Scripture in the Prayer Book Lectionary," *The Prayer Book*, A Theological Conference held at St. Peter's Cathedral Charlottetown, P.E.I., June 25<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>, 1985, edited G. Richmond Bridge (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1986), 29-70.

consciousness that the end was at hand. As striking as his Catholic sermon drawn from Archbishop Cranmer was the judgment he delivered in 1993:

[I]n current Anglicanism,...the Church in process of disintegration as an institution, professes liberality while actually becoming ever more insistently bureaucratic, imposing on reluctant but still respectful congregations the banal fabrications of impoverished imagination. In all this, Christian memory (and therefore Christian faith and understanding) must be the victim.<sup>8</sup>

This judgment is the center of the turn in Robert's thought which I shall treat in the last part of this paper. Now, however, we consider what did not change.

#### ETERNAL FORMS

It is both obvious to Christian faith, and demonstrable to understanding, that the authority of God is absolute. "Authority", as the etymology of the word itself suggests, refers to the defining and directing power in an author or originator. The idea of the absolute authority of God is thus implicit in the very notion of God as the almighty and eternal source and author of all that is, who governs all things by an indefectible providence...<sup>9</sup>

Thus, Fr Crouse in 1984, what follows he gave us in 2002.

The Fathers of the Church discerned the doctrine of God's providence not only in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, but also in the speculative and scientific theology of the Greek philosophers. They saw it not only as a fundamental tenet of religious faith, divinely revealed, but also as a necessary postulate of any rational thought about God, the world and human destiny. That meeting of faith and theological science which so characterised patristic thought in this and so many other matters, was already present, of course, in the Scriptures, perhaps most strikingly in the Wisdom Literature, in the vision of the transcendent divine wisdom ordering all things "strongly and sweetly".

In the tradition of Platonic theology, especially, from the time of Plato himself, through the Middle Platonists and Neoplatonists to that last great Neoplatonic theologian, Proclus..., the doctrine of God's providence was always a primary consideration. "God", says the Athenian stranger in Plato's

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<sup>8</sup> Robert D. Crouse, "Tradition and Renewal," *Tradition: Received and Handed On*, Proceedings of the 1993 Atlantic Theological Conference, 27<sup>th</sup> June-1<sup>st</sup> July, 1993, edited D. A. Petley (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1994), 90-98 at 94.

<sup>9</sup> Robert D. Crouse, "The Prayer Book and the Authority of Tradition," *Church Polity and Authority*, Proceedings of a Theological Conference held at the University of King's College, Halifax, Nova Scotia, May 27<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup>, 1984, edited G. Richmond Bridge (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1985), 53-61 at 53.

*Laws*, “as the old tradition declares, holding in his hand the beginning, middle and end of all that is, travels, according to his nature, in a straight line towards the accomplishment of his end. Justice always accompanies him, and is the punisher of those who fall short of the divine law.”<sup>10</sup> “Furthermore,” explains the stranger, “it would be false and impious to suppose that God’s providence could be neglectful of even the smallest things.”<sup>11</sup> According to Plato’s doctrine, the divine providence is all-knowing, all-powerful, unchanging and absolutely good.<sup>12</sup> But also in Plato’s dialogues, all the difficulties of such a doctrine, and of the correlative conception of predestination, are raised and discussed.<sup>13</sup>

The greatest of the many pleasures of reading our master’s theological papers is these authoritative revelations of the eternal forms which come out of the humble study, obedient prayer, and contemplative silence of his life. I shall say something about what characterises his disclosures of the changeless ideas in the Divine Mind, but before doing so, I must quote one more, because their astonishing freshness comes out strikingly in it. Here, for the conference on “Holy Living: Christian Morality Today”, Fr Crouse is discussing reconciliation. He opens by declaring it to be “the beginning, and the end, and the whole meaning of Christian life.” He goes on:

In a fundamental sense..., the ministry of reconciliation is finished. Our reconciliation has been accomplished, once for all; for Christ’s sake, we are accounted friends of God, and God accounts us so, so we are. We are reconciled... But, in another sense, our reconciliation is not complete, until our life of friendship, our life of charity, is finally fulfilled in the perfect knowledge and the perfect love of God; until, finally, we shall know as we are known. Friendship is not, after all, some static, finished thing, but a condition and a context in which we grow....Reconciliation includes...our beginning and our growth in friendship. And it includes, as well, that unity of spirit which is the aim and end of friendship; so reconciliation is the very life of heaven....It is in that perspective of divine and human friendship that we must consider the questions of Christian morality...<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Plato, *Laws*, IV, 718 [note RDC].

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 902 [note RDC].

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 901 [note RDC].

<sup>13</sup> Robert D. Crouse, “The Doctrine of Providence in Patristic and Medieval Theology,” *Providence: the Will of God in Human Affairs*, Papers delivered at the Twenty-Second Annual Atlantic Theological Conference, June 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26th, 2002, University of King’s College, Halifax, Nova Scotia, edited Susan Harris (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 2003), 27–37 at 27.

<sup>14</sup> Robert D. Crouse, “The Ministry of Reconciliation: Anglican Approaches,” *Holy Living: Christian Morality Today*, A Theological Conference held at the University of King’s College, Halifax, Nova Scotia, May 20th–23<sup>rd</sup>, 1986, edited G. Richmond Bridge (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1987), 50–58 at 50–51.

Morality is to be seen in the context of divine and human friendship, the life of heaven! What paradisaical freshness, old things, indeed, eternal things, made new.

Would that my task this evening might be exhausted by reading Robert's texts to you and sharing my delight in them! However, this is a theological conference and we are set to drudgery divine, so I must offer analysis. Let us consider some characteristics of his theology, present from the beginning of his papers for the Conference, and abiding until the end.

First, theology is a participation in God's knowledge. At the initial meeting of the Conference, Robert defined it:

In the first place, theology is God's own knowledge—that eternal and perfect knowledge by which God knows himself and all his creatures. In the second place, it is our imperfect sharing in that divine knowledge.<sup>15</sup>

Because God created all things according to the words, forms, or ideas he thinks or speaks in his Son, these eternal essences are known both to philosophical reflection as well as to what is given by inspiration. The Jewish and Christian holy scriptures are sources of theology, but its nature forbids that they be its only *loci*. Indeed, just the opposite. The title of Robert's first paper to the Conferences, on "Dogmatic Theology in the Church Today" proclaimed, quoting St Vincent of Lerins [*Commonitorium*, ii], that theology concerned "Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus". Thus, the test of theology's "authenticity is its catholicity, or universality; as the Vincentian Canon puts it, "*Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*"; "what is believed everywhere, always and by everyone."<sup>16</sup> Of necessity, Fr Crouse discerned the changeless ideas which constitute the substance of theology both in pagan and in Jewish and Christian sources. Thus, any of his papers might equally start from either the scriptural or the pagan side. Indeed, he judged the unification of the two to be essential to theology. Scripture itself, the pagan theologians, the Church Fathers, and the Mediaeval Doctors united inspired and philosophical knowledge.<sup>17</sup> He followed them.

Second, the given is a simple *logos* or *ratio*, an intelligible structure. However, just as these divine words are received by humans in intellectual intuition, in philosophical reflection, and by inspiration, and are only properly

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<sup>15</sup> Robert D. Crouse, "*Quod Ubique, Quod Semper, Quod ab Omnibus: Dogmatic Theology in the Church Today*," *Conference Report: A Need for a Catholic Voice in the Church Today* (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1981), 11–16 at 11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> So, for example: "St. Thomas' position involves a remarkable conflation of the doctrine of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* with the Augustinian theology of grace. Aristotle's conception of love (*philia*) as including all the virtues serves as a paradigm for Thomas' doctrine of charity, which, he says, is a certain friendship between man and God, whereby man loves God and God loves man..." Robert D. Crouse, "The Development of the Doctrine of Sin and Grace from Augustine to Anselm," *The Journey Home: Sin and Grace*, Papers delivered at the 2001 Atlantic Theological Conference, St Peter's Cathedral, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, edited Susan Harris (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 2002), 37–46 at 44.

understood when these modes are united or reconciled, so also they manifest themselves as a balance, or harmony, of elements, and to each idea there is a proper problematic. Though the divine words are simple and changeless in themselves, time, and the mode of human knowing, positively explicate, or reveal, their inner structure. This articulation enables the mutual reciprocity and harmony, the friendship of the elements, to appear; so time is the medium of glory or theophany. In distinct temporal epochs, the ideas are articulated differently, but, although none exhaust the forms, for humble loving vision, the fundamental logic can always manifest itself, and it does so beautifully. Robert gave a splendid example from sculpture. He started with “a massive bronze font, dating from 1225, in the Cathedral at Hildesheim”:

The font rests upon four figures, representations of the four rivers of Eden, symbolizing...the four cardinal virtues; and rising from that base are representations of the works of redemption, of grace and mercy. The iconography is complex, but the main point is clear: grace presupposes nature and builds upon it. The other illustration, also from the thirteenth century, probably about 1270, is in the Church of San Giovanni Fuorcivitas...in Tuscany. It is a holy water stoup, carved in stone...Around the bowl, Giovanni Pisano has carved representations of the cardinal virtues; and, on the shaft supporting the bowl, the three theological virtues: faith, hope and charity. The message is clear: grace sustains nature; nature depends upon grace for its restoration and fulfilment. Both, I think are right; together they seem a marvellous illustration of the dialectical interplay of grace and nature in the life of virtue.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the ravages of polemic, patient contemplation can discern the mutual implication between justification and sanctification as two sides of one simultaneous activity. Purged illumination finds St Paul, St Augustine, the Council of Orange, St Anselm, St Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Thomas Cranmer, Richard Hooker, and the Council of Trent in agreement and Fr Crouse sums up the *consensus fidelium* with the words of the Council:

Trent, also following St Augustine, declines to allow a division between justification and sanctification: “Justification is not only remission of sins, but sanctification and renovation of the inner man through the voluntary reception of grace and gifts, whence man becomes just from unjust, and

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<sup>18</sup> Robert D. Crouse, “Hope Among the Virtues,” *I am the Alpha and the Omega: Jesus for a New Millennium*, Papers delivered at the 2000 Atlantic Theological Conference, Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, New Brunswick, edited Susan Harris (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 2002), 66–74 at 72.

friend from enemy, that he might be heir according to the hope of life eternal.” (Tit. 8,7)<sup>19</sup>

It is important for Robert’s vision of time without history that the Anglican reformation held to the simultaneity of imputed and communicated righteousness because Archbishop Cranmer followed Augustine mediated through Peter Lombard and the *Glossa ordinaria*. And thus, Cranmer and Aquinas use the same doctrinal formula.<sup>20</sup> Again and again, it will turn out that, for Fr Crouse, Anglicans can joyfully and securely follow their liturgical and spiritual tradition because they preserve the essential connection with the Fathers and Scripture by way of continuity with the Mediaeval Doctors.

Third, however, there is another side. Time and human ratiocination also negatively allow the elements of the simple divine words to be broken up, so that their balanced structure and harmony is no longer seen. We forget, and the loss of memory is the loss of the proper human good. Weakness, evil, and sin belong to it. Repeatedly Robert reminded us of the disintegration which was contemporary with the greatest symphony uniting all the elements of Western Christian culture, Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. So, for example, when treating sin and grace, he spoke of Beatrice as representing “the unity of earthly and heavenly loves, the charity which is the gift of grace”, and then went on:

Dante, however, with his understanding of sin and grace in terms of the Augustinian-Aristotelian-Thomistic doctrine of love, represents the end of an era. Francesco Petrarca, his younger contemporary, can find no possible coherence between earthly and heavenly loves, and is tortured by the contradiction; Boccaccio...does not even strive in that direction. For William Occam...there can be no coherence of nature and grace, because the absolute freedom of the divine will in no way substantiated any natural good.<sup>21</sup>

A year later, Fr Crouse again exhibited for us the accord of divine predestination and human freedom in terms of the *Comedy*, and its breakdown among contemporaries of Dante, in much the same terms.<sup>22</sup> During the Conference on Christian Anthropology, he showed what was, for him, the crucial

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<sup>19</sup> Robert D. Crouse, “Justification and Sanctification in the Thought of St Paul and St Augustine,” *Justification and Sanctification*, Papers delivered at the Twenty-Seventh Annual Atlantic Theological Conference, May 29<sup>th</sup> to June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007, Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, New Brunswick, edited Susan Harris (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 2008), 1–10 at 9. He is quoting Denzinger’s *Enchiridion*, 31<sup>st</sup> ed., § 799, p. 287.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–9.

<sup>21</sup> Robert D. Crouse, “The Development of the Doctrine of Sin and Grace from Augustine to Anselm,” *The Journey Home: Sin and Grace*, Papers delivered at the 2001 Atlantic Theological Conference, St Peter’s Cathedral, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, edited Susan Harris (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 2002), 37–46 at 45.

<sup>22</sup> Crouse, “The Doctrine of Providence in Patristic and Medieval Theology,” 36–37.

unity in distinction both for God and the human, that of intellect and love in the “Trinitarian paradigm”, as set out by Dante, He went on to trace its dislocation:

If we find in the poetry of Dante the most finished expression of the Christian anthropology of the High Middle Ages, we must also recognize that, even as he was writing the *Comedy*, powerful movements were afoot, opening up radically new and different directions of thought about human nature and destiny....Duns Scotus, William Occam, Meister Eckhart, Francesco Petrarca [were] all...heralds of radically new ways of thinking.... One thinks of Duns Scotus’ insistence upon the *haecceitas*, the “thisness”, the absolutely irreducible individuality of each existing thing; one thinks of Eckhart’s focussing upon the absolute unitary ground of the self; one thinks of the voluntarism (the doctrine of the priority of the will) in Scotus and Occam; but perhaps most antithetical to the whole Augustinian and Medieval tradition in anthropology was the isolation of theology from metaphysics and the natural sciences in Duns Scotus, the abolition of metaphysics altogether in Occam, and the relegation of theology to the realm of faith alone—faith now being considered essentially act of will rather than of intellect.<sup>23</sup>

Dr Crouse finds present here what historians usually wait to attribute to modernity:

Sometimes the famous *cogito* of Descartes is hailed as the charter of modern thought; but already in the fourteenth century, especially in Eckhart and the other German mystics, the conception of pure subjectivity, in the presence of the infinite, as the ground of speculation, is already powerfully present. Also, modernity’s inclination, so prominent in such moderns as Kant and Fichte, to assert the pre-eminence of will over intellect, has its roots in the voluntarism of Scotus and Occam. And the *Amor*, which for Dante, as a reciprocal relation of intellect and will, was the *moto spirituale* moving the soul towards God, is for a new humanist, such as Petrarca, just an intense sentiment, which can only divide him from that end.<sup>24</sup>

Both recollection and forgetfulness are always possible. It happens that aspects of Anglican theology, liturgy, and spirituality are saved from these particular distortions, but, in Robert’s judgment, the forgetful loss of the reciprocal harmony of the original governing, and always, in principle, accessible, theological *logos* will have totally destructive consequences for the church in our time. Before

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<sup>23</sup> Robert D. Crouse, “Trinitarian Anthropology in the Latin Middle Ages,” *Christian Anthropology: the Trinitarian Theology of Man*, Proceedings of the Atlantic Theological Conference, edited Susan Harris (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1997), 63–73 at 71–72.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

considering that, let me return to happier considerations. They will move us toward an essential of Robert's theology, his rejection of time as history.

We have already seen two ways in which, for him, Anglican theology escaped determination by the distortions in some Late Mediaeval movements and remained connected with the *consensus fidelium*, the truth discernable, everywhere, always, and by all. The first was in Cranmer's adhesion to essentials of a Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist. The second was his holding to the necessary simultaneity and reciprocity of imputed and communicated righteousness because the Archbishop followed Augustine mediated by the mediaevals. Later Fr Crouse found the same Anglican preservation of the Augustinian and mediaeval doctrine by which grace and nature cohere because the Prayer Book kept the Patristic and Mediaeval Eucharistic lectionary. He concluded with these words:

When the Reformers took over that lectionary from the Sarum Missal of the medieval Church of England, it already had a history of a thousand years, in large part dating back at least as far as a fifth-century table of lessons..., and representing most perfectly the Augustinian doctrinal tradition of medieval Christendom, of which it was also the chief doctrinal instrument...The Collect for the First Sunday after Trinity, a translation of the medieval Latin collect, sums up the doctrine perfectly. "O God, the strength of all them that put their trust in thee: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without thee, grant us the help of thy grace, that in the keeping of thy commandments we may please thee both in will and deed."<sup>25</sup>

Equally, the next year, Fr Crouse brought his paper to an end with George Herbert's poem addressed to Providence ("O Sacred Providence, who from end to end strongly and sweetly movest!") which attested to how the Patristic and Mediaeval understanding of the interpenetration of the divine and human wills lived on in Classical Anglicanism.

We all acknowledge both thy power and love  
To be exact, transcendent, and divine;  
Who dost so strongly and so sweetly move,  
While all things have their will, yet none but thine.

For either thy *command*, or thy *permission*  
Lay hands on all: they are thy right and left.  
The first puts on with speed and expedition;  
The other curbs sin's stealing pace and theft.

Nothing escapes them both; all must appear,

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<sup>25</sup> Crouse, "The Development of the Doctrine of Sin and Grace from Augustine to Anselm," 46.

And be dispos'd, and dress'd, and tun'd by thee,  
 Who sweetly temper'st all. If we could heare  
 Thy skill and art, what musick would it be!<sup>26</sup>

### TIME IS NOT HISTORY

In 1969 George Grant, who had taught Robert Crouse philosophy at Dalhousie twenty years earlier and later became a colleague there, delivered a series of Massey Lectures entitled "Time as History." He explained Frederick Nietzsche's understanding of time under the suppositions that this was the ruling conception of our epoch and that Nietzsche revealed our reality: "I am concerned", Dr Grant said, "with what it means to conceive the world as an historical process, to conceive time as history and man as an historical being."<sup>27</sup> Crucially, time as history made the Platonic philosophy, and Christianity, as revelation of the eternal, unthinkable; contemplation as the divine and human good was impossible. It chagrined Dr Grant no end that the belief in progress, which was for him atheism, was proclaimed weekly from the pulpit of the Anglican parish where he worshipped.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, as we now know, time as progressive history is the one essential doctrine of the revolutionary church. Professor Grant explains this teaching which he and Fr Crouse opposed:

History is that dimension in which men in their freedom have tried to 'create' greater and greater goodness in the morally indifferent world they inhabit. As we actualize meaning, we bring forth a world in which living will be known to be good for all, not simply in a general sense, but, in the very details, we will be able more and more to control. Time is a developing

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<sup>26</sup> Crouse, "The Doctrine of Providence in Patristic and Medieval Theology,"<sup>37</sup>. In the same line of argument, at the second conference, Robert judged: "The recent century of Anglican controversy about Baptism and Confirmation has really done nothing to shake the fundamental argument of our Reformers and their claim to be faithful to Biblical and Patristic tradition; indeed, it is doubtful that current proposals for a return to supposedly more primitive ways can make so good a claim." Robert D. Crouse, "Christian Initiation: Some Historical Considerations," *Conference Report 1982: Christian Initiation* (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1982), 22–29 at 28.

<sup>27</sup> George Grant, *Time as History*, Massey Lectures, Ninth Series (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1969), 7

<sup>28</sup> The Rector of St James', Dundas, Ontario, then was the Rev'd Philip Jefferson, a Nova Scotian contemporary of Robert at King's, who in the 1960s, at the Board for Religious Education at General Synod office in Toronto, was a moving figure in producing a new Sunday School curriculum. It was the first clear indication that the national bureaucracy of the Anglican Church of Canada now had the theological revolution of "man come of age" as its agenda. In 1984, he and his wife, the Rev'd Ruth Jefferson, moved to the Atlantic School of Theology where he was Professor of Pastoral Theology and Field Education. He took part in George Grant's Requiem in the King's College Chapel at which I preached. Of the many Nova Scotians who worked in Ontario and played important roles in the revolution, as well as Philip Jefferson, Leonard Hatfield, and Eugene Fairweather stand out.

history of meaning which we make....[T]o modern man, though life may not yet be meaningful for everyone, the challenge is to make it so.<sup>29</sup>

Fr Crouse stood against time as progressive history and the denial of knowledge of the eternal. Again and again he led us on the Platonic and Augustinian path from remembering to thinking and loving which George Grant hoped was still open. The words with which his old teacher closed his lectures could be put in Robert's mouth:

[T]hose who cannot live as if time were history are called, beyond remembering, to desiring and thinking....For myself, as probably for most others, remembering only occasionally can pass over into thinking and loving what is good. It is for the great thinkers and the saints to do more.<sup>30</sup>

This is why, in his papers for this Conference, Fr Crouse made the work of the great philosophers, theologians and saints, pagan, Jewish, and Christian actual for us. To those papers we must turn again to see how he understood the relation of time and history.

Although there are various degrees of clarity and completeness on our side, God reveals the essential structure of the words, forms, or ideas by which he is manifest in himself and to us, and by which he made and redeemed the world, everywhere, always, and to all. Although the modes of manifestation are diverse, through reason and inspiration, God speaks both to Jew and Gentile.<sup>31</sup> Because the ideas subsist in God, and because they form human reason as well as the rest of creation, all knowledge involves remembrance or reminiscence. "The idea of man as created in the image of God" explains why. Fr Crouse elucidates:

That basic idea, Biblical in origin, was inherited by the Middle Ages in its Augustinian interpretation, where it was understood to mean that the tri-personal unity of God, as Father, Son and Spirit, was reflected in the constitution of the rational human soul (*mens*), as a unity of the distinct activities of being, knowing and willing, or *memoria*, *intellectus*, and *voluntas*....[T]he anthropological conception here was derivative from and dependent upon the doctrine of God as Trinity.<sup>32</sup>

Recollection is essential, as Dr Crouse explained in his address to Convocation when he received an honorary degree from King's in 2007:

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<sup>29</sup> Grant, *Time as History*, 17.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>31</sup> This doctrine may be found in the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Colossians, as well as elsewhere in the Old and New Testaments and in the Church Fathers.

<sup>32</sup> Crouse, "Trinitarian Anthropology in the Latin Middle Ages," 64.

The past is always and inevitably here, and our choice is only whether to possess it consciously in recollection, or to possess it in the form of unreflective prejudice, devoid of understanding....Recollection is the fundamental business of the University—not recollection as dwelling in the past, but recollection as basis of renewal in the present, and hope and expectation for the future.<sup>33</sup>

What he said here of the university, he says also of the church, and of institutions generally, as well as of the human self.

We have seen that, for Fr Crouse, recollection is not historically determined. God's words may be forgotten and remembered again. What the Fathers and Mediaevals discerned is recollected in a later and different time. However, these affirmations imply denials. So, for example, he criticised "Adolph von Harnack, the great liberal Protestant historian of early Christianity." In this criticism, the fundamentals of how Dr Crouse understands the relation of history and human knowing appear.

[Harnack] saw patristic ecclesiology as a direct line of development, involving increasing corruption of the original idea....On the basis of a certain critical assumption, Harnack's account of patristic ecclesiology makes sense. Its assumption was that development was always from the simple to the complex, and generally from a primitive purity to later corruptions. From the standpoint of history, the chief difficulty about the account is that positions must be seen as succeeding one another which are in fact contemporaneous at every stage of the history in greater or lesser prominence. Indeed, all of those positions are already present in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, where the church is *both* visible institution *and* inner spiritual life, *both* the company of the faithful *and* the training school for salvation, *both* the abiding-place of the Holy Spirit's inspiration *and* the possessor of the sure word of truth. The problem of ecclesiology is not the problem of choosing between those aspects; it is, rather, the problem of seeing them in complementary relation to one another.<sup>34</sup>

Another essential denial was that humanity itself had undergone a development so that a revolution of Christian religion, or rather, away from Christianity as religion, was required to match the new humanity. This would be a secular Christianity. Because what Robert has to say on this is so germane to the

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<sup>33</sup> Accessed at <http://www.ukings.ca/reverend-doctor-robert-darwin-crouses-convocation-address>. Dr Crouse referred to "Canto X of the *Inferno* and "the shocking figure of Farinata."

<sup>34</sup> Robert D. Crouse, "Problems of Ecclesiology: Patristic Perspectives," *The Idea of the Church in Historical Development*, A Theological Conference held at the University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, P.E.I., June 26-29, 1995, edited D. A. Petley (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1996), 15-22 at 18.

topic of this conference, I shall quote him at length, but before doing so, permit me an anecdote.

At the beginning of the seventies, the Reverend Creighton Brown, newly the assistant Curate at St Paul's, Halifax, organised an evening event devoted to what was called "the new theology", and indeed an address was delivered announcing that man had come of age. It happened that Robert Crouse and I were invited by Archbishop Davis, of happy memory, being the last but one prerevolutionary Bishop of the Diocese, to drive in his car to St Paul's. During the trip, Archbishop Davis turned to Fr Crouse and expressed his eagerness for the anticipated event, because, he said, as he toured his Diocese he found a stupor which he opined was owed to "the old theology." Fr Crouse retorted, "Not old theology, My Lord, **no** theology." In line with this, when addressing the 1994 Conference on "Redeeming the Secular," Robert remarked on the vain imagination, which, having conceived that humanity had advanced to a new age, now required us to break down the old difference between sacred and secular so that the Kingdom of God might be realised *hic et nunc*:

Now, as the twentieth century draws to a close, we are much less confident than Dietrich Bonhöffer was, fifty years ago, that the world has "come of age", and that "everything gets along as well without God, and just as well as before". Perhaps we have begun to learn a lesson which only the experience of radical secularity could really teach us—a lesson learned by a very secular young man many centuries ago [he is referring to Augustine]—that God has made us for himself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in him....The Church is challenged to reaffirm the sacred: not only for its own sake, but also for the sake of a true secularity, because without a clear, and strong, and wise affirmation of the sacred, the secular loses its integrity as secular, becoming confused with all sorts of quasi-religious characteristics, often of a highly irrational and even bizarre kind. Where there is no rational worship, there will be irrational substitutes. The redemption of secularity requires that the Church re-affirm the sacred; and therein lies much of the problem of the contemporary Church.<sup>35</sup>

So the problem is the re-affirmation of the sacred, and that is fundamentally a matter of renewing theology. How is this to be done? This question brings us to the heart of this paper, *Visio*.

#### **BE YE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND**

A scholar working through Fr Crouse's theological papers, sermons, and spiritual writings, would find one text ceaselessly repeated, St Paul to the Romans, 12.2: "Be

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<sup>35</sup> Robert D. Crouse, "Redeeming Secularity," *Redeeming the Time: The Church and the Challenge of Secularity*, A Theological Conference held at Christ Church Cathedral Hall, Fredericton, N.B., 5<sup>th</sup> June -8<sup>th</sup> June, 1994, edited David Garrett (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1995), 76-83 at 79-81.

ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” In that transformation lies all we can do to rediscover the sacred in today’s world. I draw your attention to two features of Robert’s theological method, or discipline. First, comes the radical decision, a choice dictated by our judgments about time as history and whether man has come of age. If we judge that theology submits to history, that we have progressed to an era which makes the eternal reasons irrelevant or unthinkable for man come of age, then the new man can only make himself and his new experience the basis. From this perspective, he must judge God’s word and Christian tradition and will shape it according to the image and requirements of his new humanity. This will produce the secularization of Christianity and the dissolution of the Church. If, in contrast, we think that the perspective of this world is always to be purged so that we may be illumined towards union with God and all else in God, then we must acquire the old disciplines of humility and obedience so that the divine truth can have its way with us.

Second, not surprisingly, the discipline to which Robert urges us has nothing particularly Christian about it—although it has been the ascetic adopted by the Church for most of its two millennia. It belongs certainly to the whole Platonic tradition for which knower and known are correlative, and, as a theological method, is perhaps most clearly seen at work in the *Confessions* and *De Trinitate* of Augustine,<sup>36</sup> but it is first given to us with all its essential features in the great poem of Parmenides from the 5<sup>th</sup> century before Christ which is at the origins of philosophy both as logic and as spiritual journey. Before giving the briefest outline of that inspired theological poem, I shall remind you of how Fr Crouse set the crucial choice before us.

He presented the alternatives to us from the very beginning of these theological conferences and repeated the choice in more or less the same terms throughout his twenty-seven years of devoted teaching in them. Quoting the advocates of the new model of theology, Robert set out its characteristics. It would be open-ended, an acceptance of continual change. Theology would become a reflection on the empirical. Scripture and Tradition would supply data, but our religious experience would be determinative. He found such a view of theology “now pervasive in the Church at every level”, but doubted that reflection on religion, though “an interesting and sometimes profitable activity... can be expected to result in saving truth.”<sup>37</sup> He urged from his hearers an insistence “upon the dogmatic truth of the Catholic Faith” and made practical proposals. The

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<sup>36</sup> For Dr Crouse’s understanding of the relation between Christian understanding and Platonism, see my “*Memoria, Intellectus, Voluntas: the Augustinian Centre of Robert Crouse’s Scholarly Work*,” published in this volume.

<sup>37</sup> Crouse, “*Quod Ubique, Quod Semper, Quod ab Omnibus: Dogmatic Theology in the Church Today*,” 12–13. See also his “Concluding Remarks,” *The Scriptures and Modern Christian Teaching, A Theological Conference held at Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, New Brunswick, June 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, 1988*, edited G. Richmond Bridge (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1989), 103–104 at 103.

difficult intellectual work of beginning “to understand the great classical works of Christian theology” was the first.<sup>38</sup>

The liturgical consequences of historicised theology always reflecting “immediate contemporary experience” were obvious, and had, in fact already been drawn and acted upon by the revolutionary church:

From the standpoint of such contextual theology, the Prayer Book is, as our BAS Preface calls it, a “Reformation experiment”, reflecting simply the particular circumstances and “world-views” of that time, and ought, strictly speaking, to be replaced in each succeeding moment, as we reflect upon the momentary changing circumstances.<sup>39</sup>

When speaking about “The Way Forward Sacramentally”, Fr Crouse united intellect and devotion in the turn against the contemporary move to subjective experience:

We do need a revival in ourselves of a penitential and eucharistic piety, expressed with reverence and religious awe. We do need to cultivate that personal holiness without which none may see God. That, I believe, is our way forward sacramentally. It may be, in God’s good providence, that the morass of subjective scepticism must coagulate still more densely around us, that we may learn to cling more closely to the objective truth of the Word of God, and of those “visible words” which are his holy sacraments, and to the witness of his saints; we must stand fast, with prayer and watchfulness, do what we can, and trust that our humble efforts will be blessed.<sup>40</sup>

The experiential subjectivism was not only destructive of theology and devotional life, but also of the Church as institution. Here too a conversion and discipline was required. The *consensus fidelium*, the common mind of the Church is what had established its doctrines, forms of ministry, sacramental practice, moral and ascetical norms. Fr Crouse affirmed that by it:

We do not mean current popular Christian opinion...Truth is not established by vote. By *consensus fidelium*, we do **not** mean the common opinion in one diocese or province..., but the mind of the universal Church.

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<sup>38</sup> Crouse, “*Quod Ubique, Quod Semper, Quod ab Omnibus*: Dogmatic Theology in the Church Today,” 13–14.

<sup>39</sup> Robert D. Crouse, “Summary of the Conference,” *The Prayer Book*, A Theological Conference held at St. Peter’s Cathedral Charlottetown, P.E.I., June 25<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>, 1985, edited G. Richmond Bridge (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1986), 106–107 at 107.

<sup>40</sup> Robert D. Crouse, “The Way Forward Sacramentally,” *Conference Report 1983, 150th Anniversary of the Oxford Movement—The Way Forward*, edited G. Richmond Bridge (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1984), 54–62 at 60.

We do **not** mean the mind of the Church as it might be isolated at this particular moment, but the coherent development of Christian thought and life from the very beginning.<sup>41</sup>

Humble submission to its authority involved choosing the untimely virtues of patience, reverence, attention, restraint; each of them required daily choices:

The authority of *consensus* is not easy to live with; it involves learning and deliberation, debate and controversy, when we would rather, perhaps, the peace of easy compromise. It involves a patience which must sometimes think in terms of centuries instead of months or years; it involves reverent, careful attention to the past, when we are perhaps inclined to be preoccupied with the latest findings of biblical criticism, or the social sciences, or with the latest...revolution. And, in the divided state of Christendom (and even of our own communion), it involves—or should involve—the frustration and self-discipline of refraining from local decisions which are not clearly justified by the *consensus fidelium*, more universally conceived in space and time.<sup>42</sup>

The Church, and the sacred in it, are, ultimately, the transforming submission of our minds to the Divine Word in the Trinitarian unity of intellect and will. Consequently, whether the matter at hand was doctrine, prayer, or institutions, Robert's solution was always the same, the unity of intellect and will in obedient virtue. So, in respect to the creeds, he judged:

The creeds are not distillations of experience; neither of our own experience, nor of our ancient Christian forebears. They are distillations of truth supernaturally revealed, truth which we precisely could not garner from experience.<sup>43</sup>

To recover their sense, he exhorted:

We must learn to recognise them ever more fully in their original sense as precise and accurate embodiments of truth divinely given. We must believe that truth with an obedient mind; we must think it with assent. What is involved, therefore, is a massive task of education, both intellectual and moral; indeed, those two aspects of the task are quite inseparable...<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Crouse, "The Prayer Book and the Authority of Tradition," 56.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>43</sup> Robert D. Crouse, "The Creeds as the Sufficient Statement of the Christian Faith," *Rebuilding the House of God, The Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888*, Report of the 1987 Theological Conference, edited G. Richmond Bridge (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1988), 41–48 at 44.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

Only “reverent attentiveness” will allow our authorities to inform us.<sup>45</sup>

Robert’s paper for the Conference on Holy Living, from which I have already quoted his deeply refreshing reduction of morality to friendship, concludes with the essential:

We have many problems...but only one of them is really fundamental: that is the demoralising of the Christian mind and heart, when we fall victim to what...St Augustine calls...*ambitio seculi*, “the ambition of the present age”. Secular ideals, secular moods, methods and measures, insidiously invade our consciousness, and pollute the very springs of Christian moral life with confusion and anxiety. That is...our one basic moral problem: we lose direction, and we lose heart; we become demoralised, and stand on the border of despair. The only remedy—and we must trust it—lies in the steady cultivation of faith and hope and charity; holding on to the truth of God in word and sacrament; holding on to the centuries of Christian wisdom and sanctity; holding on to that inner space of peace in which the Spirit guides us; holding on to the vision of that pure and perfect good which is our one and only home; in short, holding fast in the spiritual life, the practical upbuilding of the way of penitential adoration.<sup>46</sup>

I cannot do more than hint at the features of Parmenides’ *The Way of Truth* taken up within the tradition of philosophical theology and passed on to us by Fr Crouse. Plato depends on it; both he and Aristotle are sources for fragments of the poem scholarship has gathered. Its spiritual method and doctrine were common to the tradition within which the Christian Fathers placed themselves: the Biblical Wisdom literature and Philo Judaeus of Alexandria are fundamental, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and the Neoplatonists are all part of the stream, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Book of Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*, so much studied by Robert and so deeply loved by him, is a 6<sup>th</sup>-century reiteration of the *Way of Truth* which might console pagan and Christian equally.<sup>47</sup> Let me stress three features which united pagan and Christian, poets, philosophers, and theologians.

First, although God is the goal of desire, humans come to the Divine by its grace and leading. Parmenides sang: “The steeds which carried me took me as far as my heart could desire, when once they had brought me and set me on the renowned way of the goddess, who leads the man who knows through every town.” When, beyond the human world, he reached the gates of the ways of Night and Day, he found them closed and controlled by Justice. The divine maidens who led

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<sup>45</sup> Robert D. Crouse, “The Authority of the Thirty-Nine Articles Today,” *The Thirty-Nine Articles*, edited G. Richmond Bridge (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1990), 82–90 at 88.

<sup>46</sup> Crouse, “The Ministry of Reconciliation: Anglican Approaches,” 56.

<sup>47</sup> It is significant that Boethius’ determinedly pagan contemporary, Simplicius, the great Neoplatonic commentator, forced into exile outside Christendom with the remains of the Academy by the imperial authorities and the Christian mob, is the source of most of our fragments of the poem.

the traveller gained entrance for him by entreating her with gentle words and the “goddess greeted me kindly, and took my right hand in hers, and spoke to me.”<sup>48</sup>

Second, to make this journey and to arrive at the truth, we must not only leave the human world, but also its way of knowing. These are the words Parmenides put in the mouth of the goddess: “Welcome, O youth,... right and justice have sent you forth to travel on this way. Far indeed does it lie from the beaten track of men.”

To become *capax dei* human reason must be simplified to intellect (*intellectus*), simple intelligence (*intelligentia*), intuition (*intus*), or vision (*visio*), to use language which carries us from Aristotle to Cardinal Nicholas von Kues via Augustine and Boethius.<sup>49</sup> Every theological address and sermon of Fr Crouse aimed to change our perspective, to bring us to the vision which contemplated the simple divine truth. For pagan and Christian this simple contemplation required being in love with God.

Third, the Being, disclosed to the mind simplified by divine grace, transcends the realm of time and change:

Nor is it divisible, since it is all alike; nor is there more here and less there, which would prevent it from cleaving together, but it is all full of what is. So it is all continuous; for what is clings close to what is. But, motionless within the limits of mighty bonds, it is without beginning or end, since coming into being and perishing have been driven far away, cast out by true belief. Abiding the same in the same place it rests by itself, and so abides firm where it is.

For Boethius this knowledge of Being is deification. Resting in Absolute Being and Truth requires that the soul be “transhumanised”. This conclusion was drawn all the way down the tradition pagan, Jewish and Christian, Eastern and Western.<sup>50</sup>

#### DISAPPOINTMENT AND HOPE

By way of “transhumanised”, we return to our beginning with Robert’s last words to us. They are hopeful, but the hope comes out of a change we can detect if we read his addresses to this Conference in sequence. This is the only significant change I perceived in the twenty-seven years and witnessing it brought sadness.

In the decade which I have called the Anglican phase of this Conference, although there was no easy optimism, and the theological ascetic demanded was as difficult as could be, Robert conveyed a sense that real reform and renewal of the

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<sup>48</sup> My translation is dependent on G.S. Kirk & J.E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957) and Scott Austin, *Parmenides: Being, Bounds and Logic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

<sup>49</sup> *Eo mens est imago Dei, quo capax Dei est et particeps esse potest.* St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* XIV:11

<sup>50</sup> So, for example, Aristotle, Philo, Plotinus, Boethius, the Greek Fathers and Aquinas are in accord with Dante.

institutional church was possible now. So, for example, his Summary of the Conference on Holy Living in 1986 began: “The interest and enthusiasm of a large number of clergy and laity from all over the Maritime Provinces and beyond, have contributed much to the notable success of this year’s conference...One has here, I think, a sense of genuine renewal.”<sup>51</sup> The same tone pervaded his “Concluding Remarks” to the 1988 Conference on teaching the Scriptures which, significantly, had been opened with a sermon by Archbishop Nutter of Fredericton. However, in the second decade of the Conference, optimism fled and, as I noted, in 1993, Fr Crouse spoke of the Anglican Church as “in process of disintegration as an institution”. He went on to a prescription which seems to me to be both unavoidable and terrible:

As a matter of fact, I think that the malaise which afflicts Anglicanism afflicts the whole of Christendom (indeed, the whole of modern culture), although the disease may be at different stages in different patients. Frankly, I think the disease must work itself out. Insofar as our criterion is experience, it will be only by bitter and devastating experience that we shall learn the limits and sufficiency of subjective freedom.<sup>52</sup>

Fr Crouse’s change in expectation for the institutional church here may have had several causes, one must surely be the degree to which the revolutionaries in control of the administrative apparatus have behaved like their secular predecessors from Oliver Cromwell on, and used every means at their disposal to eliminate the reactionaries who stood in the way of the progress they were engineering. We may thank God that the church administrators no longer possess the coercive power of the state. Be that as it may, Robert’s response, and I think to some degree, the response of the Conference, was to enter an eschatological mode, no doubt helped by the end of the second Christian millennium. The persecution by the revolutionary bureaucracy purged elements of the hope in the temporal which may have crept into our minds from the secular world, and we were pushed back towards the holy hope which contemplation of the end requires. Robert’s final papers largely concluded with theology like that of the words with which I began.

On the eve of the new millennium, Fr Crouse envisioned us deprived even of hints and echoes of the sacred:

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<sup>51</sup> Robert D. Crouse, “Summary of the Conference,” *Holy Living: Christian Morality Today, A Theological Conference held at the University of King’s College, Halifax, Nova Scotia, May 20th-23<sup>rd</sup>, 1986*, edited G. Richmond Bridge (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1987), 72–73 at 72. He was expressing the general feeling. A young priest scholar who made important contributions to the Conference in the 1980s wrote as follows after reading a draft of this paper: “I agree wholeheartedly with your description of the confidence of the early years of the Theological Conference. I remember those years as being heady with discovery and possibility. How exciting it was! I really thought that a renewal of the Anglican Communion was going to emanate from the Maritimes.”

<sup>52</sup> Crouse, “Tradition and Renewal,” 95.

It is the vocation of the church and its ministries to affirm the sacred, but perhaps the full recovery of that affirmation must wait upon a full experience of the secular; perhaps even the hints and echoes must be lost. Just as for God's pilgrim people, the deprivations of the wilderness served to purge and clarify the mind and heart in preparation for the Promised Land, perhaps just so the experience of the desert of secularity must cut away the clichés and empty rhetoric that stand between us and the Word of God.

He then concluded, as shall I, with a poem he had translated from the German by "that great poet and prophet of modernity, and of the end of secularity, Friedrich Hölderlin":

But friend! We come too late. Indeed, the Gods are living, but up there, above our heads, up there in another world. There they are endlessly active, and seem little concerned with our life, so far do the heavenly ones spare us. For a frail vessel cannot always contain them; only sometimes can men bear the divine fullness. It is henceforth a dream of them. But bewilderment helps, like slumber, and distress and night make us strong, until heroes enough have grown in the iron cradle, and hearts are, as once they were, strong like the heavenly ones. Then they come thundering.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Robert D. Crouse, "The Classical Understanding of the Ordained Ministry," *Take Thou Authority: The Theology of the Ordained Ministry in the Church Today*, Papers delivered at 1999 Atlantic Theological Conference, All Saints Cathedral, Halifax, Nova Scotia, edited Susan Harris and Christopher Snook (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 2000), 16–24 at 24. "Brot und Wein", *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. F. Eisner, Frankfurt, 1965, 297–98; the translation is Robert's own. See also Crouse, "Hope Among the Virtues," 74.