

“In the beginning was the Word [the *logos*] and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be.”

The Gospel of John begins with this early Christian hymn, a song concerning the Word, the *logos*, God’s Word, that was in the beginning, that was God, for God and his Word are one, that was and is the source of all things, and the source of both life and light for each human person. This is the Word, the *logos*, that Albert meditated, sought and I believe, in the end, found.

Those of us who knew Albert well knew him to be disillusioned about much of life in our society. About a year ago he brought to me an essay he had written. In it he expressed his disillusionment with a world in which men and women are “no longer able to give an account of their speech”, a world guilty of “devaluing speech as a locus for truth.” I was reminded of the verdict of the prophet Ezekiel upon his own generation, “the word (the *logos*) has gone out of their speech.”

Albert meditated the dialectic of Plato and Aristotle which was founded, he insisted, upon confidence in the word, the *logos*, that grounds our ability to know and he directed us back to Socrates who exemplified “...that tradition which frees us, as members of the community who ground questions in wonder, and expect and are expected to give an account of themselves.” He spoke of the absolute primacy of the *logos*: “We must always find the *logos* as such at work prior to any individual attempt to control it as a mere tool of communication” and went so far as to insist that “The *logos* is closer to us than our own psychology. Only inside speech is there anything outside speech.” These words could have been written by Augustine.

Albert sought a community “who ground questions in wonder” and he

most certainly expected to give an account of himself. But what is it to wonder? It is the witness of our faith that, in our presence to God and the world, there are two dispositions that are mutually exclusive: doubt and wonder. They are wonderfully exemplified in the Gospel of Luke: when Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, is visited by the Angel Gabriel and informed that Elizabeth, his wife, is to bear a son – something impossible because of Elizabeth’s age—Zechariah replies, “How can I know this is so?” Later in the Gospel when Gabriel announces to Our Lady that she is to give birth to a son –an even greater impossibility, given that she is a virgin—Our Lady replies “How can this be?” The two responses seem to be so close as to be synonymous –“How can I know this is?”, “How can this be?”—and yet they could not be more opposed. Doubt calls into question what is revealed; wonder affirms what is revealed and then ponders it. To be in wonder requires that we say “yes” to whatever is presented to us; doubt insists that we refuse what is presented until we are given some further justification for affirming it.

Albert belonged to the community –however small and, in his estimation, diminishing—of those “who ground questions in wonder.” Possessed of a deep and penetrating intelligence and an integrity that refused compromise, Albert truly wondered —most especially about all that is directly involved with the human person. But what is it to wonder?

Our Lord demanded faith of us. To be faithful to another is to remain, to stay, to look and not look away. There is a natural fidelity that is not the supernatural gift of faith, but that is required of each of us: to engage our experience, to stay with what we discover of our life in the world, to examine all that is presented to us, to wonder at the world of men and women, to look and not look away. This was Albert’s commitment that he lived with great intelligence and integrity. When we were attentive to his observations he was able to startle us with what he saw, and to inculcate wonder in us.

Invariably, when Albert was present in conversation, his were the observations and questions that most demanded my attention. I would propose something and then await Albert's verdict as he stared, for a moment, off into space, formulating his reply.

In the end Albert was convinced of the immortality of the soul, of the possibility of the human intelligence to begin to see divine things, to be responsive to the *logos* that is nearer to us than our own psychology, as he put it. He did not doubt that there is truth, that the truth could be discovered in conversation, "There is a necessity of putting the reality of conversation at the center of philosophy..." he wrote. I am told that, shortly before his death, Albert asked that he might be prepared for Baptism.

He insisted upon the essential goodness in things, that "Wisdom is knowledge of the good and beautiful....". And Albert stayed with us, considering carefully all that was spoken, always prepared to give an account of his speech.

The eternal *Logos* "was coming into the world." When St. John spoke of the Word "coming into the world" he was not yet referring to the Incarnation, but to the Word as he is revealed by the Holy Spirit to human intelligence through creation and through the good and the beautiful that every human person seeks by virtue of being human. It was the eternal *Logos*, the Word, to whom Albert responded, and which he sought with wonderful integrity.

We believe that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us", sought us out, taught us, offered himself for us and then died for us that he might make a place for us, "I go to make a place for you, that where I am you also may be." In the Incarnation, Our Lord united himself with each man and woman, without any exception whatever, St. John Paul II taught us, so that, in the wonder of the Incarnation, mankind,

humanity itself, fully lived in the humanity of Jesus, the Christ, has become a way to God.

It is our faith that, in death, each human person encounters Christ Risen and I have no doubt that Albert will recognize with joy the *Logos* that was the source of his wonder, that he sought and defended. And it is now our office to present Albert to Christ and to ask Our Lord to receive one who has truly been our friend and companion and ally in our own desire to see and to speak what is true.

We will remember Albert best when we ourselves remember to wonder at the eternal *Logos*, the Word of God revealed in his creation and in his Son; when ask, with Our Lady, “How can this be?”; when we speak with integrity the truth that is revealed to us and hold fast to it with courage and integrity; when we seek through our conversation together to more fully grasp the truth and are prepared to render an account of our speech; when we faithfully stay with our experience, when we look and refuse to look away. The evidence of our faith is an intelligent wonder; let us remain steadfast in the “community who ground questions in wonder.”