

THE BIRTH PANGS OF THE FOURTH GENUS OF
CHRISTIAN or LAYMEN IN SEARCH OF
THE STATE OF PERFECTION

PART ONE

1. If a zoologist chose to discuss a particular species of monkey not in the context of his general exposition of the Simian group, but in the context of the human group, one would suspect that there was some doubt about its status, or some confusion in his mind, or, perhaps, both.

If the Second Vatican Council chose to discuss the so called 'Secular Institutes', which Pius XII had clearly stated were *lay* in character, *not* in the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, but in the Decree on the renewal of the Religious Life, similar suspicions naturally arise.

The history of how paragraph eleven came to be included in the Decree is itself a sign of the hesitations of the Conciliar Fathers about what to say or not to say on the subject. Eventually, they ended up by having next to nothing to add to what Pius XII had said in *Provida Mater*. Theologians were thus left to continue their discussions about the meaning and implications of Pius XII's declaration that members of the Secular Institutes *both* had the 'substance of the religious life' (essentially because they took the three vows to follow the evangelical counsels) *and* were still laymen (essentially because they were engaged in secular jobs by the very nature of the Institutes).

Four types of reaction to the Pope's declaration can be clearly distinguished among the variety of views expressed by theologians since it was made in 1947.

(A) F. WULF asserts that a theory of the Secular Institutes only emerged in justification of something *post factum* and 'is not free from contradictions'. The prime inconsistency, according to him lies in the evangelical counsels being still presented as implying the 'rejection of the world' (described, indeed, in sombre tones) and at the same time insisting that the members of the secular Institutes were to be apostles 'not merely in the world, but, as it were, by means of the world.' Wulf believes this concept of the Evangelical Counsels to be in need of

revision in its general application to the religious life; and the Secular Institutes are seen, in this perspective, as one attempt at renewing the form of the religious life in order to develop to full value its apostolic function. But, he concludes, 'quite obviously, these requirements have not been adequately thought out, neither theologically, nor spiritually' in the papal document. It, he thinks, 'makes no serious attempt to provide a genuine appropriate theology of the Secular Institutes.' (Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, ed. Vorgrimler, Burns & Oates, 1968, p. 356).

(B) K. RAHNER does not contest the concept of the Evangelical Counsels as implying the 'rejection of the world'; hence he concludes that they are incompatible with being a laymen in the real sense. The Papal Documents do not speak with theological correctness when they take the essence of secularity to lie in temporal commitment through having a job in the world. When marriage (for instance) is excluded by vow, so is, Rahner believes, any really full involvement in the world. This criticism (to be set out more fully later) implies a devaluation of the importance of the concept of the Secular Institutes which become only the home of a very rare type of religious vocation. (Mission and Grace, Vol. II, Sheed and Ward, 1964).

(C) Y. Congar holds that Rahner is correct in saying that members of the Secular Institutes cannot be, theologically speaking, laymen; but he does not agree with him that they are just a variant of no great importance on the traditional religious ideal. To him they are a *quartum genus christianorum* – i.e. a *fourth* type of Christian in addition to the three categories distinguished by Canon Law each with its own 'status' (i.e. set of rights and duties), viz:

- (a) The *laity*, who acquire their status in virtue of Baptism, defined as those who belong to neither of the other two categories.
- (b) The *clergy*, who acquire their status in virtue of Ordination, and some of whom can belong to the third category as well.
- (c) The *religious*, who acquire their status in virtue of a Consecration of their life to the search after perfection by taking the three vows to follow the evangelical counsels within an Order or Congregation approved for the purpose.

Hitherto, while the combination of status b and c was perfectly possible, the combination of *either* a and b *or* a and c appeared to be impossible. Only a contradiction in terms (as these were canonically

defined) could generate such hybrids. Evidently, the Pope was creating something outside these categories when he characterised the Secular Institutes as he did in *Provida Mater*.

(D) HANS URS VON BALHAZAR asserted roundly that the best theologians (meaning in particular Congar and Rahner) 'had not yet caught up with the theology' of *Provida Mater* to which he wholeheartedly subscribed. In general, members of Secular Institutes rebutted that Wulf and Rahner failed to recognise the originality of the Secular Institute concept, which was not an attempt at updating the religious ideal, but a new and different way (*in addition to* the older and perfectly valid concept) of living the Evangelical Counsels *by laymen*. Hence that Rahner recognises their true intention by discussing the Secular Institutes within the perspective of the apostolate of the laity, but is wrong about what constitutes the essence of a laymen.

Between these conflicting views, the Council did not decide. But its statements on the Church – World relationship and on the role of the laity and of the Religious Life in the Church, provide the lines along which a solution to the controversy has to be sought. For, as Rahner candidly confessed 'the question is more difficult than it may seem at first sight' and yet the importance of a solution is great, because it has implications not only for the Secular Institutes, but also for a correct concept of laity, religious and clergy. Indeed, it is not difficult to see that the divergence of views on this issue has its roots in the deeper question of the paradox of the Church's presence 'in the world, but not of it' and that it is by examining the different modalities of how to live 2. Does the juridical categorisation of Christians into three groups have a *theological* foundation?

- (i) There is no doubt that the distinction between the priest and the layman, in the Catholic understanding of the Scriptures, is one instituted by Christ and we need not be concerned with it here.
- (ii) But is the distinction between 'the religious' and 'the lay' state also equally essential in the structure of the Church?

The reason why it appears to be so is that both 'states' appear to be necessary in order that the Church may clearly reflect both sides of the paradox of 'being *in* in the world, but not of the world'. Two distinct but converging ways of life are to be found within the Church in order to bring home to humanity the progressive unfolding of the consequences of Christ's redemption of the fallen world.

These two ways have been characterised in terms respectively of 'renouncing the world' and 'living in the world'. What is meant by this? It is extremely important to be clear on the meanings given to these highly polyvalent terms, since confusion over them is the source of constant and most harmful misunderstanding.

A first distinction must be made between the sense of 'the world' as created by God and 'the world' meaning the 'evil world' as the term is sometimes used in Scripture. There is no doubt that the latter is to be renounced by all Christians. The question only arises with regard to the former: i.e. to this 'world' which is God's creation, fallen and redeemed.

(a) A heritage of sin is actually present in the organisation of this world, and one Christian reaction to it is to try to create a way of life as far removed as possible (for an absolutely total separation is not possible in this life) from its structures by constituting a sphere of existence as closely resembling the City of God as possible.

This way of life implies a *physical* separation, but it will carry a message to the world by its very existence: the 'pure' contemplatives provide a 'witness', or apostolate by demonstrating concretely, within certain limits, the possible realisation of the eschatological community even in this era of the history of salvation.

This apostolic witness is emphasized by the preaching of the word and other apostolic action in the 'mixed' ideal.

(b) Grace is also present in this world; hence another reaction would be to go on living within its existing structures and to accept a way of life which will be at a considerable distance from the eschatological idea; but to seek to contribute to the world's gradual transfiguration by grace through one's action from within its very own structures. This would be the ideal of the layman.

3. (a) It is, however, clear that the Christian cannot compromise his ideal to *any* extent to ensure his presence in the world to order to aid its transfiguration. The limit was set by the Commandments; the Christian cannot break these without losing his salvation.

On the other hand, the other aspects of the Christian ideal, which could be given up for the sake of presence in the world, came to be known as the Evangelical Counsels. To choose to follow these was to choose the 'eschatological option, or, in other words, to renounce 'this

world' in order to testify to the next by anticipating its way of life to the greatest possible degree.

When this option is taken as a decision for life by vows under a Rule approved by the Church, it was recognised as 'the State of Perfection' – i.e. a way of life which, if faithfully followed, was guaranteed by the Church to lead to Perfection. It was felt that this was a safer and surer road to salvation, although the result of a *special* call of God.

(b) But the view later became current that the Evangelical Counsels were really the universal ideal for all Christians, e.g. 'the sublime Evangelical Counsels which our divine Redeemer addressed to *all* in every age who desire Christian perfection (Acta Leonis XIII (1900 A.D.) vol. XX, p. 340). If this were so, as came to be commonly assumed, it seemed to follow that one would be forced to admit a class-distinction between Christians: an 'upper class' composed of the 'religious' and a 'lower class' composed of the 'seculars'.

(c) In modern times, a considerable sense of dissatisfaction came to be felt among moral theologians about this assumption. Its implication is that the entire laity could not be on the road to perfection; that they all were 'minimal' and could not be 'optimal' Christians.

The roots of the polemic about the Secular Institutes can, perhaps, be found in two different ways in which it was sought to get rid of this unwanted implication which resulted from the double identification of the evangelical counsels with (i) the universal ideal of Christian perfection and (ii) the eschatological option.

(A) The first way is to deny the identification of the evangelical counsels with the universal ideal of Christian perfection. It was that followed by the theologians who strove to build up a theology of the laity such as Congar and Rahner. They recognised their equal dignity from the point of view of the call to sanctify as was later ratified by the Second Vatican Council. They insisted that the tendency to perfection need not be identified with following the counsels (as had often been done).

It is an essential part of the New Law and not an option. In order to follow it, some requirements apply to all; these are the commandments. But then the Christian has to decide which of the two options sketched out above he is to take, and whichever he does, his way of life will both appear foolish to the non-believers and can lead to perfection. There is no rational criterion to tell him whether it is better to renounce

marriage and the 'world' or not; he has to rely on the 'counsel' of the Holy Spirit.

Why does it happen that in the case of the religious option, the Church authenticated certain Rules of life as guaranteeing perfection (if faithfully observed) but did not do anything similar for the layman? It could be argued that this follows clearly from the nature of the layman's vocation in a constantly changing world and widely different situations which make it impossible to establish any generally valid Rule; while for the religious vocation built on a picture of the City of God which is stable, general forms can evidently be formulated and have been. This, in no wise, establishes a class-distinction going against the equal call of all Christians to the perfection of love as the older way of putting it would appear to imply. It is the concept of the Rule, as a means of attaining perfection, rather than perfection itself, which conflicts with the concept of the layman.

(B) The second way in which the layman's possible access to Christian perfection could be demonstrated was that which led eventually to the recognition of the Secular Institutes as a 'State of Perfection'. Instead of questioning the identification of the Evangelical Counsels with the universal ideal of Christian perfection, what was questioned was the identification of the Evangelical Counsels with the 'Eschatological option'; and the assertion of the possibility of their being lived also by those who took the 'incarnationist' option (by engaging in temporal professions outside any physically separate communities) under a Rule of life approved by the Church.

This was the case put to Pope Pius XI by Father Agostino Gemelli in 1938 in a paper which became the basis of Pius XII's *Provida Mater*, and is supported by the reasoning behind Wulf's and von Balthazer's positions.

4. However, it is sufficiently clear that this recognition by Pius XII that members of the so-called Secular Institutes both (a) had 'the substance of the religious life' and (b) were still essentially 'laymen', not only appeared to tie knots in the neat lines of Canon Law, but appeared also to be theologically an attempt at having your cake and eating it. At any rate, it provided a heavy chunk of food for thought to the theologians and one not at all easy to digest.

(A) *Rabner* insisted that the members of Secular Institutes are really (i.e. from a theological point of view) religious. If the Pope calls them

lay people, this is for juridical not theological, reasons (to show they do not fall under the set of regulations established for religious in Canon Law) and following a popular use of the term by which what is meant is that they have a secular profession and do not necessarily live in a community. But by taking the three vows (i.e. renouncing marriage and the free disposal of their lives and property) they have disengaged themselves from the 'world' in a fundamental way. Their having a secular job and living outside a community are in comparison of secondary importance; these are a further extension of the traditional presence to the world through preaching and teaching first, and through other charitable and apostolic activities afterwards, which the best theologians (e.g. Aquinas, S.Th. II IIae q. 188) had always considered a beneficial adjunct to the contemplative activity which retained its primary role. 'The attitude of aversion from the world which is presupposed in evangelical virginity', according to Rahner, means that taking a secular job for a religious at heart will only be a tactical device in the service of the Church's hierarchical apostolate. It is not, therefore, to such people that we must look to carry out the task of the Christian penetration of the world: this rests squarely on the laity who have *not* decided by vow to follow the evangelical counsels. If the Pope does not speak 'theologically' when he calls members of the Secular Institutes lay people, he does precisely that when he says they have a 'profession which in substance is truly religious' although he is hardly consistent with himself when, in another document, he says that they only 'approach' the state of canonical perfection. The truth is, according to Rahner, they are religious disguised externally as lay people to carry out their apostolate more effectively, and more freely, and hence tend to flourish, in practice, where the other religious are shackled.

(B) *Von Balthazar, Lazzati*, and many others, especially members of Secular Institutes have not taken too kindly to Rahner's picture of themselves. They insist that members of Secular Institutes are really, and not only in Canon Law, laymen. The anomaly is not in the juridical treatment in relation to theological reality, but in the titles of the Conciliar Decree and of the Congregation of Religious, which, once they include the Secular Institutes should be renamed to show they deal with all those, religious or lay, who have adopted 'the state of perfection'. The Pope is right to follow the popular usage which regards as the

distinguishing mark of the layman his attachment to a secular profession, and not whether he has taken the vows of celibacy, poverty and obedience. For that is the essence of the layman's role in the Church: that he is involved in the task of redressing earthly realities from the state of corruption by sin and bringing them to their fulfilment in Christ according to God's plan. Rahner's belief that taking the vows implies that one's fundamental interest is not in one's job, but in the opportunities it provides for sharing in the Church's direct apostolate is totally rejected: for the member of the Secular Institute, doing his secular job as perfectly as possible is his primary apostolate. Just as the contemplative's vocation is to render witness to the redemptive possibilities of the Incarnation by carrying the realities of the present world to their maximum perfection possible here and now. That the member of the Secular Institute is involved, unlike the religious, essentially and not merely incidentally, in a secular profession and social life, makes him decisively a layman, despite the fact of his taking the three vows.

5. I think that the uncommitted reader who confronts these summaries (fair, I hope) of the two points of view can only conclude that both are overstressing one aspect of man.

The impression one gets from reading Rahner is of a quasi-Freudian picture of man: for him, it appears the sexual aspect (married or unmarried) is dominant enough to colour all other aspects of life. You are celibate (for it is celibacy, rather than poverty or obedience) which he stresses; hence you can hardly have the same attitude to your work as the married man.

On the other hand, the impression one gets from reading Lazzati is of a quasi-Marxist picture of man: for him, it appears the work-situation (essential or incidental) is dominant enough to colour all the other aspects of life. If you have a secular profession (for it is this, rather than living outside a community or without a habit, which he stresses), you can hardly have the same attitude to the vows as the 'religious':

- (i) The typical member of a Secular Institute does not sever his family relationships but continues to behave as a son, uncle, etc. within his family network, even if he renounces marriage;
- (ii) The obedience which he owes his superior allows him full autonomy in the execution of his secular task which he chooses himself according to his natural bent and interest and not in terms of

his Institution's needs and works – which, indeed, Secular Institutes should not have.

- (iii) By 'poverty', members of the Secular Institutes mean living at the level of one's social status in such a way that it is not an obstacle to the fulfilment of one's social role.

This line of argument might appear to lead in the dangerous direction of an evacuation of the content of the three vows. But, apart from this, it is just as implausible to argue that a celibate for religious reasons won't have a fundamental interest in his job as that the three vows allow you to be a participant in the earthly tasks on the same footing as those without. Both sides appear to overargue their case.

6. The commonsense reaction, I think, is that of Congar when he said that we have here 'a fourth genus of Christian'. Hence, the members of the Secular Institutes are right in stressing the novelty of their concept and its relationship to the needs of the times, rather than Rahner who discounts their importance, because he thinks their vocation, if viable, will still be extremely rare, and it can be fulfilled through a reform of the religious orders, since he thinks it lies totally on the side of the 'eschatological' option. But the members of the Secular Institutes insist their option is totally 'incarnationist'. The truth appears to be that it is an attempt at a synthesis between the two options involving important modifications of both. The real question now appears to be: is it possible that one need no longer be forced to choose between the two traditional options, but that a new way of life is possible which would appear to be closer than any to the true ideal of the missionary Christian? If this is the right formulation of the issue, then some fresh theological thinking is called for, which will take a much more *historical* approach to the whole question.

PART TWO

The most summary perusal of the history of the development of the forms of religious life shows a clear enough tendency: each major new form successively created tends to incorporate more and more elements of the 'incarnationist option' into the basic 'eschatological option'. In other words, history shows an asymptotic movement towards the fusion of the two vocations.

Moreover, the main stages of this movement appear to be correlated to the basic transformations of the social, political and economic structures of the secular world. Each new form comes as a response to a major alteration in these structures.

The Conciliar Decree on the Renewal of the Religious Life authorizes us to classify the forms of the religious life in the following way, historically, although the Decree itself chooses a logical rather than a chronological mode of presentation.

(A) The purely 'contemplative' or eschatological vocation. This appeared in the early centuries when the world was still mostly entirely pagan. The values embodied in the structures of the world were such that the presentation of the Christian model of the end-product to be sought could only be done as far outside these structures as possible. The Fathers of the Desert could hardly express more than the negative aspect of their rejection.

The first Cenobitic communities, whose appearance is conditioned by the easing up or disappearance of the persecution of the Christian Church by the pagan State, bring out in their way of life the positive aspect: that salvation is not an individual flight away from the City, but the construction of the heavenly city on earth.

But this new society can only be created in miniature by a relatively few, relatively small groups on the margin of society. It is the pagan structures of society almost as a whole which are to be rejected and an almost wholly new society which must be demonstrated to be possible by the 'eschatological' groups. These can only 'seek God' outcast by or outside of secular structures and carry a message to the world merely by existing the way they do.

(B) With the advent of the Mendicant Orders, we have the so-called 'Mixed Life' ideal expressed in the phrase *contemplata aliis tradere*, i.e. while these communities remain basically contemplative, they add to the witness already provided by their existence, an explicit witness by their word, through preaching and teaching.

This new form of life is correlated to two social factors:

(a) the feudal structure of society then dominant and (b) the appearance of the academic and of the bourgeois. The first factor is correlated to the continued emphasis on the basis contemplative way of life, or eschatological aspect, the second factor to the element of direct apostolic action, or 'incarnationist' action introduced by the admission of a teaching function into their way of life (which thus

acquires a structural link with the secular world). It is a subsidiary or secondary element in the 'religious' way of life, but is judged by them to make theirs a more perfect way than that of the pure contemplation of the older established monks.

(a) The separation of the friars from the dominant feudal structures is expressed in the emergence of the three evangelical counsels as the mark of their eschatological option. A basic principle of feudalism – i.e. the determination of a fixed social role by the circumstances of birth – is in such flagrant contrast with the eschatological picture of the freedom and equality of the children of God in the Communion of Saints – that it necessitates the opting out of the secular structures of feudal society by those who take the eschatological option.

- (i) The feudal concept of property, by which a man has an unbreakable bond to a particular land, conflicts with the ideal of 'poverty', by which such ties are severed.
- (ii) The feudal concept of *allegiance*, by which a man is tied to his lord, conflicts with the ideal of 'obedience', by which the guidance of the Spirit is accepted, generally mediated through a spiritual counsellor, in the choice between the various paths of goodness available to man.
- (iii) The feudal concept of *marriage* conceived as necessary to be accepted with a person determined by criteria of 'convenience', conflicts with the ideal of Chastity, in both its celibate and married forms. (The reasons for the greater complexity of this contrast between this third vow and the eschatological ideal is significant and will call for further exploration later).

Medieval theology sought to ease the contrast on all three points for those who took the Incarnationist option. No man's title to property was absolute, but subordinate to the common good; no human sovereignty was absolute and no human law was valid which conflicted with God's; the dignity of woman as a person not a chattel, was in various ways noted, and perhaps worked towards. In short, the Commandments were the layman's bulwark and allowed the possibility of a Christian existence within the very structures of feudal society.

But in order to foreshadow in the present life as closely as possible the way of the future era, with all goods really shared in common, in full freedom to follow the guidance of the Spirit as discerned with the

help of a spiritual counsellor, in Christ, in whom 'there is neither male nor female' (Gal. 3, 28), then you had to opt out of the secular structures of the feudal world. The Evangelical Counsels take shape in Medieval times in their threefold form because precisely these were the three points which made the eschatological option unlivable in that society; in this sense (not because they were the positive, essential foundations of their way of life) they defined this vocation, i.e. inasmuch as they were the dividing factors from the incarnationist way of life of the laity.

(b) However, two 'structures' emerged in the medieval world which were not feudal (in the sense given to this term above)

- (i) the University, or world of learning. In this sphere, open to all comers, the 'religious' could engage himself without being forced to violate his chosen way of life;
- (ii) the bourgeois, or merchant-class. It is from this class that St. Francis arose and the friars ensured the Church's presence within it. Their separation from feudal society was a common feature of these two human groups, friars and merchants, in other ways so different.

Hence, two motivations can be discerned in the more directly apostolic role assumed by the friars relatively to the monks. Their presence in the University was not incompatible with their eschatological option, even if it meant abandoning the physical isolation of the monastery and establishing one's habitation in the city. Their presence among the bourgeois was accepted because these two lived outside the feudal structures and required religious help. That is, perhaps, why the friars, unlike the monks, came increasingly to be *priests*.

(C) The third major form of the religious life appears with the advent of the so-called 'active' communities founded explicitly for apostolic work. While it is stressed that this must have its roots in contemplation, prayer and union with God, the basic reason for the community is apostolic action: priestly, charitable, educational. The field of activity is extended well beyond the limits (preaching and teaching) envisaged by St. Thomas Aquinas for the 'mixed life' and many physical signs and means of constituting a separate community such as special habits and choral recitation of the office are removed. A new way of life is envisaged, (at least theoretically, for in practice it was difficult to get

approval without the retention of several features more clearly suited to the monastic than the apostolic vocation) in which contemplation and action are to be fused into an integrated life.

This new form appears after the breakdown of feudalism and accompanies the emergence of the typical political structures of the modern era which were later to develop into those of the capitalist states. The barriers of birth are by now considerably broken down and social mobility has vastly increased. The legal concept of property is such in a laissez-faire economy that an involvement in social work has become not only an apostolic necessity but a practical possibility on a far more important scale for those who had themselves chosen poverty. The general concept of political authority is such that it allows a measure of involvement in the life of the city proportionate to the degree of freedom allowed; the incompatibility of the dictated choices imposed upon citizens under certain political systems with the religious concept of obedience to the motion of the Spirit, somehow institutionally mediated to man, is often reduced. However, the current economic structures of individualistic capitalism are such that it is inconceivable that the ideal of the common pooling of goods implied by the vow of poverty be fulfilled within them. Likewise, political structures are still class-dominated, nationalistically and imperialistically oriented, so that they cannot but conflict in many cases with a vow to follow the dictates of the Spirit of universality. Most of all, the marriage and family situation is still such that, although not so restrictive as under the feudal system, involvement in it will still be incompatible with eschatological witness. The three vows remain the sign of a marked separation from the structures of the secular world, despite the shift of emphasis on apostolic action in this form of eschatological ideal.

(D) The twentieth-century has seen the birth of the Secular Institutes as well as of a new type of religious order such as the Little Brothers of Jesus of Pere de Foucauld who make the assumption of a secular job part of their vocation and, some of them, admit or encourage participation in political activity.

The political, social and economic conditions which have made this possible are the return to a concept of the role of the State as not being merely the negative so-called liberal one, but as having a positive role in the interests of the common good; the creation of an economic situation in which it is possible for an individual to conform to the norms of

religious poverty while engaging in temporal activity (largely the result of the separation of the property-owning from the managerial roles and a considerable breakdown of class-divisions.) The new context of the 20th century has made it more possible to be involved in the world while living out the eschatological ideal than ever before. The Welfare State creates an economic structure within which it is possible to live the counsel of poverty in the world; democracy make active citizenship compatible with the counsel of obedience. The Secular Institutes and the other new forms of religious life remove the restriction on the type of secular job it was possible to take in the world without renouncing to the eschatological option.

There remains, however, one great barrier to full participation in the world: the vow of celibacy. Rahner appears to be absolutely right in his insistence that this places one in a very different situation vis-a-vis the married and family man. Nor does the problem appear to be satisfactorily resolved by the device adopted by some Secular Institutes of abolishing community life. For the situation of being involved in a family relationship as uncle or aunt, son or daughter, etc., is not at all comparable to being a *pater familias* or *mater familias*. The oddity of a large community of celibates in a secular quarter may be eliminated by the arrangement of living in small, family-size communities as by the Little Brothers of Jesus and other institutions. But, again, this does not tackle the heart of the problem which is not that of eliminating a phenomenological, social oddity, but that of the male-female personal-relationship implications of the Christian eschatological ideal. It seems perfectly possible today that this ideal should be incarnated with the structures of the secular world itself – except for one obstacle: the eschatological ideal, as presented by the Gospel, clearly implies a non-married personal relationship system, while marriage, the foundation of the family organisation of society, appears to be implied in the concept of total secular involvement. The key-issue in the question posed at the beginning of this essay now appears to be the future of Love.

There is, thus, one major barrier which prevents us from saying that the member of the Secular Institute is totally a layman (in the theological sense of the word, i.e. one who has made the 'incarnationist' option); on the other hand, the importance of his involvement in the world through having a secular job is too great to allow us to assimilate him quite simply to the previous forms of the religious life (or

'eschatological' option). If the Secular Institutes were all to follow one of two alternatives which many have taken, *either* of adopting a community form of life which in fact, encloses them to a considerable extent within it by being structured on the traditional framework inherited from previous form of religious communities *or* of merely living separately as individuals peripherally attached to the normal family group, then there would be strong reason to agree with Rahner that they are still definitely on the 'religious' side of the fence. It is conceivable, however, that they may experiment in different forms of interpersonal relationship which would justify Congar's description of them and live up to be the infant-form of a new genus of Christian.

The changes taking place in family-structure and the concept of married life are such that it is not too fanciful to imagine the genesis of a different type of small religious community which will be able to take its place in the secular world without celibacy or marriage any longer constituting a great divide between them. To describe such a community would be, perhaps, to indulge in crystal gazing; and only experience can prove whether and to what extent the final root-destruction between the two-options can become insignificant in this world.

At present, in conclusion, it is only possible to draw attention to some straws in the wind which may or may not be indications of the direction in which the Spirit is blowing.

Marc Oraison, in his book *Le Celibat*, has stressed the distinction between 'sexuated' and 'sexual' relationships. In the future life, Scripture tells us that there will not be sexual relationships as we now know them; but that this does not imply that the colouring of the whole personality by the fact of being man or woman will be abolished any more than any other significant trait of our personality. Although no longer sexual, our love relationship will still be sexuated. If this is the 'model' which the eschatologist option seeks to realise on earth, it may be asked, will it not be better realised if there is such a pattern of sexuated, but not sexual (i.e. not orientated towards sexual intercourse) interrelationship within the community, rather than by the exclusion of one or the other sex from close friendship?

Luise Rinser has contrasted Cardinal Doepfner's exhortation in his 1967 Lenten Pastoral to his clergy 'to carry forward a relationship of friendship, and have a healthy encounter even with Woman, or rather precisely with her' with the traditional warnings (of which she hears

the echo in Paul VI's encyclical of the same year on Celibacy) against contact with woman. She goes on to argue that there is a particular modality of love which is by no means incompatible with celibacy and which far from going against the love of God can be a means towards its fulfilment, as can be proven even from the lives of certain saints, although this form of love cannot be serenely accepted except by mature men who have experienced not only love, but also the beauty of sacrifice. Rinser's views are partly corrected and partly corroborated by Fr. Gentili, S.J., in the Italian edition of Rinser's book in an essay as lengthy as Rinser's own.

There is also *Teilhard de Chardin's* opinion. Teilhard, as is known, forecasts for the future a new development of love as the unitive force of the entire universe which will consist precisely in our overcoming the present restrictions of our capacity to love (only wife, children, friends, and perhaps country) to universal proportions. But apart from this futuristic vision, it is well-known that Teilhard himself actually lived intense friendships (to which he attributed the source of his ideas) which he held to be fully compatible with his priestly celibacy. (Vide commentary on Teilhard's celebrated text *L'Eternel Feminin*, by Henri de Lubac).

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