

MELITA THEOLOGICA

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ADVANCES IN MEDICAL GENETICS PROSPECTIVES AND ETHICAL PROBLEMS

Angelo Serra

The astonishing and troubling appeal of Nobel Laureate H.J. Muller [1] to human geneticists, convened at the Third International Congress of Human Genetics in Chicago in 1966, to engage in a strong "offensive for the control of human evolution" was founded upon the premise that "modern culture by maximal saving of lives and fertility, unaccompanied by a conscious planning which takes the genetic effects of this policy into account, must protect mutations detrimental to bodily vigor, intelligence or social predisposition" (p. 526).

A few years later, 1972, his statement was confirmed by a Technical Report of the World Health Organization. [2] A group of geneticists estimated that, if in the next generations all the subjects who up to now could not reach the age of fertility would reproduce, then the incidence of polygenic diseases should have increased 3-5% per generation, and the incidence of monogenic diseases should have increased 15% per generation, and would be doubled after seven generations.

Muller's appeal and proposal were echoed and supported by other distinguished geneticists, [3] among whom T.M. Sonneborn and J. Lederberg. The offensive for the control of human evolution had to move along three main lines: rigorous genotype selection, germinal choice and gene manipulation.

Medicine felt inevitably involved in that enterprise, and medical genetics developed as a new branch of human genetics. [4] From that time on, many important and beautiful pages were written in the history of medicine as a result of close collaboration between clinics and the newly developing areas of genetics: cytogenetics, mathematical and population genetics, immunogenetics, biochemical genetics and molecular genetics, to mention only a few. But many ethical problems emerged also.

Our aim, here, is firstly to give a glance to the main scientific achievements of medical genetics and to the great prospectives open to medicine, and secondly to briefly analyse a few hot spots where the ethical tension is stronger, in order to understand its underlying reasons.

Conquests of medical genetics

In the 1960s and 1970s an extraordinary number of new genetic diseases and congenital anomalies were discovered due to either *chromosomal aberration* [5] or to *single gene mutations*, with the number of the latter increasing from 1487 in 1966 to 2811 in 1978. [6] Most important, with the use of new biochemical techniques it was possible to demonstrate, in a number of genetic diseases, either a reduction or accumulation of certain metabolites, or a deficit of functionally significant proteins, suggesting that defect of *enzymes* or *structural proteins* were the primary effect of gene alteration. [7]

By 1980 the responsible molecular defect had been elucidated for about 200 genetic diseases: a great step forward indeed, although this represented less than 10% of the conditions proved or suspected to be due to single gene mutation. Furthermore, for many of these diseases not only the *etiology* could be studied extensively but also the *pathogenesis*; [8] and valuable genetic parameters, like *gene frequency*, *heterozygote incidence* in the populations and *segregation patterns* in the families had been established. [9] Attempts to identify heterozygotes for deleterious genes had also been made: but they frequently proved unsuccessful, due to ample estimates overlappings between controls and carriers, or unjustified because of their rarity, or even impossible, because of a lack of reliable detection methods. Finally the cytological observation of the presence of chromosomal abnormalities in tumour cells had opened the way to the study of the *genetics of human cancer*. [10]

No effective treatment or cure for genetic diseases was then possible. Yet, remarkable improvements in *ultrasonography* and *fetoscopy* had paved the way for the introduction and diffusion of *prenatal diagnosis* [11] in medical practice. By the end of 1977, two largest surveys on prenatal diagnosis of pregnancies at risk reported from United States and Canada (13,785 pregnancies) [12] and from Western Europe and Israel (11,334 pregnancies) [13] had shown that the number of fetuses affected by genetic diseases in the second trimester of pregnancy is approximately 4-6%.

In the 1980s the explosion of new technologies, [14] that followed the brilliant discovery of *recombinant DNA* by the Nobel Laureate P. Berg, [15] caused the *molecular revolution* in medical genetics, that altered altogether the direction of the search: the major target was no longer the defective products of mutated genes,

but the genes themselves, their precise error and their direct effects. The 127 papers presented at Cold Spring Harbor in 1986 under the title "Molecular Biology of Homo Sapiens" [16] give an idea of the exciting successes of this new era of human and medical genetics.

In less than ten years, more than 450 disease genes, [17] including oncogenes and tumor suppressor genes, [18] and approximately 3300 anonymous polymorphic DNA sequences [19] were mapped into human chromosomes, the latter representing extremely useful markers for locating coding genes through linkage studies. [20] The ten volumes reporting on the International Workshops on Human Genome Mapping are a testimony of the immane efforts accomplished, and of the great successes obtained. H. Ruddle and K.K. Kidd [21] while announcing in the tenth volume the formalization of the "Big Science" Human Genome Project that was increasing the hope "to view the human gene map in its largely completed form some years hence" (p. 2), could be very proud and satisfied for the great success already obtained by the 'little science' in the discovering and analysis of human genetic information.

In the time span of approximately six years from the starting of the Human Genome Project (1989-1995) in the United States and in other countries, [22] its knowledge increased exponentially. The first goal was the preparation of a sufficiently precise *physical map* of the *chromosomes* that is of the 24 volumes containing the human genetic information, by ordering the thousands fragments, in which the chromosomes had been broken. [23] The main efforts are still being devoted to a second goal, that is, the discovering of all the *coding genes* and the construction and continuous adjournment of the *genetic map*: to date, more than 15,000 *markers* were localized at an average distance of 200 kilobases along the chromosomes; and *sequence data* are available for approximately 5,000 *coding genes*, while 25,000 additional genes are represented by *Expressed Sequence Tags* (EST). [24] A major step has been the characterization of 87,983 unique partial complementary DNA sequences expressed (ESTs) in 37 human tissues at various stages of development, [25] 124 of which represent *oncogenes* or *tumor suppressor genes*.

Contemporaneously the *molecular analysis of mutated genes* [26] - such as those of the hemoglobinopathies, hemophilia, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophies, mitotic dystrophy, spino-cerebellar atrophy, Huntington Chorea, Fragile-X syndrome and Retinitis pigmentosa, oncogenes and suppressor genes - not only

disclosed the great number of *mutations*, either at a given locus or at different loci, that may be responsible for a given disease, but also led to the discovery of the *specific products* of the normal genes,²⁷ thus facilitating the understanding of the *pathogenesis* of *single gene*, and also *poligenic*, diseases. [28]

Prospectives of Medical Genetics

As a consequence of these uninterruptedly continuing advances, the *identification* of both *patients* and *heterozygous carriers* of deleterious genes became relatively easy by *postnatal*, *prenatal* and *pre-implantation* diagnosis. [29]

The enthusiasm of medical geneticists went still further. Tissue culture and *in vivo* animal experiments had shown that purified genes could be transferred into mammalian cells, function sufficiently well in them, and even cure them. [30] Thus, the prospective of *somatic cell gene therapy* appeared attainable. [31] Further investigation, aimed at making the transfection more regulated and the risk of insertional mutations minimal, could finally substantiate the proposal of the first projects of human gene therapy in 1991. [32] By the end of October 1994 [33] more than 200 protocols for gene therapy experimentation in humans were approved in United States and the patients treated were over 300, mainly for cancer, genetic diseases - cystic fibrosis, Gaucher disease, ADA deficiency, hypercholesterolemia 1, alpha-1-antitrypsin deficiency 1, Fanconi's anemia 1, Hunter syndrome - and AIDS.

It must be stressed, however, that we are still in a phase of "cautious optimism", as W.F. Anderson stated in 1991, and with still greater emphasis confirmed in 1994 [34] when, concluding an Editorial, he wrote: "The long term potential of genome science and gene therapy is extraordinary great. I have repeatedly argued that gene research should be strongly supported because it is the best prospect that we have for curing, and preventing the scourges that now claim so many lives: cancer, heart diseases, etc. Those of us in this field need to be careful, however, to provide realistic appraisals of the potential benefits and risks, as well as realistic estimates of how long it will take before society will see significant benefits. If we generate false hopes, the backlash when we cannot produce on schedule could be significant" (p. 1078). Indeed, as he stated more recently [35] "the results from the dozens of clinical trials are very encouraging in one sense, but discouraging in another (...) The gene transfer technology itself appears extraordinarily low in risk

at this point in time. Nonetheless, what we want to see is efficacy - we want to see patients getting better. We still only have two little girls with ADA deficiency, one familial hypercholesterolemia patient, and a few scattered cancer patients who have shown positive response" (p. 1432).

This situation, very well recognized by thousand researchers in the field, continues as yet: on May 1996, D.T. Zallen, [36] while underlining the vigor of scientific and biotechnology research and the encouraging signs of the field, made clear that "human gene therapy is still in its embryonic stages", that, "despite all the hope, promising results are scarce and the difficulties are legions" (p. 796), and that there is the need to "bring the troubling ethical and scientific questions to public view" in order "to proceed carefully and to flourish with broadly based public support" (p. 797).

Simultaneous to these developments, refinement of gene transfer, including *direct microinjection of genes into cell nuclei*, and progress in embryology allowed a major advance toward the goal of gene therapy. [37] It was shown that cloned DNA could be found in the cells of newborn mice when it was injected into the pronuclei of fertilized mouse eggs, and that the newly acquired genes were transmitted to the germ lines of these *transgenic* mice. Subsequently, their quantitative and tissue specific expression appeared controllable, and accurately designed experiments explored, in mice, the potential, of gene microinjection in germ cells for gene therapy. A number of successes were obtained. To recall only a few: [38] a partial correction of murine hereditary growth disorder; the cure of beta-thalassaemic mice by transfer of human adult beta-globin gene; the restoration of reproductive functions in expected hypogonadal mice, deficient of the gonadotrophin-releasing hormone because of the absence of normal gene, after germinal microinjection of the cloned wild-type *GnRH* gene. Yet, here also, a rigorous analysis of the results obtained so far in experimental animal models shows that the prerequisites for good success - that is, that gene transfer be harmless, efficient, and certain to result in physiologically significant expression - are all far from being satisfied.

While the search for gene therapy via somatic and germinal cell lines continues actively despite the rare successes, other techniques are being developed on the germe line with the aim of *preventing implantation*, or even *conception*, of embryos carrying disease genes: the DNA of one or two cells biopsied from 8 to 16 cell embryos, or of the first polar body of a mature oocyte, can now be easily analyzed

for the presence of a suspected abnormal gene. [39] The introduction of these techniques into medical practice is now largely spreading.

The ethical tension

All these advances in Human and Medical Genetics and their actual or attempted application in clinical practice deserve admiration and consideration. However, it is undeniable that a strong *ethical tension* did and still does accompany this tremendous progress. Very wisely the founders of the Human Genome Project [40] decided, from the very start, that at least 3% of the annual financial funds for the Project should be spent to support the Ethical, Legal and Social Implications (ELSI) Program, an amount that increased to 5%-7% in subsequent years. Indeed, it was perfectly clear that a project which: a) would have afforded knowledge and possibilities for diagnosis, treatment and prevention of genetic disorders and diseases; b) would have thrown light on the evolution of the human species and the development of human individuals; and, finally, c) would have set bases for the exploration of the biological components of human behaviour, should have also included potential risks of abuses of the acquired knowledge.

Some dissent on this point and think that actually no new ethical problems are to be faced. [41] J. Maddox, [42] for instance, in his paper "New genetics means no new ethics", contended: "There is also a temptation to believe that new laboratory techniques mean new applications and thus new ethical problems. But this is not the case (...) This new knowledge has not created novel ethical problems, only ethical simplifications (...) Is it not a welcome improvement ... that, when the impending birth of a child with a genetic disease can be determined by amniocentesis, most governments should allow abortion?" (p. 97).

Others, [43] because of incorrect or incomplete information and/or emotional excitement were led to an irrational condemnation and indiscriminate ban on these new scientific approaches to very serious human problems.

However, an increasing number of well-informed humanistic groups and scholars, and even a number of the most enthusiastic leaders in the development and application of the new technologies to medical genetics, show a deep-rooted concern about the possibility of misuses, and demand clear lines to be drawn between what is permissible and what is not. [44] An example is the letter that C. Thomas

Caskey, [45] President of the ASHG and chairman of the ASHG Human Genome Committee, wrote to J. Watson, at that time Director of the National Center of Human Genome Research at NIH. "The acquisition of new information - he writes - does not guarantee its use in a way that is to the benefit of mankind, respecting the prevailing views of society and the dignity of the individual. Members of the ASHG deal with such issues on a daily basis in their role as physicians, genetic counselors, and laboratory directors, providing sensitive and highly personal information about the future health of the individual and the family. There is need for resources to fund a continuing dialogue on the ethical, social and legal implications of the genome project. In addition to the workshops and symposia on this topic, there is a need both for careful research to establish the exact nature of the problems to be anticipated and for educational programmes to prepare experts in legal and ethical decision making in the field of medical genetics. These needs arise not only out of the genome project itself; they are with us already as a result of the cloning of several of the most important disease genes. The genome project will, however, exacerbate the problem as the availability of diagnostic reagents for the common multifactorial diseases brings the technology to a much larger segment of the population, and as screening programs for common genetic disorders bring the genetic knowledge to a majority of the population" (p. 689).

This highly sensitive attitude toward the ethical problems emerging from the development of the Human Genome Project and genetic engineering is constantly increasing and spreading among scientists, technologists and the public. However, the different ethical views render consensus difficult, whichever the proposed solution might be, or even impossible: wherefore the ethical tension must necessarily arise. Here we shall briefly touch on three hot spots.

The "early embryo" a disposable object for experimentation?

Research on the human genome has essentially two main aims: 1) the knowledge of the genome's *physical* and *genetic structure*, through the sequencing of the total DNA and the complete mapping of genes; and 2) the structural and functional analysis of single normal and abnormal genes, and their interactions.

The first type of investigation is generally done on the somatic cells' DNA, and does not entail particular ethical problems. It only demands professional honesty that, in some cases, may impose a rapid communication of available new data,

mainly of those that might accelerate new applications for a better knowledge and treatment of genetic diseases.

However, since 1987, *preimplantation embryos* are not excludable from the second type of experimentation. Their DNA is being used for many scientific purposes, among which: 1) the discovering of the main causes of failure in assisted reproduction; [46] 2) the setting up of easy diagnostic techniques for the pre-implantation detection of abnormal genes; [47] and 3) the analysis of activation and function of genes in the very early phases of human development, [48] as a premise to germ-line and/or early embryo gene therapy.

W.H. Anderson himself, [49] the pioneer of gene therapy, while remarking that "on medical and ethical grounds a line should be drawn excluding any form of enhancement engineering" (p. 689), stresses the idea that "as experience is gained, the line should be moved to include possibly germ line gene therapy for specific diseases" (p. 690). Actually, by the end of September 1994, 70 experimental protocols on this line of research were already in the hands of special Committees for approval. [50]

The reasons of those who insist that research on pre-implantation human embryos is a necessary step for the good of man cannot be disregarded. They are summarized in a note entitled "Embryo research: why the Cardinal is wrong", [51] issued by the President of the British Medical Association and the Royal Society of Medicine soon after the English Houses had approved the law allowing early embryo experimentation: "The potential benefits to society and to suffering humanity will be uncalculable. To have rejected its sensible and humane provisions would have dealt a devastating blow to the future of medicine and biological science, and, I believe sincerely, to that fundamental principle of Christian ethics of aiding those less fortunate than ourselves" (p. 186).

With sincere respect for all those who have such a profound conviction we think, nonetheless, that one cannot ignore the following considerations. In every experimentation on fetuses and mainly - at least in current practice - on newborns or on grown up people, where genetic engineering is applied for diagnostic or therapeutic purposes, the *human being* during all steps of experimentation is always considered and treated as a *human subject*, respecting his dignity and rights, among which the rights to life and to integrity. A proof of this are the rules published by many Committees for the revision and approval of submitted experimental protocols

and for the patient's consensus. [52]

The *experimentation on very early human embryos*, on the contrary, appears subtracted to this principle. Whichever the origin of the embryos, either purposely fabricated or selected among the spare ones from assisted reproduction, they are considered and treated as pure *producible and disposable objects*, which - according to laws already existing (England) or in preparation (United States and France) [53] - must be *destroyed* between the 14th and the 18th day after fertilization. Evidently the human embryo's *dignity* and *rights* as a real *human being*, who is autonomously developing and exploiting its potentialities, are violated.

The reasons advanced by those who support the need to experiment on human early embryos for the advancement of science and medicine are understandably only *within a logic* where the human embryo is absolutely *deprived of humanness* and, consequently, of its corresponding *moral value* as a *human subject*. This position, however, has neither biological nor metabiological foundation. [54]

The explicit conclusion reached on this respect by the Warnock Committee [55] is very clear: "While, as we have seen, the timing of the different stages of development is critical, once the process has begun, there is no particular part of the developmental process that is more important than another; all are part of a continuous process, and unless each stage takes place normally, at the correct time, and in the correct sequence, further development will cease. Thus biologically there is no one single identifiable stage in the development of the embryo beyond which the *in vitro* embryo should not be kept alive. However, we agreed that this was an area in which some precise decision must be taken, in order to allay public anxiety" (p. 65). The decision was: "The legislation should provide that research may be carried out on any embryo resulting from *in vitro* fertilisation, whatever its provenance, up to the end of the fourteenth day after fertilisation" (p. 69). Without any doubt, in this decision socio-political reasons prevailed on both the logical coherence and the ethical reason!

The view of the Catholic Church on this point can now appear in its true significance and value. Consistently with Her ethical perspective, and in accordance with the scientifically based conclusion that *from the zygote state a true human subject starts its own life cycle*, she declares: [56] "Thus the fruit of human generation, from the moment of its existence, that is to say from the moment the zygote is formed, demands the unconditional respect that is morally due to human

being in his bodily and spiritual totality. The human being is to be respected and treated as a person from the moment of conception; and therefore from the same moment his rights as a person must be recognized, among which in the first place is the inviolable right of every innocent human being to life" (pp. 13-14).

As a consequence and coherently, the Catholic Church cannot consider ethically right any kind of experimentation on very early human embryos conducted with the *exclusive* aim of research. If, and only if, the scientific progress, made by respecting the above mentioned requirements, could reach the point of permitting a safe and effective gene therapy also in very early human embryos, then and only then an experimental therapeutic approach would licitly be applied, given all the conditions and warranties requested for any therapeutic experimentation in human beings. Quoting from her document: "In the case of experimentation that is clearly therapeutic, namely, when it is a matter of experimental forms of therapy used for the benefit of the embryo itself in a final attempt to save its life, and in the absence of other reliable forms of therapy, recourse to drugs or procedures not yet fully tested can be licit" (p. 17).

The «genetically mistaken» fetuses: should they be born?

The possibility of discovering, through prenatal or pre-implantation diagnosis, a human subject who has a *wrong gene* that, sooner or later, will seriously affect the quality of its life, is steadily increasing. Suffice here to recall the easy detectability of genes as those involved in Mediterranean anaemia, sickle cell anaemia, cystic fibrosis, Tay-Sachs disease, Duchenne and Becker muscular dystrophy, myotonic dystrophy, spinal muscular atrophy, spinal cerebellar atrophy, Huntington's chorea, Fragile-X syndrome and a number of tumours.

Negative eugenics, through selective termination of affected embryos or fetuses is, at present, the policy of choice, to such an extent that most feel this practice as a *social obligation*. A great exacerbation of this policy is expected as a consequence of the new advances in gene mapping. Yet, the ethical tension in this area is still considerable.

To some people this practice is *good* and, in some case, *compulsory*. According to H.D. Aiken [57] of the Department of Philosophy of Brandeis University at Waltham (Mass) "claims regarding the right to biological survival are entirely

contingent upon the ability of the individual in question to make, with the help of others, a human life for himself. This means that in circumstances where there exists no possibility of anything approaching a *truly* human life, the right to biological or physical survival loses its own *raison d'être* and hence that the merciful termination of life, in the biophysical sense, is acceptable or perhaps even obligatory" (p. 180).

To some others, among whom the council of Churches, [58] the "decision for foetal diagnosis and abortion is a *weighty decision*, as the foetus, although still dependent, has a potential existence as a human being. The decision to deprive it of that potentiality depends on a conclusion that the *detriments* resulting from its birth *outweigh the benefits*" (p. 207). Here, the ethical principle is more restrictive, but the conditional criterion practically cancels any limitation, thus opening the door to unlimited relaxation. As a matter of fact, what only a few years ago was considered ethically wrong - such as the selective termination of a Klinefelter or a Turner fetus or a fetus of an undesired sex - is now becoming a routine; and there are pressures to extend prenatal selective termination to heterozygous carriers of defective genes.

The Catholic Church, on her side, is not against prenatal diagnosis itself. To the question: "Is prenatal diagnosis morally licit?", she answers: [59] "If the prenatal diagnosis respects the life and integrity of the embryo and the human foetus, and is directed towards its safeguarding or healing as an individual, then the answer is affirmative" (p. 14). Those who, in the Catholic Church, are responsible for the doctrine are well aware of the anxiety of many women during gestation, due mainly to their cultural environment, and of the relief that most of these women can receive from prenatal diagnosis. She is also aware of the dramatic situation of the parents in the case of a «*bad*» diagnosis. In her view, however, even in such a dramatic circumstance an unhealthy unborn human subject, and - *a fortiori* - a healthy foetus that will or may become ill later in life, both are *innocent human beings* who have absolute right to life. Therefore, she teaches that abortion, even in these cases, is morally illicit.

The «bad gene» carriers: what their future?

In *families* where there is a case of genetic disease, in general - unless it is due to casual mutation - there are, because of segregation, *healthy carriers* of the deleterious gene, who can be at risk of transmitting the disease and/or of becoming ill themselves.

In a *population*, one can also find *healthy carriers* of many bad genes that are nowadays detectable, and whose number will greatly increase in the years to come. For instance: in Europe, approximately 1 over 20-25 subjects carries the cystic fibrosis gene; in certain Mediterranean countries 3-5 over 30 subjects are carriers of a serious anaemia gene; in Ashkenazic Jews 1-2 over 100 carry the Tay-Sachs disease gene. All the healthy carriers have an appreciable probability of forming families at high genetic risk for their children.

The identification of *bad gene carriers* became progressively easier through the advances in the Human Genome Project and the growth of industrial genetic engineering. Therefore the interest in *predictive testing* and *presymptomatic screening* is exponentially growing, among both specialists and the public, due mainly to commercial pressure. To give but one example, according to sources of the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), the number of cystic fibrosis carrier tests in the United States increased from 1,854 in 1989 up to 63,000 in 1992. [60]

The diagnostic application of genetic knowledge undoubtedly opens new perspectives for *preventive medicine*. The identification of subjects at risk coupled with competent and responsible counselling in order to inform and enlighten carriers concerning, first of all, their reproductive personal choices, could lead: 1) to a *primary prevention* for genetic diseases, that is to avoid the conception of human subjects who will be affected by serious disorders, thus contributing to the preservation and promotion of the quality of life in families and populations; 2) to a *psychological relief* for all those who could be assured that they do not carry a specific bad gene; and 3) to the *alleviation of unavoidable distress* for those who are indeed bad gene carriers and should - with high probability - become ill later on, by suggesting possible preventive measures and, hopefully in the near future, also providing convenient and effective therapies.

However, serious ethical problems arose also from such important advances in the effort to safeguard the health of persons, families and society.

1. The *assisted reproduction*, that is offered not only to families suffering because of *sterility* or *infertility* but also to those *at risk* of having *children affected by genetic disorders*, is a new field full of emerging ethical problems. Actually it is a medical practice that is rapidly spreading and becoming more and more common, supported by national and international bioethics Committees and, in many countries, guaranteed by law.

Although it is commonly accepted, there are different views on the many correlated ethical and deontological aspects. Most rigorous is that of the Catholic Church. It is condensed in the following statements:⁶¹ "Conception *in vitro* is neither in fact achieved nor positively willed as the expression and fruit of a specific act of the conjugal union. In homologous IVF [in vitro fertilization] and ET [embryo transfer], therefore, even if it is considered in the context of 'de facto' existing sexual relation, the generation of the human person is objectively deprived of its proper perfection: namely that of being the result and fruit of a conjugal act in which the spouses can become cooperators with God for giving life to a new person" (p. 30). The Church teaches, indeed, "the inseparable connection, willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act: The unitive meaning and the procreative meaning" (p. 26).

At the same time, however, the Catholic Church, after noting that "a medical intervention respects the dignity of persons when it seeks to assist the conjugal act either in order to facilitate its performance or in order to enable it to achieve its objective once it has been normally performed", urges scientists and physicians to continue their research in order to find more human ways to relieve the anxieties of those families which are sterile or at risk for genetic diseases. It is, indeed, to be hoped that further progress in the search for the *selection of genetically healthy oocytes* and of *in vivo fertilization techniques* will provide a human as well as morally acceptable way.

2. The application of *predictive* and *presymptomatic tests* in view of epidemiological genetic surveillance is the second field where many ethical and deontological problems are being opened. There is a strong pressure to start or to accelerate, *at the population level* [62], at least some of the possible screenings, mainly in order to find healthy carriers of defective genes - among which those for cystic fibrosis, Duchenne muscular dystrophy, myotonic dystrophy, phenylketonurea and some tumours. In this area, possible *conflicts* of the *individual's rights* to freedom of choice and privacy with other people or *community rights* are to be expected, and in fact do exist.

The ethical controversy is still pending [63] and no general solution appears to be possible. However, in the light of the basic ethical principles of *justice*, *equity*, and *respect of the dignity* of every human being, efforts are being made to establish some rules that could help meet these requirements [64]. The Recommendations relative to «genetic screening» promulgated by a Committee of the Institute of

Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences in United States [66] - constituted by medical geneticists, genetic counsellors, pediatricians, ethicists and lawyers - are consistent with the above mentioned requirements. Among those Recommendations the following are declared as absolutely necessary: *voluntary participation*; genetic information and counselling about the benefits and risks of testing procedures, the possible outcomes and the available options; more rigorous education and training of health care providers in the area of genetic testing and counselling; restriction, for single gene disorders, to conditions of a relatively high frequency either preventable or treatable; caution over the use of genetic tests to determine a person's susceptibility or predisposition to genetic disorders that can occur later in life; finally, protection of individuals against discrimination from health insurers and employers.

As to the last requirement, the results of rigorous surveys are very impressive. [67] The Division of Genetic Medicine of the California Pacific Medical Center at S. Francisco [68] has overtly denounced that "genetic discrimination exists and is manifested in many social institutions, especially in the health and life insurance industries. Stigmatization, and denial of services or entitlements to individuals who have a genetic diagnosis but who are asymptomatic, or who will never become significantly impaired is noted" (p. 476).

Here we have yet a further and clear example showing that progress, if it is not constantly accompanied by appropriate ethical considerations, can easily turn against man himself.

The Catholic Church for the respect of human dignity and rights

One reason that could explain at least part of the ethical tension in this era of profound cultural changes is the lack or difficulty of understanding the teaching and the proposals of the Catholic Church. She [68], as well as all other religious groups [69], feels the urgency of facing the above issues and all others involving man. She recognizes and highly appreciates the intrinsic value of basic scientific research, and attributes great importance to applied investigation: indeed, as far as her religious view of the world is concerned, both *research* and *technology* "constitute a significant expression" of "the dominion over creation" (p. 5), which is entrusted by the Creator to man. At the same time, however, she feels as her essential duty: firstly, to examine all the aspects concerning human responsibility

in the manner of acquiring knowledge and in the applications that inevitably follow new discoveries; and secondly, to help - through her teaching - the Catholics first of all, and then anybody else who so wishes, to see the reasons why some ways of acquiring knowledge can be incorrect, and for what reasons some applications of scientific results may be ethically unacceptable.

While doing so, however, she is *profoundly respectful* of all those who, with a sincere - although often uninformed or scarcely informed - conscience, may hold and/or follow other opinions. She is aware of the fact that the cultural background upon which individuals or societal groups base their ethical principles of human behaviour may be greatly at variance; and, moreover, that this cultural background, whichever its origin, constitutes for every human person a true fundamental heritage, both intellectual and emotional, that has indeed for each one of us a great significance and value, and is therefore difficult to remove or even to question. It is with this sense of respect that she wants to fulfill her duty.

The *general ethical perspective* of the Catholic Church is, certainly, far from that of those [70] who think that "ethics as such is not an objective discipline", but "represents and reflects the customs accepted by a society", which under the impact of the scientific and technological development "will continue to modify" and, therefore, "tends to employ principles that vary with time and people" (p. 14). It seems quite obvious that, for all those who agree with this view, no general common principles can be found from which one can derive common ethical imperatives. If, however, one could consider man's *nature* and *dignity*, that is *the human person's* integral reality he would certainly recognize that it is his or her innermost self that can dictate the laws for the right behaviour. This principle was vigorously reiterated by John Paul II in a recent address to the Members of the Pontifical Academy of Science [71]: "One must not allow himself to be fascinated by the myth of progress, as if the possibility to make a research or to set up a technique could immediately qualify them as morally good. The moral goodness of any progress is measured from the genuine good that it affords to man taken in his double corporal and spiritual dimension. When man is the point of interest, the problems overflow the field of science, which can neither give any reason of his transcendence nor dictate moral laws that derive from the central position and his primordial dignity in the universe" (p. 5).

Conclusion

The progress and great promises of science and technology in the very frontier fields of human and medical genetics are stupendous and exciting. All the steps were accompanied by the emergence of many ethical problems, which are still a matter of controversy.

The desire of the Catholic Church is to offer a contribution to the ethical reflection on the new problems that are continuously emerging from this scientific and technological progress. In this study we have simply proposed her essential thoughts concerning a few ethical problems that have arisen in the field of human genetic research, and of the medical application of new genetic technologies, which are expected to grow and expand very quickly under the powerful impulse of the rapidly developing Human Genome Project.

Undoubtedly, one cannot help having the impression of a *rigorous* and seemingly *intransigent* doctrine. This is probably one of the reasons for the resistance and opposition to her teaching. Yet, the *true spirit* underlying that doctrine is emphasized in the following few lines in the introduction of the Document «Donum Vitae», here abundantly quoted: “The Church’s Magisterium having taken account of the data of research and technology, intends to put forward, by virtue of its evangelical mission and apostolic duty, the moral teaching corresponding to the dignity of the person and to his or her integral vocation. It intends to do so by expounding the criteria of moral judgment as regards the applications of scientific research and technology (...) These criteria are the respect, defence and promotion of man, his primary and fundamental right to life, his dignity as a person who is endowed with a spiritual soul and with moral responsibility. The Church’s intervention in this field is inspired also by the love she owes to man, helping him to recognize and respect his rights and duties” (p. 6).

It seems, however, that, independently of the intervention of the Catholic Church, the *ethical tension* that permeates the most advanced frontiers of medical genetics would not easily subside, due to the predominant pluralistic cultural structure of our society. Given this situation, all the efforts to find rules, to establish deontological codes, and to dictate laws in these areas might be helpful for preventing gross abuses. But only a profound sense of *human responsibility*, within the *scientists* involved in the making of science, as well as among *physicians* and *society* as they apply new scientific achievements, will be the best guarantee for a *real* and *respectful*

service to man. It is to this sense of responsibility that R.N. Proctor, [72] an historian of science, was strongly appealing after revealing the pitfalls of a «value-free-science»: “It is the duty of science, in the face of its public, to understand the conditions of its freedom, but also the responsibilities brought forth by that freedom” (p. 271).

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COMMUNION: THE BACKBONE OF LIFE IN CHRIST*

Metropolitan Emilianos

Among the many slogans and words which fascinate modern people is the term “communion-koinonia”. It reflects the deepest aspirations of us all. We earnestly seek this fellowship instead of continual enmity, mistrust and bloodshed. Communion is the particular concern of Christians, divided as we are, and unable as yet to reach a satisfactory consensus on the essentials of our faith.

There is a secular parallel to this: The European states, after the collapse of Marxism, have sought more unification, monetary, political, educational, social, while keeping their separate identities, inherited cultures and faith.

These are noble visions, but there is one thing that has not been taken into account: the interior world of man, with all its passions, its violent forces, its destructive manifestations, all the consequence of fallen human nature. In fact what this continent is seeking is the unification of what Europeans *have* rather than what they *are*. “*Having*” and “*possessing*” prevail over “*being*”.

Christians, particularly Monks, open their ears once they hear the magic word “communion” because this reality constitutes part of their essence. The “Ecclesia” of the ancient Greeks, the Church, signifies precisely the convocation of those who place their faith in Christ as Saviour and Redeemer. The Gospel makes it very clear that it is impossible to confess the faith and live it exclusively alone and in isolation from others. Christ’s prayer does not open with the invocation “My Father who is in heaven...”; it opens emphatically and importantly with “*Our* Father...” The “*Our*” leads at the same time both to God and to other people. It implies an ethical engagement of a communal kind during this life and even beyond it. It is deplorable that so often Christian individualism dominates the communal dimension.

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Christians, whether lay or Religious, must be reminded, and must remind others too, that salvation is not individual. This does not mean that individual piety is excluded. Gregory of Nyssa builds optimism and hope on the idea of universal salvation in Christ (*De anima et resurrectione*; Pg. 46, 109). Given that humanity forms a unique species and obtains its salvation corporately, Gregory focusses less on individual time than on universal time. Humankind, corporately and individually, had its experience of evil in the person of our parents, Adam and Eve. It will regain the redeemed state collectively, as one body. In this period of grace human beings are called to share their discipleship and sonship with others. It was for this purpose that Christ came down: to enable this collective salvation by uniting everyone into one family, one body, with himself as the head. In this way there is realised a mystical *anthropogenesis*, a sharing with others because of our common origin.

Gregory developed this truth in depth by stating that patriarchs, prophets and saints waited for such a communion. This movement from the individuality of the history of salvation to the global, reminds us of the absolute necessity of communal action for one's self and for other people. The history of Christians is related to the history of the whole world. The remaking of the history of each person and of the world is in fact a kind of "construction-kataskevi", that is, not an instant creation of beings placed in time, but the gradual construction of the world, which expresses the march of all people towards communion and fraternisation. "Now is the time for seeing, he says, certainly painful, because of tensions and conflicts, but all achieved unions by the contemplatives, anticipate the harvest to come in the last consummation of times" (In *Cantica Canticorum* 5; Pg 44, 869 and 873)

While for worldly spirits the "other" constitutes a threat, an obstacle or a hindrance with his own demands and claims, for the Christian the "other" presents an excellent opportunity for developing charity and fellowship. Both parties benefit: the doer of charity learns to reduce his selfishness, while the one who is helped is joined in solidarity with the stranger through his meekness and self-offering. A truly reconciled humanity will be realised only by cultivating more and more of this principle of Christianity. Monks must not be either heartened or grieved because of their distance from its daily life and its upheavals. In their silence, unceasing prayer and their contacts with so many wounded souls, they express the *koinonia* which is nothing else than an extension of their evangelical style of daily living. Our true mission is not only quietness and contemplation. Every human being has a role to

play in the restoration of this present world. With these preliminary reflections in our minds let us pass on to other aspects of our theme.

Koinonia: Inherent to Christian Identity

Early Christians were not worried or perplexed about seeking models of unity or ecclesiastical communion, or patterns of true koinonia. For them such vital issues were settled once and for ever. Consequently they were not obsessed or nervous about how to build up an ideal community life and human relationships. They were conscious that at baptism each Christian became 'Gloria Dei Vivens Homo', a living person reflecting the beauty and grandeur of God, as was formulated by Irenaeus (Adv. Haer, IV, 20, 5-7). This conviction became a most dynamic force for shaping their lifestyle, but also their vision of a future society. Unlike the Greek moralists who were searching through philosophical speculation and rational formulation for man's value and destiny, Christians were sure that the model for true life was given and set before them for all time.

The most ideal model was offered already a long time ago by the Son of God. He loved the world so much, that He became one of us in order to offer not only an example of meekness, but also the necessary means for its achievement. Self-offering constitutes the most eloquent sign of one's love for the other. Evangelical charity, is a real mystery. It cannot be understood by us unless we are also self-giving, following the same way of true love – self-emptying koinonia. The first Apologists were reaffirming this extraordinary achievement in the statement: "Christians were loving each other even when they did not know each other before".

It is fashionable nowadays to look for new imaginary models as if there are none left or as if they disappeared from earth a long time ago. Modern society seeks in vain for alternative ideals and models. The ideal society, the ideal fellowship, the ideal *humanum* and most perfect relationship known as *communio-koinonia* is simply there before us; it suffices to open our eyes and put the model into practice. In the ecumenical movement much discussion goes on about how to attain "models of unity and communion", as if the models which have existed since the apostolic period have become irrelevant, inapplicable, obsolete, outdated, invalidated, and void. This unfair approach, by systematically refusing to see what exists already, results in the repetition of countless consultations which are painstaking and expensive and come up with "new" findings which are doubtful and unreliable. Thus we are in a continuous circle of experimenting with all sorts of systems,

tinkering with methods, performing theological acrobatics, venturing into the unknown, and reaching the most dubious conclusions.

Christians from the beginning have had before them the *koinonia* of the Holy Trinity, a free *koinonia* which relates the three Persons. This Trinitarian *koinonia* was underlined by St. Cyprian in a remarkable formula (*De orat. Domin.* 2-3; PL 4, 536). Later it was developed by Symeon the New Theologian to prevent ambiguities and misrepresentations: "If God were deprived either of the other two, that is the Son or the Spirit, then He could not be Father. He could not even be alive, separated from the Spirit vivifying all by giving the life and the very being" (*Hymns* 12,30-35; SC 156,245).

Such explanation certainly is not given on conceptual grounds by scrutinising and investigating the mystery entailing the Godhead. Never shall we know exactly how the three persons are related in a remarkable perichoresis. We rely on inclusive language, fragmental allusions, and this is called apophatic theology. The trouble is that apophasis too easily may become an excuse for an inadmissible total and absolute silence.

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is revealed to us thanks to a historical event: namely Christ's communion. In this way the ancient world heard for the first time that it is communion which causes things "to be", "to be new", to "have hypostasis", because nothing exists without God's intervention. True Christians, regenerated and lifted up to higher levels, become able to understand and to put into practice such *koinonia* which draws its source from God. St. Basil explains the secret of such *koinonia* in the daily life of monks: although they are flesh and bones they manifest this communion in all its dimensions. (*The Long Rules: Question 7*).

The Trinitarian perichoresis disarms any flagrant human absolute autonomy. We are referential beings, that is, we belong to God as he belongs to us. Because of this interdependence, a voluntary relationship of love is established between God and his creatures. If, therefore, God is Father for ever and to all ages of ages, as is proclaimed in every liturgical hymnography, then it is rightly assumed that in the immensity of his love, God may integrate us into his paternal blessings and adopt us in his incarnate Son. If again, the eternal Spirit exchanges his gifts in the love *koinonia* relationship of the Trinity, it can transcend all existing obstacles in order to communicate the gifts it possesses even beyond itself to created beings. This is why divine action is always Trinitarian, from the first moment of creation until the

final recapitulation of all things in Christ, and by Him, in the Father. This made Irenaeus state: "The Father is always He who decides and commands, the Son is He who acts and creates, the Spirit is he who nourishes and gives growth; and little by little, man thereby progresses toward perfection." (Adv. Haer. 4,38,3).

Such Trinitarian and especially Pneumatological operation elevates the persons concerned into the charismatic and specially gifted, and their words become a second canon. Thus the words of the elders of the Egyptian desert were remembered and eventually written down. In time they became a kind of Christian midrash, a commentary on Scripture and its continuing relevance and importance. Their "sayings" constituted a double tradition of authority for those living in the desert. This double tradition, like good root stock, forms the secure foundation for the Apophthegmata or Sayings of the early desert monks. The sayings, like roses, or branches filled with grapes, rise from that stock. From its earliest days monasticism has had masters and disciples, spiritual fathers and spiritual children, those experienced in the tradition and those who have come to the desert to learn. Antony attached himself to an elder, as did Pachomius. Brief in many cases, the words of the elders were often seen as carrying the same weight of authority as those of Scripture.

* * *

In treating such a timely theme, we cannot overlook its connection with the ecumenical endeavour for unity, that is for full koinonia. Ecumenical dialogues admittedly have achieved considerable progress in the last decades. Agreement on many subjects controversial until now have been clarified, and everyday we witness promising signs for further consensus. Unity thus becomes one of the basic causes for suffering and for demolishing the existing barriers. During the Patristic period, appeals and moving letters were sent to quarrelling ecclesiastical bodies to urge reconciliation. I quote three such extracts:

Basil of Caesarea, seeing the tragic rupture caused by the Arians, sent to bishops and clergy letters urging their return to the Nicene faith so that peace could be established:

"I think firmly that for those who truly and rightly minister to the Lord, one preoccupation alone is suitable: to bring back into Unity the Churches which in many ways and for different reasons have been fragmented from each other". (Epist.114,1: PG 32, 528)

John Chrysostom commenting upon the moral disorders and the absence of Ecclesiastical discipline in the Church at Corinth, states the following:

“The name of the Church, Ecclesia, does not signify separation, but it is the name of unity and symphony. The Ecclesia was not established so that we who are assembled should remain divided, but that the divided should become united. And precisely this is confirmed by the convention, synodos”. (Hom. 27,2 in I Cor. PG 61, 228)

Gregory Nazianzene in similar terms points out:

“We do not intend to dominate, but to welcome again brothers; because of the separation we are torn in pieces in our hearts”. (Sermon 41, 8 on Pentecost; PG 36, 440)

* * *

Two objections might be made against such an eulogy of communion. The first objection is that freely chosen poverty which is not imposed, humility, ascetic self-denial and all the rest, can easily be understood within a restrictive community life, far away from worldly temptations and worries. But how can a simple lay person practise the high virtue of koinonia in his daily dealings? We must remember that in St. Basil's time, the lifestyle of the laity did not differ much from that of the monks. Lay people of both sexes were asked to practise almost the same ethical duties which were binding upon all the baptised. The lifestyle of all baptised Christians, whether in monasteries or in the towns, was almost identical. It was this living faith among merchants, workers, youth, peasants, soldiers, which witnessed to the gospel of salvation, drawing Jews and pagans to Christ.

This term “communio” was not used so much among Christians. After all, they were not scrupulous about religious language. But they were living the reality of fellowship with God and with their fellow human beings, behaving as “angels on earth”, citizens of heaven on earth, to borrow terms from the Letter to Diognetus (5, 1-17; 6, 1-7). Life among Christians then is meant to be real “communio sanctorum”. In a prophetic way and typologically Christ speaks in the Old Testament saying: “I will proclaim your name to my brothers, in full assembly I shall sing your praises” (Heb.2, 12). This text is taken from Ps. 21,23, and shows how the coming Messiah will treat men and women like his brothers and sisters. The assembly or ecclesia in this context implies the existence of a close relationship or koinonia.

Of course it is not yet that koinonia after Pentecost where the Holy Spirit is the distributor and source, as St. Paul shows in I Cor.12,4.

The second objection by many concerns the realisation of true communion, remembering the extent of evil, of conflicts, arrogance, selfishness, and clash of interests. How can such overpraised virtue be developed? Of course Koinonia does not blossom as a mushroom from one day to the next. It requires a long process and self-discipline. In the early Church candidates for full membership, koinonia, were carefully examined in order to pass the stage of Catechumens. Only after a long test were they admitted to the order of the faithful. Eucharist was administered with extreme caution, depriving those who had fallen into post-baptismal sin and had thus broken the spiritual bonds of true communion.

Nowadays parish life is rather lax, too lenient, and compromising. Consequently the elements required for the growth of koinonia are inadequate, absent or poor in quality. How then can we expect to find koinonia under such conditions? There is too much euphoric rhetoric about koinonia, but very little of its substance. Or from another perspective, communion is often understood in the horizontal dimension only, while it is primarily the union between heaven and earth, between life and eternity, as communicants experience at the Eucharist. Here there is no feeling of loneliness, but of a true koinonia fellowship with all brothers, and with martyrs past and present. Thus Ignatius of Antioch asks all brothers for their intercessions in solidarity in order to be strengthened before his tribulations. (Ad Ephesians 70; Magnes. 14. Tral, 13; Rom. 9)

Everywhere there is a complaint about the lack of communication in our modern societies, in spite of the fantastic development of communications of all kinds. Man thus is terribly alone. No other institution can heal his wounds. And because of such loneliness, man has become vulnerable and fragile. "Hell is the other" says J.P. Sartre. In his book *Huis Clos* Sartre implies that we are distanced one from the other. Contacts and relationships became more and more superficial or, even worse, possessive and abusive. In such a depressing situation, how can we speak of communion-koinonia? Everyone tries to dominate the other person. The fear of the other, the mistrust, makes one avoid contacts with the other person.

No contact means also no regard, no face to face meeting, no looking one another in the eye. Reluctance to see the other leads to indifference, except when we feel that our rights are infringed. If we could only acquire for a moment other eyes for

seeing, then we should be surprised by the wonder and resources of our fellow human beings. We shall discover that they are similar to me with the same visions and with the same faults. Above all, that we share the same hope, namely, that we should not remain alone or lost. There is a God, in the image of whom all men and women are created.

Despair, inner revolt, starts the moment one refuses to recognise the other as an equal fellow human being. There is then no more identity of personhood; we are lost in anonymity and indifference. Perhaps man is the unique being who is free to accept the other or to reject him, insulting and ignoring him. By giving more thought to our own dignity and to the dignity of others, we begin to appreciate the importance of personal communion and the common heritage of God's kingdom. True life cannot exist without relationships. Introducing *koinonia* into our lifestyle, we begin to live differently from the way we lived before. We are reminded by the Church Fathers that Christians are both relational and referential.

When we become aware that we are interdependent, that we share solidarity and responsibility and that we are fellow-builders and co-warriors, we see as a consequence the spontaneous action for mutual correction, for helping the fallen, and for sustaining, as was the practice in the early Church, those who belong to the order of the four penitential classes. We see the common supplications during worship and liturgical life, and the responsibilities of the baptismal sponsor to instruct neophytes and help their spiritual growth. Besides, there is the diaconal function of feeding the needy, the organisation of charitable institutions under the general label of philanthropia. Each Christian, in brief, was supposed not to live for himself, but to share with, to care for, and to sustain the other. All such motivations were nurtured by the conviction that we all, irrespective of social class or age, form together the body of Christ (I Cor.12,26).

Christians were convinced that heaven starts here and now on earth, within us, within each one of us, here, this very moment, near the bed of the sick, even in the slums of the hungry, or the hidden rooms of rejected and marginalised brothers and sisters. Social justice and diakonia are not the privileged slogans of socialists and Marxists. They were proclaimed long before by Jesus, the friend of all such miserable beings. Human assistance is a duty not only of the earthly, but of heavenly people also. This is the very soul of Christian humanism. Regardless of its metaphysical character, our faith is also realistic, earthly, worldly. The criteria of final judgment will be what we have done for our neighbour, whether Greek or Jew, during this life on earth.

Christians who are absorbed by the life hereafter, ignoring the challenges of this present world, forget that the other life is gained through the life of today.

All ascetic or patristic texts attest to, and convey, this wide meaning of *communio*, as concrete relationship with, and concern for, our fellow man. Thus Macarius of Egypt states, "there is no other way for man to be saved than through his neighbour" (Homily 37, 3 PG 34, 752c) Abba John Kolobos, born about 339, a famous Egyptian monastic figure, said: "A house is not built by beginning at the top and working down. You must begin with the foundations in order to reach the top". They said to him, "What does this saying mean?". He said, "The foundation is our neighbour, whom we must win, and that is the place to begin. For all the commandments of Christ depend on this one." (The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 39: PG 65, 217A)

From the above "apophthegmata" we see that our love for God passes the way known as love for our fellow man. Where there exists a true *koinonia* with God, there is no need for any reflection upon social bonds and relationships. Bishops in history who relied upon such grounds intervened in conflicts and found remarkable solutions. Thus Acacius, Bishop of Amidis, stood out for the release of Persian captives in the year 422 during a war against the Byzantine army. Instead of more bloodshed, he was working for peace and their liberation was effected. (See account in Socrates: Ecc. His 7,21; PG 67, 781B).

In this context one remark is needed, namely that Patristic language is inclusive and truth is expressed with a variety of words. The main concern of the Fathers is edification, fertilizing human relations, and not academic research. Thus *koinonia* can be found in many terms as in:

Theodoret Cyr: PG 82, 780A

John Chrysost: PG 48, 135 and 57,168

Cyril of Alex. PG 72,587B

John Chrys. PG 61,532-534

Nilus Egyptian PG 79,192

John Chrys. PG 60,535

Greg.Nyssa PG 46, 461

Theodore Stud.PG 99,1109

Theodorete Cyr PG 82,784

Theodore.Cyrr PG.82,216.

Disrespect and contempt for this distinctive relationship in Christ has led in modern times to the neglect of values, to the downgrading of issues vital for a healthy person to person communion and for the building up of a better society. This perverse generation has much to say about freedom but speaks of rights only in selective and exclusive terms. We are assailed from every direction by the demands of abortionists, gun lobbies, blood sports protesters, supporters of euthanasia, feminist groups, pornographers and “minorities” of every creed and colour. The list goes on endlessly. The confusion is such that the one right that must be rejected out of hand is the right to have an opposing belief. That belief of the majority seems generally to be founded in Christian values. In many quarters that “right” is now attacked violently. Time and again society and the Church are made to suffer by the activities of small but vociferous groups of people.

The worst is following in a defeatist kind of way, because many confessional families and Church denominations, feel free to run with the spirit of the age. Ignoring the wisdom of the Apostles and the faith testified by the blood of the Martyrs and Saints, they turn their back upon the Gospel’s warnings and innovate. Turning Christianity on its head, they treat the Gospel message like a theological smorgasbord. Casting aside the restraints of the Church, homosexuality is promoted, women are ordained, bestiality is tolerated and alliance with ‘multi-faith’ worship is encouraged, even in the great cathedrals. Our youth has been brainwashed into accepting these wide ranging and evil influences as the norm. Like the later Roman Empire, food and circuses is all that matters for many. Civilisation itself seems to be standing at the crossroads.

Koinonia is Monastic

We consider the Basilian text fundamental, a sort of the charter of human relationships in its highest expression, a perfect realisation and a remarkable formulation. St. Basil knew quite well that evangelical perfection and ethical precepts remain pure theory and eloquent ethical literature as long as they are not transformed into concrete acts, visible in daily life, under even the most difficult conditions. If Christianity claims to be the unique truth, then it must be seen in daily lifestyle, in human relationships, where human selfishness is confronted and tested. The visibility and distinctiveness of Christians became the best missionary instrument in the early Church, captivating the high esteem of the pagan world and bringing more new converts than any other missionary activity. Such Christians were not content only to proclaim their new faith, they implemented what they believed in their lives.

This was the secret of expansion of the communities from conquest to conquest.

St. Basil of Caesarea, at first gives an account how individual ascetics in their solitude were enabled to overcome aggressive passions of human nature, moving through them to the amelioration of their souls. Thus they became true philosophers. Then he moves on to explain that in his days ascetics started to live in common, in cœnobitic style, fighting together for their advancement to perfection, each profiting from the experience of the other, and so mutually encouraging and helping each other to the same end. By preferring this community askesis, they show the advantages of living together, because through *koinonia* and symbiosis, they return to the true goodness which is more fitting for our nature.

Ascetic Long Rules 18, 1–2; PG. 31,1381 B

Koinonia is Ecclesial

That union between God and man that existed in Paradise and that was broken as a result of man's disobedience, is now restored through Christ as head and his Church as his body. In this christified community, baptised members are reborn, reconciled, re-made, justified, sanctified, saved; they become "gods by grace", with the assumption of course that they satisfy all the required conditions of this goal, and that they possess total commitment. Within the Church, a Christian enters into communion with God, as well as with his fellow men, thereby surpassing and relinquishing selfish individualism to acquire instead a state of unselfish brotherhood in Christ. John Damascene finds the climax of such double "*koinonia*" in the Eucharistic fellowship:

"*Koinonia* is a true definition of the term because through it we enter into communion with Christ by participating in his flesh and in his divinity while at the same time entering into communion and uniting with one another. Since we all become the one body of Christ and blood members being promoted to the status means sharing Christ's body-syssomoi Christou". (Expos.Orth.Fid.4)

Eucharistic community, therefore, testifies that we are no longer disparate entities. We became and we continue to be one brotherhood, the family of God, the body of Christ, embracing true fellowship and divine-human unity. This conciliar view strengthens the distinctive character of the community of persons in Christ. The Reformation witnessed the emergence of the concept of a one-sided relationship

which claimed that a church could be founded wherever the faithful gathered, and that this type of assembly was the only requirement of the existence of a church. In contrast the Church Fathers maintained that the Church precedes and salvation follows (Clement of Rom: 2nd Letter 14, 2-4; Hermas Shepherd: Vision 2,4,I; Clement of Alex. Ex Theodotou 4 I; Pg. 9, 677).

The ecclesiological principle of Ignatius of Antioch that "whoever by selfishness does not come together - is proud and thus separates himself from the whole". (Eph.5) was later synodically sanctioned by the 6th Ecumenical Council in 691:

"In the event that any bishop, presbyter, deacon, or anyone else on the list of the clergy, or any layman who has no grave necessity or no particular difficulty that compels him to abstain himself from his own church for a very long time, fails to attend church on Sundays for three consecutive weeks, while living in the city, if he be a cleric, let him be deposed from office: but if he be a layman, let him be removed from Communion". (Canon 80)

The terms used in the above canon have a most important ecclesiological bearing on the frequent gathering of the parishioners as well as on the nature of congregation. They reveal the true identity of being Ecclesial. Each person must.

It is inconceivable for a Christian to be separated from the synaxis, the fellowship of brothers and sisters. Also vigorous is the Sardica Council in 343 with its 11th canon:

"Whenever a bishop goes from one city, or from one province, for the sake of pride, with a view to having eulogies bestowed upon him or to show that he is devoted to religion, and desires to stay there too long a time, and if the bishop of that city is not an experienced teacher, we decree that he shall not treat the latter scornfully, and deliver sermons too continuously, thereby endeavouring to bring disgrace and ignominy upon the bishop of that place.

For this excuse has been wont to cause trouble, and such cunning rascality shows that he is endeavouring to court and to usurp the other's benefice, and that he will not hesitate to abandon the church assigned to him and to step over into the other one."

The warning of the Councils against any such selfish approach on the part of Church membership demonstrates the damage caused in modern parishes from periodical or occasional Eucharistic attendance. This in turn results in the falsification

of the communal character of the celebrated sacraments, such as Baptism and Marriage. Indeed the modern parish does not provide its members with the possibility of living the communion in Christ and thus sharing their joys and sorrows with all others. This again explains the absence of the concept of deep spirituality and growth in Christ. These churchgoers can never become conscious members of the body of Christ.

The Ecclesial parish which serves as a microcosm of the universal Catholic Church, represents the realm of the fulfilment of all hopes, present and past. Here, all noble ambitions and visions find place leaving no room for despair and unemployment. It becomes a place that endures all adversities except the division of humankind that forms friends into enemies. Christ did not descend to earth to add one more religion to those already existing, but rather, as the Prophets anticipated, to build up his unique Church by gathering all individuals together to form one family.

Two miracles made this possible: the Incarnation and Pentecost. It is for this reason that the being of the Church cannot be compared with any other association, since there exists no other such unity, but rather only divisions. The Church is something new to the world and cannot be compared and defined with any other living earthly reality. This uniqueness, this unique aspect, makes it foolishness, and a scandal to the worldly mind. The rediscovery of the miracle of the church for the realisation of true humanity also incites the rediscovery of the great contribution of the Parish whereby hate was transformed to love, division was transformed to unification.

Reconciling and bringing people together into a close relationship and uniting heaven and earth with one another is the everlasting task of the Church. The Parish gathering is not a simple social event that is characterised by a large crowd instead of small group. Rather its main feature lies in inciting in individuals a sense of self-denial, and in allowing and encouraging them to share their joys and sufferings, their tears and fears. The community-koinonia excludes only those individuals who refuse to be united with Christ, and with the other members of His body. During the Pre-sanctified Liturgy of St. Gregory, the deacon asks, "Nobody from the Catechumens, the uninitiated, those unwilling to join the others, remain in this Sacrifice!". After this, he turns with the positive commission, "Do you know each other? Do develop a sense of acquaintance with one another." This instruction is given because of man's difficulty in understanding his fellow men in accepting

them and in cultivating fellowship, so that the Church's parish constitutes a true communion. This type of an inner preparation enables us to overcome mistrust, alienation and self-exclusion.

While we realise how demanding and how timely is the discussion of *koinonia*, we must be critical of the colossal inconsistency and contradiction between what we discuss and confess and what happens in reality. Today Christians do not live what they profess. We are losing, if we have not already lost, the very sense of community-salvation, of sharing material and spiritual blessings as well, motivated by a brotherly spirit. In modern society, but also contemporary Eucharistic communities or Parishes, we have ceased to be sharing, supporting and caring of each other. So often the Orientals blame Westerners as individualists, self-imprisoned, praising their own liturgical heritage and patristic tradition of *synaxis-koinonia*. But in full honesty the picture in reality of most Orthodox parishes is disappointing and less bright than elsewhere. The ancients would have known better.

They knew that being at peace with the Church was the testing of the mystery, the very sacrament, which assures one and determines whether the baptised is at peace with God. Ecclesiology rather than the proclamation of faith and the claim of one's orthodoxy, offered the opportunities for testing the kind of Church membership. This was so, because in the Ecclesial reality, that is, in daily relationships and manifold dealings, one was invited to give evidence of one's true transparent quality. Otherwise, one was disqualified for failing in to put into action one's solemn belief and convictions.

It is tragic to feel isolated, deprived of the warmth of such true communion. We feel insecure, unsafe, exposed to all sorts of deadly perils. This isolation wells up in lonely dissatisfaction with psychological effects on the soul's health and vitality. We begin to feel that something is wrong, something important is missing in spite of the fact that our life is plunged into so many enjoyments and other privileges. We must always bear in mind that ecclesologically a parish is the nucleus of the total universal Church where her members are invited to prove their fidelity or their poor spirituality. There is the mystical body of Christ. As such, she is expected to radiate and confirm what she is. To manifest, firstly her union with Christ, by producing Christ-minded members, living, feeling and witnessing to this empirical reality.

Furthermore, this loneliness is alarming especially in our large impersonal suburban parishes. This betrays a flagrant contradiction, discrediting the very identity

of parishioners and reducing their vitality to the detriment of the great activity of seeking the coming of God's kingdom on earth here and now. Christ can never be divided. He remains for ever the cornerstone of unity and koinonia in a parish, which means in the life of parishioners, as Cyril of Alexandria comments:

“Christ is and remains forever whole both in each one and in all others as well. He only is our peace in human relations. He gathers us into that unity, on one hand concerning the unanimity between us, and on the other, through him to God through the Holy Spirit.” (De adorazione in Spiritu, 15; PG. 68, 972)

The Church is rightly called Ecclesia – assembly – because it calls forth and assembles all men, as the Lord says in Leviticus 8 : “Then assemble the whole community at the entrance of the Meeting Tent.” It is worthy of note that this Word assemble is used in the Scriptures for the first time in the passage when the Lord established Aaron in the high priesthood in Deut 4,10. God says to Moses: “Assemble the people for me; I will have them hear my words so that they may learn to fear me”. He mentions the name of the Church again when He says of the Tablets: “And on them were inscribed all the words that the Lord spoke to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly”, as if He would say more plainly, “on the day on which you were called and gathered together”. And the Psalmist 34,38 says, “I will give you thanks in a great church ecclesia, in the mighty throng I will praise you.” (Catechises 18 PG 33, 1044)

All gestures, movements, efforts and endeavours of human beings in need and despair seek a kind of communion, in different degrees, according to the spiritual development of each person. This ontological conscience is innate, not only on the material side, but in every aspect of life. Each feels the inadequacy of his own resources and possibilities, thirsting for completion for affection and support. Whether in the physical sphere or in higher visions, nobody can live in self-imprisonment relying exclusively on his own resources and forces. This communion is not a Christian innovation; it was recognised from the dawn of history by all ancient thinkers. Nevertheless, what distinguishes Christianity is this dimension is the freedom from envy, competition, hatred, contempt, and all the under-developed iniquities that lie sleeping in the depths of our fallen nature and are ready to become aggressive and to claim more and more. If Christianity speaks about koinonia, it seeks to purify hearts from the dangerous elements that are associated with our selfishness and arrogance. And in order to consolidate the highest version of koinonia

so that it may not be polluted by envy, the Church sets up the Eucharist where human shortcomings give place to forbearance, forgiveness, to meekness, to the mystery of the condescendence and humility of a God who offers by this sacrifice the model of humility, universal love and deepening our solidarity towards the weak and the needy. Cyril of Jerusalem developing his catechetical instructions to candidates for Baptism, draws their attention that the Ecclesial gathering, far from having only a sociological and functional character, above all, seeks to incite the gathered - that is the Ecclesia - to become godlike, regenerated beings. For this remains the objective of the convener God, in the early Synagogue and in the Church as well.

The main mission of the incarnate Christ is to bring together those who have been separated, broken, scattered as a result of sin into the unique unity of His Body which is His Church. For this reason, Christ was made man and was crucified. St. Paul states: "I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, so that you, together with all of God's people, may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ's love...." (Eph.3.15).

From the opposite end the Devil does his work by keeping people at a distance from one another, by inspiring them with mistrust and enmity for one another. All this leads to insecurity and a permanent social tension and self-imprisonment. The Devil's job is to break, by any means available to him, the bonds that unite man to God and to each other, consequently perpetuating wars, misery, upheavals and all kinds of destruction. The unifying, reconciling and sanctifying task of Christ is what the Church is commissioned to bring about, particularly in parishes. The very centre of this togetherness, of heaven and earth, and God and the world, is expressed in the short invocation by all participants in the Eucharistic assembly:

"Having besought the unity of the faith and the participation of the Holy Spirit, we commend ourselves and one another and our whole life unto Christ our God".

We must never lose sight of the fact that "going to the church" does not mean to offer exclusive individual petitions and to satisfy completely personal needs, without any reference to the ecclesial body. We go to the worshipping temple in order "to realise the Ecclesial gathering", to behave ecclesiastically. It is the visible realisation of the mystery of Christ's incarnation in order to create step by step, the new Israel, the family of the redeemed. Moreover, the phrase "I go to the Church" means, "I go to the gathering of the believers, so that with them I might build up the Church".

or so that I can manifest anew what I became the day of my Baptism, that is a member – which means, in the full and absolute sense of the word, a member of Christ's body. I go there in order to reaffirm and fulfil my duty as a member, by confessing before God, as well as before my co-worshippers, the mystery of God's kingdom, which is already partly here.

1209 Geneva
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FATHERS AND CHILDREN OF THE CHURCH*

Innocenzo Gargano OSB

The title of this paper ought to have been expanded with a sub-title which said something more or less like this:- "Observations of a son of the Catholic Church on the teaching of Fr. Benedict Calati, faithful disciple of Gregory the Great, chief of the Fathers of the Christian church of the West." All I have to say, in fact, is nothing but an expression of my awareness of the Fathers of the Western Church gained from the constant attention that a Camaldolese monk such as I am has tried to give to the reading of the Fathers. For more than forty years I have been helped along the way to God by my abbot and spiritual Father in the monastic life at Camaldoli in Italy.

"Amongst the foundation documents of primitive Benedictine monasticism we must surely find a place for the dialogues of Saint Gregory the Great which deal with the lives and miracles of the Italian Fathers (*de vita et miraculis Patrum Italicorum*)."

These are the opening words of a famous article by Fr. Benedict Calati entitled "*The Dialogues of Saint Gregory the Great: an investigation into monastic spirituality*", published in two parts in the Camaldolese quarterly magazine *Vita Monastica* 49 (1957) 61-70 and 50 (1957) 108-116.

In the view of Fr. Calati (Professor of mediaeval monastic spirituality at the Monastic Institute of the Roman theological faculty of the Anselmianum), an investigation into the spiritual thought of the great Pope of Rome was a necessary complement to the very interesting research which he had carried out in tracing the patristic sources of the founding Fathers of Camaldoli (Saint Romualdo, Saint Peter Damian, Saint Bruno of Querfurt, and the Blessed Rodolfo), which they made use of in the middle-northern parts of Italy during the eleventh century.

*A paper read at *The Third Encounter of Monks East and West*, Canterbury Aylesford, May 24-27, 1996.

In order to support with yet more evidence the importance of Gregory the Great as the chief of the Western Fathers, Fr. Calati continues thus:-

“The Benedictine tradition is unanimous in recognising in the *Dialogues* one of the most significant patristic documents concerned with monastic spirituality in general and Benedictine spirituality in particular. They have, moreover, exercised an enormous influence, together with other works of Saint Gregory, upon the Latin Fathers from the seventh and eighth centuries up to the twelfth. Confirmation of this influence is given by the presence of Gregorian works in all the catalogues of mediaeval monastic libraries.” (“Investigation,” 61)

Of the four books in which Gregory the Great puts forward the best of his spiritual insights, it is obvious that Benedictine monks value above all the others the second one, which deals with what can be defined as “the first synthesis of Benedictine spirituality”.

1. *The return to Paradise is the central theme of monastic theology.*

The “return to paradise”, a fundamental idea in the theology of Saint Gregory, bears a very precise reference to that part of Genesis where man, first put by God into Paradise, and then immediately punished because of his disobedience, cannot return so long as that Paradise remains forbidden to him by his Lord. However, the use of the return to Paradise for hagiographical purposes (as Fr. Calati draws our attention to in a polemical point concerned with confronting those who disparage the spiritual formation of the old monks) is equivalent to having a modern historical viewpoint that is quite different from the ascetical presuppositions of the middle-ages! (cf *Ibid.*, 61–62) In fact “man was made for Paradise; because of sin, he was expelled and driven out into exile.... Through the incarnation of the Son of God and through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on our hearts, the life of blessedness comes back for us all. But in this “way of return” there are some masters, those who are taught by the Holy Paraclete and have a vocation to confirm in faith about things invisible and heavenly those who are not yet as strong and established. They are witnesses of Paradise” (*Ibid.*, 62).

2. *The Monastic life leads man to Paradise*

The Monastic enclosure is in fact “Paradise regained”. Fr. Calati quotes, to reinforce what Gregory says in the *Dialogues*, from the *Letter to Theoctistes* of the

same Pope of Rome, in which the monastic life is likened to angelic life and to the life in Eden when man and woman lived “extra carnem, extra mundum”. The same opinion was held in every monastic establishment throughout both the East and the West. The Camaldolese tradition often mentions the heavenly aspect of a hermitage as the Garden of Eden and of a cell as Paradise, but the idea had already been widely aired in the traditions of the ancient Fathers of Christian monasticism. There are many witnesses that one might cite; but staying with the study of Fr. Calati, we might mention the description made by Saint Peter Damian in his *Letter to Hugo*, the Abbot of Cluny, of that great conventual house as “a Paradise watered by four rivers which are the pure doctrine of the holy Evangelists” (Ibid., 63). And Fr. Calati comments on this thus:-

“The holy monks are genuine witnesses of the return to the life of Paradise through that greater hope which they have by the grace of the Holy Spirit. From this it is possible to take them as models for those who are still young in the spiritual life and who ought, therefore, to receive as humble disciples the experience of others of Paradise who “experimentum invisibilium per Spiritum Sanctum iam habent”. In this way the “examples of the holy Fathers” are of the same importance as the holy doctrine which is received by means of the *lectio* and *meditatio* of Holy Scripture. And thus the examples of the holy monks, just as much as Holy Scripture, lead to love of the kingdom of heaven; and further more, the examples are in a more understandable language. They are in fact “any of those, as Gregory says, who are burning with love for the kingdom above on high, more by deeds than by words”. Finally one can say that the monastic life allows one to enjoy in advance upon earth the life of Paradise and of Eden, be it by meditation upon Holy Scripture, which sets us upon the way for seeing and reaching God, or be it through the examples of the holy monks, which restore and anticipate the friendship of blessed spirits” (Ibid., 63–64).

3. The need for a master to point out the way for the return to Paradise.

In Saint Benedict the Western monastic tradition has recognised the master *par excellence* of the monastic life. The teaching which Saint Benedict has given to us is found principally in his *Regula monachorum*. But it is necessary to add that Saint Benedict himself stresses the need for a living master who is physically near to the monk and who interprets for him those requirements of the rule which presuppose continual attention and personal oversight only from a Father or Master who is available daily and nearby for the monk. Master Benedict of Norcia restricted his

teaching to the writings of his Rule; but he also, indeed perhaps more so, proposes himself as a model of monastic perfection. In each case it is this second aspect which Gregory the Great indicates to his readers as “a light put on a candlestick to illuminate all the house”. In doing this the Pope of Rome describes then the monk of Norcia as “*spiritu omnium iustorum repletus*”, applying to Benedict a spiritual quality known beforehand in tradition, both in the East and in the West, which is met with in the perfect monk and above all in the monastic legislators and founding Fathers of monasteries, both conventual and eremetical, a kind of memorial of the lives of just and holy men recorded in both the Old and New Testaments. In reality “beneath mediaeval hagiography, and beneath its spirituality, is the historic idea of the divine economy which we find in the Bible”, explains Fr. Calati. “The saint is he who puts himself on this historical level. Here is found the essence of the state of Eden and also of the miraculous, as well as of the gifts and the direct action of the Holy Spirit. In this context one can conclude that ancient hagiography is much more historical than the modern type, considered methodologically rather than philosophically” (p. 64). The historic, we ought to make clear, is not the same as the historiographic, and even less like the historicist.

4. *The Teaching of the Master is a programme for life.*

The return to Paradise, which Fr. Calati presents as a coming together of both the teaching enshrined in the life of Benedict and the scheme of Gregory the Great, has two distinct elements: that of ascetic detachment, and that of mystical participation in the lordship of God.

The ascetic detachment of the monk

At this first stage the master presents and explains a kind of gradual stripping away of the monk. It consists of the following steps:-

- (a) Withdrawal (*recessit*): “deliberately simple and un-wordly-wise, *solī Deo placere desiderans*.”
- (b) Hiding oneself in a solitary place, “preferring troubles to the praise of men, and preferring suffering for the love of God rather than being lifted up on high”.
- (c) Becoming like a monk, that is to say, recognising the Lord as the one master, explains Fr. Calati, as Adam did in Eden at the moment when “his solitary life had the character of a condition theological and charismatic, intimately connected with the state of paradise. Saint Benedict chose to turn this expression simply into *vir Dei*, or in fact one instructed directly by God, because (as Pope

Gregory says) “there are some who are trained within by the direct instruction of the divine Spirit and who therefore, although not having outwardly a school of human discipline, do not lack the guidance of an interior master.... John the Baptist did not have a master. The Spirit of Truth did not make the Forerunner join visibly a group of fellow-disciples, but left him free outwardly to be instructed inwardly. It was the same with Moses: he was instructed in isolation in the desert; he learned from the angel that commandment which he had not received from humans. And so also with Benedict, concludes the Camaldolese monk: He was put into that “school of the Holy spirit”, superior to human instruction, after the beginning of his conversion,” (Ibid., 65–66). It is not strange, then, that his hagiography describes him as *Vir Dei Benedictus* from this first moment of his own personal “return to Paradise”.

- (d) To be tested. To have stability in the life of Paradise it is necessary to conquer; but the paramount temptation remains the “temptation of the flesh”, because since Adam and Eve remained marked by the sin of the flesh, (in fact “having seen that they were naked, they sewed together the leaves of a fig tree and made aprons for themselves”), so also the gift of virginity discloses that new state of affairs in which monks find themselves living in a paradisaical space as “sons of the resurrection” who “neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven”. Fr. Calati then explains that if in the hierarchy of the temptations of the ascetic the first are always sexual ones, the reason for this is found in the fact that from the beginning the monk is put in close and direct union with God in the historical Paradise of the Bible and nothing shows that more clearly than virginity. Although this gift may not be given equally to everyone, Saint Gregory insists that it is an important revelation “propter experimentum Spiritus Sancti”, above all for those who are called to be Fathers and masters of others in the way of faith (cf Ibid., 67).

Mystical participation in the lordship of God

In the second stage we ought to observe a progressive participation on the part of the monk in the “virtutes” of the first Adam. Concrete signs that one has acquired such a mastery are the gifts that accompany the *vir Dei* in his overcoming of temptations of the flesh from then on. Relying faithfully upon Gregorian texts, Fr. Calati says concerning this:-

- (a) There is a *paternitas spiritualis*, known personally in the gift of virginity.
 (b) There is a *dominium supra res*, shown through a series of miraculous or

marvellous events spread throughout the life of the just man who has become the new Adam. This dominion over created things, explains Fr. Calati, which always accompanies the life of the *vir Dei* (who at the same time resembles and is connected with one or other character of the Old or the New Testaments), is not just a simple coincidence; but it has historical value insofar as the biblical drama is fulfilled and completed in every righteous man up to the end of time. Like this Benedict, for example, was a *vir Dei*, as were Moses, Elijah, Elishah, David and Peter. We are dealing in every case with an idea found throughout the hagiography of Christian antiquity. (cf *Ibid.*, 68)

- (c) There is a *dominium supra eventus*, strictly connected to the gift of prophecy.
- (d) There is a *dominium supra potentes saeculi*, which is exercised in events which test the courage and fearlessness of the *vir Dei* in confrontations with Kings and emperors.
- (e) There is a *dominium supra daemones*, strongly stressed, because more so than with any other gift it shows that there where the first Adam suffered the aboriginal defeat, the new Adam could show his victorious triumph through the weaponry of Christ.

In reality the whole of the old hagiographic tradition, observes Calati, sees the work of 'Jesus Christ as aimed at destroying the kingdom of Satan in order to spread the kingdom of God on earth in the minds and in the hearts of men. And so because Christian asceticism is seen as a kind of struggle waged against demons that requires the help of the brethren (*vita cenobitica*), it will also be an individual fight (*vita eremitica*) right up to the complete defeat of Satan in pagan territories (*evangelium paganorum*) which are as yet still contested, (cf *Ibid.*, 69–70)

- (f) There is a *dominium supra res spirituales*, a gift which could also be called "charismatic priesthood" at a time when there is overwhelming evidence of the exercise of powers concerned with the salvation of souls, whether through preaching "extra munus stricte hierarchicum", whether through intercessory prayer directed to God on behalf of the dead and for the needs of all sorts of people (*ivi*), or whether through discerning if a spirit is of God or not.

5. *Continual Prayer*

During the journey of the return to Paradise the man of God feeds himself on continual prayer. This contains some fundamental elements proper to the prayer of the monk.

The fact of prayer, Fr. Calati reminds us, controls the interior journey of the return. "As Adam before the fall spoke with God as a friend and as a son, a thing which was not possible after the fall, so the *vir Dei* restored to the original condition of Paradise, regains his own familiarity with his "Lord". [*Vita monastica* 50 (1957) 108]

The prayer of the monk, characterised always by this familiarity and sonship, can assume various forms.

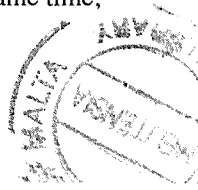
- (a) First of all it can be expressed *cum lacrimis*, as when Benedict, on the occasion of his nurse weeping over a broken wine jar (*capistero*), comforted her by mending it. (p 108)
- (b) One can be raised in gratitude, blessing the Lord in the dividing of the word and the bread, as is recounted in the dialogues concerning the meeting of Benedict with a priest, sent to him by the Lord to celebrate Easter.
- (c) It can accompany the return in itself after a particularly insidious temptation (one remembers the *ad semetipsum reversus* of *Dialogue, II, 2*).
- (d) It can be shared with one's brethren in times of stability through the *orationis studium*, or on specific occasions when one needs the supportive prayer of brothers or sisters around one.
- (e) But it is above all a habit, or better still a kind of daily rhythm, of the monk who lives continually in the presence of God, which is, according to the wonderful expression of Gregory, "*habitare secum in superni spectatoris oculis*".

6. *The Praying journey of the Christian Monk*

"To leave behind all that is alien to our state as sons of God; to re-enter the intimacy of souls redeemed by God, and then to be raised up day after day to enjoy the heavenly joys of contemplation. These are the three stages, explains Fr. Calati, on our journey of the return to Paradise. And indeed, this itself is the model for prayer which Gregory suggested when, after the arrival of Benedict at Vicovaro, he observed: 'Now Benedict has come back to his delightful solitude and he remains by himself (*habitavit secum*) in the presence of God.'" (p 109)

The Camaldolese monk continues:-

"In a negative sense *habitare secum* implies leaving that state which by excessive cerebration distracts us from ourselves (*per cogitationis motum nimium extra nos ducimur*), so that we are and we are not with ourselves at one and the same time,



because not having our eyes on ourselves, we are preoccupied with other matters (*et nos sumus et nobiscum non sumus, quia nosmetipsos minime videntes per alia vagamur*). And that was what Saint Benedict felt in that temptation, by which he was almost overcome, and risked abandoning his solitude; or else it is that interior state in which the slothful monk does not want to be present at prayer and, leaving the Church, wanders about here and there on secular business (*et mente vaga terrena agebat*). Sin is the final experience of this life *extra nos*. In a positive sense *habitare secum* indicates the re-entry into oneself (*ad cor redire*), which is then the true return to Paradise. "I should like to say therefore," Gregory in fact writes, "that the man worthy of reverence is always attentive to self-control, always holds God before himself, always examines himself, and does not allow the eyes of the soul to wander away from himself." (pp 109–110)

7. *The Vision of Paradise*

The experience of contemplation for the monk comes together with the heavenly vision of glory.

"Saint Benedict sees Paradise as the holy Patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament saw it, as Saint Paul in the New Testament saw it. It is in the luminous trail of this tradition that we find the Father of the monks "full of the spirit of all the righteous". The thought of Gregory the Great always directs us on to the reality of the return to Eden. For this reason the monk, passing from prayer to contemplation, reaches that ecstasy where he may enjoy *in via* the joys which belong to Paradise," (Ibid., 110).

8. *The return (reditus) effected*

After such an experience, contemplative or mystical, of the vision of Paradise, which gives us an awareness of the ephemeral nature of worldly things, there is still the actual return to Paradise to be made. From the *exitus mysticus* we cannot but arrive at the *exitus corporalis*," concludes Fr. Calati (Ibid., 111), "not without first noticing that ancient spirituality joins the ecstasy of contemplation to perfect charity. It would be rash and misleading to infer consequences which are typical of the mentality and thought-processes of modern times from premises which presuppose a mentality totally and typically biblical, such as that of Gregory the Great" (cf Ibid., 110)

Indeed we are dealing with that sabbath rest which crowns a complete life. Gregory writes concerning Saint Benedict:

“The sixth day the disciples spend in prayer and prepare for receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord. Then the disciples hold up their hands, raise their palms to heaven, standing on the right-hand side, and being among the prayers of those who utter their last breath.” “In this way, for Saint Benedict,” comments Fr. Calati, “there begins the mystic sabbath, like the seventh day on which God rested from creating. All mediaeval people thought this was symbolic of the contemplative life, perfected and stable for ever. Two monks both together (and this is the account given by Gregory) saw a roadway covered with carpets and illuminated by very many lamps. This road came from Benedict’s cell, went towards the east, and made straight for heaven. And a man praying at the summit of the road explained to the two monks: ‘This is the road by which the beloved of God, Benedict, climbed up to heaven.’ He is now in his homeland, in Paradise. *Hodie mecum eris in Paradiso!* The life of Benedict indeed shows us, as in this vision, the true way from earth to heaven.” (Ibid., 111–112)

9. *The abiding nature of Benedictine spirituality*

The conclusions which Fr. Calati draws from his thorough explanation of Benedictine spirituality, drawn from the second book of the *Dialogues* of Saint Gregory the Great, remain as milestones for the Camaldolese monk to refer to constantly during the journey of the years which are dedicated to the study, and research into the fundamental elements, of monastic spirituality and the Christian endeavour, using the resources of the Fathers of the Church.

They can be characterised by the following six points:-

1. Constant reference to the sacred history with regard to the return to Paradise by means of the double ladder of humility and prayer. This is a theme that always crops up in the context of the contemplative life, together with perfect charity, a point reached by the ladder of humility and by the ladder of continual prayer. Humility is a mystical ladder, resting on the earth, but which leads up to heaven, as was the ladder seen by the patriarch Jacob. Heaven, or Paradise regained, is indeed perfect charity.

The monastic life is characterised above all else as the way that leads to Paradise.

After the aboriginal sin the course of this “way” inevitably involves that renunciation of the world which the monk effects with monastic asceticism, in which the components are retirement into solitude, *extra mundum* or *extra carnem*

and continuing conversion of life (*conversio morum*). Temptation is inevitable, and by overcoming it and rising above it, achieved most of all by the exercise of the virtues of humility and obedience, the monk is led to the enjoyment of the joys of Paradise. Prayer demands the attention of the heart in such a way as not to permit the eyes of the soul to stray *extra se*; but this is also that particular gift of grace that allows the monk to taste of the vision of Paradise, accustoming him to see everything in God at the same time that he is rendered more conscious of his flight from creaturely things. (cf pp 112–114)

2. *Community and obedience.* The direct teaching of the Holy Spirit is not an ordinary rule; instead, it prevents disciples from becoming teachers of errors. And so it is normal for everyone that the return to Paradise should come through obedience to the abbot. Nevertheless, the possibility of an interior teaching of the Spirit makes monastic obedience perfect freedom, always tending *ad maiora*, and bearing a supernatural and mystical character, not just a disciplinary one. Obedience which is merely juridical, military, or formal undervalues the true worth of the cenobitic life.

There are certain signs to indicate that the soul is put under the direct control of the Spirit: when “the mind, inhabited by the divine Spirit, shows incontrovertibly the virtue and especially the humility which, when harmoniously found together in the same person, are a witness of the presence of the Holy Spirit”, as Gregory teaches us. (Ibid., 114).

3. *The mystical character of monastic asceticism.* The theme of the return to Paradise can be understood only in a biblical context. One is dealing here with repeating in a monastic context the deeds and personages of the bible, using the same scrupulous care and wisdom in both cases. (ivi).

4. *The fruit of perfect asceticism in evangelisation.* The spiritual aspect of Italian monasticism is shown most chiefly in the development of monasticism in the Anglo-German countries first of all and then afterwards in the Romualdine movement of the eleventh century. But evangelisation is seen most obviously in Celtic monasticism.

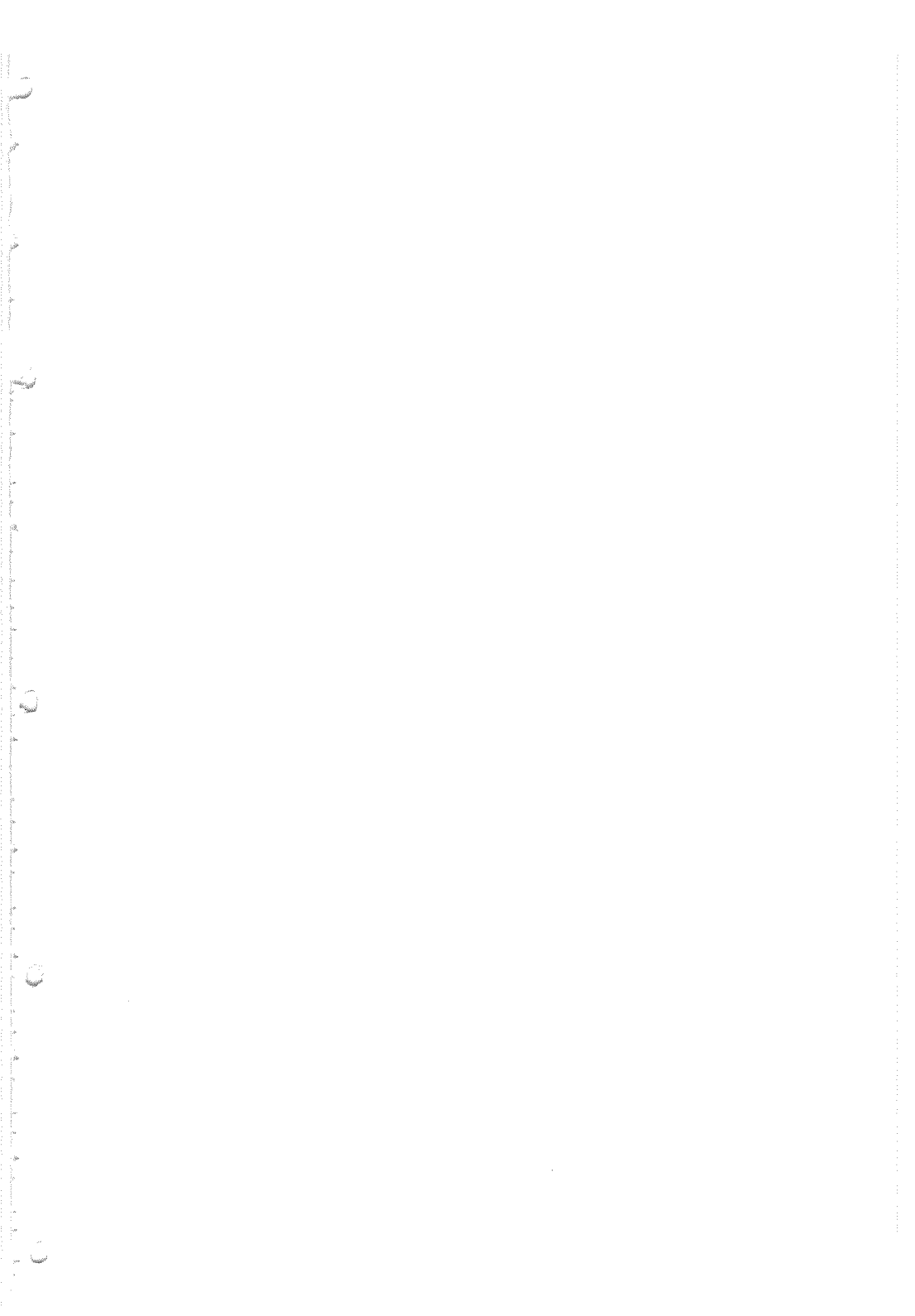
5. *The Gift of miracles.* Miracles are possible, but not necessary.

In fact the merit of the life is found in the worth of good works, not in the appearance of miracles. (Ibid., 115)

6. *The liberty of the sons of God.* There is the reply of Saint Benedict, famous throughout the middle ages, to the hermit Martin who, to safeguard his *stabilitas in cella*, tied himself with a chain to a tree-stump: "*Non teneat te catena ferri, sed teneat te catena Christi*".

Martin obeyed and undid the chain; but he did not put a foot outside the small area in which he had been confined with a chain of iron. For this iron chain he had substituted the chain of Christ. It was symbolic of all Benedictine spirituality. The monk who is supported and guided by the love of Christ ought always to be free to move creatively on his welcome return to Paradise and so reach the end of the road shown in the mystery of salvation-history. (Ibid., 116)

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Monasticism as a Bridge between East and West and their Common Heritage.¹

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Monasticism, so long as it lives on charity, instinctively throws bridges over many a gulf and bleeding wound. In practice, however, it itself not seldom turns out to be a drawbridge, facilitating communication just as readily as abruptly interrupting it. The problem becomes particularly acute when monasticism is considered as a heritage. In order to ensure their offspring a good start in life parents usually exert themselves to death so as to bequeath them an accumulation of riches, little realizing how quickly a friendship, and even family ties, can falter over an inheritance. So, granted that monasticism is often indicated as one of the common factors inherited from the Undivided Church,² there remains the nagging question: but will the inheritors quarrel over their good fortune?

There is something intriguing about considering division, and human schism generally, as inheritors unable to agree among themselves and profit from their good luck. It proves quite often more difficult to persuade heirs to stop bickering and enter into their new kingdom than to amass that fortune in the first place. A bitter experience which poses a number of questions. Can the higher values of life be inherited at all or must they not rather be acquired by effort? Indeed, can a heritage be effectively possessed in common without automatically creating division, or at least impairing harmony? One is tempted to say that a shared, or common, heritage is a contradiction in terms; and, if it is, will not *koinonia* go asunder on account of its very inheritors? If anything, inheriting seems to have an eminently unifying function: it brings together, in a solidarity of resentment that relativizes all other slights, those less lucky against the heirs, thus isolating them.

- 1 The author has already published a completely different conference, originally held at the First Encounter of Monks East and West, Crete 1989: "Monasticism as a Bridge between East and West," in: E.G. Farrugia, SJ, *Tradition in Transition: The Vitality of the Christian East*, (ed. by P. Vazheparampil & J. Palackal (Rome 1996), pp. 79-109). The present paper was read at the *Third Encounter of Monks East and West*, Canterbury, Aylesford, May 24-27, 1996 and is being published here with slight changes.
- 2 Y. Congar, *Diversités et communion*, (Paris 1982) 35. Against the charge that the Undivided Church never existed and that this talk amounts to no more than romanticism, Congar enumerates the common heritage which derives from the Fathers: the creation of liturgies, monasticism and the seven councils recognized by both the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches.

And there we have our theme. Monasticism, coveted by connoisseurs in both East and West as a centre of human and spiritual *ressourcement*, often enough seems to bring about its own undoing by dwindling into seclusion. While being called upon to function as a bridge and foster unity, it finishes on occasion by digging a ditch and becoming an island. So it might be useful to consider, for a change, the phenomenon of monasticism in terms of the isolation which goes hand in hand with inheriting and to reflect on the resources to cope with that peril, ways and means which, though present in monasticism, unfortunately, are not always activated. More specifically, (1) in the first part, we shall deal with the forces of isolation in the *individual*. (2) The second part discusses the *collective* propensity towards recuperating isolation, i.e. keeping it in check rather than completely eliminating it, as found at the level of the Church. (3) In the third part, attention is drawn to the conjoint individual and collective forces of isolation, however paradoxical that may sound, at work in *inter-Church relations*. (4) The fourth part reflects on what the *remedy* could be like, especially if we look at monasticism at close quarters: within ourselves, but also as reflected in others.³

1. *Centrifugal forces in the human*

Isolation begins at home. If the first socialization which is up to the family to impart fails, the various forms of loneliness and solitariness are likely to follow.⁴ The fact that, later in life, many judge and act on the spur of the moment under the sheer stimulus of appearances offers a sure sign that they live at the periphery of their better self. Even when this is brought to their attention not a few still refuse to budge and change their behaviour. Abandoning the search for the centre holds obvious attractions; one can foster the illusion of living on an isle of the blest, dependent solely on one's own whim and caprice, beyond good and evil. The phenomenon of centrifugal pressure is not unknown in monasticism, the *gyrovague*, or wandering monk,⁵ being indeed its plague.

3 It is to be noted that, here, monasticism is being used in an inclusive sense, and therefore includes what is known as the religious life in the West. See, on this point, E.G. Farrugia, "Devotion to Life," in idem (ed.) *Devotion to Life. The Cost of Full Religious Commitment*, (Malta 1994) 1-15.

4 On socialization as a psychological phenomenon see K. Danzinger, *Socialization*, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England 1971) 71-89.

5 J. Gribomont describes him as "always on the move, never settles," in his article: "Monasticism and Asceticism," B. McGinn J. Meyendorff J. Leclercq (ed.s), *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century I*, (New York) 1985, 101-102.

1.1 *The phenomenon of isolation.* It would be interesting to ask ourselves what first comes to mind when we think of isolation. Probably, refugees, prisoners, the sick, especially the mentally sick; the derelict, the dejected and the despondent; the dead, the buried and the unburied. The list could easily be amplified. Whoever has a superiority, real or fictitious, to assert, will soon find oneself outnumbered. So many candidates to be put in quarantine, ranging from newly-wed couples in honeymoon, when the masks come unstuck, to so many human sacred cows, or perhaps even mad cows, either qualifying so literally or abusively so labelled by political, ideological, philosophical or even down-the-street opponents; ghettos, minorities, the unpopular; the unemployed, divorcees, and the bereaved. These are but some examples of a list, that actually could be much longer, of victims of various kinds and degrees of isolation. Its essence lies in its potential for physical, moral and religious destruction.⁶ The end result is annihilation.

To cope with isolation one must always adjust to the realism of the situation, which, at best, calls only for greater adaptability, with the birthpangs any growth entails. Usually isolation includes much more, for it also involves a rude awakening to a threatening situation as it presents itself through one all-dominating stimulus. The important thing about it all, however, is that isolation is the shadow of the human: neither can survive without the other. True, as St Thomas says, evil cannot exist without the good, whereas the good can thrive without evil. But the same cannot be said of isolation, which is a parasite of communion and the pale with which communion protects those that are inside from those who are outside, and vice versa.

This would induce us to believe that isolation in itself is neutral, only the circumstances accounting for the human, moral and religious differences which make it good or bad. We human beings are just born in isolation. Birth is a result of separation, a giving up of symbiosis, the first and most universal kind of koinonia; and the newly-born grow, from separation to separation, to the great separation; in love, because the love of parents and children has been called the only one that grows towards separation; in life, because the living move towards the great separation which removes barriers and which goes by the name of death. No wonder that everybody is born and dies alone; in this matter, nobody can take our place, nor can we delegate it to others; here, too, everybody is unique and unrepeatable,

6 In his *The Courage to Be*, (New Haven 1960), P. Tillich has well articulated this subject.

because birth and death are the incoded ontological way of relating to everything and everybody else from a particular vantage-point which by definition can occur only once.

1.2 *No man is an island* Is isolation an isolated phenomenon? Unfortunately not! Isolation is a very diffuse phenomenon, thriving like an infectious disease which spreads rapidly but which forces the victim to withdraw from circulation. Isolation does not, of itself, make us an island. There have been people in prison who have been able to commune with outside reality in a way as to have all subsequent humanity as their platform.⁷ Actually, the spiritual counterpart of isolation is called individuality. And since individuality cannot survive by itself it needs other individualities like so many lamps in the night. The chance of an individual being integrated into community and so become a person⁸ is thus considerable. But nothing guarantees that it will be so integrated and that it will not go on orbiting around itself in complacent self-sufficiency.

Attempts to isolate the human, however, usually result in its re-affirming itself with a bounce. As the great metaphysical poet John Donne (1573-1631) put it:

“No Man is an island, entire of it self; every man
is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; if
a clod is washed away by the sea, Europe is the less,
as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a
manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man’s
death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind;
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
it tolls for thee.”⁹

John Donne’s eloquent words find as much echo in poetry as in life. Nobody is

7 Boethius with his *De consolazione philosophiae*, and Silvio Pellico, with his *Le mie prigioni*, immediately come to mind. Stefan Zweig has depicted how Mary Stuart and Marie Antoinette leapt the hurdle of their mediocrity and became somebody only in prison.

8 The word “person” is being used here in the modern sense of the word, not in the sense of the Church trinitarian and christological documents of the fourth and fifth centuries. Person in the sense of these documents referred to the concrete subsisting individual, whereas in its modern sense it refers to this individual as characterized by his use of liberty. In this sense, person is only a modality of person in the ancient sense.

9 John Donne, “Devotion upon Emergent Occasions” (1624) Meditations XVII.

deep down an island, but we can become one if our individuality degenerates into spiritual moroseness. Wherever the bridges of the senses are torn down, as with the blind, the other senses are mobilized and rendered more acute. Communion is thus restored. Indeed, when we die, faith induces us into believing that it is actually a piece of death which dies;¹⁰ the I remains intact, surviving according to its moral-religious capacity to absorb. For communion plunges its roots way back into eternity.

1.3 *Going around in circles* No man is an island. But the monk is an island!¹¹ The very word that describes him would seem to betray him as a trafficker in loneliness, “alone with the Alone”, forging out to find his place in the sun, all by himself, while a whole civilization is cloyed to death by self-seeking and lack of alternative models. Without entering into the details of the debate about the derivation of the word “monk,” the Syriac term “ihîdayûtâ,” one of the words indicated, seems to offer a confirmation.¹² This becomes especially evident in the case of the hermit,

10 The passage is so beautiful that it merits to be quoted in full. “Moriōr, inquit Dominus, pro omnibus, ut omnes vivificem per meipsum, et carnem omnium carne mea redemi. Moriētur enim mors in morte mea, et mecum simul, quae corruit, inquit, hominum natura resurget;” Ex Commentario sancti Cyrilli Alexandrini episcopi in Ioannis Evangelium; Lib 4, 2: PG 73, 563.

11 The criterion which distinguishes the encratite (= celibate) ascetics of the primitive Church, who usually continued to live in their family, from monasticism, which developed later, is the latter’s complete segregation in the desert and a fixed abode; J. Gribomont, “Monachesimo II: Orientale,” G. Pelliccia and G. Rocca (ed.s), *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione V*, (Roma 1978), col. 1693.

12 According to J. Gribomont, “Monasticism and Asceticism,” in: B. McGinn J. Meyendorff J. Leclercq (ed.s), *Christian Spirituality I*, p. 90, the term “monk” seems to render a Syriac technical term meaning “sole,” “single.” In *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, Cambridge 1975, p. 13, R. Murray defines it this way: “(1) singleness by leaving family and not marrying: (2) single-mindedness ... and (3) a special relationship to the *Īhîdayâ*, Christ the Only-begotten Son, whom the consecrated ascetics “put on” in a special way.” J. Gribomont, however, points out that “the term *monachos*, in Greek and Coptic, perhaps even before its Syriac correspondent term *ihîdayâ* appeared at the beginning of the fourth century. At any rate, one comes across it in various *loghia* of the Gospel of Thomas, which go back, at the latest, to the fourth century. Its meaning - prescinding from any reference to the desert - seems to have been “solitary, celibatarian”. A. Adam goes so far as to claim that, in Syriac, it originally referred to the very same word which describes Christ as “only begotten” and “only son”, something which would thus entail a mystical dimension through the identification with the Saviour. ... The least that we can say is that this possible meaning of *monachos* has left no trace in the fourth century.” J. Gribomont, “Monachesimo”, *Dizionario di Istituti di Perfezione*, col. 1693 (my translation).

who cuts the most unusual figure of all, apparently an island of one's own accord.¹³ Precisely because of his volunteering to so qualify the hermit can make the other isolation inmates look pale in comparison. To make it worse, the hermit has perfect credentials as far as going back to the sources is concerned. In its birth-hour monasticism went by the name of anchoritism, a word which means withdrawing.

With their sign language, hermits offer a particularly pithy poem on being single in this world. They may perhaps remind us of Leibnitz' synchronized clocks, going off through pre-established harmony and thus giving the impression that they were acting on one another without any real interchange; yet silent sign language can remind us of silent comic-strips as well. Monks are life's comedians, because, by the logic that whoever laughs last laughs best, they are having their last laugh, call it eschatological if you like; a greater wisdom is not known in human annals, only that it seems to live in an ivory-tower. If the deserts were soon peopled after the first hermit had moved in;¹⁴ or, where deserts were none, if young people sought refuge in droves on islands of difficult accessibility; if monasteries were built on forlorn heights, like the Meteora,¹⁵ whence the only exit could very well be in a basket not quite dissimilar to that on which Paul escaped from Damascus: all this indicates precisely that withdrawing corresponds to a human need, a crying human need with existential, political and religious survival overtones besides.¹⁶

It is not enough to point out that the hermit is tied to society by the label of the clothes he wears, by the accent his words still echo in vibrant silence and by the recollection of his dear ones. The hermit himself, too, finds isolation hard to stomach, but his vocation makes it somewhat more palatable. It would be perhaps truer to say that the hermit, and to a lesser extent the monk, represent the descending parabola of man's search for the other. He is a poem on centrifugal flight. He bumps into reality precisely by fleeing from it. Which, of course, need not be a bad thing: we are supposed to shun evil lest it taints us and instinctively recoil before the sublime

13 The hermit is defined, in canon 41 of the Quinisext, Constantinople 692, as somebody who should stay in the desert. Subsequent legislation in the East and West put him more firmly under the control of superiors or the bishop; cf J. Gribomont, J. Rezáč, J. Winandy, "Eremita," *Dizionario di Istituti di Perfezionj* III, (Roma 1976) col. 1153-1155.

14 D. J. Chitty, *The Desert a City*, Oxford 1966.

15 See N. Nikonanos, *Meteora: A complete guide to the Monasteries and their History*, (Athens 1987).

16 See A.J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Abridgement of Volumes I-VI, by D.C. Sommervell, (Oxford 1949) 212-216, 369-370.

before it crashes us, shying off from the all too lofty heights instead of feeling dizzy and tumble down the precipice.

Yet, monks can elude the pressure of the orbiting world and break loose only by hitching their star on somebody else's bandwagon. They can free themselves from enslaving gravity by subduing to a greater - and liberating - force of gravity. In simple terms, this is called imitation.¹⁷ Imitation of a stronger leader helps us break the group or tribal pressure which fetters our creative liberty. But imitation can also be soulless. The real human alternative is either to listen to one's aspirations or ape one's own lower instincts. Many actually fidget about for lack of a model, but not a few, in their perplexity, gravitate towards the monastery.

2. Centripetal forces in the human

No man is an island; and, although the monk may seem to be an exception, he is an exception that proves the rule. It remains to be seen what that rule is. This brings us to the phenomenon of human gregariousness.

2.1 *The phenomenon of gregariousness.* Humans like to aggregate because they are by nature social; souls have to congregate because they need a church. Gregariousness, however, draws the circle around some by way of excluding others. There is no such thing as universal gregariousness, except one mediated through various degrees of belonging, which, by mutual exclusions, wind up with being all-inclusive. There is, of course, such a thing as local gregariousness, and it is from the orbit of local gregariousness that the hermit leaps off. For this reason, Henri Bergson (1859-1941) speaks of the closed and the open society. A closed society aims at preserving the coherence of a group and so resists change, until a moral genius or mystic comes around and upsets the established order. When the ensuing consternation in the bosom of the closed society subsides and the progress reached is integrated into new legislation, the circle has been broken and widened to include new members, yet the new emergent society closes ranks once again to

17 Against a prejudice that imitation of Christ is a typical Western spirituality unknown to the East see I. Hausherr, SJ, "L'imitation de Jésus-Christ dans la spiritualité byzantine," idem, *Etudes de spiritualité orientale* (Roma 1969) 217-245.

protect itself against intruders.¹⁸ Until a new mystic appears on the horizon, and the whole process of social change starts afresh ...

2.2 *No Church is an island* But will gregariousness stop here? Suffice it to draw a comparison. Sects live by absolutizing the principle of gregariousness; they cut a part and call it the whole; in this way, they become real islands. Whereas the sect oversimplifies the problem by abolishing the centre, the Church tries to make the centre more attractive. No wonder, then, that Church life solves the problem of centripetal forces only up to a point, and some of the faithful will sometimes succumb to the temptation of ogling an alternative which seems to tell it all in brief, give it all at once. Something else - something more - is needed.

We can take the example of dreams. When we dream each one of us becomes a sectarian, who can do and undo empires, found and confound Churches. The alarm-clock is for many a dreamer a resurrection from a nightmare. For in dreams we elaborate our own particular world, each in our own way. But when we wake up each has to come to terms with crude reality as it exists outside of our control. And the only way to master it is by way of togetherness. Elaborating reality together - that is Christian community.¹⁹ Dreams are such a Christian reality! Everybody will dream dreams, young and old, slave and free, men and women (cf Acts 2, 17-21), but they must do it in the name of Jesus Christ, the crucified author of life: that is precisely what constitutes Church, solemnly celebrated as brand-new on the day of Pentecost!

In this sense, the Church is the exact opposite of a quarantine! It is poles apart from the private world of single dreamers; the dreams must now be presentable, and, in order to do that, must first be acclimatized to the public ("liturgical") feeling of all persons of good will. But our dreams need a quarantine; and, indeed, most dare dream only under the cover of darkness. Even then, they are a bit wary about speaking out their dreams aloud, the story of Joseph in the Old Testament serving as an apt warning. Christians everywhere need a hearth where they can feel at home away from home, where they can unburden their souls of their dreams with impunity. That centre of human warmth and enterprise is the monastery, the hallowed place where Christians "can let their hair down" while enjoying God's protection.

18 H. Bergson, "*Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*," *Oeuvres*, (Paris 1970) 1154-1156.

19 E. Jünger, *Geistesgegenwart*, (München 1979), 189-191.

2.3 *Gravitating towards the monastery.* No Church is an island, but the monastery is an island! Better, an archipelago of islands!²⁰ Indeed, this abrupt juxtaposition between Church and Monastery can easily give the impression that much of the monastery's appeal lies in its vested sectarian interests. Already the approaches to the monastery are forbidding. Traditionally, monasteries usually went out of their way to be out of the way, and, besides, the quarantine needed lasted the whole year or two required canonically for the noviciate and beyond.²¹ A wall of silence enshrouds the monastery, cordoned off moreover by habits which at face value fly in the face of society's cherished dreams.

It has been claimed, for instance, that the difference between Russia and Europe becomes noticeable in the monastery; once we grant that Russia is what Europe used to be, old Russia is to be found in the Russian monastery. This avowal would hardly have sounded credible if the story of the eye-opening encounter of the accomplished politician with the monk had not been told by the philosopher Thomas Masaryk (1850-1937), the first president of Czechoslovakia, who has written, "Russia and Europe - the Russian monk".²²

Indeed, if there is any one group capable of defying the deadlines of society, that is the monastic group. No wonder that the *Zeitgeist*, so capable of sneaking, like a mischievous cat, through sealed borders and barbed wire, stops shy of contemplative monasteries. Here time stands still, not in the sense that nothing happens, but in the sense that the time with which all other agents deal would profit by stopping here to recharge its batteries. Where this does not happen, feud fuels vendetta, and the chain of violence is wound up again like a time-bomb. But wherever a whole nation stops for a day as if on retreat, hope receives an oxygen-tent and socio-political forces on the brink of collision proclaim general amnesty for a day and go on pilgrimage.

There is nothing more subversive than to dream dreams together. As psalms

20 Indeed, the monastery has even been called a "tomb before the tomb"; Kallistos Ware, "Introduction," St John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (New York 1982), p. 22.

21 Of course, it is different if we go back in time to the origins of monasticism. St. Nilus of Rossano (+1005) seems to have insisted on a noviciate of 40 days.

22 "La Russia e l'Europa - il monaco russo," T.G. Masaryk, *La Russia e l'Europa* (trans. E. Lo Gatto) (Roma 1925) 19-13; II, pp. 494-504.

sung on pilgrimage go to show,²³ it takes time to dream them - enough, at any rate, for Jesus to get lost on one occasion - but, in the process, something new is created. The May First celebration was precisely such a creation.²⁴ A collective memory can easily be created and celebrated. Sects have no memory to them as an intrinsic principle, and the moment they do accept one, they start organizing themselves like a church with a tradition. Precisely because they have a short-wave memory to them, they are usually short-lived, which is why they can proliferate on the teeming principle. Monasteries on the contrary, bide their time, in apparent bewilderment, like an oak. They see times come and go, but it is ultimately monastic time that judges the tide of events, and it judges them precisely through its liturgy, which apparently goes on for ever, and of which its martyrologies, old and new, are but an expression.²⁵ In so doing even the monastery with the highest walls is Everybody's House, wide open to all without exception, for it is at their service that it exists, invisible though this service may be.

No one is more isolated than when abandoned by God to one's own devices. These are the wages of sin, whose most eloquent expression is death. And yet, in death we become a burnt-out offering: failing strength, a rickety frame, criticism from unexpected quarters, betrayal of trust: all these things make us unwittingly a potential Christ-symbol. Maybe nobody understands so well why Christ chose to redeem us by death than a person in agony.²⁶

23 S. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship I & II*, (trans. D.R. Ap-Thomas) (Nashville, USA) I 177, II 107.

24 J. Piper, *Zustimmung zur Welt: Eine Theorie des Festes*, (München 1963) pp. 111-119. Piper points out that May First draws its origin from the protest organized on May 1, 1886 in Chicago, during which a bomb was thrown. When a number of trade-unionists were held responsible and hanged, this soon led to their apotheosis.

25 In his memorable sermon on Christmas morning 1170, archbishop Thomas Becket refers to this tradition: "I have spoken to you to-day, dear children of God, of the martyrs of the past, asking you to remember especially our martyr of Canterbury, the blessed Archbishop Elphege; because it is fitting, on Christ's birthday, to remember that Peace which he brought; ...; and because it is possible that in a short time you may have yet another martyr, and that one perhaps not the last;" T.S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral* (annotated by P. Wenzel and K. Blohm) (Braunschweig 1967) 34-35.

26 Cf Anselme de Cantorbéry, *Pourquoi Dieu s'est fait homme*, texte latin, intr., bibl., trad. et notes de R. Roques, Paris 1963, pp. 386-396; Anselmo di Canterbury, "Meditazione sulla Redenzione dell'uomo," in: *Il Cristo III* (a cura di C. Leonardi) (Firenze 1989) 572-584.

3. *Circumincessio: The phenomenon of interrelatedness*

This brings us to the third level, that on which the Churches coexist and interact in carrying on their mission.

In this respect, one of the most interesting of human phenomena is the way any one major religion soon breaks up into a number of groups each of which claiming to be right, usually at the expense of the others. This holds true not only of Christianity, but also of Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and so forth. Is human splintering unavoidable? The Trinity affords the model of Persons - however much this concept of divine Persons transcends that of human persons - who do not break up although, or rather, precisely because they are constantly on the move, visiting. The word used in dogma for this is *perichoresis* or *circumincessio*, the reciprocal interpenetration of the divine persons.²⁷ If we further employ the term as a model for human relations, any one group must of necessity relate to the other groups, whereby the refusal to relate is itself a form of interrelationship. Again, the various forms of interrelating are themselves further characterized by the kind of centrifugal and centripetal forces, which, as minor or major trends, are discernible at the level of individuals and groups.

3.1 *Block Talk: Drifting apart and drawing closer*

Monolithic groups use the language of drifting apart and drawing closer, a phenomenon akin to the geological phenomenon of the slow movement of continental blocks to or away from each other. The East-West schism conventionally dated with 1054,²⁸ is a case in point: it had long existed, insofar as East and West had by then deep-seated feelings of resentment and mutual incomprehension; on the other hand, the union went on existing on many a practical level, especially inasmuch as other points of contact remained and simple people tended to see the issue (if they perceived it at all) as yet another round in the ongoing tensions between

²⁷ Used for the first time for the coinherence, without confusion, of the two natures in Jesus Christ by St Gregory of Nyssa, St John Damascene extended *perichoresis* for a like coinherence of the three divine persons; cf L. Ott, *Grundriß der Dogmatik* (Freiburg i.Br. 1970) 87.

²⁸ F. Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy*, trans. E.A. Quain (N. York 1964), 124-153.

hierarchs. Drawing the lesson, reunion, when it comes, will not be an all-enmeshing web, least of all a cobweb, but a skein of relationships between individuals, monasteries and local Churches on both sides, enough, at any rate, to permit an East-West rapprochement. The fear remains whether such a comprehensive relationship would not absorb weaker entities.

3.2 *Every island (individual) is a potential continent (Church)*

Spirituality is an object-lesson on unity. Just as a human being is capable of driving a much bigger animal, so too, the spiritual person is a microcosm which "includes more" than the macrocosm: like the Mother of God, he or she is "wider than heaven."²⁹ The Christian privileges a viewpoint with a long-range vista above material creation. Relating must therefore be done on an inclusive principle, potentially, on an all-inclusive principle.

The mystery of Church union is the mystery of such a symbiosis which is in principle all-inclusive, but in practice selective. For this reason, the Church operates not on the basis of just any symbiosis, but of that of *enhyposis*.³⁰ This term refers to the way in which Christ's unabridged human nature can exist within the one person (*hypostasis*) of the Logos or the Son of God. Applied to the Church with its universal claim, the term indicates the possibility that an individual, or an individual group, or a local Church, may uphold one's individual existence precisely in relation to that of others without prejudicing one's full integration within the new entity.

There are many worlds, even private worlds; some computer programmes are actually galaxies. The world of admirers, as the Little Prince defines the world of the vain person, is one of them. The world of God-searchers is another. The point is: many worlds can exist side by side, like so many radio and T.V. stations, without unduly impinging on one another, but at the same time without hindering free passage, on the principle of *enhyposis*.³¹

29 In iconographic language, Mary is called "platythera", wider than heaven, because she carries the Child, who in turn holds the universe in his hand.

30 See Ott, *Grundriß der Dogmatik*, 185.

31 H. Bergson had already employed the image of the radio stations.

Christ has left his imprint on the Church. Just as the makeup of the human reflects that of Jesus Christ, whose human nature lives in symbiosis with his divine nature within his divine person, so must this enhypostatic status of his human nature obviously tell us something about future union among the churches. No Church is an island; but the Churches are archipelagoes of swimming continents. From this viewpoint, a member of the Church is an island, but qualifies as a lawfully constituted individual only when he or she puts himself or herself in contact with the whole Church through the local Church. This takes place in communion: when the individual receives the Body of Christ in the eucharist he or she becomes part of the ecclesiological Body of Christ. The whole Church, triumphant and less triumphant, comes for a visit without crushing the individual, but rather with a corresponding exchange of gifts.

3.3 Familiar and estranged: inheriting means relating

Remember the Little Prince with his nostalgia for holiness³² and his gnostic penchant, or nosiness to penetrate mystery, overcome only through spiritual familiarization. If the world consists of acquaintances and strangers, the world is propelled by familiarization and estrangement. This is why the Little Prince can serve as an antidote for our gnostic times. One need not give up one's private world, the universe which one treasures as one's love-story because one has grown familiar with it, just because one relates to others, even, as in our case, to all others. It is this heritage that we bequeath to those who come after us, a heritage which has two keys, birth and death, birth as hope and death as accomplishment. Only, sometimes, this inheritance presents itself as an impregnable fortress; the Little Prince, too, does not want to betray his secrets to just anybody and his rose grows thistles to protect them. But we must penetrate all the same when it is a matter of passing on the spiritual riches of the Churches lest the others starve because of our egoism and shortsightedness.

Monasticism is a creed which through its rugged belief in the sacredness of the individual's way before God holds that there is no spiritual castle, however mighty,

32 See P. Blanchard, *Sainteté aujourd'hui*, (Bruges 1953) 27.

which cannot be taken by storm, by the power of monastic virtue. No wonder that many have found God in the isolation cell of death.³³ And if one meets the living God, can the community lag far behind? The living God is inseparable from the living Church. From this we gather that monastic love must go beyond that of the victim and must become that of the offering: universal and particular at once.

4. Scaling the invisible ladder

Universal and particular at once! Celibates are at once centrifugal and centripetal. They attract others precisely because they refuse to enter in competition with them. They can be very useful so long as they remain marginal. Monks, in both East and West, have made themselves famous for their culture.³⁴ But, as Cesare Balbo pointed out, Europe needs more their prowess than their manuscripts. The world could profit from their values as the Church from their virtues.

Among the plethora of those who left an imprint on overcoming spiritual distances the name of St John Climacus (*ca.* 579-*ca.* 649) remains unforgettable through his remarkable *Ladder to Paradise*.³⁵ It offers a key to the heart of Eastern spirituality, indeed, it is a spirituality of the heart. Precisely the enormous influence it has enjoyed suggests we consider it from an angle different from the usual one - namely as a directory for whoever would want to scale the walls that divide Church from Church, walls which, in an expression become justly famous, do not reach up to heaven.³⁶

The modern Western world may be less familiar with Climacus' ladder to paradise than with "snakes and ladders", an indoor game in which one advances if

33 See A. Delp, *Gesammelte Schriften*, (ed. by R. Bleistein) (Frankfurt am Main 1985) 161-176. A commentator on Boethius, Innocenzo Cappa, in his *Consolazione della filosofia*, (Milano 1941) went so far as to express the paradox that, only if mass executions were introduced, could many at least grasp the purpose of their life and discover God in the last hours of their existence.

34 In the West the Benedictines come to mind, in the East Evagrius is a name that stands for many.

35 St John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, trans. C. Luibhold and N. Russell) (New York 1982).

36 Compare this adage with the thoughts expressed by N. Berdjaev, in "God Between Four Walls," in: D. A. Lowrie, *Christian Existentialism* (London 1965) 265-274.

one chances upon a ladder but is thrown backwards if one treads upon a snake. And, if games people play are any index of their souls, it is this added dimension of ups and downs - that only over many failures and a lengthy maturation we move slowly to God, but that we are sometimes heaved up by grace - about which Climacus spoke so much when he laid stress on penance and joy as going hand in hand.³⁷ A step forwards and two backwards mean regress; but one backwards and two forwards certainly spell progress.

4.1 *Climacus and Anticlimacus*

In order to translate this double movement, backward and forward, a double movement which is interrelated and is therefore dialectical - and which, when reformed, bears a certain resemblance to paradox, guardian angel of mystery - we have an especially qualified witness. It is the great Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), who as an epitaph for his tomb wished nothing better than "That individual."³⁸ What Kierkegaard meant by individual was conditioned by his obsession with the all-engrossing presence of the universal in Hegel. Even then, one cannot pass over in silence the criticism, voiced by many, that Kierkegaard, for all the refreshing insight of his protest, wrote the individual upper-case in part at least because of his own predicament.

Kierkegaard is important in this context because he helps give Climacus a modern look. Indeed, he published under his name several books. In order to understand why, we have to keep in mind that, in *Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard introduces the new genre of the edifying pseudonym.³⁹ He thus calls himself as a student, in *De omnibus dubitandum*, Johannes Climacus.⁴⁰ Later on, however, when he had left behind this phase of philosophical maturation, he wrote under the

37 Kallistos Ware, "Introduction", John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Descent*, 14-16.

38 See "Il Singolo," S. Kierkegaard, *Diario I*, (a cura di C. Fabro) (Brescia 1948) 392-394, here 393.

39 C. Fabro, "Postilla," S. Kierkegaard, *Vangelo delle Sofferenze*, (a cura di C. Fabro) (Fossano, Cuneo (without a date))75-76.

40 S. Kierkegaard, *Philosophische Brocken - De omnibus dubitandum est*, (trans. E. Hirsch) (Gütersloh 1981) 190 (comment). The similarity to the real Climacus lies only in the similarity between Kierkegaard's dialectical scale and the real Climacus' spiritual ladder.

pseudonym of Anti-Climacus,⁴¹ not against the real Climacus, but against the assumed personage of Johannes Climacus who doubted everything. Kierkegaard's problem par excellence is "how to become a Christian."⁴² So the Anti-Climacus is the hero of the overcoming of a crisis so typical of the present state of affairs, given more to ruminating than to philosophizing. Kierkegaard's appeal lies in part in his return to the Church of the Fathers.⁴³ We might not like doubt, but we are often unwittingly its prey. Nor do we become its master simply by practising methodic doubt - as the Kierkegaard of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* was to discover. So we had better bring ourselves in line, and ask what can be done. Of course, as for Kierkegaard himself, this will only be achieved in this last-mentioned masterpiece.

Anti-Climacus and Climacus, doubt and faith: they too are eminently centrifugal and centripetal, found side by side in the primitive community of those who witnessed the Ascension (Mt 28, 17). They are a reminder that, even in interrelationship between the Churches, the loneliest individual must assert his or her place, but can surpass self-restriction only by opening up to the mystery of the Church, discovered in the isolation cell of total abandonment.

4.2 *The Monk in us and the Monk in others*

Although no man is an island, the monk certainly is one. He is an island because every individual deep down is potentially a Church. Put against the wall everybody quickly discovers the insufficiency of climbing it. No Church is an island, but the monastery is an island, because the monastery is the place where self-rotation ends and becoming humanity's satellite starts. The monk in us comes out and discovers the monk in the others. It is here that the answer lies: how to carry on a correspondence between the monk in us, going up and down the monastic ladder, and the monk in the others, presumably going through analogous movements.

41 Even this pseudonym of Anti-Climacus he later withdrew; see S. Kierkegaard, "1. Beilage: Widerruf des Pseudonyms Anti-Climacus," *Einübung im Christentum*, (Gütersloh 1980) 286-288.

42 C. Fabro, "Introduzione - Italian," in: S. Kierkegaard, *Vangelo delle Sofferenze*, 21. If Kierkegaard criticised monasticism, this was based on a misunderstanding; C. Fabro, *ibid.*, 70-71.

43 See C. Fabro (a cura di), *Søren Kierkegaard: Diario* (Brescia 1948) 121. As an example see Kierkegaard's use of the visions of Hermas in his *Vangelo delle Sofferenze*, 144-145.

Unfortunately, if the monk in us, going down, meets the monk in the other, going down as well, both will drag their feet into the stubbornness of hell.

Actually we have to distinguish the monk in us from the interiorized monk. The latter is anybody, whatever his or her station in life, who responds to the universal call for holiness.⁴⁴ The former is that conditioning which, like a bridge, enables a human being to understand and occasionally wish to be a monk. Thus, the yearning for peace of heart, present in everybody, is a bridge to understand monasticism; and, indeed, one extremely influential type of monastic spirituality has been aptly called “hesychasm” (Greek for “quiet”).⁴⁵

4.3 *Climax and Anticlimax*

Behind the idea of a ladder, a scale, a differentiated approach to spiritual reality as lived in the Churches,⁴⁶ there is the idea of a differentiated spirituality which reaches out to heaven, not with Babel’s hybris but slowly and steadily. If truth and spirituality reflect each other, then to the hierarchy of truths⁴⁷ there must correspond a hierarchy of spiritualities. It is the modern spiritual directory.

The word for ladder in Greek is *klimax*, whence derives the English climax. But English is also sadly aware of anticlimax, characterized by pathos and pseudo-solutions, in a word, whenever great expectations breed their opposite. And rightly so! Following Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* we often think of virtues in terms of being in the middle, away from extremes, whereas we could for once think of them as going up and down a ladder, that is to say, as something with a climax and anticlimax. In this sense, the fast is the climax of the feast, just as the feast is the climax of the fast.

In the list that follows we have some of monastic “virtues” in the inclusive

44 Cf E.G. Farrugia, SJ, “The Common Task and the Uncommon Hope” and “Dialogue in Silence.” in: idem, *Tradition in Transition*, 111-133 and 135-143.

45 On hesychasm see Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London 1993) 62-70.

46 On the various differentiations in St John Climacus’ spirituality see Kallistos Ware’s excellent “Introduction”, in: St John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 1-70.

47 In *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 11 Vatican II spoke of a hierarchy of truths (*hierarchia veritatum*) as a way of interpreting the proximity of any one truth to the central mystery of our redemption through the incarnate Son of God, and not of considering any one truth unimportant.

sense of the “monk in us”. There is no pretence to deduce them in Hegelian manier, but only to show one possible movement from the periphery to the centre. The movement, however, is a spiral which can go not only up but also down, especially if it goes off tangents.

- (a) *War and peace.* Point of departure for discovering the centre is one’s dissatisfaction with oneself, the cute formula for war. Yet, just as courage, as a virtue, qualifies best whoever is by nature timid, so, too, the best virtue of peace is found in the middle of war.⁴⁸ We speak too readily of serenity, but human life goes through alternating periods of both inner peace and tension. The monk is the human laboratory for the experiment. Asceticism means: war can only be postponed, but in the meantime final peace can be anticipated - which is why asceticism has been called crisis management.
- (b) *Pilgrimage and stability.* Stability is not the absence of movement, but having purpose and direction in life. Life is a one whole pilgrimage, to which chastity imparts direction, i.e. one direction, as with an integrated person, rather than several. Instability may also take the form of drifting aimlessly, but Dante, Chaucer⁴⁹ and medieval pilgrims knew why pilgrimage is a station on life’s progress. Unity depends on places of pilgrimage and will come to stay when new spiritual rendezvous are activated.
- (c) *Fathers and children.* Direction does not dispense with a guide but presupposes one. Winning the hearts of parents for their children and the hearts of children for their parents was the task indicated in the Gospel as characterizing the passage from the Old to the New Testament (Mal 4, 6; Lk 1, 17). It is resolved only in the relationship between spiritual parents and their charge.⁵⁰
- (d) *Tradition and traditions.* In a bid at discernment of spirits a guide can try to interpret God’s will in the light of the accumulated human experience, especially of monastics, source persons of wisdom, who live not from Tradition alone, but also from traditions. Yet traditions interpret Tradition, and Tradition interprets Revelation. Inheriting is an example. The monk bequeaths “according to tradition,” therefore everything goes back to the

48 As Hölderlin put it: “Was sich trennt, trifft sich wieder, und Frieden ist mitten im Streit.”

49 On pilgrimages in Chaucer’s time see G.G. Coulton, *Chaucer and His England* (London 1963) 121-125.

50 G. Bunge, *Paternité spirituelle: La gnose chrétienne chez Evagre le Pontique* (Bégrolles en Mauges 1992) 69-75; cf L. Bouyer, “Sagesse et gnose,” *Le sens de la vie monastique* (Paris 1950) 300-313.

monastery.⁵¹ Monastic inheriting is thus spared precisely the manifestation of concupiscence which is division. In the world, empires, patrimonies gradually disappear because they are divided. The monks sing in choir: United we are strong; of this, the world retains only the words.

- (e) *Insularity and communion.* Withdrawing is the condition that allows for advancing. A: Toynbee has interpreted creative personalities as acting on the basis of withdrawal from society only to return with renewed vigour.⁵² This possibility of renewal should not be the preserve of monks alone. That is why Europe needs monasteries more than ever before.
- (f) *Deformed and Reformed.* Deformations not only precede but also follow reformation. The monastery is an on-going laboratory for experiment and counter-experiment, and it calls for human volunteers with a big heart and whose "beautiful corner"⁵³ is reserved for God.
- (g) *Charismatics and Neurotics:* neurosis is healed by charism, but sometimes fostered by it. Well-placed monasteries can function as a thermostat and give what sects cannot.
- (h) *Fasting and feasting.* The problem is to fast in the feast, and to feast in the fast. Then integrity is complete. St Teresa could hold an orange in her hands and wonder at the rarity; in our times of plenty, an ascetic culture could mean trying to keep balance and avoid exaggerations.
- (i) *Service and self-service.* In the icon of the Last Supper Judas helps himself thus reducing service to self-service. The Church itself is the expression of Christ's availability here and now: that is sacrament, and not the utilitarian reduction thereof into a pretended "service". Yet, like friendship, things of least immediate use often render the greatest service.
- (j) *Prayer in and out of context:* to pray is to relativize context by taking it seriously. When one neglects prayer, one is out of context.
- (k) *Silence and hubbub:* the psalms make lots of noise, clapping, trumpeting, and, besides, silence can be embarrassing. Silence and hubbub are next-door neighbours.
- (l) *Liturgy timeless and endless:* a liturgy that never ends makes us fidget and remember that we are with 200 others, whereas a liturgy which is mystic and thus timeless, makes us forget whether we are on heaven or on earth, like Vladimir's ambassadors.

51 "Quidquid acquirit monachus, monasterio acquirit," as the adage goes.

52 Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 217-230.

53 This is an expression used by Easterners for the place in their home where they keep their icons.

An afterthought: Is Sisterhood what Catholicity means?

One big mistake in ecumenism is to think that all we need is the same creed and unity will follow automatically. That is sheer rationalism. It oversees current talk of "sister Churches."⁵⁴ We forget that their relationship itself must be spiritual, i.e. one of sisterhood. If dogma and spirituality form a unity⁵⁵ then Sisterhood remains an abstraction without sisterhoods. Since the walls of division do not reach up to heaven, everybody of good will should leap over them. In traditional terminology, the word for this collective high-jumping is monasticism. No man is an island and no Church is an island, but the monk in his monastery is the best traffic island which leads directly to the Church. Pushed to extremes the individual lapses into ecclesiality. The monastery is the laboratory where the I disappears and gives place to Christ's I, with a resultant communitarian we.

Ecumenism is about reciting both the Creed and the Confiteor in the plural. Thus, Catholics confess the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. Oneness is a form of holiness, holiness is a form of wholeness (integrity). Catholicity is qualitative oneness and apostolicity harks back to original oneness of origin. The four notes help only if they are not abstract but interrelated, and that makes them spiritual notes. From here we see the justifiability of talk of sisterhood. War ends where fraternization begins. There can only be Sisterhood if there are sisterhoods to back it up: there can only be catholicity if there is monasticism - if the monk in us holds out his hand to the monk in the other.

Monasticism is the future of the Church. Without it the church will relapse into that inner persecution called fratricide. Its antidote is fraternity, its laboratory the monastery. It is too precious a source of human and spiritual energy to be left to the monks. The world misses monastic values. The Church needs monastic virtues. Ecumenism will survive only thanks to monastic virtuosity.

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54 In Vatican II, the Catholic Church made a distinction between "sister Churches" and "ecclesial communities." In order to qualify as sister Churches a grouping has to have the same sacraments and a hierarchy with apostolic succession. In practice this means the Oriental Churches; see *Unitatis Redintegratio* 14, 17. As for the Anglican Church, cf Y. Congar, *Diversités et communion*, (Paris 1982)126-137.

55 According to G. Bunge, *Paternité spirituelle*, 98, spirituality is theology grasped from within.

INSULARITY AND COMMUNION*

Hilary Greenwood SSM

The great comic classic of middle-English literature is the *Canterbury Tales* of Geoffrey Chaucer, written in the last part of the fourteenth century. A party of men and women set out together on horse-back from an inn in London to make the pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas Becket. By a happy coincidence their route will bring them past the very spot where we are gathered today. They are a mixed group: some of them are presented to us as virtuous characters, like the Clerk of Oxford and the Poor Parson; some are figures of fun, like the drunken Miller; some are despicable hypocrites, like the Friar and the Summoner; and some are just ordinary lovable sinners, like the Wife of Bath. They agree to the suggestion of the Innkeeper that they should entertain each other on the way with stories, and that he should act as a chairman. In between the stories there are some interesting conversations; and it is with one of these, the Prologue to the Tale of the Wife of Bath, that I should like to begin.

To this group of mainly celibate male church officials she throws down the double challenge of women's rights and the institution of marriage; and she backs it up with a spirited defence of the kind of life she herself has led. She is rich, bejewelled, jolly good company, and four times a merry widow. She also takes advantage of her audience by making use of her considerable knowledge of Holy Scripture. She has recently heard a preacher say that Christ went only once to a wedding in order to teach us that it is wrong to marry more than once. If we are going to use Scripture like that, how do you explain Christ's words to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4, 16-18)? He says that she has had five men, and the present one is not her husband. Why is this fifth man not her husband? Is there some limit on the number of husbands you can have? And if there is, how do you reconcile it with God's clear instruction to Adam and Eve to go forth and multiply? Did not Solomon have a thousand wives? And did not the Apostle say that it was better to marry than to burn?

This leads her into a discussion of some of the inconsistencies in Saint Paul, who

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is obviously not her favourite theologian. Is his advice about celibacy mandatory or optional? If it were mandatory, there would never be any celibates born in the first place. And so ...

advice is not commandment in my view.¹
He left it in our judgment what to do...

Then she moves on from Saint Paul to the words of Our Lord and makes a more serious point for the men to consider ...

But Christ, who of perfection is the well,
Bade not that everyone should go and sell
All that he had and give it to the poor
To follow in His footsteps, that is sure.
He spoke to those that would live perfectly,
And by your leave, my lords, that's not for me.²

In other words, there are two standards: one for the saints and those ascetical experts who can take literally the counsels of perfection, and another for ordinary Christians who have to interpret Our Lord's words metaphorically. I don't need to tell you that such a double standard has constantly been rejected: it was Luther's main criticism of the religious-life, and by now it has probably died out from ascetical theology.³

1 Nevill Coghill's translation of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, lines 66-7. The original is ...
"but counselling is no comandement;
he putte it in our owene judgment"

2 Ibid lines 107-112, The original is ...
"Crist, that of perfeccion is welle,
bade not every wight he sholde go selle
all that he hadde, and give it to the pore,
and in swych wyse folwe him and his fore.
Hee spak to hem that wolde live parfitly;
and lordinges, by your leve, that am nat I."

3 A weak version of the double standard might be read into Vat. Conc. II *Perfectae caritatis*, which constantly refers to those who follow the evangelical counsels. But such an interpretation is rigorously excluded by the dogmatic constitution on the church, *Lumen gentium*.

The Wife of Bath has drawn our attention to the inconsistency with which Scripture has been treated. Sometimes it can be treated literally: she gives the example of "Sell all you have and give it to the Poor", which was certainly taken literally by such a person as Saint Francis. But what about "Take up your cross and follow me"? Does this not have to be taken metaphorically nowadays? And how do we answer the good Wife's contention that we choose which interpretation to follow to suit our own convenience?

But it may be an error of method to try making an either-or choice. We may be using two types of discourse at one and the same time, both of which are required. This is because Christ, like Chaucer, was a poet, and his utterances were poetical. May I please remind you that the word "poet" comes from the Greek word for "making", and that (*vice versa*) the middle-English word for a poet is "makaris"? In poetic language and in parables we are in two worlds simultaneously, the natural and the spiritual, and God will speak to us from either or both. This interchange is what the New Testament means by the Kingdom of Heaven: by a paradox this spiritual kingdom is terrestrial, for it is the organisation of daily life by spiritual standards. But it is also the measuring up and scrutiny of daily life by spiritual standards. Thomas Morton says that "the monk is someone who takes up a critical attitude towards the contemporary world and its structures".

I must stress this point that the poetic method of the parable, both verbal and acted, requires holding together the literal and the metaphorical. For instance, you cannot explain a parable by allegorising it, by saying that *this* stands for *that*; for if you did so, you would be abandoning one of the two prongs of a paradox. The kingdom of heaven is like a man seeking pearls; and a man seeking pearls is like the kingdom of heaven. Don't ask me why. Either you see it immediately, or you don't, and no amount of explanation will get you further. It seems to me that everything you can say about the religious-life tends towards paradox, and that it is our special vocation to deal with this, particularly in the words of our great poet Jesus Christ. It will not be an easy task, since the institutional church is generally inimical to poetry and most people are antipathetic towards it. But paradox is not only at the heart of monasticism; it is at the heart of Christianity itself, which lives in two worlds at one and the same time. One of these paradoxes is "Insularity and Communion". Most of us do not like paradoxes, and there are various manoeuvres for avoiding them. We might deny the existence of one or other of the paradoxical elements. (This often happens when we are dealing with moral problems.) Or we might alternate between the two, moving to suit our convenience at that moment.

(This often happens with liturgical matters and with theories of church government and ministry.) Or we might deny that there is any paradox at all and complain that it is obfuscating poets who are creating the problem. (This often happens in biblical studies or in dogmatic theology). Or, faced with paradox, we might become neurotic and break down. This generally means that we revert to earlier childish behaviour and attitudes which used to be successful when we were faced with problems, but which now are no longer appropriate. I am not a psychologist, and I am not qualified to follow up these lines. But I am sure that the poetic mind thrives on paradox; that Our Lord was a poet who used poetical methods like the parable; and that we can find here the pattern for the life of the monk. I also think that it is not surprising that it was the Wife of Bath who introduced this matter; for it is of the essence of comedy that it contrasts life as it is supposed to be with life as it really is, and the bogus clerics around her are living examples of this existential gap.

Before considering how we live our own particular lives, we must remember that the organisation of the monastic life is itself paradoxical. Consider, for instance, the eremetical life: what is called *solitudo pluralis*. St. Peter Damian says: "The Church of Christ is united in all her parts by such a bond of love that her several members form a single body and in each one the whole Church is mystically present, so that the whole Church universal may rightly be called the one Bride of Christ, and on the other hand every single soul can, because of the mystical effect of the sacrament, be regarded as the whole Church."⁴

A similar point may be made about the semi-eremetical life. It was said of the Carthusians that "their statuts recommend, not singleness, but solitude. Their cells are separated, but their hearts are united. Each one lives apart, but no one possesses anything apart. All live alone, and yet each one acts with the community."⁵

And for all of us who live in any sort of conventual or congregational life there is the constant effort of combining and balancing the sharing of everything with the human need for privacy and occasional withdrawal. There has to be a rhythm of insularity and communion.

4 PL 145 col 231 in "*Dominus vobiscum*". English translation in Patricia McNulty *St. Peter Damian: select writings on the spiritual life* (Faber, London 1959) 57.

5 PL 153 col 951 in *Vita Sancti Hugonis*

All of us are in some sense living protests and witnesses ...

“... before this strange disease of modern life,
with its sick hurry, its divided aims ...”⁶

Our life should provide an alternative to the divided and fissiparous secular world of our time. Nowadays people are herded into categories like separate compartments: baby-creches, old-people's homes, ethnic clubs and ghettos, language-determined nationalities, and the baneful tribal loyalties which are the curse of Europe today. Faced with this, the church can be Catholic, existing for all people at all times in all places, and Christians can be catalysts of unity.

But we are falling apart, not only socially, but also intellectually. Ortega y Gasset stressed the point that modern democracy and the fluidity of mass culture had exacted a severe price from humanity. “Liberty of the spirit,” he says, “that is to say, the power of the intellect, is gauged by its ability to displace ideas which traditionally were inseparable.”⁷

Let us give some examples of this falling apart. T.S.Eliot used the phrase “dissociation of sensibility”, by which he meant the disunion of feeling and thought which (in his opinion, but not mine) occurred in English poetry with Dryden and Milton. Feeling and thought (or, as Pascal put it, the heart and the reason) are two aspects of knowledge. We might study botany with our heads (that is to say, with thought or the rational faculty), and we should then know how to classify and to identify species of flora. But we should be wretchedly poor botanists if we are not able to *feel* the beauty of plants and flowers, to enjoy the smell of them, to enjoy

6 Matthew Arnold; *The scholar Gypsy* Lines 203-204. And one of the most celebrated lines of modern English poetry is in Yeats: *The second coming*: “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold”.

7 “La libertad de espíritu, es decir, la potencia del intelecto, se mide por su capacidad de dislocar ideas tradicionalmente inseparables. Disociar ideas cuesta mucho mas que asociarlas, como ha demostrado Kohler en sus investigaciones sobre la inteligencia de los chimpances. Nunca ha tenido el entendimiento humano mas capacidad de disociacion que ahora.” “*La rebelion de las masas*,” *Col. Austral* 66

A hundred years earlier in England Coleridge says: It is a dull and obtuse mind that must divide in order to distinguish; but it is a still worse that distinguishes in order to divide. In the former we may contemplate the source of superstition and idolatry; and in the latter, of schism, heresy, and a seditious and sectarian spirit.” (Aphorism xxvi) Compare also two pithy aphorisms: Maritain's “Distinguish, in order to unite”. and Tertullian's “Distincte non divide”.

giving them to girl-friends or putting them in front of shrines. True knowledge is a union of thought and feeling. But alas! modern people very often have had them divided in order to distinguish them, to use Coleridge's words. For a second example, we might consider how faith and morals must be inextricably held together. What we believe must be attached to how we treat each other, like the two sides of a coin.⁸ We may see the results of the separation of belief and morals, as also of thought and feeling, in what goes on in places like Beirut, Belfast, or Bosnia: strong beliefs allow for murder. And (*mutatis mutandis*) the reverse process bedevils our big cities: criminal behaviour is the breeding ground for aberrant ideas like xenophobia, anti-semitism, racism, or lunatic religious cults.

So, to summarise what I have said: we live by paradoxes and by the juxtaposition of the literal and the metaphorical; we must know which is which, but we must hold to both at once, for such is the spirit of poetry. Insularity and communion are to be distinguished without being divided. Their coexistence is of the nature of parable. And so now I should like to say something of how the monastic life might illustrate this.

Nowadays people find it very difficult to deal with being alone and having to keep quiet. Every day our world becomes more and more like an ant-hill; and yet people love to gather in crowds, and the success of any event is measured by the number of its participants. They dread being by themselves, bereft of entertainment. Nor can they deal with silence. There has to be constant noise as a background to life. It is ironic that the mobile headphone (or Walkman), so common nowadays, deals with the threat of silence by cutting you off from social intercourse with other people.

Solitude and silence ... modern culture cannot cope with them. And the modern church does not seem to value them highly either. It is more concerned with their opposites, community and communication. Now we can all agree that community and communication are good things in themselves: we esteem the ways in which we coinhere in Christ's Body and in which we give voice in praise and worship. We should think poorly of someone who refused social contact with his fellows

8 That instruction in faith and in morals are inextricably intertwined when someone is being prepared for admission to the church is very well insisted on throughout Saint Augustine's *de catechizandis rudibus*.

and who would not speak to anyone else. But nevertheless, the Christian tradition (and especially the monastic one) has always valued their opposites. Over and over again ascetical writers have told us that it is in solitude and silence that the Christian will hear the voice of God, will understand the real essence of things, and will experience that paradoxical enlightenment which arises from doubt, ignorance, and dereliction. It has been said: "If I enter the darkness of my own heart, I am entering the region of my being where I am ordinarily inaccessible to human beings. I am entering where God enters."

So monks and religious brothers and sisters have the privilege of taking upon themselves the burden (and from time to time the suffering) of this paradox. Their daily lives and their whole life-times should be examples of how Christians can at one and the same time be social animals and yet also enjoy solitude, and how they can join in words and music of praise and worship, and yet also enjoy silence. As well as silence and solitude, we might also consider darkness, another thing which modern people cannot bear: the monk can throw light on things for others by wrapping himself with delight in God's cloud of unknowing.

The monastic life, therefore, has to provide for solitude and for silence, whilst sharing in society and utterance. Sometimes a visitor will see small outward signs of this ambivalence. For example, he will notice that we come together into physical proximity for private prayer, for retreat, for keeping silence. These are corporate things. At the same time the conventual life must allow for privacy, for times alone, for one's hobbies, interests, and intellectual or 'artistic pursuits. Indeed, it must allow eccentricities: for there is no such thing as a natural monastic type.... God calls the most unlikely and difficult people to the life!

In my own experience I have found it difficult sometimes to explain to people that my membership of my Society provides the means whereby I can be free, creative, and adventurous. Many outsiders think that we have voluntarily put ourselves under some sort of spiritual tyranny and are concerned about keeping rules, observing prohibitions, getting permissions, and even receiving punishments. The monastic life appears to them as a complex of negative or binding restraints. But the paradox here is that we are concerned with freedom: the monastic life is liberating and provides the scope and opportunities for expressing one's desires and one's personality. But freedom is a burden which few men and women can bear. It can be a threat. There is a wonderful treatment of this idea in Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*: the character Ivan has written a poem called "The

Grand Inquisitor”, in which Christ appears in Seville in Spain at the time of the Inquisition, and is brought as a prisoner before the Grand Inquisitor. The Inquisitor blames Christ for burdening men with freedom instead of satisfying their basic needs. He says: “That was the meaning of the first question in the wilderness, and that was what you rejected in the name of freedom, which you put above everything else ... but Man, so long as he remains free, has no more constant and agonising anxiety than to find as quickly as possible someone to worship. But man seeks to worship only what is incontestable, so incontestable indeed, that all men at once agree to worship it all together.... For the sake of that all-together-worship they have put each other to the sword.... You rejected the only absolute banner, which was offered to you, to make all men worship you alone incontestably: the banner of earthly bread, which you rejected in the name of freedom and the bread from heaven.” The inquisitor patiently explains to the visiting Christ that the Church has set about correcting his work by replacing freedom with miracle, mystery, and authority. He warns Christ that on the next day the people will help burn him at the stake for coming to meddle with the Church.

Dostoevsky was a dangerous radical (until he grew into an old stuffy conservative) and he held heterodox opinions; but he lived in a land of monks and staretzes, and he had a deep devotion to folk religion. He saw clearly that the Spirit was in the physical world, that the spirit was the Spirit of truth, and that the truth would set us free. But, as he says elsewhere, “people cannot bear to be free”, for it carries responsibilities and risks. It also brings doubt, ambiguity, uncertainty, and darkens (not to speak of solitude and silence). Freedom is the great paradox. And this paradox has to be lived.

You may well have been expecting me to talk about the Anglican Church. Or about the polarities of being people of an island who are coming to terms with being Europeans. So perhaps I had better end with some remarks about paradox in the macrocosm. You will need to be patient and forgiving with *dementia Anglorum*. We claim to be an autocephalous Catholic Church, separated from the Roman Church in the sixteenth century. There are many things wrong with us and our weaknesses are obvious. It is just possible that God wants us to die out or be subsumed into some greater communion, and His will is more important than the survival of ecclesiastical organs. If it is true of individuals that unless they lay down their lives for his sake and for the gospel, they will never gain his kingdom, then it is also true of institutions. In the meantime, before we are called to such a death, I am proud of the paradoxical nature of my Church and my tradition. We do not (to use Coleridge’s

words) distinguish in order to divide. On most contemporary matters we have to stand alone, keep silence, and remain in darkness. We are condemned by others for being doubtful, vague, open to differing opinions, and shying away from certainty. I am quite happy for others, if they so wish, to revel in gregarious strength, to have an authoritative voice to obey, and to enjoy that clarity and happiness which comes of thinking that you possess certainty. All these I gladly exchange for freedom. But I must bear in mind that if one is in Christ, then this may turn out to be a freedom to suffer and to die.

There is a wonderful poem by Saint Teresa of Avila in which every stanza ends with the line "Muero porque no muero", which I take to mean "I'm dead because I won't die". And it echoes the ultimate paradox of the Christian religion, of the Catholic faith, of the teaching of our Lord: "unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit". (John 12,24)

Now the movement from the individual and from personal piety to the church and the nation, from the microcosm to the macrocosm, is something which Christians may have learnt from Jews. There has always been a pious tradition among Jews that the life-story of the individual man is a telescoped version of the history of the whole nation (from Abraham to the holocaust), and that in reverse Jewish history is a large-scale version of the normal experiences of the devout Jew. What binds them together is the life-story of the Messiah: the three sections of the book of the prophet Isaiah show him as the child born into a royal family as Prince of Peace, as the suffering servant, the man of sorrows who is acquainted with grief, and finally as the light which lightens the Gentiles, the Catholic Christ. These three, the individual Jew, the Messiah, and the nation, fit into each other like a set of Russian dolls. And similarly the life-story of the Christian, of the whole Church, and of their Christ should fit together, all three as versions of the same pattern. If there is a theology of one of these, then it should apply to the other two also. And so the dogmatic paradox of the two natures of Christ fits in with the existential paradox of the monastic life and the even more wonderful one of the whole Church: a communion of isolated holy sinners who are also holy saints.

St. Anthony's Priory
Claypath, Durham

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LITURGY, TIMELESS AND ENDLESS*

Robin Gibbons

1. *Contemporary Problems*

Sounds and smells play such an important part in daily life. Often unnoticed, they help us shape the patterns of the day - the hum of the motor car, siren of police vehicles, smell of baking bread or coffee freshly roasted, the chime of the clock; all convey an impression which forms a basis for our cultural activity as a people in a place. In the Christian tradition one non-verbal sound that resonated throughout our history and formed a very important link with liturgical life was, and possibly still is, the bell. It is said that Islam deliberately chose the human voice as a call to prayer against the Christian bronze and metal-tongued voice. Throughout Christian culture, bells, and humankind, have linked together to proclaim national events of joy and sorrow, weekly assemblies for worship, tolling the dead, healing a marriage, structuring the day. Even in contemporary society, the sounds of church bells still carry out a task of remembering the presence of God and God's people at work in the world. The sonorous call to a time for prayer reminds us, the hearer, of the timelessness of God's presence and perhaps also the endless nature of Christian faith.

This brings me to the first point I would wish to consider, that of the contemporary problems which we face in liturgy, especially (but not exclusively) in the Western Christian tradition. Various circumstances have led to vast changes within culture over the past 90 years. As we move into the 21st century, the issues of nationalism, warfare, exploitation of peoples, and resources and environment, the gulf between poor and rich, remain as obstacles to progress and future survival. Our churches have their problems too. I cannot speak for our Eastern brother and sister, but I assume that belief now is less a question of uniform allegiance but more 'pick and choose'; a consumer mentality revealed by the many problems we find in the youth cultures around us. Liturgical reforms have also caused ecclesiastical warfare. From the viewpoint of my own tradition (Roman Catholic),

* A paper read at *The Third Encounter of Monks East and West*, Canterbury Aylesford May 24-27, 1996.

the present state of affairs seems to resemble a well worn battlefield, with forces of revisionism and triumphalism claiming a small kind of victory. One also senses that the real lessons of the Liturgical Movement and the underlying pastoral theology of worship have been hijacked and replaced with a preoccupation on validity of form, concern with tradition and exclusivity of cult. There is also another tendency to discard traditional ritual and formal worship as irrelevant, replacement ritual being charismatic and evangelistic in flavour.¹ This bi-polarity is noted by some liturgists who comment on the fact that liturgy has become a scapegoat for all kinds of unresolved tensions.² Liturgy cannot be seen as either a panacea for, or an originator of, all ills in the Church. If the Body of Christ is suffering in its members then the immediacy and position of worship in its life will only serve to highlight what is already present. Cultic demonstrations of loyalty to one form of service or another (a phenomenon in all our tradition) mask a deeper sense of insecurity and unease which has possibly more to do with wider society than purity of ecclesial vision. In evaluating any current situation, we have to acknowledge the debt to liturgists and theologians of the past 100 years who have reawakened a connection not only with liturgy and Church life, but liturgy as life itself.³ The liturgy is the true work of the 'Holy People' where theology is first experienced and encountered. The true worship 'in spirit and truth' gives a temporal people a rootedness in the Kingdom of God, present and eternal.⁴

The orthodox theologian and liturgist, Alexander Schmemmann, puts it succinctly, "liturgical tradition is not an 'authority' or a locus theologicus, it is the ontological condition of theology, of the proper understanding of Kerygma, of the Word of God, because it is in the Church, of which the leitourgia is the expression and life, that the sources of theology are functioning precisely as 'sources'".⁵ Ultimately, as Schmemmann puts it, the liturgy and its tradition are realisation of "the new aeon of the Kingdom".⁶

It is this quality of source, like the source of the sound of our call to worship, the bell, that rings true. The voice of the liturgy is the voice of the Body of Christ.

1 See B. Spurr, *The Word in the Desert*, (The Lutterworth Press 1995)

2 B. Spinks, *Liturgy and Culture in Liturgy and Dialogue*, (Ed. P. Bradshaw) (1993)

3 See J. Fenwick & B. Spinks, *Worship in Transition (1984)*, (T & T Clark 1995)

4 See A. Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, (Pueblo 1984), 116-118; see *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, vol 14, 41.

5 T. Fisch (ed.) *Liturgy and Tradition*, (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1990) 18

6 T. Fisch (ed.) 1990. *Liturgy and Tradition*, (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1990) 19

2. *Monasticism and the liturgical Church*

If liturgy is seen as praxis, reform of the liturgy will always be a necessary component of the pastoral and theological dynamic of growth. Enough has been written about the essential determinants of worship to show that the history of rite and cult is not a static line, nor a steady progression of form from seed to full plant, but rather a series of plateaus, hills and valleys. The liturgy of the Christian community has always had its good and bad points. Monasticism has had an uneasy link with leitourgia and as scholars such as Schmemann show, the development of liturgical life suffered some setbacks, especially in the context of people and participation, due to a monastic ethos within the liturgical tradition.⁷ We can assume that monasticism has also made a positive contributive factor in both east and west, but there is a mythology (especially in the west) which equates monastic life with 'good liturgy', seeing what is done in the monastery as a paradigm for the Church. However, the 20th century liturgists such as Doms Odo Casel, Lambert Beauduin, and Virgil Michel saw their contribution as pastoral, reaching beyond the antiquarian interests of Dom Guèranger and his followers in the 19th century. The liturgy is not a prerogative of any one group in the Church; it belongs to the whole community and therefore must be of service to that community and their journey with God. The early monastic tradition, counter-cultural though it may have been, joined the wider ecclesia for Eucharist and major liturgies, then our domestic liturgy formed a diverse response to the situation of their own need and the particular rituals of their monastic life.⁸

What then of today? In the East, the traditions of the Churches see structures of liturgy that have either been taken over or adapted by Monks and Nuns. There are a number of different Christian families with their own traditions of worship and each has its own history. In the west, the monastic experience had largely been confined to the Roman Catholic tradition, with some interesting variants. In recent years the Anglican, Lutheran and Reformed traditions have experienced a renewal of monasticism, hence the liturgical forms have tended to pattern themselves on mainly existing structures. In all forms of this life there is a distinction between the sacramental and ecclesial dimension of liturgy and the rhythm of the monastic office with its particular rituals. There is also another point to be made.

7 A. Schmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1966).

8 The story of Nikon and his act of communal penance illustrates this ecclesial dimensions. See Benedicta Ward (Trans.), *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, (Cistercian Publications 1975) 156.

The famous story of the Russian Envoys reaching Constantinople and finding in the worship there “Heaven on Earth”, presupposes a level of cultural and ritual experience that involves images and a highly visible use of symbol. Though we can associate this with a perception of monasticism and its involvement in worship, there is nevertheless the alternative pattern of ‘aniconic’ liturgy. The ancient Desert Monks and Nuns stressed the ‘Word’, the western monastic reforms, such as Citeaux and the Carthusians, rejected the iconic formula associated with Cluny and the Black monks.⁹ This reflects the tension between the immanent and transcendent presence of God. Both are valued, both are expressions of the human yearning and desire for God, both are connected intimately with the experience of ‘knowing’ or ‘unknowing’ faith. The Incarnation itself means respect for all varieties of human experience. As Leo the Great puts it, “For that ‘emptying of himself’, by which the invisible God chose to become visible, and the Creator and Lord of all willed to be a mortal, has an inclination of comparison.”¹⁰ If monastic culture has any witness for liturgical tradition, then perhaps the legacy is the timeless quality of the Incarnation which is seen in the life of the Christian who receives life through baptism.¹¹

The daily, weekly rhythm of monastic prayer provides a link between the inner and outer experience of what it means to be a Christian. True mystery is not unfathomability, but as the poet T.S. Eliot put it in his *Four Quartets*, “the half remembered” event, or perhaps, as Paul illustrates in his first letter to the Corinthians that “not quite yet”, the “glass darkly” image (1 Cor 13, 12). The daily office is the focused expression of the unceasing prayer at the heart of the Christian pattern of life. Benedict of Nursia takes a theology of sacredness and enables us to link mystery to the mundane. Like Karl Rahner, Benedict’s vision is essentially a graced nature, the chapter on the community cellarer places sacred and profane in a Christian place, “let him look upon all the utensils of the monastery and its whole property as upon the sacred vessels of the altar” (*RSB*, Ch.XXXI). The work of God (*leitourgia*) is as much domestically as formally ecclesial. It is performed as an act of love, an act of work,¹² whether gathered in the community oratory, the work place or at the

9 For an interesting approach to this, see S. Stiegman, “The Light Imagery of St. Bernard’s Spirituality”, in *The Joy of Learning and the Love of God*, (Cistercian Studies 1995)

10 Leo, “Letter to Flavian” in J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 54. 758B-760 A.

11 *RSB*, Ch. 31, “What Kind of Man the Cellarer ought to be.”

12 *RSB*, Ch. 43.

table of the Lord. As monastic culture has evolved and reformed, it cannot claim a 'counter culture' to any particular view of the world. Most of its history has been an uneasy truce and the ancient tradition of sacred versus secular is perhaps in need of true revisionism. Perhaps the task is to 'counter' false culture, to work within that baptised, holy people, where true sacredness is found in the gathered community and hearts of the believer. The transcendent witness of monasticism balances the imminent patterns of the pastoral work of Church. Dom Gregory Freeman, one of the Abbots of Douai once wrote that, "Monastic life was a failure, but a worthwhile failure".

This image of failure is not that of disaster, rather the failure implicit in Christianity where sin abounds but God abounds the more; in the same way the failure of the Cross, the scandal and stumbling block¹³ eventually leads to the new life in the Resurrection. We have to work in history, "The narrative character of Christian faith roots it in history: in the history of God's people, in the story of Jesus, and in the saga of the Church".¹⁴ The way of the Christian demands a confrontation with the risen Christ as lord and God, and in Him discovering that the Holy Spirit and the intuitive perception of faith comes first, the praxis of liturgy normally reveals the theology then understood.

3. Timeless and Endless

The witness of our liturgy is partially that of attunement to the rhythm of the heart of God. If God is love, as St. John put it (1 Jn 4,7) and the voice of that love is incarnate now, present to us through the gift of the Spirit (1 Jn 4,13-16), then the dynamic of love will be found in all areas of human existence. That is part of the witness and legacy of the Christian (and monastic) community. The historical picture of the early gatherings as portrayed in Acts sees fidelity to the prayers and to the breaking of the bread, not so much as a monastic but as a Church charism. The addition to this from the monastic ethos is the evaluative witness of the transcendent within the context of the ordinary at all times. The division, historically rooted, of a monastic life superior to, and distinct from, the main ecclesia might have held particular attraction for those who see ascesis as the total Christian renunciation,

13 1 Corinthians 1, 20-24.

14 D. Gelpi, *Committed Worship*, Vol.1, (The Liturgical Press 1993).

but it does not provide the balance of a God who, in blessing this world, sees it as essentially good (Gen 1). The 21st century calls us to another encounter. St. Anselm's dictum, 'faith seeking understanding' is in present terms the consciousness of a faith community seeking dialogue with its world. The vocation of the Christian is to be in reality the living locus of the Spirit (1 Peter 2,9,10), God dwells with us. A connection between what is now and the eternal quality of the Divine finds meaning within the context of the liturgy.

This understanding of the abiding place of God tabernacled amongst the people gives us a locus of sacredness within life. Here the eschatological dimension of time, the proclamation of the Lord's coming, is seen in the witness and life of the Church. The liturgy with its intersection of *chronos* and *Kairos*¹⁵ provides the 'culture' in which the sacred can be brought into human life. Immanence and transcendence are two halves of a whole and our traditions from east and west reflect the richness and possibilities inherent in the wider theological understanding of Church.¹⁶ God, who is unknowable in one sense, can be glimpsed and known within the dynamic of Christian liturgy and life. This is the Pauline image of things half known, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love," (1 Cor 13, 12-13). Through the participatory activity of liturgy we are grounded in God's love revealed in Jesus Christ, which is why the Paschal Mystery is at the heart of our celebrations; it is as Donald Gelpi puts it, "when, therefore, the historical self-revelation of God in human history occurs, one symbolic reality, human experience, is transformed in another symbolic reality, divine experience. Through that symbolic transformation God communicates with his creatures."¹⁷

In pastoral and practical terms, how does this transformation enable the liturgy to form, strengthen and give vision to our present and future? In the life of the Church, how do the various forms of community and their relationships interact and strengthen the bonds of unity? These questions can only be answered in a spirit of trust and hope, but they give directional pointers which I would like to consider.

15 D-W Fagerberg, *What is Liturgical Theology?* (Pueblo. 1992) 76-117. Ch. 3 "Two Theologies from Worship."

16 See A. Dulles, *Models of the Church*. New York 1974. A work which others have followed up, reflecting the richness and possibilities inherent in the ecclesiology of Christianity.

17 D. Gelpi, *Committed Worship*, 178 (Conversion).

4. *The Future*

The monastic community, whether cenobitical or eremetical, is not '*contra ecclesiam*', nor '*contra mundum*', it is part of the *ecclesia*. In this respect it forms a valuable witness to one aspect of the life of Christ; proclaiming the Lord's death and resurrection, it also waits for the coming of the Lord, especially in the pursuit of the journey into self to find God. The tools and structures of their life are really the same as any Christian; it is the way and what we can call the environment, that marks out a different experience. The regularity of the common hours of daily prayer have, in the monastic setting, an emphasis that is cyclical and timeless, slightly distinct from the 'people's office' which reflects the rhythm of the day. All these concerns, office, spirituality, *lectio divina*, mark the contribution of monasticism to the *ecclesia*, but in other concerns, Eucharist, sacramental rites, the occasional offices, we see a wider pastoral and ecclesiological dimension at work.

These are underlying problems with a tendency to 'isolate' monastic culture especially in worship. The use of psalmody might indicate an area of concern. Perhaps the key to our future is to discern and evaluate some of the insights of our liturgists. Alexander Schmemmann points to the ecclesial consciousness of the Eucharist as the central act in liturgy (what the Second Vatican Council called the 'Source and Summit of Christian life')¹⁸ "... And the act by which the Church fulfils that presence, actualises herself as the new people of God and the Body of Christ, is "the breaking of the bread", the Eucharist by which she ascends to Christ's table in His Kingdom. This belief....constitutes the very heart of the early Christian experience and faith, thus implies a tension; the tension between this world and the world to come."¹⁹

Through our signs and symbols in the rich diversity of our traditions, the liturgy bridges the gap between heaven and earth. The liturgical year is itself sacramental, the unfolding of the Christ mystery as we celebrate it, the source and climax. In gathering together as Church, reading the Scriptures, celebrating the Eucharist and our other acts of prayer, the year and the work of salvation are brought together,²⁰ in the cycle of Sunday and Easter we enter the eschatological dimensions of the

18 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10 (afterwards SC)

19 Fisch, *Liturgy and Traditions*, 126

20 SC, Art 102. 106

sign and pledge of the Day to come,²¹ and in patristic understanding enter the eighth day of eternity. Perhaps the best way to move forward is to suggest that the notionality of Church as perceived in the magnificent theology of the assembly; “the liturgical assembly itself is the primary and most fundamental celebrant of liturgy. It is called together in order to carry out, in faith and praise, its baptismal priestly ministry. When it is duly constituted, the assembly is the outstanding sign of the presence of Christ to his Church.”²²

It is in this spirit of awareness that we approach the future, as servants and as heralds, to find in the liturgy “the outward sign of God’s reawakening of the Church.”²³

St. Mary’s University College,
Strawberry Hill

21 SC, Art 106.

22 Association of National Liturgy Secretaries of Europe, 1991, “Leading the prayer of God’s people,” 1.

23 J. Fenwick & B. Spinkers, *Worship in Transition*, 197.

MONKS IN THE CITY*

Pierre-Marie Delfieux

Monasticism has always been one of the essential elements of Christianity. The urban explosion has become one of the major realities of contemporary society. How is it that a monastic presence remains so scattered and tenuous in the heart of our great cities - where evangelization is so clearly a priority for Christians? These are the sorts of questions that arise for those called to become "monks in the city." What are the reasons for this *absence*? What arguments could justify such a *presence*? And how could one live this *presence in such an absence*, when the monastic ideal is defined as much by a need for distance as by a desire for communion?

Why such an absence?

We have all inherited a classic – if not idealized – image of the typical monk in his woollen cowl and medieval cloister, with walled enclosure and Gregorian chant, living either in the open countryside or deep woodlands. We are at the point where speaking of a monastic presence in an urban environment has become an unusual event.¹

Contrary to these generally accepted ideas, urban monasticism is not a recent development.² One could even say, in a sense, that monasticism is as old as Christianity, for it first appeared in the heart of the urban environment.³ The example of the Essenes, the emblematic figure of John the Baptist, Jesus' sojourn in the desert, his life entirely given over to the Father in the prophetic stance of consecrated celibacy, Mary's way of life at Nazareth, "keeping and meditating on all these things in her heart" (Lk 2, 51) – all this could not be without sequel.

1 Cf. for example, the conference by Fr. Atti I.O. Prêta in the bulletin *AIM*, 57 (1994) concerning the monastery of Benedictine sisters at Vanves, in the immediate suburbs of Paris.

2 Cf. Dom Jacques Dubois, "Le monachisme urbain," in *La Lettre de Ligugé*, 143 (1970).

3 Adalbert-Gautier Hamman, "Les origines du monachisme chrétien," in *Etudes de patristique* (Beauchesne 1991); Jean-Miguel Garrigues et Jean Legrez, *Moines dans l'assemblée des fidèles à l'époque des Pères* (Beauchesne 1992).

And Christianity flourished first in the urban environment. With the mention of the “virgins” and “ascetics,” even of the first Christian communities in the Acts of the Apostles, “devoted to prayer” and “holding everything in common,”⁴ one already has a first glimpse of the beginnings of a monastic presence in Jerusalem. Egeria and the Pilgrim of Bordeaux describe this monastic presence in their early pilgrimages to the Holy City. What obliges us to believe that this presence did not come into being before the fourth century in cities like Jerusalem, Samaria, Antioch, Alexandria, or even Ephesus, Corinth and Rome? If St. Anthony is the first monk we know of, thanks to his biography by St. Athanasius, he is far from being the first monk to exist. In Gaul, St. Martin, the first hermit known by name in the West, brought monasticism to flower first of all in the city of Tours (371). Soon afterwards, St. John Cassian (+ 432) founded a double monastery of brothers and sisters in the heart of Marseilles. St. Basil (+ 379), father of Eastern monasticism, with great felicity established urban monasticism in the city of Caesarea. St. Ambrose (+ 397) did likewise in Milan, St. Augustin (+430) in Hippo, St. Caesarius (+ 542) in Arles, St. Ephrem (+ 379) in Edessa, etc. St. Benedict himself (+ 583) spent time in Rome. And what should one say about Constantinople where, in St. John Chrysostom’s (+ 407) day, monks numbered in the thousands!

Throughout the Middle Ages, Benedictines, Colombans, Cistercians and occasionally even Carthusians did not hesitate to settle in the city.⁵ At one time Paris was full of monks, from the monasteries of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Saint-Martin des Champs, les Blancs-Manteaux and les Bernardins to the Charterhouse at the Luxembourg and the numerous monastic houses in the immediate vicinity of St. Gervais Church. Let us not forget the important role played in northern Europe during the 14th and 15th centuries by the convents of Beguines. And, down to our own times, the role played in Latin Europe by the Carmelite and Visitation convents, almost always city monasteries.

Nonetheless, especially in France after the Revolution of 1789, urban monasticism, which was already on the decline, disappeared from the urban fabric. And now at the end of the 20th century, monasticism remains almost entirely cut off from the majority of great cities. In former days, in a society 80% rural, monasticism was present everywhere. Today, in a society now urbanized in the same proportion, monasticism is absent almost everywhere. How can this not be

4 V. Acts 1, 14; 2, 42-44; 4, 32-35; 17, 11; 1 Cor 7, 25-28; 2 Cor 11, 1-2; Phil 2, 15-16.

5 V. Ivan Gobry, *Les Moines d'Occident*, 3 vols. (Fayard; Paris 1985-87) passim.

considered extremely unfortunate and how can this be explained?

A long series of historical, sociological, pastoral, theological and even psychological or spiritual reasons could be brought into account. Here, we will limit ourselves to a few questions that may suggest the beginnings of a few explanations.

The imposition of the *Rule of St. Benedict* to the entire Western Christian world,⁶ supported by the power of the Carolingian Empire, was perhaps a wise thing and certainly created unity. But did it respect the creativity the early Middle Ages might have left us in this sphere? One wonders.... In Eastern Christianity, monasticism developed under different circumstances – and remained largely urban.⁷

Did the rise of the great mendicant orders, especially the Dominicans and Franciscans in the 13th century, preceded by the Carmelites, Premonstratensians and the various forms of Canons Regular, by introducing a new religious presence into the heart of the city, supplant a more specifically monastic presence? Once again, one wonders.... Perhaps also the striking example of the Carthusians, with their strong emphasis on desert spirituality (St. Bruno, + 1101), followed by Rome's decision to impose a more and more strict enclosure, led monasticism to become more and more rural?

Later, the ebb of the great Benedictine, Cluniac and Cistercian expansion of the 11th and 12th centuries, the problems caused by commendatory abbots, internal disorder, material ease, and vast possessions led many monasteries towards dispersion and decline. Then Western Christendom was confronted with the difficulties of the Renaissance, the Reformation, Gallicanism, Jansenism and finally the rationalism of the Enlightenment, and the monastic world, lacking strong dogmatic foundations, was too weak to remain in the urban environment. With the French Revolution, the last walls collapsed. At least in France, the only monks left were the Trappists, confined to their rural retreat and agricultural lifestyle, far from the cities and the exchange of ideas.

6 Essentially because of the reforms of St. Benedict of Aniane (750-821).

7 One thinks immediately, of course, of the monasteries of Studios and of St. Mamas in Constantinople, the Percherska Lavra of Kiev and of the monastic presence within the Kremlin at Moscow.

Monasticism returned⁸ in the climate of 19th-century Restoration and Christian Romanticism, with of course a strong emphasis on a rural environment, enclosure and abbatial authority. Religious institutes flourished, new congregations were founded, seminaries and charities multiplied, the missions expanded.... How could the city pavements not be left to them? For better or for worse, the urban environment, confronted with positivism, scientism, ideological and practical materialism, in a climate of German 19th-century philosophy, gradually took on the coloration of the modern city as we know it today - and where a monastic presence remains dramatically, almost totally, absent.

Given the extent and suddenness of the urban explosion, the gap could only grow larger. Urbanism and monasticism came to be seen as incompatible-incomprehensible or even condescending to each other. The gap is still far from being bridged. Today town and monastery keep their distance, although from the beginnings and throughout much of their history, they had so felicitously shared so many things.

At this stage one can only express a double desire: that rural monasticism continue and prosper! It fulfils a vital need for our era. But also that urban monasticism be reborn and flourish! Today's world thirsts for it. Here a void cries out to be filled.

Why such a presence?

When one considers the implications of the urban explosion – certainly one of the most universal and decisive characteristics of today's world – how can one not hope to see the metropolis regain this monastic presence, which could only serve to expand its spiritual horizons? To see monks in the city once again, be they to a degree a new sort of monks, since we are talking about a new sort of urban environment?

But just what is a monk? and for what city? One could discuss at great length the nature of the monk. But it would be in vain.... The new code of canon law itself

8 Due, in France, notably to Dom Guéranger for the Congrégation de Solesmes and Fr. Muard for the Congrégation de Subiaco.

gives no definition, since the monk remains undefinable. He bears a secret we will never cease to fathom. At the end of an in-depth study, Antoine Guillaumont, the eminent patristics scholar, concludes simply, "The monk is a man who has no wife," for, in this sense, he is "*monos*" or "alone."⁹ To which we can add "for the sake of the Kingdom of God." In short, the monk is a consecrated celibate, living - if he is Christian - in intimacy with Jesus Christ.

From there follow the characteristics of monastic life: a fraternal existence, most often lived out in community; simplicity and unity of life; the liturgy of the hours, said either personally or liturgically; a balance of silence and sharing, work and study, hospitality and solitude; the pursuit of an ideal of chastity, poverty, obedience and humility, in a climate of joy and peace - the whole in a spirit of eschatological anticipation (Col 3, 1-3). On this foundation a great diversity of styles of living can be established. In this sense, the monk is both "*monos*" (alone) and "*unus*" (at one). Alone with the One, and at one with himself in rectitude, at one with others in love.

If, from this common foundation which seems generally accepted,¹⁰ we seek the model of the perfect monk, surprising as it may seem, we could most certainly say it is Jesus himself. He is perfectly "*monos*,"¹¹ in his intimacy with the Father (Jn 10, 30; 16, 32). He is perfectly "*unus*," in the bond of friendship and peace he lived with all men (14, 27; 17, 23). He is truly "separated from all so as to be united to all."¹¹ He truly is consecrated (Lk 3, 22; 4, 18), prays (5, 16; 6, 12; 9, 18; 11, 1), is a brother (5, 11, 28; 6, 13; 8, 1), celebrates the liturgy (4, 16; 6, 6; 20:1; 22:53). He truly is poor (2 Cor 8:7), perfectly obedient (Phil 2:8), perfectly pure and innocent (Jn 8:46). In this deepest sense, it is clear that the first, the perfect, the truest of all monks (and perhaps the only true monk) is Jesus Christ.

Now Jesus was also a city dweller. From "his own city Nazareth" (Lk 2, 39 ["*polis*"], 51; 4, 16) to the "city of Jerusalem," where he comes and goes constantly (2, 4; 4, 9; 9, 51; 13, 33; 18, 31; 19, 28), by way of "his city" of Capernaum (Mt 4, 13; 9, 1 ["*polis*"]), his journey takes him "from town to town" (Lk 5, 12; 9, 6; 10,

9 "Monachisme et éthique judéo-chrétienne," *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 60 (1972).

10 Cf. Notably the well-known "definitions" by Evagrius Ponticus, Augustine, and Theodore of Studios.

11 Evagrius Ponticus, *Treatise on Prayer*, 124.

8...) to the ultimate encounter in the heart of Jerusalem where he says, "Stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high." (Lk 24, 49).¹²

Only on this first model can we found a genuinely "monastic" ideal - an ideal straight as the Gospel, directed towards the one true goal: to meet God; to proclaim and become God, by the pure grace of God. This, in any case, is the triple goal which we constantly strive to keep in sight in our Monastic Communities of Jerusalem, which are by definition essentially urban. Our goal in this urban environment is, as we like to say, to live "in the heart of the city in the heart of God," in the long line of our forbears, the earliest Christian communities.

If we attempt to be city monks and nuns, it is first of all in order to meet God there. If, after the monk, we were to try to define the city, I would say simply that it is the most beautiful image of God of earth, since it gathers together the very children of God. Before the desert, the mountain or the temple, the city is therefore the first meeting-place with God. Since God put the breath of his own life in man, it is in the heart of man that we must first seek the mark of his Spirit. In what is most human we will discover what is the most divine.

If we want to meet the Father, let us look at his children! If we want to meet the Son, let us open our hearts to his brothers! If we want to meet the Spirit, let us turn toward those who are his holy Temple! The fulness of the Trinity lives now on this earth.¹³ We are made in the image of the Father who created us, in the likeness of the Son who lived among us, and in communion with the Spirit who dwells in us. Living and praying in the heart of the human city, we can truly live and pray in the heart of God - for he is the first to dwell in our cities, "he who dwells in Jerusalem."¹⁴

Consequently, if we want to contemplate the Lord and live in the joy and truth of this encounter, it is not a question of fleeing the presence of men but of finding in them the presence of God. For, as Madeleine Delbr el put it so well, solitude is not first an "absence from the world" but a "presence to God."¹⁵ Scripture is categorical on this point: "He who does not love his brother whom he has seen,

12 Seeking the model of the perfect contemplative nun, we could say the same of the Virgin Mary, who, following in the footsteps of Jesus, is also a city dweller.

13 Cf. Jn 14, 23; 20, 22; Rom 5, 5; 8, 16; Gal 4, 6; 5, 25; Eph 1, 13.

14 Ps 135, 21. Cf. Pss 2, 6; 48, 3; 50, 2; 68, 17; 76, 3; 87, 3; 132, 13; 135, 21, to mention only the Psalms.

15 *Nous autres, gens des rues*, (Seuil; Paris, 1976).

cannot love God whom he has not seen." (1 Jn 4, 20) In loving all men and women in the heart of the city where they are gathered together, we encounter God in this first place of his Presence among us, the urban environment. And our prayer, rising in this struggle to love, will attain the true heights of contemplation (1 Jn 4:20). Since the human heart of is the most beautiful tabernacle of God, we can best encounter the true God in the midst of the human city. For our great God is indeed "the lover of mankind"!

Certainly, one cannot seek God and fulfil our being without keeping our distance from "this world which is passing away" and "dealing with the world as though we had no dealings with it" (1 Cor 7, 31). We cannot love two worlds at the same time. But Jesus does not ask us first and foremost to "take ourselves out of the world" but to "keep ourselves from the evil one" (Jn 7, 15). The necessary distance, therefore, does not hinder communion. As Christians - and therefore, as monks - we are required to "keep ourselves" from the urban world, without cutting ourselves off from it, to be present to it without losing ourselves in it. We will be judged on this "double commandment" of love both of neighbour and of God (Mt 22, 34-40). Our presence to God does not therefore depend on our distance from the children of God, but on the openness of our heart to the Lord who remains pre-eminently present in the urban world.

Of course, the city always offers something of the fascination of Babel. Innumerable diversions, innumerable temptations can constantly turn us away from the Lord. But one can be tempted in the desert also. One can find diversion in the heart of a monastery. In deepest solitude, one can become garrulous. Might not the largest, the most prayer-filled church in Paris be the Métro, the underground? It is up to us to learn to pray in the city and through the city - to lift up its groanings and echo its cries. And perhaps to found a new spirituality there.... For living and praying are inextricably linked together. And so, here too, we need to learn to unite action and contemplation, work and prayer, chapel and workshop, oratory and office. In a word, the church and the street. And this effort at unification is eminently monastic.

We will doubtless need to pray differently, "constantly" (Lk 18, 1; Eph 5, 20; 1 Th 5, 16): during breakfast or in the lift; answering the telephone or typing on the computer; waiting for an appointment, for the end of work or of a meeting; crossing the street to the post office and waiting for the underground to return to the liturgy. So what if we no longer say the angelus in the fields, as in Millet's painting. It still

rings morning, noon and evening in all the churches of the city. And Mary of Nazareth can still teach us to say three times a day the same "*fiat*" to God's unending will. For truly, all is grace, even today, in the heart of our towns, icons of God in their thousands of faces, each made in his image.

We are also in the city in order to proclaim God there. Monasticism is not "mutism." One cannot meet the Lord without announcing him. The One whom God sent sends witnesses of God. From his first visit to us in 1975, the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal François Marty, asked us to be "watchers and wakers." All was said in two words. Keep watch before God, day after day, so as to waken to city to God, day after day. But how can one "proclaim God" in the city today and still give silence and solitude priority in our life?

To start with, by the *silent witness of our life*. For words count less than deeds. God is announced more by what we are for him than by whatever declarations we make about him. Being has always had priority over talk or mere acts. In the heart of the city, God calls us all first and foremost to be saints! (Mt 5, 48; 1 Th 4, 3) Not heroes of asceticism or prayer, but signs of God's forgiving love, living signs of his presence, witnesses of his goodness, reflections of his light, despite our weakness. The city needs these witnesses to the Absolute of God, who strive to consecrate their lives to him, today and forever, radically and visibly, in poverty but not paltriness (Lc 6, 37-38). At a time when so much that is relative is made imperative, constantly misleading city dwellers away from the essential, the radicality of the Gospel will proclaim the true God.

Next, by the *witness of love in action*. Today's cities cry out more than ever their thirst for love "in deed and in truth." In the indifference, anonymity, tensions and competitiveness of the urban environment, in this absence or invisibility of love, God himself is made distant or unknown. The tragic logic of unlove is that it engenders unfaith. The atheism of the modern city is brought about first of all by its lack of charity - for as Hans Urs von Balthasar puts it so well, "love alone is worthy of faith." If the world is to believe in the God we preach, it must be able to recognize the love our lives bear in him. "See how they love each other" - this is what converted the first pagans to Christianity.¹⁶ *Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est* (cf. 1 Jn 4:7-16). More than ever, today's atheistic world needs the visible witness of fraternal communities in its midst.

¹⁶ Tertullian, *Apologetics*, 39,7.

Finally, by the *witness of shared prayer* - especially liturgical prayer. To go running after those who have strayed furthest from the Lord's Church in those places where they are now dispersed is not always the best way to bring them back. We must also, and perhaps firstly, gather together those who believe and who pray, before the face of God who waits expectantly for us and draws us to himself (Jn 6, 44. 65). No fear of missing the boat of "the apostolate" - if our prayer is real, it will be eloquent; if it is faithful, it will be provocative; if it is fervent, it will be attractive; if it is regular, people will come regularly. And if it truly puts us in the presence of God together, he will himself transform it into witness. Since we started at St. Gervais, the church, which was becoming deserted, has never emptied.

Only the verticality of prayer can lift us above the skyscrapers and advertisements which hedge in the urban sky. Only the strength of prayer, the most effective of all forms of apostolate, can move the mountain of apathy that has overwhelmed our cities. A praying community exerts a powerful attraction! And in this sense, liturgy is most certainly a forceful means of evangelization. This is how Cyril in Jerusalem, Athanasius in Alexandria, Ambrose in Milan, Augustine in Hippo, Basil in Caesarea, John Chrysostom in Constantinople, Irenæus in Lyons, Hilary in Poitiers, Martin in Tours, Cesarius in Arles, and Denis, Germain and Marcel in Paris converted an entire Christian people.

If God is God, ultimately he alone can speak of God. Liturgy lets God speak. It reveals the Father in the gathering of brothers and sisters; it shows forth the Son in the formation of the Body of Christ; it announces the Spirit by bringing together living stones to build a holy Temple. Liturgy gives form, light and energy to our lives, especially in the Eucharist, source, centre and summit of each day. This is how we can proclaim God in monastic life, where our first labour is the office of the liturgy (*opus Dei*).

Finally, let us not fear to say that we are also monks in the city to become God there. This is the goal of every Christian life, in the footsteps of a God "become man so man can become God."¹⁷ The way of this new life, however, leads through death; our "old nature" must die if we are to "put on the new nature." Now the city is most certainly a place where we can exercise asceticism Renouncing country air and silence is a real sacrifice. In former days, monks fled to the desert to do

17 St. Irenæus, *Adversus haereses*, III.

battle against themselves and against the devil. We can count on today's urban environment to help us move forward in the paths of asceticism on our way to the dwellings of the mystical life!

If we look at the history of the Church, we will be surprised to see how many men and women have been sanctified by the city, even in monastic life. It is up to us, not the city, to let ourselves be seized by Christ, taught by God, and transformed by his grace. As beautiful as the city built by men may be, it will never captivate us like "the city whose builder and maker is God." (Heb 11, 10) Even today's cities can hone our deepest desires. Today's cities will push us onward, following Jesus and Mary, the pre-eminent city dwellers, to live "alone before the One," without which there can be no true prayer. But in communion with all humankind¹⁸, without which we have no true charity. Since Jesus and Mary lived there in this way, "the name of the city henceforth" is "the Lord is there." (Ez 48, 35)

Living this presence in such an absence

Whatever form monastic life may take, it will always be torn by a certain struggle. "One of the most difficult tasks for monks," writes Pope Paul VI, "is to reach a harmonious balance between presence in the world and detachment from the world, both being necessary if they are to act as a sign of the Kingdom, which is what the Church and the world itself expect of them."¹⁹

I will attempt therefore to describe as concretely as possible how we try to live both this "presence" and this "detachment" in our Monastic Communities of Jerusalem, most especially at St. Gervais Church in Paris.

First of all, we must be quite clear how we anchor our minds and hearts on the ridge that leads us between these paradoxes and ambivalencies. Clearly, the city represents both the best and the worst. Everything is brought together there; the evil one and the good Lord: real villains and true saints; hunger for the "fruits of this world" and thirst for "living water." One could go on and on. . . . First observation: the city deserves neither absolute confidence nor a bad reputation. There is no

18 Cf. Jn 2, 1-5; Lk 8, 19; Jn 10, 16.

19 Paul VI, *Exhortation on the Contemplative life*.

more need to flee it in scorn than to embrace it without discernment. In the end, the demarcation line passes through the middle of each one of us, between flesh and spirit, old nature and new nature, sin and grace. Living “in the heart of the city in the heart of God”, then, requires being neither gullible nor timorous, neither taking fright nor being seduced. In sum, it requires being realistic-making this life choice, more than elsewhere perhaps, in a “holy indifference” that can become a wise “abandonment to Divine Providence.” (Mt 6, 25-34).

Saying therefore, in all good faith, that one can meet, announce and even become God in the city - to the point of calling it “City Adonai” with the prophet (Is 60, 14) - means also remembering that “here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come.” (Heb 13, 14). However much grace they may bear, our “earthly Jerusalem” only foretell the “heavenly Jerusalem.” But in the midst of their neighbourliness and promiscuity, solidarity and solitude, what possibilities they offer for the joy of prayer and for living love!

More concretely, we could briefly elaborate on the titles of the first five chapters of our Rule of Life²⁰

“*Love.*” We have opted to form *fraternities* - not abbeys (the abbot’s house) or monasteries (the place where, paradoxically, one lives alone together) - in order to regain something of the Gospel ideal proposed and lived by Jesus himself (Mt 23, 8-12; Lk 22, 24-27). In this sense, we are doubtless more Basilian than Benedictine.

“*Pray.*” We have opted for a “crossroads liturgy,” which draws on both the Eastern Christian heritage and our own Western Christian traditions. A liturgy celebrated by the brothers and sisters together (though they are completely autonomous in housing, government and finance), reflecting the equality of the sexes today in social, professional and cultural domains. Not a “chapel liturgy,” but a “church liturgy,” open onto the city streets and plazas, where everyone, lay and consecrated, can turn together towards God.²¹

20 P.-M. Delfieux, *Veilleurs sur la ville: Jerusalem - Livre de vie*, Fifth Edition (Cerf; Paris, 1995). Available in seventeen languages from Sources Vives de Jérusalem, 10 rue des Barres, 75004 Paris.

21 In many ways our liturgical choices resemble the “cathedral liturgy” of the urban, 4th-century Church.

“*Work.*” For us too, work is obligatory; we cannot live in leisure. However, without either fields or workshops, we are *salaried workers*, like the majority of men and women today – but accept only part-time work, manual if possible, and work inside the fraternity if it is feasible. We are not worker-priests however, and though work is important, it is neither first nor even second in priority, coming after community life, our essential imperative, and prayer, our first occupation.

Keep silence. “Though we have no walled enclosure, we keep strict times and places reserved for silence and solitude. Spending the afternoon in one’s cell remains sacred. No television in the fraternity; no entertainment outside. Every evening is spent in community; each Monday is a desert day,” spent in silence and sometimes in the country.²² A recollection weekend every trimester; a week of *lectio divina* each winter; in August, a long period alone with God on the plateaus of Auvergne. This alternating rhythm helps us to persevere; leaving the city occasionally leads us to love it more on returning.

“*Practice hospitality.*” We live what the monastic ideal has traditionally called *hospitality* essentially through, for and in prayer. Faced with so much social, economic and cultural poverty and isolation, which are addressed by a great number of charitable and parochial programs, we try to be attentive to the spiritual poverty of men and women thirsting for God and hungry for the truth. Our table, however, is always open to guests (in silence); in the church, a priest is always available for confession or spiritual direction; at the fraternity, the parlors are places for listening and advice. We have opted to receive guests gratuitously, as in a family. “You have received without pay, give without pay” (Mt 10, 8). So what if the budget is a little crazy; it is so liberating, and Divine Providence takes care of “all the rest.” (Mt 6, 31-34)

Of course, we make monastic profession according to the three vows of *chastity* (placed first in our *Rule of Life*), *poverty* and *obedience*, being recognized as a Religious Institute since 1991 by Cardinal Lustiger, Archbishop of Paris, in direct link with the local church, along the lines of Vatican II. Besides the chapter on *humility*, essential for the contemplative life, our *Rule of Life* includes an entire chapter on *joy*, which we consider indispensable as a means of returning to the

22 Did not the Cistercians have their “granges” in former days, sometimes several hours’ walk from the abbey?

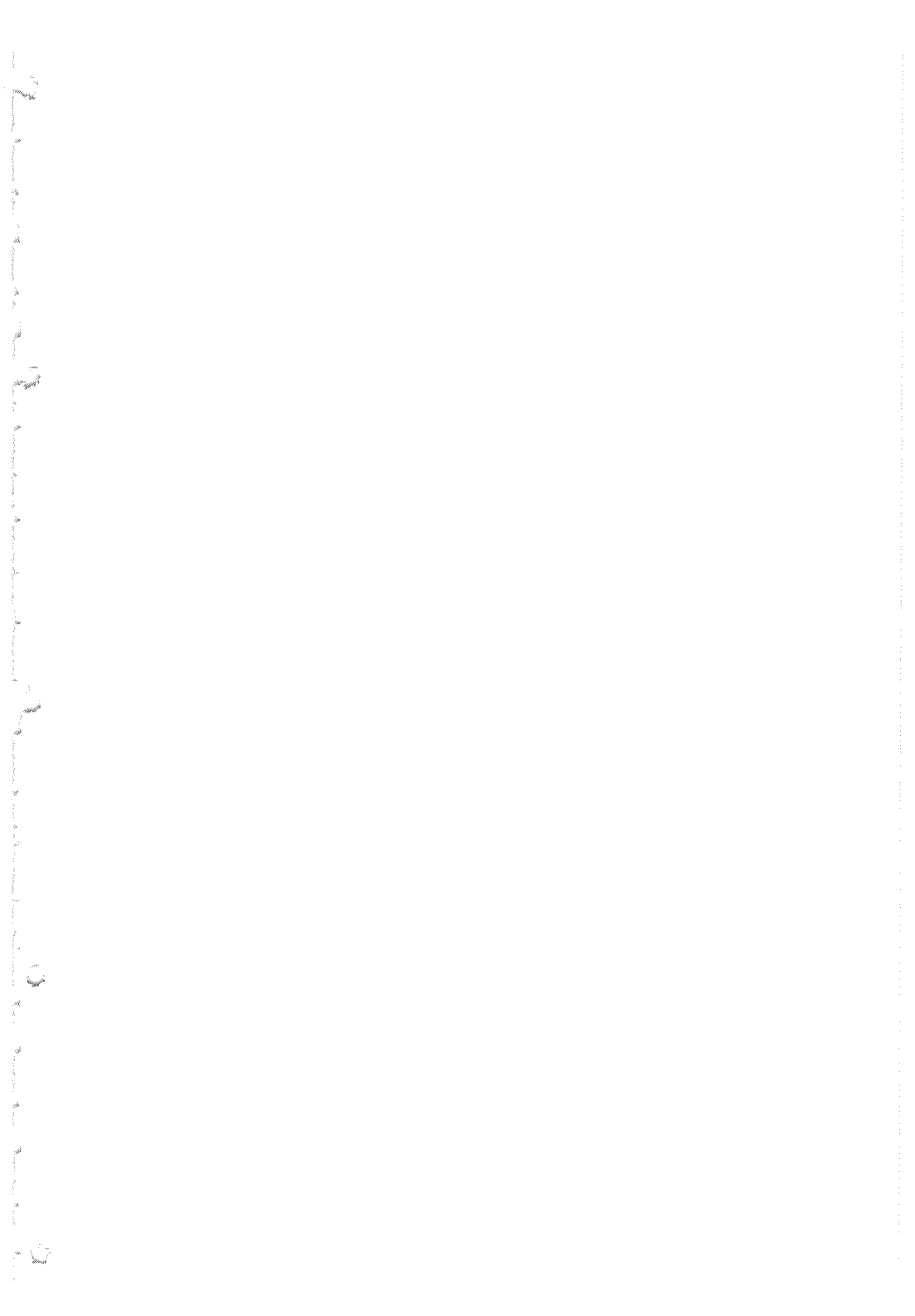
heart of the Gospel and of announcing the Good News that the Kingdom of God is already "in our midst."

* * *

In approving our foundation on All Saints' Day in 1975, Cardinal Marty spoke of "monks for the year 2000." We have never considered this a prophecy of a way of life to come, but a call to take all the time necessary truly to become what we are. In the year 2000, we will have reached the age of twenty-five - just twenty-five years, but twenty-five already. Others may then want to assess this first step. For now, experiencing day after day the grace of this way of life, I will simply express our great happiness that the Church allows us to live this way, "in the heart of the city in the heart of God."

*A paper read by author at *The Third Encounter Monks East and West*, Canterbury/Aylesford May 24-28, 1996.

Fraternités monastiques de Jerusalem
Paris, France



FAMILY VALUES AND PRIORITIES IN CONFLICT

Sergio Bernal Restrepo SJ

Within the context of a reflection whose main goal would be the preparation for one more celebration of work, this time in the year dedicated by the United Nations and the Catholic Church to the family, I deem it useful to take some time to consider what the Church offers as the foundations of society in the midst of a rapidly changing world whose impact on society and more particularly on the family are quite evident.

1. Most of what I present here is taken from the magisterium of John Paul II which constitutes the most recent expression of the Church's social discourse. In fact, the Pope's contribution in the field of social doctrine is significant. It is interesting to notice that he has been one of the most socially minded popes in the last century. Indeed, starting with his first Encyclical Letter on Human Redemption *Redemptor Hominis*,¹ the concern for the concrete, historical person is at the centre of his teaching: *this man is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission ... the way traced out by Christ himself, the way that leads invariably through the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption* (RH 14). Somehow the whole teaching endeavour of the Pope can be seen as an extensive catechesis on the famous Vatican II Constitution on the Church and the World today (*Gaudium et Spes*).²
2. The Second Vatican Council and, particularly this Constitution, are but the conclusion of a process which, in its more specific form, started with Leo XIII, namely, the opening of a dialogical relation to the world.
3. The 1971 Synod of Bishops made it clear that the commitment to justice is an integral part of the preaching of the Gospel. Four years later Paul VI introduced a new concept of evangelization which cannot ignore the concrete

1 Encyclical Letter REDEMPTOR HOMINIS (RH) of His Holiness John Paul II to the Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate, the Priests, the Religious Families, the Sons and Daughters of the Church and to All Men of Good Will on the occasion of the inauguration of His Pontifical Ministry. March 4, 1979.

2 Pastoral Constitution on the Church and the Modern World of the II Vatican Council: *Gaudium et Spes* (GS)

circumstances of human life and includes a necessary reference to the problems of development.

To John Paul II this is almost self-evident. In *Centesimus annus*³ we read that:

The Church devotes herself with ever new energies and methods to an evangelization which promotes the whole human being (CA 55). To teach and to spread her social doctrine pertains to the Church's evangelizing mission and is an essential part of the Christian message, since this doctrine points out the direct consequences of that message in the life of society and situates daily work and struggles for justice in the context of bearing witness to Christ the Saviour (Ib 5).

4. Christ offers salvation to the person in his or her historical situation. This means that salvation can be jeopardized by the circumstances under which the person lives. When the Church exerts her mission she cannot therefore ignore the concrete historical setting (social, cultural, economic, political) which can help the person to attain salvation or else can become an obstacle to it.

Thus the Church's social teaching is itself a valid instrument of evangelization. As such, it proclaims God and his mystery of salvation in Christ to every human being, and for that very reason reveals man to himself. In this light, and only in this light, does it concern itself with everything else: the human rights of the individual, and in particular of the "working class", the family and education, the duties of the State, the ordering of national and international society, economic life, culture, war and peace, and respect for life from the moment of conception until death (Ib 54).

5. In evangelizing the Church proclaims the truths she has received through Revelation. She has the obligation to proclaim the truth about the human person involved in a complex network of relationships in modern society. As Paul VI states: *In order to know how man, authentic man, man in his fullness, one must know God.*⁴ John Paul II develops this idea in *Centesimus annus* which is good expression of Christian anthropology to the point that to many this is what the Encyclical Letter is all about.

3 Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (CA) addressed by the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II to his Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate, the Priests and Deacons, Families of Men and Women Religious, all the Christian Faithful, and to all Men and Women of Good Will on the Hundredth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, May 1, 1991.

4 Dec. 7/1965. AAS, 58 (1966) 58.

The human sciences and philosophy are helpful for interpreting man's central place within society and for enabling him to understand himself better as a "social being". However, man's true identity is only fully revealed to him through faith and it is precisely from faith that the Church's social teaching begins. While drawing upon all the contributions made by the sciences and philosophy, her social teaching is aimed at helping man on the path of salvation (Ib 54).

6. Here we touch a focal point in the message the Church is trying to deliver to men and women of our day, whose profound understanding is central to the correct interpretation of her social discourse: the conception of the person as a social being.

Even though this conception has been present from the first social documents, its presentation has become more and more explicit especially after Vatican II. Prior to it the emphasis was more philosophical, almost too dependent on Aristotle's definition of man as "zoon politikon" (a social animal), whereas now there appears a clear theological grounding for it.

Man and woman were created after God's image. God has revealed himself as the triune God, one God in three Persons. One God who is pure self-gift. God is the name of the relationship of an endless perfect mutual self-gift: in our traditional imagery, the Father gives himself to the Son, the Son gives himself totally to the Father, and the Spirit, proceeding from both, is the bond of that pure "agapic" love. In frequently used patristic image, God is the loner, the beloved, and the love between them.⁵ God is the very fullness of relatedness.⁶ In him being and loving are identical.

From this concept of God Christian tradition has developed the concept of personhood as relatedness to others. One becomes more fully the person one is, by entering ever more fully into ever more intimate relationships.

7. It is this conception that one can understand that for Catholic thinking, man and woman can be conceived only in society, relating to each other. However

5 St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 8, 10, 14.

6 This idea is developed by Michael J. Himes and Kenneth R. Himes O.F.M., in their book, *Fullness of Faith: The Significance of Theology*, (Isaac Hecker Studies in Religion and American Culture; Paulist Press, New York 1993, 56-57.

not any relation will correspond to this conception. It has to be the Trinitarian analogy of self-giving out of pure love, not the usual trade-off type of relationship which prevails in western society today. The Pope describes this in a wonderful way when he says that:

The historical experience of the West, for its part, shows that even if the Marxist analysis and its foundation of alienation are false, nevertheless alienation – and the loss of the authentic meaning of life - is a reality in Western societies too... The concept of alienation needs to be led back to the Christian vision of reality, by recognising in alienation a reversal of means and ends. When man does not recognise in himself and in others the value and grandeur of the human person, he effectively deprives himself of the possibility of benefiting from his humanity and of entering into that relationship of solidarity and communion with others for which God created him. Indeed, it is through the free gift of self that man truly finds himself (CA 41).

Now, this self giving is not something that remains in the abstract like a cause, and ideology, a party and so forth. *As a person he can give himself to another person or to the other persons, and ultimately to God, who is the author of his being and who alone can fully accept his gift (Ib).*

In creating man and woman God endowed them with the essential capacity of transcendence (going beyond oneself) in which we can distinguish two levels: the other persons, and God. *A man is alienated if he refuses to transcend himself and to live the experience of self-giving and of the formation of an authentic human community oriented towards his final destiny, which is God (Ib).*

This conception of the person becomes an essential criterion in assessing the validity of a concrete (historical) form of organizing social life. *A society is alienated if its forms of social organization, production and consumption make it more difficult to offer this gift of self and to establish this solidarity between people (Ib).*

A fundamental content of Divine Revelation is the communion of love between God and men and women. This communion finds a significant expression in the covenant sealed by man and woman through marriage. Marriage must therefore be a perfect expression of the donation of self to the other person and in it we discover a mysterious presence of God's love.

We find here also the true foundation for human rights. In fact, if this conception is properly understood then it is clear that the fundamental right of a person is that of participating in the life of self-giving. Contrary to the rather generalized notion which holds that human rights are prior to societal life, thus making of it a contractual reality, Christian social thought maintains that the foundation of human rights is freedom, but not freedom from interference, but rather freedom for self-gift in relationship, freedom for participation in community.⁷ It is the essential vocation to life in community which offers the grounding for human rights.

And it is in this context, and in this context alone, that one can fully understand the Church's critical attitude in the face of any historical form of organizing society, the polity, the economy, before the concrete forms that the family as an institution assumes in different socio-cultural context. It is in this light that the recent papal document, *Centesimus annus* has to be read and interpreted.

8. Coming to the issue which is supposed to be the centre of our attention, based on these premises which have become more evident in the course of these hundred years, the Church has maintained a critical stand in the face of historical models of society which contend to dominate the whole world, not only ideologically, but politically and militarily as well. In more recent times one of the models has proved a failure, thus apparently leaving no other alternative than capitalism. To many, the Church has finally endorsed this model which is being proposed as the only form of organizing society for an efficient economy and for democratic freedom. However, from an objective reading of the latest Encyclical Letter we come to the conclusion that the Pope is not endorsing any historical model of society. He is indeed referring to the collectivistic and the capitalist models, analyzing the cause of the failure of real socialist experience, and referring to capitalism, not so much as an economic system, but as an *ethical and cultural system*. In fact, *the entire socio-cultural system, by ignoring the ethical and religious dimension, has been weakened and ends by limiting itself to the production of goods and services alone (CA 39)*.

This is due in part to the ignorance of the fundamental principle that: *Even prior to the logic of a fair exchange of goods and the forms of justice appropriate to*

it, there exists something which is due to man because he is man, by reason of his lofty dignity. Inseparable from that required "something" is the possibility to survive and, at the same time, to make an active contribution to the common good of humanity (Ib 34).

When the Church evaluates historical events she considers them only in so far as they favour or hinder salvation, that is, in the sense that they can be a help or an obstacle to the personal fulfilment of the call to absolute self-giving. The necessary references to more concrete aspects of these realities (economic, political, cultural), are to be understood under this moral perspective.

9. From the above mentioned principles one can understand on the one hand that the family would be the ideal setting for the realization of this conception of the human person, as well as the ideal and fundamental community in any society, and on the other, the difficulties for its realization within the context of the dominating culture, one which is being imposed sometimes, or even more often assimilated without a critical approach, by the majority of persons today. It is clear to us that, as the Pope says, the wrong conception of the human person determined to a certain extent the failure of the socialist model. However, a similar conception is at the core of the new culture. More than of anthropology we should speak of a sort of narcissism which appears under the form of a search for personal fulfillment and which has become an obsession for the individual realization even at the price of any tie or bond (familial, of friendship, communitarian, political, of class, even blood ties). This narcissism is opposed to any form of altruism, of self-sacrifice as a form of solidarity, even to love. This attitude responds very well and perhaps has its origins in the spirit of capitalism.

Still referring to the Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* which I see as a prophetic vision of society in which those aspects which are not in conformity with Gospel values are criticized while Christian criteria for the construction of a more humane society are offered, we can make a brief reflection on some important concepts.

9.1 *The concept of work.* The human person can be described as a working being, one that has been created and placed in the world to transform it and to secure from it all that is necessary for a truly human life. The person's social nature find its expression through work. The need for transcendence, both towards others and to

God, manifests itself also through work:

It is ordinarily by his labour that a man supports himself and his family, is joined to his fellow men and serves them, and is enabled to exercise genuine charity and be a partner in the work of bringing God's creation to perfection. Indeed we hold that by offering his labour to God a man becomes associated with the redemptive work itself of Jesus Christ, who conferred an eminent dignity on labour when at Nazareth he worked with his own hands (GS 67).

Thus, work is a duty and, consequently, a right which has to be protected. This is particularly true in reference to the constitution of a family and its maintenance. The relevance of work in this context becomes more evident when one thinks that man and woman are called to fulfil their vocation precisely in the family.

John Paul II has elaborated further this conception of Vatican II, linking the original universal destination of creation to the activity of man and woman. Private property is at the service of this original plan of God:

It is through work that man, using his intelligence and exercising his freedom, succeeds in dominating the earth and making it a fitting home. In this way, he makes part of the earth his own, precisely the part which he has acquired through work; this is the origin of individual property. Obviously, he also has the responsibility not to hinder others from having their own part of God's gift; indeed, he must cooperate with others so that together all can dominate the earth (CA 31).

Against any possible reading which might make of this statement the support for an individualistic conception of work the Pope adds that: *work is work work with others and work for others: it is a matter of doing something for someone else. Work becomes ever more fruitful and productive to the extent that people become more knowledgeable of the productive potentialities of the earth and more profoundly cognizant of the needs of those for whom their work is done (Ib).*

Anticipating the issue of unemployment which has become one of the central issues in the most industrialized countries today, whose effects on family life are evident, the Pope offers us the criteria to judge the morality of this trend, as well as the call to apply all our intelligence in the search for a just solution to the problems posed by industrialization and modernization required by the growing phenomenon of economic interdependence:

A society in which this right is systematically denied, in which economic policies do not allow workers to reach satisfactory levels of employment, cannot be justified from an ethical point of view, nor can that society attain social peace. Just as the person fully realizes himself in the free gift of self, so too ownership morally justifies itself in the creation, at the proper time and in the proper way, of opportunities for work and human growth of all (Ib 43).

9.2 The Enterprise. The dominant system of production has developed a type of enterprise in which certain aspects demand an ethical evaluation in function of the principle that human labour is superior to other elements of economic life. Particularly since the times of John XXIII the Church conceives the enterprise as a community of persons, which is in perfect coherence with the conception of the person we have seen:

In fact, the purpose of a business firm is not simply to make a profit, but is to be found in its very existence as a community of persons who in various ways are endeavouring to satisfy their basic needs, and who form a particular group at the service of the whole of society.

Profit is a regulator of the life of business, but it is not the only one; other human and moral factors must also be considered which, in the long term, are at least equally important for the life of a business (Ib 35).

A business cannot be considered only as a "society of capital goods"; it is also a "society of persons" in which people participate in different way and with specific responsibilities, whether they supply the necessary capital for the company's activities or take part in such activities through their labour (Ib 43).

We could say that almost every working person is linked to an enterprise and that this relationship has a decisive impact on his or her daily life and consequently on the family. It is precisely the prevailing model of enterprise which generates and maintains new forms of alienation. Of special interest is the situation of the woman in the enterprise. How far her right to work and at the same time to motherhood as an essential dimension of her vocation are respected in and by the enterprise? Can we speak of true participation, for instance in management positions, of responsibilities shared by women in the enterprise? Or else are only irrelevant jobs reserved to women often considered second class workers?

9.3 *The concept of Society*. Consonant with premises so far given, society is conceived as the natural place where social persons find and build the necessary conditions for a full realization through self-gift. The basic idea of Catholic outlook is that people accept their interdependence as both empirically and normatively true, thereby enhancing a shared sympathy and purpose, and accepting responsibility for the well-being of one another and the community.⁸

Society must be built upon real solidarity. And it becomes ever more evident that we cannot restrict the concept to a nation, but we must think in terms of world society. In his previous Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo rei socialis*⁹ (the social concern for the Church) the Pope tells us that the increasing phenomenon of interdependence, when considered under a moral perspective, should lead us to the practice of solidarity as a moral virtue. *Stronger nations must offer weaker ones opportunities for taking their place in international life, and the latter must learn how to use the opportunities by making the necessary efforts and sacrifices and by ensuring political and economic stability, the certainty of better prospects for the future, the improvement of workers skills and the training of competent business leaders who are conscious of their responsibilities* (CA 35).

The Pope looks at a future society built upon free work, the enterprise and participation. *Such a society is not directed against the market, but demands that the market be appropriately controlled by the forces of society and by the State, so as to guarantee that the basic needs of the whole of society are satisfied* (Ib).

One of the dominating concepts in *Centesimus annus* is that of freedom. Here again, the concept is related to what the Church has received from Revelation. True freedom has to be related to that truth. *Obedience to the truth about God and man is the first condition of freedom, making it possible for a person to order his needs and desires and to choose the means of satisfying them according to a correct scale of values, so that the ownership of things may become an occasion of growth for him* (Ib 41). This conception of freedom becomes a pivotal criterion to assess the validity of social, political and economic institutions

8 See Himes & Himes, *Fullness of Faith*, p.65.

9 Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II to the Bishops, Priests, Religious Families, Sons and Daughters of the Church and All People of Good Will for the Twentieth Anniversary of POPULORUM PROGRESSIO. December 30, 1987.

9.4 Culture is the result of interaction of the members of a society with their environment. Values are central to a culture. A culture, acceptable to the Christian vision, should be based on the conception of the person as the source, the centre and the purpose of socio-economic life (GS 63). In other words, the economy, the polity, should be centred around the fundamental value in society: the person. The culture of a nation should derive its character from the open search for the truth as it is proposed by the Pope. The use of natural resources should take into account, first of all the service rendered to the people, not only to present generations, but to the future ones as well. It is precisely in the context of culture that we speak of ethical values, and it is to the ethical value-system that the Encyclical Letter is mainly addressed.

Although not exclusively, a human group develops around the ways of satisfying basic human needs. This is one of the reasons why the economy takes a prominent place in any group or society. The Pope suggests that the different institutions of any society develop around the "vision" that society has of the person:

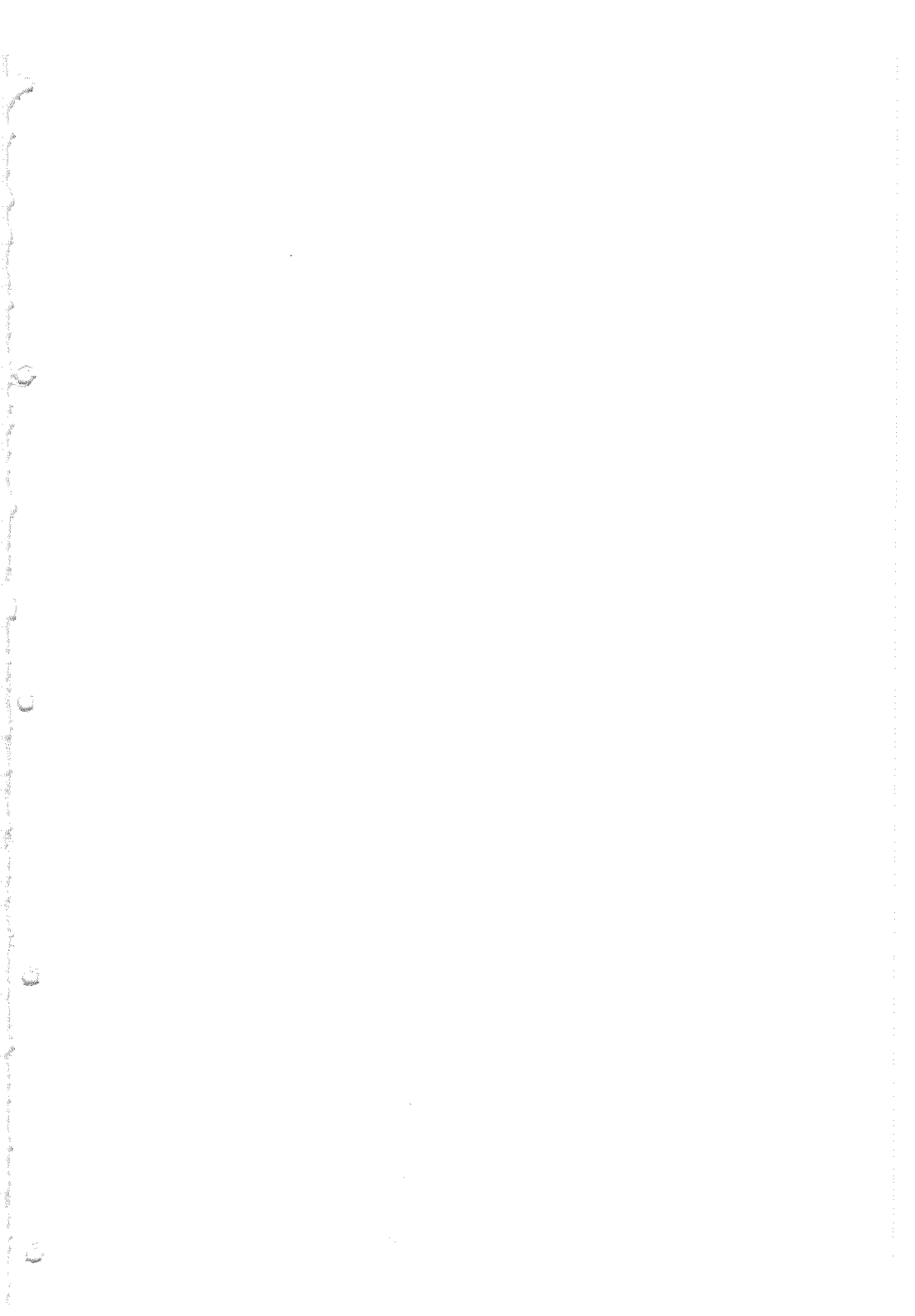
The manner in which new needs arise and are defined is always marked by a more or less appropriate concept of man and of his true good. A given culture reveals its overall understanding of life through the choices it makes in production and consumption... In singling out new needs and new means to meet them one must be guided by a comprehensive picture of man which respects all the dimensions of his being and which subordinates his material an instinctive dimension to his interior and spiritual ones (CA 36).

John Paul II advocates for the overcoming of today's widespread individualistic mentality through a *concrete commitment to solidarity and charity* (Ib 49), which is no other than the acceptance of the ever present reality of interdependence, giving it a more noble expression as the result of love for others. *It is therefore necessary to create life-styles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine all our choices in practical everyday life* (Ib 36).

The Church, therefore, is not endorsing any system nor any historical mode of society. She is inviting everyone to take Christian values seriously assuming an attitude of discernment in the face of new values which, at least partially are the result of the prevailing modes of production and consumption which are determining new cultural patterns, in a common endeavour to make of this world a more human

place, one where everyman d woman can attain their full realization. A place in which the mutual gift of self by husband and wife creates an environment in which children can be born and develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny (CA 39). A world in which the family may fully develop as the primary school of social sharing in an environment of mutual respect, justice, dialogue and love.

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HAMMAN Adalbert G., *La vie est un long jour de fête. Mémoires*, (Brepols, Paris 1995) 410 p., ISBN 2-503-83033-1.

This book can be classified as a theologian's autobiography. The author - a French patristic scholar and expert on Christian antiquity, whose teaching role in Metz, Paris, Montréal, Québec and Rome (at the Augustinianum Patristic Institute), spans more than four decades - reflects upon and describes the milestones of his life. Born in 1910 in Rahling (Lorraine), Adalbert G. Hamman (AGH) is a Franciscan friar who has had a deep urge to make the Fathers of the Church and their teachings more well-known and appreciated. The book's title is itself a phrase from Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata* (VII, 47, 3).

Strictly speaking, the work under review is not a theological text. It would be more aptly described as the spiritual journey undertaken by a man who has delved deeply into patristic texts, commented upon them, published articles and books, taught in three continents ... a life devoted to spreading the richness of the Fathers. It is what Henri de Lubac has called "l'actualité de fécondation" (pp. 194, 243) when referring to the patristic and liturgical sources and their importance for theology.

The book offers an insight into the ongoing, dynamic experiences which

have characterized AGH's life: the profound influence exercised upon him by his parents (pp. 9ff), the first promptings which marked his religious vocation (p. 20), the negative experience of two world wars (pp. 14, 17, 41ff, 70, 79, 86), teaching in different countries (Morocco [pp. 93ff], Canada [pp. 109ff], Italy [pp. 131ff]), his travels all over the globe at the invitation of French cultural centres, his visits to sites intimately connected with Christian antiquity.

AGH talks about the influence of theologians such as Scheeben, Chenu and de Lubac. About Scheeben, he asserts that "*ses Mystères du christianisme* me conduisirent à la théologie des Pères. Ma vocation à la patristique s'est déclarée à cette époque" (p. 26). With reference to the French Jesuit theologian, AGH states that "aucun homme n'aura exercé sur moi l'influence de Henri de Lubac" (p. 63; cfr also pp. 236, 242). He describes his contacts with Chenu (p. 65), von Balthasar (p. 231) and with Abbé Pierre (p. 107). His travels to many countries are given an important place in the book: his vivid account easily renders the reader present in meetings with soldiers at war, editors, his Franciscan confrères, students, university colleagues, and so on. We also see him as a theological expert to two Canadian bishops during Vatican II (p. 125), and as a member of the commission entrusted with the revision (and choice) of the patristic texts in the Liturgy of Hours (p. 131).

In the book, AGH shares his ecumenical experiences with the readers. This takes us back to the decade which precedes Vatican II. As early as 1946, he was organizing a Christian Unity Week at Metz (p. 273). On several occasions, AGH was invited to deliver lectures and conferences in Protestant faculties of theology and universities, especially in Germany (pp. 275ff), Switzerland (pp. 282ff) and the Scandinavian countries (pp. 285ff). He also talks of his contact with Orthodox Christians (pp. 302ff), Judaism and Islam (p. 96).

A section of the book is devoted to AGH's endeavours as editor of various patristic collections. From 1957, AGH was the leading co-ordinator behind the publication of two important collections - *Ictys (Lettres Chrétiennes)* and *Les Pères dans la foi* - whose aim was to bring translations of patristic texts to the general public. The latter collection contains more than fifty titles, published from 1977. From 1958 to 1974, he was the driving force behind the extensive task which entailed the publication of a *Supplementum* to Migne's *Patrologia Latina*. In 1975, on the centenary of Abbé Jacques-Paul Migne's death, AGH endeavoured indefatigably (in conferences, articles and a book) to spread far and wide a renewed appreciation of the undaunted 19th century publisher who remains famous for his mammoth undertaking of publishing hundreds of volumes of

Christian literature.

In another chapter, AGH describes the context and the composition (pp. 200ff) of two important works, *La vie quotidienne des premiers chrétiens* (which he published in 1971) and *La vie quotidienne en Afrique du nord au temps de saint Augustin* (1979). In conjunction with the latter, his travels to various sites in Algeria and Tunisia make very interesting reading. The three characteristic features of the author's sixty years of service as a scholar - *enseigner, écrire, rassembler* (i.e. teaching, writing and compiling) - serve as the three foci around which the book's chapters are assembled.

In *La vie est un long jour de fête*, it is clear that an underlying feature which characterizes the author's scholarship and research is the return to the early Christian sources. Emphasis is made on the permanent validity of the Fathers of the Church to the various fields of theology. AGH repeats de Lubac's famous phrase "*l'actualité de fécondation*" (pp. 194. 243) when referring to the centrality of the Fathers in theological reflection. Investigating the early Christian texts is for AGH an adventure where "*la foi devienne expérience de vie, à l'école des Pères*" (p. 62).

One of the book's easily identifiable substrate is the spirituality of St Francis of Assisi. The author's Franciscan vocation is a key to his book to the extent that it has to be read in the

light of "l'école du Poverello" (p. 371), as the book's epilogue is called. Within this framework, the theme of human solidarity (e.g. pp. 16. 39. 56. 124. 211. 216. 221. 242) can be implicitly traced throughout AGH's experiences as a religious priest and a patristic scholar. The intrinsic relationship between liturgy and social action is indeed central to the author's reflection on the sacraments and the Christian vocation (e.g. pp. 200ff. 242-243), especially as described in one of his more important works, *Vie liturgique et vie sociale* (1968).

La vie est un long jour de fête leads the reader to appreciate AGH's valid contribution to the study of the Fathers and their milieu. This vivid and exhilarating mosaic of experiences displays several aspects of ecclesial life during the theological and sociocultural debate before and after the Second Vatican Council.

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