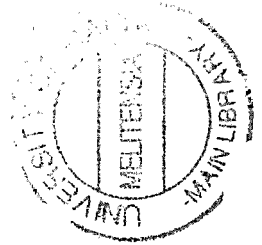


MELITA THEOLOGICA

The Review of the
Faculty of Theology
and the
Theology Students' Association
Malta



The Role of Faculties of Theology in face of Modern Identity Claims — <i>Rev. Salvino Caruana OSA</i>	3
Shifting Values — <i>Anthony M. Abela</i>	21
Unity and Peace: Mutual Understanding between Religions as Utopia — <i>Guido Vergaunwen</i>	43
Il Matrimonio Sacramento della Nuova Legge — <i>Rev. Dr. Frank Borg OP</i>	65
John's Prologue: A Suggested Interpretation — <i>James Swetnam S.J.</i>	75
Book Review — <i>Rev. Dr. Anthony Abela</i>	93

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THE ROLE OF FACULTIES OF THEOLOGY IN FACE OF MODERN IDENTITY CLAIMS

COCTI - VII GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Sherbrooke (Quebec) Canada

1st - 6th August 1996

Rev. Salvino Caruana OSA¹

COCTI (CICT) its history

The founders of COCTI, the *Conference of Catholic Theological Institutions* from all over the world, have taken upon themselves the task of reviving that original inspiration and developing it into a living tradition every three years. This tradition they expressed as follows: *to bring together the best aspects of each theological institution and each region in order to provide the Church, universities and society with a better theological service and collaboration.*

COCTI was set up as a result of the XI General Assembly of **FIUC**², the International Federation of Catholic Universities, which had met at New Delhi,

1. Rev. Salvino Caruana OSA, B.D. (Rome) B.A. (Hons.) STh.L. (Rome) Dipl. Patr. Stud., PGCE, an Augustinian Priest, lectures in Patristics at the Faculty of Theology, and is Visiting Lecturer to the Department of Philosophy at the University of Malta. Fr. Caruana has published several articles mainly on Saint Augustine of Hippo and the Fathers of the church. Among his recent publications are *Int Hlaqtna Ghalik, Mulej*. Tnehid Wistin, (Klabb Qari Nisrani 95/1), 52pp.; *Erga' Idhol Gewwa Fik*. L-Ispiritwalità ta' Santu Wistin, (Edizzjoni Klabb Qari Nisrani, 58; 1996), pp. 11; *Xmajjar ta' Ilma Haj*. Siltiet mill-kitbiet ta' Santu Wistin, (Media Centre Publications; 1996), pp. 112. Fr. Caruana has also written a 300 page introduction to Saint Augustine of Hippo's *City Of God*, translated into Maltese and which will be published shortly. Fr. Salvino has very often participated at international conferences on Patristics, and for the VII General Assembly of **COCTI** at Sherbrooke University (Quebec) Canada, he was the delegate of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Malta. Fr. Caruana has recently defended his doctoral thesis on Augustine's *De Sermones Domini in Monte*.
2. International Federation of Catholic Universities, founded at the instigation of the universities of Milan (Italy) and Nijmegen (The Netherlands) in 1924. The first directory of Catholic Universities came out in 1927. The Foederatio Universitatum Catholicarum was established by a decree of the Holy See in 1948; it was recognized by Pope Pius XII in 1949. In 1967, **FIUC** was recognized by the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (**UNESCO**) as an associate non-governmental organization enjoying consultative status.

India, in August 1975. During this assembly, the delegated participants were convinced of the importance of Catholic Theological Institutions, and of their creating a system of linkage among themselves, to better serve the Church to promote that type of collegial participation in and among these institutions, and to enhance the exchange of experiences. It was therefore proposed that a permanent organization be set up comprising all faculties, departments, institutes and associations of theology. A committee of five was set up and a set of rules was sent for consultation to some 266 institutions of Theology all over the world. A close collaboration with FIUC was defined at the time.

COCTI General Assemblies

The first meeting of these institutions of theology which would later on make the core of this new association, was called for just after the XII General Assembly of **FIUC**, held in Porto Alegre (Brasil) between the 21st July and the 2nd of August 1978. By June 1978, 92 were the inscriptions and later on 19 showed their desire to participate in this new association. The First General Assembly which established **COCTI**, was held also at Porto Alegre (Brasil) between the 17th and 19th August 1978, at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul. The Assembly discussed the theme of the **FIUC** General Assembly, namely, the Catholic University as a manifold tool at the service of the Church and society.

The Second General Assembly was held at the Catholic University of America, in Washington D.C. in 1981. The participants were 53 who put under scrutiny the future perspectives and preparation to the ministry of the students of the faculties of Theology. The results were presented in a publication entitled: "*Future Prospects and Preparation for Ministries in Catholic Institutions of Theology*", Marc Gaudron (Ed.), (Javeriana; Bogotá 1982).

The third General Assembly of **COCTI** took place at the Ecumenical Institute of Theological Research in Tantur, near Jerusalem, between the 16th and 18th of August 1984. The delegated members numbered 52 and the theme dealt with was theological formation in context. The verbal deliberations of the Assembly at Tantur, as well as the works presented at the Second European meeting on the spiritual development within the theological faculties, formed the basis of the publication entitled: "*Theological Formation in Context*," Marc Gaudron (Ed.), (Javeriana; Bogotá 1985).

The Fourth **COCTI** General Assembly was convened at St. Vigil Haus, Salzburg, Austria between the 12th and 16th of August 1987. Then 72 delegates participated and the theme focused upon was "*The Catholic Institutions of Theology and Contemporary Society*". The verbal communications presented then discussed the following topics: theological methods in Latin America; pluralism in Theology; and, finally, Theology and communications. These themes, along with the discussions at the Third European Meeting of **COCTI** which had discussed the given position of layman, and particularly of women within theological faculties, were published later on in a book entitled: *Theological Institutions and contemporary Society*", John W. Padberg (Ed.), (Javeriana; Bogotá 1989).

The fifth General Assembly convened at the Hotel Cauvery Continental, Bangalore, India between the 7th and the 11th of August 1990; fifty were the delegates present and the assembly dealt with the academic situation of the Catholic Institutions of Theology. The following topics were submitted for discussion, namely: Analysis and results of the investigation conducted; from an oriental perspective, from an occidental perspective, and, finally, from a Latinamerican perspective; Latinamerican contribution of a hermeneutical liberation. The verbal deliberations of this assembly were published in a work entitled *Academic Setting of Catholic Theological Institutions*, Alberto Muñera (Ed.), (Javeriana; Bogotá 1991).

The Sixth General Assembly was convened at the Javeriana University of Bogotá, Columbia to which fifty delegates attended. The theme for discussion was: "The Social Functions of Theological Faculties". The following themes were formulated for the attention of the assembled, namely: the social responsibility and the relevance of faculties of Catholic Theology; the social functions of Catholic Theology and theological centres; the social functions of faculties of Catholic Theology in secular European countries, and, finally, the social functions of theological faculties from an Asian perspective. The results were published in a work entitled: *Social Functions of Catholic Theological Institutions*, Alberto Muñera (President of **COCTI**) (Ed.), (Javeriana; Bogotá 1995).

The Seventh General Assembly of **COCTI** (**CICT**) under the presidency of Rev. Prof. Lucien Vachon of the Faculty of Theology, Ethics and Philosophy, was hosted at the Judiciary Centre of the University of Sherbrooke (Quebec) Canada. The 94 Deans, Heads, of Catholic theological institutions, or their representatives, the largest number of participants for any assembly thus far, from 35 countries of

the world, met between the 1st and the 6th of August 1996. For the first time, the Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Malta was invited by **COCTI**. The theme presented for the discussion of the assembled at Sherbrooke was that dealing with the role of Catholic faculties of theology in face of modern identity claims.

COCTI European meetings

During the intermediate period between the three-year General Assemblies, meetings with the deans of the European faculties of Theology are also organized on a two-year basis. The themes put forward at the meetings held thus far were the following: "The theological Faculties and the Europe of tomorrow: theology and the philosophical, economic, social and European cultural aspects," held in Milan (Italy) between the 8 and 10th April 1980. In 1985, in Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany, the European Faculties dealt with: "Theological Faculties and spiritual development." At Lisbon, Portugal, in 1986, the theme under discussion was "The position of laymen, especially that of women, within theological Faculties." The theme under survey at Barcelona, in Spain in 1989, was "The position of theology within Theological Faculties in the triangle of the: church, social state, and today's universities (Scientific-cultural)." Finally, in 1992, the theme: "Other student types-other theology types? How Theology Faculties react to the changing composition of student bodies," was put on the table for discussion at Lausanne, Switzerland.³

The most important aspect of **COCTI**'s success was that of having been able to maintain contact with close to 120 Catholic Faculties of Theology throughout the world, and now including also the Faculty of Theology at the University of Malta.

Identity claims

This year's Seventh General Assembly of **COCTI**, was addressed by Professor Jean Ladrière, a philosopher of world-wide reputation and Emeritus Professor of the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. In his lecture, Prof. Ladrière analysed

3 On the invitation of Rev. Salvino Caruana OSA, the next **COCTI** European faculties meetings due in April 1998, will be held in Malta.

the phenomenon of identity claims of our epoch. His lecture concentrated on three main aspects, namely, the meaning of the concept of identity from the point of view of the constitution of the self; secondly, the meaning of identity claims as a historical cultural phenomenon; and, thirdly, identity claims as a question for theology.

According to Prof. Ladrière, identification is that process by which the individual tries to impose himself/herself for what he/she is as an individual. In the full sense of the term, the individual is really an autarchic being, which is exercising being by assuming, in its proper act of being, the ontological force which introduces it in the realm of being, by retaking thus in an act of self-assertion the originary event which gives it being, precisely according to that modality, which gives it thus thereby the ontological status of autarchy.

Action is that which gives the self its existential determination; it is an event-like process, by which the self gives itself the density like effectivity of what it is, as originary potentiality, the expectation and, in a certain way, the *telos*.

As to the question of identity, therefore, the Self, as constitutively responsible of itself, is called to give itself, by its action, an existential determination in which its essence could be recognized; it is to say which would be in conformity to what is demanded by the ontological status which defines it as *self*. The idea of *claims* is adding to the idea of exigency a very determining factor, namely, implying indeed an opposition to an exterior power, perceived as putting obstacles to the assumption by the self in its inrootedness identity. The context in which that transformation of exigency into claims is occurring is socio-historical.

It is precisely by *rules of law* that the modern state provides the individuals who are its members with their *identity*, which is, in a way, symbolized in the institution of the *identity cards* thanks to which each one is situated with respect to a centralized locating system, based on parameters which, for the person concerned, have a purely functional and exterior meaning. In the context of the modern state, the identity claims take the form of a defence of the natural identities against the state controlled identity.

Theology, therefore, defined as a reflection of faith in and upon itself, has taken the form of a science, even that of a positive science. By the form *science* which it has given to itself, it is called on the universality of theoretical reason. But

as a positive science, it refers to a factuality, which has a concrete and singular character, namely, the factuality of Christian Revelation. The salvation brought about by Jesus Christ, is addressed to all human beings and it concerns in each one of them humanity as such, it is thus, by essence, universal, of a Christic form of universality.

Thus, the crucial question, how can and must theology take into account, in its modes of elaboration, of the concrete conditions of the inrootedness identity and of their diversity implied besides also necessarily by their concreteness? On the one hand, if it does not do so, it would involve itself into a contradiction with its own project, namely, that of the conditions of the reciprocity of Christian preaching. On the other hand, because of the fact that those conditions of receptivity are precisely constituted by the conditions of the inrootedness identity and that these ones are precisely the conditions which are the object of the claims.

This implies the question of recognizing the element of plurality in the field of theology. Plurality does not have to mean dispersion. It must maintain, according to Prof. Ladrière, the link with the concern for unity as well. But that concern itself would be inauthentic if it lets itself be influenced by functional reason and come to conceive unity as uniformity and the theological discourse as a formal system, without anchoring itself into the concrete conditions of the life of sense. It has its authentic significance only as it concerns itself for the communion. That concern for communion is itself properly theological. It is founded on the doctrine of the Mystical Body. In this doctrine, the synthesis is achieved on the one hand between the singularity of the persons, considered in their most proper identity, as presupposing and including their inrootedness identity, and, consequently, in their plurality, and, on the other hand, the universality of salvation, understood in the specific meaning of Christic universality.

Case-studies

At the VIIth General Assembly at Sherbrooke, case-studies illustrating the role of theology and theological factualities *vis-à-vis* this modern phenomenon of identity claims by the new political, ethnic, cultural or religious movements from all five continents of the world, were presented for discussion by the assembled. These case-studies helped to elucidate how much these identity claims also appealed to theology inasmuch as they concerned directly the nature of the Christian faith

itself: in that being at the service of universality of the People of God, and at the service of the diverse cultures, this faith is dialectically linked or else could also find itself in a conflicting (ethical) situation with those new identity claims. These identity claims, moreover, assume very often a highly marked religious character.

Chile: huilliches.

Cristiàn Johansson of the faculty of Theology at the Catholic University of Chile, presented the very interesting case illustrating a form of identity claim by a community of fishermen, so-called, people of the south (*huilliches*) of Chile, was also the subject of a study conducted by an anthropologist of world standing, Rolf Foester. These people of the south constitute part of the indigenous branch called "*mapuche*", people of the Soil. In 1960, a natural catastrophe occurred which entailed a series of grave consequences on the daily life and subsistence of this people. They lost all their boats, motors and fishing equipment. These people had taken to fishing only because of the financial income derived from this activity then, but with no idea of the modern techniques of fishing, which they gradually learnt too. As a result of this catastrophe, several identity problems occurred, namely, indigenous, agricultural, fishermen. Added to all these forms of identity crises, there was that of their being also "*mapuches*" people of the soil, and the situation of acute poverty. The study of Foester concentrated around the search of a working solution of the effects of the natural disaster. The thesis of the anthropologist was that in the solution of this situation, there cropped up also a complex of multiple identity claims or crises.

Around the same locality, there is also a mother-community of farmer-people of the south too. This had no connection at all with the fishing activity, as it inhabited the interior lands around the coast. Between these two communities there seemed to exist at first rather serene and peaceful relations, but as soon as the fishermen of Maicolpue after the tempest, sought salvation in claiming some lands for hunting purposes in order to survive famine, these relations got strained. Thus, the identity claims of these unfortunate fishermen community ended in a precarious situation, both interiorly (with their fellow brethren) as well as with the rest of the world outside, in the sense that these fishermen themselves were actors of the external society. The complexity of society, and the government (state) seen as the key agent of the solution of the crises; the solution implied making all these three agents work together.

The fishermen came to realize the impact of the media of communication. But which identity claim were they going to present themselves with in order to arouse national concern for their cause, and thus arouse national conscience or rally champions around their cause? Three came into question: agriculture-indigenous, fishermen, poor? Still, however, these fishermen would never come to renounce to their identity of *huilliche*, namely, people of the south. Thus they lack any concept of the dynamics of identity. The strategy of multiple/dynamic identity proposed to these poor people of the south, proves to be the most adequate and efficient.

The crux of the whole problem here is to see whether identity is something acquired once and for all, and whose modification is simply partial, but which in reality remains identical? Or else the other side of the problem, whether identity is something which builds itself up, and is made up of a multiplicity of elements which are constantly interacting? This tension between the diverse and the unitary is certainly an insoluble problem, but is also one which ought to be constantly rephrased. This particular case refers to an assumption of cultural identity and it is in this fact in which it grounds its novelty.

Besides, this case creates also theological and pastoral concerns which in turn give rise to some queries. One of these has got to do with the point of view of God. In which way does a more profound view of the Trinitarian image open some paths for the understanding of the unitary and the diversity of every culture? Moreover, a theological anthropology which detaches the human condition as a unique call open towards a dimension of an eschatological future could be able to integrate the continuity of identity which is in constant construction.

In the pastoral context, concerning the whole project of evangelization, there arises the problem of which option ought to be emphasized: the unitary aspects or the diversity aspects? This same disjunctive bears an impact on ecclesiology too: how is one to harmonize the aspects of the plurality of the functions and ministries with the necessary unit of faith and charity?

USA: feminism

The development of feminist hermeneutic, although a general case throughout the world, it would appear that the most visible and vocal *claim to identity* is in the United States. At the present time it has developed into the issue of gender equality,

raised not only by women but also by men. According to Prof. Raymond F. Collins, Dean of the School of Religious Studies of the Catholic University of America, this has got to be studied within broad historical context of these last 100 years or so. One has to keep in mind too the fact that the social context is multi-faceted, namely, socio-political, with economic as well as ecclesial implications.

During the past century, the women's movement has expressed itself in the political sphere in the recognition (1924) of the women's right to vote. Subsequently, women have been elected to representative positions within the various levels of government and to leadership positions within the various levels, although not yet to the presidency (or vice-presidency) of the nation. This political ascendancy is symptomatic of the woman's claim to be the social equal of man at all levels of social engagement, including the basic level of marital relationships. Concrete expressions of the woman's claim to (equal) identity are to be found in economic structures specifically related to equality on the work place, equality of compensation, and equal opportunity in corporate leadership. "Claim" is a term apropos to the woman's movement since total equality has not been achieved, nor has it been recognized and desired by all.

Pertinent to the doing of theology is woman's claim to identity in the academic community. The number of female students in faculties of theology is increasing, to the point that women constitute the majority of students in many major faculties of theology, particularly university related divinity schools. In the faculties of theology there is an increasing number of women, but the gender balance of the theological faculties has not reached the parity that has been attained among students. As an indication, one can note that there is only one female dean among the fifteen university related divinity schools in the United States.

Concomitant with woman's claim to equal identity with man in the general social and academic spheres is a current claim to identity with man within the ecclesial realm. This claim is rooted in baptismal equality *in Christ* (Gal 3, 28). The claim to identity gave rise to a voice for female leadership within the church, in non-ordained and ordained capacities.

For theology there is a plethora of questions which arise from the contemporary American woman's claim for gender equality. Among them are: images of God; language about God (especially, but not restricted to, the semantic constraints of the English language); the reading of the theological tradition from a feminist hermeneutic

of suspicion; the sacraments of the Church, particularly baptism and ministerial priesthood, and, the relationship between the two; the role of the magnisterium; the issue of a male's capacity to be participant in an engaged feminist hermeneutic.

The consequences for the theological faculty *vis-à-vis* all these issues are, therefore: the consideration with regard to male-female faculty ratio; to leadership roles of a female faculty; to the elements of a feminist hermeneutic being part of a core curriculum so as to facilitate theological dialogue; and, finally, to the problem whether there are any issues upon which there is no question of a healthy discussion?

India: Dalits

Prof. Thomas George, head of the Department of Christian Studies, University of Madras, India, presented a case study from India regarding the identity claims of the *Dalits*. The population of India is around 930 million. 200 million, that is, 16% of the whole Indian population, form the so-called *Dalits*, also considered to have been the original inhabitants of India. Thirty-six percent of these are workers and 48% are farmers. They are completely powerless as a social group, however. For generations they were slaves with no right to property or education, and besides, they were also called the *untouchables* of India and domestic animals often received better treatment than they.

Gradually, however, another voice came to assert itself, and it is getting stronger: the voice of the dispossessed and the oppressed, that of a people who have no place in the caste hierarchy, who were even denied entry into temples, whose very touch was considered polluting the erstwhile *untouchables*, renamed by Gandhiji as *Harijans* (*Children of God*), who now prefer to call themselves *Dalits* (*the oppressed*). Gandhi tried to remove this evil from India, but Mahatmas have come and Mahatmas have gone, but untouchability goes on forever! The reason behind all this was that these reformers tried to give religious and spiritual solutions to this problem. The most outspoken spokesman of the *Dalit* movement today, is Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, who is a celebrated name all over India today. *Dalit* youth come under the name of *Dalit Panthers* who have taken their inspiration from the *Black Panthers* of the USA. With their actions the *Dalits'* claim for separate identity has been an essential agenda of Indian politics for decades. One ought to note too, that in India today there are some 10,000 action groups or movements all claiming some form of identity!

What we normally call Christian theology is the contribution of intellectuals from one part of the universal Church, namely, Western Europe. A Chinese or African or Indian priest has to learn European thought, but not *vice-versa*, to be theologically cultured. This sort of ethnocentrism is changing. The dramatic transfiguration in economy, politics and other fields is certainly affecting the theological enterprise as well. Many Christians consider Mahatma Gandhi a better exemplar of Jesus teaching than many official Churches.

A similar claim is being effectively made within the Indian church. Fifty to sixty percent of Indian Christians are probably *Dalits*. These people originally joined the Church rejecting the caste-ridden Hindu fold. Conversion was basically an act of protest, a subversion. But their hope of an egalitarian society in the Church was totally betrayed, since the Church allowed the caste practices to continue as a concession to upper caste converts. Church leaders feared that, if such concessions were not accorded, the Church would be branded as a *Pariah* religion, that is, a religion of the outcasts, and as a result, no upper caste person would become a Christian. The major concern of the early missionaries was perhaps not the passion for spreading the socially radical Gospel of Jesus Christ, but zeal for the salvation of souls by swelling the number of the baptized.

As the Indian church was built on this wrong and sinful foundation, the *Dalits* became second class Christians, still considered as untouchables. In some churches they were allotted separate wings, separate communion rails, as far as separate cemeteries. They were prevented from joining the choir, serving Mass and reading from the altar area during Mass. During the parish festival the procession was not allowed to go into the *Dalit* settlements. Besides these injustices, even the recruitment of candidates to priestly and religious life was covertly and sometimes overtly, discouraged from the *Dalit* Christians. As a result, the rank and file of the church and religious hierarchy are filled by upper caste Christians. Therefore, the long frustrated and angry *Dalit* Christians are now organizing themselves into a liberation movement and are asserting their presence and their unique identity in the Catholic church too. There is also a *Dalit Theology* in the making, there are research students doing papers on a *Dalit* reading of the Bible. There are *Dalit* critiques of church practices and teachings.

The implications and consequences for the role of faculties of Theology are several. If the Gospel is good news to the least, it should be good news to the most exploited people in a particular society. Secondly, a high proportion of India's

Christians are converts from Hindu *Dalits*. The Churches too, unfortunately, have not been free of caste discrimination and Christian *Dalits* have been treated badly by Christians who belong to the caste hierarchy.

Theological faculties in India are doing a lot in order to explain and present certain gospel texts from a *Dalit* perspective, for instance, looking at part of the Gospel of Saint Luke from the point of view of the oppressed caste. *Dalit* Theology is becoming an annual feature of the faculties and is a compulsory credit/course in ecclesiastical degrees. The government of India and the University Grants Commission require also that a minimum of thirty percent of the seats in educational institutions be reserved to *Dalit* students. Theological department libraries are committed to strengthen the section on *Dalit* and feminist Theology.

Post-Communist Czech Republic

The Catholic Faculty of Theology in Prague is a component part of the state Charles University as well as an ecclesiastical school whose statute was approved by the Papal Congregatio de Institutione Catholica. As a result, its activities are deeply influenced by all that is going on within the state and within the Church.

(1) The contemporary political and cultural scene in which the Faculty develops its life is marked by the following features. The words describing the collapse of the Communist system and denoting the present era as Post-Communist have lost much of their persuasion for the inhabitants of the former socialist bloc. Part of the reason is that the innerly convinced Communists have never given up their conviction and they continue to profess it on the platform of various left-wing political parties. Furthermore, those who had joined the Communist Party for the sake of their career and got rid of their membership in the right time, are nowadays quite well-established, politically as well as financially, to be able to influence the society's present and future affairs.

In recent years the political and social development has received a sudden unexpected acceleration. While in the first half of the 20th century great personalities were present, in a significant way, on the political scene for decades, providing topics for culture and arts, nowadays to speak of "the Velvet Revolution" is felt as a bit awkward, and a real interest in the important activities of the anti-communist revolt is scarce. The initial euphoria has soon turned into a general scepticism. The

“Post-Communist” era has not fulfilled the hoped-for expectations. The hopes were for an earthly welfare. The Christian circles had expected a great flourishing of the Church. None came. In the former communist states the same Communist ideology: a small elite of business company owners on one side, and a number of those who fight to live on minimal levels gradually lose their economy ground under their feet. A total recession into the communist past is only prevented by fear: the major part fear that the past would return along with its cruelties and aggressivity; the elite fear loss of their quick-growing riches. A compromise is sought in some improvement of the leftist models.

The general political move leftwards that goes on in all the “post”-communist countries is accompanied by another unhealed trauma: the break of the small but economically quite well-working common state of the Czechs and the Slovaks - the Czechoslovak Republic, a state that ensured in the past the self-reliance of the two nations in relation to their powerful neighbours. The general uncertainty thus, very naturally, leads to the practical materialism of “to snatch at the chance”.

Speaking of the church, she has lost much of her previous credit, gained by her attitudes during the totalitarian era. She is also weakened by the flourishing of sects from the outside and sectarian trends from the inside.

(2) Centrifugal, namely anti-Roman tendencies, particularly strong in the Czech lands in the first half of the 20th century, ended in the founding of the schismatic Czechoslovak Church. These tendencies melted during the Communist era. The Czech theology of today is mainly marked by search for certainty and stability. Centrifugal features imported from the West are found with some small groups of intellectuals rooted in the former political dissent. The general theological attitude is undoubtedly influenced by the different accentuation of the Slavic thinking, which is directed rather to the objective reality, from the Anglo-Saxon, which principally centres on the forms of perception. That is why the European disagreements in the matters of the concept of the Church and her Magisterium, the position of the Pope and the Vatican congregations, the tension between the episcopate and the theologians, the activities aimed at establishing ordination to priesthood for women and other dogmatically dubious activities, do not grow into mass forms in the Czech region. There is, however, a considerable pressure exercised on the Church by the liberal and leftist media trying to break through her ethical norms concerning abortion, contraception, and sexual education. A stability can be stated in the quality of the vocations to priesthood and religious life as well as the interest of laity in

theology. Paradoxically, the youth is mostly interested in religious communities with strict standards, while the number of applicants with such communities that show a spirit of secularisation is sinking. A specific problem remains in the married bishops and priests who were ordained secretly in the totalitarian times; most of them have not yet adopted the life of the official Church.

(3) The Faculty of Theology has adopted a classically standard orientation, but involves, after critical evaluation, all that is true and healthy, in order that its balance may function like a lighthouse in the uncertain perspective of its milieu. The balance is received from the harmony of the horizontal and the vertical, as rooted in the deep, supernatural spirituality.

The Dutch Homosexual Movement

The phenomenon that political and cultural movements demand an own ethnic, political, cultural and religious identity, is very common. In Dutch society, contrary to adjoining countries,⁴ the political and cultural impact of groups which, based on their ethnic identity, lay claim to specific collective identity, is very restricted. One even may mention a reasonably high degree of tolerance in a society, which, partly under the influence of large groups of alloctones (amongst others from former Dutch colonial areas), justly can be distinguished as a pluriethnic society. This holds good even in the case of certain notorious initiatives like the hi-jacking of a train by a Moluccan liberation movement. This statement, however, does not mean at all that the COCTI theme *identity claim* should be irrelevant with regard to Dutch society. Certainly there are social groups which wish to have their identity established in legal (social, juridical, etc.) laying down of rules.

The way in which this collective identity question nowadays manifests itself in Dutch society must be outlined against the background of the transition of a modern to a late-modern (post-modern?) society, in which social protest has largely been moved from the economic field to cultural areas and in which social questions are largely privatized. Formerly the value 'equality' took up much of the foreground, which may be understood in the first instance as an ideal to realize social-economic equality, equality of chances and equal admission to the effects of the welfare state.

4. Relating to Flanders: R. Burggraeve J. de Tavenier et al., *Is God een Turk? Nationalisme en religie*, (Leuven 1995).

In a post-modern social climate the value of 'freedom' gains in importance, to be understood as the freedom to claim the own individual or collective identity. Some writers characterize a post-modern society with the phenomenon that social action decreases while there is an increase in the care for realising the own collective identity in a creative manner.⁵

In the discourse on post-modernity this phenomenon has to do with individualisation, as such, true enough, a distinguishing mark of modernity, but manifesting itself now in a transition of utilitarian to expressive individualism. In the utilitarian individualism the person derives his worth mainly from economic factors: from goods which lend status and therefore are to be acquired as rationally as possible. In the expressive individualism the sensitive and aesthetic aspects of existence come to the fore. Aiming at survival gives way to the wish to experience.⁶ This does not mean that the interest in social economic matters should disappear, but this is only awakened when people experience certain social-economic situations or developments as too dominant for their own lives, and in this way as a restriction for the free creative shaping of their lives.

A clear example of such a movement which during the last months influenced the Dutch political business is the homosexual and lesbian movement.

Case

The Dutch homosexual movement is a numerically relatively small new social movement. It may be characterized as a subcultural movement, a movement which aims especially at identity-producing interaction between partners in the movement.⁷ In their publication Burgers and Franssen outline some developments in the Dutch homosexual movement. The 'history' of this movement demonstrates that it is illustrative of trends and evolutions of subcultural movements in general: in times of strong repression or in moments of lesser social chances of success, such an organisation puts the accent on underground action. When the social environment

5. A. Touraine, "An Introduction to the Study of Social Movements," in: *Social Research* 52 (1985) 749-787; *Critique de la modernité*, (Paris 1992).
6. G. Schulze, *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft*, (Frankfurt/New York 1992).
7. C. Burgers & J. Franssen, "Tussen verlangen en balansen. De Nederlandse homo- en lesbische beweging", in: J.W. Duyvendak et al., *Tussen verbeelding en macht. 25 jaar nieuwe sociale bewegingen in Nederland*, (Amsterdam 1992) 181.

becomes more tolerant, such an organisation develops a more instrumental relationship towards the outer world, trying to realise a number of goals through defending their issues. In the history of the Dutch homosexual movement one may state that, for instance, certain groups in the seventies, under the influence of a Marxist discourse, profiled themselves strongly against the existing social culture and tried to establish a counter-culture. Later on, the influence of this Marxist discourse declined and made room for the enlargement of a movement in which the accent mainly lay on an own culture, an own identity. The Dutch homosexual movement, as regards the facts of the case, was intrinsically inspired by the thinking of M. Foucault on lust and longing. This, however, does not imply that the movement as such strategically struck inward completely and turned upon itself. In existing social organisations and institutions, like political parties, unions and occupation groups, homosexuals joined forces. Two data cleared the way to The Hague (the Dutch political centre). In the beginning of the eighties the movement was confronted with manifestations of hostility. Politicians appeared to be very sensitive for an infringement of the Dutch tolerance image and were prepared to listen. From 1982 onward even a coordinating minister for homosexual affairs was appointed. The Aids problem constituted a second stimulus to more intensive cooperation between the homosexual movement and political strategy. The effect of this for the homosexual movement itself was, amongst others, the strengthening of an instrumental course as well of the internal professionalizing. These two last aspects appear to be characteristic of social movements which are successful: the success strengthens the instrumental and organizational dimensions of a movement. The political successes are, amongst others, the Law on Equal Treatment as well as the Law on the homosexual marriage. These developments do not materially change anything in the basic characteristics of this organization, viz. that the seeking after the confirmation of an own identity is the very binding agent.

Questions for Theology

1. The longing for free, creative shaping of one's life implies a great challenge to classical solidarity. Solidarity as we know it, is no longer understood as the aiming for equal participation in welfare and well-being, but rather as respect and understanding for minority groups, which lay claim to the freedom concept, to legitimate their quest for social recognition. This respect and understanding have to be realised by society.

It needs no explaining that such a way of thinking means a great challenge for 'traditional' social-ethical thinking of Christian tradition, in which care for

the well-being of the human person (personalism) as well as care for the *bonum commune* go together.

2. In the homosexual movement itself there are large contradictions about legitimating the homosexual marriage (Dutch magazine *De Groene*, July, 1996). There is a course of thinking which is rather instrumental (utilitarian), and another, which is more expressively directed. Ought this social minority group to merge into society as a matter of course, or should it have a specific function as a corrective for society?
3. Human social structures are confronted with scaling up (globalizing) and with scaling down. Scaling down is to be traced, among other things, in nationalist attitudes, which may be characterized as a form of collective narcissism, with the possible incentive the opposition to processes of globalizing.
4. Values like freedom, dignity of the individual, autonomy, equality, participation, integrity of life condition, aspiring to a peaceful and solidary shaping of social relationships, have their roots in the modern political philosophy of the last two centuries and belong to the heritage of modernity. People increasingly become conscious of the differences and the partial incompatibility of the whole of modern values, and for this choose selectively for certain values. G. Lipovetsky interprets current questions of groups, which are formulated in terms of justice, equality or social recognition from the primacy of freedom, and concludes: 'on tolère davantage aujourd'hui les inégalités sociales que les interdits touchant la sphère privée'.⁸

Which is the theological meaning of this value selectivity?

Conclusion

Identity claims is a human problem found wherever there is a group of people. It is consequent on the instinct of self-perseveration and the preservation of culture. It belongs to Catholic Theological Institutes to welcome the claim in the light of the Gospel and channel it properly to avoid derailment. Theological faculties with the existing context of identity have to be serious with the meaning of cultural traditions (plural). There is no identity without openness and openness, without identity is elimination. The issue of identity is at the same time the issue of social justice and human rights in the context of post-rationalism and globalization. Doing

8. I wish to thank Veerle Draulans, *Traditie met toekomst? Sociale bewegingen en christelijke inspiratie*, (Acco; Leuven/Amersfoort 1996).

theology in this context, our Faculties have to be aware of monocultural statements or theological monocentrism; to be critical in affirming and confronting realities in order to develop creative communities of faith and even inter-faith communities to bring about cultural movements and social transformation. Identity in openness means empowering people, in which gender equality is an integral part.

Two contrasting tendencies can be found in actual Western Europe. On the one hand, we have a tendency towards the individual as ultimate value. In post-modern society, human beings have detached themselves from given values accepted by their society and from themselves, their own system of reference. Christianity takes part in this process in the "*era of cafeteria religion*". On the other hand, we all participate in a movement towards the "*global village*", by mass media, transportation, international economy. Theology in European perspective has to reflect about this tension and offer models of identity which are at the same time global and local, even personal. The test case will be sensitivity for the worldwide problems of justice, peace and the conservation of creation.

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SHIFTING VALUES IN MALTA AND WESTERN EUROPE*

Anthony M. Abela

Values in Malta, just as in other Western European societies, are shifting towards greater individualisation. Such a process refers to the growing autonomy of individuals in developing their own values and norms, increasingly turning away from traditional and institutionalised value systems. Individualisation and its concomitant secularisation is believed to be an ongoing and irreversible social process.

What follows is an abridged comparative report based on results from the third wave of the Values Survey undertaken for the Maltese Government by Misco International (1995) in comparison to similar surveys held in ten western European countries and in Malta by Gallup in 1984 and 1991.

Priorities

People in Malta have come to give more importance to leisure and friends but less to work. They retain their high attachment to the family and religion but give less importance to politics. The order of priorities for what people in Malta consider to be important in life are the family, work, religion, leisure, friends and politics. [Table 1]

* The author is indebted to the Government of Malta for sponsoring the Values Survey and for making available the data sets from Misco International for sociological analysis.

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Cultural Pluralism

Over the past decade there has been a considerable improvement in people's ability to be with others whose ideas, values and beliefs are different from their own. Those who dislike very much to be with others of different values has decreased from 20% in 1984 to 11% in 1991 and 6% in 1995; whereas the percentage of those who do not dislike at all to be with different others has increased from 44% in 1984 to 54% in 1991 and 65% in 1995. [Table 2]

The observed high level of intolerance of the Maltese towards people with social problems or other nationalities, religions and cultures has remained stable and in some respects has increased over the past decade. In fact, the values study in 1995, finds Maltese respondents equally and sometimes more unwilling to have as neighbours people with a criminal record, heavy drinkers, the emotionally unstable, people with AIDS, drug addicts, homosexuals, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, tourists, members of minority religious sects or cults, people of a different race, immigrants or foreign workers. [Table 3]

National pride, locality and European belonging

Relative to other Europeans, the Maltese remain very proud of their nationality. Over the past few years, since the setting up of the local Councils, more people in Malta feel a sense of belonging to the locality or town in which they live. Fewer respondents have a sense of belonging to their country as a whole. There has been an increase in the percentage of respondents who identify Europe as their second geographical area of belonging (from 9% in 1991 to 14% in 1995, comparable to 12% for the average in Western Europe).

Trust and solidarity

There has not been any improvement in people's trust towards each other. In 1995 just as in 1991, 23% of respondents in Malta, compared to 34% in western Europe, think that most people can be trusted, whereas 75%, in contrast to 59% in western Europe, hold that 'you cannot be too careful in dealing with people'. In Malta, the greatest majority have complete trust in the members of their family but not in other people. The percentage of respondents in Malta who think that people

are less willing to help each other has increased from 49% in 1984 to 59% in 1995. The observed cultural and social pluralism does not seem to be accompanied by a greater acceptance of different others in the community. Nor has there been any improvement in the perception of mutual help in society.

Shifts in voluntary work

Membership in voluntary organisations has shifted from the traditional religious and political organisations to more secular and post-materialist groups. In 1995, 41% of Maltese respondents, compared to 37% in 1984 and 1991, were found to belong to a social organisation, and 34% to do voluntary work with this organisation. Over the years there has been a gradual decline in membership of religious organisations and political parties but an increase in sports or recreational groups, trade unions, environmental groups and social welfare organisations.

Shifts in religion

In 1995, just as a decade ago, the greatest majority of respondents in Malta were found to belong to the Roman Catholic Church and to hold high levels of traditional belief. Most respondents go to Church at least once a week and hold religious services to mark the birth of a child, marriage or a death in the family. In spite of the continuation of the external manifestation of religion there has been a steady erosion of religious identity. People who think of themselves as religious have declined from a high of 94% in 1984 to 73% in 1991 and 65% in 1995. The non-religious have increased from 4% in 1984 to 25% in 1991 and 33% in 1995.

The percentage of respondents who find God very important in their life (scoring 9 or 10 on a ten-point scale) has decreased from 88% in 1984 and 84% in 1991 to 77% in 1995, still remaining very high in contrast to a low of 27% for the average in western Europe. Those who find comfort and strength from religion have decreased from 94% in 1984 to 86% in 1995, in comparison to 50% for the average in western Europe. In 1995, fewer Maltese spend time in meditation, contemplation or prayer. Relative to western Europe, however, most Maltese pray often (53%, 25% in Europe) or sometimes (36%, 26% in Europe) outside of religious services.

Over the past decade, people's confidence in the Church, just as in all the other social institutions, has been steadily in decline. The percentage of Maltese respondents who have a great deal of trust in the Church has declined from 67% in 1984 to 54% in 1991 and 46% in 1995. However, it by far surpasses all other institutions where the closest level of confidence is given to health services (33%). It seems that over the years there has been a general disaffection with all social institutions, possibly because people have come to be more self-reliant for their personal needs and decisions in life. [Table 4, 5]

The declining confidence in the Church as an institution is also manifest in the lesser relevance of its teaching. Except for a constant high level of satisfaction with the answers given by the Church in Malta on spiritual matters (84% in 1984, 87% in 1991 and 86% in 1995) there has been a gradual decline in satisfaction with the Church's teaching on the moral problems and needs of the individual (from 70% in 1984 to 51% in 1995), the problems of family life (from 79% in 1984 to 61% in 1995) and the social problems facing the country (from 68% in 1991 to 39% in 1995). In contemporary society people find the guidance of the Church to be relevant on spiritual matters, but are increasingly critical of simplistic, dogmatic or universal solutions to moral problems of the individual or to the increasingly complex issues of family and social life. [Table 6]

In the mid-nineties, the majority of respondents in Malta, similar to the average in western Europe, are of the opinion that "there can never be clear and absolute guidelines about good and evil. What is good and evil depends entirely on the circumstances at the time." Much fewer think that "there are absolutely clear guidelines about what is good and evil, and that these always apply everywhere, whatever the circumstances."

At the same time, people in Malta find it increasing appropriate for the "Churches", which in Malta could refer to a multiplicity of Church commissions, movements, groups, religious programmes on the media, or individual priests, to speak out on complex and controversial issues such as abortion, human rights, divorce, Third World problems, disarmament, racial discrimination, euthanasia, extramarital affairs, and to a lesser extent on homosexuality, unemployment, ecology and the environment but not so much on government policy.

As Maltese society becomes more pluralistic and open to a western European culture, there occurs a shift from an absolute morality towards a more relativistic

and individualised ethics. People are less willing to subscribe to traditional church morality; they want to be autonomous and responsible, and shape moral decisions through the exercise of reason and spiritual discernment. In a democratic society, the Church has the task to work out and propose reasonable solutions to social problems, without imposing pre-formulated solutions to its members and society at large.

Marriage and family values

Family life has remained by far the highest value for the Maltese, even if over the past few years there has been a measure of dissatisfaction. Fewer Maltese respondents are completely satisfied with their home life (60% in 1995, 76% in 1991, score '9' or '10' on a 10-point satisfaction scale), though much more satisfied than the average in Europe (41%).

More respondents in Malta are legally married (70%) than in western Europe (56%), much fewer live as married (1% in Malta, 4% in Europe), are divorced or separated (1% in Malta, 4% in Europe), but they are equally widowed (8%) or single (21% in Malta, 23% in Europe).

The greatest majority of respondents in Malta (93%) but fewer in western Europe generally (76%) do not agree with the statement that "marriage is an outdated institution". More respondents in western Europe (17%) than in Malta (5%) are of the opinion that marriage is an outdated institution.

Over the past decade there has been a shift in priorities from material concerns and the sharing of common qualities towards self-fulfillment and the development of one's personality in marriage. More importance is given to faithfulness, mutual respect and appreciation, understanding and tolerance and happy sexual relations and increasingly less to shared religious beliefs, children, same social background, tastes and interests in common, sharing households chores, an adequate income, good housing or agreement on politics. A considerable importance is still attached to living apart from in-laws, possibly because distance from the extended family is very important for the self-determination of newly constituted families. Such a shift signals a departure from conformity to traditional values of the family and a movement towards more intrinsic values.

Liberal sexuality

In the intervening years between the surveys there has been a considerable increase in the importance attached to sexuality. People feel more free to express their liberal views on sexuality.

The percentage who tend to agree with the statement that people should have complete sexual freedom without any restriction has doubled from 6% in 1991 to 12% in 1995. The recorded increase, however, is a shift from no answer questions to affirmative replies.

Sixteen percent approve for a woman who wants to have a child as a single parent without a stable relationship with a man. Fewer respondents in 1995 than in 1991 share the same sexual attitudes with their parents, but the greatest majority share sexual attitudes with their partner.

Maltese respondents have become slightly more permissive on sexual matters but still relatively very conservative by western European standards such as extra-marital affairs, divorce and homosexuality but have kept a very strict morality on prostitution, abortion and sex with minors. [Table 7]

Homosexuality and homosexuals

Over the years people in Malta have become more accepting of 'homosexuals', even if by Western European standards they remain highly censorial of 'homosexuality'. Respondents who would never justify 'homosexuality' has decreased from 75% in 1984 to 68% in 1995.

In 1995, 94% of Maltese respondents hold that homosexuals have rights as anybody else, and 82% say that they will not change their attitudes towards a friend whom they discover to be homosexual. However, 69% of respondents find homosexual tendencies in a partner as sufficient reason for disruption of a marriage. Those who do not want homosexuals as neighbours has remained just as strong (45% in 1991, 47% in 1995). The majority of respondents in 1995 (75%) much more than in 1991 (67%) are of the opinion that it is proper for the Churches to speak out on homosexuality, possibly to educate on the morality of homosexuality. The apparent incongruence between a relative high moral intolerance of homosexuality and the granting of rights to homosexuals may reflect the Catholic

distinction between homosexual activity and the homosexual person. Homosexual activity is always evil but Christians are required to show love and mercy towards homosexuals.

Separation and divorce

The shift towards individualised values in marriage has its counterpart in a greater vulnerability of relations within marriage. A situation where one of the partners is not satisfied with the quality of the relationship can easily lead to a marriage breakdown. Over the past decade there has been an increase in the percentage of Maltese respondents who find sufficient reasons for the breakdown of a marriage union.

In 1995, the Maltese Values Study asked respondents whether, in principle, they are in favour of divorce. Only 16% of respondents in Malta are favourable to divorce, 56.5% are totally against, whereas 27.5% think that it depends on the circumstances. [Table 8]

Maltese respondents find sufficient reasons for the breakdown of a marriage union when either partner is violent, in the case of a partner having homosexual tendencies and when either partner is consistently unfaithful. Less weight is given to other indications such as when either partner has ceased to love the other, problems of alcohol, unsatisfactory sexual relationship or when their personalities do not match and much less when they cannot have children, when either partner is ill for a long time, when they are financially broke, or when they cannot get on with each other's relatives.

Against abortion

In principle, the greatest majority of Maltese respondents are against abortion (87%); only the very few are in favour (1.3%) or think that it depends on the circumstances (11.5%). The latter would approve abortion when the mother's health is at risk by the pregnancy (96%), but not so much 'where it is likely that the child would be born physically handicapped' (37%), when 'the woman is not married' (20%), and least of all 'where a married couple do not want to have more children' (6%).

Change in gender stereotypes

Over the past decade there has been a gradual shift in culture concerning the role of women in the family and society. The belief amongst most respondents in Malta that a woman needs to have children in order to be fulfilled, has been radically changed from 69% in 1984 to 53% in 1991 and 38% in 1995. The situation has been reversed, as the majority of respondents in Malta (61%) now think that a woman can be fulfilled independently of whether she is a mother or not.

In the intervening four years between the two Maltese Values Studies in the nineties, there has been a marked decline in the percentage of respondents who strongly agree with traditional gender stereotypes, though on other gender issues there has been a backlash. Respondents who strongly agree that 'being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay' has dropped by seventeen percent from 37% in 1991 to 20% in 1995 approaching the 16% European average. Fewer respondents strongly agree that 'a job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children' (26% in 1991, 19% in 1995, 15% the average in western Europe), or that 'a pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works' (52% in 1991, 43% in 1995, in contrast to 19% for the average in western Europe). At the same time, however, fewer respondents strongly agree that 'a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work' (16% in 1991, 8% in 1995, in contrast to 27% in western Europe), that both 'husband and wife should contribute to household income' (24% in 1991, 4% in 1995, in contrast to 25% in Western Europe), or that 'having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person' (9% in 1991, 8% in 1995, in contrast to 22% in Western Europe).

The weakening of traditional gender stereotypes would not have been achieved without the introduction of policy measures for the advancement of women in society. Much remains to be done, however, through the implementation of new women-friendly social policies for the promotion of equal opportunities and to counter those negative side-effects that a policy of gender equality can have on the upbringing of children in the family.

Irrespective of the changing roles of men and women in society, respondents in Malta were constantly of the opinion that a child needs both father and mother to grow up happily (93% in 1984, 91% in 1991 and 93% in 1995).

Relative to other western European countries, the Maltese have retained very close family ties, with high demands for reciprocal care between generations. In fact, the greatest majority of Maltese respondents did not change much in their opinion that one must always love and respect parents regardless of their qualities and faults (89% in 1984, 88% in 1991 and 1995, compared to 69% for the average in Western Europe) and that parents' duty is to do their best for their children even at the expense of their own well being (87% in 1984, 90% in 1991 and 84% in 1995, compared to 69% for the average in Western Europe). The slight increase in the percentage of the Maltese holding that parents have a life of their own and should not be asked to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of their children (6% in 1984 and 1991, 11% in 1995, compared to 19% for the average in Western Europe), suggests a gradual shift towards more individualised family values.

Self-reliance and creativity

The shift towards more individualised family values is best seen in the changing priorities for the education of future generations. In the value priorities that children are encouraged to learn at home, Maltese respondents retain the predominantly traditional qualities such as good manners, obedience, religious faith, thrift, saving money and things and to a lesser extent hardwork but give greater importance to the post-traditional values of responsibility, tolerance and respect of others, independence, determination, unselfishness and imagination. Whereas traditional qualities favour conformity to external authority in the enterprise society, post-traditional values promote a sense of self-reliance and creativity for the information society of the future.

Work Ethic and enterprise culture

The work ethic of the Maltese has retained a strong materialist and pleasantness component, but has seen a considerable weakening of the dimensions of personal and social development. Great importance is given to good pay, pleasant people to work with, a job that meets one's abilities and an interesting job. Over the past decade there has been a gradual decline in the importance attached to the values of job responsibility, achievement, usefulness for society and opportunity to use initiative. Similar decline, however, could be observed for utilitarian qualities such as, generous holidays, job security, not much pressure, good chances for promotion,

a respectable job and good hours. Possibly, most respondents in Malta have become very pragmatic, in that they are willing to sacrifice the developmental qualities of work for higher economic returns.

The pragmatic character of the work ethic in contemporary Maltese society is evident in respondents' greater preponderance to hold that they enjoy work without letting it interfere with the rest of their lives (from 15% in 1991 to 40% in 1995; in comparison to 31% in Western Europe), over and above professional commitment to work regardless of pay (17% in 1991, 22% in 1995; 37% the average in Western Europe) or business-like concerns where job input is directly related to payment (17% in 1991, 11% in 1995; 8% the average in Western Europe).

Most respondents are somehow satisfied with the financial situation of their household (72% scoring '5, 6, 7 or 8' on a 10-point scale), though there has been a decrease in the percentage of respondents reporting high satisfaction (37% in 1991, 20% in 1995 scoring '9' or '10' on a 10-point scale) and a slight increase in the number of those who are very dissatisfied (2% in 1991, 4% in 1995 scoring '1' or '2' on a 10-point scale). Fewer respondents think that their financial position will get a lot better over the next twelve months (2% in 1995, 6% in 1991), the majority are of the opinion that it will stay the same (57% in 1995, 45% in 1991).

The culture of private enterprise and free-market, so much rampant in Malta in the early nineties is giving way to a more tempered participative enterprise, requiring some form of control. In fact, there has been a considerable drop in the percentage of respondents claiming that 'there should be greater incentives for individual effort' (70% in 1991 to 56% in 1995, scoring 8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale), that 'private ownership of business should be increased' (48% in 1991 to 33% in 1995, scoring 1, 2 or 3 on a 10-point scale), that 'wealth can grow so there is enough for everyone' (48% in 1991 to 37% in 1995, scoring 8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale), that 'individuals should take more responsibility for providing for themselves' (30% in 1991 to 22% in 1995, scoring 1, 2 or 3 on a 10-point scale), that 'competition is good because it stimulates people to work hard and develop ideas' (53% in 1991 to 39% in 1995, scoring 1, 2 or 3 on a 10-point scale), or that 'in the long run, hard work usually brings success' (51% in 1991 to 38% in 1995, scoring 1, 2 or 3 on a 10-point scale).

People in Malta have come to favour middle-ground positions between free reign given to individual freedom and the complete regulation by the State. Such

value options encourage joint projects of participative enterprise between State, industry and private individuals.

Politics

The politicisation and political polarisation of Maltese society during the first half of the eighties has given way to more discrete involvement and mitigated interest in politics. Frequent discussion of political matters (17% in 1984, 8% in 1991, 7% in 1995) has shifted towards occasional discussion (37% in 1984, 45% in 1991, 55 in 1995).

In the nineties the majority of respondents in Malta show little (63% in 1991, 69% in 1995) or no (20% in 1991 and in 1995) interest in politics. Only the few (14% in 1991, 12% in 1995) are very interested in politics. At the same time, people in Malta who hold strong opinions are more likely to exercise their persuasion skills with relatives, friends and fellow workers (55% in 1995, 48% in 1991, 37% in 1984). [Table 10]

Over the past decade, there has been a slight decline in the number of respondents taking part in political meetings (41% in 1991, 37% in 1995), but an increase in people signing a petition (15% in 1984, 30% in 1991, 37% in 1995) and attending lawful demonstrations (10% in 1984, 16% in 1991, 22% in 1995), but not in more radical political action such as joining in boycotts (10% in 1984, 13% in 1991, 11% in 1995), unofficial strikes (4% in 1984, 6% in 1991, 6% in 1995) or occupying buildings or factories (1% in 1984, 2% in 1991, 0.5% in 1995). Possibly political passion is giving way to more social concern. [Table 11]

The average score on a ten point left-right political scale for respondents in Malta slightly favours the political right, even though over the past four years it has undergone a minor shift towards the left (from 6.4 in 1991 to 5.76 in 1995). In 1995, the political allegiance of the majority of respondents in Malta is found to be right of centre.

People are more in favour for society to be gradually improved (57% in 1984, 56% in 1991, 65% in 1995) rather than to be changed through radical revolution (12% in 1991, 7% in 1995) or the strong defence against all subversive forces (23% in 1984, 17% in 1991, 23% in 1995).

There has been an increase over the past few years in the number of respondents who agree completely that 'political reform in Malta is moving too rapidly' (16% in 1991, 49% in 1995), and that they are unable to do anything if an unjust law were passed by government (20% in 1991, 43% in 1995). Quite a few Maltese respondents think that the country's economic system needs fundamental changes (23% in 1991, 26% in 1995) and still fewer think that we are more likely to have a healthy economy if the government allows for more individual freedom (8% in 1991, 12% in 1995). Generally, Maltese respondents are satisfied with the performance of the economy and the freedom allotted for individual enterprise. In their greatest majority, however, respondents in Malta are very much in favour that the government should be made more open to the public (43% in 1991, 69% in 1995). [Table 12]

Political agenda for the next ten years

In the mid-nineties, in their political agenda for the next ten years, respondents in Malta give top priority, much more than in earlier surveys, to the fight against crime (35% in 1991; 49% in 1995) and the fight against rising prices (26% in 1991; 38% in 1995). Other material concerns, on Inglehart's battery of questions, such as maintaining a high level of economic growth (51% in 1991, 34% in 1995), maintaining order in the nation (46% in 1991; 31% in 1995), economic stability (40% in 1991; 28% in 1995) and a better infrastructure (15% - asked only in 1995) also have a priority but their importance is less pronounced than in the early nineties. These priorities, however, are not exclusive of post-material concerns such as more participation in jobs and communities (27% in 1991, 30% in 1995), participation in government decisions (13% in 1991, 22% in 1995), making cities and countryside more beautiful (9% in 1991, 13% in 1995), progress towards a less impersonal and more humane society (9% in 1991, 14% in 1995), and protection of freedom of speech (10% in 1991, 9% in 1995).

Higher environmental concern but lower commitment

In the intervening years between the two Maltese values surveys in the nineties, there has been an increase in the concern over the degradation of the environment, but a lesser personal commitment to combat pollution. In the mid-nineties considerably more Maltese respondents do not agree (67% in 1995, 42% in 1991)

with the statement that 'protecting the environment and fighting pollution is less urgent than often suggested'. More respondents have come to reject the view that to combat unemployment the country would have to accept environmental problems (47% in 1995, 31% in 1991). Nor do they think that 'the campaign against pollution makes people too anxious' (45% in 1995 and 1991). At the same time, however, an increasing number of respondents are unwilling to give part of their income for the prevention of environmental pollution (46% in 1995, 28% in 1991), which could include buying environment-friendly products. In fact, in the mid-nineties most respondents (61%), much higher than in 1991 (39%), do not favour an increase in taxes for the prevention of environmental pollution. Most have come to agree (37% in 1995, 15% in 1991) or strongly agree (29% in 1995, 15% in 1991) that the government has to reduce environmental pollution with no additional cost to the tax payer. Of course, a strategy for the protection of the environment would require a concerted effort of the government, producers and consumers. This would include timely legislation to regulate industrial activity, the development of social policies and administrative structures for its enforcement and implementation. Producers are to be held responsible for the control of waste and they should cover the costs incurred to repair the damage to the environment. Consumers are to be prepared to pay higher prices for environmental friendly products. They are to voice their claims for equal access to clean air, land and sea. [Table 13]

Conclusions

Comparative results from the third wave of the Maltese Values Study posit the rise of individualised values in Maltese society. This is most manifest amongst higher educated young professional adults who, in general, are dissatisfied with the teachings of the Church, have less trust in social institutions, favour a more permissive and individualised morality and give priority to post-traditional values of independence, responsibility, imagination, tolerance and perseverance for the education of future generations.

Although the ritual practice of religion has by western European standards remained relatively high there has been a marked erosion of religious identity and a decline in the social significance of the teaching authority of the Church.

There is an apparent incongruence between the marked decline of confidence in the Church and its teachings, a continuing satisfaction with its spiritual guidance,

and an increasing expectation for the Church to speak out on controversial social issues but not to interfere in government policy. Such ambivalence could have various meanings. In a democratic society, the Church and all Churches, at that, have an equal right to teach even if people at large may disagree with the contents or pay lip service to pronouncements. On the one hand, some people could be so much dissatisfied with the present teachings that they want a concerted effort for more relevant guidance on social issues. On the other hand, others could be so much at a loss in a rapidly changing society that they want clear guidelines from their Church.

The process of secularisation in a pluralistic environment favouring an individualised morality and spiritual discernment, requires from the Churches to develop, communicate and evaluate the application of moral principles to changed circumstances and to diverse situations such that informed decisions are taken by responsible, autonomous individuals and the competent constituted bodies or authorities in society.

In the mid-nineties, respondents in Malta have retained a predominantly materialist orientation, with an improved awareness of post-materialist values. There has been an increase in the concern over the degradation of the environment, but a lesser personal commitment to combat its consequences. Just as in other areas of social life, there is a widespread attitude of non-commitment that needs to be countered by an education for a greater sense of responsibility. This would require scientific research for the identification of the causes and consequences of environmental degradation, the diffusion of information about the complexity of the issues, participation in moral reasoning, and the engagement of administrative skills such that resources are economically employed in the management of the environment. The emerging enterprise and information society should have a moral obligation towards the future. Social development needs to be accompanied by a commitment to environmental protection, social justice and post-materialist values.

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Table 1 Order of priorities

	Malta		Europe
	1991	1995	1990
very important in life:	%	%	%
Family	94	95	81
Work	80	75	53
Religion	70	72	21
Leisure	47	60	36
Friends	29	32	43
Politics	12	16	7

Source: Maltese and European Values Studies, 1984-1995.

Table 2 Dislike to be with others of different values, ideas and beliefs in Malta

	1984	1991	1995
	%	%	%
very much	20	11	6
quite a lot	10	4	6
not very much	21	25	23
not at all	44	54	65

Source: Maltese Values Studies, 1984-1995.

Table 3 Social intolerance in Malta

	%	%
Do not want to have as neighbours:	1991	1995
people with a criminal record	78	74
heavy drinkers	62	64
the emotionally unstable	35	37
people with AIDS	47	46
drug addicts	66	70
homosexuals	45	47
Jews	9	20
Hindus	9	21
Muslims	15	28
tourists	4	19
members of minority religious sects or cults	19	33
people of a different race	11	21
immigrants or foreign workers	10	15

Source: Maltese Values Studies 1991, 1995.

Table 4 Confidence in the Church

	Malta		Europe	
	1984	1991	1995	1990
	%	%	%	%
A great deal	67	54	46	20
Quite a lot	16	28	36	31
Not very much	11	14	14	32
Not a lot	3	3	4	16

Source: Maltese and European Values Studies 1984-1995.

Table 5 Confidence in social institutions

	% a great deal	% quite a lot	% not very much	% none at all
Church	46	36	14	4
Health services	33	48	14	5
Press	2	19	56	22
Broadcasting	4	24	56	15
Parliament	8	30	45	16
Politicians	4	26	47	23

Source: Maltese Values Study, 1995.

Table 6. Relevance of Church teaching in Malta

	% 1991	% 1995
Church is giving adequate answers on:		
Spiritual needs	87	86
Problems of family life	79	61
Moral problems and needs of the individual	70	51
Social problems facing the country	68	39

Source: Maltese Values Study 1991, 1995.

Table 7 Sexual non-permissiveness

	Malta	Europe	
	1991	1995	1990
*never justified:	%	%	%
extra-marital affairs	93	89	50
sex with minors	91	91	50
prostitution	91	92	46
abortion	83	91	24
divorce	72	65	16
homosexuality	73	68	40

Source: Maltese and European Values Studies 1984-1995.

*Score '1' on a 10-point justification scale, where '1' is 'never' and '10' 'always justified'.

Table 8 In principle favour divorce, in Malta

	%
favour divorce in principle	16.0
totally against divorce	56.5
depends on the circumstances	27.5

Source: Maltese Values Study 1995.

Table 9 Important qualities in a job

	%	%	%
	1984	1991	1995
Good pay	78	80	76
Pleasant people to work with	75	58	47
A job that meets one's abilities	76	69	46
A job that is interesting	74	52	45
Good hours	63	48	29
A job respected by people in general	58	44	25
Good chances for promotion	49	41	22
Not too much pressure	55	44	21
An opportunity to use initiative	48	38	19
Good job security	57	42	18
A job you feel you can achieve something	48	37	17
A responsible job	34	39	16
A useful job for society	52	38	16
Meeting people	48	33	15
Generous holidays	30	26	7

Source: Maltese Values Studies 1984-1995.

Table 10 Interest in politics in Malta

	%	%	%
	1984	1991	1995
Very interested	9	14	12
Somewhat interested	30	22	29
Not very interested	28	41	39
Not at all interested	30	20	20
Don't know	3	3	0

Source: Maltese Values Studies 1984-1995.

Table 11 Political activity in Malta

	% 1984	% 1991	% 1995
<i>percent have done:</i>			
Signing a petition	15	30	37
Joining in boycotts	10	13	11
Attending lawful demonstrations	10	16	22
Joining unofficial strikes	4	6	6
Occupying buildings or factories	1	2	0.5
Taking part in meetings	n/a	41	37

Source: Maltese Values Studies 1984-1995. n/a = not asked.

Table 12 Social and political attitudes in Malta

	% 1984	% 1991	% 1995
The entire way our society is organized			
must be radically changed by revolutionary action	1	12	7
Our society must be gradually improved by reforms	57	56	65
Our present society must be valiantly defended			
against all subversive forces	24	17	23
Don't know	18	15	5

Source: Maltese Values Studies 1984-1995.

Table 13 Attitudes towards environmental pollution in Malta

	% 1991	% 1995
<i>Strongly agree with the statement:</i>		
I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution	33	8
I would agree to an increase in taxes if the extra money is used to prevent environmental pollution	26	5
The Government has to reduce environmental pollution but it should not cost me any money	31	29
All the talk about pollution makes people too anxious	15	10
If we want to combat unemployment in this country, we shall just have to accept environmental problems	13	3
Protecting the environment and fighting pollution is less urgent than often suggested	16	3

Source: Maltese Values Studies 1991, 1995.

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

UNITY AND PEACE: Mutual Understanding between Religions as Utopia

Guido Vergaunwen

"Ah! What a great fortune it would be if... we could all - every man on earth - be under one religion and belief, so that there would be no more rancour or ill-will among men who hate each other because of diversity and contrariness of beliefs and of sects! And just as there is only one God, Father, Creator, and Lord of everything that exists, so all peoples could unite and become one people, and that people be on the path of salvation, under one faith and one religion, giving glory and praise to our Lord God.

Think gentlemen, of the harm that comes from men not belonging to a single Religion..."

The ideas of a dreamer, the opinion of a fool, who formulated them around 1270 in a book called *The Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men*. He was the Catalan poet, philosopher and theologian, Raymond Lull. Contemporary and subsequent writers thought about him in the less than glorious titles mentioned above. "A Utopist, an adventurer, a pilgrim between two cultures, who dreamt of leading to union the different peoples of the world through recognition of the one single God... A poet of the impossible, whose life history fades in legend." He is said to have died in 1316 as an 83 year old man while he was crossing over to Mallorca, his native city after a missionary journey in Tunisia where the Moslems had stoned him and drove him away. Within the Franciscan Order, Raymond, who remained a layman throughout his life, is venerated as a saint.

"O God, you are almighty and invisible to those whom you want you can show yourself as you would like to be conceived. Be merciful and show your face to all nations so that they will be saved and redeemed. If in your generosity you are willing to do so, then the sword, envy and hate and all evil would give way. All would acknowledge that there is only one religion in the multiplicity of practices and customs. To be sure, one cannot do away with all this diversity of practices and customs but in the same way that you are only one God there should at least be only a single religion and one single cult for God's worship."

This solemn petition is spoken in heaven by none other than an archangel: he brings this prayer before God's throne to express the laments of those who suffer under religious wars. On earth it is 1453, the year when Constantinople was captured by the Turkish Sultan. Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, Church politician, Coran scholar, ecumenist *avant la lettre*, influential theologian in the efforts for reunion at the Councils of Basel and Florence, makes the Utopia of peace and faith the subject of a work with this name. It is the optimistic vision of a pragmatic who believes in the power of dialogue and in the real Utopia. He seeks to find a common understanding in what constitutes the essence without illuding himself that the eternal peace between religions which is being made in heaven shall in fact be realized in Jerusalem, the common centre for all.

"Now go. My advice is that you take the matter fully as it comes. Everyone of you got his ring from his father: let everyone confidently believe his ring is the the genuine one. It is possible that the father could no longer suffer the tyranny of *one single* ring in his house.

And it is certain that he loved all three of you and loved you equally. In that he did not want to oppress two of you to favour a third. Come on!

Let each one of you emulate his pure indiscriminatory love. Let each one of you strive in competition to bring to light the power of the stone in his ring.

Let this power come to help
with gentleness, with heartfelt, tolerant disposition,
with kindness and inner submissiveness of God."

This is the Parable of the Rings in *Nathan der Weise*, by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. He was the son of a pastor, a critical, enlightened lover of theology, a dramatist and learned librarian at Wolfenbüttel. For him an understanding and thus even peace between the three revealed religions is only possible if each religion renounces its claim to absolutism. Beyond all the current doctrinal differences, all religions are confronted in daily life with the same task: to safeguard in practice trust in God and love of neighbour. Within their specific individuality religions are possibilities used by God to educate men to the true humanity. The Utopia of tolerance directed by reason takes religions at their word: it appeals to their power on favour for peace and specifically against the brutalities that have often been committed in God's name or under that of religion.

Three personalities, three epochs but clearly the same Utopia of an

understanding between the religions, namely Jewish, Christian and Moslem, even if argued from different philosophical and theological standpoints. Three literary witnesses who can be shown to be related together in a chronological order. This is an Utopia of unity and peace formulated in terms with different objectives. Its content, however, due to the conflicts and opposition of the three above mentioned religions, has been refuted 1000 times up to the present day.

It is not my task to describe this dystopia of violence and domination, about fear and destruction. We all know it even if we would like very much to forget it. Moreover, the lives and works of the three above-mentioned authors have been thoroughly examined into the minutes details by specialists in the history of philosophy, theology and literature. In this regard I would be contributing nothing new in this lecture.

But I am fascinated by the fact that in European cultural history, in Western thought, in spite of all conflicts the Utopia of the understanding between these three religions existed and was formulated. This Utopia is in its historical witness very much like a dangerous reminder which should not leave fundamental theologians in peace in view of the way Christian Theology sees itself and in connection with an appropriate evaluation of the possible service towards salvation offered by the other religions. This memory should be brought into the future understanding of Christian Theology. It would have to be a Theology:

- that can still be honestly justified even after Auschwitz, the war against Iraq and in the ex-Yugoslavia; that lives from the utopian power which is present in suffering that is not suppressed but shared in solidarity; but above all in grief for the loss of peace for which we too are to blame;

- that dares call back to memory the forgotten hopes of those who historically were defeated, and persists in narrating how things could be differently;

- that endures the tension between universality of the claims of reason and the acceptance of others in their distinctiveness and let it become fruitful in justice, peace and the preservation of the environment.

Let us see, in view of these challenges to Theology today, what we can learn from the witnesses of the past.

1.1 *"... Until we can agree how best we can honour and serve each other, so that we can arrive at a mutual understanding".*

Utopia; no place; nowhere, that which we do not already know and that which stands before us as a task and duty still to be carried out; a dream and a tool for action at the same time; planned change on the one hand, and hope that reaches into the unprecedented on the other; a journey into the unknown, negation of what is at hand and positive projection of what has already been sighted; an end followed persistently with the reservation that to err is human and that only God can bring to perfection our fumbling human attempts.

These connotations that for me arise in the concept of Utopia characterize at the same time the agitated biography of Raymond Lull. In her book *La parole risquée de Raymond Lulle. Entre le judaïsme, le christianisme et l'Islam* published in 1993, Dominique de Courcelles calls Lull "le penseur de l'étrangeté," the thinker of "being-a-foreigner", for whom the truth can come to light only in the exchanges of dialogue, in the meeting of the different view-points. Lull seeks that which divides, the interval, in which the other has the possibility to be and to breath.

In 1232 when Raymond Lull was born in Mallorca, that island had barely four years been conquered by the army of James I, King of Aragon and Castille from Moslem power. A third of the population however remained Moslem and spoke Arabic. Communication with North Africa through sea and commerce were intensely fostered. The smaller group of Jews had an important role through its influence in commercial life. So Lull grew up in an environment where the Iberian peninsula had the three revealed, monotheistic religions living together in a tense relationship.

Raymond had the office of senescalcus mensae, the budget controller at the court of the later King James I of Mallorca. Later, in a sort of autobiography that as an octogenarian he dictated to his friends, he reports the event of 1263 that gave his life a new direction. He says that the Crucified Christ appeared to him five times. He leaves his wife and children to dedicate himself entirely to missionary activity. He considers as his divine mandate the foundation of schools where future missionaries were to be trained in languages and in writing of a book in which he describes a system of thinking and an effective method for the conversion of the infidels to the Christian faith. Over the decades Raymond develops his *Ars Magna*. This is his book about the great art of discovering the truth that is based on a few principles, common to the three religions, and that have as their central point is the access to God through reflection on his name and attributes. On these foundations Lull then tries to lead his partner in the conversation to the mysteries peculiar to Christianity: the Trinity and the Incarnation.

The saintly Dominican scholar, Raymond of Pennafort, the third Master General of the Order, and a respected canonist, gave him the advice to study not in Paris, the centre of scholastic theology, but in Mallorca, at the periphery, in close contact with Arabs and Jews. So he learnt Arabic and a little Latin. He did not become a Scholastic as so many others, but an original thinker whose literary compositions give prominent importance to the language of the people, the Catalan dialect.

Raymond Lull lived in Mallorca - where he founded a first missionary convent - and in Montpellier. From here he embarked on intensive preaching and travelling. Most of all he wanted to convince the Papal Curia about the necessity of Missionary convents and language teaching for prospective missionaries; but without much success. In Paris, where he went to present his *Ars*, his teaching method, he found no understanding.

After a severe physical and spiritual crisis, he travelled in 1293 for the first time to Tunis. There he engaged himself in missionary dialogue with the Moslems. The result: a peremptory expulsion order. Once again Raymond tried his luck in the scholarly milieu of Paris. There he was met with ridicule; demoralised he travelled further. In his mystical writings, *The Tree of Philosophy of Love* Lull wrote the following, no doubt thinking of his own personal experiences:

“The friend travels to far-away countries, and tells the people to understand and love the immense goodness of his Beloved. But the people do not listen. They make fun of him and reproach him for what he does out of love. His heart sighs, he cries, because the friend can only do that which is dictated by Love.”

Raymond wrote numerous books, wherein he unfolded in conversations with Islam and Judaism the central tenets of Christianity. Here he is very careful to put reason in the forefront as the unifying factor. His position is the following: *Faith can be true or mistaken. Reason on the contrary is always true.* In other words it is not enough to believe to be sure that you possess the truth. In religious conversations the truth should be capable of being confirmed by reason. In the same line of thought Lull repeats: *The infidels do not care about the affirmations of the believers but exclusively about the grounds they bring from reason.* They say: *We do not want to change one faith for another but we would be willing to exchange belief with understanding.*

Such statements put Raymond Lull on a different plane from that of the apologetical efforts of the Dominican missionaries of his time. A case in point would be that Raymond Martí, who wrote in 1278 *Pugio fidei contra Judeos* wherein he demonstrated his knowledge of the Hebrew language, the Torah, the Mishnah and the Talmud. This method was able to bring about surprise effects on one hand but it provoked endless discussions over the texts. Lull prefers to encounter his partner with rational arguments and explain the tenets of faith with convincing arguments from reason. This is the continuation of the *fides qarens intellectum* of St. Anselm of Canterbury. Faith and Reason do not exclude each other; in its reciprocal intertwining faith gives the decisive impulse to thought; but thinking leads the man searching for God back to faith.

Perhaps with a reference to a position of Martí, Lull often relates the story of a missionary who was able to convince the King of Tunis of the errors of Islam. But he did not succeed to convert the Sultan to the Christian faith. The Sultan asked the missionary to prove the truth of the Christian faith. The missionary replied that the Christian faith could not be proved. "Here you have the Credo in Arabic: Believe that." The Sultan answered to that saying "I am not ready to give up my faith for another (*credere pro credere*) but I would be ready to give up my faith for understanding" (*Credere pro intelligere*). Then the Sultan reproaches the missionary that he made a mistake. "*You have scorned the law that I had and then you are not able to bring conclusive proofs for your own. From now on I will remain without a law (that is you have taken away my faith and left me spiritually homeless).*" Then he expelled the missionary and his companions in disgrace from his kingdom.

The power of rational arguments with which Lull wanted to encounter the others and to go beyond the limits of the strict ecclesiastical and theological confines was demonstrated not only in books, religious discussions and novels. Lull's passion for truth instigated him to prove in practice what he had envisaged in theory. In 1307 at 75 years he set out for a second journey to North Africa. This time he was even stoned, condemned to prison, driven by his beard through the streets and locked up in the prison latrine. After his release and a shipwreck he arrived back in Montpellier. The Indian summer of his restless life ensues: a certain success in his two year teaching activity in Paris (1309 - 1311). During this time his confrontation with Averroism took place and the Council of Vienna, in which Lull took part. Here it was decided that teaching posts for Hebrew, Arabic and Syriac were to be erected in Paris, Oxford, Bologna and Salamanca. That fulfilled one of Lull's old wishes. But the fact that Lull also succeeded to have the property of the suppressed

order of Knights Templars transferred to the order of St. John in view of a prospective military intervention in the Holy Land certainly belongs to those incomprehensible contradictions of a life which wished to dedicate itself to peaceful dialogue. In 1314 he leaves for Tunis for a third time provided with the King's commendatory letters, hoping to convert the Sultan. As has already been said, only legend reports the circumstances of his death. Lull may have understood the following spiritual metaphor as a premonition of his own death.

Love is a storm driven sea without shores or harbours. The Friend drowns in the sea, along with his suffering. But his consumption rises up from the depths."

Now let us turn to his book *The Book of the Gentile and The Three Wise Man*. It is the first book that Lull wrote after his conversion and in it one sees the foundations of his later literary activity. Lull is interested in bringing about the opening out to the other in dialogue.

Four factors play a role in this process:

1. Lull does not base himself on arguments that are taken from texts or any authority. He prefers statements on which the three religions are in agreement. These are certain attributes of the one God, a world vision taken over from Greek philosophy, and the corresponding categories of understanding.

2. Lull does not attack the religion of the other partner. He seeks to present the truth of his standpoint positively and without emotional surcharge.

3. Moreover it is not Lull's concern to defend the truth of the Catholic religion against possible attacks. The best proof of its truth is to be conveyed through the inner consistency of the Christian faith, especially the teaching about the Trinity and the Incarnation.

4. As Lull was conscious of the global religious situation of his times he concentrated primarily on the political military and spiritually strongest rival, i.e., Islam. In contrast to his contemporaries Lull does not show any sentiments of hate or suspicion vis-à-vis the Jews, who were then an oppressed minority.

Through these four aspects of the fundamental dialogical attitude Lull creates the conditions for the ideal communication in religious discussion. The participants have equal rights to expose their points of view, without constraint, freely and without fear of sanctions if they deviate from the official standpoints. It is in this way that the book *The Book of the Gentile and Three Wise Men* is composed.

1.2 Three learned men - a Christian, a Jew and a Moslem meet at the gates of a city to find a quiet place where they can discuss theological matters. One may say: they meet in Utopia, in a place outside, in an imaginary world, the opposite of that world, the opposite of that world where prison, persecution and poverty reign. A Gentile joins their company. *"He was a learned philosopher. Already old he was reflecting on death and on the happiness of this world. This pagan did not know anything about God and did not believe in the resurrection. He thought that everything ends with death."* His inability to answer these final questions filled him with great sadness. This set him on the way to seek the non-place where he could find an answer. Lull depicts this place as a wonderful forest. *"As the Gentile arrived in the big forest he saw fountains, rivulets and meadows. Many different birds were singing on the trees. There were deer, stags, gazelles, hares, rabbits and other animals that delighted the eye. The trees were in full blossom or laden with fruit. They were of many different types and full of fragrance."*

The beauty of the forest, however, increases the sadness of the Gentile, because he finds no answer. He wanders from place to place like a lost soul until he comes to a very wonderful path. He decides *'to follow it till the end of his misery.'* Here he will meet the three wise men, who peacefully are talking to one another. Each talked about this faith and about the science he taught to his students. Walking together refreshed their spirits, tired from study. They arrived at a lovely meadow, where a spring watered olive trees. There they meet a lady - Intelligence. She personifies that which has the power to unite the wise men together in spite of their religious differences. Their dependence on Divine Revelation which enlightens man on the attributes of God on true virtuous behaviour and on his calling to happiness, this recognition which unites all religions, has the power to set the world in motion towards a real Utopia. It unites mankind under the one true law of God, gives their actions the quality of justice, gives comfort to the oppressed and help to the suffering. In this way the three Wise Men could greet the Gentile wandering astray in the forest with the same words, that is with the same common faith: "May the God of Glory, the Father and the Lord of all there is, the Creator of the World who will raise up from the dead the good and the evil, protect you and set you free from your suffering." In the conversation that follows the Wise Men explain to the Gentile their common faith that God is good, great, eternal, almighty, wise, perfect and loving. They speak to him about the resurrection. Finally the Gentile is free from his anxieties and praises God. He asks the Wise Men to win over his fellow countrymen to the faith, to their God. But now it turns out that the Wise Men do not agree in matters that relate to questions of faith and morals. "Who had the best

law?" asks the Gentile and asks them to explain to him their ways-of-faith. They agree to explain their viewpoint, one after the other, each without any interruption from the others. The Gentile should then himself decide which of the three religions is the true one.

The Jew begins. He has the oldest Law. After a prayer and continually recalling the history of deprivation, suffering and persecutions that his people were exposed to, the Jew sets out eight articles of the Jewish faith: the Unity of God, the Creation, the Commandments given to Moses, the freedom that will come when the Messiah arrives, the Resurrection, the Last Judgement, Heaven and Hell. The Christian follows, says a prayer and set out his confession of faith: he puts the emphasis on the Trinitarian God, the Creator and the Redeemer who brings the world to perfection as well as on the humanity of Christ. On these two points the Christian position on God's Pefection surpasses that of the Jews and Moslems. This is the main thrust of the Christian exposè. It is the Moslem's turn. After a prayer and ritual washing he sets out to talk about the Unity of God and about Mohammed, the Prophet. For him the Coran is the most beautiful book that exists or could exist. It is the Word of God, dictated by God himself to the Prophet, a simple, uneducated layman. In an extremely concrete way the Moslem describes the pleasures of heaven.

Once again the Gentile thanks the God of Love, whose goodness, might and wisdom he has come to know. He is thankful for Faith, which has driven away the darkness of his thoughts, for Hope that has become his friend, and for the richness of Love, which he can now give to his neighbour. His new knowledge shows its power in the new way in which he behaves towards his fellow men. He wants to become a missionary himself, leave everything behind him, suffer deprivations, wander from one country to another to make known God's Perfection. There is fixed abode in the vision of the utopian world: the reciprocal understanding between religions is a hard way through a world that has not yet become an Oikumene, a common house for all. In Lull's vision all those who set themselves to work for faith in one God and the ethical responsibility for the just world shall meet with hunger, thirst, heat, cold, poverty, fatigue, loss of country and break-up of relationships.

It is now surprising that Lull does not betray which religion the Gentile has chosen as his way to truth. The Wise Men do not want to know his choice, "so that each one of them could believe that the Gentile has chosen his religion. And most of all because this is now a theme for disputation between us, so that using our Reason and our sound Common Sense, we shall seek to find out which religion you

shall prefer. For if you were to tell us which religion you have preferred, we would have neither such a good theme for discussion nor such a good inducement to inquiring after the truth." The quest for the truth is then to go on, none of them is to claim for himself the whole truth. The common faith in one God should be a motive for them to love and help each other, to stop all warfare, and stop killing each other in the name of religion. The Wise Men leave their Non-Place and return to the city. They bid each other farewell in a cordial and friendly manner. "Each asked forgiveness in case he had said something offensive to the other's religion. All of them forgave one another. They now want to meet daily and continue their conversation till "all three of us confess one faith and one religion, till we agree about this and reach a single understanding. Because it is war, hardship, jealousy, injustice and dishonour that hinder men from uniting in one single faith." After that they would go all over the world to praise and glorify the Name of God, our Lord. Lull concludes: "The three Wise Men went back home and kept their word regarding that which they had promised."

1.3 The utopian picture of a peaceful co-existence and of striving together for a consensus presuppose the fact that no one of the dialogue partners is restrained from expressing his opinions. Dialogue is founded on listening reciprocally, it accepts the difference in the other, and the expression of his opinions. Through this a space for ethical behaviour is created; that is, to be sure, not identical with the will to put all views on the same plane. Total coincidence excludes propinquity to the other. Hence it makes sense that the choice of the Pagan remains unknown and the questioning remains open.

In this way, does not the Gentile become, by means of his questioning and listening the teacher of the three Wise Men? In the open ended dialogue, the truth does not force itself, still less is the other constrained with force: it remains an appeal to the free man's responsibility, to his spiritual alertness and to his never-ending questioning. Not by coincidence did Lull write at the end of his book that he had written it to "*enlighten saddened souls and to wake up the sleeping eminent.*" Truth is enlightenment and challenge, light and judgment, all at once. In the multiplicity of its way of expression it contradicts the totalitarian claims of a way of articulation and interpretation which considers itself the only one possible. In Lull's opinion religion would become ideology, wherever, in its name, the study of Logic and Science is forbidden or where the multiplicity of opinions is suppressed. Moreover religion should not be misused for the establishment of power structures or for the justification of violence and intolerance.

The Utopia of mutual understanding does not leave space for a victory of the opinion of one over the ideas of another. At the end of the way that the three Wise Men want to follow together there is no victory for knowledge but the reciprocal responsibility and the will to bring together harmoniously the knowledge of God and the commitment in favour of justice and goodness - against the usual behaviour pattern of persecution, oppression and religious terror. The Utopia which Raymond Lull continuously redrafts while wandering between the worlds in the opposite of the world of certainties in which Theologians, Inquisitors, Popes and Kings sought for their own purposes to instrumentalise the truths of the religions. For Lull Utopia is the place for perceiving that which is different and that who is different - a place that is usually given no space in the systems of those who think that they possess the divine richness of God's attributes simply by the force of their theological definition. Contrary to all this, Lull emphasises the free play of God's Love and Goodness which permeates the created world and God's Incarnation. Hence man's answer to God's might is a free response in the form of Justice and Love of Neighbour. For Lull, the bond between knowledge of God and Ethics opened the way for dialogue between the religions; this led him also to enter into the depth of Religion: the loving perception of the other, who is the image of the beloved God.

"Speak, fool: What is Love?

He answered: Love

is harmony between knowledge and action
in the direction of an end
towards which the Friends' will strives
who would like to move to honour
and serve his Beloved."

The Friend designed and built a beautiful city
where his Beloved was to live.

He built it with Love and Remembrance
tears, laments and pains of ardent yearning,
he decorated it with joys
Devotion, Hope and gave it as protection
Faith, Justice, Wisdom, courage
and due proportion."

2 "... *That it is possible to construct eternal peace in religion*"

2.1 Recent sketches of Fundamental Theology recall that while the message of the Gospel does not contain a social-political programme, in the way of a Utopia it operates as social-political criticism. Utopias have therefore a prophetic role: they interpret reality in the light of hope of a better future and protest against the attitude that regards what has historically been achieved as final. In this sense the ecumenical programme of Nicholas of Cusa had a thoroughly prophetic power of an Utopia. His dialogue *De Pace Fidei*, Peace in Faith, to which I am restricting myself, is written on the same lines as those previously indicated by Lull. Already as a young student of Canon Law in Padua Nicholas had acquainted himself with the writings of Raymond Lull. Later as a cardinal he possessed a respectable number of Lull's handwritten works as well as numerous handwritten notes he had copied himself. The relationship between the two does not restrict itself to comparative religion - that interests us here - but extends itself to the theory of knowledge, theology, cosmology, christology and anthropology.

A lot distinguishes Nicholas as Cusa, the philosopher and church prince from Raymond Lull, the "vir phantasticus" of the 13th century; his geographical and social origins, the horizon of time and historical circumstances, life history and character. One fundamental thing, however, joins them together - and it changes the life history of each: their unremitting dedication and quest to find the truth to which corresponds the striving for unity in the sense of bringing together those who were separated from and in opposition to each other.

Nicholas presented his religious dialogue as a vision: a conversation that takes place in the "heavenly Council" which the author was permitted to observe deeply impressed by news of the horrors that were recently committed by the Turkish King in Constantinople.

As in Lull, religious wars, oppression, rivalry and the quest for material goods are designated at the very beginning as the grounds that keep mankind from seeking the hidden God. God had sent the prophets, who had set up cults and laws. But the long-practised customs were taken for the truth itself and then defended as such against others. An archangel asks God to make a revelation that what is being sought using this diversity of means is only the *one* divine truth and goodness. In order to make perpetual peace replace war between religions, he should show that there is only one religion under the multiplicity of rites. The difference should no

longer be a motive for war but serve to increase piety. At first God dismisses this prayer and reminds the Archangel that he had given men a free will so that they would live peacefully with each other and freely arrive at the truth. He had undertaken everything possible to help men in their orientation for the quest of truth. He had been so obliging towards them that the divine Word, the Divine Truth himself became man so that "nobody would doubt that man in his human nature could find the immortal nourishment of truth in the Incarnated Word according to the choice of his own free will."

Now the Incarnated Word begins to speak in the heavenly discussion, and in favour of mankind. He points out that the unstable relationships, the multiplicity of languages and interpretations make it difficult for men to find truth. The diversity in religions is thus to be examined in deliberation. The intention is to unify peacefully the diversity of religions into a single, sacrosanct religion through the common consensus of all men (*communi omnium hominum consensu*).

But this does not in any way mean that men should be forced to change their religion of origin with another! The "una religio" consists of that which each religion assumes in its essence. The philosophical assumption of the Cusanic argument is: unity has priority over multiplicity - the fundamental wisdom that is known in all religions and that is identical with the one God, the origin of everything.

Paul directs the next part of the discussion on religions. The theme is now the significance of the diversity of religious customs and rites: they are sensible and changing signs of the unchanging truth of faith. They should not be understood as deeds by which we attain justification. For it is only on the ground of faith, in which love operates, that all Abraham's posterity receives God's promised gifts.

This is followed by short sections on the Sacraments (especially Baptism and the Eucharist). The conclusion is: "... that the diversity in religions is to be found in the rites rather than in the adoration of the one God, who is assumed from the very beginning and who is revered in all religions. In a certain sense the whole exterior area of religion is relativised, which can be seen in an astonishing remark on circumcision. In the service of peace in faith, even something like a barter could take place: if other peoples would accept the faith of the Christians, the latter could take over certain non-Christian forms of religious practice. Nicholas gives an example the practice of circumcision! This generosity in tolerating different rites is counterbalanced by a strict adhering to the truth expressed in Christianity.

The dialogue with Greek, Roman and Arab philosophy concentrates at first on faith in one God. Later Indian religion came as the subject of the conversation and it is argued that the cult of so many gods presupposes the prior existence of one God. Hence even pictures of pagan gods can be tolerated in so far as they do not lead away from the cult and adoration of the one single God.

In the following chapters Christology is taken up under the chairmanship of St Peter. Christology arouses the greatest contravenes in the world. Hence Nicholas tries in chapters 11 and 12 of *De Pace Fidei* to open up a broad spectrum for understanding among his non-Christian partners regarding the reasoning behind the hypostatic union, the divine and human union in a single person". He seems to have especially the Muslim audience before his eyes because he connects certain expressions in the Koran regarding Christ that had been abridged in the Nestorian way in the line of the Dogma of Chalcedon. The hypostatic union is explicitly seen as a presupposition for the true relief in Christ as Redeemer and Saviour of all. "It is Christ who is presupposed by those who hope to arrive at eternal happiness." The Christological principle - the union of man and God realized in this concrete individual - is for Nicholas the fundamental essence of true religion and men's yearning for communion with God. Understood in this way the christological moment is not only presupposed in all religions; but also one person of the Word who became man is fulfilled, that is the string of all men towards eternal happiness.

2.2 The Utopia to set up peace through religion presents in Nicholas of Cusa a normative understanding of religion. Each religion pretends to be the way to God and each one should keep up this claim in practice. The central tenets of our religion - the monotheistic/trinitarian concept of God, the Christological dogma, the justification of men before God through faith - could only be maintained through the harmonious co-existence with other religions - *concordantia religionum*. This will reach perfection in a place like heaven where common sense hold sway - *in coelo rationis*. As the author himself confesses, he sees this Utopia "as when he is in a special spiritual/intellectual rapture" (*raptus ... ad quantam intellectualem altitudinem*). This intellectual vision makes it possible to find unity behind multiplicity, to set up a *facilis concordantia* among religions, which is a postulate for a long term peace. Concordance as an utopical concept comprehends here, as in the other theological and ecclesiological works of the Cardinal, "the combined efforts of all parts of a harmonious whole, the unity of different elements without any part standing in opposition to the others."

This intellectual Utopia presumes that man is capable to recognise the truth in others. This does not stop back Nicholas from adhering to the Christian revelation. It gave him also the possibility to see this truth as the reasonable basis for an understanding between religions. In the Christian religion this claim could be realized because at its centre lies the incarnated Son of God, the Mediator Jesus Christ. It's a different story from the other prophets because in his person he founded "a universal, unlimited community of believers in God." This religion lives through its christological centre, which in the multiplicity of religions seeks to be its profound truth and perfection. The utopic programme of Nicholas of Cusa does not in any way mean that he puts the contents of Christianity in question, through the multiplicity of other religious forms of expression. The Cardinal tries to assess other religions - particularly Judaism and Islam - from the Christian point of view. In this sense he tends to favour a theology of religions that qualifies other religions according to their scale of connections with the Christian truth.

How and who is to realize this "una religio"? The representatives of the three religions set a rendezvous in Jerusalem. Is this the earthly Jerusalem where historically the three met and struggled with each other, or is this the heavenly Jerusalem that is the final destination ardently desired by religious men? It can be both. Nicholas's ideal could mean a real Utopia or a regulative one, that could give wings to the idea of a peaceful meeting of religions right now, that could now be realized in a part but strives to its perfection later on. Peace in Faith could be also both the end and the way. It is in no way a matter of a "syncretism indifferent to the truth"; neither is it a "dialectic that falsely isolated recognized antitheses to build up a sort of lofty higher truths." It is rather the expectation that through dialogue and without physical or psychological constraints, the truth will enlighten men so that they, in spite of their cultures and religions, would arrive to a reasonable consensus. At the back of this project lies the theoretical reflection that unity is the ground behind the multiplicity of empirical manifestations, that this unity can only be expressed through multiplicity, differences and even contradictions. The intellect could see through these differences and contradictions and trace them back to an understandably unknown point of origin. As the many are contained in the one, so the many have the one as their reason. The real Utopia of Cusanus is the dream of unity in multiplicity and the legitimate multiple manifestations of the One. It is the dream that all men endowed with common sense in their search for truth and wisdom would strike for this One, God, who is the spring of life and love, the destination of our deepest desires.

2.3 The strong intellectual impact of argumentation in the foregoing two authors does not stop them from “defending the unlimited truth and the universal validity of a single religion *vis-à-vis* concurrent and diverging world views.” Moreover religions have only a part of the truth that is in the true religion; in other words they stand ordained towards it. This method of thinking however cannot be easily combined with the pressing situation of the Islamic progress and the cultural crisis that would have brought to Christianity. The Utopia of Unity and Peace was almost a counter picture that hard-pressed Christianity resorted to, in order to assert the universality of understanding Christian truth and religion in the ideological and political confrontation of that time.

Perhaps, for today’s sensibilities there are exactly the limits of the process set out by Lull and Nicholas of Cusa. The attempt to present the essence of one’s faith in otherness brings up an unconditional acceptance of the other. It is easy to form an impression of isolation; moreover this way of reflecting tends to assess the other by way of external and unimportant criteria while interpreting one’s own standpoint as the real substance.

One should also point out as positive the fact that both authors understood comparative religion in dialogue form. “Even if in their case this was overwhelmingly fictitious and imaginary, still it presents the expectation of a real meeting. It is carried on by the consciousness that through the dynamics of conversation more can be achieved than making up a list of counter prejudices.” That dialogue that at that time was fictitious is now possibly and could be held in a true conversation. Hence the Other is not just tolerated because we see that in him we can discover a part of our truth. His Otherness is an enrichment to our own but it should be affirmed and promoted for its own sake.

3. *“Let each of you strive to bring to light the power of the stone in your ring!”*

In the opinion of many it is risky to talk about direct influence of Nicholas of Cusa on Lessing’s parable of the rings. One would easily have the impression that the church Prince was the forerunner of the famous man of the Enlightenment, perhaps even seen as the harbinger of the modern idea of religious tolerance. It’s certain that ideas of tolerance played a part in Nicholas of Cusa, when the matter turned on formulating an Utopia on religious peace in general. But in no case would the citizen of Cusa sell off this tolerance through relativising the contents of the

great revealed religions or depreciating the dogmatic contents of Christianity. The *una religio* is not the enlightened religion of reason. In fact even the aspired unity of faith did not require the same forms of religious expressions and signs. Here was the case where multiplicity was tolerated. "The solution for the different confessions of faith is not tolerance but concordance." In fact Nicholas starts from the position that the only instrument for mutual understanding between members of different religions was "reason, that responds in every conversation partner." Even if the question regarding truth in religion in Cusanus and Lessing could be answered differently, there is no doubt that the subject of searching truth through reason interested both of them.

"Only one from these three religions could be the true one." In the course of the parable of the rings Saladin's initial question is demonstrated to be theoretically insoluble. "... One could not prove which was the right as we could hardly prove which is the right faith." One could not possess truth as one possesses money in one's pocket, "... as if truth were a coin! Yes, if only it were very old coins that could be weighed. If only they were new coins, that leave an imprint, that one could count on a board! As one stacks money in a bag, does one stock truth in the head?"

In spite of the above Lessing was of the opinion that truth, once freed from prejudices, should promote love in tolerance and benevolence. It would be a mistake if one suspects here forms of easygoing pragmatism or indifference. Neither is it a refusal to take up questions about truth. In the famous controversy with the Pastor J.M. Goeze from Hamburg, Lessing writes:

"It's not the truth that a person possesses or thinks he possesses that constitutes the value of a person, but the honest effort that this person makes to acquire this truth. It's in the search for the truth and not in its possession that a person shows his capabilities. This constitutes his evergrowing perfection. On the other hand possession makes one calm, lazy, proud.

If God were to keep closed in his right hand all the truth and in his left hand the inspiring drive to seek the truth, (even with the clause that I will be continually making mistakes) and tells me: "Choose", I would fall humbly on his left hand and say: Father give me this for the pure truth is yours alone!"

It's well known that Lessing had always emphasised that on the basis of historical analysis alone, the truth of a single religion cannot be proved. In this context the three religions bring up the same problem: "Aren't they all founded in history, in written or traditional forms? And history is certainly built on the supposition of truth and faith. And whose truth and faith does one doubt the least? No doubt, one's own."

The true religion - the authentic ring - needs the proof and the power of the spirit: it must prove itself through its capacity to "make persons pleasant in the face of God and men."

The present religious systems stand in a relationship of concurrence to each other. "Religion is a Political Party". But this situation in Lessing's opinion should be superseded by a religion of humanism. Or perhaps it would be more correct to use a metaphor from the intrigues of the theatrical play: they should find out that they belong to the same family. The real worthiness of religion should be shown in the practical demonstration of humaneness. "Is a Christian a Christian, or a Jew a Jew or both human beings? If only I would have found in you that which constitutes the honour of man!" The multiplicity of * is for religion only external bark. Once Saladin said to the temple master, "Will you remain with me, near me as a Christian or as a Muslim. It's the same. Whether with a white cloak, or with *, a turban or a felt hat, as you like best. Just the same. I have never demanded that the same bark grows on all trees."

Lessing's Utopia regarding mutual understanding between religions is not so much founded on the rational search for truth that is never complete but which can lead to an agreement on the fundamental dogmatic contents but on humane practice, that is love without prejudices. "Don't you understand how easier it is to go in pious raptures than to act in a correct manner?" asks Nathan at the beginning of the play. It's exactly in deeds that are undertaken without calculations in favour of one's neighbour that religiosity is implicitly shown. Such cases were: the Temple master who saved a Jewish girl from death, Nathan who saved his family from murder through the Christians and then adopts a Christian girl as his daughter, and Saladin who shows mercy to the captured Templar. An act of charity consciously done can only come through concrete submissiveness to God. In this way man acts freely and still in accordance to God's will. "Nobody should be constrained". Nathan expresses this excellently as follows:

"Reason came back again and spoke in a soft voice
 It's God. This is God's advice. Come over!
 What you have long time understood
 will not be all that difficult to practise.
 If only you have the will. Stand up."
 I stood up and called "I want."
 May you have the will to let me want to."

3.2 Utopia - the living dream - as religiosity that unites the whole of man's family
 in a living dimension, stands out in Lessing within the framework of a teleological
 interpretation of history. A third period of history is coming, that of new, eternal
 Good News. This time for the fullness of revelation is the true theonoumen of
 reason, where the differences between people will be eliminated, that it will be
 characterized by a true ethic of humanism. Good will be done for its own sake and
 not for a promised reward. From then on human praxis will be determined by
 revelation enlightened by reason. But this state of Utopia cannot be described in
 detail, its novelty can only be projected in a prophetic manner, in the form of a
 parable, it can be expected by hoping it. No state in history can claim to be the full
 realization of what was hoped for. This eschatological reserve in view of the
 realization of the Utopia makes tolerance possible today. At the same time it
 challenges religions to practise in life what they pronounce in teaching.
 Righteousness through hope that Saladin expected from Nathan can only be
 accomplished through practical love "with the intimate submissiveness to God."
 This is the measure of the true faith and the justification of the contents formulated
 in the act of faith.

In Lessing the question regarding the mutual understanding between religions
 is formulated in a question regarding the possibility of a free and collective
 responsibility to history. At stake here are the formation of a more humane word
 and the salvation of men as expressions of God's manner of directing history. The
 Trinitarian moment that was emphasized in the dialogue about religions in Lull
 and Nicholas of Cusa is spelt back theistically in Lessing. The concrete realization
 of salvation in history is detached from its connection with God's revelation through
 Jesus Christ. But Lessing inherited from those dialogues the role of religions to
 interpret history as space for creative partnership between God's saving will and
 men's freedom. From this standpoint should all contradictions in the world be
 taken up: the question of the future of mankind in view of misused freedom, the
 responsibility towards creation that is not taken sensibly, the negative experiences.

Is there hope against hope for everything? From where do we acquire the spirit of opposition in times of depression? How bright is the new Jerusalem just now?

4. *Attempt at a theological conclusion.*

The threefold mentioning of an utopian model for an understanding between religions shows us that peace and unity presuppose a sort of familiarity with the culture of dialogue, and an association with truth that refuses to contain it in the form of irreversible sentences and impose them on the other. When dialogue is seen as the life of truth then the decisive factor is not the unit of convictions but the unit of communication.

This standpoint presupposes that truth can also be found "outside" the definite boundaries of one's own religious system. But - I ask from the Christian side - is there really a dialogue as an open process in the search for truth, a risk at the very point of departure? Wasn't the dialogue in Lull rather a form of missionary contact, and in Nicholas of Cusa a didactic means to expose the true, i.e. Christian, fundamental tenets of faith, vis-à-vis the multiplicity of religious forms?

At this point Christian Theology of Religion should keep in mind that it, as *fides quaerens intellectum*, can never make itself identical with the Word of Revelation. With such instruments as reason and speech - stumbling but always correcting itself anew - Theology of religion seeks to understand itself "in enigmas and parables, in uncertainties and risks, even in mistakes and lies, all along the way" to the inner nature of faith. In this sense its mission is utopian, i.e. it has no place, except in dialogue, in that mutual giving and receiving, where the readiness to change place has vital importance.

In other words, it depends how effective one sees God's eschatological salvation activity, his universal will to salvation through the process of human history and how this confronts us with values and experiences unknown to us - in the daily life of other religions, and in each man that we encounter as our neighbour. Dialogue, then, is not just a simple encounter but an event in which the partners bring in their religious interpretation, to set it out as a question to the Other as well as to enrich the Other. The utopian ultimate objective wouldn't then be harmony or amalgamation of religions but a critical-creative symbiosis cataforical to different religious systems, that together seek to trace God's action in our human history.

But then, are religions equally true and therefore legitimate ways for realizing salvation? This question cannot be answered in the abstract - without a real analysis of the concrete realities and circumstances of the various religious systems. According to Christian understanding one must ask - and this is the idea behind understanding - whether the existing religious systems lead one to a life in the truth, that makes one free.

"Apart from their possible function as ways to salvation, religions in their historical constitution and depravity are often in *statu vitae* a compound of horrible excellence, truth, decay, mistake and lies. Christianity is no exception, because in its self-estimation as *vera religio*, as we have come to learn and affirm since the Theology of the Fathers, no partial or global legitimation can be deduced to justify the diverse components that belong or are associated with this religious system".

In this sense all religions stand under the same judgment of truth. Their interpretation of existence, their image of man, their system of norms, must remain open to discussion "if they are to be involved responsibly in the human struggle to find the right way for their future". In this case the Christian answer will place itself under the Word of the good News, as well as the practice of the Church to measure itself according to Jesus' teaching on God's Kingdom, that liberates and forms communities. Christians are challenged to give witness and accountability for the ever-changing power of the Gospel, that it may succeed to transform the culture in which they live. The Christian answer should also remain a critical stance against the culture of forgetfulness and progress that distort mankind, through the remembrance of Christ's life, death and resurrection. It should also keep in mind the sacrifice of our own religious self-affirmation through a compromise-free interest in promoting the freedom of all God's subjects.

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IL MATRIMONIO SACRAMENTO DELLA NUOVA LEGGE

**Il significato Teologico-Liturgico del matrimonio “nel Signore”
Nell’“Editio Typica Altera” Dell’“Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium”**

Rev. Dr. Frank Borg OP

MOTIVAZIONI E METODO DEL LAVORO*

1.1.1. La fonte della ricerca: “Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium”

L’Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium, della editio typica Altera, del 1991, è una continuazione dell’opera cominciata dal Concilio Vaticano II, ed anche dal Sinodo dei Vescovi del 1980, con il relativo documento “Familiaris Consortio” del 1981, e del nuovo codice di diritto canonico del 1983.

Il testo è un vero e proprio testo liturgico, che definisce completamente le celebrazioni, ivi compresi gli interi testi delle letture suggerite. Nell’OCM, notiamo una teologia matrimoniale sacramentale che è fedelissima alle “Fontes”, specialmente quelle biblici. Questo documento liturgico mostra chiaramente la teologia contemporanea del rapporto tra matrimonio e Chiese, Eucaristia e Pasqua, come anche la vocazione d’amore della persona che si è sposata.

ABBREVAZIONI USATE IN QUESTO STUDIO

EL:	<i>Ephemerides Liturgicae</i> , (Roma 1887ss)
GS:	“Gaudium et Spes”
LG:	“Lumen Gentium”
LMD:	<i>La Maison-Dieu</i>
N:	<i>Notitiae</i>
OCM:	<i>Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium</i> , (Editio Typica Altera 1991)
RL:	<i>Rivista Liturgica</i>
SC:	“Sacrosanctum Concilium”

Durante i secoli, la teologia del matrimonio fu contaminata dal giuridismo. L'aspetto giuridico del matrimonio è buono: ma lo "IUS" nella chiesa deve avere come fonte la "RES" e la liturgia, e non vice versa. Oggi, la teologia del matrimonio ha superato queste limitazioni giuridiche e si basa sulle "FONTES" autentiche.

1.1.2. Oggetto e finalità dell'indagine

Le *prænotandæ* dell'OCM non si trattano soltanto di una Catechesi, ma piuttosto di una serie di norme basate su una presentazione più matura. Esse riguardano soprattutto la preparazione necessaria per la celebrazione di un matrimonio, in particolare alla luce della "Familiaris Consortio". Gli elementi umani celebrati durante il matrimonio provengono da Dio, fanno parte del suo disegno di creazione e non sono stati distrutti da Adamo ed Eva o dal diluvio. Essi sono stati elevati da Cristo al livello di sacramento, come segno dell'amore di Cristo e della Chiesa. Lui ha insegnato che l'unione tra i coniugi nel matrimonio è una unione santa. Ha anche elevato la dignità della donna, perchè è uguale all'uomo nella natura umana. Soprattutto ha elevato anche il livello della stessa società: dove si è formata non da individui ma da famiglie.

Nell'OCM, il matrimonio è considerato innanzitutto come una celebrazione di fede. La celebrazione dovrebbe essere semplice, nobile e facilmente comprensibile, per esprimere la fede ed essere nello stesso tempo adatta alle circostanze locali. La scelta delle letture bibliche, dei testi, dei saluti, e dell'omelia mira a realizzare tutto ciò. Non è un momento per un discorso generico, bensì per indirizzare a tutta l'assemblea una parola di fede.

1.1.3. Lo sfondo Cristologico del Matrimonio

Cosa vuol dire essere "sposati in Cristo"? Il sunto degli elementi fondamentali del rito del matrimonio nell'OCM ci aiuta a comprendere cosa vuol dire matrimonio "in Cristo". Analizzando i termini diretti e indiretti sul tema "nubere in Christo", vedremo che: (1) la comprensione della scelta, nacque dall'Alleanza con Dio, ed influenzò la comprensione del matrimonio, così che tale sviluppo prosegue alla luce del Nuovo Testamento. (2) Il rapporto tra uomo e donna fa parte dell'essenza dell'umanità, essendo stato creato da Dio per uno scambio reciproco. (3) Il matrimonio è un segno della fedeltà di Dio verso l'uomo, così come è della sua

forza e del suo atto creativo. Questa fedeltà di Dio, dunque, è la base dell'Indissolubilità del matrimonio. (4) Non è bene che l'uomo stia da solo, e gli esseri umani sono per natura aperti alla comunione: "Per questo l'uomo abbandona suo padre e sua madre e si attacca alla sua donna e i due diventano una sola carne" (cfr. Gen 2,24). (5) Il Nuovo Testamento vede il matrimonio come amore di Cristo e della Chiesa. Si parla del grande mistero, che in Efes 5, 21-23, si riferisce al disegno di salvezza. Gli uomini sono salvati in Cristo e ciò è vissuto nella Chiesa, in quanto trasforma la "*relatio*" matrimoniale in epifania dell'amore di Cristo e della Chiesa. Puntare all'eterno e renderlo presente non significa altro che considerare la carne come parte del creato e del matrimonio.

IL VOCABOLARIO TEOLOGICO-DOGMATICO DEL MATRIMONIO IN QUANTO "VINCULUM SACRUM" ET "SACRUM SIGILLUM"

2.1.1. La Creazione e l'Alleanza

Il punto di partenza del matrimonio è la stessa creazione da cui esso assume "*vis et robur*" (OCM, 1). Dio stesso come creatore è "*auctor matrimonii*" (OCM, 4). Allora il nuovo Ordo mostra che il matrimonio è un "*bonum naturale*" e come tale fa parte della creazione di Dio e non una aggiunta successiva. L'umanità è stata creata come coppia e la società è stata ordinata in questo modo sin dall'inizio. Ciò diventa chiaro nella prima messa (OCM, 74), nella colletta alternata (OCM, 224. 227), e nella prima e seconda benedizione degli sposi (OCM, 242, 244).

La benedizione degli sposi si riferisce alla vita matrimoniale in quanto entità salvatasi dal Peccato Originale e dal Diluvio, così come al dominio dell'umanità sul creato. L'Alleanza menzionata nell'Antico Testamento viene interpretata come immagine del matrimonio. Il tema teologico-liturgico dell'Alleanza viene ben sviluppata nelle preghiere del nuovo rito. È una iniziativa d'amore da parte di Dio, alla quale Lui sempre resta fedele, nonostante l'infedeltà del popolo di Israele. Questa fedeltà continua di Dio si deve vedere tra i coniugi, perchè con la loro fedeltà, diventano testimoni vivi al mondo dell'eterna Alleanza.

Nel Nuovo Testamento, l'alleanza di Cristo e della Chiesa rappresenta come vedremo nel prossimo paragrafo un'altra immagine che pone il matrimonio come rito sacramentale. Dunque, nell'OCM sono presenti tutte e quattro le fasi della storia di salvezza e dell'Alleanza di Dio. Da ciò deriva l'idea del legame indivisibile

rappresentato dal matrimonio: “ut quod ipse coniungit, homo non separat” (OCM, 64; cfr. Mt 19, 2-6).

2.1.2. Indissolubilitas Matrimonii

I coniugi cristiani si sposano in Cristo, ed il loro amore deve essere come “Christus suam ecclesiam dilexit” (cfr. Ef 5,2): “in Christo nubunt, in fide verbi Dei mysterium unionis Christi et Ecclesiae fructuose celebrare, recte vivere et coram omnibus publice testari valent” (OCM, 11).

Il sacramento del battesimo non rappresenta semplicemente un elemento esterno o interno al matrimonio, bensì un elemento necessario e sufficiente per legare il matrimonio a Cristo ed alla Chiesa: “I coniugi cristiani, in virtù del sacramento del matrimonio, col quale significano e partecipano il mistero di unità e di fecondo amore che intercorre tra Cristo e la Chiesa (cfr. Ef 5,32), si aiutano a vicenda per raggiungere la santità nella vita coniugale; accettando ed educando la prole essi hanno così, nel loro stato di vita e nella loro funzione, il proprio dono in mezzo al popolo di Dio (cfr. I Cor 7,7)” (LG, 11).

Il matrimonio esplicita la vocazione battesimale dei battezzati nella Chiesa ed arricchisce quella stessa vocazione e la Chiesa. Esso costituisce la chiesa domestica che rappresenta l’edificio fondamentale del tutto (cfr. LG, 35). I coniugi hanno la vocazione di rendere testimonianza, a tutto il mondo ed ai loro figli, dell’amore e della fedeltà di Cristo, partecipando anche alla natura ed al destino di Cristo. La prima benedizione agli sposi considera tale amore non solo come simbolo dell’amore di Cristo, ma anche come qualcosa di vero e reale.

IL MATRIMONIO COME “ANAMNESIS” DEL “MISTERO NUZIALE DI CRISTO E DELLA CHIESA”

3.1.1 Analisi dei tre Prefazi dell’Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium: OCM, 234.235.236

I testi liturgici dell’OCM mettono in primo piano il termine “Anamnesis” perchè esso mette l’enfasi sul fatto che la celebrazione del matrimonio è presenza reale del “mysterium” totale realizzato in Cristo. La celebrazione del matrimonio appare

come “anamnesis” (*i.e. memoriale*) del mistero della creazione, dell’Alleanza, del mistero degli sponsali tra Cristo e Chiesa, e del mistero Pasquale.

La realtà del matrimonio, come sacramento si può vedere nei tre Prefazi dell’OCM, che portano questi titoli: *De dignitae foederis nuptiarum* (OCM, 234); *De magno matrimonii sacramento* (OCM, 235); *De matrimonio ut signum divinae caritatis* (OCM, 236). Qui si nota il linguaggio di tipo sacramentario usato in questi tre Prefazi, che sono tutti nuovi. In altre parole, ciò che la liturgia significa con la parola, lo contiene, lo spiega, e lo porta ad attuazione. Per questo il testo eucologico OCM, 242b asserisce che “sacramenti significatione completa, in fidelium tuorum coniugali consortio, Christi et Ecclesiae nuptiale mysterium”. La liturgia sottolinea che quello che presiede la cerimonia, deve dare nell’omilia il significato del “Mysterium Matrimonii Christiani” (cfr. rubrica in OCM, 57).

3.1.2. La triplice direzione dell’Unione nuziale

Il significato del matrimonio cristiano, come misterio, è già annunciato nella *praenotanda* dell’OCM, 8: “Matrimonii sacramento mysterium unitatis et fecundi amoris inter Christum et Ecclesiam coniuges Christiani *significant atque participant*”.

Con la grazia matrimoniale, sull’esempio di Cristo-Chiesa, i coniugi devono amarsi l’un l’altro; ognuna di loro “... diligat sempre amore, quo Christus suam dilexit Ecclesiam” (OCM, 74.105). È per mezzo di questa grazia che loro rimangono saldi e sodi nel loro amore (OCM, 233). Il significato completo allora del matrimonio cristiano si manifesta nel “Christi et Ecclesiae nuptiale mysterium” (OCM, 242). Nel matrimonio cristiano, che è “nubere in Christo” (cfr. Ef 5,25-28), notiamo che la natura sacramentaria del matrimonio passa dal mistero nuziale di Cristo-Chiesa in tre direzioni:

1. il matrimonio Cristiano è “immagine” dell’unione tra Cristo-Sposo e Chiesa-Sposa (cfr. OCM, 8, 242b).
2. Questa “immagine”, che è basata su questo rapporto, richiede il rispetto reciproco dei coniugi (*i.e.* la loro fedeltà OCM, 74.105.250).
3. Nell’OCM, specialmente nella *Praenotanda* e nell’eucologia, troviamo una insistenza sul fatto, che il matrimonio cristiano oltre ad essere un’immagine, è anche una partecipazione al mistero di unità e di amore tra Cristo e la Chiesa.

Tutto questo significa che la celebrazione del matrimonio cristiano è “anamnesis” liturgica, cioè una realtà mediante cui si ricebra e si fa presente il mistero nuziale di Cristo e della Chiesa. Siccome i ministri del sacramento sono gli stessi coniugi, allora Cristo non solo è con i celebranti, ma è nei coniugi. La celebrazione del matrimonio come sacramento è il momento nel quale ha inizio l'*anamnesis* del mistero nuziale-sponsale tra Cristo e Chiesa realizzato sulla croce. Il matrimonio è per i cristiani icona dell'alleanza tra Cristo e la Chiesa, celebrata sulla croce.

IL MATRIMONIO COME “ANAMNESIS” DEL “MISTERO PASQUALE”

4.1.1. Riferimenti espliciti ed impliciti nei rituali liturgici

L'OCM del 1991, si pone il matrimonio cristiano nel contesto del Mistero Pasquale dell'Eucaristia; e tale mistero mostra la natura sacramentale del matrimonio. Nella tradizione Tridentina, nei formulari del matrimonio, non troviamo preghiere che riferiscono esplicitamente al tema riferimenti e pasquale. Nei rituali precedenti, troviamo soltanto riferimenti impliciti; per esempio, l'acqua benedetta è vista come un richiamo alla celebrazione della veglia Pasquale. Nel nuovo ordo il matrimonio rappresenta l'unità di Cristo e della chiesa nell'alleanza del Mistero Pasquale i.e. il mistero della passione, della morte e della risurrezione di Cristo.

L'Eucaristia fa la chiesa, e la chiesa fa l'Eucaristia. La chiesa è stata fondata e formata come sposa dell'Agnello, come chiesa Eucaristica che celebra la festa nuziale. La chiesa domestica (i.e. la famiglia) diventa perciò icona della chiesa universale. Il sacramento del matrimonio e dell'Eucaristia sono simili, poichè entrambi riguardano una presenza permanente. La chiesa, come corpo di Cristo, trova forma nell'Eucaristia. L'opera di Redenzione deve diventare il corpo di Cristo dell'Eucaristia. Il matrimonio ha lo stesso fondamento e lo stesso obiettivo: essere corpo di Cristo, così che il luogo naturale per un rito matrimoniale è la celebrazione dell'Eucaristia. La costituzione “Sacrosanctum Concilium”, para. 78, pone la necessità che il matrimonio venga di regola celebrato nel contesto dell'Eucaristia. Con l'offerta e la celebrazione del Mistero Pasquale nell'Eucaristia, uguale celebrazione è rappresentata dall'offerta della chiesa domestica.

4.1.2. Linee-teologico-liturgiche nel Nuovo Ordo del Matrimonio

La celebrazione del matrimonio cristiano, allora, è “anamnesis” della prima creazione, e nello stesso tempo un’anamnesis della nuova creazione, cioè del Mistero Pasquale - il Mistero Croce-Risurrezione. Il mistero nuziale è celebrazione del mistero dell’Eucaristia. Difatti, morire e risuscitare è la legge dell’amore cristiano. Così la celebrazione del matrimonio si concentra nel culmine del mistero della Redenzione di Cristo, i.e. la sua Pasqua.

Il sacramento del matrimonio cristiano, sgorgando da Cristo in croce, è considerato come un’offerta, una oblazione. Sulla Croce, Cristo si è unito alla Chiesa come sposa, donandosi a Lei, mentre si offriva al Padre, per mezzo di un amore sofferente e accettato fino alla morte. Celebrare il matrimonio significa l’autodonazione dei coniugi, l’oblazione del “dono reciproco e responsabile della loro propria persona”.

UNA CONOSCENZA APPROFONDITA DEL MATRIMONIO “NEL SIGNORE”

5.1.1. Dalla filologia alla teologia

Nell’OCM è messo in rilievo e ben spiegato, l’atto coniugale e la fedeltà reciproca dei coniugi: si tratta qui del segno dell’Alleanza. Il nuovo ordo mostra chiaramente la necessità di una unità interiore ed esteriore. Se l’amore è vero, non si teme di dire “per sempre”. L’incapacità di dire ciò sarà segno di amore incerto e di assenza della grazia del matrimonio.

L’amore su cui si basa l’unione dei coniugi è indivisibile e conduce alla carità. Prima della riforma liturgica, il rito puntava ad aspetti giuridici e moralistici. Quello nuovo mette a fuoco più chiaramente i due membri della coppia e la loro vita insieme come Cristiani. L’amore su cui si basa quest’unione si pone come l’amore di tutti i Cristiani. Difatti le letture bibliche nel rito del matrimonio, sono diretti anche a tutti i Cristiani e alla loro vita. I coniugi hanno la vocazione di rendere testimonianza, a tutto il mondo, del loro amore e della loro fedeltà a Cristo, partecipando anche alla natura ed al destino di Cristo: “Allora la famiglia Cristiana che nasce dall’alleanza d’amore del Cristo e della chiesa, renderà manifesta a tutti la viva presenza del Salvatore nel mondo e la genuina natura della chiesa, sia con l’amore,

la fecondità generosa, l'unità e la fedeltà degli sposi, che con l'amorevole cooperazione di tutti i suoi membri": (cfr. GS,48).

5.1.2. La Famiglia nel concilio e nel nuovo Ordo

La famiglia rappresenta la chiesa domestica (cfr. LG, 11). Il testo della "Familiaris Consortio" para 49, fa riferimento a questa stessa realtà, come ad una chiesa in miniatura, e ricorre frequentemente alla nozione di chiesa domestica. Il nuovo Ordo pone il matrimonio e la famiglia come icona del rapporto tra Cristo e la Chiesa, e la comunità prega per la coppia in questi termini. Il matrimonio è immagine dell'amore di Dio verso l'uomo, ma soprattutto di quello di Cristo verso la sua sposa che è la Chiesa. Esso è come un'icona che mostra la realtà unica del rapporto Cristo-Chiesa, che allo stesso modo pone il matrimonio come rito sacramentale.

La celebrazione del matrimonio cristiano, come sacramento appare come "anamnesis" del Mistero della creazione, dell'alleanza, dell'Antico Testamento, del mistero degli sponsali tra Cristo e la Chiesa, e del Mistero Pasquale. Qui proprio entra l'impegno personale dei coniugi, della loro fedeltà e autodonazione, come Cristo si è offerto sulla croce, per la sua sposa la Chiesa.

RIFLESSIONI CONCLUSIVE

Il matrimonio come oggetto di un trattato teologico era sempre un lavoro difficile per i teologi. Sant'Agostino diceva: "Quaestionem de coniugiis obscurissimam et implicatissimam esse non nescio. Nec audeo profiteri omnes sinus eius vel in hoc opere vel in alio me adhuc explicasse, vel iam posse, si urgear, explicare" (cfr. *De Coniug. Adult.* 1.25).

Il rinnovamento pastorale-liturgico nel sacramento del matrimonio, ha aperto vari orizzonti e orientamenti nuovi nella teologia. Le riflessioni sui riti del matrimonio dell'OCM, sono più strettamente teologiche-bibliche che giuridiche: i.e. sono connessi al Mistero Pasquale. Da un saggio uso pastorale di tale Ordo, può derivare una celebrazione ricca e feconda. Soprattutto i nuovi testi introdotti nell'Ordo mostrano la teologia contemporanea del rapporto tra matrimonio e Chiesa, Eucaristia e Pasqua, come anche la vocazione d'amore della persona che si sposa.

Attraverso la Parola di Dio e l'azione liturgica, lo spirito Santo fa di questa unione un atto di Cristo.

Non possiamo ignorare lo Spirito Santo nella celebrazione del matrimonio, perchè senza la sua presenza non c'è liturgia; e il dono della fede è possibile solo con l'aiuto dello Spirito. Ciò si vede chiaramente nelle nuove *epiclesi* inserite in ciascuna delle benedizioni nuziali, contenute nella nuova edizione del rito matrimoniale, che è parallelo al rito dell'ordinazione sacerdotale come sigillo del matrimonio, una celebrazione della realtà interiore che permetterà alla coppia di compiere il rito matrimoniale nel contesto della loro vita nella Chiesa.

Possiamo concludere, che oltre l'aspetto Cristologico, sarebbe opportuno studiare ed analizzare altri aspetti del matrimonio cristiano, come per esempio: quello Ecclesiologico, quello Pneumatologico ecc. Tutto questo ci aiuterebbe a comprendere meglio l'aspetto teologico-liturgico del Sacramento del Matrimonio.

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JOHN'S PROLOGUE: A SUGGESTED INTERPRETATION

James Swetnam, S.J.

The prologue of John's Gospel remains a perennial challenge to exegetical endeavour.¹ The reasons are not difficult to divine: the prologue is important and hard to understand.² The present study suggests an interpretation of the prologue. The study does not attempt a "proof" for what will be suggested; it will simply offer a number of indications which, to the present writer at least, commend themselves as plausible 1) by reason of the unified view of the prologue which they represent and, 2) by the reason of their agreement with various aspects of the rest of John's Gospel. That is to say, two suppositions of the present study are 1) that the prologue of John's Gospel is a unified whole and, 2), that it has a close relation to John's Gospel as a whole.³

The interpretation which will be offered here suggests that the unifying theme of the prologue of the Fourth Gospel is the becoming man of the eternal divine *Logos* who, incarnate as Jesus Christ, takes the place of the Mosaic Law to become himself the New Law of the Christian dispensation. Further, the interpretation

- 1 It seems appropriate to accept John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee, as author of the tradition behind the Fourth Gospel, despite the many controversies associated with this identification. Admittedly, absolute proof is impossible. But the attribution seems more probable than not, all things considered. Cf. R. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (i-xii) (Anchor Bible; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966) c: "...we do not think it unscientific to maintain that John son of Zebedee was probably the source of the historical tradition behind the Fourth Gospel". The present article will attempt, among other things, to support Johannine authorship of the tradition behind the Fourth Gospel.
- 2 Cf. the following comment of M. Hooker: "The Johannine Prologue is not only one of the most important passages in the New Testament, but also one of the most controversial. There is disagreement regarding its character, its relationship to the rest of the gospel, and its integrity, as well as regarding detailed points of exegesis" (M. Hooker, "John the Baptist and the Johannine Prologue", *New Testament Studies* 16 [1969-1970] 354).
- 3 It would seem more plausible than not that a prologue for a work as carefully written as John's Gospel would be carefully written itself and that it would have a close relation to that of which it is the prologue, at least until the opposite is clearly shown. But in order clearly to show the opposite some sort of consensus has to be reached on what the prologue means. No such consensus exists. The present study begins with the supposition that the prologue to John's Gospel is truly a prologue to John's Gospel. And the present study ends with this supposition upheld, at least to the satisfaction of the author.

suggests that the prologue is written to be read as having two interrelated meanings, and that only through such a reading can the prologue be understood. Or, perhaps better, there are two aspects to be attended to in reading the prologue, like much else in John's Gospel: that which is deliberately explicit, and that which is deliberately implicit.⁴

The prologue will be understood as comprising verses 1-18 of chapter 1.⁵ V. 19 begins with a specific event connected with the earthly life of the divine *Logos* who has become man. This verse builds on what precedes, which has to do with generalizations about who this *Logos* is, and about his becoming man in the context of a people living under the Mosaic Law at the time of John.⁶

The following division of the prologue will be adopted here, based on what seem to be topic sentences at vv. 1, 6, 9, and 14:

- 1, 1-5: the *Logos* as God;
- 1, 6-8: John as witness;
- 1, 9-13: the *Logos* as light for those who believe in him;
- 1, 14-18: the *Logos* as *sarx*.

1, 1-15: The *Logos* as God

The words "in the beginning" (*en te arche*), along with the mention of "light"

- 4 "Anyone who studies St. John's gospel for long is likely to be impressed, not only by the extreme care with which it is written, a care extending to the smallest details, but also by the subtlety and elusiveness of the author. A passage which in itself and at first sight, may seem to have a plain and obvious meaning and no more, will perhaps be found, when studied more closely and brought into connection with other passages of the gospel and, above all, with the thought and teaching of the book as a whole, to take on, in addition to the plain and obvious sense, a meaning or meanings of a deeper sort, with religious implications which only gradually become apparent" (R.H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel: A Commentary* (ed. C.F. Evans) [Clarendon Press; Oxford 1983] 349. The present writer is indebted to Fr. Anthony Therath for calling this quotation to his attention.
- 5 The prologue is commonly taken as comprising the opening verses of the first chapter and ending with v.18 because of the different tenor of the discourse beginning at v. 19. Cf. M. Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos. Studien zum Verhältnis des Johannesprologs zum Corpus des Evangelium und zu 1 Joh* (Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen, N.F. 20; Aschendorff; Münster 1988) 169-197.
- 6 Verse 17 of the prologue is quite important because of its reference to the Mosaic Law. The only individuals explicitly referred to in the first eighteen verses are the divine *Logos* (who became incarnate in Jesus Christ), John, and Moses. The mention of Moses gives the historical background; the mention of John gives the immediate historical context; the divine *Logos* incarnate in Jesus Christ is what John's Gospel is all about.

(*phos*), "life" (*zoe*), and the idea "being made" (*ginomai*) evoke the opening chapter of Genesis.⁷ In this context a preliminary reading leads the reader to think initially of the *Logos* of the first verse as a personification of the figure of wisdom presented in the Old Testament in such texts as Wis 9, 1 and Ps 32[33], 6.⁸ The reader is then led on to the remaining verses of the section which describe the role of this *Logos* in creation (vv. 2-3) and his failure to be "mastered"⁹ by the darkness of the world. This is the aspect of discourse which characterizes a preliminary reading of 1 John 1, 1-7 as well.¹⁰ The presumed reader of the opening lines of the Fourth Gospel clearly is supported to have been informed that the Word became incarnate in Jesus Christ. The opening verses of the Gospel serve, according to the aspect of deliberately explicit discourse, as a means of rehearsing solemnly this truth. They are a stylized summary of the coming and rejection of the *Logos* in the world, a summary written for those who already have been informed about what the summary presents but who do not necessarily believe in what they have been informed.¹¹ The Gospel of John is primarily for meditation on information received, so that belief or deepening of belief may follow. The Gospel is for persons already in contact with a tradition.

But the verses in question seem also to be designed for perusal at a level even more profound, or according to another aspect which is only implied. The word "*Logos*" ("Word" is the conventional English rendering) used to describe the pre-existent Only Begotten (cf. 1, 14) would have had for the first Christians distinctively

7 Cf.: Theobald, 227-28; E. C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (ed. by F. N. Davey; Faber and Faber; London 21947) 140-41; C. A. Evans, *Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John's Prologue* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplementary Series 89; JSOT Press; Sheffield 1993) 77-79.

8 On the Wisdom background of the Johannine prologue cf. Hoskyns, 154-56; Evans, 83-99.

9 The English word "master" seems suitable for rendering the twofold meaning of the Greek *katalambano* i.e., to "overcome" and to "understand". Cf. F. Zorell, *Lexicon graecum Novi Testamenti* (Cursus Scripturae Sacrae, Pars Prior, Libri introductorii, VII; P. Lethielleux; Paris 31961), col. 673 (1,b and 2).

10 On the relation to 1 John and the Fourth Gospel cf. Hoskyns, 48-57.

11 Cf. the use of the inchoative aorist involving the verb *pisteuo* at 1,7 and 20,31 to describe the purpose of the witness of the two Johns with regard to the hearers/readers of the witness: that "they/you may begin to believe". The plural should be noted: coming to belief or deepening of belief". The plural should be noted: coming to belief or deepening of belief has a communal aspect. On the way in which the prologue was designed to be received by its first intended hearers cf. Theobald, 264-265.

Christian connotations, along with its various Old Testament connections. John did not intend that the *Logos* of his prologue should be separated from the Old Testament; the allusions to Genesis and other parts of the Old Testament make this plain. And from what follows in his Gospel it is clear that he did not intend that the *Logos* of his prologue should be separated from the other uses of *logos* in early Christian tradition.¹² The users of *logos* in the Gospel of John are matched by the use of the Greek *logos* in the rest of the New Testament, where it can refer to the Gospel (the Synoptic Gospels and Acts¹³) or to the revelation which comes through Christ (the Apocalypse¹⁴) or even Christ himself (Apoc 19, 13).¹⁵

The most telling indication of the precise force of the *Logos* of the prologue is given implicitly by the words "life" and "light". In the literature in the biblical tradition these words are used to describe the effects of the obedience to God as expressed in the Mosaic Law.¹⁶ In the Old Testament the *logos* is above all the Law given to Israel by Moses.¹⁷ It is this background which leads the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews to refer to the Mosaic Law as the *logos*.¹⁸ In the opening verses of the Fourth Gospel the *Logos* who is Christ is being implicitly compared with the Mosaic Law. The imperfect tense of the verb *en*, together with the phrase *en te arche*, indicates that which lies beyond time.¹⁹ What is being alluded to is the

12 The meanings of the word *logos* in John's gospel are varied. C. H. Dodd (*The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* [University Press; Cambridge 1953] 265-268) distinguishes the following ways in which the word *logos* is used in the Fourth Gospel: 1) in the plural as ordinary "words" in a sense interchangeable with *rhēmata* (265); 2) in the singular as "saying", "discourse", "statement", as in John 2,22 (ibid.); 3) in the singular as the "message" of Jesus, e.g., John 5,24 (ibid.); 4) in the singular as the "Word of God", as embodied in the Old Testament (e.g., John 10,35) but especially as embodied in the teaching of Jesus, which is the "truth" — *aletheia* — reality as revealed, e.g., John 17,17 (267). In the prologue, and only in the prologue — John 1,1.14 — is Christ said to *be* this divine *Logos*, though of course Christ identifies himself with this revealed truth in John 14,6.

13 Hoskyns, 159-60.

14 Ibid., 160.

15 Ibid., 160.

16 Ibid., 143: "In the later Jewish literature life and light emerge as the twin images adequate to describe the effects of obedience to the Wisdom of God revealed in the Mosaic Law (cf. 1 Bar. iv. 1; 2 Esdras XIV. 29, 30, Syriac Version, with Ps. cxix. 105; and 1 Bar. iv. 2, 3; 2 Bar. lix. 2, 1xxvii. 16; 2 Esdras xiv. 20, 21, with Isa. ix. 2)".

17 Ibid., 156. Cf. the Septuagint at Ps 147,8 and Is 2,3.

18 Hoskyns, 162.

19 "The continuous tense [sc., *en*] ... indicates that by *arche* meant not the first point in a temporal sequence but that which lies beyond time" (C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* [SPCK; London 21978 (third impression 1985) 152].

existence of the *Logos* as a sort of "metatext" for the interpretation of the Mosaic Law.²⁰ The "metatext" exists in the person of the *Logos* and the writing which follows – John's Gospel – will detail the way this "metatext" functioned in life on earth. This, then, is the level of deliberately implied discourse which the first five verses of the prologue are designed to communicate to the reader prepared to receive the communication.

1, 6-8: John as Witness

It is a feature peculiar to the Fourth Gospel that John the Baptist functions primarily as a witness to Jesus. His call to repentance so prominent in the other Gospels is only hinted at through mention of baptism;²¹ his imprisonment and death are barely noticed.²² The association of John the Baptist with the act of baptizing, used when he is introduced in the other Gospels (Matt 3, 1; Mark 1, 4; Luke 3, 2-3), is not mentioned when he is introduced in the Fourth Gospel, at 1,6. No title at all is assigned him. It is clear from the context of vv. 6-8 that John thinks of him there primarily as a witness: this function is mentioned three times. In the rest of the Gospel the Baptist is associated with witnessing in a variety of places: 1,15.32.34; 3,26; 5,33.36.

But this witness of John the Baptist in John's Gospel is limited. He witnesses to the pre-existence of the *Logos* (1,15), to the fact that the Spirit descended and remained on Jesus (1,32), and that he is "Son of God" (1,34). But he was obviously unable to witness to things after his own death. This lack seems to be made up for by John, the author of the Gospel, for at two key places – 19,35 where he witnesses to the issue of blood and water from the side of the dead Christ) and 21,24 (where he witnesses to the things about which he has written in his Gospel) – he is presented, like the Baptist, as a witness. Thus, in a sense, in John's Gospel the two Johns seem

²⁰ Theobald, 229.

²¹ Cf. John 1,25-26.28.33; 3, 23.25; 10,40. The texts are numerous, but they are never elaborated on in the direction of forgiveness of sins. Even the one passage which recounts the baptism of Jesus by John focusses on John's witness.

²² Cf. John 3,24. The allusion to the baptizing and to the imprisonment in such a close compass gives the impression of being a nod to other aspects of John's life which are known by the author but which are not regarded as germane to his purpose.

to be presented as complementary in their witness to Jesus:²³ the Baptist's function is deliberately shaded in the direction of a limited witness which is complemented by the witness of the author of the Gospel himself. It is this complementarity as witnesses which seems to warrant the suggestion that when "John" is explicitly mentioned in 1, 6-8 as being sent by God as witness, John the Evangelist and his witness to Christ is being deliberately implied. Where the Baptist is mentioned, the Evangelist is implied; if not, the witness to the *Logos* is incomplete.²⁴

The difficulty with assuming that John the Evangelist is being deliberately alluded to in 1,6-8, is that there is no evident reason why the Evangelist should resort to indirection to refer to himself by the name "John". The solution to this problem seems to lie into the various roles played by the John in the Gospel which he wrote, and in the way he chooses to identify himself with relation to these roles.

One main role of the John in the Gospel he wrote is that of the Believer. That he is symbol of the Believer seems indicated from his role at the foot of the cross, where Jesus gives him to his Mother, who, from being Daughter of Sion/Jerusalem (symbol of the Mother of Believers in the Old Dispensation) becomes Daughter of the Heavenly Jerusalem (symbol of the Mother of Believers in the New Dispensation).²⁵ In the same way, from being the symbol of the Believer in the Old Dispensation (as Son of the Daughter of Sion/Jerusalem), John (as Son of the Mother who has become Daughter of the Heavenly Jerusalem), becomes the Symbol of the Believer in the New Dispensation.²⁶ In his capacity as believer John refers to himself in his Gospel as "Son" or "the Beloved Disciple" (19,26), a term reserved for those who believe and put their belief into practice.²⁷ And this precisely where the explanation of John's silence with regard to his personal name seems to be found.

23 This point has already been made by F. Overbeck, *Das Johannesevangelium. Studien zur Kritik seiner Erforschung* (ed. C. A. Bernoulli) (J. C. B. Mohr; [Paul Siebeck], Tübingen 1911), 417, but in a somewhat different form. Overbeck seems to regard witness of the Baptist as extending to the death of Christ in the sense that his, the Baptist's, testimony was a summary of the entire preaching of Jesus. This seems an exaggerated view of the Baptist's witness.

24 M. Hengel (*Die johanneische Frage. Ein Lösungsversuch* [J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck); Tübingen 1993] 199) sees in John 21,24 the only reference to the "author" by the disciples. And, of course, even here this reference is debated. The implication is that the reference is too late and too little to be fully credible. If at all, why not earlier? If not earlier, why at all?

25 Cf. I. de la Potterie, "La Figlia di Sion. Lo sfondo biblico della mariologia dopo il Concilio Vaticano II", *Marianum* 49 (1987) 356-376, especially 372.

26 The words "mother" and "son" are to be taken here in their Semitic sense of sharing in likeness: the "son" is son because he shares in the faith of his (spiritual) "mother".

27 Cf. John 11,5.27; 13,1.23; 14,21; 20,2; 21,7.20. Cf. also Hengel, 213.

For just as in the Fourth Gospel the Mother of Jesus is never referred to by her personal name of "Mary", but always by the name "Mother",²⁸ so in the Fourth Gospel the spiritual Son of that Mother is never referred to by his proper name of "John". He is referred to by the titles which honour his being a symbol of belief: "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (sc., because of his faith) or "Son", just as Mary is referred to as "Mother". Where such a reference is deemed inappropriate, i.e., where there is no question of faith being involved, John uses other circumlocutions, such as "another disciple" (*allos mathetes* (18, 15)²⁹ or "sons [of] Zebedee" (*hoi tou Zebedaiou*).

Another main role of John in the Gospel he wrote is, presumably, that of one of the "Twelve".³⁰ Unlike the other three Gospels, the Fourth Gospel does not portray the naming of the Twelve, who are referred to as "disciples" just as are the other followers of Jesus.³¹ Only one of the Twelve is formally given a title corresponding to his role as spokesman/head of the group: Peter (1, 42). Peter as such, i.e., with the explicit use of his name and hence with implicit reference to the Twelve, figures much more prominently in John's Gospel than does any of the others who are of the Twelve, (1,40.42.44; 6, 8.68; 13,6.8.9.24.36.37; 18,10.11.15.16[2x]. 17.18.25.26.27; 20,2.3.4.6; 21,2.3.7[2x].11.15.17.20.21), and in at least two of these texts Peter is regarded as the head and spokesman of the group (6,68; 21,15. 16[2x].17), i.e., he is implicitly considered as one of the Twelve. When other members of the Twelve are mentioned, they are accordingly presumed not to be functioning precisely as members of the Twelve (e.g., Andrew [1,40.44; 6,8]; Philip

28 Cf. I. de la Pottiere, "La Mère de Jésus et la conception virginale du Fils de Dieu. Étude de théologie johannique," *Marianum* 40 (1978) 42-43. De la Potterie maintains that the reason for this avoidance of the name "Mary" is to emphasize the role of Mary as Mother of Jesus. But this would seem to be only one, superficial reason. A second, more profound reason is to highlight the spiritual motherhood of Mary in the Gospel, a Gospel in which she is portrayed as the Mother of the Believers in the Old Dispensation and in the New. On the cross Jesus gives his Mother to the beloved disciple for safekeeping (first reason). But he also gives her to him as his spiritual Mother in her role as Mother of the Believers in the Old Dispensation who becomes the Mother of the Believers of the New (second reason).

29 Cf. the wording of 20,2; "...towards the other disciple whom Jesus loved" (*pros ton allon matheten hon ephilei ho Iesous*; cf. also 20,4.8). There may also be a reference to John at 1,35.37, where John may have avoided referring to himself by his proper name by using the word "disciple" (*mathetes*) to speak of himself and Andrew. Andrew is subsequently identified (1, 40) as one of the two, but the other of the two is not.

30 The presumption is based on a comparison between the Fourth Gospel and the other Gospels.

31 Cf. R. F. Collins, "The Twelve", *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6 (ed. D. N. Freedman) Doubleday; New York 1992) 670-671.

1.43.44.45.46.48; 6,5.7; 12,21.22; 14,8.9]; Thomas [11,16;14,5;20,24.26.27.28; 21,2]; Judas [6,71; 13,2.26]). Apart from Peter, the "Twelve", when they function, function anonymously as a group. For example, they are "sent", but the idea of "sending" is conveyed by verbal forms (*apostello*—cf. 4, 38; *pempo*)—cf.20,21). In the Fourth Gospel the title "apostle" (*apostolos*) is never used. The idea of "apostle(s)" is taken over by the collective term "Twelve" (6,67.70.71;20,24). It seems probable from comparing such texts as 6, 71 with 12,4 that the term "apostle" has been deliberately avoided in favour of "disciple". The conclusion to be drawn from this careful choice of terms in the Fourth Gospel is that there the Apostles are not intended to function as witnesses as part of the Twelve, witnessing being the main function of an Apostle precisely as one of the Twelve.³² Thus, because the Twelve are not explicitly given names as members of the Twelve, one can infer that John did not wish in his Gospel that he or his fellow members of the Twelve should give testimony precisely as the Twelve.³³ Hence one should not be surprised that he does not refer to himself by the name of "John" when he speaks about his individual witness as one of the Twelve.

Not that John is not a witness in his Gospel. In fact, the third main role of John in the Gospel he wrote is precisely that of witness. This role is clear from his words at two key points in his Gospel, immediately after the issuing of blood and water from the side of the dead Jesus (19,35), and the end of his work (21,25). Here he is

32 To have been a witness to the life of Jesus from his baptism to his ascension is what is adduced as the necessary criterion for the one who fills up the complement of the "Eleven" in Acts 1, 15-26. The witness value, then, of Thomas, for example, would seem to be intended to be as *mathetes*, one of the community of the disciples of Jesus, rather than as one of the Twelve, as he seems to be. (Cf. the beginning of 20,25: "The other disciples thereupon kept saying to him [sc., Thomas] — *elegon oin auto hoi alloi mathetai*.) Judas' role at 6, 70-71 is certainly placed in the context of the loyalty expected of the Twelve because it is placed there by none other than Jesus himself, but Jesus speaks of selecting the Twelve as a group, not as individuals (6,70). It is the author of the Gospel who comments that Judas was "one of the Twelve" (*heis ek ton dodeka*); it is the author of the Fourth Gospel who mentions the name of Judas, not Jesus; it is the author of the Fourth Gospel who puts the incident in the context of the "disciples" (cf. 6,66).

33 The witness value of the individual members of the Twelve is certainly presupposed at 6,66-71, just as it is with Thomas at 20,24. But the fact that it is only presupposed should indicate what the point of view of the author of the Gospel is. John the Apostle, the author of the Fourth Gospel, knows very well that the purpose of an Apostle as one of the Twelve is to witness to Jesus Christ, from his baptism to his resurrection-ascension. But for the purposes proper to his Gospel he does not wish to state this or to let this enter explicitly into the discourse.

giving witness not as "apostle", for reasons given above, but as "disciple" (*mathetes*), one of the community (cf. 21, 25): in his Gospel John has deliberately downgraded the witness value of the Apostles in order to emphasize the witness value of the disciples. But John is not just any member of the community, any "disciple". He is "the beloved disciple", one who stands out among the community for special faithfulness.³⁴ It is this special faithfulness which is recorded at 19,35, and it is this special faithfulness which makes possible the summary of witness at 21, 24. John wishes to be known above all as the Son who symbolizes the community of New Dispensation believers, and it is in this capacity that he stands behind the tradition of his Gospel. But he does not wish to use his name "John" because this would derogate from his role as unique witness, the beloved Disciple, one who reports as the Symbol of all Believers.

This desire to be known in his role as Symbol of Believers does not prevent John from giving an implicit communication of his name at 1,6, by associating himself with the other great witness to the *Logos*. This is the suggestion being made here. This implicit association thus links the two Johns into a common destiny³⁵: "*Nomen est omen*". And for John this association is of more importance as author of his Gospel than that of being named an "apostle" or as being explicitly named a member of the Twelve. For in his Gospel John gives witness to Jesus from a background of greater faith than any of the other Twelve, a faith recognized by Jesus as he was dying on the cross. Further, John's faith implies a witness of wider breadth than that of the Twelve, for John's Gospel takes in the pre-existence of the *Logos* (John 3, 31-36 and related passages). John the Baptist provided a unique witness to the *Logos*. By implicitly associating himself with the witness of John the Baptist, John the Evangelist provides the second witness needed for the requirements of the Mosaic Law to be fulfilled if the "metatext" of the *Logos* is to be formally

34 Cf. Collins, 671. Collins distinguishes between the "Twelve" and their head, Peter, who represent "apostolic Christianity", and the community of the author of the Fourth Gospel, whose hero is "the beloved disciple". This distinction seems unnecessary. There is only one community of believers in the Fourth Gospel, and Peter is the head of the institution of the Twelve which is part of the community. But the special faith hero of this community is the beloved disciple, presumably because Jesus knew that only he would be faithful even under the cross, just as Jesus knew that Peter would not (13,38).

35 It should be noted that the purpose of the witness of John the Baptizer —1,7: *hina pantes pisteusosin*—and that of John the Evangelist —20,31: *hina pisteusete*—coincide in that both are to lead others to faith. Again, the plurals merit attention.

received by those who lived under the Old Dispensation (John 8,17) in terms proper to that Dispensation.³⁶

1,9-13: The *Logos* as Light for Those Who Believe in Him

The title for this section of the prologue speaks about the light which, as it comes into the world, illumines every man (v.9).³⁷ With the word "man"—*anthropos*—the believers of the *Logos* are introduced into the prologue in a general way.

The expressions *eis ta idia* and *hoi idioi* of v. 11 lend themselves to two interpretations: 1) the macroworld of the *Logos* which depends on him as creator; 2) the microworld of Judea in which the *Logos* passed his earthly life.³⁸

In v. 11 the word *paralambano* is used: "his own received him not" *hoi idioi auton ou parelabon*). The word is best taken as being ambivalent, referring both to the reception one gives a guest or partner³⁹ and the reception one gives a doctrine, as at 1 Cor 15, 1.

Vv. 12-13 constitute a complex of cruces.⁴⁰ The most striking thing about the

36 The suggestion, that John the Evangelist implicitly associates himself by name with John in order to provide the twofold witness required by the Mosaic Law, may provide light on the classic problem of the unattributed passage of witness at John 3,31-36. If these verses are taken as expressing the witness of John the Evangelist they could possibly be interpreted as the Evangelist's associating of his own explicit witness with the explicit witness of the Baptist but from the vantage point of one who sees the testimony of the Baptist in the context of the life of Jesus as whole. Thus 3,31-36 is a type of midrash on the final testimony of the Baptist, an actualization of the words of the John who was unable to see the fulfillment of the earthly life of the *Logos* by the John who was. For the background of John 3, 31-36 cf. J. Beutler, *Martyria. Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Zeugnisthema bei Johannes* (Frankfurter Theologische Studien 10; Josef Knecht; Frankfurt am Main 1972) 313-316.

37 On the much discussed interpretation of v. 9 cf. Theobald, 191-195.

38 Cf. the discussion in Theobald, 232-237. Theobald finds it problematic to decide which of the two meanings is to be preferred, judging from the Gospel alone: "Methodisch bleibt es zunächst problematisch, semantische Ambivalenzen im Prolog vom Corpus des Evs her aufzulösen" (234). The present writer would say that the ambivalence was intended.

39 Cf. Theobald, 233, n. 126.

40 Cf. the discussion in Theobald, 238-247. The interpretation in the present paper repeats the substance of a lecture given first at the Fifth Study Week on the Precious Blood on the theme "Blood and Anthropology: Rites and Cult" at the Precious Blood Centre Rome on November 29, 1984, and subsequently published in *Sangue e antropologia nella Liturgia II*, (ed. F. Vattioni; Atti della V Settimana; Edizioni Pia Unione Preziosissimo Sangue; Roma 1987)697-702.

verses is the odd string of negatives in v. 13: "...those not born from bloods nor from the will of flesh, nor from the will of man, but from God".⁴¹ The use of the plural for "blood" – "bloods" (*haimata*)—is also noteworthy: It sounds as odd in Greek as in English. The word "born", *egennethesan*, has been the occasion of a long-standing debate between those who defend the reading "born" in the plural, and those who defend the reading *egenethe*, "born", in the singular. The latter group of scholars, relying on a textual reading found mainly in the Fathers, think that the verse refers to the birth of Jesus Christ,⁴² whereas those who defend the reading of the majority of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament say that the verse refers to the spiritual birth of Christians.⁴³ The present interpretation will, of course, defend both interpretations, but basing itself on the plural reading and the primary meaning as referring to the spiritual birth of Christians, with the physical birth of Christ being deliberately alluded to.

The expression "not from bloods" (*ouk ex haimataton*) stands in implicit contrast with the singular, "blood" (*haima*) 19,34, where the blood of Christ is pictured as coming from the side of Christ. There can be no spiritual birth of Christians without the effect of Christ's expiatory death on the cross.⁴⁴

The words "nor from will of flesh" (*oude ex thelematos sarkos*) are to be understood with reference to 3,6, where birth from the flesh is contrasted with birth from the Spirit. The immediately preceding verse, 3,5, speaks of "water and the Spirit", and thus there is another allusion to 19,34.⁴⁵

41 "The process of the birth of a child according to the ordinary course of nature by the will of its parents, and especially of the father, is a parable of the birth of the children of God; but it is only a parable. In order to avoid confusion between the two, the divine generation must be expressed in a series of strong negatives" (Hoskyns, 146).

42 Cf.: Theobald, 172-173; J. Galot, "*Être né de Dieu*". *Jean 1,13* (Analecta Biblica 37; Rome 1969); I. de la Potterie, "La Mère de Jésus et la conception virginale du Fils de Dieu. Étude de théologie johannique", *Marianum* 40 (1978) 59-90.

43 Cf.: Hoskyns, 163-166; M. F. Wiles, *The Spiritual Gospel. The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (University Press; Cambridge 1960) 106.

44 "The Evangelist cannot write that the Christians were not born of blood (singular), because their birth does in fact depend upon a death which later he describes as involving the outpouring of blood (xix. 34)" (Hoskyns, 146-147).

45 Cf. I. de la Potterie, "Jésus et Nicodemus: de necessitate generationis ex Spiritu (Jo 3,1-10)", *Verbum Domini* (47 (1969) 209-210; B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel according to St. John* (reprint Eerdmans; Grand Rapids 1981) 50-51; Hoskyns, 213-215.

The words “nor form the will of man but of God” (*oude ek thelematos andros all'ek theou*) refer again to 19,34. At 19,25-27 the Christians are symbolized by the Disciple “whom Jesus loved” and are consigned to the care of the Mother of Jesus.⁴⁶ This giving of the Disciple to the Mother is done without any purely human intervention but because of the will of the Father who guides all the actions of Jesus.⁴⁷

The clustering of these allusions around the death of Christ suggests that the basic act where the Christians are born spiritually is there, and that they are born as a body of believers symbolized by the Disciple.⁴⁸ On the cross Christ gives “those who receive him” the “power” or “right” (*exousia*)⁴⁹ to “become children of God”, that is to say, “those who believe in his name” (1,12). The “becoming” refers to the act of baptism by which believers exercise their right or power.

But this explanation is not sufficient to explain the text adequately, for it does not explain how v.14 seems to presume v.13. Nor does it explain adequately the early and widespread tradition which saw in v.13 a description to the birth of Christ.⁵⁰ Hence it seems appropriate to see in v.13 a series of allusions which refer to the birth of Christ: “Not from bloods” alludes to the fact that the *Logos* had only one human parent.⁵¹ “Nor from the flesh” alludes to the role of the Spirit in the birth of Jesus.⁵² “Nor from the will of man [husband] but of God” alludes to the virgin birth of Jesus.⁵³

46 Cf. the discussion above in connection with 1,6-8.

47 “Il est frappant de constater qu'en dehors du prologue, le terme ‘volonté’ est toujours employé par Jean pour désigner la volonté de Dieu, la volonté du Père (4,34; 5,30; 6,38.39.40; 7,17; 9,31; 1 Jn 2,17; 5,14). Il ya deux exceptions, mais qui confirment la règle, en montrant la signification profonde de cet usage du mot ‘volonté’, là où Jésus déclare que ce n'est pas sa volonté qu'il cherche et accomplit, mais la volonté de celui qui l'a envoyé (5,30; 6,38). La volonté par excellence, c'est celle du Père; toute la vie humaine de Jésus est commandé par elle, et non par sa propre volonté humaine” (Galot, 119).

48 Cf. Hoskyns, 432.

49 On the meanings “power” or “right” for *exousia* cf. Zorell, cols. 458-460. Perhaps the distinction is inappropriate.

50 Cf. Hoskyns, 166: “...the singular **was born** is a corruption of the text, but a corruption that is neither unnatural nor unintelligent”.

51 Cf. A. Tosato, “Processo generativo e sangue nell'antichità (saggio di ermeneutica biblica)”, *Sangue e antropologia nella letteratura cristiana, II* (ed. F. Vattioni; Atti della (III) Settimana; Edizioni Pia Unione Preziosissima Sangue; Roma 1983) 643-696, especially 661-676.

52 Cf. Hoskyns, 164, who cites Tertullian, *De carne Cristi*, xviii: “Now this description is even more applicable to Him [Jesus] than it is to those who believe on Him”.

53 Cf. Hoskyns, 164-165. The connotation “husband” seems appropriate for the implied meaning in 1,13. John was well aware of this meaning for the word *aner*: cf. 4,16.17.18.

This secondary meaning suggests that there is an intrinsic nexus between the spiritual birth of Christians and the temporal birth of the *Logos*. The Christians are born spiritually analogously to the way that the *Logos* was born physically. In both of these births the Mother of Jesus, the Spirit, and the Father have essential roles. This is a subtle understanding of the verses, and could scarcely be achieved by anyone who was not previously in contact with the tradition embodying these truths. But this is in accord with the observation made at the beginning of this paper, that John's Gospel seems to have been written not to inform but to bring to belief or to deepen belief.

1,14-18: The *Logos* as *Sarx*

The final section of the prologue, vv. 14-18, must be understood in the context of Ex 33-34 and Sir 24.⁵⁴ Both Old Testament texts have to do with the Mosaic Law. With regard to Exodus, this relation is especially evident because of v.17, with its contrast between Moses and Jesus Christ, the Law being given through Moses and "grace and truth" through Jesus Christ. But it is also to be inferred from the reference to glory at Ex 33,18 (v.14). The remark at v.18 that no one has ever seen God can be traced to Ex 33,20. In contrast to Moses, who saw only God's "back", the *Logos* existed "with" (pros) God. And the expression "grace and truth" in v.14 possibly alludes to the "love and faithfulness" of Ex 34,6 (Hebrew).⁵⁵ With regard to the relation between the prologue and Sir 24, there are a number of verbal parallels or allusions, but perhaps the most striking is the use of the word *skene* and *kataskenoo* at Sir 8 and Jn 1,14.

This contrast between the *Logos* of v.14 and the Mosaic Law thus repeats the contrast between *Logos* and Law which characterized the implied meaning at vv. 1-5. In this connection it is useful to note the close connection which the prologue wishes to establish between the coming of the *Logos* who "became flesh" (*egeneto*) and the coming of "grace and truth" through Jesus Christ (*egeneto*).⁵⁶ In fact, the two main points of vv.14-18 seem to be: 1) to identify the eternal *Logos* with Jesus (v.14), and 2) to identify this *Logos* with the new Law replacing the Mosaic Law

54 Cf. Evans, 79-86.

55 For other Old Testament which may have relevance as background for John 1,14-18 cf. Evans, 86-99.

56 This connection has been noted by I. de la Potterie, *La vérité dans saint Jean*. Tome I. *La Christ et la vérité*, [(Analecta Biblica 73; Biblical Institute Press; Rome 1977) 165 cited by Theobald, 257, n. 243].

(v.17): Jesus is not a conveyer of the “grace and truth” of which v.14 speaks, he is “grace and truth” itself.⁵⁷

The pairing of *charis* and *aletheia* in v.14 may well correspond, in the context of the prologue, to the *phos* and *zoe* of v.4.⁵⁸

Again the Baptist appears as “witnessing”, at v.15. Here his message is cited as consisting of the words “This was he of whom I said, ‘The one coming after me ranks before me because he existed before me’”. He is presented with the words: “he witnesses and cries out”. The word “cries out” (*kegragen*) seems to reflect a present usage, paralleling the present tense of “witnesses” (*marturei*).⁵⁹

The deeper meaning of vv.14-18 can be sensed beginning with the word *sarx* in v.14. There is a certain tension between the word as it is used in v.14 and as it is used in v.13.⁶⁰ This tension indicates that the Evangelist was playing on nuances of the word. There is an even sharper contrast between the word as it is used in v.13 and the way it is used in chapter 6 of the Gospel, where it refers to the eucharistic body of Christ (vv.51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56).⁶¹ In 1,14 the word *sarx* refers to the identification which took place between the *Logos* and the human.⁶² The deeper meaning of vv.14-18 refers to the *Logos*’ becoming the eucharistic flesh. Just as the *Logos* becomes Jesus, and just as this *Logos* incarnate in Jesus becomes the new Law, replacing the Mosaic Law, so this new Law, concretely, is the eucharistic body of Christ.

The use of the verb with the most *sken*-in v.14 may also be susceptible to a eucharistic allusion, for in the Epistle to the Hebrews a eucharistic connotation for

57 Cf. Theobald, 256-258. “...der Mensch Jesus *ist* der Logos in Person” (Theobald, 248); “Nicht Mittler ist Jesus, der von dem, was er vermittelt, unterschieden werden kann, sondern Mittler und Gabe ist er ineins (Joh 14, 6)” (ibid., 258).

58 Cf. Theobald, 254-255. He points out that v.9 speaks of the “true light” *phos to alethinon*, and that the “abundance” (*perisson*) of life mentioned in Jn 10,10 is illumined by 1,16, “grace in place of grace” (*charis anti charitos*).

59 Cf. Zorell, col. 732.

60 Cf. Brown, I, 32.

61 The usage at 6,63 seems deliberately designed to highlight this contrast.

62 “Es [*sarx egeneto*] besagt, daß Gott als der sich offenbarende die Gestalt des Menschen annahm und sie nicht etwas bloß als Verkleidung trug, sondern mit ihr identisch wurde, damit die aus Gott Geborenen die *doxa* des Vaters erblickten, in den krassen und doch mißverständlichen Wunden wie im Gehorsam Jesu bis aus Kreuz” (E. Schweizer, “*sarx*”, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, VII (Kohlhammer; Stuttgart 1964) 140).

a word with the same root has been suggested.⁶³ The tabernacle imagery connected with this root, and the fact that this root is also used to express the idea of the tabernacle of the human body, make it an appropriate means of expressing the idea of the "tabernacling" of the *Logos* among men.⁶⁴ In Hebrews it would seem that the root is used to convey the idea of the "tabernacling" of the risen body of Jesus among men.

The argument for the implied presence of John the Evangelist used for vv.6-8 can be applied also in v.15. But in v.15 the argument is even more compelling, for the contrast between the scope of the Baptist's testimony, that which was before him and not that which was after him, is explicit: the presence of the Evangelist as witness is again felt, for the reality of the incarnation as well as for the reality of the eucharist.⁶⁵ Further, the use of the first person plural is introduced into the prologue (v.14—*etheasametha*: v.16—*elabomen*) precisely when the Baptist's witness becomes specified. Here the Evangelist is identifying himself with the community of which he is a member and joining in the witness given by the Baptist. In according with the implied meaning given to v.14, the suggestion here is that the Evangelist's witness, and that of his community,⁶⁶ through the writing of the Gospel, resumes the Baptist's witness and takes in all that is subsequent to it, including the eucharistic teaching of Jesus given in chapter 6.⁶⁷

The prologue thus ends, at vv.16-18, with the implied affirmation that Jesus Christ, the *Logos* incarnate, in his eucharistic flesh, is "grace instead of grace", the new "grace and truth" replacing the Mosaic Law. The various identifications of the surface meaning now find their fulfillment in the eucharist, the "body and blood" of Jesus. It is the command to consume this "body and blood" (*sarx kai haima*)

63 Cf. J. Swetnam, "Christology and the Eucharist in the Epistle to the Hebrews", *Biblica* 70 (1989) 79-82.

64 Cf. Evans, 82.

65 "...Die Augenzeugen, zu denen der Lieblingsjünger wie auch die Täufer... zu rechnen sind, bezeugen die Identität des fleischgewordenen Logos" (Theobald, 372).

66 The phrase "and we know that his witness is true" at Jn 21, 24 seems to imply that the community of the Evangelist had a hand in the final redaction of the Gospel, for John gives witness as "the disciple, but this witness is confirmed ("and we know that his witness is true"—*kai oidamen hoti alethes autou marturia estin*).

67 It is instructive to note that the same ambiguity attendant on the transition between the testimony of the Baptist in Jn 3,27-30 and the testimony to Jesus given in Jn 3,31 seems to be reproduced in the transition between 1,15 and 1,16. (Cf. the discussion in Theobald, 178-181.) The present paper argues that the Evangelist is speaking not only in 1,16-18, but also in 3,31-36.

which is to cause such scandal to the disciples of Jesus in chapter 6. The Christian eucharist is the true “metatext” of the Mosaic Law.

Summary

The present study has tried to present a unified interpretation of the prologue of John’s Gospel. If the methodology employed can perhaps be characterized as being “*sui generis*” the reason may be that the subject matter is “*sui generis*”. There is no question of proceeding bit by bit, “proof by proof”. The present study suggests an interpretation of the entire prologue. The study does not attempt a “proof” for what has been suggested; it has simply offered a number of indications which, to the present writer at least, command themselves as plausible 1) by reason of the unified view of the prologue which they represent and, 2) by the reason of their agreement with various aspects of the rest of John’s Gospel. One can only interpret the prologue as a whole on the presumption that it was written to make sense as a whole, and that the individual parts contribute to that sense. And since that presumption has been that John 1,1-18 is precisely a “prologue” the rest of the Gospel was consulted to elucidate obscurities.

Many of the aspects of the prologue indicated above have already been published elsewhere. Others are original contributions, as far as the present writer is aware: 1) the analysis of the reason why John the Evangelist does not want to be mentioned anywhere in the Gospel by his personal name “John” because he wishes to safeguard the priority he prefers for his role as “the beloved disciple”, symbol of the New Dispensation Believer; 2) the relation of John the Baptist to John the Evangelist in the prologue; 3) the allusion to the eucharist in 1,14; 4) the analysis of the relation between the spiritual birth of Christians and the physical birth of Christ in 1,12-13; but above all, 5) the systematic application of the idea that the prologue should be viewed as having at least two different but related meanings.

The study is obviously not intended to be a detailed exegesis of the prologue. But it is designed to be a framework within which such an exegesis can be made. This framework and the meanings it conveys cannot be assumed to be valid unless they are viewed as having been written and having been communicated against the background of a strong contemporary oral tradition about the basic truths of Christianity. And so the prologue remains to this day. It is a writing of marvelous depth and engaging simplicity, and it is designed to renew and deepen one’s faith

in the *Logos* and what he and his followers have achieved in this world, whether that world be of the first century or of the twentieth.

The present writer does not think it either impossible or unlikely that a fisherman like John, the son of Zebedee, is responsible for a Gospel noted for its depth and simplicity. Galilean fishermen, though presumably universally uneducated, were also presumably not universally unintelligent. With such material, the Spirit of the *Logos* could easily have produced an author of as subtle and as moving a work as the Gospel of John.

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Mario Cimosà, *Guida allo Studio della Bibbia Greca (LXX)*, (Società Biblica Britannica & Forestiera; Roma 1995), 272pp. ISBN 88-237-8007-1

This elegantly printed guide to the study of the Greek translation of what Christians of various denominations term "Old Testament" is timely indeed, and not only for speakers of Italian. Interest in this 'version' of such a collection of 'writings' is increasing (Cimosà's phrase on p.24 that "LXX vanno considerati come una letteratura originale che deve essere studiata in se stessa" even suggests perhaps that Septuagint studies should be considered already as an autonomous discipline. A position which may need to be nuanced). This can be seen from the contemporary publication of Cécile Dogniez, *Bibliography of the Septuagint. Bibliographie de la Septuagint. 1970-1993* published by E.J. Brill in 1995 (Understandably, there is no mention of this important instrument in Cimosà's monograph). Cimosà himself contributed a number of studies into the Septuagint, the more widely known being that on its prayer language, *La preghiera nella Bibbia Greca* (EDB; Rome 1992). In the present volume the Author offers some twenty pp. of essential bibliography covering general issues (pp.215-218), the specific writings (pp.218-231), grammar, syntax and lexicon (pp. 231-235). This students' guide (as Cimosà conceived of this work, p. 10) tends to focus on

issues of grammar, syntax and lexicon, though history and textual problems are not neglected.

There is another reason why interest in the Septuagint has seen new heights, and why publications of this kind are finding justification with publishers. There appeared in the world of Bible translation, ecclesial communities from Orthodoxy; these hold the Septuagint as the canonical version of the Old Testament. The present reviewer is aware of current debates about the 'Base Text' for translation purposes, debates which will one day come across solutions of compromise, but which still need efforts like Cimosà's to make the 'Greek Bible' better known among readers who are used to read the Old Testament mostly through translations of the Hebrew text. For the operators in the translation as well as in the exegetical fields, the study of the LXX has become, therefore, a must rather than a luxury which can be easily disposed of. In the rest of the following book review the reader will find a description, a commentary and a number of suggestions made in view of upgrading the quality of the services offered by this volume.

The title that the author has chosen for his publication defines its literary genre. This is meant to be a 'guide for the study' of the LXX corpus rather than an introduction offering general information. This guide is made up of three unequal parts. In the first part

Cimosa offers an introduction both to the corpus as a whole as well as to each 'writing' (pp. 13-65); then comes a first approach to its grammar, syntax and lexicon (pp. 67-136), and finally an anthology of textual and exegetical readings of chosen abstracts taken from most of the writings (pp. 139-204). In two of the three sections Cimosa offers a specialised and essential bibliography (pp. 13. 69-71) and footnotes where some of the more academic issues are discussed in more details. The third section constitutes Cimosa's personal contribution to guiding the reader into the intricate world of the version or rather of the individual writing under study. Here no bibliography is offered and the reader is referred to the works mentioned in the first part (cfr p. 139).

Issues of general nature that are treated in the first part include: the formation history of the corpus (pp. 13-16), the history of its use [The question of whether the LXX is inspired features high in this subsection. Cimosa avoids answering explicitly the question, but he leans towards giving a positive answer] (pp. 17-19), redaction history [What he terms "revisioni giudaiche delle traduzioni greche"], Christian editions, with special focus on Origene's *Hexapla* (p. 20), and finally the theology of the cluster [Cimosa's statement concerning the reason why this group of Scriptures should be considered as having a theology ("Se la traduzione greca dei Settanta è la più citata nel NT vuol dire

che quindi ha una sua teologia," p.20) may need some rethinking in view of the non-monolithic nature of the corpus, cfr note 55 for Kraft's objections to such umbrella expressions being used as 'Biblical translations' 'Biblical language', 'a peculiar Greek'. Cimosa himself writes of "traduzioni piuttosto che una traduzione" (p. 26). One may perhaps speak about a theology constructed *a posteriori* on the text of the various writing, although one may admit to the existence of translation strategies in the choice of vocabulary and syntax of the various translators; but do such strategies reflect a well defined theology constructed by the translators themselves? Can't we say that this theology existed already in the *Vorlagen*? The present reviewer considers such issues as needful of a deeper treatment in a Guide to LXX studies like this], and the relevance of LXX studies (pp. 21-25)].

The greater part of the General Introduction is taken by the introductions to the individual books (pp. 26-51). This presentation of, or guide into each writing is sometimes too sketchy to be really useful even though to each presentation the author adds an essential bibliography. The writer sometimes underlines the literary unity of the writing (so with Genesis), or the relation of the LXX recension to the Masoretic Text (cfr the Exodus introduction); or he surveys its textual criticism (so with Leviticus), or considers the level of

translation (Deuteronomy). One should note that Cimosà does not furnish a particular introduction to one and all writings as found in A. Rahlfs, *Septuaginta*, (Stuttgart 1935) [This is to be remedied to when when a second edition is prepared). Cimosà writes an introduction only to texts which reputedly create special difficulties for reading; he groups these under two headings: "The Pentateuch and the Historical Books" which include entries for Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, 1-2 Esdras, the Greek additions to the Book of Esther, Judith, Tobit, and the four books of Maccabees. The next cluster entitled "Poetic and Didactic Books" is made up of introductions to the Psalms, the Odes (Only "The Prayer of Manasseh" is discussed), Song of Songs, Job, Wisdom of Solomon, Qohelet, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Twelve Minor Prophets, Zechariah [No explanation is given for focusing only on problems in Zech 9-14], and Daniel or rather the Greek additions to the Hebrew original. For a quick reference of which books of the LXX are discussed one should consult p.268. Unfortunately, Cimosà's option of introducing only a selection of writings, affected his General Bibliography, for he included entries only on writings he discusses, while in a Guide one would expect to find at least some bibliographical reference on such books as 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezechiel, etc, though all

would understand the constraints of having to publish a book of affordable size and price.

The second part of the volume is a useful survey of special and not special aspects of LXX grammar, syntax and lexicon. The bibliography with which this part opens is substantial, with entries on grammars, studies on particular grammatical issues, lexica, concordances, and research monographs on aspects of lexicon and style. We should not expect an exhaustive manual on these topics since Cimosà promises to offer only 'osservazioni' on grammar, syntax [In the introductory note on the relationship of LXX syntax to that of classical Greek on the one hand and to the underlying Hebrew substratum on the other, the reader is not prepared for the writer's focusing in the third paragraph (p.96) on the Book of Revelation. Please note that the concluding inverted commas before the note number 37 must have fallen out.] and lexicon [The remarks on method on p. 122 merit to be read diligently by anyone studying LXX].

Then Cimosà offers short discussions on a small number of important terms/concepts [The bibliography never pretends to be exhaustive; on the term *agape* in Italian there is, for instance, Piero Coda, *L'Agape come grazia e libertà. Alla Radice della teologia e prassi dei cristiani*, (Città Nuova; Roma 1994) which may be useful notwithstanding its

theological stance.] by way of exemplifying how lexical analyses should be conducted. A similar demonstrative intention seems to have the anthology of about thirty short studies of specific texts, at times just covering one verse, on other times a much wider textual extension, in the third section of the volume. Each study consists of the Masoretic Text in translation, the LXX text, a translation in Italian of the Greek version, and a commentary. Each study merits to be read for its own sake. Perhaps one

should spell out better the methodology adopted. One would hope that a major publication be conceived with studies of the kind; it will be useful for translators and exegetes alike.

The author and the publishing house are to be congratulated for this book and this service rendered to study.

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