

# MELITA THEOLOGICA

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# THE SECTARIAN IN US. QUESTIONS ON THE QUESTION “WHAT IS A SECT?” IN EAST WEST PERSPECTIVE<sup>1</sup>

Edward G. Farrugia, SJ

Until before Vatican II the answer to the question what a sect is seemed to present, for many in the Catholic Church, no special difficulties. Whoever cut himself or herself off from the one true Church belonged, in ascending order of distance from the one true Church, to one of three categories: a) schismatics, b) heretics or c) sects. Schismatics had basically rescinded only communion while practically retaining the whole truth; heretics, while giving up some basic truths, had kept many others; and sects had disfigured the truth to such an extent that they could hardly claim to be Christians any longer, in spite of some Christian elements in their new beliefs and could be described as a Christian sect primarily in view of the Christian Church from which they broke off.

## *0. Formulating the problem*

Our concern here is to formulate a problem in view of a dogmatic aspect which has been insufficiently discussed - sects considered not in themselves, but insofar as they provide elements for a differentiation between East and West. Given such a methodological self-restriction, it cannot be the purpose of this brief contribution to discuss so many studies on the theme, much less so regarding the question of the definition of sect. The study of L. Greenslade, *Schism in the Early Church: What light can the past throw?* (London 1984) could here be mentioned, as representative.

### 1. Abbreviations:

ALGERMISSEN = K. Algermissen, *Konfessionskunde*, (Revised by H. Fries and others), (Paderborn 1969);

BOLSHAKOFF = S. Bolshakoff, *Russian Nonconformity*, (Philadelphia 1950);

HAUPTMANN = P. Hauptmann, “Symbolik der ostkirchlichen Sekten”, E. Hammerschmidt and others, *Symbolik des Orthodoxen und orientalischen Christentums*, (Stuttgart 1962) 92-119.

MERSH = J.L. Wieczynski (ed.), *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*, vols. 1-56, (Gulf Breeze, Fl 1976-1994).

It retraces the problem in patristics, showing its fluctuation in the concept of heresy, as well as of schism, which depended on that concept (pp. 18-20. 22. 28-29). For the Fathers the most fundamental distinction, spiritually and dogmatically, was that of being within or without the Church (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*); what was being taught outside the Church could not claim the same interest (pp. 18. 21).

Another representative study is that of K. Rudolph, who in his “Enige grundsätzliche Bemerkungen zum Thema Schisma und Häresie unter religionsvergleichendem Gesichtspunkt”, in: C.J. Bleeker et alii (ed.s), *Ex orbe Religionum*, (Leiden 1972), pp. 326-339, puts attempts to define a sect in the ample context of comparative religion. Taking his distance (Ibid., 329) from the term “*Offenbarungsreligionen*” (religions which appeal to a revelation), considered to be ambiguous, or preferring instead the term *Stifterreligionen* (religions which, contrary to *Volksreligionen*, or national-popular religions such as Hinduism, go back to a founder, such as Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed), Rudolph considers that, strictly speaking, the concepts of “heresy”, “schism” and “sect” are possible only in a *Stifterreligion* (pp. 327-328). In a *Volksreligion* one can reform rather the cult and thus form a new religious community, even if, in the context of a philosophy in the bosom of such a kind of religion, as in ancient India or in ancient Greece, one can reach sectarian formations. In effect, christianity has adopted the concepts of heresy, schism and sect from the philosophical tradition, rather than from the strictly religious tradition (Ibid., 329).

In the dynamics of *Stifterreligionen* an interpretation which deviates from that of the founder, or even contradicts it, may suffice to give origin to a new sect; therefore, through interruption of tradition (Ibid., pp. 330. 338). The cause of such interruption may be dogmatic, ethical, cultural, social and political (pp. 332-33). However, it would not be just to reduce every sect to a camouflaged social-political revolution.

This fascinatingly simple scheme has come to be challenged from various angles. We may here mention some of them.

- a) From a viewpoint of institutions, ecumenism and the recognition of parallel religious institutions as “sister Churches”<sup>2</sup> give us pause before using expressions

2. For the expression “sister Churches” see 2 John 1, 13; Vatican II’s decree on ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 14.

condemnatory of other religious groups instead of recurring to such descriptions as foster dialogue.<sup>3</sup>

b) If there are *anonymous Christians*,<sup>4</sup> that is to say people of good will who follow the dictates of their conscience, but who, without any fault of their own, do not belong to the true Church of Christ, one becomes wary of drawing all too stark a distinction even from the viewpoint of the inner voice of conscience. Traditionally one spoke of believers who belonged to the soul of the Church, though not to her body.

c) There has been a *shift from the epochal prevalence of theoretical reason to that of practical reason*.<sup>5</sup> While the hegemony of theoretical reason in the past degraded schism to a second-rate phenomenon, the shift to the practical induced by such factors as technological culture, have reversed the tendency and given dissent greater prominence. Thus, when theologians are disciplined by Church authorities, a whole sector of public opinion usually reacts by asking spontaneously whether the magisterium did not actually infringe on the freedom of expression of those censured.<sup>6</sup> Thus, a common if unfortunate attitude is to be against the Establishment, under which one subsumes the establishment Church, rather than look for the truth wherever it may be found.

And yet, when all is said, there is **one** truth and envisaged only one Church. It is thus thoroughly legitimate to ask what those factors or movements are which jeopardize this unity and whether they all impair it in the same way. As a preliminary condition of any serious dialogue the malady has to be diagnosed before remedies can be sought. Of course, in view of the current situation the very question of definition becomes fraught with unexpected complications. Thus, the unschooled believers of any one group may hold views not sanctioned by their Church authorities; so it has been suggested that heresy would then consist in **formalizing** one's own position while ignoring this very difference, i.e. between the catechism of their heart and the official catechism of their Church.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, schism is usually

3. Cf *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 11.

4. K. Rahner, "Anonymer und expliziter Glaube", *Schriften zur Theologie* XII, (Einsiedeln 1975) 83-84.

5. K. Rahner, "Schisma in der Katholischen Kirche?", *Schriften zur Theologie* IX, (Einsiedeln 1970) 435.

6. K. Rahner, "Häresien in der Kirche heute?", *Schriften zur Theologie* IX, 469.

7. Ibid., 462-464.

defined as refusing to obey the Church. Yet the concept of schism is much more relative than that of truth/heresy, even though the Church to which all owe obedience is one. The Great Western Schism (1378-1417) during which saints were to be found on both sides of the fence is a case in point.<sup>8</sup>

The same erosion of clarity is noticeable in the case of sects. There is even a preliminary need to distinguish between two terms sometimes used interchangeably: cult and sect. According to J.A. Saliba, a sect emerges when a group of people withdraw from an established Church, whereas cult recruits come from the various denominations and Churches.<sup>9</sup> That cult is a word with less negative implications than sects would be an incentive to abandon "sect" and adopt "cult", while making the necessary adjustments.<sup>10</sup> But the problem remains; whether there is such a thing as a sect in the negative sense of the word, comparable to the question what heresy or schism nowadays mean. Whether it would be advisable or not to adopt a different designation for purposes of dialogue is an important issue which, however, is not part of our question here.

In this article we shall first try to develop suggestions gleaned from a comparison of the factual uses made of the term "sect" and the realities these entail to reach a tentative definition of a sect. In the second part, this tentative definition is confronted with some phenomena from East and West so as to test the viability of the definition. The last section tries to revert the process and look at sectarianism rather than at sects, partly in order to understand the phenomenon of sects rather than simply condemn them, and partly so that the many open questions find a more fitting point

8. St. Catherine of Siena (+1380) did her part in persuading the Popes to return from Avignon, but St. Vincent Ferrer (+1419) and St. Colette of Corbie (+1447) sided at some time of their life with the antipope Benedict XIII (+1423); Y. Congar, "A propos des saint canonisés dans les Eglises orthodoxes," *idem, Chrétiens en dialogue*, (Paris 1964) 295. On pp. 305-306 Congar points out that the Catholic Church has included in her official liturgical books saints who have died separated from her.
9. J.A. Saliba, *Religious Cults Today: A Challenge to Christian Families*, (Liguori, Missouri 1983) 7-8. "Sects (like cults) have an elaborate ritual for initiating adult members into their community, but (unlike) cults seldom borrow from diverse religious traditions but rather reject any attempt to introduce foreign beliefs and practices into their religious system," *ibid.*, 8.
10. H.D. Reimer adds some light on the fluctuating terminology: "Religious groups which originate outside the Christian tradition do not count as 'sects' but as offshoots from other religions. In the USA the term 'cult' has appeared in the last few decades for those new groups with a high conflict potential which stand outside the mainstream of Christianity and are in fact hostile to the prevailing society and its cultural values"; *Idem*, "Sects", in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, edited by N. Lossky and others, (Geneva 1991) 914.

of reference in the concrete subject rather than in an objective definition. It thus tries to ask what Church members have in common with "sect" thus defined, be it by way of temptation or tendency.

### 1. Sect: What's in a name?

It has become notoriously difficult to draw the line between some sects and certain Churches, especially Free Churches.<sup>11</sup> As a consequence it has become difficult to give one satisfying definition of sect. Given this situation, we may as well start with **nominal** (not nominalistic!) definitions,<sup>12</sup> that is, take a cue from the way words are used to designate realities, because names are the carriers of the accumulated wisdom of the ages, a wisdom which in turn harks back to origins.

"Sect..., from Late Latin *secta*, organized ecclesiastical body, from Latin, way of life, school of thought, class of persons, from *sequi* to follow....: **1a:** a dissenting religious body, especially: one that is heretical in the eyes of other members within the same communion **b:** a group within an organized religion whose adherents recognize a special set of teachings or practices <the Pharisees have been called a sect within Judaism> **c:** an organised ecclesiastical body, specifically: one outside one's own communion <offered religious freedom to all sects except the Roman Catholics> **d:** a comparatively small recently organized exclusive religious body; especially: one that has parted company with a longer-established communion **2a** obsolete: a class, order, or kind of persons **b** archaic: a religious order **c** archaic: sex, so is all her sect – Shakespeare> **3a:** a separate group adhering to a distinctive doctrine or way of thinking or to a particular leader <fashionable... among many different sects of writers – L.S. Woolf> **b:** a school of philosophy or of philosophic opinion <the sect Epicurean – John Milton> as (1): party (2): an opinionated faction (as of a party <Trotskyism... and other independent communist sects

11. K. Keinath, "Freikirchen und Sekten", ALGERMISSEN, 682-683. "Free Churches" are either offshoots of a Church who reject the Church-State alliance of the Mother Church, or who go further and alter the creed. Since a sect sometimes develops into a Church, it is difficult to define sects from free Churches.
12. A nominal definition takes its cue from words and their factual use so as to trace them back to origins suggested by these verbal signposts.

– Jim Cork> (3): a school of opinion (as in science or medicine) <medical sects in ancient Greece> 4 obsolete: a body of followers: following.<sup>13</sup>

Given the fact that these many uses of the word sect may not be reduced to a least common denominator, we may at least try to elicit some common characteristics.

*1.1 General characteristics.* Sect is thus a word which ultimately derives from *sequi*,<sup>14</sup> to follow, rather than from *sectare*, to cut off, and says more about *human gregariousness* than *attempts to separate*; or rather, the latter trait is taken to be a consequence of the former. Sects come about because people feel attracted by the leader or a doctrine, which in turn not infrequently brings about secessions. And yet, this phenomenon is not restricted to religion, but is universal, and is to be found in politics, literature, economics, sports and what not.

*1.1.1 Religious characteristics.* Sects are usually judged to be such by a majority from which they break off and which considers them to be **dissenters** or **nonconformists**. Precisely for this reason they are often viewed *negatively*. As for the religious contents themselves, they can be analyzed in the light of criteria which may or may not be specifically religious.

(1) *Sociologically*, religious members of sects are often considered to be **truant**,<sup>15</sup> which in turn often serves as a pretext to suppress them. One need only remember the repressive measures meted out against Old Believers in seventeenth-century Russia and Old Calendarist in Greece this century.<sup>16</sup> The label “truancy” ascribes lack of sincerity to dissenters and thus considers their “martyrdom” to be half-suicide, half-farce, exhibitionism, self-righteousness and so forth.

13. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language*, III. Unabridged, (Chicago 1976) 2052.

14. See “*Setta*”, M. Cortelazzo/P. Zolli, *Dizionario etimologico della lingua Italiana*, V, (Bologna 1991) 1188.

15. A. Toynbee, *A Study of History*. Abridgement of volumes 1-6 by D.C. Somervell, (London 1949) 441-444.

16. When, in 1924, Constantinople adopted the reform which Pope Gregory XIII had introduced in 1582, into the Julian Calendar (whence the name of the new calendar: the Gregorian), nineteen monasteries on Mount Athos rejected the new calendar but remained in communion with Constantinople, the *Palaioperiologitai*, (Greek, “Old Calendarists”) under the leadership of Matthaios Karpathakis (+1950), separated themselves, from the Orthodox Church: Bishop K. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, (Harmondsworth; Middlesex 1963) 308-310.

(2) *Epistemologically*, sects' approach to reality has been compared to "segmentary knowledge",<sup>17</sup> or that kind of fragmentary access to the whole comparable to the segments of an orange: "you've seen one, you've seen them all." This epistemological viewpoint presents both advantages and disadvantages. It may be claimed that there is not more to reality than what is revealed to me in my segmentary approach to it, and yet, on the other hand, this claim to completeness is often bought by doing violence to the plurality of the real. The problem is compounded because being a concrete individual means having no other access to reality than that available from one's one stance ("hypostasis") in reality; only, "the whole in the fragment" of Christian theology<sup>18</sup> is a consequence of the incarnation of the Logos ("the Unlimited became Limited") and thus this stance is qualified all throughout by mystery which reaches me as a Word coming from outside my perspective. Rather than absolutizing one's privileged stance or viewpoint, one should rather seek to merge it with that of other individuals in the Church.

(3) *Theologically*, sects pose the problem of a "grammar of dissent", in analogy with J.H. Newman (1801-1890)'s grammar of assent, to face up with the problem of nonconformism in religion. In his *Grammar of Assent*,<sup>19</sup> Newman interprets the act of faith in terms of real assent, a wholehearted acceptance of God's truth for which one is ultimately prepared to lay down one's life, rather than in terms of mere notional assent which one gives to abstract propositions. Beyond Newman, the possibilities of dissent have been exploited primarily in the field of morality, where the urgency to act made it imperative to discuss where the urgency to act made it imperative to discuss probabilism, probabiliorism and what not. The absence of a fully developed ethos for loyal dissent as a chapter in the rules for thinking "in and with the Church"<sup>20</sup> has often left those who really had plenty of reason to

17. On segmentary knowledge see N. Luhmann, *Funktion der Religion*, (Frankfurt a.M. 1982) 242-243. Dioceses and parishes are examples of segmentations, otherwise differentiated, made necessary by a universal claim with particular implications; *ibid.*, pp. 106-107.

18. See H.U.v. Balthasar. *Das Ganze im Fragment. Aspekte der Geschichtstheologie*, (Einsiedeln 1963).

19. (London 1870).

20. The expression derives from St. Ignatius of Loyola: "Para el sentido verdadero que en la Iglesia militante debemos tener, se guarden las reglas siguientes...", Candido de Dalmases, *Ejercicios Espirituales: Introducción, texto, notas y vocabulario* (Santander 1987) 180.

protest against abuses in the Church, especially in the past, with no attractive alternative than leaving the Church.<sup>21</sup>

These various criteria, sociological, epistemological, theological, and others besides, are like so many questions which must be answered in order to develop a balanced typology of sects.

1.2 Thus far, we have not examined *sects* in their *specifically Christian* “contribution”. Actually, the New Testament uses the expression *hairesis* (heresy), translated in the Vulgate as *secta* or *haeresis* for a group which develops its own line, and the Greek word itself may refer to somebody’s attitude of being “choosey about truth”. The Sadducees (Acts 5, 17) and the Pharisees (Acts 15, 5; 26, 5) are designated as such groups. Most importantly, **Christianity itself** is described by its opponents as being a sect (Acts 24, 5; 28, 22). Perhaps we can follow the birth of sects within the Christian community at Corinth. Paul identifies four factions: those of i: Peter; ii: Paul; iii: Apollos; and iv: one that claimed special visions of Christ. The Apollo faction Paul castigates for its pretext to have special *wisdom*:... (1Cor 1, 17). When we consider that the two letters to the Corinthians develop the theme of folly for Christ’s sake (1 Cor 1, 13-30; 2, 2. 13-14; 2 Cor 11, 16-20), we already have an excellent definition of the sectarian in the moral-theological sense of the word: he is at the opposite pole to the fool in Christ. Imbued with the sense of his or her own importance, the sectarian is divisive of community through worldly wisdom, which destroys rather than builds up.<sup>22</sup>

1.3 *Ideal types*. This last characterization suffers from so many attempts to define sects: while it is suitable to describe the problem as such, it shows itself to be less serviceable when it is applied to concrete groups, because intentions notoriously elude the human grasp. Other characterizations, such as numbers, can also backfire. Does not V. Soloviev describe Christianity in the times of the

21. It is remarkable that one of the main moments of failure to listen to dissent has come to be known as Protestantism. R. McAfee Brown, while acknowledging that **part** of the historical Protestant witness originated in the abuses of the Medieval Church, asserts that the image of Protestantism as “protest against” fails to do justice to its positive import; idem, *The Spirit of Protestantism*, (Oxford 1974) 3-4. But all this goes to show how necessary it is to create **positive** areas of carrying out disputes. In this sense, modern-day ecumenism may be viewed as part of a global grammar of dissent.

22. K. Keinath, “Freikirchen und Sekten”, ALGERMISSEN, 659-661.

Antichrist as reduced practically to a sect, as far as membership is concerned?<sup>23</sup> Incidentally, long before Soloviev, the Gospel did just that (see Matt 24, 1-28; Mk 13, 1-23; Lk 21, 5-24).

Perhaps in view of several and elaborate attempts to classify sects according to predominant models<sup>24</sup> it might be more useful, in our context, to point to one model which has been indicated as more typical of our times. While Jonas' attempt at interpreting gnosticism in an existential key certainly does not render other classic works such as A.V. Harnack's and other more recent researchers' superfluous,<sup>25</sup> it has been taken up by modern theologians to describe our own age with its crisis about the role of the sexes as a "gnostic age".<sup>26</sup> This could perhaps throw some light why our age can seem like a New Age to not a few and how it could turn out to be fertile ground for sects. Now, gnosticism was basically a soteriological anthropology, that is, an interpretation of human beings in view of their call to salvation.<sup>27</sup> Its interest in the human did not prevent it from having a reductive anthropology, for the strictly material about humans was earmarked to be lost for ever.

A possible typology of sectarianism would thus take its cue from anthropology. Knowledge may be made to serve as a surrogate for salvation, for example, when one pretends to possess a special private revelation,<sup>28</sup> or else rationalizes and encroaches on mystery, which is thus reduced to a mere riddle. The rigorism which

23. VI. Soloviev, "Kurze Erzählung vom Antichrist", In: *Deutsche Gesamtausgabe der Werke von Wladimir Solowjew*, VIII, L. Müller and others (ed.s), (Munich 1979) 259-294.
24. F.W. Schluckebier, *Gesunde Lehre und Irrlehren*, (Wuppertal 1964); for a short overview see K. Keinath, "Freikirchen und Sekten," ALGERMISSEN, 662-665. A work which has left a deep imprint on the discussion is that of the Heidegger disciple, H. Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, I (Göttingen 1934); II: (Göttingen 1954); see also his "Typologische und historische Abgrenzung des Phänomens der Gnosis," K. Rudolph (ed.), *Gnosis und Gnostizismus*, (Darmstadt 1975) 626-676
25. A. Darby, "Recension ibes: Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantibes Geist* 1," imk. Rudolph, *Gnosis und Gnostizismus*, pp 374-386, especially p. 386.
26. W. Kasper, *Der Gott Jesu Christi*, (Mainz 1982) 174. 224 and 312.
27. A. Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, I, (Freiburg i. Br. 1979) 188. 192. As A. Orbe has shown, strictly speaking, the only docetists among the Gnostics were the Valentians; see A. Orbe (ed.), *Il Cristo*, I, (Firenze 1985) xxiii. For the relationship of docetism to gnosticism see "El docetismo gnosticó," *Cristología Gnóstica: Introducción a la soteriología de los siglos II y III*, I, (Madrid 1976) 380-412.
28. A. Orbe, *Christología Gnóstica*, II, (Madrid 1976) 533-534.

characterizes sects narrows down the choices of the will into a false "hierarchy of goods", in which a secondary good becomes top priority, or worse, in which a false good becomes absolute, as in libertinism. Thus, one of the possible ways of classifying sects is yielded in a comparison between a Christian anthropology and the reductive anthropology characteristic of sects. The scientific elaboration of such a sectarian anthropology remains to a large extent a desideratum. For example, our treatises on the Church do not usually feel obliged to discuss sects at some length, and that is as if a treatise on health would have nothing to say on illness!

## 2. *Confronting realities*

Since definitions, or even descriptions, can only help us up to a point, we should be well-advised to turn to concrete manifestations of how sects were formed. Perhaps they can bring us farther in our attempt to understand them. Since a comparison between the formation of sects in the West and that of sects in the East is precisely what is missing from so many studies on sects, it would be worthwhile to pursue precisely this particular aspect of the theme. Naturally, since the field of research is enormous, we can here only draw some conclusions as to method while drawing upon previous studies.

If sects relate to Churches as illness to health, then one would expect sects to reveal, in their own distorted way, something about the essence of Church and of the relationship obtaining between the particular Churches themselves. Now, the relation between ecclesiastical reality in East and West has been described insightfully along these lines: in the East, Church and its theology are characterized by the *primacy of the Spirit*, with the further stress laid on seeing and vision, whereas, in the West, there is a corresponding *primacy of the Word*, which leads to a keen sense of hearing and listening to the Word of God.<sup>29</sup> Whereas in the healthy person sight and hearing are coordinated, on the contrary, in the sick organism one would expect that, as a result of disintegration, vital functions would become dissociated and would thus enter in competition with one another.

*a) In the West.* An example of a medieval sect which lends itself for illustrative purposes is that of the Waldenses, which eventually developed into the Evangelical

29. H.U.v. Balthasar, "Sehen, Hören und Lesen in Raum der Kirche," *Sponsa Verbi*, (Einsiedeln 1971) 484-501.

Waldensian Church with a creed of Calvinistic inspiration. Thus, with sects such as these in mind Dante admonishes:

Siate, Cristiani, a muovervi più gravi:  
non siate come penna ad ogni vento  
e non crediate ch'ogni acqua vi lavi.  
Avete il novo e 'l vecchio Testamento  
e 'l pastor della Chiesa che vi guida:  
questo vi basti a vostro salvamento.<sup>30</sup>

The solution Dante envisages, like the doctor's prescription, tells us succinctly wherein to his mind the sickness lay. Significantly, the poet suggests that the revelation contained in the Old and New Testaments suffices, as the Waldenses claimed, but only so long as interpreted by the magisterium of the Church. In his "On the Late Massacre in Piemont" (1655), written in their defence, J. Milton refers to this unadulterated purity of revelation which the Waldenses claimed to possess,<sup>31</sup> a claim which they justified through the primacy of the Word of God.

As for the reference to water – not just any water cleanses! – this is a gibe at a favourite thesis among sects and their revision of the universality of salvation. Salvation becomes dependent on belonging to an elitarian sect, with its claim to exclusivity translated into a rejection of infant baptism.<sup>32</sup> To this Luther has given an answer, reflecting the discussions in connection with sects of his time such as the Anabaptists. In Luther's own explanation, one does not ask for baptism because one is sure of faith, but because it corresponds to God's will.<sup>33</sup>

30. Paradiso, v, 73-79, *La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri*, III, commented by L. Pietrobono, (Turin 1960), "Christians, be slower to move;/ do not be like a feather in the wind./ and do not believe that every water cleanses// You have the Old and New Testaments/ and the shepherd of the Church to guide you;/ let this suffice for your salvation;" *Dante: The Divine Comedy*. A new prose translation with an introduction by H.R. Huse, (New York 1965) 352. The fifth canto has as a theme "Compensation for Broken Vows", and, as it turns out, the Waldenses, a movement which goes back to the preaching of Peter Waldo (Twelfth century), rejected oaths.
31. "Even them who kept Thy truth so pure of old/ When all our fathers worshipt stocks and stones/  
Forget not...;" F.T. Palgrave and J. Press, *The Golden Treasury*, (London 1968) 51.
32. For the rejection of infant baptism on the part of the Waldenses see H. Densinger and A. Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, (Barcellona 1976) nos 793. 794.
33. K. Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?*, trans. by G.R. Beasley-Murray, (London 1963) 115.

Naturally, in the West, we come across sects which stress rather a direct access to the Spirit so as to be able to side-track the magisterium of the Church. Such negative elements, along more positive ones, were to be found among certain members of the religious movement of the *alumbrados* (“enlightened ones”) who flourished in Spain towards the end of the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. In 1527 St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) was suspected for a time to be one of them, which perhaps explains why, in spite of his tender devotion to each of the three Persons of the Trinity, he finishes his *Spiritual Exercises* with the Ascension and thus leaves out the descent of the Spirit in Pentecost.

In a famous passage of his *Autobiography* Ignatius makes the astounding claim about himself: “Had there been no Scripture which teaches us these matters of faith, he would have been prepared to die for them, if only on the token of what he had seen.”<sup>34</sup> This immediacy to God, comparable to St. Francis’ experience when the crucifix at San Damiano talked to him, is in line with the Eastern Doctrine of deification, or the progressive becoming like God, which, far from rendering Church mediation through her teaching and sacraments superfluous, makes it indispensable as a mediation to immediacy with God. Instead of ignoring the magisterium, Ignatius speaks of rules for being in tune “with, and in, the Church,” and sheds precious light on how to distinguish between the good and the bad spirits that move us.

Dealing with sects in the West which emphasize the Spirit or his illumination, one has to ask whether they were not meant as a charismatic corrective to a sterile orthopraxis which largely, however, left the faith intact, except in the fringes of that particular religious movement. Or one has to ask whether, in the case of a Western group which dogmatically stresses Spirit at the expense of the Word, whether it is not the exception which proves the rule. At any rate, in the West, sects tend to show a special interest in revelation, closed with the death of the apostles, but which sects believe to have been extended to their founder, in one way or another. Thus, the books of the sect-founders may come to be honoured as being on a par with Scripture, as in the case of the J. Smith’s (+1844) “Book of Mormon”. By implication, Scripture is then degraded to being a book that is incomplete and

34. “Si no hubiese Escritura que nos enseñase estas cosas de la fe, él se determinaría a morir por ellas, solamente por lo que ha visto;” Ig. Iparraguirre and C. de Dalamses (eds), “Autobiografía”, *San Ignacio de Loyola: Obras Completas*, (Madrid 1982) 108; cf K. Rahner, “Rede des Ignatius von Loyola an einen Jesuiten von heute”, idem, *Schriften zur Theologie XV*, (Einsiedeln 1983) 374-375.

that can at best be used as a source book from which to prove the doctrines of the new sect.<sup>35</sup>

*b) In the East.* The same need to establish priorities in the relationship between Word and Spirit, as part and parcel of the revelation coming from the trinitarian God is also to be found among Eastern sects.<sup>36</sup> Here we find a certain emphasis on the Spirit and his “goods”, which includes tradition and the various ways through which it expresses itself. No wonder, then, that we come across religious symbolism aplenty among the Eastern sects, as their names already show.<sup>37</sup> Where sects present a deviation from Orthodoxy itself the bridges that still stand, or that still stand broken, are eloquent indeed as a warning of jeopardized communion.

The *Khlysty*, appeared somewhat earlier than the *Staroverы* (Russian for “Old Believers”), and are thus Russia’s oldest still surviving sect,<sup>38</sup> or at least the earliest

35. K. Keinath, “Freikirchen und Sekten,” ALGERMISSEN, 666-672.
36. We follow the following attempt at ordering Russian sects, which serves as a good basis for further discussion: “What characterizes the different types of sects of the Eastern Church can be gauged by their attitude towards the problem of the relationship between Word and Spirit. The Russian *Old Believers* and the *Old Calendarists* in Greece represent, from the standpoint of Orthodoxy, a deviation to the right. For them, the written word of Church tradition is the only bearer and mediator of the Spirit and, as such, it is beyond the possibility of reform through Church regulation and reform. The *Khlysty* (“God-people”) form an extreme deviation to the left: in their eyes, the only thing that counts is the ecstatic experience of the Spirit in the heart of the faithful. With the *Dukhobors* (“Spirit-wrestlers”) there is a corresponding emphasis on the Spirit as inner light. Later on, the “God-people” added an arbitrary interpretation of Church writings, as may be gathered by the sect which sprang up from their midst, that of the *Skoptsy* (“White Dove”). The teaching of the *Molokans* (“Spiritual Christian Milk Drinkers”) built, from the start, on a spiritualizing and allegorizing interpretation of Scripture. Through the *Russian Gospel-Christian-Baptists* a naive biblicalism was now introduced. The numerous other sects, which frequently disappear just as quickly as they originate,... under one of the groups mentioned here;” HAUPTMANN, 92 (trans. and underlings by me).
37. In his *Pravoslavie, Rimo-Katolicesvo, Protestantizm i Sektanstvo*, (Izdanie Svajto-Troskoj; Sergivoj Lavrie 1992) 188, Protoierej Mitrophan Znosko-Bopovskij says that Russian sects, with the exception of the Raskol and its derivatives, are not in organic continuity with orthodoxy because they have been introduced from outside, but says nothing about the wealth of symbolism of the former group.
38. For a short survey of sects see J. Gründler, “Orthodoxe Sekten”, *Lexikon der christlichen Kirchen und Sekten*, II, (Vienna 1961) 1030-1032. Some of the earlier sects foreshadow, in the various values they assign Scripture and Tradition, much of later sectarianism. See G. Fedotov, “The First Russian Sect” (=the *Strgolniki*, Russian for “those who shear”) *The Russian Religious Mind*, IV, (Belmont, MA 1975) 113-148.

of the mystical sects.<sup>39</sup> They often described themselves as *Bozij Ljudi* (Russian for “God’s people”), but, given their peculiar christology, a more accurate designation for them is *Christovoverie* (Russian for “Christ-faithful”), whereby in the process of verbal assimilation the *r* was slurred into *l*.<sup>40</sup> Their christology was adoptionist, i.e., the Khlysty did not believe that Christ was the son of God by nature, but that the spirit of God came to dwell in him, as he can dwell in any of the true faithful. Their origins go back to 1645,<sup>41</sup> when a farmer, Danila Filippov, declared himself to be God the Father and adopted a fellow-worker as Christ the Son. With their penchant for mysticism and asceticism, they formed an easy target for caricature, as their polemical designation, “scourgers”, demonstrates.<sup>42</sup>

The Old Believers started in 1653 as a protest against Nikon’s reforms, who had them condemned in the synod of 1666–1667. A comparison between these two practically contemporaneous sects shows the whole breadth of Russian sectarianism, ranging from the extreme right reaction of the Old Believers who sought refuge in the written letter of tradition to that of the Khlysty, who gave up much of what made up that tradition to abandon themselves to the Spirit.<sup>43</sup> An offshoot of the Khlysty, the *Skopsty* (Russian for “castrated”) made sexual abstention even more rigid when Andrei Ivanov (+1832) enjoined castration as a means toward becoming “eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom” (Matt 19, 12).<sup>44</sup> Actually, physical mutilation was not so central to their doctrine; spiritual castration, or sexual abstinence, sufficed for probably most of the members. As a matter of fact, the sect preferred to be called “White Doves” (*Nelye Golubi*).<sup>45</sup> More typical was the divine veneration accorded Kondratii Selivanov, the name adopted by Ivanov, as the second incarnation of God. Besides, Selivanov’s collaborators Akulina Ivanovna and Alksandr Shilov bore the title, respectively, of “Mother of God” and “John the Baptist”.

39. BOLSHAKOFF, 83; on p. 107 he says of one of the earlier sects: “The Judaizers, it may be said, never disappeared in Russia.”

40. G.E. Munro, “Khlyst”, *Mersh* 16 (1980) 150. The process took place over the general designation of them as *Khristovshchina* (literally, the “company of Jesus”), which became *Khlystovshchina*.

41. S. Bolshakoff gives the date of 1631 when Danila Filippov proclaimed himself to be God Sabbath; BOLSHAKOFF, 83.

42. “Khlyst” in Russian means whip or the scourge used for self-discipline.

43. G.E. Munro, “Khlysty”, *Mersh* 16 (1980) 150.

44. HAUPTMANN, 110.

45. P. D. Steeves, “Skopsty”, *Mersh* 35 (1983) 171. 175; BOLSHAKOFF, 93.

As opposed to the mystical sects of the Khlysty and the Shoptsy, the *Dukhobortsy* (Russian for “Spirit-wrestlers”), as their opponents called them, though the sect-members were quick to turn it to their own advantage: fighters for the Spirit. With the Khlysty they reject the Trinity, for they claim that the Son of God revealed himself as Sophia (wisdom) in the Old Testament, whereas the New Testament ushers in the age of the Spirit.<sup>46</sup> Still, they prefer to be called “Christians of the Universal Brotherhood”. Active since the middle of the eighteenth century in what is now called the Ukraine, they are a rationalistic sect<sup>47</sup> which rejects the sacramental structures of the Church and any Church organization and are of pacifistic convictions. No wonder that Lev Tolstoj (+1910) came to their defence in his 1899 novel, *Resurrection*.<sup>48</sup> Many of them settled in Canada, whence they are more known, in English, as *Dhukhobors*.

When Simeon Uklein, son-in-law of one of the early Dukhobor leaders, N. Pobirokhin, revolted against his father-in-law’s contempt for the Bible, the *Molokans* (from Russian “moloko” for milk) began to form as a group. They called themselves “True Spiritual Christians,” but, since they drank milk during the fasting-time when milk was prohibited by the Orthodox Church they were dubbed by their opponents “Milk Drinkers”. This they interpreted along the lines of the spiritual milk St. Paul speaks about (1 Cor 3, 2),<sup>49</sup> a typical example of their spiritual exegesis; thus, baptism, too, was interpreted as listening to the Word of God. Not only was there a sustained effort to interpret the Bible according to the inner inspiration of the Spirit, but the Bible was their only authority and, in their rejection of rites and sacraments, their liturgy was reduced to Scripture readings and hymns.<sup>50</sup> This in turn led the *Khlysty* to develop a hermeneutic of their own, albeit a very arbitrary one. It was only much later on, with the *Russian Evangelical Christian Baptists*, a movement which draws its inspiration from the Baptists in the West, that there was a sustained effort at giving biblical interpretation pride of place, even if the interpretation itself was naive.<sup>51</sup>

46. BOLSHAKOFF, 104.

47. BOLSHAKOFF, 97-112 discusses them as “Russian ‘Protestant’ Sects”.

48. I. Avakomovic, *Mersh* 10 (1979) 30-33.

49. A.S. Beliajeff, “Molokane”, *Mersh* 23 (1981) 22.

50. BOLSHAKOFF, 107.

51. See F.H. Epp, “Mennonites in the Soviet Union,” and A.Q. Blane, “Protestant Sectarians in the First Year of Soviet Rule,” in R.H. Marshall (ed.), *Aspects of Religion in the Soviet Union*, (Chicago 1971) 285-299 and pp. 301-322 respectively.

In a sense, flouting the rules is endemic to the very life of sects. In Russia, religious freedom was only at the beginning of the century (1905), so that sects were quite accustomed to lead an underground existence. This stood them in good stead in the times of communist repression, so that new sects were formed. Little wonder, then, that the exegesis of these “underground groups” would be an “underground exegesis”.<sup>52</sup>

The relationship of the Word to Spirit is seen in a new light when we turn to the most famous Raskol(Schism) of Russian history, the Old Believers (staroveri). It arose in a dispute over Patriarch Nikon (1605-1681)’s reform of the liturgy in the seventeenth century.<sup>53</sup> The basis on which millions of Orthodox separated from their mother Church might seem flimsy to a Westerner.<sup>54</sup> The exact point of dissent was not the need of the reform, but Nikon’s exclusive orientation on Greek models. Thus the Greeks had changed the two fingers, the forefinger and the middle finger, used to make the sign of the cross and interpreted as symbol of Christ’s two natures, into three fingers by the addition of the thumb, now interpreted as the symbol of the Trinity. But, since many had grown accustomed to use five fingers anyhow it seemed as though one doctrine was being abandoned for the sake of that of another (the five fingers, separated properly, stood for both dogmas).<sup>55</sup> Nikon’s orientation to Greek Orthodoxy clashed with the messianic-eschatological “Third Rome Theory”. So, as P. Meyendorff has pointed out, the question was not so much liturgical as eschatological: Nikon was coming to terms with Constantinople, the second Rome, badly compromised by making peace with Rome at the Council of Florence (1439), when he should have been consolidating the last bastion of

52. The sects which arose under communism are known as *Krasnodrakonovtsen* (“Red-Dragon-Fighters”) as they considered the Soviet Government to be the red dragon of the book of Revelation (12,3). See Fr. Heiler, *Die Ostkirchen*, (Munich 1971) 78.
53. P. Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual and Reform: The Liturgical Reforms of Nikon in the 17th Century*, (Crestwood, NY 1991) 39.
54. “On the surface the issues seemed trite: the way of making the sign of the cross, whether processions should march west or east, an additional letter in the name Jesus, the repetition of ‘Alleluia’ twice or three times, the number of loaves on the Holy Table”, G. Dogulas Nicoll, “Old Believers”, *Mersh* 25 (1981) 230. On the double Alleluia see G.P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, II, (Belmont, Massachusetts 1975) 259-260. For some of the premisses of Old Believers which seek to understand them from the inside see B. Uspensky, *The Semiotics of the Russian Icon*, (trans. by P.A. Reed), (Lisse 1976) 15-16, 27-30.
55. P. Hauptmann, “Altgläubige – Raskol”, *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, (Freiburg i. BR.<sup>3</sup> 1993) 465-467.

orthodoxy, Moscow, after which there would be no “Fourth Rome”.<sup>56</sup> The Old Believers, who insisted on the old ritual, came to be known as *staroobradny* (“Old ritualists”), but were dubbed by their opponents *Raskolniki* (“schismatics”).

Irony of ironies! While the *casus belli* of two versus three fingers could splinter up the Roman Catholic Church today into countless sects with greater substantial differences, the Old Believers soon broke up into the *popostvy* (with priests or “priestists”) and the *bezpopostvy* (without priests or “priestless”). Among the latter, the liturgical omissions which had to be made – most unwillingly, it is true, but inevitably – by far surpassed any liturgical reform in the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>57</sup>

In spite of the fundamentalism of the word of tradition in the *Raskomliki*, one cannot ignore a remarkable literary creativity. In the second generation, we come across it in the literary productions associated with the Vyg commune, the stronghold of the *bezpopostvy* set up on the shores of the Vyg river by Andrew and Simeon Denisov in 1695.<sup>58</sup> But already the first generation produced a leader of the calibre of Prototyp Petrov Avvakum who wrote the first autobiography, in the modern sense of the word, in Russian literature. In it he depicts himself as a saint and adopts the genre of the Saint’s life. He depicts himself as a *fool in Christ*<sup>59</sup> and his opponents as consorting with the Antichrist.

So they were seated. And I walked over to the door and fell down on my side: “You sit there and I lie here”, I said to them. So they laughed: “Our archpriest is a fool! and he does not revere the patriarchs!” And I said: “We are all fools for Christ’s sake! You are glorius, we are dishonoured! You are strong, we are powerless!”<sup>60</sup>

It is this theme of *sophia*-folly which is central to his autobiography. Thus, folly is ripe in Russian sectarianism. However, already the combination of rationalism and spiritual exegesis would give us pause, for example, not to see in

56. P. Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual and Reform*, 223 and 226-227.

57. HAUPTMANN, 99-101.

58. G. Douglas Nicoll, “Old Believers,” *Mersh* 25 (1981) 233.

59. This well-known category of sanctity, so typical of Russian spirituality, enabled inspired people to dissemble their criticism of the State or of the Church under the guise of folly.

60. J. Børtnes, “Sainthood and Submission: The *Life* of the Archpriest Avvakun and the Russian Literature in the Seventeenth Century”, *Visions of Glory: Studies in Early Russian Hagiography*, (English Transalton by J. Børtnes and P.L. Nielsen) (Oslo 1988) 274.

the Molokans a simple Western-type sect in which the Word predominates at the expense of the Spirit. "Like the Soviet Orthodox," wrote S. Bolshakoff, "the Soviet Baptists are strict traditionalists. They have no use for modernists who want to make Christianity acceptable to unbelievers by stripping it of miracles and compromising the divinity of Christ".<sup>61</sup> In the elaboration of a typology of sectarianism in East-West perspective, the analogical differences of movements with the same name remains one of the major reference points towards answering such questions as to Russian idea, or soul, or, in other words, Russian identity in its analogical difference with other forms of Christianity. Like love, which is only one of its forms, folly, more than any ecumenism, will unite East and West.

c) *A Common Heritage.* The recent discovery of the *Cologne Mani Codex* (CMC) has helped shed new light on *Manichaeism*, a sect capable of establishing undercurrents between East and West. "Manichaeans" was a term often used indiscriminately for "heretic" in the Middle Ages. In this codex, Mani (+276) is depicted as a leader ("the head") of the Christian sect of the Elchesiates.<sup>62</sup> A patristic scholar such as H. Kraft has dismissed this sect as a phantastical fabrication and reduces its reality to the influence exercised by the *Book of Elchesai*,<sup>63</sup> written in Jewish-Christian quarters in the Persian Empire. At any rate, its Christian veneer explains the fascination it could exercise on St. Augustine, held in its thrall as an *auditor* for about 8-10 years.<sup>64</sup> Manichaeans' participation at the Christian Eucharist<sup>65</sup> was a way of eluding episcopal control, their own "eucharist" consisting in eating foods prepared by the *auditeores* or beginning candidates to full membership.<sup>66</sup> In

61. BOLSHAKOFF, 127.

62. R. Camron and A.J. Dewey, *The Cologne Mani Codex*, (Missoula, Montana 1979).

63. H. Kraft, *Kirchenväterlexikon*, (Munich 1966) 183-184. Quite different is the conclusion W. Brandt reaches in his *Elchesai: Ein Religionsstifter und sein Werk*, (Amsterdam 1971) 167: "The man, whose work and style we have tried to bring to light in the sections of the present work, is a founder of a religion" (my translation).

64. A. Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, 2/1, (Freiburg in Br. 1986) 199-200 and 215. "According to the CMC, Manes seems to have belonged to a Christian baptist sect, more precisely the Elchesiates. Consequently, his teaching could be regarded as Christian heresy... Manes had no intention of displacing Christ from (the) centre, nor of imposing his own name on his supporters...;" A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2/1 (trans. by P. Allen and J. Cawte), (London 1987) 174 and 189.

65. A. Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus in Glauben der Kirche* , 213-214.

the case of the related Bulgarian sect of Bogomolism, its influence on the Western Cathars is well attested.<sup>66</sup>

### 3. *Sectarian Tendencies*

One of the reasons why “sect” proves so elusive to define is due to the **relativity** of the concept. But there are undercurrents of folly-wisdom which at least can help specify the values at stake in sects.

#### a) *The Unlucky Faust, the Master and Margarita.*

One such cultural undercurrent, fraught with philosophico-theological implications, is the legend of *Faust*. Much points to the likelihood that gnosis started **after** the christian era but **before** the New Testament was committed to writing. Given the anti-Jewish bias of gnostics (e.g., the favourite thesis that Yahweh is the “bad God”) and its apocalyptic tenor (probably because it was a movement which took off the ground after 70AD when Jerusalem was captured), all this makes it plausible that the Samaritan Simon Magus would be considered to be the founder. Depicted in Scripture (Acts 8, 9-25) as a sorcerer who, once baptized, sought to acquire charisms by paying for them, he is described by St. Justin (+c. 165) and St. Irenaeus (+c. 200) as a founder of a sect; but debate has concentrated on whether St. Justine did not mistake Simon Magus with Simon of Gitta, who lived much later.<sup>67</sup> In the beliefs elaborated in this sect, Simon Magus had met Helen (*selene* means moon; the latter had an epistemological role in Aristotle’s cosmology of the Unmoved Mover) in a brothel in Tyre and she became his companion, *Ennoia* (thought). In gnostic systems *Sophia* is the daughter of Ennoia’s flirting with the deity. Simon’s

66. See S. Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, (Cambridge 1947); A. Rigo, *Monaci Esicasti e Monaci Bogomili*, (Firenze 1989); P. Eleuteri and A. Rigo (ed.s), *Eretici, dissidenti, Musulmani ed Ebrei a Bisanzio: Una raccolta eresiologica del XII secolo*, (Venezia 1993); Y. Stoyanov, *The Hidden Tradition in Europe: The secret history of medieval Christian heresy*, (London 1994) xvi-xviii.

67. E. Ammann, “Simon le Magicien”, *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, xiv/2, col. 2130-2140, especially col. 2137. Even if the older view that all gnostic religion derives from Simon Magus is untenable, his name remains a first and necessary point of reference until more light is thrown upon a research -area, which, like gnosticism, bristles with question-marks. see J. Ménard, *De la gnose au manichéisme*, (Paris 1986) 28-32; K. Rudolph, *Gnosis*, (trans. by R. McLachlan Wilson), (New York 1983) 294-298.

showdown with St. Peter in the Roman forum led to his being called *faustus*,<sup>68</sup> a euphemism (on the model of the euphemistic name “Eumenides” or “gentle goddesses” for the Furies): The Unlucky One is called the “lucky one”, Faustus.

Goethe’s Faust is depicted as a sophist,<sup>69</sup> who like Simon Magus really tries to have spirit under control by magic, who however truly yearns for a divine revelation.<sup>70</sup> He finds the acme of Wisdom in John’s Prologue, but reduces the Word at the beginning to activity, *Tat*, act.

M. Bulgakov’s *Master i Margerita* takes up Goethe’s theme (Gretchen was Faust’s Margherita in *Faust*).<sup>71</sup> But it is not simply a retelling of Goethe’s story in the Soviet Russia of the late 1920’s or early 1930’s.<sup>72</sup> There is a reversal of roles: it is Margarita who goes down to hell in search of the Master, an apparent Ieshua (Jesus) figure. Here there is only an apparent paradox, for it is when we search for Christ that He finds us. Interestingly enough for our study of sects, the critic Latunsky describes the Master as a “militant and Old Believer.”<sup>73</sup>

68. M. Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, 2, (trans. by W.R. Trask), (Chicago 1982) 375; also: G. Quisopel, “Faust: Symbol of Western Man,” *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 35 (1966) 241-265.
69. See, for example, “Daß ich nicht mehr mit saurem Schweiß / Zu sagen brauche, was ich nicht weiß,” (“That I need not work and woe/ Go on to say what I don’t know”), Part I, lines 380-381, *Goethe’s Faust*, (trans. by W. Kaufmann) (New York 1990) 94-95.
70. “Wir sehnen uns nach Offenbarung / Die nirgends würdger und schöner brennt/Als in dem Neuen Testament...”; “We long for the light of revelation/Which is nowhere more magnificent/Than in our New Testament...”, Part I, lines 1217-1219; *Goethe’s Faust*, 150-153.
71. The quote from *Faust*, Part I, lines 1335-1336, on the title page sets us on our guard; see M. Bulgakov, *Master i Margarita*, in *Belaja Gvardja, Teatral’niy Roman, Master i Margarita*, (Moscow 1973) 423. For Goethe’s influence on the Slavic world see H. Kindermann, *Das Goethebild des 20. Jahrhunderts*, (Darmstadt 1966) 693-698; with regard to the Soviet milieu a literary review stressed that Goethe was Marx’s preferred poet; *ibid.*, 696.
72. M. Hayward, “Literature in the Soviet Period (1917-1975)”, in R. Auty and D. Obolensky (ed.s), *An Introduction to Russian Language and Literature*, (Cambridge 1977) 207; T.R.E. Edwards, *Three Russian Writers and the Irrational*, (Cambridge 1982) 169-179, 175.
73. *Ibid.*, 158: “Latunsky’s article on the Master is entitled ‘A Militant Old Believer’, and there is indeed much of the sectarian, especially the priestless Old Believer, about the Master which links him to the heretic Ieshua: a simple lifestyle, a concern for his own view of the truth, non-resistance to evil; they share the ‘free and adventurous’ thinking which Berdyaev associates particularly with the *bespopovtsy* (It is interesting to note that this sect was, according to Conybeare, especially under the influence of Manichaean ideas...). Ieshua is described as ‘the wandering philosopher’..., and the Master too suggests the spiritual nomad, in Russian sectarianism the *stranik* or *begun*.... . However, it is not correct, as Edwards does on p. 156, to describe hesychasm as implying the

Aside from the references to Russian sectarianism Bulgakov's novel is important because it establishes a positive link to "wisdom". This transpires already through the title, which designates not a man of letters but "the Master", an eminently wisdom word, a title which indicates a direct link between a grasp of theoretical principles in their practical application.<sup>74</sup> But precisely on this question we touch a point common to both East and West. In the West, prudence, understood as that cardinal virtue that mediates between theory and practice, comes closest, perhaps, to the Eastern concern with Sophia as synthesis of this world and the next in view of praxis here on earth. In harmony with this tradition, Thomas Aquinas describes natural law the way in which humans may participate in God's eternal wisdom.<sup>75</sup> And, in the same practico-pragmatic<sup>76</sup> sense of prudence,<sup>77</sup> but this time transposed to poetry, T.S. Eliot dedicated "The Waste Land" (1922) to "Ezra Pound, *il miglior fabbro*",<sup>78</sup> a word borrowed from Dante<sup>79</sup> meaning more than its literal rendition as "(black)smith" might seem to imply.

rejection of an intermediary priesthood, "another important theme of the novel;" St. Gregory Palamas (+1359), for example, who wrote a classic work in the defense of hesychasts, was a bishop.

74. T.R.N. Edwards, *Three Russian writers and the Irrational*, 160-161: "Christ was a carpenter – spirituality was rooted in a modest background and the direct experience of working with one's hands. The Russians have traditionally held this to be a self-evident truth to which, for instance, Tolstoy tried to give practical effect; this arouses the derision of mainly western critics who fail to grasp the intimate association in Russian thought of direct experience and spirituality. (An old meaning of the word *sophia* is trained intelligence or skill.)"

75. St. Thomas of Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, IIae, art. 91, nos 2-4.

76. "Practical", because it is an activity, rather than a theory, and, as such, it modifies the agent; "pragmatic", because, modifying the agent as subject of the activity, it produces something, the wise decision (policy, moral decision etc.)

77. This practical meaning of wisdom is thoroughly familiar through Scripture; see K.E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant: A literary cultural approach to the parables in Luke*, (Gran Rapids, Michigan 1976) 105-106.

78. T.S. Elliot, *Selected Poems*, (London 1973) 49.

79. Dante (Purgatorio, xxvi, lines 115-117) puts on the lips of his famous predecessor, Guido Guinizelli, the following words which signal out the Provençal Arnaut Daniel for excellence in poetry: "'O frate,' disse, 'questi ch'io ti scerno/ Col ditto,' ed additò un spirito innanzi./ 'Fu miglior fabbro del parlar maternò,'" E. Moore and P. Toynbee (ed.s), *Le opere di Dante Aligheri*, (Oxford 1924) 91: "'O brother', he replied, 'that one' (i.e., Arnaut Daniel)/ (and with his finger he pointed to a soul ahead)/ 'was a better artist in the mother tongue';' *Dante: The Divine Comedy*. A new prose translation with an introduction by H.R. Huse, p. 291. See also M. Cortellazzo and P. Zolli, *Dizionario etimologico della lingua Italiana*, 2, (Bologna 1992) 411; S. Battaglia, *Grande dizionario della lingua Italiana*, 5, (Torino 1972) 546.

Last but not least, there has always been a sapiential strand in theology, which conceived theology to be a *sapientia*.<sup>80</sup>

*b) The Sectarian in Us.*

Sapiential literature discusses not only the master-disciple relationship, but also the presence of the foolish in the midst of the community of the wise. The Gospel sensitizes us to both cases (Mt 11, 28-30; 25, 1-13; Lk 16, 1-8). Folly and wisdom reside in the same community, sometimes within the same person.<sup>81</sup> The same holds true for sects and factions: the line of demarcation runs not only through the same group but also through the same individual.

Deep down, the sectarian is one who lets his head dictate to the heart, instead of doing what so many texts in the venerable Eastern tradition of prayer inculcate: “pray with the head in the heart”,<sup>82</sup> i.e., integrate one’s thinking, which is only a part of us, into the whole of ourselves with its centre in Christ, whose memory is cherished in the Church. The sectarian thus cuts off several of the vital links to the whole of reality<sup>83</sup> as interpreted by the Church as a community of minds and heart in her all-out effort to save it in its entirety.<sup>84</sup>

80. “Sapientia” is cognate with “sapere” (to taste) and so refers to experience. St. Bonaventure (+1274) was a chief representative of this sapiential view of theology, whose ideal he summed up in the words “ut boni fiamus;” *Prooemium in IV libros Sent.* q.3. M.J. Scheeben (+1888) finishes with a note on “theology as wisdom par excellence;” *idem, Die Mysterien des Christentums*, (Freiburg i. Br. 1912) 673-679. In his *Sophia ou le monde en Dieu*, (Paris 1994) L. Bouyer points out some sophiological points common to East and West, e.g. on pp. 89-92, without failing to mention some of the related difficulties, which he however comments as follows: some days before his death, V. Lossky, relentless foe of S. Bulgakov’s sophiology, entrusted to Bouyer, according to the latter, that Bulgakov really had a feeling, if not for the answers, at least for the questions; *ibid.*, p. 113.
81. St. Augustine affords a precious commentary. “Whence come schisms? When men say, ‘We are righteous, we cleanse the unclean’;” *In 1 Joh.. 1, 8*; quoted by S.L. Greenslade, *Schism in the Early Church*, 19.
82. Bishop K. Ware, “Introduction”, *The Art of Prayer: An Orthodox Anthology*. Compiled by Igumen Chariton of Valamo, trans. by E. Kadloubovsky and E.M. Palmer, (London 1966) 17.
83. It is interesting that M. Bulgakov, considering pure intellect to be a sin, advocates banning Kant to Solovetsky Monastery, the renowned centre of sectarian rebellion (1668-1676); T.R.N. Edwards, *Three Russian Writers and the Irrational*, 164-166.
84. The viewpoint of Orthodoxy is different, as T.R.N. Edwards, who interprets the role of experience in line with apophaticism, points out: “The argument seems to run thus: the ideal is synthesis, oneness with God; the intellect is inherently analytical; therefore, even though it must be employed

We can thus catch a glimpse how deep runs sectarianism as an underground religio-humanistic movement. The reason for our difficulty to define sects must now be seen in the context of Eastern theology: concepts remain abstract unless they are seen in the light of the "soul" they have, the vital functions in us, of which the unity of dogma and spirituality is but one – the major – exemplification. Given the difficulty to exorcise "sects" from our midst as if the reality lay completely outside of us, we have to try and figure out which those vital functions in us are that act as a bridge between Church-goers and sectarians.

It has been argued that sects can flourish because they address themselves to vital questions in the human and that consequently a good way of approaching them is to try to find out what these needs are, and work out the answer of theology, instead of simply adopting from the start a negative attitude.<sup>85</sup> Now, one vital function of religion is its capacity to generate enthusiasm, which, in turn, when earnest, engenders zeal. This goes counter to the temptation of reducing the Church to her functions, or services, as administrator of salvation, instead of regarding her as custodian of "mysteries", the Greek word for sacraments.

Sects sometimes perform the vital function of serving immediate enthusiasm<sup>86</sup> as opposite against an atrophied system of doctrines, where stress is more laid on formal orthodoxy and orthopraxis than on the well-springs of charity which should inform them. Actually, life calls more for faithfulness than enthusiasm, which is why masters of the spiritual life speak not only of "consolation" (enthusiasm) in prayer but also of "desolation" (dryness).<sup>87</sup> Zeal without self-criticism is misguided; criticism of the Church without dedication to her becomes corrosive.

Both may be illustrated by religious orders, who in several ways may be compared to sects, but with a great difference. Religious orders, too, are capable, when they live out their original charism, to fire the imagination with a will to

in the first steps towards the ideal (it being an inalienable part of man), at a certain stage it becomes a stumbling block, and must give way to something in which division is not inherent: Orthodoxy sees this as experience," Ibid., 164. As the author reminds us, Michail's father, A.I. Bulgakov, was professor at the Theological Academy of Kiev.

85. J.A. Saliba, *Religious Cults Today*, 5. 35-36.

86. Ibid., 17-18. Naturally this enthusiasm, if not guided by Christian morality, can degenerate into Dionysiac destructiveness, of which Jonestown in the United States affords a vivid example.

87. This is the language of St. Ignatius of Loyola; see Dalmases, *Ignacio de Loyola, Ejercicios Espirituales*, 192-193.

serve God and the imagination, yet, they are not self-enclosed societies but are open to the universal Church and her guidance. In this regard, an inversion obtains in the relationship between holiness and Church and in that between holiness and religious orders. The Church cannot make membership in her dependent on the holiness of its members; religious orders should, at least holiness of aspiration. Religious orders, too, live at the fringes of society; but this should serve as a challenge for them to devise ever new ways in consonance with their charism to offer alternatives to egoistic models in society and not remain trapped at the periphery of life.<sup>88</sup>

The example of religious orders is instructive, because one of the vital functions for the proper functioning of society is the status in it of minorities and the way in which the majority relates to **minorities**. Our inability to attain everlasting peace is in part in function of our inability to come to terms with **God's** minority, the Jews.<sup>89</sup> Vladimir Soloviev died praying, in Hebrew, for the Jews. At any rate, the lack of maturity in our perception of minorities wreaks havoc on the whole organism like a cancer. This has a social correlate. Thus scapegoating is a process that mimics democracy and can range from framing to judicial murder. In the religious sphere, the search of unanimities and the desire that God occupies himself with me alone, at most with my group, exemplifies an overlooking of minorities and how much we should be grateful to God for our critics. Incapacity to accept our "minority" – to accept the fact that we had a childhood, ultimately accepting the fact that God became a child, and that, as a man, he grew in age, experience and grace (Lk 2, 52) – wreaks havoc in education and engenders neuroses in life.<sup>90</sup> To ignore this is – sectarianism, or, at least, the seed-bed on which the sectarian in us thrives.

How often do people, in politics or religion, become heretics or schismatics because **we** force them into that uncomfortable role, when less zeal and more tact, and, at any rate, more of that humanity which became God's in the incarnation,

88. See R.W. Southern, "A Confusion of Tongues", *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, (New York 1976) 318-358.

89. The phrase comes from E. Trutwin.

90. Often at the roots of the human quest for sects is security at all costs, which in turn has been identified as part of the psychology of fundamentalism; see Th. F. OMeara, *Fundamentalism: A Catholic Perspective*, (Mahwah, N.J. 1990) 69-70.

would have created the conditions necessary for a fair dialogue?<sup>91</sup> How often do we rob free agents of their liberty by forcing them into actional patterns through our determining them, by forcing them to protest **against us**, and thus not allowing them to do that which they deem to be right and just? And how much is a limited and delimiting perception the result of sin – how often does the sinner clutter his own vision and thus become unable to perceive his luck? All this is, potentially, sectarianism.

How often do we consider experience as if it were grace? To choose an example from the more libertine aspects of sects – and in this the sectarianism of contemporary bourgeois society becomes manifest – those who defend pre-marital sex because they feel entitled to **know** (a form of gnosis) do not want to go to prison to discover freedom. As a matter of fact, vintage theology in both East and West insists that experience is paramount, that it is the only way to prevent religious assertions from degenerating into an ideology, but that this has to be the experience of God, but it adds that this experience, as the experience of grace, often seems to be anything but grace – in this, Vladimir Losskij (+1958)<sup>92</sup> and Karl Rahner (+1984)<sup>93</sup> meet half-way. The canonization of one-sided experience is the beginning of sectarianism.

Sectarianism thrives everywhere where there is a diastasis between ideal-image and concrete reality, where, in the phrase of R.W. Emerson (+1882), Judas passes for Christ and Christ for Judas, – unless, of course, something is done to restore the balance. Everywhere where the hierarchy of truth<sup>94</sup> and the *ordo charitatis*<sup>95</sup> is set

91. "Unfortunately we come across in the history of dogma as often as in politics the tendency that 'government' and 'opposition' depict each other only in black and white, without any attempt to nuance thier judgment", says A. Grillmeier, who goes on to give some examples from some misunderstandings in the case of Nestorius; A. Grillmeier, *Mit ihm und in ihm. Christologische Forschungen und Perspektiven*, (Freiburg i. Br. 1975) 234 (translation my own).

92. V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Church*, Trans, by members of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, (London 1973) 10-11. 23-43.

93. K. Rahner, "Über die Erfahrung der Gnade", *Schriften zur Theologie*, III, (Einsiedeln 1967) 105-109.

94. According to the hierarchy of truths, not all truths have the same importance, which depends on their closeness to the central mysteries of salvation: the doctrine of the Trinity, christology and grace; see *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 11. This enables the Catholic Church, while claiming to be the true Church, to see in other Christian Churches a greater or lesser realization of the Gospel.

95. I.e., that order of charity which sets actional priorities according to God's and the Church's law. Top priority for the Christian is the love of God and of one's neighbour.

aside, and marginal truths are given prime importance, and second-rate virtues blown up to the proportion of first rate ones, which invariably happens at the expense of charity, damage is done to our souls and the sectarian in us receives a boost.<sup>96</sup>

*(c) The Church as a Sect.*

Naturally, talking of sectarianism, even if only in the methodic key of discovering elements in common capable of making Church members understand the phenomenon of sects, may lead to a misunderstanding. It may sound as if we wanted to blur the distinction between Church and sect.

The fear is unjustified. In the creeds known to the Great Undivided Church of the first centuries a main recurring article of the creed is: "I believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church".<sup>97</sup> The claim to universality is meant as an antidote against the selective-elitarian character of sectarianism.<sup>98</sup> Once this basic difference is recognized,<sup>99</sup> a difference based on the notes of the Church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, one may further ask whether it is not possible to take the cue from the Gospel and consider, again for methodic reasons, the Church as a sect.

Thus, the Gospel suggests that the Church dwindles in numbers at the end of time; therefore, according to the sociological criteria of nonconformism and minority status the Church would then be a sect. Naturally, one may ask whether these criteria are adequate, and yet it cannot be denied that nonconformism and minority status have something to do with sects. On the other hand, not infrequently, in the diaspora, in the missions, in persecution, the Church retrieves herself because she recuperates her minority status.

However, the sectarian character of the Church is not only – or primarily – shown in the weak moments. Is it only due to numbers that the Church appears to be a sect? One could argue that nonconformism is the essence of being a Christian. "Do not conform yourselves to the ways of this world", writes St. Paul (Rom 12,2). Faith, and especially faith in the moment of opulence, is *solipsism*. The believer is, **in principle**, a loner, nobody can decide for him or her to believe, although the

96. See H.D. Reimer, "Sects", in N. Lossky and others (ed.s), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, (Geneva 1991) 914.

97. See H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, nos. 1-150.

98. See *ibid.*, no. 792.

99. See *Théo: Nouvelle encyclopédie catholique*, (Paris 1989) 539.

Church is the salvific community for loners and makes out of the loner a member of the community.

And so the question becomes more poignant: Granted that, given the normal use of words, Church and sects are considered to be two mutually exclusive entities, are there no ways in which the Church could be considered to be a sect and a sect to bear the semblances of the Church? Do Church and sect, so profoundly different as they are in their essence, have nothing in common? The first question would thus concern these four marks of the Church (as they are called),<sup>100</sup> their epistemological status and their concrete applicability to resolve the issue. Like everything that has to do with faith, like the so-called proofs for the existence of God themselves, these four signs given to help humans find out the true Church are in turn characterized by mystery.<sup>101</sup> This in turn presupposes human cooperation, i.e., openness to faith, and are not signposts which render the human seeker passive in front of their message like an anaesthetized patient on the operating table. Since human cooperation in turn depends on elements usually not permeated through and through by grace, but still resistant to it through concupiscence, this gives rise to ambiguities, so that sincere people may interpret these signs and the one objective reality they point to differently.

The Church is one; but the division among Christians make the Church sometimes look like a sect contending for equal attention with other sects.

The Church is holy, but this very holiness can be a temptation to identify the Church with a society of saints,<sup>102</sup> whereas, in point of fact, the Church is a church for sinners, the holy Church of sinners, with the means to make them all saints, which is what they are called to be. Without sanctity the Church would be a benevolence club; with compulsory sanctity she would be a sect.

The Church is catholic; but the ghetto mentality of groups in her may make her look like an outdated physician. In this regard, Eastern groups have been made to feel not seldom like minorities. Proselytism and rigorism are tactics unworthy of the beauty and the thereapeutic value of Christ's truth.

100. *Catéchisme de l'Eglise Catholique*, (Paris 1992) 190-191.

101. *Katholischer Erwachsenen-Katechismus: Das Glaubensbekenntnis der Kirche*, edited by the German Episcopal Conference, (Bonn 1985) 271. 279.

102. A heresy which the Church has condemned as Donatism, a schism in the African Church which started in the fourth century. see K. Rahner, "Die Kirche der Heiligen", *Schriften zur Theologie*, III, (Einsiedeln 1967) 111-126.

The Church is apostolic; but many quarrels among Churches in the past were above the heads of the respective Church members and were carried out almost exclusively among hierarchs.

All this does not invalidate the marks or notes to recognize the true Church, but shows why it is possible for her to appear at times as a sect. The fact that, in spite of the ambiguity of the human condition, humans have continued to throng to enter where they find light, warmth and nutrition, is a striking index that more than merely human elements are at play when we come to Church.

This brings us to one of the hottest debated questions of our times. The treatise on the Church is among those which has developed most and is still developing. And it must continue to develop, for the answer to the questions raised here is an index of how sorely needed it is to bring our treatises on Church up-to-date.<sup>103</sup> Not only *ecclesia semper reformanda* is true, but also *ecclesiology semper reformanda!* Not only the Church is in need of constant reform, but so is her ecclesiology!

One of the most urgent reforms in ecclesiology is to take into account both the Eastern and Western experience, not only as far as saints is concerned, but also all that sects have to teach us about an on-going schism between East and West which has long become obsolete but which nonetheless refuses to heal.

### **Conclusion**

One of the unfortunate aspects of Church life is the sudden proliferation of sects. One of the more unfortunate ways of preparing oneself for this eventuality is to try to understand sects without the continuum of Church and sect, a truth which, if ignored, would not allow us to see how sect is a sickness of which Church is the cure. The most unfortunate aspect of it all would be to ignore the fact that that continuum is found in us, and that we heal the moment we let grace put us humans into question and the sectarian in us in his or her place, provided we open up to mystery of which only the Church is the custodian.

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103. For some of the pastoral and ecumenical problems involved in treating with sect-members see *Evangelischer Erwachsenenkatechismus*, (Gütersloh 1977) 1001-1011.

# THE SOCIO-CULTURAL MILIEU OF HOLINESS: MALTESE VALUES IN A EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PERSPECTIVE\*

Anthony M. Abela

The English words for “saint” and “holiness”, unlike their Maltese equivalent of “*qaddis*” and “*qdusija*”, have different etymological origins though related meanings. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines a saint as “a holy or a canonised person (by a Church after his or her death) regarded as having a place in heaven”. The temporal existence of a saintly person is marked by great holiness and virtue. Holiness, however, refers to the state of religious or spiritual goodness and well-being of the living. It is manifest in personal integrity (hence “holy” from whole), good moral conduct, oneness with others, society and the environment. As a diffuse socio-religious culture it is not restricted to any one person or a heavenly saint. Whereas saints are canonized posthumously by a Church, the greatest majority of holy people never come to be declared saints. Ordinary holiness, though very real, often escapes the attention of official religion.

Saints represent the official definition of holiness. Generally, they are individuals from the past who come to be publicly acclaimed for their personal virtues. They are considered to possess human qualities often beyond the capacities of the average person. Having given witness to the transcendent or the “Holy Other”, saints are set apart as examples of heroic faith and human goodness. Popular holiness, however, is the milieu within which living saints exercise their human and divine qualities. It is not something that belongs to the individual saint, *per se*. It is a religious, spiritual and human quality shared with others in a socio-cultural environment. If it is to be acknowledged, it needs to be shared and communicated. It does not reside

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exclusively in the publicly acknowledged saintly figures. For unlike the holiness which resides in the culture of a people, saints have a delimited spatio-temporal and historical existence, often constructed and reconstructed by a religious community or a Church authority.

In the Catholic tradition most saints were once real people, about whom objective facts may be established. We know about their sex, their place of birth, their circumstances of life and death, their friends, family and work. At the same time, however, the knowledge that reaches us about saints are “the constructed saints”. All saints are more or less constructed in that, being necessarily saints for other people, they are remodelled in the collective representation which is made of them (Delooz 1983: 195). If the narrative continues to be vital to the life of the community, this shaping and reshaping continues (Wyschogrod 1990:7).

The Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church brought saints down to earth. In its document on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*, 1964) it made explicit a universal call to holiness. This theology was already implicit in the diffused popular belief of the “communion of saints”, by which the totality of the faithful constituting the “living saints” were in communion with saints in heaven. In its policy of dialogue with the world, the post-Vatican II Church called its faithful of whatever rank and status to live a life of holiness, to achieve the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of charity. In this way, holiness is achieved by a life of the spirit that is not unrelated to the promotion of a more humane society. Christians are to follow in the footsteps of Christ and dedicate all their being to the glory of God and the service of their neighbour. In this way, the holiness of the People of God is believed to grow... as is proved by the lives of so many saints in Church history (Abbott 1966: *LG*, 40).

Philosophers are also discovering the function of saints in the construction of a post-modern ethics. Narratives of saintly figures are thought to serve as examples of ethical conduct in a post-modern world. Wyschogrod, for example, connects the spiritual and the psychological with the moral and social dimensions of holiness. She defines a saint as “one whose adult life in its entirety is devoted to the alleviation of sorrow (the psychological suffering) and pain (the physical suffering) that afflicts other persons without distinction of rank or group... whatever the cost to the saint in pain or sorrow” (Wyschogrod 1990:34). Here holiness is associated with loving care, a total commitment to helping others in need even at the cost of self-sacrifice.

Social anthropologists have documented the spatio-temporal and socio-cultural milieu of saintly figures. In traditional societies, “saints” or their temporal

representatives often act as mediators between heaven and earth, the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, superiors and their dependents. In this way "saints" wield power, they protect, give favours and if called upon they intervene for their clients.

In his fieldwork in rural villages in Malta Bossevain discovered that all parish churches have a patron or titular saint under whose special protection its founders have been placed. He observed (Bossevain 1965, 1993:58-59) that the Maltese express their devotion to their patron saint with religious ceremonies and processions, band marches and tremendous displays of fireworks. Feasts celebrated in honour of patron saints are occasions on which communal values are reaffirmed and strengthened. In the process the central position which the Church occupies in the social structure is strongly reinforced.

From a total of sixty-one parishes in Malta, thirty-one (50%) are dedicated to one of the titles of Saint Mary, three to Jesus, four to the apostle Paul, the Patron Saint of Malta, three to other apostles whereas the rest to a number of other saints (*Ecclesiastical Directory*, 1994). Besides the annual feast in honour of their patron saint, most parishes celebrate a feast for one or more secondary saint. As feasts give rise to much competition, rivalry and factions in the community, parish priests keep reminding their faithful to re-discover the true values of their patron saints, to curb violence, divisions and waste of resources and to practise solidarity and love of neighbour.

There is a great similarity between the functions of heavenly saints and mortal patrons. Just as saints mediate between man and God, so do earthly patrons influence the decisions of a higher authority in favour of their clients. In fact, the Maltese word "*qaddis*" is used interchangeably for a heavenly saint and for a mortal patron. Several proverbs underline the importance of patrons in Maltese social life. For example, *mingħajr qaddisin ma titlax il-Ġenna* (literally meaning, without saints you cannot go to heaven), and *għat-telgħa kull qaddis jgħin* (literally meaning, in an upward climb [i.e. in front of difficulties] the help of a saint is welcome). In traditional Maltese society, a system of patronage extends from the religious to the social and the political.

Bossevain (1993: 154-159) observed that the socio-economic development that has occurred over the past few years, has brought about a shift in power within the traditional professional patrons. New patrons have displaced old ones. Government ministers have become the new super 'saints' and members of parliament have become brokers, intermediaries between ministerial patrons and their own

constituencies. Contrary to expectations there has been an increase in the celebration of patron saints. The unexpected rise in festivities act to structure and project group identity. Such festivities mark boundaries and generate rivalry, which in turn increase pressure to expand them in order to defend community honour.

Although many changes have taken place in Malta, patronage is found to have remained a principle of social action. In his postscript to his earlier studies, Bossevain (1993: 161) reaffirmed that underlying values such as hospitality, fierce loyalty to family, faction and community, religious reverence, saints and fireworks – are still firmly in place. A diffuse traditional culture still has an influence on the religious, social and political life of the country. It often happens that heavenly saints act as models for earthly patrons. In this way, the study of holiness and patron saints can throw light on religious culture in its relation to the politics of social welfare. Though saintly persons, as strictly defined by Wyschogrod (1990) are few in number, the reconstruction, remembrance and festive celebration of saintly figures might well support the religiosity and morality of the people.

Accordingly, the study of holiness is in line with the newly found interest in diffuse, popular and unofficial religion. Recent studies have documented the importance of shared values and beliefs as a basis for collective meaning and action (Cipriani 1988). In this movement, a shift is observed away from an exclusive concern with institutionalized religion towards popular religious culture, practice and belief. There is a growing awareness that the social significance of religion extends beyond the confines of formal religious organisations. As the social function of religion continues to decline, the social significance of religion, conceptualized in a new form seems to be on the increase (Beckford 1989, 1990). In this perspective, sociological theory and research need to undertake an analysis of the religious environment in a presumed secular world where a culture of religious values, unobtrusive holiness, devotion to saints and popular piety is continuously being reshaped.

This paper investigates the milieu of religiosity in its relation to social solidarity in Malta. It tests the hypothesis of the ethical demands of holiness. It examines whether people's religiosity is related to a corresponding care for others and a culture of social solidarity. An analysis of the European Values studies posits the socio-cultural world for holiness in Malta in a Euro-Mediterranean perspective. After mapping the culture and practice of religion and voluntary social work in Malta, the paper examines the impact of religion on works of social welfare.

### ***Values Study***

A Maltese version of the European Values questionnaire was re-administered in Malta in the nineties by Gallup in association with the European Value Systems Study Group (EVSSG). The first Values study was conducted in 1981 in ten western European countries (Denmark, Holland, France, Britain, West Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland). In 1990 the Values Study was repeated with Denmark being replaced by Portugal. In 1990, as in 1981, a total of around 15,500 randomly selected interviews was achieved.

The Maltese Values survey, conducted for the first time at the end of 1983 and the beginning of 1984 amongst a nationally representative sample of 467 respondents in Malta and Gozo (Abela 1991:1-2), was repeated in June 1991 amongst a similar sample of 393 respondents. Interviews of approximately one hour each were carried out in the home of respondents by specially trained Gallup interviewers (Heald 1992). The data for Malta, Italy, France and Spain make possible a comparative analysis of Maltese religious culture in a Euro-Mediterranean perspective in terms of personal beliefs, morality, Church teachings, prayer life and spiritual experiences and how this relates to the promotion of social welfare. The Values study allows us to draw up a profile of people's expressed holiness and its relation to a culture of care, voluntary work and social solidarity.

### ***Religiosity***

In comparison to most western European countries under study, the religiosity of the Maltese is still very strong, even if over the past few years it has suffered a number of setbacks. Seventy percent in Malta, in contrast to the average 21 percent in western Europe, 30% in Italy, 22% in Spain and 14% in France find religion to be very important in their life [Table 1].

In the nineties, almost all (98%) of our Maltese respondents claim to have been brought up religiously at home. The same percentage of the Maltese (98%) claim to have retained their attachment to their religion. Generally, in Europe, people are brought up religiously at home (81%) but quite a few abandon their religion as they grow older. This is the case in Mediterranean Italy (from 93% who were brought up religiously at home to 85% who have retained their attachment to religion), Spain (from 92% to 86%) and France (from 71% to 61%).

Over the past decade the weekly attendance at religious services has dropped

slightly all across Europe, including Malta, by a margin of two percent. But, in contrast to the average European (30%), the majority of the Maltese (88%) attend religious services at least once a week. In fact, 46 percent of Maltese respondents go to Church on Sundays and another 42 percent also do so during the week. In Malta, only 5% in contrast to 16% in Italy, 30% in Spain, 52% in France and the average 29% in western Europe never go to Church. Generally, a considerable number of western Europeans have come to attend Church less than once a week (41%) contrary to what is stipulated by the Church. Not a few do so only on special occasions marking Christmas, Easter, the celebration of a baptism, marriage or a death in the family.

Generally, in Malta, just as in neighbouring Italy, much higher than in Spain or France, people find appropriate to celebrate births (96%, Italy 81%, Spain 73%, France 63%), marriages and deaths with a religious service. In many instances the request for a Church baptism, marriage or a funeral is more a matter of cultural conformity than of religious conviction. These *rites du passage*, however, can be occasions for an initiation into religious faith and in some cases the beginning of a more active participation in the life of the Church.

Irrespective of whether respondents attend religious services or not, 73% in Malta, in comparison to 63% in western Europe, consider themselves to be religious. In the intervening years between the two surveys (1983-91), however, the percentage of Maltese respondents who think of themselves as religious dropped by 21 percent. 25 percent in Malta, almost just as high as the European average (28%) do not think of themselves as religious. In contrast to other Europeans, however, where 5 percent claim to be atheists and 7 percent religiously indifferent, almost none of our respondents in Malta think of themselves as convinced atheists and only a few are undecided about their faith (1%).

In the same way, 87 percent (3% less than in 1983) in Malta in comparison to 60 percent in Europe, claim to spend some time in prayer, meditation, contemplation or some other spiritual activity. In Malta, 57 percent pray often (23% in Europe), 36 percent sometimes (25% in Europe) and 8 percent either never pray, practically never or just when going through a crisis (28% in Europe).

The Maltese have kept strong their faith in God (99%). Most still think of God as a person (71%). Since the eighties there has been an increase in the number of respondents who think of God as a form of spirit or life force (from 12% to 18%). This might be due to the proliferation of popular religious movements at the grass-roots of society, the Charismatic movement in particular. In sharp contrast to Europe

(10%), only the very few in Malta (1%) are of the opinion that there is no spirit, god or "life-force". The Maltese find God to be much more important in their life (9.4 on a 10-point scale) than either the Italians (7.1), the Spanish (6.1), the French (4.4) or the average western European (6.0).

At the same time, however, there has been an overall drop (4% lower than in the eighties) in the number of Maltese respondents who belief in the soul (87%), sin (85%), heaven (82%), life after death (79%), hell (74%) or the devil (74%). Nevertheless the religious belief of the Maltese remains by far the highest in western Europe. Thus, for example, considerably fewer Europeans still believe in the devil (26%), hell (24%) or in life after death (44%). In the same hierachal order of belief as the Maltese, though considerably much lower, Europeans generally have kept their faith in God (73%), the soul (62%) and to a lower extent in sin (57%), life after death (44%) and heaven (44%). Though, overall, Europeans have retained the same level of religious belief as in the eighties, we observe the emergence of a plurality of individualised systems of religious values and beliefs (Kerkhofs 1992:79). This situation posits the advance of religious individualism. Western Europeans have become increasingly selective in their adherence to traditional beliefs [Table 2].

The erosion of a common system of religious beliefs in western Europe is also manifest in the lower priority attributed to the sharing of religious beliefs for success in marriage, irrespective of the actual sharing of attitudes between partners. In sharp contrast to a majority in Malta (60%), those who find important the sharing of religious beliefs between married partners are very few in western Europe (23%), with no exception to Mediterranean countries like Italy (23%) Spain (25%) or France (16%) even if the actual sharing of religious attitudes between partners in these countries (average for western Europe: (61%) is much higher. Similar to other Europeans, the majority of the Maltese (86%) share religious attitudes with their partner, but unlike their European counterparts, most Maltese respondents (60%) also think that this is important for the well-being of their marriage. It seems that people in Malta are more likely to adhere to a common system of religious values rather than to work out individualized value systems as has generally become the case in western Europe.

The sharing of a common system of values in Malta is also evident in the place assigned to the transmission of a set of religious and moral values in the family, Church and society. Fifty five percent in Malta in contrast to 25% in western Europe, 35% in Italy, 26% in Spain and 13% in France give priority to religious faith for the education of children in the family.

Religious education in the family finds its counterpart in the elaboration and diffusion of the teachings of the Church. In their majority, the Maltese are satisfied with the activity of the local Church, show great confidence in its institutions and would like to receive its guidance on moral and social issues. Thus most Maltese, much higher than the European average, think that the Church in their country is giving adequate answers to spiritual matters (87%; 52% in Europe), family life (85%; 33% in Europe), moral problems and the needs of the individual (79%; 36% in Europe) and to a lesser extent on contemporary social issues (68%; 27% in Europe). The majority of the Maltese, much higher than the western European average, think that it is appropriate for the Church to speak out on the morality of abortion (91%, Europe 52%), extramarital affairs (87%, Europe 41%), racial discrimination (77%, Europe 67%), euthanasia (72%, Europe 54%), disarmament (68%, Europe 53%), unemployment (65%, Europe 45%), and the environment (50%, Europe 49%). Foremost amongst all other social institutions, the Church in Malta enjoys the highest level of confidence by the people [Table 3].

Although the greatest majority in Malta claim to practise their religion and to abide by the teachings of the Church, only the few are members of a Church or a religious group or do unpaid work in a voluntary organisation. Similar to the average in western Europe (13%), 14% in Malta in comparison to 8% in Italy, 5% in Spain and 6% in France belong to a Church or religious group. Still, more people in Malta (9%) than generally in western Europe (6%), Italy (6%), France (5%) or Spain (3%) in particular, do some kind of unpaid voluntary work for their Church or religious organisation. Generally, unpaid voluntary work in either secular or religious organisations is highest in France (34%) and Italy (27%). Overall, however, fewer Maltese (22%) do unpaid voluntary work than the average in Europe (26%). Again, contrary to expectations, the French -who have the highest number of unchurched in western Europe -are more involved in voluntary work for the elderly, the handicapped, the deprived or in community action to combat poverty, unemployment, housing or racial inequality (8%) than anywhere else in western Europe (6%), Italy (4%); Spain (3%) or Malta (3%) in particular. Applying Wyschogrod criteria for what constitutes holiness, it seems that only the few in Malta, despite the overwhelmingly high level of religiosity relative to other Europeans, would qualify as "saints". Conversely, it is not uncommon for western Europeans to practise care and other saintly qualities in community voluntary work without any commitment to a formal religion.

In the nineties the Values survey enquired about people's motivations for doing voluntary work. In a number of European countries (but not in Malta) respondents

were given a list of fourteen possible reasons for undertaking voluntary work. They were asked to rate the importance they attach to each on a five-point scale. In descending order of importance (the average on a five-point scale), western Europeans engage in voluntary work mostly out of a sense of duty or moral obligation (3.36), to give a contribution to their local community (3.32), solidarity with the poor (3.31), to give dignity to the disadvantaged (3.26), out of compassion for those in need (3.24) or to identify with the suffering (3.24). Equally important are personal concerns like learning new skills and gaining new experiences (3.25), to pass away the time doing something worthwhile (3.23) or for socializing and meeting others (3.22). Less importance is given to a set of instrumental-objective values such as to have an opportunity to repay and give something back (2.94) or to bring social and political change (2.56). They assign least importance to religious beliefs (2.51). The low importance of a religious motivation relative to other humanitarian aims suggests that solidarity in western Europe is no longer under the exclusive inspiration of the Church. Such a situation posits the secularization of care, a departure from a predominant religious motivation in voluntary work.

### *Care in society*

In order to establish the extent to which Europeans think that they are living in a caring society, respondents were asked whether, in their opinion, people today are more willing, less willing or equally willing to help each other than they used to be ten years ago. In the eighties, the greatest majority of western Europeans (60%), the Italians (68%) and the French (67%) in particular, but not so much the Maltese (49%), were of the opinion that people are less willing to offer help. Generally, in the eighties, in comparison to other western Europeans (33%), the Maltese were more of the opinion that people are equally or more willing (43%) to offer help to others. In the beginning of the nineties, however, fewer Maltese respondents (38%) were as optimistic about the caring society as in the eighties. In the intervening years between the two surveys there has been an overall drop of 11 percent in the number of Maltese respondents who think that people today are more willing to help each other than they used to be ten years ago (from 28% in 1983 to 17% in 1991) [Table 4].

On another count, the European Values survey asked respondents to identify the reasons for what makes people in their country live in need. Answers to these question are useful in the appraisal of care (Ashford and Timms 1992:25). Respondents were asked if people were in need because of social injustice, progress,

bad luck or laziness. On the one hand, if people are found to be in need because of social injustice, the situation could in principle be remedied by a programme of social welfare. On the other hand, if their condition is seen to be the product of the inevitable march of progress, not much could possibly be achieved. With regards to the unlucky in the lottery of life chances, caring might take the form of social compensation. Respondents, however, might not see any value in caring for the lazy or those lacking in will power.

In Europe, respondents generally give most weight to reasons which call for social remedy. Overall almost four out of every ten respondents in western Europeans think that people are in need because of injustices in society. Next in importance Europeans think that people live in need because they are unlucky. Less importance is given to the inevitable march of progress, laziness or a lack of will power. In Malta, however, the majority of respondents think that people are in need primarily because of laziness or lack of will power (58%), and only secondarily because of injustice in society (12% give social injustice as first reason, 30% as second reason). Less importance is given to bad luck (13%) or the inevitable march of progress (7%).

### *Religiosity and social care*

The contemporary literature on holiness in the Catholic Church links faith with works for social justice. In this perspective, authentic religiosity needs to find expression in social solidarity, a concern for others and a commitment to voluntary work for the welfare of others in society. The multi-disciplinary approach of the Values studies makes possible an examination of the relation between people's religiosity and social values, care for others, in particular. In order to test the hypothesis of a necessary link between holiness and solidarity the various dimensions of religion are correlated with the factors of social care.

A large scale factor analysis extracted six dimensions of religion, identified as (1) people's aspirations for guidance by the Church's teaching on morality, (2) traditional belief, (3) conventional religiosity consisting in the celebration of important events in life by the rites of the Church, (4) satisfaction with the services provided by the Church, (5) Church belonging and participation, and (6) membership in a religious or Church group.

Table 5 represents the correlation matrix obtained for the specific dimensions of religion and a number of caring factors in Malta. The results show that there is

no significant relation between religiosity and social welfare or the acceptance of foreigners in the community. In Malta, religious and non-religious respondents alike are equally favourable or unfavourable of remedial action to counter social injustice or to administer social compensation for those who suffer through no fault of their own. However, it can be observed that those who hold high levels of religious belief, those who want guidance from their Church and are members of a religious or Church group are more likely to think that people are in need because of the inevitable march of progress. In this way people with strong religious convictions, members of religious organisations and those who look for guidance in the teachings of the Church are of the opinion that people are in need because of the inevitable march of progress. They might also be reluctant to favour a programme of social welfare for the alleviation of poverty. In the same way those with strong religious commitments and who are obedient to the teachings of the Church are more likely to dislike having deviants or people with serious social problem in their community neighbourhood [Table 5].

As might be expected, in the special case of Malta, there is a strong affinity between membership in Church organisations and voluntary work ( $r = .44$ ). Unlike other countries of western Europe, voluntary work in Malta is still closely related to the activities of the Church. Many members of religious or Church groups are also active in voluntary work of a religious nature ( $r = .74$ ), and quite a few are also active in voluntary social work ( $r = .12$ ). In this way, core members of the Church in Malta, but not the religious at large, are committed to the alleviation of poverty and the provision of care for people in need.

Respondents' perceptions of a caring society or solidarity does not depend on traditional belief, conventional religiosity or satisfaction with the services of the Church. The active Church goers and those who rely on the teachings of the Church for moral guidance, however, are more likely to be of the opinion that today people are less willing to help each other than before.

### *Conclusions*

A socio-cultural perspective on holiness, in view of Wyschogrod's definition of a saint and the theology emerging from the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church, leads us to conceive of the "new saints" as those people who strive to live their religious faith by a commitment to voluntary care for others in society. Accordingly, testing the hypothesis of the ethical demands of holiness in Maltese

socio-religious culture ethical demands of holiness in Maltese socio-religious culture we observe that core members of the Church in Malta, but generally not those who consider themselves to be religious, are committed to the alleviation of poverty and the provision of care for people in need.

Commitment to social welfare does not depend on conventional religiosity. The closer people are to the Church the more likely are they to hold that today people are less willing to help each other than before and that solidarity is on the decline. In such a situation, leaders of the Church are faced with a great challenge to promote a caring society. They have the task to translate popular religiosity into works for social justice.

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TABLE 1

Religious Practice in Western Europe of which four Euro-Mediterranean Countries (Malta, Italy, Spain, France)

	WE %	M %	I %	S %	F %
Belong to a religious denomination	77	98	85	86	61
Brought up religiously at home	81	98	93	2	71
Consider oneself religious	63	73	81	62	48
Religion very important in life	21	70	30	22	14
Attend religious services:					
more than once a week	7	42	10	8	1
once a week	23	46	28	23	9
less often	41	6	45	41	38
never, almost never	29	5	16	30	52
Religious service important for:					
Birth	71	96	81	73	63
Marriage	73	95	78	72	66
Death	77	95	83	73	70
Shared religious beliefs					
very important in marriage	23	60	23	25	16
Share with partner religious attitudes	61	86	68	66	58
Priority of religious faith in the education of children	25	55	35	26	13
Belong to a Church/religious group	3	14	8	5	6
Unpaid voluntary work of which for:					
Church/religious group	6	9	6	3	5
for elderly/handicapped/deprived	4	2	3	2	5
poverty/employment/housing/equality	2	1	1	1	3

TABLE 2

Religious Belief in Western Europe of which Four Euro-Mediterranean Countries (Malta, Italy, Spain, France)

	WE %	M %	I %	S %	
<b>Belief in:</b>					
God	73	99	82	80	57
Life after death	44	79	53	41	38
A soul	62	87	66	59	50
The devil	26	74	34	27	19
Hell	24	74	33	25	16
Heaven	44	82	44	46	30
Sin	57	85	65	55	40
Resurrection of the dead	35	73	43	32	27
Re-incarnation	20	14	22	20	24
Importance of God in life (score on 10 point scale)	6.0	9.4	7.1	6.1	4.4
Get comfort/strength from religion	50	92	63	51	33

TABLE 3

Attitudes towards Church morality in Western Europe of which four Euro-Mediterranean Countries (Malta, Italy, Spain, France)

	WE %	M %	I %	S %	F %
Church gives adequate answers on:					
Moral problems/individual needs	36	79	45	36	34
Problems of family life	33	85	39	36	26
Spiritual needs	52	87	60	47	53
Social problems	27	68	34	27	21
Proper for Churches to speak on:					
Disarmament	53	68	65	48	48
Abortion	52	91	56	55	35
Third World problems	76	83	85	77	70
Extramarital affairs	41	87	39	47	34
Unemployment	45	65	56	49	36
Racial discrimination	67	77	79	70	55
Euthanasia	54	72	58	55	47
Homosexuality	35	67	35	37	26
Ecology/environment issues	49	50	56	47	49
Government policy	22	28	22	22	15
Confidence in Church (great/quite)	51	82	61	50	47

TABLE 4

"Do you think that people today are more willing to help each other than they used to be, say ten years ago?"

	YEAR* ·%	M %	WE %	I %	S %	F
More willing	1981	28	11	15	17	9
	1991	17				
Less willing	1981	49	60	68	51	67
	1991	53				
Equally willing	1981	15	22	13	23	16
	1991	21				
Don't know	1981	8	7	3	9	8
	1991	10				

\*in Malta the values survey was administered in 1983/4 and repeated in 1991.

TABLE 5

Correlations of religious dimensions and care

**RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<b>CARING FACTORS</b>						
People poor because:						
unlucky	-.07	.03	.01	.02	.07	.00
lazy	.08	-.17*	-.03	.05	.09	-.02
social injustice	.08	-.06	.02	.01	-.02	-.05
inevitable progress	.15*	.14*	.03	.00	.00	.15*
Don't want as neighbours:						
foreigners	.02	.11	-.02	-.04	.05	-.01
problem people	.15*	.14*	.14*	.11	.02	.01
Voluntary workers	.15*	.03	-.03	-.03	-.01	.44**
in organisation:						
Church/religion	.09	.04	.03	.03	.15*	.74**
Social welfare	.09	.00	.00	.02	.01	.12*
Help others (7)	-.19**	-.05	-.03	-.18**	-.03	.06

- (1) Favour Church teachings
- (2) Hold traditional belief
- (3) Favour religious rites marking events in life
- (4) Church trust/satisfactory services
- (5) Church belonging/alienation
- (6) Membership in religious/Church group
- (7) People are more willing to help others than ten years ago.

\* p &lt; -.01

\*\* p &lt; -.001

# THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM IN CYRIL'S MYSTAGOGICAL CATECHESES I-III

Frank Borg, O.P.\*

*With the renewal of interest in the process of Christian Initiation today, especially with the restoration of the catechumenate after the Second Vatican Council, there is also a rejuvenated pursuit of the Patristic teaching and influence on such a process. It is with this same interest that I am undertaking in this article to see how Cyril in his time initiated new converts and his method of catechesis for these newcomers of the Church in Jerusalem*

*In this article I hope to uncover the various liturgical rites of Baptism in the initiation of Christians from the first three Mistagogical Catecheses of Cyril of Jerusalem. Before that, it might be good to put ourselves in the historical context of these Mistagogical Catecheses and the problem of authorship. To understand better the doctrinal content of these catecheses, we should first survey a few of the important terminology that Cyril used which contained specific meanings.*

*Then I shall draw some conclusions with relation to our situation today.*

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## Abbreviations:

AJT *American Journal of Theology*  
EL *Ephemerides Liturgicae*  
HJ *Heythrop Journal*  
JTS *Journal Theological Studies*  
Mus *Le Muséon*  
OCP *Orientalia Christéna periodica*  
RSR *Recherches de science religieuse*  
SP *Studia Pataviana*  
ST *Studi e Testi*  
TS *Theological Studies*

### *A. Cyril of Jerusalem*

#### *The Man and His background*

Among the bishops of Jerusalem of the Fourth Century, Cyril, of whom the famous series of catechetical lectures were attributed, is the only one that gained the reputation of being an ecclesiastical writer. His place and date of birth are unknown, but it is generally believed that Cyril was born in Jerusalem about 315.<sup>1</sup> He was ordained deacon by Macarius, Bishop of Jerusalem c. 335, and priest, by Maximus, the successor of Macarius c. 345. At the death of Maximus, Cyril succeeded him as the Bishop of Jerusalem in c. 348. Since it was the Arian bishop Acacius of Caesarea who consecrated him, the reason being that Jerusalem was under the metropolitan See of Caesarea, the suspicion arose early that he obtained it by concessions to Arianism, as Jerome's *Chronicon* mentioned.<sup>2</sup> But there is no sufficient evidence to sustain such an allegation; reality revealed itself that the following years of his consecration were marked with great tensions between the two Sees, partly because of dogmatic differences, but most probably because of jealousy over the constantly growing importance of Cyril's See. As a result, Cyril was deposed at a council in Jerusalem in 357 and took refuge in Tarsus. The next year, he was restored by the council at Seleucia only to be banished again by Acacius again in 360. It was under Emperor Julian's accession in 362 that he was allowed to return to his See. Even though Acacius died in 366, Cyril's yet another exile, which was the longest, came in 367 when he was removed from Jerusalem by Emperor Valens. He was allowed to return only after the death of the Emperor in 378. In 381, he took part in the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople and most probably died on March 18, 386, the day which the liturgical calendars of the East and West have kept as his feast.

1. J. Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol. III, (Christian Classics Ic., Westminister, Maryland 1990) 362.

2. The view of Socrates (*Hist. eccl.* 2, 38), repeated in Sozomen (*Hist. eccl.* 4, 20), that Maximus was removed for his orthodoxy and replaced by Cyril as a promoter of Arianism, is contradicted by Theodoret (*Hist. eccl.* 2, 22) and by the Synodal Letter of the Council of Constantinople of 383 (*Hist. eccl.* 5, 9).

## ***B. His Mystagogical Catechesis***

### *1. Where and when were they preached?*

The Catechetical Lectures of Cyril fall into two main groups. All but the last five were addressed to the group of candidates which looked forward to Baptism at the coming Easter. They formed a special class known as the *Photizomenoi* (its Latin equivalent: *competentes*). The last five, known as the Mystagogical catecheses, were directed to the newly baptized, the *neophotestoi*. The common practice of the time was that the photizomenoi would give their names on the eve of the first Sunday of Lent, and the next day, they would make public profession of their purpose before witnesses. The exorcisms took place the following day, at the same time catecheses which continued daily, would begin till the Lent fast. These catecheses took the form of continuous addresses. Any of the faithful (baptized) who wished were permitted to be present, but catechumens of the earlier stages were excluded.<sup>3</sup>

If we accept the traditional view of Cyril's authorship of these catecheses, there are twenty four of such catecheses:

- a) An introductory 'Procatechesis'
- b) Eighteen Catecheses directed to the photizomenoi
- c) Five Mystagogical Catecheses to the neophytes after their Baptism, given during the Paschal Octave.

The pre-baptismal Catecheses are believed to be given in Constantine's great basilica on Golgotha mentioned in Catecheses 16:4, whereas the Mystagogical Catecheses were preached at the Anastasis, that is the small chapel which contained the Holy Sepulchre.

It was the common practice of that time that someone would record Cyril in shorthand as he was speaking. In Egerias's time (ca. 385-396), an interpreter was always present to translate these catecheses from Greek into Syriac and this custom may well go back to Cyril's day. Cyril mentioned that "these catecheses were delivered fully seventy years after Probus, which meant around about 347 or perhaps

3. F.L. Cross (ed), *St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*, (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press; New York 1986; 1st pub. 1951 by SPCK, London) xxii.

a year or two later.<sup>4</sup> Such date had been commonly held to imply that Cyril delivered them when he was still a presbyter, though J. Mader<sup>5</sup> has argued that Cyril succeeded Maximus as Bishop early in 348 and that the lectures date from the Lent of that year. In any case, it is hard to maintain that the lectures were taken down in one year only, because of the extensive variations in the manuscripts.<sup>6</sup> It is most probable that the manuscripts reflect the catechizing of more than one year. The advanced theology of the Holy Spirit in Catecheses 16 and 17 also suggests a date considerably later than 350. The one-year view is difficult to harmonize with the various indications of season.<sup>7</sup> Due to the rule of the secret (attested by the scribal note following the Procatechesis), the catecheses most probably were circulated privately at first, available only to the baptized and the photizomenoi.

## II. The Problem of authorship

Here, I do not intend to discuss the whole problem of the authorship of these catecheses<sup>8</sup> but only to highlight the fact that there are at present two schools of thought as far as the authorship is concerned. The first was upheld until recently,

4. Cross (ed), *St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures*, xxii
5. *Der heilige Cyrillus*, (Einsiedeln 1891)
6. See especially Toutée's two recensions of Catechesis 2; there are two different versions of 2, 16-20. Cfr. Bibliography.
7. Giffors shows that Cat. 18:7 and Cat. 4:30 indicated that the lectures were delivered in the year when Easter fell early, but in Cat. 14:10, spring had already arrived, and not merely official spring, but also the spring flower. Cat. 13:8, as Giffors maintains, has the same problem.
8. For detailed discussion of this problem, the following argue against Cyril's authorship: W.J. Swaans, "A propos des 'Chatéchèses Mystagogiques' attribuées à S. Cyrille de Jérusalem", *Mus* 55 (1942); W. Telfer, *Cyril of Jerusalem and Memesius of Emesa*, (Library of Christian Classics; London 1955) 39-40; E. Bihain, "Une vie arménienne de S. Cyrille de Jérusalem", *Mus* 76 (1963) 319-348; A.A. Stephenson, *The works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 2 (Washington 1970) 143-149; A. Renoux, "Les Catéchèses Mystagogiques dans l'organisation liturgique hierolymitaine du IV ed du V siècle", *Mus* 78 (1965) 355-359; J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, (London 1971).

For those who defend the Cyrilline authorship: C. Beukers, "For our Emperors, Soldiers, and Allies" An attempt at dating the twenty third Catechesis by Cyrilus of Jerusalem', *Vig C* 15 (1961) 177-184; K. Deddens, *Annus Liturgicus?*, (Goes 1975); Edward Yarnold, "The authorship of the Mystagogic catecheses attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem", *HJ* 19 (1978). Authors like F.L. Cross, A Piédaugne and P.T. Camelot keep an open mind on the subject.

that is, that the whole catecheses are the work of Cyril, while the other school of thought attributes the first twelve catecheses to Cyril and the rest to Cyril's successor, John, from an analysis of the Greek vocabulary used, a marked difference emerges. In any case, the style, spirituality and theology of the catecheses as a whole is consistent. Hence, the influence of Cyril on these catecheses is beyond doubt.

### *Uncovering the rites of Baptism according to Cyril's Catechesis*

From the first three Mystagogical Catecheses, we can reconstruct a clear picture of the contemporary Baptismal rite:

#### *A. Renunciation of the Devil*

After all had assembled in the vestibule of the Baptistry (*ho proanrios tou baptisterion oikos*<sup>9</sup>; also *ho exoterios oikos*)<sup>10</sup>, the candidates, facing West and with hands stretched out, made a formal renunciation of the devil. Why did the candidates have to face West to renounce Satan? St. Cyril maintained it was necessary to do so, "since the West is the region of sensible darkness, and he being darkness, has his dominion also in darkness."<sup>11</sup> Hence, the candidates, looking towards the West with a symbolical meaning "renounce that dark and gloomy potentate."<sup>12</sup>

#### *B. Profession of faith*

After renouncing the Devil, the candidates then turned to the East and solemnly professed their faith in the one Baptism of Repentance with a trinitarian formula. What was the significance of turning to the East in order to profess one's faith? St. Cyril explained that the symbolic turning from the West to the East, which is the

9. Cat. Myst. 1:2, Cross, *Lectures* 13. Note: All English and Greek quotations of the Mystagogical Catecheses, unless otherwise stated, are taken from F.L. Cross's.

10. Cat. Myst. 1:11, Cross, *Lectures*, 17

11. Cat. Myst. 1:4, Cross, *Lectures*, 54-55

12. Cat. Myst. 1:4, Cross, *Lectures*, 55

place of light, signified a complete break with Satan and a decision to put one's faith in the trinitarian God.

### *C. Anointing with the exorcized oil*

Passing into the inner chamber (*ho esoteros oikos*)<sup>13</sup>, they next took their clothes off (in complete nakedness), and were anointed with the exorcised oil. The stripping of the garment, for Cyril, was 'an image of putting off the old man with his deeds.'<sup>14</sup> Such action was done in 'imitating Christ, who hung naked on the Cross, and by his nakedness spoiled principalities and powers, and openly triumphed over them on the tree.'<sup>15</sup> St. Cyril described the anointing with the exorcized oil as being "made partakers of the good olive."<sup>16</sup> The candidates were seen as being "cut off from the wild olive tree, and grafted into the good one and were made to share the fatness of the true olive-tree."<sup>17</sup>

### *D. Baptism by immersion*

The candidate, then, were led by hand one by one to the font, where after again making their formal profession of faith, were immersed three times in the blessed baptismal water to symbolise the Redeemer's three-day sojourn in the grave. Being led into the baptismal font was seen as being "carried from the Cross to the Sepulchre."<sup>18</sup> Hence, for Cyril, the water of salvation was at once for the candidates, "your grave and your mother."<sup>19</sup>

13. Cat. Myst. 1:11, Cross, *ibid.*, 18

14. Cat. Myst. 2:2, Cross, *ibid.*, 59; also cf. Col 3,9

15. Cat. Myst. 2:2, Cross, *ibid.*, 59; also cf. Col., 2, 15

16. Cat. Myst. 2:3., Cross, *ibid.*, 60

17. Cat. Myst. 2:3, Cross, *ibid.*, 60

18. Cat. Mys. 2:4, Cross, *ibid.*, 60

19. Cat. Myst. 2:5, Cross, *ibid.*, 61

### *E. Baptismal chrismation*

After baptism by immersion, the candidate was, then, anointed with the oil of Chrism. Cyril compared this anointing with that of Christ after his own baptism in the river Jordan. As Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit, the neophytes (*neopholistoi*), through the anointing with the oil of the Chrism, were anointed with the Holy Spirit.<sup>20</sup> Cyril continued to speak of this chrism as “a spiritual preservative of the body and safeguard of the soul”<sup>21</sup> and the importance of keeping it “unspotted and unblemished.”<sup>22</sup> Though in his Mystagogical Catecheses, St. Cyril did not explicitly mention the rite of putting on new garments, the above exhortation seems to imply the symbolic meaning of putting on the new garments before the neophytes were led into the Church for communion.

### *A. The Terminology of Cyril*

In order to comprehend better the doctrinal content of the three mystagogical catecheses of Cyril on Baptism, we must come to grip with the terminology he used. Like other Church Fathers, Cyril sets up a typological relationship between the Old Testament and the New, and then, applies this relationship to the explanation of the liturgical rites. However, Cyril did not absolutize typology. In fact, typology is only one component of his method of theologizing and he uses such typological argument only twice in the first three of his Mystagogical catecheses: one for his commentary on Baptism and the other when discussing the anointing with oil. Cyril did make clear distinction between the two Testaments in that the saving events of the New Testament do not belong to the Old. The Old Testament contains in fact not the events, but their *typos*.<sup>23</sup> “This, you must understand: that this figure (*typos*) is found in the ancient history.”<sup>24</sup> The Old Testament events are related, one by one, to their New Testament correlatives in a real and proper learning process:

20. cf. Cat. Myst. 3:2, Cross, *ibid.*, 64

21. Cat. Myst. 3:7, Cross, *ibid.*, 66-67

22. Cat. Myst. 3:7, Cross, *ibid.*, 67

23. Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy*, (translated by Matthew J. O'Connell) (Pueblo; New York 1989) 162.

24. cf. Cat. Myst. 1:2, Cross, *Lectures*, 51

"Now turn from the ancient to the recent, from the figure (*typos*) to the reality."<sup>25</sup> For Cyril, there is no question of seeing the one reality present in the other, but of passing from one reality to another. If this is to be done, there must be a correspondence between the events of the two Testaments: this correspondence is ensured by a likeness between them, in according with the method usual in typology.

In his *Mystagogical catecheses*, Cyril uses four terms to express his typology, namely:

- I. Symbol
- II. Imitation
- III. Likeness
- IV. "Antitypos"

For us, who are so much set in our own definition of these terms, it would not be easy to put ourselves into Cyril's time and try to see things from his point of view. But, it is essential that we do so, otherwise it is impossible to penetrate his thought. Hence, to help us in this venture, we shall take a close look at each of these four terms in greater detail.

### *I. Symbol*

According to Cyril, liturgical rites belong to the order of symbols, but not in the modern sense of the word. Rather, they refer to the external, ritual and visible aspects of the Liturgy. Hence, when the candidates turn to the West and renounce Satan, it is because the West is the place of the visible darkness. Facing the West 'symbolically'<sup>26</sup> vivifies the connection between darkness and Satan. Likewise, the action of turning towards the East is a symbolical action, but we cannot give such action a sacramental significance. In fact, such an "orientation" or turning toward the East amplifies the importance and nobility of the East because, according to Cyril, it is there that God had placed paradise.

25. Cat. Myst. 1:3, Cross, *ibid.*, 54

26. cf. Cat. Myst. 1:4, Cross, *ibid.*, 55

The same idea of symbol can be found when Cyril explains the oil for anointing: “For as the Bread of the Eucharist, after the invocation of the Holy Ghost (*epiklesis*), is mere bread no longer, but the Body of Christ, so also this holy ointment is no more simple ointment, nor (so to say) common, after the invocation, but the gift of Christ.”<sup>27</sup> Hence, since it is sacramental, “it is symbolically applied to thy forehead and thy other senses; and while thy body is anointed with visible ointment, the soul is sanctified by the Holy and life-going Spirit.”<sup>28</sup> The oil that has been exorcized is a symbol of the abundance of Christ, the true olive tree in which the candidates now participate.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, ‘symbol’ is to be understood not in a sacramental sense, but simply as having an indicative meaning and an explanatory power, despite the fact that the anointing and the oil do as such have sacramental value and efficacy.

Hence, we can conclude that the term ‘symbol’ according to Cyril indicates only a representative function of rites and does not imply any sacramental efficacy. The liturgical rite has a representative and didactic capacity and sheds light on the contents of the celebration; however, it does not play a constitutive part in the sacramentality of the rites, but stands alongside it in a purely accessory and nonconstitutive role.

## *II. Imitation*

Parallel with their symbolism, the rites have a sacramental dimension, for which Cyril uses the expression: ‘Imitation’. Speaking of the candidates immersing in the baptismal water three times as a symbol of Christ’s three days in the tomb, Cyril continues: “so you also in your first ascent out of water, represented the first day of Christ in the Earth, and by your descent, the night.”<sup>30</sup> Until here, the significance of the word ‘imitate’ does not carry the sacramental sense. But the sacramental sense comes immediately after with such words: “And at the self-same moment, ye were died and were born; and that water of salvation was at once your grave and your mother... and one and the same season brings about both of these, your birth went

27. Cat. Myst. 3:3, Cross, *ibid.*, 65

28. Cat. Myst. 3:3, Cross, *ibid.*, 65

29. cf. Cat. Myst. 2:3, Cross, *ibid.*, 60

30. Cat. Myst. 2:4, Cross, *ibid.*, 61

hand in hand with your death.”<sup>31</sup> Therefore, we can say that insofar as the immersions and emergencies are three, they are symbolic; insofar as they are actions that imitate what happened to Christ, they are conferred with sacramentality.

Concerning the nudity before the anointing with the oil that has been exorcized, the same point is being made. As Christ “by his nakedness spoiled principalities and powers, and openly triumphed over them on the tree,”<sup>32</sup> likewise, the candidates stripped themselves and gave an image (*eikon*) of disengaging from the ‘old man’. The fruit of ‘imitation’ (*mimesis*) is ‘likeness’ or an ‘image’. Because of this ‘imitation’ of Christ, the candidates regained the original justice of the first human being: “ye were naked in the sight of all, and were not ashamed, for truly you bore the likeness of the first-formed Adam, who was naked in the garden, and was not ashamed.”<sup>33</sup>

Cyril’s thought becomes even clearer when he puts in contrast the words ‘image’ and ‘truth’: “We did not really die, we were not really buried, we were not really crucified and raised again, but our imitation (*mimesis*) was but in a figure (*eikon*), while our salvation is in reality. Christ was actually crucified, and actually buried, and truly rose again; and all these things have been vouchsafed to us that we, by imitation communicating in His suffering, might gain salvation in reality.”<sup>34</sup> This paragraph makes a distinction between two phases: the phase of the history of salvation, that is characterized with two words: ‘actually’ (*lates*) and ‘truly’ (*alethos, en aletheia*); and the sacramental phase, which is conveyed by two other words: ‘imitation’ (*mimesis*) and ‘figure/image’ (*eikon*). The object of this ‘imitation’ is the passion of Christ, because by imitating Christ, we participate in it: “by imitation communicating in His sufferings.”<sup>35</sup>

Thus, we can conclude by saying that the sacramentality of the liturgical rites is represented by two words, ‘image’ and ‘imitation’, in their ontological sense and not in the sense of their ritual representation.

31. Cat. Myst. 2:4, Cross, *ibid.*

32. Cat. Myst. 2:2, Cross, *ibid.*, 59; also cf. Col 2, 15.

33. Cat. Myst. 2:2, Cross, *ibid.*, 60; also cf. Gen 2, 25.

34. Cat. Myst. 2:5, Cross, *ibid.*, 61

35. Cat. Myst. 2:5, Cross, *ibid.*

### III. Likeness

In his commentary, the Paradise word 'likeness' has the same significance as 'image' and 'imitation'. Explaining the letter of St. Paul to the Romans 6,5, he says: "He has not said, 'For if we have been planted together in His death', but, **in the likeness of His death**. For upon Christ death came in reality, for His soul was truly separated from his body, and His burial was true, for His holy body was wrapt in pure linen; and every thing happened to him truly; but in your case only the likeness of death and sufferings, whereas of salvation, not the likeness, but the reality."<sup>36</sup> The 'likeness' (*homoioma*) here is used in contrast with the word 'truth', exactly as image (*eikon*) is contrasted with 'truth' in his Mystagogical Catechese 2:5. Thus, we can safely conclude that the two words 'likeness' and image' carry the same significance for Cyril.

### IV. "Antitypos"

The word 'antitypos' is not an alternative word for the three words that we have discussed above. The baptismal usage of the word 'antitypos' can be directly connected with the word 'likeness' (*homoioma*). In responding to those who claim that Baptism is only for the forgiveness of sins or for the adoption as God's children, Cyril asserts that baptism is also an "antitypos" of the suffering of Christ."<sup>37</sup>

When Christians receive 'the sacrament' (*to antitypon*) of the Holy Spirit, they become the images (*eikon*) of Christ, because the anointing with Chrism that followed the baptismal bath is the "antitypon" wherein Christ was anointed; and this is the Holy Spirit."<sup>38</sup> Here, we can see the sacramental significance of 'antitypos', which ensures the identity between the descent of the Holy Spirit on Christ and the sacramental descent of the Holy Spirit on Christians. By giving such determined meaning to the word 'antitypos', Cyril is able to emphasise both the identity of the liturgical rite with the fundamental events and the difference between the two,

36. Cat. Myst. 2:7, Cross, *ibid.*, 62-63

37. Cat. Myst. 2:6, Cross, *ibid.*, 62

38. Cat. Mist. 3:1, Cross, *ibid.*, 61

since the two are never on the same plane. In Cyril's terminology, therefore, 'typos' has the same meaning as 'antitypos'.<sup>39</sup>

### *B. Baptism: The Phase of Antitypos*

For Cyril, the history of salvation consists of three main phases:

- a. The phase of *typos* : The Exodus
- b. The phase of *alétheia* : The Paschal Mystery of Christ
- c. The phase of *antitypon* : Baptism

The liberation prefigured in the Exodus is fully realized in the Mystery of Christ. Every created being through the ages finds its personal salvation in a mysterious way in the paschal mystery of Christ. The catechumens who after Baptism become neophytes, enter for the first time in the dynamism of the Paschal Mystery, that is, they die with Christ to sins and become children of the Divine family.

The life of Christ remains the paradigm of life for everyone that believes in Him. Thus, all that is fulfilled in the Saviour should be realized in a progressive manner in each believer in the sacrament, in such a way that the Baptised become totally *summorphos kai metachos*<sup>40</sup> of the Risen Christ. For this reason, even in the phase of *antitypon*, salvation is considered as a passage from death to life through the Divine Intervention.<sup>41</sup>

39. see e.g. Cat. Myst. 4:3 – “For in the figure (*en typō*) of Bread is given thee His body, and in the figure of Wine His Blood; that thou by partaking (*metabolon*) of the Body and Blood of Christ, mightest be made of the same body and the same blood with Him.”

40. Roberto Tura, "Battesimo e storia della salvezza nelle catechesi di S. Cirillo di Gerusalemme", *SP* 17 (1970) 567.

41. cf. Tura, *ibid.*

### *I. Death dominates the World*

The necessity of Baptism is affirmed by Cyril with one specific phrase, that has the abrupt style of a Tridentine Canon: *Ei tis me labe to baptisma, sotérian ouch echei.*<sup>42</sup> The fundamental motive for such necessity is explained clearly in all three catecheses on Baptism: every created being born into the world is under the domination of sin and death, from which he must be freed. Christ was sent by the Father to the world to free those who are under the oppression of sins in the world (*hina rhustitai tous ento kosmo hupo tes hamaztias kataponpoumenous*).<sup>43</sup> In the Greek understanding, the weight of oppression diminishes one's ability to do good, Jesus rescues and frees us precisely from that.<sup>44</sup>

St. Cyril used a few terminology that characterized the situation of Death which preceded Baptism. The first of which is *hamartia*: this word indicates the original sin instigated by the Devil (*arthegos hamartias*),<sup>45</sup> and the personal sin which resulted from the free will of mankind. The destruction of sin makes intervention of Jesus necessary (*eis monos anamartetos*),<sup>46</sup> that by his passion and by his blood, he has freed us.

Cyril describes the sinner (*douleia*) as under the complete will of Satan and there lays the definite awful spiritual slavery (*kakiste*). Jesus' victory over sin brings to light the 'doctrinal' falsity and the moral vileness of the Devil. Sins and death under the dominion of the Devil generates total death (*thanatos*) in a sense, in that the physical death of the sinner marked the definite end for he has no hope of the glorious resurrection. Death swallows one's up and none can escape from it, if the Saviour does not intervene.

Describing sin with such terminology concerning the situation of the sinner, St. Cyril calls the attention of his hearers to the wickedness and trickiness of the Devil. Most probably the catechumens in Jerusalem, majority of whom were pagan converts, understood the words and imagery which their Master, Cyril, was using to describe the disastrous situation under the dominion of the Devil. They knew

42. Cat. 3:10; PG 33, 440B: "Si quis baptisma non recipiat, salutem non habet."

43. Cat. Myst. 1:3; PG 33, 106B: "ut laborantes in mundo sub onere peccati liberaret."

44. cf. Tura, "Battesimo e storia salvezza", 568.

45. cf. Cat. Myst. 2:4; PG 33, 385B: "Primus auctor peccati est diabolus."

46. Cat. Myst. 2:10; PG 33, 396A: "Est solus abque peccato".

very well that by their own power, it was insufficient to overcome such desperate situation. Such salvation – the ability to be raised up and walk uprightly, the recovery of the spiritual sight and restoration to new life – can only come from outside oneself. Cyril's answer to this is that the liberation can only come from the intervention of him whose blood was poured out for our salvation because we did not abandon ourselves to desperation.

## *II. From Death springs life*

Baptism produces marvellous and mysterious effects for those who receive it. The environment itself in which the catechumens find themselves suggests a series of images; Cyril tries to make them understand that a new life has just begun in Spring time. The flowers, the brightness and the freshness of Spring gives us a glimpse of the extraordinary mystery of the baptismal regeneration. The sacrament signifies the explosion of an infinite supernatural life which is much superior than the nature order of Spring time: from the state of spiritual death, the soul is inserted mysteriously into the everlasting life of God.<sup>47</sup>

The first word that characterizes the first state of Baptism is *hamartia*. With Baptism comes the passage *ex hamartion eis dekaiousunen*.<sup>48</sup> *Dikaiousune* signifies justice, holiness, righteousness of the spiritual nature. Only God is completely 'just' and wish to share his sanctity with his creature. In the catecheses of Cyril, this term expresses a hint for reconciliation, since *dikaiousune* signifies returning to peace, friendship and intimacy with God, thanks to the Blood of Christ. While sin means the participation in wickedness of the Devil, Baptism initiates the participation in the sanctity of God. Sin carries with it the spiritual faith; but the baptismal font purifies, where the candidates come out splendidly cleansed by God.

From the distressed spiritual slavery under the heavy burden of the dominion of Satan, the catechumen enters through Baptism into the wonderful service of God: *ten men ton hamartion katisten douleian apothemenos, ten de tou Kyriou makeriotaten douleian Ktesamenos*.<sup>49</sup> The adjective *makarios* is a qualitative usage

47. cf. Tura, "Battesimo e storia della salvezza", 570

48. Cat. Myst. 1:4 PG 33, 373B: "ex-peccatis in justitiam".

49. Cat. Myst. 1:2; PG 33, 372: "ac felicissimam Domini servitatem consecutus, regni coelestis hæreditate potiunda dignus censeatur"

of the Father who brings salvation to mankind. Therefore, it is attributed to God, to Christ, to the Church, to the sacraments from which salvation is actualized, and also to the new life received through Baptism. The *douleia*, now under the reign of God, decide to respond in a service that gives value to their own human existence. Such a service generates happiness because it brings salvation. Hence, it is radically opposed to that of the devil which was burdensome and desperation, whereas now, so much lighter and salvific is the service of God. With eyes fixed at the 'revolt' at the Easter Vigil, Cyril assured his *photizomenoi* that in the service of God, no one is a slave anymore, because one lives in the climate of friendship and in a profound love.

If the situation before Baptism is qualified by the word *thanatos* (death), the successive stage is much more definitely to be described by the term *Zoe* (life). The point of departure is signified by the baptismal regeneration because *dia tou baptismatos luetai tou thanatou to kentron*.<sup>50</sup> The baptismal water at once becomes the sepulchre and the mother's womb for those who descend to death that the catechumens rediscover life. The sacrament is the *kairos*, established by God for the salvation of each believer through a mystical rebirth.

In these three contrasts, (sin-sanctity, slavery that ruins – service that saves, death-life), St Cyril adds two beautiful ideas for a better understanding of the effects of Baptism: youth and joy. The passage from death to life consists in a radical renewal. Baptism is the sacrament that rejuvenates all mankind. It is the Pauline idea of 'new man'<sup>51</sup> that re-emerges under various hints. Already in the first Mystagogical Catechese, the Bishop of Jerusalem has invited the catechumens to begin the work of taking off the 'old man' that ruined one's life by wicked desires and lust of this world, in order to put on the 'new man' that is remoulded according to the knowledge of God. The sacrament signifies the passage from the old age to that of spiritual youthfulness. St. Cyril offers his audience another beautiful imagery from the invisible reality that is at work in their soul. For Cyril, Baptism also signifies the passage from a climate of desperation to an existence of joyous hope. The 'old man' carries within himself the helpless lamentation of an oppressed slave whose life is without any opening except unto death. This luminous horizon that Christians have a glimpse of at baptism allows them to put on again the 'tunic of joy',<sup>52</sup> the

50. Cat. Myst. 3:11; PG 33, 441B: "per baptismum enim solvitur mortis stimulus" The physical death remains, but has produced the significance of a curse and a death in the Christian sense.

51. cf. Eph 4, 24; Col 3, 10.

52. Isaiah 61, 10

symbol of the 'new man', and to begin a new existence that is illuminated by the light of Christ and supported by the hope of a true life. The white garments which the neophytes put on after coming out of the baptism by immersion, have, therefore, the significance not only of being purified and renewed interiorly, but also a profound sense of eschatological hope.

### *III. Salvation as the fruit of Divine Intervention*

Our God who is a God of love, has taken the initiative to save us from the very beginning of the world. He offers salvation to Adam who refused it by sinning. There are then, he promised to all mankind the coming of the Saviour. In Baptism, God fulfils his promise by giving again what Adam had lost for all, because now between the catechumens and Adam stands Christ. It is through this Glorious Redeemer that the Neophytes receive the forgiveness of sins and a new life through baptism.

For Cyril, there are two reasons for the divine intervention through Baptism: the omnipotence and loving mercy of God. The striking thing is that God by offering the new life, has come to pull man out of the death of sins and walk with him in this new existence. Such power is amazingly real because now the baptismal re-creation is immensely greater than the creation of the world.

But what really moves Cyril to express his admiration is above all the love which, humanly speaking, is incredible and which God has demonstrated to his created beings in Baptism. To define such love, Cyril uses the Pauline term *philanthropia*, which means the loving kindness of God to mankind, a friendship that moves God himself to give more and more to the extent that he even overlooks justice. Hence, we can find such friendship that expresses mercy, clemency and boundlessness.

The two components, omnipotence and loving mercy, can be found united in one single acclamation in the second Mystagogical Catechese 2:5 -"O strange and inconcievable thing!... O surpassing loving kindness!" (*O xenou kai paradou pragmatos... o philanthropias huperballouzes*)<sup>53</sup> In Baptism, the might and love of God receives a new and unprecedented success. According to Cyril, what is to be admired in Baptism is not only the might and loving mercy of God, but also the liberation of mankind that is imprisoned by the forces of evil.

53. Cat. Myst. 2:5, Cross, *Lectures*, 20 and p. 61

## ***Conclusions***

1. What we have is the teaching of a bishop on the mystery that the neophytes had experienced in Baptism at the Easter Vigil. The sacrament gives rise to a new life for the neophytes. It was through the rite that they participate sacramentally in the paschal mystery of Christ, which was also prefigured in the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt.
2. It is with such background that we comprehend why Baptism was a solemn rite even in Jerusalem where the Jewish Paschal was still a prevailing event at the time of Cyril. The reason for such coincidence is theologically profound: The paschal mystery of Christ, thanks to the liturgy of the Church, is a salvific event that is always present and everyone can participate in it everyday. But the moment that is symbolically rich and much more operative in the course of the year appears to be at the dawn of Easter.
3. The baptismal rites that were used in the Jerusalem Church are very close to those we are using today since the restoration of the catechumenate after Vatican II, except the manner in which the rites were being carried out. For example, during the rite of anointing with the exorcized oil and the baptism by immersion, the candidates stripped naked in front of everyone in the time of Cyril. But today, such action is no longer to be accepted, because it is offensive. The practice of this rite in some case is reduced to putting on the shoulder of the baptized a piece of white cloth. As a result, our present day baptismal rites lack such typology that demonstrates forcefully the significance of baptism.
4. In order to understand well the doctrinal content of these Mystagogical Catecheses, we must comprehend correctly the significance of the terms Cyril used, especially his typology. We must never use our manner of theological thinking to interpret his catecheses.
5. Cyril used the things from daily living which his people were familiar with in order to explain the mystery of Christ. We must reflect deeply upon our contemporary situation and try to use the same method in explaining the significance of our baptismal rites by using things and experiences with which the people of God today are accustomed.

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# ECCLESIOLOGY IN THE FATHERS

Mgr. Joseph Lupi

To non-Christians, primitive Christianity must have seemed to be a conglomeration of local communities each leading its own separate life, each community considering itself to be an *ekklesia*: but at the same time each community was conscious of belonging to one universal *Ekklesia*, whose head is Christ.

This is quite evident from the letters of Saint Ignatius of Antioch.<sup>1</sup> Christ is at the centre of Ignatius' teaching: Christ is the life of the Christian, he is our eternal life (Magn 1,2) because he is "flesh" and "spirit"; he is with the Father, the Logos of the Father, but he is also man, who really died and rose again, and thus he has made available eternal life to man; so we "now live in Christ in all things" (Eph 20,2); in his death he is our true life (Symr 4,1) our inseparable life (Eph 3,2).

Therefore through faith and charity the Christian must be united to Christ in flesh and spirit. The life of the Christian, even in its most material actions, is a spiritual life for "everything is done in Christ" (Eph 8,9). The Christian must aim at reproducing in himself the unity of flesh and spirit which is in Christ, be like Christ, in communion with Christ in his sufferings, sacrificing himself for the needs of the brethren.

Unity with Christ brings about unity with the brethren. Ignatius continually stresses this unity and considers heretics dangerous, for they bring divisions in Christ's flock (Phil 2): "Love unity, avoid divisions, be like Christ as Christ is like the Father" (Phil 7,2). The source of unity which brings together all Christians in one body, is the unity of the Godhead, and love is the bond of unity in the Godhead.

This unity is manifested in a visible organisation – the Church. This organisation was slowly developing towards a hierarchical structure, which is quite evident in Ignatius. At its head there is the **Bishop**: whatever his qualities or his age, he is not just a man but he is God's representative; his mission derives from the Apostles, but he is the living image of the invisible God (Magn 6; Trall 3,1); among the college of presbyters he is as Christ or God himself among the Apostles; and as

1. Cfr. J.A. Kleist: "The Epistles of Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch", *Ancient Christian writers*, Vol.,1 (Westminster Md., 1964); Th. Camelot: "Ignace d'Antioche, Lettres-Lettres et Martyre de Polycarpe de Smyrne", (*Sources Chrétiniennes*, 10; Paris '1969).

Christ is the Word of God so the bishop not only maintains the visible unity of the *ekklesia*, and the integrity of the deposit of faith, but also exercises a spiritual authority by means of which the spirit of Christ is perpetuated.

The bishop is surrounded by the presbyters, “a precious spiritual crown” (Magn 13,1), just as Christ was surrounded by his disciples. The bishop together with the college of presbyters governs the Church, but he is clearly distinguished from the presbyterium: he is the sole authority in the Church. The situation described in the Acts, I Peter and in the Pastoral letters is different; the authority belongs to the college of presbyters, with one of them a *primus inter pares*. This seemed to be the situation also in Rome and Corinth according to the First Letter of Clement.

Each *ekklesia* is not closed in itself, it does not exist in isolation for there are regular communications between the communities; and if one Church suffers, the other churches suffer with it and when peace is again restored to a persecuted church all the others rejoice; there is continual travelling from one church to another by itinerant preachers.

This visible unity between the local churches is entrenched in the *Ecclesia Catholica* which is not the sum of all the local churches scattered “to the ends of the earth” (Ef 3,2), but it is the Body of Christ, which embraces all nations (Smyn 1/2) and is one with Christ as Christ is one with the Father (Ef 5,1).

This unity of Christians among themselves and in Christ is manifested in the Eucharist: a thanksgiving within a liturgical meal during which the bishop repeats Christ’s actions, giving thanks and breaking the bread. A meal which is also a sacrifice: the reference to the blood of Christ (Phil 4,1) and the several references to the altar (Ef 5,2; Magn 7,2; Tral 7,2) bear this out; it is a sacrifice which gathers together all believers around the bishop, around one altar, symbol of one Church grouped about the one Christ, the Only Begotten of the Father.

The Eucharist unites Christians together because it is not simply a community meal but it unites them to the flesh of Christ: “Take care to partake of one Eucharist for one is the flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ and one the cup to unite us with His Blood, and one altar just as there is one bishop assisted by the presbytery and the deacons” (Phil 4).

We meet with the notion of *Ecclesia Catholica* also in the prayer which Saint Polycarp of Smyrna made for the entire Catholic Church throughout the world, before being burnt on the stake; while Hermas tells us that the Church collects its members from the whole world, forming them into one body in unity of

understanding, faith and love; and Justin (Dialogue with Trypho 63,5) says that all who believe in Christ are united in one soul, one synagogue, one church which is brought into being through His Name and shares in his name: for we are all Christians.

### *The Church as a pre-existent spiritual society*

The Fathers of the I and II centuries, generally speak of the Church as an empirical visible society. But in this period we meet also with ideas of a pre-existent spiritual reality. These ideas were mainly developed in Judaeo-Christian circles.<sup>2</sup>

Judaeo-Christians could be:

- i. the Ebionites: Jews of strict observance who recognised Christ as prophet or Messiahs but not as Son of God;
- ii. the Christian community of Jerusalem before A.D. 70;
- iii. Christians who had broken away from the synagogue but still nurtured a Jewish mentality and embraced several Jewish ideas.

Judaeo-Christian theology is found in several Old Testament apocrypha (v.g. II Henock, Assumption of Isaiah, Testament of the 12 Patriarchs) in many New Testament apocrypha (Gospel of Peter, of James, according to the Hebrews, to the Egyptians), and in a number of early writings like the Didache, ps. Barnabas, Hermas, I Clement.

In these writings the Church appears as a theological reality; we have seen this also in Ignatius of Antioch and it developed from the prophetic writings of the Old Testament.

The prophets had already developed a theology of Israel as God's own people, Yahweh's bride, the Lord's vineyard, the celestial city. These ideas are applied to the Church in the New Testament Scriptures and form the elements of a theology which has been maintained by Tradition: the Church is the "New Jerusalem", the "true vine", the "perfect dove".

2. On Judaeo-Christian Theology of the Church, cfr. J. Danielou, *Theologie du Judaeo-Christianisme*, (Paris 1957), 3e partie, chp. X.

Many texts clearly speak of the preexistent church:

**Hermas**<sup>3</sup>: “The Church has been created first, before all things. It is on behalf of the Church that the world has been created” (Vis II, 4,1).

**2 Clem**<sup>4</sup>: “The first spiritual Church was created before the sun and the moon” (XIV,1).

Some scholars have considered these ideas as gnostic, but this is to be excluded: they belong to Jewish apocalyptic contexts.

**Hermas**, for example writes that God created all things on behalf of the Church; it is the same idea we find in IV Esdras: all things have been created on behalf of Israel. This idea is also in Eph 3, 9-10: the mystery hidden in God from all ages; and in Ignatius: the Church was predestined before all time (Eph 1,1).

The idea is symbolically expressed by Hermas when describing his visions.

His first vision is of an old woman; asked by an angel whom he thinks she is, Hermas answers: “The Sybil”, but the Angel tells him that she is the Church and has appeared to him as an old woman because she had been created before all things. This does not mean that the Church **really** existed before all else: the Church’s existence is an eschatological reality, present in God’s mind from the beginning. The woman later appears as a very young woman, a bride (Vis IV, 2, 102): Hermas’ visions symbolises both the antiquity of the Church (old woman) and her newness: the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven garbed as a bride ready to meet her bridegroom (Rev 21, 1-2).

In Jewish apocalyptic literature we meet with the notion that eschatological realities are hidden in the mind of God from all eternity. These eschatological realities are the Law, Penance, Heaven, Hell, the Throne of Glory, the Sanctuary, the Name of the Messiahs. The notion is found also among Judaeo-Christians (cfr. Rev 21, 1-2; Hebrews 12, 22-23: the congregation of the first born whose names are written in heaven; and Eph 3, 9-10: the mystery hidden from all ages, revealed in Christ).. They are the realities existing only in God’s mind from the beginning, and in the

3. The **Shepherd** of Hermas is an apocalyptic treatise which through visions, precepts and parables announces a saving repentance after Baptism.
4. The so-called “Second Epistle of Clement of Rome” is a homily by an unknown author of the 2nd century.

view of them all other things had been made. The second vision is that of a tower in construction: the tower is built on water and its foundations are the Word of God. Here the symbolism is evident: we have a parallelism between (a) the primordial waters and the waters of Baptism; b) the creative Word of God and the Incarnate Word.

The second vision recalls Genesis (the creation). In the early Church (even up to the IV century) besides a literal interpretation we meet with a symbolical interpretation; in the Genesis account of creation there are hidden the preexistent mysterious realities just mentioned.

“Starting from Papias, the disciple of the beloved one, then Clement, Pantaenus, the wise priest of Alexandria, then the wise Ammonius, all those who had lived before the great councils, interpreted the Hexameron as referring to Christ and the Church” (Anastasius Sinaita – 7th cent.) We also meet with such an interpretation in the *Elogiae prophetarum* of Clement of Alexandria; for him the heavens and the waters are the pure spirits. Heaven and earth are the material and spiritual realities; through water and the spirit, not only creation comes about but also regeneration.

In 2 Clem the Church appears as the Bride of Christ: “By doing the Will of God we become members of the Church of the beginning, the spiritual Church. Created before the sun and the moon, the Church of life, you do not ignore, I believe, that the living Church is the Body of Christ, for the Scripture says that God created man male and female. The male is Christ and the female the Church. And the books of the Prophets and the Apostles teach that the Church does not date from the present time, but comes from on high. She was all spiritual, just like our Jesus and she appeared at the end of time for our salvation.”

In this passage we meet with the same idea we found in Hermas: “the Church was the first to be created; we have a reference to the letter to the Ephesians; the Body of Christ, and also a reference to the Apocalypse: the Church the bride of Christ (this idea recalls that of the prophets: the nuptials of God with Israel). But there is also a new element: the pre-existent union of Christ and the Church, an idea very common among the Gnostics but hardly ever met with in Orthodox Christianity. Is the idea derived from Greek mythology or from Judaeo-Christian interpretation of the Scriptures? Some scholars in this idea have seen a Christian interpretation of the mythological human being who was originally male and female in one body (an Androgenos). But this is something altogether alien to Jewish or Christian thought and we must seek elsewhere for the origin of the idea of the unity of Christ and the Church.

The passage of II Clem continues thus:

“The Church which was spirit has become visible in the flesh of Christ... this flesh is a copy of the Spirit.” Here we have a contrast between Christ’s Spirit and the Church Spirit, which is the body of Christ, and between Christ’s Spirit and the Church’s flesh.

The first contrast is also found in the letter to the Ephesians, but the contrast here is between Christ as head and the Church as His Body, while in II Clem the contrast is between Christ (male) and the Church (female). Implicitly the contrast of II Clem is also found in the letter to the Ephesians (5, 25-32) where St. Paul speaks of the unity in marriage as symbolised by the unity of Christ with the Church. The unity in **one body** is not that between head and body, but between man and woman.

This idea recalls Gen 1 and 2; in fact St. Paul quotes Genesis 2,24; other expressions also recall Genesis: the Church of life, the “living Church” recalls Gen 3, 20. Eve is “the mother of the living.”

In other words the point of departure for a theology of the Church in early Christianity was Gen 2-4: these chapters of Genesis in the early Church were given an ecclesial interpretation: Adam and Eve are figures of Christ and the Church. The figure of Adam in the period between the first century B.C. and the first century A.D., was the object of a great deal of speculation and we can distinguish three lines of thought in these speculations: i) In Philo, in whom Greek thought meets Palestinian Judaism, Adam is the archetype of humanity, embracing at the same time the idea of the male and that of the female; ii) Adam is the first incarnation of the true prophet, free from sin: he reappears in Christ (Palestinian concept expressed in pseudo-Clem); iii) Pauline concept of Adam in 1 Cor 15, 46-47 the first Adam was made into a living soul, the last into a quickening spirit. The last Adam is the pre-existent Christ, the whole Christ, one of the realities of the mysteries hidden from all ages and revealed in Christ. In St. Paul, Adam denotes mankind, humanity; the first Adam would be the unredeemed humanity, while the second Adam is the humanity redeemed in Christ, the Church.

We have here again an ecclesial interpretation of Gen 2-4.

The above idea, i.e. the preexistent union of Christ and the Church was greatly developed by the Gnostics, especially by Valentinian, who together with Marcion, is strongly refuted by Irenaeus in his *Adversus Haereses*.

In Saint Irenaeus the doctrine of the Church is linked with his theory of

recapitulation of all things in Christ. His doctrine is in line with what we have already said with regard to the first and last Adam. Developing the ideas of St. Paul, Irenaeus says that the salvation of mankind, interrupted by the fall of the first Adam, is taken up anew, restored, reorganised in the Incarnate Son of God, the second Adam; when Christ became incarnate he recapitulated in himself the long history of man, summing up and giving us salvation in order that we might receive again in Christ Jesus what we had lost in Adam, that is the image and likeness of God (Adv Haer 3, 18,1). Christ recapitulates all things in himself, therefore, also the whole of mankind... Just as the Logos is the first among heavenly, spiritual and invisible things so also he is first among visible and corporal things.

He takes the primacy to Himself and by making himself head of the Church he will draw all things to himself at the appointed time (Adv Haer 3,16,6).

The Church, although scattered all over the world, is one; because it believes as if it had one mind, it exists as if it occupies one house, and it preaches and teaches as if it had one mouth. And although there are many languages in the world one and the same is the faith which is handed over by the churches established in the Germanies, in the Spains, in the Celtic countries, in the East and in the central regions of the world (cfr. Adv Haer 1,10,12). Only the Churches founded by the Apostles can be relied upon to give the correct teaching of the faith, because of the uninterrupted succession of the bishops in these churches.

Irenaeus' plan in his *Adversus Haereses* was to denounce heresies (Bk. I), refute them (Bk. II) and demonstrate the truth of Christianity (Bk. III-IV). In Bk. III he proves that there is **one God** and **one Christ**, the Son of God made man to recapitulate in himself all creation. This is proved from the Scriptures.

Irenaeus therefore begins Bk. III by establishing the truth of the Scriptures, thus showing how solid is the faith of the Church and futile the theories of the heretics.

The Apostles have received from Christ the mission to preach the truth he has brought down from heaven. Filled with the Holy Spirit they proclaimed the truth to the whole world, and transmitted it to us in the Scriptures (the Gospel).

By just reading the Scriptures we can hear the voice of the Apostles, the voice of Christ. Heretics say that the Scriptures have been tampered with: only they (the heretics) possess the original truth of the Scriptures, which they have received through tradition.

Irenaeus answers that the Catholic Church possesses the true tradition. This

can be easily checked by enquiring from each local church the origin of its teachings. This can be done by examining if the bishop of the local church – the person responsible for the teaching – is in direct descent from the Apostles.

Irenaeus affirms that he is in a position to enumerate the bishops appointed by the Apostles and their successors up to his time in the various churches, but to enumerate the list for each single church would be too heavy a task. It is enough to enumerate the succession of bishops in the greater and most ancient and well-known Church, the one founded by the great Apostles Peter and Paul: *“Ad hanc enim ecclesiam propter potentiores principalitatem necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam, hoc est eos qui sunt undique fideles, in qua semper ab his qui sunt undique, conservata est ea quae est ab apostolis traditio”* (Adv Haer 3,3,2)

Irenaeus says that it is enough to appeal to the Church of Rome because *eam habet ab apostolis traditionem et adnuntiatam hominibus fidem*, for the Church of Rome is among all churches *maxima et antiquissima et omnibus cognita, a gloriissimis duobus apostolis Petro et Paulo fundata et constituta ecclesia*.

Certain expressions need clarification:

a) *ab apostolis traditio*

in Adv Haer Irenaeus uses *paradosis*, *kerygma* and *pistis*, to indicate the truth revealed by Christ and transmitted by the Apostles (*paradosis*), preached by the Church (*kerygma*) and believed by the faithful (*pistis*). This “faith” of the Church of Rome is preached to all men - *adnuntiatam hominibus fidem* – (cfr., Rom 1,8), the faith which Clement in his letter to the Corinthians wanted to renew for them by announcing to them the “tradition” received from the Apostles i.e. there is only one Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ (III 3,3).

Those who oppose this faith are the schismatics through pride, the hypocrites and false prophets through vainglory, and the heretics blinded by false doctrine.

b) *qui sunt undique fideles*, therefore those who deny God the Creator and Father of Jesus cannot be classed among the faithful of the Church;

c) *propter potentiores principalitatem*. The original Greek text of the passage is missing and the word “principalitas” may be expressed in Greek in a number of ways which differ considerably in meaning from one to another:

*authentia* (authority, dignity)

*exousia* (power, licence)

*katolikos* (universal)

*hegemonikos* (leadership)

*proegoumenos* (presiding)

*proteuein* (to be first)

Scholars today tend to take the word *arkē* as the corresponding Greek word, for there are two passages in Adv Haer where *principalis* certainly corresponds to *arkē*:

i) II 30,9: *Solus Deus Fabricator qui est “super omnem principalitatem et potestatem”*. Here “principalitas” certainly corresponds to *arkē* as it is a quotation from Eph 1,21.

ii) II 1,2: *Et iterum secundum eos (Gnostics). Pater omnium quem et pro onta et pro archen vocant... a foris circumdatus ab altera principalitate.*

Here again there is no doubt that *principalitas* corresponds to *arkē*.

d) *ad hanc enim Ecclesiam, propter potentiores PRINCIPALITATEM necesse est omnem convenire Ecclesiam...*

A parallel passage in Adv Haer IV, 26,2 reads:

Quapropter eis qui in Ecclesia sunt presbyteris obaudire oportet, his qui successionem habent ab apostolis sicut ostendimus, qui cum episcopatus successione charisma ueritatis certum secundum placitum Patris acceperunt; reliquos vero qui absistunt a PRINCIPALI successione; et quocumque (modo) colligunt suspectos habere, uel quasi haereticos et malae sententiae, uel quasi scindentes et elatos et sibi placentes aut rursus ut hypocritas quaestus gratia et inanae gloriae hoc operantes.

The parallelism is quite evident although in Adv Haer III Irenaeus is speaking of the Church of Rome while in Adv Haer IV he is speaking of the universal Church. In both passages we have a contrast between those who have a direct succession from the Apostles through episcopal succession and those who *absistunt a principali successione* (Adv Haer IV). The word *principalis* here in the Greek text is rendered as *arkaias* and therefore the *principalitatem* of Adv. Haer. III should correspond to the Greek *arkē*.

Conclusion: The appeal to Rome is justified *propter potentiores principalitatem* i.e. its superior origin because founded by the two Apostles Peter and Paul. Others

understand the words “propter potentiores principalitatem” as meaning “a more efficient leadership”, “a greater authority”. This concept is implicitly included in the concept of “superior origin”: the authority of the Church of Rome is not simply something belonging to the past, it is something actual, for through the bishop of Rome, we have the words of Peter and Paul themselves, of those who received from Christ the *potestas Evangelii*.

The translator of *Adv Haer* most probably lived in the 4th century when the “authority” of the Roman Church was imposing itself on the Christian conscience, and intentionally or not, with the use of the word “principalitas” he translates Irenaeus’ idea which might have only indicated a superior origin, rather than a superior authority, although this superior authority is implicitly contained in the superior origin as has been explained.

e) *in qua semper ab his qui sunt undique conservata est ea quae est ab apostolis traditio* – to what does the relative *in qua* refer? To *hanc ecclesiam* i.e. the Church of Rome or to *omnem ecclesiam* i.e. the universal Church, *eos qui sunt undique fideles*? The relative should refer to the nearest substantive, therefore to *omnem ecclesiam*, but this seems to go against the idea which Irenaeus is developing. For Irenaeus:

i) has in mind the Church of Rome and not the Universal Church;

ii) in the following paragraph, giving the list of Roman bishops from Peter to Eleutherus, the 12th pope;

iii) speaks of the Church of Rome in the whole of the paragraph in question. In fact what Irenaeus is saying that all churches must agree with the Church of Rome for in it the true faith has always effectively been maintained; otherwise Irenaeus, if with the relative clause he was referring to *omnem ecclesiam*, he would have written in *qua, ab his qui sunt undique, conservata fuerit ea quae est ab apostolis traditio*.

Irenaeus wants to say that all churches must be in agreement with the Roman Church **for in this Church** the apostolic tradition has been preserved. But this interpretation has a difficulty. If *in qua* refers to *hanc ecclesiam* (Rome) who are the *hi qui sunt undique* who in the Church of Rome have maintained *ea quae est ab apostolis traditio*? Irenaeus uses the phrase *qui sunt undique* twice in the passage: in the first instance it certainly refers to the faithful of all the churches, but in the second instant to whom does the phrase refer? There are various interpretations: i) some give *in qua* an instrumental meaning, the Roman Church thanks to whom all

the faithful in the world have maintained the faith handed by the Apostles. The Latin (or even the Greek) text do not warrant such a meaning: it is out of context; ii) the second *eos qui sunt undique* was by mistake inserted a second time in the text by a scribe, unconsciously repeating the phrase – too easy a solution to avoid a difficulty; iii) a faulty translation of the Greek *tois pantahumen (qui sunt undique)* **ab his** from **pro his** – **by those** instead of **on behalf of those**. This agrees perfectly with what follows and is confirmed in the next paragraph where Irenaeus shows by a concrete example – the letter of Clement to the Corinthians – how the Church of Rome maintains the faith in one God Creator of heaven and earth and Father of Jesus on behalf of the whole church.

The passage should therefore be translated as follows:

“With the Church of Rome on account of its superior origin (as will be seen later) every other church i.e. the faithful everywhere, must agree, for in the Church of Rome, on behalf of the faithful everywhere the tradition handed down by the Apostles has been preserved.<sup>5</sup>

The whole passage is very important for the history of the primacy of Rome, and taken together with the letter of Clement and the letter of Ignatius to the Romans it is a conclusive proof that from the first century the Church of Rome is recognised as having something more than the other Churches.

### *The letter of Clement of Rome to the Church of Corinth and the letter of Saint Ignatius to the Romans.*

Was the letter of Clement to the Corinthians simply a fraternal intervention – each Church was in duty bound to interest itself in the problems of the sister-Churches – or is the letter a sign that the Church of Rome had some special responsibility towards the other Churches?

Both are true.

**Fraternal Interest:** the letter is full of exhortations and warnings against jealousies, rivalries etc., not because Rome was free from these evils but because

5. Cfr. F. Sagnard, “Irene de Lyon, Contre les hérésies”, livre III; (*Sources Chrétiennes*, 34; Paris 1952) especially appendix 4.

all are weak, all need reflecting on the examples of the past and on advice useful to all: "we are all in the same arena and we all must face the same fight, and the examples of the past will always make us better."

The first person plural is continually recurring and this not because of the style but simply a recognition that we all are sinners.

Clement's aim is to find out together with the Corinthians God's will, which can be known from nature, from the Scriptures, from tradition. The revolt of the Corinthians was against God's will (56,1). Clement was not aiming at his own prestige, at a personal triumph; but on the other hand he was not just giving advice: he speaks out clearly and condemns the authors of the revolt, telling them: "Submit, be corrected, learn submission" (57, 1-2). He presents himself as an authorised interpreter of God's will: "If anyone disobeys what we have been saying in God's name, let him know that he is putting himself at fault and is in great dangers" (59,1). "For our letter has been written to you by the Holy Spirit" (63,3). What gives such an authority to the letter, an authority which the Corinthians recognised for they treasured the letter and read it during the Liturgy?

The letter does not give an answer to this question, but Clement excuses himself for not writing immediately (1,1). This might mean that an appeal had been made to Rome to solve the problem.

Some thought that an appeal had been made to Rome and Rome's intervention was of a "political" nature, for Corinth was a Roman colony. But this explanation, is very unlikely. Rome intervened because in Rome the "highest columns of the Church" Peter and Paul have suffered martyrdom (5,2).

Rome intervened "propter potentiores principaliatatem" (cfr. Irenaeus); Rome intervened for she "presides in charity" (cfr. Ignatius' Letter to the Romans), something which results from the triple confession of Peter's love for Christ, after which he receives the power to feed his lambs and his sheep. The "charity" of the Roman Church is remembered also by Denys of Corinth (Eusebius, Hist Eccl IV, 23, 10) when Pope Soter helped the brethren of Corinth in their difficulties: Denys underlines the fact that Rome exercised this "charity" (*agape*) from the beginning.

Concluding we might state that the early Church recognised that Rome's specific role of service was the **agape**: Rome could and had to intervene to safeguard this agape in the sister churches.

Clement of Rome in his letter to the Corinthians implies that the Church of

Rome felt it was its duty to safeguard the visible unity of the *Ecclesia Catholica* through his intervention in the affairs of the Church of Corinth. This is further confirmed by the letter of St. Ignatius to the Romans. He addresses his letter to the Church "which presides in the Roman territory" "a church worthy of God, worthy of honour, worthy to be called blessed, worthy of praise, worthy of success, worthy of purity (of faith), which, presides in charity". The phrase "which presides in the Roman territory" must refer to the *ager romanus* i.e. Rome and its environs. We should take note of the preposition: *in* and not *over* the Roman region. But presiding over what? The object is missing. Ignatius uses the verb *prokathestai* only on another occasion, in the letter to the Magnesians (VI,1) and in this case he is clearly using it to indicate the presidency of a bishop. The phrase "presiding in the Roman region", without any indication over whom it is presiding, implies a pre-eminence. But what kind of pre-eminence? The verb is repeated in the same sentence: *prokathemene tes agapes*, "presides in charity". Some scholars see in this phrase a reference to the alms which the Roman church so generously distributed among the sister churches, a reference to which is found in the letter of Denys of Corinth to Pope Soter (Eusebius, Eccl Hist IV 23,10); this interpretation cannot be accepted as the verb in question does not have this meaning; besides *agape* in Ignatius is used to indicate love of one's neighbour (Smyr 6,1).

Others take *agape* as indicating the whole Christian community bound together with a bond of love: the Roman Church presiding over the bond of love, which binds together all Christians, would be another way of saying that the Church of Rome presides over the universal Church. But this explanation seems too farfetched. Others interpret *agape* as meaning the whole of that spiritual life which Christ enkindled in us through his love and in this case the phrase would mean that the Church in Rome leads and guides the other churches in what is the essence of Christianity i.e. spiritual life. Whatever meaning is given to the word *agape* the phrase implies a constant and not occasional activity of the Church of Rome and this activity seems to be that of leading the other churches in faith and love, that faith to which St. Paul makes reference in his letter to the Romans (1,8).

This is borne out by the exceptional way in which Ignatius shows deference to the Roman Church, which has had Peter and Paul for its teachers and has taught others (3,1), perhaps a reference to the letter of Clement to the Corinthians. From other churches, Ignatius asks for prayers, from Rome he asks that she espouses the Church of Antioch: "Remember in your prayers the church in Syria which has God for its shepherd instead of me: its bishop shall be Jesus Christ alone and your love" (9,1). To other churches Ignatius gives advice and commands, but he does not

presume to give commands to the Church of Rome: "I do not issue any orders to you as did Peter and Paul: they were apostles, I am only a convict" (4,3).<sup>6</sup>

### THIRD CENTURY CHRISTIAN WRITERS IN THE EAST

With the third century we can notice significant developments in the theology of the Church. In the East the real focus of interest is the invisible Church of the true gnostic, and hardly any interest is shown in the visible Church, whose hierarchical structure is taken for granted.

**Clement of Alexandria** clearly distinguishes the ancient and Catholic church from the heretical churches; in Strom 7, 17 we read that the true Church, that which is really ancient, is one and in it are those who according to God's purpose are just. As God is one, and the Lord is one, so the Church must be one, in spite of the striving of those who try to cut it asunder into many sects. In substance and idea, in origin, in pre-eminence, the ancient and Catholic Church is alone because it collects in the unity of the one faith those whom God has predestined as righteous from all eternity. The pre-eminence of the Catholic Church is its oneness, in this surpassing all else, and having nothing equal to itself.

He imagines the Church to be the virgin mother who feeds her children with the milk of the divine word, the Bride of the Divine Tutor, the school in which the Bridegroom Jesus teaches.

Heresies are an obstacle for the conversion of Jews and pagans, but heresies were foretold by Christ in the parable of the tares among the wheat, and the reasons why heresies arise within the Church is the fact that anything beautiful is always shadowed by its caricature. But this fact should not hinder anyone from remaining faithful to the truth in spite of the fact that others have not remained faithful. Imperceptibly Clement spiritualises his conception of the Church, and speaks of her as the "gathering of the chosen ones", "an impregnable city ruled by the Logos". The real priests and deacons are not the ordained priests and deacons but the pious and righteous gnostics who teach and do God's will.

The Church on earth is a copy of the heavenly church; its hierarchy on earth is

6. "Epistles to the Romans" I,1; cfr J. Quasten, *Patrology, The Theology of Ignatius* Vol. I, (Utrecht 1950).

an imitation of the angelic glory and of that economy which awaits those who follow in the footsteps of the Apostles by living a life of perfection and righteousness according to the Gospels. These perfect gnostics will rest on God's holy mountain, the Church on high, when all the philosophers of God are assembled, the true Israelites, the pure heart who give themselves to the pure intention of perennial contemplation (Strom 6,14). This spiritual Church is the true body of Christ: those of her members who still live like the heathen are, as it were, its flesh, while those (the true gnostics) who truly cleave to the Lord and become one spirit with him form the Holy Church in the true sense of the word.

Like Clement **Origen** distinguishes Christians into two classes, the ordinary Christians and the true gnostics. All those who believe in Christ are the brethren of Christ, but properly speaking His brethren are only those who imitate Him (Sermo 73 in Math.) through a life of continence and virginity, separating themselves from the world by acquiring the true *gnosis* which is superior to faith.

Nevertheless Origen has a firmer grasp than Clement of the Church as an organised community. He speaks of the Church as the *coetus populi christiani*, as the *credentium plebs* and he has a high regard for the office and responsibilities of its ministers and often deplores their unworthiness.

He imagines the Church to be a sort of world wide republic with its own laws and constitutions which nevertheless are in harmony with the established constitutions in all countries; it is the city of God on earth existing side by side with the secular state, which at the end it will overcome through the Logos working in her; in *Contra Celsum*, Origen says that Christians believe that the Logos shall finally prevail over the entire rational creation and change every soul into his own perfection and then everyone by the mere exercise of his power will choose what he desires and obtain what he chooses (8,72).

The Logos in fact lives in the Church as in His body; He is the principle of its life. The faithful are his members. Enlightened by the Logos the Church becomes the world of worlds and will embrace the whole of humanity, the whole of creation, for at the *eskaton*, all things, even the devil will be restored in Christ.

In Origen's mind there is a continual tension between the Church on earth and the ideal Church. In the Church on earth Origen recognises that there are many who only appear to be members but are not in fact. But the true Church is that "without spot or wrinkle", holy and blameless; to this Church belong all who attain perfection on earth by being united to the Logos; this elect portion of the Church on earth belongs to the heavenly Church, which according to Origen existed before

creation itself, and in this sense the Church is the assembly of all the saints, of all those who have attained perfection.

There can be no salvation outside the Church: *extra hanc domum id est ecclesia nemo salvatur*, for the doctrines and laws which Christ brought down from heaven for mankind are only found in the Church. Therefore there is no faith outside the Church. The faith of heretics is not **fides** but **credulitas**.

### ***The Western Fathers of the third century***

In the West the ideas on the Church we met with in Irenaeus were still prevalent in the beginning of the 3rd century. The teachings of Hippolytus and Tertullian at first hardly differ from those of Irenaeus, but later on, with Cyprian, we notice a certain development.

In **Hippolytus**, ecclesiology has two aspects, and this can be easily explained from the fact that Hippolytus was born and educated in the East, at Alexandria probably, but lived and worked in the West, at Rome.

Speaking on the hierarchical structure of the Church he has much in common with Irenaeus, his teacher. In all his writings, he presents the Church as the bearer of the truth, and the orthodoxy of her teachings is guaranteed by the apostolic succession. On the other hand, when speaking of the spiritual Church, Hippolytus follows the Western pattern. In his commentary on the book of Daniel, he sees in the story of Susanna a prefiguration of the Church as the Bride of Christ, persecuted by two people, the Jews and the pagans; we have the same idea in his commentary which seems to have been a collection of homilies and seems to echo Origen's commentary on the same book: the bridegroom of the Song is Christ, and the bride is the Church, although sometimes Hippolytus follows Origen, in seeing man's God-loving soul in the bride of the Canticle. Hippolytus' interpretation of the Canticle greatly influenced the Western Fathers and continued to influence the mystics of the Middle Ages.

In his commentary on the Apocalypse – in *De antichristo* – the Woman clothed by the sun, and with the moon under her feet, is the Church, and the man-child to whom she gives birth is the Logos. In the same treatise Hippolytus sees the Church as a ship sailing towards the East, towards the heavenly paradise, with Christ as her pilot; in spite of all the storms those sailing on this ship, will certainly reach port

for their voyage is secure; the ship's anchors are as safe as iron – these anchors are God's commandments and woe to him who breaks them for then his ship will founder.

Hippolytus went astray in his approach to the Church spiritual, for in his commentary on Daniel, he seems to conceive the Church as limited exclusively to the just, leaving no room for those who have sinned seriously against faith and morals, even if they are repentent. He was against "opening the gates" of the Church too wide: as Adam was expelled from the garden of Eden for eating the forbidden fruit, so also those who sin are deprived of the Holy Spirit and driven out of the new Eden, the Church. Most probably it was on account of these ideas that he harshly attacked Pope Calixtus in his *Philosophumena* for laxity and indulgence with regard to sins against chastity, saying that Calixtus was the first to pardon sins of impurity.

Throughout the centuries we meet with movements, within the Church, requiring greater severity, and such movements often went so far as to identify the Church with the community of the just. This is what happened with *Tertullian*. During his Catholic period he uses several expressions of affection, reverence and love for the Church, whom he styles as the *Domina mater ecclesia*. The term "mother" for the Church, continually occurs in the writings of his Catholic period e.g. *De oratione*; commenting on the Lord's prayer he says that when we call God "Father" not even the Mother – the Church – is forgotten, for when we mention the Father we are implicitly naming the mother for in the Son and the Father we recognise the Mother; in *De Baptismo* he concludes his treatise saying: *Igitur benedicti quos gratia Dei expectat, cum de illo sanctissimo lavacro novi natalis ascenditis et primas manus apud matrem cum fratribus aperitis, petite de patre, de domino peculia gratiae distributiones charismatum subiacere.*

When becoming a Montanist, Tertullian did not lay aside this idea but continued speaking of the Church as a mother e.g. in *De anima* he tries to prove that the creation of Eve from the side of Adam prefigures the birth of the Church from the wounded side of the Lord. As Adam was a figure of Christ, Adam's sleep prefigured the death of Christ, who was to sleep a mortal slumber, so that from the wound in his side, as Eve was formed, so also the Church is formed, the true mother of the living. Even *De pudicitia*, he calls the Church "mother".

For Tertullian, during the Catholic period, the Church is the repository of faith and the guardian of revelation (*De prescriptione haereticorum*): she alone has the truth, hers are the Scriptures and therefore heretics have no right to appeal to them;

she alone has the doctrine of the Apostles and the legitimate succession from the Apostles, and therefore she alone can teach the message of Christ handed by Him to the Apostles (Tertullian expresses Irenaeus' position in Book III of the *Adv. Haer.* in legal language through prescription in law).

As a Montanist Tertullian replaced apostolic succession with the notion that the body of believers is a purely and exclusive spiritual group, a notion which he gradually developed till he arrived at saying that the Church of the Spirit is the true Church, opposed to the Church of the bishops: "The Church properly speaking is the Spirit himself in whom is the Trinity of the one divinity, Father, Son and Spirit. The Spirit combines the Church which the Lord has made to consist in "three, and thus from that time forward, every number of persons who have combined together into this faith is accounted as "Church" from the author and consecrator. And accordingly the Church will forgive sins but not the Church which consists of a number of bishops, but the Church of the Spirit, by means of a spiritual man," who could be even a layman for where the three are i.e. Father, Son and Spirit, there is the Church: *ubi tres, ecclesia est, licet laici.*

*Cyprian's* ecclesiology is altogether different: it is practical, somewhat legalistic and conditioned by the problems caused by the Novationist schism, a rigoristic movement advocating great severity against the lapsed during the Decian persecution. For Cyprian the Church is the only way to salvation: *salus extra ecclesiam non est* (Epist 73,21); *habere non potest Deum patrem qui ecclesiam non habet matrem* (De unitate, 6), and therefore it is extremely important that one should be in the Church, for otherwise it is impossible to be a Christian: *christianus non est qui in ecclesia Christi non est.*

Cyprian continually insists on the unity of the Church and wrote a short but very important treatise on the subject: *De unitate ecclesiae*. In Chapter VI of the treatise he employs a very rich imagery to express the oneness and the indivisibility of the Church: "The spouse of Christ cannot be defiled, she is inviolate and chaste... it is he who rescues us for God, who seals for the kingdom the sons which she has borne. Whoever breaks with the Church and enters into an adulterous union, cuts himself from the promises made to the Church, and he who has turned his back to the Church... is an alien, an enemy, for you cannot have God for your Father if you have not the Church for your mother. If there was no escape for anyone outside Noah's ark, so there is no escape for anyone found to be outside the Church... The holy mystery of "oneness" with which he was clothed came from the "upper part" i.e. from the Father... it could in no way be divided... it retained its well knit wholeness indivisibly. The man who rends and divides the Church of

Christ cannot possess the garment of Christ... When the 12 tribes of Israel were divided Achias the prophet divided his own garment, but Christ's people cannot be divided, his coat woven completely as it was throughout, is not divided by those who acquire it... Christ admonishes and teaches us the Gospel: they shall be one flock and one shepherd. The Apostle Paul also commends this oneness: striving to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace... So too the sacred meaning of the Pasch lies essentially in the fact... that the lamb - slain as a type of Christ - should be eaten in one single home... This is also the reason why the Spirit comes in the form of a dove, a simple joyous creature, not bitter with gall, not biting savagely, without vicious tearing claws... (doves) fly anywhere in formation, the resort they live in is shared in common... in all things they fulfill the law of unanimity... this is the charity which we must acquire that we may imitate all doves in our love for the brethren and rival lambs in meekness and gentleness... How can a Christian breast harbour the fierceness of wolves, the madness of dogs, the venom of snakes, the blood lust of wild beasts? It is a blessing when such men break away from the Church..." Other images of the oneness of the Church are found in the letters: the multitude of grains forming one Eucharistic Bread (Epist 63, 13), a ship with the bishop as pilot (Epist 59,6). But his favorite figure of the Church is that of a Mother - it occurs more than 30 times in his writings - a mother who gathers all her children in one great family. Cyprian wrote his treatise when schisms were threatening the Church but scholars are not in agreement with regard to what schism was the cause of the treatise. In 251 two schisms were threatening the Church, one headed by the African deacon Felicissimus and the other by Novatian a Roman priest opposing Pope Cornelius. Today scholars tend to hold the opinion that the treatise was written before Novatian's revolt, but the traditional view has always been that the treatise was prompted by the revolt of Novatian who seems to have tried to secure recognition also at Carthage: Cyprian's treatise was written at Carthage and sent to Rome, where it succeeded in convincing many to leave Novatian's party.

Cyprian, in the treatise and in many letters, insists on the fact that the unity of the Church is founded on allegiance to the bishop. "You should understand," he wrote (Epist 66,8), "that the bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop and that whoever is not with the bishop is not in the Church". The bishop is the visible authority around which the congregation is centred.

The unity of the universal Church rests in turn on that of the bishops who act as a sort of senate. They are the successors of the Apostles and the Apostles were the bishops of old. The Church is built upon them. This is the interpretation which Cyprian gives to the *Tu es Petrus* of Mt 16: "Our Lord... established the honourable

rank of bishop and the constitution of his Church when he said to Peter: *Tu es Petrus...* Thence has come down to us in course of time and by due succession the ordained office of bishop and the constitution of the Church, forasmuch as the Church is founded upon the bishops and every act of the church is subject to these rulers" (Epist 33, 1). Cyprian understand Mt 16, 18-19 of the whole episcopate, whose various members are united to one another in charity and concord (Epist 54, 1; 68, 5), and thus render the universal Church one body; and therefore the Church being Catholic and one, is not split asunder nor divided but is truly bound and joined together by the cement of its priests who hold fast one to another (Epist 66,8).

This idea is also expressed in Chap. IV of the *De unitate*. Of this chapter there are two versions, which are found mixed together in various ways in many MSS: the "primacy text" and the "*textus receptus*". These two versions were subject of great controversies, Catholics generally taking the primacy text as authentic, while non-Catholics considering it an interpolation. Today scholars are not divided on strictly confessional lines with regard to the two versions, and generally Maurice Bevenot's conclusions are today accepted. Bevenot held that the "primacy version" was the original one, but later on was revised by Cyprian himself, during the time of his controversy with Rome with regard to the baptising of heretics, and produced the "*textus receptus*".<sup>7</sup>

When Cyprian wrote "*Primatus Petro Datur*" or when he spoke of the "*Cathedra Petri*", he did not have in mind the primacy of Rome as we envisage it today. Cyprian, when writing his treatise against Novatian, was not thinking specifically of Rome, but literally of Peter and of the unity which Christ intended for his Church when he founded it on Peter, and which Novatian was destroying. The unity of the Church was constituted simply by the union of the bishops among themselves.

Actually Cyprian recognised the Bishop of Rome' special position in the Church in many practical ways, and in practice repeatedly went much further than his theory. When Pope Cornelius inquired about the consecration of Fortunatus, which Cyprian had performed without first consulting the Pope, Cyprian wrote (Epist 59,9): "I did not write to you at once for it was not a matter of enough importance or gravity to

7. Cfr. C.H. Bevenot, *St Cyprian's De unitate chp 4 in the light of the manuscripts* (Analecta Gregoriana II; Rome 1937)

be reported to you in haste... since I supposed you were aware of the facts and believed that you would certainly be guided by your memory and sense of discipline I did not consider it necessary to inform you immediately of the heretics' conduct... I did not write to you about their performance because we despise all these things and I was soon to send to you the names of the bishops who govern the brethren correctly in the Catholic Church."

The letter clearly witnesses that Cyprian recognised the right of the Bishop of Rome to be informed about matters of great importance in the local churches. And when Cyprian was reported to Rome by his clergy for going into hiding, he explained his conduct to the Church of Rome, and even accepted Rome's policy towards the *lapsi*: he felt it to be an obligation to keep Rome informed of the major affairs of Carthage even when the See of Rome was vacant. He never stated that Rome's authority extended over the whole Church, although he always took it for granted that Rome and Carthage saw eye to eye on all matters of importance. But when the problem of heretical baptism arose, and Rome and Carthage were not seeing eye to eye in the problem, not to be misunderstood Cyprian never held that the Pope possessed universal jurisdiction, but he neither denied it, and in practice recognised it.

Cyprian's argument in chap. IV is that schisms take place in the Church because men do not go back to the origin of the Christian realities. If one does this, the solution is simple; the unity of the Church is founded on Christ's action with regard to Peter.

Cyprian maintains that in spite of the fact that the Apostles were all shepherds equally, that they had all equal powers, this did not detract from the oneness, from the unity of the Church. The source and hallmark – *unitatis originem et rationem* – is in the oneness of the associated bishops and so in the oneness of the Church, which has its origin in Peter and perpetuated by their powers which are all ultimately derived from him i.e. through the various lines of bishops which start from the Apostles and ultimately from Peter.

The legitimate appointment of a bishop in one of these lines of succession guarantees that he is the one and only association which derives from Peter: such a bishop possesses the *ratio* of the oneness. Cyprian is not considering bishops who break away from the Church but he is simply considering the situation of Novatian in Rome who is opposing Cornelius, the person who is already constituted bishop, and therefore has the *ratio unitatis* – opposing him Novatian is breaking away from the Church.

**Primatus Petro datur:** The term *primatus* could already be an ambiguous term: it could mean the gift of superiority, but it could also mean – and this is the meaning given to it by Cyprian – simply that Peter had a seniority among the Apostles, he was the first, the starting point for the gift given to all the Apostles.

Cyprian, in the primacy text, speaks also on the “oneness of Peter”, *hanc Petri unitatem*, although the phrase is strange, it easily conveys Cyprian’s mind: Christ did not found his Church with the “multiplicity of the Apostles”, but with the oneness of Peter, for if Christ had begun with the multiplicity of the Apostles, the uniqueness of the Church would not have been so evident.

When Cyprian speaks of the *Cathedra Petri*, saying that who deserts it can no longer consider himself to be a member of the Church, Cyprian is not restricting himself to the See of Rome. Cyprian’s argument is based on the unicity of origin (from Peter) of the Church, and authority: this authority was perpetuated by the legitimate succession of the bishops from the Apostles who were one with Peter; breaking away from one’s bishop meant breaking away from the unity of the Church, from the one Christ-established authority, the *cathdera Petri*. Novatian had broken away from the chair of Peter in a twofold way, by opposing Cornelius who was both his bishop and occupant of Peter’s cathedra in Rome; Felicissimus at Carthage was separating himself from the Church by opposing his bishop, who was in union with the whole church through the apostolic succession, which ultimately was founded in Peter, the first of the Apostles.

The *textus receptus* makes explicit what was originally only expressed implicitly: although Christ assigns like power to all the Apostles, yet in order that the oneness of the Church could be unmistakable, by his own authority he established the source of this oneness by founding his church on one man, Peter.

## THE FOURTH CENTURY FATHERS

The Greek Fathers of the 4th century<sup>8</sup> hardly speak *ex professo* of the Church and the teachings of the Eastern Churches can be easily summarised in the 18th

8. Cfr. J.N.D., Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, (London 1958). Chp XV, I, J Tixeront, *Histoire des Dogmes dans l’Antiquité Chrétienne* (Paris 1931) Vol II, Chp VI, §4.

Catechetical instruction of Cyril of Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup> Speaking of the Church he says that it is called Catholic because it is found throughout the world from one end of the earth to the other; it teaches universally and completely one and all the doctrines necessary for men's knowledge concerning all things visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly; it subjects in order to godliness all men, governors and governed, learned and unlearned; it universally treats and heals all sins and possesses every form of virtue both in deeds and words, and every kind of spiritual gifts.

It is rightly named Church because it calls forth and assembles together all men. The Church of the Old Testament has been superseded by a new Church; for the Jews on account of their evil designs against the Saviour have been cast away from grace, and so the Saviour has built a new Church out of the Gentiles, a second holy Church, the Church of the Christians. But since the word Church or assembly could apply to different assemblies e.g. the assemblies of heretics (Marcionites or Manichees), by way of security, in the Creed we say that we believe in the One Holy Catholic Church, for this is the peculiar name by which the true Spouse of Our Lord Jesus Christ is known: "wherever you are", says Cyril to the candidates for Baptism, "do not enquire for the Lord's House or for the Church, but for the Catholic Church."

All kings and nations have bounds to their dominions, but the Catholic Church knows no bounds for her sovereignty which extends over the whole world.

The above ideas are more or less met with in the writings of all the Greek Fathers from the 4th century onwards e.g. *St. John Chrysostom* speaks of the Church as the bride of Christ won for himself and continually stresses the fact that the unity is the chief characteristic of the Church holding together the faithful in mutual charity, while schisms rend it asunder and heretics distort her teachings. The Church is Catholic i.e. spread throughout the whole world, indestructible and eternal. Unity in the harmony of true doctrine is also the characteristic which is stressed by *Cyril of Alexandria*: the various particular churches form the one Catholic Church through harmony in doctrine and through one Baptism. "Mercy is not obtainable outside the holy city," says Cyril, *extra Ecclesia nulla salus*.

In the East ecclesiology was never a vital issue as it was in the West especially at the time of Augustine on account of Donatism; for this reason Eastern Fathers never deepened their ecclesiology, although their ideas of the Church as a spiritual

9. "Catechetical lectures", 18, 22-28 (English version by R.W. Church, *Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church*, 2, (Oxford 1838), with a preface by J.H. Newman.

society were deeper and more positive than those of the Western Fathers. These ideas of the Eastern Fathers can only be found in writings which did not treat directly about the Church, but in their writings on the Trinitarian and Christological problems of their time. These ideas are centred on the notion that Christians form a mystical unity with one another through their fellowship and incorporation with Christ. Often they express this notion with reference to the Church, but often also they develop this notion of the mystical body for its own sake without reference to the Church e.g. in *St. Athanasius* the idea of the mystical body lies behind all his polemic against the Arians; his doctrine on the mystical body is based on the deification of Christians in Christ; through participation in the same Christ we become one body with him, possessing the Lord in ourselves. We meet the same idea in the writings of the Cappadocian Fathers: *Gregory of Nazianzus* says that we are all made one in Christ, who becomes all that he is completely in us; *Gregory of Nyssa* continually stresses our deification through Christ; we are all, through participation, conjoined with Christ's unique body, we become one with Him. When we are all perfect and united with God the whole body of Christ will then be subjected to his quickening power. This subjection of the body is called the subjection of the Son himself because He is identified with His Body which is the Church. *John Chrysostom*, clearly alluding to the Church, emphasises the close union between the Christian and Christ which results through baptism and is kept alive through the Eucharist: those who communicate at the altar become the body of Christ, not a multiplicity of bodies, but one body... we are united with Christ and with one another.

These ideas reach their highest point in Cyril of Alexandria: we are one with Christ and with one another, and this unity is brought about through the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup>

The Western Church in the 4th century was able to grasp more deeply the problem of the Church on account of the Donatist schism. Where Donatism was no problem, e.g. in Italy or Gaul, ideas about the Church hardly differ from those of the East.

For *Hilary* the Church, externally considered, is the "harmonious fellowship of the faithful", while, spiritually considered, the Church is the bride of Christ, his mystical body, the mouth by which he speaks to mankind. Founded by Christ and established by the Apostles, the Church is one and teaches truth with authority; its unity is that of a single integrated body, based on a common faith, the bond of charity, and unanimity of will and action. Through baptism believers undergo a

10. Cfr. J. Tixeront, *Histoire* Vol III, Chp. IX §5.

spiritual transformation in their bodies and enter into fellowship with the flesh of Christ, for Christ himself is in the Church, comprehending it all in himself through the mystery of his body, and so they are incorporated in him. Heretics hold that the unity which exists between Christians is only a unity of concord and mutual charity; but actually, says Hilary, it is a real unity – *unitas naturalis* – founded on the new life imparted in baptism, brought about by having put on – *induere* – Christ. The reality of this union is guaranteed by the eucharistic mystery.

*Niceta of Remesiana*, a contemporary of St. Hilary, in his commentary on the Creed, writes: “*Ecclesia quid est aliud quam sanctorum omnium congregatio?*” and concludes saying that believers through baptism benefit from the prayers and merits of all those who form part of the Church i.e. the saints, the faithful departed, the living; on the other hand, believers through the Church, are distinguished from pagans and heretics for these do not belong to the Church of Christ but to the *communio malorum*. In the 4th century the term *communio sanctorum* came to mean, for the orthodox, the unity of all the members of the true Catholic Church.

In the 3rd century Cyprian had already clearly established the unity of Church basing it on the unity of the bishops; the Donatist schism helped further to determine the nature of this unity, through the teachings of *Optatus of Milevi* first, and later on through those of *Augustine*. Hilary was already fully conscious of the fact that there were sinners in the Church: *in ecclesia quidem manentes sed ecclesiae disciplinam non tenentes*, as well as just men. This was actually the problem raised by Donatism, which for over a hundred years caused a grave schism in the African church. For the Donatists the principal characteristic of the Church was its holiness: a serious sin was enough to exclude a person from the Church. Besides this characteristic, the Donatists also mentioned as characteristics of the Church: the *cathedra* i.e. the bishop's seat; the *angelus* i.e. the power to administer the divine things; the *spiritus* given to the faithful by God or by his ministers; the *fons*; i.e. true faith or baptism through which a person professed the true faith; the *sigillum* or *anulus*, probably baptism which impresses the true faith and leaves its mark in the believer; the *umbilicus* i.e. the altar, the centre of true worship. Optatus did not consider the altar as a characteristic of the true Church but accepted the others proving that these characteristics were those of the Catholic Church and not of the Donatist church. But he insisted that the real characteristics of the Church are catholicity and unity.

*Catholicity: ubi ergo erit proprietas catholici nominis, cum unde dicta sit catholica quod sit rationabilis et ubique diffusa?* The Church must be Catholic because God has promised his Son that all nations will be his heirloom, and it is

through the Church that this takes place: *concedeite Deo ut hortus eius sit longe lateque diffusus.*

**Unity:** Optatus distinguishes schism from heresy, for heresy changes the faith while schism destroys the bond of charity, the bond of unity. Christ wanted this unity in his Church when he founded his Church on Peter.<sup>11</sup>

Before discussing the teachings of Augustine we must first discuss what Ambrose has to say about the Church. A recent study on the Theology of the Church in Ambrose can be briefly summarised thus:

*Ecclesiology is the basic component and the dominant perspective* in the teachings of Ambrose. One might have reservations about the nature and consistency of his theology, especially with regard to its originality or with regard to the rather tedious typological allegorisms, or philosophical presuppositions, excessive moral concern, lack of an organic presentation, and improvisation, but the content is extremely rich in Christian values. The defects mentioned regard more the method and mode of expression rather than the substance of the theology of Ambrose. The teachings of are firmly based on the Christian tradition but he does not simply repeat crystallized theories; he expresses them in a creative manner deriving his argumentation from a dialogue between the bishop and his community, a dialogue drawn upon an experience of the divine, in which the hearing of the word of God acts as moderator. Ambrose's teaching reflects a sort of mystical knowledge in which the Christian community becomes aware of itself and manifests itself.

This theology has as its essential end the building of the Church as Love: it springs from the Word and in the Word it has its foundation, its life, its strength, its criterion of authenticity, and its perfect archetype. Quite evidently, then, the ecclesiology of Ambrose is constantly anchored in the Scriptures; Scripture is the great revelation of the mystery of the Church; the Bible is the visible and intelligible sign that the Word of God is present and active in the world to instruct men and call them to the Kingdom. To approach the Scriptures is to come in contact with Christ; to believe in Christ is to enter in communion with God and evoke the Church – contact with Christ emphasises the interior aspect, although the whole is indicated; reference to the Church emphasises the exterior aspect even though it

11. With regard to Hilary and Optatus cfr. J.N.D. Kelly, *Christian Doctrines*, chp. XV, 3; J. Tixeront, *Histoire*, Vol II, Chp. IX §7.

also designates the whole. Ambrose rather than defining ontological elements or discussing particular problems, is constantly intent in pointing out the significance and the dynamism of the salvific mystery – salvation history is the soul of the ecclesiology of Ambrose.

Under her dynamic aspect, the Church is, at her origin, God's love tending to an adequate expression of itself; in history it is the action of the Father through his Word and in his Spirit creating and redeeming by constituting the body of Christ and animating it with the same life that informs the Trinity. The divine action unfolds itself with a progress and an extension which involves time and eternity with a plurality of interventions that have their main salvific coefficients in the Word of God and in the Sacraments; these coefficients combine at the vertex in the humanity of Christ, always present and at work in different ways throughout all time from Adam, through the patriarchs and the prophets and in the Christian people.

In concomitance with this cosmic dimension the Church has a role in the sphere of salvation of every soul taken up into a relationship of communion with the Word after the model of Christ's humanity – *ecclesia et anima*. At the level of the individual soul, faith acquires a decisive importance between the divine Logos and man – here the highest manifestation would be full consecration to God – virginity. As regards the Church's content, Ambrose sees two essential and closely related attributes in the ecclesial reality: unity and sanctity. The Church constituted as an interpersonal communion with Christ, participates in God's sanctity; she contains and expresses this sanctity while tending towards it in keeping with her nature as the *plebs sancta Dei*. Because the Church is holy, she offers herself as the purposes of all creation giving full meaning to the existence of each man and of the entire cosmos.

All creation in the multiplicity of its components finds its *raison d'être* and its unifying principle in the holiness of the Church.

On the exterior plane ecclesial unity manifests itself in the Christian community which by the action of the Word of God is gathered together out of the dispersion of faithlessness into the one Church and directed towards the perfect communion at the end of time. In the history of mankind the Church can express herself only partially, fragmentarily; only at the end of time will the Church be perfectly one, totally brought into one Body of Christ and transformed in the one Spirit. Not only faith and love but also the Sacraments and every other element of Christian morality are directed towards this reality. The unity of the Church is therefore not a levelling conformity but an organic fact in which each person's individuality perfectly brought

about in its identity, contributes through diverse functions to the good of the entire organism.<sup>12</sup>

**Augustine** developed his theology on the Church mainly during his controversy with the Donatists. The Church is one with Christ; through the Church and in the Church, Christ continues his mission on earth: *unus ergo homo Christus caput et corpus. Quod est eius? Ecclesia eius.* The Church is Christ's MYSTICAL BODY, HIS REALM, HIS BRIDE, THE MOTHER OF ALL CHRISTIANS. It embraces not only the living but also the faithful departed and future Christians: *corpus autem eius est Ecclesia, non ista aut illa, sed toto orbe diffusa; non ea quae nunc est in hominibus qui praesentem vitam agunt sed ad eam pertinentibus etiam qui fuerunt ante nos et his qui futuri sunt post nos usque in finem mundi* (En. in ps. 56,1).

The chief characteristic of the Church is its unity – there is only one true Church, for one is the Bride of Christ; and there is unity within this one Church and those who do not form part of this unity do not form part of the Church. *Unity of faith:* The Church cannot admit diverse or contradictory opinions among its members as if it were a school of philosophy. Those who profess false doctrines and ignore the warnings are heretics and enemies of the Church – the cause of heresies is attachment to one's own opinions. *Unity in mutual love* which is opposed to schism – Christ's garment is a symbol of this unity; strictly speaking one can still hold the true faith, and fall into schism, but in this case his faith is not a faith vivified by love.

*Sanctity* of the church was the characteristic which brought Augustine face to face with the Donatists who held that the members of the Church are only the saints. Augustine opposed such a rigid opinion of the Church – there are also sinners among the members of the Church as several parables show us e.g. the cockle among the wheat. It is also true that the Church must sometimes expel these sinners from her bosom through excommunication in the interest of the community as a whole; it is also true that for safeguarding unity, the Church sometimes ignores them, while the faithful should keep away from them *vita, moribus, corde et voluntate*; but definite separation will take place only at the end of the world. Nevertheless the presence of sinners within the Church does not detract from her sanctity for the Church as a social body consists essentially not in the fact that each single member is leading a holy life, but because her teachings, the Sacraments, her ministry, her own existence aim at the sanctification of man and actually bring it about by preaching the truth and transforming customs. And thus all that is holy

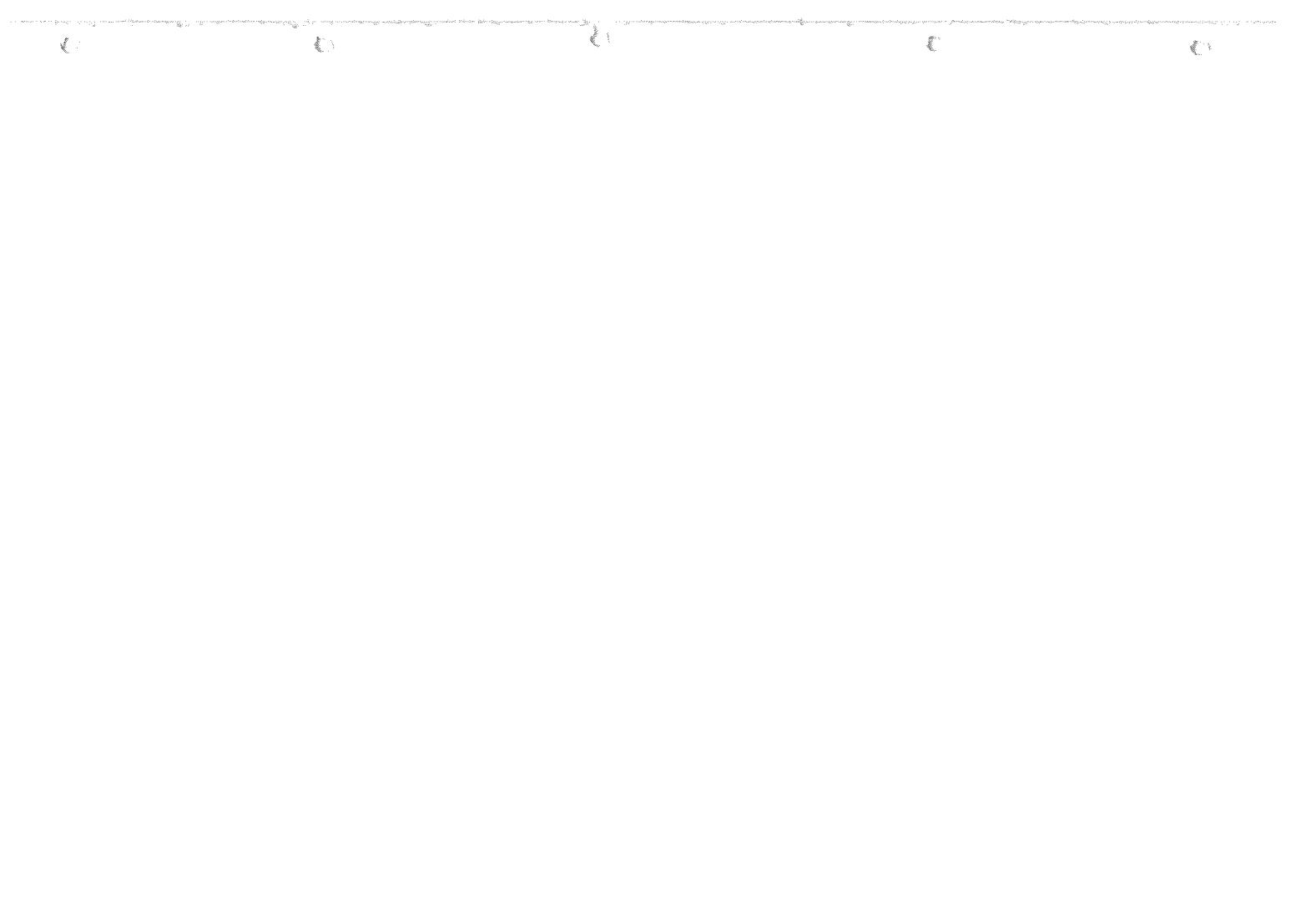
12. Cfr. G. Toscani: *Teologia della Chiesa in San Ambrogio*, (Sacro Cuore; Milano 1974) (brief summary of the book in English).

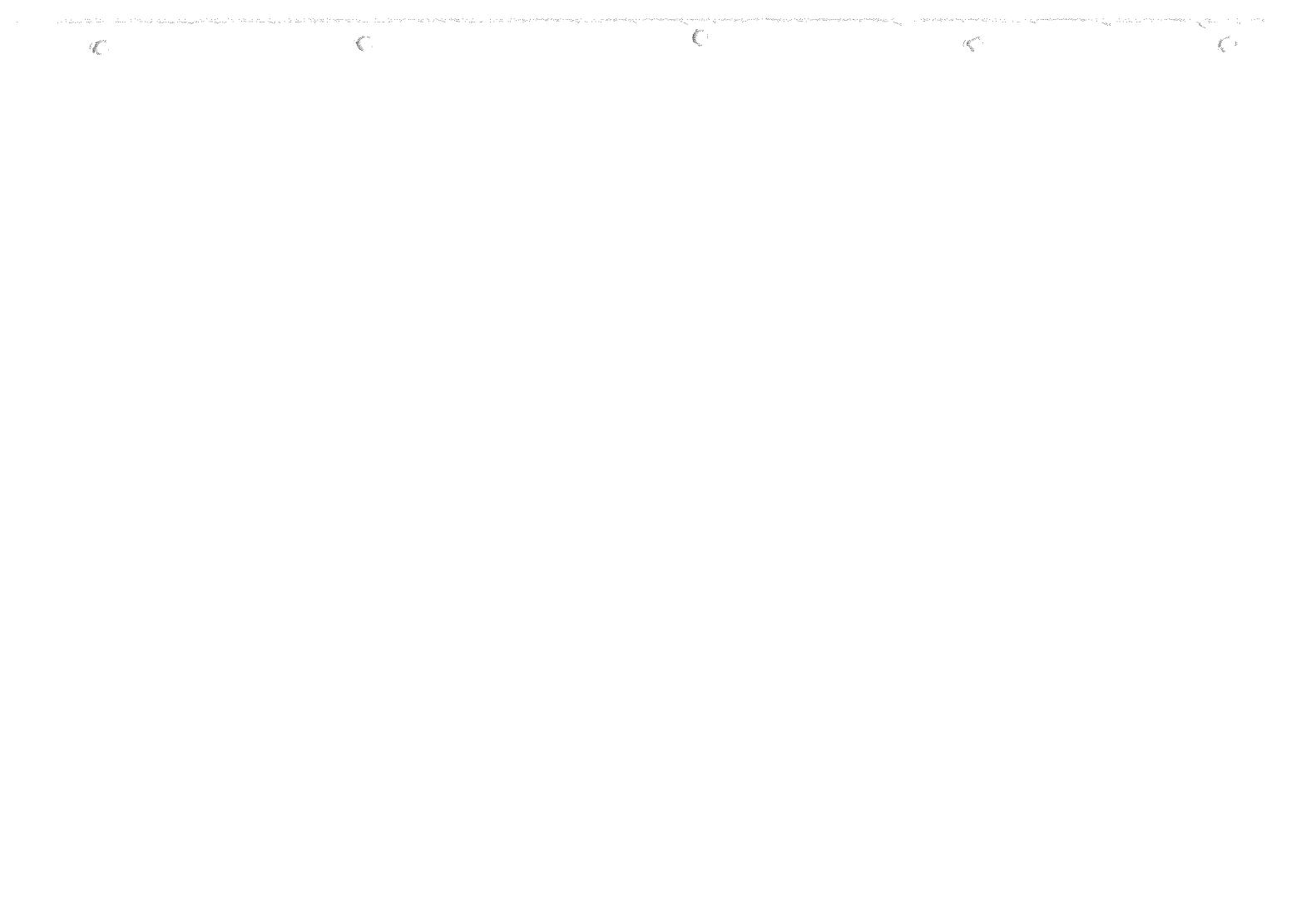
on earth derives from the Church and belongs to her; in her and through her one can attain perfection: *omnes quotquot fuerunt sancti ad ipsam ecclesiam pertinent: non ubicumque turtur inveniat nidum sibi ubi ponat pullos suos: in fide vera, in fide catholica, in societate unitatis ecclesiae pariat opera sua* (En in ps. 83, 7).

The Church considered in its members is a *corpus permixtum*; Augustine distinguishes an *invisibilis caritatis compago*, which probably speaking constitutes the body of Christ – they are the Church, the bride of the Canticle, the enclosed garden, the spring shut-up, the fountain sealed, the paradise with the fruit of apples mentioned in the Canticle 4, 12 – this is the church of the just. Side by side with them are the sinners, who do not belong to the household of God but live in his house: *alios autem ita dici esse domo, ut non pertineat ad compagem domus nec ad societatem fructiferae pacificaque iustitiae* (De bapt 7, 90)

They do not really belong to Christ though they participate in his Sacraments; but there are not two churches but only one body of Christ *verum atque permixtum, verum atque simulatum*; but actually there is a separation, a spiritual one, between the just and the sinner in the Church; interiorly the sinners are outside the church of the just, although they materially form part of it: *sive intus versari videantur, sive aperte foris sint quod caro est caro est; sive in arca in sua sterilitate perseverent, sive occasione temptationis tamque vento extra tollantur, quod palea est. Et semper ab illius ecclesiae quae sine macula et ruga est, unitate divisus est, etiam qui congregationi sanctorum in carnali obduratione miscetur.* (De bapt 1, 26) This does not mean that there are two churches or that the Church of the just should be separated from the other: *tamquam sit utrorumque corpus propter temporalem commixtionem et communionem sacramentorum. Nos istam recessionem spiritualiter intelligimus, illi (donatistae) corporaliter.* Sometimes Augustine identifies the Church of the just with that of the predestinated, although he states that this identification is not exact for the *certus numerus sanctorum praedestinatorum* includes not only those who are leading a just life but also people who at the moment are sinners, heretics or pagans. A third privilege of the church is catholicity: *Prope omnis pagina nihil aliud sonet quam Christum et ecclesiam toto orbe diffusam.* Donatists and other sects lack catholicity – they certainly are found everywhere but do not form one body; each one exists in a particular place.

The Church is also apostolic for the bishops are the successors of the Apostles: *genuerunt te apostoli, ipsi missi sunt, ipsi praedicaverunt, ipsi patres... patres missi sunt apostoli, pro apostolis filii nati sunt tibi, constituti sunt episcopi... non ergo te putas desertam quia non vides Petrum, quia non vides illos per quos nata es: de prole tua tibi crevit paternitas* (En in ps 44, 32).





participate in this commission. For Optatus communion with Rome is a vital necessity, although he also affirmed the desirability for communion with the Eastern Churches, with the *septiformis ecclesia Asiae*.

*Augustine's* doctrine is not dissimilar. Following Cyprian he regarded Peter as the representative or the symbol of the unity of the Church and of the apostolic college, and also the Apostle upon whom the primacy was bestowed. Thus the Roman Church, the See of Peter to whom the Lord after the resurrection entrusted his sheep, was the Church in which the primacy – *principatus* – of the apostolic chair has ever flourished. Three letters dictated by Augustine during the Pelagian controversy (Ep 175-177) and addressed to Innocent I in 416, seem to imply that the Pope has a pastoral and teaching authority over the whole Church, *an authority founded in the Scriptures*.

Nevertheless Augustine in practical matters, like Cyprian, was never willing to surrender one jot of the disciplinary independence of the African Church, and we can say the same thing with regard to Ambrose as regards the church of Milan.

For Augustine Rome is the *cathedra Petri*: in Peter *primatus apostolorum tam excellenti gratia praeeminet*; Peter's primacy has been transmitted to his successors in the Roman See: *semper apostolicae cathedrae viguit principatus*. The Roman See is apostolic because of the uninterrupted succession of its bishops.

The doctrinal authority of Rome is such that its ruling on any question is definitive; there is no appeal from it. In his controversy with Julian of Eclanum, Augustine stated that the authority of a council where no eastern bishops were present was binding once there was the Pope's approval of the decisions taken: *puto tibi eam partem orbis sufficere debere in qua primum apostolorum suorum voluit Dominus gloriissimo martyrio coronare* (C. lul. 10). And in Sermon 131, 10 recalling the decisions of the councils of Carthage and Milevi condemning Pelagianism he says: *iam enim de hac causa duo concilia missa sunt ad sedem apostolicam: inde etiam rescripta venerunt. Causa finita est, utinam aliquando finitur error.*

The real framers and promoters of the primacy were the Popes themselves: from the facts of history we know that it was a slow process, and it was *Leo the Great* who gathered together and gave final shape to the various elements which together form the concept of primacy as understood in the Patristic period: there were further developments during the post Patristic period.

Leo's notion of the primacy is admirably set out in his various homilies on the

anniversary of his election as pope and in a letter to Anastasius bishop of Thessalonica. Leo's teaching on the primacy can be summed up in the following points:

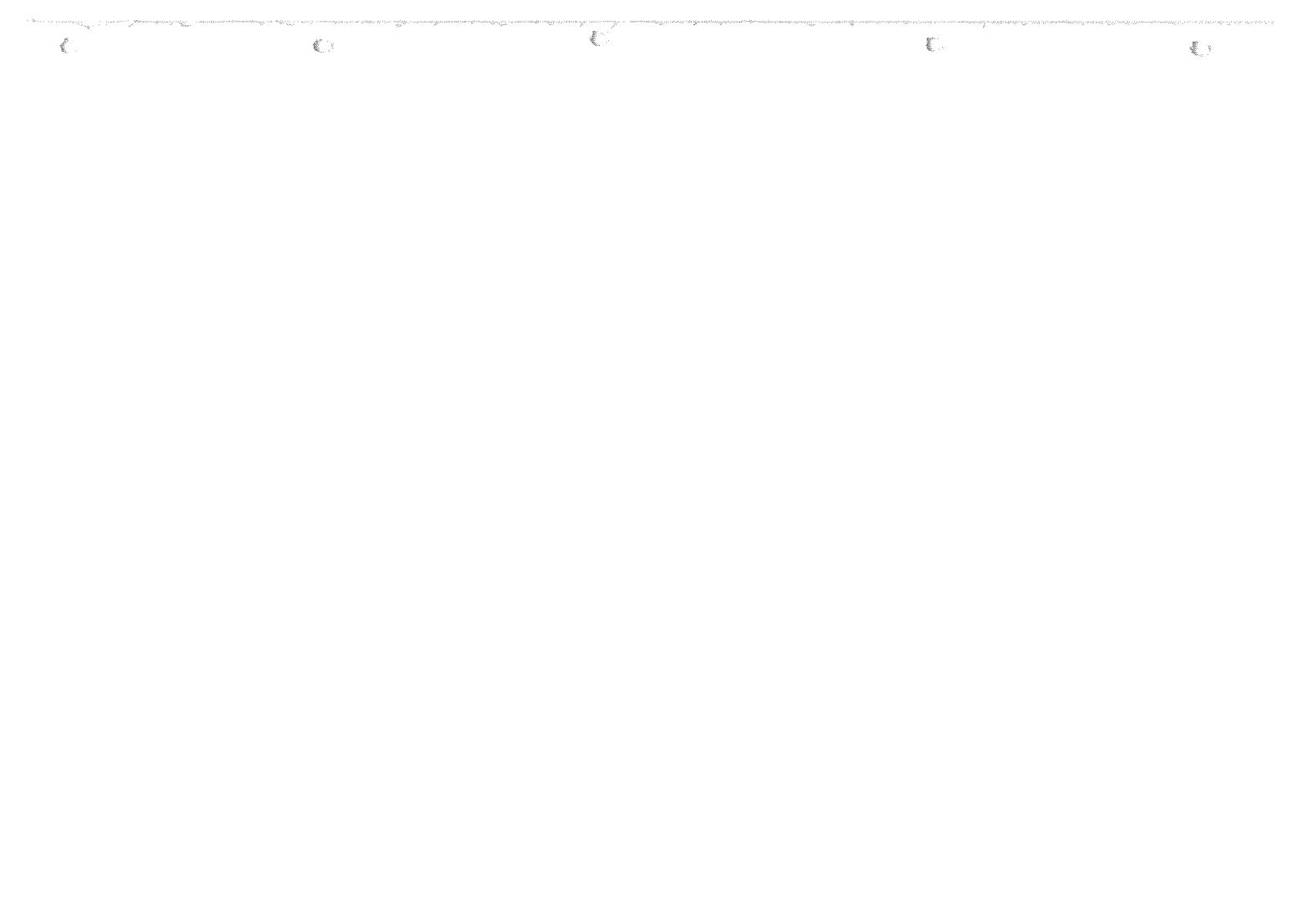
- i. The Petrine texts should be taken to imply that supreme authority was conferred by the Lord on Peter;
- ii. Peter was bishop of Rome and his magisterium was transmitted to his successors;
- iii. Peter is thus in a way mystically present in the Roman See, and therefore the authority of other bishops does not derive immediately from Christ but, as in the case of the apostles, it is mediated through Peter i.e. through the Pope who in this way represents him or better still is a kind of *Petrus redivivus*.
- iv. the bishop's mandate is limited to their dioceses; Peter's magisterium and that of his successors is a *plenitudo potestatis* and extends over the whole church.<sup>17</sup>

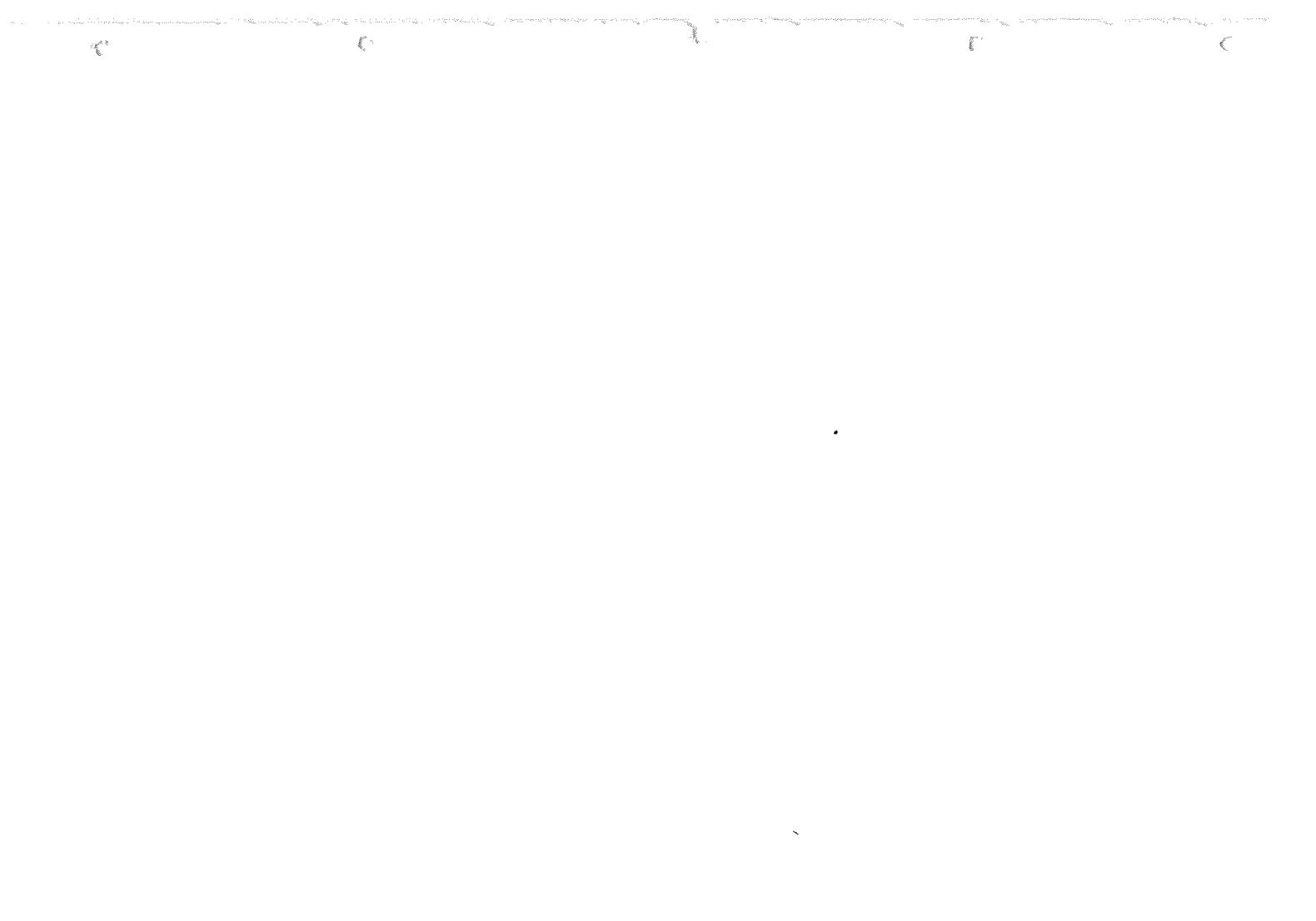
### ***Church and State***

*The Edict of Milan* (313) brought advantages to the Church: paganism deprived of State support soon lost way in the cities; the clergy were accorded civic privileges; but these advantages were not without their drawbacks, especially cesaro-papism i.e. the tendency of the civil power to deal with religious problems. Many bishops showed too much subservience to the State but there were great bishops who resisted the State's interference in religious affairs.

*Athanasius* during his third exile in the desert (356-362) as "invisible patriarch of Egypt", when all the East had bowed to the cesaro-papism of Constantius, energetically asserted the Church's independence from the State in spiritual matters. He did this mainly in his History of the Arians: referring to what Constatius said at the Council of Milan in 355 ("What I want, this is the Council's canon") and to the servility of the bishops, Athanasius asserts that the Roman power must not be confused with the government of the Church, for in this case religion would be subjected to the power of the eunuchs and this would pave the way for the antichrist:

17. Leo the Great, Epist 14, 11







El Hassan Bin Talal, *Christianity in the Arab World* (Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies; Amman 1a94) 120pp.

What a refreshing history of Christianity from the vantage point of a Middle Eastern centre of research, have the churches and culture in general received with this small, elegant volume! Its author comes from the Royal Family of Jordan, HRH Crown Prince El Hassan Bin Talal. In this booklet of just 120 pages, the author offers a rapid account of how Christianity was born on Palestinian soil, of how it developed towards other parts of world, with special focus on its development in Asia Minor and the Middle East. The title of its twelve short chapters will tell the whole story: "What is Christianity?" (pp. 1-17); "The Origins of the Nicene Creed" (pp. 18-26); "The Organisation of the Church" (pp. 27-35); "The Christological Controversies" (pp. 36-46); "The Iconoclast Controversy" (pp. 47-51); "The Schism between Rome and Constantinople" (pp. 52-56); "The Difference Islam made" (pp. 57-68); "The Maronite Union with Rome" (pp. 69-76); "The Emergence of the Uniate Churches" (pp. 77-84); "The Arab Protestant Churches" (pp. 85-90); "The Arab Uniates and Protestants in Retrospect" (pp. 91-93); "The Christians in the Modern Arab World" (pp. 94-98). There follow a Chart of Christian confessions and Churches (p. 99), a very short bibliography (p. 100) [The present

reviewer would have been very happy if there was entered a reference to Carmel Sant, *Bible Translation and Language* (Melita Theologica Supplementary Series 2; Malta 1992) in which the activities of the Church Missionary Society are described in some detail], and three sets of indexes (pp. 101-120).

The project of covering the essentials of two thousand years of history in the short space of a pocket volume has been ambitious indeed. The author has at least succeeded in explaining the origin of the various Christian Communities in the prevalently Muslim world of the Middle East. His original plan forced the author to follow the development of Christianity ab initio through its many ramifications down to the current minority groupings. Understandable is his partly negative judgement on the setting up of Uniate and Protestant Churches in the Middle East: "...This missionary activity destroyed the original unity of historical Eastern Christian communions by creating Uniate churches out of each, or by attracting converts to Protestantism from each historical communion. What was left behind, as a result, was a legacy of distrust and quarrels between daughter and mother communities, the former considering the latter to be fossilised and obsolescent; the latter accusing the former of slavish Westernization and treason to the Eastern Christian





207). There follow an Epilogue (pp. 207-210), the "Holy See Charter of the Family" annexed as an appendix (pp. 221-238), a sizeable bibliography of works consulted (pp. 239-248), and a general index covering entries of both authors and subjects (pp. 249-252).

Each of the three Parts that form the body of the volume is further subdivided into three chapters and in each subdivision ME focuses on one aspect of the general theme of the Part. It is these sub-units that shed light on the redactional history of the entire treatise. Without pretending to do justice to the richness and depth of ME's reflection we shall offer just a glimpse into the discussion of each chapter.

ME opens his discussion of the family as a community of love by describing how man and his natural family were created "in God's image and likeness". This likeness of the human family to God is "built on selfless love" (p.18) which animates family relationships. Relying on Pope Paul VI's renowned *Humanae Vitae* (1969), ME closes this first discussion with a reflection on the nature of married love (pp. 19-29). In the second chapter of the first triad, ME focuses on how the human family reflects God's triune nature. Naturally he is aware of the analogical character of such discourse (p. 32). Analogical, though, does not mean unreal: "If God is a family, then, in order to fulfil his destiny, man must be a family too. There is no other way

for man to be like God" (p.35). This holds true also for individuals choosing celibacy. ME offers a short historical prospectus of the articulation of this insight, a prospectus which reaches down to the 1980 Fifth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. The first triad closes with a general discussion on the influence on the natural family of Christ's work of redemption. This chapter includes an outline history of the Church's approach to matrimony until we reach the personalistic trend in Magisterial documents on marriage.

In the second triad of reflections ME telescopes on the family as a life community where the married couple and their children "grow together"; for the family life as an educational process ME draws heavily from the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" of Vatican II and Jack Dominian's *Proposals for a New Sexual Ethic* (Darton, Longman & Todd; London 1977). In the second essay of Part Two ME treats with delicacy the question of procreation within the family. After establishing the principle that the sexual union of the spouses "besides being always open to new life as its very essence demands, is of its nature conducive to the strengthening of the marital bond between them and to their psychological and spiritual fruitfulness" (p. 84), the author outlines the development of the Church's doctrine of procreation as a finality of

marriage, (pp. 84-93). The problems of responsible parenthood and natural birth control are discussed in a respectful, enlightened and serene fashion (pp. 93-112). The parent's mission to act as the first educators of their sons and daughters forms the subject matter of the third chapter of Part Two.

The topics of the third triad are more strictly theological: the "family as sacrament", the 'family as Domestic Church', and the family as 'evangelizer'. But the pastoral and the mystical are also present in everyone of these pages (134-206). High points are reached in this Part Three especially where the spirituality of the spouses is described. This spiritually is Trinitarian in nature and is presented as strictly linked to the sacramentality of matrimony.

Some elements of critique: (a) Two minor points. The proof reading of the book has been horrible. What a pity! Besides, placing the annotations towards the end of the book, may have facilitated the work of page-makers but rendered reading and usage by people working in the pastoral field of the family more cumbersome. These need to be remedied as a second edition is prepared. Two more point belonging to editorial drudgery: References to Scripture and to important Church documents, such as those of the Second Vatican Council, need not be put with annotations. They should enter the text within brackets (Bible siglas do not require the point and should not be underlined or written in

Italics). (b) By far the greatest weakness of the book is its handling of Scripture as a source. Not that references to the Bible are rare or are missing. They abound. Yet in a treatise meant to offer its audience a coherent presentation and reflection one would expect a scientific handling of biblical data. A few instances. References to the creation narratives of Gen 1-3 require that the author consult primary exegetical sources such as commentaries. One would expect to see entries into the annotations of Gerhard von Rad's *Genesis. A Commentary* (SCM Press; London 1972) or of Claus Westermann's standard reference book on the primordial history, *Genesis 1-11. A commentary* (SPCK; London 1984). There he would have discovered extensive material especially on the meaning of creation in the image of God which ME then extends to the reality of the family.

Another instance is his discussion of the indissolubility of marriage (pp. 51-55) which appeared more than once (cfr pp. 26-27). It is true that this aspect is never tackled as the main subject and that the pastoral finality looms large on the writer's agenda. However in a treatise one would see a more extensive treatment of this issue that is affecting the lives of so many. In such a prospect one would surely widen his use of primary sources; ME's reference to Mk 10 in note 95 does not tell the whole story. Once again the exegetical donkey-

