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TOWARD A SPIRITUALITY FOR TODAY

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES STM

This thesis examines spirituality in the history of the western Church, studies the theological background for a modern spirituality, and summarizes and criticizes the writings in ascetical theology of Martin Thornton, O.P. Fr. Thornton seeks to wed traditional spirituality to modern theological thinking, especially that of the 'new theologians' of Protestantism. It concludes with suggestions for modern spiritual life that arise from this consideration of history, theology, and Fr. Thornton's work. Stemming from a theology which emphasizes the doctrines of Creation and Incarnation these suggestions urge a personal spirituality which is disciplined but flexible and which works toward awareness of God, of self and of others. They point to a communal or Church spirituality that encourages "cell" groups and is sacramentally centred. Liturgical reform, the dichotomy between secular and sacred, and the respective roles of clergy and laity are also examined.

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A study in Ascetical Theology,
based upon an examination of
history, of doctrine and of the
writings of Martin Thornton, O.P.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this thesis was suggested by "The Rock and the River", a book by Martin Thornton, a priest of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, published in 1965. Fr. Thornton, who is an exponent of Catholic spirituality in its English expression, attempts in this book to come to grips with the modern theological, philosophical, and pastoral concerns of such writers as Heidegger, Bonhoeffer, Bultmann and Tillich. It is his contention that the truths they formulate can only be made effective in the life of the Church and its people by traditional spirituality updated to modern conditions and outlook.

My original conviction was that he had found the ascetical answers for modern Christians who want to grow spiritually, yet as full participants in their world. This conviction has lessened in the course of thesis development, but respect for Fr. Thornton certainly has not. His vast knowledge of the history of Catholic spirituality, his wit and pithy clarity of expression, his pastoral impulse, and his concern to discover an effective spirituality in and ministry by the Church in our time make him worthy of recognition and study.

There are comparatively few today who have made the attempt to relate what many of us sense to be the valid insights of the new theologians to the personal and corporate life of the people of the Church. That is, few, including these theologians themselves, have tried to answer the "how" question. How can we grow, as modern people, into the quality of life which the needs of the day call for from us as Christians? It is this question which is the primary concern of this thesis and because this is Fr. Thornton's concern, he is our catalyst.

As background for our study we will make an historical survey of our spiritual heritage; what are the ascetical factors which have marked the spirituality of the Church? Which of them have strengthened its life and which weakened it? Then, because ascetic theology is rooted in the doctrine of the Church, we will examine what features of that doctrine need to be underlined for the Church in today's world. Our conclusions on this subject in Chapter 2 are the foundation for the modern spirituality we will suggest in our final chapter.

At the outset, however, it will be helpful to provide a definition of spirituality as understood in this study. For the word itself is subject to misunderstanding. Popularly, it may suggest a rather ethereal attitude to life, a piety which withdraws from the ordinary concerns of mortal men. It may be used of specifically sacred, religious or ecclesiastical concerns. Technically, it may refer to a specific school of ascetical discipline. None of these describes what is in mind here. Ours is simply a working definition which delineates what this study is about. Nothing absolute or exclusive is claimed for it.

We define spirituality, then, as "that discipline which cultivates the life of Jesus Christ in creation". We speak of discipline because our concern is with the "how" question. How do we love our neighbour?, for example. We know we ought, yet we know we do not, at least not in the sense of the Gospel. It does not come naturally. Discipline suggests the need for conscious and habitual pursuit of the goal, requiring training of attitude. It does not imply a Pelagian theology of works, but only that the grace of the Spirit requires on man's part a willingness to cooperate actively. Nor is discipline to be interpreted as the reluctant carrying of an unwanted

burden. There is a cost implied in the word, but people who assume discipline in any sphere of life accept the cost because of the positive goal they want to achieve. In our definition, discipline points to the reality of the Cross in reaching the goal of full human maturity.

"Cultivates" is used in its earthiest sense as of the farmer working the soil, for we want to stress that the goal of discipline is not to make man into something unnatural. It is to bring to growth in him that which we believe God destines for him and that, our definition points out, is Christ-manhood. The purpose of the discipline is to cultivate the life of Jesus Christ. We speak of "life" rather than mind, say, or spirit since we want to emphasize the totally human, the physical manhood of our Lord understood by a full incarnational theology. Jesus Christ is the point of reference for our definition because we understand him to be the proto-type of perfected humanity. In saying this we do not deny the existence of other spirituality, both non-Christian and non-religious. But our concern is Christian spirituality for which the hallmark is alone Jesus Christ.

Finally, we use the word "creation" because of its breadth. It is humanity, both personal and communal, secular as well as sacred. Even if the discipline we speak of is assumed only by a few, its ramifications extend into the whole of humanity. Furthermore, the word "creation" takes us beyond the human, and implies that while spirituality operates in the sphere of men alone, at least so far as we know, the fulfilment of God's purpose in man carries with it the harmony and unity of His whole creation.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Christian spirituality continually faces the temptation to dualism. Theologically Christianity cannot be dualistic. The twin doctrines of creation, which see the world and human life as the handiwork of a loving God, and of incarnation, in which God himself takes flesh, are the rocks upon which dualistic heresies founder. These doctrines are given concrete expression in the Church's sacramental worship and in its concern for human suffering.

Practically speaking, however, traditional spirituality has reflected a strong and sometimes dominant dualism in which its goal of union with God entails a corresponding renunciation of the world. This spirituality takes its inspiration in the cross of Christ, the symbol of utter self-denial. To be redeemed by the Cross means for some to be separated from the world, a separation which if not always carried to the extreme of actual physical withdrawal, involves a psychological turning away.

In this dualism we see a failure to hold together Incarnation and Redemption in an integrated Christology. K. E. Kirk traces the roots of the divergence by showing the distinct themes of rigorism and humanism in Church history. Both are discerned in the New Testament. Kirk credits Weiss and Schweitzer with pointing out to the generally humanist Protestantism of their day that "renunciation, if it is to be eliminated from Christianity at all, cannot be eliminated from the historic teaching of the Lord."[1] It is hardly necessary to quote texts to support Kirk's thesis that he who came eating and drinking and who in his ministry of healing showed compassionate concern for

[1] K. E. Kirk, The Vision of God, p.57.

life in the flesh, also vigorously summoned those who sought the kingdom of God to renounce their worldly concerns and to take up their cross and follow him.

The most striking expression, perhaps, of the apparent dichotomy is in the Johannine writings. There the Word is made flesh and comes not to condemn but to save the world. Yet for the most part the word 'world' is used in a condemnatory sense. Christ does not pray for the world,[2] nor are Christians to love it,[3] for it is the world which gives birth to all deceitful lusts.

Kirk's own resolution of this humanist - rigorist division is to say that the ordinary joys and affections affirmed by Jesus should not be denied, but assumed into a higher aspiration. Human life, to be the creation intended by God, must be taken up into the life of God. This goal to which all else must be subordinated is what Kirk calls the vision of God. All that stands in the way is to be removed, but it is not so much a renunciation motivated by a belief in the world's evil, as by a desire to live for God alone.[4] There is no rigorist - humanist dichotomy in Christ. The new creation of the Incarnation and the salvation of Redemption are one and the same thing. There is only paradox in his teaching because we put it there. A true Christian spirituality integrates affirmation and renunciation in the referral of all to God.

The new creation in Christ by the Spirit is to be lived and revealed in the conditions of human existence and therefore redemption is not from the body but in the body. Renunciation, and thereby Christian ascetic, can never be negative in motivation. It is true that one cannot serve God and mammon, and

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[2] John 17:9.
[3] I John 2.15-16.
[4] Kirk, op. cit., pp. 470-471.

if mammon is served it must be renounced not as an evil in itself, but as an obstruction to the vision of God. 'Heavenly treasure' is the true goal, but it is a treasure to be discovered and lived in the flesh now.

Louis Bouyer discusses this point in relation to martyrdom. It is the supreme act of renunciation, and although in some instances it is no doubt motivated negatively in the sense of a virtual suicide, a true Christian martyrdom is not a denial of life but an affirmation. The martyr does not seek death. He seeks Jesus Christ through death.[5] In participating in the death of Christ he thinks of himself as sharing in the victory of his resurrection, the victory of life over the last enemy.[6]

The Church, however, has not been notably successful in maintaining a spirituality in which renunciation holds a positive rather than negative motivation. Too often renunciation is based upon the teaching that the world is evil rather than in terms of growth towards a greater good.

Evidence of rupture in the renunciation-affirmation synthesis appears as early as Paul. It is true that he taught redemption as an experience of this life, a raising up and fulfilment of life in the here and now. There is a profound strain of humanistic compassion in Paul and its practical demonstration is the collection for the starving brethren in Jerusalem. There are, however, instances in Paul where the rigorist element appears not so much an ascetical need to achieve the vision of God as a denial of creation's good itself. The clearest example is that of his attitude to marriage. When Jesus says that some make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of God or that we are to forsake all - wife, mother, sister - for the sake of the kingdom, one feels that he is not to be taken literally: that he is expressing in

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5 Louis Bouyer, The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers, Vol. 1 of A. History of Christian Spirituality, p. 199.

6 Ibid., p. 195.

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hyperbole the need for singleness of aspiration toward God, the single eye that is necessary whatever one's condition in life.

For Paul, however, it is a literal fact that with a wife a man is distracted from pleasing God.[7] True it is that he also has much that is moving and warm to say to those who are married, but it is also true that for him the bachelor state is to be preferred. One doubts if it would have occurred to Paul that in pleasing one's wife one may also be pleasing the Lord. It may be that Paul's eschatological expectation affected his view on marriage, but this does not alter the fact that in him the roots of a problem for Christianity in its sexual outlook are grounded, and no issue is more basic to the affirmation-renunciation dichotomy than the sexual one. Consider how St. Augustine took it beyond Paul and saw in the sexual act that fundamental concupiscence in which original sin was transmitted from generation to generation.

What prevented an excess of the rigorist spirit in Paul and in the apostolic age was the deeply communal life of the Church and its sacramental worship. It can be fairly said that the vision of God in the New Testament, intensely personal in its experience, was never an individualistic or isolated goal. Whatever other value the Book of Revelation may have, it at least affirms this with thundering brilliance. Again, it is Paul's love and concern for the Church which imbues his letters with grace whereas otherwise they would be arrogant.

The sacramental worship of the Church expressed and reinforced the community. The rite of baptism, in the early Church, must have been an extraordinary expression of communal joy and solidarity. The breaking of bread was the manifestation that the many, being one body in Christ, were everyone

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7 I Corinthians 7: 33 & 34.

members one of another. When such community exists, both in worship and in service, the extremes of rigorism are thwarted. Provided one is not trying to outdo his brother in zeal, in which case community is a camouflage, it is impossible to concern one's self with the lone flight of the soul to God when not only the welfare of the community is put first, but it is also recognized that only in and through community can the Spirit of God be discerned.

What has been said so far is intended to establish that in Christ there is no real divergence between world affirmation and world renunciation for renunciation is but a means toward a higher affirmation of life infused with God; that there are traces, however, in Paul and hence in the apostolic Church of a more dualistically-oriented renunciation; but that this is held in check by the communal and sacramental life of the Church.

With the close of the apostolic age these safeguards began to disappear. The Church was held together less and less by communal spirit and more and more by legalism, the two results of which were either formalism or an individualistic rigorism. Kirk shows how, in the Fathers, actions and dispositions came to be confused. Whereas Jesus' ethical teaching emphasizes purity of motive - that which proceeds from within - later codifications that were built upon his teaching emphasized outward conformity to the action required.[8] "The thought of God still dominates our post-apostolic writers, but He is no longer conceived of as a Father Whose loving purposes are the true and only canon of the law, and Whose abiding and inspiring presence is the perpetual instrument of its fulfilment. He is now thought of primarily as Lawgiver and as Judge."[9] Legalism leads spiritually to self-preoccupation.

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8 Kirk, op. cit., pp. 130 ff.
9 Ibid., p. 137.

One has continually to examine and measure one's own attainment against the code's stipulations. Gone is that freedom of spirit in which the motivation is a self-forgetful love.

Although to say so is a generalization which fails to take into account periodic reactions and exceptions to this legalism, the Church and its spiritual discipline have suffered from it ever since. Legalism in religion has two consequences. First, it necessarily defines itself in terms of negatives and prohibitions. Second, it thereby limits aspiration and growth of a positive kind. If I can judge myself to live within the prohibitions of the law I judge myself to be pleasing to God and, contrarily, can judge those who do not live as I do as displeasing to him. Spiritual discipline becomes then not a growth toward the vision of God and fulfilment of one's creative humanity, but an exercise to conform to the prescriptions of the law.

The reaction to such formalism may be, as Kirk points out, an extreme rigorism. Formalism leads to mediocrity. The zealot refuses to accept such mediocrity. He shows himself to be beyond it by the extremes of his asceticism. The practices of the desert monks such as St. Antony reflect this. Louis Bouyer argues that Antony's withdrawal was not a renunciation of life. Its sole purpose was to achieve union with Christ. He and the other desert monks did not court suffering for its own sake, but the freedom of union with Christ it gave them. To tame the spirit they had first to tame the body.[10] Kirk, too, who gives several illustrations of the excesses of the monks, credits them at least with giving primacy to prayer over a mere moralism.[11] To both Bouyer and Kirk we must reply that, in the desert monks' thought, union

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10 Bouyer, op. cit., pp. 308 ff.
11 Kirk, op. cit., p. 203.

with Christ is to be gained only through a renunciation of the world, and that of such an extreme kind as to leave little doubt that they saw the world as intrinsically evil. Psychologically they were dualists. Furthermore they were isolated. They may have believed that their prayer and discipline benefitted not only themselves, but their fellow men, that they were fighting Satan on humanity's behalf; but New Testament Christianity is established upon a physical community, sharing in a common sacramental life. No matter how admirable the efforts of the desert monk, no matter how conscious in his own mind of service to and even spiritual communion with men, he lived in a real sense outside the Church and detracted from that communal and sacramental life which had once been its strength.

One might have thought that the mediocrity of formalism on the one hand and the excesses of the anchorites on the other would have been overcome in the phenomenon of the communal monastery. In a sense they were, but only at the cost of a further loss in the Church, the creation of a double standard for religious and secular Christians.

As we turn to look at the monastic development, we are conscious of the very positive role it played not only in the Church but in western civilization. The monks virtually carried the European world through the Dark Ages. But our particular concern is their contribution to Christian spirituality, to the ascetic theology which we have inherited. There is much that was positive, certainly by comparison with the general spirituality of the Church. A proper balance was sought between personal prayer and liturgy. Indeed it was not sought, but was unconsciously there.[12] Communal discipline represented the

[12] Jean Leclercq: Culte-Liturgique et prière intime dans la monaschisme au moyen âge, La Maison-Dieu, Liturgie et Vie Spirituelle, Vol. 1, p. 39.

awareness of a mutual responsibility, of the need to make sacrifice for the common good. And behind the physical and mental labor of the monk lay the view that it was not only good for him to work, but that his work was, in the name of Christ, brotherly service.

It was not, however, possible to eliminate entirely either legalistic formalism or excessive rigorism from the monastic community. The former rested essentially upon the vow of obedience. This vow was, of course, deemed necessary for a smooth, coordinated life in community. Its very existence, however, represented an authoritative, legalistic bias. There had to be someone in authority who laid down the rules and who punished the transgression of them. This is characteristic of a legalistic system.

To be sure, the monastic founders were spiritual directors, pastoral counselors of great depth. "Basil," says Kirk, "was more interested in the spirit than in the outward observances of asceticism."[13] Benedict reduced rather than expanded the ascetic discipline of his predecessors because of "the intimate connexion he descried between an asceticism in which discipline has wholly taken the place of self-annihilation, and a life of active service."[14]

The genius and insight of such men as these are, however, difficult to perpetuate. The abbot becomes less a spiritual director than an administrator, upholding the rules and regulations of the community. A punitive rather than pastoral atmosphere develops, reflecting the fact that conformity to the law rather than the inner motivation of the heart is uppermost. The inevitable consequence of such legalism is, we repeat, to make the practitioner intro-

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[13] Kirk, op. cit., p. 267.
[14] Ibid., p. 274.

spective. His service becomes not so much a self-giving as a means to work out his own salvation.

As the aspect of legalistic formalism rests upon the vow of obedience, so the aspect of rigorism rested upon the vows of poverty and chastity, particularly the latter. They, again, may have been unavoidable, given the separation of monastery and world. And it may also be true that the monk did not so much renounce marriage as he sought God. But the conclusion inevitably arises that the vision of God and marriage are incompatible. Obedience, poverty and chastity may have been essential in the monastic system. The great pity is that they were not simply upheld as such, upheld as necessary for the welfare of the community, rather than made into religious virtues implying a higher order or sanctity of life on the part of those who took the vows.

For it was this presumption of a higher Christian life to be discovered in the monastery which was the root of the most serious drawback monasticism furnished to Christian spirituality: the theory of the double standard, meaning the distinction between the spiritual calling of the religious and the secular Christian. The fault lay not with the spirituality of the monastic founders. We find Basil, for example, refusing "to draw a hard and fast line between monks and other Christians. He teaches that all Christian life must be ascetic."[15] Monastic development, however, tended to decline rather than grow from the genius of its founders. The contemplative life, with the achievement of the vision of God as its goal, became the sole way of that achievement and the exclusive property of the religious. Salvation was open to the secular Christian, of course, but he could not attain to the sanctity of the monk.[16]

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15 J. O. Hannay, Spirit and Origin of Christian Monasticism, p. 188, quoted by Kirk, op. cit., p. 244.

16 Kirk, op. cit., pp. 254-255.

The most revealing indication of the gap between the monasteries and secular religion in the Middle Ages is seen in worship. Jean Leclercq paints a glowing picture of the liturgical life of the monasteries between the 6th and 12th Centuries. For the monk "il y avait union non seulement entre prière liturgique et prière intérieure, mais aussi, et d'abord, entre vie liturgique et vie intérieure."[17] Leclercq sees a balanced diet of personal and corporate devotion, both alive, both soundly biblical, feeding the contemplative life of the monks.

But for the masses, the liturgy became elaborately ritualistic, with the laity hardly more than spectators at a gala. "Si l'extension du culte, la longueur des offices, l'exubérance des cérémonies tend à se développer de plus en plus et à mener une vie propre, l'empreinte de la liturgie sur l'âme des fidèles se rétrécit progressivement. Une fausse 'participation des fidèles' s'introduit: on participe à part entière aux chants, aux processions, aux cérémonies, au 'spectacle', si l'on veut, mais on prend part de moins en moins à l'essentiel, au sacrament, à la prière."[18] It is not to be wondered at that out of this liturgical and spiritual void of the masses should appear all sorts of superstitious practices, emotional extravagance, heresies and cults.[19]

Certainly the chief drawback of monasticism was the divorce between "secular" and "religious" Christianity. It is not essentially a matter of evaluating the spiritual life of the monasteries themselves. It is simply that no matter what height that life might reach, no matter indeed how zealous

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17 Jean Leclercq, op. cit., p. 51.

18 Eloi Dekkers: Liturgie et Vie Spirituelle aux Premiers Siècles, La Maison-Dieu, Vol. 1., op. cit., pp. 35-36.

19 See François Vandenbrouche, o.s.b., Liturgie et Pieté Personnelle à la fin du moyen âge, La Maison-Dieu, op. cit., pp. 56ff.

the monks might be in service to the world, the monastery did little for the spiritual growth of the "secular" person. It could hardly be called a realization in the world of the New Testament concept of the Church. And its importance in our spiritual heritage is that we still suffer from a like double standard that is present in the minds of many between clergy and laity.

One other characteristic of the age under discussion needs to be noted for its effect upon our spiritual heritage. It is the preoccupation of theology and ascetic with after-life concepts. Reward and punishment, heaven and hell, judgment, damnation - these are the key-words of the period. It is not surprising that they were so, given the authoritarian structure of feudal society in which such concepts were useful weapons, and given also the appalling conditions in which the masses lived. Their attention was necessarily turned to a life beyond. We are not, therefore, saying that for its own time such a preoccupation of religious sensibilities was wrong, but only that it became so rooted in Church lore as to be a main factor which modern spirituality must take into account in its heritage.

In the 12th Century a period of renewal begins. There was a softening of the renunciatory attitude to life in this world, a flowering of a humanism which took the doctrine of creation seriously. The attempt to reform the spiritual life of the Church is evident in the schools which developed in the period. The founding of the Cistercian order in 1098 was an attempt to restore the Benedictine ideal of simplicity and poverty. Its outstanding figure was St. Bernard of Clairvaux whose basic teaching was of the love of God, a love which would be born in the Christian only through conformity to the divine will. The austerity of Bernard's own life was not negative. For him a life of poverty and humility was

essential to Christ-likeness and it was upon the sacred humanity of Christ that he focussed Cistercian devotion. Concerned with the life beyond this and with preparation for it, the Cistercians nevertheless worked for improvement in human life now. Of particular importance is that the order made use of conversi, or lay-brothers, opening its spirituality to the unlettered peasant.

The renewal of spiritual life reached out further into the world from the monastery through the Canons Regular, who mainly were clerics and lay officials attached to Cathedral churches. Forming themselves into communities they adopted for themselves the rule of life St. Augustine had laid down for his clergy, from which fact they are commonly known also as Augustinian Canons. Their particular importance is not only that a common life and rule were embraced by them outside the monasteries, but also that they were concerned with the apostolate of the Church, that is, with its ministry to souls. Through the preaching of the Augustinian Canons, the laity were called to the devout life. Spirituality was no longer the exclusive possession of the monk, although neither this nor any subsequent school was strong enough to dispel the influence of the double standard of which we have spoken.

The most notable order of the Canons Regular was that of St. Victor. Through Hugh and Richard of St. Victor the chaotic mystical speculation and liturgical extravagance of the previous century gave way to intellectual discipline and to orderliness in worship. "The Victorines insist that personal effort is of greater value than traditional methods in meditation; but they insist as well that what distinguishes meditation from 'reverie' is just the substitution of order for chaos."[20] They paved the way for the

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[20] Kirk, op. cit., p. 375.

systematic theological work of St. Thomas Aquinas that followed.

The step taken by the Canons Regular in bringing the spiritual life out from monastic walls was furthered in the thirteenth century by the Franciscans. The Canons were localized; the mendicant friars of St. Francis took the preaching of the Gospel out into the countryside. The Franciscans reflect the emphasis given earlier by St. Bernard to embracing the humanity of Jesus, particularly in their vow of poverty. Through their itineracy, however, and the preaching which accompanied it their influence went further. In this task the contemplative life was not forgotten, for it was necessary that the monks be competent and orthodox in what they preached. Although, therefore, the Franciscans were concerned primarily with preaching the Gospel in the world, some of their teachers, such as St. Bonaventure, contributed to the theological development of scholasticism.

The theological expression of Christian faith which, in the age under discussion, shows its beginnings in St. Bernard, continues through the Order of St. Victor, and persists even in St. Francis' itinerate order of friars, reaches its zenith in the Dominicans and this order's most renowned son, St. Thomas Aquinas. In the existential climate of more recent theology, it is popular to suppose that Thomas represents an intellectualization of the faith, a rationalism which emphasizes mind over living experience. Looked at, however, from a viewpoint prior to his age rather than subsequent, Thomas represents the culmination of a necessary return to order and credibility in theological speculation. His theological system was not a remote exercise in logic. It was expressive of the Dominican concern, every bit as strong as the Franciscan, to take the Gospel out into the world, but in an intellectually responsible formulation. That formulation reflected, of course, the scholastic

model of the age, Aristotle. The humanism of the Renaissance is evident in the spirituality of Aquinas. Of him Kirk says, "Perhaps his greatest contribution to ethics is the doctrine that the passions are to be ordered and harmonized rather than extirpated."[21]

The Dominican school was thoroughly, meticulously orthodox. Its spirituality was based on access to God through Jesus Christ and devotions or practices of Christian piety beyond this Christocentric core were entirely secondary. The Dionysian School, represented in such mystics as Eckhart, was of a more pantheistic nature, neo-Platonic in spirit. The intellectual tradition of the Dominicans, while by no means lost, was subsidiary to a more direct and mystical contemplation, but in the Dionysian School this becomes the prime concern. Meditations on the humanity of Christ gave way to mystical contemplation of the divine oneness. If there was excess in this Germanic school, it received correction in its Dutch and English branches. Of the former, Thomas à Kempis is the best known figure. Even of him it has been said that his spirituality is individualistic and platonic. His Imitation of Christ, probably the most influential spiritual writing of the period for subsequent ages is, as its title implies, Christocentric. The emphasis, however, is very much on personal and individual mystical communion with God. He writes of the centrality of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, yet stresses that the person prevented from attending may make a spiritual communion without loss of the Sacrament's benefits.[22] Even so, however, the devout communicant brings to the Sacrament the needs of humanity and not just his own soul.[23] The charge

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21 Kirk, op. cit., p. 386.
22 Imitation of Christ, Book Four, Chapter 10. (Penguin Edition, pp. 200-201)
23 Ibid., Book Four, Chapter 9. (Penguin Ed. p. 198)

of individualism levelled against Thomas à Kempis is, in this writer's opinion, debatable, but there is no doubt that the personal and mystical approach to God he teaches contributed to the individualism of subsequent spirituality, particularly in Protestantism.

The fourteenth Century English school, represented by such people as Hilton, Julian of Norwich, Rolle, and Margery Kempe reflects the same mystical approach, but was less concerned with the techniques of the soul's union with God and was more practical in the sense of accentuating the effect of this union upon the daily life of the faithful. Since the writings of Fr. Martin Thornton form a major part of this thesis, it may be well to look at his view of the fourteenth Century as expressing English spirituality at its best, the norm for our own day. His own particular preference is for Margery Kempe, whom he describes as "the supreme exemplar of habitual recollection."[24] His praise of Margery is that she is down to earth. It is in the ordinary circumstances of life that Margery looks for and finds God. Meditation for her is intuitive rather than discursive.[25] Her ascetic is always morally aimed; that is, improvement in love and service, rather than fine feelings are the goal of her prayer. Rooted in the tradition of the Victorines, she "would not have understood our modern distinctions between secular and sacred study, between science and theology."[26]

Without going into further detail we can agree with Thornton's analysis of Margery as an attractive example of a spiritual being who manages to keep

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[24] Martin Thornton, The Rock and The River, p. 77.

[25] Thornton, Margery Kempe, An Example in the English Pastoral Tradition, p. 33.

[26] Ibid., p. 43.

her head in heaven and her feet in the world. She may have been, as he says,[27] not so much a mystic as a first-class parishioner. But will we indeed find even a few such Margerys in our parishes today?[28] And even if we do, will they not be people who are more out of the stream of twentieth Century living than they are in it, in a way that Margery never was out of her century? She would not have made a distinction between secular and sacred study because no such distinction existed in her time in the way it does today. It is no use to say we should not make that distinction. Perhaps in time we, once again, will not. But in the meantime the Church has to speak to a world which does.

Fr. Thornton, of course, recognizes that Margery cannot simply be translated to the twentieth Century. Yet he would still have us hold to the basic outline of her ascetic discipline, brought up to date for our time. And a fundamental question of this whole study must be whether this is possible. Does Fr. Thornton take seriously enough the scientific climate of our time and the vast intellectual gulf between the fourteenth and twentieth centuries?

Moving into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries we have to divide our study of spirituality in western Christendom into Reformation and Counter-Reformation aspects. Taking the latter first, its most influential expression was the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola. Ignatius emphasizes personal effort, a warfare against the evil passions of the soul. It may seem that Ignatius' system is Pelagian in this concentration upon what man must do. This, however, is not exact, for he stresses that growth in the spiritual life is God's doing. It is nearer to the truth to say that the emphasis on personal effort represents Ignatius' desire to combat the moral degradation he found in

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[27] Ibid., p. 3.
[28] Ibid., p. 3.

this Renaissance period as well, perhaps, as the quietistic tendencies of at least some of the Protestants. It cannot be denied that in Ignatian spirituality there is something akin to the desert monks' view that virtue comes only through a battle to the death with vice.

The Society of Jesus, founded by Ignatius, brought the religious life closer to the whole life of the Catholic Church in that the Jesuit had no special habit beyond that of the 'secular' priest, the liturgical life in which he took part was no different from that of the Church generally, and the recitation of the Office was private rather than in monastic community. It is also worth noting that the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius were embraced not only by religious, but by devout laity.

St. Teresa added to the Ignatian system a description of the various grades of prayer through which the Christian is to advance to spiritual union with God, while St. John of the Cross stresses the value of the use of visual images in meditation and the danger of the 'spiritual' vices to the advancing soul. Both schools have been influential in their effect upon subsequent spirituality into our own time, but next to Ignatius the most important figure in Counter-Reformation spirituality is St. Francis de Sales. In his Introduction to the Devout Life St. Francis provides a system of spiritual exercise particularly designed for the lay person, a system which, while cultivating devotional excellence, never loses sight of the fact that the goal is the practice of Christian love in daily life.

Kirk claims that with Ignatius and de Sales spirituality ceases to be the privilege of the monk and is thrown open to the layman. We have seen indeed that through them the spirituality of the laity was served. Kirk,

however, goes too far in saying that "the barriers set up by the invalid theory of the double standard were broken down forever."[29] The double standard has remained with us in the different spirituality commonly expected of the clergy and the laity. Indeed in the Counter-Reformation period itself it was only the few lay men and women who had not only the inclination but also the leisure who were in a position to take advantage of Ignatian and Salesian spiritual direction. It hardly touched the mass of Christians.

It is also difficult to share Kirk's enthusiasm that with Ignatius and de Sales "thought about prayer reaches its high-water mark."[30] The elaborate mental gymnastics of the Spiritual Exercises hardly reflect the New Testament's rather simple, almost childlike approach to God as 'Father'. De Sales is more human, indeed more optimistic and practical, but it is questionable if a meditation such as the following marks the high-point of spirituality by the standards of the down-to-earth kind surmised from the Gospels: "Despise the world. Since I know not the hour in which I must leave thee, O wretched world, I will no more set my heart on thee. O my dear friends, my dear relations, permit me to love you no more except with a holy friendship, which may last eternally. Why should I unite myself to you, since I shall be one day forced to quit you and to break those ties asunder?"[31] Even in the Johannine writings where, as we have seen, there is a rejection of or opposition to 'the world', the apostles are told to love one another, and if the incident of the feet washing is a criterion, the love is more concrete,

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29 Kirk, op. cit., p. 412.
30 Ibid., p. 412.
31 Introduction to the Devout Life, Chapter XIII, the Fifth Meditation on Death, Trans. by John K. Ryan, Doubleday Image Book, p. 57.

more truly human than that implied in de Sales' 'holy friendship'. St. Paul, too, who sometimes indicated a desire to depart this life and be with Christ exhibited a counter-wish to remain with his flock.

Turning to the spirituality of the Reformation we find ourselves with a problem of precision. This is partly because of the diversity within Protestantism, a characteristic not absent from Catholic spirituality, as we have seen in the various schools, but which in Protestantism has to be traced through the multiplicity of its sects. Difficulty in precision, however, is even more the result of the diffuse nature of Protestant spirituality. That is to say, this spirituality does not stand out as a subject of specific study as it does in the schools we have looked at. The spirituality of Protestantism therefore has to be gleaned from the religious emphases upheld in its major historical movements.

Dr. Donald G. Bloesch writes that Protestant spirituality is not obvious "because the traditional emphasis of Evangelicals has been on the reconciling action of God in past history rather than on the transformation of the believer. Even those movements within Protestantism that have been particularly concerned with sanctification seek always to ground this in the justification procured for us by Christ in his death and resurrection."[32] It is questionable whether this is true of such a small but influential group as the Society of Friends and some of the mystically-oriented sects of Protestantism, but as a general statement of the main emphasis of the Reformation it is sound.

Luther's theological stand on justification by faith was a ringing rejection of sacramentalism and of the mediation of salvation through the

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[32] Christian Spirituality - East & West, pp. 166-167.

Church. Through Christ alone, the Christ encountered in Scripture, is the salvation of man procured, and that salvation is appropriated not through priestly intervention or through works of righteousness, but through faith, the personal gift of God by which we come to know that God treats us, unrighteous as we are, as righteous. This personal encounter with Christ is the essence of the Reformation. By it we are not thinking of the direct and personal union characteristic of mysticism. We mean a biblically-oriented encounter between the historic Christ and the soul without third party mediation. Protestant spirituality therefore reflects this theological foundation. One of the most expressive areas of Protestant spirituality has been in its hymns and the theme, as in Luther's own hymns, for example, recurs again and again of God's forgiveness given to man in the death and resurrection of Christ, a forgiveness effective in man through faith.

It would be wrong, however, to say that in either Luther or Calvin the attack on ecclesiastical authority resulted in an anti-Church individualism. Both held firm doctrines of the Church, not, as we have seen, as the mediator of salvation, but as the community of the faithful in which and through which the divine Word made known in the Bible was communicated in public reading of Scripture, in preaching, and in the celebration of the dominical sacraments. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers did not mean that each man became in effect his own priest or had the right to priestly office. It simply referred to the direct and personal apprehension of grace through faith in the Christ of the Bible and also to the fact that each of the faithful became a witness of Christ. Both Luther and Calvin were concerned with Church Order and with clerical and lay office. Indeed in the churches which flow from

their influence the double standard of spirituality between clergy and laity has been as pronounced as in the Roman Church.

From what has been said so far, the predominant place of the Bible in Protestant spirituality will, of course, be noted. Interest in the recovery of the Bible as the book for the Church's people pre-dated the Reformation, as with Wyclif, but there is no doubt that it was the flooding forces of the Reformation which carried it out to them. Despite the literalism and even authoritarianism which accompanied this rediscovery of the Bible, it remains possibly the most notable contribution of the Reformation to Christian spirituality.

Beyond being the community in which the Word of God is revealed, Calvin in particular saw the Church as the body which was to give expression in the world to the divine law. The people of the Church were to live by the laws of God as revealed in the Bible. The Church had to exist, of course, in the world and therefore there was no withdrawal into a religious life separate from the world. But nevertheless in Calvin's teaching the Church stands very much apart from the world as the community of the redeemed. This reveals a dualism inherent in Protestantism, not a dualism between nature and spirit, but between light and darkness, between the forces of the devil in whose grip the world is held and the forces of Christ by whose victory or by whose ransom the devil's grip is broken. The Church is, then, the beachhead of God's kingdom in the fallen world. It is to give concrete expression of this in its own life and from this principle evolves the profound concern which Protestantism as a whole has shown for ethics and the moral life of its members, a concern which, at times, has become separated from any doctrine of grace. It is not without

reason that Fr. Thornton, as we shall see, accuses Protestant teachers and preachers of jumping straight from Gospel to ethics without considering the need for spiritual counsel and growth. It is not that sanctification has been completely overlooked in Protestant thought; indeed we shall see that it was a major concern of Methodism, for example. It is simply that emphasis upon the historic redemption in Christ and its meaning for us has tended to result in a message of 'Christ loves you, go out and be loving in turn' without considering carefully enough just how this love is to grow in us.

To some extent also, the view of the world as the kingdom of the devil against which the kingdom of Christ is in conflict has contributed to Protestant distrust of symbols in worship. Absolute and total loyalty and devotion belong to God alone, and any creature standing between the soul and God has the inherent danger of perverting that loyalty and devotion to itself. This absolute and sole dedication to God, without the intervention of any intermediary person or symbol, was, of course, a corrective to the abuses in the Roman Church. It was, in itself, however, an exaggeration both in the austerity of the worship it occasioned and in its doctrinal expression in Calvin's theology of predestination. The latter was to have profound effect in North America through the Puritans who not only believed in the doctrine, but were anxious to experience the assurance that they were among the elect. The evidence of their election was seen in the success of their God-inspired industriousness. They dedicated their lives totally to the fulfillment of what they believed to be God's will, and the ordinary pleasures of life were largely forgone, if not because they were evil, then because they were simply unnecessary or frivolous. They did not contribute to doing God's work. These Puritans were not by any means the dour

people so frequently pictured. But as their inspired motivation ultimately lost its force, the spirituality they bequeathed objectified into prohibitions against pleasures of the flesh, a negativism of which Protestantism as a whole has been often accused. Another quite different effect of retaining the Puritan ethic without its spiritual impetus has been a belief in justification by works and a belief that we can, and possibly even do, love our neighbour without love of God. Such a turn of events shows just how far a religious movement can swing from its original principle.

By taking our study of Protestant spirituality through to the North American Puritans and, in turn, to their legacy to the Protestantism of today we have gone beyond the Age of the Reformation itself. It is necessary to do this, however, for its spirituality can only be understood as we observe the outcome of the different movements. Let us, however, go back to the sixteenth Century and note that while Luther and Calvin are the main figures of the Reformation, they are not its only ones. There was, for example, the more radical spirit evident in the Anabaptists who believed in direct inspiration by the Spirit. They were in this belief far more individualistic than Luther or Calvin. They insisted, as their name implies, upon believer's baptism holding that those baptized in infancy had to be rebaptized as believers. The centre of their teaching was not so much justification by faith as the personal experience of Christ in the heart of the believer and the new life flowing from that experience. Sanctification in terms of leading a pure and holy life is a significant factor in this tradition and for the Anabaptists the Church is the fellowship of those in whom this experience is present and whose life is marked by purity and holiness. As the history of the Mennonite and Hutterite communities

which developed along the line of the Anabaptist tradition shows, such an understanding of the Church resulted in the formation of religious sects very much withdrawn or separated from the world. At the same time, however, in few other areas of the ecclesiastical spectrum has the double standard between clergy and laity been so effectively overcome. Indeed it has been done by the elimination of a clerical order itself.

This extreme wing of the Reformation represented by the Anabaptists is important in that this stream has persisted throughout Protestant history, even in groups which have little or no historical link with the Anabaptists themselves. This stream represents a spirituality based upon direct experience of the Spirit, with justification by faith being more or less important according to the nearness or historical relationship of the particular sect to mainline Protestantism. This stream, which we may designate generally as the Pentecostal, has become most powerful when the central bodies of Protestantism have become enmeshed in theological and ecclesiastical hair-splitting and people have been attracted to a religious expression based upon inner experience and, possibly, emotion rather than upon the exercise of the mind.

Methodism, although far different from this stream, had its beginning in a similar need. Eighteenth Century Anglicanism was remote from the people. The influence of Protestant scholasticism was evident in the Anglican Church, even though, of course, this particular branch of Christendom had retained much of the Catholic flavor in spite of the Reformation. The Wesleys and Whitefield stressed the personal power of Christ in the heart of the believer, the experience of his love, and communicated this message to people whom the established Church did not reach or perhaps even care much about. Their

preaching was the main vehicle of the message, but the spirit of it is to be caught primarily through the hymns that came from the Wesleys and their followers. Rooted in the Protestant principle of justification by faith, Methodism stressed nevertheless growth in sanctification, as its name, originally derisively applied, suggests. The ground of this process of sanctification was the belief that the transforming power of the Saviour would through total devotion to Him lead a man to good and pure acts.

Methodism, of course, grew out of Anglicanism and we will once again move backward historically for a moment and look at the particular spirituality of the English Church in the Caroline Age, roughly-speaking the seventeenth Century. Fr. Thornton sees in this period a return to a primitive devotion in which moral theology is the ground for spirituality, a characteristic reflective of the fourteenth Century.[33] "The threefold Rule, the speculative affective synthesis, the unity of priest and people, biblical meditation, recollection and spiritual guidance, all retained importance."[34]

It is difficult to generalize the period, for there was a variety of figures in it. On the whole they reflect the Catholic influence, but do not borrow slavishly from it. Theirs is a spiritual outlook and teaching based upon the Book of Common Prayer. Ministry of the word was important as in the Reformation generally, but it was thought of in terms of catechetical instruction and personal guidance as well as preaching. Guidance and direction were not juridical, but in the spirit of a pastoral sharing between priest and inquirer.[35]

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33 Martin Thornton, English Spirituality, p. 226.
34 Ibid., p. 231.
35 Ibid., p. 236.

Amongst the principal figures of the period are Nicholas Ferrar who founded the community at Little Gidding where a life of spiritual discipline and communal worship was accompanied by service to the poor of the neighbourhood; Thomas Traherne, whose writings show a profound appreciation of the wonder of creation, a highly humanistic and sacramental view of life; Nicholas Herbert, whose Country Parson reflects the image of a devout, intellectually competent and pastoral priest; Jeremy Taylor, noted for his preaching and practical spiritual wisdom; and, of course, William Law, whose A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life stresses the ordinary virtues required in daily living motivated by a devout worship of God. This book has been probably the most influential coming from this group, although Law's later work shows the influence of the agnostic and esoteric mysticism of Jakob Boehme.

The Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, with some of the developments, particularly of the former, which we have tried to trace form the immediate background of the spirituality we have inherited. Catholic spirituality, until very recently, has been founded in the modern age upon the systems of Ignatius and St. Francis de Sales. The Church has been preoccupied with upholding the principles of the Counter-Reformation. Protestantism, on the other hand, has tended to ebb and flow in its spiritual life: now flowing with the liberating influence of a Luther or a Wesley, now lapsing into narrow theological controversies or preoccupation with matters of external conduct. It can be said for Protestantism, though, that of the two it has been more open to the intellectual development of the modern world. It has responded more to the scientific spirit and indeed in biblical

scholarship it has brought that spirit to its own service. As a very general statement we may say that in terms of spiritual insight and counsel our Catholic background is the richer while in terms of a faith more philosophically and ethically sensitive to the world, Protestantism has been the stronger. More than at any time since the Reformation, however, such a distinction is today blurred.

We have to build upon or at least work from the heritage we have received, and the purpose of our study to this point has been to highlight the main features of that heritage. Where to stand pat or where to strike out afresh is the question to which we must eventually come. But before we do this we need to know not only our spiritual heritage. We must also consider the theological foundation, in a world with our modes of thinking and culture, upon which a modern spirituality will have to be based.

CHAPTER II

THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Our spirituality depends upon what we believe. If we believe in a God who is persuaded to intervene by our entreaties, our intercessions will be earnest requests on behalf of those for whom we seek favor. If we believe in God as the idea of the highest good, our intercessions will be no more than the cultivation of generous thoughts toward others. What we believe must in turn bear some relationship to life experience, not only personal but also arising from the cultural and intellectual concepts of our time. For example, in the early days of Christianity man lived in a world where extra-ordinary events were simply accepted without philosophical speculation. Amongst the unseen powers at work, the miracles of Christ were assumed as happenings in which the order of God broke into human life victorious over demonic forces. They were not against natural order, but occasions of God's order. Not until the seventeenth Century, when conflicting systems of order were debated, were miracles used as proofs of Christ's divinity. Those who upheld an order established by God and evidenced by revelation used them in support of their argument.[1]

We live in a time when neither of these attitudes to miracle suffices. We are scientifically oriented and in such a climate it is virtually impossible to deal satisfactorily with miracle, beyond possibly accrediting it to the wonder there is in life generally. We then say of the Virgin Birth, to take one instance, that however life comes into being, birth is itself a miracle, a wonder, and the Christmas story in particular points to the wonder of Christ's life which we perceive as the union of Godhood and manhood.

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[1] John Dillenberger, Contours of Faith, pp. 137-140.

However adequate or inadequate this may be, the point is that while we have to deal with miracle in Christian apologetics, we cannot today use it as theological foundation. Therefore, we cannot use it spiritually either. In other words, whatever inspiration a modern man may draw from meditating on the feeding of the five thousand, he will not be able to base it upon a mental image of Jesus supernaturally multiplying the loaves and fish. If he does it will mean that he has psychologically withdrawn from the age in which he lives.

To say this is not to say that our theology is to be determined by the particular outlook of our age, that it must bend with every passing wind. It is simply to say that it must take seriously the attitudes and assumptions of the age or culture, express itself in terms which make sense to those attitudes and assumptions, and if it criticizes them it must do so on the grounds of their present inadequacy and not because they are inimical to the theological systems of prior ages.

The characteristics of our age, at least where western culture predominates, are that it is scientific and it is secular. It is scientific not only in the sense that it shows a profound respect approaching reverence for the achievements of the natural and applied sciences, but that its total outlook is scientifically oriented. When we want to understand personal behaviour we turn to the psychologist. When we want to understand our communal existence we turn to the sociologist. Business, education, and even sport are largely governed by complex scientific patterns.

An interesting example of this pervading scientific outlook is shown by

Dr. Donald Fleming, a historian, who maintains[2] that the future of mankind lies wholly within the science of biology. Man will be able by synthetic genetic selection to breed himself out of the predicaments of his present imperfect nature into the superman category. Dr. Fleming boldly states that biology offers that hope of salvation to modern man which Christ offered to people of the first Century. Reaction of scientists to his article was negative,[3] but not on theological grounds. They claimed simply that he put too much stress on the one discipline; that sociology, for example, needed to be consulted as much as biology. The one, however, is as scientifically oriented as the other.

Science is pragmatic and both develops within and contributes to secularism. This latter word is difficult to define, but it is taken here to mean that cultural attitude in which our goals and values are determined solely with reference to this life and pursued by methods and techniques positing human intervention alone. It is not only that society has freed itself from ecclesiastical paternalism, from church control and influence in civil affairs. It is also that the prevailing attitude is one in which people do not look, at least initially or primarily, for theological solutions to their questions or their problems.

The consequent pressure upon and confusion within the Church are unlike anything it has had to face in its long history. In its formative years it was engaged in formulating and interpreting its faith to the world, but it

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2 "On Living In a Biological Revolution," The Atlantic Monthly, February 1969, Vol. 223, No. 2 pp. 64-70. See especially p. 67 where Dr. Fleming parallels the Christian Revolution and the Biological Revolution.

3 Ibid., March 1969, Vol. 223, No. 3, pp. 46-50.

was able to make use of the philosophical concepts of the time without having to look over its shoulder to see if it was being true to the theology of a previous age. In the age of Christendom the Church was dominant and the greater pressures it had to deal with were political rather than theological. Today the Church is torn between the necessity of being loyal to its past, including the theological doctrine it has taught for centuries, on the one hand, and, on the other, the necessity to preach, teach, worship and work in this scientific and secular society.

Some resolve the tension by simply removing it. At one extreme they opt for loyalty to the past, and continuing the worn phrases of ancient theological statements, they generally remove themselves from the mainstream of life into a religious ghetto. At the other extreme they equate Christianity with the best they can find in modern society, baptizing every cause from birth control to black power. Both extremes will always attract some Christians; but it is unlikely that they will satisfy the more thoughtful. Potentially more promising is the kind of approach taken by Paul Van Buren who, asking "How can the Christian who is himself a secular man understand the Gospel in a secular way?",[4] proceeds to analyze the essentials of patristic thought and to build a theology which, in his terms, is true to those essentials and yet expressed in categories which the modern Christian understands. Whether Van Buren succeeds is not the question here. It is simply his attempt to bring something creative out of the tension which is commended.

Before suggesting a Christian spirituality for today we must discover a valid theological basis for it, a basis which having roots in the traditional

[4] The Secular Meaning of the Gospel, p. 2.

faith of the Church is able also to come to grips with the outlook of a Christian who is part of the secular world. The premise underlying what is now to be argued is that this theology must, in its own attitude, be affirmative toward the scientific and secular viewpoint, holding it to be appropriate rather than inimical to Christian faith. We hold this to be a valid premise because, although the faith of Christ was not nor could it be expected to have been secular in terms of our definition, it was worldly in the sense that it took this life and man's place and responsibility in it seriously. We hold here that both the doctrine of creation and that of the incarnation posit an affirmative world view and that the renunciatory aspects of the Gospel are to be understood as warnings against those forces in life which obstruct the realization of what is affirmed in creation. A modern theology has the right and responsibility to be critical of the destructive tendencies in our secular culture. But the emphatic point is that it can only do so when it begins from a basic affirmation of man and his world. If, in fact, theology for a long time has been centred on redemption as salvation from an evil world, a renewed consideration of it in proper relationship to creation and incarnation ought to be a healthy return to biblical foundations.

The fundamental consideration for today, then must be the doctrine of creation. We have for the most part passed beyond the stage of intellectual antagonism between religion and science. Theology may not be able to speak meaningfully to science of "God's creation", but at least if it can explain to itself what it signifies by that expression, its findings, if not its mode of speaking, may meet with a positive and creative response in man's evaluation and use of science.

Theologically the most important statement following the one which refers to creation as the act of God is that the creation is good. Here is so basic a Christian assertion that one wonders why it should need re-examination. The fact is, however, that traditional interpretations of the Fall story have largely vitiated it. God's creation was once upon a time good, but man by his disobedience has ruined it. To take science seriously, however, means that we can no longer theologically posit some pre-historic or pre-mundane state of paradise, either as an existing fact or as a useful myth. Rather we have to look at the Fall itself as a stage (not necessarily temporal, but in the sense that it marks an essential sine qua non of human existence) in creation. Psychology provides the scientific key. The dawn of self-consciousness in the child, his awareness of himself as "I" is essential to his being a person; it also sets him apart from, and existentially against, others, notably his parents. Original sin by analogy is not a taint inherited from a past disobedience, corrupting all the sons of Adam. It is that condition of man in which he discovers himself over against the rest of creation, over against his fellow man, over against even his Creator. It is an eonic moment in creation which is to be transcended when the awareness of self which divides is swallowed up in the love which unites.

Both the Creation story and the Fall story must, in other words, be viewed from the end rather than the beginning. The Fall does not follow upon the completion of Creation. Rather it describes the condition of man prior to that completion. Creation is a goal not reached, rather than a beginning thwarted.

Such a theology of the Creation story permits us to hold an affirmative

view toward the world, a view which sees it striving toward the fulfilment envisaged for it in the story. It is a view which permits Christian theology to espouse, as part of the goodness of creation, any human effort to bring nearer that fulfilment, an espousal justified by the second major assertion of the Creation story, that God gave man dominion over the work of his hands. Once again traditional theology has left us with the scientifically untenable position that once this was so, but no longer is because of man's disobedience. A once ideal state has gone awry. If, however, we see the ideal enshrined in the Creation story as the goal to which the world is to move, we see also man's mastery of creation as something he has yet to work out, something indeed which he must strive for and discover. A theology based on the end rather than the beginning permits us to take a receptive attitude toward all technical and scientific means by which man understands and gains control of his environment.

For too long Christians have been caught in an ambivalent position with respect to science and technology. On the one hand there is the fundamental common sense tradition based on a positive interpretation of the creation story, an interpretation never quite extinguished even in the worst of times, which has embraced them as at least means given by God to man. On the other hand is the guilt aroused by the traditional Fall theology. Man is totally corrupted by his disobedience. All efforts at self-improvement simply compound his sin and work him deeper into the quicksand. Science partakes of this character of godless man working out his own unachievable salvation. Science is here evidence of man's depravity; it is a false god he worships.

This latter is an extreme position which comparatively few Christians

today would hold. Nevertheless, in the minds of many there is an uncertainty hanging over from the theological past. Can they, people wonder, embrace scientific and technological achievement wholeheartedly and yet still be true to Christian beliefs, especially when they see that science clearly is used for ends they deem to be evil, as well as for good ones?

The modern Christian needs theological reassurance about his embrace of science and secularity, and indeed about his guilt on account of it. Unless he receives it we can be sure that his Christian outlook will have less and less to say to his secular identity, and hence less and less to him as a person. Our point here is that such reassurance can be given, not as a manufactured rationalization, but as the consequence of a theology based on the twin peaks of the creation story: the goodness of creation and the dominance of man within it. The only thing we do to traditional theology is to shift, as scientifically we must, the Fall story from a post-ideal position to a pre-fulfilment one.

The criticism of such a position will, of course, be that it refuses to take sin seriously. But this is to misunderstand it. Modern secular and scientific society is not blind to sin, or at least to what that theological concept represents. Indeed we are probably more than ever aware of sin in its profound communal aspects. We recognize the alienation of man in society and hence within himself. Our inability to solve the problem of poverty with all the resources we have; the clear evidence of a terrifying unrest amongst the young; the high incidence of mental illness, all point to what the Christian will mean as he uses the word sin. It is the terrible and deadening weight of alienation in personal and communal life. And to think of it as the result

of our not yet having discovered the essence of love with which to transcend that which alienates makes it no less terrible than to think of it as the taint of an inherited defect caused by original disobedience. But in the latter view the doctrine of the goodness of creation and man's dominion over it is voided. In the former it is not. The difference this makes to the Christian approach to our secular and scientific society is profound. For in the one case we have basically to reject that society, with only the hope of supernatural intervention to save us. In the other we can criticize and judge secular and scientific assumptions in terms of Christian insight, but from a standpoint that they themselves presuppose the goodness of creation and man's dominance within it.

The goal of creation - the "not yet" from the point of view of the Adam story is realized in the proto-type, Christ: man in perfect union with God, man wholly mature, and man having dominion over the world about him, Christ redeems the world from evil not in the sense that he takes a bad world and makes it good, or even in the sense that he makes people good and rescues them from a bad world but in the sense that he completes the creation, he brings it in his person to its mature fulfilment and he is thereby the end to which all humanity has to aspire. The Incarnation is, therefore, not to be viewed so much as a corrective to the Fall as it is as an epochal stage beyond it in the creation of man. If Adam is man at the childhood stage of dawning self-consciousness of himself over against God and creation, Jesus is man at full maturity, in whom this division is transcended in perfect love.

We say then that the essential characteristic of man is not his sin, but his goodness as reflected in the creation story, a goodness not vitiated by

the Fall, but which that myth shows to be unrealized. Man's attempt to know, control and utilize his world for himself is not evidence of arrogant sin, but of his reaching for his proper destiny, the dominion over all creation. His misuse indicates only that he is yet far from grown up. The specific insight, however, for Christian theology to reassert is that this whole effort at dominion remains vain and void in the lost child condition of Adam unless and until Christ is formed within us, unless mankind grows up into him.

Only the barest outline of such a theology has been given here, but it is of a kind with the approach of such men as Teilhard de Chardin and Nicholas Berdyaev. Teilhard views creation from its end rather than from its beginning. God is the God ahead who draws the creation out of non-being into unity with himself through the stages of biological evolution, followed by that spiritual evolution which is the task of our time. For Teilhard evolution is itself a genesis[5] and on this basis evil can be understood as the reverse side, the side of trial and travail, of the great triumph of emerging creation.

Berdyaev's outlook is not dissimilar, although he would oppose what appears in Teilhard to be a spiritual evolution emanating from and therefore dependent upon a material evolution, because his concern is to assert the absolute and total supremacy of spirit. For Berdyaev, God creates out of what he calls the abysmal depth of freedom, the Ungrund.[6] This freedom is beyond the distinctions of good and evil, but contains the potentiality of both. Man is called by God to join with him in creative activity, but he does not do so and returns into that state of non-being out of which evil arises. "All

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5 Teilhard de Chardin, The Future of Man, p. 90, (Collins Ed.).
6 Nicholas Berdyaev, The Beginning and The End, pp. 104-117.

rebellion against God is a return to non-being which assumes the form of false, illusory being and is a victory of non-being over the divine light. And it is only then that the nothing which is not evil becomes evil."[7]

While Teilhard and Berdyaev begin from quite different premises, the one profoundly scientific, the other deeply mystical, they approach one another in viewing creation from the end rather than the beginning, for to Berdyaev, as to Teilhard, creation is a divine-human activity. Man is called to make a revelation of his true anthropological nature as free spirit.[8] This is, in fact, the significance of the event of Christ. In speaking of redemption of Christ, Berdyaev thinks of it not in forensic terms, but as the perfect response of Man to divine creativty - a perfect union of God-man in which the fall back into non-being is overcome. The event of Christ is therefore "a new moment in creation."[9] For Berdyaev redemption is to be considered not so much <u>from</u> something, that is, from sin, but <u>to</u> something, that is, to the anthropological revelation of the human spirit responding in freedom to the divine creativity.[10]

Both Teilhard and Berdyaev have weak points in their arguments. The former's evolutionary doctrine of creation is deterministic; the latter's cosmogony is essentially dualistic despite his attempts to show that it is not. But both are pointing in a direction which is theologically defensible and which furthermore will meet a responsive chord in modern man. It is a theology which

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7 Nicholas Berdyaev, The Destiny of Man, pp. 34-35.
8 Nicholas Berdyaev, The Meaning of the Creative Act, p. 98.
9 Nicholas Berdyaev, Freedom and the Spirit, p. 178.
10 For a more complete analysis of Berdyaev on this point see the present writer's McGill B.D. Thesis "Creation in the Theology of Nicholas Berdyaev," pp. 4ff.

looks at creation doctrine from the vantage point of the end or purpose rather than from the explanation of origin. It looks at Christ as the personification in time of that end rather than one who restores creation to an original innocence or perfection.[11] And, most important of all, it summons man not from the world by Christ's salvation but through or with him to join in its completion, to bring it to its end. It is a theology which can affirm all of man's creative instincts, and cares not particularly whether they are religiously or secularly inspired. Its specific Christian insight, however, will be to hold out continually that only in the universalization of the Christ-spirit personified in Jesus can that creation be completed and harmonized.

The question now arises whether traditional ascetic theology is adequate to give spiritual expression to the theological concepts outlined above. We saw in the first chapter that the asceticism we have inherited is essentially renunciatory. This element, as Kirk points out, is an undeniable aspect of the Gospel but is meant to have a positive rather than negative motivation, the motivation of attaining the vision of God through renouncing all which stands in the way. In practice, however, we saw that renunciation tends to become an end itself, primarily through legalism. Self-denial per se becomes equated with the vision of God. The predominant world view of the ascetic is that the world is evil and by renouncing involvement in it he is redeemed from it.

Our theological premise here is one which states the goodness of creation, a goodness inherent rather than vitiated by some historic or pre-mundane fall. Evil there is as a condition of a yet unfulfilled creation, but redemption becomes not a rescue from the world, but a stage in its growth toward its

[11] Colossians 1: 15-20 is a passage in which Christ as the goal of creation melds with him as its mediator and its redeemer.

fulfilment. A spirituality based upon such a theology will embrace, amongst other things, the scientific endeavour of our age. But it will so place Christ at the apex of creation as to survey all that we do in the name of science from the point of view of whether it goes to the building up or breaking down of the Christ-goal.

This leads to consideration of another characteristic of traditional spirituality, its individualism. Personal salvation was its aim. Even for the mystic, whose way began with renunciation and culminated with the vision of God, such vision included primarily himself and God. The world today will not allow us to be so individualistic, nor indeed can our Christian faith. To say this is not to deny Christian altruism in bygone generations, but the fact remains that its motivation was based on a combination of earning salvation for one's self and converting those ministered to into a like path of salvation from this world and this life. For millions today salvation from this world and this life is not a goal at all. On the contrary, they see afar off what joy and happiness, including material things, are to be had in their threescore and ten, and salvation is to enter that experience. Are they wrong? If we begin with a basic doctrine of the goodness of creation, why are they? Who am I, as a Christian, to say to my poor neighbour that he and I will both be better off in the eyes of God if I renounce them and he never has them? Once again Christ enters to tell both of us that no one can seek his ultimate fulfilment in the possession of things - but this is not to say that in our sharing and enjoyment of them there is a deadly evil.

The redemption of the world in our day must mean renunciation not for personal salvation, but renunciation for sharing. It must mean working with

all forces which seek the elimination of poverty and discrimination. Christian activists today who embrace every social crusade as the manifestation of the Gospel may sometimes exaggerate, but they are on the right theological path. They take the doctrine of creation seriously and see in Christ the inspiration that all men have the right to enter into the joy of that creation.

This brings us to consider next the concentration of asceticism in previous ages upon the after-life. This was largely due to the misery and hopelessness for the masses as far as this life was concerned. There is still much misery, but far more hope. The rewards of the after-life cannot be held up today as the motivation for a religious life in compensation for what joy is missed now. The fact is that heaven and hell in the traditional sense have ceased to be meaningful to most people, believers as much as non-believers. We are probably concerned as much with death as man always has been but more likely with the act of dying and of separation from this life than with what lies beyond. It may be that as the emphasis of previous ages on this after-life aspect was excessive, so in ours it is under-played. Certainly its place in Christ's Gospel cannot be glossed over. And indeed it may be that if in future years science opens up some of the mysteries of death it will once again assume importance. But heaven and hell as inner present experiences of integration or disintegration are currently meaningful concepts. Resurrection as the vitality in a life which is able to face and rise above that which is destructive - the little deaths we go through each day - finds a response. Pointing to Christ as the key to the resurrection and heaven experience in this present life is spiritually meaningful to the modern person. If he prefers to think of it that way and be somewhat agnostic about their application beyond death this is

perfectly adequate for in the Gospel itself their reality in after-life is determined by what we make of this one. A fundamental point of the New Testament is that it is in this life that we are raised with Christ, we are born anew.

Finally, another main feature of traditional spirituality we recognized was its division between the religious and the secular. The highest form of spirituality was that expressed by withdrawal into the monastery. The religious practices of the monks therefore became the norm even for those who did not make the physical withdrawal. We have not yet broken away from this tradition; and yet if spirituality is to make its way in today's culture, we must.

The building of a spirituality at home in the world of the 20th Century is the chief consideration of our final chapter. But we may at this point outline a promising trend. It was argued earlier that what prevented an excess of the rigorist spirit in Paul and the apostolic age was the deeply communal life of the Church and its sacramental worship. Social movements taking place in the world today indicate a communal consciousness to which a Church life centred upon koinonia rather than individual salvation will have much to contribute. Both baptism and the eucharist are rich in ability to express this koinonia, although because of our traditional redemption theologies they at present lean heavily in people's minds toward an individual rather than communal relationship with God.

Basing itself spiritually upon the doctrines of creation and incarnation as we have outlined them, the Christian Church may be able to make communion in Christ the key to the fulfilment of secular movements toward social integration and brotherhood. If it can do this, and if it can baptize the material world

for the purpose of drawing the creation toward its Christ-goal, we may have discovered the point where the barrier between the religious and the secular is transcended.

CHAPTER III

THE ASCETICAL THEOLOGY OF MARTIN THORNTON

As stated in the Introduction, Fr. Martin Thornton has attempted to develop a modern ascetic theology which is based upon the Catholic heritage of the Church but takes account of the insights into the nature of man today revealed to us by the new theologians, who are mainly Protestant. Before, therefore, we go on to develop our own conclusions about the character of modern spirituality we will give a thorough consideration to the views of this writer who is amongst the few, certainly of Anglicans, to have given the subject the study it deserves.

In outline, his position is that prime consideration must be given to the zealous minority, those few who in every parish seek to grow spiritually, to offer to God the worship and service which are his due, and to represent the Church vicariously in its true work. The heartbeat of this Remnant is the threefold Rule of the Church consisting of Office, Eucharist and Personal Prayer. The maintenance of this Rule assures a balanced trinitarian worship and theology and, coupled with proficient personal guidance, leads to spiritual progress. The progress must be in the context of contemporary life, and indeed it cannot but be so where God is truly known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or in Bonhoeffer's phrase, "The beyond in the midst of life".

We must now examine this position in detail under five heads:

1. The Remnant
2. The Meaning of Ascetical Theology
3. Rule as the Basis of Ascetic
4. Spiritual Direction
5. Considerations for Today

1. The Remnant

Thornton's Remnant concept of the Church is his solution for the humanist-rigorist dilemma.[1] That which is true in the multitudinist approach is the recognition of God as Father of all whose Son Jesus Christ was born, lived, died, and rose again for all. Yet the Cross and Passion of Christ indicate to us that to follow Christ means to accept suffering and sacrifice. These call for a spiritual strength built upon discipline. Pastoral practice indicates that only a few will accept this struggle.

The essence of the Remnant concept is that these few, the Remnant itself, vicariously offer to God that worship and service to which He calls the Church, and represents His love to the world in its concern and sense of responsibility for it. Rigorist in its own acceptance for itself of the Cross, it is humanist in its outlook upon the world.

Thornton stresses strongly the vicarious nature of the Remnant. It is not a pious clique and if it becomes so it ceases to be the Remnant.[2] Nor are we to be concerned with judging exactly who is the Remnant or how many are in it, for it is an organic concept, not a numerical one.[3] Furthermore, the Church is not restricted to the Remnant. Thornton visualizes the Church Militant in its parochial manifestation as consisting of three concentric circles, the inner one being the Remnant, the second the occasional church-goers, and the third everyone else.[4] Since Fr. Thornton's primary ascetical concern is with the personal life of the Remnant, he is not very explicit as to the function or place of people in

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1 Pastoral Theology: A Reorientation, pp. 16-17.
2 Essays in Pastoral Reconstruction, pp. 100-101.
3 The Rock and the River, p. 149.
4 Essays, p. 100;
Pastoral Theology, pp. 20-21.

the second and third groups within the parish organism. It is probably this which has been the basis of charges of sectarianism against him.[5] But that they are irrevocably incorporated into the Church by baptism he has no doubt.[6]

The relationship of Remnant to Church may be better understood if we look at Fr. Thornton's view of the Parish as being the link between the individual and the whole mystical Body of Christ. The parish Church is the concrete expression of the whole Church catholic. Such a local embodiment is essential, for our lives are lived out in the particular and the concrete. The community, with its infinite variety of life and relationship, personifies the human creation and the parish church within it, being the church in microcosm, is to convey the expression of God's love and care for that creation.[7] But in practical terms it can only do this if there is within it those few who will accept for themselves the sacrifice of Christ and set their goal to live that expression.

Fr. Thornton refuses to see the Remnant, not only in theory but also in practice, as a club of pious people. In fact they really do not get together for "religious purposes" such as prayer or Bible study, although casually and spontaneously such things are part of their ordinary conversation together.[8] Indeed they tend to find the major part of parish organization and activity boring, unnecessary and unfruitful. It is the parish as the localized organism of the Church's life which concerns them. And they go about their daily life as Churchmen in that sense, bound together and individually sustained by the ascetical discipline of the common Rule.

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5 Essays, p. 99.
6 See Note to Second Edition of Pastoral Theology, p. X.
7 Pastoral Theology, p. 19.
8 Essays, pp. 109-110.

The historical and theological justification for his Remnant concept of the Church is traced by Fr. Thornton from the Old Testament through Christ himself to the monastery of the Middle Ages. Christ is Saviour of the whole world, but his ministry takes place in one small corner and time of it.[9] His ministry is to all, yet he accomplishes it primarily through guidance of a small group. In the Middle Ages the monastery embodies the Remnant and Fr. Thornton attempts to draw a picture which closely integrates the life of the monastery into that of the community as a whole. This he does largely by showing how the monks, "rubbing shoulders with the world, engaged in similar work, indulging in similar pursuits."[10] Later there are the "conversi" of the Cistercians, lay brothers who, as peasant-monks, carried out the farm duties of the monastery and lived under a simple rule.[11] Finally we have the nearest secularization of the monastic type in St. Gilbert who, as Rector of Sempringham, founded an "Order" of lay sisters under Rule and direction, later augmented by conversi and canons regular, whose work and service was closely related to the parish.[12] The monastic system gave birth to ascetical science and a closely ordered system was essential to this growth; but the existence of the science together with modern methods of communication no longer make a close order necessary. The more loosely-ordered parochial Remnant is the successor of the monastery.[13]

2. Ascetical Theology

The spiritual discipline and pastoral guidance which are the life-blood of the Remnant are the subject matter of ascetical theology. ".... the best

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9 Pastoral Theology, p. 32.
10 Ibid., p. 81.
11 Ibid., pp. 88-90.
12 Ibid., pp. 91-92.
13 Ibid., pp. 75-76.

translation of ascesis is the coaching - rather than mere training - of the spiritual athlete, because this includes the actual arts and skills of individual prayer, and the relation between such individual prayer and the corporate life of the Church, as well as the bodily and moral disciplines that go with it."[14]

Ascetical theology is essentially the application of dogmatics to the pastoral facts of life. It is not of its own a study of techniques and methods, although this, which Fr. Thornton distinguishes as "ascetical-theology" is part of it,[15] but its concern is to nurture the spiritual gifts and strengths of the churchman that he may progress in the deepening of his relationship to God and the quality of his giving to others. "To the Christian ... ascetical theology is the key to the art of living as fully, creatively, and indeed joyfully, as mankind is capable."[16]

In order that ascetic theology may provide the map for Christian spiritual progress, it must be true to Christian dogmatics. It must, in other words, be orthodox and indeed Fr. Thornton's most scholarly book, English Spirituality, is largely a justification of this view, for as he traces ascetic discipline from Augustine down to the Caroline divines he shows how Dogmatic and Spiritual Theology inevitably depend upon each other. It is the function of ascetic to make Christian faith meaningful and applicable to the age. It must translate dogma into the characteristics of life of the given time. The ascetic of the primitive Church facing the pastoral fact of perse-

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[14] Essays, p. 18.
[15] English Spirituality, pp. 15ff.
[16] Ibid., p. 25.

cution was an austere one. "When circumstances change, as they did with the conversion of Constantine, it is in the very nature of ascetic to change too; in other words the Christian ascetical approach to life changes and adapts itself, but is neither weakened nor overthrown. Then as now, Christian ascetic is concerned with a relation, be it positive or negative but nevertheless a relation, with the whole culture of its environment."[17]

It is the misfortune of ascetical theology that popularly it has become associated with an essentially negative, austere attitude to life. The desert monk provides the image. One thereby tends to think in terms of methods of self-denial, the practices of which are designed to earn the ascetic a state of grace and a reward of heaven. On these terms, of course, it is rejected. But even a cursory reading is enough to realize that this is the farthest thing from Fr. Thornton's mind. Far from being a work, which is Protestantism's chief complaint against ascesis, it is simply in itself a response to the grace of God, the expression of a desire to grow to know God as the supreme end and goal of life. "Despite the obvious interaction, it is true to say that, primarily, we fight our sins in order to pray better; we do not, primarily, say our prayers in order to conquer our sins."[18]

The purpose, then, of ascetical direction is to engage an ever-deepening response to the prevenient grace of God, issuing in a continuously growing or maturing life. Thornton is at pains to point out that moral progress, that is the deepening of Christian character, is the criterion for the effectiveness of ascetical theology. It is not a question of developing feelings in prayer, for example. It is a question of growth in will and action.[19]

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17 Essays, pp. 20-21.
18 Ibid., p. 21.
19 Christian Proficiency, p. 28.

Not only is ascetical theology the guide to a deepening response to God; this growing response is for most of us impossible without it. It is here that Fr. Thornton crosses swords with Protestantism. Protestantism has mistrusted ascetic as a work, and therefore tends to jump straight from Gospel to Christian ethic. The Gospel is proclaimed from the pulpit and the faithful are exhorted to practice its implications. But this, says Fr. Thornton, is precisely what we cannot do, and if we try we end up in attempted works. Protestantism, so fearful of Pelagianism, ends up embracing the dragon it guards against.

While, then, Fr. Thornton believes that in many ways it is the New Theologians of Protestantism who have best expressed the mind and soul of modern man, they leave us, as they preach the Gospel of Christ as the answer, without the means of doing anything about it. This is Thornton's "Yes, but how?" question which runs through The Rock and the River. "In the Cost of Discipleship, Bonhoeffer, having poured derision on rules, rites, sacraments, and formal prayers, pleads for 'costly grace which demands a genuine discipleship of obedience and exclusive attachment to Jesus Christ.' All will applaud his sentiment, but what, in daily life is such 'obedience'? Obedience to what? A moral code? No. for we have seen that this is impossible without grace. To a system of prayer? No, because anything so 'formal' has been rejected. How do ordinary men and women ... achieve 'exclusive attachment to Jesus Christ'? Certainly not by a superhuman act of will, or by an intellectual decision that this is the right way. 'It is achieved,' continues Bonhoeffer, 'only when the form of Jesus Christ itself works upon us in such a manner that it moulds our form in his own likeness.' Yes, but how?"[20] Unless one supposes

[20] The Rock and the River, pp. 30-31.

a predestinarian quietism, we are left only with theory if there is no guidance as to the way in which to make a response to God's grace in Christ.

In tracing the development of an ascetical discipline, Fr. Thornton begins in the natural world. A truly Christian ascetic belongs only to the Remnant and much of our difficulty in the Church is in having Christian expectations of those whose religion is in the natural rather than incarnational stage. The awareness which needs development is that of the harmony of the person with the natural world about him.[21] Thus we should not be teaching children Christian doctrine, but helping them to develop their love and sensitivity to the creation. To have a child love a butterfly is ascetically more promising than getting him to be a good boy. Religion begins with sense experience and the innate response to it, rather than with intellect or ethics.

When we move from a harmonious union with environment to the realization of the fundamental unity of all things, we have moved from a sub-conscious natural religion to a conscious theistic one, for what we mean by "God" is this unifying and creative principle. The next step is to understand the experience of this fundamental unity as wholly summed up in the Person of God Incarnate. "Union with the universe is summed up as union with God in Christ and the fundamental encounter between the self and God is now a personal encounter with Christ. To be in harmony with the universe is to be 'in Christ'."[22] Only at this point does a specifically Christian ascetic become applicable.

3. Rule as the Basis of Ascetic

For Fr. Thornton the form and matter of Christian ascetic are comprised

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[21] Pastoral Theology, p. 168.
[22] Ibid., p. 177.

in the three-fold Rule of the Church: Office, Eucharist and Personal Prayer. Other practices and disciplines, while helpful and possibly advisable under personal direction, are dispensible. Rule is not.

We must be clear in speaking of Rule that it is not a legalistic concept. It is not something you undertake as a religious burden or duty. Rather you embrace it as a creative response to God in life. If you lapse from it, it is not something to be confessed as a sin. It is simply a deprivation of yourself. Indeed there are times in life when Rule for some reason has to be abandoned or modified.[23]

To embrace the rhythm of Rule is to begin the process of spiritual growth. But this is never to be understood individualistically or as an end itself, not certainly if we recall the vicarious aspect of the Remnant. Rule, even that part of it we refer to as Personal Prayer, is always the Prayer of the Church. This is an extremely important point in Fr. Thornton's thinking. It is the failure to have a consistent doctrine of the Church which has led Protestantism to have an undeveloped ascetical theology of prayer, and while a like inconsistency can be charged to Anglicanism, Anglican ascetic, however inadequate, is rooted in the Book of Common Prayer which, in turn, presupposes the Catholic doctrine of the Church.[24]

The three-fold Rule is the ascetical expression of the Doctrine of the Trinity. The daily Office is essentially the corporate worship of God transcendent.[25] Of all the three parts of Rule it is the most thoroughly objective and for this reason no individualism is permissible within it. "To omit a

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23 Christian Proficiency, Chapter 5.
24 The Rock and the River, pp. 24-25.
25 Pastoral Theology, p. 205.

psalm, add a collect, or alter a lesson is inexcusable."[26] This rather startling statement of rigidity does not mean that Fr. Thornton entirely approves the daily Office of the Book of Common Prayer.[27] He is prepared, indeed anxious, to see it revised in terms of present day needs. What he does mean is that since the Office is totally corporate and objective, it must be the authorized Office of the Church and not an individual adaptation which is used.

From the personal point of view, the daily Office is the mainstay of habitual recollection. Instead of prayer being thought of in terms of evoking affective feelings, the daily Office gives to it solid food, based on scriptural foundation. Fr. Thornton is insistent that the daily Office is not an "act of religion" in the derogatory sense implied by Bonhoeffer. It is not a withdrawal from life, but a part of that Regula which gives to life rhythmic heart-beat.[28] To the charge that the daily Office imposes upon the laity a too heavy burden, Fr. Thornton replies that our Remnant people today are far more weighed down with ridiculous and useless Church committee work than they would be with ten minutes twice a day to say the Office![29] But he is also insistent that the daily Office must in our day and age be a secret discipline rather than a choir Office.[30] The monastic Church was a physical community. The Church today is a diaspora, and the private recitation of the Office on the bus or behind the desk gives expression to this fact, all the while testifying that since it is Rule it is still the corporate worship of the Church.

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26 Ibid., p. 216.
27 The Rock and the River, p. 111.
28 Ibid., p. 100.
29 Essays, pp. 54-55.
30 The Rock and the River, p. 107.

The second ingredient of the Regula is the Eucharist, which Fr. Thornton sees as a balance of the objective and the subjective, emphasizing the mutual giving and receiving, the corporate and the individual. It expresses also the synthesizing in love of that dichotomy between rigorism and humanism. It declares the complete succor of God in the event of Jesus Christ, but with a cost, the Cross. The Cross makes upon us an absolute demand.[31] Fr. Thornton has far less to say about the Eucharist than the Office simply because he feels that of the two the latter is by far the more neglected. And he warns that the Parish Communion gives a very superficial view of the corporateness of the Church and is in danger of becoming an isolated act of religion if those participating are not also embracing the whole Rule, including the daily Office.[32]

The third element in Rule is Personal Prayer which, in the Trinitarian pattern, relates us primarily to God as Holy Spirit and which is as variable as the Office is invariable. The function of Regula is to achieve a reintegration of human personality through a concentration of the whole being on God.[33] In the mature Christian this does not mean a series of religious acts to produce such a state. It is rather a condition of habitual recollection, an awareness both in the affective and intellectual spheres, of God in life which Regula both instils and reflects. But a part of the habitual recollection is the specific recollection, the paying attention, of personal prayer.

Without trying to give an exhaustive analysis of the components of prayer in Fr. Thornton's teaching, they consist of:[34]

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[31] Pastoral Theology, p. 220.
[32] The Rock and the River, p. 114.
[33] Ibid., p. 66.
[34] Pastoral Theology, pp. 248-251; See also Christian Proficiency, p. 21.

a) Mental prayer, the most familiar pattern of which is the Ignatian three-fold meditation: composition of place in terms of the Gospel story which is the subject of the meditation, the deliberation upon it, and the resolution which flows from it.

b) Colloquy, into which mental prayer leads, is actual prayer in its familiar categories of petition, confession, intercession, and so forth, always remembering that colloquy implies listening as well as speaking.

c) Actual recollection, that is, momentary acts of prayer during the working day.

d) Recollection in place and in community, by which the Remnant members recall their sacramental association with the entire parochial organism and hence with Church and world, a recollection unnecessary in medieval times because the association was physically evident.

Fr. Thornton is aware that such a formula makes personal prayer appear rigid and formidable. He takes care therefore to stress that in practice the categories are far more fluid and as varied as the persons who pray.

The main problem he wrestles with in this scheme of personal prayer is the ability of modern man to make the three-fold meditation. He insists that the strength of English spirituality since Anselm has been its ability to achieve a synthesis between the speculative and the affective.[35] The essential ingredient for the affective side is the mental image of Jesus as a genuine human being, and Fr. Thornton is aware of the difficulty modern man has in translating Biblical scenes into modern pictures. It is a more complex problem

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[35] See especially English Spirituality, pp. 156ff.

than transposing the Ascension from Olivet to the village green and while Fr. Thornton at an earlier stage hardly gets beyond such a trick,[36] in a later writing he has more to offer.[37]

His answer to the dehumanization of Jesus that arises from Bultmann's demythologizing on the one hand, and to the problem modern man has in forming mental images of the human Jesus, on the other, rests upon the doctrine of the Church. Based on John Knox's The Church and the Reality of Christ, his suggestion is this: that the Church as an organism has a memory of its own; it is that memory rather than the Jesus of history to which the Gospels testify; in that memory we know Jesus primarily as Lord and Christ. But this is dependent upon the Church having known Him also as man and Master. In other words, our present experience of Jesus as Lord and Christ leads back to that of having known him as man and Master. Our meditation should follow the same pattern. Rather than taking a Gospel story, imagining the humanity of Jesus in it, and from there contemplating his divinity, we meditate upon Jesus as He is now, Lord and Christ, letting this lead us back to a full concept of his sacred humanity.[38]

"The ultimate problem of the Jesus of history is still unsolved, yet I hope we have unearthed at least some matter for devout experiment... In a new and impressive way, (John Knox) has demonstrated the old but forgotten truth that all prayer depends upon the doctrine of the Church, and that creative prayer is possible only from within it. To start with the Christian experience of Jesus in his Body, and especially in the Eucharist, to fill out his image from the Gospel, and to see the divine office as the activity of

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[36] Christian Proficiency, p. 76.
[37] The Rock and the River, pp. 88-97.
[38] Ibid., pp. 93-95.

the divine organism, and this as preparatory to mental prayer and habitual recollection; all that could help us to see the old regula in a new, existential, pattern."[39]

4. Spiritual Direction

An essential aspect of ascetical theology is spiritual direction by someone competent to give it. Although this is not necessarily the priest, and indeed Fr. Thornton feels there are more competent lay people than the Church realizes, it is a primary function of the priest.

The need for personal direction rests upon the fact that ascetical theology ultimately comes down to specific people and specific situations. Ascetical theology must be "occasional" in the sense that it does not deal only with general principles, but is able to translate them into personal cases.[40] And this means guides who are equipped theologically, spiritually and in the ability of Christian casuistry.[41]

For this reason, that is because of its personal application, Fr. Thornton looks upon personal direction as far more significant in the proclamation of the Gospel than preaching. "Under modern conditions especially, I think (Spiritual direction) is our greatest need and that it will prove most pastorally effective."[42] One of the strong ages of Anglican spirituality, according to Fr. Thornton, was the Caroline age, and this was one of emphasis upon the sermon. But our writer points out that it was central because it was preceded by catechetical instruction, which meant an instructed congregation,

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39 Ibid., p. 95.
40 English Spirituality, pp. 11-12; see also pp. 62-63.
41 The Rock and the River, pp. 119ff.
42 Essays, p. 129.

and followed by spiritual guidance, which meant personal interpretation and application.[43] For our own time, Fr. Thornton believes that personal direction tends to obviate the need for demythologising.[44]

That which inhibits personal direction is the concept of the priest as confessor and the seeker as penitent. The inhibition is increased by the legal concept of the confessional which comes from the Counter-Reformation. For Fr. Thornton, direction does not mean, nor is it limited to confession and, when confession is involved, it ought not to be conceived of in juridical terms.[45]

In the Anglican tradition spiritual direction is empirical rather than dogmatic.[46] That is, it rests upon free discussion in which the one being asked for guidance confines himself to that with due humility and a proper sense that he may be in error. He does not command. As a result the relationship is a two-way one, involving mutual dependence and support.[47] But even though the relationship is intensely personal, it is nevertheless directed toward the whole life of the Church because it opens up the latent gifts of the individual and makes them available for the Church.[48]

The question of spiritual direction raises that also of the priesthood. Spiritual direction is in Fr. Thornton's mind something very much different from what we commonly call pastoral counselling, which he takes to mean rather short-lived relationships dealing with situations of distress and which engages other professions as well as the ministry.[49] This to him is not

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43 English Spirituality, p. 236.
44 The Rock and the River, p. 134.
45 Christian Proficiency, p. 31.
English Spirituality, pp. 153-154.
46 Christian Proficiency, p. 29.
47 Ibid., p. 32.
48 Ibid., p. 26.
49 Ibid., pp. 42-43.

spiritual direction and is not really the proper function of the priest. "His vocation, indeed, should make him less concerned with 'human problems' than doctor, solicitor, or garage hand, while his professional integrity should set him well apart from public affairs. The priest's one legitimate approach to these things is such personal direction in Prayer that individual decisions have the greatest chance of being guided by the Holy Ghost."[50]

Fr. Thornton, then, takes a highly professional and specialized view of the priesthood. In terms of pastoral function, spiritual direction is the priest's priority and this means that he must concern himself almost exclusively with the Remnant. On this basis, Fr. Thornton attacks the multitudinist view which sees the parish priest as doing the parish rounds. In his Essay "1984", he sees this as not only wrong theologically, but increasingly impossible practically.[51] The Remnant concept, always remembering its vicarious import, is far more creative and far more sensible in the function which it calls for from the priest. Equally questionable is the multitude of organizations which characterize the modern parish and preoccupy the priest in administration. These are no part of the organic life of the Body of Christ and waste the time of the faithful laity, as well as of the priest.[52]

As against this, the organic concept of the Remnant opens the way to an efficient, creative and technically as well as theologically sound use of the Church's resources: a vicarious offering of the Church's trinitarian worship,

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50 Pastoral Theology, p. 11.
51 Essays, pp. 85-98, esp. pp. 88-90.
52 Ibid., esp. pp. 90-91;
The Rock and the River, p. 133.

supported by personal direction, culminating in a quiet but effective service to the world in the name of Christ.

5. Considerations for Today

Our principal concern in this thesis is with modern spirituality, and whether or not we find Fr. Thornton's conclusions acceptable, he is to us a catalyst for he takes the traditional concepts of orthodox spiritual theology, developed over a long period of Christian history and attempts to interpret them for and apply them to modern conditions and culture. Before we go on, however, to evaluate Fr. Thornton's success in doing so we need to make more explicit and complete the application of his spiritual theology to modern life.

As we have seen, Fr. Thornton's basic premise is that "It is intrinsic to ascetical theology to adapt itself to the contemporary situation, yet it can only evolve out of a living tradition with roots in the past."[53] Fr. Thornton's own adaptation is his willingness to accept the fact there is such a thing as modern philosophy,[54] reflected particularly in the Protestant New Theology which better than any other reflects modern needs and aspirations,[55] and in his attempt to take seriously the culture imposed by the technological revolution.

Fr. Thornton is one of those who believes that a revival of spiritual questing is afoot. Middle-aged people are reacting against the spiritual emptiness in which they themselves grew up. Youth is reacting against the

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53 English Spirituality, p. 13.
54 The Rock and the River, p. 14.
55 Ibid., p. 14.

materialistic outlook in both Soviet socialism and Western democracy.[56] But he goes on to point out that the spiritual quest is mature in outlook. It is not to be satisfied with religious emotions and pious practices. It is groping for a religious attitude which is intellectually sound and, in terms of application to life, efficient and effective.[57]

Fr. Thornton sees the issues of modern spirituality personified in Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The riddle of Bonhoeffer is that while issuing his famous call for religionless Christianity, he himself, as his Letters and Papers from Prison shows, followed a disciplined spiritual practice. Our writer tries to solve this riddle by suggesting that what Bonhoeffer was rebelling against was not spiritual discipline, but formalism in religion, and possibly he mistook orthodox spirituality for it.

Fr. Thornton believes that in speaking of a world come of age, Bonhoeffer was describing a world situation similar to that of the Proficient who having passed through the stage of his early spiritual enthusiasm and affective religious warmth finds himself in a period of spiritual aridity. He does not suggest that the world is spiritually a Proficient, but he does mean that it has passed out of that medieval era, both intellectually and emotionally, when religion was supported by many outward affective devotions and symbols. At the theological level we can not use God any longer as the 'God of the gaps'. In this sense is the world come of age, and in this sense Thornton is in accord with Bonhoeffer. But he does not accept - and believes Bonhoeffer's

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56 English Spirituality, pp. 5-6.
57 Ibid., pp. 8-10; see also the Preface to Christian Proficiency and p. 5.

perscnal practice and rather full doctrine of the Church justifies his view - that Bonhoeffer was opposing spirituality as such. He discerns the difference in the distinction between habitual recollection and actual recollection. It is the latter which, he says, Bonhoeffer means by "religion". It is comprised of those devotions and supports to piety - acts of religion - which were so important to the medieval age and which still tend to be with us: the formal saying of grace, opening prayers at school, and the presence of clergy at secular dedication ceremonies. It seems that in Thornton's early writings actual recollection was an integral part of mental prayer, at least as momentary acts of deliberate recollection of God.[58] In The Rock and the River he tends to play it down as a beginner's technique.[59] Habitual recollection, on the other hand, is a very different thing. It is to live in the world with background awareness of the beyond in the now and of the Church. Rather than having to engage in religious practices continually to support such recollection, that recollection belongs to one's very being. Such habitual recollection, says Fr. Thornton, is really what Bonhoeffer meant by 'holy worldliness'. To say that the world has come of age means to say that it has passed from being in an age of actual recollection to one of habitual recollection.[60]

It is, however, Fr. Thornton's firm contention that holy worldliness, that is, habitual recollection, is wholly dependent upon Regula. Bonhoeffer, he says, shows the usual Protestant mistrust of ascetic; he jumps straight from Gospel to ethic without answering the "Yes, but how?" question. Yet in

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58 See discussion, supra, p. 55

59 The Rock and the River, p. 69.

60 Ibid., p. 68. For Fr. Thornton's full development of the thoughts summarized in this section, see The Rock and the River, Chapters 4 and 5, and especially pp. 66-70.

his own personal discipline he exhibits what comes close to the Regula - the rudiments of Office, emphasis on the sacraments, and personal meditation on Scripture. Regula alone makes habitual recollection possible and without it all religious acts from Church attendance to saying prayers become actual recollection. In itself habitual recollection is not "religion" in Bonhoeffer's terms because it is not a separate province of life - it is response to Christ in the whole of life with one's total being.[61]

A second major area in which Fr. Thornton seeks to adapt traditional spirituality to modern conditions we have already discussed,[62] and will return to in our evaluation. It is that of the encounter with Jesus the Christ in Scripture, in other words, the problem modern man has with his imagination of Biblical events. Here he tries to show how the result Bultman desires, namely encounter with Christ for today in the kerygma, is what Ignatius was seeking in the resolution part of his three-point meditation.[63]

The third area to consider is that in which Fr. Thornton examines Rule and analyzes where it needs adaptation to modern conditions. Here it is Fr. Thornton's basic contention that the Office must become more of a "secret discipline" than a choir office[64] and be in an appropriate form thereto. This reflects the fact that the Church community today, unlike that of the Middle Ages, is a diaspora. To say the Office secretly "out in the world" is to testify to that fact. Furthermore, as a secret discipline, Fr. Thornton contends that it cannot be criticized as "organized religion" which is so under attack today. He does not, however, raise the question of it as "formalized

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61 The Rock and the River, p. 71.
62 Supra, pp. 55-57.
63 The Rock and the River, p. 83.
64 Ibid., p. 107.

religion" which is equally out of favor.

As to form, he argues that it should be less complex than was necessary in the illiteracy of the Caroline age. Then it had to be comprehensive. Now, much of what was included in the Office belongs more properly to private prayer, particularly confession and intercession.[65] He also believes that today the Bible must be studied rather than merely read, and that reading of it should be removed from the Office. Study of or meditation upon it should become part of private prayer.[66]

What he does insist upon is that the Office "must be the common and objective prayer of the whole Church, the core of which is selfless praise offered through Christ to God transcendent".[67] He stresses the authority of the Church in the Office and contends that the Office should therefore be "so simple as to make omissions or alternatives impossible".[68]

Fr. Thornton has less to say about the Eucharist because far more experimentation has been done with it than with the Office. The emphasis needed today is that on community, on "being-with-others". This aspect of the Eucharist is best expressed in the westward as opposed to eastward celebration. The latter, while expressing the transcendence and mystery of God, tends toward the "God-out-there" symbolism. It also risks individualism. The former gives expression to the idea of "God-in-the-midst."

To summarize, it is Fr. Thornton's basic belief that "a revitalized spirituality today can only come through a continuation of a tradition, together with devout experiment".[69] As he believes that in English spirituality the same currents flowed through the seventeenth century as through the

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65 English Spirituality, pp. 270-272.
66 Ibid., p. 271.
67 The Rock and the River, p. 111.
68 English Spirituality, p. 272.
69 Ibid., p. 226.

fourteenth, different as the centuries were, and indeed had been flowing for almost a thousand years, so these same currents are still present. What is necessary is to channel them into twentieth Century flow.

CRITIQUE

Fr. Thornton's espousal of a Remnant approach to Christian ascetic has much to commend it historically. In the call of Abraham one can see the birth of the idea of the particular: that a representative person is called to worship and serve God in the way becoming to all men. The event of the Exodus and the constitution of Israel under Moses extend the principle to a whole people. Then again within that people the role is particularized: the seven thousand who have in Elijah's day not bowed the knee to Baal; the Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah; ultimately Jesus himself on behalf of all men; and, in turn, the apostolic Church as his delegate.

Within the Church, too, as within Israel we have to recognize a particularization: that amongst the baptized there are those who accept not only the humanistic ideal personified in Christ, but also the cost of the Cross. But in our particularization we have to be careful of specifying. Fr. Thornton, for example, identifies the Remnant of the medieval age with the monastery. Tempting as it may be to think thus, the questions raised earlier as to the separation of monastery from the ordinary society of men make us wonder if this is a valid model of Remnant theology. And if it is not we put in question immediately the validity, at least as far as its exclusiveness is concerned, of the Rule which Fr. Thornton draws from it.

That there is a cost of the Cross must be a central realization of all

who seek that full humanization anticipated in the Creation story and personified in the Incarnation. But to define those who come to that realization as those who follow a very specified Rule is highly questionable. Yet ultimately this is what Fr. Thornton's position comes down to.

We can understand and agree with Fr. Thornton's attack against multitudinarian views of the Church. We use 'Church people' in every member visits, for example, to represent the Church when they have no concept of what it is or requires. We waste our energy in parish activities removed from, and even detrimental to, Christian ministry. We have, in other words, to recognize as fact the view that only a few comprehend the nature of Christ's apostolate, and that these embrace not only the humanism of Christianity, but also its cost. But they are not necessarily now, nor have they always been, those who embrace Rule, any more than the Remnant of the medieval age was of necessity the monastery.

It is true that he insists that the Remnant is an organic, not a numerical concept. Yet his position cannot be summarized by any other conclusion than saying that the Remnant consists of those who embrace Rule, and in particular the three-fold Benedictine order of Office, Eucharist and Personal Prayer. It is here that he is open to the charge of sectarianism: not that he is championing a pious élite; not that he fails to uphold the vicarious role of the Remnant; but that he identifies it too closely with a Rule, and a very specific one at that. The reviewer who charges him with failing to see the spiritual strength and contribution of those who have been fostered in traditions other than that he advocates is on the whole fair.[70]

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[70] Edna Mary, DssCSA, The Kingsman, No. 9, 1966-67, pp. 46-50.

That there must be some cell structure within the body of the Church which gives it life; that an essential element in this cell is the awareness of the Cross as a prime fact in the realization of full humanity; and that the ability to embrace the Cross requires a discipline of attitude and of living, signified by the word ascetic - all this we accept fully from Fr. Thornton. That these conditions are guaranteed by the acceptance of Rule, however, we deny.

Even were we to agree with Rule in principle, we would seriously question whether Fr. Thornton has succeeded in coming to grips with suiting it to the modern mind and culture. We have noted his attempts to bring Rule up to date. And we applaud his view that a world come of age does not require the religious consolation and pious practices of the Middle Ages. But has he truly modernized the Benedictine Rule? Has he grasped the modern mind? Is it anything but religiosity to think in terms of spending "Friday after the fifth Sunday after Trinity on the beach with the children"?[71]

It is true that Bonhoeffer frequently dates his letters by the Kalendar and has their subject suggested by it. The knowledgeable Churchman will be aware of the main pattern of it. But to have him consciously fuss about the Red Letter days and the Sundays after Trinity is to withdraw him from the temper of the times. Could such a person in fact be down at the pub, as Fr. Thornton wants him to be, discussing religion casually along with football, housing and meat prices?

Nor surely can we ask members of our Remnant Church to think of themselves as being "certainly different creatures from the unbaptized, with different supernatural powers".[72] The churchman who cherishes his baptism will indeed

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[71] Christian Proficiency, p. 69.
[72] Ibid., p. 10.

see the dynamism and motivation of his life in different terms from the unbaptized. But he cannot, nor should he, believe that as a creature of God he differs from Muslim, Buddhist, or atheist. And what possibly can it mean to speak to him of his supernatural powers!

Fr. Thornton's contention that the priesthood should be ninety percent concerned with ministry to the Remnant[73] is at first thought attractive, at least to those of us who spend frustrating hours in tasks and involvements which seem far removed from our concept of ministry.[74] He is certainly justified in arguing that many priests today have so oriented themselves to other professions as to have lost the essence of their own and that the problems of society are primarily the arena for the apostolate of the laity.

Even so, if the priesthood is to convey the spirit of an incarnational religion, it can only do so by showing an authentic and participating concern for all sorts and conditions of men. The conduct of Jesus' ministry manifests a very live concern for human suffering, physical and social. In ministering to this he brought the spiritual into an encounter with life. Granted that it is the Church and not the priest alone that has entered into the work of Christ, but in his own ministry the priest must give evidence of the breadth and scope of that work.

We have indicated certain doubts as to whether Fr. Thornton has effectively married traditional spirituality to the modern world. Any doubt about his failure, however, is removed by considering his total inability to understand that the modern mind will not adapt to the Ignatian-like method of meditation he outlines at the end of Chapter 6 of The Rock and the River.[75] No

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[73] Supra, pp. 58-59.
[74] Supra, p. 59.
[75] Op. cit., pp. 96-97.

doubt there will always be some who will find such a pattern helpful. Equally certain is it, however, that most, including many who could hardly be excluded from his Remnant, find such exercises artificial, formalized and laboriously burdensome. Fr. Thornton himself has agreed that the Personal Prayer portion of his Rule is infinitely variable according to the temperament and needs of the individual. But he, in the traditional way of the spiritual teachers of the past, puts it into a strait-jacket of techniques and components. Whether right or wrong, modern man has neither the inclination nor the temper for this. He is not averse to suggestions to reflect and what to reflect upon. But techniques convey to him a paternalism and a formalism he has no place for.

The problem with Fr. Thornton's Rule is that for all the simplification he wants in the Office and the diversity he claims to allow in Personal Prayer, it is too rigid, too systematized for the mind of today. Why, it is hard to say. Perhaps it is that the world in which we live, unlike the parish of the Caroline age, is so pluralistic that flexibility in our mental processes is our greatest need. We do not achieve it, of course, but we do sense a danger in any systematization which denies us that flexibility. Everything that modern man encounters in his education and culture goes against the thought that the Office should be so objective that it is wrong to alter it by so much as a jot or tittle; that it is unimportant to consider the words being said. Is he to be so naive as to suppose that in the weekday dispersion of the Church its community is expressed and the objectivity of its worship guaranteed by everyone saying exactly the same Office, comma for comma? The Church has to face the realities of a pluralistic world in which personal and dynamic principles of education have, for better or for worse, replaced

mechanistic and static ones. Fr. Thornton's Rule, however, possesses just such rigidity both in the exclusive value he places upon it and in its composition.

Finally, as Fr. Thornton has not fully considered the pluralistic nature of the age, so has he not given due regard to ecumenism in the Church. It is true that he is writing out of the English scene where there may yet be some justification for defining the local parish as the Anglican Church, and to think of English spirituality as Anglican spirituality. This fails, of course, to take into account the contribution of others such as the Quakers who, in England itself, have contributed to spiritual history. But it becomes absurd when transferred to North America. Is it realistic for the ascetic guide of today, Anglican though he may be, to confine himself to that spiritual strain which runs through his own tradition? Ecumenicity, whether approved or not, is a fact of the age, and a spirituality which fails to give it room is inadequate.

It is our conclusion upon Fr. Thornton's spiritual theology that he is correct in emphasizing the need within the Church for the nurture of what he designates as the Remnant, those who accept not only Christ's humanism, but also the cost of discipline in following his way. We agree with much of what he has to say about the spiritual emptiness of what passes for parish life. We agree that there is a need for guidance in spiritual life and the acceptance of an ascetic discipline toward growth in Christ.

We do not, however, particularly cherish the implications of the word Remnant which smacks of Elijah's attitude fleeing from Jezebel after his victory on Mt. Carmel. However, Fr. Thornton may think of it in organic rather

than numerical terms, it has a ring of spiritual pride to it. We feel that the word "cell" conveys more accurately the function of what we are talking about, an organism, not easily visible, giving life to the whole body.

Nor do we accept that the essential characteristic of this cell, that which gives it its own adherence, is the practice of Rule. For reasons discussed in this section, we believe that the Rule Fr. Thornton upholds is out of tune with modern modes of thought, is too rigid and stereotyped, and fails to take account of the pluralistic and ecumenical aspects of world and church today.

We must therefore now turn our thought to an examination of what spiritual life and discipline may best fit the needs of the cell and its individual members in the church and world of this age, and, prior to that, to what principles lie behind such a spirituality.

CHAPTER IV

TOWARD A MODERN SPIRITUALITY

The task of this Chapter is to map the outline of a modern spirituality and to mark in some of its basic features. The plan is, of course, suggested by the discussion in the previous chapters and therefore we begin by summarizing certain of the principles we have discussed there.

From our historical analysis we note that certain things are essential to a viable Christian spirituality, for we see strength in the Church when they are present and weakness when they are absent or deformed. Primary amongst these is a Christianity in which a synthesis is maintained between the humanist-rigorist elements. While Christian humanism has a continuous and honorable history in the Church, its stream has been subsidiary to the rigorist, not in the sense, of course, that rigorism has ever been accepted by the vast body of ordinary churchmen, but that its principles have predominated the ideals of spirituality.

Today Christian humanism, however, is flourishing. It is evident in new liturgical expressions, in man-centred theology, in involvement in social action. It is suited to a technologically and intellectually sophisticated age, and any spirituality viable for our time must accept it into itself. This means, however, that since the atmosphere of spirituality which we have inherited from past ages is largely rigorist, we need more than just adaptations of it. We need a spirituality unashamedly humanist in its basic assumptions.

But we have said that a synthesis between the humanist-rigorist elements is necessary. A spirituality which bases itself solely on Christ's universal love of mankind and neglects the cost of the Cross will be in its own way

incomplete or distorted. We feel that Fr. Thornton has rightly put his finger on this problem with the "Yes, but how?" question he puts to preachers of Christian humanism. We have, for reasons already discussed, raised serious doubts as to the efficacy of the spirituality he suggests, based on the discipline of Rule; but we accept as fundamental that there must be discipline in Christian spirituality, a discipline which embraces the reality of the Cross. A spirituality for today must, therefore, transplant itself from the rigorist attitudes of the monastic type that has reigned as the ideal for so long, and root itself in the humanistic soil of both the Gospel and the age. In doing so, however, it must not lose sight of the way of the Cross as essential in a mature Christian humanism.

The theology which serves such a spirituality and therefore which must permeate it is, we saw in the second Chapter, strongly creational. It will recognize the creative presence of God in His world, and this will mean not only in so-called sacred spheres but in the social, technological and scientific endeavours of the so-called secular. Indeed, a spirituality for today will be concerned with blurring if not extinguishing the lines of distinction between these two.

As for that element in the life of the world which theologically we define as sin, our spirituality must recognize its awful reality and not be hoodwinked into supposing it a relic of bygone ages. The perversity in man by which he denies his creature status and sets himself up as his own final judge or by which, even acknowledging God's authority, he rebels against it, is not a hidden fact in this time of extreme social unrest and fear for the survival of man and his world. But for all this we must see sin as the anguish and pain

through which we must pass in our birth struggle toward Christ-manhood rather than as the ruination of a once perfect and painless innocence. To be redeemed by the Cross of Christ is not to be plucked from a wicked world, a saved individual. It is to be freed from inner and outer chaos and be created fully man, man with God-centred dominion over his own life and the creation about him.[1] In such a spirituality repentance becomes "discovering that you have more to you than you dreamt or knew, becoming bored with being only a quarter of what you are and therefore taking the risk of surrendering to the whole, and thus finding more abundant life."[2] Repentance in this sense calls for a discipline, but one which affirms the world instead of negating it.

A second principle we observed in our historical survey as essential to a healthy spirituality was a communal basis. This is not to deny the personal element in spirituality. It is only to claim that personal spirituality must grow out of the communal life of the Church. We noted this strength in the apostolic age, and later we saw how the life of the Church suffered when community was restricted to the artificial world of the cloister or when it became secondary to the individualism in some Protestant development.

Community in the Church, however, cannot be pre-supposed. It has to be created or, perhaps more properly, discovered and there is little doubt that the parish church alone, as we know it in western Christianity today, will not provide that awakening; yet changing as they are, Church structures are not likely to move so rapidly that we shall quickly find a substitute.

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1. Modern writing on spirituality is not weighty, but a recurring theme amongst many who do write is that spirituality today must be affirmative about man, strongly creational and incarnational.
   See: Paul Hinnebusch, O.P., Prayer, The Search for Authenticity, p. 63.
   Jordan Aumann, O.P., Trends in Catholic Spirituality: Christian Spirituality - East and West, p. 86.
   John B. Coburn: Spirituality for Today (ed. E. James), p. 23.
2. H. A. Williams: The True Wilderness, p. 82.

The most promising and practical expression of community therefore seems to us to be what Fr. Thornton calls the parish Remnant but which, for reasons discussed, we prefer to name "cell". The cell must be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, but it will be that element which gives life to the Church, where personal life is fed and encouraged, where experiment and discovery in liturgy are made, where Christian action in the world is fostered. It is to be understood that it is not a mini-Church or the true Church in microcosm, but the elemental source of the whole Church's life.

A third principle we have found in a strong spirituality is the sacramental. Like community, with which it goes hand in hand, it was the strength of the apostolic Church which, nourished on the eucharistic meal, went out to baptize the world. The abuse of sacraments in ritualism and sacramentalism or the rejection of them have always marked a decline in the life of the Church and in its spirituality.

The sacramental is, of course, essential to a spiritual outlook which is, as we have said today's must be, humanist. It is the expression of God's creative activity in and through the physical, and therefore is closely tied to creation's complementary doctrine, incarnation. God's activity in man, the goal of Christ-manhood, the koinonia of the body of Christ: all these essentials of a humanist spirituality are ingredients of eucharistic and baptismal theology. Yet the rigorist element of the Gospel is strongly present for both sacraments relate directly to the Cross.

Our liturgical expression of these sacraments, as they have come to us, are no longer adequate, and the current experimentation with them testifies to the need for change not just in forms but in theological emphases. It also

testifies, however, both to the innate sacramental nature of Christianity and to the Church's vitality evidenced by the liturgical ferment.

The fourth and last principle we wish to draw from our examination in previous chapters is one which hardly received specific discussion and yet was inherent in most of what was said. It furnishes us too with probably the greatest difficulty of implementation amongst our principles. It is the absolute need to maintain spontaneity and flexibility in balance with discipline and order. We saw what destruction formalism and authoritarianism wrought to the spiritual life of the medieval Church. And our fundamental criticism of Fr. Thornton's Rule is that, despite his protestations to the contrary, it smacks of these to a world and a Church which have become extremely wary of formalized religion.

At the same time we are in danger today of ascetical chaos. Daily Office may be questionable, but when it is discarded what replaces it? We reject Lenten observances and other disciplines as legalism in religion but does not their disappearance leave a spiritual vacuum? It was the contribution of the Victorines that they substituted order for chaos in transforming reverie into meditation.[3] There is danger for us that we shall make the transfer back again in our opposition to methods and manuals. If spirituality today, with that humanist and affirmative world view we have supported, is nevertheless to maintain the centrality of the way of the Cross, it must itself be possessed of a discipline which alone leads that way.

How shall we maintain spontaneity and flexibility in balance with order and discipline? To end with an answer to this question would be a tour de

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3 Supra, Chapter 1, p. 12.

force for this thesis; but, of course, there is no single or no simple answer, and all we can say is that in whatever we have to suggest about the implementation of the other principles discussed, the need of trying to maintain this one must always be kept in mind.

We have now to mark out the main features of a spirituality based upon these principles. For the sake of the discussion we shall divide it into two sections: personal spirituality and communal spirituality. They overlap, of course, but their distinct elements can best be treated separately.

Personal Spirituality:

We have agreed with Fr. Thornton about the need for spiritual discipline in the growth toward Christ-manhood. A discipline, to be effective, must have some order to it, and while we have rejected the particular form of Fr. Thornton's Regula, it does embrace two features essential to a wholesome spirituality: awareness of God transcendent and awareness of God immanent. The former we take to mean awareness of all that is beyond the human: awareness of creation, of its beauty, of its mystery, of its infinity and of the hand behind it. By the latter we include first, awareness of self and second, awareness of others. We have here then, through basic attitudes which a personal spiritual discipline should foster, awareness of the beyond-human, awareness of self, and awareness of the communal. It is quickly apparent that we have the essential content though not the form of Rule in which the Office relates to the worship of God transcendent, personal prayer develops the awareness of God and self, and where the Eucharist unites the community in God. There is, of course, a cross-fertilization and unity between these three, but

the basic element in each is distinguishable.

To encase these elements in an inflexible Rule is to strangle them, at least for many people. But to eliminate Rule in an age which is suspicious of formalization in religion is not to eliminate the spiritual truths it contains. In other words, whatever spiritual discipline a person undertakes for himself, it should contain aspects which will heighten his awareness in these three areas.

a. Transcendental Awareness:

Transcendental awareness can, and probably should, begin without reference to God. We agree with Fr. Thornton's insistence that meditation at the initial level begins with contemplation of the natural world and not of the Gospel. Awareness of God is by induction, not by deduction. Because God is God, we are told, the world is beautiful. But it is the beauty of the world we must learn first to worship and through it, consciously or instinctively, we shall come to praise God.

Simple reflection upon the life-force which pulsates in all that one sees; upon the complexity of the laws of nature; upon the mystery of things which lie beyond the human mind; upon the use of scientific and technological skill: this develops awareness of and a sense of awe at the vastness of the creation which exists out beyond our own lives. These foster a worshiping humility before its author which is an essential ingredient of a genuine spirituality. It is a type of reflection which affirms life and its world and is, as we have said it ought to be in our time, unashamedly humanist. The rigorist element will be provided by a sense of our failure to work fully with this life-force and the knowledge that to do so requires of us change of attitude and ambition.

The most serious problem to be faced in the development of such a

spirituality is to prevent it from becoming sheer reverie. As the Office has become overlaid for many with formalism, the danger in the more spontaneous form we are suggesting is a total lack of order. To people undertaking it the need therefore of self-discipline must be stressed, a discipline of time and of mind. As an aid there is desperately needed a new literature which expresses this worshipful attitude toward the creation out beyond us and which therefore, without being heavy on techniques and methods, can suggest lines of thought to the less imaginative of us. A "psalter" of modern hymns and poetry to be used in personal meditation could be helpful as might a collection of themes illustrated by photographs which portray what nature and life reveal of themselves directly or scientifically. Use could also be made of records or tapes, musical and verbal, in helping to reflect and to pray.

b. Awareness of Self:

Our second area of spiritual concentration is to become aware of self. This is to be distinguished from an avid self-preoccupation. What we have in mind here is to see oneself participating in the life we have discerned in our transcendental awareness. Each one of us is a part, fragmentary and momentary, it is true, and this provides the necessary humility, but a part nonetheless, so that we come to see within ourselves something of that beauty, that love and that mystery which life is. Again, this is thoroughly humanist.

Self-awareness, however, must also be directed towards seeing why the life which ought to flow in us and from us does not. Traditionally this can be called the awareness of sin, but its remedy does not lie in the old forms of mortification which supposed the necessity of renouncing the world. The

remedy is in the dawning awareness of our potential to use the world creatively and the development of the will to do so, and to this end our discipline of self-awareness needs to be directed.

In the process we will become aware of the rigorist strain in our development. We will see that we need, for example, to be more thankful and less demanding, more generous with our attitudes and our possessions, more moderate in our desires. But these are the consequences of our discipline of self-awareness. They are not to be pursued as virtues in themselves.

Such a spirituality does not appear specifically Christian and there is every reason to suppose that this is a good thing, for self-awareness does not stem from a full Christology as much as it leads to it. It is simply to be left open that people following this discipline will come to see that a full self-awareness depends ultimately upon an awareness of Christ, that the foundation of our humanity is his.

Meditations on incidents in the Bible may be helpful to some, but for many others will obscure rather than clarify because of extraneous detail and intellectual problems such as miracle. The Church's memory of Jesus as evidenced by the Gospel stories but not confined rigidly to them is sufficient. By this is meant that our comprehension of Christ-humanity is adequate to our development of self-awareness without having always to centre upon a Gospel incident. This is not to separate Christ from the Jesus of the Bible. It is simply not to entomb him in the Bible.

This means that all the formal methods of meditation Fr. Thornton describes in his consideration of personal spiritual life are not so much wrong as unnecessary. They may be useful to some, but many will find them simply

redundant. Modern man may not be spiritually attuned, and this may be because we have tried to tune him into a spirituality unsuited to him. But he is educated and aware enough that, with some general guidelines, he can look at himself and draw the relevant lines between his manhood and Christ's. Whatever spiritual direction is given to him must assume this maturity and avoid all semblance of paternalism in the old director-seeker relationship. But again a new literature expressing the process of self-awareness we have been describing is badly needed, a literature in the category of Michel Quoist's Prayers which have proven their appeal strongly to modern man.

This activity of self-awareness may or may not be described as prayer. It is too loose to say that it always is, for prayer ought to be defined phenomenologically in terms of what it is to those who pray,[4] who have a concept of prayer. If an atheist who rejects prayer engages in the discipline of self-awareness, it is wrong to say of him that though he does not know it he is praying. At the same time we cannot say that because he excludes prayer his discipline is any less authentic than that of the Christian who includes it.

Still our concern is with Christian spirituality in particular and the discipline of self-awareness in this context will weave in and out of what we understand by prayer. At times it may involve simple reflection upon one's life which by his own concept a man may consider not to be prayer. At other times it will involve a reaching out to God in thanksgiving, in confession, in petition. But the point is that there should be complete freedom of movement within the basic order of the discipline. Direction, reading and conscious attitude of mind are necessary to avoid mere reverie, but the

[4] See D. Z. Phillips, The Concept of Prayer, p. 27.

discipline must not be shackled by fixed and rigid methods and definitions.

c. Communal Awareness:

The third area of personal awareness is that of the communal, by which is meant everything from one to one relationship to concern for humanity in general. Self-awareness and communal awareness, of course, are inseparable for it is through our personal relationships that we come best to know ourselves. And to grow in deeper self-awareness is to understand better the forces at work in others.

By and large this is an unconscious process, but it depends upon conscious times of reflection when we try to look beneath the surface of our loves and our conflicts to the true being of the other. There is no reason why this aspect of our spiritual discipline should not make use of the insights of psychology. But whether or not it does the essential thing is that our personal spirituality reach out in this way beyond self into the knowing of others. How much it will include intercession and the use of prayer lists will depend upon the individual's concept of prayer; but there is no reason why those whose concept of prayer cannot comprehend intercession should thereby be excluded from this aspect of spiritual discipline. Here again we see today's need for flexibility within discipline.

Equally part of communal awareness is to understand the needs and hopes, the sufferings and joys of mankind generally; to see our responsibility, if we are to be agents of creativity, to be involved in the alleviation of pain, the removal of poverty, the defeat of social injustice. In the process we may find that we are hindered rather than helped by our own affluence and that

simpler modes of living on our part make us more free to concern ourselves for the rights of others. In other words, we discover renunciation as an ingredient of greater creativity; but it is a renunciation because the good of the world is to be shared, not because the world is considered to be evil.

The personal spirituality described here in terms of beyond-human, personal and communal awareness will seem very vague to those schooled in the more definite patterns of earlier traditions. Some may, of course, find these older patterns still helpful and there is no reason why they should not use them, for we are not trying to establish a <u>better</u> spirituality, simply one in which people who sense an unreality for our time of the traditional may find themselves at home.

It needs to be emphasized once more, however, that we are discussing here a real discipline. It is primarily one of attitude rather than of conformity to Rule, but this makes it no less demanding and possibly more adult. It does, however, have a definite structure and those who embrace it must understand that these elements are essential to it, however flexible may be the means of achieving them: transcendental, self and communal awareness.

<u>Communal Spirituality</u>

We saw earlier in this chapter that the communal life of the Church is a fundamental principle for any viable Christian spirituality. Personal spiritual growth itself depends upon it. The Church as a whole and the parish church in particular, as we know them today, do not of themselves, however, adequately fulfil this role. There are problems of size, of denominationalism, of liturgical rigidity, of clergy-laity distinctions, of impersonality, and

countless others which prohibit the parish church from being the prime unit of Christian community. Yet for the most part it is still the point of identification of the Church for most people. Given this fact, is there any way in which the local Church can still be the means toward, if not the actual centre of, Christian community?

In discussing personal spirituality we borrowed the three-fold pattern behind Rule from Fr. Thornton without accepting the Rule itself. In our discussion of communal spirituality we shall do something similar: we shall take the basic concept of the Remnant as providing the key to Christian community, but for reasons set forth in our critique of Fr. Thornton, we shall alter it considerably, having already, for example, chosen the word "cell" over "Remnant".

We do not intend to convey the idea that the parish church is nothing more than the conglomerate of cells scattered about it geographically. Nor are we saying that those who belong to the cells are "the true church"; no doubt many draw from and contribute to the community of the Church in ways others of us would never recognize. All we are saying is that the life of the Church will be fed, perhaps primarily, by cells, units of people which are small enough to foster personal communion amongst their members, flexible enough to adapt to different people and needs, and free enough to weave in and out of the rubrics.

A cell, however, must have some kind of structure. As personal spirituality requires discipline and order to prevent it from lapsing into sheer reverie, so the life of the cell needs discipline. The cell will, for example, be primarily composed of those who undertake to share with one another the

discipline of personal awareness in the three aspects discussed, although at any given time it may include others who do not. It will be sacramental since we have seen that this is essential to a viable communal spirituality throughout Church history. Since it is flexible, the cell will be able to experiment liturgically and thereby nourish the sacramental life of the Church generally. But its members as a norm should be prepared to participate sacramentally in the Church as it is, as well as in the cell, for it is primarily through sacrament that this essential link with the whole Church is maintained. This is of vital importance so that the cell does not become an esoteric and exotic fringe group, but remains integrally united to the catholic Church. Finally, the sacramental relationship of Church to the world should be expressed by an involvement of the cell in some apostolic work. It must, in other words, see itself as a servant not only of the Church but of mankind generally.

These three things then provide the norm for the life of the cell: personal spiritual discipline of its members, sacramental participation in the Church, service to the world. Beyond this simple structure we would not stipulate the mode of the cell's life, for here flexibility is essential. It would be understood that the cell is Church-integrated, but this does not mean the exclusion of people who do not embrace Christianity, but who in goodwill and as interested human beings provide cross-fertilization between Church-cell and the non-Christian world.

And if the cell can in this way embrace the pluralism of the world today, it can also embrace the ecumenicity of the Church. In fact it is likely that only in such cells can real Christian unity be discovered, for in the freedom

of the cell we will be able to cross denominational lines without guilt and to build a community which arises from a common bond of spirit rather than a bureaucratic imposition. It also must go without saying that in the milieu of the cell itself there will be no limiting rules of communicant status. It may indeed happen through the cell that Eucharistic communion will chronologically precede the sacrament of baptism.

The fostering and encouragement of such cells may possibly be the most important task of the Church in our time. For through the life of the cells, with their flexibility and yet also their own discipline and integration with the Church as a whole, will that Church be primarily renewed and sustained. But it will be a natural process through infusion of the cell's influence rather than a radical surgical operation imposed, as it often is today, on a reluctant body.

Liturgy:

The spirituality we have considered so far is admittedly specialist. That is, it applies principally to those relatively few who will compose the cell and embrace a personal discipline. They will, we believe, nourish the life of the whole Church, but in our concentration upon them we must not neglect the rest, those less aware of or less attracted to what we have been describing. In other words there must be a spiritual quiddity which the average Christian encounters in the Church. If it is something alive and meaningful it may lead him to a further quest. Even if it does not, however, it will at least provide an encounter between the Christian gospel and his twentieth Century life.

This spirituality may be expressed to him in the involvement of the Church

in community and world concerns and in its pastoral function. Chiefly, however, it will be in the liturgical experience he finds in the Church's worship. This experience ought to be an expression of the theology we have described in Chapter two. Our present liturgies, as exemplified in the Book of Common Prayer, rooted in the theology of the middle ages and the Reformation, are inadequate to this task. They emphasize the evil of the world, Christian life as avoidance of its contamination, and heaven and hell as post-life realities. There is, of course, scriptural foundation for this theology and the meanings behind it have their proper place in a balanced Christian doctrine. But for reasons advanced in Chapter two the more humanist stream in Christian faith needs to be brought forth and liturgically expressed. We are involved here with more than a change in musical forms, more than a change from "thee" to "you". We are saying that the theological substance of the liturgy needs re-ordering.

What needs to be liturgically expressed to the modern worshipper is that creation is an ever present process, in which he is a participant; that evil is not the result of some prehistoric fall in man's nature, but of our own refusal to grow up, to forego rebellion, to tap the creativeness within us; that the Incarnation testifies to the fitness of the human to be the bearer of God; that life today, in personal experience and the human condition generally, is the ground of heaven and hell; and that the Cross towers over all not only as the earnest of God-forgiveness, but as the way for us to the discovery of Christ-manhood.

The Canadian Book of Common Prayer, which we take as our example, hardly meets these criteria with the chief exception of the Marriage Service. Is

there not something to be learned from the fact that this service, with its thoroughly Christian humanist spirit and its expression in such physical symbols as joining of hands and giving and receiving of the ring touches a spiritual chord in people at a level deeper, in this writer's experience, than the sentimentality we can expect on such an occasion?

Elsewhere, in the Prayer Book, however, the rigorist and negative world view predominates. This is so in the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, especially the former. In Baptism the predominant theme is remission of sin, established in the initial exhortation and prayers. The goodwill of God, which is the theme of the opening of the service, is not expressed in terms of life's creation and its hope of Christ-manhood in the present world. It comes out as saving us from sin in this life that we may inherit the kingdom of God hereafter.

The reality of sin as we have discussed elsewhere is something most people today will understand, not, of course, in the traditional terms of original sin theology, but in terms of an existential fact of that life and world into which every child is born. But baptism must appear as more than some quasi-magical salvation from sin so that we can get into heaven. It must show Christ as the fulfilment of the humanity we are born into and the way to our own maturity. It must express our participation in the community of the Church and thereby involve us in the world rather than point us beyond it. These themes, although they can be discerned in the present service if we look hard and make enough explanation, do not come through on their own as they should. Even the words of reception into the Church suggest a highly individualistic and moralistic battle against the world's evil.

In short, what we are asking is that baptism represent not so much a

locking back to Adam and forward to heaven as the reality of Christ-manhood in the here and now; that it signify a dynamic way of life rather than a change of status from a dirty person to a clean one; and that therefore the means of baptism, water, be shown not so much as the agent of cleansing as the sine qua non of life itself. The symbolism of passing through the waters of death, dying with Christ, still stands, but as the path to the new life in Christ.

Because the Eucharist is so inextricably bound up with Christ's Incarnation and with His presence in the world, it suffers less from the imbalance of remission of sin theology. The essential humanism of the Sacrament inevitably breaks through. We might say, however, that this is more in spite of the Book of Common Prayer liturgy than because of it. The crux of the problem is in the Propers, for after a rather positive introduction in the Collect for Purity and the Summary of the Law, the Eucharist is more often than not shunted off on to a sin-oriented track. That this track has its proper place, we do not deny. We only say it is too heavily travelled. Having, for example, been well reminded by Paul during Lent of the weaknesses of the flesh, is there in the Epistles no greater expression of new life in Christ to be found for Easter morning than Colossians 3:1-11?

Even more significant, however, is that the heart of the Sacrament, the Prayer of Consecration interprets the life and death of Christ almost exclusively in terms of our receiving thereby remission of our sins. Anything else is simply lumped under "all other benefits of his passion".[5] We hardly need

5. Book of Common Prayer, Canada, 1962, pp. 82-83.
Discussion of Baptism and Eucharist here are based on this Canadian Prayer Book.

mention again the necessity of a more positive expression in our day of these "other benefits": the hope of new being in Christ, the presence of His Spirit in the world, the community of the Church, to name a few. It could be argued, of course, that remission of sin opens the way to these others, that they are included in it. But this requires long-winded explanation inappropriate to a sacrament where the meaning should stand out for itself.

There will be, of course, some who will contend that the theological expression we are asking for here in the sacraments is too optimistic about man. Not without justification they will point to current problems in ecology and of massive social unrest as evidence. It has, however, been frequently mentioned in this study that we are not trying to gloss over the perversity in man that is comprehended in the word <u>sin</u>. We are simply saying that our liturgical heritage has given us a sin-centred view of man. It has not sufficiently portrayed his destiny as we must understand it from our theology of creation and incarnation. Indeed it may be that only when we grasp what we could be will we see by comparison how awful is our sin.

In this liturgical discussion we have not been concerned with the form of the services: no doubt they are far too wordy and pitifully empty of congregational action. Nor are we bothering too much about the language, for we feel that it is not with the "Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven" that today's worshipper is being straitened. It is with the fundamental theological standpoint which fails in the liturgy to express a Christian humanist spirit, to open up the riches of Creation-Incarnation, and to relate it all to the heaven and hell of this life rather than the next.

Secular and Sacred:

What has been said indicates that a spirituality for modern man will blur the division between the secular and the sacred. There is a sense, of course, in which they do and will always differ. Sunday worship and the activities of the rest of the week must tie together, but there is a difference in the act of worship and that of going downtown to work. It is a relative difference, however, not a radical one, and therefore the aim of spirituality must be to ensure that whatever is thought of as being sacred fulfils its function only insofar as it serves to move the creation-process toward its Christ-goal. Personal and communal spirituality and liturgical expression must always keep this in sight.

This requires an ascetical outlook which embraces what once was figuratively called the secular, and emphasizes Christian action in the world. The economically and otherwise oppressed are not crying out for the heavenly Jerusalem. They are asking for their inheritance in the blessings of God's creation. And the world of today has the know-how to provide them. Christian faith demands of us that we prod it to do so. Christian discipline is necessary for us in the world, but it is a discipline which will move us to renunciation of our own desires, not because they are evil, but so that we may share in meeting the needs of others. For the rich Christian this means the renunciation of that attitude which demands and keeps for himself more than his due. For the poor Christian it means renunciation, not of his share, but of means to acquire it which end in greater destructiveness.

Since our spirituality must be more affirmative and humanist, it should also be more joyful, and joyful not only in a religious connotation, but in

the totality of life in all its physical manifestations. Some of this is already becoming evident in the use of physical and material art forms in worship, something which is more than a quirk of the young. It is a genuine rediscovery of the goodness of creation in the spirit of a down-to-earth joy reminiscent of that zest for living which breathes through the Old Testament.

Priest and Layman:

A special aspect of the secular-sacred dichotomy which has plagued the Church is, as we have seen, the double standard for layman and priest. One way of removing this double standard is, of course, to abolish a professional ministry. There is much to commend this view, but as we are dealing in terms of present day realities in which a professional ministry is the rule it is in this situation that we have to deal with the double standard.

It should, however, be possible to blur the present sharp distinction by making it easier to pass in and out of that profession so that the ordained person may naturally and with relative ease take up as a lay Christian. Experiments should be made in modifying the professional requirements and training so that different streams could lead to ordination, with some exercising their priesthood on a full-time professional basis and others not, again with ease of interchange from one status to the other.

This deliberate attempt to bridge the present lay-clergy cleavage is but a step toward a second and more important development, which is to establish the place of the minister as one of theological, liturgical and pastoral function within the economy of the Church community. In other words, we are talking of eliminating that element of authoritative exclusiveness which

adheres to the bishop in liturgy and ordination and tends to rub off on the priest as the authority in religion in the parish. Also to be divested is that vicariousness by which the laity trust the priest will carry out the Church's apostolate for them.

In its polity, in its liturgy, and indeed in all aspects of its life, the canonical and hierarchical authority of the ministry must be revised. It is not because such an exercise of authority in the past was wrong, although in some areas it was wrong and in most areas it was abused. It is simply because it has no place today when the great mass of people are educated and who must have commensurate responsibility and trust accorded to them if they are to fulfil their apostolate.

This discussion of the lay-clergy double standard leads to the question of whether there is one spirituality for the priest and another for the layman. All that we have said implies the answer no. One is not a higher order of Christian than the other, nor does he necessarily have a greater capacity for spiritual development than the other. There is one spirituality to carry out the one apostolate of the Church. To say this and uphold it as our basic answer is not to say, however, that all spirituality is identical. It needs adaptation not only to personal characteristics but to function. The full-time priest has a different life-style and a different function in the Church than a layman. He will have to think at deeper theological levels. His knowledge and reflection upon Scripture will be broader. Because of his pastoral care, his intercessory awareness of individual persons will have to be extensive. The spirituality of the layman may be more concerned with ethical decisions and public issues in which he is knowledgeable. His intercessory awareness may be

quite narrow as far as individual persons are concerned, but broad in terms of mass needs and problems.

In other words, in terms of personal spirituality there will be differences inherent in the different function of priest and layman, differences which will be modified, of course, when, as suggested, a priest moves again into a lay role. The differences, however, are, like those between male and female, complementary rather than opposed. In the community of the Church each adds to the spirituality of the whole and to the fulfilment of the Church's apostolate in the world.

We have tried in this Chapter to trace the outline and general aim of a spirituality for our time. In some ways it may seem radically different from that we have inherited, and in terms of methods or techniques, or possibly the lack of them, it is. Yet strong currents of traditional Christian spirituality run through it. It is thoroughly incarnational and imbued with the sense of God as Creator-Spirit. With this theological background it is humanist, but the rigorist element, though subsidiary, is not lost, for the need of discipline and order is acknowledged, and it is axiomatic that this discipline of awareness, sincerely pursued, will lead to an embracing of the Cross. That the renunciation involved in its discipline is for sharing rather than for shedding the world makes it no less demanding or costly.

It is a spirituality which is Trinitarian, corresponding in principle though not in form to Rule as Fr. Thornton describes it. It is both personal and communal, and draws strongly upon the sacramental life of the Church.

There are in it, of course, elements of pluralism, of blunting the distinction between secular and sacred, between clerical and lay. It is marked by an absence of specific methods and manuals of devotion. It criss-crosses the borders of denominationalism and erodes the edges of the rubrics. But so it must be in this age and one cannot avoid voicing the suspicion that in divesting itself of these accretions of the ages, it may be more in harmony with the spirituality our Lord communicated to the apostolic Church.

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