

***The Catholic Thing.* Rosemary Haughton. Springfield IL: Templegate Publishers, 1979.**

Introduction

Catholic 'thing' and 'Church' are not coextensive. The 'thing' is wider than church, and the 'Church' is not all and always Catholic. Method is to understand 'Catholic' in its manifestations, and then to sum up and interpret what has been discovered. [7]

Haughton's mother became Catholic in middle age because she "felt at home there," but then became alienated by "the preoccupation with the rules, the intolerance and narrowness." [7]

"Western culture has reached a point at which precisely that 'something else' is vital for its sanity, let alone its salvation." [7]

Two allegorical figures: Mother Church and Sophia. [9]

Mother Church: caring in detail for her children's welfare; patient, imperturbable, unshakable; has "a huge fund of stories, maxims and advice, all of them time-tested, and usually interesting as well"; creates a beautiful home; enriches with the beauty of her music and art; loves God and wants to guide her children according to his will. [9]

But also inclined to identify her will and God's; cynical, shrewd; "She knows her children's limitations so well that she will not allow them to outgrow her"; will lie and cheat to protect them; ruthless in suppressing revolt; insensitive, even cruel; suspicious of new ideas; "not-conformists get a rough time, though after they are dead she often feels differently about them." [9]

Sophia shows a different side of herself in different relationships, and so is often known by other names (Romantic love, Mysticism, Superstition, Inspiration, Adventure, Imprudence, Sanctity, Folly); "You never knew where she would be or what she would be doing"; "... telling marvelous tales or singing strange songs"; "She grew roses in the place where her sister wanted to plant tomatoes." [10]

The book is "very largely concerned with the antics of Sophia" – yet always aware that 'the Catholic thing' acquires its special character from the interplay of the relationship between the two. [11]

Restoration of York Minster: modern engineers working harmoniously with archaeologists, historians and artists. A temporary support structure was established to enable the work of both. [11-13]

"... this place of prayer is a prayer, the inarticulate prayer of people who cannot pray, don't want to pray, think it ridiculous to pray, but find a strange reassurance in the fact that someone does." [13]

"... an enterprise, spanning many centuries, yet it is also a new enterprise, and in both ways it is fittingly symbolized by the old and new enterprise which is York Minster." [14]

"... there can never be a stasis, a perfect balance, except momentarily." [14]

“... the Catholic enterprise, its makers and re-makers, its shifts of balance, its failures and its astonishing persistence and recoveries. It is huge, it is human, it is old, it needs repair.” [15]

Those who labor at the enterprise bring their own qualities and abilities, yet find those changed/developed/challenged by the enterprise itself. “It makes them, as they make it.” [15]

Catholicity: “... the attempt to integrate the whole of human life in the search for the kingdom of God.” Doomed to failure, historically, yet also destined to succeed. [15-16]

Never complete, “though sometimes the unrealized wholeness may be glimpsed in a person, or a moment of history.” [16]

“Yet, however gross its failures, there is an inner vitality that will not admit defeat. It will not give up trying to bring all aspects of human life into the kingdom of God.” [16]

“... an assertion of hope in human beings, their capabilities, their destiny, their inner and undestructible sanctity.” [16]

“We are creating for the future, not just preserving the past.” [17]

“The present searches the past for the sake of the future. When we understand better what we have inherited, we shall know ourselves better and make better use of ourselves.” [17]

ONE: The Team

“... the Catholic enterprise is, at any time, kept going, or even pushed along very fast, by a comparatively small number of people who happen to have the qualities required.” [18]

“The enterprise somehow evokes the enthusiasm of people who have little in common, and yet their common involvement challenges their attitudes and views, confronts them, undermines their assumptions, shows them new ways. And they, as they respond to this challenge, create (sometimes without knowing it) the enterprise in which they are involved. They modify, enlighten, prod, define, check, comfort or stabilize it, as they have the talent and as the needs of the case demand.” [18]

The enterprise is the interaction-in-tension of the political, religious and charismatic powers. [19]

Friedrich von Hügel (d. 1925) “achieved, as far as a person can, the integration of all aspects of life in the search for God’s kingdom.” [19]

His profound respect for people, his sensitivity to truth and goodness wherever he met it, made him revere the presence of God in every faith, awed and thrilled to discover yet more of the divine bounty and wisdom.” [19]

His life (1852-1925) spanned “one of the periods of deepest demoralisation and pusillanimity in the history of the Catholic Church.” [20]

“... he could fight what was wrong and yet cling to the essential mission, and both without bitterness.” [21]

The Modernist controversy revolved around the issue of whether the findings of modern scholarship could be applied to Christian belief. [21]

“The whole argument was falsified from the start, because each side held to a crude and undeveloped version of its own views, a scientific fundamentalism opposed to a Catholic one.” [21]

“... equally pig-headed orthodoxies.” [22]

Blanket condemnations could not distinguish between honest and anguished doubt and open rejection of authority.” [21]

His sought-for synthesis of old and new would have to wait until Vatican II, when circumstances were far more favorable. [22]

“He was acutely aware and indeed almost tortured by the failures and sins of his Church, but he remained always capable of exultation, awe, and sheer delight at the riches of it, the Catholic variety and strength and beauty and vitality.” [22]

Lengthy quotation: Church is both progressive and conservative, freelance and official, “daring to the verge of presumption, and prudent to the verge of despair.” [23]

The Italy of his childhood as a pre-Protestant, deeply positive and Catholic world. [24]

“... he had an intense appreciation of the importance of ordinary people and ordinary affairs.” [25]

“To him, nothing was insignificant, because truth was not abstract but incarnate.” [26]

“... his sense of the generosity of God, which must be matched by the generosity of the Christian.” [26]

Augustine is a great contrast with von Hügel: little or no sense of humor, no interest in material things, “a vast and comprehensive intolerance. [27]

“... an eccentric, a genius, a one-sided giant whose influence still must not prevent us from peering past his vast but twisted shadow to perceive other kinds of greatness and quite different traditions and emphases, all within the Catholic thing.” [27]

Augustine’s pull was in the direction of the Sacerdotal, in which he tended to merge the Regal and Prophetic. [27-28]

“Augustine’s intellectual style penetrated European thought for centuries and marked the whole course of Western philosophy with an indelible dye.” [28]

“He was African, possibly a black African, but almost certainly dark skinned. The interesting thing is that we don’t know for certain because in spite of his fame the point wasn’t considered important by his contemporaries. It says something about the culture of the time that nobody thought it worthwhile to record the skin colour of the most illustrious bishop, theologian and polemicist of the age.” [28]

“... passionately analytic egoism” gave him an extraordinarily perceptive intensity, but made him “a very bad observer of other people.” He saw other people only in relation to himself. [28]

Evidence that he had a brother and sister, whom he never mentions. [28]

As a young man, he “did all the things that a clever, spoiled, undisciplined young man with plenty of curiosity and or moral standards might be expected to do.” [29]

Yet, “he had the kind of mind that seizes on intellectual problems and wrestle with them, even against his very inclination.” [29]

Monica = “that terrifying thing – a frustrated, hysterical, pious woman.” [29]

His friends were either disciples or masters, never equals. [30]

“For him, sexual feeling was so intimately bound up with all that most disliked in his past life that he was never able to disentangle it. His own distrust of sexuality influenced his theology of marriage and of grace, and through him it affected Christian attitude to sex and to the body for many centuries.” [30]

“His egoism and his charm went with him into his new life, but both were connected.” [31]

“His charm was transformed into the attractiveness of intellect fused with compassion. The egoism was also transmuted, and became the power of decisive and supportive leadership.” [31]

“Augustine gave a huge push to the Catholic enterprise even if it was a push rather to one side of the road.” [32]

“One of his last acts was to bully the rich to give up their treasures to feed the poor of the besieged city...” [33]

Heloise grew up in a world “full of newness and a sense of discovery.” [33]

Abelard and Heloise: “arguably the most famous pair of lovers in history.” [33]

Without Heloise, Abelard’s thought could never have been as rich or as human.” [33]

“Through their strange and tragic experience of love the whole Christian feeling about the nature of human love was enhanced, made more strange, more sensitive, more problematic.” [33]

“Heloise still in her ‘teens, very beautiful and with a subtle and ruthless intellect which, unlike his, was wholly at one with her feelings.” [34]

“... one period of idyllic happiness,” during which their son was born. [35]

Astrolabe’s name: “... just the sort of thing one might expect from a couple of intensely intellectual romantics.” [35]

The castration: “We owe to this gothic horror a unique development in the humanist strand of Catholic culture.” [35]

“... this strange, illicit, and disastrous love, in its destruction produced acute and courageous reflection on the nature of human love, of marriage, of the relation between divine and human love. The exchanges between the anguished minds of the parted lovers refined and hammered out new insights.” [35]

“Heloise’s whole devotion was to Abelard.” [35]

“Out of their attempt to make sense of this contradiction, and of their whole human and religious predicament, grew Abelard’s later theology, one which emphasized the God of love present in the human Jesus who suffered and cared with and for mankind.” [36]

Movement to a subjective moral standpoint, rather than legalistic: “... it was an insight that was stirring in the minds of men and women of that time, and it was Abelard who gave it the precision and power to affect the development of Christian thought down to our own day. It was also something he had learned from Heloise.” [36]

“Her contribution to the Catholic enterprise was to pin down remorselessly certain moral paradoxes displayed in her own life.” [36]

Her mind could not resolve the paradoxes, but her life did; “it forced later generations to realize the fundamental oneness of love, human and divine.” [36]

“Heloise’s tragic marriage unlocked an understanding of the spiritual nature of the marriage bond itself, and showed why it can properly be linked to the love of Christ for his Church.” [36]

Bernadette Soubirous: “Her heroic, stubborn obedience to her Vision, which nothing could make her deny... altered the ‘feel’ of Catholic spirituality from an ascetic, defensive and elitist cult of perfection to a warm, popular, penitential, but practical religious sense – aesthetically crude, liturgically unsophisticated, but realistic, hopeful and immensely resilient.” [37]

“The Catholic religious sense... was, if narrow, basically satisfying, and realistic about life as experienced by the poor and uneducated and exploited.” [37]

Her family was extremely poor, and lived “in a cell once used to confine drunks and vagrants.” [37]

Her story can be easily framed in a conventional piety. But “Bernadette, in fact, was neither passive nor pliable; she was an extraordinary young woman.” [38]

Pressured and bribed to deny her story, ... “she refused to be bullied or wheedled into saying what was requested by others. She reported faithfully the appearance and words of the ‘beautiful lady’ who had appeared to her in a hole in the rocky cliffs outside the town, and entranced her and claimed her whole devotion.” [38]

“To the government she was a political embarrassment as proof of the superstitious backwardness of the provinces. To the Church she was a probably source of ridicule from hostile rationalists, a stumbling block which refused to fit into the neat highway of Catholic life. They all wanted to get rid of her. They all failed.” [38-39]

The visions lasted only a few months. “The rest of her life was devoted to the memory and service of her love, in total obedience to what that love demanded of her.” [39]

“Vanity never touched her, was not even a temptation to her, because her love filled her whole heart and left no room for self-regard.” [39]

“So it was to Bernadette that the Catholic world owed a new kind of religious awareness.” [40]

“... a homely, understandable, *accessible* piety. The Mother of God, who in any case seemed more approachable than her Kingly Son, appeared suddenly in Bernadette's description as a young, informal, friendly presence, coming with gestures of love and concern for the poor and sick and weak, calling to penitence, but in no way frightening or remote. And, through her, the Christ was also nearer, a friend, not a judge.” [40]

Lourdes devotion expanded, “spreading the message that God had hidden certain things from the wise and learned and aesthetically sensitive, and revealed them to little ones.” [40]

Her nineteenth century France was “rent by the battle between the church, identified with royalty and the ancient regime, and the forces of republicanism allied with Science and Atheism.” [40]

“... her integrity and grasp of essentials made the artificiality of the labels attached to the two aims very apparent.” [40]

“Catholics have a kind of love-hate relationship with the Society of Jesus.” But to non-Catholics, they were chief among the Popish terrors. [41]

Edmund Campion “was to the Protestant party a sinister symbol of Catholic trickery, and to the Catholics a symbol of hope and courage in an increasingly hopeless situation.” [42]

“... the peculiarly English brand of resistance movement.” [42]

With the possibility of a brilliant career ahead of him, Campion “took the step of being reconciled with the old and forbidden faith, which cut him off from all possibility of a successful career in England.” [42]

Pressure on English Catholics to conform was increasing. “A deep gloom had fallen on them, and a kind of bewilderment.” [43]

They needed priests “to celebrate Mass for them, comfort and encourage them, make them realize that they were still, in their loneliness, part of a great enterprise, and one, moreover which was engaged in a searching process of reform and rethinking, and was no longer the stagnant and worldly organization which had made the Protestant Reformation inevitable.” [43]

Most of the priests who returned did not seek return of the Catholic monarchy, but only in sustaining the faith of Catholics. [43]

“The stories of these decades of hidden ministry are as strange and heroic as any in history.”

“... priestly ministry was subject to the death penalty, and torture was likely preliminary.” [43]

Campion brought “a special Elizabethan bravura” to the task... daring the ‘establishment to find him. [44]

His ‘Ten Reasons’ for holding to the old faith were “witty as well as well-reasoned.” [44]

“He would turn up in London, then disappear and be heard of next in some remote country area. Stories spread of his exploits, his narrow escapes, the gay effrontery with which he would show himself openly, maintaining that public places were the best disguise.” [44]

“... he brought the remaining Catholics to a condition of steady, unambitious endurance.” [44]

Imprisoned in the Tower and tortured, he was offered pardon by the Queen if he recanted. He refused, and challenged Anglican divines to debate; none accepted. [45]

“According to custom, he was roped to a hurdle behind horses heels, dragged to Tyburn, the site of the public gallows, and there hanged, cut down alive and disemboweled, as the sentence demanded.” [45]

“His particular kind of cheerful, understated courage, his wit, his learning and his warmth and friendliness, made up a special, compelling influence which no one who comes into contact with his story can resist.” [45-46]

“... unknowingly they laid the foundation of a Catholicism of a conscious minority, a thing never before considered.” [46]

Erasmus “saw very well the evils in the Church which were provoking its rejection by the Reformers, and he also saw the flaws in the reforming ideas, which were to ally the Protestant cause with the new economics and the rise of capitalism.” [46]

Illegitimate son of a priest. Charles Reade’s *The Cloister and the Hearth* is based on his parents. [46]

Erasmus, John Calvin, and Ignatius Loyola studied at Paris at the same time – “each in his own way seeing the need for reformation.” [46]

He compared his teachers to Epimenides (of Greek legend) who slept for 47 years: the difference? Epimenides eventually woke up! [46]

“... his savage jokes were the reaction of a genuinely sensitive Christian mind, outraged at the state of the Church and its teachers.” [46]

Erasmus “thought of reform in terms of educating, changing by reforming the mind.” [47]

“... he was suspicious of the split between learning and behavior.” [47]

He had been influenced by the Brethren of the Common Life – the *devotio moderna*, “which emphasized the following of Jesus in holiness of life, rather than a more abstruse mysticism, or scholarship for its own sake. It was an attempt to recover the catholicity, the wholeness, of religion, endangered by too much specialization, either in learning or in special ‘mystical ways.’” [47]

“He was a scholar, but he knew that scholarship for its own sake is at best a waste of time, at worst a dangerous evasion of responsibility.” [47]

“... he had a prophetic hatred of warfare, a thing which almost everyone else assumed to be an inevitable and necessary political instrument.” [48]

He was also characterized by obscurantism and credulity – ignorant of scientific and economic developments, and accepting extraordinary fables, if vouched for by an authoritative classical source. [48]

Even at the height of the Renaissance, uninterested in art. [48]

He tended to oversimplify mercantile and political issues, “yet to do so always with an eye to morality and justice.” [48]

“He concentrated on what seemed to him of ultimate importance and he measured importance in moral terms.” [48]

Regarding his hope for eliminating war: “The fact is that even the reiteration of such an ideal, even the endless and boring and practically fruitless discussion of possible ways and means is better – incomparably better – than the acceptance of war as the proper and only means to settle political differences. This Erasmus knew. He knew it because of his special combination of solid, unmystical, moralistic piety and his intense enthusiasm for the ‘new’ classical learning.” [49]

Erasmus sought to do two things: (1) to make available the wisdom of the ancients, which he considered superior, as “a means of spring-cleaning a culture cluttered and clogged by habits of thought too long unexamined, and presumed rather than really used:” (2) keep Latin as a living language. [49-50]

Yet he demanded a vernacular liturgy, because he wanted people to understand. [50]

Lutherans attacked him as a reactionary, Catholics of sympathizing with Luther. [50]

“During those years when Europe was being remorselessly split into two camps, few people were prepared to think. Slogans and battle cries were the mode, and Erasmus would not use them.” [50]

“If he had been willing to compromise, to be adopted as champion by one side or the other, he could have had praise, money and safety in either camp. He would not compromise. He continued to the end his striving to see clearly and judge justly, in all that turmoil and bitterness.” [51]

“He cared about education – for all, including the poor, and women.” [51]

“His stringent honesty shows the only way to Christian unity, and indeed to any kind of enduring peace between groups of people.” [51]

“The sum of our religion is peace and unanimity, but these can scarcely stand unless we define as little as possible.” [51]

Church as hidden society of those who respond to grace. [52]

He believed the Protestant sense of predestination to be monstrous. [52]

“... a heart-warming refusal to be tied to logical consequences when logic went against common sense and justice.” [52]

“... he knew that a totally ‘purified’ Church is not possible, and the attempt to enforce one leads to spiritual pride, persecution, censoriousness and loss of Christian peace and love.” [52]

“... the church needs to be inclusive, not exclusive. Inclusiveness is not laxity, it is simply a realistic view of the human nature which God loves and works to redeem.” [52]

Pope Leo wrote Erasmus, inviting him to Rome – a year before Luther’s theses, but the letter arrived too late. What if? [53]

Dorothy Day was also “concerned for the integrity of the Catholic experience.” [53]

She is “a new kind of member for the Catholic team, one who could not have appeared except in our own time.” [54]

“Dorothy Day’s particular combination of traditional ‘charitable’ labour and political witness, united in one consistent, uncompromising, and well argued Christian commitment, causing acute embarrassment to both Church and State.” [54]

Temperamentally dissatisfied with denouncing social evils, “She discovered in herself the need to identify with the poor.” [54]

“The only way to love was to share, and that meant smashing the barriers of fastidiousness and fear.” [54]

“She had an attitude to poverty and the poor which is a familiar part of the Catholic enterprise, and as such she is a good representative member of the ever-renewed team of its leaders.” [54-55]

“... a strange vein of earthly common sense which is not more shocked by the worldly timidity of some bishops than by the violence or petty dishonesty of drunks.” [55]

“The Church she joined consists of a very usual collection of human beings, with all the possibilities of weakness and self-deception that implies, but one with a doctrine which continues uncompromisingly to state truths about the dignity of human beings, the duty to love them, and the face of their eternal destiny which nothing can destroy except their own free choice.” [55]

“... a whole body of articulate thought about social issues, poverty and want, love, death and resurrection was available to her, to give the force of centuries to the power of her own inward conviction and personal experience.” [55]

“She had become part of a great enterprise, to which she was to contribute a new clarity and a new direction, just because she was part of a whole – not a whole which was a uniform lump, but a living and varied and uneven thing, growing and irrepressible and unpredictable.” [55]

Peter Maurin “supplied Dorothy with a much-needed intellectual and cultural leaven for the rather stodgy American Catholicism which he was valiantly trying to combine with her communist idealism and her passion for the cause of the workers. [55]

“... radical tradition of French Catholicism.” [56]

“... hospices for the homeless, like the medieval ones.” [56]

Peter Maurin: “in the Catholic Church one never needs any money to start a good work.” [56]

The one cent price of the newspaper: “... a symbol of the apparently lunatic but absolutely practical methods of the whole movement.” [56]

“... she has established a style and an ideal which are in the direct line of those who have chosen voluntary poverty as the necessary way of bearing witness to the presence of Christ in the poorest and most neglected.” [56-57]

She analysed with passion and idealism “all the things that happened to poor people which the better off prefer to forget.” [57]

“The special quality of the Catholic Worker movement lay in the attitude of the workers to their guests, the genuine fellow feeling, the total acceptance of each one as a person to be respected and served.” [57]

The Catholic Worker “is in some ways the perfection of response to the Gospel... Its uncompromising adherence to the strictest Gospel poverty and openness, sharing the cast-off clothes which are collected for the poor, living as they live, never turning away even the lazy and dishonest, is the kind of splendor that the Catholic enterprise is always capable of revealing, at the very moment when it seems to have sunk out of sight in a fog of pietistic worldliness.” [57]

“... intransigent pacifism... need to work the land for food and people, not profit...” [57]

“The Catholic Worker was pacifist, agrarian, egalitarian, not because these things suddenly seemed necessary (though they did) but because these are obvious Christian principles developed and spelled out over centuries in the radical Catholic tradition in very precise terms.” [57-58]

“She emphasized the oldest teachings, those of evangelical poverty, of the mystical identification of the Christians with the poor man or woman, who is in turn the poor Christ, emptied of glory for love of human kind, sharing the suffering and despair of the lowest and most abused.” [58]

Each member of the Team was one-sided, emphasizing one aspect of the whole. [58]

The part of the enterprise in which Dorothy Day “labours and which she symbolizes is the one which has to endure whatever else may be destroyed, and it is an element without which the rest is useless and rapidly corrupted.” [58]

Von Hügel “is the most nearly catholic of the group” – but he knew, as did they all, “that the aspect of the Catholic enterprise which Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement represents is ultimately the essential and specifically Christian undertaking.” [58]

“... the *costingness* of faith.” [58]

“a soul that is... dominated... by such fastidiousness.... Is as yet only hovering round the precinct of Christianity... a deeply *costingly* realized Christianity... a very hideous thing: the full, truly free, beauty of Christ completely liberates us from this miserable bondage.” [59]

“Catholicism has to be catholic, open not only to the highest but to the lowest, the repulsive, the self-hating; it can never be a cult of the beautiful, which is why it is not for the religious connoisseurs or the seekers after fulfillment. In Eliot’s phrase, the cost of belonging to this team, in even the humblest capacity, is ‘not less than everything.’” [59]

TWO: The Model

“This chapter is about one time and place at which it seemed that the Catholic enterprise was about to achieve its aim of creating the kingdom of heaven on earth, drawing all aspects of human life into one great and holy Catholic thing. This time was the twelfth century in Europe and it was Mother church’s

great moment, but also a moment at which the cooperation between the two sisters was the closest.” [60]

A model “cannot begin to do justice to the thing itself [but] it does enable the viewer to carry essential proportions and shapes in his or her head, and so interpret more easily the huge reality.” [60]

“... the twelfth century is a unique and marvelous cultural phenomenon.”

“The medieval enterprise sought to build the City of God in the city of man, and to do so in detail and at every level.” [61]

“... the high point, the peak of hope and enthusiasm and real achievement, before the inevitable disillusion and corruption – slow, uneven, but thorough – began to show itself unmistakably.” [61]

“Not only heaven and earth were separated, but politics were split from scholarship, reason from feeling, the market from the Church, science from morality, and ultimately home from work and love from everything except family and sex relationships.” [61]

We need “to realize the vision that underlay the achievement... that sense of the oneness, the interdependence, of all created things. [61]

“It is the lack of this vision which has made advances in science and technology a source of both actual and potential destruction. [61-62]

Through the ‘dark ages,’ the Church “discovered a cultural as well as a religious identity.” [62]

The Church became “the *only* guardian of scholarship and civilized standards, the influence that directed pagan creativity and craftsmanship into new and original channels and produced an explosion of beauty in Romanesque churches, metal and enamel work, sculpture and illumination.” [62]

Fusion of culture/religion, and of politics/religion. [62]

Born of that experience was the assumption “that it was proper and inevitable for the Church to shape the whole pattern of human life into as godly a mould as might be.” [62]

For about two centuries “The Catholic Church had (or thought it had) the means and opportunity to create the ideal human commonwealth.” [63]

“The sense of newness, of limitless possibility, of optimism and sheer exuberance which comes through in writing of the twelfth century makes what we have learned to call the ‘Renaissance’ seem brilliant but burdened, gorgeous yet neurotically self-absorbed and afraid.” [63]

“The medieval enterprise was the truly Titanic attempt to create an integrity of body and soul, time and eternity, the particular and the universal. And the understanding of this is not just an interesting historical divertissement; it is vital to the psychic health of the Western world.” [63]

“... we need, as a culture, to realize what our origins are, what are the attitudes and aspirations that shaped our inheritance, and so to realize where the growth went wrong. Then we can learn from both.” [63-64]

Jung: “everything we think is the fruit of the Middle Ages.” [64]

“... we are discovering that the Middle Ages had some ideas and attitudes whose loss has caused, and is still causing, terrible damage.” [64]

We need an “imaginative recovery” – two key words: ‘monk’ and ‘Gothic’ [64]

Abbot Suger of St. Denis supervised construction of the first great Gothic building. [65]

“in Suger we are challenged by a conception of human life as a vast variety, yet all drawn together in the service of God, and that service, in turn, expressed in visible, tangible forms, forms explicitly intended to catch the heart and harness the wayward spirit in an experience of awe and longing.” [65]

He was concerned with symbolism as well as beauty; the building intended to uplift and instruct. [66]

“... no dividing line between aesthetics and spirituality, not between these and the details of fundraising.” [66]

Theophilus's book *The Various Arts* details the decoration of churches. [67]

He encourages the craftsman “to pray for the gifts of the Spirit to assist his work.” [68]

A vision “of human workmanship empowered by the Spirit and leading back to Him.” [68]

There was a danger in this exuberance of gorgeousness – “of pride and distraction, of valuing beauty for its own sake.” [69]

The Cistercian reform fled from that danger, provided “an emphatic counterpoise.” [69]

“Catholicism was re-thought and renewed, freshly motivated and infused with a rather stern vigor.” [69]

“The reform was an attempt to recover the original Benedictine simplicity. But because it was in violent reaction against what Bernard felt were the aberrations of the great monasteries, the puritan emphasis was very strong.” [69]

Cluniac reform had been aristocratic, emphasizing scholarship and the splendor of liturgical worship. [70]

“Bernard denounced these princely, elegant, cultured gentlemen in monks' robes, and demanded a return to the simplicity of the Gospel, to a Golden Age of monastic perfection that never was.” [70]

Cistercians depended on the land, concentrated on making it productive, and led “a tremendous leap forward in agriculture.” [70]

“The monastic enterprise, then, was unbalanced repeatedly in two different directions: towards comfortable worldliness and power-seeking, and towards a puritanical ideal which in practice could not be sustained without damage.” [71]

Reformers continually called for a return to the excellence of earlier monasticism. [71]

“Early in the sixth century a man named Benedict went into the remote countryside to find solitude and a hermit’s life, and, as so often happens, found that others wanted the same thing and wanted him to direct the affair.” [71]

“He drew on older rules but adapted them to the conditions he saw around him. What he saw was a widespread anarchy of competing barbarian kingdoms encroaching on dwindling pockets of remaining Roman power and ‘classical’ culture.” [72]

In this situation, places of stability and order were necessary to enable the pursuit of salvation. [72]

The ordered periods of prayer throughout the day are intended to bring the intervening mundane tasks to the level of prayer as well. [72]

“The scholar and the peasant work side by side as brothers.” [72]

“... this way of life was ideally suited to survive, because each monastery was self-contained not only in necessities of life but in government.” [73]

“When it worked, which it did surprisingly often and well, it was a way of life that provided for nearly all aspects of human personality.” [73]

“The Shakers, like the monks and nuns at the high point of the monastic achievement... produced beautiful things because they had managed to bring the whole of life into a balance – precarious, as history shows, but real and splendid.” [74]

When the monastic system worked, “it provided a framework of thought about life, its purpose and its priorities, which was available to everyone. So the monastic ideal provided a kind of touchstone by which to test the validity of domestic and economic life.” [75]

Medieval enthusiasm for law: Medieval jurists “tried to order human life in ways intended to be both efficient from the point of view of keeping the social system in working order, and also – much more difficult – truly *just* to each human being. Each person was considered not merely as a political unit but as someone with a spiritual dimension, having inherent rights and duties and an eternal destiny.” [75]

“The strange dialectic of medieval judicial theory and practice shows the struggle to disentangle justice from custom, might from right, social or political status from inherent human value.” [76]

This passion for law sought to overcome the violence and vengeance by which social life tended otherwise to be ordered. [79]

“The basis of order was conscience, to the mind of the medieval jurist, and human law could not overrule divine justice.” [79]

“... the inseparability of private conscience and public duty in the medieval ideal, even if practice often fell short of it. The point is, there *was* an ideal.” [79]

John of Salisbury held that it is right to kill a tyrant; Aquinas argued that removal of a tyrant is not seditious. [80]

The truly absolute monarch was a product of Renaissance political pragmatism rather than of medieval respect for royalty. [80]

“Many jurists and theologians were of the opinion that a republic was a more suitable form of government for a Christian state than a monarchy, and the independent urban republics of Italy were there to prove that this was a perfectly good alternative.” [80]

“The variety in legal and political structure was enormous...” [80]

High degree of self-government in villages; many towns and villages elected ‘consuls.’ [81]

Monarchy often preserved the real liberty of the subject better, because it prevented power from concentrating in the hands of rich merchants. [81]

“A King, properly kept in his place by the Church, had a better chance of controlling families grown too powerful, whether by nobility or wealth, than an elected body.” [81]

The last and strongest manifestation of the power of the ‘people’ was found in the corporate power of the trade guilds.” [81]

Violence, corruption, and harsh punishment were present, but they were “recognized as evil and denounced; and the denunciation was not regarded as ‘disloyal’ to State or party, as can happen when the only criterion is the law itself and the power to enforce it.” [81]

Despite the obvious practical inequality of the sexes, “the law protected women vigorously.” [82]

The plans for towns included hospitals and almshouses for the old, which were to be ‘free of all tax.’ [82]

“The care of the poor was regarded not as an optional extra but as an essential, and the responsibility for it was put squarely not only on the local government but individually on all those who were not poor themselves.” [82]

Judicial torture and the Inquisition “are indelibly black marks on the medieval period. [83]

Horrible physical punishment was an inheritance from the Roman system. [83]

Medieval torture “was hedged with all kinds of limitations and warnings against causing serious or lasting harm, and required the presence of impartial witnesses to secure this.” [83]

When absolute Renaissance rulers acquired absolute control, these limitations were lost. [83]

In some instances, courts inquisition were established partly because popular panic over heresy had led to mob violence, without even trial. [83]

The Inquisition became a monstrous thing, but it was modeled on the methods of secular Italian courts. [83]

“Ironically, it was the great surge of Utopian enthusiasm, the longing for ‘perfect’ and democratic State in which the welfare of the whole community should be guaranteed, which made everyone ultra-sensitive to any possible threat to the social, political, or religious order. [83]

In the thirteenth century, Bishops’ councils took steps to rein in the Inquisition, followed by reforms promulgated by Boniface VIII. [84]

“For the twelfth century Catholic enterprise, law was an area of discovery and ‘invention’”... “a genuine creative effort, part of the attempt to make a whole, ‘universal’ human life-style governed by Christian principles.” [84]

“... there was strong propaganda in favour of a good education for women, because women were free human being, and human beings have a need for and right to whatever wisdom is available.” [85]

“... the inclusion of women in this search for wisdom was a part of the irrepressible idealism and hope which thought of the perfection of the Kingdom of God not as a metaphor or an interior experience, but as a concrete possibility. In the kingdom, all are equal and all are wise, and learning embraces every aspect of reality, since God made it all.” [85]

The post-Roman collapse of order and subsequent violence led to a gloomy view of human existence. “But with Abelard and other teachers of the twelfth century a new mood of hope, a new emphasis on God’s conquering love and compassion, began to displace this.” [86]

Because of belief in Creation, everything could be profitably studied. “The aim... was ‘catholic.’ The desire was to discover a unifying design in all of life, to discern God’s plan for the perfection of human and all created existence, from the nature and uses of herbs to the theology of angels.” [86]

“The desire for wholeness and unity led to a fear of anything that broke the whole.” [87]

Conjunction of Church and State eventually politicized the Church and became dangerous. But it initially also assured more administrative concern for justice, kept a check of greedy exploitation of people, and restricted warfare. [88]

But evil crept in and “turned the structure of the Church into a bureaucracy more concerned with its own wealth and prestige than with the Kingdom of God.” [88]

“Yet perhaps the enterprise was worth while all the same. For a while, men’s and women’s lives unfolded not only through the natural seasons but in each season were also caught up into the succession of the liturgical year. Medieval popular songs link spring and resurrection, the darkness of winter and the light of the new-born Saviour at Christmas. St. John’s day was mid-summer day; pagan and Christian symbols became indistinguishable. Harvest thanksgiving

blended with the old fertility rites, and the Mother of Jesus presided over the gathering of the Earth Mother's plenty. Wild flowers acquired names of saints as well as of the ailment they helped to cure – St. John's Wort, Lady's Bed-straw, Star of Bethlehem, as well as Lung-wort, Eye-bright and Pile-wort. The bells that called the monks to prayer called the labourers to the fields, and in the fields men bowed their heads, perhaps perfunctorily, at the sacring bell of the Mass, when God was made Bread again, heaven and earth joined inextricably. In the churches the judgement paintings warned horribly of like damnation; yet the carvings of corbel, hammer beams and misericord were delicate, observant of man and beast, funny and sad, robust, awed, and sometimes extremely secular. The 'doom' on the walls might proclaim a God of wrath, but the newer, gentle Mother and child proclaimed a different message; and the taut crucified figure, bowed with grief for man's pain, was a God of compassion, and of hope for burdened people." [88-89]

"Indeed, there was altogether more scope for eccentricity than we allow in our time." [89]

Hermits, pilgrims, artisans. [89]

Little room for squeamishness of prudery. [90]

"They lived easily with mystery, because so much was mysterious, whereas we are suspicious of the unknown and inclined to equate it with the non-existent." [90]

"... never since have we been able to see the Catholic premise so clearly spelled out in a pattern of living." [91]

THREE: Unknown Factors

The unknown factors "live on the frontiers of experience"... and "are not fully describable except in symbol and myth." [92]

John Steinbeck experienced in mid-life a need for some 'unknown factor,' "which is essential to full human life, yet for which our culture makes no provision." [93]

He wanted a new direction, a Quest, and came to be convinced that modern readers needed the Arthurian myth. [93]

"'Unknown factors' are disturbing to the orderly mind and dangerous at the best of times, and those forces in the Catholic enterprise which, especially since the seventeenth century, favour the well-lit, the rational, the comforting and explainable and tidy, have not been happy with the vast twilight realm of mysticism and miracle which borders so obviously on magic, superstition, fantasy and even madness." [94]

"Spiritual imponderables" are affirmed by doctrine: New Testament and miracles and Biblical visions make it hard to deny the possibility of them on other places and times. [94]

To write his *Mort d'Arthur*, Steinbeck chose to live in Glastonbury, "which has been a holy place since people first came to it maybe forty thousand years ago." [96]

"Some places have seemed, and still seem, to be meeting points between the worlds." [96]

Glastonbury became “gradually and increasingly associated with the great Arthurian myth, which is the only complete and original myth to emerge from Western Christendom.” [96]

“... the spirit of Arthur, who in time had come to symbolize the best of Catholic Christendom, but also a certain unclassifiable spirituality...” [98]

Two aspects of the Arthurian myth are important in understanding the unknown factors which hold together the Catholic Christian experience: (1) persistence of the myth in the subconscious mind of the West; (2) the Grail, which links the myth to wider experience of mystics and visionaries. [98]

“... the great succession of poets who have found in the Arthurian myth the supreme and satisfying language to express their experience of the meaning of life.” [100]

The Catholic thing exists “on the borderland of two worlds. It must strive to include not only all the conscious areas of human life, personal and communal, but all the dark, peculiar, unexplained areas that open out into the totally ‘other’ world in which even the mystics are surely temporary guests, yet which is, finally, the most important of all. [100-101]

“Life in this borderland is paradoxical and off – but, full of contradictions and dangers.” [101]

St. Patrick is associated with Glastonbury. Improbable but fitting, as Celtic Christian culture is “startlingly different” from the Roman model. [101]

Celtic Christians lived “in strong consciousness of that indefinable ‘something else’ in religion and life which is symbolized by Glastonbury.” [101]

“Celtic culture, in some respects, was a Christianity of the region between the worlds.” [102]

“The Celtic imagination was much concerned with places – hills, rivers, woods and springs – in which dwelt spirits of greater and lesser power.” [102]

Rome drew sharp distinctions between pagan and Christian; Celtic religious sense accepted “a link between the everyday world and the ‘unknown factors.’” [102]

“it was a church that was flexible, devoted, and produced saints and scholars as a meadow grows daisies. It was a person-centered church, growing around heroes and heroines, saints and sages, rather than within the pre-planned jurisdiction of a man chosen for that job by a central authority.” [103]

“... but then Rome is not the Church and – to its chagrin – never was.” [103]

Celtic culture was characterized by a “delight in adventure.” Unlike stable Benedictines, Celtic monks “were individualistic, even eccentric, full of curiosity about everything under the sun (or the moon) and extremely mobile.” [103]

“... full of irrepressible delight in learning and craft and beauty.” [103-104]

“... they were spiritually linked to the older, looser and very ascetic tradition of the ‘desert Fathers.’” [104]

Celtic monasticism spread throughout much of Europe, and its spirituality “fed into the main streams of European culture” and then to America. [105]

“... the lost Celtic Catholicism was uniquely important in its embracing quality, its feeling for the presence of the divine in natural beauty and in the unexpected, its single-minded devotion to the quest for god, and its sheer wealth of symbol and fantasy.” [105]

This Celtic culture largely yielded to Roman Catholicism, and to Methodism which “distrusted its predecessor and all the marks of the faeries and the old heroes.” [105]

But: “It lives in the stories, and the poems, whose themes became would up with the Arthurian themes.” [106]

“... haunted by inhabitants of the borderland world, talking animals, wood and water spirits, magicians and enchanted flowers.” [106]

Tales of travel – e.g. St. Brendan – are background to tales of knightly adventure and questing. [106]

“... a culture whose religious sense was remarkable for its human tenderness, and its delicate love of natural beauty and all living things.” [106]

While the culture and spirituality had a passion for natural beauty, strangely “this earthly yet ascetic spirituality... found expressing in entirely non-naturalistic art.” [108]

The poetry is filled with reference to natural beauty, but the illuminations, metal work, stone carving “are made up of elaborately intertwined ‘strap work,’ coils within coils, where fabulous birds and animals crawl, never seen on earth.” [108]

“Perhaps the strangeness of a visible world in which God was as near as the sparkle of the sun on the wave top could only be expressed in these charged and vibrant patterns and strange beasts, linked to the older symbols of pagan worship, yet in their sparseness and uncompromising clarity expressing the unworldly and aspiring thrust of Christian Celtic adventure, which must be hindered by no earthly thing.” [108]

The Roman church system flourished because it brought peace and order to warring nations, and “because it established a network of consistent moral and legal and religious influence – clear, strong, reliable.” [108]

It eventually discredited itself by clinging to a power system no longer needed. [108]

“... it may be that in our time – odd as it seems – the decentralized, person-centered, community-minded and non-territorial type of Church makes some sense once more.” [108-109]

And our most vital link to that lost Celtic past is the Arthurian legends, which “put out fresh shoots of story.” [109]

Glastonbury was the meeting of two worlds, Roman and Celtic.

English kings claimed to be doing in some fashion what Arthur did – “claiming to do the Catholic thing, trying to discover the varied realities of human life – social and political and mystical as well – as expressions of the eternal kingdom.” [109]

Glastonbury as “the place where the essential spirit of Celtic Christianity was somehow felt to reside.” [109]

“Arthur... and his court and his knights and the Quest for the Grail form the myth which best expresses the longing and hope for a perfect Kingdom, the City of God among men.” [110]

“The gathering of the Round Table, the adventures, the intrigues, express in symbolic language the human and Christian struggle to live with integrity on earth in the sight of heaven, even though it is a very vulnerable and brief achievement, flawed at its heart by pride and passion. It can be done... there can be a human city which is worthy of its heavenly archetype. But the poets know that it will fail, the King will be betrayed and will die – and yet not finally. There is no absolute end; the hope endures.” [110]

Arthurian myth “only finds its meaning in the sacramental and integral terms of Catholic theology. Glastonbury and Arthur are the rendezvous for the Catholic enterprise at the very limit of conscious articulation.” [110]

The Grail only became linked to the Arthurian theme in the twelfth century. [110]

Two reasons for this link: [111]

1. Crusades: enthusiasm for the liberation of the Holy Places from the hands of people who did not acknowledge Christ as the Son of God. [111]
2. The sacramental sense, “the perception of the divine as inherent and verifiable in material things.” [111]

“This is something most of us have lost, but to the twelfth century it was an everyday and vital experience.” [111]

Eucharistic controversies of the age resulted from “this hunger for the most precise visible sign of God’s presence among men.” [111]

The Chalice of the Last Supper supremely expressed both these enthusiasms. [111]

The Grail as touchstone of two worlds, as “a magical source of delicious food and the locus of ultimate visionary enlightenment” had preChristian Celtic roots. [112]

But the specifically Christian Cup eclipsed all the others. [112]

In modern renderings, it becomes privatized (e.g., Tennyson), and ceased to be an experience of community – as piety became a personal search for God. [112]

The Grail and the Passion of Christ were inextricably bound together, with the figure of the Mother of God linked to them: “These three are at the core of Catholic spirituality from that time on.” [113]

“... the vessel called the Grail was, in some sense Mary, the vessel of grace, the God-bearer, and that the Passion of her Son, as well as his Incarnation, is presented through her (as woman and vessel) to the believer.” [113-114]

Grail as “the symbol of the deeper, mystical experience of the divine which comes to only a few, yet is essential to the spiritual health of the whole enterprise.” [114]

Contemplata aliis tradere: the unspeakable things must, somehow, be shared with others –
“as Mary had to give her Son, mysteriously and silently conceived, to the struggle and
agony of bodily life and death.” [114]

“The integrity of divine and human expressed in the body of Mary shows the need for the soul, seeking
divine vision, to come to it through this ultimate humanness.” [114]

“... the Catholic tradition conceives of a divinely *transformed* body” – not a *disembodied* spirituality.
[114-115]

“But the fact is that human beings are, in part, ‘crudely material’ and it is at this point, in this
inescapably material framework, that God has to touch people, or not at all.” [115]

“The ‘crudely materialistic’ imagination of Catholic Christianity has always shocked people, and it can be
very repulsive; but at least it reckons with reality, and it is because of this unrepentant earthiness that
there is the possibility in the Catholic tradition of keeping an unbroken chain from everyday experience,
through the ‘off-beat’ and peculiar, or ‘psychic’ experience, to mystical visions and finally to image-less
mystical experience.” [115]

“... so long as a proper proportion is preserved, none are ruled out of human growth and some
normally co-exist in the same individual, though for one person to experience all four stages is
extremely unusual. (St. Francis of Assisi was one such exceptional person.)” [115]

“Only certain people see the Grail, yet their attainment of it depends on their membership in a whole
group.”

Arthur’s Knights as ‘church,’ dedicated to the common good and supporting each other in the
Quest. [115]

“In a Church of very mixed human beings, the myth is saying, a church where there is self-deceit,
weakness, disordered feeling and thinking and self-love even at the heart of religious
consciousness, there is always the possibility of the highest holiness, so long as the doctrine is
‘true and honourable,’ and so long as the ‘City’ is not split up.” [116]

In the red, the city sleeps, but can be reawakened. [116]

“The myth of Arthur and the Grail is the myth of Catholicism which is always trying to
create a Camelot that will not be rent by sin, but can only fail and try again, and then fail,
but never give up because the achievement of the Grail is certain, in the end.” [116]

A related strand of European awareness of the unknown factors in life is the Romance tradition, with its
“carefully developed ethos of courtesy, of chivalry, of devotion to the sovereign Lady.” [116]

Sexuality is so ambivalent that it has always been an area of conflict for Christians. [117]

The failure of Mother Church in this regard drove men and women to explore for
themselves, with the help of Sophia. [117]

Medieval practicality with regard to sex “meant that all speculation about erotic emotion, its
meaning and nature, took place outside any Christian framework.” [117]

There was an emerging awareness that sexual passion – with its obvious links to the transformation of conversion and mystical illumination – “must certainly be a mode of divine presence.” [117]

The ‘place’ where exploration of this could proceed was “in the borderline area, the area of the not quite earthly and not quite heavenly, the realm of Arthur and the Celtic twilight generally.” [117-118]

There was “an odd convergence of appropriate people at a suitable time and place.” [118]

Chretien de Troyes “cast the whole ‘Arthurian’ myth in chivalric form and made it express the ideals of courtly love as well as of religious aspiration. [118]

Romance culture “is an important part of the cultural development of the Catholic enterprise.” [118]

It has similarities to the Cathars. “Both movements arose from a disillusion with the increasing worldliness of the Church structure and of churchmen.” (e.g., Warrior bishops with little or no faith fought each other for lands and wealth” – and the monastic abuses that led to the reform of Citeaux.) [119]

The Church had provoked a longing for ‘otherness,’ but did not satisfy it: “longing for a purer, more interior kind of spirituality.” [119]

The Romance movement sought spiritual liberation through ecstatic experience of sexual passion – usually unconsummated. [120]

It was the passion that transformed, the emotion that mattered. [120]

Crucial is the fact that the Grail is material: it is a material object; it feeds, and heals physical illness. [121]

It is “concerned with the whole concept of incarnation, and closely linked, therefore, to the body and person of Mary.” [121]

“The Grail... has to do with the especially Christian notion of God *in matter*, in the woman especially who has always symbolized the earth, the bodily but unconscious aspects of human life.” [121]

“The transcendent spirit comes to human beings in material form, but in order to discover and partake of this transcendence a long quest, a purification, an Adventure of the fabulous Celtic type, is required. It is concerned with bodies and souls, with human behavior as well as devotion, and this is shown by the preoccupation with purity of life, compassion, honour and fidelity in the questing knights.” [121]

The great mysteries of all religious traditions converge at the highest point, but “Each grows out of, and belongs to, his or her own tradition. Each was formed by it, and without that formation would not have reached such heights of vision.” [122]

“Christian mysticism is rooted in a tradition that sees the final freedom not as a liberation from the material but as a transformation of the material, which has in it already the needs of eternal life.” [122]

Creation itself is to be transformed, not set aside.” [122]

“... there is an earthy quality about most of the great Catholic mystics, and an astonishing capacity for combining hard, practical work, profound and tender friendship, and efficient organization with the highest mystical experience.” [123]

Eckhart, e.g., stretched language “to the limits of conceptual clarity (and a little beyond),” and so has been often misunderstood within and outside the Church, but was firmly Christ-centered. [123]

Catherine of Siena “used metaphor and poetic language to convey the inexpressible union of her soul with its Bridegroom, a union which draws her to involve herself passionately with nursing the sick and with the politics of her day.” [123]

The Cloud of Unknowing (14th century): experience of God is a darkness, “an ‘unknowing’ of the intellect in which only the blind will push stubbornly toward its love. [124]

Walter Hilton’s Ladder of Perfection combines an “uncompromising demand for entry into the ‘darkness’ with a homely common sense concerning human motives and behaviours, and an insistence that not everyone is called to this ‘Way’ and that there are very good people whose calling is in the ‘Active Way.’” [124]

“... the straightforward and sensitive psychology of a school of mysticism which reaches to heaven but knows that the quest begins much lower down.” [124]

Teresa of Avila guided the Carmelite reform “with humor, ruthless will, and enormous compassion. She knew people’s weaknesses, including her own, and pointed them out with vigour, but she could be infinitely gentle with the weak.” [125]

“Teresa fought and adventured in search of the Grail, found it, and led others on the same quest.” [125]

The Counter-reformation feared all emotional, irrational types of spirituality. [126]

“... the polar and paradoxical shape of Catholic mystical awareness.” [126]

Rose of Lima... “slept on a bed of stones, and treated her body hideously in passionate identification with the suffering of Christ and of the Indians, oppressed by her own people. She nursed the poor, had the gift of communion with insects and animals, and had visions of towering beauty.” [126-127]

Visions and miracles “provide headaches for conscientious bishops.” [127]

“But visions are obvious ways in which the ‘unknown factors’ in human and religious life break through the surface of every day, and they arouse a tremendous response.” [127]

“... well-attested healings should not really present a problem if we take seriously the premise of Christian faith, that man is body-soul, and matter is also in the process of being redeemed.” [127]

“Magic is part of life, and the fringe of this dark wood opens onto the shores of that sea beyond which, symbolically, are the blessed lands of Eternity.” [128]

“The world of politics and law, of organized religion, of daily work and war, of human love and grief, is inextricably one with the worlds of plants and animals and their spirits, of fairy beings good and bad, of high chivalry and demonic powers, of the supreme experience of God and the intermediate regions of visions and miracle. The Grail draws something from all of these and centres them in the Catholic sense of the Eucharist on *the* frontier post between earth and heaven.” [128-129]

Wisdom in this regard is “a kind of light-hearted humility, full of wonder at the strangeness of being human.” [129]

Pilgrimages: “The seeking out of holy places with actual geographical locations is a reminder which we cannot ignore that the human quest involves the whole person and is not a merely mental affair.” [130]

FOUR: The Workers

“An enterprise that is trying to be universal cannot be elitist.” [131]

“... the rather startling (but perfectly verifiable) fact that Catholicism is popular not only in the sense that it has always been a religion of ‘the people’ but in the sense that the people *make* it. [131]

Theologians then incorporate insights gained by popular experience into Christian self-understanding.” [131]

George Lindbeck once “compared the relationship between Catholic and Protestant churches to that between an occupied country and its exiled freedom fighters” – who have tried to re-establish their ‘native country’ abroad, and forgotten that the reason for their existence is to return to their homeland. [132]

The fundamental premise is that the homeland is not constituted by its rulers, but “is more credibly represented by its constant popular culture and traditions.” [133]

“But in all ways ‘the people’ are the ground from which everything in a society grows.” [134]

“The people endure, waiting for better times and enjoying them when they come, singing their own songs, making their own jokes, praying their own prayers and passing on their own bits of often cynical wisdom, learned from living and obstinately surviving in one land, one city, one tradition.” [134]

“The Catholic thing is, and has always been a ‘popular’ thing, a thing of the people, shaped and coloured by the continuity of popular cultures, whether of peasants or urban proletariat.” [135]

The Church’s “strength and stability, its sheer, obstinate capacity for survival, have come from the poor.” [135]

The poor = “the people whose small livelihood is directly dependent on what they can grow or even, those who are not cushioned against change and need and political oppression by wealth or privilege.” [135]

“Tradition and custom matter, for they give a sense of identity, a self-respect with which to face a future on whose kindness there can be little reliance.” [136]

People's social/economic needs present them with definite problems and possibilities, and these strongly influence the development of theology. [136]

For immigrant Catholics in the U.S., e.g., the Church was the "only one reassuring, recognizable thing around" – and people set up their own schools, hospitals, orphanages, and other necessary institutions. [138]

"The Catholic people created nations within the nation, having had to do so in order to survive, not only psychologically but even politically and economically." [138]

Beginning with the Irish, Catholics won acceptance in American society. Clergy encouraged patriotism, because "Catholics owed their newly won prosperity to the freedom of the American way of life." [139]

The Church's traditional alliance with the *Ancien Regime* had itself emerged out of social conditions, but had then proceeded to become theological assumptions, divorced from such real conditions. [140-141]

The American experience questioned those assumptions, and "theology caught up with what was actually going on." [141]

This happened because American Catholics had "experienced a new kind of Catholic life... and found that it worked." [142]

Ghetto Catholicism: "Religion is a curious mixture... and one of its functions has always been to validate the necessary life-style of a society, to reinforce cultural and moral norms and attitudes, and generally to give people a sense that the way of life which the community has evolved for its survival is a good one..." [142]

In schools especially, but also "in all kinds of societies and movements," American Catholics were helped "to do, as Catholics, things that other Americans were doing." [142-143]

"... helped to form a pride in being Catholic and American, and to develop a sense of the basic unity of the two." [143]

"Patriotism and Catholicism were one glorious purpose." [143]

The Catholic ghetto "broke down once and for all the notion that the Church could only operate fully under one kind of political regime." [143]

"... the American experience offered a fresh self-understanding which later enabled the Church to realize a new kind of mission in a war-torn world, a world suffering from extremes of riches and poverty and subjected to every variety of government from exotic neo-feudalism to communism." [143]

In the early post-Vatican II years, there was a renewal of interest in retrieving ethnic, religious traditions. It was "a domestic, family movement, and hardly touched church structures." [144]

This enthusiasm has largely faded, but it had helped American Catholics "to feel real links with the past, and with Catholics in other countries." [144]

A... a deep longing for roots in a world thought of as more stable and 'natural' than the industrialized life most people know." [144]

Most such movements – self-conscious, domestic, liturgical Catholic piety; agrarianism – have not endured, due to “a failure to understand the way a culture operates,” i.e., “a particular culture works the way it does because it has to.” [144]

Moral emphases, which receive religious validation, e.g., are “those which underpin the economy.” [144]

Revived Catholic customs/rituals “didn’t really belong to their secular culture,” but they did belong partially, at least, in the separate Catholic culture, and “worked as community-building experiences, just as they had in their original settings.” [145]

“Religion, as an understanding of the meaning of life and death, expresses itself through things that affect the actual experience of life and death. Local identity and communal feeling are among the most important of these, especially so in a peasant culture in which life means life on this bit of land, and no other.” [145]

Peasant communities, e.g., tend to regard strangers with great caution, if not hostility – and thus, only with great difficulty, can embrace the Christian obligation of charity to strangers. [145]

The Trapp family embodied peasant values and strength. [146]

Maria “brought to the aristocratic household a strange, solid, country Catholicism, with its sense of the importance of a stable family community, love of the land, and a celebration of both in yearly rituals and customs in which religious and secular are so intertwined that it becomes impossible to tell clearly which is which.” [146]

Singing folk songs has “a remarkable uniting effect on the group that habitually uses them.” [146]

The family’s one ambition “was to have a bit of land of their own,” which they eventually bought in Vermont, where they adapted an Austrian, peasant life-style. [147]

The family lived its faith in alien conditions – both in resisting Hitler and in the U.S. – by sustaining that faith through traditional peasant culture. [147]

The Trapp family story shows “the way in which a Catholic people both shapes and is shaped by the Catholic enterprise.” [147]

Two levels of religion: (1) first order “related to particular needs, fears and structures” (which easily becomes superstition); and (2) higher order “over-arching religion [which] is needed to make a coherent meaning-pattern out of the elaborate network of pragmatic charms, folk-wisdom, pagan survivals and the sheer conservatism of peasant populations.” [147]

Catholicism “has been remarkable well-adapted to the needs of peasant cultures at both these levels.” [147]

But below a certain level of poverty, “the thing doesn’t work” – beyond this point, “a religious culture is no longer relevant to experienced reality.” [148]

Village violence was real, but peasant culture “has a remarkable ability to contain and modify violent behavior, keeping it within recognized bounds.” [148]

The religious culture is part of their ordering and regulating system, even if it is clearly recognizable and has a ‘place,’ and is therefore less generally disruptive.” [148]

Middle class efforts to retrieve such a sense of the sacramentality of daily life “tend to become a decoration added to the real necessities of a culture incompatible with the peasant one.” [148]

Such efforts did, though, “help to show up the unhuman values of a newer culture which seemed incapable of finding sacramental expression at all.” [148]

Nazi rise to power: “Hardship and oppressive rulers are no novelty to peasant populations, and traditionally they submit because they have no choice.” [149]

Franz Jägerstätter “refused the draft... because, as a Catholic, he held that Germany was engaged in a war of aggression, which was clearly unjust in the Catholic definition.” [150]

His fellow villagers reacted with contempt and hostility. [150]

“He loved his family, his land, his home, but he had no choice, he felt, but to obey his conscience.” [150]

“To be Catholic must mean, if it has any meaning at all, that Christian religion is not the affair of an elite. It must, somehow, embrace humankind in at least a minimal willingness to take the gospel seriously, while always pointing at the same time to the heights of holiness.” [150-151]

“... the one requirement is that a person should be aware of the need for salvation, and be prepared to seek it in company with the Church.” [151]

For even the weakest – “The call is for them, the message is for them, and must be available in all the fullness possible, which means in whatever way it is possible to present it to them, each one in his or her time, place, and personality.” [151]

The message will be restricted, scaled down to their level of love and understanding. How little or great their response is will depend on both culture and person. [151]

Some cultures (e.g., respectable Victorian middle class) restrict the message “to a point at which it was scarcely recognizable – yet it still was just recognizable.” [151]

As any culture modifies Christianity, so Christianity modifies that culture, retaining an unpredictable vitality which “is always liable to light a bonfire of sacrificial love if the right fuel is available.” [152]

“There are always some who discover what lies behind the routine of religion.” [152]

The government of Queen Elizabeth I, e.g., persecuted Catholics for political, not religious, reasons, but Catholics resisted the government for religious, not political, reasons. [153]

“... the very pressure of persecution was bound to create a new kind of Catholic people, no longer simply inheriting traditional values and customs but forced by circumstances to make a conscious decision about religious allegiance.” [153]

Networks of recusant families maintained the 'old faith' in the face of this persecution. [154-159]

Because the Mass was banned – “When a priest could say Mass, and people gathered secretly to hear it, the atmosphere was charged with an awe even greater than that of medieval Eucharistic devotion, because it was bound together with the sense of high courage demanded in order to carry on this worship. There was the powerful sense of communion with each other, as well as with the Lord, which comes from a shared loyalty in face of danger.” [158]

In this intense Eucharistic concentration, “some of the scope of Catholic sacramentality was lost.” – but it prevented the Eucharist from “being dissolved into a merely symbolic presence, comparable to other symbols, in a culture which has, in any case, an impoverished notion of what symbols are.” [158]

The recusant churches kept alive a real sense of the dwelling of God in flesh – thus it kept heaven from dissolving into earth, with earth thus losing its capacity to reveal ‘something else.’ [159]

In the North of Ireland, James I settled reliable Protestants “with the express purpose of keeping the Irish powerless.” [159]

Negatively, the experience of intense oppression produced an unnecessary, stubborn conservatism – clinging to every detail of the outlawed tradition. [162]

Positively, the Irish “capacity for getting a great deal out of life in most unhelpful conditions has created a kind of popular religion which is humane, durable and irrepressibly cheerful.” [163]

“... the culture of a very poor people, even when they have ceased to be poor, with the defiant and often bawdy gaiety of people who are born and wed and die in overcrowded rooms.” [163]

Some of the ancient Celtic attitude to life persists – loyalty, generosity, imagination and adventure. [163]

“African music, African dance, African spirituality with its rich sense of the indwelling Spirit, found in Catholicism a satisfying expression at every level, and the Catholic enterprise has received a much-needed inflow of new life, wherever it has been willing to accept it.” [164]

More than elsewhere in the world today, in Africa Catholicism is ‘popular.’ [164]

“... when eventually Catholicism in China comes to the surface once more we shall see yet another totally different Catholic people.” [165]

“It is unlikely, e.g., that Chinese will accept an all-male ministry. [165]

In Latin America, the Church has been forced to rethink political alliances inherited from the colonial past, “and to learn to identify with the poor and the oppressed.” [165]

“In the torture rooms and cells of many countries, the Church is recovering her identity with the crucified.” [165]

“Wherever it is rooted, it will be the experience of Christian peoples that will shape the self-understanding of the new churches, churches which will certainly have forgotten some of the old

denominational boundaries. They will be cared for and interpreted by their ministers; they will be inspired by men and women of outstanding individual quality. But basically it will be the shared, common, everyday experience of living and loving and dying as Christians in a particular environment which will count, as it has always done.” [166]

All kinds of popular Catholicism “are the real thing, they are part of the enterprise, they are the stones laboriously chipped and hauled to build the cathedral, and suddenly what it all means becomes visible, in a person like Jägerstätter, a place like Lourdes, a cause like the Pilgrimage of Grace – none perfect, all flawed, yet strong, genuine and aspiring.” [166]

Cf. the von Hügel story of an Irish priest encountering “‘the heights and depths of holiness’ “in a single, dying Irish girl. [166-167]

FIVE: Making It Better

To meet new needs, the Catholic enterprise must change – new methods and structures. [168]

“... the way in which those within the main-stream Catholic tradition, driven by conviction to pursue different ways of being Catholic from those currently regarded as ‘normal,’ found ways to be radical and Catholic, radical because Catholic and (in the last resort) Catholic because radical, though not Catholic in the way most people expected.” [168]

Reformers’ relationship to the visible Catholic Church is ambiguous, and so frequently there is traffic in two directions: “people going out of the Church, and ideas coming in.” [169]

“... every religious founder was starting something new and usually die so in reaction to a failure in the existing religious or secular establishment.” [169-170]

Mystics and saints have often attracted suspicion and persecution because their message seemed scandalously new. [170]

“Every major theologian is now regarded as major because he broke new ground.” [170]

Radicals contribute by “leavening the lump of those who were happy to use such bits of Christianity as could be comfortably accommodated in the existing ways.” [170]

“... different circumstances dictated different, even opposite, strategies aimed at the same end – that of human wholeness.” [170]

“... it is the *whole* Catholic thing – saints and sinners, Popes and housewives, bigots and simpletons and scholars – all those who carry the message from one generation to another, the message which the great (and lesser) radicals recognize and revitalize. Such a method of transmission naturally scrambles the message at times, but it is because the thing is catholic in this sense, also, that it is worth revolutionizing. It is a people’s faith; and the people are of all sorts. Most of them have enough of ordinary inertia, timidity and greed to keep from being altogether delighted at plans to open up their cosy, familiar Church to the vigorous breeze of the Spirit. It is not villainy which makes most Christians resistant to zealous reformers, but simply their condition of being in need of salvation, and rather scared of it.” [171]

“When laymen and women have spoken out in the name of the Gospel, and acted on its principles, then this is the voice of the Church, and the protests of politically-minded clerics are the voice of the ‘world.’” [172]

Camilo Torres (b. 1929) as too close to us to evaluate historically, but his importance is not in doubt, and “he demonstrates the inevitable tragedy of the radical vocation.” [172]

He was a radical thinker and an active reformer – both are essential. “He moved from personal concern through theoretical study and analysis to committed personal action of an extreme kind, because the situation he was reacting against was also extreme.” [172]

Torres’ decision to join the Colombian rebels “grew out of his years of working and thinking in more conventional situations.” [173]

“To be a part of the Catholic radical impulse martyrdom must be drawn by the need to recover a wholeness that is threatened or lost. Some human value is under attack, something is going on that so impoverishes the human spirit that it is no longer capable of the wholeness of the gospel vision. Therefore something must be done to heal the wound, to restore the lost integrity. To die for this is the ultimate affirmation of its importance, even though there is so much else to do.” [173]

A sense of living in a damaged, sick society can produce a desire to withdraw “in order to get to grips with the evil at the basic level of common humanity.” [173]

“Camilo Torres’ early impulse, when he began to look seriously for a life that had meaning, was first of all towards solitude.” [173]

Having undergone a profound conversion during a holiday in the tropical forest, “The hugeness, the silence, the sun, seemed to shrivel up his previous life to a point of utter triviality and pointlessness.” [173-174]

As a diocesan seminarian, he studied at Louvain, which was “of decisive importance.” [174]

He understood that violence is used not only by criminals and terrorists, but also by those who use force to keep people “in a state of servility against their will.” [174-175]

“And it seemed to Camilo, as it has seemed to many others, that in situations of oppression, when nothing else will do so, force is justified to put right manifest wrongs. A number of medieval theologians would have agreed with him.” [175]

Political action appeared ineffective, and he judged Church officials to be complicit with State violence. He sought laicization to join the rebels. [175]

Camilo Torres: “... the ethic is to be violent once and for all in order to destroy the violence which the economic minorities exercise against the people... The Catholic who is not a revolutionary is living in mortal sin... I took off my cassock to be more truly a priest.” [175]

He was killed during a guerilla raid in 1965, and “his death made him a symbol of the Christian need to resist injustice and to identify with, and stand up for, the oppressed.” [175]

Since then, many Catholic clergy in Latin America have become spokesmen for the poor, which had been inconceivable. [175]

They have been targeted by the wealthy “who own these countries,” many of whom rely on the U.S. [176]

Torres and others following him have relied uncritically on Marxist analysis. Later Christians engaged in this struggle have been more aware of what Solzhenitsyn saw as “the basic flaw in Marxism as a language about human life: it excludes the area of the experience of the spirit.” [176]

For a long time, though, Marxism was “the *only* language available to analyse the situation of oppressed peoples in terms that allowed effective redress.” [176]

But the lack of moral imperatives “leads to a contempt for human life, negating the ideals which inspire the real struggle.” [176]

Dom Helder Camara, e.g., seeks to “develop the passionate Christian vision of men like Torres towards a greater wholeness.” [176-177]

He believes that real change can come only by means of “‘peaceful’” violence, refereeing often to Gandhi and King. [177]

The paradox of Gandhi’s influence: “Christians recover their own deepest principles as they are reflected back from the teaching and experience of other religions and other cultures.” [177-178]

Torres did not get his fundamental ideas from Marx. He was “looking for a usable language to express his Christian awareness of poverty and oppression.” While at Louvain, he spent time “working in Paris with Abbe Pierre, the priest whose work for the homeless roused the conscience of France and also roused a hatred, as well as enthusiasm, as violent as that surrounding Torres himself.” [178-179]

Unlike Torres’ approach of using intellectual tools to reach an understanding and decision, Abbe Pierre represents a tradition of people who work in more direct fashion. [179]

Such direct action is revolutionary in its own way, because of “the effect of such direct confrontation with a social evil on the consciences of those who witness it.” [180]

Abbe Pierre formed the Compagnons d’Emmaus with “a strange group of down and outs and ex-convicts who had nowhere to go.” They build primitive shelters for people, encountering resistance from authorities and incredulity from the public. [180]

After a baby whose family was homeless died of cold one winter night, Abbe Pierre demanded broadcasting time, during which “He flayed the legal hypocrisy, the indifference of the comfortable, the political careerism that ignored the real needs of the people.” [180]

This resulted in authorization for construction of a temporary ‘village’ of shelters, increased publicity of the problem of homelessness, and increased funding. [181]

In very different ways, Torres and Abbe Pierre took existing theological designs and “reorganized them to fit new situations.” [182]

“There has to be a theology if real change is to happen.” [182]

“France has been the centre of the radical Catholic tradition since the early nineteenth century.” [182]

Jacques Maritain “represents the intellectual effort of innovation,” and influenced Torres, as he did “the lives of so many young Catholics who were restless and searching for a dynamic Christian role in a world which they felt had lost both its sense of direction and the will to discover one.” [182]

Maritain’s milieu was an “age of intellectual disillusion, of old nations deteriorating politically, of self-assured scientists pontificating like medieval Popes, while aesthetic young men followed fashion and doubted everything.” [183]

Charles Peguy, mystic and fervent nationalist, profoundly influenced Jacques and Raissa Maritain. [183]

Bergson had given an appealing quest to such young intellectuals, arguing that “the ‘enlightened’ materialism that had claimed to liberate the human race from superstition had only succeeded in imprisoning men and women in industrial and moral squalor.” [184]

Maritain “found in Catholicism the satisfaction of his need for an imaginatively coherent system of symbols, his longing to escape from the bourgeois world, his desire for self-dedication to a worthwhile cause.” [184]

He “soaked himself in the Catholic past, but made it new in himself.” [184]

Maritain was part of “a renaissance of the Catholic enterprise” --- “Cocteau and Marcel, Gilson, Riviere, Bremond, Blondel, Mauriac and Bernanos succeeded Bloy, Claudel, Peguy and Huysmans.” [185]

“To be Radical meant to them to turn away from a corrupt democracy in the search for a more human structure based on ancient loyalties.” [185]

Emmanuel Mounier was influenced by Maritain, and, in turn, exerted strong influence on the Catholic Worker Movement. He reacted against “what he saw as a bankrupt, amoral pseudo-democracy without human values or direction.” [186]

Personalism involved “a pluralist state, de-centralised, regional, derived from and answerable to local needs.” [187]

His vision was close to that of twelfth-century Christendom, with a much less unitary ideal. [187]

Neither Maritain nor Mounier provided a practical programme, but rather “a vision of the values of a human society which would be worth living, and possibly, dying for.” [187]

“The great upsurge of awareness of the meaning of the enterprise in France between the wars, was one example of how, somehow, the genuine vision re-asserts itself to re-form falsified values and redress a lost balance, even though the new expression will inevitably prove, in its turn, inadequate.” [188]

Felicite de Lamennais had been ultramontanist as a way of opposing the narrowing of Catholicism by Gallican location of Church in the nation. [189]

Even after the general suppression of ecclesiastical structures after the French Revolution, even surviving priests reacted with “surprise at the strength of the basic Catholic feeling among the people.” [190]

Lamennais realized that an irrevocable change had occurred – there was not return to the old order. The Church needed to free itself of dependence on the State; its social mission was one of prophecy and teaching, not administration. [192]

The Papacy symbolized “a supra-national, un-worldly faith, not tied to any State, yet with a mission to all.” [192]

With Lacordaire and Montalembert, Lamennais advocated the democratic freedoms we have come to take for granted, and the Church freed from dependence on Catholic sovereigns and relying solely on spiritual authority. [192]

Pope Gregory XVI condemned their journal, *Avenir*, and the Bishops rejected the vision which would have deprived them of wealth and power. [192]

“The Catholic enterprise has a built-in self-correcting mechanism: the doctrine itself, the incarnational demand for an ever-renewed search for wholeness, pushes people to look for new ways to do the job if the older ones are not working well.” [193]

“However much normal human inertia and fear of risk try to disguise it, there is a doctrinal presumption in favour of the reformer and pioneer which can be strong enough to outweigh the obvious advantages belonging to the known, the accepted, and the established. This is why the eruption of radical innovators and revolutionaries is a regular occurrence, and yet always seems to be exceptional. Each one has to struggle against the weight and power of established tradition, yet the tradition *itself* contains the argument for innovation.” [193-194]

Matteo Ricci is “an example of the curious blend of pragmatism and principle which is typical of the Catholic thing at its best, neither applying fixed formulae blindly, nor melting into circumstances as they change, but working to discover in a given situation the eternal verities, waiting to be newly expressed and lived.” [194]

He realized that to gain a serious hearing in China, he would need to prove himself worthy of respect at the highest levels of Chinese education and culture. He mastered the language, studied Chinese science and religion, and gained a reputation “for erudition, impeccable courtesy and profound wisdom.” [195]

Ricci regarded Confucian teaching and respect for ancestors “as worthy foundations on which a higher faith could be built,” and “presented Christianity as the fulfillment of all that their own great culture had developed.” [196]

“But the European ecclesiastical system had meanwhile become even more suspicious of anything unusual. ‘One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all’ was not enough. There had to be one rite, one inflexible creedal formula, one method of evangelization, and no compromise.” [196]

“In the end, the long, slow imaginative and catholic work of the Chinese Jesuit mission was destroyed, and Christianity in China became a despised and outlawed sect.” [196]

Ricci's approach was rejected by Mother church. And when Christianity approached China in the nineteenth century, under the guise of armaments and commerce rather than learning and virtue. "It is hardly surprising that the Communist revolution had nothing but hatred and contempt for a Christianity associated with the greed of business men and the cynical power-politics designed to keep them in business." [196]

Ricci's experience, though, had effects in other places. [196]

Because of the experiences of many persons in many places over many ages, we see "that the Catholic reality is what it says it is – a way and a word for all peoples, everywhere, and therefore capable of expression in many cultures." [197]

William Langland's *Vision of Piers the Plowman* bears unmistakably the social outlook of 14th century England, "but the principles he expressed embraced all of humankind"... and the book rejects any narrowing of the scope of God's Kingdom. [197]

"Truth, known by Love, is available to all but it must be valiantly safeguarded, and this is the job of Holy Church." [198]

"Langland saw the Church as the body commissioned to show the way to the wholeness of heaven by the road of a just and merciful social system. He saw it failing, but also saw that the job needed doing. His remedy was repentance and re-discovery of the Gospel ideal of brotherly love, which makes all men equal in mutual service, whatever their work, be it clear and pleasant or heavy and foul." [198]

In the actual social situation after the Black Death of the 14th century, 'the Church' (officials/bureaucracy/institutions) was naturally on the side of the wealthy and powerful, but "the Catholic enterprise was most clearly apparent in the cause of the peasants." [198]

John Ball wanted Christians to hold everything in common like the first disciples, "for 'we be all come from one father and one mother, Adam and Eve; whereby can they say or show that they be greater lords than we be, saving by that they cause us to win and labour for what they spend?'" [198]

Serfdom, he argued, was the invention of proud and sinful men, contrary to God's law. [199]

Ball's society was broken by the powerful and its leaders executed. "Nothing was gained, except that another link had been forged in the long, strong, chain of the development of Catholic radicalism." [199]

Medieval radical movements tended to be labeled heretical, because they were only free to develop their ideas in separation from Church structures. Once separated, they tended to become unbalanced, and non survived for long. [199]

Wycliffe's Lollards (15th century) saw the Church's riches as a betrayal of Christ. [199]

Savanarola "represented a type of radicalism which is more familiar as evangelical revivalism." [199]

Preaching against wealth, vice, and oppression, he gained significant hearing in mid-15th century Florence, virtually transforming “beautiful, luxurious Florence into a kind of monastery, living at an extraordinary pitch of puritanical piety.” [199-200]

Savonarola saw this as “an expression of Christian allegiance, a return to Gospel patterns,” with an emphasis on justice and compassion. [200]

Savonarola’s movement was “far too one-sided,” and “asked too much too quickly”... Thus, “It had no sufficient basis for development.” The whole thing collapsed after his execution, but this was inevitable because “his kind of radical programme was inherently unstable.” [200]

“The radical impulse has always been there, because the endeavour has always been in need of renewal, re-direction, or drastic re-structuring, if it is to be true to its mandate.” [201]

“... the innovations are essential to the enterprise. Without them it would collapse into ancient rubble.” [202]

SIX: Observers and Tourists and Pilgrims

This chapter considers outsiders who “have found in the Catholic tradition something essential to their own search for a truer human or religious catholicity.” [203]

Given the “strong and definite anti-Catholic bias” of British society, the 19th century “revival... of passionate interest in the medieval experience takes on a peculiar importance.” [204]

This was “the beginning – a minority beginning, narrow and misunderstood – of a great effort in the West to recover a sense of wholeness in human life.” [204]

“... a more far-reaching search for an understanding of human life on earth which would unify, rather than fragment, ethical and social and religious concerns, and so seek to heal the wounds caused by divorcing business from morality and science from spirituality.” [204]

This is “a strangely assorted collection” of people, having little in common “except a conviction – which they themselves sometimes found rather shocking – that the prosperous, scientific, rational, progressive world of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had lost something which was vital to proper human life, and that this something had been known to the Catholic middle ages, in spite of all its barbarities.” [204]

It was their “variety of reasons for trying so hard to get behind two or three centuries of history which makes the phenomenon interesting.” [205]

“... what these men and women perceived was a world with saner, more human values, less narrow in its understanding of what matters in human life, less dominated by inhuman ethics dictated by capitalism, closer to nature, bringing human beings closer to each other, capable of artistic achievement unsurpassed before or sense.” [205]

In short, “a more catholic vision of human life.” [205]

William Cobbett “moved from a violent conservatism to violent radicalism,” because he perceived English country people’s way of life being destroyed by the new business, allied with government, and had a phobia for paper money. [206]

He regarded people who lived on investments as parasites, and despised revivalist preachers who encouraged the poor to accept their misery as God’s will.’ [207]

Medieval England provided Cobbett with “something to show them what English men and women could be, when they had the chance.” [207]

“To him, the medieval world was one in which society had been held together by a strong conviction of mutual responsibility at every level, when the land produced food for those who lived on it, when craftsmanship was valued and sturdy peasants lived in wholesome simplicity under the care of humane landowners.” [207]

He judged England to have been “destroyed by the use of a market economy run by a class of greedy capitalists who cared nothing for the land or those who lived on it.” [207-208]

He argued that “all the evils which had since afflicted his country (and the Colonies) stemmed from the Reformation, which he saw as a purely political affair, intended to enrich the King and his servants at the expense of the poor.” [208]

As examples of this, he posited the appropriation of the property of religious orders which had relieved poverty, and the seizure of funds of the trade guilds, which had done the same. [208]

“... the “Reformation” as it is called, was engendered in lust, brought forth in hypocrisy and perfidy, and cherished and fed by plunder, devastation, and by rivers of innocent English and Irish blood.” [208]

Cobbett pierced the “communal self-deception” of his readers, “whose class privileges made it essential for them... to believe that the lands and funds and prestige they enjoyed had rightfully and necessarily been taken away from the Church organizations or guilds of the Middle Ages.” [209]

The medieval Church seemed to him “to have been a religion of real and practical justice and charity.” [209]

“He saw in that distant age hospitals, poor relief, shelters for travelers and the aged, free schools for the children of the poor, and contrasted them with the lack of all such benefits in his own time.” [209-210]

Thomas Carlyle “looked to the medieval period as an example of an ordered society, by which he meant one under orders from wise leaders, doing what it was told.” [210]

He contrasted “the exploitation of the poor and the unbridled mania for profit” of his own age with the medieval provision for the poor. [210]

Ruskin “saw the medieval world as offering an aesthetic ideal, because it seemed “that medieval art was not isolated from the rest of life.” [211]

“... an integral part of everyday life, an expression in paint and stone of a whole understanding of life, material and spiritual.” [212]

For the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the heretofore despised Middle Ages became “an enchanted, secret realm, their very own, untrodden by crass and elderly people...” [213]

Their “anger at the effects on industrialization, at the worship of ‘Science’ and ‘progress’ and at the pursuit of affluence as the only proper human goal “was caused by “a true, if ill-informed, awareness of a disastrous gap at the heart of the great new commercial prosperity.” [214]

The medieval world came to them through art and poetry, especially Malory and Chaucer. [214]

They desired to recover a “lost human oneness,” without the elite status of ‘artists.’ [215]

“Rosetti proclaimed a vague but glorious vision of a union of all the arts (except music, which bored him). He envisioned a community of ascetic and dedicated artists, who would give themselves to art and works of charity, forswearing drink, bohemian clothes, bad language, and (possibly) smoking.” [215]

“... the enterprise aroused the enthusiasm, the hope and idealism of thousands... because... it evoked a possibility of a way of life more whole and meaningful than anything that seemed to be on offer elsewhere.” [215]

William Morris “looked to the Middle Ages for an ideal of ‘craftsmanship for all,’ a community of free workmen. [216]

His “sense of the unity of art and life” led him to build his own house and furniture, and then “a firm that produced furniture, papers and hangings.” [216]

Morris saw in the splendid diversity of medieval churches “many works side by side – the exalted, the earthy, the workaday, the delicate, the bawdy, all co-existing comfortably, just as the men who made them, or many trades and skills, worked together on one building.” [217]

This did not express Christianity to him, but rather “an ideal of human society totally different from the competitive, exploitative one he saw around him.” [217]

He became a socialist, because to satisfy his “catholic conscience,” dissatisfied that only the wealthy could afford him firm’s lovely products. [217]

“His doctrine was that society should ‘produce to live, not live to produce.’” [217]

Morris proposed an idyllic vision, rooted in faith that, somehow, human beings must be capable of fullness of life, or a harmony of body and soul, art and work, individual and community.” [218]

In Gasquet’s introduction to Corbett’s *History*, he provides a portrait of medieval village life in which such a vision was rooted. [218]

“... the rich vitality, the celebratory, inclusive character which its advocates discerned in medieval religion.” [220]

“... a desire for integrity of religion, life and art, often the centuries of departmentalization, and indeed of suppression of some aspects of life.” [220]

The Tracts of the Oxford Movement saw the Church “as a whole, human, but divinely commissioned community with a continuous tradition, alive and developing but one with its apostolic beginnings, through bishops who were successors of these apostles.” [220]

Official religion – Protestant and Catholic – at this time was in a state of torpor, “respectable, undemanding and, on the whole, boring.” [221]

Both the response and the opposition was tremendous. [221]

Many Anglican clergy influenced by the Movement “worked in slum parishes in the huge, new, horrible cities. They brought to the industrial poor a religion whose full humanness, warmth and spiritual courage were expressed outwardly, as they had been in the Middle Ages, in beauty of decoration, in colour, light, and ceremony.” [222]

The Counter-Reformation Church, centered in Rome, concentrated on tightening bonds of loyalty to Rome, and “emphasized all the points on which the Reformers disagreed.” In a sense – “It was no longer *the* Church... It was *a* Church, and while it never admitted this, it behave like one, which inevitably caused a deep loss in the very catholicity which it was struggling to preserve.” [222]

“A true attention to tradition has results which are often far from ‘traditional.’” [225]

The great Anglican tradition fed back into “the parent Church”... “its own extraordinary witness to a Catholicism which could subsist for two hundred years without a centralized church bureaucracy.” [225]

SEVEN: The Way of Wisdom

“There is nothing new under the sun, but nothing remains unchanged except what is dead.” [226]

Present efforts to re-capture the past, “among neo-ultramontanes more papal than the Pope, have not only been divisive and anything but Catholic, they have been just as selective, and as uncritical in their historical judgment, as any Victorian Gothic Romantic. The results have been much less fruitful, for recent projects in Catholic nostalgia have chosen as their model the nineteenth century, the period of Roman Catholic history when the Church was most defensive and least Catholic.” [226]

Haughton’s basic question: “what is the function of this Catholic thing in our time?” [227]

Theology is “a reflection, in the light of faith, on what actually happens to people – to individual people, and to groups and nations and cultures.” [227]

Theology: “the attempt to find more or less adequate and comprehensible ways of conveying what we perceive of human events as the action of God toward human beings, and the response of human beings to God.” [227-228]

“In fact, it begins with experience, and then, naturally, reflection on experience – commented on, discussed, handed on – becomes ‘tradition’ for those who come after, and becomes part of their own experience, part of their inherited way of understanding and responding to God. Those who renew this

tradition must integrate it with their own new, direct and probably differing experience, and so enrich, and modify, the tradition which they have renewed and must, in turn, hand on." [228]

"... there are blind spots in each generation, and each generation is necessarily unable to perceive what its own particular blind spots are." [229]

The universal aspiration of Catholicism can result in "a lunatic tidiness that tries to legislate creation into some humanly controllable pattern." [229]

"For whenever Christians... have, in disillusion and fear, outlawed some aspect of life, at that point they have failed to be Christian." [229]

"Wherever Christians have pushed some aspect of their lives outside the boundaries of their Christian responsibility that aspect has fulfilled their expectations and become a point of corruption." [229]

"It is only by being brought into the wholeness of a potentially transformed humanity that the potentially corrupting influence can become, instead, 'a means of grace and a hope of glory.'" [230]

Without the central Christian fact that God became human the Catholic enterprise would not make sense. [230]

This fact "makes it impossible to reject any aspect of creation as irrelevant to the Kingdom of God." [230]

We have a "more accurate idea of the inter-relatedness of all material reality" than was possible for our forefathers. [230-231]

"So the human person is at the heart of an enormously complex, subtle, and varied pattern of inter-related and inter-dependent being, and beings." [231]

"... the scandalous particularity of incarnation, which sees not only material reality in general but history – sequence, development, human circumstance and human response – as divinely significant." [231]

"But Christians assert that this life, cramped as it was within historical circumstances, broke through some kind of cosmic barrier and changed not only the course of human history but that of the history of matter, by drastically modifying the status of material reality." [232]

The resurrection is a transformation of material and bodily existence, and began a new process of cosmic parturition. [232]

"We can only talk about the 'plan' of God if we surround the word with so many reservations and inverted commas that it loses any force." [232]

"... the whole thing happens through human decision and human muddle and in and through the given progression of natural growth and change. It is, still, an historical *phenomenon*, worked out not just *in*, but *by*, people – real people in real situations, with normal limitations – genetic, cultural and moral." [232-233]

The role of human beings in relation to unconscious creation: "... if human beings do not take on this role, as redemptive, then the full potentiality of material reality must remain unfulfilled. There is no inexorable 'process,' there is only an invitation." [233]

To be a bodily creature is to be chemically, genetically, environmentally and culturally conditioned. The Christian message is an "invitation to take part in the transformation of the whole affair." [233]

Divine love depends on human response: "We talk about 'Almighty God,' but that might is solely the power to go on pouring out love without end or limitation." [234]

God "asks people to take on the job of loving all of earthly reality to such a point that it is transformed into the ultimate wholeness which we call 'heaven.'" [234]

"This job is to be done in the power of that same love, which will be poured into anyone willing to accept such a frightening gift, and to the very limit of the person's willingness to accept it, but no further." [234]