

**BETWEEN THE ‘POLITICS OF MYSTICISM’ AND THE  
‘MYSTICISM OF POLITICS’:  
IMPLICATIONS OF THE UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS WITHIN THE  
ROMAN CATHOLIC TRADITION**

Submitted by

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*Dedicated*  
*to*  
*Peter Williamson*  
*whose friendship*  
*is a constant delight and inspiration.*

## **STATEMENT OF SOURCES**

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This thesis contains no material published  
elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part  
from a thesis by which I have qualified for  
or been awarded  
another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement  
in the main text of the thesis.

The thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma  
in any other tertiary institution.

**David Ranson**

**September 2009**

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## PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THIS RESEARCH

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David Ranson. *Across the Great Divide: Bridging Spirituality and Religion*.  
Strathfield, New South Wales: St. Pauls Publications, 2002.

David Ranson. *Living in the Holy Spirit: Elements of Catholic Spirituality*.  
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(October 2008), 456-463.

## ABSTRACT

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This dissertation is a study of Christian spirituality within the Roman Catholic tradition in the modern era. Specifically, it is an exploration of the tense relationship between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’. Though this inter-relationship has become a feature in twentieth century Roman Catholic theology there remains a relative absence of considered treatments on the theme. The thesis is a response to this lacuna.

The thesis suggests that, given both the development of laicality in recent times and the enunciation of the “universal call to holiness” in chapter five of *Lumen gentium* of the Second Vatican Council, an engagement of the relationship between the ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ is now unavoidable in the development of a spiritual life. Evolving aspects of the Roman Catholic tradition have dissolved a previous two-tiered systematization of the pursuit of holiness and presented ‘the world’ itself as the locus for the experience of holiness. The thesis is animated by a certain pastoral concern and with the conviction that the necessity of such an engagement shall only increase in the period ahead.

Notwithstanding the difficulties inherent in the very definition of both ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ a previous dichotomy is transformed by recent theological discourse into a new consideration of the relationship between them. Several antecedent dualities by which ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ are regarded classically in opposition to one another, at least by way of intimation, are identified and examined. Yet, even in the later achievement of an inter-relationship, ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ remain in an uneasy alliance. This is particularly evidenced through the contributions of Jacques Maritain, William T. Cavanaugh, Johannes Metz and Edward Schillebeeckx.

More specifically, the dissertation proposes that in this uneasy alliance between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’, a new polarity emerges, namely a ‘politics of mysticism’ and a ‘mysticism of politics.’ As key illustrations of recent scholarship suggest, the spiritual tradition itself intimates the political character of mysticism. However, the history of the development of lay consciousness in the modern era of the Roman Catholic tradition also evidences the possibility that ‘the mystical’ can become placed at the service of ‘the political’, understood as the exercise of power. Conversely, ‘the political’ - understood as engagement with the public sphere - can become a place of mystical expectation.

The thesis proposes this new polarity by tracing developments in French and German political and social Catholicism in the nineteenth century, and by exploring a phenomenon characteristic of Roman Catholic twentieth century spirituality – the rise of the new ecclesial movements which are preceded by the initiative of Catholic Action. Four such ecclesial movements are explored as agents either of the ‘politics of mysticism’ or the ‘mysticism of politics.’

The thesis concludes that a genuine conjunction of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ occurs between the extremes of a ‘politics of mysticism’ and a ‘mysticism of politics.’ The primary means by which such conjunction might be attained are proposed. Such unity in tension suggests, in turn, a new paradigm for Christian holiness within the Roman Catholic tradition, a ‘political sanctity’ embodied in new models for holiness within the tradition.

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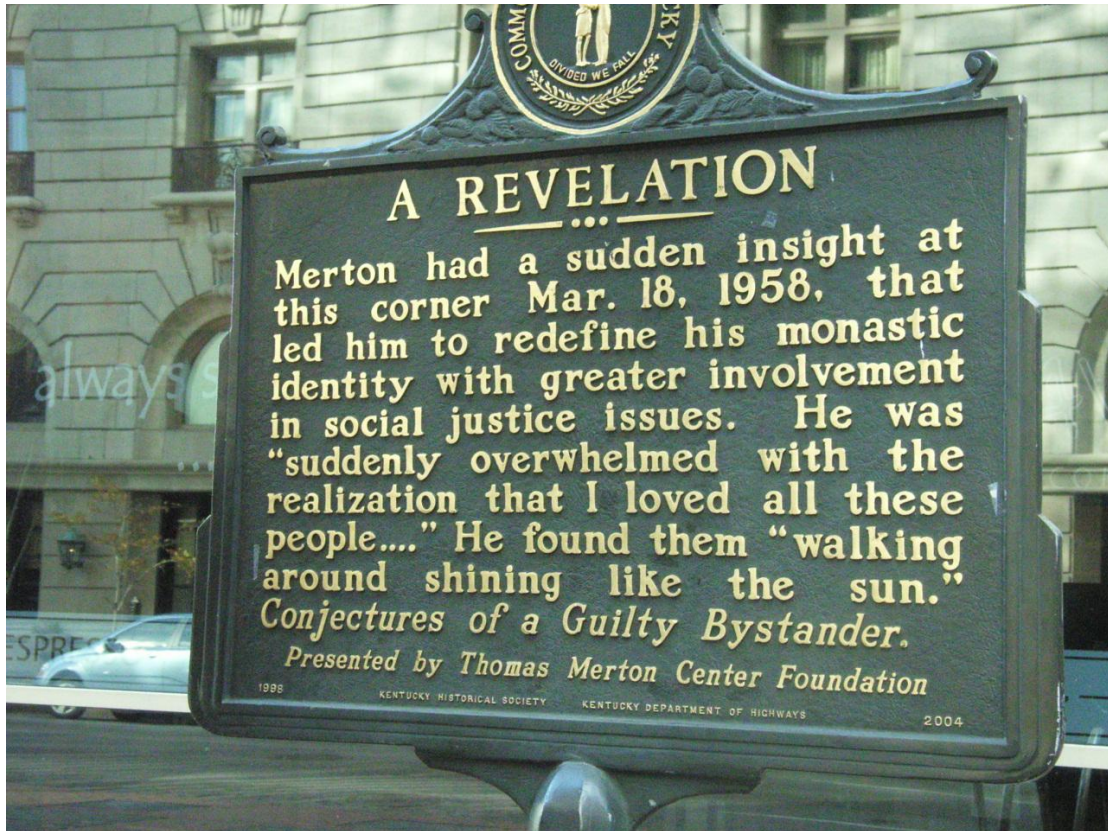


Photo courtesy of Associate Professor David Tacey, October 2008

### ***The Vision in Louisville 18 March 1958***

In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the centre of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all these people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world, the world of renunciation and supposed holiness. The whole illusion of a separate holy existence is a dream.

. . . I have the immense joy of being *man*, a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate. . . There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun.

. . . My solitude, however, is not my own, for I see now how much it belongs to them . . . It is because I am one with them that I owe it to them to be alone, and when I am alone they are not 'they' but my own self. There are no strangers!

Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts which neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only they could all see themselves as they really *are*. If only we could see each other that way all the time. [Italics in the original]

Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), 140-142.

# INTRODUCTION

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## A. Preamble

The twentieth century dawned with the expectation of social and political emancipation. The growth of both industrialization and urbanisation throughout the nineteenth century, the rise of the masses against political exclusion and the threatening fragmentation of the imperial order brought the world to a new threshold in 1900. There was every sense of the dawn of a new era.<sup>1</sup>

The threshold, however, was turbulent and violent, as it was fragile. Imperialism unravelled in the First World War. Unresolved tension from this bloody conflict, bitter ideological divisions between the subsequent rise of communism and fascism, the emergence of mass nationalism, uneven economic growth and eventual collapse, gave way to the trauma of a new world war by the mid-century, the death of Enlightenment optimism in the horror of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, and to the profound uncertainty of the Cold War.

However, even as initial expectation at the beginning of the century met with bitter disillusionment by its mid-term, prolonged and expansionary post-war economic growth gave to the twentieth century unparalleled advances socially, scientifically, and technologically. The electronic and communication revolutions of the second half of the century gave such developments hitherto unimagined accessibility, heightening the tension between global and local perspectives. The retrieval of ethnic

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive overview of social and political developments in the twentieth century, from which this summary is developed, see *The Times History of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, edited by Richard Overy, (London: Times Books, 1999).

consciousness coupled with the narrative of globalisation – all within a post-modern celebration of difference and relativity – meant that the twentieth century ended as a new order, characterised on the one hand by a profound anxiety and, on the other hand by the excitement of undreamt possibility. The twentieth century yielded a world on an ever-present precipice of destabilisation as a result of the threat of a widening gap between rich and poor, terrorism, mass migration, ecological crises and new disease, and yet ever on the brink of fresh scientific and technological discovery and capability. For the sustained rapidity of change, the twentieth century was unique in human history.

The Roman Catholic Church was not immune from these vicissitudes. However, the choreography of its own development throughout this period ran in almost inverse pattern to wider social currents - at least for the first half of the century. The dawn of the new century was not experienced in the Roman Catholic Church as expectation but as threat with the waves of the Modernist crisis crashing on its shores.<sup>2</sup> Defence against the intellectual critiques of historical consciousness, however, was associated with innovative, ecclesial-inspired social concern. As the world itself descended into greater political crisis, such social action, together with a sustained *ressourcement* scholarship, manifested an increasing anticipation of change within the Church, as it brought into relief the Church's relationship to society, culture, and 'the world' generally.<sup>3</sup> In no small way such was the implication of Pius XII's *Divino afflante*

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<sup>2</sup> See *inter alia*, David G. Shultenover, *A View from Rome: On the eve of the Modernist crisis*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993); *Catholicism Contending with Modernity: Roman Catholic modernism and anti-modernism in historical context*, edited by Darrell Jodock, (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> For a succinct overview to *ressourcement* scholarship, see Marcellino D'Ambrosio, "Ressourcement Theology, Aggiornamento, and the Hermeneutics of Tradition," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 18 (Winter 1991), 530-555. See also a response to this article by John F. Kobler in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 19 (1992), 321-325.

*Spiritu, Mediator Dei*, and *Mystici corporis*. Consequently, as the world itself consolidated into a new social and political order, the Second Vatican Council, as an outcome and response to such a new order, promised a fresh orientation for the Church, with pastoral and catechetical initiative, and new paradigms of Christian life within the Church.

The innovatory character of the Second Vatican Council might be contested. In recent years, the depth of change indicated by the Second Vatican Council has been challenged, namely through criticism of Giuseppe Alberigo's five volume history of the Council.<sup>4</sup> In the midst of this debate, John W. Malley has suggested, nonetheless, that, whatever of the extent of the doctrinal development occurring at the Council, the real change lay not so much in 'content', but in 'genre', rendering Vatican II an essentially 'pastoral council.'<sup>5</sup> I would contend further that precisely in this fundamentally pastoral orientation, the Council, whilst not necessarily creating dogma, can, nonetheless, be considered dogmatically creative. The Council brought to magisterial articulation an understanding of key issues that had been emerging for the 150 years preceding it – issues which had been, in no small way, shaped by the social and political currents outlined above.

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<sup>4</sup> See *History of Vatican II*, volumes 1-V, edited by Giuseppe Alberigo, English version edited by Joseph A. Komonchak, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis/Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> See John W. Malley, "Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?" *Theological Studies* 67 (2006). 3-33. In regards to the style of the Council, for a detailed analysis of the way in which 'dialogue' is used (and translated) see Anne Michel Nolan, *A Privileged Moment: Dialogue in the Language of the Second Vatican Council 1962-1965*, European University Studies: Series 23, Theology, Volume 829, (Oxford: Peter Lang AG International Academic Publishers, 2006). See also James McEvoy, "Church and World at Vatican II: The significance of *Gaudium et spes*," *Pacifica* 19 (February 2006), 37-57.

Two of these critical issues which the Second Vatican Council brought to a new level of formulation were, specifically, the vocation of the laity and the nature and locus of Christian holiness. The two issues are intrinsically bound together. The rise of lay consciousness, especially developed since the French Revolution, and found embodiment in the texts of the Council, notably in the documents *Lumen gentium* (21 November 1964), *Apostolicam actuositatem* (18 November 1965), and *Gaudium et spes* (7 December 1965). This evolution created the context for a new way of understanding the mystery of holiness, and for the imagination of how holiness is to be exercised. The Council's affirmation of the lay state, and its place in the scheme of salvation, rendered an altogether new possibility for the validation of universal accessibility to the life of holiness. In so doing, the Second Vatican Council paved for the centuries following a way for understanding the spiritual life within the Roman Catholic tradition, especially in regard to the context in which such holiness might be enjoyed. This was henceforth to be envisaged across a wide variety of states of life.

## **B. The Rise of Lay Consciousness**

The superiority of clerical and Religious Life in the pursuit of holiness within the Roman Catholic tradition was to become increasingly untenable in the face of the development of lay consciousness in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and through the social, economic, and political developments which characterized them.<sup>6</sup> The ecclesial conscientization of laity, formed over the nineteenth century, was the outcome of the pervasive socialist idealism with which the twentieth century dawned, the increasing interest in a genuine Christian humanism, as articulated, for example,

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<sup>6</sup> For an historical overview of this development refer to Roger Aubert, *The Church in a Secularised Society*, volume V, *The Christian Centuries*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd/New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

by Jacques Maritain (1882-1973),<sup>7</sup> and the deepening of the liturgical renewal throughout the twentieth century which advocated inclusiveness and participation of the entire ecclesial assembly in worship.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, theological literacy on the theme of lay consciousness - as an affirmation of the secular realm within Christian thought and praxis and as a locus for Christian holiness – increasingly unfolded over the twentieth century, prompting movements galvanized by Catholic social principles. These in the North Atlantic, Europe and Australia and New Zealand especially in the 1920s and 1930s were mainly lay inspired. The outcome was a more inclusive terminology defining the Church generally, such as ‘ecclesial,’ and thus denoting a sense of the Church as the people of God in whom all have mission and responsibility. Yves Congar illustrates that in France, at least, the term ‘ecclesial’ only goes back to the years of the Second World War or the years soon after. As he stated in his seminal, *Lay People in the Church: A study for a theology of the laity*, “Before the war the only adjective we used from the word *Ecclesia* (*Eglise*) was ‘ecclesiastical’; but while the substantive had kept its full meaning the adjective was reduced simply to the clerical aspect of the Church.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism: temporal and spiritual problems of a new Christendom*, translated by Joseph W. Evans, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973). Maritain’s contribution will be discussed at length in a subsequent chapter.

<sup>8</sup> For a full treatment of the liturgical reform see Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy, 1948-1975*, translated by Matthew J. O’Connell, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1990) and Bernard Botte, *From Silence to Participation: An insider’s view of liturgical renewal*, translated by John Sullivan, (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1988). See also Keith F. Pecklers, *The Unread Vision: The liturgical movement in the United States of America 1926-1955*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 25-79.

<sup>9</sup> See Yves M.-J. Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A study for a theology of the laity*, translated by Donald Attwater, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1959), 50. See also, Yves M.-J. Congar, *Laity, Church and the World: Three addresses*, translated by Donald Attwater, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1960); Timothy I. MacDonald, *The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar*, (New York: University of America Press, 1984); Aidan Nichols, *Yves Congar*, (Wilton, Connecticut: Morehouse-Barlow, 1989), 63ff. For a later, critical self-examination of his approach to a theology of laity, see Yves M.-J. Congar, “My Path-Findings in the Theology of Laity and Ministries,” *The Jurist* 32 (1972), 169-188. In this later supplement, Congar explores more precisely the intrinsic link between ministries and community, and further refines his definition of ‘laicality.’

More specifically, we see such a possibility evidenced in later contributions such as Chenu's *The Theology of Work: An exploration*.<sup>10</sup> It is difficult now to appreciate the apparent innovation of such studies. Whilst the themes were evidenced in certain streams of Christian spirituality to which I will allude below, they did not find sustained prominence in earlier centuries of the spiritual tradition within Roman Catholic thought which largely regarded such activities as distraction rather than as intrinsic to spiritual endeavor. As Chenu asserts,

The expression itself [theology of work] may be said to be quite recent: for although the phrase 'morality of work' has been current since the nineteenth century, and 'mystique of work' for some twenty years, the term 'theology of work' appeared for the first time only five or six years ago.<sup>11</sup>

Congar, while also tracing the development of lay consciousness within the Church, recognized that such an historical thrust had not come without a good deal of tension – primarily that between 'laicality' and 'laicism.'<sup>12</sup> Laicality may be understood as the 'sense of lay identity' which has accompanied the rise of the secular mind whilst laicism as an anti-hierarchical spiritual movement which seeks to redefine the constitution of the Church. Congar situates the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in particular as a period characterized by a strong popular affirmation of the Church as a lay society. It was,

assisted by the programme of the rising urban class, the burghers and artisans who from the later middle ages had been taking the place of clerics in various duties, formerly discharged by the Church, notably

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<sup>10</sup> Marie-Dominique Chenu, *The Theology of Work: An exploration*, translated by Lilian Soiron, (Dublin: Gill and Son, 1963).

<sup>11</sup> Chenu, *The Theology of Work*, 3. For an excellent study of Chenu's contribution see Christoph R. Potworowski, *Contemplation and Incarnation: The theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001). The author outlines Chenu's understanding of the church as 'pilgrim people' in whom God's self-revelation occurs in and through the events of history. For Chenu this is a fundamental interpretation of the theology of Incarnation.

<sup>12</sup> See Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 20.



in works of charity; here, as in urban councils, everything was organized according to rules of an associational, non-institutional type, a law from below, thus providing a framework for the reformed communities.<sup>13</sup>

The rise of what Congar terms the ‘communal movement’ at this time beneficially helped towards a greater appreciation, as he remarks, of the aspect of *societas fidelium* in the Church, a community made by its members in the long term. Its exaggerated form, however, eschewed other critical dimensions of the Church’s mystery and the rise of the Communes ultimately flowered into the Reformation with the assertion of the Church entirely as a lay society. To counter this tendency, the theology of the Church, according to Congar, began to be “elaborated rather one-sidedly as theology *only* of her institution and hierarchical power of mediation.” [Italics in the original]<sup>14</sup> Thus, in the face of the evolution of the secular mind and against the place of laity that was occurring, there developed in opposition an over-emphasis on the clerical character of the Church, culminating in the nineteenth century apologetic manual *De Ecclesia* composed, Congar purports,

in answer to Gallicanism, to conciliarism, to the purely spiritual ecclesiology of Wyclif and Hus, to Protestant negations, later on to those of secular ‘stateism’, Modernism and so on. It follows that it is composed in reaction against errors all of which call the hierarchical structure of the Church in question. The *De Ecclesia* was principally, sometimes almost exclusively, a defence and affirmation of the reality of the Church as machinery of hierarchical mediation, of the powers and primacy of the Roman see, in a word, a ‘hierarchology.’<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 35-36.

<sup>14</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 32.

<sup>15</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 39. For a version of the manual see Patrick Murray, *Tractatus de ecclesia Christi*, (Dublin: McGlashan & Gill, 1860-1866) or Francis Aloysius Sullivan, *De Ecclesia: I. Quaestiones theologiae fundamentalis*, (Romae: Apud Aedes Universitatis Gregorianae, 1963).

When the theme of laity came to be discussed at the Second Vatican Council it was still burdened with this strongly clerical orientation of the nineteenth century's apologetic manual, *De Ecclesia*.<sup>16</sup> Though laity had until the Council been officially defined as 'neither clerical nor religious' and in a way subordinate to them, too much had occurred in practice for this to be acceded to by the diverse Council Fathers as an appropriate framework to treat the theme. As Klostermann points out by way of summary,

It was stressed that the schema was too clerical in tone, too judicial in concept, too diffuse and general, too abstract, and that it did not correspond to modern needs; it was claimed that the layman's [sic] Christian state was not fully recognized and that his [sic] *specific spirituality, vocation, and apostolate was not understood*. . . The apostolate of the laity was still interpreted in too narrow a way due to the acute lack of priests in such a way that it was based upon participation in the apostolate of the hierarchy and under its direction. There was too much emphasis on the organised apostolate; there was as much danger from an exaggerated

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<sup>16</sup> The draft Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity – which had been in constant revision since the first meeting of the Preparatory Commission for the Apostolate of the Laity on 15 November 1960 – was eventually debated on the Council floor during the Council's Third Session for five days between 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> October 1964. "The 64 speeches by council Fathers left not a single section of the draft untouched by criticism, some of it slashing." The *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam actuositatem)*, was promulgated on 18 November, 1965, after a solemn vote which recorded the lowest level of noes for any conciliar document.

For a comprehensive historical outline of the development of the decree, see Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity" 273-302; Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, *History of Vatican II: Volume II* (Maryknoll/Leuven: Orbis/Peeters, 1997), 435-446. For an outline of the debate refer to Xavier Rynne, *The Third Session: The Debates and Decrees of Vatican II, September 14 to November 21, 1964* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 69-84. It is intriguing to note that lay people were not included in any of the preliminary discussions on either the decree or the fourth chapter of *Lumen Gentium* which dealt with the theme of the laity. It was not until the Second Session that eleven lay people were invited to attend the Council. See *Council Daybook, Session 1 and Session 2*, edited by Floyd Anderson (Washington D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1965), 140. Further, it was not until November 1963, during this Second Session, that 3 lay auditors were invited to a newly established mixed commission to take the discussion of *Lumen gentium* chapter 4 further, although there had been both informal and formal consultation with laity earlier that year. See Ferdinand Klostermann, "Chapter IV: The Laity" in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II: Volume I*, edited by Herbert Vorgrimmler, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 231-252; Alberigo and. Komonchak, *History of Vatican II: Volume II*, 440-443. On 13<sup>th</sup> October 1964, at the end of the debate on the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, the first layman addressed the Council – Mr. Patrick Keegan, President of the International Catholic Worker Movement, speaking on the importance of the relationship between priests and laity. Xavier Rynne remarks, however, that Keegan's comments were unexceptional. "The effect of his remarks was frankly disappointing to those who had expected greater fire from the first layman to have something to say in public on a subject so much criticized by the clergy; his speech appeared to have been 'clericalized.'" See Rynne, *The Third Session*, 83.

institutionalism *as there was from a world-alienated angelism*  
[Italics mine].<sup>17</sup>

It was precisely this ‘world-alienated angelism’ that was directly challenged at the Second Vatican Council. The Council’s refusal to re-iterate a long-standing distrust of ‘the world’ is set against the context of an historical development in which the theme of secularity had risen to unavoidable prominence. Chenu’s essay on the theology of work referred to above had, for example, put forward an ‘idea of social evolution’ – a dynamic historical thrust that has its commencement in the twelfth century but which only reached its climax in the twentieth century through the technical advancements of the nineteenth. For Chenu, such a socio-political process has direct implications for theological development. In this evolution “whose laws are seen today in the most mystical desires as in the most material limitations,”<sup>18</sup> Chenu attempted to “show the links which gradually join economic facts to spiritual aspirations, even to the religious attitudes of Christians.”<sup>19</sup> In so doing, he was pre-empting the later observation of the French scholar of spirituality, Michel de Certeau who rightly observed,

The structures of society, the terms in which it voices its aspirations, the objective and subjective forms of the common conscience, build up the religious conscience, which in turn manifests them . . . A particular type of society and a particular social balance (including the essential elements of the significance of power. . .) are reflected in the problems of spiritual experience.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ferdinand Klostermann, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II: Volume III*, edited by Herbert Vorgrimler, (London/New York: Burns & Oates/Herder and Herder, 1968), 291.

<sup>18</sup> Chenu, *Theology of Work*, 51.

<sup>19</sup> Chenu, *Theology of Work*, 53. See also Karl Rahner, “The Order of Redemption within the Order of Creation,” in Karl Rahner, *Mission and Grace: Essays in Pastoral Theology*, Volume 1, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1966), 59-113.

<sup>20</sup> See Michael de Certeau, “Culture and Spiritual Experience.” *Concilium* 9 (November 1966): 2, 3-16.

Michael de la Bedoyere furthers this observation about the interrelationship between social development and spiritual consciousness by suggesting that the emergence of a distinctly lay spirituality and apostolate had “to wait for the evolution in history of a free and educated people trained to realise and accept social responsibilities within a stable society.”<sup>21</sup> He suggested ‘democratic’ as a fuller description of this stability, though he cautioned thinking of democracy in terms of political and parliamentary freedom, “whereas its essence lies rather in cultural and economic social conditions which permit of the self-development of the human being in a sufficient personal independence from massive authorities, whether of State or Church – the latter in the historical sense of clerical power exercised over secular life.”<sup>22</sup> However, the point that he affirmed was that an “authentic lay Catholicity came with the beginnings of the new learning, whose sources were secular rather than religious.”<sup>23</sup>

Chenu outlines the history of this secular evolution, through six key ‘moments.’<sup>24</sup> The first ‘moment’ he identified as the twelfth century renaissance and the liquidation of serfdom:

During the period of this transition from fief to commune, men [sic] gradually became more self-reliant in their actions, acquired a new sense of personal responsibility, a taste for initiative and that adaptability which testifies to man’s [sic] confidence in himself

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<sup>21</sup> See Michael de la Bedoyere, *The Layman in the Church*, (London: Burns and Oates, 1954), 28.

<sup>22</sup> De la Bedoyere, *The Layman in the Church*, 28.

<sup>23</sup> De la Bedoyere, *The Layman in the Church*, 30.

<sup>24</sup> Chenu, *Theology of Work*, 58-59. Yves Congar, several years before Chenu, wrote of a five staged evolution: “During the middle ages the ecclesiastical institution included and formed human society; but from the beginning of the fourteenth century society began slowly to assert its independence. First, to cut loose were rulers and their politics, then various activities of human life and welfare, then thought and the sciences, then morality and spirituality itself; finally, and much more radically, the common consciousness of the people in their daily life of sorrows, joys, hopes . . .” Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 41.

<sup>24</sup> Chenu, *Theology of Work*, 49.

when faced with the unpredictable problems of a newly-opening world. Intellectual life and the organization of the urban schools for the rising generations embodied the same ideals as those which inspired the municipal corporations and magistrates in the government of towns. In the university colleges the very facts of free association and democratic regime are enough to show how far they had traveled since the days of the old monastic schools.<sup>25</sup>

Secondly, Chenu suggested the institution of the national state and its evolution developing a high degree of political organization and emphasizing the human values of the national community; thirdly, the origins of the civic brotherhood of the democracies achieved in the victory of liberty and social fraternity – at least in principle; fourthly, the technical discoveries of the nineteenth century and the transformation of the factory into a community of workers; fifthly, the awareness of population concerns which highlight attention on the family as part of worker and national communities, and sixthly, the progressive development of what Jacques Maritain was to call ‘secular Christianity’ with the encouragement of Catholic Action. “Whatever interpretation we may give to this double and unique awakening of social and historical consciousness,” says Chenu, “it appears as a spiritual event of prime importance, whose influence on the total humanism that the world of the twentieth century demands we can now appreciate.”<sup>26</sup>

It is these very conflicts that begin to furnish a new consciousness about laity, in particular, and, in turn, a change in the imagination about spirituality.

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<sup>25</sup> Chenu, *Theology of Work*, 56. Chenu is in accord here with Edward Schillebeeckx in his assertion, “History shows that the role of the laity was not really and fully recognised until man himself [sic] discovered the value of the world.” See “Definizione del laico cristiano,” in *Chiesa del Vaticano II*, edited by Guilherme Barauna, (Florence: Valechi, 1966), 959 as quoted in Leonard Doohan, *The Lay Centered Church: Theology and spirituality*, (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1984), 8.

<sup>26</sup> Chenu, *Theology of Work*, 49.

### C. Implications for the Question of Christian Holiness

Though the conciliar debate on the nature of holiness occurred several years earlier than the promulgation of the Decree on the Laity, it was, in no small part, influenced by these wider developments in understanding and articulating the lay vocation. As mentioned above, the affirmation of the lay state and the issue of the locus of holiness are intrinsically bound together. Indeed, whilst it was itself being influenced by the growing background discussion about the laity, the reflection on the nature of holiness within the Church surely enabled such a validation of the lay vocation to deepen.

The classical concept of Christian holiness had drawn from that paradigm generally regarded as ‘neo-platonic ascent.’ This follows the Greek contemplative ideal, originating from Plato, transmitted into Christian spirituality through the filters of the non-Christian philosophers, Philo (20BC-50AD) and Plotinus (205-270AD) and the influential theologies of the Alexandrian Christians, Clement (c.150-c.215), Origen (c.185-c.254) and Evagrius Ponticus (346-399). These were to have effective influence on the development of monastic spirituality, characterizing the first Christian millennium. As McGinn elucidates, Plato understood the human person as one living in exile, in a world of appearances and temporality, seeking possession of the Absolute Good from which their spiritual dimension originates, through a process of ascending purification (*katharsis, ascesis*) of both will and knowledge, and who finds his or her end in a union with that Supreme Good through contemplation (*theoria*).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Refer to Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the fifth century*, (London: SCM Press, 1991), 23-61, 99-182.

This Platonic conception was deeply woven into the mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius (c. 500) who envisaged such ascent according to a tripartite structure which the tradition was to name more fully as the purgative, the illuminative and the unitive ways.<sup>28</sup> Medieval anthropology had continued this triadic structure such that in the writings of the Franciscan, Bonaventure (1217-1274) the mystical triad was confirmed for the whole of the spiritual life.<sup>29</sup> Many centuries later scholasticism tended to manualise such an approach into a division between ascetical theology and mystical theology – a dichotomy in which the latter is reserved to a spiritual elite.<sup>30</sup>

It can be contended that such historical developments in the systematization of spirituality rendered a hierarchical framework for models of holiness that favored those lifestyles exclusively focused on the achievement of (platonic) perfection through a cathartic rejection of ‘the world.’ Consequently, the clerical and Religious Life, removed from ordinary social and political involvement, and consecrated to the achievement of such holiness, inevitably became seen as superior in holiness to the possibilities of holiness in the lay state.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> For an historical outline of this tripartite structure of holiness see also Kees Waaijman, “Towards a Phenomenological Definition of Spirituality,” *Studies in Spirituality* 3 (1993), 9-12.

<sup>29</sup> See particularly Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, in *Works of St. Bonaventure*, Volume II, edited by Philotheus Boehner and Zachary Hayes, (St. Bonaventure, New York: The Franciscan Institute, 2002) and “The Triple Way, or Love Enkindled (*De Triplici Via alias Incendium Amoris*)” in *The Works of Bonaventure*, Volume I, *Mystical Opuscula*, translated by José Vink, (Paterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1960), 63-94. For a helpful recent commentary on Bonaventure’s triadic structure of spiritual ascent, see J.A. Wayne Hellman, *Divine and Created Order in Bonaventure’s Theology*, translated and edited by Jay M. Hammond, (St. Bonaventure, New York: The Franciscan Institute, 2001).

<sup>30</sup> See *inter alia*, A. M. Meynard, *Traite de la vie intérieure. Petite somme de théologie ascétique et mystique d’après l’esprit et les principes de saint Thomas d’Aquin*, (Paris: Clermont-Ferrand, 1885); Adolphe A. Tanqueray, *The Spiritual Life: A treatise on ascetical and mystical theology*, (Tournai: Desclee, 1930); Pierre Pourrat, *La spiritualité chrétienne*, (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1928).

<sup>31</sup> Such a two-tiered structure of the understanding of spirituality is given succinct historic outline by Friedrich Wulf, “Introductory Remarks on Chapters V and VI”, in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Volume I*, edited by Herbert Vorgrimler, (London/New York: Burns & Oates/Herder and Herder, 1966), 256-259.

To appreciate the significance of the shift that occurred at Vatican II on the question of holiness it is useful to trace the way in which the discussion unfolded at the Council. The conciliar reflection on the place of holiness within the Church occurred during the Second Session of the Second Vatican Council, (the 56<sup>th</sup>-59<sup>th</sup> General Congregations, 25<sup>th</sup> October to the 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1963), in the debate on Chapter IV of *De Ecclesia*, the draft conciliar document on the Church, entitled, “The Call to Holiness.”

The subject of Christian holiness could hardly be thought of as a contentious subject. Yet, this small chapter was not without its conflictual background and in its final form, as Chapter V of *Lumen gentium*, it represented a paradigmatic shift in the Church’s understanding of the locus of Christian holiness and of the nature of spirituality generally. “A one-sided attitude that was taken for centuries towards the relationship of Christians with the world, its goods, its arrangements, and its history, has now been abandoned in the Church and in her doctrinal pronouncements”<sup>32</sup> which now exclude “completely any discrimination between a higher category composed of nuns and monks, and the mass of the faithful who manage to be saved one way or another, by the help of an elementary form of morality, offered to them, so to speak, at a lower cost.”<sup>33</sup> As Wulf points out in his commentary on Chapter V of *Lumen gentium*, the ‘way of the commandments’ and the ‘way of the counsels’ had been imagined, historically, as the two pathways to salvation: the first for those ‘in the

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<sup>32</sup> Wulf, “Introductory Remarks on Chapters V and VI,” 258.

<sup>33</sup> Gérard Philips, “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: History of the Constitution,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Volume 1, edited by Herbert Vorgrimler, (London/New York: Burns & Oates/Herder and Herder, 1966), 123.



world', the second for those who had renounced the world.<sup>34</sup> It was the second that the tradition had envisaged as the more perfect, and indeed as 'the state of perfection.'<sup>35</sup> Now, that tradition had come to a critical turning point.

The chapter on "The Call to Holiness" had begun as *De statibus evangelicae acquirendae perfectionis* ("The states of evangelical perfection to be acquired") and was meant to be a discussion on the place of Religious Life in the Church, identifying the different canonical forms of counsel life.<sup>36</sup> Revised by the Commission on Religious after the directives on the pastoral orientation of the Council on 5 December 1962, the title changed to "Of those who bear themselves (before the Church) to the evangelical counsels" and was ready to be placed before the Council by the beginning of March 1963.<sup>37</sup> However, as Wulf indicates, the draft was rejected in May 1963 by the Theological Commission in its discussions on the remaining chapters of the Constitution on the Church which were to deal with laity and Religious because of the singular way in which Religious Life was imagined as a superior form of Christian holiness. The subsequent revision, which Jan Grootaers describes as "a historic

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<sup>34</sup> Wulf, "Introductory Remarks on Chapters V and VI," 256.

<sup>35</sup> Cf Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1 II q. 99a.6c; q. 108 a. 4 c; 2 II q. 184 a. 5 c. See also Thomas Aquinas, *Contra retrabentes*, Canon VI, referenced in Wulf, "Introductory Remarks on Chapters V and VI." Wulf also alludes to the famous dictum of Augustine: "A mother will have a lower place in heaven because she is married than her daughter, because she is a virgin." *Sermo 354 ad continentes* 9 (PL XXXIX, 1568).

<sup>36</sup> Wulf, "Introductory Remarks on Chapters V and VI", 254-256. For a detailed history of the evolution of the document see Jan Grootaers, "The Drama Continues Between the Acts: The 'second preparation' and its opponents," in *History of Vatican II*, Volume II: *The Formation of the Council's Identity – First Period and Intersession October 1962 – September 1963*, edited by Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, (Maryknoll/Leuven: Orbis/Peeters, 1997), 408-410, 473-479.

<sup>37</sup> Wulf notes the date as March 1962 but I believe this to be a typological error.

development that seemed revolutionary,” amounted to a new text, “The call to holiness in the Church.”<sup>38</sup>

The new text continued to deal with both the themes of sanctity and Religious together. It acted, however, to correct the dominant theme of the earlier manuscripts that maintained the superior calling of the Religious Life, and commenced with a paragraph on a universal vocation to sanctity:

For all and for each, then, whatever their state or order, whether they live in the world or in religion, there is only one Christian holiness. This begins with faith and with baptism, and with the unmerited help and inspiration of God’s grace and produces abundant fruit, as the history of the Church and the life of the saints make luminously clear. Therefore, let all Christians tend toward perfect love and develop the powers they have received according to the measure of Christ’s gift in order that by following in his steps they may devote themselves with their entire soul to the glory of God and the service of the neighbor.<sup>39</sup>

However, two thirds of the text still related to Religious Orders.<sup>40</sup> The text should have required joint approval by both the Theological Commission and the Commission on Religious to be sent to bishops. The death of John XXIII and the temporary suspension of the Council intervened. With the continuation of the

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<sup>38</sup> See Jan Grootaers, “The Drama Continues Between the Acts,” 408, fn. 95. See also Wulf, “Introductory Remarks on Chapters V and VI,” 259-260.

<sup>39</sup> Schema *De Ecclesia*, 29; AS II/I, 269, dated 19 July 1963, quoted in Jan Grootaers, “The Drama Continues between the Acts,” 409, fn. 97.

<sup>40</sup> The division of the Chapter went as follows:

- 28. Introduction
- 29. The Universal Vocation to Sanctity
- 30. The Different Ways in which Sanctity can be pursued
- 31. The Means to Sanctity and the Evangelical Counsels
- 32. The Observance of the Counsels in a Way of Life approved by the Church
- 33. The Profession of States of Perfection in the Church
- 34. Under the Authority of the Church
- 35. Consecration to the Evangelical Counsels to be Honored
- 36. Conclusion

See Xavier Rynne, *The Second Session: The Debates and Decrees of Vatican Council II, September 29 – December 4, 1963*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), 127.

Council, the new pope, Paul VI, to expedite matters, decided simply to forward the revision, along with the chapter on the laity, to the conciliar participants on 19 July 1963, ready for the Second Session of the Council beginning in mid-September, 1963.<sup>41</sup> Council debate formed the basis for a revision of the text in the spring of 1964.<sup>42</sup> In this revision the affirmation of the universal accessibility to sanctity comes to its clearest expression.<sup>43</sup>

Therefore all in the Church, whether they belong to the hierarchy or are cared for by it, are called to holiness, according to the apostle's saying, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification. (I Th 4:3; cf. Eph 1:4)"<sup>44</sup>

It is therefore quite clear that all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love.<sup>45</sup>

The forms and tasks of life are many but holiness is one – that sanctity which is cultivated by all who act under God's spirit and, obeying the Father's voice and adoring God the Father in spirit and in truth, follow Christ, poor, humble and cross-bearing, that they may deserve to be partakers of his glory. Each one, however, according to [their] own gifts and duties, must steadfastly advance

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<sup>41</sup> Wulf, "Introductory Remarks on Chapters V and VI," 255.

<sup>42</sup> For a summary of this debate see Philips, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: History of the Constitution," 121-125. For a complete list of speakers see Rynne, *The Second Session*, 154-157. See also Anderson, *Council Daybook*, 216, 222, 226.

<sup>43</sup> Notable in this regard were the conciliar interventions of Cardinal Paul-Emile Léger of Montreal (30 October, 1963) who complained that monastic spirituality for too long had been proposed as the only real model of holiness in the Church, "the ideal being unattainable for the secular clergy and laity" and of the President of the Beuron Benedictine Congregation, Abbot Benedikt Reetz who challenged the Thomist category of Religious Life as 'the state of perfection.' See Rynne, *The Second Session*, 128, 132. These followed the intervention of Cardinal Manuel Goncalves Cerejeira, Patriarch of Lisbon, (28 October, 1963) who had made the observation, that "the identification of sanctity with the religious state is still far too widespread among our faithful . . . all Christians [should be] made more keenly aware of the possibility, and even the obligation, of striving for the sanctity in the living of their daily lives." See Anderson, *Council Daybook*, 222. Others to speak in this regard included Cardinal Jaime de Barros Camara, Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro (28 October, 1963), Archbishop Angel Fernandes, coadjutor of Delhi, India (30 October, 1963), and Bishop Sebastiao Soares de Resende of Beira, Mozambique 30 October, 1963). See Rynne, *The Second Session*, 156, and Philips, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: History of the Constitution," 122.

<sup>44</sup> *Lumen gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, (21 November 1964), n.39, in *Vatican II: The conciliar and post conciliar documents*, edited by Austin Flannery, (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer Pty. Ltd., 1975, revised edition 1988), 350-342. (Hereafter referred to as *LG*.)

<sup>45</sup> *LG* 39.

along the way of a living faith, which arouses hope and works through love.<sup>46</sup>

Therefore all the faithful are invited and obliged to holiness and the perfection of their own state of life.<sup>47</sup>

The theological basis for such universality is to be discovered in Chapter II of *Lumen gentium*, on ‘The People of God.’<sup>48</sup> By virtue of their baptism each member of the Church shares in the priesthood of Christ, all are consecrated to be ‘a spiritual house and a holy priesthood’. All are to persevere in prayer and praising God, and should present themselves as a sacrifice, living, holy, and pleasing to God. (Rom 12:1).<sup>49</sup> This inclusive concept, given further expression in Chapter IV on ‘The Laity,’ provides,

a common dignity among all the members deriving from their rebirth in Christ, a common grace, as sons [and daughters], a common vocation to perfection, one salvation, one hope and undivided charity. . . In the Church not everyone marches along the same path, yet all are called to sanctity and have obtained an equal privilege of faith through the justice of God (Pet 1:1).<sup>50</sup>

On the 30<sup>th</sup> September 1964 the chapter was re-presented to the Council for final deliberation.<sup>51</sup> It was delivered in two sections: one on the universal call to holiness and the other on Religious Life. An initial vote was taken as to whether the two parts

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<sup>46</sup> LG 41.

<sup>47</sup> LG 42.

<sup>48</sup> For an early conciliar commentary on the notion of the ‘people of God,’ see Yves Congar, “The Church: The people of God,” *Concilium* 1 (January, 1965), 7-19.

<sup>49</sup> LG 10.

<sup>50</sup> LG 32.

<sup>51</sup> The original Chapter IV of *De Ecclesia* had now become Chapter V of *Lumen Gentium* as a consequence of the insertion of the consideration on the People of God as the new Chapter II. The final document was solemnly voted on 21 November, 1964 with only 5 noes. See Philips, “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: History of the Constitution,” 127-137.

should be kept as one or divided and made into two separate chapters. For individual chapters, the vote was 1,505 ‘yes’ to 698 (7 null).<sup>52</sup>

Though the final version of Chapter V of *Lumen gentium* received overwhelming final endorsement (1, 856 ‘yes’ votes to 17 ‘no’ with 302 *juxta modum*, 2 null), the earlier plebiscite reflected, in fact, the Council’s very struggle to determine the locus of Christian holiness in the face of historical currents that had brought into question its very definition. It was, however, a struggle that has ultimately facilitated a new possibility for understanding holiness, and the spiritual life, generally.

In the universal call to holiness, any suggestion of a dichotomized framework for holiness that is in disregard of the ‘world’, or those who live in society, is irrevocably abandoned at least at the level of the Magisterium, even though in the popular imagination residues of an earlier framework clearly remain. The import of this conciliar articulation cannot be overestimated. It would be erroneous, however, to suggest that such a declaration was entirely innovative.

The notion of holiness accessible to all, irrespective of ecclesiastical status, had, of course, been a theme present in the history of Catholic spiritual literature, although always one secondary to the idea of Religious Life as the genuine ‘state of perfection.’ Several recent studies have detailed the experience of a lay asceticism in history.<sup>53</sup> In the contrast between Heloise, Abbess of the Paraclete (d.1164) and

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<sup>52</sup> For details of the voting related to chapters V and VI and for the Council agenda of 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1964 see Rynne, *The Third Session*, 57-58.

<sup>53</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 379-428; *Lay Sanctity, Medieval and Modern: A search for models*, edited by Anne Astell, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000) and *Mysticism and Social Transformation*, edited by Janet K. Ruffing, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse

Bernard of Clairvaux (d.1153), Astell, for example, notes an explicit divergence from the Platonic and hierarchical paradigm on sanctity.<sup>54</sup> In such figures as the medieval Lombard tertiaries of the Humiliati (twelfth century) and the Beguines, inspired by Blessed Mary of Oignies (d.1213) and Blessed Gertrude of Delft (d.1358), through to fourteenth century characters such as Gerard Groote (1340-1384) and the Brethren of the Common Life,<sup>55</sup> Catherine of Siena (1347-1380),<sup>56</sup> Jean de Charlier de Gerson (1363-1429)<sup>57</sup> and Margery Kempe (1373-1439)<sup>58</sup> additional traces of a secular spirituality are evidenced. Further, in later personalities like Angela Merici (1474-1540),<sup>59</sup> Thomas More (1478-1535), Ignatius of Loyola (1495-1556), Louis of Granada (1505-1588), and Pierre Charron (1541-1603) the same development can be identified. Perhaps, however, it is in the spiritualities of Francis de Sales (1567-1622)

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University Press, 2001). See also Derek Baker, “*Vir Dei*: secular sanctity in the early tenth century” and Marc L. Schwarz, “Some Thoughts on the Development of a Lay Religious Consciousness in Pre-Civil-War England,” in *Popular Belief and Practice*, Studies in Church History Volume 8, edited by G.J. Cuming and Derek Baker, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 41-53, 171-178; Frederick C. Bauerschmidt, *Julian of Norwich and the Mystical Body of Christ*, Studies in Spirituality and Theology Series, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1999); Ray C. Petry, “Social Responsibility and the Late Medieval Mystics,” *Church History* 21 (1952), 3-19.

<sup>54</sup> Astell, in *Lay Sanctity, Medieval and Modern*, “Introduction.”

<sup>55</sup> See for example, Augustine Thompson, *Cities of God: The religion of the Italian communes 1125-1325*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press 2005).

<sup>56</sup> Karen Scott, “Catherine of Siena and Lay Sanctity in Fourteenth-Century Italy,” in *Lay Sanctity, Medieval and Modern*, 77-90; Carola Parks, “Social and Political Consciousness in the Letters of Catherine of Siena,” in *Western Spirituality: Historical roots, ecumenical routes*, edited by Matthew Fox, (Sante Fe, New Mexico: Bear and Company, Inc, 1981), 249-260.

<sup>57</sup> For an introduction to Gerson, see James L. Connolly, *John Gerson: reformer and mystic*, (Louvain: Librarie Universitaire, 1928). For a fuller treatment of his spirituality see Paschal Boland, *The concept of "discretio spirituum" in John Gerson's "De probatione spirituum" and "De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis"* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1959). For Gerson's role in the early fifteenth century schism and the Council of Constance, see John B. Morrall, *Gerson and the Great Schism*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1960) and Louis B. Pascoe, *Jean Gerson: principles of church reform*, (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

<sup>58</sup> Peter Pellegrin, “‘I wold pow wer cloyd in a hows of ston’ Sexuality and Lay Sanctity in *The Book of Margery Kempe*,” in Astell, *Lay Sanctity, Medieval and Modern*, 91-104.

<sup>59</sup> See *inter alia*, Querciol Mazzonis, “A Female Idea of Religious Perfection: Angela Merici and the company of St. Ursula (12535-1540),” *Renaissance Studies* 18, 393-411.

and Alphonso Ligouri (1696-1787) that such a strand within Catholic spirituality achieves its most detailed expression.<sup>60</sup>

More specifically, in the years immediately preceding the Council, the understanding of the universal accessibility to holiness, and therefore the possibility of holiness ‘in the world’ had been given magisterial context through a number of different pronouncements. In the encyclical *Mater et magistra* (1961), for example, John XXIII had penned,

No one should make the mistake of supposing that [their] own spiritual perfection is inconsistent with the tasks of this present life. The two are perfectly consistent. Let no one imagine that [they] must necessarily withdraw from the activities of temporal life in order to strive for Christian perfection, or that it is impossible to engage in such activities without jeopardizing one’s human and Christian dignity.<sup>61</sup>

John XXIII, however, was engaging a sentiment given articulation much earlier by Pius XI and from which Chapter V of *Lumen gentium* draws its inspiration.<sup>62</sup>

Celebrating the third centenary of the death of Francis de Sales, Pius XI wrote:

We cannot accept the belief that this command of Christ concerns only a select and privileged group of souls and that all others may consider themselves pleasing to Him if they have attained a lower degree of holiness. Quite the contrary is true, as appears from the

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<sup>60</sup> See particularly Francis de Sales, *Letters to Persons in the World*, translated by Henry Benedict Mackey, (London: Burns & Oates, 1894) and *Introduction to the Devout Life*, translated by John K. Ryan, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966). For a helpful commentary on Salesian spirituality, see Bernard Bangle, *Authentic Devotion: a modern interpretation of Introduction to the Devout Life by Francis de Sales*, (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Waterbrook Press, 2002). For the spirituality of Alphonso Ligouri, see *The Great Means of Salvation and of Perfection: prayer, mental prayer, the exercises of a retreat, choice of a state of life, and the vocation to the religious state and the priesthood*, edited by Eugene Grimm, (New York: Benziger, 1886) and *The Love of God in Practice: a complete treatise on the virtues to be practiced in the changing affairs of daily life*, translated by W. Frean, (Ballarat, Victoria: Majella Press, 1963). For a recent treatment, see Terrence J. Moran, “Alphonsus Ligouri: Preacher of the God of loveliness,” *The Way* 36 (July 1996), 245-255.

<sup>61</sup> John XXIII, *Mater et magistra*, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 53 (1961), quoted by Wulf, “Introductory Remarks on Chapters V and VI,” 258.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. footnote 4, article 40, Chapter V, *Lumen Gentium*, in Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, 397.

very generality of His words. The law of holiness embraces all and admits of no exception. (n.3)

[Francis de Sales] task was to give the lie to a prejudice which in his lifetime was deeply rooted and has not been destroyed even today, that the ideal of genuine sanctity held up for imitation by the Church is impossible of attainment or, at best, is so difficult that it surpasses the capabilities of the great majority of the faithful and is, therefore, to be thought of as the exclusive possession of a few great souls. St. Francis likewise disproved the false idea that holiness was so hedged around by annoyances and hardships that it is inadaptable to a life lived outside cloister walls. (n.4)

[Francis de Sales] sets himself expressly to prove that holiness is perfectly possible in every state and condition of secular life, and to show how each can live in the world in such a manner as to save their own soul, provided only they keep themselves free from the spirit of the world. (n.13)

. . . the truth that holiness of life is not the privilege of a select few. All are called by God to a state of sanctity and all are obliged to try to attain it. (n.27)<sup>63</sup>

*Provida mater ecclesia* (1947), the Apostolic Constitution of Pius XII concerning Secular Institutes which attempts to do for the proliferation of the secular institute what Leo XIII's *Condita a Christo* (1900) did for Religious Congregations with Simple Vows, resumes this renewed ecclesial understanding of the entire church's call to holiness. Drawing from Matthew 5:48 and 19:12; Colossians. 4:12 and James 1:4, and tracing the development of new forms of apostolic life through the nineteenth century, Pius XII declares,

[God] has sent out his invitation, time and time again, to all the faithful, that all should seek and practice perfection, wherever they may be. So it has come about in the working of Divine Providence that many chosen souls even in the midst of the world, so vicious and corrupt, especially in our times, have opened out to him like flowers to the sun, souls not only full of burning zeal for that perfection to which each single soul is called, but capable in the

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<sup>63</sup> Pius XI, *Rerum omnium perturbationem* (26 January, 1923), in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 15 (1923), translation given <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius11/P11PERTU.HTM>, accessed 11 February, 2003. These sentiments are given particular implicit concretisation in the treatment of Christian marriage in Pius XII, *Casti Connubii* (31 December, 1930), *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 22 (1930).



midst of the world with a vocation that is from God of finding new and excellent ways of seeking perfection together in associations suitable to the needs of our times and yet well adapted to the search for perfection. (n.13)

Every man and every woman may, in the hidden world of the human heart (the canon lawyer would call it *forum internum*) reach out to perfection. (n.14)<sup>64</sup>

#### D. 'The Mystical' and 'the Political' – An Unavoidable Tension.

The twin issues of affirmation of the lay vocation and the universal nature of Christian holiness correlate in the twentieth century in a movement from the 'sacralisation' of spirituality through to the 'secularisation' of the same. Perhaps heirs to the much earlier contributions of thinkers such as William James (1842-1910),<sup>65</sup> Dom John

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<sup>64</sup> Pius XII, *Provida mater ecclesia*, (2 February, 1947), in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 30 (1947); translation given [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_xii/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_a](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_p-xii_a), accessed 11 February, 2003. This thought is renewed by Pius XII in his addresses *Annus sacer*, (8 December, 1950), in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 45 (1951), and *Nel darvi*, (1 July, 1956), in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 48 (1956).

Il Terz'Ordine Francescano nacque in cuore al vostro Serafico Padre il giorno in cui una schiera di anime, commosse e sospinte dalle parole di lui, chiesero di accompagnarlo nelle strade che egli percorreva, seguendo le orme di Cristo, nel cui nome andava ripetendo: "Siate perfetti." Siccome non era possibile che tutti praticassero i consigli evangelici, Francesco ricordò che tutti, se lo avessero voluto, avrebbero potuto tendere alla perfezione dello stato, e conseguirla senza abbracciare lo stato di perfezione. *Tutti avrebbero potuto, rinnegando se stessi, essere docili strumenti nelle mani di Cristo: pronti a qualsiasi desiderio di Lui, a qualunque suo cenno. E questa adesione completa, perenne, alla volontà di Dio, questa affettuosa ma forte dedizione a Lui e al suo volere, questa completezza e perfezione di vita alla luce del Vangelo, può essere di tutti i cristiani, ed è stata infatti di tanti in ogni epoca.* [emphasis mine]

The Third Order of the Franciscans was conceived in the heart of your Seraphic Father on the day in which an army of souls, motivated by his words, asked to follow him on the journey that he himself traveled, in imitation of the footprints of Christ, whose call was "Be perfect." Since it is not possible that all practice the evangelical counsels [i.e. Religious Life], Francis brought to mind that all, if they wished it, could aspire to the perfection of the state, even without embracing the state of perfection [i.e. Religious Life]. *All are able, with the same renunciation, to be docile instruments in the hands of Christ: ready to always desire Him with whatever means. And this whole-hearted sustained dedication to the will of God, this affectionate but strong devotion to Him, and to His will, this complete and perfect life according to the light of the Gospel, is for all Christians as it has been in every age.* [Translation and emphasis mine].

<sup>65</sup> See William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A study in human nature*, (New York: The Modern Library, 1902). Following Schleiermacher's definition of religion as a 'creature-feeling,' James presents, the spiritual experience, from an empirical approach, as "the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, as far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine." In so doing, James renders spirituality with an intensely individual, personal experience of affect. As "theologies, philosophies and ecclesiastical organisation may secondarily grow" James work provides the basis for the increasing dichotomy between

Chapman (1865-1933),<sup>66</sup> and Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941),<sup>67</sup> various commentators speak of the ‘democratisation of holiness,’ or the ‘spirituality revolution,’ that occurs over this period<sup>68</sup> or the shift from ‘monastic to political holiness’<sup>69</sup> or the transformation from a focus on ‘interiority’ to ‘exteriority.’<sup>70</sup> In tracing its Reformation influences, Charles Taylor suggests this shift in the perspective of the ‘affirmation of ordinary life.’<sup>71</sup>

In very different ways these new expressions of spirituality affirm both the universal call to holiness and ‘the world’ as the place in which the spiritual endeavour is to take place. This represents a fundamental paradigmatic shift in the way in which the

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‘spirituality’ and ‘religion’ in the twentieth century. For a critical review of James, see Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today: William James revisited*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002).

<sup>66</sup> Chapman was one of those in the early twentieth century, along with Evelyn Underhill, known for his retrieval of the biblical and patristic sources of mysticism, and for the affirmation of a contemplative approach to Christian prayer that was accessible to many. For a collection of Chapman’s teaching on prayer, mysticism and the spiritual life, see Dom John Chapman, *The Spiritual Letters of Dom John Chapman*, edited by Dom Roger Hudleston, second edition, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1944).

<sup>67</sup> See for example, Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: a study in the nature and development of man’s spiritual consciousness*, first published 1911, (London: Methuen/Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977); *Practical Mysticism*, (New York: Dutton, 1915).

<sup>68</sup> William M. Johnston, “The Spirituality Revolution and the Process of Reconfessionalisation in the West,” *Pacifica* 16 (February 2003), 6. See also Johnston, *Recent Reference Books in Religion* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 131. For a broad treatment of the implications of such a revolution in the rise of various ‘secular’ spiritualities see *Spirituality and the Secular Quest*, World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest, Volume 22, edited by Peter H. Van Ness, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996); Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); David Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution: The emergence of contemporary spirituality*, (Pymble, NSW: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2003); Robert K.C. Forman, *Grassroots Spirituality: What it is, why it is here, where it is going*, (Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic, 2004); Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: The silent takeover of religion*, (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>69</sup> Claudio Leonardi, “From ‘Monastic’ Holiness to ‘Political’ Holiness,” in *Models of Holiness*, edited by Christian Duquoc and Cassiano Floristan, Concilium Series 129, (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 46-55.

<sup>70</sup> Owen C. Thomas, “Interiority and Christian Spirituality,” *The Journal of Religion* 80 (2000), 41-60.

<sup>71</sup> See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The making of the modern identity*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 211-233.

attainment of holiness is envisaged within the Roman Catholic spiritual tradition. Given this new locus for the receptivity to the grace of holiness, implied by the Second Vatican Council's universal call to holiness, an engagement of the dialectic of 'the mystical' and 'the political' cannot be avoided. Both 'the mystical' and 'the political' are impelled into a particular relationship by the universal call to holiness which intimates the possibility of a certain integration of the two trajectories – a conjunction that, itself, may well be proposed as the deepest implication of the conciliar call.

In this 'secularisation' of spirituality, Roman Catholic spiritual practitioners will find themselves confronting the relationship between 'the mystical' and 'the political' with greater and greater urgency. Discovering his or her pathway to holiness in the midst of the secular world, the spiritually committed person cannot avoid the struggle to understand the proper relationship between 'the mystical' (broadly understood as an intense form of the love of God) and 'the political' (broadly understood as an intense form of social commitment).<sup>72</sup>

The intrinsic unity between mysticism and politics has emerged as a critical consideration in contemporary theology<sup>73</sup> The possibility of a certain integration of

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<sup>72</sup> This broad definition is taken from Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in our Western Culture: mysticism, ethics and politics*, translated by John Bowden, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1987), 71-72.

<sup>73</sup> This is particularly evidenced in the work of Edward Schillebeeckx. See *Jesus in Our Western Culture*, and *Church: The human story of God*, translated by John Bowden, (New York: Crossroad, 1990). See also inter alia, Kenneth Leech, *The Social God*, (London: Sheldon Press, 1981); Gustavo Gutierrez, *We Drink from our own Wells: the spiritual journey of a people*, translated by Matthew J. O'Connell, (Maryknoll, New York/Melbourne, Australia: Orbis Books/Dove Communications, 1984); Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward a political holiness*, translated by Robert R. Barr, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988); Hans Küng, "Rediscovering God" in *On the Threshold of The Third Millennium*, edited by the Foundation of Concilium, International Congress for Theology, Concilium Series, English language editor Philip Hillyer, (London/Philadelphia: SCM Press/Trinity Press International, 1990), 98; David Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other: The inter-religious dialogue*,

the two has become widely discussed even in recent exegetical exercises on the life of Jesus himself.<sup>74</sup> As Kevin Burke recently remarked, “many efforts to import the value of one side into a commitment on the other . . . proliferate.”<sup>75</sup> Nonetheless, Burke goes on to suggest, “However, because they require such intense philosophical and practical commitment, carefully articulated [published] efforts at genuine integration of the two remain relatively rare.”<sup>76</sup> As far as I can ascertain in good academic faith this may be held as true given the literature review indicated and embedded in this study.

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Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 1. (Louvain/Grand Rapids, Michigan.: Peeters Press/William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), and “Approaching the Christian Understanding of God” in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic perspectives*, edited by Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John Galvin, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992), 133-148; Johann Baptist Metz, *A Passion for God: The mystical-political dimension of Christianity*, translated by J. Matthew Ashley, (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1998); James Matthew Ashley, *Interruptions: Mysticism, politics, and theology in the work of Johann Baptist Metz*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998); Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, “Theo-Drama and Political Theology” *Communio: International Catholic Review* 25 (Fall 1998), 532-567 and “The Politics of Disenchantment,” *New Blackfriars*, (July/August 2001), 313-334; Roger S. Gottlieb, “The Transcendence of Justice and the Justice of Transcendence: Mysticism, deep ecology, and political life,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67, (March 1999), 149-166; *Mysticism and Social Transformation*, edited by Janet K. Ruffing; Dorothee Soelle, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and resistance*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001); 149-66; Robert J. Egan, “The Mystical and the Prophetic: Dimensions of Christian existence,” *The Way Supplement* 102 (2001), 92-106; Don Edwards, “‘Practical’ Mysticism: Seeking to unite contemplation and action,” *Pacifica* 15 (June 2002), 174-189; Philip Sheldrake, “Christian Spirituality as a Way of Living Publicly: A dialectic of the mystical and prophetic,” *Spiritus* 3 (2003), 19-37, reprinted in *Minding the Spirit: The study of Christian spirituality*, edited by Elizabeth A. Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 282-298; Gerald Gleeson, *From Ethics to Spirituality*, Catholic Social Justice Series 49, (Sydney: Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, 2004).

<sup>74</sup> See *inter alia* Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and community: the social dimension of Christian faith*, translated by John P. Galvin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); Hugo Echegaray, *The Practice of Jesus*, translated by Matthew J. O’Connell, (Maryknoll, New York/Melbourne, Australia: Orbis Books/Dove Communications, 1984); Sean P. Kealy, “The Political Jesus,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 61, (1995), 89-98; Marcus J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press International, 1998).

<sup>75</sup> Kevin F. Burke, “Review of *Mysticism and Social Transformation*, edited by Janet K. Ruffing, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, (2001),” *Spiritus* 2 (2002), 123.

<sup>76</sup> Burke, “Review,” 123.

## **E. The Research Focus of the Dissertation**

This dissertation attempts to provide such an articulation. The dissertation explores the way in which ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ coalesce in twentieth century Roman Catholic thought, exploring the conversation about the dialectic through the twentieth century, and its immediate precedents. This thesis will not attempt to explore the historical evolution of the terms of ‘mysticism’ or of ‘politics’ as entities in themselves. Rather, this thesis is an exploration of the tension between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political,’ *per se*, as it emerges through the twentieth century. This thesis will conclude that ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ might attain a certain coincidence in the lives of individuals who present as new models of Christian holiness in the twentieth century within the Roman Catholic tradition. Thus, from a consideration of the ways in which the tension has been engaged, theologically and historically, the thesis seeks to present insights for an integrated spirituality that can meet the challenges of a complex world.

Further, in suggesting that the central evangelical command to love both God and neighbour presents today with spiritual immediacy, this thesis recognises that the attempt to discover a tensive relationship between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ is not without a certain complexity. In particular, this thesis will explore as to whether in the very attempt to achieve a relationship between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ a tendency arises toward a certain polarity – that of a ‘politics of mysticism’ and a ‘mysticism of politics.’ In various ways, a ‘politics of mysticism’ will be proposed as that variant of the tension which emerges when what might be initially described as pertaining to the trajectory of ‘the mystical’ is engaged and employed for predominantly political purposes, understanding ‘political’ in this sense as a certain

exercise of social power for the purposes of asserting social identity. Conversely, and also through various illustrations, a ‘mysticism of politics’ will be suggested as that variant of the dialectic which presents when the trajectory of ‘the political’ – understood as the engagement of the public sphere – is seen as the very means by which spiritual experience becomes manifest.

Given this, it is important to present definitions of the two primary terms in the manner in which they will be employed in this thesis. Though I affirm, along with Edward Schillebeeckx, that the “love of neighbor and love of God [do] form a unity in tension - two forms of one and the same theological attitude”<sup>77</sup> - this tension has not always been held successfully. This may be due, in part, precisely to the difficulties in defining the terms, which Schillebeeckx, himself, admits as “both ambiguous, even suspect.”<sup>78</sup> Given that difficulty, importantly the terms will be used throughout this work with inverted commas, i.e. as ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political.’ Such a designation will also underscore the relatively generic way in which the terms will be employed. Nonetheless, it is important to provide the more specific way in which the terms will be engaged throughout this work in such a way that the two phrases, a ‘mysticism of politics’ and a ‘politics of mysticism’ might be more clearly apprehended.

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<sup>77</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in our Western Culture*, 70, 71.

<sup>78</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in our Western Culture*, 71.

## F. Defining ‘the mystical’

It is undeniable that there has been a marked renewal of interest in the subject of mysticism occurring throughout the twentieth century.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, as Bernard McGinn re-iterates, citing W. R. Inge’s 1899 Bampton lectures, “No word in our language – not even ‘Socialism’ – has been employed more loosely than ‘Mysticism’.”<sup>80</sup> In his magisterial tome, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods* (2002), Waaijman critiques the term, ‘mystical’ as it appears in five significant dictionaries of spirituality.<sup>81</sup> These include:

- a) ‘the mystical’ understood primarily as a participation into the mystery of Christ, as in the 1980 contribution of Solignac *et al* in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* in which we read mysticism is “a theopathic union which is faith-knowledge in love, bears fruit in love towards all creatures, who have become

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<sup>79</sup> For an excellent anthology on historical and contemporary writings on mysticism see *Understanding Mysticism*, edited by Richard Woods, (Garden City, New York: Image Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1980) and *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, edited by Steven T. Katz, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); for more detailed discussion on traditional definitions of mysticism see the pioneering work of Rudolph Otto, *Mysticism, East and West: A comparative analysis of the nature of mysticism*, translated by Bertha L. Bracey and Richenda C. Payne, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1932); Robert Charles Zaehner, *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane: An inquiry into some varieties of praeternatural experience*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961); Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The nature of religion*, translated by Willard R. Trask, (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, Inc., 1959) and *The Two and the One*, translated by J.M. Cohen, (London: Harvill Press, 1965). For contemporary interpretations see Louis Dupré, *The Deeper Life: An introduction to Christian mysticism*, (New York: Crossroad, 1981); William Johnston, *Christian Mysticism Today*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984); Harvey D. Egan, *Christian Mysticism: The future of a tradition*, (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1984); Louis Bouyer, *The Christian Mystery: From pagan myth to Christian mysticism*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990); Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, Volume 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Christian Mysticism*, (London: SCM Press, 1991) and “The Venture of Mysticism in the New Millennium,” *New Theology Review: An American Catholic Journal for Ministry* 21 (May 2008), 70-79; Mark A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The integrity of spirituality and theology*, (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1998); Don Cupitt, *Mysticism After Modernity*, (Malden, Massachusetts/Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998). For two succinct summaries of the discussion see Wayne Teasdale, “The Mystical Essence of Religion,” *Studies in Formative Spirituality* 9 (May 1988), 209-222, and Edward Howells, “Mysticism and the mystical: the current debate,” *The Way Supplement* 102 (2001), 15-27. See also Janet K. Ruffing, “Introduction,” in *Mysticism & Social Transformation*, 1-7.

<sup>80</sup> William. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism*. 1899 Bampton Lectures, (London: Meuthen Press, 1899), 3 cited by McGinn “The Venture of Mysticism in the New Millennium,” 70.

<sup>81</sup> See Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, foundations, methods*, translated by John Vriend, *Studies in Spirituality Supplement* 8, (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, Massachusetts: Peeters, 2002), 845-860.

transparent to God; in the love of neighbour, the consequence of and criterion of authenticity for the love of God; in becoming conformed to the life and work of Christ;”<sup>82</sup>

- b) a heuristic definition of mysticism by Moiolò as, “a special, religious experience of unity – fellowship – presence from which flow indeterminacy and inexpressibility” in the *Dictionnaire de la vie spirituelle* of 1983;<sup>83</sup>
- c) Dupré’s perspective in the 1987 *Encyclopedia of Religion* which begins with a more etymological approach but offers a typology of the various forms of mysticism as manifest through anthropology and the philosophy of religion.<sup>84</sup>
- d) De Sutter’s adoption of a more specifically theological framework, understanding mysticism in the *Dizionario enciclopedico di spiritualità* of 1995 as supernatural - a special action of God who makes his presence felt<sup>85</sup>
- e) Wiseman’s approach in the 1993 *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* which seeks to maintain a specifically scriptural understanding of the term.<sup>86</sup>

Waaïjman, himself, is critical of all these attempts and engages Buber’s categories of the disclosure of being to identify the key component of mystical experience.<sup>87</sup> In the light of the plethora of approaches McGinn’s observation that historical contextuality is critical for understanding mysticism in the Christian tradition has credence.<sup>88</sup> So is

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<sup>82</sup> Cited in Waaïjman, *Spirituality*, 846.

<sup>83</sup> Cited in Waaïjman, *Spirituality*, 847.

<sup>84</sup> See Waaïjman, *Spirituality*, 850.

<sup>85</sup> See Waaïjman, *Spirituality*, 852.

<sup>86</sup> See Waaïjman, *Spirituality*, 854-855.

<sup>87</sup> See Waaïjman, *Spirituality*, 860-867.

<sup>88</sup> See McGinn, “The Venture of Mysticism in the New Millennium,” 74.



his hope “that more developed forms of mysticism still lay ahead of us,” rendering a *via media* important in any discussion on mysticism. The discussion need take into consideration that, “[a]n exclusivist view does not prevent all dialogue, though it does put severe limits on it. An inclusivist view must be careful to remain true to the basic witness of faith, on the one hand, and, on the other, not to adopt some kind of Christian imperialistic stance.’<sup>89</sup>

As indicated above, the objective here is not to provide detailed commentary on such diverse approaches to the term for the interest is in the *dialectic* of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ rather than in mysticism as a study in itself. Accordingly, what this study seeks is a working definition of the term ‘mystical’ that achieves meaning in the engagement of the mystical-political dialectic within the Roman Catholic Tradition. This will be necessarily a broad definition of the term, rather than too close an etymological or typological consideration. Again, as indicated above, in order to denote this specific approach of the engagement of the term, and in respect to the diversity of approaches and the complexity of both the historical and contemporary argument on mysticism, the study will, therefore, refer to this specific polarity in the dialectic, as ‘the mystical.’

Out of the many different twentieth century contributions, for the purpose of attaining a working definition that might render the term ‘mystical’ with meaning in the mystical-political dialectic I wish to return to the classic formulation of Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941) as outlined in *Mysticism* (1911).<sup>90</sup> Whilst cognizant of the

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<sup>89</sup> McGinn, “The Venture of Mysticism in the New Millennium,” 78.

<sup>90</sup> Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A study in the nature and development of man’s spiritual consciousness*, (London/ Methuen & Co Ltd, 1901, 1977 edition). For commentary on Underhill, see

influence of neoplatonic frameworks of mysticism within the Christian tradition, but without having to draw exclusively from Orientalist constructs, Underhill describes mysticism as “essentially a movement of the heart, seeking to transcend the limitations of the individual standpoint and to surrender itself to ultimate Reality.”<sup>91</sup> For her, mysticism - as the ‘science of the Real,’ and as “the art of establishing conscious relation with the Absolute”<sup>92</sup> - is purely an instinct of love, the desire of love in combination with the desire of knowledge. Underhill identifies these two desires as the two eternal passions of the self. There are two significant characteristics in Underhill’s approach that render it with historical importance for the way in which ‘the mystical’ is to be understood in the twentieth century. Firstly, for Underhill, though mystical experience entails “the abolition of individuality; . . . that hard separateness, that ‘I, Me, Mine’ which makes of man [sic] a finite isolate thing,”<sup>93</sup> it does not mean the complete dissolution of the self which remains always a free and conscious agent.<sup>94</sup> And secondly, for Underhill, though the mystical impulse, in itself, is wholly “transcendental and spiritual. . . [such that it] is in no way concerned with adding to, exploring, re-arranging or improving anything in the visible universe”<sup>95</sup> at the same time genuine mystical experience yields an agency of ‘divine

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Margaret Cropper, *The Life of Evelyn Underhill: An intimate portrait of the groundbreaking author of Mysticism*, (Woodstock, Vermont: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2003); John J. Kirvan, *Grace Through Simplicity: The practical spirituality of Evelyn Underhill*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2004). See also John Barres, “Mysticism, The Heart of Practical Religion: The spiritual theology of Evelyn Underhill,” *Spiritual Life* 34 (Fall 1988), 129-143; Terry Tasthard, “Divine Presence and Human Freedom: The spirituality of Evelyn Underhill reconsidered,” *Theology* 94 (1991), 426-432.

<sup>91</sup> Underhill, *Mysticism*, 85.

<sup>92</sup> Underhill, *Mysticism*, 97.

<sup>93</sup> Underhill, *Mysticism*, 85.

<sup>94</sup> See Underhill, *Mysticism*, 534.

<sup>95</sup> Underhill, *Mysticism*, 96.

fecundity,' a 'fresh outbirth' of spiritual vitality into the world.<sup>96</sup> In other words, while mysticism moves us beyond simply what there is before us, genuine mysticism is neither something that is self-enclosed nor something which creates a fundamental disconnection with the world. "Wherever we find a sterile love, a holy passivity," concludes Underhill, "we are in the presence of a quietistic heresy, not of the Unitive Life."<sup>97</sup>

Thus, whilst certainly not referring explicitly to 'the political' polarity of the mystical-political dialectic, Underhill's understanding of mysticism does intimate the logic of the tension. The intimation is aptly indicated by Philip Sheldrake in his commentary on Underhill's contribution, and more specifically on the legacy of John Ruusbroec, the fourteenth century Flemish mystic who was Underhill's favourite.

A person who has been sent down by God from these heights is full of truth and rich in all the virtues . . . He will therefore always flow forth to all who need him, for the living spring of the Holy Spirit is so rich that it can never be drained dry . . . He therefore leads a common life, for he is equally ready for contemplation or for action and is perfect in both.<sup>98</sup>

Mysticism ultimately gives over to service. As Sheldrake remarks, "The spiritually elevated person is also the common person."<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> See Underhill, *Mysticism*, 512ff.

<sup>97</sup> Underhill, *Mysticism*, 513.

<sup>98</sup> John Ruusbroec, "The Sparkling Stone," in *John Ruusbroec: The Spiritual Espousals and Other Works*, edited by James Wiseman, (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 184, cited in Philip Sheldrake, "Christian Spirituality as a Way of Living Publicly: A Dialectic of the Mystical and Prophetic," *Spiritus* 3 (2003) 24. Sheldrake's article is also published in *Minding the Spirit*, edited by Elizabeth A. Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 282-292.

<sup>99</sup> Sheldrake observes this intimation of action within contemplation not only in the writing of Ruusbroec, but also in Augustine and in those twelfth century forms of community life based on the Augustinian tradition. Indeed, for Augustinian spirituality, interiority and sociality are two sustained complementary themes, each never divorced from the other. For a helpful summary of this see John D. Barbour, "Bounded Solitude in Augustine's *Confessions*," in John D. Barbour, *The Value of Solitude: The ethics and spirituality of aloneness in autobiography*, (Charlottesville and London: University of

## G. Defining ‘the political’

Defining ‘the political’ presents as no less problematic. In the end a twofold definition is required if the terms, ‘politics of mysticism’ and ‘mysticism of politics’ – as explored in this study - are to be properly understood. Just as the use of ‘the mystical’ denotes and respects its own complexity, so, too, will the political polarity of the dialectic be referred to as ‘the political.’

From the outset it is important to stress that the term, ‘the political’ is *not* being engaged in the narrow sense of government or partisan politics. A broader construct of ‘the political’ is being envisaged in the study. The notion of political life is, generally, indebted to Aristotle and his *Politics*, which Robert Sokolowski suggests maintains the finest treatment of the subject.<sup>100</sup> Aristotle writes,

Our own observation tells us that every state [*polis*] is an association of persons formed with a view to some good purpose. I say ‘good’ because in their actions all men do in fact aim at what they think good. Clearly then, as all associations aim at some good, that one which is supreme and embraces all others will have as its aim the supreme good. That is the association which we call the State, and that type of association we call political.<sup>101</sup>

For Aristotle the human person is by nature a political animal whose faculty of reason enables him and her to engage with others in the pursuit of the ultimate good.<sup>102</sup> In

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Virginia Press, 2004), 32-42. Charles Taylor offers an excellent treatment of Augustine’s understanding of interiority in *Sources of the Self: The making of the modern identity*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 127-141.

<sup>100</sup> See Robert Sokolowski, “The Human Person and Political Life,” *The Thomist* 65 (October 2001), 505-527. In what follows I am particularly indebted to Mary Roddy, “Democracy and Political Life? Are they compatible in the modern state?” *Ethics Education: A journal for applied philosophy and ethics in the Christian tradition* 13 (2007), 4-13. For a succinct history of political philosophy see Michael J. White, *Political Philosophy: An historical introduction*, (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2003).

<sup>101</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, book 1, chapter 1, in *Aristotle: The Politics*, translated by T. A. Sinclair, (Great Britain: Penguin Classics, 1962, reprinted 1969), 25.

<sup>102</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, book 1, chapter 1, in *Aristotle: The Politics*, 25.

other words, political life comes into being through sustained, reasoned, ethical discourse about what constitutes the good. For Aristotle, the *polis* enables citizens to think and act for the sake of living a good life with the goal of achieving happiness which he regards as an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.

Manent suggests a finite number of historical political forms, but whether it be empire, city state, the modern state, or even theocracy, it is 'the political' which provides the structure and order necessary for persons to live together.<sup>103</sup> Michael Oakeshott, likewise, defines politics as, "the activity of attending to the general arrangements of a collection of people who, in respect of their common recognition of a manner of attending to its arrangements, compose a single community."<sup>104</sup> For Oakeshott political thought occurs on three levels: in political practice which is represented by the thinking that goes on when people are in the midst of political activity; in political commentary, when people reflect on historical patterns to discern principles explaining or justifying their political actions; and in political philosophy in which political activity and government is situated within the entire map of human activity.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> See Pierre Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, translated by Rebecca Balinski, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996) and *A World beyond Politics? A defence of the nation-state*, translated by Marc LePain, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006). Charles Taylor traces how such a concept of order has evolved from a hierarchical model to one based on the mutual respect and service directed towards instrumental goals, but one now particularly characterized by the individualism of Hobbes. See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 159-171.

<sup>104</sup> Michael Oakeshott, "Political Education," in Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1991), 56.

<sup>105</sup> See Michael Oakeshott, *Morality and Politics in Modern Europe: The Harvard lectures*, edited by Shirley Robin Letwin, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1993), 3-15.

Within such a framework various experiences of ‘the political’ are being intimated: activity, reflection, philosophy. ‘The political’ is thus a multi-dimensional term that can, in effect, be used in a variety of ways to mean a number of different human activities. The context in which the term, ‘the political,’ is used is, therefore, critical to its definition.

As mentioned above, the term ‘the political’ will, thus, be used in two senses. The first sense it will be used will be such that it might underscore use of the term, the ‘mysticism of politics’ as it develops throughout the thesis. From this perspective, ‘the political’ is being understood primarily as ‘social engagement.’ The second sense in which the term, ‘the political’ will be used will underscore the employment of the term, the ‘politics of mysticism.’ Within this framework, ‘the political’ is principally conceived in terms of the exercise of social power. The term, ‘the political,’ is considerably nuanced in each instance. In the first instance, an understanding of ‘the political’ moves us beyond the pessimism of Weber and Péguy – as will be considered below - to suggest that ‘the political’ contains an intrinsic orientation to ‘the mystical’ just as ‘the mystical,’ as presented above, might enjoy a fundamental inclination towards ‘the political.’ In the second, ‘the ‘political’ is regarded primarily as an exercise of a power, civil or ecclesiastical, that manipulates or coerces ‘the mystical’ for purposes extrinsic to its proper experience, i.e. ‘the mystical’ is used subservient to a social agenda oriented to the establishment of identity or status. In this sense, ‘the mystical’ is used instrumentally for the achievement of political power in one form or another.

### **G.1 ‘The political’ as social engagement**

In understanding ‘the political’ primarily as social engagement, it is important to identify the development of the notion of the ‘public sphere’ which in the West becomes increasingly a means of political practice.

The public sphere is the place of conversation and debate on matters of public interest. This notion evolved further by democratic idealism and by the concept of civil society. In the latter there exist free associations through which persons develop moral agency in their life with one another to bring about the common good they desire even, and especially, in the presence of diversity within the community’s life.<sup>106</sup>

Upon his treatment of the evolution of the understanding of ‘the political’ with its emphasis on the security of individual rights, Charles Taylor understands ‘the public sphere’ as a reality distinct from ‘the political,’ distinguished as the exercise of power over a social grouping, as developed below.<sup>107</sup> For Taylor, the ‘public sphere,’ is the normative space of reflective view, to which government must listen and in which the sovereignty of the people is expressed: “a locus in which rational views are elaborated which should guide government.”<sup>108</sup> Not an exercise of political power itself in the sense of partisan implementation, the ‘public sphere’ enjoys a certain ‘extra-political status’ and possesses a critical supervisory function on the exercise of

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<sup>106</sup> The classic work on modern democratic society remains Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* of 1848. See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, translated by George Lawrence, edited by J. P. Mayer, (London: Fontana Press, 1994). On civil society see Charles Taylor, “Invoking Civil Society,” in *Philosophical Arguments*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995).

<sup>107</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 188.

<sup>108</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 189.

partisan power. “So what the public sphere does is enable the society to come to a common mind, without the mediation of the political sphere, in a discourse of reason outside power, which nevertheless is normative for power.”<sup>109</sup> Taylor understands this definition of the public sphere to be the eighteenth century innovation on the experience of the same, further characterized now by secularity and what he terms a ‘direct-access society’ in which an unmediated equality of access to the complete social structure is enjoyed.

Though Taylor distinguishes the ‘public sphere’ from political power *per se*, I will include participation in the public sphere as, at root, political activity according to the originating Aristotelian use of the term. As Murray indicates, in genuine political life, as distinct from despotic rule, persons come together in different ways in the project of living together “in deliberations about ends and means [so to realise] his or her full human potential” which they do in increasingly complex associations. The public sphere, as presented by Taylor, is one such means.

The important characteristic of this understanding of political life is the presence of participation and engagement.<sup>110</sup> Sheldrake terms this “living publicly. It entails, “real encounters, learning how to be truly hospitable to what is different and unfamiliar, and establishing and experiencing a common life.”<sup>111</sup> Therefore, to live publicly excludes any kind of social or political quietism just as it does the tendency to any type of passivity in the face of the world’s concerns.

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<sup>109</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 190-191.

<sup>110</sup> Andrew Murray, *What Can the Church Say?*, (Strathfield: St. Pauls Publications, 2005), 50-51.

<sup>111</sup> Sheldrake, “Christian Spirituality as a Way of Living Publicly,” 27.



Sheldrake goes beyond offering a definition of civil life, however. He goes on to affirm that interaction, participation and active citizenship – i.e. ‘the political’ as it is being here defined - should be seen as a form of spiritual practice because of the way in which such activities reflect the theological reality of a God understood as persons in communion and whose mission is to bring persons into the experience of communion, reflective of the divine life.<sup>112</sup> For Sheldrake, therefore, ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ are thus equal expressions of the spiritual life, with different orientations, transcendent and immanent, but without dichotomy.

Thus, if Underhill’s definition of ‘the mystical’ as discussed above can intimate ‘the political,’ an understanding of ‘the political,’ taken from both Aristotle and from more modern discussion on the same, can intimate ‘the mystical.’ This dual intimation which speaks of the possibility of a certain integration within the mystical-political dialectic is, however, given more explicit formulation in relatively recent studies in religious anthropology as will be outlined below.

## **G.2 ‘The political’ as the exercise of power**

The second way in which ‘the political’ will be used in this thesis will be as the exercise of power. From this perspective, ‘the political’ is, as Taylor has indicated above, quite separate from the political activity inherent in engagement within the public sphere. Thus, we come to the Weberian sense of ‘the political’ as overwhelmingly instrumental and allude to a Machiavellian approach to the experience of power. This also brings us to a Hobbesian approach to ‘the political’ in

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<sup>112</sup> See Sheldrake, “Christian Spirituality as a Way of Living Publicly,” 26.

which the reality of the state is sovereign and the sole determinant of the common good. As Sokolowski indicates, in this approach to the political, “[t]here is only the calculation of consequences.”<sup>113</sup> The agency of persons is manipulated for purposes beyond themselves, and for the purposes of a social agenda that is beyond their own conscious and individual agenda. For Hobbes, participation in a deliberation about the common good is, at best, illusory:

For there is no reason why every man should not naturally mind his own private, than the public business, but that here he sees a means to declare his eloquence, whereby he may gain the reputation of being ingenious and wise, and returning home to his friends, to his parents, to his wife and children, rejoice and triumph in the applause of his dexterous behavior”<sup>114</sup>

In the sovereign state, so indicated by Sokolowski as the antithesis of Aristotelian political engagement, ordinary social groupings, (in this sense pre-political in character, or in Taylor’s perspective above, extra-political), are permitted to exist only according to the sovereign’s own purpose. Sokolowski thus draws from Rousseau’s *Social Contract* to describe the orienting principle of such political power: “The man [sic] who makes bold to undertake the founding of a people should feel within himself the capacity to – if I may put it so – change human nature: to transform each individual . . . into a part of a larger whole, from which he in a sense draws his life and being.”<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Sokolowski, “The Human Person and Political Life,” 520.

<sup>114</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive* 10, n.15 in Thomas Hobbes, *Man and Citizen*, edited by Bernard Gert, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972) cited by Sokolowski, “The Human Person and Political Life,” 519.

<sup>115</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, translated by Willmoore Kendall, (New York: Henry Regnery Company, 1954), book II, chapter 7, cited by Sokolowski, “The Human Person and Political Life,” 523.

Thus, we see, in Taylor's words, the rise of contemporary despotisms that "are forced not only to suppress public opinion, but also to counterfeit it."<sup>116</sup> De Tocqueville, the great commentator on democratic political principle, was aware that such a situation is possible even in the experience of democracy, though "it would be more widespread and milder; it would degrade men rather than torment them."<sup>117</sup> Nonetheless, its effects are real. De Tocqueville's description of the exercise of such political power, for which he struggles to find a term, is important to relate in full:

It would resemble parental authority, if fatherlike, it tried to prepare its charges for a man's life, but on the contrary, it only tries to keep them in perpetual childhood. It likes to see the citizens enjoy themselves, provided that they think nothing but enjoyment. It gladly works for their happiness but wants to be sole agent and judge of it. It provides for their security, foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs their industry, makes rules for their testaments, and divides their inheritances. Why should it not entirely relieve them from the trouble of thinking and all the cares of living?

Thus it daily makes the exercise of free choice less useful and rarer, restricts the activity of free will within a narrower compass, and little by little robs each citizen of the proper use of his own faculties. Equality has prepared men for all this, predisposing them to endure it and often even regard it as beneficial.

Having thus taken each citizen in turn in its powerful grasp and shaped him to its will, government then extends its embrace to include the whole of society. It covers the whole of social life with a network of petty, complicated rules that are both minute and uniform, through which even men of the greatest originality and the most vigorous temperament cannot force their heads above the crowd. It does not break men's will, but softens, bends and guides it; it seldom enjoins, but often inhibits, action; it does not destroy anything, but prevents much being born; it is not at all tyrannical, but it hinders, restrains, enervates, stifles and stultifies so much that in the end each nation is no more than a flock of timid and hardworking animals with the government as its shepherd.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Taylor, "Invoking Civil Society," 208.

<sup>117</sup> De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, volume II, part four, chapter 6, 691.

<sup>118</sup> De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, volume II, part four, chapter 6, 692.

De Tocqueville has described the modern state with breathtaking clarity, but he has also described the situation when, as he indicates, people within any social grouping are caught in the conflict between wanting to be free and wanting to be led. It will be a point made in this thesis, however, that the Church can likewise engage such power in similar fashion. In so doing, 'the mystical' itself can be engaged at the service of such politics. Accordingly, this provides the basis of how the term, the 'politics of mysticism' will be presented in this dissertation.

It must be noted, however, that not all assertion of power is necessarily pejorative. There is an exercise of power, and an engagement of 'the political' in the sense of 'the political' as power, that can be regarded as a capacity for fostering growth in a social body. The assertion of social identity may be necessary by a particular group for a variety of reasons: from the legitimate need of a group to protect its rights through to a public celebration of the contribution of a group to the common good.

'The political' as an exercise of power is suggested negatively in those circumstances when a proper exercise of power translates into purely self-absorbed activity and the maintenance of control. The proper exercise of 'the political' at the service of identity is thus usually momentary in character. It does not seek to fixate its assertion. The determination about the legitimacy of power's exercise in the context of this study will be centered on the issue of whether power and 'the political' is about control or about prophetic realization.

## H. Methodology of the Dissertation

Having postulated the working definitions of the key terms and phrases from which the thesis will proceed, it is important to stipulate the particular methodology which will be engaged in the dissertation as specifically a study in Christian spirituality.

In noting the academic study of spirituality as a “young discipline”, Sandra Schneiders suggests it is typically postmodern in that it is “interdisciplinary in its formulation of research projects and in the methodologies it develops for prosecuting those projects.”<sup>119</sup> She suggests that while “making use of a plurality of specific methods, the discipline itself has no method of its own. Rather, methods function in the explanatory moment of the hermeneutical dialectic between explanation and understanding.”<sup>120</sup> Nonetheless, Schneiders proposes that studies in spirituality should involve a three dimensional approach:

The first phase is essentially descriptive, and intends to surface the data, concerning the experience being investigated. In this phase historical, textual and comparative studies are of primary importance. The second phase is essentially analytical and critical, leading to explanation and evaluation of the subject. Here the theological, human and social sciences are of particular importance. The third phase is synthetic and/or constructive and leads to appropriation. Hermeneutical theory governs this final phase. Not every study in the field of spirituality will involve all three dimensions nor will they always occur in this order. But experience

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<sup>119</sup> Sandra M. Schneiders, “The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and dynamics of a discipline,” *Studies in Spirituality* 8 (1998), 49.

<sup>120</sup> Sandra M. Schneiders, “Spirituality in the Academy,” *Theological Studies* 50 (1989), 694. Here Schneiders is critical of the proposal for study in spirituality forwarded by Edward Kinerk, “Toward a Method of the Study of Spirituality,” *Review for Religious* 40 (1981), 3-19 in which Kinerk adapts Bernard Lonergan’s method in theology for the study of spirituality. Kinerk’s method does, however, present possibilities for the study of historical schools of spirituality. For further discussion on the topic of methodology in the discipline of spirituality see Carlos N.N. Eire, “Major Problems in the Definition of Spirituality as an Academic Discipline,” in *Modern Christian Spirituality: Methodological and historical essays*, edited by Bradley C. Hanson, (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1990), 53-61; Philip Sheldrake, “The Study of Spirituality,” *The Way* 39 (April, 1999), 162-172; *Minding the Spirit: The study of Christian spirituality*, edited by Elizabeth A. Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005) and David B. Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2007).

suggests that this type of approach distinguishes serious studies in the field.<sup>121</sup>

Whilst I accept the general orientation of Schneiders' proposal, Kees Waaijman, in his landmark study, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*, details a more rigorous methodology in the study of spirituality, identifying four research strategies for the discipline and proposing that they are integrally linked: description, hermeneutics, systematics and mystagogy.<sup>122</sup>

In 'Form-Descriptive Research' he suggests three layers corresponding to phenomenological description: the demarcation of the form; the contextualisation of the phenomenon to be described; and the explication of the divine-human relational process which determines the form within. Descriptive research is,

aimed, on the one hand, at the description of spiritual forms in their sociocultural context, a project that implies the use of church-historical, culture-historical, sociology-of-religion and phenomenology-of-religion methods. On the other hand, this research is aimed at deciphering and describing the ascetic-mystical process of transformation that is expressed in these forms.<sup>123</sup>

By "Hermeneutic Research", Waaijman proposes a comprehensive "reading and interpretation procedure which includes a pre-understanding, a phased reading process and its impact."<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 695.

<sup>122</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 593-945.

<sup>123</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 598.

<sup>124</sup> For the detailed study of such a hermeneutic of the text, see Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 690-773.

In 'Systematic Research' attention is paid to the categorization of thematic fields, style of argumentation, and orientation. This research "is guided, on the one hand, by insights from systematic theology and philosophy in articulating the truth; on the other hand, it pays systematic attention to the role that the process of spiritual transformation plays in the process of articulation."<sup>125</sup>

Fourthly, by 'Mystagogic Research' Waaijman seeks to give clarification to the process of spiritual transformation, noting that in mystagogy the attempt is "to clarify the journey of the spiritual way" such that persons are enabled to "relate personally to the way they are going in the divine-human relational process."<sup>126</sup> In Waaijman's framework, mystagogy is not concerned with the communication of doctrine but rather with the deeper experience, and more precise interpretation of the divine mystery.<sup>127</sup>

The integrity of these forms of research in spirituality, which Waaijman regards as a balance between inter- and intra-disciplinarity, means, "they presuppose and are intertwined with each other."<sup>128</sup> As he identifies, should students wish to fully explore, for example, a particular historical period, thus using 'form-descriptive research' as their primary concern, they will, naturally,

have to be familiar with the spiritual literature of that time and not just in a general sense. [But] they will [also] have to analyze certain key texts in depth (hermeneutics) in order to obtain access to the internal horizon of that spiritual form. They will also have to be

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<sup>125</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 598-599.

<sup>126</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 869.

<sup>127</sup> See Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 870.

<sup>128</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 595.

familiar with the material frame of reference: images of God and man, central concepts, cosmological models, ideas about prayer and mysticism, and so forth (systematics). Finally, they will have to explore how real people oriented themselves within that spiritual form, say by reading a number of spiritual biographies (mystagogics)<sup>129</sup>.

The key point that Waaijman is making is that one form of research, in this example, ‘descriptive,’ presupposes the other three. Though I would not hold with Waaijman that each form necessarily needs to *explicitly* incorporate the other three, nonetheless the point is taken that one form will, at least, intimate the other three in such a project.<sup>130</sup> Waaijman is ultimately suggesting that a methodological integrity is necessary, in his words, *mutatis mutandis* for those whose starting point might be ‘systematic research,’ that is for those who want to examine a given set of themes from the domain of spirituality. For these students, it will be incumbent upon them to “distinguish carefully of what spiritual form this set is a part (description); they will have to analyze key texts (hermeneutics) and trace the possible function of this set in initiating people into the spiritual way (mystagogy).<sup>131</sup>

Whilst this thesis will not be bound stringently by Waaijman’s methodological schema, nonetheless it is a dissertation primarily oriented to “Systematic Research,” as Waaijman defines it above, and is informed by his concern for a certain integration between the different forms of research that he identifies.

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<sup>129</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 596.

<sup>130</sup> See Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 596.

<sup>131</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 596.



The study will borrow from Waaijman's methodology but engage it with some liberality. In exploring the chosen topic of the mystical-political dialectic ('systematic'), the thesis will be systematic in that it is guided by insights from systematic theology, and philosophy.<sup>132</sup> In so doing, however, it cannot avoid both a 'descriptive' component that situates the theme historically and also a component that is 'hermeneutical' such that key contributions encapsulating the mystical-political dialectic - though not necessarily recognized classical spiritual writers as such - will be explored.

At the same time, however, as a project in spirituality, attention must be paid "to the role that the process of spiritual transformation plays in this process of articulation."<sup>133</sup> Indeed, as Schneiders understands it,

the primary aim of the discipline of spirituality . . . is to *understand* the phenomena of the Christian spiritual life as experience. And since understanding of such phenomena is a function of *interpretation*, the presiding intellectual instrumentality is hermeneutics understood as an articulated and explicit interpretational strategy. [Italics in the original]<sup>134</sup>

Precisely, as a project in Christian spirituality, the ultimate aim of this thesis, thus must be mystagogical. It is at the service of enabling people to experience the truth of the evangelical command of love of both God and neighbour (Matthew 22:34-40) in the context of the social and ecclesial challenges of the twenty first century.

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<sup>132</sup> Cf. Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 598.

<sup>133</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 599.

<sup>134</sup> Sandra Schneiders, "A Hermeneutical Approach to the Study of Christian Spirituality," in *Minding the Spirit: The study of Christian spirituality*, edited by Elizabeth A. Dreyer and Mark. S. Burrows, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 56.

The study appropriates these considerations through the following structure. **Part A**, predominantly ‘systematic’ and ‘hermeneutical’, surveys the tension between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ as it has generally been engaged, historically and theologically. It identifies several key dualities which are antecedent to the mystical-political dialectic and acknowledges recent studies of religion that suggest the possibility of a change in regard to ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ from duality to tensive relationship. In this latter respect, the contrasting positions between the neo-Thomist Jacques Maritain and the church-state dialectic of the Augustinian Radical Orthodoxy writers, particularly William Cavanaugh, will be discussed, as will the parallels in the mystical-political framework enunciated by the German Johannes Baptist Metz and the Flemish Edward Schillebeeckx.

**Part B**, mainly ‘descriptive’ and ‘hermeneutical,’ explores the dialectic from the perspective of historical insight. It begins by suggesting the intimation of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ within each other – an intimation that might be derived from historical scholarship on the spiritual tradition. Again, some key examples will be availed – in this case, Ray C. Petry and Frederick Bauerschmidt, Steven Ozment and Michel De Certeau. From a particular consideration of the nineteenth century it will be argued, moreover, that ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ can be considered as forming a continuum in which emerges either a ‘politics of mysticism’ or a ‘mysticism of politics.’ Through an exploration of the rise and development of twentieth century lay movements, this possibility of the tension between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ devolving into a ‘mysticism of politics’ or a ‘politics of mysticism’ is further presented.

On the basis of these considerations, the **Conclusion**, primarily ‘mystagogical’, presents key lessons for contemporary Roman Catholic spirituality that are suggested by the mystical-political tensive relationship, and its two critical variants as named in the thesis. It will suggest those means by which the tension might be effectively sustained as a necessary and creative one within the spiritual life, and acknowledge the implications for an emergent paradigm of holiness at the dawn of the twenty first century.

## **PART A**

### **‘THE MYSTICAL’ AND ‘THE POLITICAL’: DUALITIES AND A TENSION IN UNITY**

*"All life, according to [von Hügel] consists in a patient struggle with irreconcilables—a progressive unifying of parts that will never fit perfectly."*

George Tyrrell, "Review of *The Mystical Element of Religion* by Baron F. von Hügel," *Hibbert Journal* 7 (July 1909), 689.

## CHAPTER ONE

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### ANTECEDENT DUALITIES

The historical inability to hold the conjunction of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ with seriousness may be a consequence of various sets of dualities that are antecedent to the mystical-political dialectic. In such dualities mystical experience and political action are intimated, most often, as in a certain opposition one to the other. In particular, this chapter will identify the following antecedent dualities: Augustine’s ‘two cities’ and Luther’s ‘two kingdoms’, the religious ‘mystical’ and ‘prophetic’ typology of Friedrich Heiler, and the mystical and political divide as found in the work of both Max Weber and Charles Péguy.

#### 1.1 The Augustinian and Lutheran Polarity of Cities and Kingdoms

Commentators debate Augustine’s understanding of the inter-relationship between his ‘two cities’ – ‘the ‘earthly city’ and ‘the heavenly city.’ The degree to which they are ultimately opposing dualities is a contentious point.

Markus provides a useful background on this debate. He begins this treatment with the premise that ‘secular’ was an unfamiliar term in the ancient world accustomed as it was to the distinction rather of the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane.’<sup>1</sup> Thus, he suggests that the term ‘secular,’ as distinct from ‘profane,’ is not necessarily antithetical to the religious but rather the “the sphere in which they can have a common interest.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Robert A. Markus, *Christianity and the Secular*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> See Markus, *Christianity and the Secular*, 6.

Markus goes on to outline two broad appropriations of the Augustinian understanding. On the one hand, stands secular liberalism which argues for a complete severance between the religious and the public realm, and on the other hand, the position as detailed by Milbank and the school of ‘radical orthodoxy’ in which ‘the realm of the merely practical, cut off from the ecclesial, is quite simply a realm of sin.’<sup>3</sup> As Markus concludes in this view which he regards as a misreading of the Augustinian position, “no sound political theory can be constructed except within the framework of a Christian ‘ontology’ or worldview . . . [i.e.] true justice is dependent on true piety.”<sup>4</sup> .

From a similar perspective, Jean Bethke Elshtain points out, Augustine’s “repudiation of the theology underwriting the notion of an *imperium Christianum* lies in part in his worry that any identification of the city of God with an earthly order invites sacralization of human arrangements and a dangerous idolatry.”<sup>5</sup> The ‘earthly city’ tends towards dominion, the result of disordered wills. It is characterized by the ‘standard of the flesh’ in contrast to the ‘standard of the spirit’ that is the feature of the ‘heavenly city.’<sup>6</sup>

For Markus, however, the ‘earthly city’ in Augustine’s schema is not used in a singular way. Rather, at different times it is used to both designate a reprobate

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<sup>3</sup> John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond secular reason*, (Oxford, 1990), 406, cited in Markus, *Christianity and the Secular*, 42. Markus outlines the position of secular liberalism in chapter 3, “Consensus in Augustine and the Liberal Tradition” in *Christianity and the Secular*.

<sup>4</sup> See Markus, *Christianity and the Secular*, 43.

<sup>5</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Augustine,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, edited by Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 42.

<sup>6</sup> See Elshtain, “Augustine,” 42, in reference to Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, translated by Henry Bettenson, (London: Penguin, 1972), Book XIV.

tendency but also a neutral secular status. In this latter sense of the term the ‘earthly city’ lays claims on its citizens to work for a context of peace. In Markus’ words, “political engagement and commitment are inescapable duties laid upon the Christian by the exigencies of his social existence.”<sup>7</sup> In the midst of their engagement in the ‘earthly city,’ it is the ‘city of God’ that calls to its citizens. As a higher moral order, the ‘city of God’ (not a physical entity) alone offers genuine peace.

From this perspective, in his twofold protest against both “an identification of the Church with a social order,”<sup>8</sup> on the one hand, and on the other, an endowment of secular institution with “any ultimate, sacred significance,”<sup>9</sup> Augustine recognises that the two cities do not have an altogether independent existence from each other. Whilst affirming their distinction by their orientation, Augustine acknowledges, according to Markus, that “in their historical existence they can never be discerned in their unmixed state” and that it is precisely “[t]his invisibility of the presences of eschatological categories in historical realities [that is] the foundation of Augustine’s theology of the *saeculum*.”<sup>10</sup> The ‘earthly state’ is comprised of persons who even in the exercise of secular power are members of the Church and who are called, therefore, to the ‘standard of the spirit.’

Markus is clear that Augustine’s considerations about the nature of empire, social institutions and the place of the church in them yields a theology of the *saeculum*

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<sup>7</sup> Robert A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and society in the theology of St. Augustine*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 167.

<sup>8</sup> Markus, *Saeculum*, 162.

<sup>9</sup> Markus, *Saeculum*, 158.

<sup>10</sup> Markus, *Saeculum*, 151.

which he defines in Augustine's thought as, "the sphere of temporal realities in which the two 'cities' share an interest [such that] the *saeculum* is the whole stretch of time in which the two cities are 'inextricably intertwined.'"<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the 'city of God' possesses a leavening, animating position in the 'earthly city.' Without confusing the mystical and the political, Augustine affirms the capacity of 'the mystical' to work within 'the political' to redeem it from its lust for power which would dominate if the 'earthly city' were left only to itself. Thus, in the Augustinian vision, according to Markus, that which defines the Church as being 'over against 'the world' was not sociological separation but its eschatological orientation. "What prevented the Christian from being at home in his world was not that he (sic) had an alternative home in the Church, but his faith in the transformation of the world through Christ's victory . . ."<sup>12</sup>

According to Markus, for Augustine Christian hope is thus "necessarily both critical and creative . . . [a] duality [that] is the fundamental reason for the Augustinian ambivalence of politics."<sup>13</sup> Markus finds in this ambivalence, however, the essential character of the inter-relationship between church and society:

Seen in an eschatological perspective, there can be no existing or possible society in which there is nothing to criticize. The reference to the eschatological Kingdom, the fully human community of love promised by God, discloses injustice and inhumanity in the best of social structures. The Christian hope is of its nature a searchlight which, turned on its social *milieu*, seeks out the opportunities for protest. The Gospel can never be at home in the world, and cannot fail to bring a true believer into conflict with any existing order of

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<sup>11</sup> Markus, *Saeculum*, 133.

<sup>12</sup> Markus, *Saeculum*, 167.

<sup>13</sup> Markus, *Saeculum*, 167.



things. It is in essential and permanent tension with the world. This tension should be a fruitful one, from which awkward questions are continually being put to the world. Hope is a permanently unsettling force, seeking to prevent social institutions from becoming rigid and fixed, always inclined to treat the *status quo* with suspicion.<sup>14</sup>

In the dialectic vision of the Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther such transformative agency within an analogical perspective is ruptured. For Luther the two realms of the sacred and the secular, the two “kingdoms,” must be maintained with both distinction and separation. Commenting on Luther’s *On Secular Authority*, Whitford defines the spiritual realm as that of revelations and faith, the secular as its dialectical partner – the realm of reason and unbelief. The first is eternal and proleptic, the second finite and fleeting in which “the sword instead of service is definitive . . .”<sup>15</sup> Church and state, therefore, have their own sphere of concern, though both divinely ordained, and the concern of each must not transgress the boundary of the other. In Luther’s own words, “[t]herefore care must be taken to keep these two governments distinct, and both must be allowed to continue [their work], the one to make [people] just, the other to create outward peace and prevent evil-doing.”<sup>16</sup>

As Bradstock comments, Luther was not original in the construction of this dichotomy.<sup>17</sup> As we have seen, some interpretations of Augustine allowed for it, and

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<sup>14</sup> Markus, *Saeculum*, 169.

<sup>15</sup> David M. Whitford, “Luther’s Political Encounters,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, edited by Donald K. McKim, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 181. For the text of Luther’s *Von Weltlicher Oberkeit* [On *Secular Authority*], written in 1523, see *Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority*, edited and translated by Harro Höpfl, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1-43. For commentary on Luther’s notion of the two kingdoms and the two governments, see Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, translated by Robert C. Schultz, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 42-82.

<sup>16</sup> See Luther, *On Secular Authority*, 12.

<sup>17</sup> See Andrew Bradstock, “The Reformation,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, edited by Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 65.

in the fourteenth century William of Ockham also made a clear distinction between spiritual and temporal affairs. Yet, neither had gone as far as Luther who, while maintaining the equal status before God of both spheres, asserted that there must be no admixture of one rule into the other. This prospect for Luther was nothing other than the work of the devil himself who, he claimed, “never ceases cooking and brewing up the two kingdoms together.”<sup>18</sup>

Such a division between faith and reason implies a dichotomy of moral standards between the dictates of the Sermon on the Mount and obedience to civil rulers. According to Bradstock, Luther, therefore, “offers no space for a Christian critique of structural injustice.”<sup>19</sup> In Luther’s vision the Christian ruler is, in effect, someone who has sought to combine two states into the one individual: “A prince should therefore dispense with his might and superiority, as far as his heart and mind are concerned, and attend to the needs of his subjects as if they were his own” – in the example of Christ himself.<sup>20</sup> This, admits Luther, is a rare phenomenon!<sup>21</sup> The Christian prince is saved from some kind of ethical dualism or from some type of spiritual schizophrenia only in and through the exercise of charity and the assumption of the agency of secular power with evangelical virtue.<sup>22</sup>

Our first task is [to find] a firm grounding for the secular law and the Sword, in order to remove any possible doubt about their being in the world as a result of God’s will and ordinance . . . For there is no power but from God and the power that exists everywhere is

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<sup>18</sup> Bradstock, “The Reformation,” 65.

<sup>19</sup> Bradstock, “The Reformation,” 66.

<sup>20</sup> Luther, *On Secular Authority*, 36.

<sup>21</sup> “Everyone knows that a prince is a rare bird in heaven.” See Luther, *On Secular Authority*, 36.

<sup>22</sup> See Luther, *On Secular Authority*, 14-15, and particularly Part III, 34-35, 41.

ordained by God. And whoever resists the power resists God's ordinance.<sup>23</sup>

The terms, 'mystical' and 'political' are, of course, only intimated in the Augustinian and Lutheran frameworks through the lens of their own respective terms to speak about a fundamental dialectic in Christian experience. Many centuries later, in the early twentieth century, particularly in the rise of interest in religious anthropology consequent to the rise of historical consciousness, the terms, however, become more closely articulated through the polarity of 'the mystical' and 'the prophetic'.

## 1.2 The Polarity of 'the Mystical' and 'the Prophetic' in Heiler's Typology

Heiler's classic treatise on the typology of prayer outlines in detail the specific duality of 'the mystical' and 'the prophetic' and, in particular, their irreconcilable opposition.<sup>24</sup> Heiler (1892-1967) stands in the tradition of Adolphe von Harnack (1851-1930) who McGinn identifies draws from the influential work of Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) for whom mysticism is regarded as antithetical to Christian faith.<sup>25</sup> Ritschl and von Harnack entertain great suspicion about mysticism which von

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<sup>23</sup> Luther, *On Secular Authority*, 6.

<sup>24</sup> Friedrich Heiler, *Das Gebet. Eine Religionsgeschichtliche und Religionspsychologische Untersuchung*. The work first appeared in 1919 and was reprinted a number of times. Its English translation was printed as *Prayer: A study in the history and psychology of religion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932). All subsequent references will be to the English translation. In a similar way, the more recent sociologist of religion, Peter Berger, has suggested polarities of 'interiority' and 'confrontation' as constituting the religious phenomenon. See Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative: contemporary possibilities of religious affirmation* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1981), 153-165. Robert J. Egan outlines, however, the shift that occurs in Berger's thought. Berger, as a consequence of the seminar from which the aforementioned work is drawn, drops the distinction as typical of the difference between monotheistic traditions of the West and the religions of southern and eastern Asia. See Egan, "Mystical and Prophetic," 104, n.4.

<sup>25</sup> See Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, Volume 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Christian mysticism*, (London: SCM Press, 1991), 267.

Harnack characterizes as the regrettable third century irruption of subjectivity into Christianity of which the outcome is only pantheism and self-deification.<sup>26</sup>

As Rowan Williams points out, Heiler was also heavily influenced by the work of the Lutheran scholar, Nathan Söderblom who juxtaposed ‘salvation religions’ “with the notion of escape or release at their center,” and religions of revelation and prophecy.<sup>27</sup> In tracing the history of religions, Söderblom, once Archbishop of Uppsala, concluded that the two peoples of religion on earth were epitomized by India and Israel, even though a third, the Greeks, should also be noted.<sup>28</sup> He asserts, however, that “passing from India to the prophets of Israel . . . the change is so tremendous, so amazing, that it cannot be adequately expressed.”<sup>29</sup> In India, “all is concerned with the inner life and the state of the soul,” whilst in Israel “all is action, concrete situations, history.”<sup>30</sup>

Within this same perspective Heiler understood ‘the mystical’ in only a singular way – as a denial of the world:

Mysticism is that form of intercourse with God in which the world  
and self are absolutely denied, in which human personality is

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<sup>26</sup> See McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 269. As cited by McGinn, the principal references to von Harnack’s understanding of mysticism can be found in the seven volumes of Adolf von Harnack’s *History of Dogma*, (*Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, 1885-1890). See in particular Adolph von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, volume VI, translated from the third German edition by William M’Gilchrist, (London: Williams & Norgate, 1899), 97-106. In an earlier work, von Harnack details his understanding of the various types of Christian faith. See Adolph von Harnack, *What is Christianity?* Sixteen lectures delivered in the University of Berlin during the Winter-Term 1899-1900, translated into English by Thomas Bailey Saunders, Theological Translation Library Volume XIV (London/Edinburgh/Oxford: Williams and Norgate, 1901), 190-301.

<sup>27</sup> See Rowan Williams, “The Prophetic and the Mystical: Heiler Revisited,” *New Blackfriars* 64 (July/August 1983), 330.

<sup>28</sup> See Nathan Söderblom, *The Living God: Basal Forms of Personal Religion*, The Gifford Lectures 1931, (London/New York/Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1933), 265.

<sup>29</sup> Söderblom, *The Living God*, 265.

<sup>30</sup> Söderblom, *The Living God*, 266-267.

dissolved, disappears and is absorbed in the infinite unity of the Godhead<sup>31</sup> . . . The fundamental psychic experience in mysticism is the denial of the impulse to life, a denial born of the weariness of life, the unreserved surrender to the Infinite, the crown and culmination of which is ecstasy.<sup>32</sup> . . . Mysticism flees from and denies the natural life and the relish of life in order to experience an infinite life beyond it<sup>33</sup> . . . Mysticism does not value moral action as a thing good in itself, an absolute aim, that is, as the realization of values in personal and social life, but as a means to deaden the senses and suppress the emotions<sup>34</sup> . . . [it] is rendered possible by isolation from the objective world.<sup>35</sup>

In seven primary ways Heiler counterpointed ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ or more accurately, the ‘prophetic’ suggested above as the natural antecedent to ‘the political. These ways were in: the valuation of history; the attitude towards authority; sin and salvation; relation to ethics; social fellowship; relation to the world and civilization; the hope of immortality. In each of these spheres, the dynamism of ‘the mystical’ runs in counter-direction to ‘the prophetic.’

The fundamental psychic experience in *prophetic* religion is an uncontrollable will to live, a constant impulse to the assertion, strengthening, and enhancement of the feeling of life, a being overmastered by values and tasks, a passionate endeavour to realize these ideals and aims<sup>36</sup> . . . the prophet is a fighter, who ever struggles upwards from doubt to assurance, from tormenting uncertainty to absolute security of life<sup>37</sup> . . . prophetic piety . . . believes in life and affirms it, throws itself resolutely and joyfully into the arms of life<sup>38</sup> . . . Morality is not cut off from religion, nor is

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<sup>31</sup> Heiler, *Prayer*, 136.

<sup>32</sup> Heiler, *Prayer*, 142.

<sup>33</sup> Heiler, *Prayer*, 144.

<sup>34</sup> Heiler, *Prayer*, 157-158.

<sup>35</sup> Heiler, *Prayer*, 169.

<sup>36</sup> Heiler, *Prayer*, 142.

<sup>37</sup> Heiler, *Prayer*, 143.

<sup>38</sup> Heiler, *Prayer*, 144.

religion dissolved away in morality . . . but is in vital, organic connection with it.<sup>39</sup>

The experience of prayer, particularly, brings to the fore the difference between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political.’

Mystical prayer has its roots in the yearning of the devout person for union with the Infinite; prophetic prayer arises from the profound need of the heart and the longing for salvation and grace. Mystical prayer is artificially prepared through a refined psychological technique of meditation; the prophetic petition breaks forth spontaneously and violently from the subconscious depths of the religious soul that has been deeply stirred. Mystical prayer is silent, contemplative, delight; prophetic prayer a passionate crying and groaning, vehement complaint and pleading. . . Mystical prayer is a passing out of oneself, an entering and sinking into the Infinite God; prophetic prayer is the utterance of the profound need that moves the inmost being. . . . Mystical prayer is the consuming of self in the flame of God’s love, dissolving into the glow of the Infinite, melting into the stream of the Immeasurable; prophetic prayer is a mighty wrestling with a challenging and commanding God..<sup>40</sup>

Nineteenth century continental Protestantism’s negative understanding of ‘the mystical,’ as detailed in both von Harnack and Heiler, is premised upon mysticism as an entire importation of Neoplatonism into Christianity.<sup>41</sup> However, as Bauerschmidt outlines, such a declaration was underscored by nineteenth century interest in Orientalism generally.<sup>42</sup> Drawing from the work of Edward Said, Bauerschmidt suggests that the Orient for the West evolves through this period as,

a code, when applied to mysticism, [which] delineates it as an autonomous sphere of religious experience that nonetheless can only be brought to articulation by rational discourses that are exterior to it. This simultaneously guarantees a realm of private religious

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<sup>39</sup> Heiler, *Prayer*, 159.

<sup>40</sup> Heiler, *Prayer*, 283-284.

<sup>41</sup> See Adolf Harnack, *History of Dogma*, Volume I, translated from the third German edition by Neil Buchanan, (London: Williams and Norgate, 1905), 335-362.

<sup>42</sup> See Friedrich C. Bauerschmidt, “The Politics of Disenchantment,” *New Blackfriars* 82 (July/August 2001), 319ff.

experience, 'mysticism' and a real of public, utilitarian rationalism, 'politics.'<sup>43</sup>

### 1.3 The 'Mystical-Political' Divide in Weber and Péguy

We are thus brought to Weber's sociology of religion - particularly those essays comprising his three-volume *Religionssoziologie*, published in 1920-1921<sup>44</sup> which are informed by his dichotomy of 'the ascetical' and 'the mystical.'

Weber understands the relationship between 'the ascetical' and 'the mystical' within his philosophy of disenchantment: the progressing intellectualization and rationalization of the world. As he noted in his 1919 lecture, 'Science as a Vocation':

There are in principle no mysterious incalculable powers that play a role. Rather we can master by calculation everything. But that means: the disenchantment of the world. No longer must we – like the savage for whom such powers existed – grasp at magical means to master or implore the spirits. But technical means and calculations accomplish that.<sup>45</sup>

Such instrumental rationality for Weber has been shaped in no small way by Calvinist asceticism. Through Calvinism, "the practical-ethical action of the average believer lost its planless and unsystematic character and was molded into a consistent, *methodical* organization of his life as a whole."<sup>46</sup> As Mitzman indicates with reference to Weber's own personal background, particularly in regard to his

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<sup>43</sup> Bauerschmidt, "The Politics of Disenchantment," 320-321. See also Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

<sup>44</sup> See Arthur Mitzman, *The Iron Cage: An historical interpretation of Max Weber*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 193.

<sup>45</sup> Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," cited in Mitzman, *The Iron Cage*, 226. The seeds of Weber's theory of disenchantment can be found in Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An outline of Interpretive Sociology*, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

<sup>46</sup> See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, [*Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, third edition], translated by Stephen Kalberg, (Oxford: Blackwell/Los Angeles, California: Roxbury Publishing Company, 2002), 71.

relationship with his mother, “viewing the material world as inevitably blasted with sin leads to a worldly asceticism that is politically passive but economically energetic.”<sup>47</sup> In a landmark debate with Troeltsch in 1910 Weber suggests that in such asceticism lies the ground of the modern capitalist system:

A doctrine like that of sectarian Protestantism, Calvinism, Pietism, which most piously condemns the collecting of the earth’s treasures, may strengthen the psychological motive which this doctrine set in motion in such a way, that it leads just these very people to become the great bearers of modern capitalist development. For, the use of treasures for one’s satisfaction was even more sharply condemned than the gathering of treasures; consequently, nothing less than an ever renewed utilization of these treasures for capitalist purposes was brought about.<sup>48</sup>

Within such a system the place of the *homo politicus*, along with the *homo oeconomicus*, the bureaucrat emerges as, “[t]he exemplary inhabitant of the disenchanted world of means without meaning . . . who fulfills his function competently and efficiently without inquiry into the ultimate meaning or purpose of his role.”<sup>49</sup>

Against such a disenchanted politics, animated by Calvinist asceticism, Weber situates the potential of mysticism as that ‘other-worldly’ concern which seeks quietitude only in a subjective illumination and union with ultimate meaning.<sup>50</sup> As

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<sup>47</sup> Mitzman, *The Iron Cage*, 205.

<sup>48</sup> Max Weber from “Discussionsrede zu E. Troeltsch’s Vortrag über, ‘Das stoisch-christliche Naturrecht,’ in *Max Weber Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Soziologie und Sozialpolitik* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1924), 462-470, printed as “Max Weber on Church, Sect and Mysticism,” translated by Jerome L. Gittleman, edited by Benjamin Nelson, *Sociological analysis: A journal in the sociology of religion* 34 (Summer, 1973), 146.

<sup>49</sup> Bauerschmidt, “The Politics of Disenchantment,” 316. Weber develops such a role more fully in “Politics as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited and translated by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 77-128.

<sup>50</sup> See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 545, 601. See also Max Weber, “The Social Psychology of the World Religions,” in *From Max Weber*, 282.



Bauerschmidt concludes, however, on the basis of such a Weberian dichotomy between ‘the ascetical/political’ and ‘the mystical’ the religious person is rendered with a kind of immunity to the ordinary vicissitudes of politics, now free to pursue a private project of acosmic love. However, the world of politics also becomes autonomous and dangerously freed from what constraints might be placed upon the use of violence.<sup>51</sup>

Weber remains within an Oriental framework in approaching ‘the mystical.’ ‘The mystical’ is antithetical to ‘the political’ not just within a typology of religion, as it was for Harnack and Heiler. Now ‘the mystical’ is regarded as a direct evasion of the demands of political life. For Weber, ‘the mystical’ was not a viable alternative, but rather a kind of pathology. Nonetheless, if managed it was a pathology with which society could live so that it might be possible to be both a mystic and a politician, provided that the identities were kept well apart from each other.<sup>52</sup>

I wonder, however, whether the notion of acosmic love is one that Weber may have developed to its logical conclusion - a way by which the dichotomy between ‘the ascetical/political’ and ‘the mystical’ might largely be dissolved, such that ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ might find a certain conjunction? The notion is one which Weber identifies in the famed 1910 debate with Troeltsch mentioned above. It

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<sup>51</sup> See Bauerschmidt, “The Politics of Disenchantment,” 319.

<sup>52</sup> See Bauerschmidt, “The Politics of Disenchantment,” 322. For the manner in which Weber himself dichotomized his own life, see Mitzman, *The Iron Cage*, 218.

emerges from his comments on Greek Orthodox and Russian mysticism.<sup>53</sup> Weber himself includes the experience of acosmic love within the mystical polarity:

There lives in the Orthodox church a specific mysticism based on the East's unforgettable belief that brotherly love and charity, those special human relationships which the great salvation religions have transfigured (and which seem so pallid among us), that these relationships form a way not only to some social effects that are entirely incidental but to a knowledge to the meaning of the world, to a mystical relationship with God.<sup>54</sup>

Weber goes on to suggest this acosmic quality, "characteristic of all Russian religiosity" is supported by agrarian communism which "still serves as divine law directing the peasant in the regulation of his social interests."<sup>55</sup> Concluding that the concept rests on 'community', not on 'society', Weber may well have gone on to develop the intrinsic link between a certain mystical intuition, present in this acosmic love, and social relations and the political quality which might characterize them. It would seem that Weber's own German ecclesiastical context inhibited him from pondering such a conjunction. As Robertson identifies, "on Weber's view religious mysticism leads only indirectly to particular organizational forms, [which are] . . . unintended products of the pursuit of *unio mystica*."<sup>56</sup> Weber's acosmic mysticism is linked only to a non-specific experience of love, a link that he develops in showing forth the inter-relationship between eroticism and mysticism. Had Weber understood the mystical foundation in Orthodox spirituality in specific experiences of love, might he not have bridged the ascetic and mystic divide?

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<sup>53</sup> See Roland Robertson, "On the Analysis of Mysticism: Pre-Weberian, Weberian and Post-Weberian Perspectives" in *Sociological Analysis* 36 (1975), 248. See also Mitzman, *The Iron Cage*, 196-200.

<sup>54</sup> Max Weber in "Max Weber on Church, Sect, and Mysticism," 144-145.

<sup>55</sup> Max Weber in "Max Weber on Church, Sect, and Mysticism," 144-145.

<sup>56</sup> Robertson, "On the Analysis of Mysticism," 249.

The distinction between the ‘mystical’ and the ‘political’ also emerges in the thought of the French Catholic writer, Charles Péguy (1873-1914), though in a significantly different way than in Weber. Whilst echoing Weber’s framework of the utilitarian orientation of the ‘political’, Péguy entertains a definition of the mystical that is not coloured by Orientalism. For Péguy, rather, an understanding of the ‘mystical’ emerges from a sustained reflection on the socio-political events of nineteenth-century France. He is concerned with the Dreyfus affair which offers a different angle on how ‘the mystical’ might be understood and how its differentiation from ‘the political’ might be crystallized.<sup>57</sup> In Dreyfusism,

The real traitor, in the full sense of the word, in the strong sense of the word, is the man who sells his faith, who sells his soul and gives himself up, *loses* his soul, betrays his principles, his ideal, his very being, who betrays his *mystique* and enters into its corresponding *politique*, the policy issuing from it and complacently passes over the dividing point.<sup>58</sup>

In the Dreyfus Affair, ‘the last manifestation of the republican mystique,’<sup>59</sup> there is for Péguy, a “unique example, a model almost, of what is meant by the degradation of a human action; but not only that, a précis of the degradation of a *mystique* into a *politique*.”<sup>60</sup>

As Villiers identifies, by *mystique* Péguy means “an unqualified and disinterested adherence to spiritual values.”<sup>61</sup> His use of *politique*, drawn from the use of the term

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<sup>57</sup> See Charles Péguy, “From Memories of Youth” in *Temporal and Eternal*, [an adaptation of *Notre Jeunesse* (1910) and of *Clio I*], translated by Alexander Dru, (London: The Harvill Press, 1958), 36-37.

<sup>58</sup> Péguy, *Temporal and Eternal*, 40.

<sup>59</sup> See Péguy, *Temporal and Eternal*, 21-22.

<sup>60</sup> Péguy, *Temporal and Eternal*, 43.

<sup>61</sup> Marjorie Villiers, *Charles Péguy: A study in integrity*, (London: Collins, 1965), 48.

in the French Religious Wars of the sixteenth century, is used to describe “the sacrifice of these absolutes to *les raisons d'état*, the compromises made to secure power or maintain it by an individual, a class, a party, an institution, in their own interests or even in those of the nation itself, if these were seen outside the context of the interests of humanity.”<sup>62</sup> As Péguy will phrase it,

Well, sir, you were asking me to define what a *mystique* is, giving a reasonable, rational definition, and what politics is, *quid sit mysticum et quid sit politicum*: well, the republican *mystique* was when one died for the Republic; the political Republic, the republican *politique*, is, at present, that one should live off it. You understand, I hope.<sup>63</sup>

In *Notre Jeunesse*, published in October 1910, and what Rolland called “un Cahier d'exaltation mystique,” Péguy separates ‘la mystique’ and ‘la politique,’ the former foundational to the second and of an order that it should never be assumed into the second.<sup>64</sup> As he will be adamant, “L’essentiel est que dans chaque ordre, dans chaque système, la mystique ne soit point dévorée par la politique,”<sup>65</sup> so that, “[t]o be a politician engaged in politics is one thing, to engage in politics and describe it as a *mystique* is unpardonable.”<sup>66</sup> For Péguy, the two can never meet on the same ground: “une politique ne remplace pas une religion, une politique ne déplace pas une mystique.”<sup>67</sup> Péguy is acutely aware how *la mystique* becomes overwhelmed by *la politique*, tracing the history of this in both royalist and clerical contexts: “. . . by the

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<sup>62</sup> Villiers, *Charles Péguy*, 48. In regard to the historical context of *politique*, see *inter alia*, Barbara Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in sixteenth-century Paris*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>63</sup> Péguy, *Temporal and Eternal*, 85.

<sup>64</sup> See Villiers, *Charles Péguy*, 251.

<sup>65</sup> See Péguy, *Temporal and Eternal*, 31, 39-40.

<sup>66</sup> Charles Péguy, cited in Villiers, *Charles Péguy*, 258.

<sup>67</sup> Charles Péguy, “Avertissement au Cahier Mangasarain,” cited by Villiers, *Charles Péguy*, 174.

mere succession of events, the continuation of the game, the baseness of man and his sinfulness, the *mystique* has become political action, or rather politics have usurped the place of the *mystique*, have devoured the *mystique*.”<sup>68</sup>

Péguy saw himself as living between those “generations which had the republican *mystique* and those which have not got it, between those who still have it and those who no longer have it.”<sup>69</sup> He lamented that the ‘de-republicanisation’ of France was the same movement as the ‘de-christianisation’ of the country:

Both together are one and the same movement, a profound de-mystification. It is one and the same movement which makes people no longer want to lead a republican life, and no longer want to lead a Christian life, they have had enough of it . . . The *same* incredulity, *one single* incredulity, strikes at the idols and at God . . . One and the same sterility withers the city and Christendom. The political city and the city of God. That is the sterility of modern times. [Italics in the original]<sup>70</sup>

For Péguy, therefore, both the sacred and the secular, the two cities of Augustine, are subject to *la mystique*. It is *la mystique* which brings them together:

And when we say to the young: be careful, don’t talk so airily about the Republic, it was not always a pack of politicians, behind it there is a *mystique*, it has a *mystique*, behind it lies a glorious past, an honourable past, and what is perhaps most important still, nearer the

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<sup>68</sup> Péguy, *Temporal and Eternal*, 39-40. 51. Given these references it would seem odd to me that Michael Novak could claim, positively, that Péguy once remarked that politics begins in mysticism, and mysticism ends in politics – though Novak does not provide the reference. Taking what I believe to be a misrepresentation of Péguy, Novak paraphrases the French writer by saying, “every form of ‘politics in depth’ begins in a religious vision, and every vision that is incarnated in history must end in politics.” See Michael Novak, “Religion and Liberty: From Vision to Politics,” *Christian Century* (6-13 July, 1988). Though I agree that vision requires its translation into action, and that “without vision, we would be far less free than we are,” it does not seem to be the manner in which Péguy uses the terms *mystique* and *politique*. Curiously, the same quote, within the same perspective, and without reference, is used by Robert J. Egan in the Foreword to *Mysticism and Social Transformation*, edited by Janet K. Ruffing, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2001), ix.

<sup>69</sup> Péguy, *Temporal and Eternal*, 24.

<sup>70</sup> Péguy, *Temporal and Eternal*, 23. See also Charles Péguy, “Politics and Mysticism” in *Basic Verities: Prose and poetry*, rendered into English by Anne and Julian Green, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1943), 103.

essence, there is a whole race behind it, heroism and perhaps sanctity.<sup>71</sup>

It is *la mystique* which nourishes *la politique*. *Mystiques* are “the creditors of policies.”<sup>72</sup> But ideal and aspiration have become hijacked by *politiques*. The ecclesial ramifications of this, according to Péguy, have been catastrophic:

That is why the factory is still closed to the Church, and the Church to the factory. She acts as, and is, the official formal religion of the rich. That is what the people, obscurely or explicitly, very certainly feel quite well. That is what they see. She is therefore nothing; that is why she is nothing. And above all, she is unlike what she was, having become all that is most contrary to herself, to her institution. And she will not reopen the factory doors, she will not reopen the way to the people except by *bearing the cost* of a revolution, an economic, social, industrial revolution, and, to call a spade a spade, a *temporal* revolution for *eternal* salvation. Such is, eternally, temporally (eternally temporally, and temporally eternally), the mysterious subjection of the eternal itself to the temporal. Such, properly speaking, is the inscription of the eternal itself on the temporal. The economic, social and industrial price must be paid, the temporal price. Nothing can evade it, not even the eternal, not even the spiritual, not even the inward life. That is why our socialism was not so stupid after all, and why it was profoundly Christian. [Italics in the original]<sup>73</sup>

This is a most significant passage for it intimates how the spiritual is achieved through the secular for Péguy, the eternal through the temporal, the intentions of the heavenly city through the efforts in the earthly city. By positing an understanding of ‘the mystical’ no longer exclusively according to Oriental interiority Péguy intimates how ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ – as it will later come to be understood more broadly, in Schillebeeckx’s words as ‘an intense form of social commitment’ – are not irreconcilable. An ancient duality may now be considered more in a tensive relationship.

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<sup>71</sup> Péguy, *Temporal and Eternal*, 24.

<sup>72</sup> Péguy, *Temporal and Eternal*, 49.

<sup>73</sup> Péguy, *Temporal and Eternal*, 67.

## CHAPTER TWO

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### TENSIONS IN UNITY

Historical considerations of the affairs of the world and the affairs of the spirit might render a sharp dichotomy. Earlier attempts at religious typology might also yield a sharp distinction between a spiritual experience that is oriented beyond the world and one that which is oriented toward the world. More recent studies in religion, however, proffer an alternative framework to such duality. Indeed, in such studies we see how the duality is transformed into a tensive relationship. This tension provides the foundation for such terms as a ‘politics of mysticism’ and a ‘mysticism of politics.’ It is, therefore, critical to examine various ways by which the polarity of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ has been considered within a more dialectical framework.

Following a brief account of this specifically twentieth century possibility from the vantage of an example of such studies in religion, this chapter will take several key illustrations of the philosophical and theological discussion on the dialectic of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political.’ This discussion, itself, intimates the possibility of the two variants of the dialectic – a ‘politics of mysticism’ and a ‘mysticism of politics’ - which are being considered in this thesis. Then, in Part B of the thesis these two possible variants in the tension will be considered from a more historical perspective and particularly through the lens of the rise of laicality occurring in both the nineteenth and twentieth century.

## 2.1 Beyond Duality to a Tensive Relationship

As an example from recent studies of religion that suggests how the duality between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ might be considered more in dialectic terms, I refer principally to the work of Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005). Ricoeur identifies how spiritual experience itself can be categorized along two fundamental trajectories. He identifies the most basic two as ‘proclamation’ and ‘manifestation.’ However, importantly, he enunciates these as a ‘polarity or tension’ that he seeks to preserve such that it does not “disappear into simple identity, nor . . . harden into a sterile antinomy, or still less an unmediated dichotomy.”<sup>1</sup>

Ricoeur understands ‘proclamation’ to be that hermeneutic in which the accent is on the text, on speech and writing, and on the historical transmission and continuous interpretation of the text.<sup>2</sup> ‘Proclamation,’ operating from the logic of ‘limit-expressions,’ is essentially directed towards the ethical and the political, applying the “word here and now.” This politically-oriented trajectory of the sacred is opposed by Ricoeur to that of the aesthetic phenomenology of ‘manifestation’ in which “the sacred is experienced as awesome, as powerful, as overwhelming.”<sup>3</sup> Without this “renewing power of the sacred cosmos and the sacredness of vital nature” he fears that the ‘word’ or text “becomes abstract and cerebral.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, narrative and imagination*, translated by David Pellauer, edited by Mark I. Wallace, [reprinted from the *Blaisdell Institute Journal* 11 (1978)], (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 48.

<sup>2</sup> See Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 48.

<sup>3</sup> See Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 49-55. Ricoeur is using here the idea of Rudolph Otto’s ‘numinous’ and Mircea Eliade’s ‘hierophany.’ See Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), and Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The nature of religion*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

<sup>4</sup> Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 67.



Ricoeur holds the trajectories in ‘subtle equilibrium,’ a tension between the “iconoclastic virtualities of proclamation and the symbolic resurgence of the sacred.”<sup>5</sup> In the Christian tradition this polarity emerges for him as the dialectic of preaching and the sacraments.

As a disciple of Ricoeur, David Tracy, (b. 1939), believes such a dialectic lies “at the heart of Christianity.”<sup>6</sup> Tracy writes, “[f]or religious languages arrive in two basic forms: the rhetoric of the prophet and the rhetoric of the mystic.”<sup>7</sup> He understands that “mystical religious discourse is startlingly different from prophetic discourse.”<sup>8</sup> However, one discourse tends towards the other: in becoming the ‘word of the Other’ the prophet moves, in his or her discourse, into the ‘radical mystical rhetoric of the Other, the ‘Godhead beyond’ the prophets’ God.<sup>9</sup> But then, as Tracy elucidates, “the mystic may eventually find it necessary to adopt a prophetic rhetoric and proclaim the

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<sup>5</sup> Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 67.

<sup>6</sup> David Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other: The Interreligious dialogue*, (Louvain: Peeters Press/Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 6. See also David Tracy, *Analogical Imagination: Christian theology and the culture of pluralism*, (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 202-208.

<sup>7</sup> Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other*, 17. In this Tracy echoes the work of Reinhold Niebuhr’s dialectic of love and justice. See Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1963). For a useful engagement of the Niebuhr dialectic see Glenn Tinder, *The Political Meaning of Christianity: The prophetic stance*, (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991); for a useful application of the Niebuhr dialectic, see Andrew Flescher, “Love and Justice in Reinhold Niebuhr’s Prophetic Christian Realism and Emmanuel Levinas’ Ethics of Responsibility: Treading between pacificism and just-war theory,” *The Journal of Religion* 80 (2000), 61-82.

<sup>8</sup> Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other*, 21.

<sup>9</sup> See Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other*, 25.

word of the Other. Otherwise, the others in their secure institutions will trivialize and reify the words of the Other once again.<sup>10</sup>

For Tracy, therefore, the ‘prophetic’ and the ‘mystical’ require each other. It is ‘the prophetic’ which maintains the commitment to justice with a certain kind of publicness and it is ‘the mystical’ which prevents such a struggle from becoming mere self-righteousness and becoming exhausted.<sup>11</sup> From the foundation of Ricoeur’s trajectories, Tracy, echoing Underhill, concludes that “any responsible theology today must be what classic Flemish thought, art and spirituality once exemplified: mystical and prophetic, aesthetic and ethical-political; contemplative and committed to action.”<sup>12</sup>

As the twentieth century unfolds we see significant theological discussion that in various ways engage Tracy’s conclusion. For the purposes of this thesis, I will explore four such contributions. Firstly, I examine the different ways in which the neo-Thomist Jacques Maritain and the Radical Orthodoxy contemporary theologian, William T. Cavanaugh approach such a possibility. It can be held, I believe, that even though their primary concern is the relationship between church and state, nonetheless, each in their own way conjecture how ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’

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<sup>10</sup> Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other*, 26. For a further statement on the nature of the prophetic in this same perspective, see Janet Ruffing, “Introduction,” in *Mysticism and Social Transformation*, edited by Janet K. Ruffing, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 9-11.

<sup>11</sup> See Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other*, 118.

<sup>12</sup> Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other*, 122. Tracy is particularly influenced by his engagement with the Flemish mystic, Jan van Ruusbroec (1293-1381). Indeed, Tracy goes on to suggest that “the hermeneutical attempts of some contemporary Christian and Jewish theologies to become both mystical and political are interesting examples of attempts at meeting the full demands of theological interpretation.” See David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, religion, hope*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 102.

coalesce. Through the lens of the mystical-political dialectic it would appear that Maritain will be criticized by Cavanaugh – at least by intimation - for the possibility of dissolving ‘the mystical’ into ‘the political.’ However, Cavanaugh himself might be criticized, in turn, for the opposite – dissolving ‘the political’ into ‘the mystical.’ The contributions of Johannes Metz and Edward Schillebeeckx will then be examined. Both Metz and Schillebeeckx are firmly committed to ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ in dialectical tension. However, even in their own attempt to achieve such conjunction, the uneasy alliance between the two cannot entirely be avoided. It will need to be asked whether even in their own attempts at integration, the tendency toward a ‘politics of mysticism’ or a ‘mysticism of politics’ is apparent.

## **2.2 The Contributions of Jacques Maritain and William T. Cavanaugh**

A characteristic element of Jacques Maritain’s journey was a struggle with the ambiguity that marked the Church’s relationship with the emergent laicality of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In his attempt to find God in the midst of the world, Maritain described his own personal identity and journey intimately connected to such a project:

After all, who am I actually, I asked myself at that time. . . . And perhaps, too, a kind of water diviner putting his ear to the ground to catch the sound of hidden springs, and of invisible germinations. And also, perhaps, like any Christian, in spite of and in the midst of the miseries and shortcomings, and of all the graces betrayed that I am beginning to realise more and more now in the evening of my life, a beggar for heaven disguised as a man of the world, a kind of secret agent of the King of Kings in the domains of the Prince of this world, taking his risks like Kipling’s cat, who made his own way all alone.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Carnet de notes* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1965), 10 quoted in Bernard Doering, “Jacques Maritain (1882-1973): A beggar for heaven on the byways of the world,” *Theology Today* 62 (2005), 306. For a concise ‘bio-bibliography’ of Maritain, see Henry Bars, “A Maritain Bio-Bibliography,” edited and translated by Anthony O. Simon, in *Understanding Maritain: Philosopher and friend*, edited by Deal W. Hudson and Matthew J. Mancini, (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1987), 15-23.

Maritain lived from 1882-1973. Along with Raissa, his wife, his early influences had been Léon Bloy's, "Pilgrim of the Absolute"<sup>14</sup> and the Dominican, Humbert Clérissac through whom he was introduced to the work of Thomas Aquinas.<sup>15</sup> The introduction to the thirteenth century magisterial thinker was, however, accompanied by an introduction to the twentieth century Charles Maurras. This included involvement with *Action Française* - the political movement which sought monarchical restoration only to be condemned in December, 1926 by Pius XI<sup>16</sup>. This involvement early on and his eventual rupture from such spheres, resulted, at different stages, in Maritain being declared as champion of both liberal and conservative.

Maritain entertained a fundamental ambivalence about ecclesial developments in the aftermath of Vatican II. It is an ambivalence that can create a suspicion about

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<sup>14</sup> Jacques and Raissa Maritain met Bloy in June 1905 in Paris, disenchanted by the Sorbonne and barely trusting in the "Bergsonian intuition [which] was but a too flimsy refuge against the skepticism all modern philosophies logically bring in their train." See Léon Bloy, *Pilgrim of the Absolute*, edited by Raissa Maritain, with an introduction by Jacques Maritain, (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1947), 21-22. Maritain writes in his introduction, "[Bloy's] main concern was to 'give the idea and the impression of mystery,' that is, of our incapacity of looking directly at the light which shines on us, and to give at the same time, by means of a most riotous flowering of images, a perceptible likeness of that truth which we do not yet know by intuition, which we know only through a mirror, in riddles. . . . Impatient as was Hello to see and to touch, Bloy, it would seem, never was willing to renounce completely the splendors of the tangible, in order to seek beyond, in the darkness of a purely spiritual contemplation, Him who is above all images and thought. Perceptible and tangible signs of God – such were the objects of his never-sated hunger. Thus it is in the world of forms and images that the mystical keys have their repercussion, and there take shape the melodies of a most genuinely Christian sense of the absolute requirements of the Lord." For an account of the relationship between Bloy and Maritain see Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, "Léon Bloy and Jacques Maritain: *Fratres in Eremo*," in Hudson and Mancini (eds), *Understanding Maritain*, 71-90.

<sup>15</sup> See Humbert Clérissac, *The Mystery of the Church*, (London: Sheed & Ward, 1937) in which Maritain writes the Preface, quite hagiographical in tone. It was, however, Clérissac who advised Maritain that he "must not hesitate to follow the way of contemplation in the world." See Jacques Maritain, *Notebooks*, translated by Joseph W. Evans, (Albany, New York: Magi Books), 57. For an overview of Maritain's engagement of Aquinas, see Peter Redpath, "Romance of Wisdom: The friendship between Jacques Maritain and Saint Thomas Aquinas," in Hudson and Mancini (eds), *Understanding Maritain*, 91-113.

<sup>16</sup> Doering, "Jacques Maritain," 309. For a succinct summary of the historical context of Action Française see William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, politics and the body of Christ*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 157-158.

Maritain's motivation. Yet, his orienting perspective remained one affirmative of the human person. Well before his conversion to Catholicism on 11 June 1906, aged 24, he declared, whilst still an adolescent, that "Man's only God is man himself," and one evening he told Angèle, his mother's cook, of his faith in a humanist mystique without God.<sup>17</sup> Maritain was never to depart from this radical humanist orientation which led him to an abiding solidarity with 'the people'.

Whenever we have to deal with the ingredients of human history, we are prone to consider matters from the point of view of *action* or the *ideas* which shape action. Yet it is necessary to consider them also – and primarily – from the point of view of existence. I mean that there is another, and more fundamental, order than that of social and political action: it is the order of communion in life, desire and suffering. In other words there must be recognized, as distinct from the category *to act for* or *to act with*, the category *to exist with* and *to suffer with* which concerns a more profound order of reality. [Italics in the original]<sup>18</sup>

This was a solidarity that characterized Maritain's subsequent writings on the justification of democratic principles being consonant with Christian faith: *True Humanism* (1938), *Scholasticism and Politics* (1940), *The Rights of Man and Natural Law* (1942), *Christianity and Democracy* (1943), *The Person and the Common Good* (1947), *Man and the State* (1951), *The Range of Reason* (1952).

However whilst Maritain entertained such democratic commitment he also argued for something greater taking place within its project. In *True Humanism*, he proposes a Christian civilization, a New Christendom, which has as its common aim, "no longer that of realizing a divine work here on earth by the hands of men (sic), but rather the realisation on earth of a human task by the passage of something divine, that which

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<sup>17</sup> Doering, "Jacques Maritain," 312.

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Range of Reason*, (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1953), 121.

we call love, through human operations, and even through human work.”<sup>19</sup> He positions the democratic project within a fundamentally theocentric determination whilst being clear that such a perspective should not devolve into some kind of theocracy. Such a theocentric orientation of human endeavour was established by Maritain’s anthropology of the person’s supernatural vocation, without which his personalist democratic principles had no foundation:<sup>20</sup>

. . . contrary to the conception of Rousseau, the personalist conception of democracy is first of all determined by the idea of man as God’s image, and by the idea of the common good, of human rights and of concrete liberty; and it is based on Christian humanism. . . . It is a relation of *fact* which concerns only . . . the germinations naturally produced in the depths of the profane and temporal conscience itself under the influence of Christian leaven. [Italics in the original]<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Jacques Maritain, *True Humanism*, translated by M.R. Adamson, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1941), 197.

<sup>20</sup> See Doering, “Jacques Maritain”, 312-313. “This new approach will proceed neither in the adoration of creatures, which was the foolishness of our time, nor in that bitter contempt which too many Christians mistake for the divine madness of the saints. It will manifest itself in a deeper respect for an understanding of the creature and in a greater attentiveness to discover in it every vestige of God.” See Jacques Maritain, *The Range of Reason*, 94. On a local Australian level, it was the charge of “theocracy” that Maritain leveled against the ‘political action’ theories of anti-communist crusader, Bob Santamaria. See Bruce Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy: Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle in Australia*, (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001), 385. The writings of the influential 20<sup>th</sup> century German Catholic thinker, Romano Guardini (1885-1968), similarly expressed this sense of theocentrism, through the concept of ‘theonomy.’ Guardini, too, sought a safeguard between two extremes: Nazi heteronomy, in which authority lay exclusively in ‘the other’ (ie the state) and Rilkian autonomy. Though Guardini “offered no explicit guidance on how Christians should promote the coming of God’s kingdom by means of their work and their sociopolitical activities” he “enriched Christian humanism by asserting that personal existence must be governed by theonomy. Each woman or man should recognise God as the only absolute authority for human life, and in turn the living God will set each human being free to become a whole person, one who is an “I” within “I-thou” relationships.” See Robert A. Krieg, “Romano Guardini’s Theology of the Human Person,” *Theological Studies* 59 (September 1998), 457f. Guardini’s principal work in this regard is *The World and the Person*, translated by Stella Lange, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1939). Guardini’s theonomy provided the basis for his focus on liturgy and prayer, the two primary activities in which such a radical orientation is expressed. Thus, Guardini sought to restore to modernity an inherent sacredness to life: “The world which finds its center in man has its orientation toward God. . . . Man soars above his own level and does not fully realize himself until he is in contact with God. In a certain sense this is also valid of the world. The self-sufficient world, postulated by some modern thinkers, does not exist; it was a postulate of revolt. What does exist is the world related to God through man.” See Romano Guardini, *Freedom, Grace and Destiny*, quoted in *The Essential Guardini: An Anthology of the Writings of Romano Guardini*, selected by Heinz R. Kuehn (Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1997), 61.

<sup>21</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Scholasticism and Politics*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1940), 86. In his Personalism, Maritain was indebted to Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950), founder and editor of the journal *Esprit* from 1932 to 1950. The Personalism of Mounier sought to find a midway between

The supernatural vocation of humanity lived in the context of the dynamism of a personalist democracy forges for Maritain the fundamental link between the spiritual and the political order. In introducing Catholic Action, not “as a proper noun designating an official institution of the Church, but rather of *Catholic action* as a common noun designating a certain task and work,”<sup>22</sup> Maritain explains the integral link between the two through the use of the imagery of ‘planes’:

On the first level of activity – that of the spiritual – man [sic] acts as a member of the Mystical Body of Christ and as occupied with the things of God; on the second level – that of the temporal – he acts as member of the earthly city and as occupied with the business of earthly life.

These two orders are distinct, but they are not separate. If grace captures us and recreates us in the depth of our being, it is in order that the whole of our action may be affected by it and illuminated with it. But on the temporal level, although our action – if it is what it ought to be – will be an action proceeding from Christian inspiration, yet it will not present itself as specifically Christian; it will present itself as formally determined by such and such temporal object, such and such temporal specification (political action, national, cultural action etc.), under Christian inspiration.

On the other hand, on the spiritual level, it will be not only under Christian inspiration, but it will also present itself, in the very measure in which it will have as its object the expansion of the Kingdom of God in souls, as specifically Christian (the Christian apostolate).

And it will be the same on the third level, that of the spiritual considered as joined to the temporal, so far as the action of the Christian belongs here also to the apostolate, but to the apostolate as touching things of the earth; I mean so far as it has for its purpose to infuse evangelical vitality into the temporal life, or as it intervenes in

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individualism and collectivism, seen as the two great tyrannies of the twentieth century. It sought a new world order, out of the crisis of the present crisis of civilization, “committed to man’s transcendence and [is the enemy] of all individuals, ideas, societies, and states that deny man the needs of his body, the dignity of his spirit, the presence and sustenance of a true human community.” See Joseph Amato, *Mounier and Maritain: A French Catholic understanding of the modern world*, (University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1975), 1. For a concise historical account of the partnership between Maritain and Mounier, see Thomas Bokenkotter, *Church and Revolution: Catholics in the struggle for democracy and social justice*, (New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 1998), 335-401. For the implications of Maritain’s Personalism on the issue of the ‘common good’ and human rights, see Brian Stiltner, *Religion and the Common Good: Catholic contributions to building community in a liberal society*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 83-142. See also John Hellman, “The Humanism of Jacques Maritain” and Matthew J. Mancini, “Maritain’s Democratic Vision: ‘You Have No Bourgeois’,” in Hudson and Mancini (eds), *Understanding Maritain*, 117-151.

<sup>22</sup> Maritain, *Scholasticism and Politics*, 196.

politics in the very name of Christianity when politics touches the altar.<sup>23</sup>

In Catholic *action*, so understood by Maritain, the dualism between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ is overcome:

[I]t seems to me that the coming of Catholic action marks the end of the *separatism* and *dualism* which have reigned too long in the Christian world . . . Too long, in modern times, ‘has the Christian world obeyed two opposing rhythms, a Christian rhythm in matters of worship and religion, and, at least among better men, in things of the interior life; and, a naturalistic rhythm in things of the profane life, the social, economic and political life, things too long abandoned to their proper carnal law.’

Today, at least for Christians who have ears to hear, this dualism is past. An age now appears in which the organic and vital unity of all that has been inhumanly dissociated will be restored. [*Italics in original*]<sup>24</sup>

Maritain laments the implications of such an earlier dualism –

[a] sort of effectual lie which makes so many people, and sometimes Christians themselves, believe that Christianity is a party to social

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<sup>23</sup> Maritain, *Scholasticism and Politics*, 195-196. This thinking resumes what Maritain postulates in *True Humanism*: “These two planes are clearly distinct, as the things which are Caesar’s and the things which are God’s. It is obvious that the order of the redemption or of the spiritual of the things that are God’s, should vivify to its most intimate depths the order of earthly civilization or of the temporal, the things that are Caesar’s: but these two orders remain distinct.” (p. 289). However, Maritain is equally clear that ‘distinction’ also implies a hierarchy. “There is no distinction without an order of values. If the things that are God’s are distinct from the things that are Caesar’s, that means that they are better . . . The Kingdom of God is essentially spiritual, and by the very fact that its own order is not of this world, . . . But precisely because it is spiritual, the Kingdom of God is of a better and higher nature than the kingdoms and republics of the earth. Let us remove from the word ‘superiority’ any accidental connotation of domination and hegemony; let us understand this word in its pure sense; it means a higher place in the scale of values, a higher dignity.” See Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 152-153. Such a line of thought was a maturation from an earlier argument held by Maritain in which he asserts more apologetically the greater subordination of the temporal to the spiritual. See Jacques Maritain, *The Things that are not Caesar’s*, translated by J.F. Scanlan, (London: Sheed & Ward, 1930), 1-43. On the manifestation of such planes in the local Australian context under the banner of the National Civic Council, Bruce Duncan cites the observation of Fr. James Murtagh that “[t]he spiritual and temporal planes of activity became confused . . . little-known theory lagged behind social fact and performance.” See Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy*, 379.

<sup>24</sup> Maritain, *Scholasticism and Politics*, 201. Maritain identifies the dissociation as the crisis of modern times in chapter one of the same work. This “organic and vital unity” becomes the foundation of Maritain’s affirmation of the “necessary cooperation between the Church and the body politic or the State.” See *Man and the State*, 154. Maritain entertained ‘a socio-temporal *convivium*, demanding “co-operation on the temporal level between believers and non-believers.” See *Scholasticism and Politics*, 220.



conduct which is anything but Christian. . . . When separatism and dualism reign among Christians, there is a whole portion of their life and activity, and perhaps in the social domain, which does not arise from Christianity and is not animated by it . . .<sup>25</sup>

Earlier, in *True Humanism*, he would express it thus:

And we shall also understand the wholly opposite error of certain unenlightened apologists of religion who are prepared to think that piety and the defence of religious interests cover the whole ground and that, to acquit all our duties towards the earthly city and the temporal order, it suffices for us to fulfil what is required in the spiritual order, falsely considered as *separate*. That is not true. Even religious who have quitted the world are called to open their hearts to all the misery and anguish of the world and to gather them into themselves to apply there the blood of Christ: so, in a way which is wholly spiritual, they still care for the things of time and act upon them. And as for us, we who are still in the world, we must not only act *as* Christians and *as* Christians *as such*, as living members of Christ, on the spiritual plane; we must also act as Christians, as living members of Christ's body, on the temporal one. [Italics in the original]<sup>26</sup>

In this discussion Maritain positions Catholic action as the way in which, “the world and profane existence ought to be penetrated and vivified to their depths by Christian energies, and that the things of God ought to reach man in all his reality, temporal as well as spiritual, social, as well as individual.”<sup>27</sup> Echoing the sentiments of the

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<sup>25</sup> Maritain, *Scholasticism and Politics*, 205. This is given good summation by Dawson: “The Puritan or the sectarian Christian can isolate himself from the age in which he lives and construct a private world in harmony with his religious convictions. But for the Catholic this should be impossible. Catholicism stands essentially for a universal order in which every good and every truth of the natural or the social order can find a place.

The disorder of the modern world is due either to the denial of the existence of spiritual reality or to the attempt to treat the spiritual order and the business of everyday life as two independent worlds which have no mutual relations. But while Catholicism recognises the distinction and autonomy of the natural and the supernatural orders, it can never acquiesce in their segregation. The spiritual and the eternal insert themselves into the world of sensible and temporal things, and there is not the smallest event in human life and social history but possesses an eternal and spiritual significance.” See Christopher Dawson, “General Introduction,” in Jacques Maritain, *Religion and Culture*, translated by J. F. Scanlon, (London: Sheed & Ward, 1931), vii.

<sup>26</sup> Maritain, *True Humanism*, 292.

<sup>27</sup> Maritain, *Scholasticism and Politics*, 201.

German von Ketteler, nearly a century earlier, and whose contribution will be discussed in a later chapter, he affirms an inherent social Catholicism:

Let us not forget that the social, the economic, and the political, are intrinsically dependent on ethics, and that, *by this title*, for this formal reason, the social, the political, and the economic, are concerned with eternal life, and therefore with the pastoral ministry of the Church. The problem of destitution, for example, of misery, is certainly a temporal problem: but it is also a problem of eternal life. . . . The problem of destitution is a problem of eternal life for him who suffers it and who, being treated like one damned, breathes the air of damnation and runs the greatest risk of turning against God . . . and it is a problem of eternal life for him who contemplates the destitution of others with an indifferent heart, sometimes in order to make a profit out of it. [Italics in the original]<sup>28</sup>

For Maritain, such social consideration translates into a spirituality that overcomes a two-tiered system of holiness that divides the elect and ordinary believers.<sup>29</sup> It formulates into a secularized spirituality in which, “all are called to live more and more fully with the life of grace, called to the sanctity and the freedom of the sons of God.”<sup>30</sup> Elsewhere, Maritain goes on to say,

What matters in a very special way, and perhaps more than anything else for our ages, is the life of prayer and of union with God lived *in the world* . . . by those who are called to this life in the common condition of lay people with all its turmoil, its risks, and its temporal burdens. [Italics in the original]<sup>31</sup>

In this way, Maritain imagines an immense,

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<sup>28</sup> Maritain, *Scholasticism and Politics*, 203.

<sup>29</sup> See Astrid O’Brien, “Contemplation along the Roads of the World: The Reflections of Raissa and Jacques Maritain,” in *Lay Sanctity, Medieval and Modern: A search for models*, edited by Ann W. Astell, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 151. Maritain “insisted that the difference between priest and layman is one of *function* and *character*. . . The layman is no less called to the perfection of charity than is the priest or the religious.” See Bernard E. Doering, “Notes and Comments: The Spiritual Mission of the Laity,” *Communio: International Catholic Review*, 14 (Summer 1987), 194.

<sup>30</sup> Maritain, *Notebooks*, 177.

<sup>31</sup> Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garrone*, 196-197, quoted in Astrid O’Brien, “Contemplation along the Roads of the World.” 151.

reserve of spontaneity, of liberty of movement, of adaptability to the ebb and flow of time, of inventiveness, and of prophetic initiative, this reserve, which exists in a potential and undetermined state among the baptised, must be maintained intact, and respected as sacred.<sup>32</sup>

Subsequently, for Maritain, and his wife Raissa, a “Christian family is in itself a community consecrated to God in the lay order just as an abbey or a Carmelite convent is in the religious order.”<sup>33</sup> He goes on to say,

If a human person gives himself truly and absolutely to another human person as to his Unique and to his Whole, because he loves this person with mad, boundless love, he can indeed, certainly love God more . . .<sup>34</sup>

Re-positioning the locus of the spiritual journey into the ordinary affairs of human experience, Maritain goes so far as to introduce a new spirituality of sexuality, traditionally the border between the elect and laity: “Spouses who have passed under the regime of mad, boundless love for God, and more particularly under that of infused contemplation are certainly not obliged for this reason to renounce giving themselves carnally to each other and engendering offspring.”<sup>35</sup>

In suggesting such an incarnated spirituality the Maritains positioned that “[t]he great need of our time . . . is to put contemplation on the roads of the world.”<sup>36</sup> They suggest a ‘resacralization’ of “a world without mystery” yet without the need to

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<sup>32</sup> Maritain, *Notebooks*, 176.

<sup>33</sup> Maritain, *Notebooks*, 180.

<sup>34</sup> Maritain, *Notebooks*, 250.

<sup>35</sup> Maritain, *Notebooks*, 249. Maritain re-iterates the holiness of family life in his 1965 Memorandum written on the request of Paul VI. See Doering, “Notes and Comments: The Spiritual Mission of the Laity,” 197-199.

<sup>36</sup> Raissa Maritain, *Liturgy and Contemplation*, 74-75, quoted in O’Brien, “Contemplation along the Roads of the World,” 160. For a comparison between the contemplative approaches of Maritain and Thomas Merton, the towering contemplative writer of the twentieth century and to whom Maritain was befriended, see Jean Leclercq, “Maritain and Merton: The coincidence of opposites,” *Cistercian Studies* 19 (1984), 362-370.

withdraw from the world.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, Jacques Maritain was clear not to confuse that active life and the contemplative life:

I believe that the spirit of contemplation is called upon to assume new forms, to make itself more pliable and bolder, to clothe itself in the love of one's neighbor in proportion as it spreads out into ordinary life. This means that action can be a disguise for mysticism, but it does not mean there can be a mysticism of action. There is no more mysticism of action than there is one of inertia. Stop now, says the Lord, wait a minute, keep quiet a little; be still and know that I am God . . .<sup>38</sup>

From the personal to the social order Maritain is clear to avoid such interplay between 'the mystical' and 'the political' devolving into the kind of *theocraticism* championed by his fellow countryman, Lammenais, a century earlier, and who will also be discussed in a later chapter. As Maritain says,

This socio-temporal or socio-political action is not within the province of Catholic action. At this frontier, Catholic action stops. Its competence goes no farther, because its direct and proper end is *apostolic*, not *profane* and *temporal*. [Italics in the original]<sup>39</sup>

In the same way,

It is not the business of the social polity to lead human persons to a state of spiritual perfection and full freedom of autonomy (i.e. to sanctity, to that state of liberation which is indeed godlike, for then it is the very life of God that lives in man's heart). But the social polity is essentially directed, by reason of its own temporal end, towards such a development of social conditions as will lead the generality to a level of material, moral and intellectual life in accord with the good and peace of all, such as will positively assist each person in the progressive conquest of the fullness of personal life and spiritual liberty.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See Amato, *Mounier and Maritain*, 124.

<sup>38</sup> Maritain, *The Range of Reason*, 215.

<sup>39</sup> Maritain, *Scholasticism and Politics*, 209.

<sup>40</sup> Maritain, *True Humanism*, 128.

Here Maritain differentiates earlier ‘sacral’ civilizations which recognised the spiritual dimension of humanity but had not been adequate to enshrine the distinction and independence of the temporal order. He proposes that only in the modern age, “the order of terrestrial civilization and of temporal society has gained the completed differentiation and full autonomy . . . required by the Gospel’s very distinction between God’s and Caesar’s domains.”<sup>41</sup> Maritain protects his differentiation from a slide into ‘social divinisation’ by his own *theocentrism* acting as a corrective to the anthropocentrism of thinkers such as Rousseau and Kant:

The social divinization of the individual, inaugurated by “bourgeois” liberalism, leads to the social divinization of the State, and of the anonymous mass incarnate in a Master, who is no longer a normal ruler but a sort of inhuman monster . . . True political emancipation, or the true city of human rights, has for its principle a conception of the autonomy of the person that is in conformity with the nature of things and therefore “theocentric.”<sup>42</sup>

Thus, by implication, for Maritain the integration between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ is far more subtle:

If, by the teaching it dispenses and the spiritual formation it achieves, [Catholic Action] *prepares* the laity for acting *as* Christians, for a participation in secular strife and a participation *as* Christians, for the assumption of those forms of social and political work to which they feel called and called *as* Christians, it guards itself with all the more care against itself laying the shadow of a finger on the second plane. And it is not only because the Church will not, at any price, be enfeoffed to any one particular secular form. It is also because, in regard to the proper work of that second plane, with regard to work which must penetrate to the ultimate contingent realisations called for by the service of the secular common good, the competence of an activity whose order is wholly spiritual quickly finds its limits. [Italics in the original]<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State*, cited in Paul E. Sigmund, “Maritain on Politics,” in Hudson and Mancini (eds), *Understanding Maritain*, 157.

<sup>42</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Social and Political Philosophy of Jacques Maritain*, cited in Sigmund, “Maritain on Politics,” 157.

<sup>43</sup> Maritain, *True Humanism*, 295.

Maritain's influence on the Second Vatican Council, through his friendship with Pope Paul VI is well attested.<sup>44</sup> His profound sense of the spiritual mission of the laity was encapsulated in a 1965 memorandum written at Paul VI's request.<sup>45</sup> Whilst underscoring the importance of organized Catholic Action, Maritain sought to clearly separate this mission from the organisation which he maintained was, at base, a participation in the apostolate proper to the clergy. He regarded that the danger of a reduction of the spiritual mission of the laity to Catholic Action could be a kind of clericalisation of the laity. Laity, rather, had a mission sourced in their own baptismal calling and which manifested itself in intellectual, social and spiritual ways.<sup>46</sup>

For Maritain, then, the contemporary acknowledgement and the exercise of this vocation represented a paradigmatic shift. He was, indeed, a harbinger of this shift occurring through the twentieth century - a heralding eloquently summarized in the following words which may well be regarded as his own *Nunc dimittis*:

For centuries monasteries and religious houses above all fulfilled this office, and they will not cease to do so; and everything new that is tried will have to come back to them to find new strength and vigor. My conjecture is that with the growth in awareness brought about today by the Christian laity, an awareness that marks a decisive

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<sup>44</sup> See Doering, "Notes and Comments: The Spiritual Mission of the Laity," 193-194. Doering recounts the interviews between Paul VI and Maritain on 27 December, 1964 and 1 September 1965. On Maritain's death, announced on 29 April 1973, the pope referred to him as "a master in the art of thinking, of living, and of praying." Having closed the Second Vatican Council with an address on 8 December 1965, Paul VI turned and embraced Maritain. See William J. Nottingham, *Christian Faith and Secular Action: An introduction to the life and thought of Jacques Maritain*, (St. Louis, Missouri: Bethany Press, 1968), 13.

<sup>45</sup> The text of Maritain's Memorandum is published in Doering, "Notes and Comments: The Spiritual Mission of the Laity," 194-202.

<sup>46</sup> Maritain lists a constellation of figures: intellectually – Chrétien de Troyes and Dante to Pascal, Zurbaran, Bach, Rouault, Chateaubriand, Joseph deMaistre, Baudelair, Verlaine, Tolstoy, Dostoyesky, Léon Bloyt, Péguy, Claudel, Bernanos, Papini, Chesterton, T.S. Eliot; socially – the French priest-worker Jacques Loew; spiritually – Robert Garric, Étienne Gilson, the study groups of Meudon, Lanza del Vasto, Emmanuel Mounier, Eric Gill, Dorothy Day.

turning-point in the history of the Church, it is in the midst of the lay world itself, at least, in certain of its 'prophetic minorities,' that the function in question will also be carried out. God grant these centres of spiritual radiance may grow rapidly in number. Scattered above this poor earth of ours in the great darkness of our common human misery, they will shine like new constellations of faith and of love. . . In the future as I conceive it, it seems to me (if what I have proposed in these pages is exact) that the special responsibility of Christian laymen, wherever they wish to be true disciples of the Savior, will be that spiritual radiance which is produced, by reason of the mysterious solidarity with souls, shining forth from the new constellations I have just mentioned, not only under the influence of the specific activities of the various centers of energy which compose them, but also through the power of heroic example, on which Bergson insisted so much, and through the power of the prayer and of suffering united with the Passion of Christ.

To put things in the best light, these scattered centers of spiritual radiance, if human freedom is not too neglectful of its responsibilities, would become the yeast which will cause the whole mass of dough to rise.

To put things in the worst light, they would become a more or less persecuted diaspora thanks to which the presence of Jesus and of his love will, in spite of everything, remain present in the apostate world.<sup>47</sup>

However, whilst Maritain's vision was, according to Cavanaugh, "born not of ego but of sanctity" and whilst Maritain, himself, was "a great man and a holy man, not possessing but possessed by a vision of individual freedom and common good under a limited state and benevolent God,"<sup>48</sup> his project was not to be universally accessible to constructive application. Indeed, whilst Maritain's secularized spirituality may have largely overcome the duality between clerical and lay in the order of holiness, it

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<sup>47</sup> Maritain, "Memorandum to Pope Paul VI," cited in Doering, "Notes and Comments: The Spiritual Mission of the Laity," 202. Maritain refers to 'prophetic minorities' as "prophetic shock minorities" in *Man and the State*. See Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State*, 139-145. Maritain imagines "a culture no longer gathered and assembled, as in the Middle Ages, in a homogenous body of civilization occupying a tiny privileged portion of the inhabited earth, but scattered over the whole surface of the globe – a living network of hearths of Christian life disseminated among the nations within the great supra-cultural unity of the Church." See Jacques Maritain, *Religion and Culture*, translated by J.F. Scanlan, in *Essays in Order*, edited by Christopher Dawson, (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1940), 28. In the Australian context, the founder of the National Civic Council, Bob Santamaria, used the expression of prophetic minorities in October 1959 to describe the Movement, one of the few instances, according to Bruce Duncan, "where Santamaria had alluded to Maritain." See Bruce Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy*, 370.

<sup>48</sup> Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 177.

is uncertain that he enabled a genuine re-location of the sacred in the midst of the secular in such a way that the sacred could exist there with transformative capacity.

As a constructive critic, William T. Cavanaugh, a contemporary theologian, (currently associate professor of St. Thomas University, St. Paul, Minnesota), highlights liberation theologians' assertion that Maritain's 'distinction of planes,' whilst logically helpful, did not exist in practice. This was the case especially in those contexts - for example in South America - where religious formation could not be as separated from political formation.<sup>49</sup> For the South American theologian, Gustavo Gutiérrez, the separation of a profane and sacred history – even so as to re-join them in an integral unity - is no longer tenable. Cavanaugh paraphrases this as the liberationist position which would hold that, “the history of salvation is a unity; we cannot properly distinguish two separate realms, spiritual and temporal, with different ends, one transcendent and the other natural.”<sup>50</sup>

Yet, even should one not accept such a liberationist critique Cavanaugh identifies the flaw in Maritain's advocacy of a 'spiritual' space for the church which is both interior to the person and transcendent to the person suggesting that he,

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<sup>49</sup> Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 178. Cavanaugh is citing here the conclusions of Gustavo Gutiérrez in *A Theology of Liberation*, revised edition, translated by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 36-41. Cavanaugh cites John Milbank's critique of such a position as ultimately rendering a theological critique of society impossible. Where “the social is an autonomous sphere which does not need to turn to theology for its self-understanding, and yet it is already a grace-imbued sphere . . . what we are offered is *anything but* a true theology of the political.” John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 208, cited in Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 180.

Cavanaugh is not alone in his perspective. Another example of his voice can be found in Nicholas Lash, “The Church in the State We're In,” in *Spirituality and Social Embodiment*, edited by L. Gregory Jones and James J. Buckley, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 121-137. For a general critique of the school of thought to which Cavanaugh belongs, see Mary Doak, “The Politics of Radical Orthodoxy: A Catholic critique,” *Theological Studies* 68 (2007), 368-393.

<sup>50</sup> Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 179.



does not allow the possibility that the Gospel may have its own bodily performances, its own “politics,” its own set of social practices which are neither purely otherworldly nor reducible to some “purely temporal” discourse.<sup>51</sup>

Cavanaugh proposes that Maritain’s attempt to distinguish in order to unite fails because of an erroneous reading of the relations of nature and supernature in Aquinas on whom he is so dependent.<sup>52</sup> Maritain, according to Cavanaugh, fails to succeed “in conveying the *permeation* of the natural by the supernatural that is found in Thomas,”[italics in the original]<sup>53</sup> and, therefore, cannot adequately entertain a realised eschatology.<sup>54</sup> For Cavanaugh, “Maritain’s dichotomy between spiritual and temporal serves as a philosophical *a priori* into which the Incarnation fits very awkwardly.”<sup>55</sup>

Practically, this means,

For those interested in a Christian theology and practice of the political, the key difficulty with Maritain’s project is that he makes the Christian community the repository of purely supernatural virtue which stands outside of time, and thus interiorizes and individualizes the Gospel. The soul is the province of the church, and the state has charge of the body.<sup>56</sup>

For Cavanaugh the consequence of Maritain’s interiorization of the supernatural into the temporal, with its concomitant emphasis on the activities of ‘animation,’ ‘penetration,’ ‘influence,’ ‘inspiration,’ ‘vivification’ is a diminishment of the

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<sup>51</sup> Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 181. Cavanaugh critiques the tendency to a certain privatization in Maritain as his inability “to resist the pull of interiority and the essential individuality of the spiritual life.” See Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 171.

<sup>52</sup> Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 183. Cavanaugh uses the work of Etienne Gilson to suggest that Maritain is reliant more on the Thomistic commentators such as Cajetan, Suarez and John of St. Thomas than Aquinas himself.

<sup>53</sup> Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 184.

<sup>54</sup> Cavanaugh juxtaposes Maritain’s ‘spatial’ distinction against the Augustinian concept of the ‘temporal’ as “rather a time, a time between the times . . .” See Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 185.

<sup>55</sup> Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 185.

<sup>56</sup> Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 195.

presence of Christian discourse in the public realm. Cavanaugh claims, “[j]ust as an immigrant language will die if it is not spoken outside the home, so Christian language will eventually cease to provide ‘inspiration’ for rights language as long as such inspiration is closed away in the interior of the human soul.”<sup>57</sup>

Alternatively, what is required, according to Cavanaugh, is a more visible, bodily ecclesial presence which is neither Old nor New Christendom, but rather the church precisely as a ‘community of practice’ that must legitimately constitute, at least, the capacity for “*resistance* to the nation-state.” [Italics in the original]<sup>58</sup> Without such, to use the analogy of the soul and the body, the church as the ‘soul of the society’ can not readily be in a position “to resist the bodily disciplines of the state.”<sup>59</sup> Maritain’s ‘new Christendom,’ interior and subjective, along with the kind of ‘social Catholicism’ that inheres to it, thus must, according to Cavanaugh, be replaced by a more visible ecclesial reality with its own actions, practices and habits sourced in the discipline of the Gospels themselves and able to confront – through compassion and martyrdom, suffering and reconciliation - the practices of the state which are antithetical to it.<sup>60</sup>

In his 1999 article, “The City: Beyond secular parodies,” Cavanaugh succinctly elucidates the nature of this resistance through a comparison between the soteriology

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<sup>57</sup> Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 187.

<sup>58</sup> Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 195.

<sup>59</sup> Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 196.

<sup>60</sup> See Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 197, 202. Cavanaugh turns to a sustained consideration of the Eucharist in this regard and how “a Eucharistic ecclesiology can and should provide the basis for the church’s social practice.” See Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 207. See also William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the liturgy as a political act in an age of global consumerism*, (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2002).

of the State and of the Church.<sup>61</sup> He argues for a ‘Christian anarchism’ which stands in opposition to what he regards as the false premise of the modern nation state. Tracing the rise of the modern nation state in the anthropology of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, Cavanaugh highlights the formation of the modern state on the foundation of “individuals com[ing] together on the basis of a social *contract*, each individual entering society in order to protect person and property.” [Italics in the original]<sup>62</sup> He proposes:

Indeed, the rise of the state is predicated on the creation of the individual. The realization of a single unquestioned political centre would make equivalent and equal each individual before the law, thereby freeing the individual from the caprice of local custom and subloyalties which would divide them from their fellow-citizens. . . . The power of the state grew in concert with the rise of capitalism, because of direct state subsidies for business and international trade, the development of state-sanctioned standardized monetary and taxation systems, and the emergence of a centralized legal system which made possible the commodification and contractualization of land, goods, and especially labor. In other words, the impersonal and centralized state accompanied the invention of the autonomous individual liberated from the confines of the traditional group and now relating to other individuals on the basis of contract. Property – including one’s own self in the form of one’s labor – became *alienable*. Thus were born both the capitalist and the wage laborer. [Italics in the original]<sup>63</sup>

According to Cavanaugh, this “state soteriology offers a false unity and a false peace which are fundamentally at odds with the Christian story.”<sup>64</sup> In the Eucharistic liturgy

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<sup>61</sup> William T. Cavanaugh, “The City: beyond secular parodies,” in *Radical Orthodoxy: a new theology*, edited by John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward, (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 182-200.

<sup>62</sup> Cavanaugh, “The City,” 187.

<sup>63</sup> Cavanaugh, “The City,” 192.

<sup>64</sup> Cavanaugh, “The City,” 190. Cavanaugh discusses his concepts about the modern nation state in three chapters of *Theopolitical Imagination*: “The Myth of the State as Savior,” “The Myth of the Civil Society as Free Space,” and “The Myth of Globalization as Catholicity.”

Christians envision “a proper ‘anarchy,’ not in the sense that it proposes chaos, but in that it challenges the false order of the state.”<sup>65</sup> In this vision the Eucharist,

defuses both the false theology and the false anthropology of will and right by the stunning ‘public’ *leitourgia* in which humans are made members of God’s very Body. . . the foundational distinction between mine and thine is radically effaced (cf Acts 2:44-47). . . The Eucharist undercuts the primacy of contract and exchange in modern social relations. . . As members of the Body, we then become nourishment for others – including those not part of the visible Body – in the unending Trinitarian economy of gratuitous giving and joyful reception. Property and *dominium* are thus radically questioned. . . There is no liberal body, in which the centre seeks to maintain the independence of individuals from each other, nor a fascist body, which seeks to bind individuals to each other through the centre. . . Whereas in the modern state the centre either vindicates the rights of property against the marginalized or takes direct concern for the welfare of the marginalized out of our hands, in Christ the dichotomy of centre and periphery is overcome. . . The Eucharist transgresses national boundaries and redefines who our fellow citizens are. . . [The practice of the sign of peace before the Eucharist is one] which cannot be specified through the formal adjudication of contractual obligations, but can be constructed only in the direct encounter of human beings who consider themselves members of one another and of the Prince of Peace.<sup>66</sup>

Cavanaugh is deeply concerned that Christians have become forgetful of the radical conflict between state and church. “True peace,” he concludes, “depends not on the subsumption of this conflict, [which constitutes his primary criticism of Maritain], but on a recovered sense of its urgency.”<sup>67</sup> Cavanaugh thereby retrieves the Augustinian vision of the two cities though according to his own Radical Orthodoxy reading which, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, is not the only way by which Augustine might be interpreted:

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<sup>65</sup> Cavanaugh, “The City,” 194.

<sup>66</sup> Cavanaugh, “The City,” 194-197. See also Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, “Towards a Eucharistic Counter-Politics,” 46-52. Cavanaugh develops his ideas initially in *Torture and Eucharist*, 207-252, in which he seeks to prepare “the way to develop a politics embedded in the liturgy – that is, accomplished by *Christ in the Eucharist*, and not be the church’s imitation of the empire or its reassertion of authority over the state.” See Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 221.

<sup>67</sup> Cavanaugh, “The City,” 198.

We journey through the *civitas terrena* always aware that our true home is in heaven. This communion with our fellow-citizens in heaven is not, however, an escape from this-worldly politics, but rather a radical interruption by the Church of the false politics of the earthly city. Thus Augustine contrasts the fellowship of the saints in heaven – and on earth – with the violent individualism of the Roman empire, the virtue of which is based on a self-aggrandizing *dominium*, the control over what is one's own. It is the Church, uniting earth and heaven, which is the true 'politics.' The earthly city is not a true *res publica* because there can be no justice and no common weal where God is not truly worshipped.<sup>68</sup>

Nonetheless, Cavanaugh is not arguing for a retreat by the Church into some privatized realm, no longer concerned with 'this world.'

The Church should not simply attempt to reassert dominance over the state, as in Christendom, nor try to reoccupy political space currently under the state's control, nor attempt some "sectarian withdrawal" to a space physically separate from the world. To take a body does not indicate that the church is called to emerge from its confinement to the "spiritual" only to fill in public "temporal" spaces without redrawing the lines which supposedly separate these "planes." . . . I have written of an alternative Christian "politics" only in an analogous sense; it is better to speak of alternative disciplines, imaginations, or performances, because the church is not called to present itself as yet another type of *polis*. *Ecclesia* is neither *polis* nor *oikos*, but an alternative which radically reconfigures the dichotomy between public and private used to domesticate the Gospel.<sup>69</sup>

Critical of the "anaemic ecclesiology"<sup>70</sup> of John Courtney Murray's advocacy of a 'public theology' and Richard John Neuhaus' conception of democracy which separate 'state' and 'society' and which argue for the possibility of a neutral space - the 'public square of civil society' in which the church can participate as an

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<sup>68</sup> Cavanaugh, "The City," 185. Here Cavanaugh refers to Augustine, *The City of God*, translated by Marcus Dods (New York: Modern Library, 1950), 686-709 [XIX, 11-28]. He also refers to John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond secular reason*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1990), 389-392, 398-411. See also Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 83-84.

<sup>69</sup> Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 268-269.

<sup>70</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 83.

interlocutor amongst others (albeit in non-theological language)<sup>71</sup> - Cavanaugh fights against any movement in which theology, “must submit to what ‘the public’ can consider reasonable, where ‘the public’ is understood in terms of the nation-state.”<sup>72</sup> He clearly understands such an attempt to be a diminishment of the church’s true politics, a victory of the nation-state to “tame the Church” and to reduce the Church “to its own terms.”<sup>73</sup>

Cavanaugh is stridently insistent that,

The Church gathered around the altar does not simply disperse and be absorbed into civil society when God’s blessing sends it forth. The liturgy does more than generate motivations to be better citizens [again, his criticism of Maritain’s ideas on ‘animation’]. The liturgy generates a body, the Body of Christ – the Eucharist makes the Church, in Henri de Lubac’s words – which is itself a *sui generis* social body, a public presence irreducible to a voluntary association of civil society.<sup>74</sup>

He is concerned that, “succumbing to the power of state soteriology,” the “individual Christians, fortified by ‘basic orienting attitudes,’ can enter public space, but the

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<sup>71</sup> See Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 54-62. Cavanaugh also critiques the work of Harry Boyte’s on civil democratic society, and its application in Catholic education. Cavanaugh distrusts the Murrayite position as naïve: “In fact the supposedly free debate of the public square is disproportionately affected by the state.” See *Theopolitical Imagination*, 71. Cavanaugh claims that the “interpenetration of state, society and economy” renders “true alternative spaces” an impossible ideal. He quotes Michel de Certeau: “Seized from the moment of awakening by the radio (the voice is the law), the listener walks all day through a forest of narrativities, journalistic, advertising and televised, which, at night, slip a few final messages under the door of sleep. More than the God recounted to us by the theologians of the past, these tales have a function of providence and predestination: they organize our work, our celebrations – even our dreams – in advance. Social life multiplies the gestures and modes of behaviour *imprinted* by the narrative models: it continually reproduces and stores up the ‘copies’ of narratives.” Michael de Certeau, “Believing and Making People Believe,” in *The Certeau Reader*, edited by Graham Ward, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 125, cited in Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 79.

<sup>72</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 81.

<sup>73</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 82-83.

<sup>74</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 83.

Church itself drops out of the picture. The Church [then] is an essentially asocial entity that provides only ‘motivations’ and ‘values’ for public action.”<sup>75</sup>

Thus, Cavanaugh wants the Church to retain itself as its own public space.<sup>76</sup>

We must cease to think that the only choices open to the Church are either to withdraw into some private or ‘sectarian’ confinement, or to embrace the public debate policed by the state. The Church as the Body of Christ transgresses both the lines which separate public and private and the borders of nation-states, thus creating spaces for a different kind of political practice, one which is incapable of being pressed into the service of wars, or rumours of wars.<sup>77</sup>

For Cavanaugh, “public theology is simply not public enough.”<sup>78</sup> He seeks the affirmation of a body of “concrete practices that do not need translation into some putatively ‘neutral’ language to be understood.”<sup>79</sup> He seeks the creation of “spaces in which alternative stories about material goods are told, and alternative forms of economics are made possible.”<sup>80</sup>

Thus, by implication, for Cavanaugh, ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political,’ have become one in an ecclesial counter-cultural stance, a space “of resistance where the Kingdom

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<sup>75</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 84.

<sup>76</sup> Cavanaugh contrasts ‘space’ with ‘place.’ Here he relies on the work of Michel de Certeau, and links de Certeau’s concept with the Augustinian one of two cities which “do not exist beside each other on a territorial grid, but are formed by telling different stories about ends, and by thus using matter and motion in different ways.” See *Theopolitical Imagination*, 92. See also Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 269.

<sup>77</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 90.

<sup>78</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 95.

<sup>79</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 94.

<sup>80</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 94.

of God challenges the reality and inevitability of secular imaginations of space and time<sup>81</sup> As he states,

The church is not *a* social body, an analogy with the state, political party, corporation, or labor union; it is the true body of Christ, which exists simultaneously in heaven and on earth. This is not to say that it straddles the spiritual and the temporal planes; it denies the imagination of the spiritual and the temporal as two separate planes or two separate places. The body of Christ engulfs creation, contains past, present, and future. In the Eucharist heaven and earth are intermingled, and we are made fellow-citizens with the martyrs and saints of all times in heaven. The invisible Church is only that church of heaven which is made visible in the Eucharist on earth. [Italics in the original]<sup>82</sup>

Using the words of Cristián Precht Cavanaugh expresses the ‘politics’ of this body, the Church, as,

*the church enters into the broad field of the political, but it does not act as a political party nor does it allow itself to be used by any party; she does not attempt to conquer power, nor to make prevail a concrete model of society; she does not have a political program, nor does she use political methods. The Church does not fight for a political project – since it would escape her direct competence - but rather to reaffirm an historical option in favor of the weakest and most marginalized people of the society.* [Italics in the original]<sup>83</sup>

But can ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ achieve, in fact, the unity that Cavanaugh so desperately wishes to affirm? Though it may indeed rightly claim its own ‘space’ in such a counter-cultural fashion, the Church is never the exclusive space in which the believer lives and works. Cavanaugh critiques the naivety of the Maritainian approach but does he not move into his own naivety by purporting that the church can claim a space entirely independent of the social matrix in which it finds itself?

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<sup>81</sup> Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 272.

<sup>82</sup> Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 271.

<sup>83</sup> Cristián Precht Banados, *El imperative de la solidaridad: entre el dolor y la esperanza*, (Santiago: Ediciones Paulinas, 1986), 40 cited in Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 272.



The Eucharist does indeed suggest a new set of practices, but principally - if not wholly - by way of intimation through the symbolic order and not by actual social construction, even though such a formation would be its full realisation. In other words, an entirely new society is not brought into being through the celebration of the Eucharist, even though that celebration might act proleptically to do so. Those who gather for Eucharist are not, thereby, cocooned from the social reality in which they ordinarily live and work but must return to the non-eucharistic realm and to a non-ecclesial, if not openly hostile, space. Even though the participants in sacramental practice may bring profoundly eucharistic attitudes to bear on their social, economic and political life, they must still contend with the fact that the context in which they do so is not one informed by such practice and sentiment.

To my own thinking by failing to recognize the complexity of the Church in both its institutional and charismatic dialectic, Cavanaugh confuses the tension between a realised and future eschatology, expecting one to exist in the other. They do not. The Christian is forced by the tension to live in a dual commitment to *both* the present secular reality and the future divine reality *only ever partially realised now*. Whatever of the inadequate origins and, perhaps distorted philosophical bases of the modern nation state, this *is* the world in which the Christian subject now finds himself or herself, and with which he or she must contend and in which his or her agency is inextricably bound.

There can never be a purely prophetic or charismatic stance adopted with the clarity or intensity for which Cavanaugh argues because the Christian subject is physically unable to entertain a series of practices that are not, in some fashion, intertwined in

the social matrix in which he or she lives. Even the very bread and wine used in Cavanaugh's paradigmatic Eucharistic liturgy, in usual circumstances, are subject to a kaleidoscope of social and economic factors without which even their very liturgical use would not be possible. The Church cannot exist in any viable societal manner that excuses it from engagement and participation in the very contractual expectations and obligations of the modern nation state that Cavanaugh declares as possessing such illegitimacy. In other words, the soteriology of the Church cannot be imagined apart from the contextual factor of the state for it is precisely *in* the state that the Church's soteriological invitation is heard.

Even though Cavanaugh vigorously argues against any restorationist nostalgia of Christendom, one cannot but help detect in his approach a certain echo with the French Catholic position of the second half of the nineteenth century, to be discussed in a later chapter, in which the believer acts as an *émigré de l'intérieur*, the phrase designating "those who have remained at home and who nevertheless have emigrated from the prevailing order, who are fugitives from the whole life of the nation."<sup>84</sup> These are those who live in one world, the state, but seek refuge in another, the Church, as a kind of parallel world that is ultimately dismissive of the social, economic and political context in which it finds itself. The 'world' is abandoned, at least spiritually, for the sake of the Church.<sup>85</sup> There is yet further intimation of this in recent formulations of Cavanaugh's when he appeals to the metaphors of 'pilgrim'

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<sup>84</sup> Refer below to Part B, chapter four. The designation is taken from Ida Görres, *The Hidden Face: A Study of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1959), 25-27.

<sup>85</sup> For further critique of Cavanaugh's position in regard to modernity, and the possibility of a more nuanced approach, see Randall S. Rosenberg, "The Catholic Imagination and Modernity: William Cavanaugh's Theopolitical imagination and Charles Taylor's modern social imagination," *Heythrop Journal* 48 (2007), 911-931.

and ‘monk’ as models for the Christian response to globalization.<sup>86</sup> Though through the use of such metaphors Cavanaugh, “hallows the particular and the local” and argues for “co-operation with others outside the church, [in order] to build strong local communities and cooperative social arrangements deeply rooted in their places” he is clear that the Christian community’s “primary citizenship is in heaven,” against which all else is subordinate and accountable. This “means primarily the relativization of national borders and the active denunciation of all kinds of nationalism that would impede the Christian vision of the planet’s common destiny” including the real possibility of civil disobedience if necessitated.<sup>87</sup>

Though the Christian community must surely not surrender its prophetic stance towards the society in which it is rooted, Cavanaugh’s search for a separate ‘Body,’ completely loosened from its emplacement within national states, runs the risk of imagining an idealized Church that has lost its own hermeneutical perspective for deconstruction, and therefore becomes ripe for the very play of power for which he condemns the state. When Christian praxis is considered exclusively *sui generis* and, therefore, no longer accountable to social critique, it also seeks naïve immunity from the confronting postmodern recognition that there is no innocent text, no innocent interpretation. In David Tracy’s words, “there is no escape from the insight which modernity most feared: there is no innocent tradition . . . no innocent classic (including the scriptures) and no innocent reading.”<sup>88</sup> Postmodern consciousness will

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<sup>86</sup> See William T. Cavanaugh, “Migrant, Tourist, Pilgrim, Monk: Mobility and identity in a global age,” *Theological Studies* 69 (2008), 340-356.

<sup>87</sup> Cavanaugh, “Migrant, Tourist, Pilgrim, Monk,” 355-356.

<sup>88</sup> See Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other*, 5-6.

no longer allow the illusion that gospel praxis is, in fact, politically innocent, whatever the claims.<sup>89</sup>

Maritain's own project of discerning the sacred in the secular, or 'the mystical' in 'the political' may be an affair fraught with risk. It demands, perhaps, a level of Christian formation and evangelical maturity that cannot be ordinarily guaranteed. Even so, Cavanaugh's own critique in which 'the mystical' and 'the political' become one in an alternative space from the state cannot be *sustained* in any realistic, viable way. Even though it may provide genuine *moments* of prophetic capacity and dialectic possibility, Cavanaugh's 'space' is, I believe, an unrealistic attainment.

Against the background of such debate, the contributions of Johannes Metz and Edward Schillebeeckx, more specifically focused on the mystical-political dialectic, need to be examined for the insights which they might provide as to whether integration of 'the mystical' and 'the political' is possible at all.

### **2.3 The Contributions of Johannes Metz and Edward Schillebeeckx**

Cavanaugh only alludes to the work of Johannes Metz (b. 1928).<sup>90</sup> However, it would seem that the political theology of Metz provides a counterpoint to Cavanaugh and an

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<sup>89</sup> This acknowledgement lays at the basis of Johannes Metz's postidealist paradigm of theology. Metz takes seriously the Marxist critique of the project of modernity and asserts the necessity of dialogue with such a position. "[T]he new paradigm contests any religion that operates as a legitimation myth, and escapes the social critique of religions at the price of suspending its own truth-claims. Second, in a theological critique, it criticizes all theologies that, by appeal to their unpolitical character, turn into theologies of . . . political religion." See Johann Metz, *A Passion of God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity*, translated by J. Matthew Ashley, (New York/Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1998), 35.

<sup>90</sup> See Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 62 and *Torture and Eucharist*, 250. In *Theopolitical Imagination*, Cavanaugh briefly describes Metz's 'political theology' but without detailed critique. However, he does seem to retain a suspicion about Metz's 'need' to translate theology "into 'practical public reason' for consumption in the arena of civil society."

alternative perspective on how the Maritainian dilemma might be addressed. In so doing, I suggest it protects against Cavanaugh's tendency for 'the political' to dissolve into 'the mystical,' though as I shall indicate, it does, itself, open to the specter of the very opposite: 'the mystical' dissolving into 'the political' which was, precisely, the Maritainian dilemma.

I would like to turn to an exploration of Metz's position by firstly recounting a German parable that he was fond of retelling – a parable that perhaps differentiates his approach from Cavanaugh. It is retold by John K. Downey:

Metz tells the German folktale about the race between the hare and the hedgehog. The hedgehog was rather vain and proud of his legs. One day the hare happened to make fun of him and so the hedgehog challenged the hare to a race. The race course – two furrows – allowed no one to actually see the runners. The hedgehog asked to go home first and eat. While at home he got his wife, who was identical to him, dressed her in the same clothes he was wearing, and stationed her at the end of the furrow. When the hare said, "Go!" the hedgehog just ducked down in place while his wife popped up at the finish line with "I'm already here!" The story shows us that the weak can challenge the strong if they use their heads. But Metz wants to tell the story against the grain . . . He wants us to model our theology on the hare not the hedgehog. The hare really enters the race of human history and runs for all his worth. The hedgehog merely pretends to run: he actually remains at rest. . . . For Metz, too much of our theology has been a hedgehog trick: talking about history, but never mentioning the suffering, the losers, the horrors. A glib joy and hope, a theoretical, already-won salvation history constructed with our backs to Auschwitz cannot confront the horrors of history. Metz calls for us to enter that real history, which is also the history of suffering, the history that needs us, the history that puts a claim on us to act. The fact that Jesus suffered and died does not put us at ease, but charges us with taking him and those like him off the cross. In Münster over the desk of Johann Baptist Metz hangs a very large picture of a hare running at full speed.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> John K. Downey, "Introduction: Risking Memory – Political Theology as Interruption," in *Love's Strategy: The political theology of Johann Baptist Metz*, edited by John K. Downey, (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1999), 9.

Metz's work is well documented.<sup>92</sup> In his postidealist theology, taking into serious account a confrontation with the processes of the Enlightenment, the primacy of a reason endowed with memory, anamnestic of Auschwitz, along with mindfulness of the emergence of third-world, non-European theological discourse, and marked by a particular sensitivity to theodicy, Metz eschews a Christian eschatology that is, for him,

despite its popularity among the existential theologians – a mere presential or actual eschatology, in which the passion for the future exhausts itself in a mere “making present” of eternity in the actual moment of personal decision. [But n]or is Christian eschatology a mere passive waiting, in which the world and its time-span appear as a waiting room, where the Christian lounges around in its lackadaisical boredom until God opens the door of his office and allows the Christian to enter.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Metz first used the term ‘political theology’ in a series of lectures at the University of Münster in the winter semester of 1965. See Roger Dick Johns, *Man in the World: The Theology of Johannes Baptist Metz*, Dissertation Series 16 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press for the American Academy of Religion, 1976), 123. Metz's primary works remain *Theology of the World*, translated by William Glen-Doepel, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), *Faith in History and Society: Towards a Practical Fundamental Theology*, translated by David Smith, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980) and *The Emergent Church: The future of Christianity in a postbourgeois world*, translated by Peter Mann, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1980). For a succinct summary of his theological position in regard to this study see Johannes Metz, *A Passion of God: The mystical-political dimension of Christianity*, translated by J. Matthew Ashley, (New York/Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1998), 24-29, though the most detailed examination is James Matthew Ashley, *Interruptions: Mysticism, politics, and theology in the work of Johann Baptist Metz*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998). For a helpful treatment of the manner in which Metz differentiates his ‘new’ political theology from earlier forms of the same genre, refer to Derek Simon, “The New Political Theology of Metz: Confronting Schmitt's decisionist political theology of exclusion,” *Horizons* 30 (2003):2, 227-254. For a full background to the emergence of political theology, see Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “Political Theology as Foundational Theology,” *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 32 (1977), 142-177. See also Alistair Kee (ed), *The Scope of Political Theology*, (London: SCM Press, 1978). Note particularly Fiorenza's treatment of the political theology of the Catholic Restoration which I have termed above under the term the ‘politics of mysticism.’ Fiorenza highlights the utility of religion in such a program leading to “an explicit program to reconstitute society by religion. What this concretely meant was the reestablishment of the authority of the monarchy and the authority of the papacy . . . [but it also] formed the center of a ‘new’ apologetics or a new method of theology and a new approach to fundamental theology. . . . It formed the cognitive and metaphysical center of [the] political theologies [of figures such as Cortés, de Bonald, and de Maistre]. This new apologetics had several common elements: the necessity of religion, the primacy of the social, the interrelation between social and political questions, and a social criterion of truth.” See Fiorenza, “Political Theology,” 160-161.

<sup>93</sup> Johann Baptist Metz, “The Church in the World” in Downey, *Love's Strategy*, 23.

Metz is clear: “Christian eschatology is, however, a productive and militant eschatology, which gradually realizes itself” such that “[a]n eschatological faith and an engagement in the world do not exclude one another.”<sup>94</sup> For Metz, the gospel imperative is that we not only change ourselves. Along with his fellow German theologian Jürgen Moltmann, he asserts that,

we should in conflict and creative expectation change the pattern of this world in which we believe, hope and love. The hope of the gospel has a polemical and a liberating relation to man’s [sic] present and practical life and to the (social) condition in which man [sic] leads his life.<sup>95</sup>

He is concerned that the theological reaction to the Enlightenment has turned the Christian message,

into a basically private concern and reduced the practice of faith to a matter of mere individual decisions, unrelated to the world . . . [with the] present prevailing forms of transcendental, existential and personalist theology seem[ing] to have one thing in common: concentration on what is private.<sup>96</sup>

Though he is deeply critical of an evolutionary view of history, which he regards as the source of apathy and banality,<sup>97</sup> Metz follows Aquinas’ foundational position that humanity has only *one* end, not “a natural last end (*finis ultimus naturalis*)” and “a supernatural last end (*finis ultimus supernaturalis*).”<sup>98</sup> He goes on to say,

In our relationship to the future we cannot be satisfied with a distinction which separates the natural future of the world from the

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<sup>94</sup> Metz, “The Church in the World,” 23.

<sup>95</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Theologie der Hoffnung*, second edition, (Munich: Ch. Kaiser Verlag, 1964), 304 cited in Metz, “The Church in the World,” 23.

<sup>96</sup> Johannes B. Metz, “The Church’s Social Function in the Light of a ‘Political Theology’,” in *Faith and the World of Politics*, edited by Johannes B. Metz, *Concilium* 36 (New York, New York/Glen Rock, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1968), 3-4. See also “Political Theology of the subject as a theological criticism of middle-class religion,” in Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, chapter 3.

<sup>97</sup> See Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 169-179. See also Metz, *Passion for God*, 51-52.

<sup>98</sup> Metz, “The Church in the World,” 20.

supernatural future of the faith and of the Church. Both dimensions converge in our relationship to the future. . . since the hope of the Christian faith is oriented toward the future, it cannot fulfill itself in bypassing the world and the future of the world. And because this hope is responsible for the *one* promised future, it is therefore also responsible for the future of the world. The Christian faith hopes not only in itself, the Church hopes not only in itself, but they hope in the world. [Italics in the original]<sup>99</sup>

Metz thus re-orientes the Christian maxim of ‘renunciation of the world’ to a radical commitment to the world:

Because man [sic] can never live apart from the world or be worldless (without a world), this renunciation could never be a mere flight out of the world. For such a flight would then be a deceptive and illusory flight into an artificially isolated world, which de facto is often the more comfortable religious situation of yesterday. Not a flight *out* of the world, but a flight *with* the world “forward” is the fundamental dynamism of the Christian hope in its renunciation of the world. [Italics in the original]<sup>100</sup>

Metz provides his theological affirmation of secularity in *Theology of the World* (1969).<sup>101</sup> As Johns suggests, Metz’s starting point is, paradoxically, given the aforementioned quotation, a certain ‘worldlessness’ of the person:

This loss of a world is not scientific or cosmological loss, but a theological and anthropological one. Man [sic] stands between the desacralization of the world and the humanization of it. In this situation of worldlessness, man no longer knows who he is, who God is and what the world is. There is a void at the centre of his life which keeps his existence from having a purpose. God has given the

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<sup>99</sup> Metz, “The Church in the World,” 20-21.

<sup>100</sup> Metz, “The Church and the World,” 21. Metz will declare, “Christian mysticism finds, therefore, that direct experience of God which it seeks precisely in daring to imitate the unconditional involvement of the divine love for man (sic), in letting itself be drawn into the *descensus* of God, into the descent of his love to the least of his brothers. Only in this movement do we find the supreme nearness, the supreme immediacy of God. And that is why mysticism, which seeks this nearness, has the place not outside, beside, or above responsibility for the world of our brothers, but in the centre of it.” See Metz, *Theology of the World*, 101-104.

<sup>101</sup> Johannes B. Metz, *Theology of the World*, translated by William Glen-Doepel, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969). Roger Dick Johns indicates that Metz’ systematic discussion of the concept “world” was developed in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* in 1965 which was the most programmatic statement of this theology. See Roger Dick Johns, *Man in the World: The Theology of Johannes Baptist Metz*, 89.



world to man twice: once to Adam with the mandate that he should conquer it and govern it, and once again in Christ. The subject of Theology of the World is man's acceptance of this gift and his responsibility for his world before God.<sup>102</sup>

Secularization, for Metz, is, therefore, "originally a Christian event and hence testifies in our world situation to the power of the 'hour of Christ' at work within history."<sup>103</sup> The Incarnation "becomes the framework of a genuinely Christian view of the world"<sup>104</sup> which sets the world free for "its own authentic being, its own clear, non-divine reality. . . The world is now universally given over to what the Incarnation bestows upon it in a supreme way: secularity."<sup>105</sup>

Metz can be as passionate for secularity because he views the world as "not a world of things" but "always the *world of man* [sic], the world into which man [sic] has already entered in understanding and action." [Italics in the original]<sup>106</sup> With such a profoundly anthropocentric view of the world, Metz therefore understands the world, essentially, as an "*historical* entity because of God's free, original action on it." [Italics mine].<sup>107</sup> The world is history with teleology.

Whilst acknowledging a "worldliness of the world . . . [that] has an autonomistic and secularistic attitude which protests against its Christian origin and emancipates itself

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<sup>102</sup> Johns, *Man in the World*, 91. Metz develops this notion of the acceptance of the world by God in the hypostatic union in Metz, *Theology of the World*, 25ff.

<sup>103</sup> Metz, *Theology of the World*, 20. Similar to Maritain, Metz thus affirms the separation of the *imperium* from the *sacerdotium* in the Middle Ages. See Metz, *Theology of the World*, 36.

<sup>104</sup> Metz, *Theology of the World*, 32.

<sup>105</sup> Metz, *Theology of the World*, 35.

<sup>106</sup> Metz, *Theology of the World*, 23.

<sup>107</sup> Metz, *Theology of the World*, 24.

from it,” Metz wishes to hold that “this protesting emancipation and the Christian history of liberation,” nonetheless, interpenetrate “each other in such a way that they can never be fully separated.”<sup>108</sup>

This notion of secularity as history, oriented eschatologically, extending the Old Testament “perspective of the horizon of a promissory history of salvation,”<sup>109</sup> has direct implication for Metz’s ecclesiology. It is an understanding of the Church that creates significant distinction between himself and the views of Cavanaugh:

In obeying its eschatological vocation Christianity should not establish itself as a ghetto society or become the ideological protective shell for the existing society. Rather it should become the liberating and critical force of this one society. Christianity should not establish itself as a “microsociety” beside the “great secular society.” Any separation of Church and State leading to a ghetto or to a microsociety is fatal. The *terminus a quo* of the Christian mission should be the secular society. On this society must the “osmotic pressure” of the Christian hope be exerted. The various institutions of Christianity find their legitimation and also their criterion in their eschatological mission. Wherever these institutions serve Christianity’s self-protection more than its venture forward . . . then the bastions of these institutions should be dismantled.<sup>110</sup>

Thus, it is precisely through Metz’s understanding of the world that we are brought to the heart of Metz’s understanding of the Church: “In this theological perspective, the Church appears, not ‘by the side of’ or ‘above’ the social reality, but *within* it as an *institution of social criticism*.”[Italics in the original]<sup>111</sup> Though Metz’s ecclesiology of “*an institution of free criticism by faith*” [Italics in the original]<sup>112</sup> presents as

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<sup>108</sup> Metz, *Theology of the World*, 41.

<sup>109</sup> Johns, *Man in the World*, 89.

<sup>110</sup> Metz, “The Church and the World,” 24.

<sup>111</sup> Metz, “The Church’s Social Function in the Light of a ‘Political Theology’,” 10.

<sup>112</sup> Metz, “The Church’s Social Function in the Light of a ‘Political Theology’,” 11.

clearly inadequate for a comprehensive and cohesive understanding of the Church, it is at the service of his commitment to the Church as “living under the constant proclamation of its own provisional character,” purely in reference to the Kingdom of God – “the eschatological proviso.”<sup>113</sup> Metz is adamant that Christian love,

not be confined to the interpersonal contact of I-and-thou. Nor should it be understood as a kind of philanthropy. It must be interpreted in its social dimension and made operative. This means that it must be understood as the unconditional commitment to justice, freedom and peace *for others*. Understood in this way, love contains a power of social criticism . . . [Italics in the original]<sup>114</sup>

Metz’s eschatological faith, which he regards as a demand of both biblical faith and his own autobiographical narrative,<sup>115</sup> should not be confused with either a nineteenth century or late twentieth century apocalypticism, even though Metz freely engages the language of apocalyptic symbolism. ‘The apocalyptic’ for Metz is not “a free-floating metaphor easily projected onto the current fears of catastrophe . . .”<sup>116</sup> Rather, Metz understands the term as fundamentally a symbol of interruption upon the evolutionary view of timelessness. For Metz, in differentiation from his theological master, Karl Rahner, time is bounded:

It appears that theology is always in danger of giving up the understanding of time, including time’s perception of the world that is urged upon theology by its biblical heritage, and thereby is in danger of forgetting its own proper word about time: that time is

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<sup>113</sup> Metz, “The Church’s Social Function in the Light of a ‘Political Theology’”, 11. Metz recounts the practical implication for such an ‘ecclesiology’ in as the movement from a “paternalistic church” (a church looking after people) to a “bourgeois church” (a church supplying service) to a “basic-community church” providing a diagnosis of both church and society. Metz links these three ecclesial images to three different types of current theologies. See “Transforming a Dependent People: Toward a Basic-Community Church,” in Metz, *The Emergent Church*, 82-94.

<sup>114</sup> Metz, “The Church’s Social Function in the Light of a ‘Political Theology’”, 13-14. Metz develops the Eucharistic implications of this in “Bread of Survival: The Lords Supper of Christians as Anticipatory Sign of an Anthropological Revolution,” in Metz, *The Emergent Church*, 34-47.

<sup>115</sup> For the autobiographical context of Metz’s theology, see Johann Metz, “Communicating a Dangerous Memory,” in Downey, *Love’s Strategy*, 136-137.

<sup>116</sup> Metz, *A Passion for God*, 47.

bounded. Theology frequently lives off foreign, borrowed understandings of time, making it questionable how the God of the biblical tradition can possibly be thought of in connection with them. This is true of cyclical time, as well as of time sheltered within a cosmos of preestablished harmony, of linear-teleological time. It is true of any progressive continuum, whether it be one that extends into infinitude, evolutionistically empty, or one that is dialectically slowed and interrupted; it is also true of biographically individualized time that is decoupled from nature's and the world's time

. . . theology has always tended by self-censorship of its biblical idea of God, to free itself from the most offensive of its assertions: imminent expectation and the doctrine of the second coming.<sup>117</sup>

For Metz, "the logic of bounded time has an anamnestic, a narrative depth structure.

It is in this sense that memory and narrative would have to be won back for the logos of theology."<sup>118</sup>

Downey makes comment on this that,

For Metz, too much of our theology has been . . . talking about history, but never mentioning the suffering, the losers, the horrors. A glib joy and hope, a theoretical, already-won salvation history constructed with our backs to Auschwitz cannot confront the horrors of history. Metz calls for us to enter that real history, which is also the history of suffering, the history that needs us, the history that puts a claim on us to act. The fact the (sic) Jesus suffered and died does not put us at ease, but charges us with taking him and those like him off the cross.<sup>119</sup>

This *memoria passionis*, "the basis of a universal morality by the fact that it always takes into account the suffering of others, the suffering of strangers,"<sup>120</sup> interrupts "the dominant understanding of the human being in modernity, and to resist this

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<sup>117</sup> Metz, *A Passion for God*, 87-88.

<sup>118</sup> Metz, *A Passion for God*, 89.

<sup>119</sup> John K. Downey, "Introduction: Risking Memory, Political Theology as Interruption," in Downey, *Love's Strategy*, 9.

<sup>120</sup> Metz, *A Passion for God*, 134.

understanding at least for a brief moment.”<sup>121</sup> Metz goes on to describe it as that which,

seeks to interrupt that understanding of the human being that is prevalent today within all blocs: the Faustian-Promethean human being. It seeks to interrupt that concept in which the coming human being is designed without the dark background of sorrow, suffering, guilt and death. The rebellion of the apocalyptic symbols is turned against the human being empty of secrets, incapable of mourning and therefore incapable of being consoled; more and more unable to remember and so more easily manipulated than ever; more and more defenseless against the threatening apotheosis of banality and against the stretched-out death of boredom; a human being whose dreams of happiness finally are nothing but the dreams of an unhappiness free from suffering and longing. That is the front along which we are fighting when we recall the apocalyptic traditions.<sup>122</sup>

Such remembrance accords, for Metz, with Israel’s own anamnestic structure of mind and spirit which differentiates itself from the mentality of the people around it. He asserts that,

one could almost say that Israel’s election, its capacity for God, showed itself in a particular kind of incapacity: the incapacity to let itself be consoled by myths or ideas that are remote from history. This is precisely what I would call Israel’s poverty before God, or poverty of spirit, that Jesus blessed.<sup>123</sup>

This biblical poverty acts as the foundation for the mysticism of Metz. Metz provides a full statement of such a mysticism “of suffering unto God” in the following passage that merits being quoted in full. It is a sentiment that appears in many places of Metz’s writing.

I will describe it tentatively here as a mysticism of suffering unto God. It is found particularly in Israel’s prayer traditions: in the Psalms, in Job, in Lamentations, and last but not least in many

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<sup>121</sup> Metz, “Communicating a Dangerous Memory,” in Downey, *Love’s Strategy*, 145.

<sup>122</sup> Metz, “Communicating a Dangerous Memory,” 145-146.

<sup>123</sup> Metz, *A Passion for God*, 158. See also 81-83, 125-126. See also Johann Baptist Metz, “Suffering from God: Theology as theodicy,” *Pacifica* 5 (1992), 281-284. For a full account of Metz’s appropriation of the place of spiritual poverty, see Johannes Baptist Metz, *Poverty of Spirit*, translated by John Drury, (Paramus, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1968).

passages in the prophetic books. This language of prayer is itself a language of suffering, a language of crisis, a language of affliction and of radical danger, a language of complaint and grieving, a language of crying out and, literally, of the grumbling of the children of Israel. The language of this God-mysticism is not first and foremost one of consoling answers for the suffering one is experiencing, but rather much more a language of passionate questions from the midst of suffering, questions turned toward God, full of highly charged expectation. These mystics are no willing yes-men, neither assertive nor apathetic. They practice neither cowardly submission nor masochistic self-subjugation. They are not pious underlings. Their yes to God does not express shallow humility or infantile regression. And the prayer that expresses their yes is not a language of exaggerated affirmation, no artificial song of jubilation that would be isolated from every language of suffering and crisis and which all too quickly falls suspect to being a desperately feigned naïveté. What occurs in this language is not the repression but rather the acceptance of fear, mourning and pain; it is deeply rooted in the figure of the night, the experience of the soul's demise. It is less a song of the soul, more a loud crying out from the depths – and not a vague, undirected wailing, but a focused crying-out-to.

Jesus' God-mysticism is also a part of this tradition. His is in an exemplary way a mysticism of suffering unto God. His cry from the cross is the cry of one forsaken by God, who for his part has never forsaken God. It is this that points inexorably into Jesus' God-mysticism: he holds firmly to the Godhead. In the God-forsakenness of the cross, he affirms a God who is still other and different from the echo of our wishes, however ardent; who is ever more and other than the answers to our questions, even the strongest and most fervent . . . It is found today . . . wherever we pose to ourselves the ultimate and decisive God-question, the question about God in the face of the world's abysmal history of suffering.

. . . The mystical uneasiness of questioning . . . does not correspond, for example, to a typically intellectual cult of questioning, which indeed would be precisely the most distant from those who actually suffer. Not vaguely undirected questions, but surely passionate and focused questioning belongs to that mysticism in which we have to form ourselves in order to find true consolation.<sup>124</sup>

This is what Metz terms “the mysticism of open eyes” –

[a] political spirituality, a political mysticism. Not a mysticism of political power and political domination, but rather – to speak metaphorically – a mysticism of open or opened eyes. Not only the ears for hearing, but also the eyes are organs of grace! . . . With all

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<sup>124</sup> Metz, *A Passion for God*, 66-69. Johann M. Vento applies Metz's approach to the issue of violence against women. See Johann M. Vento, “Violence, Trauma, and Resistance: A Feminist Appraisal of Metz's Mysticism of Suffering unto God,” *Horizons* 29 (2002), 7-22.

respect for Eastern mysticism and spirituality let me stress . . . In the end Jesus did not teach an ascending mysticism of closed eyes, but rather a God-mysticism with an increased readiness for perceiving, a mysticism of open eyes, which sees more and not less. It is a mysticism that especially makes visible all invisible and inconvenient suffering, and – convenient or not – pays attention to it and takes responsibility for it, for the sake of a God who is a friend to human beings.<sup>125</sup>

Metz goes on to realise the implications for this mysticism:

Such witnessing to God is not allowed political innocence. In the end, witness is intimately involved, with eyes that see, in that history where people are crucified and tortured, hated and miserly loved; and no mythos far-removed from history, no world-blind gnosis, can give it back the innocence that is lost in such an historical trial. The God who comes near in Jesus obviously is not primarily interested in how and what we think about him, but rather first in how we behave toward the other; and only in this – how we deal with others – can it be known how we think about God and what we think of God.<sup>126</sup>

This sense of political mysticism, one of solidarity, acts as a counter-impulse to injustice.

It offers inspiration for a new form of solidarity, of responsibility towards those most distant from us, inasmuch as the history of suffering unites all men [sic] like a ‘second nature’. It prevents a purely technical understanding of freedom and peace; it excludes any form of freedom and peace at the expense of the suppressed history of suffering of other nations and groups.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Metz, *A Passion for God*, 163. Metz is clear that he is not advocating a partisan politics: “The task of the Church is not a systematic social doctrine, but a *social criticism*. . . [Thus] the Church, defined as social-critical institution, does not become a political ideology. No political party can have this criticism as its sole plank. Moreover, no political party can embrace in its political activity the whole scope of the Church’s social criticism which covers the whole of history under God’s eschatological proviso, otherwise it would drift into either romanticism or totalitarianism.” Metz, “The Church’s Social Function in the Light of a ‘Political Theology,’” 17-18. [Italics in the original].

<sup>126</sup> Metz, *A Passion for God*, 163.

<sup>127</sup> Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 105. In Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims: A Theology of Social Transformation*, (New York: Crossroad, 1982), Lamb states that “only in such a solidarity will religion and reason stop posturing foolishly.” (xiii). Echoing Metz, Lamb asserts that “[c]lassical orthodoxy expresses subversive memories linked to eschatological and apocalyptic expectations of the coming reign of God.” (xiv). Metz writes that Lamb’s work “illustrates how a theology not divorced from experience and praxis becomes, in and through its most demanding theoretical articulations, a witness to a life of human solidarity before God.” (cover page). Lamb also provides a stimulating outline of Metz’s divergence from his mentor, Karl Rahner. In reference to Metz’s favorite parable of the hedgehog quoted above, Lamb contrasts Metz’s approach in criticism of Rahner’s transcendental conceptuality which “would project the illusion of having won the race without having actually run.

Such solidarity is an outcome of a shared memory – a memory constituted by narrative. Thus, for Metz, one can only theologize through a narrative identification with the victim. As Downey summarizes, “in narrative we remember and connect. By participating in a narrative we trade experiences with others. This keeps memory and solidarity alive.”<sup>128</sup> It also creates the inter-subjectivity-become-community that is another signature idea in Metz’s vision – again taken from what he regards as the essential biblical notion of mysticism:

Experiences of solidarity with, antagonism towards, liberation from and anxiety about other subjects, form an essential part of the constitution of the religious subject, not afterwards, but from the very beginning. The question about the relationship between the individual subject and other subjects is unreasonably expected and is the product of later abstraction. The universal solidarity that existed among biblical subjects, then, is a fundamental category in the political theology of the subject. It does not point to a subsumption of individual religious subjects at a later stage. On the contrary, it is the form in which those subjects existed in God’s presence and through him.<sup>129</sup>

Given this dominant theme of solidarity in the narrative memory of suffering, “[t]he religious and moral concerns of the Church, so apparently and predominantly focused upon personal piety and sexual purity” are now broadened by a full range of political

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Concepts do not move.” See Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*, 118. For the particular way, however, in which Rahner does engage the mystical-political dialectic, see Ashley, *Interruptions*, 171-191. For Metz, this solidarity, which is born out of the critical function of the Church, also acts to underscore the Church’s” possibility of *co-operation* between Christians and non-Christians, between people and groups of the most varied ideological tendencies.” He goes on to declare, “[t]he solidarity bred by this experience, the possibility, therefore, of a common front of protest, must be understood and put into action.” See Metz, “The Church’s Social Function in the Light of a ‘Political Theology’”, 18. [Italics in the original].

<sup>128</sup> Downey, *Love’s Strategy*, 8. For a detailed treatment of the term ‘narrative’ in Metz, see Paul Lauritzen, “Is ‘Narrative’ Really a Panacea? The Use of ‘Narrative’ in the Work of Metz and Hauerwas,” *The Journal of Religion* 67 (July 1987), 322-339.

<sup>129</sup> Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 61. It is interesting to note that the contemporary French feminist psychoanalyst writer Julia Kristeva also alludes to the transformative power of grief, mourning and melancholia in political life, along with a detailed examination of cultural memory and the power of imagination. See Julia Kristeva, *Crisis of the European Subject*, (Other Press, 2001).



questions that pivot on liberation from oppression in its myriad forms, as Albano identifies.<sup>130</sup> Downey expresses it in this way:

Reducing Christian mysticism to the sphere of the so-called private existence is not only naïve but also dangerous, for it reduces discipleship to a matter of personal style or preference. It reverses the Incarnation by removing Jesus from our world. Authentic Christianity is public mysticism.<sup>131</sup>

Metz, himself, states it thus:

In these [the poor churches particularly of Latin America] the productive model of holiness for our times shines out: holiness, not as a strictly private ideal one seeks for oneself and that could therefore easily lure on into an attitude of conformism toward the prevailing political situation but rather a holiness that proves itself in an alliance of mysticism and that militant love which draws upon itself the suffering of others. Without any doubt, our age has its own martyrology. It contains the names of lay people, priests, and bishops who have risked all and given all in the struggle for a church in solidarity with the people. With them, these allies united by messianic trust, a change of heart becomes possible, the spell of bourgeois religion will be broken.<sup>132</sup>

Thus, Metz contrasts bourgeois and messianic religion. “It is my view that nothing is more needed today than a moral and political imagination springing up from a messianic Christianity and capable of being more than just a copy of already accepted

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<sup>130</sup> Peter J. Albano, “The Contributions of Johannes B. Metz to a Political Theology,” *Thought* 62 (March 1987), 20.

<sup>131</sup> Downey, *Love's Strategy*, 4.

<sup>132</sup> Metz, *The Emergent Church*, 11. See also Metz, *A Passion for God*, 45. Gustavo Gutierrez extends this thought in his landmark work, *We Drink from our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People*, translated from the Spanish by Matthew J. O'Connell, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books/Melbourne: Dove Communications, 1984). Gutierrez writes, “We all have the same vocation: to rise to life with the people in its spirituality. This implies a death to the alleged “spiritual ways” that individualisms of one or another kind create but that in fact lead only to an impasse. It also supposes a birth into new ways of being disciples of Jesus, the risen Christ. The newness draws its strength from the Bible and from the best in the history of spirituality and in this respect is profoundly traditional. Such is the experience of the poor of Latin America. Theirs is an authentic spiritual experience, an encounter with the Lord who points out a road for them to follow.” Gutierrez, *We Drink from our Own Wells*, 32. Echoing Metz, Gutierrez also is highly critical of any tendency to an individualistic spirituality. See Gutierrez, *We Drink from our Own Wells*, 14-15. This is developed at length by Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward political holiness*, translated from the Spanish by Robert R. Barr, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988). See also Paul F. Knitter, Keith J. Egan, Elisabeth Koenig, “Jon Sobrino's *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward a political holiness*: Three perspectives,” *Horizons* 16 (Spring 1989), 131-150.

political and economic strategies.”<sup>133</sup> This will require what Metz terms an “anthropological revolution.” It is a conversion of hearts,

in which the bourgeois of the first world are to be freed, not from their powerlessness but from their excess of power; not from their poverty, but from their wealth; not from what they lack but from their form of total consumerism; not from their sufferings but from their apathy.<sup>134</sup>

Yet, for Metz such a revolution is not simply a human project. Rather it is one that is divine. Albano puts it thus: “Metz re-iterates Heidegger’s testimonial word, ‘Only God can save us now.’ A failed *Homo Emancipator* gives way to an expectant *Deus Salvator*.”<sup>135</sup>

We return to Metz’s eschatological hope. Ashley asserts, “what is distinctive of apocalypticism is its willingness to assert a high degree of transparency of historical events to the saving will of God.”<sup>136</sup> Ashley seeks, “the [necessary] apophatic corrective to apocalypticism” citing “the famous ‘eschatological proviso,’ the claim that no particular economic or political configuration can be identified with the Kingdom of God.”<sup>137</sup> As he observes,

If we see apocalyptic discourse and the eschatological proviso as a similar pair of discursive strategies in political and liberation theology, then the isomorphism I am advocating . . . directs us to look for their context of meaning in certain practices, in a particular

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<sup>133</sup> Metz, *The Emergent Church*, 10.

<sup>134</sup> Metz, *The Emergent Church*, 72. In this regard, see also Metz’s chapter, “Bread of Survival: The Lord’s Supper of Christians as Anticipatory Sign of an Anthropological Revolution,” in Metz, *The Emergent Church*, 34-47. For a similar treatment from a Latin American perspective, see Enrique D. Dussel, “The Bread of the Eucharistic Celebration as a Sign of Justice in the Community,” in *Concilium*, in *Can We Always Celebrate the Eucharist*, edited by Mary Collins and David Power, Concilium Series 152, (New York: Seabury Press/Edinburgh: T & T Clark. 1982), 55-65.

<sup>135</sup> Albano, “The Contributions of Johannes B. Metz to a Political Theology,” 24. See also Metz, *Faith in History*, 211, 125-126.

<sup>136</sup> James Matthew Ashley, “Apocalypticism in Political and Liberation Theology,” *Horizons* 27 (2000):1, 37.

<sup>137</sup> Ashley, “Apocalypticism in Political and Liberation Theology,” 39.

way of being engaged in history. We are led to find that tensive moment, continually performed, whereby the openness to the mystery of God is cleared again and again, and the apocalyptic affirmation, in conjunction with the denial made in the eschatological proviso, finds their proper meaning.<sup>138</sup>

Thus, according to Ashley, any affirmation of God's presence in history, must be accompanied by "the black darkness of hope"<sup>139</sup> – a "wisdom that continues to make the struggle to make love a socially real, historical reality, and that continues to make the claim that God is found in a particular place, by committing oneself to a particular praxis that goes by the name of the 'option for the poor.'"<sup>140</sup>

The political mysticism of Metz opens up the possibility of a radical commitment to the world, though it demands a high level of spiritual consciousness to maintain the

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<sup>138</sup> Ashley, "Apocalypticism in Political and Liberation Theology," 39.

<sup>139</sup> Jon Sobrino, *The True Church and the Poor*, translated by Matthew J. O'Connell, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1984), 154, cited in Ashley, "Apocalypticism in Political and Liberation Theology," 40. Ashley surveys the historical formulation of *docta ignorantia*, learned ignorance, particularly through the Franciscan tradition of Bonaventure. Turning to Gustavo Gutiérrez, he concludes, "For the contemplative in action, then, an historical *docta ignorantia* is not exhausted by the eschatological proviso, a statement of ignorance concerning God's presence in history. Rather, it is the end result of a process that begins with an encounter with God in the *vita activa*, focused on the option for the poor. . . As with its cognate in classical mystical theology, [the] *via positiva* too will lead one into a dark night, a desert of disillusionment, a 'black darkness of hope', a moment in which 'all that remains is the conviction that one wants to do the Father's will and save the people, but . . . so filled with spiritual aridity that despite one's conviction one's tongue cleaves to the roof of one's mouth.'" See Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 130, cited in Ashley, "Apocalypticism in Political and Liberation Theology," 42-43.

<sup>140</sup> Ashley, "Apocalypticism in Political and Liberation Theology," 43. This, too, is a theme currently being engaged by the Chicago theologian, David Tracy in his articulation of the Hidden-Revealed God and the Comprehensible-Incomprehensible God of Luther.. "God enters contemporary history not as a consoling 'ism' but above all as an awesome, often terrifying, hope-beyond-hope. God enters history again not as a new speculation – but as the unpredictable, liberating Hidden God. For this God reveals God-self in hiddenness: in cross and negativity, above all in the suffering of all those others whom the grand narrative of modernity has too often set aside as non-peoples, non-events, non-memories, in a word, non-history . . . The entry of the Hidden-Revealed God now comes to us principally through the interruptive experience and the memory of suffering of whole peoples, especially the suffering of all those ignored, marginalized, and colonized by the grand narrative of modernity. . . God discloses Godself, to sinful humans *sub contrariis*: life through death, wisdom through folly; strength through abject weakness." David Tracy, "The Hidden God: The Divine Other of Liberation," *Cross Currents* (Spring 1996), 7-9. See also David Tracy, "The Post-Modern Re-Naming of God as Incomprehensible and Hidden," *Cross Currents* (Spring/Summer 2000), 240-247. See also Scott Holland, "This Side of God: A Conversation with David Tracy," *Cross Currents*, <http://crosscurrents.org/Tracyspring2002.htm>, accessed 16 June 2004.

clear *distinction* between ‘gospel’ and ‘world.’ For example, even though Metz puts forward the *memoria passionis* as a self-reflective, self-correcting impulse for the Church, the question must be asked: is such a spiritual value adequate to maintain the gospel’s (or the Church’s) integrity in the midst of its intense immersion in the world? How does the Church maintain sustained identity across myriad contexts? As an ‘institution of free criticism by faith’ how does it preserve confidence that its social criticism retains continuity in substance and orientation across generations? How does the Church avoid even subtle manipulation by those “autonomistic and secularistic” attitudes with which Metz admits the Church must contend?

Given his understanding of the Church situated firmly within this teleology, and given the reduction of ecclesiology to its prophetic element, Metz lays himself open to the opposite problem of Cavanaugh. Whereas Cavanaugh could be suspected of dissolving the political into the mystical through his affirmation of the Church as *sui generis*, Metz could easily be proposed as ‘dissolving’ ‘the mystical’ into ‘the political’. Enmeshed in ‘the political’, what vitality does the ‘mystical’ have apart from the ‘political’? Can not ‘the mystical’ have its own experience in such a way as to determine a refrain from ‘the political’ – as has clearly been the foundation for the monastic impulse, and the monastic paradigm of holiness, which has sustained Christian discipleship for so many centuries? Is this paradigm of holiness and discipleship, and therefore the reservoir of Christian spirituality of generations, rendered with illegitimacy as a result of Metz’s political mysticism?

Though controversial at the time of its publication, some of these questions were raised in the 2000 Vatican Declaration *Dominus Jesus*:

In considering the relationship between the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the Church, it is necessary to avoid one-sided accentuations, as is the case with those conceptions which deliberately emphasize the kingdom and which describe themselves as 'kingdom centred.' They stress the image of a Church which is not concerned about herself, but which is totally concerned with bearing witness to and serving the kingdom. It is a 'Church for others,' just as Christ is the 'man for others'. . . . Together with positive aspects, these conceptions often reveal negative aspects as well. First, they are silent about Christ: the kingdom of which they speak is 'theocentrically' based, since, according to them, Christ cannot be understood by those who lack Christian faith, whereas different peoples, cultures, and religions are capable of finding common ground in the one divine reality, by whatever name it is called. For the same reason, they put great stress on the mystery of creation, which is reflected in the diversity of cultures and beliefs, but they keep silent about the mystery of redemption. Furthermore, the kingdom, as they understand it, ends up either leaving very little room for the Church or undervaluing the Church in reaction to a presumed 'ecclesiocentrism' of the past and because they consider the Church herself only a sign, for that matter a sign not without ambiguity." These theses are contrary to Catholic faith because they deny the unicity of the relationship which Christ and the Church have with the kingdom of God.<sup>141</sup>

Metz does not highlight the reality of redemption. His attempt to move beyond a past 'ecclesiocentrism' could be criticized for not adequately addressing the Magisterial claim that the "temporal dimension of the kingdom remains incomplete unless it is related to the kingdom of Christ present in the Church and straining toward eschatological fullness."<sup>142</sup> This is a theme underscored by the declaration that the Church also serves the kingdom by, "establishing and building up communities which make present and active within mankind the living image of the kingdom."<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*, (16 June 2000), n.19. For the Magisterial presentation on 'kingdom' from which the Declaration is taken, see John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio: On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate*, Encyclical Letter, (7 December 1990), nn.17-20.

<sup>142</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, 20.

<sup>143</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, 19.

We must therefore look for a perspective that, though it seeks to integrate the mystical and political, does not allow for the dissolution of one into the other. For this, we must turn to the framework of Edward Schillebeeckx, even though the approach of Schillebeeckx himself has drawn its own criticism from the same author of *Dominus Jesus*.<sup>144</sup>

Schillebeeckx, (b.1914), grounds his own approach to the issue in his concern about drawing too sharp a distinction between interiority and exteriority. As he claims, “the critical question is whether this sharp dividing line between an inside and an outside in human beings is justified, and whether it does not saddle us with the wrong picture of what it is to be human.”<sup>145</sup>

As with Metz, Schillebeeckx likewise entertains a theology of suffering for others, though his theological project is more encompassing than this significant theme. His is essentially a sacramental vision but one that is brought to bear on the social issues of the contemporary period.<sup>146</sup> In this way, Schillebeeckx’ sacramental project is infused with a strong soteriology. It is an attempt “to speak credibly of the Christian

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<sup>144</sup> This criticism is within Ratzinger’s insistence on ‘integral salvation’ in distinction from liberation within the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Instruction on Certain Aspects of the ‘Theology of Liberation.’ (6 August, 1984). More will be said of this in a chapter below. See also Joseph Ratzinger, “Freedom and Liberation: The Anthropological Vision of the Instruction ‘*Libertatis conscientia*,’” *Communio: International Catholic Review* 14 (1987), 55-72

<sup>145</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church: The human story of God*, translated by John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 47.

<sup>146</sup> For a useful introduction to the background and scope of Schillebeeckx’ project, see Philip Kennedy, *Schillebeeckx*, Outstanding Christian Thinkers Series, edited by Brian Davies, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993) and John Bowden, *Edward Schillebeeckx: In search of the kingdom of God*, (New York: Crossroad, 1983). For a personal account of his work, see Edward Schillebeeckx, *God is New Each Moment: in conversation with Huub Oosterhuis and Piet Hoogeveen*, translated by David Smith, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Limited, 1983).

hope for salvation coming from God as revealed in Jesus and experienced in the power of the Spirit.”<sup>147</sup> The paradigm of ‘encounter,’ grounded in Thomistic thought but incorporating phenomenological perspectives, becomes instrumental in Schillebeeckx’s early writing on sacramental structure. The mid 1960s, however, represented a turn in his attention from sacramentality to history and, in history, eschatology.<sup>148</sup> ‘God,’ for Schillebeeckx, becomes the possibility of a future for humanity.<sup>149</sup> This led him into a strongly hermeneutical approach to theology: the recognition that the vitality of a tradition depends on the constant re-interpretation of its texts. Yet, as Hilkert, points out, Schillebeeckx recognises that “any theologian who claims history as the starting point for speech about God must grapple with the realities of senseless suffering and the multiple ways in which history is laced with the non-sense of evil.”<sup>150</sup> Thus theology becomes, in a certain way, an act of resistance: the affirmation that God saves even in the face of dehumanizing experiences of sheer negativity. In this resistance, Schillebeeckx agrees with Metz:

The Gospel message of Christian expectation offers the stimulating possibility constantly to overcome the limitations of any present ‘establishment.’ It contains a permanent criticism of the actual situation: secular institutions, social structures, and their dominant mentality. It urges constant improvement, and above all, it brings the firm conviction that this building up of a more human world is

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<sup>147</sup> Mary Catherine Hilkert, “Edward Schillebeeckx, op (1914- ): Encountering God in a secular and suffering world,” *Theology Today* 62 (2005), 377.

<sup>148</sup> See Hilkert, “Edward Schillebeeckx,” 378-379. Hilkert develops this at length in Mary Catherine Hilkert, “Hermeneutics of History in the Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx,” *The Thomist* 51 (January 1987), 97-145.

<sup>149</sup> See Edward Schillebeeckx, *God, the Future of Man*, translated by N.D. Smith, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968).

<sup>150</sup> Hilkert, “Edward Schillebeeckx, 380. For a full treatment on the place of suffering in Schillebeeckx’ thought see Aloysius Rego, *Suffering and Salvation: The salvific meaning of suffering in the later theology of Edward Schillebeeckx*, Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 33, (Louvain, Paris, Dudley, Massachusetts: Peeters Press, 2006).

genuinely possible. We should not be afraid of the word 'utopia' here, as it refers to that angle from where we can criticize society.<sup>151</sup>

Schillebeeckx, however, is not utopian in his vision like Metz. His thought is strongly influenced by Frankfurt social critical theory, and his 'utopian' leanings must be understood from this context.<sup>152</sup> Schillebeeckx assumes Adorno's 'negative dialectics' which eschews the realisation of a utopian vision of society, yet, nonetheless, affirms the longing for the same such that in such tension society is enabled to 'become.' In Schillebeeckx this is expressed as 'critical negativity' or 'negative contrast experience.'<sup>153</sup> It is the full recognition of the reality of suffering but, at the same time, the affirmation of a hope that is forged through a shared suffering which effects a practice to do good.<sup>154</sup> Within this, Schillebeeckx disavows the illusory hope, though, that emancipation from suffering is a possibility through the ordinary ideologies of liberation. Suffering and salvation are intrinsically related:

Salvation cannot therefore be found *outside* suffering. Emancipatory liberation outside a perspective on religious redemption therefore

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<sup>151</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, "The Magisterium and the World of Politics," in *Faith and the World of Politics*, edited by Johannes B. Metz, *Concilium* 36 (New York/Glen Rock, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1968), 32.

<sup>152</sup> See Edward Schillebeeckx, "From Hermeneutical Theology to Critical Theory," in Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Schillebeeckx Reader*, edited by Robert J. Schreiter, (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 106-119. For two treatments on the background of this influence in Schillebeeckx' thought, particularly in regard to Adorno's 'negative dialectics' as a form of social critique, see Elizabeth K. Tillar, "The Influence of Social Critical Theory on Edward Schillebeeckx's Theology of Suffering for Others," *Heythrop Journal* 42 (2001), 148-172. See also William Portier, "Edward Schillebeeckx as Critical Theorist: The impact of neo-marxist social thought on his recent theology," *The Thomist* 48 (July 1984), 341-367.

<sup>153</sup> See Schillebeeckx, *God the Future of Man*, 55-56; "Living in Human Society," in Schillebeeckx, *The Schillebeeckx Reader*, 54-59. For a treatment on the influence of Aquinas on the human experience of contrast on Schillebeeckx, see Kathleen McManus, "Suffering in the Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx," *Theological Studies* 60 (1999), 481-484. For the background to 'negative dialectics', see Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, second edition, translated by E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1982) and Joan Always, *Critical Theory and Political Possibilities: Conceptions of emancipatory politics in the works of Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas*, Contributions in Sociology Series n.111 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1995).

<sup>154</sup> See William P. George, "The Praxis of the Kingdom of God: Ethics in Schillebeeckx' *Jesus and Christ*," *Horizons* 12 (1985), 44-69.



takes on problematical and dangerous dimensions because it becomes blind to real aspects of human life and in this way reduces men [sic]. The history of freedom *remains* a history of suffering. This is a reality of being human which is taken seriously by religious soteriologies. Christian redemption is something more than emancipatory liberation, though it shows critical solidarity towards that. [Italics in the original]<sup>155</sup>

This trajectory of suffering and salvation for Schillebeeckx unites two fundamental ways of knowing – both contemplative and active. Firstly, the unavoidability of the encounter with suffering, in its myriad forms, bears the radical intuition of something beyond itself. The experience of suffering is particularly revelatory, taking the structural reality of experience, generally, to a deeper level:

In view of the negativity of the ‘refractoriness’ in all this, one might say that the intensity but also the authority of the experience of life culminates in ‘suffering’, in the suffering of disaster and failure, in the suffering of grief, in the suffering of evil, in the suffering of love. Here are the great elements of the revelation of reality in and through men’s *finite experiences*. [Italics in the original]<sup>156</sup>

Yet, suffering, as a ‘contrast experience’ between what is and what might be, initiates active response to the problem of suffering. It therefore brings into play an active knowledge.

The cognitive value peculiar to suffering is not only critical in regard to both forms of human knowing: dialectically it can also form the link between the two, contemplative and actively controlling, potentialities for knowledge of the human psyche, . . . precisely with respect to the contrast experience or critical negativity, the suffering

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<sup>155</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The experience of Jesus as Lord*, translated by John Bowden, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980), 769-770. For the background on the influence of Habermas’ theory of emancipative praxis on Schillebeeckx see Tillar, “The Influence of Social Critical Theory,” 163-166.

<sup>156</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 36. Schillebeeckx develops the revelatory nature of experience in a number of places. It flows from his radically sacramental understanding of reality and revelation. He asserts, for example, that “[i]t is not . . . a question of a pattern of ‘two worlds,’ ours and another. *Our* own reality is itself different from and more than what we believe; this reality itself, and not another higher world, is a surprising revelation of what has never been conceived of by man. See *Christ*, 9. See also Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An experiment in Christology*, translated by Hubert Hoskins (New York: Seabury, 1979), 632.

experienced lays the bridge over to a possible praxis, intended to remove both the suffering and its causes.<sup>157</sup>

This ‘unity-in-tension’ of the knowledge afforded by the encounter with suffering forms for Schillebeeckx the unity between theory and praxis, contemplation and action, religion and ethics.

The world needs a critique that champions the cause of neither dogmatism, nor positivism, nor skepticism. Religion dethrones any preconceived doctrine of salvation or soteriology, in the sense of a cut and dried system and manageable identity. Christianity is not an unmediated identity, but a praxis of identification with the non-identical, the non-I, the other, identification especially with the injustice suffered by others. If man is the fundamental symbol of God then that place where he is shamed, wounded and enslaved, both in his own heart and in suppressive society, is at once the privileged place where religious experience becomes possible *in* a living praxis that intends to give shape to that symbol, to heal it, and to restore it to its own identity. [Italics in the original]<sup>158</sup>

We are thus brought to the dialectic of the mystical and political in Schillebeeckx, born from the experience of contrast which is “the charismatic element of the whole process.”<sup>159</sup> As indicated earlier, Schillebeeckx indicates that the terms ‘mystical’ and ‘political’ are both ambiguous and even somewhat suspect.<sup>160</sup> However, as Bauerschmidt indicates, Schillebeeckx goes a lot further than others who evoke the mystical-political dialectic to define what he means by ‘the mystical.’<sup>161</sup> For

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<sup>157</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 621.

<sup>158</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, “God, Society and Human Salvation,” in *Faith and Society/Foi et Société/Geloof En Maatschappij: Acta congressus internationalis theologici Lovaniensis 1976* (Paris: Éditions Duculot, 1978), 98 cited in Tillar, “The Influence of Social Critical Theory,” 166-167.

<sup>159</sup> See Edward Schillebeeckx, *God, the Future of Man*, 55-56.

<sup>160</sup> See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in our Western Culture: Mysticism, ethics and politics*, (London: SCM Press, 1987), 71.

<sup>161</sup> See Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, “The Politics of Disenchantment,” *New Blackfriars*, 82 (July/August 2001), 324.

Schillebeeckx, the problem of mysticism is summarized as ‘mediated immediacy.’<sup>162</sup> There is an experienced immediacy of God’s proximity in mystical experience. “Mysticism lies in the extension of prayer: it’s a prayer in which an attempt is made to transcend the elements of faith which are also mediated by politics, ethics and conceptuality in order to put oneself directly into the immediate proximity of God.”<sup>163</sup> However, such an experience is mediated through something else, not least the silence and apparent concealment of God, as evidenced particularly in the Carmelite tradition. Schillebeeckx understands there to be three constants in mystical experience, each one of them characterized profoundly by paradox. Firstly, it is a “source experience” in that something new has come into recognition, something that is both transcendent and at the same time all embracing; the source of both all objectivity and subjectivity. It is ultimately an experience of totality, of reconciliation even in the face of the irreconciled. Secondly, such an experience of wholeness gives way to torment and a radical questioning about what one has experienced; and thirdly, mystical experience lives in the memory of a love entirely mutual, even in the experience of a feeling of loss, and not seeing.

For Schillebeeckx, mysticism, however, should not be regarded as something exceptional. It is “essentially the life of faith, and therefore not a separate sector in Christian life to which only a few, or individuals are called.”<sup>164</sup> Subsequently, he

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<sup>162</sup> Schillebeeckx draws here from the mystical legacy of Ruysbroeck. See Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 80.

<sup>163</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in our Western Culture*, 67.

<sup>164</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 69. This perspective closely resembles that of Karl Rahner’s understanding of mystical experiences. See for example Karl Rahner, “Prayer in the Everyday,” in Karl Rahner, *The Need and Blessing of Prayer*, translated by Bruce Gillette, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press 1997). For commentary on Rahner’s approach to mysticism see Harvey Egan, *Karl Rahner: Mystics of everyday life*, (New York: Crossroad, 1998) and Declan Marmion, *A Spirituality of Everyday Faith: A theological investigation of the notion of spirituality in Karl Rahner*, (Louvain: Peeters, 1998).

distinguishes his understanding of ‘the mystical’ as distinct from ‘the’ “Jesuit understanding of the same: a more voluntarist conception of spirituality . . . not on the same wavelength as the theological life but cover[ing] a separate sphere of all kinds of unusual and sometimes suspicious phenomena . . .”<sup>165</sup>

Schillebeeckx is very adamant that, contrary to such esoteric inclinations of the mystical, genuine mystical experience is no flight from the world. “It is a resource, not a flight.”<sup>166</sup> If mystical experience, *a priori*, involves a totality there can be no knowledge of God without social relationships.<sup>167</sup> Thus, mysticism “is not just a process of knowledge but a particular way of life – a way of salvation.”<sup>168</sup> And this way of life is ‘political.’ Schillebeeckx makes this assertion given that the mystical summons is “not to flee from the world but to flee *with* the world to the kingdom of God, that is, to the anticipation of the kingdom of God,” particularly in a praxis that speaks of such an order. [*Italics mine*].<sup>169</sup> For Schillebeeckx this is nothing other than

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<sup>165</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 69.

<sup>166</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in our Western Culture*, 69. In another place, Schillebeeckx expresses it in this way: “Authentic mysticism is never flight from the world but, on the basis of a first disintegrating source-experience, an integrating and reconciling mercy with all things. It is approach, not flight.” See Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 72.

<sup>167</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in our Western Culture*, 57. See also Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 94. In regard to this, Schillebeeckx draws from the approach of Emmanuel Levinas. The Reformed theologian, Jürgen Moltmann expresses Schillebeeckx’ sentiment similarly: “[God] is known in the true human community of women and men, parents and children. And if this is so, then the place for the experience of God is not the mystical experience of the self; it is the social experience of the self and the personal experience of sociality. The individual soul, detached from the body, and isolated from the community, must first of all again become ‘in-corporated’ and socialised, before it can know God as God himself knows the soul. There is no mysticism of the soul without the mysticism of sociality. It is only the spirituality of the body and the spirituality of sociality or fellowship which realise, or ‘embody’ what the Fathers of the church again and again tried to assert, with all possible emphasis, in opposition to the Platonism of the cultured, and the gnosticism of the common people: the ‘expectation of the resurrection of the body.’” See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A universal affirmation*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 94.

<sup>168</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in our Western Culture*, 67.

<sup>169</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in our Western Culture*, 70.

fidelity to the evangelical imperative to love both God and neighbour, two forms of one and the same theological attitude. Thus he goes on to use the term mysticism “to denote an intensive form of experience of God or love of God, and politics to denote an intensive form of social commitment, and thus not the political activity of professional politicians, *per se*, a commitment accessible to all people.”<sup>170</sup> He further expresses the dialectical tension thus:

The form of the love of God of the active mystic involved in the world is only implicitly present in his love of neighbour. In the person who prays explicitly this latter is implicitly present. But here it is not a matter of asserting that the one form is better or more perfect than the other; that would be more Hellenism than Christianity, or an expression of modern activism. It does mean that mysticism is possible not just in the form of silence and rest, inwardness and contemplation, but also in the hard and prophetic struggle.<sup>171</sup>

In this Schillebeeckx appeals to the tradition of the *via eminentiae* – the acknowledgement that God gives himself in sheer gratuitousness in a way beyond all description – “all that is good, true and delightful in the world of human beings and their history.”<sup>172</sup> If God is experienced as such then God is to found in those actions that render goodness and beauty in the world. The passage in which Schillebeeckx expresses this merits quotation at length:

Properly understood, this *via eminentiae* brings us not to a Greek, purely contemplative, view of mysticism, but to a Christian view of the kind formulated by Eckhart. Here it is not the inwardly contemplative Mary, but Martha, whose concern for God makes her solicitous for human beings, who is seen as the model of all true mysticism . . . The *via eminentiae* is not a philosophical or purely conceptual, dialectical thought-process, but is revealed to us in the Jewish-Christian, biblical tradition, in which the nature or the

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<sup>170</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in our Western Culture*, 71-72.

<sup>171</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in our Western Culture*, 71.

<sup>172</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 76.

character of God is made known to us as love for men and women with a disinterested partisan preferential love for the poor, the oppressed, the excluded and the voiceless. On the basis of the historical story of men and women who on the basis of their converse with God see new and alternative possibilities, earlier images of God will constantly be shattered and new possibilities will come to life. Thus we do not learn to know the *via eminentiae* beyond affirmation and negation in and through the conceptual interplay of thought, but in and from the history of solidarity, justice and love made by men and women in a world of egoism, injustice and lovelessness.<sup>173</sup>

Thus God is known in those actions which bring about a different ethical order. Both the call of God and our response to that call are only known “through self-giving to [others] in a world [which we are] to humanize.”<sup>174</sup> Schillebeeckx terms this ‘political love.’ Out of the experience of contrast, as seen above, there is a new possibility for the experience of transcendence. There are two aspects to this new found transcendence:

a) on the one hand the person, above all the poor and oppressed and all those who have declared themselves to be in solidarity with him or her and act accordingly, experiences that God is absent from many human relationships of possession and power in this world; thus he or she experiences the alienation, the gap, between God, the kingdom of God and our society; b) on the other hand the believer experiences precisely in his or her political love and opposition to injustice an intense contact with God, the presence of the liberating God of Jesus.<sup>175</sup>

This is for the Christian today, in memory of how it was for Jesus himself. “In the prophet Jesus, mysticism and the healing of men came from one and the same source: his experience of the contrast between the living God and the history of human

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<sup>173</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 77.

<sup>174</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 630.

<sup>175</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in our Western Culture*, 73.

suffering.”<sup>176</sup> For Jesus, it is precisely his mystical ‘Abba’ experience that is the source of his prophetic activity: “In such mysticism, love for all men and women and all-embracing love for fellow creatures as an expression of love of God can come fully into its own.”<sup>177</sup> It is out of this experience that Jesus is able to bring “a message of hope not inferable from the history of our world, whether in terms of individual or socio-political experiences – although the hope will have to be realized even there.”<sup>178</sup> Such reaches its culmination in the mystery of the Cross itself which is the result of preaching a new ethical order emanating from his mysticism. His “radical service of justice and love, a consequence of his option for poor and outcast human beings, is a choice for his people that suffered exploitation and manipulation. Within an evil world, any commitment to justice and love is perilous.”<sup>179</sup>

As Hilbert points out, for Schillebeeckx,

[in] the life story of Jesus, human suffering is not theoretically resolved, but practically resisted, and ultimately defeated by the power of God. The life-praxis of the followers of Jesus who stand in solidarity with the crucified of the contemporary world is an active remembrance and retelling of the story of Jesus.<sup>180</sup>

Remembrance entails “Do this in memory of me.” As for Metz, remembrance, then, is critical for Schillebeeckx, though he expresses a reservation about the absence in

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<sup>176</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 821.

<sup>177</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 181.

<sup>178</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 268.

<sup>179</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 125. This aspect is explored at length by Derek J. Simon, “Salvation and Liberation in the Practical-Critical Soteriology of Schillebeeckx,” *Theological Studies* 63 (2002), 501-507.

<sup>180</sup> Hilbert, “Hermeneutics of History in Schillebeeckx,” 134.

Metz of a truly theological basis of the ‘*memoria* thesis.’<sup>181</sup> In such remembrance, it is the “church’s *living* memory Jesus . . . embod[ied] in scripture and encountered in concrete experiences of suffering” that remains the pivotal point of reference.<sup>182</sup> Such remembrance also renders liturgy and sacramental celebration with particular significance for Schillebeeckx. For him, the sacraments,

are anticipatory, mediating signs of salvation, that is, healed and reconciled life. And, given our historical situation, at the same time they are symbols of protest serving to unmask the life that is not yet reconciled in the specific dimension of our history. In the light of its prophetic vision of universal [*shalom*], accusation also has a part in the liturgy. . . Therefore the sacramental liturgy is the appropriate place in which the believer becomes pointedly aware that there is a grievous gulf between his prophetic vision of a God concerned for peace among men and the real situation of mankind, and at the same time that our history of human suffering is unnecessary and can be changed. So if it is rightly performed, there is in Christian sacramental symbolic action a powerful historical potential which can integrate mysticism and politics.<sup>183</sup>

As Frohlich demonstrates, prayer and liturgy, for Schillebeeckx, thus “have their authenticity in their dialectical unity with emancipative praxis” even though “religious language and liturgy cannot be reduced to social and political concern.”<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> See Schillebeeckx, *The Christ*, 755. The notion of ‘remembrance’ in Schillebeeckx is given full treatment in Elizabeth K. Tillar, “Critical Remembrance and Eschatological Hope in Edward Schillebeeckx’ Theology of Suffering for Others,” *Heythrop Journal* 44 (2003), 15-42.

<sup>182</sup> Tillar, “Critical Remembrance,” 26. The living memory of the historical Jesus forms the basis of Schillebeeckx’ Christological trilogy: *Jesus: An experiment in Christology* (1979) (originally published in Dutch in 1974), *Christ: The experience of Jesus* (1980) (originally published in 1977), and *Church: The human story of God*, (1990).

<sup>183</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, “The Life of Grace in the Church,” in Schillebeeckx, *The Schillebeeckx Reader*, 208.

<sup>184</sup> See Mary Frohlich, “Schillebeeckx on Prayer: Politics, mysticism and liturgy,” *Liturgy: Journal of the Liturgical Conference* 5 (1986), 39. One is reminded of the famous dictum of Dietrich Bonhoeffer that only the one who has first stood on the side of the victim can sing Gregorian chant.



In so presenting a fundamental unity between the mystical and the political, forged in the memory of suffering, Schillebeeckx portrays in his work what he terms a religious and political soteriology, “in which the progressive and political meaning of the religious is stressed.”<sup>185</sup> Schillebeeckx does so through the presentation of a typology of soteriology in which he contrasts this designation against two others. It is a typology that is constructed on the relationship of each soteriology to the political. In what he calls horizontal soteriologies there is an absolutization of a finite socio-political movement as the exclusive agent. Such are prone to coercion and violence; they are purely instrumental in character. Marxist-Leninist, fascist, nihilist and neo-liberal ideologies are given as examples. It might be said that these are political without the mystical.

Alternatively, there are purely vertical soteriologies which are fideistic in character. As Simons points out these,

tend toward sectarian and otherworldly forms of religious withdrawal from the complexities of prevailing sociocultural and political-economic realities. Seeking release from this complexity through recourse to a transcendental purity, vertical soteriologies legitimate dissociation. Vertical soteriologies flee the difficulties of life on earth by attaching to and identifying with an idealized or post-historical narrative. The group that is formed around such attachments and identifications insulates its members from struggling with real responsibilities for the current conditions of social and political living. Such postures of withdrawal and protection intend sociopolitical neutrality but in fact submit to, even passively participate in, dominant systems of oppression.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 907. For a detailed exploration of this point see Simon, “Salvation and Liberation,” 496-497.

<sup>186</sup> Simons, “Salvation and Liberation,” 497.

It could be said, therefore, that such a soteriology, at first, represents ‘the mystical’ without ‘the political,’ but, as shall be argued below, can easily become agents of the ‘politics of mysticism’ in the manner that ‘the mystical’ acts as a critique against both society and church.

The soteriology that Schillebeeckx wishes to pursue is, in difference to these two types, neither horizontal nor vertical, but interactive. In this framework, “religious transcendence and sociopolitical immanence are in a mutually productive tension with each other, allowing their various fields of practice and interpretation to confront and to develop each other.”<sup>187</sup>

It is a point that Frederick Bauerschmidt criticizes, unconvinced that such interactivity is indeed possible. Similar to Cavanaugh above, from his Radical Orthodoxy position Bauerschmidt wishes to argue the gospel itself had its own political logic, entirely separate from the State, and in prophetic contra-distinction to it. Subsequently, one is confronted with only one stark choice: Gospel or State.

Schillebeeckx and other political theologians do not appreciate the degree to which ‘political wisdom’ in the modern, secular nation state – precisely because it is not desacralized – comes into conflict with the spirit of the gospel. By restricting Christianity’s role to one of providing ‘inspiration’ or ‘direction,’ the mystical-political model hands over the actual material existence of Christians to the pedagogic shaping of the state.”<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Simons, “Salvation and Liberation,” 497.

<sup>188</sup> Bauerschmidt, “The Politics of Disenchantment,” 331. Here Bauerschmidt directly alludes to the work of Cavanaugh.

Bauerschmidt thus argues that what is required is for “Christians to rediscover a theological imagination that can think beyond the antinomy of the mysticism and politics” for the Gospel to break out of the mystical confinement in which it has been placed by the modern state.<sup>189</sup>

But is this not precisely what Schillebeeckx has sought to achieve, no longer seeing the mystical and the political in antinomy but now in inherent tension? It seems that Bauerschmidt misses the opportunity that Schillebeeckx actually presents him to resolve how the mystical life can indeed be unfettered from a pure inwardness so as to have a bearing on political life, which Schillebeeckx certainly does not equate with the Weberian coercion of the modern state.

If this be the case, it is because Bauerschmidt does not seem to have followed through the deepest implications of how Schillebeeckx has explored the definitions of the mystical and the political. Firstly, in regard to the mystical, he does not accept that Schillebeeckx has argued sufficiently that “everything about a person, including his or her inwardness, is social.”<sup>190</sup> He bases this on his understanding that Schillebeeckx’s mystical experience seems “to acquire a kind of ineffable purity within the interior of the individual” and is, therefore, not intrinsically social, remaining within earlier more Hellenist, or Oriental, ways of defining mystical experience.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> See Bauerschmidt, “The Politics of Disenchantment,” 331.

<sup>190</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 48.

<sup>191</sup> See Bauerschmidt, “The Politics of Disenchantment,” 326.

Likewise, Bauerschmidt argues that Schillebeeckx subverts his attempt for the intrinsic link of the political with the mystical given Schillebeeckx's claim that the political has its own autonomy.<sup>192</sup> For Bauerschmidt, in Schillebeeckx's firm eschatological orientation that resists identifying God's liberating activity with any particular political program, he has fundamentally 'desacralised' all politics, including for example Israel's exodus from Egypt. Bauerschmidt, though, does not seem willing to accept that the Exodus event may not be a purely religious event but rather a political event that is given later theological significance by interpretation, and therefore demonstrative of the way in which the activity of God is enmeshed within (non-religious) political activity. Further, given Schillebeeckx's approach to contemporary European politics, particularly in regard to his perceived evangelical response to the issue of unilateral disarmament, Bauerschmidt suggests there is a resultant "gap between the way in which Schillebeeckx theorizes the relationship between 'faith' and 'politics' and his actual theological reflections on specific issues."<sup>193</sup> He argues that "the implications of this would seem to consign Christians to a theological ghetto in which the position demanded by faithfulness to its crucified Lord prevents the Church from making 'realistic' policy recommendations to the state."<sup>194</sup> Curiously, Bauerschmidt is locked within his conclusion that "for Schillebeeckx, 'mysticism' functions as a remainder outside of the walls of the *polis* – and hidden within as an inexpressible experience – that serves to preserve the

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<sup>192</sup> See Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 790-791.

<sup>193</sup> Bauerschmidt, "The Politics of Disenchantment," 327.

<sup>194</sup> Bauerschmidt, "The Politics of Disenchantment," 327.

transcendent character of theology and keeps Christian discipleship from being mere politics.”<sup>195</sup>

However, there would be a number of points by which Bauerschmidt’s critique might be addressed. As mentioned above, I am not convinced that he has fully understood the implications of the way in which Schillebeeckx has defined both the mystical and the political. Firstly, even though he acknowledges that the mystical in Schillebeeckx is not a different experience from the ordinary life of faith, Bauerschmidt seems unwilling to accept the implication of this, i.e. that it too must inherently lean towards social expression. Though Schillebeeckx certainly admits that the mystical maintains interiority, this is never at the expense of exteriority. Secondly, Schillebeeckx’s understanding of the political is not merely of the Weberian sense (the coercive use of power by nation states) in which Bauerschmidt would seem to consign it. This is clearly evidenced in the following by Schillebeeckx:

Above all, churches can intervene actively in politics when political themes are not purely political – which is often the case – and the question implies, ‘What kind of humanity are you opting for?’ That is clearly the case with legislation about biotechnology, the arms race, peace and so on. In all these questions politics must be open to the wishes and votes of many spheres of society, including religions and churches. One cannot attribute omnipotence and omniscient competence to politics any more than one can attribute these characteristics to the churches in this sphere. What counts is responsible argument which is above all open to discussion, in the sense that secular entities, like political ones, may not be deified.<sup>196</sup>

Indeed, the Church, according to Schillebeeckx, must have the courage to speak within society for the common good. However, precisely because of his considered

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<sup>195</sup> Bauerschmidt, “The Politics of Disenchantment,” 328.

<sup>196</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in our Western Culture*, 82.

mystical-political dialectic, what Schillebeeckx is at pains to affirm is that “the social and political proclamation of the church is not something separate from its proclamation of faith . . .”<sup>197</sup>

## 2.4 Conclusion

The several explorations proffered here reveal that, whilst through twentieth century theological discourse within the Roman Catholic tradition an ancient duality has been considered in far more positive dialectic fashion, ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ coalesce, still, in a somewhat uneasy alliance. On the one hand, the major insight, overall, of these contributions is that ‘the mystical’ need not be thought of as antithetical to ‘the political’ and vice versa. On the other hand, they run the risk of one dissolving in the other, as possibly in the case of Maritain and Metz, or one being used over and against the other, as in the case of Cavanaugh. And though Schillebeeckx, perhaps, amongst them all has sought to respect a genuinely tensive relationship between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ the tension is not without its stress.

This stress underscores the way in which the dialectic, though celebrated in the twentieth century, very easily meanders from the possibility of a type of conjunction into a new set of polarities. This thesis suggests that such a new set of polarities which emerges from the attempt to hold ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ in dialectical fashion is the one between ‘a politics of mysticism’ and ‘a mysticism of politics.’

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<sup>197</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in our Western Culture*, 82.

This is particularly suggested by an exploration of those lay movements characteristic of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

**PART B**

**THE ‘POLITICS OF MYSTICISM’  
OR  
THE ‘MYSTICISM OF POLITICS’?**

*We often speak of the individual and the social as though of inner and outer, but in reality, the inner, too, is social.*

Luigi Sturzo, *The True Life: Sociology of the Supernatural*, translated by Barbara Barclay Carter, (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1947), 40



## CHAPTER THREE

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### **‘THE MYSTICAL’ AS SOCIAL EXPERIENCE AND SOCIAL CRITIQUE - INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS FROM THE TRADITION OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY**

In Part A ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ were proposed as forming a tensive relationship. Both by specific definition, and by recent studies in the anthropology of religion one can be seen to intimate the other. At the least they can be envisaged as not to be thought negating the other. Though a relatively recent allusion in theological discourse this mutual intimation at the heart of the tension is, however, not without its evidence in the tradition of Christian spirituality. That ‘the mystical,’ particularly, implies ‘the political,’ and that it stands in a specific relation to ‘the political’ can be traced through a number of key studies in the history of Christian spirituality. This chapter identifies several key examples of them. In so doing, this chapter begins to identify by historical intimation the new set of polarities emergent in the mystical-political dialectic – a ‘politics of mysticism’ and a ‘mysticism of politics.’

In this chapter the possibility of a ‘politics of mysticism,’ particularly, is traced through the evidence of the Christian spiritual tradition by means of a number of soundings in the scholarship of the tradition. Firstly, the fundamental link between mystical experience and social responsibility has been demonstrated by the work of Ray C. Petry and Frederick C. Bauerschmidt that have been particularly landmark contributions. Secondly, the intrinsically subversive character of mystical discourse on dominant social paradigms, be they secular or ecclesiastical, has been at the

forefront of significant recent scholarship in Christian spirituality, particularly of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, notably that of Steven E. Ozment and Michel de Certeau, though from considerably different perspectives.

### **3.1 ‘The Mystical’ as Social Experience: Contributions of Ray C. Petry and Frederick Bauerschmidt**

Petry’s work is of special consideration given that it was one of the first to counter a purely subjective definition of ‘the mystical’ and to highlight the inherent social dimension of mysticism.<sup>1</sup> In part, however, he was extending the much earlier important contribution of Dom Cuthbert Butler and Evelyn Underhill as identified in the Introduction.<sup>2</sup> Petry is particularly keen to address a number of criticisms levelled against ‘the mystical,’ namely that it represents a type of selfish solipsism, that it ignores incorporation into ecclesial commitment, and that it avoids the necessity of social responsibility. Taking up Dean W. R. Inge’s comment in the Bampton Lectures of 1899 that Eckhart’s disciples were “no advocates of pious indolence”, Petry takes the example of six late medieval mystics to demonstrate a resonance: the Franciscan Raymond Lull (1235-1315), the Dominican Meister Eckhart (c. 1260-1328), John Tauler (c. 1294-1361), Richard Rolle (c. 1290-1349); the fourteenth century English author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, John Ruusbroec (1293-1381), and Nicholas Cusa (1401-1461). In different ways, each of these classic writers, according to Petry, maintains the important perspective found in *De civitate dei* in which Augustine writes, “For no one ought to be so leisured as to take no thought in

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<sup>1</sup> See Ray. C. Petry, “Social Responsibility and the Late Medieval Mystics,” *Church History* 21 (March, 1952), 3-19.

<sup>2</sup> See Dom Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism: The teaching of Augustine, Gregory and Bernard on contemplation and the contemplative life*, first published 1923, third edition, (London: Constable, 1967).

that leisure for the interest of his neighbour, nor so active as to feel no need for the contemplation of God.”<sup>3</sup> Earlier, Augustine had posited the necessity, not of an either/or dichotomy, but, rather of a “balanced combination of the two.”<sup>4</sup>

Though it can certainly be argued that each of these historical writers favours the orientation towards contemplation, such preference does not exclude social concern.

Subsequently, Eckhart will write,

No person in this life may reach the point at which [they] can be excused from outward service. Even if [they are] given to a life of contemplation, still [they] cannot refrain from going out and taking an active part in life . . . . I say that the contemplative person should indeed avoid even the thought of deeds to be done during this period of [their] contemplation, but afterwards [they] should get busy . . . <sup>5</sup>

Tauler will argue for receptivity of the Spirit within, so that the person will become active without, under the impulse of that same Spirit.<sup>6</sup> Ruusbroec, especially, will develop the sentiment to a high degree using the analogy of aspiration and expiration. As Petry comments, “God draws us near to himself – beyond any holding back; but after this, God’s Holy Spirit breathes us out again, for the practice of love and good works.”<sup>7</sup> Ruusbroec brings this remarkable unity into a wonderful articulation in a passage cited above, but now deserving its full quotation:

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<sup>3</sup> Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, Book XIX, chapter 19, translated by Henry Bettenson, (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 880.

<sup>4</sup> See Augustine, *City of God*, Book XIX, ch 2, 847.

<sup>5</sup> See R.B. Blakney, *Meister Eckhart: A modern translation*, (New York; 1941), 238, cited by Petry, “Social Responsibility and Medieval Mystics,” 9.

<sup>6</sup> See Petry, “Social Responsibility and Medieval Mystics,” 9.

<sup>7</sup> Petry, “Social Responsibility and Medieval Mystics,” 13. See John Ruusbroec, “The Sparkling Stone,” in Jan van Ruusbroec, *The Spiritual Espousals and other works*, translated by James A. Wiseman, Classics of Western Spirituality Series, (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 157; and John Ruusbroec, “The Spiritual Espousals,” Book II, part. 2, in John van Ruusbroec, *The Spiritual Espousals and other works*, translated by James A. Wiseman, Classics of Western Spirituality Series, (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 76-77.

A person who has been sent down by God from these heights into the world is full of truth and rich in all the virtues . . . He is accordingly righteous and truthful in all things and has a rich and generous foundation which rests on God's own richness. He will therefore always flow forth to all who need him, for the living spring of the Holy Spirit is so rich that it can never be drained dry. Such a person is a living and willing instrument of God with which God accomplishes what he wishes in the way he wishes. . . .He stands ready and willing to do all that God commands and is strong and courageous in suffering and enduring all that God sends him. He therefore leads a common life, for he is equally ready for contemplation or for action and is perfect in both of them..<sup>8</sup>

In so affirming the common life, Ruusbroec laments those, “foolish persons who want to be so idle that they do not wish to act or be of service when their neighbour is in need” concluding,

[t]hese persons are neither secret friends nor faithful servants of our Lord but are completely false and deceived, for no one can follow God's counsel if he is not willing to keep God's commandments. For this reason, our Lord's secret friends are always his faithful servants in case of need . . .<sup>9</sup>

Just as Petry made a significant historical contribution to identifying the social impulse present in ‘the mystical,’ Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt brings such a treatment into a consideration of ‘the political’ in his masterly retrieval of the spirituality of the fourteenth century Julian of Norwich whom he claims should be read as “*one who theologically imagines the political.*” [Italics in the original].<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ruusbroec, “The Sparkling Stone,” Conclusion, 184.

<sup>9</sup> Ruusbroec, “The Sparkling Stone,” Part 2, 166.

<sup>10</sup> See, *Julian of Norwich and the Mystical Body Politic of Christ*, (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999). 3. Julian's text is *Revelations (Shewings) of Divine Love*. See Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, translated by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, The Classics of Western Spirituality Series, (New York, Ramsey, Toronto: 1978). For a very useful study on Julian, see Christopher Abbott, *Julian of Norwich: Autobiography and theology*, (Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 1999).

Bauerschmidt is largely indebted to the Radical Orthodoxy approach of Milbank and Cavanaugh, resting his observations on the two axiomatic claims that all politics is ‘theological’, and that all theology is ‘political.’<sup>11</sup> These claims are made, in turn, on Bauerschmidt’s understanding that ‘the political,’ as the State resulting from the sixteenth and seventeenth century Wars of Religion, though secularized, still operates on a *mythos* – its own version of reality. Every system of ‘the political’ is already located within an overarching construal of reality. There is an inseparability of material processes and the process of imagining.<sup>12</sup> Subsequently, the claim that modern states are somehow religiously neutral is disingenuous: each of them is underpinned by a fundamental metaphysical account. Weber’s description of the State as entirely concerned with means, rather than with ends, is untenable, in Bauerschmidt’s perspective.

Bauerschmidt subsequently adopts the broader understanding of ‘the political’ as I have in the above chapter. ‘The political’ need not be reduced to mere statecraft, prone to its Weberian violence, but “exists anywhere some shared end is pursued, even an unseen or unspecifiable one.”<sup>13</sup> However, deeply within the framework of Radical Orthodoxy, Bauerschmidt suggests, therefore, that, “the metaphysical image, the *mythos*, proffered by Christian theology is one that finds its political correlate in

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<sup>11</sup> See Bauerschmidt, *Julian of Norwich*, 3 and 214, fn.11 and 12.

<sup>12</sup> See Bauerschmidt, *Julian of Norwich*, 5. Bauerschmidt is indebted here to Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). Charles Taylor develops this notion through his concept of ‘social imaginary’ – the way in which people imagine their social existence along with the concomitant expectations and the deeper normative notions and images underneath these expectations. See Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) and Charles Taylor *A Secular Age*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 171-176.

<sup>13</sup> See Bauerschmidt, *Julian of Norwich*, 8.

the church as the exemplary form of human community.”<sup>14</sup> In the fashion of Radical Orthodoxy, Bauerschmidt argues that the ecclesial community is itself a *polis* – a distinct social sphere – but one radically different from any earthly polity, being the foretaste and promise of the heavenly *politeuma* (Phil 3:20). With its own governance and ritual practice, it is its own “complex organic structure of differentiation and unity.”<sup>15</sup> In the line of William Cavanaugh, discussed above, Bauerschmidt marshals the historical evidence of medieval experience to demonstrate the direct connection between the eucharistic body and the body politic, just as he engages the notion of medieval nominalism and modern commentary on the same, to highlight the inception of modernity’s distinction between, “on the one hand, the violence-wielding, pragmatic state and, on the other hand, the value-bearing essentially peaceful civil society.”<sup>16</sup>

I cannot accept that the theological *mythos*, as such, can only be brought to bear within the ecclesial community, ‘the Church,’ itself (which Bauerschmidt accepts is a highly ambiguous term in this context), and that it cannot be imagined as affecting the wider forum of ‘the political,’ particularly given Bauerschmidt’s own initial definition of the same. I wonder why such a narrow application of the implications of the theological *mythos* must be so applied, especially given Bauerschmidt’s assertion elsewhere that “the task of theology is reflection upon and explication of the social

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<sup>14</sup> See Bauerschmidt, *Julian of Norwich*, 9.

<sup>15</sup> See Bauerschmidt, *Julian of Norwich*, 18. In this Bauerschmidt is using the work of Mervyn James, “Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval Town,” *Past and Present* 98 (1983).

<sup>16</sup> See Bauerschmidt, *Julian of Norwich*, 31.

practice of the Gospel, precisely so as to enact it anew in diverse circumstances.”<sup>17</sup>

As he states, in stark fashion,

One cannot divide human existence into the inner mystical sphere and the external political sphere and declare a truce or division of labour between them. The attempts of [particular writers] on mysticism to relate the ‘mystics’ to a putative inner sphere tends to result whether wittingly or unwittingly, in a Christian exit from the stage of history, leaving its inhabitants prey to the wolves of ‘nationalism, Marxism and Thatcherism.’<sup>18</sup>

Without needing to argue for an ecclesial polity, so distinct from the ordinary experience of the state, we can still accept Bauerschmidt’s claim that a figure such as Julian of Norwich does entertain a particular *mythos* in such a way to imply a particular form of community, i.e., her theology is ‘political’ because it contains a ‘social theory.’<sup>19</sup> In challenging approaches to ‘the mystical’ that would have it merely contained within individual subjectivity, Bauerschmidt, particularly, argues a strong case against a depoliticized Christianity. He is highly critical of studies of Julian that place her, and ‘the mystical,’ more generally, “in a protected sphere of *interiority-self-affectivity-experience*, safe from the forces of *history-politics-intellect-doctrine*.” [Italics in the original]<sup>20</sup> In demonstrating the centrality of corporeality to

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<sup>17</sup> Bauerschmidt, “Julian of Norwich – Incorporated,” 82.

<sup>18</sup> Bauerschmidt, “Julian of Norwich – Incorporated,” 82.

<sup>19</sup> See Bauerschmidt, *Julian of Norwich*, 10.

<sup>20</sup> See Bauerschmidt, “Julian of Norwich – Incorporated,” 77-83. Bauerschmidt is particularly critical of the approaches to mysticism of Arthur Edward Waite, *Studies in Mysticism and Certain Aspects of the Secret Tradition* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906), William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A study in human nature*, (New York: The Modern Library, 1902), even Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism; a study in the nature and development of man’s spiritual consciousness*, first published 1911, (London: Methuen/Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977). In each of these writers, Bauerschmidt is critical, more or less, of a certain ‘anti-institutional,’ non-theological perspective, one that reduces ‘the mystical’ exclusively to interiority and subjectivity and to cross-cultural ‘sameness.’ Clearly, he has not followed through on Underhill’s perspective on mysticism as I have in the chapter above that intimates the necessity of ‘the political.’ From his own conclusion, he is thus highly critical of the first book-length treatment of Julian – Robert Thouless, *The Lady Julian: A psychological study*, (London: S.P.C.K.: 1924) and the much later Karen Armstrong, *Visions of God: Four medieval mystics and their writings*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1994).

medieval religious practice, and the significance of substance and sensuality, particularly in Julian's highly incorporated spirituality which seeks its immersion "into the suffering and generative body of Christ," Bauerschmidt offers a portrayal of Julian's mysticism that is completely "exteriorized" by "participation in the infinite divine compassion revealed in Christ, a compassion enacted in visible practices of forgiveness and vulnerability."<sup>21</sup>

In his retrieval of the tradition of Julian of Norwich, Bauerschmidt argues against any understanding of 'the mystical' that becomes,

a way of locating a haven in a heartless world, the invulnerable space of interiority that makes tolerable the apparatus of the modern state . . . the refuge into which we recoil as we become progressively disillusioned by the various 'external, socially oriented ideologies' of modernity.<sup>22</sup>

Rather, as Julian's approach makes apparent, 'the mystical' ultimately effects "the participatory *mimesis* of Christ's compassion, which reveals in history the perfect sociality of the Father's love for the Son in the Spirit."<sup>23</sup> Genuine Christian mysticism, which is never ahistorical, never apolitical, incorporates us in to the Body of Christ now defined by those practices which sacramentalize it within time and place, particularly the works of mercy.

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<sup>21</sup> Bauerschmidt, "Julian of Norwich – Incorporated," 96. In this Bauerschmidt particularly draws from Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The religious significance of food to medieval women* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1987) and *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on gender and the human body in medieval religion*, (New York: Zone Books, 1991)

<sup>22</sup> Bauerschmidt, "Julian of Norwich – Incorporated," 97.

<sup>23</sup> Bauerschmidt, "Julian of Norwich – Incorporated," 97.



More recent studies in the history of Christian spirituality have also identified the social orientation of genuine mysticism.<sup>24</sup> They are accompanied by general treatments of the same possibility from more contemporary perspectives.<sup>25</sup> There will be no need to repeat their findings here. Rather, having used the contribution of Petry and Bauerschmidt, as two examples of scholarship that demonstrates the intrinsic social orientation of ‘the mystical’ within the Christian tradition, let us now turn to a slightly different consideration of ‘the mystical’s’ fundamental orientation to ‘the political’ in the manner by which it might present as a certain social critique. To do this, I refer particularly to the contribution of Steven E. Ozment and Michel de Certeau.

### **3.2 ‘The Mystical’ as Social Critique: Contributions of Steven Ozment and Michel de Certeau**

Like Michel De Certeau, Steven Ozment is a scholar of the mystical tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth century.<sup>26</sup> His concern is to demonstrate that there is an affinity between the values of mystical experience and the experience of marginalization at this time and how a mystical world uniquely correlates,

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<sup>24</sup> See Paul Lachance, “Mysticism and Social Transformation according to the Franciscan Way;” Amy Holywood, “Preaching as Social Practice in Meister Eckhart;” Carole Slade, “St. Teresa of Avila as Social Reformer;” Janet K. Ruffing, “Ignatian Mysticism of Service;” and “Practical Mysticism: Quakers and Social Transformation,” in *Mysticism and Social Transformation*, edited by Janet K. Ruffing (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2001) and *Spirituality and Social Embodiment*, edited by L. Gregory Jones and James J. Buckley (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> See particularly Dorothee Sölle, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001) and Roger S. Gottlieb, “The Transcendence of Justice and the Justice of Transcendence: Mysticism, Deep Ecology, and Political Life,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67 (March 1999), 149-166.

<sup>26</sup> See Steven E. Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent: Religious ideology and social protest in the sixteenth century*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973).

philosophically and historically, with the project of social and political dissent.<sup>27</sup> His understanding of the mystical tradition is heavily shaped, however, by a framework of ‘the mystical’ directly at odds with Bauerschmidt’s. Ozment is entirely reliant on the understanding of mystical theology that regards it as separate from, and above, the ordinary means of social participation. He engages with David Knowles’ classic definition of mystical theology as the imparting of knowledge of God that is directly known and experienced, totally different from standard knowledge about God, moving and filling the mind, wholly incommunicable but granting a certainty.<sup>28</sup> In support of this, Ozment recounts the definitions of mystical theology given by Bonaventure (1221-1274), Jean Gerson (1363-1429), Meister Eckhart and John Tauler.

In our examination of Petry’s contribution we have seen how Eckhart and Tauler do not conceive of a mysticism that is not oriented towards social responsibility, but Ozment focuses exclusively on an understanding of ‘the mystical’ within their writings that regards mystical experience as fully beyond normal sense perception and rational reflection, and in Bonaventure’s words take the subject *ad supermentales excessus* – mind-transcending ecstasies.<sup>29</sup> Ozment maintains that the German mystics dichotomize normal sensory, reasoning and volitional functions and the experience of

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<sup>27</sup> See Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent*, x.

<sup>28</sup> See Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent*, 3-4. See David Knowles, *The English Mystical Tradition*, (London: Burns and Oates, 1961). Ozment further develops this framework in “Mysticism, Nominalism, and Dissent: A *Forschungsbericht* in search of a thesis,” in *The Pursuit of Holiness in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Proceedings of the Conference on Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, April 1972, edited by Charles Trinkaus and H.A. Oberman, (Leiden, 1973).

<sup>29</sup> See Bonaventure, “Itinerarium Mentis in Deum,” in *Works of St. Bonaventure*, Volume II, edited by Philotheus Boehner and Zachary Hayes, (St. Bonaventure, New York: The Franciscan Institute, 2002). In regard to Jean Gerson, Ozment relies on *De mystica theologia* of 1402. See Jean Gerson, *Early works*, translated by Brian Patrick McGuire, (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 262-335.

God's direct presence such that "[f]or a moment, the soul surrenders its accustomed routine and takes refuge in its self-sufficient inner ground."<sup>30</sup> The conclusion that Ozment draws from this is that "[m]ystical salvation is the discovery of the final power and authority of the Self within one's own Self."<sup>31</sup> The mystical enterprise, from this framework, is thus wholly trans-rational and trans-institutional. "It is a receptacle for more intimate communications from God than those which the eyes and ears behold in the sermons, sacraments, ceremonies and writings of the church."<sup>32</sup> Because it bears, at least potentially, such an anti-intellectual and anti-institutional stance, mystical experience for Ozment can most conveniently be adopted "for the purposes of dissent, reform, and even revolution."<sup>33</sup> The basis for such an adoption was the recognition that

In the late Middle Ages one did not have to be a learned theologian to know that God had spoken more authoritatively through persecuted prophets, ragged ascetics, and even a braying ass than through the religious authorities who lay claim to his truth. He was a God who dwelt more intimately among those who deny the world in body and spirit than among those who attempt to run it from the pulpit and by the sword.<sup>34</sup>

Ozment, however, is speaking with a particularly Protestant voice, and is seeking a justification in the nature of mysticism for the Reformation's dissenters' critique of the Christendom in which they were enveloped, and about which his work is primarily concerned:

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<sup>30</sup> See Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent*, 8, 12.

<sup>31</sup> Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent*, 12. Ozment alludes here for concrete examples to Rufus M. Jones, *Mysticism and Democracy in the English Commonwealth*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1932).

<sup>32</sup> Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent*, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent*, 8.

<sup>34</sup> Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent*, 2.

Mystical anthropology and reflection on man's union with God made possible direct communication with that Power and Authority to whom pope, council, tradition, and holy book must necessarily cede. Mystical theology, with abundant scriptural proofs, promoted the view that the individual heart and conscience, not traditional institutional structures or historical writings, was the immediate locus of this Power and Authority.<sup>35</sup>

Within his concern for the writers of the Reformation, Ozment, however, has overlooked the fundamental ecclesial character of the writers from which he draws his understanding of 'the mystical.' At no stage, do any of the Reformation writers, in fact, move from their immersion in the ordinary life of the church, or indicate that it is dispensable. Ozment, mistakenly, has removed their understanding of mystical experience from their foundational ecclesial context from which they never depart or argue against.<sup>36</sup>

Despite what I believe to be Ozment's flawed methodology and his rather selective interpretation of the Christian mystical tradition, his work, nonetheless, does indicate, even if, more genuinely, by intimation, the possibility that 'the mystical' possesses a certain counter-cultural potential, and in that sense stands as a subversive critique to structures and systems guarding, in his word, "the regular, normative way of religious salvation."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent*, 59.

<sup>36</sup> Ozment argues that Eckhart did in fact argue for an experience of God that was beyond, or more foundational than that transacted by the Church. However, as recent studies indicate Eckhart's position is not so straightforward. See *inter alia*, Oliver Davies, *Meister Eckhart: Mystical theologian*, (London: SPCK, 1991), 115; Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The man from whom God hid nothing*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), 20-34. For the full works of Eckhart, see Meister Eckhart, *Sermons and Treatises*, Volumes I and II, translated and edited by M. O'C. Walshe, (London and Dulverton: Watkins, 1979, 1981).

<sup>37</sup> See Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent*, 1.

In the contribution of another scholar of sixteenth and seventeenth century spirituality I believe, we see a far more balanced and sound perspective. This is found in the work of the towering yet enigmatic figure of Michel de Certeau (1925-1986).<sup>38</sup> For De Certeau, there is an *intrinsic* political dimension of mysticism which, indeed, keeps ‘rescuing’ it from being subsumed into ecclesiastical structure and at the same time saves it from abdicating the necessity for corporate location. De Certeau also presents us with an understanding of ‘the mystical’ that acts as social critique without needing to have recourse to definitions of ‘the mystical’ that reduce it to a kind of solipsist subjectivity which Ozment appears to favour.

De Certeau is intensely aware of the role of context in spirituality, that “mystical literature relates first of all to a certain topography.”<sup>39</sup> In an earlier landmark essay on the importance of culture to spiritual experience, generally, he wrote that,

Experience is always defined in cultural terms, even when it is religious . . . it is in the very cultural situation that [a person’s] yearnings and [their] predicament ‘take flesh’, it is through this medium that [they] find God yet ever seek him, that [they] express [their] faith, that [they carry] on simultaneous experiments in colloquy with God and with [their] actual [fellows] . . . A culture is the language of a spiritual experience. The very history of spirituality demonstrates this fact, unless we are determined to look at it in blinkers which would exclude its context.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> For a useful introduction to de Certeau’s work see Graham Ward, “Introduction,” in *The Certeau Reader*, edited by Graham Ward (London: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 1-14. As Ward highlights, de Certeau, in his own life, “moves out to question what we might mean by home; to question the fixity of place. . . . It was always an impossible journey, an endless exile into alterity.” This will be deeply reflected in de Certeau’s understanding of mysticism itself. For more developed studies, see Jeremy Ahearne, *Michel de Certeau: Interpretation and Its Other*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Polity Press/Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995).

<sup>39</sup> Michel de Certeau, “Mystic Speech,” in *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, translated by Brian Massumi, *Theory and History of Literature*, Volume 17, (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 83.

<sup>40</sup> Michel de Certeau, “Culture and Spiritual Experience,” *Concilium* 9 (November 1966), 3-16.

Much of De Certeau's scholarship was focused on the application of this principle to sixteenth and seventeenth century French and Spanish mysticism, the period in which he identifies the more precise historical formation of the Christian mystical tradition, understood in a modern way.<sup>41</sup> He notes that the mystics of this period,

were for the most part from regions or social categories which were in socio-economic recession, disadvantaged by change, marginalized by progress, or destroyed by war. The memory of past abundance survived in these conditions of impoverishment, but since the doors of social responsibility were closed, ambitions were redirected toward the open spaces of utopia, dream, and writing.<sup>42</sup>

In such a context, groups emerge that, according to De Certeau, at the extremes, at least, vacillated "between ecstasy and revolt – *mysticism and dissent*." [Italics in the original]<sup>43</sup> Such persons, in De Certeau's understanding, were, in the end, reacting to the 'humiliation of the Christian tradition' and to the very decline of institutions of meaning, such that they were experiencing the disintegration of a sacred world. For De Certeau it is no accident that the 'Machiavellian Moment' and the 'mystic invasion' co-incide.<sup>44</sup>

As De Certeau points out, however, the mystics of this period, such as Teresa of Avila and Ignatius of Loyola, do not desert the church, but, rather they enter "the ruins" of both the Churches and the Scriptures, "considered equally corrupt" because they "represented in their minds the state of the contemporary Christianity and, like the

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<sup>41</sup> See De Certeau, "Mystic Speech," 82-83. See also Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable: Volume I, The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, translated by Michael B. Smith, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 16. For useful commentary on de Certeau's contribution to spirituality, see Philip Sheldrake, "Unending desire: De Certeau's 'mystics'," *The Way Supplement* 102 (2001), 38-48.

<sup>42</sup> De Certeau, "Mystic Speech," 84.

<sup>43</sup> De Certeau, "Mystic Speech," 85.

<sup>44</sup> See De Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, 153-156.

cave of rejection at Bethlehem, were *where* they were to seek a repetition of a founding surprise.” [Italics in the original]<sup>45</sup> It is from this place, a ‘siteless site,’ as de Certeau names it – related both to the fragility of social position or the uncertainty of institutional referents - that a new language is born.<sup>46</sup> This is in De Certeau’s words, “a contract of language which, because it has no property, takes the form of the lack and desire of the other.”<sup>47</sup> The mystical figure, particularly as he or she emerges in De Certeau’s study of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, makes “readable an absence that has multiplied the productions of desire.”<sup>48</sup>

For De Certeau we see this particularly exemplified in the dynamic of the poem – the special utterance of mysticism: received, that which comes from beyond, containing that excess which names but remains unnameable. “It says nothing. It permits saying. For that reason, it is a true ‘beginning.’ It is a liberating space, where yesterday’s readers – but ‘we’ also – can find speech.”<sup>49</sup> The mystical poem speaks of the absence of what it designates. This is its mystical character:

[t]he establishment of a space where change serves as a foundation and saying loss is an other beginning. Because it is always *less* than what *comes* through it and allows a genesis, the mystic poem is connected to the *nothing* that opens the future, the time to *come*, and more precisely, to that single word, ‘Yahweh,’ which forever makes possible the self-naming of that which induces departure. [Italics in the original]<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> De Certeau, “Mystic Speech,” 86.

<sup>46</sup> See De Certeau, “Mystic Speech, 90.

<sup>47</sup> De Certeau, “Mystic Speech,” 92. See also De Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, 25, and particularly 157-176.

<sup>48</sup> De Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, 13.

<sup>49</sup> See De Certeau, “Mystic Speech,” 97-99.

<sup>50</sup> De Certeau, “Mystic Speech,” 100.

This idea that mystical discourse represents rupture, departure, ever new beginnings leads to the fundamental paradox in mystical discourse, and that which renders it with a radical destabilising capacity:

That is why the text is destabilized: it is at the same time *beside* the authorized institution, but outside it and *in* what authorizes that institution, i.e., the Word of God. In such a discourse, which claims to speak on behalf of the Holy Spirit and attempts to impose that convention on the addressed, a particular assertion is at work, affirming that what is said in this *place*, different from the one of magisterium language, is the *same* as what is said in the tradition, or else that these two places amount to the same. [Italics in the original]<sup>51</sup>

Yet, for De Certeau, such mystical discourse lends itself to social practice that is, itself, subversive, acting as critique to accepted norms of behaviour. As Sheldrake observes, “the language of movement implies a continual transgression of fixed points.”<sup>52</sup> As such, in De Certeau’s perspective, the mystic defines a different treatment of the Christian tradition:

Accused (with good reason) of being “new,” caught up in and ‘bound to’ circumstances, yet founded on faith in a Beginning that must come about in the present, they institute a ‘style’ that articulates itself into *practices* defining a *modus loquendi* and/or a *modus agenda*.<sup>53</sup>

It is precisely ways of acting that organize the invention of a mystic body, according to De Certeau. In time, this “labor of transcending limits” begins to shape the tradition that “has deteriorated and opacified.”<sup>54</sup> De Certeau traces the traditions of the ‘idiot woman’ of the fourth century, and the sixth century’s ‘laughter of madmen’

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<sup>51</sup> De Certeau, “Mystic Speech,” 92-93.

<sup>52</sup> Sheldrake, “Unending desire,” 40.

<sup>53</sup> De Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, 14.

<sup>54</sup> See De Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, 15.



to demonstrate such a point.<sup>55</sup> Both speak of the repressed Other; they disrupt that which would suffocate the Other, forcing by their very madness, their silence, and their marginal witness, “a turning aside toward another county, in which [they] . . . create the challenge of the unbound.”<sup>56</sup>

Thus, the mystic, both in language and in practice, critiques the status quo, calling it beyond its innate tendency to complacency and ossification and to once again be surprised by the potential within a new rupture, a new beginning. Mysticism, even in its silence, thus has within itself a politically subversive dimension.

The framework of De Certeau, however, is not simply a commentary of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. It is a commentary equally on our modern experience. In the very last paragraph of the first volume of *The Mystic Fable*, De Certeau brings into superb summary his own biographical experience, his historical scholarship, and his insight for a contemporary context:

He or she is mystic who cannot stop walking and, with the certainty of what is lacking, knows of every place and object that it is *not that*; one cannot stay *there* nor be content with *that*. Desire creates an excess. Places are exceeded, passed, lost behind it. It makes one go further, elsewhere. It lives nowhere. It is inhabited, Hadewijch also said, by

a noble *je ne sais quoi*, neither this nor that,  
that leads us, introduces us and absorbs us in our Origin,  
On that self-surpassing spirit, seduced by an impregnable origin or end called God, it seems that what for the most part remains, in contemporary culture, is the movement of perpetual departure . . . . Unmoored from the ‘origin’ of which Hadewijch spoke, the traveler no longer has foundation or goal. Given over to nameless desire, he is the drunken boat. Henceforth this desire can no longer speak to someone. It seems to have become *infans*, voiceless, more solitary and lost than before, or less protected and more radical, ever seeking

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<sup>55</sup> See De Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, 31-48.

<sup>56</sup> De Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, 32.

a body or poetic locus. It goes on walking, then, tracing itself out in silence, in writing. [Italics in the original]<sup>57</sup>

De Certeau thus brings us to the very dilemma of the modern Christian: the loss of place within a secularized context. In his enigmatic essay, “The Weakness of Believing: From the Body to Writing, a Christian Transit,” he brings to bear his historical insights on the nature of the relationship between the Christian at the end of the twentieth century and their society.<sup>58</sup> In so doing, De Certeau identifies the continuing power of ‘the mystical,’ affirming it, I suggest, even if by implication, as the Christian’s present and ever-unfolding future response to ‘the political.’

De Certeau begins his complex essay by naming the dislocation of the ecclesial body in the modern context. He recognises that ordinary Christian discourse is supported by its relation to its originating community for “social belonging founds linguistic ‘competence.’”<sup>59</sup> But what becomes of this language, he asks, when the body with which it is articulated is disseminated? “What happens when a language is no longer articulate with a body, no longer supported and held by it?”<sup>60</sup>

These are real questions for the contemporary Christian since modernity evidences a progressive loss of the ecclesial body. Now Christian experience,

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<sup>57</sup> De Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, 299. The image of the drunken boat is taken from the best known work of Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891), “Le Bateau Ivre,” (The Drunken Boat), which appeared in 1871. In the poem Rimbaud sent a toy boat on a journey, seeing in it an allegory for a spiritual quest. See “Arthur Rimbaud,” <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/rimbaud.htm>, accessed 26 September, 2008.

<sup>58</sup> Michel de Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing: From the Body to Writing, a Christian Transit,” translated by Saskia Brown, in *The Certeau Reader*, 214-243. The themes are also developed, though in slightly different ways, in Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven F. Rendall, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1984). See in particular chapters 9 and 13.

<sup>59</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 216.

<sup>60</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 217.

as though it had fallen from the sinking ecclesial ship . . . is lost in the vast and uncertain poem of an anonymous reality which comes and goes; it renounces the appropriation of a sense which the hull and portholes conditioned, and instead receives from this indeterminate history a life which fulfills everyone by going beyond them. There is no body other than the body of the world and the mortal body.<sup>61</sup>

He remarks how, for a time, in the face of this, the tendency was entertained to seek an alternative ‘site,’ another space, from which the Church could speak, consequent to its displacement from the centre of society, just as there have been efforts to replicate a past. Yet, as he traces, such alternate ‘sites’ – the ‘worker Priest movement,’ emergent marginal communities of one kind or another – in the end, fail as their referent becomes less and less the ecclesial community itself:

The institutions to which the groups refer are no longer religious and are less and less ideological. There remains the gesture of taking a distance from institutions, but without the ground which it was related to; an instrument adapted to work on one system survives the corpus it has traversed. The function can no longer find the place where it used to be applied.<sup>62</sup>

In De Certeau’s mind, different initiatives to re-locate a social body inevitably face a choice: they either create only what he calls ‘scriptural sites’, i.e. ways of discourse which are entirely subjective, lacking any objective exteriority - such as ‘charismatic’ or Pentecostal groups - or they become enmeshed into a network of social practices, “anybody’s, anonymous, stripped of distinctive rules or marks,” which, in the end, situates them elsewhere than the ecclesial community.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 229.

<sup>62</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 220.

<sup>63</sup> This has a direct bearing on such current pastoral questions as the maintenance of Catholic identity of ecclesial agencies in the provision of social service delivery within a pluralist and secular context. As an Australian example of such a pastoral problem, see *Identity and Mission in Catholic Agencies*, edited by Neil Ormerod, (Strathfield: St. Pauls Publications, 2008).

Such a scenario drives home to De Certeau the question of “[h]ow can a Christian reference be marked in social practices, since, for Christians, there are no longer sites of production which are properly their own?”<sup>64</sup> Yet, in addressing this question, De Certeau wishes to maintain that Christian experience “can [indeed] introduce changes within the social sites where it intervenes.”<sup>65</sup>

In a situation, though, in which the ecclesial ‘body of sense’ has lost its effectiveness and in which “civil society has replaced the Church in the role of defining tasks and positions, leaving the Church with only a marginal possibility of correcting or going beyond the delimitation of domains,” the task, however, falls more and more to the individual Christian, as De Certeau writes, to ‘do’ faith.<sup>66</sup> For De Certeau, this requires a New Testament combination of ‘following’ and of ‘conversion’ – “a going beyond which the name of Jesus opens up . . . [and] a corresponding transformation of consciousness and of conduct.”<sup>67</sup> He will call this ‘evangelical sense.’ It is not a new site, itself, but that which “expresses itself in terms of instituting and going beyond, relative to the effective sites of our history which yesterday were religious, today civil.”<sup>68</sup> In other words, it is the vital component of the Christian’s effectiveness in the world, irrespective of the emplacement or displacement of the Church. This twofold response is for De Certeau thus not compromised by the “weakening, dissemination and even disappearance of the (ecclesial) sites which it has traversed.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 224.

<sup>65</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 224.

<sup>66</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 226.

<sup>67</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 226.

<sup>68</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 228.

<sup>69</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 228.

After all, according to him, these in the end but constituted a space for the development of such a response.

The stance, or style, or profile, (which is the outcome) will have no single concrete expression in De Certeau's perspective because of the essentially dynamic character of the call to follow and the possibility of change:

This principle is in fact an evanescent event. It is "mythical" in a double sense: the event has no site, except for the writings which narrate it, and it generates speech and action and yet more "writings," while remaining itself unobjectifiable. This beginning point is a vanishing point. That which opens possibility is also that which goes beyond, withdraws or escapes.<sup>70</sup>

De Certeau is talking here about an entirely 'responsive' attitude, always relative to site, now required by the contemporary Christian. It is an attitude "mad about loving," deeply attentive "to all the 'calls' to which many reply by turning round, discrete invitations to excesses which punctuate normal procedures with risk."<sup>71</sup> It is a response that is quintessentially mystical:

The "follow me" comes from a voice which has been effaced, forever irrecoverable, vanished into the changes which echo it back, drowned in the throng of its respondents . . . It is no longer anything except the tracing of a passage – made possible by it – a relation between an arrival (birth) and a departure (death), then between a return (resurrection) and a disappearance (ascension), indefinitely. Nothing but a name without a site. Writings which initially set out to respond, then, themselves develop as a series of "listening – following – changing," already inflected in a hundred different ways, and never with a stable term before them. The Name which institutes this series designates at once (and only) the different elements which it allows to emerge after it and whatever refers it to its other I a movement of listening to and following the Father. Jesus is the vanishing unknown factor of this relation "call-conversion" which he names. He himself enters into this relation which posits terms which are indeterminate: he is yes (2 Corinthians 1:19), a response relative to an Unnameable who calls, and he is the

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<sup>70</sup> De Certeau, "The Weakness of Believing," 227.

<sup>71</sup> De Certeau, "The Weakness of Believing," 229.

continually “converted” son of the inaccessible Father who says to him “come.”<sup>72</sup>

Such is what De Certeau understands as the “excess of belief.” It brings with it particular conditions by which Christian faith can work on social practices. That effect will no longer be a consequence of Christian experience unifying itself as one body. Rather now, it will be more and more relegated to the private sphere, in the sense that it calls for individual discernment and action, but in its responsiveness, is destined to lose itself in history, i.e. it is always situated before something other than the self. This brings about what De Certeau calls “the violence of the instant.”<sup>73</sup> There is an enormous loss as one feels the once firm Christian ground disappear, but precisely in the loss, animated by this two-fold response, something ‘begins’: an infancy. Movement is instigated. An initial non-site, what De Certeau suggests analogously as ‘the empty tomb,’ gives rise to new writings,’ - which De Certeau earlier defines as the inscription of a desire into the system of a language, and not simply literary – “a language without force, structured by the absence of a body, the renunciation of proximity, and the obliteration of the proper.”<sup>74</sup>

This is, for him, the ‘evangelical fable.’ It is the response, from a distance, “to texts encountered along the way, dispersed, without any unity which one might grasp or seek, but nevertheless productive, because of the ‘turmoil’ or . . . the ‘crisis’ which, like dreams, they first provoke in us.”<sup>75</sup> Subsequently, the discourse that is possible

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<sup>72</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 227.

<sup>73</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 230.

<sup>74</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 234.

<sup>75</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 234.

must remain in the interrogative – “like dream, it has no sense except for what comes to it from elsewhere and from an other . . .”<sup>76</sup> Belief is, through and through, a ‘coming’ and ‘following.’

The fable remains always in the distance, as the poetic other of historical effectivity, as a utopia which articulates with social topographies only through private risk . . . A fragile and floating text, witness to itself alone, yet lost in the innumerable murmur of language, and hence perishable. But this fable heralds the joy of obliterating itself in what it figures, of returning to the anonymous work out of which it was born, of converting itself to this other which it is not.<sup>77</sup>

For De Certeau there is an inherent ‘weakness’ in the evangelical fable – weakness in the sense of the opposite of the apparent strength provided by something which might appear more sure, more lasting. Yet, this very ‘weakness’ becomes the foundation for a new way of being. No longer can we enjoy the litany of past strengths – ecclesial property with cultural prestige, nor “ideological substitutes for this body of sense – communities of utterance, historical facts, ‘anthropological’ positivities.” Rather what we now have, and all we now have, is what emerges in the interaction between “the effective sites of our social belonging” and the possibility inherent in the evangelical fable.<sup>78</sup> In this interaction is a constant beginning.

Given that the Christian place is now dependent on the encounter with alterity, the genuine Christian response in a contemporary context must always involve rupture for De Certeau.

Practice, always relative to a site, is indefinitely “responsive” and believing, on the move, like Jacob who ‘went on his journey’ after having erected a stele at Bethel, the unexpected and awesome place

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<sup>76</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 231.

<sup>77</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 237.

<sup>78</sup> See De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 237.

of his vision (Genesis 28:18 to 29). It always has to take risks further on, always uncertain and fragmentary.<sup>79</sup>

This is critical for De Certeau who recognises that in Christian spirituality there is always the temptation “to transform the conversion into establishment . . . or . . . as in evangelical transfiguration (a metaphoric movement) to take the ‘vision’ as a ‘tent’ and the word as a new land.”<sup>80</sup> Genuine spirituality within the Christian tradition, however, resists this trap:

In its countless writings along many different trajectories, Christian spirituality offers a huge inventory of difference, and ceaselessly criticizes the trap; it has insisted particularly on the impossibility for the believer of stopping on the moment of the break – a practice, a departure, a work, an ecstasy – and of identifying faith with a site. Today we are even more radically obliged, due to history, to take this lesson seriously.<sup>81</sup>

The insights of De Certeau, complex and often enigmatic, I present, nonetheless, as important considerations in the inter-relationship between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political.’ Whilst not concerned directly with the dialectic between the two, the insights of De Certeau, both in regard to the social critique offered by the mysticism in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, and in the ever-present challenge of what, in the end, can only be regarded as the mystical impulse for the Christian in the twentieth century, demonstrate that ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ cannot be thought of as in opposition to one another, in some kind of irreconcilable duality.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

Through its exploration of a several significant contributions, this chapter has sought to highlight this affirmation through the suggestion that engagement with ‘the

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<sup>79</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 228.

<sup>80</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 236.

<sup>81</sup> De Certeau, “The Weakness of Believing,” 236.



mystical’ ultimately implies regard of ‘the political.’ The chapter has sought to demonstrate that ‘the mystical’ does this either through its exercise of an inherent commitment to social action or by its construction of a certain reaction to social development both outside and within the Church. In both situations however it is clear that mysticism intrinsically bears upon social reality, and is shaped by such reality.

In the first instance – as oriented towards the commitment to social responsibility – we see, particularly through the contribution of Petry and De Certeau, that sense of ‘the mystical’ which underscores a ‘mysticism of politics.’ Here, ‘the political’ is being taken within its first definition, that which is ultimately committed to the pursuit of the common, shared good, as given in the Introduction. Especially in the work of De Certeau, ‘the mystical’ presents as the constructive response in faith to the displacement of the Church in a modern pluralist and secular *polis*. ‘The mystical’ is proposed as the only proper way of transformative Christian discipleship active in a context in which the Church no longer enjoys social dominance. In this sense, though from quite different foundations, the contribution of De Certeau echoes the earlier discussion on Jacques Maritain.

In the second case – that of reaction – particularly as evidenced in Bauerschmidt’s interpretation of Julian of Norwich and Steven Ozment’s perspective on the sixteenth century, we see the use of the ‘the mystical’ in a way that underlies a ‘politics of mysticism.’ In this situation we return to the second definition of ‘the political’ given in the Introduction – the exercise of social power. From the perspective of Bauerschmidt’s and Ozment’s contributions, the ‘politics of mysticism’ might be seen

to operate in one of two ways. 'The mystical' can operate either as the foundation of an alternative polis to the 'state' – as intimated in Bauerschmidt's Radical Orthodoxy inclination and parallel to the earlier discussion on William Cavanaugh's contribution - or, indeed, as an alternative to the ordinary experience of the ecclesial *polis*, itself, as put forward by Ozment and as will be evidenced below when we come to investigate various contemporary agents of 'the politics of mysticism.'

Though the discussion of the current chapter has arisen from the perspective of historical scholarship, the considerations have been largely theoretical in character. The question arises as to how such arguments might be taken forward in the examination of more recent historical social and political initiatives. For this we now turn to an exploration of the nineteenth century.

## CHAPTER FOUR

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### **PERSPECTIVES FROM THE ‘AGE OF MOBILIZATION’**

I have explored how ‘the mystical’ can be envisaged as bearing upon social reality. Scholarship within the tradition of Christian spirituality demonstrates that mysticism both overflows into social responsibility and presents it as a certain social critique. Thus, we can think of a ‘politics of mysticism’ as operative in a relatively general way. More recent historical developments in the emergence of lay consciousness and spirituality within the Roman Catholic tradition, further nuance, however, the notion of a ‘politics of mysticism.’ In concrete circumstances, ‘the mystical’ can be brought to bear on social reality not only in terms of responsibility and critique, but also for the purposes of the Church seeking to regain its ‘site’ in an increasingly complex, pluralist and secular environment in which the Church experiences displacement. In this ‘the mystical’ can become subsumed into a political agenda, albeit ecclesiastical, understanding ‘politics’ in this instance according to its second definition as the exercise of power.

This chapter will explore how this emerges as a distinct possibility in the nineteenth century. Further, more generally, it seeks to illustrate how the polarities of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ co-relate in the nineteenth century within the context of the specific momentum in the development and expression of Roman Catholic social and political consciousness within that period.

The nineteenth century presents as an extraordinary impetus in the development of such consciousness. Charles Taylor terms this period the ‘age of mobilisation’ a period of increasing secularization by which religion becomes more and more displaced.<sup>1</sup> It is a period caught in the tension between the *ancient régime*, and nostalgia for its restoration caught within a ‘baroque’ social imaginary, and a new experience of ‘mobilization’ in which

people are persuaded, pushed, dragooned, or bullied into new forms of society, church, association. This generally means that they are induced through the actions of governments, church hierarchies, and/or other élites, not only to adopt new structures, but also to some extent to alter their social imaginaries, and sense of legitimacy, as well as their sense of what is crucially important in their lives or society. . . . [Now, however, it] becomes clear that whatever political, social, ecclesial structures we aspire to have to be mobilized into existence.<sup>2</sup>

Precisely given the tension characteristic of such an age, the polarity between mysticism and politics in the Roman Catholic tradition is situated in new and urgent relief. The period thus, subsequently, accords pertinent insight into how the dialectic of the mystical and the political can divide into either a ‘mysticism of politics’ or a ‘politics of mysticism’. It also provides important background to how this new set of polarities will manifest themselves in the twentieth century, which will be the subject of the following chapter.

Within the context of the ‘Age of Mobilization’, so termed by Taylor, the development of Catholic spirituality in the nineteenth century was to be constituted by a fundamental paradox at the level of its sources. On the one hand, particularly through the emergence of “social Catholicism,” which in itself may be considered as

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<sup>1</sup> See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 423-472.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 445.

an ecclesial illustration of such ‘mobilization,’ a growing consideration is witnessed for the place of laity especially in the mission of the laity. This may be suggested as yielding a certain ‘mysticism of politics.’ On the other hand, however, in the Church’s definition of itself against a pervading social ‘dechristianisation’ – or more precisely, perhaps, against an increasing political secularity – a demarcating spiritual practice begins to assume ever greater prominence so that the mystical now becomes political. The ‘politics of mysticism’ presents itself.

As was raised in the Introduction, Congar, in his own exploration of the nineteenth century as a background to the development of the twentieth century’s theology of laity, appears to treat these two currents as a kind of unity without recourse to their fundamental contradiction.

The world’s structure had changed: it was now deeply divided, separated from Christ by hostility or indifference, full of new forces at work, enthusiastic for values unknown to classical theology . . . Many priests and lay people appreciated the urgent necessity for making contact with the world, for finding ways of acting upon it, for defending and explaining the faith in a language it could understand, for applying themselves to the Christian regeneration of society by forming islands whence Christian life should shine.<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult, however, to perceive how the development of ‘islands shining with Christian life’ and the perception of an ‘urgent necessity to make contact with the world’ stand easily together. In fact, the history of the nineteenth century reveals these two currents as concomitant but in a tension with each other far more complex than Congar’s analysis would admit. They seem rather to be counter-pointed towards each other.

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<sup>3</sup> Yves M.-J. Congar, *Lay People and the Church: A study for a theology of the laity*, translated by Donald Attwater, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1959), 343.

The current of what becomes known as ‘social Catholicism’ will be the one that will endure. Although by the end of the nineteenth century it has, in some ways, become overshadowed by the strength of the popular piety of the second current, it is the theme that will re-emerge with greater strength as the twentieth century unfolds. Its alternate, though with strong residual tide, will recede as social Catholicism begins to gain increasing momentum especially through the emergence in the twentieth century of the phenomenon called ‘Catholic Action’ between 1925-1940 and then in a second quickening, more definite and acute, during and after World War II leading up to the landmark documents on the laity in the Second Vatican Council.<sup>4</sup>

#### **4.1 The ‘Mysticism of Politics’: The development of political and social Catholicism through the nineteenth century**

Political consciousness within Roman Catholic thought arose through the nineteenth century in a number of places internationally.<sup>5</sup> For example, in the United States, the first native bishop, John Carroll, had been committed to the ideals of republicanism, whilst through the initiatives of Isaac Thomas Hecker, received into the Church in 1844, this pledge took on as a more developed concern: ‘Americanism’ to which the formation of the Knights of Labour was in service.<sup>6</sup> Though tolerated by Rome, this organisation, defending the rights and supporting the claims of workers, was to become embroiled in controversy by the end of the century resulting in the publication of the Apostolic Letter *Testem benevolentiae* of 1899 which,

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<sup>4</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 50.

<sup>5</sup> See also Giacomo Martina, “The Contribution of Liberalism and Socialism to a Better Self-Conception of the Church,” in *Church History: Church history at a turning point*, edited by Roger Aubert, *Concilium* 7 (1971), 93-101.

<sup>6</sup> J. Derek Holmes and Bernard W. Bickers, *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1983), 249.

“distinguished between religious and political Americanism and condemned the notion of adapting the doctrines, though not the practices, of the Church to the needs of modern society.”<sup>7</sup> In Ireland, Daniel O’Connell (1775-1847) can also be mentioned as an example of a nineteenth century lay statesman who championed a new order of religious tolerance and political liberalism.<sup>8</sup>

Yet, it was particularly in France and Germany that a sense of the ‘mysticism of politics,’ - as a perception of God present within social change - expressed itself both in political and social commentary. I identify three specific periods: early nineteenth century French Roman Catholic political consciousness; mid nineteenth century German Roman Catholic social consciousness; and late nineteenth century social and political initiatives.

#### **4.1.a French Roman Catholic political consciousness**

French Roman Catholic political consciousness arises in the vexed question of Church-State relations consequent to the French Revolution and attempts at Restoration. The termination of the *ancien régime* and the declaration of *fraternité, liberté, et égalité* awoke a political consciousness that could not be revoked, even though various attempts for the restoration of the French monarchy were to take place. This insistence on participation in the affairs of state could not but also become a demonstration for involvement in the concern for the Church’s place within society. Subsequently, even in initial attempts at ecclesiastical restoration, along with the foundation of new religious congregations committed to the projects of social welfare

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<sup>7</sup> Holmes and Bickers, *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, 251.

<sup>8</sup> See Mary O’Connell, *The Last Colonel of the Irish Brigade: Count O’Connell and old Irish life at home and abroad, 1745-1833*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1892).

and the missionary endeavour, themselves now largely drawing from the ranks of the lower classes rather than the aristocracy, opportunities for lay involvement began to emerge in new ways. By 1801, the “Central Office of Catholic Action’ had been established in France with around sixty other bodies associated with it.<sup>9</sup> It was to be followed in 1816 by the Society of Good Works and in June 1828 by the association, the Defence of the Catholic Religion with its newspaper *Le Correspondant*, and other publications. In such activities “the laity played a great participatory role not only as executors but also as initiators and cofounders.”<sup>10</sup>

These early developments argued for ecclesiastical identity within a changed political landscape. They reached a certain climax in the now infamous trip to Rome in December 1831 by the abbé Hugues-Félicité Robert de La Mennais (Lamennais) (1782-1854),<sup>11</sup> the Dominican Jean-Baptiste Henri Lacordaire (1802-1861), and the lay historian Charles René Forbes de Tryon Montalembert (1810-1870) in order to plead for the legitimisation of their views, expressed through *L’Avenir*, on the freedom of conscience, the separation of Church and State, democratic republicanism

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<sup>9</sup> The Central Office of Catholic Action was banned by Napoleon in 1809 but re-established in 1814. See Roger Aubert *et al*, *The Church between Revolution and Restoration*, History of the Church Series Volume VII, edited by Hubert Jedin and John Dolan, translated by Peter Becker (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 228.

<sup>10</sup> Aubert, *The Church between Revolution and Restoration*, 227.

<sup>11</sup> For biographical material on Lamennais I am primarily indebted to Alec R. Vidler, *Prophecy & Papacy: A study of Lamennais, the Church and the Revolution*, The Birkbeck Lectures 1952-1953, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1954); W. Gibson, *The Abbé de Lamennais and the Liberal Catholic Movement in France*, (London, New York and Bombay: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896); W.G. Roe, *Lamennais and England: The reception of Lamennais’ religious ideas in England in the nineteenth century*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966). See also Lord Stanley of Alderley, “Translator’s Preface,” in *Essay on Indifference in Matters of Religion* by Abbé F. de Lamennais, translated by Lord Stanley of Alderley, (London: John Macqueen, 1895), vii-xiv and Cuthbert Reavely, “Translator’s Foreword” in *The People’s Prophecy* by F. de Lamennais, (London: Andrew Dakers Limited, 1943), 7-18.



and national self-determination, and social and economic reform.<sup>12</sup> Lamennais' political liberalism also, however, had ecclesial implications for he also advocated a vernacular liturgical language, regular doctrinal instruction for the laity, "for broader public education, and for a greater role of the laity in ecclesiastical decisions."<sup>13</sup>

Moody introduces Lamennais' vision:

Lamennais belongs to the prophetic tradition: he sensed that the world was in process of an awesome mutation; he saw more clearly than most the direction in which history was moving. He was specific: the bulk of mankind [sic] was coming to demand a share in political-decision making and a portion of the new wealth that the machine was beginning to provide. He argued that the Church would have to deal with the many in forming policy. If the Church were to seek support among the people of God, she would be much more secure than trusting in the volatile will of monarchs.<sup>14</sup>

The *pélerins de Dieu et de la liberté* were unsuccessful, and condemned by the publication of *Mirari vos* (On liberalism and religious indifferentism) by Gregory XVI on 15 August, 1832, although on what grounds, political or theological, is a matter of historical debate.<sup>15</sup> Lamennais' political position was, however, not incongruent with a spiritual vision. Consequently, he assumes significance in the nineteenth century's development of a 'mysticism of politics.'

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<sup>12</sup> Holmes and Bickers, *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, 232. For further exploration of Montalembert see Charles René Forbes de Tryon Montalembert. *Letters to a schoolfellow 1827-1830*, translated from the French by C.F Audley, (London: Burns & Oates, 1874).

<sup>13</sup> Joseph N. Moody, "Note: The Condemnation of Lamennais: A New Dossier," *Theological Studies* 44 (March 1983), 123. Moody provides a worthwhile discussion of the 'l'affaire Lamennais' based on the research of M. J. LeGuillou and Louis LeGuillou, *La condamnation de Lamennais*. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1982). For a general historical exposition of Lamennais see Aubert, *The Church between Revolution and Restoration*, 227-235, 271-292.

<sup>14</sup> Moody, "The Condemnation of Lamennais," 129.

<sup>15</sup> See for example, Moody, "The Condemnation of Lamennais," 127; Vidler, *Prophecy and Papacy*, 184-266.

Initiated into the spiritual tradition by a translation of *Speculum monachorum* by the Benedictine reformer, Louis de Blois (1506-1566) early in his intellectual formation<sup>16</sup>, Lamennais, the introspect of La Chênai, was already arguing in 1817 for the indispensability of faith for both personal and social vitality and for the importance of solidarity that faith encourages, concluding,

From the precept of loving one's neighbour as oneself for the sake of God, flow all the laws of morality and of society. This single precept puts order into families, into the State, and amongst nations; for nations have amongst themselves the same relations, and are subject to the same duties as individuals. The perfect observation of this commandment would make of actual society a perfect reflection of the eternal society, of which we are one day to be members. . .

. . . Apply these considerations in detail to either domestic or social duties, and you will conceive that, without religion, everything is in disorder because all order is relative to God. Order in our thoughts is to know Him; order in our affections is to love Him; order in our actions, to serve Him, either directly, by the exercise of worship established by the Mediator in religious society; or indirectly, by the exercise of moral virtues, or of the worship we offer to His image in political society.<sup>17</sup>

Lamennais entertained an apocalyptic mysticism about social and political events unfolding. In 1832, learning in Munich about the failure of Polish patriots to find political liberation, he penned,

And I asked myself: "What is that?"

"And a voice answered me: 'It is a martyred people. *Through it a sacred mystery is being fulfilled.* It has been delivered up for a time to the powers of evil, in order that, steeped in suffering like iron in a torrent of water, it may become the sword which shall vanquish the evil genius of mankind. . .

" . . . What do you hear in those forests? The sad murmur of the wind. What do you see passing over those plains? The bird of passage seeking a place whereon to rest. Is that all? No, I see a Cross; turned towards the East, it marks the spot where the sun rises,

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<sup>16</sup> Refer to Lammenais, *The People's Prophecy*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> De Lamennais, *Essay on Indifference in Matters of Religion*, 297-298. The French original appeared in two volumes, 1817 and 1820, as *Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion*. Two further volumes followed in 1823. For a full discussion of the work see Vidler, *Prophecy & Papacy*, 68-100.

whilst on the evening air rise sweet, mysterious voices.”[Italics mine]<sup>18</sup>

Disillusioned with his condemnation, Lamennais’ apocalyptic perspective about a reign of peace in which production and consumption harmonised in an ideal community reached its high pitch in his 1834 publication of *Les paroles d’un croyant* – his retort to the papal condemnation, *Singulari nos* of 7 July, 1834. In commentary on social events, he declares,

Whence comes that confused sound, faint and strange, which is heard on all sides? Put your hand upon the earth, and tell me why it trembles. Something unknown is stirring in the world; some work of God is here. Is not everyone expectant? Is there a heart that does not beat?

. . . Oh, speak to me of the mysteries of this world which my desires foresee, and on whose breast my soul, wearied with earthly shadows, now longs to sink. Speak to me of Him Who made it and fills it with Himself, and Who alone can fill the immense void which it has hallowed out in me.<sup>19</sup>

Subsequently, Lamennais’ religious vision – a faith which, “had always been political and moral rather than dogmatic and scientific”<sup>20</sup> –became progressively divorced from Roman orthodoxy. His perception of the divine in the socio-political events of his time not only maintained but also, indeed, amplified into a glorification of *la race humaine*.<sup>21</sup> He understood that the rise of the people would be violent and awe-inspiring, *un grand tremblement, comme si la face de Dieu leur apparaissoit*.<sup>22</sup> This mingling of the divine and the human lost its distinction. His 1839 *De l’esclavage*

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted by the translator in De Lammenais, *The People’s Prophecy*,” 9, 10.

<sup>19</sup> Felicité de Lamennais, *Les paroles d’un croyant*, translated by Cuthbert Reavely, in *The People’s Prophecy*, 21, 119.

<sup>20</sup> Ernest Renan, a compatriot of Lamennais, quoted in De Lammenais, *The People’s Prophecy*, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Lamennais also understood this as the *sensus communis*, an infallible trait within humanity. See *Essai* II, 149, 150 as quoted in Vidler, *Prophecy & Papacy*, 87-88.

<sup>22</sup> *Politique à l’usage du peuple*, 1839 quoted by Roe, *Lamennais and England*, 20.

*moderne* asserted that since the end of all religion was simply to do the will of God, and since the improvement of society was undoubtedly the will of God, social duties and religious duties were the same.<sup>23</sup> By *Discussions critiques et Pensées diverses*, written whilst in the prison of Sainte-Pélagie (1840-1841),<sup>24</sup> he had developed a kind of pantheism in which religion had returned to the realm of purely natural laws, consisting in the proper development of the divine element in all people.<sup>25</sup>

Almost a century later, this pantheistic element in social development is echoed in the French writer Ernest Psichari (1883-1914).<sup>26</sup> He is worth mentioning here in light of the way in which he mirrors Lamennais' apocalyptic extremism of 'a mysticism of politics.' Psichari developed nothing less than a mysticism of war rendering military duty with a spiritual awakening. *La guerre est divin*, was Psichari's perception.<sup>27</sup> For him the monk and the soldier were fundamentally united. Influenced by Bergson, and inspired by Péguy's sensibility of France as the bearer of salvation, Psichari understood that the one called to arms for the glory of France, with his character mobilized by a great cause, first marched and then prayed. He walks in a supernatural

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<sup>23</sup> G.D.H. Cole in his *Socialist Thought, the Forerunners 1789-1850*, contended that *De l'esclavage moderne* was "one of the greatest documents in the history of the idea of the class struggle." See Roe, *Lamennais and England*, 187. Lamennais was also to have significance for the thinking of John Henry Newman, though the latter was apprehensive about the extent to which Lamennais might ultimately reject authority. See Marvin R. O'Connell, "Politics and Prophecy Newman and Lamennais," in *Newman after a Hundred Years*, edited by Ian Ker and Alan G. Hill, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 175-191.

<sup>24</sup> Lamennais was imprisoned following the publication of *Le Pays et le Gouvernement* in October, 1840 in which he compared the French constitution to an Oriental despotism. For an account of this episode, see Gibson, *The Abbé de Lamennais*, 309-311.

<sup>25</sup> Such is a theme pursued in the four volumed work, *Esquisse d'une philosophie* (1841-1846) in which Lamennais presents society as the finite expression of God. In *Discussions critiques*, Lamennais speaks of the *flux divin* which unites divinity with humanity. See Roe, *Lamennais and England*, 23-24.

<sup>26</sup> See particularly Ernest Psichari, *L'Appel des Armes*, (Paris: Conrad, 1918). The following information on Psichari is drawn from Wallace Fowlie, *Ernest Psichari: A study in religious conversion*, (London: James Clarke & Co, Ltd., 1938).

<sup>27</sup> See Fowlie, *Ernest Psichari*, 85.

light, in sacerdotal alliance, thus giving back to France its virtue by the accomplishment of his mission: “the blood shed on Calvary and the blood shed for the country are two sacrifices of purification, one of a natural order, the other of a supernatural order.”<sup>28</sup>

Lamennais’ thought never reached the military mysticism of Psichari who was to follow him, but its seeds are present. Nonetheless, though it diverted into unorthodox interpretations, and perhaps laid the basis for the senseless glorification of war as evidenced in the sacrificial Psichari a century later, the primary impulse of Lamennais’ thought should not be undervalued. As Gibson commented at the end of the nineteenth century,

But if Lamennais failed through the fact that he was no longer a Catholic, if he lost himself in the aimless wanderings of an unbridled mysticism, we are none the less forced to recognise the real speculative power which gave rise to this immense conception of an universal principle of evolution working itself out in the subject-matter of all the sciences, from the lowest to the highest, from the simplest to the most complicated. In his expression of this, and of that other idea, the manifestation of society in all phenomena, he leaves far behind him the foremost contemporary writers, not excluding Comte.<sup>29</sup>

Lamennais’ original vision had been shared by fellow cleric, Henri Lacordaire.

Lacordaire, very different by personality and without his early mentor’s apocalyptic

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<sup>28</sup> Fowlie, *Ernest Psichari*, 100. Fundamentalism, generally, has an inherent tendency towards the apocalyptic. This is a theme treated in a number of key biblical studies. See for example John J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979), 1-19; *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic studies since the Uppsala Colloquium*, edited by John J. Collins and James H. Charlesworth, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991); Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth: A study of millenarian activities*, (Oxford, UK and New York: Blackwell, 1969). For a contemporary perspective see John Gray, “Politics of the Apocalypse,” *The Tablet* (17 January, 2004), 4-5.

<sup>29</sup> Gibson, *The Abbé de Lamennais*, 294. Lamennais’ mystical doctrine of society is first enunciated in *Livre du Peuple* (1837) before being more fully developed in the four volumed work, *Equisse d’une philosophie* of 1841-1846. See Gibson, *The Abbé de Lamennais*, 308.

framework, nonetheless shared the perception of the ‘something more’ in historical developments. As with Lamennais, Lacordaire, too, came to religious fervour as a young man.<sup>30</sup>

With Lacordaire it was this Romantic sensibility that eventually triumphed and led him to religion; for the occasions of emotional experience were desperately inadequate when he came to explain it, to reconcile it with his own philosophy. He needed a faith to make his own feelings real to himself; he wanted to tear aside the curtain of reality, wanted to attain the greater reality that lay behind. Something forced him to penetrate beyond appearances in order to achieve some degree of personal contentment. But this need was not exclusively personal or individual; he was also continuously and earnestly concerned with the conditions that gave stability to society, with the ideals that might one day transform it into another paradise.<sup>31</sup>

Lacordaire had shared the Mennasian perspective, stating that “[t]o remove the Church from the state of interpenetration in order to place her in a state of absolute independence, in a word to free her, that is what must be done. The rest is just a mass of detail.”<sup>32</sup> When he broke with Lamennais in 1832 after the publication of *Mirari vos*, the influence of Lamennais, nonetheless, “had enlarged his recognition of the inherent goodness and power of the modern spirit, and he had acquired a new sympathy for the common people”<sup>33</sup> – an empathy formed in no small way by the influence of a certain Mme Swetchine and the more well remembered Frederic

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<sup>30</sup> For biographical information on Lacordaire I am primarily indebted to Lancelot C. Sheppard, *Lacordaire: A Biographical Essay*, (London: The Catholic Book Club, 1964); Philip Spencer, *Politics of Belief in Nineteenth Century France: Lacordaire, Michon, Veuillot*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1954); Bernard Chorceane, *The Inner Life of the Very Reverend Père Lacordaire, O.P.*, translated by Augusta T. Drane, eleventh edition, (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1923). For classic biographies of Lacordaire see R.C. Montalembert, *Memoir of Abbé Lacordaire*, (London, 1863) and Th. Foisset, *Vie du R.P. Lacordaire*, (Paris, 1873).

<sup>31</sup> Spencer, *Politics of Belief*, 36.

<sup>32</sup> A letter to M. Foisset, quoted in Sheppard, *Lacordaire*, 26.

<sup>33</sup> Spencer, *Politics of Belief*, 79.

Ozanam.<sup>34</sup> It was largely at the young Ozanam's behest that Lacordaire provided the eight Lenten conferences at Notre Dame 1835-1836 which give insight into his mystico-social consciousness even though, in his private spirituality he remained within the then fashionable temper of dolorism.<sup>35</sup>

Lacordaire was accused by some "of speaking of religious matters in too modern a spirit."<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, others speak of him as *filis d'un siecle dont il a tout aimé* - one of those who accepted their century.<sup>37</sup> He stressed his desire "to plant his feet firmly on the ground of the living reality and seek in it the traces of the divine, for there must exist a visible work which makes manifest before the eyes of all the wonder of God."<sup>38</sup> That Lacordaire had a passion for the world can be gleaned from this note in his memoirs,

Once a Christian, the world did not vanish from my sight; it grew with myself. Instead of the vain and transient theatre of disappointed or satisfied ambitions, I regarded it as a great man stricken by illness, who needed succour, an illustrious unfortunate uniting all the evils of the ages past and to come; and thenceforth I knew nothing comparable to the happiness of serving it, under the eye of God, with the Gospel and the cross of His Son.<sup>39</sup>

Consequently, Lacordaire entertained a keen discernment for the signs of the times.

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<sup>34</sup> Leaving Russia in 1825 on account of the brutality of Nicholas I, Mme Swetchin was, throughout the 1830's, hostess of one of the main Catholic salons in Paris. Her father had been a secretary to Catherine II. See Spencer, *Politics of Belief*, 55. Ozanam was introduced to Lacordaire through a series of lectures given by latter at Collège Stanislas, January 1834.

<sup>35</sup> Dolorism was a spirituality in which Christ was contemplated exclusively in terms of his suffering and the Cross. In this perspective, religious life and priesthood, for example, are seen as states of immolation. See Sheppard, *Lacordaire*, 178. For a full account see Chocarne, *The Inner Life of the Very Reverend Père Lacordaire*.

<sup>36</sup> Sheppard, *Lacordaire*, 54.

<sup>37</sup> See Sheppard, *Lacordaire*, 178.

<sup>38</sup> Henri Lacordaire, Conference 1, 1 March 1835 quoted in Sheppard, *Lacordaire*, 51.

<sup>39</sup> Henri Lacordaire, "Memoir of his Youth," in *Thoughts and Teachings of Lacordaire*, (London: Art and Book Company, 1902), 373.

Therefore it is that souls, occupied with God and with man, interrogate with sorrowful anxiety the signs of the time. As the Stoics, the only noble remnant of the beautiful ages of antiquity, thought of the future in their virtues, the souls who still have faith, the living remains of love grown cold, raise their anxious eyes to the horizon of an age which has made so many ruins, and which has hoped for so much from its ruins. As for myself, after them and very far from them, I gaze also: my gaze is already a hope, and, sad though it may be, a consolation.<sup>40</sup>

It was a hermeneutical perspective fashioned by his perception of the divine activity in the affairs of the world.

The ancients said that the sage, amid the silence of the night, could hear the music of the heavenly spheres fulfilling in space the harmonious laws of creation: thus the heart of man, when its passions are silent, may hear in the midst of the world the eternal voice of truth. Religion is a lyre suspended in heaven which, agitated at one and the same time by the divine breath and by that of men, gives forth sounds sad as those of a suffering soul and joyous as those of an angel, but always superior to humanity, and which ingratitude alone discerns not.<sup>41</sup>

Always Lacordaire is keen to identify the underlying reality of political and social events.

Even though the United States should last for a long time, it does not follow that they should be the invariable and universal model for all free communities. Here, as elsewhere, variety is the law of the world. Nothing assuredly could be more unlike than England and France from 1814 to 1848, although both had monarchical and parliamentary institutions. It is the spirit which is all-important in this question: it is the anti-religious spirit, with its doctrine of absolute equality and its desire for civil centralisation, which marred the great revolution of 1789, and always prevented it producing the fruits which might have been expected from it. So long as this spirit lasts, liberalism will be conquered by an oppressive democracy or by an absolute autocracy; and therefore it is that the union of liberty and Christianity is the only possible safeguard of the future.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Lacordaire, "The Six Epochs of History," in *Thoughts and Teachings of Lacordaire*, 330.

<sup>41</sup> Lacordaire, "The Philosophy of De la Mennais" in *Thoughts and Teachings of Lacordaire*, 340-341.

<sup>42</sup> Lacordaire, "Christianity and Democracy," Letter from Sorèze, 23 February 1861, quoted in *Thoughts and Teachings of Lacordaire*, 362.



Though he may be regarded as a forerunner more of ‘social Catholicism’ *per se*, Frédéric Ozanam (1813-1853), who championed Lacordaire, shared in this perspective of something deeper coming into being through political events.<sup>43</sup> Unlike Lamennais, Ozanam envisaged the ‘something more’ in social rather than apocalyptic terms. “Behind the political revolution, we see a social revolution, we see the arrival of the working class,” he penned.<sup>44</sup> That he identified with the emergent social order can clearly be seen from his correspondence.

When I say *passons aux barbares*, [let us go over to the barbarians] I don’t mean “to the radicals.” The sovereign pontiff seems to me to be implementing some of our views of the last twenty years. To go over on the side of the *barbarians*, means from the camp of the kings, of the statesmen since 1815, to go to the people. By saying *passons aux barbares*, I am asking that we do as he is doing, that we attend to the people. Our people has too many cares and too few rights; it is legitimately looking for a greater part in public affairs, with some assurances of work and against poverty. Our people has some poor leaders because good ones have not made themselves available; but it is not responsible for the rhetoric of bourgeois books or assemblies, they being outside its ken. Perhaps we will not convert Attila and Genseric, but with the help of God we may win the Huns and the Vandals.<sup>45</sup>

Though Ozanam only indirectly knew Lamennais the thinking of each of these French figures was united by the influence of two little known men, one a cleric, the other a layman: Abbé Philippe Gerbet and Charles de Coux, respectively. In the early 1830s Gerbet and de Coux organised a series of conferences at the University of Paris in which Ozanam had eagerly participated.

M. le Coux has started his course on political economy, full of depth and interest. You should send for the printed version. Large numbers attend; they are full of truth and of life and of a keen grasp

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<sup>43</sup> For a recent useful outline of Ozanam’s context, contribution and contemporary relevance, see John Honner, *Love and Politics: The revolutionary Frederic Ozanam*, (Melbourne: David Lovell Publishing, 2007).

<sup>44</sup> Correspondence, March 1848, quoted in Alec R. Vidler, *Century of Social Catholicism 1820-1920*, (London: SPCK, 1964), 85.

<sup>45</sup> Correspondence, 22 February, 1848, quoted in Vidler, *Century of Social Catholicism*, 78.

of the plague that is preying on society and of the only cure that will succeed.<sup>46</sup>

Vidler suggests that it was Ozanam himself who had suggested the topic for a course of Gerbet's, yet whatever the title's source, Ozanam attended the fortnightly lectures on the philosophy of history in 1832.<sup>47</sup> Never had he listened to a "more penetrating eloquence or to a profounder doctrine . . . Now at length we can say in truth: *Lux in tenebris lucet*."<sup>48</sup> More is known of Gerbet (1798-1864) than of de Coux (1787-1864). As Vidler indicates, de Coux was responsible for developing the notion of Christian socialism within *L'Avenir*, becoming professor of political economy at the new Catholic University in Louvain in 1834.<sup>49</sup> But it is in the thought of Gerbet that the spiritual dimension of political and economic involvement is raised.

Ultramontane, Gerbet was to become bishop of Perpignan in 1853, and in the end, conservative to the point of authoring an early draft of *Syllabus errorum*.<sup>50</sup> His work was to be profoundly characterised by both continuities and ruptures in theme.<sup>51</sup> It was whilst he was in Besançon in 1817 that Gerbet read the first volume of Lamennais' *Essai sur l'indifférence*, subsequently meeting him the following year

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<sup>46</sup> Correspondence, quoted in Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, 60.

<sup>47</sup> See Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, 60 and V. M. Crawford, *Frederic Ozanam: Catholic and Democrat*, (Oxford: Catholic Social Guild, 1947), 19.

<sup>48</sup> Correspondence to Falconnet, quoted in Crawford, *Frederic Ozanam*, 19.

<sup>49</sup> See Vidler, *Prophecy and Papacy*, 175-176. For biographical material on de Coux see also Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, 7-9. For de Coux's involvement with the Mennaisian school see G. Braive and E. Lamberts, "Lettres de Charles de Coux à l'abbé De Haerne (1831-1832)," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 66 (1971), 887-928; M.-M. de Coux-Euzennat, "Action institutionnelle ou engagement social: Lettres de Charles de Coux à Charles Périn, à Lacordaire et l'abbé Maret de 1845 à 1849," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 85 (1990), 669-700.

<sup>50</sup> See Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, 9.

<sup>51</sup> See Paul Fournier, "Gerbet Philippe Olympe," in *Les Sciences Religieuses: le XIXe siècle 1800-1914*, edited by François Laplanche, Volume 9 of *Dictionnaire du monde Religieux dans la France Contemporaine*, edited by Jean-Marie Mayeur and Yves-Marie Hilaire, (Paris: Beauchesne, 1996), 279.

when pursuing theological studies at Saint-Sulpice.<sup>52</sup> Gerbet was to become Lamennais' closest friend and advisor at La Chênaie until the publication of *Paroles d'un croyant* in 1834 when they painfully separated.

Crawford comments that "to his friends Gerbet appeared almost as a new Fénelon. It was of him Sainte-Beuve wrote in one of his *Causeries du Lundi*, that he was the author of some of the most suave and beautiful pages in French spiritual literature."<sup>53</sup> In his first work, *Des doctrines philosophiques sur la certitude dans leurs rapports avec les fondements de la théologie* (Paris, 1826), Gerbet built on the Mennaisian doctrine of the 'sens commun' which championed humanity itself as the criterion of truth and provided a hermeneutical key to history.<sup>54</sup> He imagined, however, that *la raison générale* – present everywhere and always as a seed of divine revelation (*la revelation divine primitive*) – was caught in a battle of two principles, the *principe catholique* which affirmed the place of the authority of all believers, in the Church, as the criterion of truth and which created order, and the *principe philosophique*, which was subject to the vagaries of individual prejudices and whims and created anarchy. Convinced that the *principe catholique* would be victorious in this battle, as elucidated in *Coup d'oeil sur la controverse chrétienne depuis les premiers siècles jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris, 1831), Gerbet developed such a dichotomy into the further Mennaisian distinction between the 'order of faith' and the 'order of thought' played

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<sup>52</sup> This biographical information is taken from Fournier, "Gerbet Philippe Olympe," 277-279.

<sup>53</sup> Crawford, *Frederic Ozanam*, 19.

<sup>54</sup> For this summation of Gerbet's thinking I am indebted to Fournier, "Gerbet Philippe Olympe," 278.

out in the wrestle between Church and State, itself representing a new progression of human history.<sup>55</sup>

In his *Considérations sur le dogme générateur de la piété catholique* (Paris, 1829), Gerbet appropriates the Mennaisian system into a Eucharistic context in which he declares that the Eucharist, *principe inépuisable de l'amour, est le coeur d'un catholicisme où tout est 'social,' car elle satisfait pleinement toutes les aspirations profondes de l'homme dans son besoin d'action et de contemplation* – the Eucharist, “the inexpressible principle of love, is the heart of Catholicism where all is social, because it fully satisfies all the profound aspirations of humanity in its need of both action and contemplation.”<sup>56</sup>

Lammenais, Lacordaire, Ozanam, Gerbe: each of these figures intimate a ‘mysticism of politics’ - though in very different ways and at different levels. Their perspective is tempered by their personalities, their ecclesial identification and their intuitions about the emergent social and political order. All of them perceive that it is in the process of social engagement and the pursuit of the common good, i.e. in ‘the political’ as it is defined in the first instance in this study that the experience of God was to be enjoyed. If this is one such legacy of this period in early nineteenth century France how is something similar to be discovered in another context, that of Germany, in which Catholic social consciousness becomes particularly formulated?

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<sup>55</sup> Gerbet outlines the philosophical and social consequences of this in his six *Conferences de philosophie catholique* of 1829 and *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire* of 1832-1833. See Fournier, “Gerbet Philippe Olympe,” 278.

<sup>56</sup> Fournier, “Gerbet Philippe Olympe,” 278.

#### 4.1.b German Roman Catholic social consciousness

As Misner demonstrates, the term, ‘social Catholicism,’ is present in embryonic form in those French political initiatives outlined above. As he comments, social Catholicism,

is here seen as one important aspect of the development of modern Catholicism as a whole. In a second crucial respect as well, it is a virtually unprecedented phenomenon in the history of the church. The term “social Catholicism” refers heuristically to Catholic responses to economic modernization in particular, hence to the industrialization process and its consequences in the social classes. This complex development, taken as a whole, constitutes a sharp turn in the history of humankind, a unique movement with no close analogies in prior history. It was in process even before the French Revolution and independently of it. The process commenced with the well-named industrial revolution in Great Britain. It reached Catholic countries first in Belgium and France in the 1820s and 1830s.<sup>57</sup>

Vidler contends that the term, ‘social Catholicism’ did not come into use until towards the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>58</sup> Yet, the reality to which it responded existed much earlier.

Amid all its varied manifestations it represented the belief that it was possible and a matter of moral obligation to improve the social structures as well as to bring charitable relief to the victims of industrialisation, although in the early stages it was not always easy to draw so sharp a distinction.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Paul Misner, *Social Catholicism in Europe: From the onset of industrialisation to the First World War*, (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 3. For two standard treatments on the origins of social Catholicism, see Joseph N. Moody, ed., *Church and Society: Catholic social and political thought and movements 1789-1950*, (New York: Arts Inc., 1953) and Jean Baptiste Duroselle, *Les débuts du catholicisme social en France (1822-1870)*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1951).

<sup>58</sup> Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, xi. See also A. Dansette, *Religious History in Modern France, Volume 1: From the Revolution to the Third Republic*, translated by John Dingle, (Freiburg: Herder/Edinburgh-London: Nelson, 1961), xi-xii.

<sup>59</sup> Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, xii.

Though social Catholicism cannot be understood apart from the traditional evangelical imperative to tend to the poor, this particular nineteenth century response demarcated itself by a,

certain degree of economic insight or at least alertness to new conditions . . . As Duroselle suggests, a necessary condition of social Catholicism is that one regard the misery of the working classes as a state of things that ought not to be and can be changed for the better.”<sup>60</sup>

By no means was social Catholicism an homogeneous movement. It was overall a constellation of various responses to the ‘social question’ posed by industrialisation in which there co-existed conservative, ‘liberal’ and pre-Marxist solutions.<sup>61</sup> Embryonic examples of social Catholicism are French. Though the St. Vincent de Paul Society, itself founded in 1833, can only be indirectly conceived as contributing to it,<sup>62</sup> Ozanam, its founder, nonetheless had come to a more expressive sense of it in the publication *Ère Nouvelle*, with Abbé Henri-Louis-Charles Maret (1805-1884) in February 1848. Lacordaire was its editor for a short time, and it advocated a new social Catholicism through open calls for a ‘Christian economy’ and a ‘Christian socialism.’ In the prospectus of the new publication, Ozanam and his collaborators stated:

We see with sorrow the moral and physical hardships of so many of our brothers who bear here below the heaviest part of the world’s work, a part that has become still more oppressive through the development of industry and civilization. We do not believe that these evils are incapable of being remedied. While none of the children of men can escape suffering, charity wedded to science can all the same do something to reduce its incidence, even if it cannot stop it altogether. The Church has always worked to that end; in no period has she lost sight of the poor, and now more than ever, if that

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<sup>60</sup> Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, 39-40; 50-51.

<sup>61</sup> See Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, 42-43.

<sup>62</sup> See Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, 59.

be possible, because of the new and strange ills that beset the world, she has her eyes and her heart on the wounds of humanity. We expect, we must expect, the Republic to use its power to relieve the miseries of the largest number of its children.<sup>63</sup>

Both Ozanam and Maret understood that along with individual charity there should be “another movement inspired by Christianity,” socio-economic in nature, and which worked toward a just re-distribution of wealth.<sup>64</sup>

It was in Germany, however, that this new movement would particularly gather momentum towards the mid nineteenth century. During the 1840s Father Adolph Kolping organised the *Gesellenverein*, “societies consisting of master workmen and young journeymen directed by a chaplain who tried to assist the moral intellectual development as well as to improve the economic conditions of their members.”<sup>65</sup> By 1901, the *Gesellenverein* had a membership of over 500, 000 people.<sup>66</sup>

He was assisted by Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler (1811-1877).<sup>67</sup> Von Ketteler was originally a civil servant. However, in disillusionment with the 1837 imprisonment of Cologne’s Archbishop Clemens August Freiherr Droste zu Vizhering for refusing to hand over children of mixed marriages to Protestantism, he,

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<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, 38.

<sup>64</sup> Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, 40.

<sup>65</sup> Holmes and Bickers, *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, 227.

<sup>66</sup> Holmes and Bickers, *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, 228.

<sup>67</sup> For biographical material on von Ketteler, see William Edward Hogan, *The Development of Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler’s Interpretation of the Social Problem*, The School of Social Sciences, The Catholic University of America Studies in Sociology 22, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1946). Hogan draws from the first English study of von Ketteler by George Metlake, *Christian Social Reform: Program outlined by its pioneer William Emmanuel Baron von Ketteler Bishop of Mainz*, (Philadelphia: The Dolphin Press, 1912). For significant extracts of Ketteler’s thought see also Georges Goyau, *Ketteler, La Pensée Chrétienne Textes et Études*, (Paris: Librairie Bloud & Co., 1907).

henceforth, identified with the needs of the working class. Ordained, and made Bishop of Mainz in 1850, von Ketteler worked to develop a strong social consciousness, eventually providing the basis of the German Centre Party's social platform.<sup>68</sup> Yet, von Ketteler's approach also testifies to a strong spirituality of social involvement.

Whilst still pastor at Hopsten, von Ketteler, almost in analogous fashion to Lacordaire's Paris Lenten Sermons some years earlier, delivered the now famous 1848 six discourses, "Great Social Questions of the Day" in Mainz Cathedral. Earlier, von Ketteler had affirmed his spiritual belief that,

with [Christ] . . . we will be able to transfigure the world into a true paradise . . . in a complete way to found, in love, in unity and in harmony, true humanity; similarly – I affirm it as the deepest conviction of my heart – to re-establish a community of well being (*communauté des biens*), to inaugurate the reign of perpetual peace, and to create at the same time the freest political and social institutions.<sup>69</sup>

In the Mainz lectures, themselves, Von Ketteler shared his French counterparts' belief that only in Christian faith and in the Church could genuine answers for the political and social upheaval be found.

Let us make the world subject to us by the power of this love and bring it back to the Cross from which it has turned away. Then, and only then, shall we preserve the faith; for faith in Christ can exist only where the charity of Christ is bound up with it. Let us overcome the world with works of love and lead it back to Christ, to the Catholic faith! . . .

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<sup>68</sup> Of von Ketteler, Karl Marx wrote in a letter to Friedrich Engels, 25 September, 1869, "During this trip through Belgium, my sojourn in Aachen and the tour up the Rhine river I have come to the conviction that we have to combat the clerics vigorously, especially in the Catholic areas . . . The scoundrels are flirting with the workers' question whenever it seems appropriate." Quoted in Aubert *The Church in the Industrial Age*, 229.

<sup>69</sup> Fragments of a talk given 21 September, 1848 at the tomb of Prince Lichnowsky, quoted in Goyau, *Ketteler*, 3. [Translation mine]



But the more powerless the doctrine of the world is to help us, the more powerful is the doctrine of Christianity. It is precisely in social questions that the fullness of its power is manifested.<sup>70</sup>

For von Ketteler, the “pastor of souls in a social world,”<sup>71</sup> however, this was not an ultramontane concern as it was a spiritual responsibility:

. . . I ask you, how is it possible for doctrines [economic patterns] which so manifestly contradict the most natural truths to arise and spread far and wide? How is it possible that on the one hand we see rich men, in the face of the most elementary laws of nature and without a qualm of conscience, wasting their substance riotously, while the poor are starving and children degenerate? How is it possible for us to relish superfluities whilst our brothers are in want of the barest necessities of life? How is it possible that our hearts do not break in the midst of revelry and song when we think of the poor sick who in the heat of the fever are stretching out their hands for refreshment and no one is by to give it to them? How is it that we can go through the streets of our cities with joy in our hearts, when at every step we meet poor children, human beings, images of God like ourselves, who grow up in the deepest moral and physical degradation . . . . How is it possible for men to become so inhuman?<sup>72</sup>

We must bridge over the vast abyss that yawns between the rich and the poor; we must heal the deep-rooted moral corruption into which so many of our poor brethren have fallen, who have lost all faith, all hope, all love of God and their neighbour; we must relieve the spiritual poverty of the poor. . . .<sup>73</sup>

Yet, for von Ketteler it is the poor themselves who have something to reveal about the nature of Christian faith:

No more palpable proof of the divine power and truth of Christianity, it seems to me, can be found than the cheerfulness it is

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<sup>70</sup> “On the Right to Private Property”, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Discourse, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1848, quoted in Metlake, *Christian Social Reform*, 41, 47.

<sup>71</sup> See Hogan, *The Development of Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler's Interpretation of the Social Problem*, 252.

<sup>72</sup> “On the Right to Private Property”, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Discourse, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1848, quoted in Metlake, *Christian Social Reform*, 42.

<sup>73</sup> “On the Right to Private Property”, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Discourse, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1848, quoted in Metlake, *Christian Social Reform*, 52.

able to infuse into the souls of the afflicted. Standing beside the bed of such silent sufferers, I could not but wonder and adore. In their poverty, misery and nameless pains I never heard a word of complaint; they were filled with an interior joy such as I had never observed in the worldly-minded amidst all their pleasures. All I had ever seen and heard in the world of courage, strength, resoluteness, paled before the courage and strength with which I beheld Christian souls bearing up under their sufferings . . . Bring the teachers of materialism to the bedside of the sick, to the dying, to the grave – and the flood of their eloquence will dry up.<sup>74</sup>

The following year, whilst holding the provostship of St. Hedwig's, Berlin, von Ketteler's thinking in this regard had consolidated. "One often tends to think of almsgiving as merely a good deed, but seldom does one think of it in terms of one's serious duty. Such an attitude is an erroneous one for any Christian to support. I assure you, and in this I rely upon the teaching of St. Thomas and St. Ligouri, that, in general, almsgiving is a Christian duty, as holy and as earnest as any other duty without the fulfilment of which we can not become saints."<sup>75</sup>

Von Ketteler was to take this insight further. In his paper, "On the Care of the Church for Factory Workpeople, Journeymen, Apprentices and Servant Girls," prepared for the September, 1869 Conference of German Bishops in Fulda, he stated categorically,

The Church must help to solve the social question, because it is indissolubly bound up with her mission of teaching and guiding mankind . . .

The social question touches the deposit of faith. Even if it was not evident that the principle underlying the doctrines of economic Liberalism, which has been aptly styled "a war of all against all," is in flagrant contradiction with the natural law and the doctrine of universal charity, there is no doubt that, arrived at a certain stage of development, this system, which, in a number of countries, has

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<sup>74</sup> "On Human Destiny," 4<sup>th</sup> Discourse, December 1848, quoted in Metlake, *Christian Social Reform*, 56.

<sup>75</sup> 9 December, 1849 quoted in Hogan, *The Development of Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler's Interpretation of the Social Problem*, 45.

produced a working-class sick in body, mind and heart, and altogether inaccessible to the graces of Christianity, is diametrically opposed to the dignity of a human being and *a fortiori* of a Christian, in the mind of God . . .<sup>76</sup>

He had given this insight radical pastoral demonstration several years earlier, declaring in his *Die Arbeiterfrage und das Christentum* (Christianity and the Labor Question) of the spring of 1864, “Subsidiarily, however, the poor have a right to the property of the Church, for according to Canon Law and the intention of the donors, the patrimony of the Church is at the same time the patrimony of the poor.”<sup>77</sup>

There was another practical dimension to situating attention to the social question at the heart of Catholic faith. Von Ketteler was clear that it was not “the mission of the Church to found associations and institutions for workmen herself and take their direction into her own hands,”<sup>78</sup> but, nonetheless, there was the need for co-operation by the Church with those social agencies committed to similar objectives

It would be a great folly on our part if we kept aloof from this movement [unionism] merely because it happens at the present time to be promoted chiefly by men who are hostile to Christianity. The air remains God’s air though breathed by an atheist, and the bread we eat is no less the nourishment provided for us by God though kneaded by an unbeliever. It is the same with unionism: it is an idea that rests on the divine order of things and is essentially Christian, though the men who favour it most do not recognise the finger of God in it and often even turn it to a wicked use.

. . . Just as the great truths which uplift and educate the workingman – his individuality and personality – are Christian truths, so also Christianity has the great ideas and living forces capable of imparting life and vigor to the workingmen’s associations.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Quoted in, Metlake, *Christian Social Reform*, 177.

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in Metlake, *Christian Social Reform*, 125.

<sup>78</sup> Von Ketteler, “On the Care of the Church for Factory Workpeople, Journeymen, Apprentices and Servant Girls,” quoted in Metlake, *Christian Social Reform*, 181.

<sup>79</sup> Von Ketteler, “Christianity and the Labour Question,” Spring 1864, quoted in Metlake, *Christian Social Reform*, 127.

In developing this openness to the currents of his time, and recognising in them the potential for the apostolic mission to be realised, von Ketteler also gives expression to the sacramentality of human labour.

It is with work as with other valuable things, whose importance we overlook because they are so common. What is more common than light? Yet it is one of the most beneficent gifts of God, which not only allows us to see the objects of the created world, but also moves us to raise our thoughts to the Source of Eternal Light and Truth. What is more common than bread? Yet it is not merely one of the necessary things of earthly life, but also the real and true symbol of the spiritual food that give eternal life to the world. So too there is something grand, something mysterious about work. Revelation alone can teach us its true significance.

Five Christian labor rules: to work because it is the will of God, to combine work and prayer; to work willingly, honestly, and well; to work without complaining; to work in the state of grace; for ‘just as the sap of the vine is communicated even to the tiniest branches, so grace and benediction flow out of the infinite fullness of the merits of Christ to every drop of sweat that moistens the brow of the Christian toiling in union with Jesus for God.’<sup>80</sup>

#### **4.1.c Late 19<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholic Social and Political Initiative**

Von Ketteler’s personal initiatives took place within a wider German consciousness of the ‘social question’ and cannot be seen in isolation from it. His own advocacy of ‘a ministry beyond the traditional pastoral role’<sup>81</sup> subsumed a great many initiatives springing up from German Catholics.

The first national assembly of German Catholics took place in 1848, organised by the *Piusverein*, an association founded in the same year by Fr. Adam Lennig. Through such initiatives the German laity become increasingly self-confident. Consequent to

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<sup>80</sup> Von Ketteler, “Pastoral”, 1 February, 1877, quoted in Metlake, *Christian Social Reform*, 223.

<sup>81</sup> See Misner, *Social Catholicism in Europe*, 143.

this, the *Katholikentag* emerged as an annual forum for deliberation on social issues as did the *Volksverein* which stimulated meetings of Catholic workers.<sup>82</sup> Further initiatives were represented by the formation of the *Arbeiterverein vom heiligen Paulus* (Workers' Society of Saint Paul) in 1869 by E. Cronenberg of Aachen and Dr. Litzinger. In 1879 in Mönchen-Gladbach, the *Arbeiterwohl*, an association of "Catholic industrialists and friends of the workers" was founded through the influence of the industrialist Franz Brandts (1834-1914).<sup>83</sup> The work of the Fribourg Union, around the same time, advocating international agreements to guarantee workers' rights, went on to provide the basis of Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum novarum*, through a memorandum by them to the pope in 1888.<sup>84</sup> There can be little doubt that all these types of initiatives found their crowning point, indeed, in the pontificate of Leo XIII (1878-1903). As an Italian bishop he had the experience of agricultural poverty first hand, aware of the work of figures such as Bishop Geremia Bonomelli of Cremona and his pastoral "Property and Socialism", the layman Alessandro Rossi who, like Harmel, had converted his factory into a Christian corporation<sup>85</sup> as well as the inspiration of the saintly Vincent Pallotti (1795-1850). The pontificate of Leo XIII was to encourage the best use of existing liberal institutions with a constant and generous encouragement of all forms of Catholic organisations in which laity played

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<sup>82</sup> The first *Katholikentag* occurred at Mainz on 3 October 1848. See Aubert, *The Church in a Secularised Society*, 137. Further lay congresses began in Austria in 1877 and Switzerland in 1903. The *Katholikentag* has continued to be a vibrant expression of German Catholic life to the present. See <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katholikentag>, accessed 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2004.

<sup>83</sup> Aubert, *The Church in the Industrial Age*, 41, 47.

<sup>84</sup> Holmes and Bickers, *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, 248. See also Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, 125-127. The Fribourg Union consisted of a handpicked group of social Catholic leaders from France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Belgium and Switzerland under the chairmanship of Mgr. Gaspar Mermillod (1824-1892), Bishop of Fribourg.

<sup>85</sup> Holmes and Bickers, *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, 248.

an active role. Seeking to rechristianise governments at their roots, he entertained the idea of capillary action on the part of laity, permeating the lives of those around them.

The French parallel to these German initiatives can be found in the latter part of the century, for as Vidler mentions French social Catholicism, “entered into an almost exclusively charitable phase” after the Revolution of 1848.<sup>86</sup> Primary was the foundation of *Cercles catholiques d’ouvriers* in 1871 by Albert de Mun whose goal was “to unite the Catholics in the ‘*défense religieuse*’ and the ‘*action sociale*.’”<sup>87</sup> An offshoot of this was the *Association catholiques de la jeunesse française* (ACJF), which de Mun subsequently founded in 1886, “with the aim of enabling young people to ‘co-operate in the rebuilding of a Christian social order’ [according to] its motto, ‘Piety, Study, Action . . .’”<sup>88</sup>

Other initiatives included the formation of the first Christian trade union movement, *Syndicate des Employés du Commerce et de l’Industrie* in 1887; the establishment in 1889 of the *Union fraternelle du Commerce et de l’industrie*, an association of shopkeepers and small manufacturers, by Léon Harmel (1829-1915) and abbé Alet;<sup>89</sup> the foundation in 1892 of a rural system of co-operatives by E. Duport and L. Durand which formed the basis of *Ligue agricole chrétienne* with the aim, “to further the members in religious, moral, intellectual, social and material respects;” the

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<sup>86</sup> Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, 123.

<sup>87</sup> Refer to Aubert, *The Church in the Industrial Age*, 220-233.

<sup>88</sup> Refer to Aubert, *The Church in a Secularised Society*, 137.

<sup>89</sup> Léon Harmel is described as a man of intense, simple, mystical faith, a tertiary of St. Francis, who placed great significance in the lay apostolate. See Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, 124. See also Holmes and Bickers, *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, 248.

establishment of the *Union sociale des ingénieurs catholiques* by Abbé Puppey-Girard also in 1892.

The French experience did not galvanise such large instrumental congresses. However, a number of earlier important initiatives, prior to the disenchantment of 1851, need to be mentioned for they are seminal in the formation of a lay consciousness and in providing the context for the cultivation of a social faith. Primary among these is the Society of St. Francis Xavier founded in 1840 and the work of Françoise-Auguste Ledreuille (1797-1860).<sup>90</sup> The Society of St. Francis Xavier began as a society for adult workers with a catechetical orientation. It developed into a friendly society with a range of social benefits. However, one of its primary characteristics was the participation of laymen in giving religious instruction. Ledreuille, himself, was a popular lay speaker at these meetings. Though ordained a deacon in 1819 he had left the clerical state pursuing an academic career in philosophy and literature. Extending the work of the Society in 1844 through the establishment of a *Maison des Ouvriers* – an employment bureau – he finally accepted ordination by the Mgr. Affre, the famed Archbishop of Paris who was later to die at the barricades in 1848, henceforth becoming known as *Le Père des Ouvriers* – the “Workers’ Priest.” The *Universe*, at the time, recorded the event thus:

This new apostle of the people celebrated his first mass last Sunday amid an immense concourse of the faithful among whom there was a large number of the members of the Society of St. Francis Xavier. At the communion long files of working men came forward to take their place at the altar rail . . . The crowd was much moved, and recalled how in the midst of society rotten with materialism, as ours is, Christianity had through men of the people marched to the conquest of the world.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> The following is drawn from Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, 29-32.

<sup>91</sup> Quoted in Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, 31.

Throughout, the French experience of a social faith manifested itself politically more than economically. Subsequently, *le père des ouvriers*, in the figure of Ledreuille, gave way by the end of the nineteenth century to the *abbés démocrates* – expressed in such a character as Jules Lemire (1853-1928).<sup>92</sup> Lemire, Deputy of Hazebrouck in the French parliament, was a contested figure, finally censured in 1914.<sup>93</sup> His social involvement was motivated in a threefold way: religious renewal; social reform; and acceptance of the republic. In these he desired universal suffrage, action for and by the people.<sup>94</sup> The group to which he belonged, the *abbés démocrates*, was among the first to fully explore the notion of “the place of the Christian in a secularised society” and “the Christian values implicit in secular activity.”<sup>95</sup>

The first half of the nineteenth century in France and Germany saw notable examples, illustrating a tendency of both thought and action towards a ‘mysticism of politics’. So, too, in the second half of the century in both the French and German context we see further instances emerge in response to the evolution of both industrialism and democratic principle. A ‘mysticism of politics’ however exists in tension with its polarity – a ‘politics of mysticism.’ In this variant ‘the mystical’ is engaged for both the assertion and preservation of social identity and power. This might be demonstrated particularly through the piety of Roman Catholic restorationism.

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<sup>92</sup> See Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, 132. For a full treatment of Jules Lemire see J.M. Mayeur, *Un Prêtre démocrate, l'Abbé Lemire, 1853-1928*, (Paris-Tournai: Casterman, 1968). See also a review of the same by Paul Droulers, *Gregorianum* 52 (1971), 390-392.

<sup>93</sup> See Aubert, *The Church in a Secularised Society*, 158.

<sup>94</sup> Droulers, “Review”, 391.

<sup>95</sup> Aubert, *The Church in a Secularised Society*, 157.



## 4.2 The ‘Politics of Mysticism’: Piety of Roman Catholic Restoration

Lemire presented as a fitting figure contrasting the ‘mysticism of politics’ as represented in the emergence of social Catholicism, and the ‘politics of mysticism’ that dominated the religious piety of the nineteenth century. In his opening paragraph in an address on “The Present Duties of the Clergy” given in the diocese of Tarentaise in 1902 he states,

I come to you, gentlemen, as the explorer of a world, which you can hardly be said to frequent, the political world. I have been in this world for as long as ten years. I will gladly stay there. I do not want to say anything ill of it. To do so would be to condemn myself. I have another reason for speaking well of it. Too many French Catholics live in their country like the Hebrews in Egypt – *like exiles in the interior*. Those of them, whether priests or laymen, who are sent by universal suffrage as elected representatives and into the thick of society, ought not to return with empty hands or with discouraging words, but like the messengers of Moses on their return from Canaan, with fine grapes on their shoulders and with alluring descriptions of the promised land. [Italics mine]<sup>96</sup>

The term *émigrés de l'intérieur* had gained currency by the end of the nineteenth century to denote a particular religious stance that demarcated itself from the society that was developing around it. It was a tendency which was to be epitomized in the pontificate of Pius IX, (1846-1878), which brought a growth in piety characterised by its defensiveness against social secularisation. As Görres, the twentieth century biographer of Thérèse of Lisieux whose popular cult typified the unmoored baroque spirituality of the late nineteenth century French school of spirituality, comments,

Out of their surprise and perplexity [to the dramatic social changes taking place around them] two crucial responses formed in the hearts of the devout, responses which have continually influenced the character of Catholic life to the present day. The one was a fervent, unconditional affirmation of love and loyalty to the Church, in which all the pathos of the piety of the period was expressed; the other as a never-ending, equally passionate exclusive negation of the victorious, usurping power of ‘modernity’ in all spheres of life.

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<sup>96</sup> Jules Lemire, *Les Devoirs actuels du Clergé*, 1903, quoted in Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, 132.

Perhaps never before and never since has there been so painfully vigilant, so sensitive, so unconditional and, uncritical a devotion, such blind loyalty, to the Church, and not only to it, but to everything connected to it . . . The devout laid stress, eagerly and assiduously, upon everything that distinguished them from the others, everything unmistakably pertaining to their particular faith . . . For the devout of this type the world was divided plainly into a chessboard of black and white squares; there were no shades between . . . French *esprit* created for the pious Catholics of that era the pointed, perhaps malicious, perhaps melancholic name, *émigrés de l'intérieur*, a phrase revived in the twentieth century as a political concept: exiles who have remained at home and who nevertheless have emigrated from the prevailing order, who are fugitives from the whole life of the nation, left-overs of a vanished era, quietly longing for a return to a or restlessly bent upon reconquest of the past.<sup>97</sup>

Though the situation varied widely across Europe, it could be well summed up by another French phrase juxtaposing the '*déchristianisation du peuple*' and the '*rechristianisation de la bourgeoisie*.'<sup>98</sup> Though intense under Pius IX, such devotional piety did not abate under Leo XIII who devoted nine encyclicals and seven apostolic letters to the rosary alone.<sup>99</sup> These forms of piety were,

invigorated through demonstrative gestures in ceremonies of consecration, through liturgical festivities and through the confirmation of congregations and fraternities. They were valued as socially integrating factors in the forms of Catholicism taking shape within the various countries. And yet their significance cannot be recognised unless they are valued as the daily religious nourishment of the faithful who were living in a strange and hostile environment and who, in those pious exercises, found the strength to remain loyal to a faith which was finding less and less support in a secular world.<sup>100</sup>

Thus, the steady emergence of political and social consciousness throughout the nineteenth century with its primary orientation to situate the Church in a concern for

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<sup>97</sup> Ida Görres, *The Hidden Face: A Study of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1959), 25-27.

<sup>98</sup> Aubert, *The Church in the Industrial Age*, 257.

<sup>99</sup> Aubert, *The Church in the Industrial Age*, 263.

<sup>100</sup> Aubert, *The Church in the Industrial Age*, 257.

both the separation of church and state, and the implications of industrialisation, was not without a kind of counter-argument for which such a concern was considered more as threat.

As early as 1815, upon the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte's messianic vision, the voices of Catholic lay apologists began to be sounded emphasising "the need for a religious basis of society . . . contrast[ing] that necessity with the insufficiency of philosophy as an adequate social foundation."<sup>101</sup> Among these were Francois-Auguste Vicomte de Chateaubriand (1768-1848),<sup>102</sup> Louis Gabriel Ambroise Vicomte de Bonald and Joseph Marie Maistre (1753-1821)<sup>103</sup> in France, Count Friedrich Leopold zu Stolberg in Germany, Friedrich von Schlegel in Austria, Alessandro Manzoni in Italy, Karl Ludwig von Haller in Switzerland, Nikolaus von Eckstein in Denmark – "all laud[ing] the emotional satisfaction and cultural inspiration which they found in Christianity and Catholicism."<sup>104</sup> They were to be joined by others such as Bishop Rafael de Vélez of Ceuta in his 1818 publication of *Apology for Altar and Throne*, by Adam Müller's 1820 work, *Of the Necessity of a Theological Foundation for the Idea of the State* and Prince Capece Minutolo of Canossa's 1825 book, *On the utility of the Roman Catholic Christian religion for the tranquillity of people and the security of thrones*.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Holmes and Bickers, *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, 221.

<sup>102</sup> See Francois-Auguste Vicomte de Chateaubriand, *Recollections of Italy, England and America, with essays on various subjects, in morals and literature*, (London: Printed for Henry Colburn, 1815).

<sup>103</sup> See Joseph De Maistre, *The Works of Joseph de Maistre*, selected, translated and introduced by Jack Lively; new foreword by Robert Nisbet, (New York: Schocken Books, 1971).

<sup>104</sup> Holmes and Bickers, *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, 221

<sup>105</sup> Holmes and Bickers, *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, 222.

Just as social Catholicism had its crowning point in Leo XIII, the other concomitant source of Catholic spirituality through the nineteenth century found its consolidating affirmation in the pontificate which preceded Leo XIII, that of Pius IX (1846-1878). The pontificate of Pius X (1903-1914) was also defensive in response to the modernist crisis though it lacked the kind of condemnation of emerging secularisation as an apostasy of Christian faith by its own orientation toward liturgical renewal and encouragement of the lay apostolate and Catholic Action. As Holmes and Bickers indicate,

The Ultramontanes [of Pius IX's time however] came to believe that there was an absolute dichotomy between Catholicism and the contemporary world while the pope himself took up the position that Christendom had apostatized. The appropriate action of Catholics was intense loyalty to the central power, unity among themselves and separation from the outside world. This attitude was publicised by such laymen as Louis Veuillot [1813-1883] in France, Juan Donoso Cortés, Marquis of Valdegamas in Spain and William George Ward [1812-1882] in England.<sup>106</sup>

It was a view silhouetted against the strongly maintained clerical vision of the Church throughout this period, despite the growth of lay consciousness. Congar situates such a rigid stance primarily in reaction to the 'communal movement' of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The movement had,

helped towards a greater appreciation of the aspect of *Societas fidelium* in the Church, a community made by its members" in the long term, but its exaggerated form eschewed other critical dimensions of the Church's mystery.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Holmes and Bickers, *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, 240. For the work of Veuillot, see Louis Veuillot, *The Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, translated from the seventh French edition by Anthony Farley, (New York: Catholic Publication Society, 1875); and for Cortés, see Juan Donoso Cortés, *Essays on Catholicism, liberalism, and socialism: considered in their fundamental principles*, translated from the Spanish by William McDonald, (Dublin: M. H. Gill, 1888).

<sup>107</sup> Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 117.

It was an ecclesiology socially supported by Eucharistic, Marian, Sacred Heart and St. Joseph pieties which, multiplying, represented a ‘Catholic restoration,’

creat[ing] even more institutions to practice the numerous forms of worship whose style was often an expression of the contemporary popular taste, but which differed markedly from the Baroque *because they were isolated from the culture as a whole.*” [Italics mine]<sup>108</sup>

It was to be given even yet further divorce from social currents by the promotion of a Sulpician model of priest as the man of prayer sacrificing himself in a withdrawn life:

The disadvantage to the sacerdotal ministry of this isolation from the world shows up in the generally mediocre quality of the preaching . . . For all the time and effort expended on them the content is disappointing, for the preachers seem for the most part preoccupied with the re-evocation of a still cherished past, having little understanding of the world in which they lived. This ignorant fear of the world, met equally in the pious literature of the time, was reinforced by a notoriously inadequate philosophical and theological training which gave the priest a view of the world based on outdated and distorting categories.<sup>109</sup>

There was much irony in such a development given that at “the very time when German historians, with the tools of modern methodology, were in the process of rewriting Church history on the strict basis of authentic documents, devotional literature as written by authors who virtually had no such standards.”<sup>110</sup> There were notable exceptions. These primarily focused on those initiatives at liturgical renewal which were even now getting underway principally through the work of the French Benedictine Dom Guéranger. However, in German-speaking countries liturgical issues had been raised as early as the 1830’s and 1840’s by figures such as A.A.

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<sup>108</sup> Aubert, *The Church in the Industrial Age*, 265. For a full treatment of the many different expressions of the piety of this period see Aubert, *The Church in the Industrial Age*, 257-269 and Roger Aubert, *The Church in the Age of Liberalism*, 218-228. In the situation of Ireland, by the ‘devotional revolution’ initiated by Cardinal Cullen, the mysticism of this ecclesiology becomes used expressly for the political purposes of re-invigorating Irish social identity. See Edmund Campion. “Irish Religion in Australia,” *Australasian Catholic Record* 55 (1978), 4-16.

<sup>109</sup> Aubert, *The Church in a Secularised Society*, 130.

<sup>110</sup> Aubert, *The Church in the Age of Liberalism*, 220.

Hnoge, Anton Graf and Johann Baptist Hirscher who had advocated, like Lamennais, a vernacular liturgical language and lay reception of the chalice at communion.<sup>111</sup> It was in Germany too, particularly through the work of Johann Michael Sailer (1751-1832) and Johann Sebastian von Drey (1777-1853), and the Tübingen school, that new images of the Church were being entertained to enable a greater organic sense of the Church.<sup>112</sup>

Indirectly, the advocacy of a mysticism which guaranteed political identity, at the expense of social involvement and concern for the world, was further enhanced by the liberal Protestant definition of religion by ‘feeling.’

From the devotion to the Sacred Heart, the ultimate achievement of the Christocentrism of the seventeenth century, to the theory of religious emotion represented by Schleiermacher’s *Discourse on Religion*, by way of Rousseau’s *Profession du foi du Vicaire Savoyard*, there was a clear degeneration of the notion of a “religion of the heart.”<sup>113</sup>

Even though the same could hardly be said for baroque French Catholic spirituality, Benjamin Constant’s comment on German Protestantism was not without its effect on the landscape of Catholic spirituality:

Every day the Protestant religion in Germany becomes more a matter of feeling than an institution: no forms at all, no symbols, nothing obligatory, almost no ceremonies, nothing but comfortable ideas and an ethics of sensibility.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Aubert, *The Church in the Age of Liberalism*, 227.

<sup>112</sup> See Donald J. Dietrich, “German Historicism and the Changing Image of the Church, 1780-1820,” *Theological Studies* 42 (March 1981), 46-73.

<sup>113</sup> Bernard Plongeron, *Archetypal Christianity: The models of 1770 and 1830*, in *Church History: Church History at a Turning Point*, edited by Roger Aubert, *Concilium* 7 (London: Burns & Oates, 1971), 86.

<sup>114</sup> Quoted by Plongeron, “Archetypal Christianity,” 86.

The effect of the Protestant reform on Catholic spirituality by the end of the nineteenth century was ultimately – even in the midst of such public political religious ostentation - the further interiorisation and individualisation of spirituality that had begun in the seventeenth.<sup>115</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The nineteenth century thus ends with an uneasy alliance between the ‘mysticism of politics’ and the ‘politics of mysticism.’ On the one hand, the advance of French political consciousness and German social awareness have correlated into yet further germinations of lay consciousness through antecedents to Catholic Action, such as the *Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Française* and the Sillon movement at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the crowning achievement of *Rerum Novarum*’s unapologetic engagement with social evolution, respectively. This chapter has attempted to demonstrate through a variety of advocates that such currents were imbued with an explicit sense that God is to be encountered in their engagement.

Yet, on the other hand, popular Catholic spirituality by the end of the nineteenth century has become entrenched within a ‘politics of mysticism’ wherein both personal commitment to a spiritual life and social display of devotional practice serve, at least, to further a political agenda of social survival and identity.

What lessons may be gleaned from such juxtaposition?

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<sup>115</sup> For an outline of the development of ‘interiority’ in Christian spirituality see Owen C. Thomas, “Interiority and Christian Spirituality” *The Journal of Religion* 80 (2000), 41-60. For a developed treatment of the influence of the German *Aufklärung*, see Alister McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 9-27.

Firstly, it is evident from this survey of the nineteenth century that the two tendencies identified are not mutually exclusive. Whilst an intellectual elite may both intuit and give expression to an almost sacramental perspective on history, such as in the Mennaisian vision, the broad sway of popular practice, endorsed even by the institutional Church, may be operating according to very different premises.

Secondly, the ‘mysticism of politics’ appears to gain currency precisely at times of political and social innovation in which there exists the experience of the instrumentality of human agency according to an evangelical vision. Despite its trauma, post-Revolutionary France was a time of opportunity in which there was every sense, at least, of the possibility of the creation of a new order. Analogously, even in the face of poverty created by industrialisation in Germany, the promotion of new social theory created a sense of opportunity as the nineteenth century unfolded. It is at these times that the ‘mysticism of politics’ finds its context of inspiration. In the political disenchantment subsequent to the *coup d’état* of Louis Napoleon in 1851 and Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf* of 1873, the instrumentality of human agency for change according to an evangelical vision receives a severe blow and the voices expressing a ‘mysticism of politics’ recede.

Thirdly, in a modern, liberal society in which it discovers itself as one voice amongst others the Church will tend towards a ‘politics of mysticism’ for social identity. In this sense, the intensity with which a ‘politics of mysticism’ is engaged acts as a type of religious barometer on the level of the threat perceived.



Fourthly, that which begins in a ‘mysticism of politics,’ may unfold into a ‘politics of mysticism.’ Philippe Gerbet is a case in point. The line between the two, in other words, is not impermeable. The question thus presents as to the threshold between the two. I suggest that the ‘mysticism of politics’ is preserved within yet a further tension, the prophetic and the institutional. Where the prophetic is entertained, a ‘mysticism of politics’ will ensue. Where the prophetic is surrendered and the institutional enveloped, there the ‘politics of mysticism’ will flourish.

The nineteenth century provides both background to, and valuable insight into, the tension between ‘the political’ and ‘the mystical’ as they then coalesce in the experience of developments throughout the twentieth century. The seeds of lay consciousness sprouting in the nineteenth century yield the particular flower of new forms of ecclesial community in the twentieth century. In these new communal forms lay spirituality within the Roman Catholic tradition will attain irrevocable prominence hitherto as the ordinary form for the pursuit of holiness within this tradition. In them, we also see evidence of how ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ form alliance into illustrations of either a ‘politics of mysticism’ or a ‘mysticism of politics.’

## CHAPTER FIVE

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### **PERSPECTIVES FROM THE TWENTIETH CENTURY LAY MOVEMENTS**

The question arises as to whether, given the very different historical circumstances of the twentieth century, ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ as generic terms denoting the love of God and of neighbour continue to coalesce into a ‘mysticism of politics’ or a ‘politics of mysticism’? In other words, in the midst of shifting historical events, do the four primary insights identified at the end of the last chapter continue to present with validity? To address these questions, this chapter explores those lay movements, intrinsically spiritual in character, which develop in the twentieth century. As spiritual movements that are lay, and thereby suggesting the possibility of Christian holiness in the midst of the ‘affairs of the world,’ they must intimate the negotiation of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ in diverse and real ways. In this negotiation, it will be suggested that we see yet further examples, historically, of the lineaments of ‘a politics of mysticism’ and a ‘mysticism of politics.’

The lens through which such considerations will be explored will be the initiative known as Catholic Action which developed in the first half of the twentieth century, and the rise of the new ecclesial movements which have become increasingly characteristic of Roman Catholic spirituality in the second half of the century, and for which the twentieth century will, I believe, be principally marked in the history of the Roman Catholic spiritual tradition.

## 5.1 Catholic Action

That Catholic Action was a primary ecclesiastical concern throughout the first half of the twentieth century can be without question. Indeed, as a simple term, it may be thought of as providing a unifying metaphor of the various papal responses to the emerging modern world.

If the collaboration of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate appears profitable and approved since the dawn of Christianity in the primitive apostolic preaching, if this working apostolate has across the centuries in the history of the Church taken on the most varied aspects of aggregation, discipline, method and means, according to the needs of the times, that very noble form of collaboration which constitutes Catholic Action, after having been developed under the pontificates of Pius IX, Leo XIII, Pius X and Benedict XV, has received from the great mind and heart of Pius XI its most vigorous impulse and its organic structure.<sup>1</sup>

Devised as a papal response to the problem of secularism,<sup>2</sup> Catholic Action, though a simple term, enjoyed a complex interpretation that renders it as a worthwhile illustration of the mystico-political dialectic. Does Catholic Action, as it developed in the first half of the twentieth century, represent a mysticism possible within secular involvement? Or does it represent, as Buchanan and Conway term, “a process of ‘ghettoization’ or ‘pillarization’ in which a Catholic network of schools, associations, and religious institutions provided an all-enveloping milieu for the faithful”<sup>3</sup> at the

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<sup>1</sup> Pius XII, 4 September, 1940 quoted in Arthur Alonso, *Catholic Action and the Laity*, translated by Cornelius J. Crowley, (St. Louis, Missouri/London: B. Herder Book Co., 1961), 123. Alonso highlights that Pius XI spoke about Catholic Action in “eleven encyclicals; thirty four letters to different bishops, twenty-four autographs, four consistorial speeches, two hundred and ten speeches to different groups, ten acts of the Sacred Congregations, fifty-two letters written by the Secretary of State, five concordats, eight hundred and seventy audiences.” In addition he cites that “Cavagna in his two collections of pontifical documents on Catholic Action from 1922 to 1936 reproduces . . . no less than five hundred and seventy six documents.” See Alonso, *Catholic Action and the Laity*, 298 (n, 70), 138.

<sup>2</sup> See Thomas J. Reese, “Review: *The Theology of Catholic Action* by Theodore M. Hesburgh, (Notre Dame, Indiana,: Ave Maria Press, 1946),” *The Thomist* 11 (1948), 530.

<sup>3</sup> Tom Buchanan and Martin Conway, eds, *Political Catholicism in Europe 1918-1965*, (Oxford/New York: Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, 1996), 20.

service of defence against an unsympathetic new order? In other words, was Catholic Action an incident manifesting how religious aspiration – ‘the mystical’ - can be employed for political purposes?

The ambiguity within the phenomenon of Catholic Action in the twentieth century becomes apparent in the struggle over its very definition. The classic definition of Catholic Action, afforded by Pius XI, provided an encompassing mantle: Catholic Action is,

the participation of the Catholic Laity in the Hierarchic Apostolate, for the defence of religious and moral principles, for the development of a wholesome and beneficent social action, under the guidance of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, outside and above political parties, with the intention of restoring Catholic life in the family and in society.<sup>4</sup>

It attempted to achieve this primarily through a range of strategies, such as -

co-operation in the life of religion by helping priests prepare for religious functions, missions, courses of instruction, and by the teaching of the Christian doctrine; the diffusion of Christian culture; the Christianisation of family life; the defence of the rights and liberties of the Church; co-operation in the Scholastic field especially for the rights of Catholic schools; the press; the moralisation of manners; the apostolate of public opinion, the provision of recreational centres; the betterment of social disorders and misery; the Christian solution of the social question; the Christian inspiration of all public life.<sup>5</sup>

Pius X, credited with being the first to use the term Catholic Action, spoke of the movement in generic terms, suggesting that,

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<sup>4</sup> Pius XI, Letter to the President General of the International Union of Catholic Women’s Leagues, 30 July, 1928, quoted in Luigi Civardi, *A Manual of Catholic Action*, translated by C.C. Martindale, (London: Sheed & Ward, 1935), 6. This definition is largely maintained by Pius XII, ‘There has always existed in the Church the collaboration of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate.’ Address to the ACI, 3 May 1951 quoted in Alonso, *Catholic Action and the Laity*, 122.

<sup>5</sup> Archbishop Carboni, Apostolic Delegate to Australia, Address to Australian Catholic Men, 15 August 1955, Sydney, quoted in Jeremiah Newman, *What is Catholic Action? An Introduction to the Lay Apostolate*, (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son Ltd, 1958), 84-85.

It is not Our intention that you [bishops] and your clergy be alone and unaided in this very arduous hour of the restoration of the human race in Christ. . . . It is not only priests, therefore, but also the faithful, all of them without exception, who should work for the interests of God and souls, not indeed according to their own opinions and purposes, but always under the direction and command of the bishops, inasmuch as in the Church it is given to no one to preside, teach and govern except you, in whom God infused the Holy Ghost in order to feed God's Church (Acts 20:28)<sup>6</sup>

Likewise, in what was to become regarded as the first official charter of Catholic Action, the same pope urged laity to pool "their vital energies in an effort to restore Jesus Christ to his place in the family, in the school, in the community."<sup>7</sup>

In these statements Catholic Action is presented, in a general context, as the corporate endeavour to enable laity to assume their baptismal vocation and responsibility. It was the nature of lay collaboration, however, that was not as clear and which made apparent the fundamental ambiguity within the movement. Whilst Catholic Action acted to evoke lay consciousness and responsibility, it did so within the official hierarchology of *De Ecclesia*.

For the provisions of the new law [i.e the emergence of democratic legislative frameworks] are contrary to the constitution on which the Church was founded by Jesus Christ. The Scripture teaches us, and the tradition of the Fathers confirms the teaching, that the Church is the mystical body of Christ, ruled by the Pastors and Doctors – a society of men containing within its own fold chiefs who have full and perfect powers for ruling, teaching and judging. It follows that the Church is essentially an unequal society, that is, a society comprising two categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock, those who occupy a rank in the different degrees of the hierarchy and the multitude of the faithful. So distinct are these categories that with the pastoral body only rests the necessary right and authority for promoting the end of the society and directing all its members

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<sup>6</sup> Pius X, *E supremi apostolatus*, (4 October, 1903), quoted in Alonso, *Catholic Action and the Laity*, 117.

<sup>7</sup> Pius X, *Il fermo propositio*, (11 June 1905), quoted in Roger Aubert *et al*, *The Church in a Secularised Society, Volume V. The Christian Centuries*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd/New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 142.

towards that end; the one duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile flock, to follow the Pastors.<sup>8</sup>

It was clear, therefore, that the papal encouragement of laity at the dawn of the twentieth century was not without serious qualification. Failure to observe this qualification resulted in condemnation as evidenced, for example, in the demise of the pro-democratic Sillon movement founded by Marc Sangnier in 1893. Sangnier, initially celebrated by Rome for his work, may have been publicly condemned in 1910 for his confusion between church and democracy, but the primary issue was his refusal to accept episcopal control.<sup>9</sup>

It was to be a constraint that distinguished Catholic Action proper and Catholic social action generally, a tension resolved through the distinction provided by Vizcarra:

The organization proper to Catholic Action is what causes it to be Catholic Action, and associations lacking this specific organisation, for that very reason, fail to be Catholic Action properly so called . . . The specific character of Catholic Action is not in the words, but in the form of participation, collaboration or cooperation.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Pius X, *Vehementer*, On the French Law of Separation, 11 February 1906, n.8. [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_x/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-x\\_enc\\_110219](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_110219) Accessed 13 February 2003.

<sup>9</sup> See Jean de Fabrègues, *Le Sillon de Marc Sangnier: Un tournant majeur du mouvement social catholique*, (Paris: Perrin, 1964); Charles Breunig, "The Condemnation of the *Sillon*: An episode in the history of Christian-democracy in France," *Church History* 26 (1957), 227-244.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Alonso, *Catholic Action and the Laity*, 123-124. The failure to adequately define Catholic Action has presented as a recurring confusion throughout the period under discussion. In reviewing Theodore M. Hesburgh's book, *The Theology of Catholic Action* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1946), Reese makes comment: "Failure to distinguish between Catholic Action and the lay apostolate because of this confusion of principle can result also in a germane error held by some that Catholic Action is the visible organisation of the lay priesthood, the entire 'lower half of the church formed into a single organisation,' that would parallel the organised hierarchy, 'the upper half of the Church.'" Reese goes on to debate the question of the mandate upon which Catholic Action is founded citing that although different writers laid great stress on it, papal documents hardly refer to it at all. See Thomas J. Reese, "Review," *The Thomist* 11 (1948), 528-529. Catholic Action, mandated, was organised in a manner typically described in the following way: "There are organisations for young workmen, young working girls, young farm hands of each sex, and for students; working in the parishes, guided by the parish priest, but led by educated lay men and women. The young people are expected to attend study circles, to think things out, and to take every opportunity to better the conditions under which they and their fellows work, as well as to convert their fellows." Helen M. Larke, "The Liturgical Movement and Catholic Action in Belgium," *Orate Fratres* 13 (1938-1939), 60.

In so far as Catholic Action enjoyed specific mandate from episcopal authority which placed it “at the immediate command of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of jurisdiction,”<sup>11</sup> the phenomenon began as illustrative of the ‘politics of mysticism’, expressive of the aim to “re-catholicise society, enabling Catholics to resume political power.”<sup>12</sup> Its origins in the latter years of Pius IX’s reign and in the various manoeuvres between Italian lay associations leading up to the first Italian Catholic Congress in Venice in 1874, emerged in developments such that the,

active wing of Italian Catholicism had . . . turned its back on conciliatory approaches to modern society along the lines of Catholic liberalism . . . opt[ing] for a militant movement based on the principles of the Syllabus, which by anathemas against liberal society had served to galvanise the energies of the intransigents.<sup>13</sup>

Though initially it encouraged the rise of lay responsibility, it was thereby dogged by,

the added encouragement it gave to the Catholic tendency to remain aloof from the rest of the community, an isolation particularly marked in the cultural domain . . .; above all, the weakness inherent in an organisation which by reason of its origins was by way of being both a Catholic Action movement and a political party, with the result that the doctrinal intransigence necessary on the religious front tended to be transferred to its political positions, and the ecclesiastical authorities could claim to control minutely all its activities, even in the purely secular domain.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> “Catholic Action is then, directly and immediately subordinated to and coordinated with the ecclesiastical hierarchy, from which it receives its being and the directives or mandates for the fulfilment of its apostolic purposes.” See Alonso, *Catholic Action and the Laity*, 137. This distinction is highlighted in positive light by Pacelli, the future Pius XII, when, whilst Secretary of State, he stated clearly that not every lay Catholic association could be assumed into the category of Catholic Action’s. “Catholic Action and many of the apostolic associations that cannot exactly be called Catholic Action coincide as far as they are a collaboration or cooperation of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate. . . . All of them exercise the apostolate within forms of organization proper to the nature of each effort and as varied as these efforts, but for that very reason they differ from the organization which is proper to Catholic Action. They are the works, therefore, which cannot be called Catholic Action.” Letter to President General of Catholic Action of Italy, 30 March, 1930, quoted in Alonso, *Catholic Action and the Laity*, 121, 122.

<sup>12</sup> Aubert, *The Church in a Secularised Society*, 139.

<sup>13</sup> Aubert, *The Church in a Secularised Society*, 139.

<sup>14</sup> Aubert, *The Church in a Secularised Society*, 140-141.

That Catholic Action properly understood was at the service of the restoration of an integrally Catholic social order was further evidence by the imagery it attracted to itself. Throughout, the popes of the first half of the twentieth century promoted Catholicism with an ‘ultramontane fundamentalism,’ with “metaphors derived from the secular worlds of the military or civilian bureaucracy” and with the propagation of “a distinctively Roman form of religious piety [in which] the cults of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of the Christ King, of the Pope, and, above all, of the Virgin Mary were prominent features.”<sup>15</sup> It was therefore common that Catholic Action proper would be often expressed in militant terms:

This well-ordered and tight squadron that has for its goal the defense of the Church Militant, has appropriately set up parochial, diocesan and provincial unions which, in the fashion of cohorts devoted to their captains, faithfully offer their services to the parish priests and bishops, and in this way strive to unite the scattered Catholic forces.<sup>16</sup>

Leo XIII’s theme was enthusiastically appropriated by Pius XI. He situated Catholic Action as “a holy battle engaged on every front at once” thus making the orientation of the programme the “recatholicization of modern life.”<sup>17</sup> According to Buchanan and Conway, it was to engender a,

new mood of Catholic militancy. The rise in participation in pilgrimages, Marian processions, mass rallies, and spiritual associations were all further indications of a more ostentatious, or

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<sup>15</sup> Buchanan and Conway, *Political Catholicism in Europe*, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Leo XIII, “Letter to John Paganuzzi, President of the Work of the Congresses,” (9 September, 1891), quoted in Alonso, *Catholic Action and the Laity*, 116.

<sup>17</sup> Pius XI, “Address to the counsellors of the UFCI,” (1 March, 1924); “Address to the Youth of ACI,” (9 March 1924); “Letter to Cardinal Bertram,” (13 November, 1928), quoted in Alonso, *Catholic Action and the Laity*, 119.



even triumphal, Catholicism which sought to challenge publicly the secular character of modern life.<sup>18</sup>

Pius XII continued the theme well into the middle of the century. Note the militarist language in the following letter of 1942 to Cardinal Leme of Brazil,

In every battle against the contagion of the tyranny of errors and for the defense of Christian Europe, the Marian Sodality have fought in the front line by word, pen and press, in argument, in polemics and apologetics, in action . . . On occasion even with the sword, on the frontier of Christianity, for the defense of civilization. . . . But why go searching for examples in the past, when in our own times and not in any single nation, thousands and thousands of heroic members of the Sodality have fought and fallen, calling and invoking Christ the King.<sup>19</sup>

All of this convinces Us once again that these Marian phalanxes, following their glorious traditions and under the orders of the hierarchy, hold an illustrious place in working and fighting for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls and as a spiritual force are of great importance in the Catholic cause of Brazil . . . .<sup>20</sup>

Nearly eighty years after the initial stirrings of Catholic Action, Pius XII was still quite clear as to the movement's fundamental orientation. In *Evangelii praecones* (1951) he suggests that "the time has now arrived for [the Church] to enlarge its squadrons."<sup>21</sup> He deplored the way in which the Church had been consigned to "a critical situation" by a century of social and political events, citing that such a parlous context was "the origin of what are called Catholic movements which under the

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<sup>18</sup> Pius XI, *Ubi Arcano Dei*, (December 1922). See Buchanan and Conway, *Political Catholicism in Europe*, 22.

<sup>19</sup> Pius XII, "Address to Members of the Marian Sodality throughout the World," (21 January, 1945) quoted in Alonso, *Catholic Action and the Laity*, 218.

<sup>20</sup> Pius XII to Cardinal Leme, Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro 1942, quoted in Alonso, *Catholic Action and the Laity*, 218-219.

<sup>21</sup> Pius XII, *Evangelii praecones*, Address to the First World Congress for the Apostolate of the Laity, (2 June, 1951), quoted in Alonso, *Catholic Action and the Laity*, 109.

guidance of priests and seculars recruit through their effective compacts and their sincere fidelity the great mass of believers for combat and victory.”<sup>22</sup>

These papal perspectives were yet furthered by the various endorsements, appearing in catechisms and manuals, supporting the practice of Catholic Action. Take for example the following extracts from *A Manual of Catholic Action*:

This is enough, we think, to make it clear how the Catholic laity, in such a state of affairs, felt the need no more to remain inactive, but to organise itself on the terrain of its common liberties, and to stand alongside the Hierarchy in its work of defence and of Christian restoration. That is, indeed, what happened; and thus was born Catholic Action. . . .

Catholic Action therefore was born to fulfil a work of necessary and legitimate defence. It is like the outer rampart of the Church, and nothing but its vast and solid organisation can give it the necessary strength. It is again the modern Crusade, destined to set free no more the tomb of Christ, but Christ Himself, made prisoner within the souls redeemed by Himself. . . .

But . . . Catholic Action has not only the task of defence, but also and specially that of restoration. It must help the Church to build up again what secularism has destroyed.

It is clear that the organisation of evil can be beaten only by the organisation of the good. Hence the necessity of Catholic Action, a vast and complex phalanx, army versus army, raised against the serried attacks of Christ’s enemies.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Pius XII, *Evangelii praecones*, in Alonso, *Catholic Action and the Laity*, 110.

<sup>23</sup> Civardi, *A Manual of Catholic Action*, 108-109, 112. Note, “Catholic Action is apostolate and militia. . . . But, as we have seen, it is a *selected* army.” See Civardi, *A Manual of Catholic Action*, 67.

Similar sentiments are expressed in *The Catechism of Catholic Action* by the Bishop of Tortosa.<sup>24</sup> Ferland expresses the purpose of Catholic Action in an especially evocative way when he writes,

At the cry of alarm raised to the four corners of the earth by the supreme head of the army of Christ, new troops came running, squadrons were formed which had never been seen before, and at this moment they rally beneath the one flag of the faith, which a venerable father upholds so valiantly.

For the first time in the history of Christendom lay people have been summoned in a religious conscription and inscribed and enrolled among the offensive and defensive troops of the Church. In this hour “an ordained militia preaching in the churches no longer suffices; there must be an innumerable army, mobile and everywhere active, propagating the Christian ideal and diffusing the splendor of Christianity throughout the social atmosphere. . . .

Today, against the unleashed forces of hell which strain themselves for our ruin more furiously than ever and under the most deceitful of disguises, we need still other kinds of religious troops and weapons. For we are faced with the problem of defending and extending the kingdom of Christ under conditions which never existed before.<sup>25</sup>

The overall thrust of these quotes is clear. Congar sums it up when he says,

amidst a secularised and often hostile world, Catholics [were being urged through the encouragement of their lay responsibilities] thus to remake the framework of a Christian society capable of maintaining the faith, of defending it, and even of regaining, as well as the adhesion of the faithful, some degree of sympathy and even of a favourable situation from the world.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Bishop of Tortosa, *The Catechism of Catholic Action*, quoted in Alonso, *Catholic Action and the Laity*, 216.

<sup>25</sup> Auguste Ferland, “Priesthood of the Laity, the Foundation of Catholic Action,” *Orate Fratres* 15 (1940-1941), 496-497.

<sup>26</sup> Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A study for a theology of the laity*, translated by Donald Attwater, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Company Ltd., 1957), 344.

However, in the process of staging such a militant defence against the encroachments of secularism, this magisterial encouragement to the apostolate in Catholic Action, ironically, opened up new possibilities for the way in which secularity was appropriated by Catholic laity themselves – and not just laity but also a number of bishops. Though often couched in such strident militarist terms, Catholic Action was not only a defence against the rise of secularism but it was, in fact, an instrument by which secularity might be entered. This was clear from Pius XI's first words to Joseph Cardijn, the founder of one of the primary expressions of Catholic Action, the *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne*, the Young Christian Worker or 'Jocist' movement, so designated from the French initials.<sup>27</sup>

At last! Here is someone who talks to me of the masses, of saving the masses. Everyone else talks to me of the *élite*. What is needed is an *élite* in the masses, the leaven in the paste. The greatest work you can possibly do for the Church is to restore to the Church the working masses which she has lost. The masses need the Church and the Church needs the masses. *Yes, indeed, the Church in accompanying her mission greatly needs the working-class masses. A Church in which only the well-off are to be found is no longer our Lord's Church. Our Lord founded the Church mainly for the poor. That is why it is necessary to restore to him the working masses.* [Italics mine]<sup>28</sup>

Representative of Catholic Action, *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne* began as a political response to the communist infiltration of workers' movements. It was a front-line strategy of the Church "to defend its specific project for social transformation."<sup>29</sup> A

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<sup>27</sup> For a comprehensive history of the origins and development of the Y.C.W movement see Lucie Bragard et al, *La Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne: Wallonie-Bruxelle 1912-1957*, 2 Volumes, (Bruxelles: Vie Ouvrière, 1990).

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Cardijn's account of his meeting with Pius XI, 1925 as cited in Michael de la Bedoyere, *The Cardijn Story: A study in the life of Mgr. Joseph Cardijn and the Young Christian Workers' Movement which he founded*, (London/New York/Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1958), 67.

<sup>29</sup> Bruno Duriez, "Left Wing Catholicism in France. From Catholic Action to the Political Left: The movement populaire des familles," in *Left Catholicism: Catholics and society in Western Europe at the*

good example of an integralist Catholicism, the plan was “indeed both to change consciousness and to rechristianise the working classes and, furthermore, the whole of society.”<sup>30</sup> Further, it was aware of its social power, “because through its 20,000 French activists, it possesses this invisible means of conquest which can be called influence.”<sup>31</sup>

Cardijn (1882-1967) had been influenced in his vision by a number of key figures, noticeably the social industrialist Léon Harmel, the *bon Père*, who had founded ‘The Workers Christian Corporation of Val des Bois’ in 1875 although Harmel was nearly eighty when Cardijn first met him. Cardijn had also been in contact with Mark Sangnier of the ill-fated Sillon movement.<sup>32</sup> Both men’s visions worked to clarify Cardijn’s. Distinct from Harmel, Cardijn believed “the future for Christians could not be the creation of perfectionist Catholic islands, but the spread into the world of the workers, through a workers’ *élite* of values, philosophy and technique that would be indefinitely extended.”<sup>33</sup> He also learnt from the experience of Sangnier. As his biographer, de la Bedoyere comments,

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*point of liberation 1943-1956*, edited by Gerd-Rainer Horn and Emmanuel Gerard, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 66.

<sup>30</sup> Duriez, “Left Wing Catholicism in France,” 69.

<sup>31</sup> *Jocisme française 1927-1939*, quoted in Duriez, “Left Wing Catholicism in France,” 69.

<sup>32</sup> Recent research by Stefan Gigacz has illustrated that the ‘see-judge-act’ methodology of Cardijn has its origins in the methods of democratic education pioneered by the Sillon in their campaign to promote study circles, as does the theme of ‘conscious and responsible’ that often appeared in Cardijn’s lectures. Gigacz traces this phrase to Sillon’s definition of democracy as the ‘system of social organisation that maximises the civic consciousness and responsibility of each person.’ See Stefan Gigacz, “Healing the Fractured Memory of the Lay Movements,” *Australian Catholic Movement for Intellectual & Cultural Affairs Publications*. [http://www.acmica.org/pub\\_gigacz.html](http://www.acmica.org/pub_gigacz.html) Accessed 9 June, 2004.

<sup>33</sup> De la Bedoyere, *The Cardijn Story*, 31.

Sangnier, who began so young and without specific training, never tried to clarify his particular *mystique*. Inevitably, he drifted into difficulties in his relations with the spiritual authority of the Church and the Church's developing social organisations. Cardijn, as a trained priest, not only realised the vital importance of the priest in his sacerdotal and apostolic role for the spiritual formation of youth leaders or, in the continental phrase, 'militants', but appreciated the necessity of fitting his social *mystique* into the Church's organisation from the start.<sup>34</sup>

As a curate in a poor parish of Brussels, Cardijn had "suffered greatly at seeing this immense distress of the working class."<sup>35</sup> "With [the workers], by them and for them", he envisaged,

a kind of professional 'third order', preached and organised by the new *poverellos* of Assisi. We need more boldness to make the world happy. We must allow ourselves to be overcome by that holy wrath which sometimes seized our Saviour before the abuses and hypocrisies of his contemporaries.<sup>36</sup>

Such 'holy wrath' was informed by a conscious appreciation of the need for the integration of the spiritual and material dimensions of workers' lives that animated his endeavour. For Cardijn, "the 'spiritual' must always be 'spiritual *in temporal*'." [Italics in original]<sup>37</sup> This is seen in the following aspiration:

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<sup>34</sup> De la Bedoyere, *The Cardijn Story*, 31-32. Cardijn had also been, in no small way, influenced by Baden-Powell, who had founded the international Boy Scouts movement, and with whom he had spent several days in London in 1910.

<sup>35</sup> De la Bedoyere, *The Cardijn Story*, 40.

<sup>36</sup> Cited in De la Bedoyere, *The Cardijn Story*, 60-61.

<sup>37</sup> De la Bedoyere, *The Cardijn Story*, 86. Other commentators concur. Fievez and Meert highlight, however, that his type of integration was practical rather than intellectual. "He did so within a pastoral perspective and without any intention of working out a theological system. But by helping to make such truths commonly understood, he contributed more to theology than many official theologians, some of whom were not a little surprised and indignant that a doctorate *honoris causa* should have been conferred on this little priest who was clearly not an academic at all." Marguerite Fievez and Jacques Meert with Roger Aubert, *Cardijn*, translated by Edward Mitchinson, (London: Young Christian Workers, 1974), 229.

We are not interested in the socialist party nor in communism; we are interested in the soul and the destiny of our young workers. If these souls are to spread their wings, their rightful claims must be slowly, methodically, but energetically, pursued. Their soul, indeed, is not separate from their bodies; their spiritual life from their lives as workers.<sup>38</sup>

This unity of the spiritual and the temporal was given further explication by Cardijn at the *Semaine Internationale de Bruxelles* in 1935:

*Cette destinée, est-ce pour demain, après la mort? Non, c'est dès aujourd'hui, dans leur vie la plus ordinaire de manoeuvre, d'employée de bureau ou de maison, de chômeur et de chômeuse, de fiancés; dans leur milieu de vie habituel; au milieu de la masse de leurs comrades.*

*Une destinée qui n'est pas double, mais une. Ses deux volets se réalisent ensemble, chacun par et au sein de l'autre. [Italics in the original]*<sup>39</sup>

Cardijn entertained a concept of the sacredness of the working class and its significance as a locus of divine encounter.

For the worker the tools of his trade are what the chalice and paten are for the priest. Just as the priest offers the Body and Blood of Christ on the paten and in the chalice, so the worker-apostle must learn to offer to our Lord, in and by the tools of his trade, our Lord's own sufferings and hard work. He is united to them, since he is part of Our Lord's Mystical Body. He must know how to pray in and by his work, making of it a prayer of praise to God.

He cannot handle his rosary or his missal while he is in the factory; he has tools in his hands and work to do. By means of the spiritual life on which he is formed, he must change his work into a prayer, a prolonged Mass, united to the priest at the altar. Thus all the small hosts, which are thousands and millions of workers in the factories, offices, and workshops of the world, are placed on that paten by the side of the big Host which is Christ. All will be united to Christ. The priest will present them to the heavenly Father as a prayer of

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<sup>38</sup> Speech of Joseph Cardijn, 19 April 1925 at the official inauguration of *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne*, cited in De la Bedoyere, *The Cardijn Story*, 71.

<sup>39</sup> Bragard *et al*, *La Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne*, 30.

praise, so that all work may render glory to God and continue the work of Creation and Redemption.

. . . There can be no question of separating our life of work from our life as apostles. We do not need two lives, but one only. We are apostles, not merely during a day of recollection or a meeting, but also in our life of work. We have not got two plans – one work and one of the apostolate. We have only one plan, which is essentially an apostolic plan.<sup>40</sup>

Larke's account of a visit to Belgium in 1938 provides a poignant expression of this:

They are taught that they can and should offer to God work that is good; i.e., work that is well done, and is at the same time of use for the good life. The town worker's magazine is *Joy in Work*; and there is a delightful little picture of a country child offering her sheaves of corn at the foot of the crucifix, with the legend "Our homes and our fields for God" . . . In the J.A.C and the J.A.C.F. – the agricultural sections – there is growing up a conception of the earth, the land, as the primary gift of God . . . That land is said to be a thing elemental in itself . . .<sup>41</sup>

As Duriez comments,

This particular emphasis enabled both manual work and the young worker to be regarded with more respect. It [also] forged a militant ethos in which the transformation of social relations was a part of God's work.<sup>42</sup>

The members of Catholic Action were "to act officially in bringing divine life to the world" by being leaven permeating all aspects and fields of life"<sup>43</sup> – a sentiment encouraged by Pius XII when he declared,

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<sup>40</sup> Joseph Cardijn, "The Young Worker Faces Life" Godinne Lectures 1949, in Joseph Cardijn, *Challenge to Action: Addresses by Monsignor Joseph Cardijn*, (London: New Life Publications, 1955), 80, 81.

<sup>41</sup> Larke, "The Liturgical Movement and Catholic Action in Belgium," 60-61.

<sup>42</sup> Duriez, "Left Wing Catholicism in France," 70.

<sup>43</sup> William Boyd, "The Cell Technique in Catholic Action: Three postulates," *Orate Fratres* 16 (1941-1942), 14, 16.



Catholic Action must have as its preliminary the individual sanctification of its members so that supernatural life superabounds within them . . . . But after this first element of formation, comes the second: the distribution of this life, the action of the apostolate.<sup>44</sup>

As von Ketteler's had been in Germany in the nineteenth century, now, in the twentieth century, Cardijn's spiritual voice therefore became one of social advocacy.<sup>45</sup>

Only if Catholic social teaching, only if Catholic social organisation seems to the workers a carrying-out, a fuller realisation of integral Catholicity, a magnificent setting-up of the social Kingship of Christ, spreading more justice and charity in the world, will it cease to be possible to accuse Christian workers' organisations of dividing and weakening the working class. The Christian working movement will then be seen to be the social unfolding of Christianity.<sup>46</sup>

With Marx, Cardijn believed in the historical or socially transformative mission of the working class.<sup>47</sup> Yet, it was a mission stated in very different terms:

The Y.C.W is essentially, continually, everywhere and before all else recruiting and winning. The act par excellence of the Movement is recruiting and winning . . . The characteristic spirit of each Y.C.W is the spirit of recruiting , the apostolic, missionary spirit, the apostolic spirit, always drawn outwards towards others, never turned in on himself . . . The Y.C.W wins new members for the Mystical Body of Christ, in order that the Mystical Body may grow ever larger and may gradually reach the size of humanity itself, and that the Mystical Body and humanity may truly become one and the same thing.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Pius XI, "Discourse to the Catholic Associations of Rome," (19 April, 1931). quoted in Boyd, "The Cell Technique in Catholic Action," 19.

<sup>45</sup> Similarly to von Ketteler, Cardijn had a solid appraisal of the social and economic issues of his time. See "The World Today and the Apostolate of the Laity," October 1951 in Joseph Cardijn, *Challenge to Action: Addresses by Monsignor Joseph Cardijn*, (London: New Life Publications, 1955), 40ff.

<sup>46</sup> Joseph Cardijn, first publication of the *Manuel de la Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne*, cited in De la Bedoyere, *The Cardijn Story*, 75-76.

<sup>47</sup> See Joseph Cardijn, *Challenge to Action*, 40ff.

<sup>48</sup> Joseph Cardijn, "The Young Worker faces Life," Goddine lectures, 1949. See also Cardijn's 1948 Godinne lecture series, "The Hour of the Working Class," in which he treats at length the missionary dimension of Y.C.W. See Joseph Cardijn, *Challenge to Action*, 46-49, 59.

For Jocists, it was precisely this mission that contained a mystical quality.

*La mystique de la JOC?*

*De nouvelles découvertes, de nouvelles tentatives, de nouvelles évolutions. Fonder tous les jours le mouvement, dans un perpétuel recommencement.*

*Un dynamisme militant qui éclate au sein du quotidien, dans un témoignage chrétien. Une sorte de révolution qui ne peut plus s'arrêter et ne se contente pas de paroles: pas des mots, des actes!*

*Un universalism de l'évangile, sans aucune exclusion, qui a fait jaillir spontanément ce cri de Cardijn, en finale du Conseil International de la JOC en 1957: Jeunes travailleurs de tous les pays, unissez-vous dans la JOC internationale!*

*Cette mystique, on la garde toute sa vie: nous l'avons dans la peau et elle ne peut plus nous lâcher. Adultes et témoins, là où nous sommes, elle nous pousse toujours vers la réalisation de la même et vivante UTOPIE. [Italics in the original]<sup>49</sup>*

Subsequently, though a long way from Lamennais' apocalyptic social mysticism, we see in Catholic Action a fundamental mystical premise.

Catholic Action, prepared by the social action of preceding generations, synthesises such social and spiritual action. We say social action and not trade union action, which is situated more on the level of official and openly political activity. We also do not target the social sphere institutionalised by professions and society. We mean that element of social being which is the actualisation of the fraternal, which is the actualisation of the divine.<sup>50</sup>

Precisely what were the boundaries between the mystical and political is left somewhat ambiguous in discussion about Catholic Action. It is not envisaged as

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<sup>49</sup> Bragard *et al*, *La Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne*, 52.

<sup>50</sup> Paul Magand, "Le Mouvement populaire des familles," *Masses ouvrières* 1 (January 1944), quoted in Duriez, "Left Wing Catholicism in France," 76 fn 45. For the traditional prescribed inter-relationship between Catholic Action and politics see Civardi, *A Manual of Catholic Action*, 183-210; Newman, *What is Catholic Action?*, 145-153. Such is described in the following manner: "Catholic Action and social or civic action of Christian inspiration are distinct from one another. Both are necessary in their respective context. They need one another . . . [but] they must operate in distinct movements."

political action per se, yet there is clear insight that a spiritual reality will have political implications:

Differing in no way from the commission divinely entrusted to the Church and the apostolate of her hierarchy, Catholic Action is not of the temporal order, but of the spiritual; not earthly, but heavenly; not political, but religious. . . . Nevertheless it must rightly be called social, since its purpose is to advance the kingdom of Christ the Lord, by which there is acquired for society not only the greatest good of all, but likewise all those other benefits which result therefrom – such as those which affect civil society and are called political.<sup>51</sup>

For its practitioners, Catholic Action was not simply a series of combatant activities waged against the wiles of secularism for the defence of religion. Rather, it became the “creative expansion of ‘other Christs’ communicating the life of divine charity, the infinitude of which reposes in the bosom of the eternal Father.”<sup>52</sup> At the heart of Catholic Action also lay the principle of the Mystical Body of Christ – a theological principle which grounded the internationalism and universalism of Catholic Action. As Griffin comments,

Catholic Action understood as the expansive life of the Christly organism could never be apathetic to brethren suffering in Spain, Mexico, Germany or Russia for “If one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it . . . . Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member [1 Cor 12: 26, 27].

The Mystical Body as the basis of Catholic Action is, finally, the key to social reconstruction as explained by the sovereign pontiffs. Who, understanding the doctrine of the Mystical Christ, would prosper from the strife between capital and labor? Who, with such an understanding would tolerate the vision of another war? Who would preach Chauvinistic nationalism in the face of the unity of Christ, the

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<sup>51</sup> Pius XI, Letter to Cardinal Bertram, *Acta Apostolica Sedis*, XX (1928), 385, quoted in Auguste Ferland, “Priesthood of the Laity,” 508.

<sup>52</sup> John J. Griffin, “The Spiritual Foundations of Catholic Action,” *Orate Fratres* 9 (1934-1935), 462-463.

internationalism and supranationalism of the organic Mystical Humanity? . . . the universalisation of its charity is the foundation of all enduring economic rehabilitation and social reconstruction.<sup>53</sup>

This organic mysticism also provided teleology. Pius X, taking as his papal motto, ‘so that Christ may be all in all’ (Col 3:11),

envisaged a world in which Christ the King would rule the nations and families of nations, in which Christ the Lawmaker would sway legislatures and courts and caucuses, in which Christ the Worker would hold the arbitrament of industrial relations, in which Christ would be partner in every business transaction, the honored guest at every fireside, the pedagogue in every classroom . . .<sup>54</sup>

Such a principle of *anakephalaiosis* entailed an active co-partnership with Christ, priest, prophet and king. “Catholic Action . . . is vitalized by the lay priesthood, from which it derives its strength and vigor, as well as its capacity for growth and fruitfulness.”<sup>55</sup> This sacerdotal foundation for Catholic Action allied it intensely with the liturgical renewal of the first half of the twentieth century.

*But the connection must be made immediately between the mystical body, the liturgical movement, and Catholic Action. The boy can appreciate the mystical body if he sees it doing something with which he is familiar, namely, praying. And he will never understand the mystical body in action until he understands the mystical body at prayer. [Italics in the original]*<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Griffin, “The Spiritual Foundations of Catholic Action,” 463-464.

<sup>54</sup> Gerald Ellard, “Pius X and Christocracy: Thirty Years After,” *Orate Fratres* 10 (1934-1935), 11.

<sup>55</sup> Ferland, “Priesthood of the Laity, the foundation of Catholic Action,” 509. From this perspective, Confirmation was seen as the particular sacrament of Catholic Action. “But the Christian lay apostle . . . is a priest in Christ . . . That was the power given him at Confirmation, a direct effect of that Sacrament which focuses his whole outlook. He understands that he has received a sacerdotal quality in the sacramental character given with Confirmation. See Gerard Meath, “Sacerdotal Aspects of the Lay Apostolate,” *Orate Fratres* 15 (194-1941), 460, 463.

<sup>56</sup> William Boyd, “The Birth of the Catholic Action Cell,” *Orate Fratres* 16 (1941-1942), 113. Boyd goes on to quote Cardinal Pizzardo: “The liturgy and Catholic Action are thus respectively the mystical body at prayer and sacrifice and the mystical body in action upon the world. Each of these functions requires the other. True Christian formation by the corporate sacrifice and prayer of the liturgy is the fundamental basis of Catholic Action.”

To achieve this integration of action and prayer, *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne* had devised a particular instrument called the ‘revision of life’ (seeing, evaluating, acting or observation, judgement and action) - a similar technique employed by the *Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Française* (ACJF) at the beginning of the century – but differentiated by the fact that,

action was not deduced from doctrinal teaching but was constructed through collective reflection. Education as not so much the acquisition of accumulated knowledge but instead based more on a pragmatic approach [such that] this inductive approach to reality gives to those who shared it the conviction that they could define the direction of their own action.”<sup>57</sup>

By being invited into observation, members were to “listen to the pulse beat of their environment with regard to some particular problem.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, they were to take the milieu in which they lived and worked seriously. Only secondarily were members then urged into a phase of evaluation employing the study of doctrinal resources before, thirdly, reaching a decision regarding resolve and resolution.

The *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne* mysticism, in turn, became partly responsible for the new concept of ‘worker-priests’, particularly through the initiatives of Archbishop Emmanuel Suhard of Paris, who had publicly supported *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne* since hearing Cardijn at the *Ite, Missa Est* conference in 1933 at Rheims.<sup>59</sup>

Although Suhard’s vision was hampered by the undisciplined manner of Père Godin,

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<sup>57</sup> Duriez, “Left Wing Catholicism in France,” 68–69.

<sup>58</sup> William Boyd, “Militants of Christ,” *Orate Fratres* 16 (1941-1942), 344. Boyd presents here the steps of a Catholic Action cell meeting.

<sup>59</sup> De la Bedoyere, *The Cardijn Story*, 96.

in whom he had placed carriage of the initiative, the idea was paralleled by the experience of French priests secretly ministering to workers deported during the German occupation. These priests, without the usual barriers of the clerical life, found that their experience could be replicated in less dramatic circumstances and be instrumental in breaking down the “solid wall between priests and people” – and we might add, between the sacred and the secular.<sup>60</sup>

In its evolution *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne* became the *Ligue Ouvrière Chrétienne* (LOC), and ultimately in its desire to penetrate the masses more it evolved further into the *Mouvement Populaire des Familles* in August 1941 – “a greater popular family movement which would lead the entire working class towards Christianity.”<sup>61</sup> This was according to Duriez,

the first stage in the secularisation of the movement . . . The movement then remained a movement of the Church; however, it was no longer ‘appointed’ by the episcopacy, but ‘on a mission’. The distinction demonstrates the uncertainty and the difficulty in maintaining a Church connection while simultaneously affirming the autonomy of the movement in the definition of its ‘temporal’ directions, as they were then called.”<sup>62</sup>

The *Mouvement Populaire des Familles* was to undergo political radicalisation in the years that followed becoming in the end the *Mouvement de Libération du Peuple* in 1950, disassociated from the Church.<sup>63</sup> However, taken together with its approved antecedents, such movements,

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<sup>60</sup> De la Bedoyere, *The Cardijn Story*, 100.

<sup>61</sup> Duriez, “Left Wing Catholicism in France,” 72, 73.

<sup>62</sup> Duriez, “Left Wing Catholicism in France,” 73

<sup>63</sup> Duriez, “Left Wing Catholicism in France,” 82.

catalysed young people into action and, above all, shaped their representations of a world waiting to be constructed. This represented a break from a position of respect for an established order and for its corollary, patronage . . . The command to action as a means of constructing God's kingdom on earth provided the driving force of many initiatives.<sup>64</sup>

Duriez concludes that what “was at stake in [the debates that ensued] was a model of social and political action, but likewise a certain view of the Church and a certain theology.”<sup>65</sup>

In the phenomenon known as Catholic Action, ‘the politics of mysticism’ demonstrates itself capable of ‘the mysticism of politics’. What began as an innately defensive posture toward the emergence of the secularity, becomes, in fact, through the influence of Cardijn, the cornerstone of the major writings of the Second Vatican Council on the pressing need for the Church’s engagement with the world: *Gaudium et Spes*, *Apostolican Actuositatem*, *Ad Gentes*, *Dignitatis Humanae* and the significant documents of John XXIII which preceded them such as *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963).<sup>66</sup>

The strictly hierarchical approach of Pius X to one which allowed for lay initiative, albeit limited, in no small way contributed to the shift from a ‘politics of mysticism’ to a ‘mysticism of politics.’ Such a shift was supported also by the new intellectual

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<sup>64</sup> Duriez, “Left Wing Catholicism in France,” 88.

<sup>65</sup> Duriez, “Left Wing Catholicism in France,” 90.

<sup>66</sup> Gigacz identifies Cardijn’s friend and ally, Mgr (later Cardinal) Pietro Pavan as the principal drafter of *Dignitatis Humanae*, *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris*. See Gigacz, “Healing the Fractured Memory of the Lay Movements,” 3.

current in Roman Catholicism of the twentieth century – a thinking which did not share what had appeared to be a papal suspicion about the value of secularity but recognised in it a completely new possibility for the life of the Spirit. The outcome will be new forms of Christian discipleship. To these we now turn.

## 5.2 The New Ecclesial Movements

As a phenomenon of lay spirituality, the new ecclesial movements began much earlier than the pontificate of Pope John Paul II (1978-2005). They emerged out of the seed bed of Catholic Action. However, under John Paul II such movements achieved particular momentum. Ratzinger, however, comments that the emergence of the new ecclesial movements in recent times has come almost unexpectedly - even despite Karl Rahner's declaration that the Church had entered a wintry period.<sup>67</sup>

Had not the Church in fact become worn-out and dispirited after so many debates and so much searching for new structures? What Rahner was saying was perfectly understandable. It put into words an experience that we were all having. But suddenly here was something that no one had planned. Here the Holy Spirit himself had, so to speak, taken the floor.<sup>68</sup>

There is no shortage of interest in those movements which enjoy considerable (media) profile, such as Opus Dei, and in those movements which have suffered particular scrutiny for their difficult integration in the local church such as the Neo-Catechumenal Way. Against the background of an emergent ecclesiology of communion, the new ecclesial movements have often presented as having an

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<sup>67</sup> See Karl Rahner, "A 'Wintry' Church and the Opportunities for Christianity: An interview with David Seeber, Freiburg (1984)," in Karl Rahner, *Faith in a Wintry Season: Conversations and interviews with Karl Rahner in the last years of his life*, edited by Paul Imhof and Hubert Biallowons, translated by Harvey D. Egan, (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 189-200.

<sup>68</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, "The Theological Locus of Ecclesial Movements," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 25 (Fall 1998), 481.



uncomfortable alliance with the more traditional ecclesiastical structures of the local church, such as the diocesan parish, just as they have brought the tradition of Religious Life, as it has been lived in recent centuries, into new relief.<sup>69</sup> In a critical appraisal of the movements, De Rosa identifies seven particular problems – three ‘dangers’ and four ‘challenges.’<sup>70</sup> The challenges include a legislative vacuum in regard to such movements, the presence of members who have membership both in the movement and other existing associations such as Religious Institutes, the admission of non-Catholics into membership of the movements, and the issue of the locus of incardination of clerical members. The dangers, according to De Rosa, are the tendency for some members of such movements to make absolute their own Christian experience, the tendency to refuse collaboration with other pastoral initiatives, and the tendency to run independently from the local church.

Even given this recent helpful critical analysis, systematic research and reflection on the phenomenon of the rise of the new ecclesial movements, beyond mere observation, are only just commencing in English however.<sup>71</sup> Ongoing reflection will be necessitated increasingly in the years ahead as the phenomenon has now found

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<sup>69</sup> For a succinct treatment of communion ecclesiology see Richard Lennan, “Communion Ecclesiology: Foundations, Critiques, and Affirmations,” *Pacifica* 20 (February 2007), 24-39. Amidst the plethora of news articles that give account of tensions between new ecclesial movements and local churches, see in particular, [http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/movimenti\\_cattolici?eng=y](http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/movimenti_cattolici?eng=y), accessed 3 September, 2008.

<sup>70</sup> See Giuseppe De Rosa, “I Movimenti Ecclesiali Oggi,” *La Civiltà Cattolica* 155 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 19 June 2004), 523-536.

<sup>71</sup> See Michael A. Hayes, ed., *New Religious Movements in the Catholic Church*, (London/New York: Burns & Oates, 2005); Tony Hanna, *New Ecclesial Movements*, (Strathfield: St Pauls Publications, 2006). For non-English studies see P. Pingault, *Renouveau de l'Eglise: les communautés nouvelles*, (Paris, 1989); G. Cholvy, *Histoire des organisations et mouvements chrétiens de jeunesse en France (XIXe-XXe siècle)*, (Paris: 1999); *Movimenti ecclesiali contemporanei: Dimensioni storiche, teologico-spirituali ed apostoliche*, edited by A. Favale, (Rome: 1982).

articulation within the highest levels of the Church's formulation of its self-understanding.

Not all associations which are now brought under the umbrella term, 'new ecclesial movements' are happy to be so. At one end of the spectrum associations such as Charismatic Renewal do not enjoy the presence of a charismatic founder nor organizational structure most often belonging to such a movement; on the other end, a group such as Opus Dei has such organizational structure as to be a 'personal prelature.'<sup>72</sup> However, as Charles Whitehead points out, in both cases, and in others, "that is where the Church usually chooses to include them, and so to debate the point further is of little value."<sup>73</sup>

Indeed, both such groups have been significant participants in those gatherings by which the new ecclesial movements have steadily gained recognition. Those gatherings have provided an important snapshot into the evolution of the place of such movements in the life of the Church. Since an initial meeting of the movements at Rocca di Papa in 1980<sup>74</sup> a number of colloquia followed both before and after the 1987 Synod of Bishops on the laity in the Church with its post-synodal exhortation,

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<sup>72</sup> Opus Dei explicitly does not regard itself as a 'movement.' In a statement issued by Opus Dei Prelate, Bishop Javier Echevarria, on 28 May 1998, the declaration is made: "The Prelature of Opus Dei, as such, structurally does not form part of these movements; and therefore it has not participated in the [1998 World Congress of Ecclesial Movements] nor will it be represented in the final meeting. Nevertheless, all of the faithful of the Prelature feel themselves, together with the whole Church, very close to these movements. Some of them have also had the opportunity of collaborating in the organisation of the Congress. Others are present in the celebration for various reasons . . . See "A Sign of Hope," *Catholic International* 11 (November 2000), 431.

<sup>73</sup> Charles Whitehead, "The Role of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities in the Life of the Church," in *New Religious Movements in the Catholic Church*, 18-19.

<sup>74</sup> Recorded in Pontificium Consilium pro Liacis, *Première rencontre des mouvements qui promeuvent la vie spirituelle des laïcs. Rocca di Papa 14-18 avril 1980*, (Vatican City, 1981). Some 150 representatives of ecclesial movements were present at this Congress.

*Christifideles laici: On the vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World.*<sup>75</sup> The first World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements took place 27-29 May, 1998 in Rome, coinciding with the celebration of Pentecost, and with the theme, “Ecclesial Movements: Communion and Mission on the Threshold of the Third Millennium.”<sup>76</sup> The second World Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities took place at Rocca di Papa, 31 May - 2 June 2006 with the theme, “The Beauty of Being a Christian and the Joy of Communicating this.”<sup>77</sup> In addition to such focussed assemblies, ecclesial movements are now regularly represented at the Synods of Bishops at various levels of participation – a sure indication of their now solid incorporation within the highest levels of the Church’s life.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> The second meeting occurred at Rocca di Papa, 28 February – 4 March 1987 and is recorded in *I movimenti nella chiesa. Atti del II Colloquio internazionale, ‘Vocazione e missione dei laici nella Chiesa oggi’*, (Milan 1987); the third occurred in Bratislava 1-4 April, 1991. See Alberto Melloni, “Movements: On the significance of words,” *Movements’ in the Church*, edited by Alberto Melloni, *Concilium* 2003/3, (London: SCM Press, 2003), 24.

<sup>76</sup> This meeting is fully recorded in English in *Movements in the Church*, Proceedings of the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements, Rome, 27-29 May, 1998. edited by Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, (Vatican City, 1999).

<sup>77</sup> See [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/laity/documents/rc\\_pc\\_laity\\_doc\\_20060603\\_in-fo-pentecoste\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/laity/documents/rc_pc_laity_doc_20060603_in-fo-pentecoste_en.html), accessed 4 September, 2008. See also <http://www.laici.org/index.php?p=homepentecoste>, accessed 4 September 2008. Some fifty ecclesial movements were present at these congresses. For an index of these fifty movements, each with their own website, see <http://www.laici.org/index.php?p=link>, accessed 4 September, 2008.

<sup>78</sup> For example at the 12<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 5-26<sup>th</sup> October 2008, on “The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church,” the following representatives from ecclesial movements were appointed by Benedict XVI at various levels of participation. As Members: Bishop Javier Echevarría Rodríguez, prelate of the personal prelature of Opus Dei, Rome, and Father Julian Carron, president of “Comunione e Liberazione”; as Experts: Father Enzo Bianchi, prior of the monastic community of Bose, Italy, Marguerite Lena, professor of philosophy at the Madelaine Daniélou Centres, and director for the theological formation of young people at the Saint Francois Xavier Community of Paris, France; and as Auditors: Francisco Jose Gomez Arguello Wirtz, cofounder of the NeoCatechumenal Way, Spain, Sr. Jocelyne Huot S.F.A., president of the movement “Les Brebis de Jesus”, Quebec, Canada, Ewa Kusz, president of the World Conference of Secular Institutes (CMIS), Poland, Michelle Moran, president of the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS), Great Britain, Andrea Riccardi, founder of the Sant’Egidio Community, Italy, and Maria Voce, president of the “Focolari” movement, Italy. See <http://www.zenit.org/article-23564?l=english>, accessed 9 September, 2008.

The phenomenon of the new ecclesial movements represent as new opportunities for holiness within the Roman Catholic spiritual tradition. The twentieth century may well be noted historically in the tradition of spirituality for their rise. The subsequent chapter will examine a select sample of such ecclesial movements, suggesting that they may be regarded as either agents of the ‘politics of mysticism’ or of the ‘mysticism of politics’ – particularly, when either ‘the mystical’ or ‘the political’ within them assumes more predominant weighting.

Before so doing, however, it is important to trace the development and nascent theology behind the new ecclesial movements

### **5.2.a The Antecedent to Ecclesial Movements: The Secular Institute**

Organised religious movements with a strong lay involvement are not confined to the twentieth century. Earlier instances are demonstrated in a number of ways, though prior to the twelfth century association with established monastic centres may have been the maximum form to so realise an aspiration for lay religious living. Even so, as Ratzinger highlights, the monastic impulse, whether it be represented in the personal demonstration of the desert father, Anthony, or in the communal vision of the Cappadocian Basil, the originating point was “to seek, not a community apart, but Christianity as a whole, a Church that is obedient to the gospel and lives by it.”<sup>79</sup> Ratzinger regards monasticism itself, - in its initial forms, its eighth century missionary expansion, and in its later Cluniac reform - essentially through the lens of a movement. Christian life as an apostolic movement is one he also traces through the

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<sup>79</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “The Theological Locus of Ecclesial Movements,” 492.

perspective of Aquinas dealing with the thirteenth century Paris controversy between the secular clergy and the representatives of the new mendicant movements.<sup>80</sup>

Particularly in the Middle Ages, new forms of spiritual living, essentially lay, came into focus.<sup>81</sup> From the beginning of the thirteenth century the tradition of lay brothers and sisters emerged in Cistercian communities. In such instances, a religious life could be led without renunciation of the lay state, though, in effect, such a state of life quickly came to be regarded as quasi monastic. In the twelfth century Crusades, and through the formation of the military orders, the possibility of living a pious and ascetic life whilst still within the lay state, perhaps gained more distinct realisation.<sup>82</sup> However, in the subsequent centuries, independent lay movements escalated in number and in type.<sup>83</sup> One thinks, by way of example, of the Devout movement around the dissemination of ‘à Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ*, Gerard Groote’s Brothers [and sisters] of the Common Life in the Low Countries, the charitable communities of the fifteenth century such as the *Divino Amore* movement founded by Ettore Vernazzo in 1497, inspired by Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510), and the subsequent, pre-Ursuline, initiative of Angela Merici (1474-1540).<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ratzinger, “The Theological Locus of Ecclesial Movements,” 496-497. Ratzinger alludes to Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 3.40.1.2.

<sup>81</sup> See André Vauchez, “Lay Religious Movements in the Middle Ages,” in ‘*Movements*’ in the Church, edited by Alberto Melloni, *Concilium* 2003/3, (London: SCM Press, 2003), 49-56.

<sup>82</sup> See Marcus Bull, “The Roots of Lay Enthusiasm for the First Crusade,” in *The Crusades*, edited by Thomas F. Madden, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 172-193.

<sup>83</sup> See *inter alia* François Vandenbroucke, “New Milieux, New Problems: From the twelfth to the sixteenth century,” in Louis Bouyer, Jean Leclercq and Françoise Vanderbroucke, *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages*, Volume II of *A History of Christian Spirituality*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), 223-505.

<sup>84</sup> See Mary-Cabrini Durkin, *Angela Merici’s Journey of the Heart: The rule, the way*, (WovenWord Press, 2005), 212-214.

As Ratzinger identifies about the movements of the much later nineteenth century,

[a]n element that, while by no means absent from the movements, can easily be overlooked, now comes powerfully to the fore here: the apostolic movement of the nineteenth century was above all a female movement, in which there was a strong emphasis on caritas, on care for the suffering and the poor . . . However, such an observation has pertinence well before the nineteenth century.<sup>85</sup>

The Beguines, as a community of women without perpetual vows, bringing together both prayer and concern for the poor, are a classic example.<sup>86</sup>

The more recent development of lay institutes finds its benchmark date in the 1947 publication of the Apostolic Constitution regarding Secular Institutes, *Provida mater ecclesia* by Pius XII, in which the presence of secular institutes and lay associations achieved magisterial acknowledgement and encouragement.<sup>87</sup> The papal statement

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<sup>85</sup> See *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, edited by Daniel Bornstein and Robert Rusconi, translated by Margery J. Schneider, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996); Patricia Raft, *Women and Spiritual Equality in Christian Tradition*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Marie A. Conn, *Noble Daughters: Unheralded women in western Christianity, 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000).

<sup>86</sup> See *inter alia* *Beguine Spirituality: An anthology*, edited by Fiona Bowie, translated by Oliver Davies, (London: SPCK, 1989); Saskia Murk-Jansen, *Brides in the Desert: The spirituality of the Beguines*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1998); Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine communities in the medieval low countries, 1200-1565*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

<sup>87</sup> Pius XII, Apostolic Constitution regarding Secular Institutes, *Provida mater ecclesia*, (2 February, 1947) in *Acta Apostolica Sedis* 39 (1947), 114-124. Further documents in the pontificate of Pius XII in which secular institutes featured were *Primo feliciter* (1948) and *Cum sanctissimus* (1948). As Gerosa intimates there was an irony in this given that even as late as 1939 Fr. Agostino Gemelli was ordered to retract his *Le associazione dei laici consecrati a Dio e al mondo: Memoria storica e giuridico-canonica*. This was a proposed canonical systematization of lay associations by Gemelli (1878-1959), a Franciscan friar and founder of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore of Milan in 1921. A psychologist, he was particularly concerned with the reconciliation of faith and culture. Gemelli's proposal can be located in *Secolarità e vita consecrata*, edited by A. Oberti, (Milan, 1966), 361-442. See Libero Gerosa, "Secular institutes, lay associations, and ecclesial movements in the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 17 (Fall 1990), 343. For a tribute to the work of Gemelli, see John Paul II, "Address to the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart," 8 December, 1978, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/speeches/1978/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19781208\\_univ-sacro-cuore\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1978/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19781208_univ-sacro-cuore_en.html), accessed 3 September, 2008.

was in response to the proliferation of such groups in the preceding forty years, some of which were 'self-contained,' others associated with existing Religious Orders.<sup>88</sup>

There were associations which had deserved well of Church and State but had not all the specific features and legal formalities (public vows for instance) which go with a canonical state of perfection. Yet they were closely akin to Religious since they had everything that makes a life of perfection in the plain meaning of those words. With these, too, the Church must be concerned. They must be given in some way full and equal canonical standing in the manner and degree appropriate to their nature.<sup>89</sup>

Pius XII was not including "every kind of association of people who are sincerely committed to secular Christian perfection" but "those which for all practical and essential purposes are closest akin to the states of perfection already recognized in the Church, and in particular to the Societies without public vows (Tit. XVII, of the Code) which have their own external ways of association, different from the common life of Religious."<sup>90</sup> Whilst Pius XII re-iterated that Religious Profession uncompromisingly belonged within a Religious Order, *Provida mater ecclesia* fully acknowledged the spiritual possibility within the new forms of lay association which had evolved. "[T]hey have their definite ways of ministry and apostolate"<sup>91</sup> and enjoy an ecclesial and apostolic fruitfulness:

In such Institutes it is quite possible to lead a life of perfection in spite of any difficulties arising from time, place and circumstances. For those who wish to do that but cannot or should not join a Religious Community, an Institute is often the answer. The effectiveness of Institute life in the Christian renewal of families, of secular professions, of society in general, through people's daily contact, from the inside of the secular scene, with lives perfectly and totally dedicated to God's sanctifying work in them is obvious.

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<sup>88</sup> *Provida mater ecclesia*, n.22.

<sup>89</sup> *Provida mater ecclesia*, n.12.

<sup>90</sup> *Provida mater ecclesia*, n.15.

<sup>91</sup> *Provida mater ecclesia*, n.15.

These Institutes also open the way to many forms of apostolate and service in times, places and circumstances from which priests and Religious are excluded by the nature of their calling, or which for other reasons are not accessible to them.<sup>92</sup>

Several decades later, the 1983 Code of Canon Law admits of a range of such associations which continue to multiply.<sup>93</sup> It does so against its definition of Religious Institutes as,

a society in which members, according to proper law, pronounce public vows, either perpetual or temporary, which are to be renewed when they have lapsed, and live a life in common as brothers and sisters. The public witness to be rendered by religious to Christ and to the Church entails a separation from the world proper to the character and purpose of each institute. (Canon 607)

The Code presents a variety of alternatives to Religious life so defined:

- A secular institute is an institute of consecrated life in which the Christian faithful, living in the world, strive for the perfection of charity and seek to contribute to the sanctification of the world, especially from within. (Canon 710)
- Societies of apostolic life resemble institutes of consecrated life; their members, without religious vows, pursue the apostolic purpose proper to the society and, leading a life in common as brothers and sisters according to their proper manner of life, strive for the perfection of charity through the observance of constitutions. (Canon 731)
- Associations: In the Church there are associations distinct from institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life; in these associations the Christian faithful, whether clerics, lay persons or clerics and lay persons together, strive in a common endeavour to

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<sup>92</sup> *Provida mater ecclesia*, n.20.

<sup>93</sup> See *The Code of Canon Law: A text and commentary*, study edition, edited by James A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green, Donald E. Heintschel, (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985). For an example of a directory of such institutes and associations, see Mary E. Bendyna, ed., *Emerging Communities of Consecrated Life in the United States 2006*, second edition, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), Georgetown University, 2006). This directory, a revision of a 1999 study, is a compilation of new or emerging religious communities and lay movements that have been founded across the United States since 1965. It identified the following trends in these emerging communities: the importance of prayer and contemplation for them, the attractiveness of poverty, a relative decline in traditional apostolates for the delivery of social services, and the predominance of Benedictine, Franciscan and Carmelite provenance. Interestingly, the research demonstrates mixed indications on the value of conservative models: those communities whose members wear distinctive garb and express loyalty to the pope are “somewhat more likely to draw new members, communities which emphasize orthodoxy are not.”



foster a more perfect life, to promote public worship or Christian doctrine, or to exercise other works of the apostolate such as initiatives of evangelization, works of piety or charity, and those which animate the temporal order with a Christian spirit. (Canon 28.1). These may be either public (Canon 312-320) or private (Canon 321-326).

The particular theological champion of the initial rise of such various associations and institutes was Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) who termed such entities “secular communities” (*Weltgemeinschaften*). Von Balthasar had a deeply personal interest in such communities. In 1940, along with his friend, Robert Rast, he had conceived of creating a training community (*Schulungsgemeinschaft*) which might effect a union of Christian life with professional life.<sup>94</sup> Though this did not eventuate, what did was the Johannine Community he formed with Adrienne von Speyr. It was to be a community of consecrated persons, educated, and directed in mission to society.<sup>95</sup>

Sara indicates that in von Balthasar’s vision such communities achieved a fundamental integrative role: they are “constituted by their integration of an exclusive service of God and the world as a *form of Christian life*.”<sup>96</sup> Taking the lead from Pius XII’s acknowledgement of these new forms of ecclesial expression, von Balthasar

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<sup>94</sup> See Peter Henrici, “A Sketch of Balthasar’s Life, in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His life and work*, edited by David L. Schindler, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 17.

<sup>95</sup> See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *My Work in Retrospect*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 37; and *Our Task*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 47.

<sup>96</sup> See Juan M. Sara, “Secular Institutes According to Hans Urs Von Balthasar,” *Communio International Catholic Review* 29 (Summer 2002), 310. Sara indicates that there is some debate as to how successful von Balthasar was in such a project. Though in disagreement with its thesis, Sara refers to the 2000 doctoral work of Daniela Mohr who proposed that in von Balthasar’s effort to integrate God and the world, he, in effect, suffocated a true lay life. Mohr’s thesis is published as *Existenz im Herzen der Kirche, Zur Theologie der Säkularinstitute im Leben und Werk Hans Urs von Balthasars*, (Würzburg, 2000). For von Balthasar’s own development of the place and theology of the secular institute, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983); *Spouse of the Word*. Volume 2 of *Explorations in Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 315-331; *Spirit and Institution*, Volume 4 of *Explorations in Theology*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 287-288.

understood that, whilst they did not replace traditional Religious Life, they did provide an alternative with its own particular genius. As Sara expounds, von Balthasar understood that such institutes in their own way effected a participation in the eccentric-concentric state of Jesus' own life, i.e. from the Father to the world, and then together with the world towards the Father. They are thus placed within the unity of the Trinitarian missions. However, because they not only participate in the dynamic of the evangelical counsels but find their direction towards the world, they demonstrate an inherent unity between consecration and worldly mission. Within the theological framework of his renowned Trilogy (*The Glory of the Lord*, *Theo-Drama*, and *Theo-Logic*), von Balthasar situates the secular institute such that the world itself might be the place in which the love of Christ might grow:

Such is the ecclesial integration to which Balthasar aspired – an integration that happens in the dialogue between the Church's consecrated Yes and the world itself, embraced and fostered by the rhythm of absolute love (*Non Aliud*), which grows together with the world and, in so doing, sets it free.<sup>97</sup>

Such then is the overarching orientation of the secular institute,

. . . to foster an existential, Eucharistic echo in present history of that original dialogue between the triune God and Mary . . . This dialogue is nothing other than the growth of the world in total gift to God, authentic worldly profession in Christian consecration, the flowering of the logos in the divine Logos, the fruitfulness of God in man.<sup>98</sup>

Within such an understanding, the secular institutes provided a certain response to the issue of secularity. They suggest the secular as not antithetical to the experience of

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<sup>97</sup> Sara, "Secular Institutes According to Hans Urs Von Balthasar," 317.

<sup>98</sup> Sara, "Secular Institutes According to Hans Urs Von Balthasar," 333. The Marian dimension of the secular institute is a critical theme in von Balthasar's theology of them. See Brendan Leahy, *The Marian Profile in the Ecclesiology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, (New City, 2000). It is a dimension that has transmuted into a definitional perspective of the now-called ecclesial movements. See Chiara Lubich, "Ecclesial Movements and the Marian Profile of the Church," in Hayes, *New Religious Movements in the Catholic Church*, 164-173.

God, but the very locus in which such an experience is rendered possible. In their own way, particularly as developed by von Balthasar, they suggest, in historical form, a very real way in which ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ might be oriented towards integration. Certainly such entities do raise the spiritual issue of the possibility of how consecration and secularity might find conjunction, just as they highlighted the theological issue of the inter-relationship between institution and charism.<sup>99</sup>

However, the questions evoked by the acknowledgement of the secular institute in the mid twentieth century have now given way to the vocabulary of the new ecclesial movements. Such questions have become incorporated, if not by design or reflective planning, by papal language.

### **5.2.b From Secular Institutes to Ecclesial Movement**

The rise of the ecclesial movements assumes those issues initially related to secular institutes. However, it also implies a number of other complex issues. One of these is the theological question of the inter-relationship between the local and the universal church given the Petrine orientation in a large number of instances of the ecclesial movements.<sup>100</sup> Yet, it is their designation precisely as *ecclesial movements* that has

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<sup>99</sup> Gerosi, “Secular Institutes,” 346. Gerosi alludes that the question about the possibility of the conjunction of consecration and secularity was a key aspect of the controversy between the theologians von Balthasar and Karl Rahner. He refers to the work of G. Pollack, *Der Aufbruch der Säkularinstitute und ihr theologischer Ort* (Vallendar-Schönstatt, 1986), 177-187. For further analysis of von Balthasar’s contribution see Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, “Theo-Drama and Political Theology,” *Communio: International Catholic Review*. 25 (Fall, 1998), 532-552. Responses to Bauerschmidt follow his article.

<sup>100</sup> The emergence of non-territorial ecclesial forms was at the fore of discussions at the Colloquium of the World Association of Canonists in Budapest, September 2001. Beyond the canonical issue, the Marian dimension and the Petrine dimensions are intrinsically related in the ecclesial movements. For Balthasar, the Marian principle is “the liberating embrace of the Petrine ministry”, such that it renders the Church not simply an institution but a person, Mother. See Leahy, *The Marian Principle*, 139. In regard to the movements themselves, Hanna explains the intrinsic link thus: “In recent papal statements we find the pope reaffirming and in one sense reclaiming the Marian dimension of the Church, not in any narrow sense but as the true arbiter and guide, to chart the course between the

special historical and ecclesial significance. In this designation, we see a marked differentiation from their antecedent, secular institutes, in two primary ways.

Firstly, *ecclesial* movements, as they are now called, are not simply *lay* since they are constituted by a diversity of states of life within the Church. As Coda indicates, “The new movements are constitutionally open (by virtue of their original charism) to all the vocations and to all the states of life present in the People of God.”<sup>101</sup> Their inclusivity is promoted as a mirror of the organic wholeness between the charismatic and the institutional dimensions of the Church’s life, and reflective of ecclesial communion.<sup>102</sup>

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institutional and charismatic tension within the Church. The movements are a prime example of the Marian principle of the Church, and their emergence and acceptance bear testimony to the Petrine role of the Pope who has validated their ministry and encouraged their acceptance and dispersal throughout the Church.” See Hanna, *New Ecclesial Movements*, 213. The role of, and relationship to, the papacy in the phenomenon of the ecclesial movements is also highlighted by Ian Ker, “The Radicalism of the Papacy: John Paul II and the New Ecclesial Movements,” in *John Paul the Great: Maker of the post-conciliar church*, edited by William Oddie, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 49-68. See also Angelo Scola, “The Reality of the Movements in the Universal Church and in the Local Church,” in Pontificium Consilium pro Liacis, *Movements in the Church*, 105-129.

<sup>101</sup> Piero Coda, “The Ecclesial Movements, Gift of the Spirit: A theological reflection,” in Pontificium Consilium pro Liacis, *Movements in the Church*, 95. The extraordinary breadth of different states of life –and lifestyles – within the ecclesial movements is highlighted and described by Jean-Paul Durand, “Catholic Movements of the Faithful which arose in the Twentieth Century: Some Challenges to Canon Law,” in Melloni, *Movements in the Church*, 97-100.

<sup>102</sup> Ratzinger is critical of any dialectic between institution and event, or institution and charism, and sees such a distinction as an unhelpful means of defining the emergence of ecclesial movements: As he remarks, “The institution-charism model does not answer this question, because the antithesis [of the two terms] does not adequately capture the reality of the Church.” The ecclesial institution, itself, is only brought into being by the Spirit given that the structural element of the Church is constituted by the sacrament of priesthood (bishop-priest-deacon), but this is realised only in response to a call of the Spirit. Thus the Church “is created primarily by Gods’ call to man, which is to say, only charismatically-pneumatologically.” The sacrament of priesthood, itself, which gives ecclesial structure, must also be something that is lived charismatically. When it does, institutional hardening is avoided. See Ratzinger, “The Theological Locus of Ecclesial Movements,” 482-485. For further discussion on “how to affirm a distinction between institution and charism that is without opposition and a unity between them that is without confusion,” in regard to ecclesial movements, see David L. Schindler, “Institution and Charism,” in Pontificium Consilium pro Liacis, *Movements in the Church*, 53-75; Charles Whitehead, “The Role of the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities in the Life of the Church” in *New Religious Movements in the Catholic Church*, 15-29; Tony Hanna, *New Ecclesial Movements*, 218-220. For the manner in which this issue is specifically addressed by John Paul II, see “Address to participants in the Italian Episcopal Conference meeting in Ariccia Italy,” *L’Osservatore Romano* 852 (17 September, 1984), 8-9, “Address to the participants in the Second International Conference of Ecclesial Movements,” *L’Osservatore Romano* 979 (16 March 1987), 12; “The

Secondly, ecclesial *movements*, as they are now termed, have shifted the canonical boundaries envisaged by the mid twentieth century acknowledgement of secular institutes.<sup>103</sup> They are in different ways splinters from Catholic Action. Melloni makes note that such institutes overturn “the superimposition of church and movement which was at the heart of Pius XII’s vision. Thus, from the church-movement there emerged a vision of a movements-church.”<sup>104</sup> It is a point explicitly named by John Paul II in his own understanding of what are now called the ecclesial movements. In his address to the First International “Movements in the Church” Congress in 1981, (an event at which some 150 such movements were represented) he brings the notion of ‘movement’ to the very definition of the Church, itself.<sup>105</sup> Ecclesial movements are to reflect the four-fold movement which constitutes ecclesial reality:

the movement towards the living God himself, who drew so near to man; the movement towards one’s interior self, one’s conscience and one’s heart, which, in the encounter with God, reveals its depth; the movement towards men, our brothers and sisters, whom Christ puts along our way in life; the movement towards the world, which is

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Participation of Priests in Ecclesial Movements,” *Catholic News Service* 31 (2001), 187-188. . For a discussion on their challenge to traditional forms of Religious Life, see Antonio Maria Sicari, “Ecclesial Movements: A New Framework for Ancient Charisms,” *Communio: International Catholic Review* 29 (Summer 2002), 286-308; David Ranson, “Religious Life into the Future,” *The Australasian Catholic Record* 85 (October, 2008), 456-463.

<sup>103</sup> For a discussion on the canonical complexity of the movements see Gianfranco Ghirlanda, “Charism and Juridical Status of the Ecclesial Movements,” in Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, *Movements in the Church*, 131-148; Jean-Paul Durand, “Catholic Movements and Communities of the Faithful which arose in the Twentieth Century: Some Challenges to Canon Law,” in Melloni, *‘Movements’ in the Church*, 94-105. It was an issue explicitly raised by John Paul II. See “Speech for the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities,” (30 May, 1998), n.6, in *Catholic International* 11 (November 2000), 434-435.

<sup>104</sup> Melloni, “Movements,” 15.

<sup>105</sup> John Paul II, “Address to ‘Movements in the Church’ Congress, *L’Osservatore Romano* 704 (5 October, 1981), 1.

ceaselessly waiting for ‘the revelation of the sons of God’ in it (Romans 8:19).<sup>106</sup>

Such an integral understanding in some ways begins to address the earlier question inherent in the acknowledgment of secular institutes – the possibility of the conjunction of consecration and secularity in which both ‘the vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ dimensions of Christian experience are regarded organically. Though this question is not treated thematically, the very encouragement of the new ecclesial movements through the pontificate of John Paul II goes a long way in addressing the issue - if not in theory but certainly by practice. Such very encouragement of the movements implies that consecration and secularity are not seen as antithetical to one another.

The manner in which the new ecclesial movements achieve this is evidenced in critical soundings from John Paul II’s formal perspective on the movements. In his first encyclical, *Redemptor hominis* (1979), the pontiff remarked:

Within the church, there are various types of services, functions, ministries, and ways of promoting the Christian life. I call to mind, as a new development occurring in many churches in recent times, the rapid growth of “ecclesial movements” filled with missionary dynamism. When these movements humbly seek to become part of the life of local churches and are welcomed by the bishop and priests within diocesan and parish structures, they represent a true gift of God both for new evangelisation and missionary activity properly so called. I therefore recommend that they be spread and that they be used to give fresh energy, especially among young people, to the Christian life and to evangelisation, within a pluralistic view of the ways in which Christians can associate and express themselves.<sup>107</sup>

However, it is not until much later, in his message to the First World Congress of Ecclesial Movements in 1998, that he offers a definition:

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<sup>106</sup> John Paul II, “Address to ‘Movements in the Church’ Congress, 1.

<sup>107</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, “On the Redeemer of Man,” Encyclical Letter, (4 March, 1979), n. 72.

What is meant today by ‘movement’? The term is often used to refer to realities that differ among themselves, sometimes even by reason of their canonical structure. Though that term certainly cannot exhaust or capture the wealth of forms aroused by the life-giving creativity of the Spirit of Christ, it does indicate a concrete ecclesial reality with predominantly lay membership, a journey of faith and a Christian witness which bases its own pedagogical method on a precise charism given to the person of the founder in specific circumstances and ways.<sup>108</sup>

Yet, it is in the earlier 1989 post-synodal document, *Christifidelis laici* that we are provided with the fullest endorsement of this new ecclesial reality:

In recent days the phenomenon of lay people associating among themselves has taken on a character of particular variety and vitality. In some ways lay associations have always been present throughout the Church's history as various confraternities, third orders and sodalities testify even today. However, in modern times such lay groups have received a special stimulus, resulting in the birth and spread of a multiplicity of group forms: associations, groups, communities, movements. We can speak of a new era of group endeavors of the lay faithful. *In fact, alongside the traditional forming of associations and at times coming from their very roots, movements and new sodalities have sprouted, with a specific feature and purpose, so great is the richness and the versatility of resources that the Holy Spirit nourishes in the ecclesial community, and so great is the capacity of initiative and the generosity of our lay people.* [Italics mine]<sup>109</sup>

In such flourishing, the pope clearly indicates a new possibility for the way in which consecration and secularity find a new conjunction:

There are many other places and forms of association [than the parish] through which the Church can be present and at work. *All are necessary to carry out the word and grace of the Gospel and to correspond to the various circumstances of life in which people find themselves today.* In a similar way there exist in the areas of culture, society, education, professions, etc., many other ways for spreading the faith and other settings for the apostolate which cannot have the parish as their center and origin. . . . [Italics mine]<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> John Paul II, “Message to the Participants of the First World Congress,” (27 May, 1998), n.4, in Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, *Movements in the Church*, 18.

<sup>109</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles laici*, “On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World,” Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, (30 December, 1988), n. 29.

<sup>110</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles laici*, n. 26.

Further on, the apostolic exhortation provides criteria for the discernment of the proper ecclesiality of such groups.<sup>111</sup> However, the endorsement of the movements remained firmly within John Paul's ecclesiology to the end of his pontificate as we read in *Novo millennio ineunte* of 2001,

It is in this perspective that we see the value of all other vocations, rooted as they are in the new life received in the Sacrament of Baptism. In a special way it will be necessary to discover ever more fully *the specific vocation of the laity*, called "to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God"; they "have their own role to play in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world by their work for the evangelization and the sanctification of people".

Along these same lines, another important aspect of communion is *the promotion of forms of association*, whether of the more traditional kind or the newer ecclesial movements, which continue to give the Church a vitality that is God's gift and a true "springtime of the Spirit". Obviously, associations and movements need to work in full harmony within both the universal Church and the particular Churches, and in obedience to the authoritative directives of the Pastors. But the Apostle's exacting and decisive warning applies to all: "Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything and hold fast what is good" (1 Th 5:19-21). [Italics in the original]<sup>112</sup>

### 5.3 Conclusion

From what we have seen, the ecclesial movements were promoted in such a sustained way through the long pontificate of John Paul II. In them we see a new form of ecclesial life coming into greater and clearer focus. It is a charismatic form, not only with institutional approbation but at the very service of the church's institutional definition. Notwithstanding the inclusion of a number of states of life the ecclesial movements present a consecration to a full life of Christian discipleship not separate

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<sup>111</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles laici*, n. 30.

<sup>112</sup> John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, "At the Beginning of the New Millennium," Apostolic Letter, (6 January 2001), n.46.



from the secular but lived out within the secular for the transformation of the secular. The vision of von Balthasar in regard to secular institutes, formulated in the middle of the twentieth century has by the end of that same century through his champion, John Paul II, now been liberated from the juridical confines of such associations to undergird a much more diverse and diffuse experience of fraternity within the Church.<sup>113</sup>

These new forms of ecclesial spirituality, precisely given that they are lived in the context of the secular, render a negotiation between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ as unavoidable. They do so, however, in various ways. The diversity of approach to the alliance, in turn, proffers a certain typology in their regard. They present as particularly useful examples of a ‘politics of mysticism’ or a ‘mysticism of politics.’ Further, we will wish to address how the ecclesial movements may be considered from the perspective of those insights about such a polarity as drawn in Chapter Four on the movements of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>113</sup> Von Balthasar himself was a key influence on the thought of John Paul II. See George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The biography of Pope John Paul II*, (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1999), 565, 577; Avery Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith: The theological vision of Pope John Paul II*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999), 43, 115, 183. See also John Paul II, “Hans Urs von Balthasar has placed his knowledge at the service of truth which comes from God,” Discourse at the conferral of the Paul VI International Prize, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, (23 July, 1984), 6.

## CHAPTER SIX

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### **AGENTS OF THE ‘POLITICS OF MYSTICISM’ AND THE ‘MYSTICISM OF POLITICS’ AMONGST THE NEW ECCLESIAL MOVEMENTS**

At the end of Chapter Four which explored the emergence of a ‘mysticism of politics’ and a ‘politics of mysticism’ in developments in the nineteenth century, a number of conclusions were suggested. It was proposed that:

- a) the ‘mysticism of politics’ appears to gain currency precisely at times of political and social innovation in which there exists the experience of the potential of human agency according to an evangelical vision;
- b) in a modern, liberal society in which it discovers itself as one voice amongst others the Church will tend towards a ‘politics of mysticism’ for social identity. In this sense, the intensity with which a ‘politics of mysticism’ is engaged acts as a type of religious barometer on the level of the threat perceived; and
- c) that which begins in a ‘mysticism of politics,’ may unfold into a ‘politics of mysticism’ with the threshold between the two determined by the tension of the prophetic and the institutional. Where the prophetic is entertained, a ‘mysticism of politics’ will ensue. Where the prophetic is surrendered and the institutional enveloped, there the ‘politics of mysticism’ will flourish. As outlined in the Introduction in each scenario ‘the political’ is envisaged differently: in the ‘mysticism of politics’ as social engagement; in the ‘politics of mysticism’ as the exercise of social power.

To what extent do the new ecclesial movements, as they increasingly emerge by the end of the twentieth century as a new locus for spirituality within the Roman Catholic tradition, also evidence these insights? This chapter addresses this question through an exploration of four illustrations amongst the plethora of movements. Two will be presented as exemplary of ‘the politics of mysticism’ and two of ‘mysticism of politics.’ In so doing, ‘the politics of mysticism’ and ‘the mysticism of politics’ suggests itself as providing a typology for the phenomenon of the movements.

### **6.1 The New Ecclesial Movements: Towards a Typology**

As indicated in the previous chapter, the rise (and rise) of the ecclesial movements is a phenomenon in current process, and systematic reflection both on their ecclesiological definition and place has only just commenced. It will be further necessitated as further time is brought to bear in their regard. Nonetheless, even at this relative early stage in their historical development it is possible to begin to discern various lineaments in regard to their particular orientations and styles. Within the ambit of this thesis, they also present with sufficient form and clarity already to be considered within the dialectic of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ for in them, given the consecration within the secular, ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ must, at least by implication, aspire to a certain conjunction. In what manner is the dialectic evident within them? And given the shifting balance between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ that is possible, and which has been demonstrated in the historical considerations of earlier chapters, how does the ‘politics of mysticism’ or the ‘mysticism of politics’ become apparent within the new ecclesial movements?

There have been some initial attempts at providing a critical typology of the new ecclesial movements. Durand asks whether the new forms of religious association that have arisen in the twentieth century church “show signs of prophetism or a Christian rigorism.”<sup>1</sup> He further indicates that there is already a civil and political interest in such spiritualities,

because public order, public health and public security are taking steps to discover if these new religious forms do not display tendencies towards sectarianism or to proselytism of a doubtful kind, or even to discover whether they represent new challenges of uncontrollable power, or, better, whether they will be new stimuli towards humanization.<sup>2</sup>

Durand acknowledges the great diversity within the movements. However, he steers away from labelling them progressive or conservative, modernist or traditionalist given that the form and behaviour of the movements are far more complex than what such terms allow, and context of country and culture must also be taken into account.

Pace proffers a more developed, if still very initial, systematization of the movements.<sup>3</sup> He places his morphology against the background of the model of the relationship between Church and society that existed prior to Vatican II and within the project of Catholic Action. This he calls an “organicistic conception.” The Church existed, as it were, alongside society but sought an inter-penetration into society as a kind of universal value and marker over the full range of professional activity. All was to be brought under ‘holy mother church’: “the sign that over and above the many

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Paul Durand, “Catholic Movements and Communities of the Faithful which arose in the Twentieth Century: Some Challenges to Canon Law,” in *‘Movements’ in the Church*, edited by Alberto Melloni, *Concilium*, (London: SCM Press, 2003), 94.

<sup>2</sup> Durand, “Catholic Movements,” 94. For the difficulty that movements created for even local civil communities across Europe, see Gordon Urquhart, “Model Towns for God,” *The Tablet* (6 July 2002), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Enzo Pace, “Increase and Multiply: From Organicism to a Plurality of Models in Contemporary Catholicism,” in Melloni, ed., *‘Movements’ in the Church*, 67-79.

differentiations characteristic of modern society, the church was in a position to provide a sense of collective belonging . . . and moral incentives individualized by professional category, age group and social corporations.”<sup>4</sup> Within a social context now withdrawn from religion such a model of influence is no longer possible, according to Pace,

That is either because the faithful organised by corporations no longer seemed to feel to belong through groups determined by interests or socio-biological subdivisions, or because it was discovered that the unifying religious message could not offer light, meaning and direction to the concrete choices which each individual – as part of an age-group or social class – wanted to make autonomously, in his or her particular sphere of life. . . . The claim on the part of the church to unify them was no longer socially plausible, even among its faithful.<sup>5</sup>

Subsequently, in regard to the ecclesial movements of the end of the twentieth century, no homogenous model is evidenced. There emerges, rather, a considerable plurality and complexity. According to Pace, the Catholic tradition thus must deal with quite a different situation than in the past. It is faced with surrendering the attempt to reduce to unity the many movements. From previous attempts to unify many movements, it must now promote a plurality of forms “because they are considered the necessary terminals through which to tune in to a social and religious environment which has become increasingly differentiated.”<sup>6</sup> The outcome is what Pace terms a paradigm shift from an organicistic conception to a systematic conception in which, “[t]he various religious groups and movements present in the

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<sup>4</sup> Pace, “Increase and Multiply,” 68.

<sup>5</sup> Pace, “Increase and Multiply,” 69.

<sup>6</sup> Pace, “Increase and Multiply,” 76.

church in their diversity are not considered sources of potential disorder by the system of belief, but as a way in which the system itself functions.”<sup>7</sup>

Within this model of ‘systematic conception’ of the new paradigm facilitated by the rise of the new ecclesial movements, Pace identifies four criteria by which movements can attain a kind of classification:

1. The ‘spiritual life’ proposed;
2. The leadership structure and the division of powers and knowledge within the organization;
3. The relationship between religious choice and active commitment in society and in the *polis* (directly or indirectly in political life);
4. The attitude towards the virtue of obedience (to the authority of the church’s magisterium).

Pace suggests that the combinations of these four dimensions are not limitless and if they are brought to bear on the current complexity they yield two significantly different types of ecclesial movements. These two types act for Pace like a kind of *complexio oppositorium* - and about which “church authority oscillate[s], still uncertain today about favouring one over another.”<sup>8</sup>

Firstly, Pace identifies those movements in which the spiritual model is centred on conversion and the refounding of the community of the faithful. In these communities the leadership is predominantly lay, the style - even liturgically - is towards participation and there is a strong emphasis on being transparent of the ‘communion of saints.’ The world is approached as a locus for an evangelisation that is aimed at

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<sup>7</sup> Pace, “Increase and Multiply,” 78.

<sup>8</sup> Pace, “Increase and Multiply,” 78.

consciences rather than towards institutions. The question of obedience is resolved by the official approbation of the movement or is placed more diffusely within the context of fidelity to the charism by which the organisation lives.

Secondly, there are those movements which live by the spiritual model of a new identity. This expresses itself in a certain defence of Catholic identity which is regarded as being threatened by modern individualism and ethical relativism. Such movements are strongly clerical, and enjoy a hierarchical organisation mirroring the classic divisions within the church clergy/laity, man/woman, and intellectuals/ordinary persons. The world presents to such movements as in readiness for reconquest, particularly in those spheres no longer under the influence of Catholic thought – ranging from economics to politics, culture to educational systems, media to human relationships. The public demonstration of obedience to the heart of the institutional church is the very credential of legitimization.

As mentioned, Pace admits that these two ‘types’ are polarised. Interestingly, he does not offer a list of examples of each type. Between them there is a range of movements which in different ways, more or less, reflect such a polarity. In other words, the full complexity of the ecclesial movements can, in no way, be reduced to simply two types. Many different movements take elements of each pole in peculiar combinations.

Nonetheless, Pace’s initial morphology is helpful in addressing the question of this thesis concerning the manner in which the dialectic of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ is displayed in the new ecclesial movements. I suggest that, building upon

Pace's morphology, we might understand the first type to be more likely agents of the 'mysticism of politics', and the second more likely to be agents of the 'politics of mysticism.'

In bringing to bear a typology informed by the dialectic of 'the mystical' and 'the political' we, subsequently, might identity the first type as oriented to a discovery of the presence and activity of God precisely through a political engagement that seeks a social transformation according to evangelical principles. 'The political' in this type of movement is understood according to the first definition of the same proffered in chapter one: a civil life in solidarity with others to seek the common good. In this context, 'the political,' so understood, becomes the very crucible through which an orientation towards 'the mystical' is achieved.

In the second type, 'the political' is transparent of the second definition of the same - primarily as an exercise of power. Within those movements which approximate this second type, the orientation towards 'the mystical' - reflected through various practices of transcendence, both private and public, in both personal acts of spiritual discipline and in public gestures of ritual - is, in different ways, placed at the service of something other than itself, i.e. the rechristianisation of either a secular society or a secularised church.

Let us examine each of these two possibilities, according to this new typology, using a variety of examples.



## 6.2 Agents of the ‘Politics of Mysticism’

Melloni suggests that for a number of the ecclesial movements that more directly originated within Catholic Action in the first half of the twentieth century a certain radicalisation of the original features of secular institutes occurs:

The chain of command became vertical from the founder; consecration became the sacrament of militancy which involved even married people; the objective of the reconquest of society became the end which justified both the practice of secrecy and extreme visibility; finally . . . direct action was preferred to the slow culture of mediation and the project.”<sup>9</sup>

Such would appear to typify ecclesial movements such as Opus Dei and the Neocatechumenal Way, though in different ways. The spiritual practice of the first presents as a critique against the secularisation of modern society, seeking to revitalise those spheres of social, economic and political – and even ecclesiastical – life which have lost, or are in danger of losing, their Catholic imprint; the spiritual practice of the second stands as a critique against a church considered luke-warm in faith and in fervour. Within this grouping we might also include Communion and Liberation, formed by Fr. Luigi Guissano in 1954,<sup>10</sup> and Regnum Christi of which the Legion of Christ is the clerical arm, founded by Fr. Marcel Maciel in 1959.<sup>11</sup>

There are indeed a number of studies on each of these movements, and there is not the need to reproduce considerable information about them here. The task, rather, is to suggest the manner in which they might be reflective samples of the ‘politics of

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<sup>9</sup> Melloni, “Movements,” 15.

<sup>10</sup> For a new study on Guissano, see Massimo Camisasca, *Don Giussani: La sua esperienza dell'uomo e di Dio*, (Edizioni San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> For a succinct overview of the foundation, development and ethos of these two organizations, see *Catholic International* (November 2005), 390-398, 414-418. For a general treatment of Communion and Liberation, see Hanna, *The New Ecclesial Movements*, 33-47.

mysticism' as the concept is used in this thesis. Nonetheless, a brief account of the two main movements under consideration, Opus Dei and the Neocatechumenal Way, will be helpful.

### 6.2.a Opus Dei Prelature

Opus Dei cites its origin on 2 October 1928 in the vision of Fr. Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer (1902-1975).<sup>12</sup> Originally for men, the vision was expanded to include women in 1930. The *Consideraciones espirituales*, the precursor to The Way, - the spiritual constitutions of the Prelature – were published in 1934. Delayed in its expansion by the Spanish Civil War and World War II, the clerical wing of the nascent association, the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, was formed in 1943, though the Society is now for those clergy, incardinated into their own diocese, but spiritually bound to the Prelature. Roman approval for Opus Dei as a secular institute was given on 24 February 1947; the establishment of the Roman College of the Holy Cross followed the subsequent year. This was later to evolve into the Pontifical Atheneum of the Holy Cross in 1985. In the following years, a number of other tertiary institutes were founded (University of Navarre in Pamplona, Spain 1952, The Roman College of St. Mary for women in 1953). From 1957 the association was

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<sup>12</sup> The most important works on Escrivá, written within Opus Dei itself, are Salvador Bernal, *Monsignor Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer: Profile of the Founder of Opus Dei*, (London and New York: Scepter, 1977) and Andrés Vázquez' trilogy, *The Founder of Opus Dei: Volume I, The Life of Josemaria Escrivá: The early years*, (London and New York: Scepter 2000); *The Founder of Opus Dei: Volume II, God and Daring*, (London and New York: Scepter, 2003); *The Founder of Opus Dei, Volume III, The Divine Ways on Earth*, (London and New York: Scepter, 2003). The following factual information on Opus Dei's evolution is largely taken from "History of Opus Dei," *Catholic International* 11(November 2000), 427. For more detailed biographical overview of Escrivá and the inception of Opus Dei, see Michael Walsh, *The Secret World of Opus Dei: An investigation into the controversial sect at the heart of the Roman Catholic Church*, (London: Grafton Books, 1989)., 19-26 and John L. Allen, *Opus Dei: Secrets and power inside the Catholic church*, (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 43-73. For other studies on Opus Dei see Peter Berglar, *Opus Dei: Life and Work of its Founder Josemaria Escrivá*, (London and New York: Scepter, 1995); John Coverdale, *Uncommon Faith: The early years of Opus Dei 1928-1943*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002); Noam Friedlander, *What is Opus Dei*, (Collins and Brown, 2005); William Keenan, *St. Josemaria Escrivá and the Origins of Opus Dei*, (Gracewing, 2004). It should be noted that Scepter is an Opus Dei publishing house.

given a number of pastoral bases (the prelature of Yauyos in Peru, 1957; a vocational training centre and parish in Rome, 1965). Throughout the 1970s Escrivá travelled extensively through Mexico, Spain and Portugal, Venezuela and Guatemala on catechetical missions.

There were some 60,000 members of Opus Dei by the time of the founder's death in 1975. Beyond its prelate and its incardinated presbyterate the organisation is constituted by lay people either as 'supernumeraries' (married men and women primarily committed to the sanctification of family life), 'associates' (celibate men and women, living within their own context and dedicated to the apostolate of the organisation) and "numeraries" (celibate men and women living within communities of the organisation with complete availability for the work of the organisation). It is supported by the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, and lay co-operators who are not members of the organisation but support it through a variety of means.<sup>13</sup>

The spirituality of Opus Dei hinges on a certain 'materialised' spirituality. Escrivá was particularly concerned with a mysticism that was possible in the context of the ordinary, what he called the "flashes of divine splendour which shine through the most common everyday realities."<sup>14</sup> He was committed to the possibility of both sanctity and the development of competence in secular professional life, the 'two

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<sup>13</sup> For a full description of these categories of membership, see Maggy Whitehouse, *Opus Dei: The truth behind the myth*, (London: Anness Publishing Ltd., 2006), 52-59.

<sup>14</sup> See a profile of Escrivá by Albino Cardinal Luciani (later Pope John Paul I) which was originally published in *Il Gazzettino*, Venice on 25 July, 1978, reprinted as "The Two Wings of Sanctity" in *Catholic International* (November 2000), 428-429. For a foundational documents on Opus Dei spirituality, see Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer, *The Way*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1985); *Conversations with Monsignor Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer*, (Manila: Sinag-Tala, 1977). *The Way* is in the original, *El Camino*. It contains 999 maxims.

wings of sanctity' in Opus Dei, according to Luciani.<sup>15</sup> In so doing, he sought to overcome any dichotomizing between the two:

a kind of double life. On the one hand, an interior life, a life of union with God; and on the other, a separate and distinct professional, social and family life. There is just one life, made of flesh and spirit. And it is this life which has to become, in both soul and body, holy and filled with God.<sup>16</sup>

For the organisation, "the profession, the job, the trade, whatever each one carries out, is a road to holiness."<sup>17</sup> This means, according to John Allen that,

holiness is not something to be achieved in the first place through prayer and spiritual discipline, but rather through the mundane details of everyday life. Holiness thus doesn't require a change in external circumstances, but a change in attitude, seeing everything anew in the light of one's supernatural destiny.<sup>18</sup>

This spiritual pathway is constructed in the application of five theses on which the spirituality of Opus Dei hinges<sup>19</sup>: divine filiation which brings with it the responsibility to act in accordance with this baptismal reality; the sanctifying value of ordinary life such that "[o]rdinary life can be holy and full of God. Our Lord is calling us to sanctify the ordinary tasks of every day, for the perfection of the Christian is to be found precisely there;"<sup>20</sup> the sanctification of work itself; the love of freedom understood as acting according to an informed conscience and faith; a life of prayer and sacrifice replete with a number of pious, liturgical and self-mortifying practices; and charity and the apostolate so that working "at our job, side by side with

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<sup>15</sup> Luciani, "The Two Wings of Sanctity," 429.

<sup>16</sup> Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer, *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer* (Manila: Sinag-Tala, 1977), 114.

<sup>17</sup> See Escrivá, *Conversations* 10.

<sup>18</sup> Allen, *Opus Dei*, 16-17.

<sup>19</sup> I have taken this from "Spirit" – a text prepared by Opus Dei Office of Communications, *Catholic International* (November 200), 429-430. They are also treated with anecdotal supplementation by Allen, *Opus Dei*, 77-127.

<sup>20</sup> Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer, *Christ is Passing By*, (Manila: Sinag-Tala, 1974), 148.

our colleagues, friends and relatives and shar[ing] their interests, we can help them come closer to Christ.”<sup>21</sup>

It is the last foundation of the pathway, which has rendered Opus Dei with a particularly political focus, i.e. as an agent of social change. The heavily debated question is to what extent has the agenda of the evangelisation of professional life, be it economic, political, in education or the arts, also represented the pursuit of gaining political power for the organisation both within society and the church. Is the attainment of political power, both within and outside the Church, regarded, if not in theory at least in practice, as a significant means by which to effect such evangelisation? In other words, to what extent has the spiritual pathway of the sanctification of work, at the heart of the mysticism of Opus Dei, presented as a means to achieving political status?

On the one hand, there is a clearly stated position that the organisation has no interest in political power. In what Walsh terms the *locus classicus* of the organisation’s position in regard to politics, we read:

Opus Dei is not to the right or to the left or to the centre, as the aims of the Association are not political but spiritual. No doubt there are people who take it for a political party and laboriously strive to place it in one camp or other. Opus Dei however has no desire to come down to the realm of Caesar nor can it do so. But its members certainly can and are entirely free to do so in accordance with their own personal judgement and opinions. It was in order to clarify and affirm these points that the Secretariat of Opus Dei in Spain sent a note to the press in 1957 stating that ‘Opus Dei expressly disavows any group or individual using the name of the Institute for their political activities. In this field, as in their professional, financial or social activities, the members of Opus Dei, just as other Catholics,

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<sup>21</sup> Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer, *Friends of God*, (London: Scepter, 1981), 264.

enjoy full freedom, within the limits of Christian teaching.’ (Madrid, 12<sup>th</sup> July, 1957)<sup>22</sup>

However, even such a ‘declaration’ is made in response to the perceived insinuation of the organisation at the highest levels of political, economic, social and ecclesiastical life that has not abated in the intervening fifty year period.<sup>23</sup> It is beyond both the scope and the interest of this thesis to establish a foundation for such claims which remain, at this relatively, early stage of the organisation’s evolution, largely anecdotal and journalistic in tone. However, the very debate about the status of this particular illustration of an ecclesial movement, notwithstanding the problem with the designation of such to Opus Dei, as earlier indicated, demonstrates how a mystical pathway can be engaged for purposes other than itself.

This is perhaps more clearly indicated by a brief exploration of that framework which presents as the social and political context for the rise of Opus Dei and other Spanish religious and spiritual movements. In this I am particularly indebted to the insights of Antonio Perez-Romero.<sup>24</sup> It is the ideology termed *casticismo*, from the Latin for ‘pure’, ‘honest’ – or what might be termed ‘*castizo* ideology.’ Perez-Romero indicates that the ideology has had three phases: firstly, in the Middle Ages in Spain’s struggle against Islam; secondly in response to the challenges presented by the Renaissance; and thirdly, as a reaction to those Enlightenment and liberal movements beginning in the eighteenth century and continuing through to the twentieth which culminated in the Spanish Civil War and the Franco triumph. In each of these phases,

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<sup>22</sup> Julian Herranz, “Opus Dei and the Activity of its Members,” *Studi Cattolici*, 31 (July/August 1962) cited in Walsh, *The Secret World of Opus Dei*, 143-144.

<sup>23</sup> This positioning of Opus Dei has been the subject of a number of key studies. In works already indicated, see Walsh, *The Secret World of Opus Dei*, 130-185; Allen, *Opus Dei*, 232-299.

<sup>24</sup> See Antonio Perez-Romero, *Subversion and Liberation in the Writings of St. Teresa of Avila* (Amsterdam/Atlanta, Georgia: Editions Rodope, B.V., 1996), 5-35.

with their own particular set of historical circumstances, there has been the overriding concern to re-establish Catholic purity – against, the infidel, the heathen, the heretic – in an agenda markedly messianic, missionary, imperialist and ultra-conservative. Alluding to numerous historical instances in these three periods, Perez-Romero suggests that,

Spain's *castizo* controllers promoted militant anti-Semitism and the elimination of Spanish Jewry; similarly, they expelled the Moors with harmful economic consequences for the country. They rejected economic enterprise and the bourgeois ethos, and created a unitary, religiously strident, and intolerant state. To protect the latter, they created institutions such as the Inquisition, which effectively persecuted, gagged, and silenced the most intellectually restless and 'progressive' sectors of society: Renaissance humanists, critical philosophers, Erasmus, Catholic reformists, and all sorts of religious enthusiasts . . . The list goes on.<sup>25</sup>

Perez-Romero particularly cites the work of the nineteenth century Spanish writer, Menéndez y Pelayo and his seven volume Spanish history. Menéndez y Pelayo praised Spain for its messianic vocation:

God has predestined [it] to spread the word of Christ to the barbarous heathen; to sink in the Gulf of Corinth the haughty vessels of the Graecan tyrant and, under the leadership of John of Austria, save Western Europe from the second and last threat of Islam; to smash the Lutheran legions in the Batavian marshes, with swords in their mouths and water up to their waists; and to deliver to the Roman Church a hundred nations for every one that heresy snatched from it.<sup>26</sup>

The argument of Perez-Romero is that such ideology endured throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, “despite the attacks by the forces of the

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<sup>25</sup> Perez-Romero, *Subversion and Liberation*, 19-20.

<sup>26</sup> Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos espanaoles*, cited in Perez-Romero, *Subversion and Liberation*, 24.

Enlightenment, liberalism and modernity.”<sup>27</sup> Perez-Romero suggests that the Francoist restoration was but yet one other manifestation of it. As he indicates,

An important group of men whose ideas became the ideological framework of the Francoist restoration called themselves *Acción Espanola* (Spanish Action). Members of this movement put together an elaborate system of beliefs, based closely on traditional Catholicism, blended with the Golden Age, imperial ideology of *casticismo*, and peppered generously with contemporary fascist beliefs.<sup>28</sup>

Escrivá's association with the Franco regime is debated. However, Walsh highlights that despite the organisation's attempts to later disassociate from Franco's regime, Escrivá, himself, was inextricably bound up with the Francoist agenda of restoring Spanish, and Catholic, purity.<sup>29</sup> His own *El Camino* identifies the importance of patriotic fervour (maxim 905), and his own apostolate was insinuated in the ideal of *Hispanidad*, 'Spanishness' – another expression of *castizo* ideology – which found application in a tightly controlled education system.

From this perspective, it may be conjectured that Opus Dei, has, historically, been an instrument of *castizo* ideology. What remains unclear is to the extent that what began initially as a peculiarly Spanish concern is now, by the rise of the organisation internationally, a universal concern and agenda of the organisation.

A further question that may be posed is to what extent has this Iberian concern about the restoration for Catholic purity, now found its universal expression in the project of 'the new evangelisation'? 'The new evangelisation' had been a key motif in the

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<sup>27</sup> Perez-Romero, *Subversion and Liberation*, 20.

<sup>28</sup> Perez-Romero, *Subversion and Liberation*, 28.

<sup>29</sup> See Walsh, *The Secret World of Opus Dei*, 43. See also Allen, *Opus Dei*, 56-61.



pontificate of John Paul II – a theme he directly linked with the rise of the new ecclesial movements:

I call to mind, as a new development occurring in many Churches in recent times, the rapid growth of ecclesial movements filled with missionary dynamism. When these movements seek to become part of the life of local Churches and are welcomed by bishops and priests within diocesan and parish structures, they represent a true gift of God both for a new evangelisation and for missionary activity properly so-called. I therefore recommend that they be spread, and that they be used.<sup>30</sup>

The focus on the ‘new evangelisation’ represents in main part the re-animation of life within the Church itself, rather than in the usual *extra-ecclesial* impulse of the missionary endeavour. As Dulles writes many within the Church itself stand in need of conversion.<sup>31</sup> The ‘new evangelisation’ thus stands as a critique of a certain apathy of faith in the life of the Church. That faith requires re-invigoration, and the ecclesial movements are seen as instrumental in this.

Within the project of the ‘new evangelisation,’ the spiritual pathway of a movement assumes another form of political significance. It has political significance because its spiritual pathway is placed predominantly at the service of something other than itself, the process of change - though in this case reform within the Church itself.

### **6.2.b The Neocatechumenal Way**

Such a political agenda is clearly evidenced within the movement known as The Neocatechumenal Way which was founded by two young ex-members of Catholic

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<sup>30</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, n. 72.

<sup>31</sup> See Avery Dulles, *John Paul II and the New Evangelization*, (New York: Fordham University, 1992), 13-17. It is a theme taken up by one of the co-founders of The Neocatechumenal Way. See Kiko Argüello, “Christian Initiation and the Transmission of Faith,” in Hayes, ed. *New Religious Movements in the Church*, 135-148.

Action in Spain, the artist, Francisco Argüello, known as Kiko, and Carmen Hernandez in 1964.<sup>32</sup> As Pace comments,

The choice of returning to the origins of the Christian community and subjecting oneself to an intense and strict course of rediscovering the foundation of one's faith contains an implicit criticism of every form of religion acquired by birth. It is no longer enough to be born a Catholic; I feel the need to depart from the tradition. This is a post-traditionalist and in a sense a post-Catholic choice, in the sense that it reveals the awareness of belonging to a society which continues to call itself Catholic but has not been for some time in the molecular patterns of individual and collective life.<sup>33</sup>

Argüello had begun his commitment in the pathway of Charles de Foucauld in the slums of Palomeras Altas on the edge of Madrid.<sup>34</sup> By the partnership with Hernandez "a kerygmatic, theological-catechesis came into being," according to the community's own version. From the slums of Madrid, The Way found itself in Spanish parishes through the promotion by Casimiro Morcillo, archbishop of Madrid. However, in The Way's own narrative,

the social situation was so serious that the necessity of an adult Christian catechesis became clearer and clearer . . . In this way the renewal of Baptism appeared as an itinerary, a Way which fundamentally would lead to an adult faith capable of giving an answer to the epochal change that was taking place. In the parishes many people who received the sacraments were insufficiently catechised and mostly ignorant of the contents of Baptism. By opening a way of Christian initiation such people would find, in a Post-Baptismal itinerary of a catechumenal type, the possibility to recover the stages of Baptism already received as infants.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> That The Neocatechumenal Way is born in the crucible of Franco's Spain is evidenced by Kiko's claim that the "roots of the Neocatechumenal Way are soaked in the blood of many martyrs." See "Convivencia in New York with 253 Bishops of the Americas," (1-5 April, 1997), 51, cited by John Thornhill, "Influential 'New Ecclesial Movements' Face the Challenge of Inculturation," *The Australasian Catholic Record*, 84 (January 2007), 70.

<sup>33</sup> Pace, "Increase and Multiply," 71.

<sup>34</sup> The following is taken from the official website of The Neocatechumenal Way: <http://www.camminoneocatecumenale.it/all/papa.asp?id=159>, accessed 15 September, 2008. For a further overview of the history of the movement and its spirituality see "The Neocatechumenal Way," and "'The Spirit of the Way'," *Catholic International* (November 2000), 399-405. See also Hanna, *The New Ecclesial Movements*, 47-77.

<sup>35</sup> See <http://www.camminoneocatecumenale.it/all/papa.asp?id=159>, accessed 15 September, 2008

Thus, from slums to parishes to itinerary, The Way began to spread beyond the Iberian Peninsula and a peculiarly Spanish concern for *castizo* into a more universal commitment for the reform of the Church. The Way was firmly seen by John Paul II as significantly instrumental in the ‘new evangelisation.’ Such came to endorsement in 1990. John Paul II formally recognised the “vitality that animates the parishes, the missionary thrust . . . which evangelises[s] in dechristianised areas of Europe and the entire world.”<sup>36</sup> He affirmed the vocations pertinent to the “diocesan Colleges of formation to the priesthood for the New Evangelisation” which now number some 46 “Redemptoris Mater” seminaries throughout the world. Several years later he declared, “This Way appears particularly qualified to contribute in dechristianized areas to the necessary *reimplantio ecclesiae* leading man in his moral behaviour towards obedience to revealed truth and even contributing to the very fabric of society, which is decayed due to a lack of knowledge of God and His love.”<sup>37</sup>

Whilst draft Statutes, initiated in early 1997, were approved *ad experimentum* on 29 June 2002, final Statutes were approved on 11 May 2008.<sup>38</sup> The Statutes of The Way are not easily categorised, fitting neither as a movement, nor religious congregation, nor simple association, but precisely as “an itinerary of Catholic formation” in service

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<sup>36</sup> John Paul II, “Ogniqualvolta: Letter to Msgr. Paul Josef Cordes, Vice President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity.” 30 August 1990, AAS-82.90.1513-1515, available in English on <http://www.camminoneocatecumenale.it/all/papa.asp?id=111>, accessed 15 September, 2008.

<sup>37</sup> John Paul II, “Letter to Bishops, Priests Itinerants and Families of the Neocatechumenal Way,” (12 April, 1993), cited in Hanna, *New Ecclesial Movements*, 58. For John Paul II’s estimation of The Way, see Ezekial Pasotti, ed., *The Neo-Catechumenal Way According to Paul VI and John Paul II* (Maynooth, Ireland: St. Pauls, 1996).

<sup>38</sup> *Statuto del Cammino Neocatechumenale*, available on <http://www.camminoneocatecumenale.it/en/statuti1.asp>, accessed 15 September, 2008. For a more detailed outline of the evolution of the Statutes for The Way, see Hanna, *New Ecclesial Movements*, 52-53.

of parishes and dioceses, reviving the ancient process of the catechumenate, though with particular length and intensity.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the avowed intentions of the Statutes of The Way that it is to be firmly at the service of parish life within a diocese, the practice of The Way has clearly indicated that its agenda is not simply as it first presents. The uneasy alliance it experiences with the ordinary parochial ecclesiastical structures suggests, in fact, a certain elitism that operates as a severe critique on the fervour, or perceived lack thereof, of communities into which The Way seeks to insert itself. The Way, therefore, can present as a highly charged political statement within the Church itself about what is considered fervent or otherwise. The formation of its community of faith, understood as the primary means of evangelisation, animated by the scriptures and celebrated in liturgy, (the threefold animation of The Way), tends towards the service of something other than simply a renewed baptismal appreciation. In its practice, The Way stands as a living criticism of the ordinary means of ecclesial involvement, formation and development. From the “Report into the Presence and Activities of the Neo-Catechumenal Way in the Diocese of Clifton” (November 1996)<sup>40</sup> through to the letter from the bishops of the Holy Land to The Neocatechumenal Way (25 February 2007),<sup>41</sup> The Way’s way appears on numerous occasions to be highly resistant to both integration and inculturation.<sup>42</sup> Its opposition to change and development, even down

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<sup>39</sup> See “Neocatechumenate gets its wish for a special status,” *The Tablet* (6 July 2002), 24.

<sup>40</sup> For the account of this inquiry, see Hanna, *New Ecclesial Movements*, 62-72.

<sup>41</sup> See <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/124623?&eng=y>, accessed 15 September, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> This is a theme developed by Thornhill, “‘Influential ‘New Ecclesial Movements’ Face Challenge of Inculturation,’” 68-72. See also Gerald Arbuckle, “Is the Neo-Catechumenate Way Compatible with Religious Life?” *Religious Life Review* 33 (January-February 1994). For an outline of the difficulties experienced by The Way in the archdiocese of Westminster, see Hanna, *New Ecclesial Movements*, 72.

to the type of music that is used in its liturgical celebration, must elicit the question about its underlying agenda. Heavily reliant on the charismatic influence of its founder, The Neocatechumenal Way continues to have to address the issues of its fundamentalism, as well as even of its tendency to the status of a sect with strong messianic pretensions.<sup>43</sup>

Both Opus Dei and The Neocatechumenal Way present primarily as spiritual pathways, as means of encountering God in a deeper personal way, and are therefore oriented in their rhetoric towards ‘the mystical.’ Nonetheless, precisely in that orientation both envisage that something else is to be achieved – either social or ecclesiastical reform. Their mystical orientation is, thus, at the service of a certain political agenda, either within society itself, as in the case of Opus Dei, or within the church, as for The Way. I contend, therefore, that a certain replication of the nineteenth century piety of the Roman Catholic Restoration, as discussed in an earlier chapter, is thereby effected with similar lessons to be gleaned. In a secular context, the Church will favour ‘a politics of mysticism’ for social identity as well as for internal cohesion, particularly in the face of perceived fragmentation. The degree to which it does serve is a barometer to the level of the threat perceived. Again, too, we see in both the movements that have been discussed here the permeable line between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political.’ What begins as one can easily transmute into the

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For further accounts of the difficulties see

[http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/movimenti\\_cattolici?eng=y](http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/movimenti_cattolici?eng=y), accessed 15 September, 2008.

<sup>43</sup> This was a theme outlined by the Custodian of the Holy Land, Franciscan Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa in early 2005 in which he suggested that the Neocatechumenates in Israel and the Lubavitcher Jews had formed a strange alliance in their messianic orientation. See

<http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/22847?&eng=y>, accessed 15 September 2008. For a sociological perspective on the potential for ecclesial movements to develop into sects see Luca Diotallevi, “Catholicism by Way of Sectarianism? An Old Hypothesis for New Problems,” in Melloni, ed, *Movements in the Church*, 107-121.

second in the anxiety that is generated by the perceived loss of institutional identity and integrity.

### **6.3 Agents of the ‘Mysticism of Politics’**

Let us now turn our attention to an exploration of two other examples of the new ecclesial movements, suggesting them as agents of the alternative – a ‘mysticism of politics.’ I focus particularly on the Sant’Egidio Community and those ecclesial forms which may be grouped under the heading of the spirituality of Liberation Theology.

#### **6.3.a The Sant’Egidio Community**

Though it is not an example of a base ecclesial community, understood within the context of liberation theology, the new ecclesial movement, the Sant’Egidio community, in many ways exemplifies these shifts and so provides a mainstream illustration of a specific agent of the ‘mysticism of politics.’

The Sant’Egidio community is loosely co-ordinated. The Trastevere community in Rome, as the oldest, “performs a service of communion” to the other communities across four continents.<sup>44</sup> At the time of its recent fortieth anniversary, this foundational community has hundreds of members itself, working across fifty neighbourhoods in Rome.<sup>45</sup> It was founded in 1968 by Andrea Riccardi.<sup>46</sup> Inspired

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<sup>44</sup> The geographical extent of the community is raised in John L. Allen, “Interview with Sant’Egidio founder Andrea Riccardi, (15 July 2004), *National Catholic Reporter* (23 July, 2004), <http://ncronline.org/mainpage/specialdocuments/riccardi.htm>, accessed 18 September, 2008.

<sup>45</sup> See Kathy Gilsinan, “Sant’Egidio at 40: A community at home in Rome,” *National Catholic Reporter*, <http://ncronline3.org/drupal>, accessed 18 September, 2008.

<sup>46</sup> The following information on the Sant’Egidio community is taken from the community’s website, <http://www.santegidio.org>, accessed 18 September, 2008.

by the model of the community of the Acts of the Apostles and animated by Franciscan idealism, he gathered a small group of high school students together to visit the Roman slums with the purpose of enabling educative opportunities which were also catalysts for establishing relationships between rich and poor. Today, the community in Rome undertakes a special outreach to Rome's marginalised gypsy population which swelled after the fragmentation of the former Yugoslavia. Now, in more than seventy countries, the community numbers more than 50,000 with a large number of associates. The vision of Sant'Egidio is constituted by four 'works' or pillars. The first and foundational is prayer, particularly through attention to the Scriptures and immersion in the Psalter as the prayer of the poor. The second is the communication of the gospel meditated upon. It understands itself as living a 'missionary brotherhood.' This centrifugal impulse establishes thirdly, a community without borders or walls, an international fraternity. The fourth pillar is friendship with the poor which is the living dynamic of the community's involvement. Critical to such friendship is the redress of those factors which contribute to poverty, particularly war. For this reason, the community has become an important broker of international peace, particularly in Guatemala and Mozambique.<sup>47</sup> It has also taken on the project of promoting inter-religious dialogue through its regular "Spirit of Assisi" international gatherings;<sup>48</sup> a campaign for a moratorium on capital

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<sup>47</sup> For a full study of the role of Sant'Egidio in the peace of Mozambique, see Cameron R. Hume, *Ending Mozambique's War: The role of mediation and good offices*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1994). See also "Interview with Andrea Bartoli, member of Sant'Egidio, Director of the International Conflict Resolution Program, School of International and Public Affairs, Chair of Conflict Resolution Network, Columbia University," <http://www.beyondintractability.org/audio/andrea-bartoli/?nid=2410>, accessed 18 September, 2008.

<sup>48</sup> For Riccardi's evaluation of this project, see Andrea Riccardi, "Religions as 'Precious Resources of Peace:' Address in Assisi," (5 September, 2006), <http://www.jknirp.com/precious.htm>, accessed 18 September, 2008.

punishment<sup>49</sup> and the use of land mines, a Drug Resource Enhancement against AIDS and Malnutrition (DREAM) program, and aid assistance when and where required as a result of significant disaster which is always maintained on a voluntary basis.<sup>50</sup> Riccardi himself, summarises: “I would say that we try to have a few points of reference: the Word of God; the liturgy; the poor, we try to stand with people, to understand their reality, hence not closing ourselves off; and finally the horizon of the world.”<sup>51</sup>

Unlike the base ecclesial communities animated by liberation theology, the Sant’Egidio community is not underscored by a theological method and substantial systematic reflection. It finds its life almost entirely in the practice of outreach through the various ways detailed above. As Riccardi reminisces,

I remember in the 1970s when I went to Holland, everyone would ask me, “Are you an active community or a spiritual community?” We’ve always refused this definition. This is a firm point of Sant’Egidio. We’re an active community, and we don’t place limits on our activity. But the fulcrum of our activity is our spirituality, our prayer and our liturgy. This is a central aspect. We believe in *ora et labora*. This is our synthesis. We wouldn’t be able to maintain certain fairly extreme commitments, for peace, for the poor, etc., if we didn’t have these roots.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> For a discussion on Sant’Egidio’s involvement with such a United Nations moratorium, see John L. Allen, “Interview with Mario Marazziti (17 December, 2007), <http://ncronline.org/mainpage/specialdocuments/interview-marazziti.pdf>, accessed 18 September, 2008.

<sup>50</sup> This voluntary dimension of the community’s outreach was recently stressed in a meeting between the president of the community, Marco Impagliazzo and the President of the United States, George W. Bush in Rome, 10 June, 2007. See “Bush hears of Sant’Egidio’s Philosophy,” <http://www.zenit.org/article-19844?l=english>, accessed 18 September, 2008.

<sup>51</sup> Allen, “Interview with Riccardi.” See also Andrea Riccardi, “Charity and Justice: Challenges for the Movements,” in Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, *Movements in the Church*, 186.

<sup>52</sup> Allen, “Interview with Riccardi.”



In his body of speeches we are given insight into Riccardi's deeply spiritual motivation.<sup>53</sup> Riccardi is impelled by the encounter with suffering, not only that which has proximity, but also that which is 'far away' – seen but not touched.<sup>54</sup> As he states,

Charity stimulates us to understand to recognise the poor, in other words, to read the parable of the Good Samaritan or that of the rich man and Lazarus in the concrete history of life. We then discover that charity to the poor in the contemporary world must constantly accept the challenge of alleviating not only the poor in our midst, but also those that the global village brings close to us even if they live far away.<sup>55</sup>

This displays a difference of approach to another key exemplar of the 'mysticism of politics', liberation theology. It also acts to universalise the heavily contextualised approach of liberation theology.

It also means that to respond to suffering entails a change in lifestyle which moves beyond "the search for goods solely for oneself." No one should be absolved from this demand. However, as for the practitioners of liberation theology, this responsiveness entails an historical orientation to the revelation of God – "to read the Word of God in our lives and in history. In this sense our spirituality is one of *Dei Verbum*, but it's also a geopolitical spirituality."<sup>56</sup> Riccardi is quite clear that the geopolitical involvement is directly linked to the reception of charism, and cannot be understood apart from this: "a charisma is a gift, not a utopia, an ideology, or a

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<sup>53</sup> Riccardi's vision has recently been published in Andrea Riccardi, *Living Together*, (London: New City, 2008). See also a series of interviews published in Andrea Riccardi, *Sant'Egidio: Rome and the world*, (London: St. Pauls Publishing, 1999).

<sup>54</sup> Andrea Riccardi, "Sharing the Path Towards Peace," [http://www.vatican.va/jubilee-2000/magazine/documents/ju\\_mag\\_01021998\\_p-10\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/jubilee-2000/magazine/documents/ju_mag_01021998_p-10_en.html), accessed 18 September, 2008.

<sup>55</sup> Riccardi, "Charity and Justice," 189.

<sup>56</sup> Allen, Interview with Riccardi."

project of power.”<sup>57</sup> The activity of the community is to be entirely motivated by “that patient and tenacious love that God outpoured in our hearts [so that] love of God and love of neighbour are now truly united.”<sup>58</sup> For Riccardi there is a fundamental integrity between worship and justice.

Christian faith and worship are not acts of private devotion, nor the expression of a search for balance or spiritual well-being. This explains its difference from other religious worlds. Eucharistic worship continues in life. . . . The Eucharist and listening to the Word of God transform believers into women and men who seek peace and the good of their brothers and sisters in humanity. This is a crucial aspect of the link between worship and life with a profound effect on the future of so many of the world’s peoples.”<sup>59</sup>

In the work of promotion of inter-religious dialogue, Riccardi particularly sees the spiritual as the basis for such an enterprise:

. . . we realize how much there is that we have in common: a series of spiritual concern, the orientation toward God, prayer, the sense of frailty of man but also the confidence in a path of redemption. . . . These spiritual reference points, similar but diverse, represent a precious heritage for the spiritual ecology in a world full of voids.”<sup>60</sup>

In accepting the 1999 Félix Houphouët Peace Prize on behalf of the community, Riccardi articulates the fullest potential of such dialogue. Quoting from the Brazilian poet, Vinicius de Moraes, “Life, my friend, is the art of meeting,” he claims, “Yes, Meeting, my friends, is the art of peace, of life and of future.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Andrea Riccardi, “A Charisma is a Gift, not a Utopia: Address on Psalm 112,” (4 June, 2006), <http://www.jknirp.com/ps112.htm>, accessed 18 September, 2008.

<sup>58</sup> Riccardi, “A Charisma is a Gift.”

<sup>59</sup> Andrea Riccardi, “Reflection on *Sacramentum Caritatis*,” *L’Osservatore Romano* (9 January 2008), 8.

<sup>60</sup> Andrea Riccardi, “Address at ‘Peoples and Religions’ Meeting, Palermo, Sicily,” (3 September, 2002), <http://www.zenit.org/article-5245?l=english>, accessed 18 September, 2008.

<sup>61</sup> Andrea Riccardi, “Address on Receipt of Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize (1999),” [http://www.unesco.org/prixhboigny/le\\_prix/lauareats/199/eng/riccardi.htm](http://www.unesco.org/prixhboigny/le_prix/lauareats/199/eng/riccardi.htm), accessed 18 September, 2008.

In the immediacy and practicality of its vision, Riccardi and the Sant'Egidio community remind all ecclesial movements that charism is intrinsically linked to service, and that they cannot imagine themselves apart from this orientation. Whilst recognising that in many ways, the new ecclesial movements are in an adolescent phase of development, Riccardi's words are important to recall as a clarion call to all movements.

The approaching third millennium appeals to the movements to be a fountain of charity, so that love for everyone, and especially for the poor, mutual understanding and justice may be irradiated from them. In this sense it seems to me that the right attitude, that of the majority of the movements, is precisely that of Pentecost: the gathering together to pray together in the same place in unity, with mutual esteem and a great willingness to serve. For we all have a great deal still to learn about how best to serve the Lord with our poor forces. We are sure that the Spirit will illuminate us in an even more abundant way.<sup>62</sup>

In this way, agents of the 'mysticism of politics' will retain the humility to avoid the danger of falling into their own utopian, and messianic illusion.

### **6.3.b Communities Inspired by Liberation Theology**

Liberation theology is, as Galilea highlights, an ambiguous term.<sup>63</sup> There are, in fact, many different strands of thought that the umbrella term seeks to cover. At heart, it is a different way of theologizing.<sup>64</sup> However, importantly, its context is markedly different from those in which the agents of 'the politics of mysticism,' discussed above, arose. Liberation theology, as a late twentieth century movement in the Roman Catholic tradition, does not arise countering the experience of increasing

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<sup>62</sup> Riccardi, "Charity and Justice," 192.

<sup>63</sup> Segundo Galilea, "The Spirituality of Liberation," *The Way* 25 (July 1985), 187.

<sup>64</sup> This new way of theologizing is given succinct treatment in Claude Geffré and Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Editorial: A Prophetic Theology," in *The Mystical and Political Dimension of the Christian Faith*, edited by Claude Geffré and Gustavo Gutiérrez [sic], (New York: Herder and Herder, 1974), 7-16.

secularisation. It is often entwined, in fact, with popular religious piety.<sup>65</sup> It is also, in large part, a response to the very enmeshment of an institutional church with the affairs of state. Liberation theology acts as a critique of the structures of injustice within those very cultures which have a strong Christian characteristic, at least in name. Given its position as critique the movement of liberation theology might indeed, at first, be thought of as a kind of ‘politics of mysticism.’. However, given that it is not about the restoration of a certain Christian social status, it is a very different ‘politics of mysticism’ than that which has been identified above. Nor is it about the supplanting of one power, secularisation, with another, social re-christianisation. ‘The mystical,’ at the basis of liberation theology, does act as a critique to dominant paradigms of power, an alternative to those structures in which power is amassed by some, and denied to many. However, as a criticism of social depersonalisation, the practice of liberation spirituality quickly turns into a perspective firmly oriented to the mysticism of politics, i.e. the insight that in the struggle for political transformation, understood in the primary definition of ‘the political’ used in this thesis, God becomes manifest and is to be experienced.

I am including a discussion on liberation theology as part of the discussion on ecclesial movements because its development finds its embodiment in those base Christian communities that became so infused with a spiritual and theological framework. As Carroll points out, “their emergence is one of the most significant developments in the pastoral life of the Church in the second half of the [twentieth]

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<sup>65</sup> See Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward political holiness*, translated from the Spanish by Robert R. Barr, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 58-59.

century.”<sup>66</sup> As indicated by Gustavo Gutierrez, “the experience of many base level Christian communities is making us realise that they are the active agents of the evangelisation of a whole people in the very midst of their struggle for liberation.”<sup>67</sup>

Small in size, some dozen or so families,

The BCC’s constitute the place for the conscientisation of the poor through a reflection on the problems of their lives in the light of the Gospel in order to take decisions which will lead to action. . . . At times they work on their own; at times they participate in political activity to demand their rights at the level of the local area, of the city, and, with the help of their pastors, right up to the national level.<sup>68</sup>

The emergence of these communities, numbering many thousands throughout the South American continent, was within the context of the development of liberation theology more generally. Liberation theology finds its genesis in the impulse of Vatican Council II, and particularly *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, alongside a hermeneutic of Scriptures, particularly the Exodus event, in terms of God’s interest in the liberation of the poor.<sup>69</sup> Oliveros identifies three initial developmental phases for liberation theology in which the question of the identity of the poor increasingly assumed focus and through which the various churches shifted their perspective from alliance with the State to the poverty

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<sup>66</sup> Denis Carroll, *What is Liberation Theology?* (Sydney and Wellington: E. J. Dwyer, date unspecified), 12.

<sup>67</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, “The Poor and the Christian Communities,” in *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, edited by S. Torres and J. Eagleson, (New York: Orbis, 1981), 118.

<sup>68</sup> Brazilian Bishops 1978 declaration, cited by Carroll, *What is Liberation Theology?* 13. For a more recent estimation of these historical communities see Victor Codina, “The Wisdom of Latin America’s Base Communities,” in *Mysticism and the Institutional Crisis*, edited by Christian Duquoc and Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Concilium* (1994/4) (London: SCM Press/Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 71-80.

<sup>69</sup> The following history of the theology of liberation is principally taken from Roberto Oliveros, “History of the Theology of Liberation,” in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, edited by Ingacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 3-32. For an anthology of documentation in the development of liberation theology see Alfred T. Hennelly, ed., *Liberation Theology: A documentary history*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990).

which so comprised their societies.<sup>70</sup> There was a gestation period from 1962-1968 culminating in the regional synod of Medellín in August-September, 1968. Secondly, there was a phase of genesis of the term “theology of liberation” in which the “institutions, draft proposals, articles, symposia, Medellín orientations, investigations, and subsequent in-depth studies finally came to crystallization in Gustavo Gutiérrez’s *A Theology of Liberation*.<sup>71</sup> In this phase, from 1969-1971, a theological method, pertinent to liberation theology, presents alongside the basic concepts of such a theology. A re-orientation of Christian themes within the praxis of liberation took place, and a spirituality of liberation came to initial articulation. The third period, from 1972-1979, witnessed further key colloquia and a greater development of reflection of both liberation theology and spirituality. Here, particularly, the insight that “a contemplation and spirituality not rooted in the liberative mission of Christ are inauthentic” finds expression.<sup>72</sup> This third initial phase finds its culmination in the regional synod of Puebla of February, 1979. To these early phases Oliveros adds a fourth phase, from 1979 to 1987, in which there is a certain maturation amidst a good many conflicts about the methodology of liberation theology.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> For a study on the history of the transformation of the Church in Brazil, particularly in regard to its relation to the State, see Thomas C. Bruneau, *The Political Transformation of the Brazilian Catholic Church*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

<sup>71</sup> Oliveros, ‘History of the Theology of Liberation,’ 16. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation History: politics and salvation*, translated and edited by Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1973). For a good treatment on the social, cultural and ecclesial background to Gutiérrez’s theology, as well as the development of this thought, see Gaspar Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God: Political, liberation and public theologies*, (New York and London: Continuum, 2001), 89-151.

<sup>72</sup> See Oliveros, “History of the Theology of Liberation,” 21.

<sup>73</sup> Much of this conflict centered on Joseph Ratzinger’s, “Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation,” (6 August 1984), and the subsequent Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s, “Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation,” (*Libertatis conscientia*). See *Origins* 15 (17 April, 1986). See also Joseph Ratzinger, “Freedom and Liberation: The Anthropological Vision of the Instruction, ‘Libertatis conscientia’,” *Communio: International Catholic Review* 14 (1987), 55-72. For a helpful commentary on the Vatican Instruction, see Alfred T. Hennelly, “The Red-Hot Issue: Liberation Theology,” *America* (24 May 1986), 427-428 and William L. Portier, “Mysticism and Politics and Integral Salvation: Two approaches to theology in a suffering world,” in

Gutiérrez suggests that the political involvement envisaged by the project of liberation theology has a mystical genesis. Sobrino outlines a similar foundation. He asserts a divine element in the struggle for human rights.<sup>74</sup> By such an affirmation he suggests:

There are ‘places’ where, even apart from divine omnipresence, God can be found in a special way – ‘places’ where persons’ rights are at stake, places where we could therefore ‘make history’ in a particular way, and where to do so would be to respond to and correspond to God.<sup>75</sup>

For Sobrino, the ‘sacred,’ as salvation for the one who responds to the ultimate or absolute and who is prepared to be introduced into it, is a reality manifest in the life of the poor: “there can be little doubt,” he claims,” that the defense of human rights represents for many of us something sacred – something that makes ultimate demands on us and holds out the promise of salvation.”<sup>76</sup> This sanctity of the life of the poor can be expressed both without explicit Christian language but also within Judeo-Christian revelation, according to Sobrino.<sup>77</sup> However, ultimately, for him it is nothing other than *divine*:

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*Pluralism and Oppression: Theology in world perspective*, edited by Paul Fr. Knitter, The Annual Publication of the College Theology Society 1998, Volume 34 (Lanham/New York: University of America Press, 1991), 255-275.

<sup>74</sup> See Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 103-114.

<sup>75</sup> Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 103.

<sup>76</sup> Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 105.

<sup>77</sup> For a non-Christian expression of this possibility in the work of Michel Foucault, see Jeremy R. Carrette, *Foucault and Religion: Spiritual corporality and political spirituality*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 136-141. As Carrette expounds, for Foucault the ‘spiritual’ like ‘the sexual’ does not exist apart from political structure understood as a series of power relations which shape life, the body and the self. Identifying the overlap between ethics, politics and spirituality as each pertains to a mode of self-formation, Carrette cites Foucault, “How can one analyze the connection between ways of distinguishing true and false ways of governing oneself and others? The search for a new foundation for each of these practices, in itself and relative to the other, the will to discover a different way of dividing up true and false – this is what I would call ‘political *spiritualité*.’” Carrette suggests that in developing ideas of political spirituality and spiritual corporality, Foucault challenges the dualism of the ordinary theological enterprise and positions the spiritual as a “form of discursive power in the attempt to win territory in the governance of human life.”

Those who struggle for life encounter God in history, and encounter themselves in history in the sight of God. Thus we can speak of the *divine* element in the struggle for human rights. But this is reality, and reality occurs when it occurs. It will not be enough even to show the conceptual congruity of both doctrines. The struggle for human rights emerges as divine only in the waging, and only when, on the basis of those rights, the struggle waged is on behalf of the life of the poor of this world. [Italics in the original]<sup>78</sup>

This divine element that Sobrino locates is further disclosed through the animation of liberation theology: the “preferential option for the poor.’ Gutiérrez, himself, is quite clear, however, that:

The preferential option for the poor is much more than a way of showing our concern about poverty and the establishment of justice. Inevitably, at its very heart, it contains a spiritual, mystical element, an experience of the gratuitousness that gives its depth and fruitfulness. This is not to deny the social concern expressed in this solidarity, the rejection of injustice and oppression that it implies, but to see that in the last resort it is anchored in our faith in the God of Jesus Christ.

Faith in the risen Christ is nourished by the experience of suffering, death and also of hope among the poor and oppressed, by their way of relating to each other and to nature, by their cultural and religious expressions. . . . Rilke was right when he said that God is in the roots.<sup>79</sup>

That liberation theology is, at heart, a spirituality, and in this sense a mystical trajectory, is unambiguously affirmed by Galilea who claims an intrinsic link between ‘a spirituality of liberation’ and liberation theology.<sup>80</sup> Galilea suggests three major themes of such a spirituality: an emphasis on the historical Jesus and the concrete call to discipleship of him; a concern for and a solidarity with justice in which the poor

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<sup>78</sup> Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 113.

<sup>79</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, “From Exclusion to Discipleship,” in Duquoc and Gutiérrez, eds., *Mysticism and the Institutional Crisis*, 88-89.

<sup>80</sup> Galilea, “The Spirituality of Liberation,” 187. See also, Segundo Galilea, “Liberation as an Encounter with Politics and Contemplation,” in Geffré and Gutiérrez (sic), eds., *The Mystical and Political Dimension of the Christian Faith*, 20.



themselves become the agents of evangelisation to the church itself;<sup>81</sup> a focus on charity expressed as mercy and compassion.<sup>82</sup> The foundation of spirituality for liberation theology and its themes are dealt with systematically by Sobrino in *Liberación con espíritu* (1985).

The spirituality at the centre of liberation theology, and the movements inspired by it, is given eloquent summation by Frei Betto. I wish to quote it at length here as it encapsulates so fulsomely the orientation of a mysticism of politics:

If we see prayer as an initiative taken by the Spirit in our lives (and not as mere religious technique capable of providing religious ‘experiences’), we need to find out where the Father is speaking to us today. . . .

In Latin America, the setting for the new theophany will not be a geographical one (woods or mountains), but a social one: the place of the oppressed (Matthew 25:31-46). There can be no prayer that takes us away from the people to reach God, no dualism separating Christian practice, based on charity, from the practice of prayer. . . . We open ourselves to the loving presence of the Father by listening to the clamour of the poor. Conversion is not a new way of feeling; it is a new way of acting. . . .

Christian prayer involves a deep criticism of de-personalising society, in so far as it arises from the social setting of those who are the negation of that society and, at the same time, the ideal setting of theophany – the poor. In this way, the political dimension of prayer links the purpose of union with God to that of union among people. .

. . . There is no other way besides this quest for reconciliation which the Spirit puts into our hearts so that it can then take concrete form in the political project, the building of a more just society under future regimes and systems – imperfect stages on the road of progressive liberation which only the final manifestation of the kingdom will bring to full fruition. . .

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<sup>81</sup> This is a key theme developed by Gutiérrez in his “encounter, experience, reflection, prolongation” theological methodology. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from our own Wells: The spiritual journey of a people*, translated by Matthew J. O’Connell, (Maryknoll, New York/Orbis Books/Melbourne, Australia: Dove Communications, 1984).

<sup>82</sup> In this emphasis, liberation theology shares a good deal with some aspects of feminist theology. See for example Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The mystery of God in feminist theological discourse*, (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

We can feel delicious inner spiritual ‘comforts’ without sharing the anxieties of those who hunger and thirst after justice; we can feel a great uplift of the spirit and enjoy ecstasies and visions without the least awareness of the contradictions (disunities) between the social classes. But these are not the forms of prayer the gospel teaches us and the spirituality of liberation require of us. Christian prayer is neither flight, consolation, delight nor opium. It cannot be narcissistically enjoyed by our inner senses or for the pleasure that it affords our egos. It associates recognition of the holiness of God with the supplication that is at once promise and project: ‘Thy Kingdom come.’<sup>83</sup>

Betto argues the need for a hermeneutic for all Christian prayer, asserting that all prayer has an ideological content. There is no such thing as ‘pure prayer.’ It either is saturated with the entrenched patterns of the powerful, and the pursuit of power, in the sense that it operates from the illusion of being in a kind of disunity with the poor, disconnected from their cry, or it is aligned with the struggle of those left aside by patterns of power, and in various ways gives expression to that struggle. In other words, it is either marked by the illusion of being a-historical or deeply embedded within history. As Sobrino comments,

The content of the qualifier ‘spiritual,’ as attached to the noun ‘life,’ can no longer be understood or actualized in any other locus than that of historical life. In a word, the intuition that has gradually forced itself upon our perceptions is that without historical, real *life* there can be no such things as *spiritual* life. [Italics in the original].<sup>84</sup>

Thus liberation spirituality is deeply incarnational. Liberation theology stands, according to Galilea, as the “historical and theologico-spiritual place of encounter of the political and contemplative dimensions in the Christian.”<sup>85</sup> For Galilea, this

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<sup>83</sup> Frei Betto, “Social De-personalisation and Prayer,” in *Where Does the Church Stand?*, edited by Guiseppe Alberigo and Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Concilium* 146, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark/New York: Seabury Press, 1981), 71-72, 73.

<sup>84</sup> Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 4.

<sup>85</sup> Galilea, “Politics and Contemplation,” 20.

creates an altogether new paradigm for Christian spirituality in which a “synthesis between ‘militant’ and ‘contemplative’ is urgent.” He identifies two tendencies. These can be defined as ‘religious-contemplative’ and ‘militantly committed.’ The first is unaffected by “the temporal or social divisions of the faith” and is directed to religious practices entertained as a-historical. Galilea argues that such is constructed on the essentially Hellenist understanding of contemplation discussed in an earlier chapter. “This mysticism,” he claims, “infected authentic Christian contemplation, not as an isolated fact, but as Greek thought and its dualistic ethos gained influence in the nascent Church.”<sup>86</sup>

Liberation theology, however, retrieves a biblical basis of contemplation. This Galilea locates in a number of key biblical strands in which the encounter with the Lord leads directly to a confrontation with systems of oppression and an encounter with the poor: the tradition of Elijah to John the Baptist, and the Moses project itself. Liberation theology “has restored the Exodus to its political symbolism and has seen in Moses an authentic politician, guiding the people towards a better society”<sup>87</sup> – though this was a point particularly criticised by the Vatican’s 1986 “Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation,” (*Libertatis conscientia*). Within the New Testament, liberation theology retrieves the tradition of the desert as a metaphor for a purification become prophecy, and the encounter with the Lord manifest in Matthew 25. This is,

the experience of Jesus as our brother [which] gives the Christian consciousness its social dimension and frees it of any tendency to be purely individual, private or platonic. It gives brotherly love a social, collective dimension to the extent that the ‘least’ are not only

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<sup>86</sup> Galilea, “Politics and Contemplation,” 21.

<sup>87</sup> Galilea, “Politics and Contemplation,” 31.

individuals in Latin America, but human groups – marginal subcultures, social classes or sectors. There is in them a collective presence of Jesus, the experience of which constitutes a true contemplative act.<sup>88</sup>

In this “service-encounter” there is no disjunction between contemplation and action.<sup>89</sup> “The Other experienced in contemplative prayer is also experienced in the encounter with others.”<sup>90</sup> Salvation loses any a-historical character. It is now tied to temporal and political commitments without being reduced to these. With this perspective,

The Christian committed to liberation becomes a contemplative to the extent that [they] grasp what God wished for [their] fellow[s]. . . and makes that the decisive motive for [their] commitment . . . They give great importance to the praxis of liberation and discover in prayer the guarantee that evangelical values preside over that praxis.<sup>91</sup>

Using the example of the Bolivian, Nestor Paz, Galilea concludes that this has led many to “bring their faith to a high degree of Christian mysticism.”<sup>92</sup>

For Sobrino, all this leads to ‘political holiness.’ Though with greater nuance than the way in which this thesis has defined ‘the mystical’ - and ‘the political’ in the first instance - Sobrino defines holiness as the outstanding practice of theological virtues of faith, hope and love in discipleship of Jesus. By ‘political’ he means “action directed towards structurally transforming society in the direction of the reign of

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<sup>88</sup> Galilea, “Politics and Contemplation,” 25.

<sup>89</sup> For an Asian perspective on this same theme, see Aloysius Pieris, *Mysticism of Service: A short treatise on spirituality with a Pauline-Ignatian focus on the prayer-life of Christian activists*, (Gonawala-Kelaniya, Sri Lanka: Tulana Jubilee Publications, 2000).

<sup>90</sup> Galilea, “Politics and Contemplation,” 25.

<sup>91</sup> Galilea, “Politics and Contemplation,” 23, 22.

<sup>92</sup> Galilea, “Politics and Contemplation,” 22. Sobrino provides an extensive martyrology. See Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 87-88.

God.”<sup>93</sup> He argues that the ability to link these two realities involves two steps. Firstly, there is a need for the presentation of a new locus for holiness as both possible and necessary, as has been indicated above. The second is more complicated and is consequent to Christians becoming increasingly involved in the life of politics, ordinarily understood. It involves the reflection of how such involvement in the name of faith is possible as persons bring Christian values to bear to their political involvement and seek to make such action as effective as possible. He asserts, therefore, “[t]hus politics today offers a sphere for holiness and holiness makes political action more humanizing for those engaged in it and for the political project in which they are engaged.”<sup>94</sup> Sobrino identifies ‘political love’ as the basis for ‘political holiness.’ Political love is the love “for the most deprived of life and working so that they may have life”<sup>95</sup> It finds its culmination in lives given for others, even unto death.

The great numbers of these deaths is what not only enables us to speak a priori of the possibility of political holiness, but what forces us to speak of it a posteriori. If the spilt blood of so many . . . is not a convincing argument that the political is a proper sphere for holiness, and moreover that at the moment holiness normally means involvement with politics, then there is no theological discourse that could be convincing.<sup>96</sup>

Nonetheless, Sobrino is clear that if political love is to generate such political holiness, political love must be and remain precisely *love*. As he indicates, this is not easy to attain and has a certain utopian quality about it. Yet, it is not simply idealistic.

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<sup>93</sup> See Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 80-86.

<sup>94</sup> Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 81.

<sup>95</sup> Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 81.

<sup>96</sup> Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 83.

It is preserved by a constancy of subordination to the theological reality of the kingdom of God.

This holiness is repeating in history God's action, which is eschatologically holy. *It is necessary for Christians to maintain their specificity in political action, . . .* In the short term this holiness may seem like a hindrance, because it dedicates energies to what is not purely political action. It may appear idealist because of its intrinsic difficulty. But in the long run it is also fruitful historically, as Archbishop Romero demonstrated in an exemplary manner. [Italics mine]<sup>97</sup>

As liberation theology has continued to mature within its embodiment of base ecclesial communities, Cordina suggests that a new 'ecclesiogenesis' has begun to emerge: "We are witnessing a new style of base communities, in which, without a break with an earlier tradition, new paths are opening up and new aspects being emphasized."<sup>98</sup> In many ways, the threads of this have protected 'the mysticism of politics' represented in liberation spirituality from the apocalypticism of the 'mysticism of politics' present in the nineteenth century, as in the case of Lammenais explored in Chapter Four.

Cordina suggests a number of shifts that imply a certain protection from this possibility. Of the number he identifies, I choose three that have pertinence to this aspect. Firstly, given a certain loss of credibility of political parties, he highlights a shift from 'the political' ordinarily understood as partisan politics to the 'social and civil.' Members of base ecclesial communities are now preferring, "to act in the social domain (solidarity) and in civil society: groups and associations of neighbours, young people, women, for human rights, in defence of land rights, in defence of life

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<sup>97</sup> Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 85.

<sup>98</sup> Victor Cordina, "The Wisdom of Latin America's Base Communities," in Duquoc and Gutiérrez, eds., *Mysticism and the Institutional Crisis*, 76.

etc.”<sup>99</sup> In this regard, such a shift renders ‘the political’ as defined in the first instance in this thesis – i.e. as social engagement - as particularly important. It implies that the ‘mysticism of politics’ is provided with its authenticity to the extent that ‘political’ is precisely so defined. Secondly, Cordina identifies that the metaphor of Exile has replaced that of Exodus to define the project of liberation. This has ameliorated the need for fast outcomes in the struggle for human rights and infused liberation theology with a greater degree of patience and sustained resistance. The third is a consequence of this. With the expectation of revolutionary change abating, and the ordinariness of life with its vicissitudes remaining, apocalyptic tendencies have given way to that of the Wisdom tradition as the place in which the divine element is to be expected and experienced. ‘The prophetic’ has not been abandoned, nor replaced by the ‘alienating mysticism’ of an a-historical, platonic kind, but now the wisdom of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and the patience of Job have come much more to the fore. Fourthly, this renders base ecclesial communities today, according to Cordina, with a greater inclusiveness and less elitism.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

In their different ways the four ecclesial movements explored in this chapter have been presented as either agents of the ‘politics of mysticism’ or the ‘mysticism of politics.’ The polarity of the ‘politics of mysticism’ and the ‘mysticism of politics’ is suggested as a kind of typology by which the new ecclesial movements might be considered. Such a typology, I believe, has legitimacy precisely because of the way in which the new ecclesial movements, as manifestations of lay spirituality,

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<sup>99</sup> Cordina, “The Wisdom of Latin America’s Base Communities,” 76.

unavoidably must negotiate the ways in which 'the mystical' and 'the political' coalesce.

As with their antecedents, so too these explorations of the twentieth century confirm those insights drawn from the nineteenth century. In a secular environment in which it experiences either social displacement, or the threat thereof, a 'politics of mysticism' is entertained for the retrieval of social identity. At worst, this involves an engagement of 'the political' as the exercise of a certain power not simply at the service of an identity capable of manifesting a prophetic 'moment' but for the purposes of maintaining and exercising a certain social control. Again, the intensity with which a 'politics of mysticism' is engaged acts as a type of religious barometer concerning the threat perceived.

Alternatively, the 'mysticism of politics' emerges as the stronger option in those circumstances, and from those intellectual frameworks where there exists the experience of the instrumentality of human agency to transform the given social and political situation according to an evangelical vision.

In so emerging, the final insight detailed from observations of the nineteenth century is likewise confirmed that where a strong and developed sense of the prophetic is entertained, a 'mysticism of politics' will ensue. Where the prophetic is surrendered and the institutional dimension of the church more strongly emphasised, there the 'politics of mysticism' will flourish.



What the exploration of the twentieth century movements, however, perhaps uniquely demonstrates, is that the two alternatives of a 'politics of mysticism' and a 'mysticism of politics' are not just derivative of different historical circumstances as they may well have been in the nineteenth century. For now the two alternatives more clearly co-exist within the same set of historical circumstances. They may be thought, therefore, as derivative of two fundamentally different responses to the problem of the place of the Church in the modern world, and more specifically, to its lack of 'site' – to return to the terminology of Michel de Certeau. The 'politics of mysticism' seeks ultimately to regain a visible, tangible 'site' – at worse, in a frozen, fixated manner for the sake of the maintenance and preservation of control. The 'mysticism of politics' is more prepared to operate with a certain anonymity. One is fundamentally oriented towards the institutional, the other to the personal. The first places concern for the Church itself at the forefront of its vision, the second places concern for society there.

As with all sets of polarities - and typologies - there are liabilities. Polarities present broad brushstrokes and cannot be regarded as exhausting the full experience of the realities they seek to represent. They are offered as providing useful hermeneutical keys to an otherwise complex situation. Polarities also identify the tendency to distortion when they become fixated. Then they easily develop into caricatures of themselves, and drift to various extremisms which, in the religious context, are ordinarily apocalyptic in character. This was a point also identified in our exploration of the movements of the nineteenth century.

Identifying sets of polarities, therefore, evokes the task of moderation, i.e. the capacity to hold apparent opposites in a tension and to discover, precisely in the

tension, a new place of vitality and fruitfulness. There is a certain alchemy demanded in this. This is the spiritual challenge of the typology suggested here. As the spiritual journey presents in the future of the Roman Catholic tradition which has now brought lay spirituality irrevocably to the fore as the ordinary context of Christian holiness, such an alchemy will be increasingly required.

The spiritual practitioner will therefore find themselves standing midway between the 'politics of mysticism' and the 'mysticism of politics.' Belonging to a social reality - the Church - which will continue to require visible form, they will also find themselves called to transform their society and world with a certain anonymity and with a capacity to be flexible and mobile.

How the Roman Catholic of the twenty first century stands between a 'politics of mysticism' and a 'mysticism of politics' will thus bring forth a new paradigm for Christian holiness within his or her tradition.

**CONCLUSION:  
HOLINESS BETWEEN A ‘POLITICS OF MYSTICISM’  
AND A ‘MYSTICISM OF POLITICS’**

*Brothers and dreamers, there is a reason to take heart! A new mysticism becomes,  
one day, a new politics. Meantime, much suffering must be endured. Later, a yet new  
mysticism will be required. Politics and mysticism, mysticism and politics.  
Be wily as serpents, innocent as robins.*

Michael Novak, *A Theology for Radical Politics*,<sub>2</sub> (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 126.

*He understood, too, that by the alchemy of his writing, old things were made new . . .  
For out of old feldes, as men seyth,  
Cometh al this newe corn from yer to yere.*

Peter Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, (London: Vintage, 2005), 60.

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## CONCLUSION

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### A. Recapitulation

This has been a study of the mystical-political dialectic as it has emerged in theological reflection and through historical practice within the modern Roman Catholic period. I have suggested that such a reflection is necessitated by the universal call to holiness articulated at the Second Vatican Council. This proposes the secularity as a significant locus for the pursuit of the spiritual life. In this context a negotiation between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ and the attempt to live a certain integration between them will only increasingly become apparent. It is, perhaps, *the* spiritual challenge of the legacy of Vatican II.

‘The mystical’ and ‘the political’ are not easy terms to define. As evolving terms they have meant different things at different times. Employing Underhill’s classic contribution, this study has opted for a working definition of ‘the mystical’ as ‘a pursuit of ultimate Reality’ within a particular context – the art of establishing a conscious relation with the Absolute, a self-transcending movement in which the desire of love combines with the desire of knowledge. Put simply, using Schillebeeckx’s simple definition, it is the intense form of a love of God. ‘The political’ has been engaged in a more nuanced way with two primary manifestations – as engagement with the social and public sphere, on the one hand, but also as the exercise of power, on the other hand.

With notable exceptions notwithstanding, for much of the spiritual tradition ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ have been regarded antithetically. This opposition is

intimated in those classic dualities antecedent to the mystical-political dialectic, particularly, though in different ways, in the polarity of ‘cities’ and ‘kingdoms,’ in Augustine and Luther, the early twentieth century typology of the mystical and prophetic of Friedrich Heiler, and the categories of the mystical and political as engaged by the German sociologist Max Weber and the French philosophy Charles Péguy. Much of the opposition between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ that is intimated by such dualities has been influenced by Platonic and Oriental perspectives on mysticism.

With an understanding of mysticism that is not regarded exclusively from the framework of a platonic catharsis prior to a pure mental illumination that is no longer influenced by history or geography, time and place, the stark opposition between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ begins to dissolve. The duality gives way to a tensive relationship. This has been the contribution of the twentieth century’s reflection on the inter-relationship between the two. Within its stated parameters, this study has focused this reflection on four principal writers for whom the tension, in one form or another, has had particular significance. The perspective of the relationship between church and state has been shown in the contributions of Jacques Maritain and William T. Cavanaugh, and, more explicitly in regard to the tension itself, in the theological endeavour of Johannes Metz and Edward Schillebeeckx.

Each of these writers envisages the tension of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ in different ways, as more or less possible. The discussion itself indicates, however, that though ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ no longer need to be regarded as opposed, as they were in previous periods of the theological tradition, nonetheless, they are

brought together with a certain uneasy alliance. Subsequently, out of this oft uncomfortable coalescence, this study has proposed that the foundational tension proffers another tensive experience between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political.’ This new set of polarities has been articulated as the ‘politics of mysticism’ and the ‘mysticism of politics.’ In this new tensive consideration, ‘the political’ is understood in the two different ways by which it has been defined. In a ‘politics of mysticism’ ‘the political’ is understood as an exercise of power. In a ‘mysticism of politics’ ‘the political’ is envisaged as the engagement of the public sphere. In the first, ‘the mystical’ is instrumental for a political agenda – the affirmation of ecclesial social identity in a context in which the Church experiences displacement. In the second, ‘the political’ is envisaged as the very forum in which the experience of God becomes a possibility.

This particular form of the mystical-political dialectic – a ‘politics of mysticism’ and a ‘mysticism of politics’ - has been traced in this study by historical soundings within Roman Catholic experience in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and especially in those principal markers of the emergent laicality of these periods – the development of political and social Catholicism in Catholic Action and its antecedent initiatives. More specifically, it has been proposed that the new ecclesial movements, as a defining phenomenon of the Roman Catholic spiritual tradition by the end of the twentieth century, may be situated as either agents of a ‘politics of mysticism’ or a ‘mysticism of politics.’ The proposed polarity thus provides the phenomenon itself with a certain typology and hermeneutic.

In considering the way in which ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ coalesce into either a ‘politics of mysticism’ or a ‘mysticism of politics’ a number of important lessons have been drawn. Three in particular have been stated. Firstly, the ‘mysticism of politics’ appears to gain currency precisely at times of political and social innovation in which there exists the experience of the instrumentality of human agency according to an evangelical vision. Secondly, in a modern, liberal society in which it discovers itself as one voice amongst others the Church will tend towards a ‘politics of mysticism’ for social identity. In this sense, the intensity with which a ‘politics of mysticism’ is engaged acts as a type of religious barometer on the level of the threat perceived. As mentioned in the Introduction such a use of ‘the political’ is not in itself pejorative. It is when such an exercise of power, however, becomes fixated in the need for control and instead of manifesting a prophetic ‘moment’ becomes frozen that ‘the political’ in a ‘politics of mysticism’ becomes problematic. Thirdly, and following from this, that which begins in a ‘mysticism of politics’ may unfold into a ‘politics of mysticism’ with the threshold between the two determined by the tension of the prophetic and the institutional. Where the prophetic is entertained, a ‘mysticism of politics’ will ensue. Where the prophetic is surrendered and the institutional enveloped, there the ‘politics of mysticism’ will flourish. Ultimately, it has been suggested that a ‘politics of mysticism’ invariably moves towards a certain ecclesial fundamentalism whilst a ‘mysticism of politics’ veers towards a certain spiritual and theological apocalypticism, though it is beyond this study to fully outline the detailed implications of such scenarios.

What does remain within the scope of this study is to suggest the means by which a steady course might be steered between these two extremes of the dialectic. How

might the spiritual pilgrim at the outset of the twenty first century hold ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ together? How might they do so in a form that recognises the distinction between the two that does not become a division, and which enables the spiritual traveler within the Roman Catholic tradition a means through which the Spirit of God may be experienced afresh at the dawn of a new millennium?

## **B. Challenges from an ‘Age of Authenticity’**

The question about what the most appropriate paradigms of holiness might be in the new century in which we live is a critical one, particularly given the nature of the era. Just as we have seen Charles Taylor term the nineteenth century, ‘the age of mobilization,’ so has he designated the current period, ‘the age of authenticity.’<sup>1</sup> Taylor describes this era as characterized by both moral/spiritual individualism and an ‘expressive’ individualism. Whilst acknowledging that the latter is not particularly new, he suggests that the mass phenomenon of such self-orientation is.

Now, the interest in that Romantic expressivism of the late-eighteenth century, that each one of us has his/her own way of realizing our humanity, and that it is important to find and live out one’s own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside, by society, or the previous generation, or religious or political authority . . . infiltrates everywhere.<sup>2</sup>

Taylor is deeply aware of the distortions and illusions which are spawned from such a widespread consciousness – the propensity to simple egoism and the pursuit of pleasure hijacked within the tyranny of consumer choice.<sup>3</sup> However, rather than

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<sup>1</sup> See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), chapter 13.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 475.

<sup>3</sup> See Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 480.



simply join in a chorus of condemnation about the present age, Taylor wishes to see this feature in a more constructive light.

Firstly, in the ‘space of fashion’ that he also identifies as a mark of the period, he suggests that it “matters to each one of us as we act that others are there, as witness of what we are doing, and thus as co-determiners of the meaning of our action.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, we are poised today between ‘solitude and togetherness,’ ‘solipsism and communication.’

Secondly, in the ‘lonely crowd’ that we have become there is an openness to what he terms ‘the festive’ –

moments of fusion in a common action/feeling, which both wrench us out of the everyday, and seem to put us in touch with something exceptional, beyond ourselves. Which is why some have seen these moments as among the new forms of religion in our world.<sup>5</sup>

The end result, for Taylor, is a shift in the ‘social imaginary’ by which we understand ourselves – the underlying framework of social definition. No longer with a “necessary embedding of our link to the sacred in any particular broader framework, whether ‘church’ or state,”<sup>6</sup> the experience of passion has now become a critical component for spiritual experience. “Deeply felt personal insight now becomes our most precious spiritual insight . . . To give this reign and voice in oneself is more crucial than getting the right formula.”<sup>7</sup> For Taylor, this demands going beyond what

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<sup>4</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 481.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 482-483. In this Taylor cites Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *La Religion pour Memoire*, (Paris: Cerf, 1993), chapter 3.

<sup>6</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 487.

<sup>7</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 489.

he calls a “Reform-clerical complex” with its strong emphasis predominantly on abnegation and concern for sexual purity, and which so easily dominates ecclesiastical discourse, to an openness that “there are more ways of being a Catholic Christian than [have yet been] imagined.”<sup>8</sup>

Taylor thus entertains what the emergent spirituality might look like. He does not resile from the possibility of trivialized distortions, namely being,

mere extensions of the human potential movement, hence totally focused on the immanent, and/or being a variety of invitations to self-absorption, without any concern for anything beyond the agent, whether the surrounding society, or the transcendent.<sup>9</sup>

Taylor is keen, however, to suggest that the Church ignores at its peril the new social imaginary. We see in our own time, the rise of a generation who,

resonate with the “Peggy Lee” response [i.e. “is this all there is?”], but also [who] are seeking a kind of unity and wholeness of the self, a reclaiming of the place of feeling, against the one-sided pre-eminence of reason, and a reclaiming of the body and its pleasures from the inferior and often guilt-ridden place it has been allowed in the disciplined, instrumental identity. The stress is on unity, integrity, holism, individuality . . .<sup>10</sup>

In Taylor’s estimation, the current age discovers itself spiritually between the extremes of “utter self-suspicion” of the past and a ‘total self-trust’ which can easily characterize the distortions within the present interest in spirituality now separated from religion, “believing without belonging.”<sup>11</sup> Yet, even in the face of the

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<sup>8</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 504.

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 508.

<sup>10</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 507.

<sup>11</sup> See Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 512, 514. I have explored this division between spirituality and religion, myself, in David Ranson, *Across the Great Divide: Bridging spirituality and religion*, (Strathfield, NSW: St. Pauls Publications, 2002).

unmistakable decline in religious practice, Taylor is convinced that a future belongs to the middle ground.

In this middle space, according to Taylor, we are set to see new expressions of spirituality and the spiritual quest. “We are just at the beginning of a new age of religious searching, whose outcome no one can foresee,” he declares.<sup>12</sup> The outcomes may not yet be evident. However, for Taylor, the lineaments of this new spiritual paradigm are,

The new framework has a strongly individualist component, but this will not necessarily mean that the content will be individuating. Many people will find themselves joining extremely powerful religious communities” in which ‘the festive,’ as defined above, plays a significant role.<sup>13</sup>

‘The festive,’ however, will not be sufficient: people will want more than a temporary ‘wow!’ experience. “They want to take it further, and they are looking for ways of doing so.”<sup>14</sup> In light of this, Taylor recommends, “[w]e could say that this is a world in which the fate of belief depends much more than before on powerful intuitions of individuals, radiating out to others.”<sup>15</sup> We are caught up in new modes of quest, according to Taylor, in Robert Wuthnow’s dialectic of “dwellers and seekers.”<sup>16</sup> It is a spirituality of quest that is the form of spiritual aspiration in an ‘age

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<sup>12</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 535.

<sup>13</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 516-517.

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 518.

<sup>15</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 531,

<sup>16</sup> See Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 512, 533. Taylor is referring to Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), chapters 1 and 2.

of authenticity.’<sup>17</sup> Following the insight of José Casanova, Taylor further suggests that this will find its discourse very much in the public square.<sup>18</sup>

Should Taylor’s observations be correct, as I believe them to be, then I would contend that there are a number of important implications in regard to the dialectic of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ as it has been presented in this study as an unavoidable negotiation for the committed Christian spiritual practitioner. The new forms of a spirituality of quest that Taylor intimates, which by their character are inclusive in character, will seek a greater integration between both the public and the personal, or to use Owen C. Thomas’ phrase, between exteriority and interiority.<sup>19</sup> In Casanova’s terms, a certain deprivatisation of religious experience will be called for.<sup>20</sup>

If all this is so, then it may well be precisely through an engagement of the dialectic of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ that such new forms of spiritual quest emerge. New paradigms of Christian holiness in which ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ enjoy conjunction without dissolving into the fundamentalism of a ‘politics of mysticism’ or the apocalypticism of a ‘mysticism of politics’ are particularly needed. In ‘an age of authenticity’ ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ joined together create a pathway into

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<sup>17</sup> See Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 532. For a postmodern address on this issue of new forms, see Edith Wyschogrod, *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning moral philosophy*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990).

<sup>18</sup> See Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 532. Taylor refers here to José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994). See particularly pages 51-66.

<sup>19</sup> See Owen C. Thomas, "Interiority and Christian Spirituality," *The Journal of Religion* 80 (2000), 41-60.

<sup>20</sup> Some striking examples of this have recently presented. For example, see Jim Wallis, *The Soul of Politics: A practical and prophetic vision for change*, (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994). For Australian examples see the contribution of the Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, (when Leader of the Opposition), "Faith in Politics," *The Monthly* (October 2006), 22-30; Gerard Henderson, "Time for non-believers to hear the word," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (11 April, 2006).

the future that avoids the solipsism of a distorted Romantic expressivism, on the one hand, and yet on the other, avoids the purely instrumental reasoning of passionless politics.

### **C. New Models of Holiness**

Models of holiness, and the way in which certain models are either affirmed or relegated to the margins, are not without significance. As Christian Duquoc comments, “The Church elevates to the kingdom of God those who serve her, but does serving her always amount to promoting the kingdom of God in this world?”<sup>21</sup> He goes on to observe – in a way that precisely expresses a ‘politics of mysticism’ about which this study has been concerned – “these two ends are not identical on account of the fact that the Catholic Church is a social reality that is not always governed by the interests of the gospel alone.”<sup>22</sup>

Duquoc’s comments about the nature of models are important to include here. As he observes, models are for imitation and, therefore, address the imagination and affections. However, they also political in character:

The history of those put forward as models of holiness has other surprises in store for us: Why is it that so many monks, virgins, widows and bishops people official heaven; whereas layfolk, married women, and ordinary priests are hardly represented there at all? Representations of heaven in the art of the Middle Ages or of the renaissance [sic] reproduce the social hierarchies which obtained [sic] within the Church: the peasant does not sit at the side of the pontiff. The virgins remain grouped together, there is no question of mixing them up with the rest of the population. It is only in representations of hell that this hierarchy is contravened: bishop and highway brigand jostle each other. A suspicion begins to arise:

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<sup>21</sup> Christian Duquoc, “Editorial,” in *Models of Holiness*, edited by Christian Duquoc and Casiano Floristán, *Concilium* 129, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), vii.

<sup>22</sup> Duquoc, “Editorial,” viii.

Does not the procedure of canonizing somebody in the light of models of holiness that are in some sense predetermined reveal more about the ideal of an epoch than about the demands of the Gospel?<sup>23</sup>

In making this observation, Duquoc is not advocating dissolution into skepticism about the process of canonization but, rather, drawing us to an honest recognition about the relative nature of models. All models are in the end accountable to the holiness of Jesus himself. However, it is quite possible, according to Duquoc, for particular models, in time, to become obstacles in the pursuit of holiness. “By stereotyping holiness they overvalue the forms of the past and do not encourage the innovatory form of the Gospel.”<sup>24</sup>

Should Charles Taylor be correct about the current era demanding new forms of spiritual quest, then, subsequently, new models of holiness are also required to evidence the vitality of the Gospel. Those models will, I believe, be characterized by a certain conjunction between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political.’ They will be forged between the two tendencies explored throughout this study – between a ‘politics of mysticism’ and a ‘mysticism of politics.’

Claudio Leonardi has termed this new model as representative of a shift from ‘monastic’ holiness to ‘political’ holiness.<sup>25</sup> As he provocatively asserts, “[f]rom the fourth to the twentieth century Christians thought of the perfect imitation of Christ as

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<sup>23</sup> Duquoc, “Editorial,” ix.

<sup>24</sup> Duquoc, “Editorial,” xii.

<sup>25</sup> See Claudio Leonardi, “From ‘Monastic’ Holiness to ‘Political’ Holiness,” in *Models of Holiness*, edited by Christian Duquoc and Casiano Floristán, *Concilium* 129, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), 46-55.

the monastic life, but now this image is worn out.”<sup>26</sup> Though I would not agree with Leonardi that monastic life no longer presents as a viable model of holiness, his primary point that paradigms of holiness have changed is worthy of consideration. Leonardi, in fact, posits two periods in the evolution of paradigms of Christian holiness. The first - that of the martyr - is extended into that of the monk.

The language of martyrs corresponds to baptismal language and only expresses the beginning of Christian life: baptism does not yet express the problem of a life to be lived in the world but not of the world.

It is this problem that the monastic model tries to solve and which is the basis of its new language: how to conquer not death, but the world. . . The monk is the perfect follower of Christ because he conquers the world by dying to the world.<sup>27</sup>

In this paradigm, the ‘body’ is seen, by diverse influences, as the diminishment of the soul. With the fall of the Roman Empire, the Christian attitude towards the world had to be re-thought. Christians “could not simply avoid the world, they had to cope with it and try to convert it: they became involved in history.”<sup>28</sup> In various ways, monks thus assumed a lifestyle co-joining a cenobitic lifestyle with a missionary endeavour. In this sense, Leonardi proposes that “as perfection was expressed in the saint who existed in history, its language was both mystical and prophetic, prophecy which measured history against meta-history.”<sup>29</sup> Franciscan idealism expanded this further. In the model presented by Francis of Assisi, the “monk should not flee the world, or take over the world by converting it: he must love the world.”<sup>30</sup> Yet, this love, stretching through the Carmelite tradition, did not involve a confrontation with the

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<sup>26</sup> Leonardi, “From ‘Monastic’ Holiness to ‘Political’ Holiness,” 46.

<sup>27</sup> Leonardi, “From ‘Monastic’ Holiness to ‘Political’ Holiness,” 47.

<sup>28</sup> Leonardi, “From ‘Monastic’ Holiness to ‘Political’ Holiness,” 49.

<sup>29</sup> Leonardi, “From ‘Monastic’ Holiness to ‘Political’ Holiness,” 50.

<sup>30</sup> Leonardi, “From ‘Monastic’ Holiness to ‘Political’ Holiness,” 51.

world. It was a longing for the world to be caught up in the same experience of consummation in the pure love for God.

Thus, in different ways, according to Leonardi, the monastic ideal of holiness represented a rejection of either nature or of history. However, curiously, Leonardi suggests that in the declaration of the dogma of the Assumption, precisely in the middle of the twentieth century, a new paradigm is brought to the light of day. The figure of the Virgin assumed bodily into heaven brings to the fore the fundamentally eschatological character of Christian holiness, for both human beings and cosmos are present in Mary's own assumption.

If 'the mystical' is the main fruit of the martyr-monastic paradigm - a fruit which he does not argue should be abandoned - then the outcome of the new paradigm is 'the political' for, as we have seen elsewhere particularly in the contribution of Metz, eschatology "opens the silence of the mystic to the word of prophecy."<sup>31</sup> Thus, Leonardi presents the character of the new paradigm of holiness.

The new model does not require separation from the world or the conquest of worldly power. It requires the Christian to be present in the world to reveal to it the divine-human fullness of the second coming [as intimated in the doctrine of the Assumption]. The mystic's words of eternal life are coupled with words which recognise the distance that history still has to travel to reach eschatological fulfillment. In the old model the 'political' reached its final expression in the yearning of Thérèse of Lisieux, it was non-political, and any other word would have been worldly. In the new model the 'political' word is a prophetic word, not like monastic prophecy which pointed out meta-history to history, the future to the present, the individual to the social, but prophecy in the stricter sense which confronts historical limits with the power of Utopia, which carries within the good of the person, the good of the community, which already sees history in its eschatological fulfilment.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Leonardi, "From 'Monastic' Holiness to 'Political' Holiness," 54.

<sup>32</sup> Leonardi, "From 'Monastic' Holiness to 'Political' Holiness," 54.



#### **D. Requirements for Tensive Unity**

The new model of holiness that is being suggested here brings ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ into a new conjunction. It does not disavow past paradigms of holiness but proposes that their legacy now be informed with a new perspective. However, if ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ are to find a balanced integration, between the tendencies to either a ‘politics of mysticism’ or a ‘mysticism of politics,’ what are those formative characteristics which will constitute this new model of holiness? Another way of addressing this question is to ponder what are those spiritual attitudes and practices which most effectively serve a genuine but practical way by which the creative tension between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ might be lived.

In his very brief but helpful study, Urban Holmes highlights in his own typology of Christian spirituality a ‘circle of sensibility.’<sup>33</sup> Whilst enunciating four quadrants formed by the two axes of the apophatic and the kataphatic threads of spirituality, and the speculative and the affective, Holmes suggests that orthodox schools of Christian spirituality lie within a ‘circle of sensibility’ forming a circumference around the intersection of the axes. However, each quadrant also depicts a potential towards distortion, beyond the ‘circle of sensibility.’ Thus, for example, whilst Benedictine spirituality might represent a school of spirituality within the circle of sensibility in the quadrant formed by the kataphatic and the affective, Pietism represents the move towards distortion in the same quadrant. Whilst mainstream Rhineland spirituality lies within the circle of sensibility of the quadrant formed by the apophatic and

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<sup>33</sup> See Urban T. Holmes, *A History of Christian Spirituality: An analytical introduction*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1980).

speculative, the denial of the body as in encratism is illustrative of the distortion possible in the quadrant beyond the 'circle of sensibility.'

If the polarity of a 'politics of mysticism' and a 'mysticism of politics' itself contains the possibility of movement along a spectrum, it might be asked, therefore, what lies within its own 'circle of sensibility' in such a way that distortion by extremes is minimized? In addressing this question, forced by a consideration of the polarity, another one arises: what are the marks of a spirituality in which 'the mystical' and 'the political' are held together in the healthiest tension, with distinction but without either opposition or dissolution? In turn, from a consideration of the dialectic of 'the mystical' and 'the political' and the unavoidability of its negotiation for spirituality today, the question about a new paradigm of holiness within the Roman Catholic tradition begins to present itself. This issue is a vital one at the beginning of the twenty first century. I suggest that 'the mystical' and 'the political' will find their healthy balance through acknowledging three characteristics which mark the next stage of the discussion.

### **D.1 Respect for Tension**

In positioning 'the mystical' and 'the political' together within a new model of Christian holiness a tension is invariably suggested. It is the tension which is vital. The respect for tension within religious experience has been classically enunciated by both John Henry Newman (1801-1890) and Friedrich von Hügel (1852-1925). Newman understood that Christian experience is forged in the crucible of three forces,

the spiritual, the theological, the pastoral, each in turn associated with Christ as Priest, Prophet, King.<sup>34</sup> Each of these forces has its own guiding principle.

Truth is the guiding principle of theology and theological inquiries; devotion and edification of worship, and of government, expedience. The instrument of theology is reasoning; of worship, our emotional nature; of rule, command and coercion. Further, in man as he is [sic], reasoning tends to rationalism, devotion to superstition and enthusiasm, and power to ambition and tyranny.<sup>35</sup>

Newman is cognizant that each of these is arduous to discharge but “much more arduous are they to administer, when taken in combination.”<sup>36</sup> Each force, however, requires the corrective of the other two, if it is not to become a caricature of itself. Theology needs to draw on prayer and personal experience if it is to avoid rationalism just as it needs to be shaped by pastoral concern. Governance needs to respect the devotional experience of people if rigid pastoral policies are not to crush their spirit and if they are to be in accord with the truth of the Gospel, such that pastoral policies do not reflect simply the whim of those in authority.

In similar fashion, von Hügel identified a triad of religious elements that must be held in tension should distortion not eventuate.<sup>37</sup>

If Religion turned out to be simple, in the sense of being a monotone, a mere oneness, a whole without parts, it could not be true; and yet if Religion be left too much a mere multiplicity, a mere congeries of parts without a whole, it cannot be persuasive and fully operative.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> See John Henry Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church*, Volume 1, third edition, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1901), xl.

<sup>35</sup> Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church*, xli.

<sup>36</sup> Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church*, xli.

<sup>37</sup> See Friedrich von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and Her Friends*, (London: J. M. Dent & Co./New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1908.), 50-82.

<sup>38</sup> Von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion*, 50.

For von Hügel, the three elements were the institutional, the intellectual, and the mystical. Rather than associating each of these christologically, von Hügel identified these with stages of maturation. The institutional is first encountered as a child. Its danger is its claim, against modification, for absoluteness, and exclusivity. The second element of the triad, the intellectual, is adolescent in character. It is a time of questioning and reasoning and is argumentative and abstractive in quality. The danger of this element, without the tension of the presence of the other two elements is that religion becomes purely a system of thought with a tendency towards rationalism and a clear cold deism. The mystical element von Hügel associates with adulthood. He defines this element as certain interior experiences, certain deep-seated spiritual pleasures and pains, weaknesses and powers such that religion here is felt rather than seen, or reasoned about, loved and lived rather than analyzed. Nonetheless, without the other two elements of the institutional and intellectual, the mystical itself is prone to distortion: incurable tyranny of mood and fancy – and, in the end, fanaticism. For von Hügel these three elements “ever involve tension, of a fruitful or dangerous kind.”<sup>39</sup> He concludes that one of the primary difficulties of achieving such an outcome lies in “[h]ow obvious and irresistible seems always, to the specifically religious temper, the appeal to boundless simplification.”<sup>40</sup>

Both Newman’s and von Hügel’s insights on the necessity of tension in religious experience, and the difficulty of living in it, shines light on the particular problem of living the tension between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political.’ One or the other is

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<sup>39</sup> Von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion*, 53.

<sup>40</sup> Von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion*, 65.

preferred, rather than the tension between them. Yet both writers have indicated the vitality of tension in the religious experience.

When it comes to the tensive relationship between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ that a new model of holiness for our own times involves, the notion of the mandorla may be particularly helpful.<sup>41</sup> The mandorla is the almond shape created by the overlap of two circles and represents the experience of unity between two apparent opposites. Often enough we see it in ancient Christian art. In such the circles themselves are often not evident, only the almond shape, the mandorla itself. In these instances in the middle of the mandorla is the figure of Christ, the mandorla between God and man in such a way that neither is denied nor a third circle created. The principle of the mandorla, then, teaches that the spiritual art is not to eradicate tensions, but to hold them in such a way that we live into the experience of their unity without their dissolution. It teaches that if we do try and live as if only one circle existed, then it is only a matter of time before the rejected circle reaches out in explosive fashion to reassert its presence to us. Then the result is compulsion, addiction and fanaticism. The art is in preserving the paradox not in eradicating it. “Truth,” writes the contemporary author Scott Peck, “is virtually always paradoxical, and the presence of paradox is the test of truth.”<sup>42</sup> Perhaps, this is why the philosopher Pascal could say,

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<sup>41</sup> For this understanding of the notion of the mandorla I am indebted to Robert A. Johnson, *Owning Your Own Shadow*, (San Francisco, California: Harper Collins, 1991), 97-103.

<sup>42</sup> M. Scott-Peck, *To a Different Drum*, (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1987), 238-239. For a further useful discussion on the role of paradox in the spiritual life see Parker J. Palmer, *The Promise of Paradox: A celebration of contradictions in the Christian life*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1980).

I do not admire the extremes of such a virtue as courage unless I see at the same time the extreme of its opposite, as in Epaminondas, who was extremely courageous and extremely humane. For otherwise we do not rise but fall. We do not show greatness by touching one extreme only, but by touching both at once, and filling the space between.<sup>43</sup>

The necessity of living in the tension between what first appears as two apparent opposites, such that a model of holiness which seeks to bring ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ together is underscored methodologically by what might be termed ‘revisionist spirituality.’ Such a spirituality being proposed here is that which is derived from what has been termed revisionist theology.

Revisionist theology is that school of theological methodology largely centred at the University of Chicago through the work of David Tracy and enunciated by him in his book *Blessed Rage for Order* (1988).<sup>44</sup> Tracy explains that there must always be two sources of theology: human experience and the Christian event. These two dimensions must be in a constant conversation. It is their mutual correlations that give shape, form and development to the theological endeavour. Let us understand for our purposes here, human experience to be the way in which we ordinarily experience ourselves replete with our hopes and hurts, our perceptions and our questions. Let us understand the Christian event to mean the full gamut of what constitutes our specifically Christian experience: our texts, our traditions, our rituals and symbols and images, our praxis.

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<sup>43</sup> Blaise Pascal, *The Pensees*, n. 323, translated by J. M. Cohen, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1961), 113.

<sup>44</sup> See David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The new pluralism in theology*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1975, reprinted with a new preface, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

If revisionist theology is the conversation between these two sources, then let us understand revisionist spirituality in similar fashion – as the conversation between the questions of our time and the deepest impulses of our particular tradition. Not in such a way that the deepest movements of our tradition simply provide the answers to the questions of our time but that the presence of the Spirit lies in the correlation, in the meetings, in the mutual touching points.

This revisionist approach respects both the contemporary situation and the tradition, and affirms the need for the presence of both in the spiritual endeavour. To return to Leonardi's evaluation, it takes both the fruit of past paradigms of holiness and the call of the new paradigm, 'the mystical' and 'the political,' and brings them into correlation with one another, in such a way that their resonance becomes apparent. Such revisionist spirituality is thus needed to steer a steady course between the Scylla of ecclesial domination/introversion and the Charybdis of political apocalypticism?

## **D.2. An Analogical Imagination**

The revisionist task proposed here that might keep 'the mystical' and 'the political' in tense relationship requires a particular type of imagination. This is the imagination that Tracy puts forward as the analogical imagination. It is ultimately the imagination that can 'see in one thing, another.' Thus, it is an analogical imagination which can see in 'the mystical' 'the political, and in 'the political' that which is representative of 'the mystical' with neither confusion nor division of either.

Analogy is always understood by Tracy as similarity-in-difference.<sup>45</sup> It is not a relationship of empathy.<sup>46</sup> Nor is it some form of ‘universalism’ which is a reduction of all to the same in the case of the lowest common denominator.<sup>47</sup> It is not simply about discovering ‘similarities.’<sup>48</sup> Tracy is fully aware of how easily claims to analogy or similarity can become subtle but effective evasions of the other and the different. The analogical imagination always grasps similarity-in-difference, and the tension is a vital one. Originating in Aristotle, it is a clear alternative to a univocal language where all is the same and an equivocal language where all is different.<sup>49</sup>

Tracy compares the analogical imagination to the dialectical one.<sup>50</sup> Whereas the dialectical imagination, as found in Marx, Freud or Nietzsche and even Kierkegaard, is primarily one of suspicion and negation exposing the univocal visions of reality as illusory and the equivocal expressions as finally lazy, the analogical imagination is open to some order in reality and indeed a focal meaning as some prime analogate.

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<sup>45</sup> Tracy develops his understanding of the analogical imagination most fully in David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian theology and the culture of pluralism*, (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

<sup>46</sup> See David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, religion, hope*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 20.

<sup>47</sup> See David Tracy, “Christianity in the Wider Context: Demands and Transformation,” in *Worldviews and Warrants: Plurality and authority in theology*, edited by William Schweiker and Per M. Anderson, (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1987), 10.

<sup>48</sup> See David Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other: The inter-religious dialogue*, (Louvain: Eerdmans/Peeters Press, 1990), 42.

<sup>49</sup> See Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity*, 93. Tracy suggests equivocal language asserts differences to the point of no order at all (scepticism) and univocal language asserts sameness to the point of oneness (like pantheism or monism). See David Tracy, “Presidential Address: The Catholic Analogical Imagination,” *Catholic Theological Society of America* 32 (1977), 236. For a magnificent treatment of these two languages refer to William F. Lynch, *Christ and Apollo: The dimensions of the literary imagination*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1960).

<sup>50</sup> See Tracy, “Presidential Address,” 236-237. See also David Tracy, “Analogy and Dialectic: God-Language,” in David Tracy and John Cobb, *Talking about God: Doing theology in the context of modern pluralism*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), 29-38.



This focal meaning, or analogate, acts as a basic clue to the whole. In the analogical imagination hope is not extinguished. And though Tracy accepts the challenge of the dialectical mind, understanding that it shakes any complacency in the analogical imagination, it is this quality of the conversation that chiefly characterises his point of departure from the postmodern labyrinth. And it is the analogical vision, i.e. the possibility of a range of ordered relationships, which yields for Tracy “the final trustworthiness of all reality - that deep faith that in spite of all else the final reality with which we must deal really is love . . . the genius of the vision informing that extraordinarily rich and vibrant religious form of life called Catholic Christianity.”<sup>51</sup>

### **D.3 Evangelical Discernment**

In this revisionist approach to spirituality, the analogical imagination renders a capacity to see ‘the political’ in ‘the mystical’ and ‘the mystical’ in the political’ without confusing either. It also calls for a particular evangelical discernment in the midst of the tension. Subsequently, with such discernment one can look in the place of blindness in order to bring vision; one can seek out the place of deafness to shout out a new message; one can seek out that place of paralysis to offer new movement; just as one is enabled to seek out that place of death to dawn new life. If the Christian disciple wants to find the God of Jesus Christ they must go to that place of darkness awaiting light, they must go to that place of emptiness awaiting fullness; they must go to that place of death awaiting life. The Kingdom of God is known in the way that

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<sup>51</sup> Tracy, “Presidential Address,” 244. In this address, Tracy outlines the development of the analogical imagination in Catholic theology, and particularly situates the Catholic social justice tradition within its framework. See also David Tracy, “The Analogical Imagination in Catholic Theology,” in Tracy and Cobb, *Talking about God*, 17-28. Here, Tracy particularly treats the Thomist battle over analogy. For an interesting scientifically researched validation of Tracy’s claim of the analogical imagination as being inherent in the Catholic Tradition particularly, see Andrew M. Greely, “Theology and Sociology: On validating David Tracy,” *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 59 (1991), 643-652.

people are brought together out of their alienation into a sense of community and belonging. For this is the divine life – understood from the perspective of Trinity, the ultimate experience of communion. Wherever we thus see intimations of communion, no matter how obscure or anonymous, there the Kingdom of God is present. We see the Kingdom of God showing itself whenever the forces that impel people towards alienation are transformed into opportunities that create a new sense of community. These moments may occur in the most unlikely of places. Most often, they may not be religious in character. The disciple of the Risen Christ however, is the one who has been given the eyes and the ears to see and to hear when and how the Kingdom of God shows itself. The disciple is the one who, by virtue of an analogical imagination and evangelical discernment, can perceive in the most unlikely and the most ordinary of places that something extraordinary is occurring. With ears and eyes touched and opened by the Spirit, the disciple is the one vigilant for the Kingdom of God's manifestation. Where inclusion overcomes exclusion, community overcomes marginalization, kindness overcomes distrust, there the Kingdom of God is intimated. To live with this attentiveness and responsiveness is to live both mystically and politically.

Such pertains to the 'sacramental mysticism' illustrated by Benedict XVI in *Deus caritas est* which is not surprising given the analogical character of a sacramental perception of divine revelation. "Union with Christ," he remarks, "is also union with all those to whom he gives himself. I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his

own. Communion draws me out of myself, towards him, and thus also towards unity with all Christians.”<sup>52</sup> A ‘sacramental mysticism’ is, therefore, inherently social.

Faith, worship and *ethos* are interwoven as a single reality which takes shape in our encounter with God’s *agape*. Here the usual contraposition between worship and ethics simply falls apart. “Worship” itself, Eucharistic communion, includes the reality both of being loved and of loving others in turn. A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented.<sup>53</sup>

However, such a sacramental-social mysticism borne by a revisionist approach which might bring ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ together in tensive relationship, without dissolution of either, will also place other specific demands on emergent spiritual forms. Particularly, given the personal urgency of people in their spiritual search, as demonstrated by Taylor, the new forms of spiritual expression will need to engage the questions they encounter in a particular way. In the end such forms will need to present themselves as, what might be termed, ‘sacral’, deconstructed, and in the end, poetic.<sup>54</sup>

Spiritual forms that engage the revisionist approach will, firstly, be ‘sacral.’<sup>55</sup> A sacral form of spiritual quest is imbued with iconic consciousness: it is prepared to see in one thing, another. It is ready to look beneath the surface of things and to

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<sup>52</sup> See Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, Encyclical letter, (25 December 2005), n.14.

<sup>53</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, n. 14.

<sup>54</sup> These characteristics were firstly explored in the context of Christian evangelisation in a keynote paper delivered to the Catholic Education Conference, Melbourne, 2000. See David Ranson, “Evangelising an Unknown Future,” *Conference: Journal of the Catholic Education Conference* 17 (August, 2000), 7-12. They are also explored in a slightly different context in David Ranson, *Across the Great Divide: Bridging spirituality and religion today*, (Strathfield, New South Wales: St. Pauls Publications, 2002).

<sup>55</sup> I am indebted, in part, for this characteristic to the current research work of Frank Fletcher. See Frank Fletcher, “Towards a Contemporary Australian Retrieval of Sacral Imagination and Sacramentality,” *Pacifica* 13 (February 2000), 1-10.

perceive something else occurring. It understands how spirit is present in the world and not apart from it. It understands that spirit works in and through the questions of the human heart and is not incidental to them. It thrills at the prospect that spirit is birthed in the world through the grief and aspirations of people and is eager to midwife that arrival. Sacral forms are earthed. They are embodied. They are not seduced into thinking that spirit gives itself other than through creation. They are loyal to the world that it holds as theatre of the divine. They have learnt to listen, and to perceive in the ordinariness of life something greater. They are able to recognise in that which is finite, the pull of infinity, and in that which is human, what is divine. Therefore, spiritual forms marked by the sacral can truly hear the signals of spiritual irruption in the world and not be condemned to simply re-tracing previous forms.

Secondly, the revisionist approach, and the time in which we find ourselves calls for spiritual forms ready to be deconstructed i.e. ready to be scrutinized for their mixed motivations and agendas. Spirituality, as we have seen throughout this study, is not always what it seems or what it proclaims to be. The hermeneutics of suspicion that characterized the emergence of postmodernity in the twentieth century does reveal that spirituality can mask more basic defence patterns in the personality of its adherents and in its social patterns. Images of God, for example, are not simple; rarely are they pure. Religious aspirations and patterns of religious behaviour, styles of prayer and preferences for particular religious language are curious for what they reveal about personality and political and social agendas just as they might be for what they say about the mystery of 'God'. Institutions do become enmeshed in the politics of power. Religion requires its own hermeneutic of suspicion. A spiritual tradition that is not prepared to be deconstructed is very suspect indeed. Forms of

spiritual expression that are simply a projection of defence patterns or merely an extension of basic optimism or that are entrapped within their own social power structure cannot have the flexibility, receptivity and creativity that the bridge of a revisionist approach demands. There is every need to separate the layers of history, culture and interpretation within spiritual expressions, to distinguish between the literal and metaphorical within them and to appreciate more fully the role of narrative, the genre of parable and the significance of myth so that the central questions animating spiritual expression can once again stand out in their clarity and simplicity. History answers such questions in different ways, in different formulations according to different philosophical frameworks and cultural presuppositions. Questions are the source of energy and passion. They enable the fire to ignite. The retrieval of the questions, and not only earlier formulations of wisdom, is the greatest possibility in the project of deconstruction.

Lastly, ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ will find their integration in emergent forms of spirituality to the extent that spiritual discourse is prepared to be ‘poetic’ rather than didactic. Language can invite or block. It can either suggest or stifle. It can either promise or exclude. When language resonates with the revisionist concern, i.e. with both the political questions of the time and the questions underscoring religion’s mystical impulse, then it bears the power of genuine reconciliation. It is precisely the ‘poetic word’ which can hold such tension. The ‘poetic word’ is the one that appeals to the imagination. The Australian philosopher, Matthew Del Nevo has remarked, the poetic word has the capacity to bring two spheres into an alchemical *metaxy*. As he continues, “the poem is evidence of a paradox, namely that transcendence is immanent and immanence is transcendent – or in plain English, that what is ‘above’

and what is 'here below' (the heavenly and the earthly) interpenetrate one another.”<sup>56</sup>

The poetic word opens up new vistas of how things could be, not simply how things should be. Paul Ricoeur once stated, “any ethic that addresses the will in order to demand a decision must be subject to a poetry that opens up new dimensions for the imagination.”<sup>57</sup> It is a timely word for emergent forms of the spiritual quest. The poetry of religion, which is its true romance, can easily get lost in a prose that may be cognitively cohesive but that is unable to find resonance in the questions and hungers of the time. Religious life needs to discover anew what Amos Wilder called a ‘theopoetic’ – a language that has the capacity to capture the imagination and to offer an adventure of the spirit.<sup>58</sup>

In these ways, the new spiritual forms might bear the possibility of evidencing both ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’. They will thus be presented as disclosive of spiritual experience that has immediacy and a deeply experiential quality to it - for the new forms of spiritual experience must give evidence that they can lead others to an experience of God, not just to knowledge about God. Yet, they will also invite the capacity to effect change in society. Thus, in this sense, by being truly ‘political’, these new forms of the spiritual quest reach their public character. They are not

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<sup>56</sup> Matthew Del Nevo, *The Valley Way of Soul: Melancholy, poetry and soulmaking*, (Strathfield, New South Wales: St. Pauls Publications, 2008), 96. Del Nevo identifies the meaning of *metaxy* from Platonic metaphysics meaning ‘in-between-place.’

<sup>57</sup> Paul Ricoeur quoted by Frederick Herzog in “Liberation and Imagination,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 32 (July, 1978), 228.

<sup>58</sup> Amos Wilder, *Theopoetic: Theology and the religious imagination*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976).

afforded the luxury of drifting into “private reservations of the human spirit” but remain committed to working for the common good and for social transformation.<sup>59</sup>

### **E. Biography: The New Alchemy**

Where are these elements, characteristic of a new form in spirituality that lives between a ‘politics of mysticism’ and a ‘mysticism of politics,’ to be found? In the end the conjunction of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ is not to be found, from the perspective of spirituality, in theoretical construct but in living biography. Biography is the locus par excellence for the alchemy of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ – an alchemy which may well constitute the most creative form in spirituality set to emerge in our own era and as the surest implication of the universal call to holiness of Vatican II.

In any study of spirituality, biography is an essential component. As was indicated in the Introduction to this study, Waaijman indicates that ultimately the various forms of research in the study of spirituality – ‘Form-Descriptive,’ ‘Hermeneutic’ and ‘Systematic’ – find their culmination in what he terms ‘Mystagogic Research.’ This is the attempt is “to clarify the journey of the spiritual way” such that persons are enabled to “relate personally to the way they are going in the divine-human relational

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<sup>59</sup> Note David Tracy’s theological angst in this regard “To refuse to face the complexity of the social reality of the theologian may well prove as damaging as an earlier theological generation’s refusal to face historical consciousness. For the results of that refusal lie all about us in the contemporary theological context: a relaxed if not lazy pluralism contenting itself with sharing private stories while both the authentically public character of every good story and the real needs of the wider society go unremarked; a passionate intensity masked as authentic prophecy that resists necessary pleas for empirical evidence while demanding compliance to a particular ideology; a rush to the right for the false security of yet another restoration – too often a restoration which, like that of the Bourbons, has forgotten nothing and learned nothing; a reigning pathos among those who still demand argument and evidence (in a word, publicness) and whose inability to cut through the swamp of privateness may finally force them to become those who lack all conviction.” See David Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 6.

process.”<sup>60</sup> Indeed, as a project in Christian spirituality, the ultimate aim of this thesis, indeed must be mystagogical. Therefore, it will have to at least suggest how real people oriented themselves within the spiritual form which has been under consideration.<sup>61</sup> The scope of this thesis will not allow for a detailed exploration of such personal journeys. However, taking seriously Waaijman’s attention to Mystagogics, as indicated in the Introduction, it is important to acknowledge that, ultimately, the resolution of the alliance between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ will present primarily in biography. In other words, it is in the lives of actual people, and by their own personal journeys of faith, that ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ find their conjunction and that the most viable forms of the spiritual quest between a ‘politics of mysticism’ and a ‘mysticism of politics’ will be demonstrated. Biography ultimately represents the alchemy between ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political.’ As Waaijman cites Simon:

In the context of their biographical experiences, [mystagogy makes people] attentive to the hidden presence of the incomprehensible God and the working of his Spirit: as transcendent origin and ground, as the horizon and goal of the life history of the individual and the history of humankind. It sets in motion a faith process of learning-through-discovery in which God can let himself become experience [sic] as the salvation of human beings.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, biography is not only the crucible in which ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ find a living conjunction, but it is also the means by which the ‘readers of biography’ – Christian disciples at large – aspire to such integration and, themselves, learn to live between a ‘politics of mysticism’ and a ‘mysticism of politics’. Waaijman, again:

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<sup>60</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 869.

<sup>61</sup> See Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, foundations, methods*, translated by John Vriend, *Studies in Spirituality Supplement* 8, (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, Massachusetts: Peeters, 2002), 596.

<sup>62</sup> W. Simon cited in Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 870.



Mystagogy suspends the boundaries of human existence and transforms it into an expectant openness to the divine mystery (*mysterion*), leads individuals into (*agein*) God's gracious self-communication, and helps them understand their unique calling.<sup>63</sup>

Amongst the various types of mystagogical situations Waaijman identifies is 'mystical accompaniment' – the clarification of the course of a person's life as a spiritual way.<sup>64</sup> This may be thought of as the service of biography, and, in the sense being explored here, the instrument of the spiritual alchemy between 'the mystical' and 'the political.' In this accompaniment, Waaijman relates that,

people attempt to discern the working of God in their own life: arriving at a good choice of the way to be taken; learning to interpret life situations as signs of God's presence; *seeking a mean between extremes in the midst of spiritual communication*; learning to discover the possibilities of growth from a divine perspective. [Italics mine]<sup>65</sup>

In his own evaluation of Heiler's dichotomy between mysticism and prophecy, which as we have seen is a prime duality antecedent to 'the mystical' and 'the political,' Rowan Williams, likewise, indicates the importance of biography to intimate resolution in the midst of apparent oppositions. As he comments,

There must be those who in their very consciousness experience, and so manifest to the rest of us, a fullness of presence or significance . . . The holy *person* represents access in the most concrete and vivid form. The religious community 'demands' (an ambiguous word, since what is in question, in the Old Testament and elsewhere, is clearly not to do simply with the needs *consciously identified* by a community at any particular moment, which may be precisely what are challenged by the 'upholder of holiness') that there be some who experience things at that level of depth and authoritativeness which is fundamentally creative and recreative, and so it generates

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<sup>63</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 870.

<sup>64</sup> See Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 872.

<sup>65</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 872.

traditions of what it means to be a holy person. [Italics in the original]<sup>66</sup>

As Williams goes on to observe it is essential that religious traditions – and indeed by intimation the new forms of spirituality about which Charles Taylor speaks – “nurture an expectation that there will be those who represent the holy, the source of significance for action and relations, in their form of life and of speech, and provide disciplines, words and images for such people to express their ‘holiness’.”<sup>67</sup> In other words, the spirituality of the future, a spirituality that is open to a certain conjunction of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ – an inevitable implication of Vatican II’s universal call to holiness - needs to identify those biographies which demonstrate those characteristics through which such integration might take place. As I have been argued above these are a respect for tension, an analogical imagination and evangelical discernment.

The South American theologian, Leonardo Boff thus proposes that it is the ‘political saint’ who will provide the new model of holiness for the emergent spiritual forms of our time. Like Leonardi, discussed above, Boff acknowledges the shift that has occurred in the paradigms of holiness within the Roman Catholic tradition. Though I would disagree with his interpretation of the Benedictine maxim *ora et labora* which contends that in the past *ora* overwhelmed *labora* creating, in Boff’s words, a certain ‘spiritual monophysitism,’ I concur wholeheartedly with his questions:

How can one combine passion for God, which is characteristic of every truly religious person, with passion for the people and their justice, which is the distinctive trait of all political militants? . . .

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<sup>66</sup> Rowan Williams, “The Prophetic and the Mystical: Heiler revisited,” *New Blackfriars*, 64 (July/August 1983), 337

<sup>67</sup> Williams, “The Prophetic and the Mystical,” 338.

How can we maintain that unity? . . . A vision that is both contemplative and liberating does not emerge spontaneously.<sup>68</sup>

Boff identifies the poles of prayer and practice, but is unapologetic in positing the first as fundamental. It is prayer, for Boff, which,

aids the believer to see the sacramental presence of the Lord in the poor and in every variety of exploited people. Without prayer, rooted in faith, our sight becomes blurred and superficial; it cannot penetrate into that depth of theological mysticism in which it enters in communion with the Lord, who is present among the condemned, humiliated and offended peoples of history.<sup>69</sup>

The ‘political saint’ – the new model for holiness which brings ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ into a new unity, and is lived between a ‘politics of mysticism’ and a ‘mysticism of politics’ with respect for tension, analogical imagination and evangelical discernment – is the ‘contemplativus in liberatione.’<sup>70</sup> Such is marked in seven ways: by prayer materialized in action; by an overflowing of that prayer out of privacy into community; through liturgy which is a celebration of life; by a prayer which acts with critical examination of social practices and patterns; by a political sanctity known by the asceticism of solidarity; by prophetic courage and historical patience; and by a radical paschal attitude – which, as I have indicated above, breathes the full spiritual force of paradox.<sup>71</sup> In short, the ‘political saint’ is the one who embodies the observation of Rowan Williams that,

Asceticism is a purification of seeing . . . The whole of this life is about becoming instrumental to someone else’s path to reconciliation. It may well be that we arrive at Heaven, if we ever do, slightly puzzled about how we got there as no doubt we all shall be, and it is explained to us that we’re there quite simply because at some moment or other, we actually served another’s path to

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<sup>68</sup> Leonardo Boff, “The Need for Political Saints: From a spirituality of liberation to the practice of liberation,” *Cross Currents* 30 (Winter 1980/1981), 374, 375.

<sup>69</sup> Boff, “The Need for Political Saints,” 376.

<sup>70</sup> See Boff, “The Need for Political Saints,” 376.

<sup>71</sup> See Boff, “The Need for Political Saints,” 377-378.

reconciliation, and maybe we barely noticed it. . . Our life is with our neighbour because we are alive in God when and only when, God's reconciling presence is through us, somehow connected with the reality of the neighbour. Our death is with our neighbour, because letting go of all these things which we so love, the moral high ground, the convictions of victory, is a kind of death. But also there's a much deeper and a much nastier death ahead of us if we don't deal with all that. Our life and death are with our neighbour. If we gain the neighbour, we gain God.<sup>72</sup>

The question thus presents, what are the biographies that provide classic symbols evidencing both the paradigmatic shift in the understanding of holiness within the Roman Catholic tradition within the twentieth century as well as those characteristics which bring 'the mystical' and 'the political' into a living conjunction for our own time? What biographies present between the 'politics of mysticism' and the 'mysticism of politics?' In this sense 'classic' is defined as to incorporate events, persons, images, rituals and texts of a tradition which vex, provoke, challenge the subject by their claim to attention.<sup>73</sup> Again, as David Tracy has elucidated in the presentation of that which has the status of 'classic,'

Th[e] force is the claim to attention, a vexing, a provocation exerted on the subject by the classic text. The subject may not know why or how that claim exercises its power . . . But that the claim to attention is present - that something like what we have called a realized experience, ranging from a haunting sense of resonance and import to a shock of recognition, that sheer event-like thatness - is what cannot be denied. My *doxai* are suddenly confronted with a *paradoxon* demanding attention.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Rowan Williams, "Lessons from the Desert Fathers," *Religion Report*, ABC Radio National, (5 November, 2008), <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/religionreport/stories/2008/2410736.htm/tran>., accessed 6 November, 2008.

<sup>73</sup> Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 104, 105.

<sup>74</sup> Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 119.

The classic is thus assumed, by definition, to be that “which always has the power to transform the horizon of the interpreter and thereby disclose new meaning and experiential possibilities.”<sup>75</sup>

There are, of course, many. Most are anonymous: people working within the context of their own profession and by their own faith-filled commitments in diverse and myriad contexts. The ‘political saints’ of our time are legion though it may well be some time yet before their witness effects the Roman model of sanctity which generates processes of formal canonisation. Yet, I am convinced that the tradition of spirituality within the Roman Catholic tradition of the twentieth century will remember one with particular classical status - that of the American Cistercian, Thomas Merton (1915-1968). As Padovano comments,

He became the symbol of a century – of its turmoil and sensitivity, of its conflict and restlessness, of its furtive peace and fugitive wars, of its holocausts and Hiroshomas and Harlems and hopes . . .<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, specifically pertinent to the themes of this study, as Hinson observes,

Merton’s originality lay . . . in the way he fed the whole tradition of contemplation through his own gifted and fertile mind and personality so as to create a profound new synthesis which could speak not only to his monastic confreres but even to the wider circle of humanity.<sup>77</sup>

For this reason, this project opened with the account of Merton’s conversion experience on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 1958 at the corner of Fourth and Walnut in Louisville,

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<sup>75</sup> David Tracy, “The Particularity and Universality of Christian Revelation,” in *Revelation and Experience*, edited by Edward Schillebeeckx and Bas van Israel, *Concilium* 113, (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 111.

<sup>76</sup> Anthony T. Padovano. *The Human Journey: Thomas Merton – symbol of century*, (Garden City, New York; Image Books, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1984), xviii.

<sup>77</sup> Glen Hinson, cited in Kenneth Leech, *The Social God*, (London: Sheldon Press 1981), 41.

Kentucky.<sup>78</sup> I conclude this study with mention of Merton because, I believe, his is the biography that so clearly typifies the conjunction of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the political’ as the tension is brought to personal consciousness in the twentieth century. Not only does his own spiritual journey bring the tension to such stark articulation but it is one that continues to proffer such transformative possibility to the countless spiritual pilgrims who touch his experience through his prolific reflections.

There is no need here in the final paragraphs of this study to recount the celebrated memory of Merton’s entire journey about which the secondary reflection has become voluminous. Yet the memory retains historical significance in the light of this project for the single aspect brought to such eloquent summary on the corner of Fourth and Walnut in Louisville. That Merton himself was conscious of living between ‘the politics of mysticism’ and ‘the mysticism of politics’ can be evinced from his following observation which so closely echoes those observations of this study:

The anguish, the ambiguity, and even, one might say, the existential absurdity of the problem of the Church in the world today is rooted in [an] unadmitted assumption. If one is conservative, then the Kingdom of God on earth is the Church as a sociological entity, an established institution with a divine mandate to guide the destinies of culture, science, politics etc., as well as religion. If one is liberal or radical, then one admits that the progressives and revolutionaries of “the world” have unconsciously hit upon the right answers and are building the Kingdom of God where the Church has failed to do so. Hence, the Christian must throw in his lot with revolution – and thus guarantee that Christianity will survive and rediscover itself in a transformed society.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> See Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), 140-142. See also the definitive biography of Merton by Michael Mott, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984), 311-312.

<sup>79</sup> Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, 41-42.

How does Merton envisage living in between such tendencies directed beyond the ‘circle of sensibility’ of the mystical-political dialogue? He continues his remarks above,

Before we can properly estimate our place in the world, we have to get back to the fundamental Christian respect for the *transiency* of both the world and the institutional structure of the Church.

True *contemptus mundi* is rather a *compassion* for the transient world and a humility which refuses arrogantly to set up the Church as an “eternal” institution in the world. But if we despise the transient world of secularism in terms which suggest an ecclesiastical *world* that is not itself transient, there is no way to avoid disaster and absurdity. [Italics in the original]<sup>80</sup>

This conclusion had come from a deeply personal perspective. Merton had begun his religious quest in the first half of the twentieth century within the paradigm of holiness starkly envisaging the two-tiered systematization of holiness outlined in the Introduction.

In the past, the contemplative life was proposed in a rather rigid formal sort of way. You entered the contemplative life by making a list of things which you were going to drop, so to speak. You took the world and all its possibilities and you just crossed off the joys of human love, you crossed off the joys of art, music, secular literature, enjoyment of beauties of nature, enjoyment of natural recreation, sports, swimming. All these things, you just discarded: and when you had crossed everything off the list then the one great thing was left, the *unum necessarium*, the one thing necessary.<sup>81</sup>

Nonetheless, Merton was deeply conscious of the reality of paradox in his life.

The sign Jesus promised to the generation that did not understand him was the ‘sign of Jonas the prophet’ – that is, the sign of his own resurrection. The life of every monk, of every priest, of every Christian is signed with the sign of Jonas, because we all live by the power of Christ’s resurrection. But I feel that my own life is especially sealed with this great sign, which baptism and monastic profession and priestly ordination have burned into the roots of my

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<sup>80</sup> Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, 42.

<sup>81</sup> Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, (Garden City. New York: Image Books, Doubleday & Co., Inc, 1973), 353.

being, because like Jonas himself I find myself travelling toward my destiny in the belly of a paradox.<sup>82</sup>

In the midst of this personal paradox, he was also deeply sensitive to the tension of the mystical and the prophetic, writing in a passage immediately prior to the one above,

The prophet is a man whose whole life is a living witness to the providential action of God in the world. Every prophet is a sign and a witness of Christ. Every monk, in whom Christ lives, and in whom all prophecies are therefore fulfilled, is a witness and a sign of the Kingdom of God. Even our mistakes are eloquent, more than we know.<sup>83</sup>

His 'second conversion' in 1958, in the middle of the twentieth century, deepens this prophetic consciousness to a new level, and co-joins 'the political' to his once predominant and exclusively mystical aspiration. The experience now presents with classical status, bringing into mystagogical expression the shift in the paradigm of holiness within the Roman Catholic tradition with which this study is concerned. Merton achieves this, too, in that "singular, existential, poetic approach" I advocated above.<sup>84</sup> Henceforth,

The true contemplative is not less interested than others in normal life, not less concerned with what goes on in the world, but *more* interested, more concerned. The fact that he is a contemplative makes them capable of a greater interest and of a deeper concern. . .

This does not mean that the contemplative mind has a deeper practical insight into political or economic affairs . . . [but that he has] the inestimable gift of appreciating at their real worth, values that are permanent, authentically deep, human, truly spiritual, and even divine.

. . . his mission is to be a complete and whole man, with an instinctive and generous need to further the same wholeness in others, and in all mankind. He arrives at this, however, not by

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<sup>82</sup> Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas*, (London: Hollis & Carter, 1953), 9.

<sup>83</sup> Merton, *The Sign of Jonas*, 9.

<sup>84</sup> See Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, vii.



superior gifts and talents, but by the simplicity and poverty which are essential to his state because these alone keep him travelling in the way that is spiritual, divine and beyond understanding. [*Italics in the original*].<sup>85</sup>

In this inclusive mysticism, imbued with the capacity to see the hidden wholeness in all things and persons, Merton shifts from a privatised spiritual quest to one that is not only public in reputation, but, more significantly, public in character in that it is deeply sensitive to ‘the political’ as social engagement whilst avoiding the extreme forms of a ‘politics of mysticism’ and a ‘mysticism of politics.’ Thus, the foundation of genuine Christian social action is proposed by Merton:

We have got ourselves into a position where, because of our misunderstandings of theoretical distinctions between the “natural and the supernatural,” we tend to think that nothing in man’s ordinary life is really supernatural except saying prayers and performing pious acts . . . But Christian social action, on the contrary, conceives man’s work itself as a *spiritual* reality . . .

Christian social action is first of all action that discovers religion in politics, religion in work, religion in social programs for better wages, Social Security, etc., not at all to “win the worker for the Church,” but because God became man, because every man is potentially Christ, because Christ is our brother, and because we have no right to let our brother live in want, or in degradation, or in any form of squalor whether physical or spiritual. In a word, if we really understood the meaning of Christianity in social life we would see it as part of the redemptive work of Christ, liberating man from misery, squalor, sub-human living conditions, economic or political slavery, ignorance, alienation. [*Italics in the original*].<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Thomas Merton, *The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation*, edited by William H. Shannon, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003), 147-148.

<sup>86</sup> Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, 68-69. Merton’s following works give testimony to this: *The Hidden Ground of Love: The letters of Thomas Merton on religious experience and social concerns*, selected and edited by William H. Shannon, (San Diego, California: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993); *Witness to Freedom: The letters of Thomas Merton in times and crisis*, edited by William H. Shannon, (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1994); *Passion for Peace. The social essays of Thomas Merton*, edited by William Shannon, (New York: Crossroad, 1995); *Turning Towards the World: The Journals of Thomas Merton Volume Four 1960-1963*, edited by Victor A. Kramer, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996); *The Other Side of the Mountain: The journals of Thomas Merton. Volume Seven, 1967-1968*, edited by Patrick Hart, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998). For various commentary on this shift in Merton see Edward Rice, *The Man in the Sycamore Tree: The good times and hard life of Thomas Merton*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1970); G. Zahn, “Thomas Merton as Prophet and the Spirituality of Peace,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 20 (1985), 142-135; Daniel Berrigan. “Thomas Merton on Peace

Ultimately, however, it is only the one who has entered into the mystical solitude of the self that is most equipped to engage in this enterprise. "Solitude," he wrote, "has its own special work: a deepening of awareness that the world needs. A struggle against alienation. True solitude is deeply aware of the world's needs. It does not hold the world at arm's length."<sup>87</sup> Thus, in his own solitude, Merton brings 'the mystical' and 'the political' into a form of unity. "If we want to bring together what is divided, we can not do so by imposing one division upon the other or absorbing one division into the other. But if we do this, the union is not Christian. It is political [as in the second sense of the term used in this study]. We must contain all divided worlds in ourselves and transcend them in Christ."<sup>88</sup> From this integration in Christ,

The man who has attained final integration is no longer limited by the culture in which he has grown up. "He has embraced *all of life* . . . He has experienced qualities of every type of life": ordinary human existence, intellectual life, artistic creation, human love, religious life. He passes beyond all these limiting forms, while retaining all that is best and most universal in them, "finally giving birth to a fully comprehensive self." He accepts not only his own community, his own society, his own friends, his own culture, but all mankind. He does not remain bound to one limited set of values in such a way that he opposes them aggressively or defensively to others. He is fully "Catholic" in the best sense of the word. He has a unified vision and experience of the one truth shining out in all its various manifestations, some clearer than others, some more definite and more certain than others. He does not set these partial views up in opposition to each other, but unifies them in a dialectic or an insight of complementarity. With this view of life he is able to bring perspective, liberty and spontaneity into the lives of others. The finally integrated man is a peacemaker, and that is why there is such

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and Nuclear War," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 17 (1982), 366-372; David W. Givney, *The Social Thought of Thomas Merton: The way of nonviolence and peace for the future*, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983); Mary Tardiff, *At Home in the World: The letters of Thomas Merton and Rosemary Radford Ruether*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1995).

<sup>87</sup> Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, 10.

<sup>88</sup> Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, 12.

a desperate need for our leaders to become such men of insight.  
[Italics in the original]<sup>89</sup>

In the mystagogic memory of this biography, may such ‘perspective, liberty and spontaneity’ be the mark of the emergent spirituality of our own era lived as it is between the ‘politics of mysticism’ and the ‘mysticism of politics.’ Thus may we realise in our own time and in our own place the very heart of the Gospel.

*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all  
your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment.  
The second resembles it: you must love your neighbour as yourself.  
On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also.  
Matthew 22: 37-40.*

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<sup>89</sup> Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, 225-226.

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