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THE RICHES OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY LIFE

Community life is one of the most amazing aspects of religious life. People choose it because they have a vocation to live together. Apart from a shared vocation there is virtually no basis for this way of life, for members usually have different personalities, differ in age, come from diverse social backgrounds, are not emotionally attuned to each other, and are not bound together by blood ties or survival needs. Viewed dispassionately, this lifestyle is even more surprising. On top of everything, in practice the common vocation on which this way of life is based is rarely experienced in the same way. That is as well, for every person's spiritual life follows its own course. Some may see the community as a home where they seek and expect to find security, whereas some experience their fellows as constantly confronting them with their otherness. One person may regard the community as a home base for his or her work, whereas another may expect the same community to provide a religious environment. Most religious communities are so complex that diverse expectations can be projected onto them.

Because the community is patient and cannot speak for itself, formal and informal authoritative institutions are bound to speak on its behalf, stating what its aim is, where its limits lie, and what are the do's and don'ts. Experience teaches us, however, that what we hear is often the voice of a ventriloquist. Just as seepage oozes through the foundations of dikes, so personal motivations and ambitions continually exceed the limits of the communal space. But the community itself is patient and holds its peace. Invariably its spokespeople have taken it upon *themselves* to speak, even when they happen to be legitimate mouthpieces. Always the community is bigger and richer than the potential asserted in chapters and in dialogue. It is fascinating to transpose oneself mentally to the community as subject: the silent repository of a common will and individual expectations.

The intriguing thing about a religious community is that it has a certain permanence over time. I am speaking about communities of a given size and vitality, and I am assuming that they have not decided to disband. Such communities are supported by an atmosphere that is difficult to pin down, yet outsiders sense it immediately. That atmosphere actually does not come from anyone. The members breathe it, feel at home in it like fish in water. Those who do not

find it agreeable will in due course leave of their own accord. A community's atmosphere may be characterised by peace or bustle, by open-mindedness or narrow-mindedness, by rationality or repressed tensions, by purposefulness or unconstrained living. This summary is by no means exhaustive. It merely seeks to convey that a community's atmosphere is a mixture of all these things. Sometimes the atmosphere is captured in the name the community gives itself: brotherhood, sisterhood, community, order, congregation, society, institute, college, foculare. To some extent these names indicate in how far those in the community put the accent on a primary existential context (brotherhood, sisterhood) or highlight organisational goals (institute).

In this article I want to look at two polarities, which to my mind are fundamental and determine the character of a religious community. The one polarity is introversion/extroversion. Some communities are inward looking, others are directed to the outside world. The other polarity is person/community. Some communities are organised around the personal spiritual journeys of their individual members, whereas others constitute a collective to which members conform as best they can. Together the two polarities offer scope for any number of interesting variants.

Our description draws on examples from the history of Christian religious life, from the desert monks to secular institutions. The main focus is on the spirituality of these forms of community life. This factor is decisive in the experience of religious community life. From a spiritual angle the following questions are pertinent: What kind of spirituality is expressed in this way of life? What spiritual way does the community offer its members? What forms of guidance act between this particular person and the spirituality of the community? Is the spiritual road stipulated in minute detail, or does the community represent an environment in which the individual's road is a voyage of discovery? Is the community predominantly intent on adaptation or does it encourage exploration of new aspects? Is the relationship to God regarded as an unpredictable personal adventure or are members expected to profoundly internalise the proffered religious role? Obviously one cannot deal with all these questions in just a few pages. But they do indicate the slant of our description.

1. Eremitic Communities

An eremitic community is actually a contradiction in terms, for eremites are solitary and community indicates collectiveness. Yet this remarkable phenomenon is the oldest form of religious community life in Christendom. In the course of the 3rd century growing numbers of Christians moved into the desert (Egypt,

Palestine, Syria). Their motives varied:[1] (1) The first Christian communities were part of a culture that set great store by asceticism. The philosophical schools in particular saw asceticism (austerity, control over passions) as a necessary condition for contemplation; (2) They were looking for an alternative to martyrdom which, in a changing political climate, befell fewer and fewer Christians; (3) The expansion of Christianity brought a levelling process. Life in the wilderness offered a challenging alternative; (4) Lay spirituality in the first two centuries presented models that called for further development: itinerant evangelists, who abandoned hearth and home; celibates for the sake of God's kingdom; martyrs who gave their lives for Christ.

What was the eremitic lifestyle like? Where was it centre of gravity? The desert monks retired from society, including that of the church (*anachorese*). They dissociated themselves from both family life and the public life of the church. They opted for a solitary existence (*anchorite*) and lived as hermits (*monachos*).[2] In their seclusion they emulated Israel, which had to sojourn in the wilderness for a whole generation, the place of its first love (Jer 2:2-3; Hos 9:10), the place where the prophet Elijah heard the silencing voice of Be-er (1 Ki 19:12). They also emulated Jesus' forty days in the wilderness, where He went to be tempted by Satan (Mat 4:1). Following Him, the monks, too, confronted Satan head-on.

But the main thing was that in their solitude the monks exposed themselves to God's presence. In the silence of their cells they strove to leave behind them everything that interfered with God's impact. Their main exercise was sitting: 'Interior peace [*hèsuchia*] means to remain sitting in one's cell with fear and knowledge of God'.[3] Confinement to their cells was the supreme exercise.[4] The point was that the cell worked on the soul, purifying it so that it opened up fully to God. All exercises in the cell (Scripture reading, manual work, prayer, fasting, abstinence, reciting psalms) were aimed at this purity of heart, this waiting on God's self-communication in contemplation.

Eremitic communities were devoted entirely to solitude: the state in which monks experienced transformation in God. A number of lines linked this orientation with the community. (1) The way of solitude implied guidance by an *abba*. Many sayings of the fathers indicate how essential this guidance was to prevent monks from getting caught up in themselves or foundering in exaggerations.

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1 See K. Frank (Ed.), *Askese und Mönchtum in der alten Kirche*, Darmstadt 1975.

2 P. Brown, 'The notion of virginity in the early church', in: B. McGinn & J. Meyendorff (Eds.), *Christian spirituality: Origins to the twelfth century*, London 1986, 427-443 (World Spirituality 16).

3 Rufus 1, in: *The sayings of the desert fathers* (trans. B. Ward), London-Kalamazoo 1984², 210.

4 John Cassian, *Conferences* 7,5. We follow the text edition of B. Ramsey, *John Cassian: The Conferences*, New York-Mahwah 1997 (The Works of the Fathers in Translation 57).

Innumerable sayings were handed down, all giving directions for the spiritual way: sayings about prayer, silence, discernment and obedience, humility and patience, always aimed at the ultimate goal of the spiritual way – contemplation. (2) The monks congregated regularly to share and test their experiences. Through these discussions they learned to discern the spirits. Which way led to death and which to life? How can we recognise God in this life? What are the limits of our lifestyle? What should we do and refrain from doing in order to be increasingly moved by God? They also met (usually once a week) to celebrate the eucharist. That was also when they took their provisions for the week (loaves and water) back to their cells. (3) As a rule the monks had a collective purchasing and sales policy. The artifacts they produced (mostly baskets and carpets) were sold at the market. In exchange for these they bought food: wheat, oil, vegetables, fruit, sometimes dairy products.

The eremitic cells (huts and caves) formed a kind of 'street' (*laura*), in which they lived under the leadership of an *abba*. Sometimes there was a wall demarcating the communal living area. Pachomius (ca 290-346), himself a full-fledged hermit for many years, listed living in a cell as the first rule for community life devoted to seclusion. In this regimen everything centred on personal growth to perfection in a community, which introduced the monk into the hiddenness of solitude.[5]

The eremitic community was a way of life which optimally expressed two extremes of the introversion/extroversion and person/community polarities – introversion and person. It was an extremely inward looking type of community: even within the community the monks sought the introversion of their cells. And it centred on the person of the monk in his search for God. In addition to the early eremitic communities we find this type of community life among the Camaldulians and the Carthusians. The Carmelites, too, started off as an eremitic community. Their main occupation was sitting in their cells, where they pored over the Scriptures day and night, bathing and keeping their vigil, reciting psalms, eating and silently performing tasks. As eremites they were joined together under the authority of a prior, in community of property, regularly meeting for mass and chapters.[6]

2. Coenobitic Communities

According to Basil (ca 330-379), one generation after Pachomius, the eremitic lifestyle was contrary to human nature and conflicted with Christian love. People are social beings and need one another.

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5 Cf. John Cassian, *Conferences* 18,4.

6 K. Waaijman, *The mystical space of Carmel: A commentary on the Carmelite rule* (trans. J. Vriend), Leuven 1999 (first publ. 1995).

> Who does not know that man is a civilized and gregarious animal, neither savage nor a lover of solitude! Nothing, indeed, is so compatible with our nature as living in society and in dependence upon one another and as loving our own kind. Now, the Lord Himself gave to us the seeds of these qualities in anticipation of His requiring in due time their fruits, for He says: 'A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another'.[7]

In the person/community polarity Basil basically settled for community as his premise, in contrast to the eremites, whom he put on a par with savages. He gave two motives for his point of view: human nature and the commandment of love. Seclusion is aimed exclusively at personal need satisfaction. Hermits bury their talents and do not take their place in society.[8] He concluded logically: 'Hence one would agree that living separately [in an eremitic community] offers no advantage but rather the reverse. This applies even more to total seclusion [as a hermit outside a community]'.[9] The communitarian lifestyle liked to model itself on the communitarian ideal in the book of Acts. Accordingly Basil wrote:

> So it [this lifestyle] maintains also the practice characteristic of the saints, of whom it is recorded in the Acts: 'And all they that believed were together and had all things common', and again: 'And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but all things were common unto them'.[10]

To Basil the community, founded in human nature and in accordance with the commandment of love, was the way that led to union with God. The practice of fellowship is an excellent path of progress, continual discipline, and a practicising of the Lord's commandments, when brethren dwell together in one community.[11] The presence of others – and this applied especially to the *abba* – was the most appropriate way to break down self-involvement and bend the will outwards. Amma Syncletica already said: 'As long as we are in the monastery, obedience is preferable to ascetism. The one teaches pride, the other humility'.[12] Syncletica touched a raw nerve. Whereas seclusion provided an opportunity for intensive training, asceticism took place in the closed circuit of a personal strategy. In a community, by contrast, monastics were confronted with *others* from the

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7 Basil, 'The long rules', in: *Saint Basil: Ascetical works* (trans. Sr M. Monica Wagner), New York 1950, 239-240.

8 Ibid., 250.

9 H. Urs von Balthasar, *Die grossen Ordensregeln*, Einsiedeln 1948, 50: 'Wenn nun eingestandermassen in der Absonderung der Wohungen nichts Gutes, sondern gerade das Gegenteil gefunden wird, so ist die Trennung voneinander durchaus schädlich'.

10 Basil, 'The long rules', 252.

11 Ibidem.

12 Syncletica 16, in: *The sayings of the desert fathers*, 234.

outset, people who thwarted their schemes and whittled down their self-will. It also put an end to economic independence. Hence Basil logically associated coenobitic life with community of property: monastics put their energies at the disposal of the community; they did not work for themselves or their own progress but for love of their brethren and to assuage each other's needs; the community was the subject of the economy.[13]

Cassian aptly summarises the basic structure of a coenobitic community when he says that it has two key elements: the will of the *other* (the superior, the brethren) influences the will of the monk, lifting it out of its egotism, and they all look after each other's sustenance without self-interest, thus allowing evangelical unconcern to flower. 'For [they] remain in such humble subjection that they are stripped of their power over the things which they procure by their own effort, just as they are of that over themselves, and they constantly renew the fervor of their first renunciation by daily depriving themselves of the fruit of their toil'.[14]

Augustine (354-430) makes the same point. He, too, proceeds from the ideal of Acts: 'The chief motivation for your sharing life together is to live harmoniously in the house and to have one heart and one soul seeking God'.[15] The community as a way to God – that was the main thing; through mutual fellowship to share in God's loving fellowship: 'In God we are growing from multitude into unity. The fire of love may bring us together, so that with one heart we may follow the One'.[16] The result of this love – indeed, its direct expression – was community of property, which also initiated them into it: that was the supreme exercise. That is why community of property appears immediately after the summons from Acts to be of one heart and soul, because in Augustine's view community of property was the first expression and realisation of love for one's neighbour.[17]

In coenobitic communities three factors differentiate the introverted nature of monastic life more precisely, apart from external features like locks, veils, bars and the like. (1) *Study*. From the outset communities assigned scholarship high priority. That is why Ireland was known as the island of scholars.[18] In the 6th century

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[13] Basil, 'The long rules', 314-318.

[14] John Cassian, *Conferences* 18,7; also see 19,8.

[15] Augustine, *Praeceptum* 1,2, in: G. Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and his monastic rule*, Oxford 1987, 81.

[16] Augustine, Sermo 284,4 (*Patres Latini* 38, 1290): 'ut simus in illo unum ex multitudine. Conflet nos igne charitatis, ut uno corde sequamur unum'.

[17] T. van Bavel, *Augustinus van Hippo: Regel voor de gemeenschap* (3rd ed.), Kampen-Averbode 1991, 42.

[18] K. Frank, *Geschichte des christlichen Mönchtums*, Darmstadt 1993, 45.

Cassiodorus established a monastery that set out to be a centre of learning. His *Institutiones* contains a full programme of intellectual training. In England the Benedictines concentrated on scholarship. The zenith of this endeavour was the reform of Maurus, claiming that an ignorant Benedictine is a contradiction in terms.[19] This reform bred an elite of scholars. (2) *Liturgy*. Liturgy played a major role in all introverted monasteries. It sanctified time, but above all it formed the hub of the community. This applies particularly to the reform of Cluny. Peter Damian exclaimed in amazement that even on the longest days of the year hardly half an hour was left![20] The reform of Solesmes reverted to this practice: the monks dispensed with all external activity and concentrated wholly on liturgy. Here a new kind of Benedictine was born. The dominant liturgical order affected the entire form of monastic life, gave it aristocratic features and led to a strictly stylised attitude to life.[21] (3) *Spiritual exercises*. The internal cohesion of religious communities depended greatly on a uniform pattern of spiritual practices: prayers other than the liturgy; choice of types of work; periods of fasting and abstinence; clothing; forms of recreation; et cetera. They also included devotional practices, which gave the community a distinctive affective aura.

By way of summary we can say that two extremes of the introversion/extroversion and person/community polarities converge in coenobitic communities. The first is the extreme of introversion, also found in eremitic communities. In this respect they concur: both are introverted. But on the person/community axis they part ways: eremitic communities were basically focused on a personal search for God in seclusion, whereas coenobitic communities were primarily based on fellowship, which was the way to God for their members. Of course, there were all sorts of transitions between the two extremes. That, in fact, is the most interesting feature of the variegated scene of religious community life. For instance, the Rule of St Benedict is known for seeking to balance the two extremes. The first few chapters are strongly oriented to the eremitic lifestyle, relying mainly on the *Regula Magistri*, the longest and most detailed rule in Benedict's time (ca 480-547). Later chapters, relying more heavily on Basil and Augustine, emphasise coenobitic aspects.[22] All exercises converge in love: love of God and between brethren. This is explicitly summarised in the conclusion to the Rule.[23]

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[19] Ibid., 143.

[20] Peter Damian, *Epistola* 6,5; quoted in Frank, *Geschichte des christlichen Mönchtums*, 61-62.

[21] L. Soltner, *Solesmes et Dom Guéranger 1805-1875*, Solesmes 1984.

[22] T. Kardong, *The Benedictines*, Wilmington (Delaware) 1988.

[23] See the Rule of Benedict 72. Also see the critical edition of *La Règle de Saint Benoît* (ed. A. de Vogüé & J. Neufville), Paris 1971-1972.

3. Apostolic Communities

So far we have dealt mainly with introverted religious communities, but actually Augustine does not belong among these. For his conception was one of a community of priests, thus giving it a pastoral dimension.[24] Such a lifestyle had been designed before Augustine's time by bishop Eusebius of Vercelli, although one finds it happening on a far larger scale in the Middle Ages. During that period church leadership tried wherever possible to have the clergy adopt a monastic lifestyle (*canonice vivere*).

An original form of apostolic life was devised by the mendicant orders (Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, Carmelites). They saw their impoverished lifestyle, their brotherly fellowship and their mendicant wanderings as a living representation of Jesus, who roamed in the company of his disciples with no possessions, preaching throughout Palestine (*vita apostolica*). In this mendicant lifestyle brotherhood forms part of the essence of proclamation. The community life itself is apostolic.

A new wave of apostolic communities arose at the time of the restoration, especially in France. Via popular missions many priestly congregations devoted themselves to rebuilding the church.

In addition to pastoral aims, missionary tasks also drew the religious community into the outside world. Even in the early Middle Ages Benedictine abbeys played a major role in spreading the Christian religion in Europe. In Carolingian politics they served as nodes of politico-religious expansion. They were centres of culture, liturgy, science and spirituality. The zenith of their glory coincided with the decline of their influence. The mendicants took over their role. In the emerging urban culture they evolved a democratically structured form of community. Members were mobile. Several houses constituted a province which, along with other provinces, formed part of an order. They were actively involved in the burgeoning urban culture.

A new missionary movement started with the dawn of modernity, when the New World was discovered. In the wake of colonisation the missionary communities christianised the newly discovered parts of the world outside Europe. Europe itself also required new forms of community life, so as to respond to the challenges of modern culture (physical sciences and technology, industrialisation and Enlightenment, ecclesiastic schisms and secularisation). To counteract these cultural challenges there was a need for super-personal organisations with strong central authority, to which members pledged obedience. The Jesuits set an example

[24] See A. Zumkeller, *Das Mönchtum des heiligen Augustinus*, Würzburg 1950, 60-61, 170.

in embodying this principle of religious communities as missionary organisations. The availability of members was the supreme criterion. Central leadership prevailed over horizontal and local links.

In addition to pastoral and missionary extroversion there was a third line: social input. From the outset religious communities – especially those of female religious – devoted themselves to charitable work. They concerned themselves with the lot of prisoners, the sick, widows and orphans.[25] Basil instructed his urban convents to assist with child raising, education and nursing. Abbeys were havens of hospitality. Since earliest times charity (education, nursing, emancipation of slaves, harbouring aliens and refugees) played a role in religious community life. But it was particularly in modern times, climaxing in the 19th century, that hundreds of congregations were established, mostly centring on education and nursing.

In the context of modernity extroverted community life evolved in its purest form – that of the Vincentians. To sample the spirituality of this type of community we probe, by way of example, the General Rules of the Sisters of Charity, written by Vincent de Paul.[26] What interests us is the model,[27] which Vincent describes after defining the aim of the Vincentian community and before dwelling on the basic attitude of the sister of charity, the vows, mutual relations and organisation of time. In this model Vincent clearly indicates the architectural principle of this type of community: they were not members of a monastic order, because that state was not suited to the activities of their vocation. What was the hallmark of earlier monastic orders? The seclusion typical of their convent. Such a lifestyle did not accord with a Vincentian vocation: they would devote themselves to the sick and the poor in *their* situation. Logically Vincent argues that Vincentian communities are exposed to the outside world. He proceeds to give a graphic description of the 'convent' of a Vincentian as it evolves from the world of the sick: she has no convent other than the homes of the sick, no cell other than a rented room, no chapel other than the parish church, no quadrangle other than the city streets or hospital wards. The architecture of the introverted convent – its characteristic seclusion – is turned inside out. The centre lies outside the community, the convent is composed of the homes of the sick: the poor with their infectious diseases, the dying over whom the sisters watch.[28] Their cells are rented rooms, the abode of the poor who have no

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[25] See H. Chadwick, *Die Kirche in der antiken Welt*, Berlin-New York 1972, 202-205.

[26] In: M. de Pistoye, *La Soeur de Charité*, Paris 1862, 107-327, interspersed with comments by Vincent himself, taken from conferences that he devoted to these Rules.

[27] *Règles communes*, chap. 1, art. 2.

[28] Saint Vincent de Paul, *Correspondance, entretiens, documents* (Ed. P. Coste) Paris 1920-1925, II, 549; III, 54.

homes. Their chapel is the parish church, where those who consort with the sick and the poor worship. Their quadrangle is the city streets, along which the poor move and live, along which Vincentians go on their way to tend the sick.[29]

Relations with the outside world, too, were regulated by the new centre of gravity outside the convent walls: no lock other than obedience, no bars other than fear of God, no veil other than holy modesty. Instead of secluding herself behind bolted doors a Vincentian has to obey the sick and the poor: 'She should go only where her work demands and waste no time on idle visits. Is that not what you had in mind, my daughter, when you said that religious have their convents, but that the Sisters of Charity have only obedience?'[30] Instead of bars Vincentians must cultivate a respectful attitude: 'Sisters, be meek and gentle in your dealings with the poor. You know that they are our master and that we should love them tenderly and respect them'.[31] Instead of a veil they should cultivate a modest demeanour: 'Observe this sacred practice of modesty, always mindful that you in the congregation are not sent out to indulge your inclinations or gratify your bodies'.[32]

Vincent de Paul designed a religious community life that was wholly intent on the outside world, on the alterity. His concern was with the transforming power of love. Love makes it possible that we cannot see anybody suffering without suffering with them. Love opens one person's heart to another and makes her sense what the other is experiencing.[33] And this love is God. According to Vincent, in serving the poor with kindness, gentleness and respect, one makes God's presence palpable: 'Doing what God has done is to be God yourself'.[34]

By way of summary we could say that two extremes of the introversion/extroversion and person/community polarities converge in extroverted communities. The first is the community pole: in extroverted religious communities the organisational level and the virtue of obedience consistently prevail. That is logical, since these communities seek to function effectively for the sake of a goal outside the community. And that is the second pole: extroversion. The community

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[29] Ibid., IX, 82 and 90; X, 662.

[30] Ibid., IX, 513: 'Elle ne va simplement que là où le travail l'exige et ne perd point de temps en visites inutiles. N'est-ce pas, ma fille, c'est bien ce que vous pensez quand vous dites que les religieuses ont des cloîtres, mais que les Filles de la Charité n'ont que l'obéissance?'

[31] Quoted in *De spiritualiteit van Vincent de Paul* 1 (ed. Dochters der Liefde) Brussels 1993[3], 52: 'Zusters, wees minzaam en zacht in je omgang met de armen. Je weet dat ze onze meesters zijn en dat we van hen moeten houden met tederheid en hen moeten eerbiedigen'.

[32] Saint Vincent de Paul, *Correspondance, entretiens, documents*, X, 60: '…conservez cette sainte pratique de la modestie, pensant souvent que vous ne vous êtes mises dans une Compagnie pour vivre selon vos inclinations, ni pour satisfaire le corps'.

[33] Ibid., XII, 271.

[34] Ibid., X, 134: '[C]'est faire […] ce qu'il fait, en ainsi cést être Dieu même'.

(in its purest form) is structured from the perspective of education, nursing, poverty relief, et cetera. The centre of gravity of the religious architecture lies outside the community.

4. Communities of Solidarity

The modern age has seen the gradual emergence of a form of religious life that shows profound solidarity with Western culture. Naturally pastoral, apostolic and missionary motives play an important role, but underlying these is intense love for the weal and woe of a culture as the scene of God's presence. I cite the words of Michel de Certeau, who wrote in one of the first issues of *Concilium*: 'The problem is on each occasion defined by a cultural dialectic – the problem that the "spiritual" man will see as that of his union with God'.[35] In technical terms De Certeau refers to the basic fact that each age finds itself in a new cultural situation, in which the great spiritual dicta of tradition have become meaningless, while that same culture does not yet speak the language of God's hidden presence. This problem (the old language no longer speaks, the new situation as yet says nothing) is precisely where the spiritual person looks for God. In a sense this person has reached the empty grave: the old words have died, the new are swathed in silence. Here spirituality is essentially culture-bound: 'Spiritual experience replies to the questions of the moment, and always replies in the terms of those questions, for these are what the men of a particular society talk about and live by – Christians as much as any others'.[36] The questions of the age present the language in which religious people search for an answer. They are the questions that generation lives with. In these questions religious people recognise themselves fully. But in asking themselves from the bottom of their hearts how one can live by the Absolute in conditions actually laid down by a given cultural situation,[37] they alienate themselves from their religious answers (traditions, language, symbols, rituals) – in short, from their religious community. They are uprooted as they become embroiled with the heart of culture, where they are looking for their God – a lonely adventure.

It is not surprising that this form of loneliness was first clearly articulated by a Jesuit, which Michel de Certeau was. After all, part of the charisma of the Jesuits is a profound solidarity with cultural life. Their spiritual training and education

[35] M. de Certeau, 'Culture and spiritual experience', in: *Concilium* 2 (1966) no. 9, 3-16, citation on p. 6.
[36] Ibidem.
[37] Ibidem.

are aimed at enabling them to venture as independent personalities into the existential depths of a culture, there – having lost their own cultural and religious identity – to look for the spiritual dynamics of that culture. Thus it is not surprising that the first Jesuit missionaries to go to China identified fully with Chinese culture. In our own age we have seen Jesuits like Teilhard Chardin, Daniel Berrigan and Gustavo Gutiérrez taking on extreme cultural situations, where the inner conflict of those cultures raged most fiercely: the world of the natural sciences, the Vietnamese war, the poverty of the Third World. Spiritually they were well qualified for their lonely quest: highly educated, versed in the discernment of spirits and motivated by the community. For the sake of personal availability these communities of 'individualists' have burst into choral prayer.

What is just one aspect of Jesuit charisma is the architectural principle of secular institutes, which have burgeoned since World War II and have had their basic structures affirmed by Vatican II.[38] Typically the members of these institutes lead everyday lives as ordinary people. They live in the same houses, dress as others do, practise some occupation and share all the customs of their environment. They live among the people as one of them, and carry full responsibility for the orientation and organisation of their personal and professional lives.[39] For the sake of solidarity with the social environment they also give up their organised community life under one roof. Such a home would alienate them from the environment they have opted for. Despite the outward isolation that such radical solidarity entails, they constitute close brother- and sisterhoods: isolated by their vocation, members of secular institutes find a fellowship and a freedom that is the source of their strength.[40] Three spiritual values are expressed by these secular eremites.

Firstly, their lives embody the hiddenness of the mystery of Christ. To the members of secular institutions Christ is the hidden Christ, the traveller to Emmaus, the Christ who appears without immediately announcing Himself to Mary Magdalene, on the shore of the lake.[41]

Secondly, this way of life is an exercise in the extremely difficult act of *presence*. Having left all external attributes and typical activities behind, all that remains is simply being there, as God simply is, without declaring themselves through qualities, specific activities, distinctive events or special times and places. This spirituality of presence demands a great deal from the personality. The apostleship of presence presupposes an individual act, special powers of discernment

[38] J. Beyer, 'Instituts séculiers', in: M. Viller, F. Cavallera, & J. De Guibert (Eds.), *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique*. Vol 7, Paris 1971, 1806-1813.

[39] Ibid., 1807.

[40] Ibid., 1811.

[41] Ibid., 1807.

adapted to the life world and behaviour, and rejection of everything that separates the person from the natural, familial, social and professional environment.[42]

Thirdly, this lifestyle permits great openness and lack of constraint. The loneliness of a hidden life that merely asks to be present entails giving up the joys of a home and a certain spiritual loneliness, which, however, offers an opportunity for greater openness towards others, a more universal love and a freer endeavour to be of service to other people.[43]

Two extremes of the introversion/extroversion and person/community polarities converge in these secular institutions. The first is extroversion: members of these institutions live without the support of an external group (no common home, no distinctive dress, no communal liturgy, etc.), secretly seeking God in real-life situations, in the heart of their culture. This self-imposed isolation links them to the other pole: the person. Members of secular institutions are obliged to adopt a highly person-oriented lifestyle, of which personality development and discernment of spirits are vital components. This lifestyle resembles the eremitic model. The extremes meet, not in the surface structure (for eremites retreat from culture, whereas secular religious consciously identify with it), but at an essential level: fundamental solitude in the search for God. This inner coherence between the two extremes are paradigmatically expressed in the life of Simeon the Fool. After spending some time in a coenobitic monastery and living as an eremite in the desert for 29 years, he went to the city of Emesa, where he lived a secret life as 'a fool for Christ'.[44] 'Only after he had fought the good fight properly as behoved him [as an eremite], only after he had seen that he was armoured in spiritual power, […] only then, heeding God's call, he swooped on the world from the desert as if for a duel with the devil'.[45] To Simeon the city of Emesa was the same as the desert: a place to search for God and fight the powers of evil.

5. Mystagogical Reflections

The purpose of our exploration of the principal models of religious community was not simply to provide information. Insight into models of religious community

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[42] Ibid., 1809.

[43] Ibid., 1811.

[44] His life story is told by Leontius of Neapolis, *Leven van Symeon de Dwaas*, Bonheiden 1977. The text of this spiritual biography was published by L. Rydèn, *Das Leben des heiligen Narren Symeon von Leontius von Neapolis*, Uppsala 1963.

[45] *Leven van Symeon de Dwaas*, 22-23: 'Pas nadat hij op de juiste wijze naar behoren de goede strijd had gestreden, pas nadat hij gezien had dat hij gepantserd was met de kracht van de geest […] tóen is hij pas zelf, gehoor gevend aan de oproep van God, uit de woestijn op de wereld afgesprongen als voor een tweegevecht tegen de duivel' (Rydèn, 123,10-123,25).

life can trigger a process of greater awareness. What do we actually mean when we speak of 'community'? What kind of community do we have in mind? What do we expect from it? And so forth. In addition insight into the pluriformity of community life sometimes captures a bit of our personal history. A case in point is Simeon the Fool: he started off as a coenobite, then became an eremite in the desert and ended up as a secret, urban eremite. It also sheds light on our collective history: the Carmelites started out as full-fledged eremites, then joined together in an introverted coenobitic community; in a subsequent phase, having been driven from Israel and returned to Europe, they joined the mendicant brothers, thus becoming an extroverted community; finally, in modern times, they occasionally emerge as communities of solidarity. Nowadays we see this collective history reflected in the enormous variety of Carmelite lifestyles, which in its turn poses a challenge for spirituality, for if the surface fails to provide an identity, it will have to emerge from the depths.

Noting the various models of religious community life may well offer not just information, insight and awareness, but also comfort. For many religious have ended up in forms of community that are not of their choice. Thus they may have opted for an extroverted life focused on societal needs, but find themselves as members of a rapidly aging community perforce living an introverted life with brothers and sisters, which they may find profitable for religious life in their apostolic work but not in communitarian life. Or they may have started out as members of a close and vital community with a common task in the outside world (a school or hospital), and now they remain behind alone because everyone else has grown old and had to retire. So they end up perforce living the secret life of urban eremites, supported from afar by purely spiritual community ties, not a lifestyle they had initially chosen. Insight into the riches of religious community life is broader than the actual form of community one may have chosen originally, which one might have thought was the sole form of community. Outside developments may introduce one to aspects of community life that one has never surmised. Such changes create a possibility that unsuspected powers in our spirituality will be called into play.

(transl. Marcelle Manley)

Summary

In this article, the principal models of religious community life are explored: the eremites, who retreated to search for God in seclusion, with the community creating the necessary condition; the coenobites, who took human sociability as a premise of the way to God, with the community helping them to pursue this way faithfully and lovingly; apostolic communities, which exerted themselves for the good of both the church and the world, with the community fulfilling a largely logistic function; and secular institutions,

which maintain a hidden presence in cultural life, with the community creating an invisible tie that offers members secret support. We explored the extremes of these types of community so as to depict the scope and riches of religious community life. The various intermediate forms between the extremes are readily conceivable. Meanwhile the exploration of the field provides an overview of religious life over the ages.

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These rich religious leaders didn't get the memo, apparently.Â However, religious and spiritual leaders come with various beliefs, lifestyles, and income levels. Take a look at these insanely rich religious leaders â€" youâ€™ll never think of that pious monk again. 31. Al Sharpton. G F/CC BY 2.0 via Flickr. Estimated net worth: $500,000, says Celebrity Net Worth Reverend Al Sharpton is a well-known civil rights activist who is the founder and president of Harlem, New York-based nonprofit National Action Network (NAN). NAN has grown to over 47 chapters in the U.S., reads Sharptonâ€™s bio on NANâ€™s website. A child prodigy, Sharpton delivered his first sermon at t "The Jewish communal organization is considered a role model for all other ethnic groups. It helped the Jews everywhere and especially in the US, which was always more open than other countries and provided equal opportunities, while on the other hand â€"wasn't supportive of the individual." How do community institutions help people succeed in business? "The mutual help allowed poor Jews to study. My family is an example of what happened to millions. This is a list of religious populations by number of adherents and countries. Countries and territories with the greatest proportion of Christians from Christianity by country (as of 2010): Vatican City 100% (100% Roman Catholic). Pitcairn Islands 100% (100% Seventh-day Adventist). Samoa ~99% (mostly Protestant). Romania 99% (mostly Romanian Orthodox). East Timor 99.6% (mostly Roman Catholic). American Samoa 98.3% (mostly Protestant). Malta 98.1% (mostly Roman Catholic). Adherents of folk religions, Jews and members of other religions make up smaller shares of the worldâ€™s people. Muslims experienced the greatest natural increase among all religious groups, including Christians. Births to Muslims between 2010 and 2015 outnumbered deaths by 152 million (213 million births vs. 61 million deaths). Globally, all major groups had more births than deaths.Â Indeed, fertility differences between religious groups are one of the key factors behind current population trends and will be important for future growth. Globally, Muslims have the highest fertility rate of any religious group â€" an average of 2.9 children per woman, well above replacement level (2.1), the minimum typically needed to maintain a stable population. This list of Catholic religious orders and religious communities includes traditional and Catholic monastic orders, but also secular institutes and societies of apostolic life. (We have titled it simply "Catholic Religious Orders and Communities" because "Religious Orders" or "Religious Communities" are the most common names used.) This list of religious orders and communities is nowhere near exhaustive. We would like to extend this list to include all communities notable for faithfulness to the magisterium of the Catholic Church and to the charism of their founde