

# **The Christocentrism of the Carmelite Charism**

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# 1 Summary

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According to the Prologue of the Rule of St. Albert, Carmelites, as all Christians, are called to be disciples of Christ, “to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ”. The Rule spells out the specificity of the Carmelite mode of this Christian discipleship. The Rule, therefore, is thoroughly Christocentric. In every age and every place where Carmel has taken root, Carmelites have had to dialogue from the perspective of that age and place with the Christocentricity of their Rule to reconstruct the meaning of walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ for their specific times and cultures. Such an ongoing dialogue, which constitutes the effective history or tradition of Carmel, of necessity has given and will continue to give rise not only to a multiplicity but also a “conflict of interpretations”.

This paper first explores the Christocentricity of the Rule of St. Albert as this Christocentricity is understood within the Rule itself as contextualized by its twelfth and thirteenth century ecclesial-historical contexts, especially medieval feudalism and the Crusades.

Through prayer, penance and fasting and especially through meditating upon the law of the Lord and the recitation of the psalms, the first hermits of Carmel were to be transformed into Christ. In turn through their spiritual combat and transformation into Christ, they were to contribute in their own way to regaining for Christ the land which he had acquired through his own cross. This

Christocentrism is highly kenotic, patterned on the self-emptying of Jesus coming to completion in his own suffering and death. Associated with this Crusade-influenced Christocentric spirituality is the importance of the original Jerusalem community of the Acts, which serves as a model for the first hermits on Mt. Carmel.

This Christocentrism of the Rule finds two paramount expositors in Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. For both mystics, the humanity of Jesus is central to their understanding of transformation into Christ and hence to their understanding of the journey of the person to God. For both writers, this Christocentrism is focused in the role of the humanity of Jesus in prayer, even in the highest stages of contemplative prayer. Christian life in all stages is incarnational in structure with Christ as model, mediator and goal. For both John and Teresa this Christocentric mysticism is kenotic and directed not only to God but to the healing of the world.

Just as Teresa and John retrieved the Christocentrism of the Rule for their day, so also Carmelites today must do the same. Two contemporary Christological approaches are offered to facilitate this retrieval: the anthropological Christology of Karl Rahner and Christologies “from below” based upon the “historical Jesus”. In each case but in somewhat different ways the humanity of Jesus and its importance for Christian life is stressed. Both Christological approaches present challenges to contemporary Carmelites to understand anew the meaning of walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Both approaches call forth a kenotic following of Jesus.

## NOTES

# 2

## Preface

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The Order of Carmel has its origins in a group of Western lay hermits who journeyed to the Holy Land and settled near the spring of Elijah on Mount Carmel. Between the years 1206 and 1214 these hermits approached Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem and Papal Legate for the province of Jerusalem, with a request for a “formula of life”, which would come to be known as Albert’s Rule.<sup>1</sup> As I hope to show, this Rule is thoroughly Christocentric. This Christocentricity has continually informed the spiritual heritage of Carmel, seen for example in the writings of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross.

In this paper I wish to do three things:

- 1) explore the Christocentricity of Albert’s Rule;
- 2) show how that Christocentricity is witnessed in the Carmelite tradition in the persons of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross; and
- 3) rearticulate this Christocentricity for Carmel today in light of contemporary Christological thinking.

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<sup>1</sup> Carlo Cicconetti, “The History of the Rule”. in Michael Mulhall, ed., *Albert’s Way*, Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1989, pp. 24-27.

## NOTES

# 3

## The Christocentricity of Albert's Rule<sup>2</sup>

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Albert's Rule is notorious for its brevity. Yet it contains twelve direct and at least eight indirect references to Christ. Various theories regarding the "center" or "heart" of the Rule have been proposed, e.g. its eremitical-contemplative or its communal dimension.<sup>3</sup> Without wishing to enter into this debate, I would propose that anterior to any other interpretation of the Rule is the centrality of Christ and walking in his footsteps, discipleship.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In dealing with the Rule I will refer to the text as mitigated in 1247 by Innocent IV according to the new uniform enumeration of sections accepted in 1999. With only slight revisions, the following treatment of the Christocentricity of Albert's Rule is taken from pp. 91-98 of my article "Jesus in Carmelite Spirituality" found in Paul Chandler, O. Carm. and Keith J. Egan (eds), *The Land of Carmel: Essays in Honor of Joachim Smet, O. Carm.*, Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1991, pp. 91-107.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of this issue, see selections in Mulhall, *Albert's Way*.

<sup>4</sup> "He (Albert) wishes the hermits well-being in Jesus, who will hold the central position in his formula for living . . . ." Otger Steggink, Jo Tigcheler, Kees Waaijman, *Carmelite Rule*, Amelo, 1979, p. 14, n. 9; see also p. 47, n. 85 and 86, where the person of Jesus is referred to as the ultimate motive and foundation of the life on Carmel. Rudolph Hendriks states: "We cannot stress sufficiently: Christ is the Alpha and Omega of the Carmelite Rule. The Rule begins in Christ and ends in Christ.... They [the first Carmelites] wish simply to serve Christ by living a solitary life near the spring on Mount Carmel, fasting and keeping vigil, meditating on the law of the Lord, constant in prayer. They wish to imitate Christ in his prayer at night on the mountain, and to keep watch with him in the garden". See "The Original Inspiration of the Carmelite Order as Expressed in the Rule of Saint Albert", in Hugh Clarke, O.Carm. and Bede Edwards, O.C.D., *The Rule of Saint Albert*, Aylesford, 1973, p. 69. Likewise Cicconetti claims: "A central design in Albert's 'formula of life' is the following of or allegiance to Jesus Christ (*obsequium Jesu Christi*). . . . the spirituality of the rule of Carmel hinges on 'the following of Christ' (*obsequium Jesu Christi*). The

In responding to the request of the hermits of Carmel for a formula of life, Albert, in n.1, as one might expect, lays down the fundamental project of every Carmelite, namely, "to walk in the footsteps of Christ".<sup>5</sup> In the Rule he then delineates the specific ways in which these hermits were to live out the universal Christian vocation of "a life of allegiance to Jesus Christ".<sup>6</sup> This Christocentric project is certainly not unique to those original Carmelites or their followers. Yet it is this project which must inform the precise modality of Christian living spelled out in the Rule. In all aspects of their lives, the hermits are to *in obsequio Jesu Christi vivere*. This *obsequium* becomes their "supreme and fundamental norm".<sup>7</sup> Thus I fully concur with Valabek's position:

*Saint Albert immediately seizes on the essential: religious are not in the first place bound to a well-described, scheduled way of life, but they are bound to a person: Christ Jesus. In fact, the Rule is pervaded by this presence of the person of Christ both in word and in sacrament.*<sup>8</sup>

Whatever else Carmelites may or may not be, they must in the first instance be Christians, followers of Christ. Walking in the footsteps of Christ becomes, therefore, the underlying hermeneutic of the Rule and not just an incidental adjunct. As hermeneutic it not only informs the whole of the Rule; it also provides its interpretive key. Furthermore, precisely as interpretive key, walking in the footsteps of Christ

explanation of St. Paul's expression constitutes the entire novelty of our study of Carmel's Rule". *The Rule of Carmel*, Darien, IL: Carmelite Spiritual Center, 1984, pp. 14, 15.

<sup>5</sup> I will discuss below the meaning of "*in obsequio Jesu Christi vivere*", in n.1.

<sup>6</sup> Cicconetti, *The Rule of Carmel*, 63, 296.

<sup>7</sup> Steggink et al., *Carmelite Rule*, p. 4, p. 14, n. 11, p. 16, n. 17. See Bruno Secondin, "What Is the Heart of the Rule", in Mulhall, *Albert's Way*, pp. 116-17.

<sup>8</sup> Redemptus M. Valabek, "The Spirituality of the Rule", in Mulhall, *Albert's Way*, pp. 151-52.

must function along the lines of a hermeneutic of suspicion, that is a hermeneutic which stands in judgement of and corrects every past and present interpretation of the Rule and provides direction for its ongoing rearticulation.

I have claimed that the underlying project and hence hermeneutic of Albert's Rule is expressed in n.1 itself, namely, walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ (*in obsequio Jesu Christi vivere*). As underlying hermeneutic, one would expect that this Christocentric project informs the whole of the Rule. And indeed it does. To appreciate the Christocentricity of the Rule one must first step back behind the text to its author and ecclesial context.

Prior to Albert's appointment as bishop of Bobbio in 1184, he had been a Canon Regular of the Holy Cross in Mortara. His formation as a Canon Regular entailed the constant reading of the sacred scriptures and devotion to the Cross of Christ. Furthermore, as Patriarch of Jerusalem and Papal Legate to the Holy Land, the patrimony of Christ, he had a special commitment to the *obsequium* of the Cross of Christ.<sup>9</sup> With this background, therefore, the Christo-

centricity of the Rule should come as no surprise.

As for the ecclesial context, at the end of the twelfth century there arose in Europe new spiritual movements which in critique of the opulence of the clergy and monks returned to the scriptures, and hence to the centrality of imitating Christ and the apostolic way of life of the Jerusalem community. One form of this evangelical awakening was a movement of lay, wandering hermits dedicated to penance, evangelical poverty and the visiting of holy places.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover this same period witnessed the Crusades, which undertook the task of recovering the "Land of Christ". However, after the defeat of Hattin in 1187 and with the election of Innocent III in 1189, the theological reason for visiting the "Land of the Lord" prevailed over all other motives (e.g. military and commercial).<sup>11</sup> Of all the holy places which the wandering hermits of Europe visited, the "Land of Christ" became the most popular. There they could literally walk "in the footsteps of Jesus" and through penance imitate his suffering and death.<sup>12</sup> "By renouncing all earthly goods in voluntary poverty, they sought to renew Christian life by the following of Christ through imitating the 'way of life' of the Apostles."<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, as Cicconetti notes:

*The very fact of being in the Holy Land comprised in itself a decision to fight for Jesus Christ, not necessarily in the military sense, but in personal service, in spiritual warfare. In fact, the Holy Land was considered the "patrimony of Jesus Christ", his heritage or kingdom. One who dwelt there was by a special title his*

<sup>9</sup> Cicconetti, "The History of The Rule", pp. 25-26, and *The Rule of Carmel*, pp. 2, 300. As J. Pelikan and B. McGinn point out, devotion to the cross of Christ and imitation of the crucified Christ typifies Western spirituality ever since the early Middle Ages and was flourishing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as can be seen e.g. in the writings of Peter Damien (1007-1072), Anselm of Canterbury (1003-1109) and Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). And E. Cousins claims: "By the end of the thirteenth century devotion to the humanity of Christ was solidly established in Western spirituality, and its focus was fixed on the passion of Christ". See Ewert Cousins, "The Humanity and the Passion of Christ", in Jill Raitt (ed), *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, New York: Crossroad, 1989, pp. 386-387. See also Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, pp. 106-157; Bernard McGinn, "Christ as Savior in the West", in Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff (eds), *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, New York: Crossroad, 1989, pp. 253-259.

<sup>10</sup> Cicconetti, "The History of the Rule", pp. 34-35, 43 and *The Rule of Carmel*, pp. 27-43.

<sup>11</sup> Cicconetti, "The History of the Rule", p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> Steggink et al., *Carmelite Rule*, p. 4; Cicconetti, *The Rule of Carmel*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>13</sup> Cicconetti, "The History of the Rule", p. 43.

*liege-man, a vassal in the following of Christ to whom he owed fidelity and faithful service.*<sup>14</sup> (Emphasis mine).

One such group of Western evangelical, lay hermits who returned to the land of Christ and the primitive apostolic life to help reclaim the patrimony of Christ were the hermits of Carmel who requested Albert for a “formula of life”, which itself would respond to but also further delineate a life-style (*propositum*) which they already lived,<sup>15</sup> that is, a life dedicated to the following of Christ, especially the Christ of the Cross, and lived in imitation of the primitive Jerusalem community.<sup>16</sup> As Cicconetti notes and as will become clear below: “The thoughts of the hermits (of Mount Carmel) focused on the Holy Land completely. From this posture, which regarded the Holy Land as the sacred patrimony of Christ, one must view the rule and spirituality of Carmel”.<sup>17</sup>

Given the above context for Albert’s “formula”, two questions can now be addressed. First, what was the meaning of the phrase in the Prologue: “walking in the footsteps of Jesus”? Second, how is this fundamental project delineated in the Rule in such a way that it “informs” the whole?

### 3.1 Walking in the footsteps of Jesus<sup>18</sup>

As Cicconetti notes, the phrase *in obsequio Jesu Christi*, drawn from 2 Cor 10:5, takes on somewhat different meanings in differing situations.<sup>19</sup>

Valabek summarizes the Pauline meaning of this *obsequium*. A disciple of Christ is a *doulos*, a slave or servant who totally hands over self, thoughts, will, wishes to Christ, who becomes the most important person in life. In turn the disciple shares in the very life of Christ and becomes a new self created in God’s way.<sup>20</sup>

This Pauline notion of *obsequium* took on specific connotations in feudal times. What images or overtones did this Pauline expression evoke in the hermits of Carmel during this feudal period?

The basic feudal meaning of *in obsequio* was that of service, the service which a vassal rendered to a sovereign. Cicconetti notes:

*Following of or allegiance to another (obsequium) implied duties on the part of master and subject. Those living in the patrimony of a feudal lord promised good and faithful service, assistance in time of war and participation in resolution of problems or questions. In return the lord promised protection . . . to his subjects.*<sup>21</sup>

This secular meaning of *in obsequio* was transferred in the religious realm to service owed to God or (especially) Christ.

*In the XII and XIII centuries, relationship with Christ was judged in similar*

<sup>14</sup> Cicconetti, *The Rule of Carmel*, p. 42; see also pp. 62.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63, 296; see also Steggink et al., *Carmelite Rule*, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Steggink et al., *Carmelite Rule*, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Cicconetti, *The Rule of Carmel*, p. 17; see also pp. 63-64.

<sup>18</sup> Various English translations of the Latin *in obsequio Jesu Christi vivere* are found: walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, living in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, to live in allegiance to Jesus Christ. In my explanation of this concept I am indebted especially to Cicconetti, *The Rule of Carmel*, pp. 296-312.

<sup>19</sup> *The Rule of Carmel*, p. 298.

<sup>20</sup> Valabek, “The Spirituality of the Rule”, pp. 152-153.

<sup>21</sup> Cicconetti, *The Rule of Carmel*, p. 15; see also pp. 299.

*terms; traditional feudal values of service . . . , of fidelity . . . , of allegiance or following (obsequium), of being bound to . . . , of dedication . . . , governed a man's responsibilities to Christ with a pervading influence that colored every aspect of daily life.*<sup>22</sup>

All Christians were bound to this *obsequium Christi*. But during the period of the Crusades, the concept took on even greater specificity. Christ had been expelled from his own patrimony and had suffered an injustice. Hence popes evoked the concept to induce Christians to support the liberation of the Holy Land.<sup>23</sup> Hence, the *obsequium Jesu Christi* had a very pregnant sense for crusaders and others, such as the hermits on Mount Carmel, who pilgrimaged to or resided in the land of Christ. All such Christians became Christ's special subjects, were especially dedicated to his service (*obsequium*) and were to be completely faithful to him.<sup>24</sup>

Of course the patrimony of Christ was to be regained not only through military efforts. Since the fall of Jerusalem was attributed to the infidelity and sins of Christians, true interior conversion to Christ and spiritual arms (prayer, penance, fasting) were more important than the earthly weapons of the crusader. The soldier of Christ had to arm himself with the disarming attitude of Christ.<sup>25</sup> This was a spirituality founded on the passion of Christ and realized only by taking up the Cross, through which Christ himself had acquired the land. The *obsequium Jesu Christi* was, therefore, very much a following of the *crucified* Christ.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 299.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 16, 299.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 301-302, 309. See also Valabek, "The Spirituality of the Rule", pp. 168-174.

<sup>26</sup> Cicconetti, *The Rule of Carmel*, p. 302.

In the case of the hermits of Carmel, therefore, their particular allegiance (*obsequium*) to Christ was very much defined by the then current theology of reconquering the land of Christ through *spiritual* combat in imitation of the suffering and Crucified Christ. They were to embrace poverty, penance, silence, solitude, prayer and fasting, "to follow Christ's law, be available to do all things in his name, to vest themselves in spiritual armor",<sup>27</sup> to disarm the forces of evil and above all to meditate upon the law of the Lord.<sup>28</sup> In all of this, but especially through meditating upon the law of the Lord and the recitation of the psalms, they were to be transformed into Christ.<sup>29</sup> It is this specific form of "walking in the footsteps of Jesus" which is signalled in n.1 and further specified in their "formula of life".

### 3.2 How the *obsequium* Informs the Rule

I do not intend to analyze or comment upon each reference to Christ in the Rule. I merely wish first to make some general observations and then show how the very structuring of the Rule is Christocentric.

From the above, one can see how the basic project of walking in the footsteps of Jesus, signalled in the Prologue, is then articulated in the Rule itself: faithful following of Christ through obedience to his representative, the prior (nn.4,22,23), solitude (n.6), meditating upon the

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 16. See also pp. 303-304, 310-11. Steggink et al. seem to interpret the *in obsequio* as imitating Christ in his desert battle with Satan. "Wearing God's armor is a concrete application of 'living in the footsteps of Jesus', for in 2 Cor. 10:4-5 the 'arms of warfare' and the 'walking in the footsteps of Jesus' are closely connected". *Carmelite Rule*, p. 35, n. 58; see also pp. 4, 15, n. 14-16, p. 33, n. 53, pp. 33-34, n. 55.

<sup>28</sup> Cicconetti, *Albert's Way*, p. 310. See also Valabek, "The Spirituality of the Rule", p. 154. For the medieval meaning of "meditating", see Cicconetti, *The Rule of Carmel*, pp. 309-310.

<sup>29</sup> Valabek, "The Spirituality of the Rule", p. 154.

law of Lord, vigilance in prayer, reciting psalms (nn.10,11,14), poverty (n.12), penance as fasting and abstinence (nn.16,17), vesting in spiritual armor for spiritual warfare (nn.18,19), doing all in the Word of the Lord (n.19), willingness to undergo persecution (n.18), silence (n.21). In all of this Christ is present to the hermit community as model, teacher, savior and eschatological judge (nn.23,24).<sup>30</sup> Within this Christocentric perspective, Elijah and Mary, present only implicitly in the Rule, become subordinate models or symbols who serve to concretize the *obsequium Jesu Christi*.<sup>31</sup>

Even more important than seeing how the various elements of the *obsequium Jesu Christi* are taken up in the chapters of the Rule is the Christocentric structuring of the Rule.<sup>32</sup> And here we discover the role which the ideal Christian community of the Acts played for those first Carmelites in their walking in the footsteps of Jesus.

We saw above that the hermits on Carmel were part of a larger spiritual movement which espoused a return to the scriptures and the life of the Jerusalem community. Their walking in the footsteps of Jesus was not to be done in a solitary way but as a community. "Reechoing the insights of Luke, Albert enjoins on the hermits a following of Christ by following the ideals and values of the apostolic Christian community."<sup>33</sup> Hence it is no surprise that nn.10-15 of the Rule parallel Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35 (fidelity to the Word, perseverance in prayer, sharing in goods, fraternal unity, the centrality of daily worship).<sup>34</sup> Within the Rule, daily

Eucharist is structurally central, i.e. it lies at the very center of the text (n.14). This textual centrality reflects the spatial centrality of the Eucharistic oratory in the midst of the cells.<sup>35</sup> This textual and spatial centrality in turn indicate the theological center of the Rule, the Eucharist.<sup>36</sup>

This structural approach to the Rule, with the Eucharist as its textual center, reveals that the center of this hermit community is, as it was for the Jerusalem community, Christ. The Rule now appears visually as an arc. At the two ends of the arc are the following of Christ (n.1) and the awaiting of the return of the Lord (n.24). At its apex is the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. "Between these three reference points all the rest of the Rule rotates, either as a consequent actualization or as a dynamic referent."<sup>37</sup> Structurally the Rule is saying that the whole Christocentric project of the Rule, namely to walk in the footsteps of Jesus (n.1) in anticipation of his return (n.24), is focused upon, celebrated in and subsumed into the Eucharist (n.14), in which Christ himself is sacramentally present to the community and which itself anticipates his return.<sup>38</sup>

In concluding this first part dealing with the Christocentricity of the Rule and by way of introducing the second part of this paper, I cite the words of Secondin:

*In the Rule, then, we find a Christology which esteems discipleship and revolves around a "life in Christ", prayerful listening to the Word, celebration of the Mystery, a vision of meditation as a way of imprinting Christ into one's life . . . , and the awaiting of his return. The same*

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 156-157.

<sup>32</sup> Here I am indebted to Bruno Secondin, O. Carm. "What is the Heart of the Rule?" in Mulhall, *Albert's Way*, pp. 93-132.

<sup>33</sup> Valabek, "The Spirituality of the Rule", p. 159.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 157-159; Secondin, "What is the Heart of the Rule?" pp. 103-04. Secondin claims (p. 94) that the unifying center of the Rule, which integrates all other elements are nn.10-15.

<sup>35</sup> Secondin, "What Is the Heart of the Rule?" pp. 108, 129.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>38</sup> In this Eucharistic "concentration" or "sublimation", the Rule anticipates many statements from the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. See the *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 5 and 6.

*way-of-life . . . as a dedication to the Lord  
in the Holy Land . . . is now transformed  
into an open journey to be undertaken in  
any place or time.<sup>39</sup>*

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<sup>39</sup> Secondin, "What Is the Heart of the Rule?" p. 119.

# 4 Christocentrism in the Tradition

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Indeed this Christocentric way of life, celebrated in Albert's Rule in the context of a crusade spirituality of reconquering the land of Christ through spiritual combat in imitation of the suffering and crucified Christ, was transformed into an open journey to be undertaken in any place or time. This Christocentrism would continue to inspire Carmel's tradition as witnessed through and interpreted by its many saints. Two such saints are Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross.

## 4.1 The Christocentrism of Teresa of Avila

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In his lecture on the role of the human Christ for St. Teresa upon the occasion of the fourth centenary of the death of Teresa, the noted Carmelite scholar, Dr. Eamon R. Carroll, singles out Teresa of Avila as "one of the all-time great defenders" of the *in obsequio Jesu Christi* tradition of the Carmelite Rule.<sup>40</sup>

Reflecting upon Teresa's concern for the humanity of Jesus and the role of Jesus' humanity in Christian life, William M. Thompson claims that she accents the mediatorial role of Jesus throughout the *en-*

*tirety* of our spiritual lives.<sup>41</sup> For Teresa, the humanity of Christ remains the sole gate through which we must enter if we desire "his sovereign Majesty to show us great secrets".<sup>42</sup> As the spiritual journey to the center of the soul or castle progresses, more and more the figure of Christ becomes predominant.<sup>43</sup> As Thompson states:

*For la Santa, every aspect of our Christian lives is in some sense Jesus-mediated. On our way to God and our neighbor, we never really leave Jesus. That seems to be her fundamental intuition.*<sup>44</sup>

This Christocentrism of Teresa of Avila is above all reflected in her own interior journey of prayer. As Luti states: "The humanity of Christ was absolutely central to Teresa's developing relationship with God in prayer".<sup>45</sup> In order to appreciate Teresa's Christocentrism, therefore, one must attend to what she says regarding the role of Jesus in prayer. The main sources for her explicit treatment of the role of Jesus in prayer are the *Life*, chapter twenty-two and the *Interior Castle*, book six, chapter seven.<sup>46</sup>

As Thompson and others point out,<sup>47</sup> while there was no debate on Jesus' role as mediator for the early stages of the spiritual life, it had become fashionable in some circles to think that one must transcend the humanity of Jesus as one progresses

<sup>41</sup> William M. Thompson, *Fire and Light: The Saints and Theology*, New York: Paulist Press, 1987, pp. 143, 147.

<sup>42</sup> *Life*, 22.6, in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. I, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1976, p. 147.

<sup>43</sup> John Welch, O. Carm. *Spiritual Pilgrims: Carl Jung and Teresa of Avila*, New York: Paulist Press, 1982, pp. 193, 208.

<sup>44</sup> Thompson, *Fire and Light*, p. 143. See also Carroll, "The Saving Role of the Human Christ for St. Teresa", p. 136.

<sup>45</sup> J. Mary Luti, *Teresa of Avila's Way*, Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991, p. 97.

<sup>46</sup> For a clear and concise treatment, see Antonio Moreno, O.P., "St. Teresa, Contemplation and the Humanity of Christ", *Review for Religious* 38 (1979): 912-923.

<sup>47</sup> See e.g. Luti, *Teresa of Avila's Way*, pp. 94 ff.

<sup>40</sup> Eamon R. Carroll, O. Carm., "The Saving Role of the Human Christ for St. Teresa", in John Sullivan, O.C.D. (ed), *Carmelite Studies*, III, *Centenary of Saint Teresa*, Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1984, p. 133.

up the mystical ladder. The mysteries of the human Jesus, i.e. the events of his life, especially his passion and death, but also his resurrection, were thought to be merely stepping stones for the contemplative beginner.<sup>48</sup>

This debate regarding the role of Jesus' humanity in prayer is not merely an "insular skirmish on an esoteric subject in ascetical theology",<sup>49</sup> for prayer is a microcosm which reveals the very nature of a religion. Thus the struggle over the mediatorial role of Jesus in contemplative prayer is, as Thompson points out, really a struggle over Jesus' mediatorial role in Christian faith. It raises the questions of whether or not Christians encounter God apart from Jesus or receive the gift of salvation apart from Jesus.<sup>50</sup> For Christians, the answer to these questions is an emphatic "no", since for Christian trinitarian faith the very meaning of Jesus and his history is God precisely as *God-for-us*, i.e. God as the God of salvation.<sup>51</sup> It is this basic Christian trinitarian and Christological faith which is itself at issue in Teresa's insistence upon the role of Jesus' humanity even in the highest stages of contemplative prayer.<sup>52</sup>

In chapter twenty-two of the *Life*, Teresa gives two reasons why

contemplatives should never relinquish the humanity of Christ in their life of prayer. The first reason has to do with a lack of humility, i.e. one thinks that in prayer one can lift oneself beyond the humanity of Christ in order to contemplate God in God's self. This is tantamount to wanting to be Mary before having worked with Martha.<sup>53</sup>

The second reason, found also in chapter six of the *Interior Castle*, is much more theological and anthropological. In the *Life* Teresa puts it in this way:

... we are not angels but we have a body. To desire to be angels while we are on earth - and as much on earth as I was - is foolishness. Ordinarily, thought needs to have some support.<sup>54</sup>

In other words, as O'Donoghue explains, since we are on earth we need something to lean on, especially in times of stress or aridity. "At such times Christ is a very good friend and companion."<sup>55</sup> He is the one through whom all things come to us and so "we should desire no other path even . . . at the summit of contemplation"<sup>56</sup>.

In a similar vein, Teresa writes in the *Interior Castle*:

... To be always withdrawn from corporeal things and enkindled in love is the trait of angelic spirits, not of those who live in mortal bodies. It is necessary that we speak to, think about, and become the companions of those who, having had a mortal body, accomplished such great

<sup>48</sup> Thompson, *Fire and Light*, pp. 144, 147. See the *Life*, 22.1, p. 140.

<sup>49</sup> Thompson, *Fire and Light*, p. 146.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> On this matter, see the excellent work of Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1991.

<sup>52</sup> Thompson (*Fire and Light*, p. 146) correctly points out how this same issue was very much at stake in the Arian crisis and Nicean response to Arius. Is Jesus merely a dispensable finite medium through which the God of salvation can be encountered or is Jesus himself in his humanity the *Self-gift* of God to us? Nicea's response was that Jesus is not merely one among several dispensable finite media in and through which the divine can work. For God to be the God of salvation, i.e. for God to be *God-for-us*, God must "do" or "be" God in Jesus. Hence the Son is "one in being" with the Father, or else there is no salvation.

<sup>53</sup> *Life*, 22.9.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.10, p. 148.

<sup>55</sup> Noel O'Donoghue, *Mysticism for Our Time*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989, p. 29. See the *Life*, 22.10. O'Donoghue goes on to point out (p. 30) that Teresa is affirming the way of the humanity of Christ as the *staple* of contemplative prayer, even though she allows a secondary place to another state in which for a *short period of time*, the humanity is transcended. Teresa, indeed, appreciated the symbolic and historical character of the human person, because of which the experience of God must always be mediated. For Christians, the humanity of Christ acts as the primary mediation of the divine.

<sup>56</sup> *Life*, 22.7.

*feats for God. How much more is it necessary not to withdraw through one's own efforts from all our good and help, which is the most sacred humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ.*<sup>57</sup>

Teresa goes on to indicate that such persons who abandon the humanity of Christ in prayer will harm themselves and others and will not enter the last two dwelling places.

*For if they lose the guide, who is the good Jesus, they will not hit on the right road.... The Lord Himself says that He is the way; the Lord also says that He is the light and that no one can go to the Father but through Him, and "anyone who sees me sees my Father".*<sup>58</sup>

O'Donoghue points out that the real issue here is the meaning of the presence of Christ's humanity in prayer. He indicates that there are three distinct presences: "presence-before", "presence-beside" and "presence-below", or Christ as object of contemplation, as friend and companion, and Christ as support.<sup>59</sup>

Against her opponents who would grant the last two presences, even in the higher states of mystical prayer, Teresa steadfastly maintains also the first presence, Christ as object of contemplation.

Rejecting, therefore, a totally apophatic mysticism in the Dionysian tradition of the divine darkness, which would haughtily look down upon the role of the creature in the higher states of contemplative prayer, Teresa says such an attempt to leave behind the humanity of Christ, to neglect to continue to contemplate the mysteries of his life, is a "dangerous path".<sup>60</sup> For Teresa, the contemplation of Christ's humanity, especially the mysteries of his life,

belongs also to the higher states of infused or supernatural communication.<sup>61</sup> The whole prayer-experience, therefore, must be grounded in the incarnation and should itself be deeply incarnate. "Once this anchoring in the Word made flesh is affirmed fully and concretely, there is no limit to the horizons of contemplative vision."<sup>62</sup> For Teresa, therefore, the "denigration of the human and finite and material fosters a simple other-worldly form of piety".<sup>63</sup>

This appreciation of Teresa for the "this-worldly" or incarnational structure of religious experience and its relevance for contemporary spirituality have been noted most favorably by the Jesuit theologian, Karl Rahner. Comparing Teresa's mysticism to that of John of the Cross, Rahner states:

*We might at first perhaps think that the radical "absence of images" in the experience of God as described by John of the Cross would make him a better interpreter of our modern experience of God than Teresa with her frankly visionary mysticism. But if we consider that the loss of imagery today is to be counted precisely as a loss and not as a gain, if we see that our relationship to God today must either*

<sup>61</sup> O'Donoghue points out that in these higher stages of prayer Teresa does not mean by contemplation "discursive meditation". "Here there is question of an interior glance, a kind of intuition, a mere look, a simple vision. This mere look is ... the launching pad of the mind's journey into the world of Divine mystery... What has happened is that the memory has brought an image before the understanding which launches the understanding into the heavens of contemplation . . . ." *Mysticism for our Time*, p. 33. For a similar treatment, see Moreno, "St. Teresa, Contemplation and the Humanity of Christ", pp. 919-920, and Thompson, *Fire and Light*, pp. 150-51, 155-56, where he distinguishes between mediation and mode of mediation. Our God experience, says Thompson, is always a Jesus-mediated experience. But that experience can come to us in either the mode of images or concepts or in the more supraconceptual or imageless mode of the apophatic way.

<sup>62</sup> O'Donoghue, *Mysticism for Our Time*, p. 33. O'Donoghue points out (pp. 33-34) that because of Teresa's appreciation of the incarnational or historical nature of religious experience, even contemplative experience, liturgy also plays an essential role in contemplative life for Teresa.

<sup>63</sup> Thompson, *Fire and Light*, p. 146.

<sup>57</sup> *The Interior Castle*, 6.7.6, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., New York: Paulist Press, 1979, p. 145.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>59</sup> O'Donoghue, *Mysticism for Our Time*, p. 30.

<sup>60</sup> *Interior Castle*, 6.7.14, p. 150.

*be mediated perhaps more explicitly than ever though our relationship to the concrete Jesus of Nazareth, to his life and death and his relationship to his fellowmen, or it will not exist at all, then it is perhaps not so obvious that for us today Teresa of Avila must rank behind John of the Cross. The fact that her desire for penance did not lessen her appreciation of good roast partridge and that she was also an incomparable worldly-wise organizer and diplomat ..., these are also things which make her mysticism particularly sympathetic for us today.*<sup>64</sup>

And what are we to say of Teresa's many visions? Teresa's visions, which were mainly of Christ,<sup>65</sup> are, according to O'Donoghue, the expression or overflow of the very rebirthing of Christ within her. "In her and through her Christ lives again, dies again, goes down to hell again, rises again in glory.... Where so many Christian mystics go upwards to God, Teresa brings God down to earth."<sup>66</sup>

This rebirthing of Christ in Teresa opens another window on the Christocentrism of Teresa. Not only is Christ as object of contemplation central for Teresa in his mediatorial role in prayer and the spiritual life, Christ is also the very *model* and *goal* of prayer and the spiritual life. It is precisely through meditation upon and imitation of the mysteries of Christ's life,<sup>67</sup> especially his passion and death,<sup>68</sup> that one becomes more and more transformed through love into Christ.<sup>69</sup> Quite accurately does

Carroll state "to pray (for Teresa) meant to be transformed in Jesus the Lord".<sup>70</sup> Carroll describes this process of transformation in the following words:

*She (Teresa) did not simply "put on" Christ, she was transformed into him, a development not from without but from within, Jesus acting in her, at the heart of the interior castle of her personality. The progressive degrees of prayer in her life were stages in grasping Christ, or better, being seized by him.*<sup>71</sup>

And summarizing Teresa's doctrine on this matter, Welch states: *In sum, Teresa tells us that Christ accompanies our journey. Christ is our true life, our final goal. He is the model whom we are to imitate. That imitation will principally be in his suffering. "Fix your eyes on the Crucified..."*<sup>72</sup>

This process of transformation into Christ or "Christoformation" is very graphically depicted by Teresa in chapter two of book five of the *Interior Castle* where she speaks of the process in which the silkworm weaves its cocoon, dies and is rebirthed as a butterfly. In chapter two of book seven of the *Interior Castle*, where the goal of the spiritual life is depicted in terms of spiritual marriage or identification with Christ, the butterfly itself now dies, "and with the greatest joy because its life is now Christ".<sup>73</sup> At this stage of total transformation into Christ, Teresa can say: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain".<sup>74</sup> The transformative process of silkworm-cocoon-butterfly and final death of the butterfly symbolizes the pascal mystery itself, the mystery of transformative death to self and resurrection into Christ. In-

<sup>64</sup> Karl Rahner, *Opportunities for Faith: Elements of a Modern Spirituality*, trans. Edward Quinn, New York: Seabury Press, 1974, p. 126.

<sup>65</sup> See especially chapters 27, 28 and 29 of the *Life*.

<sup>66</sup> O'Donoghue, *Mysticism for Our Time*, p. 41.

<sup>67</sup> Teresa often identifies with Mary Magdalene, the Samaritan woman and others in their relationships with Christ. See e.g. *Interior Castle* Book 6.7.

<sup>68</sup> See e.g. the *Life*, 13.13, 22.12; *Interior Castle*, 6.9; 7.1,4,8. Carroll points out that the emphasis in imitating Christ is always on his suffering and death. See Carroll, "The Saving Role of the Human Christ for St. Teresa", p. 139.

<sup>69</sup> This theme of transformation into Christ runs throughout Carroll's lecture. As Carroll states, for Teresa "we become most properly human beings

when in the inmost center of ourselves Christ is enthroned...." See Carroll, "The Saving Role of the Human Christ for St. Teresa", p. 134.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>72</sup> Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrims*, p. 196.

<sup>73</sup> For an excellent treatment of the butterfly symbol in Teresa as image of healing and transformation into Christ, see Welch, *Ibid.*, 136-164.

<sup>74</sup> *Interior Castle*, 7.2.5, p. 179.

deed, the story of the silkworm's transformation represents the entire journey to the center of the castle, where is found Christ himself and union with him.<sup>75</sup>

And of course the whole purpose of this transformative process is "the birth always of good works", not unbroken repose, but apostolic activity on the basis of inner stability. For Teresa the contemplative vocation is not opposed to the apostolic. Contemplation results in love of God *and* neighbor and is directed not only to God but to the healing of the world. The vocations of Martha and Mary must become fused.<sup>76</sup>

No one image or statement can exhaustively express the centrality of Christ for Teresa.<sup>77</sup> He is a very good friend with whom we can identify in his own weakness and trials. In turn he is a good companion for he understands the human situation and knows "of what stuff we are made".<sup>78</sup> He is our brother who enables us to call God our Father. He is the way, the light, the master, the teacher, the one whom we are to imitate in his poverty, humility, compassion, suffering, forgiveness and love. But he is also the risen and glorified Christ indwelling within us and present for us in the Church and Eucharist. Ultimately he is the bride into whom the butterfly dies and becomes one.

<sup>75</sup> Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrims*, pp. 141-42, 145.

<sup>76</sup> *Interior Castle*, 7.4.6, 10. See Rowan Williams, *Teresa of Avila*, Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1991, pp.138-139.

<sup>77</sup> For this summary statement, see Luti, *Teresa of Avila's Way*, pp. 96-103, and Carroll, "The Saving Role of the Human Christ for St. Teresa", pp. 133 -151.

<sup>78</sup> *Life*, 22.10; 37.5.

## 4.2 The Christocentrism of John of the Cross<sup>79</sup>

We saw above how for Teresa of Avila the humanity of Christ plays an essential role in all phases of the spiritual life so that every aspect of Christian life is Jesus-mediated. Is the same true for John of the Cross?

Both Edwards and Barron point out that John has been criticized on this very point.<sup>80</sup> No less a premier theologian than Karl Rahner has made this criticism. We saw above his defense of Teresa. However, regarding John of the Cross, Rahner says the following in writing about the abiding mediatorial significance of the humanity of Jesus:

*Signs of the great difficulty of such a Christianization of the basic religious act directed towards God are to be seen even within the theory of Christian mysticism. This theory has always been tempted (even in St. John of the Cross) to let everything in the mystic act disappear in the face of God, so that over and over again subsequent corrections of such a basic start on a pantheistic basis were found to be necessary to enable the mystic to hold on to the fact that he may and can still occupy himself with the humanity of Christ.*<sup>81</sup>

<sup>79</sup> In my treatment of the role of Christ in John of the Cross, I am guided mainly by two doctoral dissertations. James Denis Edwards, *The Dynamism In Faith: The Interaction Between Experience of God and Explicit Faith: A Comparative Study of the Mystical Theology of John of the Cross and the Transcendental Theology of Karl Rahner*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1979. Keith Reeves Barron, *A Study of St. John of the Cross's Theology of Transformation from the Perspective of Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1989.

<sup>80</sup> Edwards, *The Dynamism in Faith*, p. 92; Barron, *A Study of St. John of the Cross's Theology of Transformation*, p. 151.

<sup>81</sup> Karl Rahner, "The Eternal Significance of the Humanity of Jesus for Our Relationship with God", in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 3, trans. Karl H. Kruger and Boniface Kruger (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1967), p. 42. Regarding the eternal significance of the humanity of Jesus, Rahner himself states: "For, according to the testimony of faith, this created

That John of the Cross could so easily be misunderstood regarding his position concerning the role of the humanity of Jesus throughout all stages of the spiritual life is somewhat understandable. Edwards indicates how certain writers point to John's "rejection of discursive thought and images as proximate means to union with God in order to suggest that he rejects the humanity of Jesus in prayer. This is related to the opinion of those who hold that St. John seeks to go beyond the incarnation and the Trinity into the oneness of God".<sup>82</sup>

Along similar lines, Barron asks: "When St. John of the Cross teaches that no creature has proportion to God and that the soul must empty herself of all particular finite forms, images, concepts, and apprehensions in order to reach union with God, is there room left for the humanity of Christ?"<sup>83</sup>

While granting that one can legitimately question John regarding his appreciation for the humanity of Jesus at all stages of the spiritual life, both Edwards and Barron emphatically deny that this is truly John's position. Edwards believes that such an interpretation is "an extraordinary injustice to the thought and teaching of John of the Cross".<sup>84</sup>

And Barron states:

*... Because John's Christology is not systematically elaborated in his writings, a cursory reading of his works can lead one mistakenly to conclude that the person of Jesus . . . must be left behind as the soul journeys into the vast emptiness of God.*

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human nature is the indispensable and permanent gateway through which everything created must pass if it is to find the perfection of its eternal validity before God. He is the gate and the door, the Alpha and Omega, the all-embracing in whom, as the one who has become man, creation finds its stability. He who sees him, sees the Father, and whoever does not see him - God become man - also does not see God". Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>82</sup> Edwards, *The Dynamism in Faith*, pp. 91-92.

<sup>83</sup> Barron, *A Study of St. John of the Cross's Theology of Transformation*, p. 151.

<sup>84</sup> Edwards, *The Dynamism in Faith*, p. 92.

*This is certainly not John's teaching, however, and it becomes clear with a careful examination of his doctrine that the humanity of Christ is not left behind or transcended, much less is the Trinity.*<sup>85</sup>

Much as Teresa argued for the necessity of the humanity of Jesus, since we are not angels, John's teaching, claims Barron, is that the person is human and the human is not lost in God. "Human nature is not destroyed but transformed and perfected in union with God."<sup>86</sup> Hence the humanity of Christ can no more be left behind than can one's own humanity.

John's life itself shows how devoted he was to the incarnate Christ. He loved to carve wooden images of Jesus; his sketch of the crucified Jesus is well-known; as a superior he led his community in devotional dramas to celebrate Christmas.<sup>87</sup>

In analyzing the works of John, both Edwards and Barron<sup>88</sup> conclude that the incarnate Word, Jesus, is for John the *model* of the whole life of asceticism, the *mediator* in the soul's union with God, and the *spouse* in the mystical marriage.

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### 4.2.1 Christ as Model

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In the *Ascent* Christ, especially the suffering and crucified Christ, is presented as our model, the one who shows the soul the way it must travel. The more the soul models itself on Christ, the more it is open to his transforming presence. Christ's role as model is seen clearly in the following two counsels:

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<sup>85</sup> Barron, *A Study of St. John of the Cross's Theology of Transformation*, p. 152.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p.152.

<sup>87</sup> Edwards, *The Dynamism in Faith*, p. 93.

<sup>88</sup> See Edwards, Ibid., pp.93-99; Barron, *A Study of St. John of the Cross's Theology of Transformation*, pp. 153-158.

*First, have a habitual desire to imitate Christ in all your deeds by bringing your life into conformity with his. You must then study his life in order to know how to imitate him and behave in all events as he would.*

*Second, in order to be successful in this imitation renounce and remain empty of any sensory satisfaction that is not purely for the honor and glory of God. Do this out of love for Jesus Christ. In His life He had no other gratification, nor desired any other, than the fulfillment of His Father's will, which He called His meat and food (Jn 4:34).<sup>89</sup>*

It is especially in Book Two of the *Ascent* that the role of Jesus as model is highlighted. Barron cites several references in the following summary statement:<sup>90</sup>

*John states that a person "makes progress (on its journey to God) only through the imitation of Christ, Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one goes to the Father but through Him, as He states Himself in John" (Jn 14:6).<sup>91</sup> The contemplative journey is the embrace of the cross of Christ who is "our model and our light".<sup>92</sup> Christ himself has called us to this when he says: "If anyone wishes to follow My way, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me. For he who would save his soul shall lose it, but he who loses it for Me shall gain it" (Mk 8:4-35).<sup>93</sup> The dark night is patterned on Christ's crucifixion and the ensuing annihilation that Christ experienced when he was left by His Father "without any consolation or relief" and in "extreme*

*abandonment".<sup>94</sup> It was "at the moment in which He was most annihilated in all things" that the greatest work in all of heaven and earth was performed in the redemption of humanity.<sup>95</sup> To follow the way shown to us by Christ is to walk "the narrow path of obscure contemplation".<sup>96</sup> It is nothing less than the "living, sensory and spiritual, exterior and interior death of the Cross".<sup>97</sup>*

Likewise the *Maxims* have the same message. For example in Maxim 8 John says:

*Crucified inwardly and outwardly with Christ, you will live in this life with fullness and satisfaction of soul, and possess your soul in patience.<sup>98</sup>*

And Maxim 78 says:

*Never take a man for your example in the tasks that you have to perform, however holy he may be, for the devil will set his imperfection before you. But imitate Christ, who is supremely perfect and supremely holy, and you will never err.<sup>99</sup>*

<sup>94</sup> Not all John of the Cross scholars would agree with this statement of Barron. A puzzling problem for these scholars is why it is that in *The Dark Night* John does not hold up the suffering Christ as a model. He makes no reference to Jesus and his passion. Nor does he make reference to the Suffering Servant texts of Isaiah. Rather, his references are to Job, Jeremiah and the Psalms. For a treatment of this issue, see Georges Morel, *Le sens de l'existence selon S. Jean de la Croix*, Vol. II, Aubier, 1960, pp. 179-215.

<sup>95</sup> *Ascent*, 2.7.11

<sup>96</sup> *Ascent*, 2.7.13.

<sup>97</sup> *Ascent*, 2.7.11. Again, as these citations indicate, it is especially the suffering and crucified Christ who is presented as our model. Regis Jordan likewise highlights the role of the cross in John's spirituality, claiming that John bases his approach to the theme of absolute negation on the death of Christ. "Christ's death is the motive and model for our own death. This accounts for John's radical teaching on the so-called *negative way*: the death, the self-abasement of the soul in the sensual and spiritual nights must correspond to the death of Christ, so that the soul may be united to him and, through him, with the Trinity." See Regis Jordan, O.C.D., "Jesus Christ in the Writings of John of the Cross", in Steven Payne, O.C.D. (ed), *Carmelite Studies*, vol. VI: *John of the Cross*, Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1992, p. 100. See also Tomas de la Cruz, O.C.D., "The Carmelite School: St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross", in *Jesus in Christian Devotion and Contemplation*, trans. Paul J. Oligny, O.F.M., St. Meinrad, IN: Abbey Press, 1974, pp. 95-96.

<sup>98</sup> Kavanaugh and Rodriguez, *Collected Works*, p. 674.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 679-680.

<sup>89</sup> See *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 1.13.3, 4, in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1979, p. 101. Edwards claims that the call to imitate Christ and the constant references to the life of Jesus are such constant themes in the *Ascent* that there can be no argument on this point. He cites the following from the *Ascent* as examples: 1.5.2; 2.7.4-12; 2.22.6-7. See *The Dynamism in Faith*, p. 94.

<sup>90</sup> See Barron, *A Study of St. John of the Cross's Theology of Transformation*, pp. 153-154.

<sup>91</sup> *Ascent*, 2.7.8.

<sup>92</sup> *Ascent*, 2.7.9.

<sup>93</sup> *Ascent*, 2.7.4.

With Christ as model, we are reminded by John that to lose one's life is to save it; to surrender all is to gain all. "This is one of the most striking and hopeful themes one encounters in St. John of the Cross. John wants us to possess all things! But he knows that the only way to achieve this is through total disposition."<sup>100</sup>

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#### 4.2.2 Christ as Mediator

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Not only does Christ function in the spiritual life as model, providing the example to be followed, he is also *mediator*. He mediates to the soul its own divinization.<sup>101</sup> It is especially as the fullness of God's revelation to the human soul that Christ functions in his mediatorial role.

This revelatory-mediatorial role of Christ is clearly spelled out by John in the *Ascent*. John writes:

*Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would be guilty not only of foolish behavior but also of offending Him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty.*

*God could respond as follows: If I have already told you all things in My Word, My Son, and if I have no other word, what answer or revelation can I now make that would surpass this? Fasten your eyes on Him alone, because in Him I have spoken and reveal all.... For He is My entire locution and response, vision and revelation, which I have already spoken, answered, manifested, and revealed to you, by giving Him to you as a brother, companion, master, ransom, and*

*reward.... Hear Him because I have no more faith to reveal nor truths to manifest....*<sup>102</sup>

*If you desire Me to answer with a word of comfort, behold My Son, subject to Me, and to others out of love for Me, and you will see how much He answers. If you desire Me to declare some secret truths or events to you, fix your eyes on Him, and you will discern hidden in Him the most secret mysteries, and wisdom, and the wonders of God.... The Apostle, therefore, gloried, affirming that he had acted as though he knew no other than Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor 2:2). And if you should seek other divine or corporal visions and revelations, behold Him, become human, and you will encounter more than you imagine, because the Apostle also says "In Christ all the fullness of the divinity dwells bodily" (Col 2:9).*<sup>103</sup>

It is entirely illegitimate, therefore, in John's teaching to bypass Jesus in seeking to know God, although even here the soul must proceed in faith alone, for it is only faith which most vividly sheds light concerning the Beloved.<sup>104</sup> In Edwards' words: "There is no other knowledge than that of the crucified Jesus. St. John tells us to look at the Son 'become human.' All wisdom, all knowledge of God is mediated by the Incarnate Word".<sup>105</sup> In him we have received all.

According to Edwards, this same point is confirmed in John's "Prayer of a Soul Taken with Love". He cites the following:

*Why do You delay? For if, after all, I am to receive the grace and mercy which I entreat of You in Your Son, take my mite,*

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<sup>100</sup> Barron, *A Study of St. John of the Cross's Theology of Transformation*, p. 154.

<sup>101</sup> Barron points out (Ibid., 154-155) that while John spends little time writing about Christ's mediatorial role, his whole doctrine hinges on this point. It is the very key to understanding his Christology, which, as will become clear above, is a "revelational" Christology and, in that respect, somewhat similar to that of Karl Barth, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Karl Rahner. Christ himself is the very *self-revelation* of the Father.

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<sup>102</sup> *Ascent*, 2.22.5.

<sup>103</sup> *Ascent*, 2.22.6.

<sup>104</sup> *Canticle*, 12.2, in Kavanaugh-Rodriguez, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, "The truly devout person directs his devotion mainly to the invisible object .... He seeks the living image of Christ crucified within himself, and thereby he is pleased rather to have everything taken from him and to be left with nothing".

<sup>105</sup> Edwards, *The Dynamism in Faith*, p. 96.

since You desire it, and grant me this blessing, since You also desire that.

Who can free himself from lowly manners and limitations if You do not lift him to Yourself, my God, in purity of love? How will a man begotten and nurtured in lowliness rise up to You, Lord, if You do not raise him with your hand which made him?

You will not take from me, my God, what You once gave me in Your only Son, Jesus Christ, in whom you gave me all I desire. Hence I rejoice that if I wait for You, You will not delay.

With what procrastination do you wait, since from this very moment, you can love God in your heart?

Mine are the heavens and mine is the earth. Mine are the nations, the just are mine, and mine the sinners. The angels are mine, and the Mother of God and all things are mine; and God Himself is mine and for me, because Christ is mine and all for me.<sup>106</sup>

In this prayer, claims Edwards, Christ is seen as the mediator in three ways. In him is all forgiveness of sin. He is the basis of all our hope. And union with God and all creatures is given in and through him, “because Christ is mine and all for me”.<sup>107</sup>

Here we can see that the soul’s growing union with God is itself being mediated by God’s own union with humanity in the incarnation. The soul is achieving its own union with God through sharing in the very incarnation of the Son. By being assimilated more and more into Christ, it is becoming more and more “Christoformed”. Hence John can write:

*In His Son Jesus Christ, the soul is most sublimely and intimately transformed in the love of God. And with unspeakable*

*delight she thanks and loves the Father again through His Son Jesus. She does this united with Christ, together with Christ.*<sup>108</sup>

Again we see that because Christ is sole mediator between the soul and God, there is no leaving behind the humanity of Jesus.

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### 4.2.3 Christ as Spouse

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Not only is Christ our model and our mediator, our means to spiritual perfection, he is also our spouse, and as such he represents the goal of the spiritual life, the union or spiritual marriage between the soul and Christ. Writing of this union, John says:

*When there is union of love, ... it is true to say that the Beloved lives in the lover and the lover in the Beloved. Love produces such likeness in this transformation of lovers that one can say each is the other and both are one .... Thus each one loves in the other and is the other, and both are one in the transformation of love.*<sup>109</sup>

In this union the soul “becomes divine, becomes God through participation”, insofar as this is possible in our earthly existence.<sup>110</sup> And God weds himself to the soul in this spiritual marriage precisely through the deep revelation of the mysteries of Christ’s humanity to her.<sup>111</sup>

Describing this mystical union or marriage, in which Christ is our spouse, Edwards writes:<sup>112</sup>

*In this union the Lord reveals his secrets to the soul and communicates the mystery of his incarnation.*<sup>113</sup> *In this union we are taken into the love of the Trinity in*

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<sup>108</sup> *Canticle*, 37.6. See also 37.3.

<sup>109</sup> *Canticle*, 12.7.

<sup>110</sup> *Canticle*, 22.3.

<sup>111</sup> Barron, *A Study of St. John of the Cross' Theology of Transformation*, p. 156; see *Canticle*, 37.4-6.

<sup>112</sup> Edwards, *The Dynamism in Faith*, p. 98.

<sup>113</sup> *Canticle*, 23.1.

<sup>106</sup> Kavanaugh-Rodriguez, *The Collected Works*, p. 669.

<sup>107</sup> Edwards, *The Dynamism in Faith*, p. 97.

*an adoptive sonship.<sup>114</sup> Even in the next life our joy will be to know in Jesus Christ the mysteries of his incarnation, and to be transformed “into the beauty of both his created and uncreated wisdom, and also into the beauty of the union of the Word with his humanity”.<sup>115</sup>*

Concluding his reflections on the role of Christ in St. John of the Cross, Edwards says:

*There is no doubt that for St. John, Jesus Christ is the way to truth and life for us. All prayer is in and through the Incarnate Word. It is certainly true that “no one goes to the Father except through him as he states himself in St. John (Jn. 14:6)”.<sup>116</sup> For John of the Cross, it is equally true that “there is no advancing in faith without the closing of one’s eyes to everything pertaining to the senses and to clear, particular knowledge”.<sup>117</sup> This means that there is a time when he does*

*not encourage us to meditate imaginatively on the details of the life of Jesus, because the Lord himself is calling us to a more immediate union in dark faith. But this is union with the person of Jesus Christ who is both God and man.... St. John’s suggestions concern our mode of union with Christ. The mode is dark faith rather than imaginative meditation. But the object remains the same, the Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ, and in him the soul is taken into the intimacy of the Trinity.<sup>118</sup>*

So it is, therefore, with John of the Cross, much as was the case with Teresa of Avila, that in our being more and more assimilated into Christ himself, especially the suffering and crucified Christ, we enter into the very inner life of the Trinity. In the Son, Jesus Christ, we too become sons and daughters of God.

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<sup>114</sup> *Canticle*, 36.5.

<sup>115</sup> *Canticle*, 38.1. Surely, in view of these words, Rahner, who stresses the significance of the role of Christ even in the Beatific Vision, would seem to have to revise his assessment of John of the Cross.

<sup>116</sup> *Ascent*, 2.7.8.

<sup>117</sup> *Ascent*, 2.16.15.

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<sup>118</sup> Edwards, *The Dynamism in Faith*, pp. 98-99.

# 5 Christocentricity and Carmel Today

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Any retrieval of the Christocentrism of the Rule for our day must take into account contemporary Christology, for any view of Christ is time-conditioned. How does contemporary Christology view Christ? This is not an easy question to answer, for today there are many views of Christ, many Christologies. It is neither possible nor for our purposes necessary to present here even a brief overview of contemporary Christologies.<sup>119</sup>

Of the many models and ways of doing Christology today, two will be considered here: 1) a transcendental or anthropological Christology, and 2) a Christology “from below” based upon the “historical Jesus”.

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<sup>119</sup> For overviews of contemporary Christologies see Gerald O'Collins, *What Are They Saying About Jesus?* New York, 1977; Bernard Cooke, "Horizons on Christology in the Seventies", *Horizons* 6 (1979): 193-217; Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Christology after Vatican II", *The Ecumenist* 18 (1980): 81-89; John P. Galvin, S.J., "Jesus Christ", in Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin (eds), *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, vol. 1, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991, pp.251-324. In 1984 the Pontifical Biblical Commission issued an extensive document on Christology entitled *Bible et christologie*. This document presents in survey fashion, with reference to authors, eleven "approaches" taken in contemporary Christology. For an English text of this document and commentary upon it, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., "The Biblical Commission and Christology", *Theological Studies* 46 (1985): 407-479.

## 5.1 Transcendental or Anthropological Christology<sup>120</sup>

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A transcendental or anthropological Christology can give us a new way of understanding the divinity or sonship of Christ. Many theologians today approach and understand the divinity or sonship of Christ from the perspective of his life, death and resurrection.<sup>121</sup> For these theologians the life, death and resurrection of Jesus are “constitutive” of his being Son of God, of his being divine. This renewed and biblically inspired understanding of Jesus’ sonship can in turn give Carmelites a renewed understanding of the Christocentrism of the Carmelite charism.

The classical Christology of the Church came to be articulated in the well-known two nature-one person model. According to this model, Jesus possesses two natures or two modes of being, human and divine. Both natures exist in the one divine person or bearer, who is the eternal Logos or Son of God. This two nature-one person model was itself embraced by the Councils of Chalcedon in 451 and Constantinople II in 553. Hence it has come to be called “Neo-Chalcedonian” Christology.

In recent years due to the influence of contemporary biblical Christology<sup>122</sup> and also contemporary philosophy, many questions have been raised regarding the adequacy of the classical two nature-one person

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<sup>120</sup> Here I will focus primarily although not exclusively upon the systematic Christology of Karl Rahner.

<sup>121</sup> I have in mind theologians such as Karl Rahner, Walter Kasper, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann, Piet Schoonenberg, Dermot Lane, William M. Thompson.

<sup>122</sup> The following section of this paper dealing with a Christology “from below” will take up this renewed biblical Christology.

model.<sup>123</sup> It should be pointed out, however, that the majority of theologians today, while pointing out the limitations and difficulties with the classical model, in no way contest its basic affirmation, namely, that one and the same Son, Jesus Christ, is truly God and truly man. The question is, can the mystery of Christ be more clearly and adequately articulated today.

In order to better understand Rahner's own Christology, which itself is an attempt to surpass the many difficulties and limitations of the classical Christology, I would like briefly to state and describe six such difficulties and limitations.<sup>124</sup>

First, classical Christology, under the influence of various strands of Platonism, rests upon several philosophical and theological presuppositions. Above all it presupposes a view of God as absolutely immutable and also as infinitely opposed or antithetical to the creature. This antithesis between the divine and the creaturely becomes a major problem in attempting to understand what "The Word became flesh" (Jn 1:14) could possibly mean and how such an incarnation could be possible in the first place.<sup>125</sup> Given the antithesis between the human and the divine, the human and divine of Jesus would have to be understood as two distinct and infinitely opposed natures or substances

within the one Christ. Hence the classical Christological problem: how can one and the same Christ be both human and divine? In affirming that one and the same Son is human and divine, Chalcedon definitely maintained the Christian faith and proclaimed what Hellenistic metaphysics could never attain, namely, that in the one person are found the infinitely opposed divine and human. In this regard Chalcedon is truly a "de-Hellenization". But since it also worked within the presuppositions of classical metaphysics, it could in no way explain *how* the one person can unite the divine and the human.<sup>126</sup>

Second, the classical Christology, though the result of Christianity's basic soteriological faith that Jesus is savior, is not expressly soteriological. That is, it does not show that Jesus is Son precisely because he is Savior, or, Jesus' salvific actions, above all his obedience, obedience unto death, are themselves significant for his being Son. The classical approach first dealt with Jesus' *being-structure* as Son (one person, human and divine) and then went on to consider his redemptive work. What is needed is a much closer integration of the redemptive work of Jesus (his obedience) and his being Son.

Third, the Christ of classical Christology is not seen as coming from within the context of creation and history. Rather, because of the "fall", the eternal Son, "for us and for our salvation" became human. Had there been no fall, there would have been no incarnation. Immediately, then, Christ is seen as something of a "divine visitor" who comes into creation and history "from without", but who is not himself an integral moment of creation and history, such that even had there

<sup>123</sup> See for example Karl Rahner, "Current Problems in Christology", *Theological Investigations*, vol. I, trans. Cornelius Ernst, O.P. (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1965), pp. 149-200; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), pp. 283-323; Piet Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, trans. Della Couling (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), pp. 50-91; Dermot A. Lane, *The Reality of Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), pp. 109-121; John C. Dwyer, *Son of Man and Son of God* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), pp. 77-154.

<sup>124</sup> For the following, see references in note 123.

<sup>125</sup> See Rahner's excellent analysis of "The Word became flesh" in "On the Theology of the Incarnation", *Theological Investigations*, vol. IV, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), pp. 105-120.

<sup>126</sup> Hence in Chalcedon the relation between the human and divine natures is spoken of only in *negative* terms, "without confusion, without change, without division and without separation".

been no “fall”, there would have been no Christ. Such a “divine visitor” from without, not really belonging to creation and history, immediately appears as something of an “exception” to what all other human beings are. One must begin to ask whether such a Christ is truly “one in being with us” as Chalcedon had insisted.

Fourth, the categories used to describe the Christ of classical Christology, such as nature and *hypostasis* appear to be somewhat impersonal or “thing-like”. While Christology affirmed that in the incarnation the Logos took upon itself a human *nature*, this human nature was not understood to involve freedom. Hence the incarnation almost appears to be an event between God and a “thing” in which event the freedom of Jesus itself plays no role. On the other hand, the New Testament in speaking of Jesus’ relationship to the Father (his Sonship), always speaks in personal categories and stresses the role of Jesus’ free obedience. To neglect the role of Jesus’ freedom in the event of the incarnation itself leads one to an understanding of Jesus in which God pre-empts or precludes the freedom of Jesus. This was precisely the problem with such heresies as Apollinarianism and monothelitism, condemned in the early Christological Councils. These heresies failed to take seriously the true human freedom and subjectivity of Jesus.

Fifth, for the Christ of classical Christology, i.e. his humanity, his divine sonship and the event of the incarnation itself, Jesus’ life, history, obedience, death and resurrection are quite irrelevant. This Christ appears *in* history but not as being truly *historical*. He is no more Son in his resurrection than in his birth. All that occurred after December 25th is irrelevant for his being human, divine or incarnate. This ahistorical view of Christ and the incarnation is,

of course, due to the Hellenistic metaphysics of substance and accident. A being possesses the fullness of its being in its first moment of existence. Any changes which occur to the being thereafter are strictly “accidental” modifications of the being but in no way affect the inner “nature” of the being. We will see that the New Testament takes quite a different view. Moreover, once one understands the incarnation as involving the human *freedom* of Jesus, then the *history* of Jesus becomes essential to understanding this incarnation.

Sixth, and finally, the distinction and opposition between the human and the divine can itself lead to the impression that Jesus must somehow be “schizoid”. How can one affirm at one and the same time of one and the same subject that it knows all and does not know all, is fully aware of its identity and is not fully aware of its identity? The fallacy here is to assume that the human and the divine of Jesus are in the first place antithetical and in the second place, belong to Jesus in the same way, i.e. both being his proper natures, as “being human” is proper to Peter or Mary.

In his anthropological Christology Rahner wishes to surpass these many limitations of Neo-Chalcedonian Christology, a Christology which, though maintaining the genuine humanity of Jesus, could never do justice to the full *historical* humanity of Jesus and its importance for his being Son of God. Rahner wants a Christ who is not the big *exception* to the rule, a Christ who is truly human with a genuine human history and freedom, coming from within creation and history itself. Likewise he wishes to give us a *unified* Christ in whom the antithesis of the human and divine is resolved. His model of Christ will not be the two nature model of divine *and* human but the anthropological model

of divine *as* human. The “and” and the “as” make all the difference.<sup>127</sup>

To achieve his goal of a Jesus who is truly divine as human, Rahner opts for the thirteenth century Franciscan theologian, John Duns Scotus, on the question of the motive of the incarnation. For Scotus, sin or no sin, there would have been the Christ, for in Christ God was to bring his creation to completion. Hence, Rahner will view Christ from the perspective of creation itself, i.e. as its goal and culmination, or as de Chardin says, its omega point. In this regard, Rahner’s is a “New Adam” or “Eschatological Adam” Christology, i.e. Jesus is the crown of God’s creation itself.

In this “New Adam” Christology, Christ will not be explained so much “from above” as “from below”, or “from within”, i.e. in terms of proceeding from creation itself, and in fact creation understood as occurring in an evolutionary way, i.e. in terms of the evolutionary, historical and creative process itself. In this way Christ will not appear as the big “exception”, but as the *supreme exemplification* or the supreme instance of what God is always doing everywhere in God’s creative activity. Hence Rahner’s Christology can also be called an “archetypal” Christology. Jesus is “exhibit A” of the human, the perfect model, the New Adam.

After taking the above mentioned Scotistic option, Rahner then contextualizes his Christology within the framework of evolution. He points out that as any being emerges from within the evolutionary process, it stops being “what it had been” and is now “sublated” to a new and higher level of being. When

matter evolves to life, it is no longer mere matter but living matter. In other words, at every stage of the evolutionary process the new reality which emerges has a limited potentiality for development. It has *limits* to its possibilities of becoming. It can itself become so much and no more. If it transcends its own being in its process of becoming, an evolutionary critical threshold has been crossed and it ceases to be what it had been. When in the evolutionary process animal became human, it ceased being just an animal and has become rational animal. In simple language, you can teach a dog so many tricks and no more. Once the dog learns the trick of saying “I am a dog”, it is no longer a dog! It has been sublated to the level of “human”.

Of course throughout this evolutionary process, since there results an emergence of new and higher being, God as empowering or transcendental cause is at work. It is precisely God’s empowering causality that enables beings to surpass themselves in the evolutionary process. Without this grounding and empowering causality of God, finite being can neither exist nor become nor surpass itself in its becoming as occurs in evolution.

Eventually in this evolutionary process matter unfolds in its unlimited potentiality to the point that it can reflect back upon itself. At that point human matter or “spirit” has emerged, and at this point there is something unique about the new being which has emerged. Whereas in all previous stages of evolution the being which has emerged has definite limits to its possibilities of becoming, once the human has emerged, this is no longer the case. This is because of the understanding of the human which Rahner has.

For Rahner human nature is not absolutely limited, determined or

<sup>127</sup> The best single source for Rahner’s Christology, which itself incorporates several earlier Christological writings, is Rahner’s *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), pp. 176-321.

circumscribed in its being. Human being is not absolutely “finite”, but rather is a relative infinitude. Human being is *capax Dei* or *capax infiniti*. As “spirit” the human being is a being whose very being is *infinite openness*. Hence Rahner states: “Human being is not some absolutely terminated quantity.... Human being is rather a reality absolutely open upwards....”<sup>128</sup>

As *capax Dei* there is no finite end to that which the human can become. And as “absolutely open upwards”, no matter how much a human becomes, he/she remains “just human”. The only “end” which the human can have as *capax Dei* is God him/herself. Only the infinite itself can fully “fill” or actualize the infinite capacity which the human is.

Since the human is an infinite capacity for God’s *self-gift*, God can give totally the fullness of God’s own being to a human being. Thus, if God were totally to give God’s own *self* to a human being, e.g. Jesus of Nazareth, that infinite openness or *capax Dei* would be totally actualized or realized. That human being would now be *fully and totally* human. He or she would not *cease* being human, nor would he or she move to a qualitatively “higher” stage, since his/her own being as human is open to the infinite. Nor would that person be human *plus* something else, namely, divine, as if the divine would be distinct from the human. Rather that person would be fully human and hence divine, since the human as *capax Dei* can only be *fully* human if it itself is divine.

Of course for Rahner, this total actualization of the infinite capacity which is the human being is not something that can be achieved by human freedom alone.<sup>129</sup> This total

realization of the human is always due in the first place to the divine initiative, to grace or God’s *self-gift* which empowers human freedom to respond to this self-gift. But in the second place, this total realization of the infinite openness which human being is does demand human freedom, human response. God (grace) never excludes nor acts apart from human freedom. Jesus is the highest instance of this reciprocal dynamic between God’s creative-empowering self-gift and human freedom.

Hence to Jesus and his human freedom God has totally given God’s self, and that total self-gift creates and enables the human freedom of Jesus to respond totally to this same self-gift. In so responding fully, Jesus through his human freedom, empowered by God’s own self-gift, totally actualizes the infinite openness or *capax Dei* which he is as human. Hence, while remaining human, but now fully and totally human, Jesus is divine. Not divine *and* human but divine *as* human. The divine of Jesus is no longer understood as a nature distinct from his being human, but is rather his human nature as fully actualized due to the empowering causality of God’s total self-gift.<sup>130</sup> Thus

<sup>129</sup> Hence for Rahner this *capax Dei* is merely an “obediential potency”, i.e. a potentiality which cannot of itself actualize or realize itself.

<sup>130</sup> Thus while affirming the Chalcedonian *doctrine* of the humanity and divinity of Jesus, Rahner is no longer articulating that doctrine within the *two-nature* framework necessitated by the metaphysics of Hellenistic philosophy with its antithesis between the human and divine. Rahner’s Christology is a *one* nature Christology, made possible by Rahner’s anthropology, i.e. his understanding of human nature as *capax Dei*. That *one* nature is the *human* nature. But the human is understood here as fully actualized by God’s self-gift. Only to the extent that the human nature of Jesus in and of itself is not able to totally actualize itself but is actualized only by this divine self-gift can we speak of a *two* nature Christology in Rahner, i.e. the human of Jesus in and of *itself* is not divine. With his *one* nature Christology, Rahner of course is not falling into the one nature Christologies condemned by the Councils, according to which the humanity of Jesus is either displaced by the divine (Apollinarianism) or absorbed by the divine (monophysitism). In Rahner’s Christ, nothing of the divine or the human is lacking. Hence Rahner protects

<sup>128</sup> “Current Problems in Christology”, p. 183.

Rahner states: “Only someone who forgets that the essence of man... is to be unbounded... can suppose that it is impossible for there to be a man who precisely by being man in the fullest sense (which we never attain) is God’s existence into the world”.<sup>131</sup> And again: “The less we merely think of this humanity as something added on to God, and the more we understand it as God’s very presence in the world and hence... see it in a true spontaneous vitality and freedom before God, the more intelligible does the abiding mystery of our faith become, and also (the more it becomes) an expression of our very own existence”.<sup>132</sup>

For Rahner, it is only because the human is *capax Dei* that the incarnation (“The Word became *flesh*” of Jn 1:14) is, from the perspective of the human, possible. If the “flesh”, i.e. human nature itself, were not open to the infinite Word, the Word could not itself become en-fleshed. It could merely lie “along-side of” but not be one with the flesh, as is the case with the classical two-nature Christology.<sup>133</sup>

Hence according to this anthropological Christology, it is precisely Jesus as human, in his “bare humanity”, who is God’s expression in history. Precisely, and only, as human, Jesus is the primordial sacrament, exegesis or grammar of the divine. One need not nor must not look for the divine in Jesus “along-side of” or “behind” the humanity. The human of Jesus *is* the historical

expression of the divine. “We must learn to see that what is human in Jesus is not something human (and as such uninteresting for us in the world) and ‘in addition’ God’s as well (and in this respect alone important...). On the contrary, in this view the everyday human reality of this life is God’s Ek-sistence...; it is human reality and so God’s, and vice versa.”<sup>134</sup>

Hence, against all heretical tendencies to skirt or downplay the humanity of Jesus and the role of Jesus’ human freedom, Rahner insists that the humanity of Jesus is not merely a passive puppet or instrument through which God acts. For Rahner, Jesus in his human freedom does Jesus, as is true of every other person. The eternal Logos of Jesus is the person or agent of Jesus only in that the humanity of Jesus *is* itself the historical expression of this Logos.

Thus far we have seen that from the perspective of human nature the condition for the possibility of an incarnation is that human nature be open to the infinite itself, be *capax Dei*, otherwise there is no way that the Word could become *flesh*. But the condition for the possibility of an incarnation also demands something from the perspective of the divine being itself. God must be a God who can “become”, or “give God’s self away”.

Hence, this view of Jesus is also rooted in Rahner’s understanding of God’s own inner trinitarian being, according to which to say that God is God-Logos is precisely to say that it belongs to the very being of God “to be human”, to express God’s self outwardly into history, to be God-*for us* in and as history, i.e. in and as the historical event of Jesus. Reminiscent of the early Apologists and Irenaeus, for Rahner Jesus is the fullest histor-

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Chalcedon's concern for the integrity and fullness of the both the human and the divine.

<sup>131</sup> "Current Problems in Christology", 184.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>133</sup> Rahner states this in a somewhat oblique manner. "This human reality as human... in its 'bare' humanity can only be of theological importance if it is as such (as just this) the manifestation of God in the world, not just as something *joined on* in a logically subsequent way; if, that is to say, it is one with the Logos in virtue of *being the reality of the Logos itself*, and (is) not the reality of the Logos in virtue of being 'one' (how?) with the Logos." "Current Problems in Christology", p. 191. Emphasis mine.

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<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

ical expression of this immanent mode of existing in God called God-*Logos*, i.e. God as a God who *can* give God's self to us in and as history. Hence Rahner writes:

*We could now define the human... as that which ensues when God's self-utterance, his Word, is given out lovingly into the void of god-less nothing. Indeed, the Logos made "man" has been called the abbreviated Word of God. This abbreviation, this code-word for God is man, that is, the Son of man, and all men who exist ultimately because the Son of Man was to exist. If God wills to become non-God, man comes to be.*<sup>135</sup>

In a similar vein he writes:

*We must never forget that the Christian, authentically Catholic truth of faith about the incarnation of the Father's eternal Word does not mean that God put on some kind of overall called humanity, because his world had somehow broken down, contrary to his original plan, so that he had to repair God the creator's original plan down here in this world of ours. It means that God is man to all eternity, so that to all eternity we cannot think rightly about this God or express him properly unless we add to our thinking what we men and women all are as well. There is no longer any theology to all eternity which is not anthropology too.*<sup>136</sup>

Precisely because God is God-*Logos*, God can "become" God *for us*. In this "becoming", God does not become more God in God's self, since God is pure actuality. Rather, God becomes more God *for us*, more *our* God. Our God is a God whose very being is self-communicable or *expressible*. If God's being were not self-communicable, there could be no incarnation.

We can see, therefore, how Rahner has overcome two of the

metaphysical presuppositions of the classical two-nature Christology. First, there is not an absolutely infinite abyss between the divine and the human. These are not infinitely antithetical. Second, God is not absolutely immutable in every respect. As pure actuality, as God-*Logos*, God can express God's self in and as history. God can become in history God-*for us*.

In this anthropological view of Christ, therefore, the incarnation is understood as a dialectical event of God's self-giving and the human response of Jesus. In this regard, Jesus is no different than any other human being. Through God's self-gift or empowering causality, he in his freedom, as all humans, is empowered to respond to God. Since in him this self-gift is total and hence enables a total response of freedom, Jesus is not the exception but the supreme exemplification of what the human is. He is the perfect image of God.

It was seen above that the incarnation for Rahner is a dialectical event of God's total self-gift enabling the total response of Jesus. This dialectical event of incarnation itself, however, has a history. Precisely because in the incarnation God creates and takes upon God's self a human *freedom*, this event of incarnation cannot occur in one moment. For God to become human demands that God take upon God's self a *history*, since human nature demands a history of self-realization or actualization through human freedom. For Rahner human nature is not a terminated, static, ahistorical essence which exists fully in its first moment of existence. Human nature is a project or task. Human nature to be all that it can be demands a history of self-realization through human freedom. We must "do" ourselves to "be" ourselves.

<sup>135</sup> "On The Theology of the Incarnation", p. 116.

<sup>136</sup> "The Body in the Order of Salvation", *Theological Investigations*, vol. XVII, trans. Margaret Kohl (New York: Crossroad, 1981), p. 80.

Thus for Rahner the response of Jesus' human freedom to God's total self-gift is a response that is made throughout the history of Jesus, constituting that history and hence the very being of Jesus. It is through his obedience to the Father, obedience unto death, that Jesus "does" Jesus and hence becomes more and more who and what he is, the perfect image of God, the Son of God. The total self-communication of God to Jesus and Jesus' total response to this self-communication reaches its own climax in Jesus' own death and resurrection. It is in his death that Jesus collects and sums up or recapitulates his own history of free obedience to God and totally hands himself over to the Father. Jesus' death is Jesus' total "yes" of free obedience to God.<sup>137</sup> In this total self-emptying or response to God, which is his death, itself enabled by God's total self-gift to Jesus' freedom, Jesus has totally actualized his infinite openness to God, his *capax Dei*. He has become "fully human" and hence divine. He is now, through his obedience, obedience unto death, the perfect Son of God, the perfect sacrament or expression of the divine. In turn, in raising Jesus from the dead God has accepted and given eternal validity to the total "yes" of Jesus to God which occurred in his death. Jesus dies into God. The resurrection constitutes the dialectical reality of God's self-gift and Jesus' response, which culminated in his death, an eternal reality.

Hence Jesus' freedom and obedience, culminating in his own act of total self-*kenosis* in his death, as well as Jesus' being raised by God are all the history of the incarnation itself, moments of one process or history

<sup>137</sup> For Rahner death is the supreme *act* of a person. It is only through death that one can totally dispose of oneself or "sum one's self up" before God. This act of total self-dispossession cannot occur prior to death since one's history is not yet complete. Prior to death, one's history is still "out-standing". Only at the *end* can a person collect one's *total* history and dispose of it.

beginning with Jesus' conception and ending with his death-resurrection. They are constitutive of Jesus' history of becoming more and more who he is, the Son of God. Without this history of freedom, culminating in Jesus' own death and resurrection, there would be no incarnation. Hence Rahner can state: "the incarnation is a divine movement which is *fully deployed only* in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ".<sup>138</sup> And again, "Consequently the life, death and resurrection of Jesus are the history of the hypostatic union...."<sup>139</sup>

The following and somewhat lengthy statement of Rahner clearly expresses his dynamic and historical interpretation of the incarnation. In this statement one can see how important for the incarnation event is the role of Jesus' freedom, obedience, death and resurrection.

*How can we understand the incarnation of the Logos, i.e. the assumption of the human reality and the essence of this (human) reality itself, in such a way that the event of the incarnation from the start is no longer understandable merely as the assumption of a thing-like, static reality but rather is seen as the assumption by the Logos of a time, a history, a life-giving death? Can the incarnation of the Logos be so understood so that from the innermost essence of the incarnation.*

<sup>138</sup> See "Salvation", in *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. III, ed. Karl Rahner et al. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), p. 428.

<sup>139</sup> "Jesus Christ, IV: History of Dogma and Theology", in *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. III, p. 208. Needless to say the importance of Jesus' obedience, death and resurrection for his being Son, Christ, Lord or High Priest is clearly indicated in the New Testament itself. See e.g. Heb. 2:9-10; 3:2,6; 4:14-16; 5:7-10; Rom. 1:3-4; 10:9; Acts 2:32-36; 5:29-31; 10:42-43. In John's Gospel Jesus is the "Son" not because of a divine nature which he has, but because of his perfect obedience towards and love of his Father. The Father and Jesus are "one" because Jesus always does the will of his Father. See e.g. Jn. 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:28, 10:25-38. Perhaps the clearest statement is that found in the Philippians hymn (Phil. 2:5-11) in which Jesus' obedience, obedience unto death and exaltation or resurrection are all constitutive of his being given the name above every other name, Yahweh's own name, "Lord".

. . . *that one event of death and resurrection is (also) meant and accepted? When, on the one hand, the history of "man", the act of his freedom and the absolute culmination of this freedom (i.e. his death) are not considered accidents, which belong to an in-itself-unaffected-substance of a human nature conceived in a static and thing-like way, but rather are seen as the self-fulfillment of an essence, which achieves its own reality in this process of self-fulfillment, and when on the other hand therefore freedom is not seen so much as a "faculty" which a human has but as the (self)-disposing freedom which a human person is (precisely in order to bring one's own pre-given essence... to its fulfillment), then the event of the incarnation is seen as more closely and essentially related to the fulfillment of a human life... than as the constitution of a human subject, within whose life this or that event only subsequently and accidentally happens.*<sup>140</sup>

Here of course, through his emphasis upon the importance of human freedom for the history of one's own self-actualization, one can see that Rahner has again broken from Hellenistic metaphysics in its position that human nature exists in its entirety in the first moment of its existence, so that all that freedom achieves throughout the history of a person is only "a mere epiphenomenon of an essence which abides statically and unaffected".<sup>141</sup>

There remains only one point left to consider in the Christology of Karl Rahner. We saw above that one of the difficulties of classical Christology is that Jesus is seen to be something of a divine visitor to human history. He does not come from within the process of creation and history and hence does not belong to creation and history as an integral moment. Had there been no "fall",

there would have been no incarnation. Such an approach makes Jesus to be an exception to the rule from the very beginning of his human existence. Such a Christ is not really the same as other human beings. He is not really the New, the second or perfect (eschatological) Adam because he is not in the first place Adam, truly "one in being with us", as Chalcedon insists.

Because of the Scotistic option, spoken of above, which Rahner takes, his Christ is seen not to be a divine visitor to creation and human history who is not related to or integral to creation and human history. Rather, as the one in whom God's total self-gift and total "yes" to that gift is found, Jesus is seen to be the goal and culmination of God's creative and salvific activity everywhere operative. In him, God has brought God's creation to its completion. Jesus is the goal or eschaton of history, because Jesus is the total and complete expression of the plan which God has had from all eternity to create and to give God's self to that creation in Jesus, thus fulfilling and bringing that creation back to God's self. As the full and total historical expression of God as God-*Logos*, i.e. as God *for us*, the saving God, Jesus brings all of God's creative and saving work to its fulfillment.<sup>142</sup> And hence also as the goal or eschaton of history, he himself is the Savior. In him, heaven and earth not only touched. They became one. This is the meaning of the incarnation. In the man Jesus, through his life, death and resurrection, God has fully achieved God's eternal plan to be a loving God, a saving God, God *for us*.

<sup>140</sup> "Dogmatic Questions on Easter", *Theological Investigations*, vol. IV, pp. 130-31; translation and emphases mine.

<sup>141</sup> "Jesus Christ", *Sacramentum Mundi*, III, 208.

<sup>142</sup> See especially Rahner's "Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World", *Theological Investigations*, vol. V, trans. Karl-H. Krüger (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), pp. 157-192.

## 5.2 Reararticulating Christocentricity Today

This Rahnerian vision of Christ can help Carmelites today to articulate in a new way the Christocentrism of our Rule and tradition.

So often the Christ of classical Christology was not truly one of us. Although Phil 2:5ff. exhorts us to have “the attitude which was that of Christ”, who emptied himself and took upon himself the form of a slave, being obedient, obedient unto death, and although Heb 12:2 exhorts us to keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, so often Christians do not find that Christ is truly imitable. Because Jesus has so often been presented as the big exception to the rule, one could not truly follow him. After all, he is “God”. He may be like us in his human nature. But in his divine nature and person, he is quite unlike us.

So often the Christ of classical Christology was not truly tempted, despite the Epistle to the Hebrews saying that he himself was beset by weakness and was tempted in every way that we are and hence can sympathize with our weakness.<sup>143</sup> He did not experience the negative and shadow side of human existence. He did not really have to grow in his relationship with God, as we do, even though Luke says that he grew in wisdom, age *and grace* before God and people (Lk 2:52). He did not have faith or have to grow in faith; he did not undergo the “dark nights” of faith as we do, even though Hebrews speaks of his faithfulness to God, a faithfulness which exceeds that of all the Old Testament witnesses, even Abraham.<sup>144</sup> In fact the same Epistle to the Hebrews

speaks of Christ as praying with loud cries and tears to his Father who had the power to *save* him from death.<sup>145</sup> And Hebrews also points out that Jesus had to learn obedience through his suffering and *become perfected*. Because he was perfectly obedient, obedient to and through his death on the cross, he became the perfect Son and High Priest.<sup>146</sup>

This is not a “plastic” Jesus who is above the human fray, a Jesus who “play acts” his way through the ups and downs of human experience, a gnostic or docetic Jesus who only “appears” to be human but who does not truly walk in our shoes, with all the anguish, darkness, faith, trust, love, abandonment and joy which that involves.

What makes the Christ of classical Christology quite unlike us and hence quite inimitable is not only that it “added” on “divinity” to the man, Jesus, but it also distinguished and opposed within Christ the human and the divine. Moreover, it “compressed” the concrete, fleshy humanity and actual history and experience of a real live Jesus into a timeless, abstract, ahistorical, impersonal human “nature”. When this abstract human nature, quite unaffected by and above history, is put alongside of the divine nature, and when the ultimate bearer or person of these two natures is the eternal, divine Logos, understood in a highly personal way,<sup>147</sup> it is almost certain that the genuinely *historical* humanity of Jesus will be lost, even though the human “nature” will be affirmed.

Even such a theological genius as Thomas Aquinas has difficulty doing full justice to the genuine, historical humanity of Jesus. Thomas’

<sup>143</sup> Heb 4:15, 5:2.

<sup>144</sup> See Heb 3:2, 3:6, chapter 11 and chapter 12:2.

<sup>145</sup> Heb 5:7.

<sup>146</sup> Heb 5:8-10.

<sup>147</sup> By “personal way” I mean here “person” in the contemporary sense of person, that is, as a center of consciousness, self-consciousness, and freedom.

Jesus in the first moment of his human existence enjoys the beatific vision, which for other human beings is the goal of their existence. Hence Thomas' Jesus is somehow both a "*viator*" and "*comprehensor*", i.e. both a pilgrim and one who has already arrived at journey's end. Moreover, through this beatific vision, Jesus knows all things. He can suffer on the cross only in virtue of a divine dispensation given to his humanity by the divine Logos, who permits Jesus to suffer on the cross. But this suffering is only bodily and not experienced in the intellectual part of his soul, i.e. psychologically.<sup>148</sup>

How different is Rahner's understanding of Christ! Rahner gives us a Christ who is truly "one in being with us", as Chalcedon teaches. Rahner's Christology allows and in fact necessitates a Christ who can and must truly grow in his own relationship with his Father. Rahner's Christ is one who must also walk the road of faith, trust and love. Rahner's Jesus is a truly human Jesus who undergoes a truly human history with all that that implies.

This is a Christ with whom we can identify because this Christ has truly identified with us. His divine sonship does not make him different from us. It makes him the supreme and complete realization of what all humans are called to be, "images of God", daughters and sons of the Father. Discipleship, i.e. walking in the footsteps of *this* Jesus is truly possible. This Jesus can truly inspire and motivate discipleship, for he first had to clear the way for us as the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. As the temptation and garden stories

<sup>148</sup> See S.T., III, q. 14, art. 1, ad. 2. See also q. 9, arts. 1 & 2. In q. 14 art. 2 Thomas has to make a case that Jesus had such "defects" as hunger, thirst, ability to suffer and die. In other words, for Thomas it is not obvious, given Jesus' humanity, that Jesus would have these human experiences. Again one begins to wonder how "one in being with us" is this Jesus.

indicate, Jesus too had to come to grips with the roaring lion who goes about seeking someone to devour. "Abba, you have the power to do all things. Take this cup away from me. But let it be as you would have it, not as I."<sup>149</sup>

The Jesus of this anthropological Christology shows us that our own growth in sonship or daughter-ship, our own spiritual journey, consists precisely in *kenosis*, in self-emptying, self-abandonment, self-displacement, so that we can be filled with God. Jesus so totally emptied himself that he could be totally filled with the divine. In this self-emptying, he who was the old Adam as we are, became the new and perfect Adam, which we are all called to be in imitation of him. This Christological theme of *kenosis*, so essential to understand Jesus' own sonship, is of course a central theme in our own Carmelite tradition of desert, darkness, dark night and pure heart, as has been seen above in the Rule, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross.

One last point from Rahner's anthropological Christology which can be instructive to us. Rahner's Jesus, as we have seen, is divine because he is fully human. In the good Catholic tradition of grace and nature, Rahner never has grace compete with or preclude the human. Grace always makes possible the truly human, enriches it and completes it. We have seen that Jesus is the supreme instance of this theological principle. What is instructive here is that growth in faith, growth in the spiritual life, growth in prayer, if it is genuine growth, can never be *dehumanizing*. It must always be *humanizing*. In a very true sense, given Rahner's view of the human person as *capax Dei*, one can say that grace does not divinize. Grace humanizes. Or perhaps it would be more precise

<sup>149</sup> Mk 14:36.

to say that grace divinizes us by making us more and more human.

In view of this theological principle, of which Christ is the highest and fullest example, the life of faith or the spiritual life should never alienate us from our genuine humanity or true selves. Jesus' sonship as the radical realization and hence celebration of the human militates against all gnostic, Manichaean, Albigensian and Jansenistic tendencies in spirituality to denigrate the human. Christ as the New Adam, as the one totally actualized human being is the witness par excellence to the words of Irenaeus, "The glory of God is the human person fully alive".

**5.3** One concern common to most contemporary Christologies is to take seriously the significance of the *historical* humanity of Jesus.<sup>151</sup> Hence, many Christologies today, e.g. that of K. Rahner, E. Schillebeeckx, W. Kasper, W. Pannenberg, J. Sobrino, are characterized as Christologies "from below" or "ascent" Christologies, i.e. Christologies which move from the "the historical Jesus" to the Christ of faith and dogma.<sup>152</sup> The "historical Jesus"

is actually a composite image of Jesus (his words, deeds, self-understanding, claim, understanding of his fate) which is reconstructed through the use of historical-critical methods applied to New Testament texts.<sup>153</sup> It is with select aspects of this historical Jesus that I am concerned, for they can most help us rearticulate the Christocentrism of the Rule.<sup>154</sup>

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Bourke (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 213-214.

<sup>153</sup> Regarding the term "historical Jesus", see Elizabeth Johnson, "The Theological Relevance of the Historical Jesus: A Debate and a Thesis", *The Thomist* 48 (1984): 4-10. For a succinct presentation of the historical Jesus along with extensive bibliography, see John P. Meier, "Jesus", in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy (eds) (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990), pp. 1316-1328.

<sup>154</sup> It should be pointed out that while Rahner's Christology discussed above is a Christology from below insofar as he does take seriously the historical humanity of Jesus, nonetheless Rahner himself spends little time discussing the concrete historical details of Jesus' life and ministry as these are known through contemporary historical-critical methods. Nor does he spell out the social and political consequences of this historical Jesus. Hence his more speculative, anthropological Christology needs to be complemented by a consideration of the historical Jesus, his words and deeds and their socio-political consequences. Because Rahner's theology often fails to take seriously the concrete, specific details of history and to spell out the socio-political consequences of the Gospel, it has been accused of being somewhat privatized and spiritualized, that is, it is concerned more with the individual and its authentic self-actualization than with the historical, societal and communal aspects of human existence and their transformation. The same criticisms could be raised regarding the spirituality of Teresa and John. This world, with its oppressive socio-economic structures, and the liberation of history from all forms of oppression and injustice were not central themes for them. Nor could we expect them to be. It is only in our day, perhaps because of Karl Marx himself, that there has been a rediscovery of biblical eschatology and its significance for a "worldly" Christianity and hence a "worldly" following of Christ. However, it is important to note that even today we have much to learn from Teresa and John and the inner liberation of which they speak, a liberation which is essential for those who are committed to liberating those who are in any way socially or economically oppressed, for the enemy, the roaring lion, is not only "out there", as Marx and others have shown. It is also "within" as Paul, Augustine, Albert of Jerusalem, Freud, Paul Ricoeur and others have shown. Concerning the importance of Teresa and John for a contemporary "liberation" theology and spirituality, see Segundo Galilea, *The Future of Our Past* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press,

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<sup>150</sup> The following section, with some revision and expansion, can be found in Buggert, "Jesus in Carmelite Spirituality", pp. 98-107 (see note 2 above).

<sup>151</sup> On this see, e.g. Jon Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1987), pp. 30-32, 43, 56-57. I stress the word "historical", for these Christologies are not concerned with Jesus' human "nature" understood in a timeless, *ahistorical*, philosophical way but with the actual "specifics" of Jesus' own history and the significance of these specifics for his being the Christ, Son, Lord, Savior. We have already to some extent seen the importance of this "historical" humanity in considering the Christology of Karl Rahner.

<sup>152</sup> For the terms "from below" and "ascent", see, e.g. Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian*, trans. Edward Quinn (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976), p. 134; Dermot A. Lane, *The Reality of Jesus*, pp. 15-18; Karl Rahner, "The Two Basic Types of Christology", *Theological Investigations*, vol. XIII, trans. David

Reflecting the consensus of biblical scholars today, Norman Perrin states:

*The central aspect of the teaching of Jesus was that concerning the Kingdom of God. . . . Jesus appeared as one who proclaimed the Kingdom; all else in his message and ministry serves a function in relation to that proclamation and derives its meaning from it. . . . Of all the descriptive titles that have been applied to Jesus through the centuries, the one that sums up his historical appearance best is the one whose currency owes so much to Bultmann: Jesus is the Proclaimer of the Kingdom of God.*<sup>155</sup>

Jesus, therefore, did not preach himself but the kingdom of God (*malkuth shamayim*) or, more precisely, “the Reigning God”. This proclamation has its roots in the Davidic period. But with the prophets and apocalyptic seers the Reign of God becomes an eschatological or futuristic hope. It is this eschatological understanding of the Reign which forms the context for Jesus’ own proclamation and praxis.<sup>156</sup> Hence by Reign of God Jesus is referring in the first place to God’s final, decisive, salvific activity within history through which God fully becomes king, becomes fully the God of salvation. In the second place by Reign of God Jesus is referring to the eschatological blessings of salvation such as

peace and justice which will result from God’s decisive act of reigning.<sup>157</sup>

Among other characteristics of Jesus’ reign of God proclamation and praxis which are unique to Jesus are that for him this Reign of God is not only future but also present and in fact is already now breaking into history precisely through him, his words and deeds. Hence Jesus sees himself as the eschatological prophet,<sup>158</sup> the one through whom the decisive eschatological reality of God is now being mediated to history. In his words and mighty deeds or miracles (*dunamis*), the eschatological blessings of salvation are now occurring. Anointed with the eschatological spirit foretold by Joel, Jesus brings good news to the poor, proclaims the presence of the Jubilee year in which captives are freed and returned to the land, gives sight to the blind, cures the lame, lepers, and deaf, proclaims good news to the poor and binds up the strong man, Satan, and his reign.<sup>159</sup> Through Jesus’ reign of God praxis, creation and history are already beginning to be brought to eschatolog-

1985), pp. 25-43. On the relation between liberating praxis and contemplation, see my own article, “Liberation Theology: Praxis and Contemplation”, *Carmelus*, 34 (1987): 3-58.

<sup>155</sup> *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 54. See also Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971), p. 96 (Kingdom as the central theme of the public proclamation of Jesus); Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, trans. Hubert Hoskins (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), p. 140 (Kingdom as basic impulse behind the message and preaching of Jesus); Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, p. 84 (The ultimate for Jesus is the Kingdom of God); Meier, “Jesus”, p. 1320 (Kingdom as the basic message of Jesus).

<sup>156</sup> As Sobrino and other liberation theologians point out, not only Jesus’ proclamation but also his praxis of the Reign of God is important. See Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, pp. 13, 66-69, 71, 85-86, 91-94.

<sup>157</sup> Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, pp. 55-60. I have stated here the basic meaning of Jesus’ Reign of God proclamation. But, as Perrin points out, the reign of God as proclaimed by Jesus is a “tensive” and not “steno” symbol, i.e. it is characterized by “semantic plenitude”. Thus it will take many “stories” or parables to spell out this semantic plenitude and to mediate to Jesus’ hearers the experience of God as king. See Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom: Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp. 32-34, 55-56, 199-200.

<sup>158</sup> For this notion see Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, pp. 441-49, 475-480; Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, trans. V. Green (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), pp. 69-70.

<sup>159</sup> Since not only diabolical possession but all sicknesses were in some way attributable to Satan, Jesus through his mighty deeds was dispelling the reign of Satan and ushering in the reign of God. Regarding Jesus’ mighty deeds (miracles and exorcisms) and their relation to the inbreaking Reign of God, see Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 95-98; Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian*, pp. 226-238; Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: an Experiment*, pp. 180-200, in which Schillebeeckx also relates the mighty deeds of Jesus to his identity as eschatological prophet.

ical completion.<sup>160</sup> In Origen's words, Jesus is himself the Reign of God, the *autobasileia*. His message and cause (the Reign) cannot be separated from his person.<sup>161</sup>

For Jesus the reign of God entailed, therefore, a total transformation of creation and history. It was the realization of Israel's eschatological hope that at the end of time, all alienation and evil, be it physical or moral, would be overcome, and justice and peace would reign. Nothing would escape its salvific, healing presence. And thus for Jesus, this reign of God, while remaining "outstanding" or futuristic in its completion, was very much a reality which was also *this worldly* and which was even now beginning to heal reality in all its dimensions, political, social, economic, personal and cosmic.<sup>162</sup> It cannot be totally eschatologized or spiritualized, that is referring only to an other-worldly eschatological fulfillment or to only the "spiritual" dimensions of men and women.<sup>163</sup>

Jesus was not, therefore, concerned only with ultimate salvation, the hereafter. He was also concerned with salvation *now*, with the

inbreaking of God's reign *now*. Hence he was not an "other worldly" ascetic or hermit concerned only with the "interior" life. He threw himself into the midst of his sin-laden society and challenged it. In this regard, he is a prophet and not a hermit.

One more aspect of the historical Jesus to be noted is his association with "sinners" or the "rabble", those who in the eyes of at least certain Pharisees were considered to be beyond the pale of God's compassion and mercy. Jesus' frequent association with sinners and his eating with them can only be understood in terms of his Reign of God ministry. In Jesus' time the ultimate forgiveness of sin was a major aspect of apocalyptic hope. When God fully reigned, all sin would be forgiven. But such forgiveness was limited to God-fearing, law-keeping Jews. It did not extend to Gentiles or those Jews who deviated from the law and the middle class mores of the Pharisees, or who through certain professions or practices turned themselves into Gentiles. In the eyes of the Pharisees all such were Godless sinners, the "rabble", and included those uneducated in the law, the poor, tax collectors, swineherds, prostitutes, the sick, blind and lame, demoniacs, beggars, robbers, gamblers, usurers. It is especially for these, the marginalized, the oppressed, the vilified and the victims of society that Jesus worked his mighty deeds and proclaimed his "good news" of the reigning God, good news for those who heretofore had heard only the "bad news" of exclusion and condemnation. In fact, for Jesus the kingly activity of God was being primarily manifested in God's compassionate love for all these. It is especially with these "outcasts" that Jesus and his God had solidarity and for them a preferential love.<sup>164</sup>

<sup>160</sup> For this summary statement, see Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 65-103; Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: an Experiment*, pp. 140-271; Michael Cook, *The Jesus of Faith: A Study in Christology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), pp. 35-62.

<sup>161</sup> Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 100-01; William M. Thompson, *Jesus Lord and Savior: A Theopathic Christology and Soteriology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), pp. 63-66.

<sup>162</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, trans. Patrick Hughes (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1978), pp. 51-56. Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, pp. 81-94. Regarding the relationship between the Reign of God as historically realized and its eschatological fulfillment, or between intraworldly liberations and ultimate salvation, see Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Salvation and Liberation: In Search of a Balance Between Faith and Politics*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1984), pp. 14-66.

<sup>163</sup> See William M. Thompson, *The Jesus Debate* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), pp. 183-91; Donald Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1984), pp. 94-118. Regarding the notions of spiritualization and eschatologization, see my "Liberation Theology: Contemplation and Praxis", *Carmelus* 34 (1987): 6-9; Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>164</sup> Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, pp. 90-94; Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: an Experiment*, pp. 206-213; Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before*

Included among those who were marginalized in Jesus' day were women. The role of women in Jewish society at the time of Jesus was basically restricted to the home. The Jewish historian, Josephus, roughly a contemporary of Jesus, writes: "The woman... is in all things inferior to the man. Let her accordingly be submissive, not for her humiliation but that she may be directed; for the authority has been given by God to the man".<sup>165</sup>

This inferiority extended also to religious matters. A woman was not permitted full access to the temple; she was restricted to an outer courtyard. The religious obligations expected of her were the same as a slave's. She did not have to recite the *shema* that every male Jew was expected to pray each morning and evening. The reason for this was that a woman was like a slave; she was not the mistress of her own time. Women were not to be spoken to on the street; they were to veil their faces and remain behind their husbands in public.<sup>166</sup>

How shocking Jesus' association with women in public must have been. Many of his mighty deeds were performed for women; women travelled with him and in fact assisted Jesus and his disciples out of their means (Lk. 8:1-3). It is the women, not the male disciples, who remain faithful to Jesus until the end and are present at the foot of the cross. Indeed, in his association with these women, Jesus is again shocking the system of his day, turning things upside down. With the now arrival of the Reign of God, the God of the absolute future, there are indeed

surprises. With Jesus and his God, there are no longer classes, barriers and divisions.

Jesus did not only associate with and minister to these "sinners" and outcasts; worse yet, he broke bread with them, and in so doing "de-classed" himself, i.e. became one of them.<sup>167</sup> As Nolan states:

*It would be impossible to overestimate the impact these meals must have had upon the poor and the sinners. By accepting them as friends and equals Jesus had taken away their shame, humiliation and guilt. By showing them that they mattered to him as people he gave them a sense of dignity and released them from their captivity.*<sup>168</sup>

But even more important is the theological significance of these meals. For the Jew of Jesus' day, all meals were sacred. Table fellowship signified not only peace, friendship and reconciliation, but it signified all of this in God's eyes. The meal celebrated the restoration of the covenant relationship and the coming of the Reign of God.

Jesus' meals with sinners were, therefore, "acted parables" which celebrated the present joy of those who had accepted the God of Jesus and joyfully anticipated the eschaton when God's salvific gifts would be fully present. They were an acted symbol of Jesus' message and mission of the offer of God's peace, favor and reconciliation, a sacrament or a prolepsis of the future Reign of God which itself in the prophets and seers was symbolized by a meal. And what was most scandalous about these meals was that sinners were invited to eat along with the righteous. No longer did the law dictate with whom one was to eat. No longer was the sinner to be so clearly distinguished from the righteous. Grace and compassion were taking prece-

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*Christianity* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1978), pp. 21-29. Regarding God's and Jesus' preferential love for these groups of outcasts, see Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice*, pp. 87-94; Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, pp. 13-15, 32-35, 86-94, 106-111.

<sup>165</sup> See Donald Senior, *Jesus: A Gospel Portrait* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), pp.67-68.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>167</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: an Experiment*, p. 211.

<sup>168</sup> Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, p. 39.

dence over the law. This was new wine breaking old wine skins.<sup>169</sup>

By way of summary we can say that Jesus understood himself to be God's eschatological prophet whose mission it was to usher in the Reign of God and its blessings which touched all aspects of creation and history. In his mediating the reigning God to men and women Jesus turned especially to those who were the outcasts and marginalized of his day, the victims of injustice and oppression. For them especially Jesus had good news (Gospel) and to them especially Jesus shows himself as the sacrament of God's compassion. For them being sad in the presence of Jesus was an existential impossibility.<sup>170</sup>

Indeed, this Jesus was pouring new wine into old wine skins. He was pouring the new wine of the good news that the love and compassion of the reigning God was now offered to all, even the outcasts, the marginalized, the sinners and the rabble. In so pouring this new wine, Jesus came into conflict with the leaders of Israel. He, his message, his ministry, his God were a threat and a challenge to them and their power. Eventually they would have to do away with him. They did. They had him crucified and hence he died a God-forsaken death. "Cursed is anyone who is hanged on a tree" (Gal 3:13). We must not "mystify" this death on a cross with exalted theologies of redemption, such as it was God's will that his son die such a gruesome death in order to expiate or wipe away the debt of human sin or appease God's anger through the sacrifice of his own life. Jesus died not because his Father willed it. Nor did he die to repair God's injured honor

<sup>169</sup> For Jesus' meals see Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, pp. 109-108; Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment*, pp. 206-218; Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, pp. 37-40.

<sup>170</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment*, p. 201.

through an infinite act of satisfaction. He died because he tangled with the powers of his day and lost, or so it seemed on Good Friday. But Easter Sunday tells us that justice triumphs over injustice.<sup>171</sup>

## 5.4 Rearticulating Christocentricity Today

The project of all Carmelites is to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. But our understanding of Jesus changes; so also does the historical situation. And the change of historical situation presents new challenges to our walking in the footsteps of Jesus. In order, therefore, to rearticulate the Christocentric spirituality of Albert's Rule we must take into consideration both our contemporary understanding of the historical Jesus and also our contemporary situation. Hence before attempting a rearticulation, a word about the contemporary situation of the developed countries of the first world is in order.<sup>172</sup>

The Jesuit philosopher, John F. Kavanaugh, views and analyzes our contemporary situation by employing the Marxian inspired heuristic model of the "commodity form".

<sup>171</sup> See Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time*, trans. Patrick Hughes (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1978), pp. 100-138; Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1978), pp. 179-235; Jon Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, pp. 119-122, 148-151.

<sup>172</sup> Here I rely upon John F. Kavanaugh, *Following Christ in A Consumer Society* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1981). Similar in many aspects to Kavanaugh is Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice*. Both authors wish to achieve an integration of faith and justice into a holistic Christian spirituality responsive to the contemporary situation. For an analysis of the situation in Latin America and a spirituality which will respond to its challenges, see e.g. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1982); *We Drink from our Wells*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1983); Segundo Galilea, *The Future of Our Past*; Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1988).

The commodity form is a paradigm for human living. It is a way of perceiving ourselves and others as things or commodities, and living accordingly. Things replace persons; material relations between things displace truly human relations. The commodity becomes a god who drives humans to worship things and relate to them as if they were persons and relate to persons as if they were things, with the result that persons are possessed by their possessions and produced by their products. Thus they become alienated from themselves and transformed into the commodity itself.<sup>173</sup> There is even a commodity form of knowing. Knowing is reduced to technical, scientific, instrumental, “thing-like” knowing.<sup>174</sup> This commodity form with its pre-eminent values of marketability and consumption thus becomes a pathology against which persons evaluate themselves in terms of productivity and usefulness with the result that there is no intrinsic human value.<sup>175</sup>

In turn the commodity form, as underlying value of our society, gives rise to a commodity ethics of moral rugged individualism, which results in violence, domination, manipulation, fear, alienation, racism, chauvinism, hedonism, sexual mechanics, abortion, euthanasia, excessive consumption and the dissolution of family life.<sup>176</sup>

Besides the commodity form, there is another paradigm of human existence, the “personal form”, which is “a mode of perceiving and valuing men and women as irreplaceable persons whose fundamental identities are fulfilled in covenantal relationship”.<sup>177</sup> The personal form promotes the intrinsic worth of persons, respect, freedom, detach-

ment, self-donation, generosity, justice, peace, forgiveness, healing, compassion, the empowering and exaltation of those who are least.<sup>178</sup> These two forms, the commodity and the personal, are opposed in every respect. And hence Christ and the Gospel, as most fully revealing the personal form, radically conflict with and even subvert our contemporary society and its commodity form. To follow Christ is, of necessity, to be counter-cultural.<sup>179</sup>

As we saw above, it was the crusade spirituality which helped define the *obsequium Jesu Christi* of the first Carmelite hermits as one of imitating Jesus’ own spiritual battle through poverty, penance, solitude, silence, obedience and prayer. Such a walking in the footsteps of Jesus was not merely a “spiritual” enterprise; it also had “political” connotations, for its purpose was to regain the land of Christ. Though involved in spiritual combat, those first hermits were very much committed to the land of Christ, its liege, and so were truly citizens of this world. As vassals of Christ, they had solidarity with and responsibility for the land and its people.<sup>180</sup>

Needless to say the crusades are over, and reconquering the physical land of Christ is not a priority item. But for Carmelites, walking in the footsteps of Jesus does remain a priority item. Given the above analysis of the contemporary situation in terms of the commodity form, and given the above sketch of the historical Jesus, how are we to rearticulate for today our “walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ”? I offer three suggestions.

First suggestion: not any Jesus will do. In our walking in the foot-

<sup>173</sup> Kavanaugh, *Following Christ*, pp. xviii, 3-5, 26.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 26.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xviii, 9, 30-40.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 98, 112.

<sup>180</sup> Constance Fitzgerald, “How to Read the Rule: An Interpretation”, in Mulhall, *Albert's Way*, pp. 58-59; Cicconetti, *The Rule of Carmel*, p. 16.

steps of Jesus, which Jesus do we follow? Not every Jesus is reconcilable with the historical Jesus and his praxis. Jesus has been used, abused and manipulated to become an ideological prop for the status quo. He has been invoked, and even prayed to, in order to keep the oppressed in their oppression, the oppressors in their power, the “haves” in their riches and the “have nots” in their poverty. If Bultmann “demythologized” Jesus, we must “depacify” him so that he is not in connivance with idols, such as the commodity form, and so that he does not leave reality in peace.<sup>181</sup>

We must ask ourselves: what would a “depacified” Jesus have to say about the tremendous inequality of the distribution and use of the goods of the earth between rich and poor, rich and poor nations, about all the enslavement, injustice, dehumanization and ecological plunder which result from this unequal distribution? What would the “depacified” Jesus have to say about the oppression and marginalization of women or of any minority? Not to bring Jesus and his liberating praxis into the picture, as if they had nothing to say about these issues, is in effect to present a heavenly and eschatologized Jesus who has no significance for history, for our salvation *here and now*. It is to reduce the reign of God to an exclusively eschatological reality.

Sobrinó correctly warns us of having only an “Easter” Christology which leaves the life and cross of Jesus behind, which gives us an exalted Christ who is above and indifferent to the injustices of this world. Such a Christology easily leads to the privatization, spiritualization and escha-

tologization of faith and Christian life. It anesthetizes us to the conflictual and sinful reality of this world and the power of the “Satanic” at work in it.<sup>182</sup>

Any following of Christ which anesthetizes us from history and its conflicts at best is a *fuga mundi* spirituality which negates God’s own incarnational history through which in Jesus God took upon God’s self our history precisely to heal and fulfill it. At worst such an anesthetizing spirituality which is focused upon one’s “interior life” to the neglect of creation and history is a gnosticization or Platonization of Christianity or a supposedly Christian form of magic or voodoo which attempts to manipulate the divine and escape from the painful, and in some instances, death-dealing commitments and efforts needed to make God’s Reign more a reality in our world.

Second suggestion: walking in the footsteps of Jesus means taking up Jesus’ own Reign of God praxis. There is still a land of Christ with its people to be regained, but this land with its people is not limited to the geographical land of Christ. Jesus was about much more than that. Jesus was about the inbreaking of the Reign of God now into history, a Reign of God which would embrace and transform *all* of creation and *all* of history, a Reign which even now in history would begin to dispel the Reign of Satan and *all* of its consequences: injustice, violence, war, oppression, domination; a Reign which would restore *all* to the paradisaic state. From the perspective of the Reign of God proclamation and praxis of Jesus, the land and the people of Jesus embrace *all* creation and *all* history, especially the marginalized, the victims of oppression

<sup>181</sup> Sobrinó, *Jesus in Latin America*, p. 59. On the ideological or dehumanizing images and invocations of Jesus, see José Míguez Bonino, ed., *Faces of Jesus: Latin American Christologies*, trans. Robert Barr (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1977).

<sup>182</sup> Sobrinó, *Christology at the Crossroads*, pp. 273-286, and *Jesus in Latin America*, pp. 148-54.

and injustice, the least of the sisters and brothers.<sup>183</sup>

Hence, to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ to reconquer the land is to insert one's self into history and its conflicts, to take on earthly and political citizenship as did the original hermits of Carmel.<sup>184</sup> The *obsequium* of the Rule allows for no privatized, spiritualized, eschatologized spirituality. It cannot be separated from the *polis*. Both the Jesus and the discipleship of classical theology and spirituality must be "secularized", i.e. made relevant to the *saeculum*, the world and its history. Carmelites also must attend to the wisdom of Marx's well-known eleventh thesis against Feuerbach: "Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it".<sup>185</sup>

Hence the *obsequium* of the Rule demands today commitment to the land, the here and now of history with all of its sin-riddled conflicts. In the context of the developed, industrialized nations of the first world, this insertion into history, this commitment to the land, becomes specified by prophetic denunciation of the commodity form and annunciation of the personal form. The idol of the commodity form, with its reduction of the person to an ex-

pendable "thing" and human experience to the quantifiable, with its enslaving values of marketability and consumption, with its ethics of rugged individualism and its offsprings of violence, domination, manipulation, alienation, racism, chauvinism, sexual mechanics, abortion and the dissolution of family life, has become the new Satan, the new adversary who prowls around as a roaring lion seeking those whom he can devour. To take up Jesus' Reign of God praxis in our day means to enter into battle with this roaring lion of the commodity form, to stand on the side of the intrinsic worth of persons, freedom, detachment, generosity, justice, peace, forgiveness, healing, compassion and the empowering of those who are least.

Third suggestion: to walk in the footsteps of Jesus demands entering into spiritual combat with the roaring lion of the commodity form. In what might this spiritual combat consist? I propose three elements: the vows, silence-solitude-prayer, and community.

Poverty, chastity and obedience themselves are counter-cultural; they are opposed to the commodity form, for their purpose is humanization and freedom, freedom from powers within which drive us to the commodity values of power, domination and possession, and freedom to empower others as persons. Likewise, there is an economics to the vows. They are not very helpful to financial growth.<sup>186</sup>

There is also an economics to silence, solitude and prayer. They too are financially worthless and hence are a prophetic denunciation of the commodity form.<sup>187</sup> Silence and solitude are filled with risks, for they reveal our needfulness and inner poverty, which are so strongly de-

<sup>183</sup> It is this thrust towards universalization, rooted in the Reign of God proclaimed and enacted by Jesus himself, which accounts for the wisdom-inspired, world-historical and cosmic Christologies of later New Testament works such as Colossians, Ephesians and the Gospel of John. If Jesus is to be "Lord", then his Lordship must be as extensive as that of Yahweh, whose name he now shares. Hence it must embrace all of creation and history. On this see Reginald Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), pp. 62-85; E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, trans. John Bowden (New York, New York: Seabury Press, 1980), pp. 179-217; James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1980), pp. 163-250.

<sup>184</sup> Fitzgerald, "How To Read the Rule: An Interpretation", p. 59.

<sup>185</sup> See "Theses on Feuerbach" in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1978), p. 145.

<sup>186</sup> Kavanaugh, *Following Christ*, pp. 48, 137-138.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48.

nied by the commercialism and materialism of the commodity form. Silence and solitude are hopelessly unmarketable.<sup>188</sup> Prayer is an act of interiority which demands that we extricate ourselves from patterns of behavior which are normative for the commodity form of existence; prayer involves being present to God and hence to our true identity as persons; prayer is an attack against the fraudulence of mere roles demanded by the commodity form; it is a centering in “being” rather than the “having” of the commodity form. Prayer is a de-commodification of our lives and a reappropriation of our personhood.<sup>189</sup>

Silence, solitude and prayer play also another role in our spiritual battle. These three typically desert values of Carmel make us attentive to the gratuitousness of God’s love in our lives, dispose us to recognize that God is present in all things, purify our approach to others of the commodity tendency to impose an alien will on them and thus enable a true and full encounter with our neighbor.<sup>190</sup> Silence, solitude and prayer are the “stuff” which produces mystical prophets. Because the prophet “tastes” the divine presence, he/she can also taste its absence in history, the commodity form. It is this awareness of the divine absence which caused the prophet to denounce the old, the reign of Satan, and announce the new, the Reign of God. Silence, solitude and prayer are the school of Elijan prophets.<sup>191</sup>

Community too is a counter-cultural form of spiritual combat. The original hermits of Carmel contextualized their walking in the foot-

steps of Jesus Christ by embracing the ideal vision of the Jerusalem community. Albert’s formula of life spells out this communitarian vision in terms of a sharing of goods and life, an egalitarian style of life, communal-dialogical discernment and a respect for the individual. Hermits within the Rule itself quickly come to be called “brothers”, who are to undertake a participative form of living together. This communitarian life is itself a counter-cultural, prophetic protest against the commodity form with its objectifying of the person through dominative and dehumanizing relationships, its lack of care and respect, its enslavement of freedom, and its idolizing of competition, achievement and control.<sup>192</sup> In turn such a communitarian life witnesses to the values of the personal form: the intrinsic worth of persons, freedom, detachment, generosity, justice, peace, forgiveness, healing, compassion, the empowering of those who are least.

The land of Christ has yet to be reconquered; all things have yet to be subject to him so that his Father may fully reign and be all in all. As in the days of Albert and the first hermits of Carmel, the land will be reconquered not by arms and might but by walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. This *obsequium Jesu Christi* involves a spiritual battle which, as with Jesus himself, inserts one into history in combat with the roaring lion. To walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ today is a call to a communal life of counter-cultural resistance, rooted in silence, solitude and prayer, by re-enacting Jesus’ prophetic praxis of the Reign of God in solidarity with all, but especially with those who are the sinners, the outcasts and the rabble of our day.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., pp. 121.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., pp. 121-122.

<sup>190</sup> Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, pp. 110-113.

<sup>191</sup> Regarding “mystical prophets”, see my “Liberation Theology: Praxis and Contemplation”, *Carmelus* 34 (1987), p. 55. On the importance of the desert spirituality of Carmel for the prophetic action of liberation, see Segundo Galilea, “The Future of Our Past”, pp. 25-43.

<sup>192</sup> See Fitzgerald, “How To Read the Rule: An Interpretation”, pp. 61-62.