THE LIVING STONES OF THE HOLY LAND TRUST

Registered Charity No. 1081204

'An ecumenical trust seeking to promote contacts between Christian Communities in Britain and those in the Holy Land and neighbouring countries.'

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Living Stones Yearbook 2019

LIVING STONES
YEARBOOK
2019

Witness and Communion:
Christian Theological and Political Thought
in the
Contemporary Middle East

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Note

It is appreciated that articles derive from authors in a range of disciplines and demonstrate a variety in approach. The spelling of some specialised terms, local place-names and proper names in particular may vary considerably according to the contributor and discipline. These variations, however, should cause no problems to readers.

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EDITORIAL

The present volume, like previous *Yearbooks*, might well begin on the familiar note of deep concern about the situation of the Christian communities in the Middle East. In the light of the events of the early days of January 2020 this needs little justification. However, it does not diminish the need to support, value and expound the heritage of these ancient communities.

This volume of studies provides a strong emphasis on witness and communion in contemporary Christian religious and political thought from the Middle East. The first essay is by Stefanie Hugh-Donovan which brings together in dialogue four significant thinkers and mystics—Louis Massignon, Olivier Clément, Thomas Merton and Christian de Chergé, highlighting their commitment to radical hospitality and radical faith. Stefanie sadly died in December 2018. She strongly supported the Theology Group through her presence and fine theological contributions.

David Derrick, an academic friend and colleague, presents a reflection upon the significance of Stefanie's research contribution to religious ideas and knowledge.

Agnes Wilkins, Stanbrook Abbey, in her second contribution to the Yearbook, focuses upon the life and witness of the Hassan Dehqani-Tafti as bishop in post-revolutionary Iran. Agnes' contribution is a timely engagement with the modern history of Christianity in Iran.

Paolo Dall'Oglio, Italian and Jesuit scholar who founded the monastic space of dialogue and encounter at Deirmarmusa el Habashi in Syria, reflects upon the idea of Badaliyya (mystical substitution) which is central idea in the thought of Louis Massignon, as is presence

for Charles de Foucauld. Massignon, through his dialogue with Islam and de Foucauld for his presence in the eremitical tradition interfacing with the Muslim world had both been central figures in Dall'Oglio's interreligious engagement. Dall'Oglio disappeared during the conflict in Syria. Christopher Knolly contributed an overview of Dall'Oglio's life and work for Yearbook 2017-2018.

Environmental concerns have emerged with greater force in the Middle East. Robin Gibbon's introduces Eastern Christian Perspectives on Ecology.

Peter Colwell describes the contribution of David Neuhaus to Jewish-Christian relations in the context of modern Israel.

David Derrick in this third contribution to the Yearbook takes forward his account of the theological and political thought of Kenneth Cragg with an emphasis on his ecclesiological view of the Church of England's presence in Jerusalem.

In the final contribution Anthony O'Mahony gives an account of some aspects of the monastic and spiritual contribution of Matta el-Meskin/Matthew the Poor, an influential contemporary Desert Father (1919-2006) who has wide ecumenical appeal.

These studies collectively make an important contribution to the on-going important of the Christian religious and political thought of the Middle East for the wider Church today.

Editors
January 2020

CONTRIBUTORS

Peter Colwell is Deputy General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, a Reformed minister and a doctoral research student at the School of Advanced Studies, University of London.

David Derrick trained as a worker priest for the Church of England and has exercised his ministry in London's inner boroughs for the last fifty years. An article based on his MA dissertation (Heythrop College, University of London), 'Can we re-image an Islam with purely a Meccan identity, as set out in the writings of Kenneth Cragg?' appeared in *Living Stones Yearbook* 2013, pp. 84-107. This was followed by 'Kenneth Cragg, Charles Malik and Dag Hammarskjold—some thoughts on the question of mysticism and the "public square"' (*Living Stones Yearbook* 2016). He is currently a postgraduate student at the School of Advanced Studies, University of London, researching the theology of Kenneth Cragg in dialogue with Charles Malik and Dag Hammarskjöld with reference to 'The Human Condition'.

Robin Gibbons is one of the two chaplains for the Greek-Catholic Melkite Church in the UK from 1997; he was monk and priest St Michaels Abbey, Farnborough, 1972-1997. He is Director of Studies for Theology and Religious Studies, Department for Continuing Education, University of Oxford; Faculty Member, Faculty of Theology and Religion Oxford; Alexander Schmemann Professor of Eastern Christianity, Graduate Theological Foundation, Indiana; Ecumenical Canon, Christ Church Cathedral Oxford. He has published numerous studies including For The Life of the World: Eastern Christian

Reflections on the Environment, Institute for Religion, Politics and Culture, Maryland USA; 'Landscapes of Ecumenism: a Vast and Complex Realm', One in Christ Vol 46 no 1 2012; editor The Sunday Missal; The Order of Mass for Sundays, Harper Collins 2012; editor The Weekday Missal: The Order of Mass for Weekdays, Harper Collins 2012; The Eastern Christian Churches, CTS, 2006; 'The Eastern Catholic Diaspora in Contemporary Europe: Context and Challenges', The Downside Review 2016, Vol. 134 and Weekly Reflection E Journal (Sunday Reflection in Independent Catholic News 2013-ongoing http://www.indcatholicnews.com/index.php.

Paolo Dall'Oglio SJ, an Italian Jesuit was the principal founder of the contemporary monastic community Dayr Mar Musa al-Habashi in Syria, which is dedicated to ecumenism and relations between Christians and Muslims. For the wider context of this engagement see S H Griffith, 'Arabic Christian Relations with Islam: Retrieving from History, Expanding the Canon', in *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East: Studies for the Synod for the Middle East*, A O'Mahony and J Flannery (eds), London, 2010, pp. 263-290; Sidney Griffith, 'Christianity's Historic Roots in the Middle East: Christians at Home in the World of Islam', OSA (ed): Secular Nationalism and Citizenship in Muslim Countries Arab Christians in the Levant, London, 2018, pp. 29-60. The monastery, whilst it has its own modern rule, is in an ecclesial expression of the Syrian Catholic Church. A O'Mahony, 'Between Rome and Antioch: Syrian Catholic Church in the modern Middle East', in *Eastern Christianity in the Modern Middle East*, A O'Mahony and E Loosley (eds), London, Routledge, 2010, pp. 120-137 and John Flannery, 'The Syrian Catholic Church: between history, martyrdom, mission, identity and ecumenism', *Christianity in the Middle East: Studies in Modern History, Theology and Politics*, A O'Mahony (ed.), Melisende, London 2008), 143-167. Dall'Oglio considered ecclesial plurality as an essential aspect of maintaining a religious and political plurality in the Middle East region today see P Dall'Oglio, 'Eglises plurielles pour un Moyen-Orient pluriel', *Mélanges de sciences religieuses*, 68/3 (2011), pp. 31-46. The community should be considered as an aspect of monastic revival which has taken place across the region, but also a novel expression of Syriac Christianity, from within the Eastern Catholic tradition based upon the life and

eremitical endeavour Charles de Foucauld and the religious ideas of Louis Massignon for Christian relations with Muslims and Islam. See E Loosely and P Dall'Oglio, 'La communaté d'Ad-Khalil: une vie monastique au service du dialogue islamo-chrétien', *Proche Orient Chrétien*, 54 (2004), pp. 117-128; P Dall'Oglio, 'Louis Massignon and Badaliya', *Aram: Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies*, 20 (2008), pp. 329-336; P Dall'Oglio, 'Massignon and jihad, through De Foucauld, al-Hallaj and Gandhi', in *Faith, Power and Violence*, J J Donahue and C W Troll (eds) [= *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 258 (1998)], pp. 103-114. During the years leading up to the crisis in Syria and the abduction in 2013—Paolo Dall'Oglio published a numerous theological reflections on the religious and political context of Christian-Muslim relations in Syria but also its wider context: *Speranza nell'Islam: Interpretazione della prospettiva escatologica di Corano XVIII*, Marietti, Milan, 1991; *Amoureux de l'islam, croyant en Jésus*,—avec Églantine Gabaix-Hialé, Les Editions de l'Atelier, Paris, 2009, *La sete di Ismaele. Siria, diario monastico islamo-cristiano*, Gabrielli Editori, Verona, 2011; *La rage et la lumière, avec Églantine Gabaix-Hialé* , Les Editions de l'Atelier, Paris, 2013. The lecture presented here was given at Heythrop College, University of London in 2007 for a conference on 'The Life and Thought of Louis Massignon'.

Stefanie Hugh-Donovan. Stefanie died early morning on 9 December 2018 after several months struggling with cancer which had spread very rapidly to the bone and other organs. She was a great friend to the Centre for Eastern Christianity, Heythrop College, University of London and an excellent scholar who brought real insight to her research on Olivier Clément, the Eastern Catholic Churches and Ecumenical relations between the Eastern and Western Churches. Stefanie contributed much conviviality and happiness by sharing her commitment and research interests, especially in the Eastern Catholic Churches. See in particular her study, 'The Eastern Catholic Movement in Russia', in Journal of Eastern Christian Studies, Vol. 67, no. 3-4, 2015, pp. 305-327. Stefanie's last lecture was given on this subject at the valedictory conference in June 2018 for the Centre for Eastern Christianity *Olivier Clément and Russian Catholics/Eastern Catholics in Europe*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvBzrMzKpGk&t=36s. I know that Stefanie enjoyed immensely working alongside so many others who had gathered around the Living Stones Theology Group and

Centre for Eastern Christianity. She was disappointed and very sad at the closure of the Centre. Stefanie, after retiring from a successful career in the NGO sector studied, for two master's degrees in Philosophy and Theology at the University of London, followed by her doctoral thesis 'Olivier Clément: French Thinker and Theologian of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Dialogue with Western Catholic Thought on Ecclesiology, Theology and the Identity of Europe', Heythrop College, 2015. Clément died in January 2009 and Stefanie was the first research scholar to engage with this important and very influential French religious thinker. For the English reader several of Clément's works have been translated. Clément was born into a deeply 'secularized' socialist/left family context in a south of France that was deeply divided between Protestant-Huguenots and Catholics. This context prevented Clément from 'discovering' Christianity until he encountered the Eastern Orthodox Church in Paris. He was influenced by the Russian immigrants at the theological School of St Serge which had gathered together some of the finest minds and influential figures of the Russian Religious Renaissance. Over time Clément travelled ecclesiologically from the Moscow Patriarchate, to a deep attraction to Athenagoras, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople; and the Church of Antioch. Clément's theological, political and ecclesial concerns became Stefanie's—deeply committed to the 'idea' and unity of Europe as echoed in its Christian culture and expressed through its global and ecumenical character. She was aware of the destructive trauma of the totalitarian possibility in European history, expressed in particular in Olivier Clément's The Spirit of Solzhenitsyn. Her experience enabled a re-reading of this in the temptation of totalitarian religion as expressed in Benedict XVI's Regensburg Address on 'Faith, Reason and the University—Memories and Reflections', September 2006 [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/ september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university- regensburg.html]. Indeed, Clément's critique of the leading Sunni Muslim scholar Tariq Ramadan including his affirmation of Islam as a negation of Christianity and Europe, was juxtaposed with Stefanie's instinctual spiritual awareness of the mystical possibility as offered in the life and thought of Louis Massignon and the Martyr Mystic of Islam al-Hallaj. See her studies: 'Olivier Clément on Orthodox theological thought and ecclesiology in the West', *International Journal for the Study of the Christian*

Church, 10 (2010), pp. 116-129; 'Ecclesial thought and life trajectories: an ecumenical dialogue. Part 1: Olivier Clément, Eastern Orthodox Theologian and Thomas Merton, Western Catholic Cistercian Monk', *One in Christ: a catholic ecumenical review*, 45 (2011), pp. 35-54; 'Ecclesial thought and life trajectories: an ecumenical dialogue. Part 2: 'Olivier Clément and Paul Evdokimov: Deux Passeurs', *One in Christ: a catholic ecumenical review*, 45 (2011), pp. 297-312; 'An Eastern Orthodox Perspective on Europe and Catholicism: A Study in the thought of Olivier Clément', *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 63 (2011), pp. 234-254; 'Olivier Clément: A Spiritual Journey', *One in Christ: a catholic ecumenical review*, 43 (2019), pp. 141-176; 'Truth and Beauty in the Life in Life and Thought of Olivier Clément, Simone Weil and Alexander Solzhenitsyn', *One in Christ: a catholic ecumenical review*, Vol. 43 (2019), pp. 177-195. Stefanie noted that in a 'guided' path one needed to be open to the promptings of the Spirit, indeed Clément took up this challenge of ecclesial integration as he travelled through the various contexts of Eastern Orthodox–Paris–Constantinople–Antioch always gathering perspective and new insights. Haunted by his origins, Clément sought to revisit his French Catholic background or spiritual Patria. This yearning for rootedness in a Christianity 'breathing with Two Lungs' lead him into an ecclesial relationship with John Paul II who asked him to give a reflection to the Church of Rome; a reflection for Eastertide. For Stefanie, the Eastern Catholic possibility attracted her greatly as, along with Clément, she understood that this was an unfulfilled opportunity beyond Ecumenism.

This renewal of ecclesial unity attracted both Clément and Stefanie to the importance of the Petrine Office, especially in the light of John Paul II's call for a wider Christian reflection on the Papacy for the worldwide Church in Ut Unum Sint (1995), http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/ en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html. Stefanie wrote on this theme in 'An Orthodox View of the Papacy: Olivier Clément's Response to Ut Unum Sint', *Orientalia et Occidentalia*, Vol. 13 (2013), pp. 103-116; 'An Eastern Orthodox Reflection on Papal Primacy: Olivier Clément's Response to Ut Unum Sint and the Ecclesial Legacy of Patriarch Athenagoras I', *The Downside Review*, Vol 134, no. 3, 2016, pp. 70-87. A focus of Stefanie's work became the relationship between Eastern Christianity and Islam as expressed in the contemporary situation of

Muslim-Christian relations in the modern Middle East. This was the theme of Stephanie's contribution to the Living Stones Yearbook 2016 which collected studies on 'The inter-relationship between religion and politics in the Middle East', entitled 'Eastern Orthodoxy and Muslim-Christian Relations between Europe and the Middle East: Olivier Clément's Perspective on Theology and Ecclesiology in the Christian Encounter with Islam'. Stefanie was a committed friend of the Eastern Christian Churches of the Middle East and the wider world between East and West. May her memory be eternal.

Sr Agnes Wilkins OSB is a Benedictine nun of Stanbrook Abbey, Wass, Yorkshire, UK. She holds a degree in Catholic theology from the Maryvale Institute, Birmingham, and a doctorate from York at St John University in Muslim/Christian relations, concentrating on the contribution of Hassan Dehqani-Tafti and Jean-Mohammed Abd-el-Jalil to Muslim/Christian dialogue. Publications include 'Straight Writing on Crooked Lines', in *Touched by God: Ten Monastic Journeys*, edited by Laurentia Johns OSB (Continuum, London, 2008), and on the Christian encounter with Islam: 'Thomas Merton's Encounter with Islam'. in *Catholics in Interreligious Dialogue: Monasticism, Theology and Spirituality,* edited by A. O'Mahony and Peter Bowe OSB, Gracewing 2006; 'Louis Massignon, Thomas Merton and Mary Kahil', *Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies* (special issue on 'The Life and Thought of Louis Massignon'), Vol.20, 2008; 'Monasticism and Martyrdom in Algeria', *The Downside Review* (special issue on 'Catholic Encounters with Islam), Vol. 126, no. 444, 2008, and most recently in *Dilatato Corde*, Vol. IX, No.1, Jan-June 2019, the online journal of DIM/MID Interreligious Dialogue, 'Paul Mehmet Mulla-Zadé and Jean-Mohammed Abd-el-Jalil'.

Anthony O'Mahony has been a Fellow of Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford from 2018. He was Reader in the Modern History of Eastern Christianity, Heythrop College, University of London, between 1999-2018 and Director for the Centre for Eastern Christianity from 2009 until 2018. In 2018 he held the Sir Daniel and Countess Bernardine Murphy Donohue Chair in Eastern Catholic Theology at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in

Rome. His major research interests include the modern history of Eastern Christianity, ecumenical dialogue between Eastern and Western Churches, Christian-Muslim-Jewish relations and the religious and political history of Jerusalem. He has published widely in these areas, including contributions and papers in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, *The International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, *The Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, *New Blackfriars* and *The Downside Review*.

AUTHENTICITY, ECUMENISM AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: LOUIS MASSIGNON, OLIVIER CLÉMENT, THOMAS MERTON, CHRISTIAN DE CHERGÉ— RADICAL HOSPITALITY RADICAL FAITH

Stefanie Hugh-Donovan

'Distinguer pour unir'
Jacques Maritain

Introduction

A concatenation of ecclesiological and experiential occurrences connects the lives of Louis Massignon, Olivier Clément, Thomas Merton and Christian de Chergé. Massignon and Clément reflect aspects of modern Eastern Christian thought: Massignon 'converted' to the Eastern Catholic Melkite tradition and Clément to Eastern Orthodoxy, while Merton and de Chergé 'converted' to monasticism becoming monks of the Cistercian Order; all lived however within the framework of 'interior monasticism'[1] and the eschatological awareness eloquently expressed by monasticism. Interior monasticism is an important term coined by Paul Evdokimov,[2] a Russian Orthodox thinker, to whose thought on monasticism we will return to later.

1 Paul Evdokimov, *Les âges de la vie spirituelle* (Paris: DDB, 1964), translated by Sr Gertrude SP as *The Struggle with God* (Marwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1966), p. 113. See Peter C Phan's studies of Evdokimov, *Culture and Eschatology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1985); and 'Evdokimov and the Monk Within', *Sobornost*, 3 (1981), pp. 53-61. See also Olivier Clément's affirmation of Evdokimov as a teacher and friend in *Orient-Occident: Deux Passeurs* (Paris: Labor et Fides, 1985).

2 See Clément in conversation with Thomas Merton and Paul Evdokimov: Stefanie Hugh-Donovan, 'Ecclesial thought and life trajectories: an ecumenical dialogue. Part 1: Olivier Clément, Eastern Orthodox Theologian and Thomas Merton, Western Catholic Cistercian Monk', *One in Christ*, 45 (2011), pp. 35-54; 'Ecclesial thought and life trajectories: an ecumenical dialogue. Part 2: 'Olivier Clément and Paul Evdokimov: *Deux Passeurs*', *One in Christ*, 45 (2011), pp. 297-312.

Within the personal stance chosen by each of the four men in their early adult years, a spectrum that ranged from atheism, self confessed dissolution and young faith, each experienced a metanoic encounter with Christ: as Clément observed in his spiritual autobiography, 'He who sought for me, found me.'[3]

The four pioneers were born in France, and were strongly influenced by its geographical and cultural landscape. Twentieth-century European French society had reached a high level of *laïcité,*[4] a consequence of the Enlightenment and secularised politics following the Second World War. The national religion of France was Catholicism but Catholics were a minority group within a non-Catholic and *laïc* milieu. This chapter reflects on the vocations of these four Christians within the context of the ecclesiological and political circumstances of their time, and their significant and authentic contribution to changes within the Catholic Church, that led up to and beyond the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Each contributed creatively to the great ecclesiological and theological movement that enabled the Church to view itself in a new way and to listen to the 'other'. This new openness of the Catholic Church towards interreligious dialogue with Jews and Muslims and ecumenical discourse with other Christian Churches was truly remarkable after centuries of religious polemic and persecution.

The remarkable convocation of the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII enabled the Church to begin the process of an inner renewal, which brought a change of direction and self-understanding, first by the Council Fathers then by the local Churches. The 'change of heart' can be thought of as *metanoic,* as it refocused on Christ and moved from a closed, embattled post-Reformation view,[5] that considered the Church to be a 'perfect society', to a fresh openness towards the other expressed with charity and hope. This was proclaimed strikingly in the Council documents *Nostra Aetate, Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis Redintegratio*, which translates as Restoration of Unity: 'Upon

3 Clément, *L'autre soleil*, p. 9.

4 Secularisation' is the nearest English word conveying the meaning of *laïcité*. For an interesting new perspective on the history of the Christian West see John W O'Malley, *Four Cultures of the West* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press), 2004.

5 The Trent ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church, December 1545-December 1563, issued condemnations on what were defined at that time as Protestant heresies of the Reformation.

the Moslems, too, the Church looks with esteem' (NA3):[6] 'But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place among these are the Moslems, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God ....'(LG16).[7] The Church, at Vatican II, put Judaism and Islam in a special category by recognising Christians, Jews and Muslims worshipped the *same* 'one and merciful God'.[8]

A journey towards seeing Jews and Muslims no longer as the enemy but as part of God's plan had begun, the Church was inviting its people to participate in dialogue with the 'other'. In the introduction to its Decree on Ecumenism the Council Fathers recognised the ecumenical movement is 'fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit' (UR1),[9] and encouraged Catholics to respond to this grace and to this divine call.'

This chapter examines first the ecclesiological and political context of the twentieth century during which a *kairos* for the Church crystallised in the convocation of Vatican II in 1962. The ecclesial and theo-anthropological thought of Massignon, Merton, Clément and de Chergé developed and evinced as a prophetic witness of lived radical hospitality and radical faith that reveals the true meaning of dialogue with the other. Dialogue can only bear fruit if it is an authentic expression of love and compassion; this is rightfully characteristic and manifest in the three monotheistic religions. Dialogical engagement has contemporary global relevance for countries hosting multi-cultural and diverse religious communities, where people may experience a sense of double disengagement following forced Diaspora from their homeland and inability to integrate in the new. Wars and economic disasters have produced global pluralistic societies; although in France, the country which forms an important social and geographical context

6 Vatican II: Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions, *Nostra Aetate*, 2.

7 Vatican II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium,* 16. See Anthony O'Mahony, 'Catholic Theological Perspectives on Islam at the Second Vatican Council', *New Blackfriars*, 88, 1016 (2007), pp. 385-398.

8 For a comparative study of the three monotheisms see French scholar Roger Arnaldez, *Trois Messangers Pour un Seul Dieu* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1983); English edition: *Three Messengers for One God*, trans. by Gerald W Schlabach, Mary Louse Gude and David B Burrell (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

9 Vatican II: Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio.*

here, the concept of pluralism has largely been resisted by political action.[10] A worldwide discourse evolved around issues of world peace and the dialogue of civilisations heightened by events surrounding the extremist attack on 11 September 2001. The vocation of world religions is to become leaven in the dough.

Two key themes are advanced: biographical context is essential to understanding and assessing the significance of the contribution of these Christians' evolving ecclesial and theological thought; experiential spirituality is foundational in their committed response to Christ and a theology of dialogical encounter. These themes are explored in the vocations of Massignon, Merton. Clément and de Chergé, followed by Conclusions.

Ecclesiological Context and 'Dialogue of Civilisations'[11]

Islamicist Louis Massignon (1876-1962) became a Melkite Greek-Catholic priest[12] late in life, Cistercian monk Thomas Merton (1915-1968) converted to Catholicism in 1939, lay theologian Olivier Clément (1921-2009) became an Orthodox Christian in the Russian Orthodox Church in Paris in 1951, Christian de Chergé was ordained a Catholic priest in 1964 and entered the Cistercian Order in 1969 to became abbot of a Cistercian monastic community in the Atlas Mountains of Algeria. Through authenticity, integrity and prayer they became spiritual ascetics who embodied mystical acceptance of all humanity and creation on a cosmic scale in Christ. Their mature witness acts as a signpost for people of the twenty-first century that points towards Christ,[13] proclaims the dignity and irreducible spirit of

10 Pluralism, understood as the existence of groups with distinctive ethnic origin, cultural and religious forms: Napoleon created Departments, areas of national 'space', as a way of eliminating differences. The Third Republic enforced *laïcité* (secularism) by separating the Church and State in 1905; France became a nation of one language, one religion, one territory when religion and state separated; concerning religion the French saw themselves as Catholics or non-Catholics.

11 Fabio Petito, 'In Defence of Dialogue of Civilisations: With a Brief Illustration of the Diverging Agreement between Edward Said and Louis Massignon', *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 2011, pp. 1-21.

12 Anthony O'Mahony, 'Louis Massignon as Priest: Eastern Christianity and Islam', *Sobornost,* 29 (2007), pp. 6-41.

13 Clément views his own writing as 'a small compass': Clément, *Petite Boussole*.

the human person, and seeks unity in diversity; a diversity which is Trinitarian in character.

Clément speaks of Massignon's 'science of compassion': that is, knowledge acquired by compassion in an attempt to put oneself in the other's place while taking into consideration the spiritual, social, intellectual, political experience of the other or the other's religion. For Massignon 'the human word [...] is a sharp personal calling destined to make us go beyond ourselves, our country, our clan: to go beyond all in love.'[14] The encounter with the Other opens a 'space where language itself reveals the nature of pilgrimage as a way of going out of oneself in order to converge with another in the presence of the "Divine Absentee".'[15] 'To understand something is not to annex it, it is to transfer it by decentring oneself (*par décentrement*) to the heart of the other. The essence of language should be a kind of decentring.'[16] Massignon's personal experience led him to believe that by learning the language and experiencing the traditions and culture of other religions one's own faith is enhanced. He observes that language itself is both a 'pilgrimage' and a 'spiritual displacement', because language with another evokes 'an Absentee, the third person [...] the Unknown.'[17]

Massignon, Merton, de Chergé and Clément sought a way that leads to authentic convivial harmony between peoples, communities, cultures and faiths. They believed that the healing of divisions between Eastern and Western Christians and of antagonism and warfare between Islam and Christianity during one and a half millennia, could flow from a spiritual experience of God, practised and lived by believers open to dialogical encounter with the other. The lives and thought of these men as theologians, writers and transcultural spokesmen for human concerns continues to challenge people of faith in the twenty-first century: all four were *passeurs* who could traverse between intellectual and cultural 'shores' of different faiths and countries, exchanging valuable

14 Massignon quoted by Jesus Hernandez Aristu, 'The Philosophy of Dialogue', *Community Development—A European Challenge*, Roland Brake and Ulrich Deller (eds) (Farmington Hills, MI: Barbara Budrich, 2008), p. 309.

15 Patrick Laude, *Louis Massignon: The Vow and the Oath*, trans. Edin Q Lolija (London: Matheson Trust, 2011), p. 2.

16 Louis Massignon, '*L'involution semantique dans les cultures sémitiques', Opera Minora*, v. II (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969), p. 681.

17 Laude, *Louis Massignon*, p. 2.

gifts. Their endeavours received acclaim and sometimes rejection from their own Churches during their lifetimes; however, 'every exceptional spiritual personality necessarily sheds light' on the 'spiritual meaning of sacred space', a space which is 'constituted by sacred hospitality and the recognition of the Other in it.'[18] Clément sees that 'the "apostolic man", or *staretz*,[19] regardless of his place in the hierarchy, consciously becomes a "pneumatophore, while Tradition is the "pneumatosphere", a carrier of the Spirit', which 'makes the Word alive and present in all historical circumstances.'[20]

Points of convergence and congruencies are revealed in the thought of these four Christians and in the different trajectories each life took. Massignon coined the term '*la courbe de vie'* to speak of 'the curve of life' of individuals he regarded as special intercessors for their fellow people.[21] A significant *noeud* on the trajectory for all four men is an experience of metanoic conversion to Christianity: a relationship with Christ, which they fostered in prayer and rootedness in their own Christian tradition, expressed in an 'inner hospitality towards the Other', both divine and human. Roger Arnaldez describes how the law of God, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart [...] and your neighbour as yourself' (Matt 22:37-40), is made possible by the indwelling of the Spirit:

> The law that Christ brings is the Law of love: this law 'completes' the law of Moses by releasing in it the Spirit whose significance is not merely symbolic [...] but rather a powerful wind capable of regenerating, animating and intensifying the moral and religious life of humanity. This law truly becomes an active presence of God in us, so that God really is with each of us, perfectly interiorizing the meaning of Emmanuel.[22]

18 *Ibid*.

19 Monk or elder whose wisdom stems from his ascetic experience.

20 Clément, *Jesus the One Consecrated by the Holy Spirit*, http://www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/magazine/documents/ju_mag_01041998_p-17_en.html [Accessed 25.7.15].

21 S H Griffith,' Bediüzzaman Said Nursi and Louis Massignon in Pursuit of God's Word: A Muslim and a Christian on the Straight Path', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 79 (2008), pp. 5-16 (p. 5). Anthony O'Mahony, 'Louis Massignon as Priest: Eastern Christianity and Islam', *Sobornost*, 29 (2007), pp. 6-41 (p. 6).

22 Arnaldez, *Trois Messagers,* p. 8.

It is the 'interiorizing of the meaning of Emmanuel' that enables the possibility of responding to the Spirit's call to holiness by a life of interiorised monasticism.

They were gifted writers with a poetic love of language: de Chergé's writing and homilies are more recently published and appreciated,[23] while Massignon, Merton and Clément were able to reach and influence a wide audience during their lives, aiming to raise religious consciousness and heal divisions. Among that audience were the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council convoked by Pope John XXIII, the first conciliar meeting since the Council of Trent over three hundred years before. Connecting strands of cause and effect linked the lives of Massignon and Merton to Vatican II; and their legacy and influence on the twenty-first century debate on peace and justice in a multi-cultural world order was taken forward by Clément and de Chergé. They show that a peaceful and just co-existence between nations requires the will and mindset of hospitality from each nation and person in the encounter with the cultural and religious identity of the 'other'. A theology of encounter is not offered as a political tool to bring about world peace or avert a 'clash of civilisations', but recognises the call of God to unity and spiritual communion. The lives of Massignon, Merton, de Chergé and Clément offer concrete paradigms that point to the possibility of fruitful encounter between persons and between peoples, who recognise the mutual and fundamental worth and dignity of each person.

Support for this view appears 'In Defence of a Dialogue of Civilisations' by Fabio Petito,[24] who judges Massignon's 'dialogical life-journey' stands as a convincing paradigm in defence of the political discourse for a 'dialogue of civilisations'[25] against a secular politics of reason. He challenges the notion that civilisational dialogue generates conflict rather than peace, with the argument that 'stronger' civilisational identities contribute to a more peaceful and stable

23 See Christian Salenson, *Christian de Chergé: A Theology of Hope*, trans. by Nada Conic (Collegeville MN: Cistercian Publications, 2012), for list of writings of de Chergé.

24 Fabio Petito, 'In Defence of Dialogue of Civilisations: With a Brief Illustration of the Diverging Agreement between Edward Said and Louis Massignon', *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 2011, pp. 1-21.

25 Petito, p. 2.

world order. He draws on Gadamer's hermeneutic of 'a fusion of horizons'[26] to interpret how this might look. The notion of a dialogue of civilisations emerged in the 1990s in reaction to political debate on future world order,[27] which recognised that after the collapse of Communist totalitarianism a form of Islamic totalitarianism might enter the world stage. This dialogue must be based on the vision and will for world justice and peace, a human solidarity expressed in unity in diversity. Olivier Clément saw some traces of an idolatrous Islamic totalitarianism appearing in Islam, which caused him to raise a note of warning in 2003. Clément detects a possible exploitation of the juridical and mental structures of Western society that signalled a new political motivation. He voices criticism of Tariq Ramadan's model of Islam,[28] in which it would seem Ramadan wanted to replace the values of Western civilisation, affirm Islamic identity and present it as the true universality that will fill the spiritual void left by a diminishing Christian and Jewish religious presence.

Samuel Huntington provoked international debate in 1993 by his article 'Clash of Civilisations', in which he predicted future conflicts would occur frequently and violently because of cultural rather than ideological differences. In Huntington's view tensions will increase the more Islam and the West attempt dialogue. In response to Huntington, Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, a scholar and Shi'a religious thinker, in 1998 called for a dialogue between Islamic and Judeo-Christian civilisations.[29] At United Nations in 2000 Khatami presented

26 Petito, p. 16. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), German philosopher wrote his magnum opus *Truth and Method*, 1960.

27 Petito, p. 3.

28 See note 650.

29 Reformist politician M Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran 1997-2005 and founder of the Foundation for Dialogue among Civilisations (FDC) based in Geneva, 2007. FDC aims to promote dialogue between world peoples, cultures, civilisations and religions to promote peace, justice and tolerance. See Stephen G Carter, 'Christopher Dawson and Ayatollah Khatami and the "Dialogue of Civilisations": A Christian-Muslim Conversation', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 18 (2007), pp. 403-420; Fabio Petito, 'The Global Political Discourse of Dialogue among Civilisations: Mohammad Khatoumi and Vaclav Havel', *Global Change, Peace and Security*, 19 (2007), pp. 103-125; Anthony O'Mahony, 'Christianity, Shi'a Islam and Muslim-Christian Encounter in Iran' *Christian Response to Islam: Muslim-Christian relations in Modern World*, A O'Mahony and Emma Loosley (eds) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), pp. 175-188; A O'Mahony, 'Our Common fidelity to Abraham is what divides', *Sobornost*, Eastern Churches Review, 28 (2006), pp. 126-148. Anthony O'Mahony, 'The

an alternative paradigm for international relationships that in many ways resonates with the views of Massignon, Merton, Clément and de Chergé. He marks the importance of considering the historical landscape and appeals for empathy and compassion to substitute the prevailing will for power and the 'glorification of might'. Huntington's subsequent book (2003) on the clash of civilisations,[30] gives an interpretation of a post-cold war global future, which Petito judges to be a 'minimalist morality of co-existence' by agreeing to 'reciprocal non-interference'.

Huntington's interpretation could produce a disastrous mind-set that subverts the flourishing of humankind, and relies on Western domination, which can appear to disregard the value of the 'other' in contributing to a political, economic and cultural construct. Regardless of cultural differences there exists in individuals the basic hope for dignity and just political governance. A dialogue of civilisations that includes an understanding of *authentic* and lived Christianity, that is, a theocentric anthropology of Self *with* the Other, will succeed over against a predominantly Western secularist-*laïcité* political view that presents a negative political construct of Self *against* the Other. Massignon, Clément, Merton and de Chergé deeply understood this, and were led to take dialogue to the deeper spiritual level of encounter with the other. In Clément's thought the coming of the Holy Spirit has enabled man to become 'pneumatophore', 'every gesture that creates love, justice and beauty anticipates the transfiguration of the world of the Eighth Day,'[31] as 'the Spirit in co-operation with our freedom, gradually shows the face of Christ who comes.'[32]

Second Vatican Council: 11 October 1962-8 December 1965

When Pope John XXIII convoked Vatican II, he declared his wish to open the windows of the Vatican to allow *aggiornamento* and the fresh

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Image of Jesus and Christianity in Shi'a Islam and Modern Iranian Thought', *A Faithful Presence: Essays for Kenneth Cragg*, David Thomas and Clare Amos (eds) (London: Melisende, 2003), pp. 256-273.

30 Samuel P Huntington, *Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

31 Clément, *Jesus the One Consecrated*.

32 *Ibid*.

air of the Spirit to bring the Catholic Church into the modern world. The Council enabled the Church to express its identity, to enter into dialogue with modernity and creatively face contemporary challenges concerning issues of diversity, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. The work and thought of Massignon and Merton, as well as the milieu in which Clément and de Chergé worked, influenced and contributed to important findings and documents of the Second Vatican Council.

Many Council Fathers including the future Pope Paul VI and Melkite Patriarch Maximos IV knew Massignon personally. Massignon's decision to become a priest of the Greek Catholic Melkite rite in 1949[33] enabled him to attain his long-standing desire to be associated with Arab Christianity in its proximity and dialogue with Islam, and to pray in Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, during the eucharistic offering. Clément refers to it as Massignon's 'arabisation', which would seem to be a type of double belonging to East and West, Christianity and Islam. Orthodox Metropolitan Georges Khodr of Mount Lebanon, who knew Massignon, praised his ability to speak Arabic with purity and fluency.[34] According to Massignon 'the Greek-Catholic rite, the Arab rite, is destined to explain Muslim thought to the West.'[35] Maximos IV, Patriarch of the Melkite Greek-Catholic Church, 1947-1967, authorised Massignon's ordination to the priesthood by Pierre-Kamel Medawar his Auxiliary Bishop. Two years earlier Medawar had granted the *imprimatur* to the work of the *Badaliya*[36] a prayer movement founded by Massignon and

33 Anthony O'Mahony, 'Louis Massignon, the Melkite Church and Islam', *ARAM: Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies*, 20 (2008), pp. 267-297.

34 Interview of Metropolitan Georges Khodr by writer, 6 October 2012 at Archbishopric of Mount Lebanon. Metropolitan Khodr quotes in his article '*Al-bubba finà*, The Love in Us', *An-nahār*, February 2012, the words of the twelfth-thirteenth-century Sufi mystic *Ibn* Arabi: 'I am a disciple of the religion of love, however the parade of love moves [my religion and faith follows]: see Sylvie Avakian, 'The Mystery of Divine Love in the Apophatic Theology of Bishop George Khodr', *Theological Review*, 33 (2012), pp. 39-66 (p. 66). See Heidi Hirvonen, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Perspectives of Four Lebanese Thinkers* (Leiden: Brill, 2013): Khodr 'played an important role in Christian-Muslim dialogue' and was instrumental in establishing a Centre for Christian-Muslim studies at the University of Balamand, p. 6.

35 Christian S Krokus, 'Louis Massignon's influence on the teaching of Vatican II on Muslims and Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 23 (2012), pp. 329-345, p. 338.

36 *Badaliya*, Arabic for substitution; at the heart of the Christian faith experience is the mystery of Jesus' sacrifice of his life for all humanity. See Paolo Dall'Oglio

Mary Kahil in Egypt as a way of supporting Christians marginalised in a predominantly Muslim country, and as a way of befriending and praying with Muslims. Massignon saw *Badaliya* prayer as a testimony to the universal love of Christ.

Christian Krokus judges that Medawar, as a strong supporter of Massignon's work and *Badaliya* prayer, would have favourably presented Massignon's vision for Christian-Muslim relations to Patriarch Maximos IV. The eighty-four year old patriarch 'knew the importance of Arabic for the Muslim mind' and 'the strong potential of his Church as a bridge between Arab (Muslim) and Western minds.'[37] At the Second Vatican Council Maximos spoke out for the Churches of the Middle East, who had survived the religious, spiritual and political milieu of Muslim dominance since the seventh century. He recommended that if the Jews were to be discussed 'then we should likewise take up the question of Muslims, among whom we must live in a minority.'[38] Massignon wrote in a letter concerning *Badaliya*, 24 July 1934, 'Pius XI blessed the oblation of my life and death for my Muslim brothers and sisters […].'[39] Massignon also gained support from Cardinal Giambattista Montini, later Paul VI, concerning the *Badaliya*, and it is thought the cardinal was a member of the Rome *Badaliya* group. This appears to have had consequences later at the Second Vatican Council. 'When Vatican II undertook to speak of Islam, the memory of Louis Massignon who died in 1962 on the eve of the Council's opening was in the mind of Paul VI, 'as I can testify', writes Robert Casper,[40] former tutor of Christian de Chergé. 'In speaking of Moslems and of Jews, the Council stresses our common father in faith, Abraham. This is where Louis Massignon [...] told us to begin.'[41] O'Mahony judges

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SJ, 'Louis Massignon and Badaliya', *ARAM*, 20 (2008), pp. 329-336; Dall'Oglio founded the contemplative monastic community at *Deir Mar Musa* in Syria in 1992.

37 Krokus, p. 128, cites Guy Harpigny, *Islam et Christianisme selon Louis Massignon* (Louvain-la-Neuve: 1981).

38 Krokus, p. 239, cites Xavier Rynne, *The Second Session: the debates and decrees of Vatican II, September 29-December 4 1963* (London: Faber, 1964).

39 Salenson, p. 36.

40 Salenson, p. 36. Robert Casper, *Pour un regard chrétien sur l'Islam* (Paris: Bayard, 2006), p. 185. Fr Caspar, White Father and Islamic scholar, theologian and promoter of Muslim-Christian interreligious dialogue founded GRIC: *Groups Recherche Islamo-Chretien*.

41 Richard J Sudworth, *The Church of England and Islam*, p. 63, PhD thesis, cites A Hastings, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council, Volume*

that Massignon gave the Council the knowledge and language to speak of interreligious dialogue between Christians and Muslims, but it appears important to note that Vatican II 'spoke about Muslims but not about Islam.'[42]

Maximos IV spoke out strongly at the Council against the latinization of the Catholic Eastern Churches and encouraged reconciliation between Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches and pointed to the importance of the Christian presence in its homeland. 'Christianity in the Middle East has a witness beyond itself.'[43] He was raised to the position of cardinal by Paul VI in January1965, for his contribution to Christian ecumenism, and won support from both the Orthodox observers at the Council and the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Athenagoras II, whom they represented. The Maronite and Coptic patriarchs also became cardinals at that time.

The irenic personality of Patriarch Athenagoras I exerted a significant influence on the life and thought of Olivier Clément. His three-month visit to Athenagoras in 1968 resulted in a change of heart from a polemical attitude[44] to one of peace; 'he set me free', notes Clément.[45] Clément's acclaimed book, *Dialogues with the Patriarch Athenagoras*, which he wrote as a 'service to unity',[46] marked an opening in Clément's perception of ecclesial identity. Speaking on 28 October 2012 to an Orthodox delegation to the Vatican fifty years after Vatican II, Pope Benedict XVI recalled 'the person and works of the unforgettable Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras who together with Pope John XXIII and [...] Paul VI, moved by that passion for Church unity [...] promoted important initiatives which paved the way to renewed relations between the Catholic Church and Oriental Orthodox Churches.'[47] The

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One (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1968), p. 198.

42 O'Mahony, 'Catholic Theological Perspectives', p. 387.

43 Anthony O'Mahony, 'Introduction', *Christianity in the Middle East: Studies in Modern History, Theology and Politics*, Anthony O'Mahony (ed.) (London: Melisende, 2008), pp. 9-16, 16.

44 Olivier Clément, '*Vers un Dialogue avec le Catholisme*', *Contacts*, 16, 1964, pp. 16-37. In this earlier work Clément perceives Catholicism from a more Orthodox polemical stance.

45 Clément, *Dialogues*, p. 10.

46 *Ibid*.

47 Solemnity of Ss Peter and Paul, 28 October 2012, Vatican City, Benedict XVI received a delegation sent by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I; see News.

radical thought on interreligious dialogue initiated by Massignon and Merton influenced the decisions of Vatican II, and was taken forward by Popes Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI.[48] It was also taken forward in the lives and vocations of Clément and de Chergé.

Clément considered John Paul II's invitation to leaders of all religions, to join him in a Day of Prayer for Peace at Assisi in 1986,[49] and again at Assisi in 2002, when religious leaders signed a peace charter that was disseminated to governments globally,[50] were two great moments of his pontificate.[51] John Paul II's prophetic gift regarding interreligious dialogue[52] was demonstrated as an authentic response to the UN Year of Peace 1986, with a deep understanding of unity in diversity and the theology of encounter. Clément remembers with admiration John Paul's pastoral and state visit to Kazakhstan in 2001 when he commended Muslims for their spiritual values and ability to creatively participate in world culture,[53] and encouraged multi-national Kazakhstan in its mission to become a bridge between religions, nations and continents.

Pope Benedict in Istanbul in 2006 met Patriarch Bartholomew I; referring to the Christian roots in Turkey for over a millennium; he sought to take forward Christian unity between East and West and overcome differences between Christians and Muslims. During his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in May 2014, Pope Francis met Patriarch Bartholomew, an encounter resonating with echoes Paul VI

Va, *L'Osservatore Romano*.

48 Pope Benedict XVI prayed in the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, the second pope in 2,000 years to visit a mosque. Andrew Unsworth, 'Louis Massignon, The Holy See and the Ecclesial Tradition from '*Immortale Dei*' to '*Nostra Aetate*': A brief History of the Development of Catholic Church Teaching on Muslims and the Religion of Islam from 1883-1965', *ARAM: Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies*, 20 (2008), pp. 299-316. See reflections on interreligious dialogue as an ethical necessity: Peter Gallagher SJ, 'What Dialogue with Islam Adds to Christianity: Reflection on the Thought of Benedict XVI', *The Downside Review* (2008), pp. 219-227.

49 World Day of Prayer, 27 October 1986: 160 religious leaders gathered to spend a day of prayer and fasting for peace.

50 Salenson, p. 5: 'The Charter of Peace', *Chemins de Dialogue*, 20 (2002), p. 195.

51 Clément, *Mémoires*, p. 136.

52 See collection of studies in *John Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue,* Byron L Sherwin and Harold Kasimow (eds) (New York: Orbis, 1999), pp.169-177

53 Papal visit to Kazakhstan, w2.vatican.va/…/john-paul-ii/…/hf_jp-ii_spe_20010924_kazakhstan-astana, [Accessed 15/6/15].

and Athenagoras I in Jerusalem in 1964. The theme of Christian unity for Clément was given impetus by the social and dialogical changes set in motion by the Council. Known and respected by John Paul II, Clément, at the pope's invitation entered into dialogue both in person and in writing with the pope on issues surrounding Christian unity and the role of the papacy. Clément's book, *Rome Autrement*, written in response to John Paul II's encyclical *Ut unum sint*, is a valuable contribution to the history of Orthodoxy in the West and the problems posed by papal primacy for both Orthodox and Western Christians. It would seem that John Paul II valued Clément's gifts as a theologian and poet, inviting him to compose the beautiful and deeply spiritual *Via Crucis* in 1998.[54]

Louis Massignon (1883-1962)

Louis Massignon 'saw himself as an ardent Frenchman, profoundly rooted in his land and its dead.'[55] This memorial phrase could equally have been written of Olivier Clément who was profoundly French and deeply respectful of his French ancestry; it formed the cultural landscape from which his quest for truth brought him to become a leading Orthodox thinker and writer on theology, anthropology and spirituality. Massignon found 'space' to become France's most celebrated Islamicist, a leading Catholic intellectual, and one of the most important scholars of Arabic and Islam of the twentieth century.

He entered the Lycée Louis le Grand in Paris aged thirteen, coincidently the same school at which Clément taught for most of his adult life. At the age of twenty Massignon had given up Catholicism, for what he later judged to be a self-centred way of life. In 1907 however, he became deeply interested in the life and martyrdom of al-Hallâj, a tenth-century Sufi mystic in Baghdad, and chose him as the subject for his thesis. Hallâj's teaching and death became a personal inspiration and leitmotif that shaped Massignon's future and destiny. The thesis became a four-volume book, *La Passion d'al-Husayn ibn Mansür al*

54 John Paul II read the text written by Clément on Good Friday Stations of the Cross as he moved from the *Coliseum* to the Roman Forum.

55 *Memorial Louis Massignon* (Cairo: 1962), p. 95; cited by Laude, p. 146.

Hallâj, martyr mystique de l'Islam,[56] that described the life and teaching of Hallaj and explored the whole milieu of early Islamic civilisation. To obtain a clear understanding of an era, Massignon considered historians must enter imaginatively into the spiritual, social and political culture of that time, rather than viewing the past through the lens of post-Enlightenment rationalism. Massignon's book became a landmark that aroused the interest of scholars in the West and brought about a change in Catholic theology: the recognition that *authentic* mysticism could exist outside the Catholic Church and even outside the boundaries of Christianity. Massignon challenged the West to recognise that Islam too was a way to reach God in the heart. Clément also brought about a change in Catholic thinking concerning mysticism and spirituality of the Eastern Orthodox Church, which was either unknown in the West or held in low regard by many Western Catholics. His aim in his seminal book *Sources*[57] is to awaken the Western reader to a knowledge and appreciation of the Eastern tradition and the relevance of early Patristic teaching and Christian mysticism for contemporary Europe.

Massignon, aged 25, intelligent and linguistically gifted, but on his own admission somewhat naive, led an official archaeological mission in 1908, to an area of central Mesopotamia near Baghdad that was politically fraught with the risk of a revolution erupting to end Ottoman rule. On arrival in Baghdad, Massignon wished to befriend Muslims, and lodged with the Alusi family who showed him great hospitality; he lived in the Arab quarter and wore Arab type clothing, all of which shocked his fellow Europeans, irritated his superiors and baffled locals who viewed him with suspicion.[58] Spending too long carrying out research on Hallâj and visiting his tomb, he finally set off across the desert to engage in exploration 150 miles from Baghdad. He was taken prisoner and, perhaps to cool potential political ferment and avoid unwanted questions, was declared to be mentally unwell. It was within these strange circumstances that Massignon attempted

56 An abridged English version: *Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr*, ed. and trans. by Herbert Mason (Princeton: University Press, 1994); Mason was Massignon's student and friend, his translation and preparation took13 years.

57 Clément, *Sources*, p. 11.

58 See Ian Latham LBJ, 'The Conversion of Louis Massignon in Mesopotamia in 1908', *ARAM,* 20 (2008), pp. 245-267 (p. 260); Latham, 'Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916): Silent Witness for Jesus "in the face of Islam"', in *Catholics in Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 47-70.

suicide and shortly after experienced an event he describes as the *Visitation by a Stranger* that brought conversion, followed by his return to Catholicism. His artist father decided his son's sudden change from 'an agnostic, free-thinker and lover of life' like himself, to an 'ardent believer and ascetic' must indicate 'an intellectual collapse',[59] but finally recognised 'the authenticity of his son's new vocation and admiration for the mystic Hallâj.'

The word *authenticity* is important as a marker in the experience of *metanoia* and its outcomes, part of the '*courbe de vie'* also of Clément, Merton and de Chergé. Clément and Merton experienced conversion and an encounter they identified as a spiritual meeting, that brought repentance, forgiveness and faith following a time of dissolution in their personal lives, and a tendency towards suicide; de Chergé entered into a deeper commitment to Christ after an Algerian Muslim gave up his life for him. The importance of these spiritual experiences as foundational events cannot be separated from their future theological thought, commitment and development. Biographical context forms the humus from which their faith grew.

Mystical experiences can only be validated by the Gospel criterion: events can be judged by the 'fruits' that follow.[60] St John of the Cross taught that if the experience is '*authentic* it will *of itself* work its intended effect.'[61] Multiple good fruits over a life-long commitment can be seen in the life of Massignon, which manifested themselves as hospitality, substitution, compassion, witness and dialogue. The same is true of Merton, de Chergé and Clément: an interior monasticism'[62] expressed through prayer to unite with the 'substitution' of Christ on the Cross for all mankind, lived as a life of inner prayer and outreach to others.

Clément's spiritual father, Fr Sophrony,[63] was a monk of Mount Athos and disciple of Staretz Silouan[64] who died on Mount Athos in 1938. Clément was in frequent contact with Sophrony when he lived

59 Latham, 'The Conversion', p. 260.
60 Latham, 'The Conversion', p. 260: Matthew 7:20.
61 *Ibid*.
62 Evdokimov, *Les âges*, p. 113: '*monachisme intériorisé'*.
63 Riccardi, 'Preface', *Petite boussole,* p. 13.
64 Silouan, canonised by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1987, was largely unknown until Archimandrite Sophrony's biography: *The Undistorted Image: Staretz Silouan 1866-1938*, trans. by Rosemary Edmonds (London: Faith Press, 1958), first published in Paris as *Startetz Silouan*, 1952.

in Paris and gained from him the understanding that 'Christianity is not an ideology, but the Resurrection.'[65] Merton was moved by the words which Staretz Silouan believed were spoken to him by Christ: 'Keep your soul in hell and do not despair.'[66] Clément often reflected on the words, which are recorded in Fr Sophrony's biography of the Staretz. Silouan's monastic vocation led him 'to pray for the dead suffering in the hell of separation from God'; he prayed also 'for the living and for generations to come […] he could not bear to think anyone would languish in "outer darkness."'[67] Within the context of those words, Clément compares St Thérèse of Lisieux with St Silouan: Thérèse trusted in God and resolved to keep faith during the dark night of the soul when the apparent absence of God became part of her spiritual journey. As a young girl she prayed for the murderer Pranzini, and experienced joy at his conversion; towards the end of her life she saw herself sitting at table with sinners, praying for universal salvation. Clément believes that Christians are called to this, to be seated at the table of sinners while carrying within themselves the mystery of the Resurrection, praying for universal salvation, so that all may taste the joy of the presence of the Holy Spirit.[68]

Clément and Evdokimov recognised the role of the Staretz was a prophetic image for our times, that pointed to a universal vocation of interiorised monasticism for laity in the modern world, not merely as 'an interior life for a layman', but carrying the notion of a 'lay-monk' who penetrates to the 'ontological roots, the mystical essence, of the monastic life on an ecumenical and trans-confessional level.'[69] The role of the monk in the world is to be a visionary witness; this can be the vocation of all believers. Williams refers to the early 'insistence that monasticism is first and foremost a lay movement,'[70] and judges that the *lay character* of monasticism is one of monasticism's

65 Riccardi, p. 13.

66 See Sophrony, p. 33; Clément, *Petite boussole*, p. 125.

67 Sophrony, p. 38.

68 Clément, *Petite boussole*, pp. 125-6.

69 Clément, *Petite boussole*, p. 118. The quoteations are cited by Thomas Merton from Léon Zander, 'Le monachisme-réalité et idéal-dans l'oeuvre de Dostoievski', in *Le Millénaire du Mont Athos 963-1963: Études et Mélanges I* (Belgium: Éditions de Chevetogne, 1963).

70 Archbishop of Canterbury's address at San Gregorio al Celio, 11 March 2012: Rowan Williams, 'Monastic Virtues and Ecumenical Hopes', in *One in Christ*, 46 (2012), pp. 306-313 (p. 307).

significant contributions to ecumenical encounter.[71] Peter Phan affirms Evdokimov's theological discernment, that the ascesis of the Desert Fathers retains its enduring significance for all ages and all times; it forms an ascetical archetype characterised by total obedience to the will of God, which suppresses self-complacency; chastity consisting in the total consecration of one's existence; poverty, which is a total openness and receptivity towards God's designs; prayer, which becomes a constant state of the soul; and eschatological maximalism, that is an existential attitude to, and active expectation of, the Parousia.[72] Evdokimov concludes that 'monastic holiness and conjugal holiness are two sides of Mount Tabor,' contradictory for human reason yet they are interiorly united and mysteriously identical.[73]

The monastic tradition of Eastern Orthodox Christianity greatly influenced Clément's spiritual journey and theology. A convergence of theological thought unites Clément, Evdokimov and Merton, with regard to authenticity and monasticism. Rowan Williams identifies 'authenticity' as a recurrent unifying theme of Merton's life and writing since the time of *Elected Silence*,[74] which challenges Merton and his audience concerning personal and artistic integrity. A new choice of life, as a monk for example, is 'artificial or *inauthentic*'[75] without metanoia, and the healing forgiveness of Christ being first experientially received. Williams judges 'the monastic vocation demands a real encounter with one's own "nothingness", with the false and illusory *persona* created by one's betrayal of the true self [...] in a concordat with a false and illusory society.'[76] Clément and Evdokimov want their readers to understand that the monastic vocation is shared by all Christians and will demand the same vocational call: a real encounter with our own "nothingness".

According to Evdokimov, the monk is essentially an eschatological man:

71 *Ibid*.
72 Phan, *Culture and Eschatology*, p. 197.
73 *Ibid*. Phan cites Paul Evdokimov, *Le Sacrement de l'amour: le mystére conjugal à la lumière de la tradition orthodoxe* (Paris: L'Epi, 1962), p. 108.
74 Williams, 'Bread in the Wilderness: The Monastic Ideal in Thomas Merton and Paul Evdokimov', *Merton and Hesychasm: The Prayer of the Heart* (Louisville KY: Fons Vitae. 2003), pp. 175-196, p. 176.
75 Williams, 'Bread', p. 176.
76 Williams, 'Bread', p. 177.

> After the concordat which established the Church in history and offered it a legal status and a peaceful existence, the witness which the martyrs had borne to the last things passed over to the monks and was transformed by them into a ministry of eschatological maximalism.[77]

For Evdokimov 'the spirit of monasticism' is 'the crystallisation of the evangelical ideal', an ascesis practised by the Desert Fathers 'in the place of all and once for all.'[78] He believes an eschatological transformation of culture can be realised through the practice of interiorized monasticism.

O'Mahony observes that monasticism was a distinctive feature of Christian life in the place where Islam was born and in the Christian communities that became integrated into the world of Islam,[79] and anti-monastic influences found their way into the interpretation of certain Quranic phrases.[80] Celibacy was not accepted by Muslims and Muhammad opposed extreme ascetic practices. In his *Essai*[81] Massignon cites the Quranic statements. 'There is no monastic in Islam' and 'The monasticism of my community is *jihad* (holy war).'[82] Traditionally monasticism has been considered by Muslims to demonstrate a Christian attitude of putting unnecessary religious burdens on people.[83] However, Christian monks were among the first to use Arabic for ecclesiastical liturgies and writings.[84] The martyrdom of the seven monks of Tibhirine in May 1996, and subsequent justification on religious grounds by some Islamic thinkers brought awareness of the theological understanding of Islam concerning Christian monks and monasticism.[85]

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77 Evdokimov, *Orthodoxie* (Neuchatel-Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1959), p. 20; cited by Phan, 'Evdokimov and the Monk Within', p. 61.
78 Evdokimov, *Les âges*, p. 113.
79 Anthony O'Mahony, 'Christian Monks and Monasticism in Islam', *DIM/MID*, 80/81 (2006), pp. 25-33.
80 O'Mahony, 'Christian Monks', p. 30 and note 21.
81 O'Mahony, p. 33; Louis Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane* (Third Edition) (Paris:Vrin, 1968), pp. 145-153.
82 O'Mahony, p. 29
83 O'Mahony, p. 31.
84 O'Mahony, p. 32 and note 23: S H Griffiths, *Arabic Christianity in the monasteries of Ninth-Century* Palestine (London:Variorum, 1992).
85 O'Mahony, p. 25.

Impressed by the humility and example of St Francis of Assisi, Massignon became a Franciscan tertiary in 1931; in Egypt, 1934, at the abandoned Franciscan Church in Damietta built on the site where St Francis met the Sultan al-Malik in 1219, Massignon prayed with Mary Kahil, an Egyptian Melkite Christian. They took a vow of *Badaliya*, placing themselves in *substitution* and prayer for Muslims, desiring to bring about mutual respect and dialogue. Today *Badaliya* groups exist around the world. Importantly, their prayer intention is not for the conversion of Muslims, but that the will of God might be accomplished in them and through them. Massignon paved the way for a greater openness in the Catholic Church towards Islam which was expressed in Vatican II's document, *Nostra Aetate*[86] in 1965. Paolo Dall'Oglio SJ, writing in 2008 judged that Massignon has become a contemporary source of inspiration in France and for Christian theology with regard to the Christian-Islamic relationship, and has been a significant influence in Arabic and Islamic scholarship.[87] The spirit of Badaliya was the foundation of spirituality at the desert monastic community established in Syria by Dall'Oglio at *Deir Mar Musa*, in daily prayers in Arabic, hospitality and sharing the life of local Muslims.

Some have commented that later in life Massignon described the Visitation of the Stranger in more poetic language. This would seem a natural outcome for a poet to attempt to find words to describe an experience, which in fact is impossible to express adequately in words, which he believed to be *supernatural* and *unspeakable*. Massignon quotes the thirteenth century Persian poet Rûmi, 1207-1273,[88] to assist in describing his experiential knowledge of the Visitation by the Stranger:

> This Someone, whose beauty makes the Angels jealous,
> Came at break of day, and He looked into my heart;
> He wept, and I wept, until the coming of the dawn,
> Then He asked me: of us two, say, "Who is the lover".

It was important for him to witness to what he believed was the driving force in his life: his faith in God and the substitution of Christ

86 *Nostra Aetate*, Proclaimed by Pope Paul VI , 28 October 1965.
87 Dall'Oglio, 'Louis Massignon', p. 331.
88 Rûmi (quatrain No 143), cited in Latham, 'The Conversion', p. 267.

on the Cross for all people. During the *Visitation of the Stranger* he became aware that ten intercessors were praying for his conversion; these included his mother, the Muslim Sufi mystic al-Hallâj and Charles de Foucauld, with whom he had corresponded. This inner knowledge convinced him of the validity of intercessory prayer; he regularly revisited the tomb of Hallâj throughout his life. Later in 1909 he met de Foucauld in France, at a time when de Foucauld was waiting and hoping for someone to join him as a hermit in the desert of southern Algeria.[89] De Foucauld succeeded in sharing his Christ-like life with Muslims in Algeria, who saw him as a Sufi saint and Christian hermit.[90] He founded a confraternity, which after his death became the Little Brothers and Sisters of Jesus, the *Union Solidarité*,

Speaking of his conversion Massignon felt the significance of the circumstances, 'It is in Arabic [...] that I recognised God for the first time, that I made my first prayer to him'.[91] An intensely deep commitment to self-denial became characteristic of Massignon's faith and life. Professor Albert Hourani, British Lebanese historian, Oxford graduate and later lecturer at Magdalen College, converted to Catholicism through Massignon's witness. He writes on Massignon's understanding of the meaning of history, which was judged not to be found in the social structure of events but, in the Word of God received in each individual, an encounter which could take place within established Traditions, or as a sudden confrontation, when God irrupts in an ordinary life in a way that enables the person to see beyond his own concept of reality, to 'another beauty'[92]. Massignon believed that he had been drawn into a 'chain of witness' during the encounter, leading to the understanding that his particular vocation lay in the act of substitution, through which Muslims would come to the knowledge

89 See Ariana Patey, *Life and Thought of Charles de Foucauld: An Eremitical Vocation to Islam and his Contribution to the Understanding of Muslim-Christian Relations within the Catholic Tradition*, PhD Thesis, 2012; Patey, 'Sanctity and Mission in the Life of Charles de Foucauld', *Studies in Church History,* 47 (2011), pp. 365-375.

90 Mahmoud Ayoub, 'Pope John Paul II on Islam', *Jean Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue*, Byron L Sherwin and Harold Kasimow (eds) (New York: Orbis, 1982), pp. 169-177, 173.

91 Cited by A O'Mahony in *Louis Massignon as Priest*, p. 7, from *Correspondance: Paul Claudel-Louis Massignon (1908-1914)*, Michel Malicet (ed.) (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1973), p. 111.

92 O'Mahony, *Louis Massignon,* p. 9; Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 44.

of the meaning of the incarnation of Christ. Massignon believed that the only way he could respond to his deep desire 'to die with Christ, because martyrdom eludes me'[93] was to become an ordained priest, and in this way unite himself as an *alter Christus* in Christ's passion and 'his supreme act of sacrifice and salvation'[94].

Thomas Merton (1915-1968)

The place of Merton's birth in Southern France, where Merton spent childhood days with his father, was only a few miles away from the village in which Clément was born.[95] England he knew as a schoolboy; it was here, aged sixteen, he faced the trauma of his father's early death in a London hospital; his mother had died when he was six. After his father's death Merton visited Rome where he was unexpectedly enthralled by Byzantine mosaics depicting Christ: 'For the first time I began to find out something of who this Person was that men called Christ,'[96] 'it was there that I first saw Him [...] the Christ of the Apocalypse, the Christ of the Martyrs […] the Christ of all the Fathers.'[97] These mosaics and frescoes revealed Christ, but above all 'this grace was Christ himself, present in those churches, in all his power, and in his humanity, in his human flesh and his material, physical, corporeal Presence.'[98] Those churches taught Merton the doctrine of a God of infinite power, wisdom and love revealed through the manhood of Christ. He bought a vulgate text and began reading the New Testament. Yet there was still no deep sense of conversion. That came suddenly one night in his room. The light was on when his father, who had been dead a year, seemed to be there with him, in a vivid,

93 O'Mahony, *Louis Massignon*, p. 8, see Jacques Keryell, *Louis Massignon: L'Hospitalité sacrée* (Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 1987), p. 67.

94 O'Mahony, *Louis Massignon*, p. 8; Louis Gardet, '*A propos du sacerdoce de Louis Massignon*', *Présence de Louis Massignon: Hommages et témoignages* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1987), pp. 192-193.

95 Clément was born at Aniane in the Languedoc region of Southern France on 17 November 1921, Merton was born in Prades, Pyranées-Orientales, 31 January 2015.

96 Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (London: Sheldon Press, 1975), p. 109.

97 *Ibid*., p. 108.

98 *Ibid*.

real and startling way. Merton felt pierced deeply by a light; he became suddenly overwhelmed by a profound insight into the state of his soul. Filled with horror and a sense of urgency he longed for escape and freedom; he prayed God would free him from the terrible things that held him in slavery. Through many tears he spoke to his father and to God.[99] He understood it to be a great grace and continued to pray and visit churches. But the experience did not hold. He entered Cambridge as an undergraduate at eighteen but his belief at that time that life was meaningless, seemed to lead to the outcome described by Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov*:[100] if God is evacuated then everything or anything is permissible. Merton recalls his year at Cambridge as a time of decadence and sorrow. His unacceptable behaviour resulted in his dispatch to America and Columbia University in Manhattan in 1935. Once there he became attracted to Communism because of its apparent pacifism and promises of a new social order. It became however a milestone on his journey towards Catholicism.

Reading Etienne Gilson's book *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* in 1937 opened Merton to Catholicism; a year later a book on the conversion of Gerard Manley Hopkins and his priestly vocation, followed by a meeting with Jacques Maritain, who concurrently with Gilson had re-interpreted the work of St Thomas Aquinas, led Merton to Corpus Christi Church where he was baptised on 22 February 1939. Merton, who felt his vocation to be with the Franciscan Order, saw Francis as an 'Apostle who incarnated the whole spirit and message of the Gospels most perfectly.'[101] St Francis was, of all saints, 'another Christ' he writes in *No Man is an Island*. To be an *alter Christus* was the longing of Massignon's life and the reason he became an ordained priest. In prayer, Merton connects with Massignon's thought on substitution; in 1939 in his prayer to St Francis, after the rejection of his application to join the Franciscan Friary in New York, he asks for guidance through the saint's prayers, that he 'may soon be able to suffer so that someone else may not suffer.' Merton's quest led to his monastic vocation and desire for solitude as a Cistercian monk in 1941. Paradoxically almost immediately he became famous as an

99 Merton, *The Seven*, p. 108.

100 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamzov*, see Paul Evdokimov, *Dostoïevski et le pro blème du mal* (Paris: DDB, 1961); and Rowan Williams, *Dostoevsky: Language, Faith and Fiction* (London: Continuum, 2008).

101 Thomas Merton, *No Man is an Island*, Harvest (Kansas: Harvest, 1978).

author of books on spirituality, monasticism, justice and peace issues, and a forerunner of interreligious dialogue at a depth never before envisaged by the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church. Merton's aim in writing was to make known God's mercy and grace; he believed the spontaneous language of personal experience to be the most effective way to speak of God to twentieth century *laïcité*. Abbot John Eudes Bamburger entered Gethsemani in 1950 after reading *Seven Storey Mountain* while training to become a doctor; he states that Merton's writing is 'a process of cleansing the mirror of the heart so that it reflects all in the light of Christ [...] the luminous presence continues to shine out from many of his pages.'[102]

As a Cistercian monk at Gethsemani, Kentucky, Merton became deeply involved with the peace movement and supported the non-violent civil rights movement. In 1962, seventeen years after Hiroshima, the United States, Soviet Union, Great Britain and France were sole possessors of nuclear weapons, and a Catholic was President of the United States. In this political climate, Merton wished in some way to contribute to the Second Vatican Council and the voice of the Church for peace. He wrote *Peace in the Post-Christian Era*.[103] Merton's original manuscript was banned from being printed as a book by Dom Gabriel Sortais,[104] the Abbot General of the Order of Cistercians of Strict Observance, and Merton silenced from further writing about war and nuclear armament. Dom Sortais was urged by Jacques Maritain to allow Merton to write, as he considered his work contained some of the finest writing of the twentieth century. Meanwhile, private circulation to friends of mimeographed copies had not been banned, and Merton sent a mimeographed copy of his unpublished work to Pope John XXIII. Gabriel Sortais forms a link between Merton and de Chergé: Dom Sortais and Leo-Etienne Duval, Archbishop of Algeria, both attended the Second Vatican Council. In 1963, Sortais expressed to Cardinal Duval his decision to close the Tibhirine Monastery founded in 1938, Cardinal Duval argued for the monastery to remain, as he saw

102 John Eudes Bamberger, *Thomas Merton: Prophet of Renewal* (Collegeville MN: Cistercian Publications, 2005).

103 Published four decades later as *Thomas Merton: Peace in the Post-Christian Era*, Patricia A Burton (ed.) (New York: Orbis, 2004).

104 Guy Oury OSB, *Dom Gabriel Sortais: An Amazing Abbot in Turbulent Times (1902-1963)* (Collegeville MN: Cistercian Publications, 2006).

Tibhirine as 'the lung of the diocese'. The monastery was not closed[105] and de Chergé was to live his monastic vocation there at Our Lady of Atlas for twenty-five years until 1996.

It is thought that Merton's work, *Peace in the Post-Christian Era,* influenced passages in *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,[106] on the Church's position against war and violence. It is noted in the foreword of the book published in 2004 that John XXIII showed his approval of Merton's work through a personal gift and messages to Merton at Gethsemani Monastery. Many of the views expressed by Merton, critical of war and nuclear weapons, appeared in papal statements that culminated in John XXIII's encyclical, *Pacem in Terris* in April 1963.[107] Aware of the persecutions of Soviet totalitarian Communism but with true monastic insight Merton notes the demons within, against which we must struggle: 'The struggle against totalitarianism is directed not only against an external enemy [...] but also against our own hidden tendencies towards fascist or collectivist aberrations.'[108]

Merton had a special relationship with Russia, evident in his correspondence with Boris Pasternak, and through his appreciation of the Patristic writings of the *Philokalia*, his interest in Orthodox mysticism and of the importance of icons in his life. He notes his interest in the writings of the Russian émigré religious philosophers who were pivotal in Clément's conversion. It is a paradox that as a Cistercian monk who desired solitude, Merton became a global traveller whose books on mysticism and social action were translated into many languages. Canon A M Allchin points out[109] that 'Merton's home was in God, since God's heart was his hermitage he was at home everywhere … in God's

105 Salenson, p. 17.

106 J Forest, 'Foreword', *Thomas Merton: Peace*, pp. vii-xxiv, xvii. Forest notes John XXIII showed approval of Merton's work through a personal gift and messages to Merton at Gethsemani Monastery.

107 *Ibid*., p. xv.

108 *Ibid*., p. xix, cites Merton's chapter 'Can We Choose Peace? pp. 8-19.

109 A M Allchin, 'Celebrating Thomas Merton', Presidential Address at the first general meeting of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland, Southampton, 1996. A M Allchin 'The Worship of the Whole Creation', *Merton and Hesychasm: The Prayer of the Heart*, Bernadette Dieker and Jonathan Montaldo (eds) (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2003), pp. 103-120; A M Allchin 'Our Lives a Powerful Pentecost', *Merton*, pp. 121-140.

creation.' But this was possible only because 'the universal was rooted in the particular', which was Merton's little hermitage in the woods where he sought solitude and prayer. He noted in his journal 30 December 1949, 'Our whole life must be a dialectic between community and solitude.' This is true also of St Bernard of Clairvaux who 'described himself as a chimaera, because he was a monk whose frequent ecclesiastical and political involvements meant that he was rarely to be found in his monastery.'[110]

Sufism

Merton felt drawn to identify mystical forms of expression in other religions, this led to his exploration of Asian religions, especially Zen[111] and other forms of Buddhism. Under the guidance of Louis Massignon, he studied Islam and the early Muslim mystics, developing a particular interest in Sufism. Fluent in French, he was reading Massignon's classic study in comparative mysticism, *Essai sur les origins du lexique technique de la mystique Musulmane*,[112] on his Asian journey in 1968. Merton noted the phrase 'experiential knowledge' which described the approach Massignon took in his study of Muslim mystics,[113] by this he meant he was looking for the 'grace which is wholly divine';[114] Merton also adopted this approach. Massignon and Merton were unique at that time in their openness to interreligious dialogue in this way, believing 'grace which was divine' would be found in non-Christian faiths. Merton was impressed that the witness and intercession of a Muslim mystic had been instrumental in Massignon's conversion and return to the Catholic faith of his childhood, noting in his diary that 'Massignon and de Foucauld were both converted to Christianity by the witness

110 Bernard McGinn, 'Withdrawal and Return: Reflections on Monastic Retreat from the World', *Spiritus*, 6 (2006), pp. 149-172 (p. 152).

111 Thomas Merton, *Mystics and Zen Masters* (New York: Delta Books, 1967).

112 Published in 1922 and 1954; Louis Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, trans. B Clarke (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame 1997).

113 Thomas Merton, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, N Burton, P Hart and J Laughlin (eds) (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 26. See S Griffith, 'Mystics and Sufi Masters: Thomas Merton and Dialogue between Christians and Muslims', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 15 (2004), pp. 299-316 (pp. 299-230).

114 Griffith, 'Mystics', p. 301.

of Islam to the one, true, living God.'[115] A mutual friend of Massignon and Merton, Herbert Mason, records, 'Merton told me himself of the far-reaching effect this book had on his life, coming at a particularly critical moment for him, in helping him turn his attention towards the East.'[116] In 1959 Merton and Massignon began an exchange of correspondence, which continued until 1961. Mason believed 'Merton sensed that M[assignon] was spiritually revolutionary for future Islamic/Christian influences.'[117] Merton believed of his own vocation, that if 'literature, contemplative solitude, Latin America, Asia, Zen, Islam etc.,' were excluded from his life 'he would be less a monk.'[118]

Merton's knowledge of Sufism was enriched by meeting and corresponding with Muslim student of Sufism Abdul Aziz. In correspondence, 1964, to Aziz, Merton anticipates the theology of the Second Vatican Council's *Nostra Aetate*, promulgated the following year, 28 October 1965, he writes: 'How can one be in contact with the great thinkers and men of prayer of the various religions without recognising that these men have known God and have loved Him because they recognised themselves loved by Him.'[119] However he affirms his Christian rootedness: 'It is true there are different ways to Him, and some are more perfect and more complete than others. It is true that the revelation given to the "People of the Book", Christians, Jews and Muslims, is more detailed and more perfect than that given through natural means only to the other religions.'[120] Both Massignon and Merton believed that the Catholic devotion to Our Lady of Fatima, the city in Portugal named after Muhammad's daughter where once many Muslims lived, had a mystical importance that endorsed the notion of inter-faith communication between Muslims and Christians. Merton could see the far-reaching importance of this interaction globally. He wrote, 'It seems to me that mutual comprehension between Christians and Muslims is something of

115 Thomas Merton, *Dancing on the Water of Life: Seeking Peace in the Hermitage. The Journals of Thomas Merton*, v. 5, 1963-1965, R E Daggy (ed.) (San Francisco: Harper, 1997), p. 166.

116 Griffith, 'Mystics', p. 301, cites Herbert Mason, 'Merton and Massignon', *Muslim World*, 59 (1969), p. 317.

117 Griffith, 'Mystics', p. 301, Herbert Mason to Sidney H Griffith, 21 October 1988.

118 Merton, *Dancing*^, p. 125.

119 Merton, *Hidden Ground of Love*, letters edited by W H Shannon, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux (New York: 1985), p. 58. See Griffith, 'Mystics', pp. 305-306.

120 Merton, *Hidden*, p. 58.

vital importance today, and unfortunately it is rare and uncertain, or else subjected to the vagaries of politics.'[121]

In a letter to Aziz, 1965, Merton relates how close he feels to Sufi mysticism, 'My prayer is then a kind of praise rising up out of the centre of Nothing and Silence […]. If He wills He can make the Nothingness into total clarity […]. It is not thinking about anything, but a direct seeking of the Face of the Invisible, which cannot be found unless we become lost in Him who is invisible.'[122] In some of his writings and lectures Merton recommended the Sufi practice of *dhikr* which has much in common with the 'Jesus Prayer' from the hesychast tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy. Clément comments that the West sometimes places the Jesus prayer with other non-Christian methods such as the Muslim *dhikr*, the Hindu *japayoga*, but its ecclesial context for the Eastern Christian is *hesychia*, a way of centring and focusing on God which for monks means silence and the peace of union with God.[123] Clément points to the Trinitarian character of the prayer, implicit in the text 'No-one can say that Jesus is Lord unless the Holy Spirit is in him' (1 Cor 12:3). Merton describes it as, 'attention to the presence of God' and 'being before God as if you saw Him,'[124] noting words of St Theophan the Recluse, 'Prayer is descending with the mind into your heart and there standing before the Face of the Lord, ever present, all seeing within you.' Merton allowed Sufi ascetism to be at the heart of his prayer life, which he identified with the Sufi word *fana*, or 'annihilation of all that is not God in oneself, and of the mystical presence of God *(baqa)* abiding in the saint as a witness to the Real.'[125] As Canon Allchin discerned of Merton, 'God's heart was his hermitage'; Merton uses Massignon's phrase, *le point vierge*, to describe the secret centre of his own heart, touched only by God: 'At the centre of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs to God [...] This little point [...] is the

121 Merton, *Hidden*, p. 53. See Griffith, 'Mystics', p. 309.
122 Merton, Hidden, pp. 63-64. See Griffith, 'Mystics', p. 311.
123 Olivier Clément, 'La Prière du Cœur', *Spiritualité Orientale*, 6 (Abbaye de Bellefontaine: 1970), pp. 41-98 (p. 44).
124 Merton, *Hidden*, pp. 63-64. See Griffith, 'Mystics', p. 311.
125 Griffith, 'Mystics', p. 312. See Richard J Sudworth, *The Church of England and Islam: Contemporary Anglican Christian-Muslim relations and the politico-theological question 1988-2012*, PhD Thesis, 2013.

pure glory of God in us. It is like a pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven. It is in everybody.'[126]

Pilgrimage

'Our real journey in life is interior.'[127] Merton sees this as a form of 'exposed consciousness.' Referring to his time in Asia, Merton says, 'I come as a pilgrim.'[128] According to Benedictine David Steindl-Rast, the goal of pilgrimage in the context of monastic tradition is 'exposure' to the sacred presence of the holy place. Massignon observes that language itself is both a 'pilgrimage' and a 'spiritual displacement', because language with another evokes, with that person, 'an Absentee, the third person'.[129] Clément identifies pilgrimage this way: 'Christian destiny is a pilgrimage towards "the place of the heart" where the Lord awaits us, and where he draws us.'[130]

Sixty years ago, at the start of the French Algerian war in 1954, which continued until 1962, Louis Massignon discovered *La Chapelle des Sept Dormants* in Brittany at Vieux-Marché,[131] dedicated to seven Christian saints. Seeing correspondence with the story in Sura XVIII of the Seven Sleepers who died in Ephesus, who are also venerated by Muslims for their complete surrender to the will of God, and who are seen by them to be saints of the parousia, Massignon sought permission from the local archbishop[132] to include Muslims as well as Christians on an annual pilgrimage as a sign of hope and peace. At the fiftieth anniversary of the pilgrimage to Brittany in 2014, presiding Archbishop Tessier of Algiers, wished to associate the seven Martyrs of

126 Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), p. 158. Griffith, 'Mystics', p. 313.
127 Merton, *Asian*, p. 296.
128 Merton, *Asian*, p. 312.
129 Louis Massignon, *Opera Minora II* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969), p. 581. Cited by Laudo, p. 2.
130 Clément, 'La Prière', p. 60.
131 See Anthony O'Mahony, 'Louis Massignon, the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus and the Christian-Muslim Pilgrimage at Vieux-Marché, Brittany', in *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage*, eds Craig Bartholomew and Fred Hughes (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 126-146.
132 A characteristic of Massignon was his deep respect for the authority of the Church. He submitted all new projects and ideas to the Magisterium for approval.

Ephesus with the memory of the seven monks of Tibhirine monastery in Southern Algeria, who were assassinated in 1996, by establishing a place of pilgrimage in Algeria as a sign of hope.[133]

Olivier Clément (1921-2009)

Born in a 'dechristianised' area of southern France, Clément grew up in a family which took atheism and socialism as their guiding reality. His conversion, which he recorded in *L'autre soleil* and recorded in Part 1 of this thesis, came during a dramatic spiritual encounter when 'Someone' was looking at him, the One in the icon; everything was silence, words of silence, the silence was of Him, he was no longer alone. Clément, convicted by the Holy Spirit, was moved to repentance, was healed and reinstated in a new life with Christ. Williams reflects on Vladimir Lossky's theology of the 'silence of Christ and of scripture', which Williams interprets: 'the truths spoken to us by the Word of God are never spoken by words alone.' Lossky defines this as 'a margin of silence' to which we must listen, or the words will mean nothing; 'the faculty of hearing the silence of Jesus' is 'attributed by St Ignatius to those who in truth possess his Word.'[134] Clément had confronted the desert of 'nothingness' that haunted him since childhood, and experienced transformation into a new life with Christ; his quest for truth took him deeply into a life of prayer and interior monasticism, where solitude was no longer an emptiness but a *communion*. He moved from atheism to baptism in the Russian Orthodox francophone Church and life as a lay theologian, to become a tireless seeker of ecumenical harmony between East and West, with a particular interest in the Middle Eastern Churches of Constantinople, Antioch and Lebanon and the Christian presence in Europe. Williams comments on becoming a new creation, which in a monastic frame, 'the life of solitude and communion together' is a 'matter of ecumenical significance', and a radical calling to the whole

133 Louis Massignon, *La Maison de la Vierge et la résurrection des Sept Dormants à Ephèse,* ap *La France Catholique*, 12 août 1955; Louis Massignon, *Les Sept Dormants, Apocalypse de l'Islam*, ap. Meelanges Peeters, Tome II, pp. 245-260. Geneviève Massignon (1921-1966), daughter of Louis Massignon, presented her PhD thesis, *The Veneration of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus: A Devotion Common to Muslims and Christians*, 1963.

134 Rowan Williams, *A Margin of Silence*, p. 39.

people of God;[135] a radical call expressed by St Paul.[136] The message of the Gospels call us into a community that finds its deepest paradigm, to use Clément's term, the Uni-Trinity; he writes, 'there is nothing more profound ultimately, than the person and the communion of persons.'[137] Clément wants to communicate this mystery to others. This community, 'the Body of Christ, is a new nation, a new *polis* or city, a new language taught by the Spirit, a new family.'[138]

Clément observes we have moved on from the era of the Fathers who worked throughout the Eastern Mediterranean, Christians today must do this throughout the world, it is a matter of scale.[139] Clément came to understand the Mediterranean as holding immense historic, political and future importance for Europe and the Middle East and therefore globally. The Mediterranean is a place of conviviality and Christian consciousness that he has responded to over a lifetime. He recognised the significance and context of the Churches of Antioch as a Christian presence that has endured within a predominantly Muslim milieu and which had experienced spiritual revival in the twentieth century. 'Mediterranean humanism' and 'Mediterranean genius'[140] had encouraged an inclusive and dialogical character; an organic approach of person to person characterises their search for truth that they endeavour to keep free and unbiased from nationalistic tendencies. Clément wants to show that these ancient Churches and Christianity in Europe need each other and need to identify with each other. Clément judges that for Christians, the prophecy of Muhammad has a place in the designs of God to which Christians are called to participate. He sees in the mysticism of Islam and in the Qur'an that speaks of the Word and the Spirit of God, a Trinitarian 'space'. Clément appeals to Christians to reflect on the prophecy of Muhammad with an open heart.[141] He sees Muhammad as a prophet of the Old Testament and a prophet of the ultimate eschaton: Islam questions Israel waiting for a Messiah born of human paternity, it questions Christianity which became divided,

135 Williams, 'Monastic Virtues', p. 307.
136 Colossians 3:12-17.
137 Clément, *Mémoires*, p. 28.
138 Williams, 'Monastic Virtues', p. 308.
139 Clément, *Mémoires*, p. 28.
140 Clément, *Conversations*, p. 211.
141 Talbi & Clément, *Un Respect Têtu*, p. 282.

imprisoning the Spirit in a kind of 'ecclesiolatry'.[142] It is a reproach to Christians for not recognising sufficiently the monastic perfection, of which Jesus is the model. He sees the task of Christians in dialogue is defined by the Church Fathers who saw the presence of the Holy Spirit in all humanity.

As a mature Christian he became aware of the special vocation of Antioch and the renewal of Catholicism in Europe; he judges the united cooperation of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches to be vital to the future of Europe, together with hard-headed dialogue between Islam and Christianity. Massignon's sense of double belonging to Catholicism and also to the *Umma* of Islam, is significant for Clément. Clément opens his discourse[143] with Tunisian-born historian and intellectual, Mohamed Talbi, on Christianity, with a quotation from Soloviev: 'What we hold most dear is Christ himself. Christ and all that comes from Him.'[144] His relationship with Mohamed Talbi concerning Christianity and Islam in the book they co-authored is part of that development in which he became aware of zones of conversation and dialogue, and the overall importance of Europe.

Clément was influenced by the writing of Louis Massignon, with whom he was acquainted, and also the work of Massignon's disciple, Youakim Moubarac,[145] Lebanese Maronite scholar and priest. Clément believed the mutual respect that creates a space for dialogue must include mutual compassion and justice for the poor of the Third World and Palestinian refugees of the Middle East. Endorsing the ecumenical concerns of Bartholomew I, Clément writes that 'humanity, or at least a few persons, must become truly compassionate', through a transforming 'divinely-inspired humanism'. The separation of Christian East and West led to rupture and 'disintegration', the encounter again between East and West in the twentieth century could lead Christianity into unity and communion, through 'life of the Spirit in the Body of Christ', each

142 *Ibid*., p. 284.

143 Talbi and Clément, *Un Respect Têtu*. The book is less dialogical in nature than the editor intended and became more an explanation of belief and structure of each faith because Talbi and Clément unfortunately were never able to meet in face-to-face dialogue.

144 Talbi and Clément, *Un Respect Têtu*, p. 112; see footnote 1, p. 121.

145 Y Moubarac, 1924-1995, dedicated his life to interfaith dialogue between Christianity and Islam, to the unity of the Church and to Maronite Antiochian heritage.

member a 'unique person in communion with all other persons'.[146] This Christian reality would be able to strive for peace and raise its voice against 'fundamentalism'.[147] Isaac of Syria is cited:[148]

> When God sees that you have, in all purity of heart, placed your trust in him more than yourself, then a power unknown to you will make its dwelling within you. And you will perceive in all your senses the power of the One who is with you.

Williams reflects on the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Kingdom of God in an expression well known by Orthodox Christians from St Seraphim of Sarov: 'the purpose of the Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit'. Williams notes this is a connection 'western theology has been slow to make', as has the understanding that 'the Holy Spirit is a foretaste of things to come',[149] which are fundamental to understanding Eastern Christianity and Russian Orthodoxy in particular.[150]

Arab Christians in Antioch experienced the influence of a double stream of Russian and Greek Orthodox spirituality, while retaining their 'Arabness'. This would have been attractive to Clément, as would the French language spoken fluently by most Lebanese after the French Protectorate was established in 1926, with French administration continuing until 1944. It would seem that John Paul II saw this possibility for 'unity in diversity' for the Middle East in a paradigm he hoped for and was partly realised in Lebanon. In 1997 during his visit to Beirut, when over a million people of all sects and beliefs attended his Mass in Martyrs' Square, he proclaimed that 'Lebanon is more than a country; it is a message of freedom and an example of pluralism for East and West.' The pope's visit, coming soon after the end of the tragic civil war, received almost unanimous support from political and religious leaders. His presence brought renewed hope of genuine reconciliation and justice in a country that had once been a model of pluralism in the Middle East. He encouraged young Muslims and Christians of the

146 Clément, *Conversations*, pp. 232-234.
147 *Ibid*., p. 232.
148 *Ibid*., p. 233.
149 Williams, *A Margin of Silence*, p. 11.
150 *Ibid*.

many faith groups of Lebanon to enter into greater dialogue, calling them to 'open with confidence a new page in their history'.[151] During the papal visit to Lebanon in 2012, Pope Benedict XVI discussed the relationship between secularism and politics, recognising the need for a healthy secularism, '*un sens laicité*' that frees religion and allows politics to be enriched by religion bringing harmony in service of the common good. Antoine Audo, Jesuit Chaldean Bishop of Aleppo,[152] proclaimed the contribution of Christians at the heart of conflict in an Arab Muslim society, was love and solidarity for the good of all with courage to be involved in change without violence. The 'Church of the Arabs' has a special responsibility as a tiny Christian presence in the world of Islam. 'Christianity in the Middle East has a witness beyond itself.'[153] The responsibility of a minority prayerful presence was realised in the monastic witness of Christian de Chergé.

Christian de Chergé (1937-1996)

Christian de Chergé's future became rooted in a foreign land when as a young child his family lived for three years in Algeria at the beginning of the Second World War in 1939. In those early years in Algeria he was touched by the way Muslims prayed and encouraged by his mother to recognise that they prayed to the same God as he did. These childhood impressions would have formed the background for his thought throughout twenty-seven months national service in Algeria during the War of Independence (1954-1962). It was during this time that he met and became friends with Mohammed, an Algerian village policeman, a devout Muslim married with ten children. Walking together one evening, they were attacked by hostile members of the

151 A Special Assembly for Lebanon of the Synod of Bishops was convened 26.11.95-14.12.95 on the theme 'Christ is our hope: renewed by his Spirit, in solidarity, we give witness to his love.' The final document *A New Hope for Lebanon* was signed in Beirut by John Paul II, 10 May 1997.

152 At a special Guest Lecture at the Centre for Eastern Christianity, Heythrop College, on 19 October 2012, Bishop Audo spoke on the situation in the Middle-East especially Syria.

153 A O'Mahony, 'Introduction', *Christianity in the Middle East: Studies in Modern History, Theology and Politics*, Anthony O'Mahony (ed.) (London: Melisende, 2008), pp. 9-16, p. 16.

FLN,[154] Mohammed immediately placed himself in front of de Chergé and argued successfully to save his life; the next day Mohammed was found murdered by his well. The sacrifice of his Muslim friend's life, given for him, confirmed de Chergé in his dedication to Algeria and to God.

Christian was the son of a French general and one of eight siblings, all brought up as Catholics. He studied theology at the Institut Catholique de Paris from October 1956-June 1964.[155] Olivier Clément was a Professor at the Catholic Institute as well as at the Orthodox Institute of St Sergius in Paris; both men would have been deeply disturbed by the massacre in Paris in 1961 when police attacked a peaceful demonstration of supporters of Algerian independence, killing, it is thought, 200 people. De Chergé continued his studies in Rome at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, under Robert Casper and Maurice Boormans for a further two years, when the work of Massignon would have been discussed. He was ordained in Paris, 1964, and in 1969 entered the Cistercian Abbey of Aiguebelle, mother house of Our Lady of Atlas at Tibhirine, where he took up his vocation to be 'one who prays among others who pray'.[156] He remained at Tibhirine for twenty-five years, twelve of which he served as abbot of the community. He offered employment to local Algerians, medical care and lessons in literacy, organised an annual conference to promote Muslim-Christian dialogue and invited Muslims to stay in the monastery compound.

Confirmation of his monastic vocation occurred in the year before his solemn profession, referred to as a '*nuit de feu*',[157] an experience that reminds us of Blaise Pascal's night of fire.[158] Christian was praying a prayer of surrender one evening in the near darkness of the monastery church, between the altar and the tabernacle, when a Muslim guest came to him in the quiet of the evening and asked to pray with him.

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154 *Front de Liberation Nationale*, an Algerian socialist political party that sought Algerian independence from France.

155 Salenson, p. 2.

156 *Ibid*.

157 De Chergé speaks of a 'night of fire' in *L'Invincible espérance* (Paris: Bayard, 2010), p. 3.

158 Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), experienced a religious vision described afterwards by him as 'Fire', during the night of 23 November 1654, when he prayed to the 'God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob [...] God of Jesus Christ'.

Their voices joined in praises of 'the One from who all love is born' for three hours; it gave Christian immense hope and knowledge that this was a possibility of eternity.[159] He says 'These three hours made me live what my faith for centuries and centuries had known was possible.'[160] The death of Mohammed revealed the mystery of the communion of saints to de Chergé, an eschatological reality which is 'a beyond that is present, a beyond that is coming towards us.'[161] He wanted to demonstrate that Muslims and Christians can live together: 'the only way for us to give witness [...] is to be what we are in the midst of banal realities.' De Chergé felt supported in his witness by the vision of John Paul II concerning interreligious dialogue.[162] Dialogue, he wrote, is 'an interior path' based on spiritual unity which exists between persons; 'to draw close to the other and to draw close to God: these are one and the same.'[163] Both de Chergé and Clément draw attention to St Therese of the Child Jesus who saw that we are all seated at 'the sinners table'; the foundation of dialogue is thus the 'mercy of God for everyone'.

Two years before his death de Chergé wrote a letter forgiving his future assassins, sealed it and left it with his mother in France, to be opened posthumously. He not only forgave the rebels who killed him, he did so before the event, which in some way he anticipated would happen soon. The time came in May 1996 when a radical Muslim group kidnapped seven of the community including the abbot and later put them to death. Christian wrote, 'I forgive with all my heart the one who will strike me down. I could not desire such a death [...] my death will confirm those who hastily judged me naive or idealistic'. To 'my last-minute friend [...] I commend you to the God in whose face I see yours […]. And may we find each other happy "good thieves" in Paradise.' In the fourth century, St Ephrem[164] understood that to

159 Salenson, p. 28.
160 *Ibid*.
161 *Ibid*., p. 102.
162 C Salenson, 'Commissions pour le dialogue interreligieuse monastique', *International Bulletin*, 2 (2005), pp. 23-31.
163 Salenson, 'Commissions'.
164 St Ephrem the Syrian, a deacon, probably born in 306, he died 373 in the area now south-east Turkey. He spoke Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic, the language spoken in Palestine in the first century AD to the present day. He became famous as a gifted theologian and poet. See *The Harp of the Spirit: Poems of Saint Ephrem the Syrian*, Introduction and trans. by Sebastian Brock (Cambridge: Aquila Books, 2013), p. 152.

speak publicly about theological thought and faith requires prayer in silence and in private:

> Truth and love are wings which cannot be separated,
> for Truth cannot fly without Love, nor can Love soar
> aloft without Truth, their yoke is one of amity.[165]

Unconditional hospitality shows compassion to the stranger, the guest, the foreigner; it is an essential element of becoming a follower of Christ. Genesis 2 describes Abrahamic hospitality: Abraham bowed down to welcome the faces of three uninvited strangers, then served them with food and drink. De Chergé embraced the spiritual ideal of radical hospitality and radical faith in interreligious fraternity.[166] Both Massignon and de Chergé entered into deeper understanding of the Catholic Eucharist and communion of saints[167] because of their encounter with a Muslim. De Chergé reflected often on the death of his friend Mohammed, 'Each Eucharist makes him infinitely present to me in the Glorified Body for he lived the Eucharist to the end.'[168] He rejoiced in his Christian monastic vocation, the gift of encounter with the other, lived in a Muslim context, as 'the gift of the Spirit, whose secret joy will always be to establish communion and restore the likeness, playing with the differences.'[169]

Conclusions

Prophets and pioneers arise in each era to point to what is authentic. The call for unity in diversity, expressed in the lives of Massignon, Merton, Clément and de Chergé, characterises this prophetic role.

165 *Ibid*., 'Hymns on Faith No. 20.

166 See Christian S Krokus,'Christianity, Islam and Hinduism in Louis Massignon's Appropriation of Gandhi as a Modern Saint', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*,Vol. 47, No 4, Fall, 2012.

167 John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: Alfred K Knopf, 1994), p. 77: John Paul speaks of the communion of saints, 'in which all believers—whether living or dead—form a single community, a single body'; cited by Mahmoud Ayoub, 'John Paul II on Islam', p. 182.

168 Salenson, 'Commissions', p. 23.

169 Christian de Chergé, *L'Invincible Esperance*, Bruno Chenu (ed.) (Paris: Bayard, 1996), p. 223.

They were Christians who witnessed to the power of Christ and lived in the power of the Holy Spirit, alive and active in the world and the Church. The Holy Spirit activates the renewal of Christian theology in several places and persons simultaneously, if persons open to receive. Merton writes:

> For as the wind carries thousands of invisible, and visible winged seeds, so the stream of time brings with it germs of spirituality that come to rest imperceptibly in the minds and wills of men. Most of these unnumbered seeds perish and are lost, because men are not prepared to receive them: for such seeds as these cannot spring up anywhere except in the good soil of liberty and desire.[170]

They all wished to share knowledge of the gift of God's compassion and mercy, by living, speaking and writing a theology of encounter. Each of them had recognised God's mercy in a personal, metanoic experience, which opened them to repentance and forgiveness and led them to express their faith within the context of radical hospitality. Spiritual experience and biographical cultural context were foundational to the vocational choices each one made, which led to a life of service, prayer, ecumenism, encounter with other religions and interior monasticism.

The eschatological orientation of monastic life and interreligious dialogue are linked together. Monastic life is a sign in the Church and a *kairos*[171] that Massignon, Clément, Merton and de Chergé have brought to the attention of men and women of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in a particular way. The monastic way reminds the Church that 'eschatology refers to the transcendent dimension of reality, a reality that is fulfilled only if it is open to the divine [...] goes beyond its limits [...] transcends itself [...] and manifests God;'[172] in Massignon's words, 'to make us go beyond ourselves, our country, our clan: to go beyond all in love.'[173] They have highlighted the importance of interior monasticism as a call to holiness to the universal Church in a communion of saints past, present and to come.

170 Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1949), p. 7.
171 Salenson, 'Commissions', pp. 23-31.
172 Phan, *Culture and Eschatology*, p. 2.
173 Massignon quoted by Jesus Hernandez Aristu, 'The Philosophy of Dialogue', p. 309.

The legacy of their lives lies in their shared passion for peace, justice, compassion for the poor and marginalised of society, and an openness to the other in an encounter that recognises the mutual and fundamental worth and dignity of each person. This legacy is a valuable contribution to the Church and people of the twenty-first century, for the guidance of politicians in a global and contemporary 'dialogue of civilisations' that seeks the future well-being of humankind. Mutual respect creates a space for dialogue: Massignon, Merton, Clément and de Chergé have given us an authentic paradigm of radical faith and radical hospitality: a lived theology of eschatological hope

Clément while remaining deeply committed to the Orthodox tradition was able to reassess his ancestral Catholic roots through the lens of spiritual renewal flowing in twentieth-century French Catholicism; he evaluated the spiritual and ecclesial paradigm of Antioch and the Mediterranean Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, which as at Antioch, learnt to co-exist alongside Islam. This maturing view enabled him to engage powerfully with issues regarding the papacy, ecclesial unity and interfaith encounter. They highlighted the importance of interior monasticism as a call to holiness to the universal Church.

A REFLECTION ON STEFANIE HUGH-DONOVAN'S 'EASTERN ORTHODOXY AND MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST. OLIVIER CLÉMENT'S PERSPECTIVES ON THEOLOGY AND ECCLESIOLOGY IN THE CHRISTIAN ENCOUNTER WITH ISLAM,' *LIVING STONES YEARBOOK* 2016.

David Derrick

Introduction

Stefanie Hugh-Donovan looks at Eastern Orthodoxy and Muslim-Christian Relations through the work of Olivier Clément. He was born in a village in the south of France in 1921 to a strongly atheist and socialist family. Hence, he had no religious education. Stefanie plots his marked, profound, and dramatic journey from atheism to Christian conversion—part of his 'curve de vie' to use Louis Massignon's phrase.[1] As a teacher in Paris he encountered the Russian Orthodox Church into which he was baptised in 1951, thus becoming part of the Russian Francophile community.

A Mediterranean Man

Although now rooted in Orthodoxy Clément continued to identify with France and Europe. Living and working mainly in Paris he identified himself as a 'Mediterranean man'. He saw the Mediterranean as having great historic and political importance for Europe and the Middle East. His reaction to the atheism and totalitarianism in post-war Europe and Russia fostered in him a spirit of ecumenism, and a desire to work to bring Eastern and Western Christians together in

1 Jeffrey J Kripal, *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom: Eroticism and Reflexivity in the Study of Mysticism*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2001, pp. 89, 96, 102, 137, 257.

closer communion and understanding. Stefanie illustrates this desire by introducing us to a book on faith and dialogue which in 1989 Clément co-authored with the Tunisian-born historian and intellectual, Mohamed Talib entitled, *Un Respect Têtu* ('Hard-headed Respect'). This book considers Islamic-Christian dialogue to be of major contemporary importance and conveys a sense of practical, realistic, unsentimental respect for the 'Other', and importantly for the faith of the 'Other'. It was written not only for Muslims that they might understand Christianity better, but also for 'God Seekers' in the West and in Russia.

The book is dedicated to the Christian Arabs of Antioch (among whom he had many friends), and the martyrs of Lebanon, 'where Christians and Muslims must again learn to love each other anew.'[2]

Vladimir Soloviev

Clément opens with this quotation, 'What we hold most dear is Christ himself. Christ and all that comes from Him,' by the Russian Orthodox religious philosopher, Vladimir Soloviev, *A Short Story of the Antichrist*,[3] written in 1900 the year of Soloviev's death. Stefanie notes that Soloviev's eschatological theme predicts forgetfulness of God, the secularisation of Europe, and civil strife and revolutions which would pave the way for a United States of Europe at the end of the twentieth century. This would bring about the rise of the Antichrist—an urbane philanthropist—who, while accepting the social and cultural teaching of Jesus, would reject the central message that he is the Son of God. And yet, Soloviev was hopeful that ethical and humanistic ecumenism would result in ecclesial ecumenism. Stefanie shows that Soloviev's religious philosophy underpinned the thinking of the Russian Orthodox theologians of the Diaspora, and therefore that of Clément.

Soloviev's book was published in France in 1984, and again resurfaced in Russian theological circles after the breakup of the Soviet Union. It is therefore both foundational in Clément's Orthodoxy and significant in his analysis of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

2 Mohamed Talbi and Olivier Clément, *Un Respect Têtu*, Nouvelle Cité, Paris, 1989, p. 112.

3 Vladimir, Soloviev, *War, progress, and the end of history, including a short story of the Anti-Christ*. University of London Press, London, 1915. A recent and revised edition was published by Lindisfarne Press in 1990.

Interreligious dialogue—the Christian starting point

Stefanie demonstrates that for Clément, ecclesial ecumenism was essential for any dialogue with Islam. He wanted Christians and Muslims not only to listen to each other, but 'to undertake a reciprocal spiritual sharing and questioning that unites both in a sense of justice.'[4] Through such an approach to interreligious dialogue, Clément sees 'hard-headed respect' (*Un Respect Têtu)* as primarily respect for oneself, for one's faith, and for the Other.

Clement sees a Trinitarian space where the Qur'an speaks of the Word and the Spirit of God. In response to this, Clément appeals to Christians to reflect on the prophecy of Mohammad with an open heart. 'Par là même, il appartient aux chrétiens de réfléchir, avec une intelligence et un cœur ouverts, à la «prophétie» de Muhammad.'[5] ('By the same token, it is up to Christians to reflect, with an open mind and heart, on the "prophecy" of Muhammad.')

Islam

Clément then describes Islam as seen from a Christian viewpoint. Drawing on the writings of French or French speaking Islamicists, who introduced a fresh understanding of Islam to twentieth-century Western theologians, Stefanie makes the observation that:

> A remarkable aspect of the opening up of Western theological understanding to the importance of Islamic/Christian dialogue is the intensely francophone element that allowed it to happen.[6]

4 S Hugh-Donovan, 'Eastern Orthodoxy and Muslim-Christian Relations between Europe and the Middle East: O Clément's perspectives on theology and ecclesiology in the Christian encounter with Islam', *Living Stones Yearbook 2016,* 2017, pp. 210-211.

5 Clément, *Un Respect Têtu*, p. 125.

6 Hugh-Donovan, 2017, pp. 211-212.

He was deeply influenced by the writing of Louis Massignon[7] who experienced a type of 'double belonging', to the West and the East, Christianity and Islam. He also cites a range of other intellectuals who supported the authentic nature of the Qur'anic prophecy. For example, the second century Father, St Irenaeus of Lyons, who saw Muhammad both as an Old Testament and an eschatological prophet. Clément sees that the task of Christians in dialogue, as defined by the Fathers, is to regain the eschatological perspective of universal salvation.

Widening her perspective, Stefanie notes other writers who shared the key theological principle of the action of the Holy Spirit in the world. The Anglican Bishop, Kenneth Cragg was held in high regard as a pioneer of dialogical ecumenism by Clément. Stefanie also cites the Anglican priest, the Revd Chris Brown's work 'Kenneth Cragg on Shi'a Islam and Iran: An Anglican Theological Response to Political Islam', (*ARAM*, Vol. 20, 2008, p. 380).

Stefanie notes that Bishop Cragg had spent much of his long life reflecting on the relationship between Islam and Christianity. His approach as a Christian to Islam was that of an ambassador representing not another country but the religious 'Other', 'who must learn the language and customs of Islam, not so much to understand them, but to be understood.'[8] In his seminal book, first published in 1956, *The Call of the Minare*t, Cragg writes that from a Muslim point of view,

> Christianity they [the Muslims] did not understand, because its central doctrines were confusing and elaborate. Islam is readily intelligible and entirely simple.[9]

The Antiochian Paradigm

'The disciples were first called Christian at Antioch' (Acts 11.26). Clément, as Stefanie points out, reminds us that Christianity is both an Oriental religion, and a mystical religion. Clément introduces Georges

7 Massignon was a Melkite Greek Catholic priest ordained in Cairo in 1950. A O'Mahony, 'Louis Massignon, the Melkite Church and Islam', *Aram* 20(2), 2008, pp. 267-297.

8 Hugh-Donovan, 2017, p. 214.

9 Kenneth Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford, 2000, p. 277.

Khodr, who was born in Lebanon in 1923 into a Christian family; a pioneer in renewal in many areas of ecclesial life in the Patriarchate of Antioch and a founding member in 1942 of the Orthodox Youth Movement (OYM). A return to bible reading by the laity brought a return to the sources of Christianity. In the 1980s this renewal was further encouraged in the Archdiocese of Beirut under the leadership of Bishop Elias Audeh. Stefanie observes that:

> This deeply scriptural and spiritual renewal grew among groups of young people who became aware of their own personal relationship with Jesus and discipleship to him; in this sense it was [a] deeply evangelical movement of the Holy Spirit, that brought the experience of Pentecost to their lives. The Church became for them a meeting place with Jesus where individual healings took place. Their prayer life and in particular the use of the Eastern Jesus Prayer became an imperative, …
> Clément points to the discernment of Georges Khodr and Kenneth Cragg who see that the Christian is meant to discover and recognize the 'traces of Christ' in all human reality, whether religious or not.[10]

Two faces of Islam

In Clément's view, Stefanie argues, that by linking Orthodoxy together with European Catholicism, this can show an Islam with two possible 'faces'. One face represented by Mohamed Talbi, the other by Tariq Ramadan. Talbi engages and takes interest in European thought and Christianity, while for Ramadan, the West is a space for Islam to reassert its old dominance.

Clément explains that Muslims who have emigrated to the West need to rethink the position of Islam within the reality of being 'just another religion' in a 'secular', democratic society. Islam, after its original fruitfulness in the early centuries, became isolated. This is in comparison to the Jewish and Russian Orthodox diasporas which brought richness to the world.

10 Hugh-Donovan, 2017, pp. 215-216.

Kenneth Cragg sees the diaspora of Muslims to the West as a hopeful sign that may be a call from God for Muslim communities to co-exist with those of other religions.

> Now many Muslims find themselves in that pre-Hijrah situation in which the faith began. If we believe in the hand of God behind historical developments, then today's Muslim diaspora—Turks in Germany, Algerians in France, Pakistanis in Britain, Indonesians in Holland, people from many Islamic countries in Canada and the U.S.—seems a call for Muslims to coexist with those of other religions. Many Muslims are being called to live in varying circumstances, as fellow citizens, voting, getting elected, taking part in local and national government—but all in the context of remaining a minority, with the psychological uncertainty that all minorities experience.[11]

As Stefanie demonstrates:

> A re-evaluation of Islam itself is being forced on Muslims by international laws of human rights and by the minority status of Muslim communities no longer living in an Islamic State. Islam had a longstanding tradition of tolerance to minority religious groups in its early centuries.[12]

Stefanie in her conclusion shows that Clément came to appreciate the context of Antioch as a Christian presence that has endured and has experienced spiritual revival in the twentieth century. She sees the united co-operation of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches as vital to the future of Europe, together with hard-headed dialogue between Islam and Christianity. I would add that by bringing Kenneth Cragg into the equation, Stefanie shows that the Protestant Churches also have a distinct role to play in such a dialogue.

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11 K Cragg, 'Cross meets crescent: An interview with Kenneth Cragg', *The Christian Century,* 116 (5), 1999, p. 183.

12 Hugh-Donovan, 2017, p. 221.

HASSAN DEHQANI-TAFTI: THE STRUGGLES OF A CONVERT FROM ISLAM TO BE CHRISTIAN IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY IRAN?

Agnes Wilkins OSB

Hassan Dehqani-Tafti (1920-2008) deserves to be better known, not only for his close association with Kenneth Cragg and his contribution to Muslim/Christian understanding, but because he is a remarkable and very attractive person in his own right. Born a humble village boy into a Muslim family in Iran, he converted to Christianity, became the first indigenous leader of the Anglican Church in Iran, eventually having oversight of the four Anglican dioceses of Jerusalem, Iran, Egypt and Cyprus & the Gulf. He survived the Islamic Revolution of 1979, but eventually had to go into exile in England. He became an Assistant Bishop of Winchester Cathedral, where he is buried.

Early Life and Conversion

Hassan Dehqani-Tafti's beginnings were humble. He was born in 1920 in Taft, a village which was situated in central Iran just beyond the Yezd desert at the foothills of a great range of mountains. The desert and these mountains became part of him, and wherever he went later in life they always represented home. He describes his village thus:

> The village is built on the banks of a great dry stony riverbed, which fills with flood waters when the winter snows melt upon the high slopes in the spring. Then Taft breaks into beauty: the orchards are pink with peach blossom and the pomegranate trees glisten in the sunshine, their brilliant scarlet flowers aflame in the fresh foliage. The houses are simple, of sun-dried mud bricks behind

> high walls; the narrow streets are dusty. Our home had but two rooms and a kitchen.[1]

One of the rooms of the house was used by Hassan's mother Sekinah who, having some nursing skills, had converted it into an infirmary where she ministered to the local population, for Taft had no hospital. Her own conversion to Christianity came about in the following way: It happened that her mother, referred to locally as 'Mulla Zara' because, unusually for that time, especially for a woman, could read and recite the Qur'an, needed to go to hospital for the treatment of an eye complaint. The only local hospital was one that had been established by Christian missionaries in the nearby town of Yezd before the First World War. Mulla Zara took along with her two daughters who were to act as her nurses. However, they both subsequently trained officially to be nurses at the hospital. It was during this time that Sekinah, Hassan's mother, was drawn to Christianity. She was baptised and confirmed, and also taught to read and write. Hassan believed that she must have suffered a great deal at the hands of her relatives, but in the small community of Christians in Yezd she felt safe. This, however, was not to last.

During the 1914-18 War the hospitals in Yezd were obliged to close and the missionaries had to leave. Within a few weeks the two hospitals were closed, the missionaries were gone and the local church was in disarray. Sekinah had to return to her village where she was the only Christian. There, according to local custom, she had to marry, and so she was given to a relative who became Hassan's father; a young man named Mohammed who was illiterate but intelligent, with a deep interest in religion which made him well-loved and respected among those who knew him.

After the war it came about that the hospitals were able to reopen and the missionaries return. One of these missionaries, a rather formidable lady called Miss W A Kingdon, was to play an important part in Hassan's conversion process. As part of her missionary endeavour at this time she would go round the local villages on a donkey and hold small group meetings in various people's houses, where she would sing and talk around gospel themes and stories. One entry in her diary

1 H B Dehqani-Tafti, *Design of My World: Pilgrimage to Christianity,* Seabury Press, New York, 1982.

records a visit to Hassan's house where they had 'a nice little meeting of twenty five or so.' 'They listened well,' she adds. Hassan considered it remarkable that the words of the Gospel were heard in his house when he was about a year old. His mother was seemingly able to continue with her Christian life unhindered during these early years of Hassan's childhood. He describes happy memories of her role in the village:

> When I was about four years old, crowds of sick people used to come to our house where my mother's dispensary was. She has remained in my mind as the central figure to whom everybody referred his or her problems. Her figure is vivid in my memory, always on the move, trying to do what she could, quietly and kindly'.[2]

Sadly the happy years of Hassan's childhood ended when his mother died of tuberculosis when he was five years old. Without her earnings the family was plunged into poverty; his father had to work harder and his brother had to leave school in order to work. His only sister died whilst still a baby from lack of adequate care and nourishment. The young Hassan said of himself that he was not yet old enough to earn his living, nor young enough to die from lack of care and attention. He felt that he was just growing haphazardly, like one of the many thousands of thorn bushes growing in the deserts around Taft. But his mother, before her death, had taken some thought for his future. It happened at this time that she was visited in Taft by a few of her friends, including a doctor from the women's hospital in Yezd, and she took this opportunity to request that at least one of her children be brought up a Christian. Under the circumstances this was a virtual impossibility; it would be necessary to send the child to a Christian school, rendered extremely unlikely by the fact that his was a strictly Muslim household and in addition they were very poor. Nevertheless Miss Kingdon, the missionary, a very strong character who loved Sekinah, was determined to do all in her power to implement her last wish, and kept on pressing Hassan's father to let his son go to a Christian school. She continued her policy of persuasion till Hassan reached the age of six and a half, when his father finally yielded to the extent that he agreed to consult the Qur'an. He himself could neither

2 *Ibid.,* p. 19.

read nor write, but as was the custom in such cases, he opened the Qur'an at random and consulted a mulla who interpreted the text favourably, as it happened, and Hassan, against the odds, was allowed to go to a Christian school. He comments: 'When God has a design for someone, who are we to say that He does not rule the opening of the pages of the Qur'an by a Mulla?'[3]

There was only a girl's school in Yezd, so that was where Hassan had to go for his initial education. It was fifteen miles away and his father travelled there with him all the way by night through the desert, sometimes carrying him on his shoulders. On arrival he was given accommodation in the house of a newly married Persian couple, which was not an ideal situation as they had a small baby and Hassan tended to be side-lined. However, they were a warm-hearted couple and at the request of the indomitable Miss Kingdon, taught him the Lord's Prayer. On the whole, therefore, despite the loss of his mother and departure from his home village and relatives, Hassan was happy at this school where, among other things, he learned the Persian alphabet, attended Bible classes and learned some psalms by heart. However, when he was seven a problem arose in that they could not keep a boy of that age in a girl's school. Hassan surmises that there was probably another struggle between her and his father, but that the latter yielded and Miss Kingdon got her way again. As a result Hassan was allowed to go to school in Isfahan where the mission had a college for boys with a preparatory school. The head of the school was a man called Jalil Aqa who was destined to have some considerable influence over Hassan's development.

Isfahan is one of the largest and loveliest towns in the country and has a long and illustrious history. Hassan describes it thus:

> Its history goes back to Cyrus the Great and to the glories of pre-Islamic Iran. There are ruins of ancient fire-temples

3 *Ibid.,* pp. 18-19. He is referring to the practice of *istekhara,* whereby the mulla takes a copy of the Qur'an, opens it at random and puts a finger on a verse. If that verse proves to have a positive result for the mulla, then the person can go ahead with whatever the reason for seeking guidance was. The mulla's answer can be at random and he can answer anyway he likes. There is no definite method as to how he decides. This information was given to me by Margaret Dehqani-Tafti, widow of Hassan, who was born in Iran and lived there until the troubles following the Revolution of 1979. (letter dated 20.10.2010)

> where the Zoroastrian inhabitants of Isfahan used to hold services in honour of fire and light. The Arab invasion of Iran in the seventh century made Isfahan into a Muslim town. The most glorious time in its history belongs to the period of the Safavis in the seventeenth century. Isfahan was made their capital, and they spent their energy, time, and talents in making it beautiful. They made a large square in the middle of the town, one of the biggest in the world, and called it Naqsh-i-Jahan, 'the Design of the World'.[4]

This square was the inspiration behind the title of Hassan's autobiography, *The Unfolding Design of My World: A Pilgrim in Exile*.[5] This was a clear indication of his desire to root his life story and his conversion in the context of his own country and its Islamic heritage. When he first went there, however, it seemed a different world, almost a foreign country, but it was here that he was destined to spend much of his life and exercise his Christian ministry, and so it became his home as much as the little village of Taft.

Christianity came to Isfahan quite early, in the era of the Safavis (1499-1739) when Isfahan was transformed from a provincial city into one of the largest capitals in the world of its day. It was during this time that Shah 'Abbas moved thousands of Armenians from his northwest domains to his capital, where he built them a small town on the south bank of the river. The Armenians, who were Christian, called it Julfa after a town of the same name in their native land. At times local animosity meant they had strained relations with the Muslims over the river.[6] Preaching the gospel was completely out of the question, and so the Armenian Church, according to Hassan, became more and more inward-looking and enclosed, and lost its evangelistic spirit, as a result of which it seems the Christian community was not very vibrant. However, this situation changed at the end of the 19th century when the Church Missionary Society built a hospital and school in Julfa.

4 *Ibid.,* p. 23.

5 H B Dehqani-Tafti, *The Unfolding Design of My World: A Pilgrim in Exile,* edited by Kenneth Cragg, pub. Canterbury Press, 2000.

6 Information on Isfahan and its history is taken from Wilfrid Blunt, *Isfahan, Pearl of Asia,* Pallas Athene (Publishers) Ltd, London 2009, first published 1966.

The educational, medical and evangelistic work of these missionaries, after tentative beginnings, was officially sanctioned in 1975. Iran was recognised by the missionaries to be 'stony ground'; there was no question of creating a burgeoning Iranian Church, but their efforts did lead to the creation of an indigenous Church, albeit an extremely small one.[7] The Christians of Julfa were not at this time allowed into Isfahan but somehow, according to Hassan, a missionary doctor endowed with gifts of gentleness, meekness and friendship, bought a piece of land in the town itself, and started to build a much needed hospital there. This was soon followed by a church built in the middle of the compound. Eventually the mission school in Julfa transferred to the town, and this was followed by another successful purchase of land on which was built the Stuart Memorial College, after a retired bishop from New Zealand whose love for the Muslims had brought him to Iran in old age. It was in a small school built next to this called 'The College Branch School' that Hassan was destined to continue his education.[8]

Jalil Aqa, headmaster of this school, was to have a considerable influence on Hassan's conversion process. This was not in any direct way, despite his own recent conversion from Islam to Christianity, but he profoundly influenced his pupil indirectly, in that Hassan was able to see in his headmaster an expression of Christianity totally at home in Persian culture, especially as expressed in the poetry and calligraphy that they both loved. As will be seen later, when Hassan went to England for further study after his definitive conversion to Christianity, the change of culture had a profoundly negative effect on him which he had to struggle hard to overcome. Hassan describes Jalil's background as follows:

> By race Jalil was a Cossack. Jalil's father, Khalil, was a colonel in the army of the king of that day, and he was brought to Isfahan to train the local army. Khalil was a Sunni Muslim and had strong tendencies towards

7 The history of these missionaries in Iran has been researched by Gulnar Eleanor Francis-Dehqani in her doctoral thesis, *Religious Feminism in an Age of Empire: CMS Missionaries in Iran, 1969-1934,* published by Monograph Series, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Bristol, 2000. She is the youngest daughter of Hassan Dehqani-Tafti, and was appointed the first Bishop of Loughborough, Leicester, in July 2017.

8 For all this part of Hassan's story, unless otherwise stated, I rely on his work already quoted, *Design of My World, Pilgrimage to Christianity.*

> mysticism. He took a great deal of trouble over the education of his son, Jalil, whose aptitude for learning and artistic abilities soon made him a poet, a first-rate calligrapher and well versed in Persian literature. The wise father saw to it also that his son should learn French and English, which in those days was very rare indeed.[9]

In fact Jalil became deeply immersed in Persian culture; he digested the best of Persian culture and then baptised the whole into Christianity. This was vitally important for Hassan as he saw in his teacher a form of Christianity to which he could easily relate. In addition his own growing love of poetry and literature was encouraged, an aspect of himself that became integrated ever more deeply into his Christian life. Like his teacher, in time he would write many hymns for the Persian Church. Jalil's own conversion had happened at a Christian hospital where he had to go for treatment of a chest complaint. He talked there with the Christians and read their Bible, and his mystic spirit was attracted by the person of Jesus Christ. Therefore after his conversion he wanted to give his abilities to Him and his Church. Under this teacher Hassan made great progress, despite the fact that he was somewhat spoiled. He records:

> My being a small motherless boy away from home must have appealed to his poetical sensitivity. Also he must have seen in me some likeness to himself, for even at the earliest stages of my education I loved poetry and calligraphy; this always creates love between father and son, teacher and pupil, friend and friend.[10]

The school curriculum consisted of calligraphy, Bible reading and poetry, and under his teacher's tutelage Hassan soon began composing his own verse. The teacher/pupil relationship he enjoyed, however, was not altogether healthy for he admits that the more he showed signs of progress, the more Jalil's exaggerated praises of him increased. This could add to Hassan's problems when he went home to his family for the summer holidays, problems which were to worsen as he was to

9 *Pilgrimage to Christianity,* p .26.
10 *Ibid.,* p. 27.

become gradually more committed to Christianity. He speaks of a series of jumps from one side of a ditch to the other, the 'ditch' being the ever-widening gap between his early home life and his school life, and also between Christianity and Islam. He describes himself at this time as being a 'conceited young fellow', in fact a 'conceited little evangelist' who would argue vigorously with his father, brother, and the elders of the village. But as the holidays progressed his Islam tended to reassert itself and the Lord's Prayer somehow turned into Surah's of Praise and Unity from the Qur'an, so that after the long school holidays he felt he was a Muslim again and had to gradually change into a Christian as the influence of the school grew on him. This happened for two summer holidays when he was ten and eleven years old, but by the time he was twelve he considered that the school influence outweighed his home influence, and he decided to be a Christian. At this stage his conversion process was very much influenced by the cultural environment whether Islamic when he was at home, or Christian when at school, which would seem to indicate that it was not yet very deeply rooted, although he himself claimed that from the age of twelve it was so. Nevertheless It was not long before this youthful conviction would be put to the test.

Hassan's father was understandably upset at the way his son's religious life seemed to be developing, as was his brother. Therefore between them they decided not to let him go back to Isfahan and sent him instead to a one-roomed school in the village run by a mulla. However the mulla humiliated the young boy to such an extent, presumably on account of his religious beliefs and questionable attitude towards his father, that Hassan in the end refused to attend. His father did not insist that he do so but sent him instead to the local government school which had just started. It was Hassan's religious convictions that were undoubtedly the cause of his father's concern, for he pointed out to him that he was still a child, and it was his father who was responsible for his religion. However, he conceded that at the age of fifteen Hassan could choose for himself. At this juncture his Christian education could have been over for good, but as he himself put it:

> God's design for my life was not to be interfered with. All of a sudden six letters arrived, some addressed to my father and some to myself, all imploring my father to let me go. Two were from Miss Kingdon. Another was

> from Jalil my beloved teacher, who had written in his own lovely handwriting to my father advising him to reconsider his decision. [11]

Finally Miss Kingdon sent two Christians from the Yezd church to persuade his father to reconsider. As a result of all this pressure Hassan's father decided to allow the Qur'an to be consulted again, and again the reading was positive in Hassan'a favour, and so his father submitted to what would seem to be the will of God and allowed his son to return to Isfahan.

In the event it was no easy return. To begin with the government had ordered the closure of all foreign primary schools, which included Hassan's. Fortunately, however, permission was obtained for it to remain open a little longer, so that in fact Hassan managed to finish his primary education in a Christian school. The next blow was the death of Jalil's wife, after which he was never quite himself again. Jalil and his Christian wife had taken care of Hassan in the little hostel next to the school, but now he suffered some neglect. As a boy he had never been very strong, being rather thin and small, and now his somewhat delicate physical condition was not improved by the lack of any responsible person to look after him. It seemed to him that everyone was far more interested in his spiritual welfare than his bodily growth. As a result his health began to deteriorate, and in his fifteenth and sixteenth years he spent about six months in and out of hospital. He was ill with sunstroke, malaria, and various fevers and was not able to take his final school exams. His ill health was a concern to all around him, and not least to himself. The fear was that he would develop tuberculosis and die young like his mother. However, in the end a missionary pastor of Isfahan solved the immediate problem by giving him a room on his own in some far corner of the compound, for 'missionaries', it was argued, do not live a normal life according to the standards of the country. The pastor would come every night to his room to make sure he was eating and sleeping properly, and eventually he made a good recovery.

During all these trials Hassan's commitment to Christianity came to maturity. He decided on Christianity, he claims, when he was only ten years old, and it is significant that, as with his teacher Jalil, it was the person and teachings of Jesus that drew him. He describes it as follows:

11 *Ibid.,* p. 29.

> After my second visit to Taft when I was about ten years old, I had decided to follow in my mother's footsteps and become a Christian. The teachings of Jesus Christ I came to regard as being higher and lovelier than any I had yet come across. Love, even towards one's enemies, purity in thought and heart, monogamy, the idea of marriage for life, and finally the Christian attitude not only towards life but also towards death, made me prefer Christianity to any other religion.[12]

His desire to be a Christian grew stronger in his teenage years. In fact we find him practicing a rather 'muscular' Christianity when he was seventeen. This approach assumes one can achieve holiness by dint of hard work and one's own good deeds alone. Bent on Christian 'perfection' he had a book in which he had recorded no less than seventy seven resolutions, because he wanted to be, in his own words, 'as perfect as possible'. This, in fact, is an immature approach to the spiritual life, and so unsurprisingly he was not allowed to be baptised until he was eighteen years old. Before this event took place he wrote what he called 'a very hard letter' to his father and brother announcing his intention to take this decisive step in his conversion process. He wrote to them:

> Man cannot please God by fasting, pilgrimage and even prayer. God is not in need of these things. He only wants a pure and strong faith. No one can save himself, but God will save those who seek him. Of course you know that everyone is free to choose his religion for himself, and I will be eighteen soon. I have found the joy and happiness that I want in Jesus Christ. Dear father and brother, I know you will be sad and angry when you read this, but this is what I have found out for myself from God, and I hope you will read from our Mother's Bible which is still in our house. Please, father, do not count yourself responsible for my religion. I will soon be eighteen and will be legally responsible for myself.[13]

12 *Ibid.,* p. 33.
13 *Ibid.,* p. 34.

Despite the pain and anger he knew he was causing his father and brother, Hassan considered the year of his baptism to be the happiest he had yet spent.

On his first visit home as a baptized Christian, however, Hassan was to have a painful struggle for his faith, as his father and brother did everything to convince him he was wrong. In addition the villagers were not pleasant, and old friends passed him by without speaking. His family regarded him as unclean and would not eat from the same bowl. They changed their clothes and washed them when they wanted to pray. However, despite all this Hassan declared that his family was loving and hospitable, which paradoxically made his cross harder to bear. He only heard one hard word from his father but it was hard indeed; he declared that when that fateful letter came, he had dreamt that his right hand was cut off. This referred, he said, to his son, whom he no longer considered to be part of the family. The pain of this must have been severe for Hassan as it indicated without any doubt that his father had rejected him, at least that he was no longer part of the family, but somehow he was able to put it aside and throw himself into his work for the Church.

Once back in Isfahan Hassan was given more responsibility which included reading lessons in services, writing and translating new hymns, and taking an active part in the Christian Union of the college. Despite his family troubles, he remembers an 'unforgettable, unconscious happy zeal' as most characteristic of those days. But it was not to last. Just before his last year at school a decree came from Tehran that all foreign educational institutions were to be handed over to the government. However, on application, permission was granted for a year's respite which providentially allowed Hassan to complete his education at a Christian school. In 1929 the Second World War broke out, and in 1940, the year he received his diploma, the college and hostel which had become so dear to him passed out of the hands of the mission and the Church. A new phase was now beginning in his life which was to include university in Tehran, military service, and further study in Cambridge University, during the course of which his new found faith would be tested almost to extinction.

Preparation for the ministry: Tehran University; the world of work, spiritual crisis at Cambridge University

Hassan had felt for some time a call to the ministry, but now he offered himself definitively and put himself at the disposal of the Church Council, but they decided, despite the risks to his faith, to send him first to Tehran University, for which he was given a scholarship annually. Tehran unlike Isfahan, was a city much rebuilt by the father of Reza Shah who decided to modernize his capital, and as part of this project built a modern university. Hassan found there a very secular atmosphere, the students being more interested in Western philosophy that eastern religions, but despite these challenging circumstances Hassan's Christian faith thrived. He enjoyed the study and took the advice of the missionaries in Isfahan to keep on praying and attending church. He found a refuge from the secular atmosphere of the university at the Presbyterian church in the American mission that he used to attend. One of the older missionaries was particularly helpful. Hassan describes their meetings as follows:

> In his quiet, humble and deep way he used to listen patiently to my unending questions, and then would give short simple answers which would keep me thinking for a long time. In fact the home of these missionaries in Tehran was a refuge for my confused head and wondering spirit in those days in the disturbed atmosphere of the capital.[14]

Some of the intimate circle of his university friends knew he was a Christian. Some of them were interested in the fact, others disgusted, but the majority were indifferent and even thought there was something strange about someone seriously thinking about things religious in the 20th century. In the holidays Hassan went back to Isfahan where he enjoyed the company of his old missionary friends and shared their work, mainly with youth. He also visited 'his people', but found the gap between them ever-widening. Despite this, Hassan's university experience was positive, and he thrived despite the secular atmosphere and a certain challenge to his faith.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

On graduating from university in 1943 Hassan went, as was required of all graduates, straight to the Officer's Training College. He foresaw problems since he was convinced that as a Christian he should be against fighting of any kind. This gives an interesting insight into the mentality of a new convert from a non-Christian background, since he follows literally what Jesus said and did in the Gospels, for instance when he forbade Peter to use his sword in the garden of Gethsemane when he was being arrested (Jn. 18:20). In this area doctrine has developed and we now have a theory of the 'just war', whereby warfare is hedged around with various conditions which must be adhered to for it to be legitimate. Arguably at the time Hassan was unaware of this, but in any case he was convinced that his faith would not allow him to be a combatant in war. With this concern in mind he managed to obtain an interview with the Chief of the General Staff in order to make his position clear, but the latter was not sympathetic and made it clear to him that it was the responsibility of the Officer's Training College to train him in any way they saw fit. Sometime later all the recruits had to fill in forms with their particulars which meant that Hassan had to publicly declare his Christianity. Soon afterwards his commanding officer summoned him forward in front of the whole company and asked him what his religion was. He replied that he was a Christian, upon which he was questioned about his family background. He was then upbraided for taking the religion of his mother rather than his father, upon which Hassan boldly declared that he had not taken anybody's religion, but had chosen himself to be a Christian. The officer summarily dismissed him, declaring that he could not trust him anymore, but Hassan responded that the reverse should be the case since he could easily have lied about his religion, but did not wish to deceive anyone. He was not, as a result of this meeting, treated unkindly, and one of the sergeants even drew much nearer to him because of his bold and open witness. It would seem, in conclusion, that Hassan's time in the military was also a largely positive experience, and he was not disconcerted by the challenges to his religion.

At the end of his training Hassan was commissioned as Second Lieutenant Staff Officer, and engaged to be secretary to an American colonel who had just been appointed advisor to the Isfahan Division, a position which suited him well, for Isfahan had become his home and he considered the members of St Luke's church there his family.

He was back where he belonged, had a regular and good salary, and was able to give his free time to church activities. But now came the next major turning point in his life, and a further stage in the on-going process of his conversion. As his military service drew to an end he had offered himself for ordination as a minister in his Church, and was rather surprised to be told to go on with his job for a while. Then after a few months he was asked to take different work—church work, with a view to ordination. This meant giving up his regular salary. There was much pressure from his family and friends, and the colonel he worked for who valued his services highly, not to do this. Not surprisingly his family hated the idea of his ordination, but they liked the fact that he had a good job, recognising that with this he might raise the standard of living of the whole family. However, Hassan stood firm and resisted the pressure, sensing the dangers of having money and status, especially their ability to gradually choke the life of the spirit within. But he was particularly concerned for his family, not only for the loss of financial support he could have given them, but also the effect his future ordination would have on them. He describes his state of mind:

> The turmoil was not only theirs, but mine too and perhaps even more severely. By choosing to follow Christ I had separated myself from them, but now I knew that ordination would mean cutting myself off even more deeply from them, and indeed from almost the entire social life of my own country. The uprooting, loneliness and lifelong inner tension tend to be so terrific that it has led some Christians to doubt whether it is wise to make converts of individuals without their families, in non-Christian lands.[15]

The wisdom of this was to come home fully to Hassan when he was sent to England, where he discovered that being alone, out of his familiar cultural setting, was almost harder than the separation from his family. However, unbeknown to him at the time, England was destined one day to be his home and place of burial, and that great English scholar of Islam, Bishop Kenneth Cragg, to become a close friend and mentor.

15 *Ibid.,* p. 44.

Before this, however, there would be much to endure. When Hassan was back in Isfahan at first everything seemed to be going well. All seemed to be proceeding as planned and he was doing what he loved which was mostly working with youth and reading Christian literature, no doubt involving translation into Persian. But inwardly he was not at peace, without really knowing the reason why. He describes this situation as follows:

> Inwardly I was not at rest and I did not know why. I wanted to progress in Christian character, fight bad habits and replace them with nobler ones, but somehow I used to fail horribly. Deep down in my spirit I felt utterly alone and weak. One of the elderly ladies of the mission got very near to me. I used to tell her everything, and used to pour out my difficulties and troubles to her. She acted like a mother and was a great help to me, but the restlessness inside me continued.[16]

This 'restlessness' would reach a climax and cause a major crisis when Hassan was sent to Cambridge University, England, for further study, where he was alone and far from his own culture. It happened that after two years of parish work in Isfahan it was decided that he should go to Ridley Hall in the University of Cambridge for theological study, and it was here that his spiritual crisis deepened. Fortunately, however, he came out of it the stronger and more able to face the trials of his ministry as bishop in Iran which culminated in the loss of practically everything he had so painstakingly built up.

When Hassan first arrived in Cambridge there was no hint of the trouble to come. With a sense of wonder he marvelled that he, a son of the desert and mountains of Yezd where life had not changed for the last three thousand years at least, should be studying theology in Cambridge, the heart of the best that the Western world could offer. In fact it was love at first sight and he was intoxicated. The soft green lawns seemed magical after the desert terrain around his native Taft, and it filled him with wonder, joy and amazement. It all seemed like a sweet dream. This initial euphoria, however, soon gave way to a restlessness more intense

16 *Ibid.*, p. 46.

than before, which was to lead him to the brink of despair. He describes his state of mind:

> The old restlessness of the spirit cropped up again and this time in a more intensified way. There was a war inside me, the old war which must have troubled St Paul when he wrote: 'I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate (Rom. 7.15). It was as if these words were written for me. How long, O Lord? Where was the power of Christ which strengthened St Paul to do all things, but did not seem to be strengthening me?[17]

There seem to have been several contributory factors leading to this state of mind, but undoubtedly they were directly or indirectly related to his conversion process, and were most likely triggered by the fact of finding himself suddenly in a totally foreign environment far from home and without all the familiar supports of his own culture, including the missionaries who had nurtured his faith. The loss of his mother in early childhood and separation from his family for educational purposes were also no doubt contributory factors. He felt himself becoming increasingly lonely within himself, and sinking into a serious degree of unbelief and despair. In his own words he expresses it thus:

> I blamed God for having taken my mother from me so early in life, for deep down within myself I felt a vacuum for love—to have been loved by someone for what I was, and not for what people would like me to be. The thought of a mother's warm bosom and a father's welcoming arms was so deep an unsatisfied desire within me, that thinking about it used to leave me cold and desolate.[18]

In this state of mind Hassan used to lie awake for long hours dwelling on his misery to such a degree that he even contemplated suicide; whether with real seriousness or not is difficult to surmise,

17 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
18 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

but he was undoubtedly deeply unhappy. During this difficult time he began to blame the very people who had nourished his faith for causing this extremely painful separation from his own people. He lamented that if he had stayed in Taft, he would probably not have had any of these tensions which were tearing him apart. He even blamed Miss Kingdon, without whose instrumentality he would never even have become a Christian at all, for taking him away from where he was 'himself'; he felt he had forfeited what was irreplaceable. He now declared that the missionaries were not *his* people, and with such thoughts he succumbed to waves of self-pity and despair so strong that he compared himself to the biblical figure Job, whose miseries were so great that he cursed the day he was born. Amazingly during all this time Hassan continued to attend lectures, sat exams as normal, and went regularly to chapel. Some friends to whom he could speak a little tried to comfort him with what he described as 'religious clichés', such as that he should surrender himself to Christ, or just pray as a means of obtaining peace of mind, but none of their suggestions helped.

How did Hassan come through this trial? First he wrote a letter to a Christian psychologist asking for help, but got no answer. Then one day an undergraduate who was keen on Moral Rearmament suggested he write to a certain Christian leader who had a reputation for helping young people through their difficulties. This was Bishop Stephen Neill who had helped many at times of severe mental strain. He was a Fellow of Trinity College who gave up a distinguished academic career to be a missionary in India. He died in 1984. Hassan took the student's advice and meetings with the bishop were arranged. They only had, it would seem, about six meetings, but for Hassan they transformed the whole situation. In the first interviews the bishop simply listened while Hassan poured out his heart with many tears. The bishop seems to have become a father figure to him, not only in his spiritual life but also in some way compensating for the estrangement his conversion caused him with his natural father. They corresponded often, but unfortunately the letters are not accessible, having been destroyed when the family home in Isfahan was looted at the time of the Islamic Revolution. One wonders what kind of advice they contained, but Hassan claims that it was nothing that others could not have told him just as well; it just happened that Bishop Neill was God's chosen instrument to be a channel of grace

when he needed it. His message was basically just to trust in God. Hassan wondered if it could really be that simple, but was assured that it could and it was. He found himself saying with Job: 'Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand. I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.' (Job 42: 5.6).

Apart from the problems just described, Hassan also recognised that he had a deep need of repentance. It became clear to him that he had been thinking of himself as the 'centre of the world'; in fact, he had not realised how self-centred he had become. This recalls his time in Isfahan when his teacher Jalil praised him so much that he became puffed up with self-confidence and pride, to the great annoyance of his family when he went home for the holidays Now metaphorical scales fell from his eyes and he exclaimed:

> How people tolerated me at Ridley I do not know! I shudder to think there was a time when I truly believed the whole Church in Iran depended on me. If I was going to be a useful servant of God in his Church, this awful unconscious pride had to be broken, and a miracle needs to happen if a conceited young man is to repent.[19]

The 'miracle', it would seem, did happen through his repentance, and he was now ready to return to Iran for whatever God had in store for him there. The Book of Job meant a great deal to him at this time, especially the ending quoted above (Job 42:6). He believed that through these verses he had been 'melted in the crucible of humility'. He sums up his state of mind before he left Cambridge:

> I needed repentance, not in a pietistic sense, but deep within, not from this wrong or that, but from the whole edifice of my self-esteem, to know myself as a speck of dust before the unimaginable reality of God. I came down to dwell in the lowly place where there is rest from the striving of self-will. I felt a process of healing was underway within.[20]

19 *Ibid.,* p. 53.
20 H B Dehqani-Tafti, *The Unfolding Design of My World: A Pilgrim in Exile,* p. 121.

As his time in Cambridge drew to a close, Hassan was offered a job there, but he knew he had to go back to his own country. England fascinated him, especially Cambridge, but he always knew in his heart that he had to return home. Before his departure, however, he spent a few days with Miss Kingdon, now retired and close to death. They spoke about Taft, and his mother, and the church there. She seemed to him to have the look of a mother for a son of whom she was very proud. When he was leaving the country she accompanied him to the train station, and it seemed to Hassan, that in this last farewell, she was singing her *Nunc Dimittis.* She died soon after he reached home.

Return to Iran

The rest of Hassan's story consists in living out his conversion and commitment to Christianity, which involved living through the difficult time of the Islamic Revolution which began in 1979, and his subsequent exile in England. However, at first he moved quickly into a period of deep satisfaction on the personal level, and one of prosperity and growth in the Church. On St Luke's Day, 18 October, he was made a deacon by the Bishop in Iran in St Luke's church, Isfahan. Ten months later, in 1950, he was ordained and began his career as pastor of St Luke's church. His whole aim at this time was to interpret the Christ he loved and preach about him as fervently as he could to his congregation, and then to socialise and care in a spontaneous way, without prejudice. Nevertheless he had to struggle with a certain amount of tension at this time since he was even now regarded with suspicion. He reports that the Detective Bureau of Police regularly visited his church to listen to his sermons.[21]

Hassan's personal happiness was completed by his marriage in June 1952 to Margaret, daughter of Bishop Thomson, the Anglican Bishop in Iran. Her brave and unflinching support in their subsequent time of trial must have helped him enormously to cope with the tremendous pressure he was under. Also, after his alienation from his own family because of his conversion, it must have been a great joy to have his own Christian family. His family grew to include three girls and a boy; the latter, who was to die in tragic circumstances, was born in 1955.

21 *Ibid.,* p. 127.

During this time when his young family was growing up, there were small incidents of spying and harassment, and a certain unrest in the community at large, but on the whole the situation was calm and the Church's work prospered.

Visitors from abroad would pass through Hassan's parish on a regular basis and he would invite them to speak to his flock, with himself acting as interpreter if necessary. One of these visitors, first arriving in 1957, was the renowned English scholar of Islam, Kenneth Cragg, who at that time was the Travelling Secretary of the Near Eastern Council of Churches. Hassan became very familiar with Cragg's thought as he regularly had to translate for him. What began as his translating Cragg's words into Persian for his own congregation soon developed into a life-long friendship. Providentially the first visit came when Hassan felt the need, after eight years of ministry, for some 'declogging of heart and mind', as he called it, and Cragg's friendship was like a 'refreshing breeze'. He found himself responding to how Cragg seemed to find a way into Islam with a certain 'gentleness and modest warmth of heart' that he sought to emulate. About Cragg's influence he writes:

> Some of the inner contradictions and tensions I had known in my past were resolved in fresh hope and purpose and a new harmony of mind and rest of heart. For the comprehending love between us we could both render to God thanksgiving as being authentically the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. I had come across a teacher apt to meet my deepest mental and spiritual need of strength and wisdom.[22]

It was at this time, the late 1950s that Hassan began writing his own story of his pilgrimage from Islam to Christianity in which he describes how he personally came to grips with the profound differences he perceived between Islam and Christianity (*Design of my World, Pilgrimage to Christianity*, 1959). It so happened that about this time Kenneth Cragg had recently published *The Call of the Minaret,* a still popular, seminal work in the dialogue with Islam.[23] Cragg's writings and intellectual input into his life at this time helped Hassan

22 *Ibid.,* p. 150.
23 First published in 1956, reprinted 2000, 2004, 2008, pub. Oneworld, Oxford.

to build on the theological training he received at Cambridge, and to expound the Christian faith to intellectuals and the influential people of Isfahan. Many of these sermons were later published in Persian in book form.

In the 1960s and 70s the small Church in Iran continued to grow and prosper. In 1960 the long-serving Bishop Thompson, his father-in-law, announced his intention to retire. The diocese at this time was still under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Canterbury, but after wide consultation it was decided to propose the appointment of bishop to Hassan rather than bring in for an interim period a retired bishop unfamiliar with the Persian language. He accepted this and was duly consecrated in St George's Cathedral, Jerusalem, because at that time the Archbishop in Jerusalem was still nominally accountable to Canterbury. Hassan's rather understated reaction was as follows: 'So it came about that I was called to the utmost trust the Church has, the Church that I had so long before pledged to serve till death. I could only ask the Council members to stand and pray for me in the fulfilment of that sacred pledge.'[24] Around 1975 it was decided that a new Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East should be created, separate from Canterbury. This province was to be made up of four dioceses, namely, Iran, Jerusalem, Egypt and Cyprus and The Gulf, and the President Bishop was to exercise overall jurisdiction. In 1976 the Province was formerly inaugurated and Hassan was elected as its President, which meant he had pastoral care for a very large area. About this development he says:

> This new provincial dimension to my tasks was a heavy trust, entailing a pastoral concern for the whole of the area from far North Africa, Ethiopia, the long Gulf line of States from Muscat to Iraq, the island of Cyprus and the heartlands of Christian history in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon—all to be cherished in Christ in an Anglican fellowship that held each diocese both autonomous and contributory, the entire structure being itself innovative and untried.[25]

24 *Unfolding Design of My World,* p. 151.
25 *Ibid.,* p. 101.

Meanwhile in Iran, during his time of tenure of this whole area, the new bishop managed to increase considerably the educational facilities, in particular setting up a high school for boys and girls with boarding facilities. He believed it was a matter of urgency to take this work beyond primary school level, and for all this he obtained funds from the Diocesan Council. There was already in the diocese when Hassan took over a Christian hospital and nursing school. There was also an institute for the welfare of the blind built up over many years, which educated and trained blind girls and women. There was a similar institute for boys called after Cyrus the Great, which trained them in keeping poultry, animal husbandry and agriculture. One of Hassan's main duties was to visit and inspect these institutions, as well as the other churches in different parts of the diocese.

During his tenure as bishop, Hassan's father died. This was a very painful event for him on a personal level, but it was his reception in his home village that demonstrated how deep the rift had become with his family since his conversion. On hearing the news of his father's death, Hassan went to Taft with all speed but instead of being able to offer solace to a community in grief, as he had hoped, his arrival caused disquiet, especially for his brother, Yahya. The latter intimated that as they had already buried their father, his presence was unnecessary, and he should return to Isfahan. Yahya then foresaw difficulties about Hassan's presence at the traditional third day service following death. Hassan insisted that he must be there, but in the event he discovered that his brother had called local religious leaders to their home to prevent him. He describes the situation as follows:

> I found myself confronted by a dozen turbaned men who were unanimous in their verdict that my presence in the mosque would be intolerable. It was the mosque I had attended as a child. There was a deep anger in me when their leader recommended that I swallow my humiliation and return home forthwith. So I went and stood for a while by the door of the mosque in prayer and loving recollection of my father.[26]

26 *Ibid.*, p. 178.

It is remarkable that this father, whom Hassan obviously loved, had not been quite so unbending as these mullahs and allowed himself to be persuaded, albeit with difficulty, in the matter of Hassan's education in Christian schools. Soon, however, the effects of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 were to override this and all other difficulties in Hassan's life and ministry.

The Islamic Revolution and its aftermath

The Ayatollah Khomeini, inspiration and architect of the Islamic Republic which came into existence in 1979, began by protesting, whilst teaching in the theological seminary of Qum, against the ruler Reza Shah's unpopular reforms. The Shah, it would seem, had moved too quickly with his reforms, dismissing older men around him who might have given him wise advice and surrounding himself instead with younger men who flattered him. His biggest mistake, according to Hassan, was to send Khomeini into exile, from where he sent printed bulletins back to Iran to build up support for his movement. These came even to Christians reminding them of their long-standing ties with Islam, and asking them to rise up against oppression. Khomeini managed to return to Iran on 2 February 1979, where revolutionaries who had broken into army arsenals helped themselves to weapons and joined him. When he was sufficiently in control of the situation Khomeini dissolved the Iranian parliament. At this stage, according to Hassan, most people sincerely believed the country would be free from dictatorship and oppression. He himself shared these sentiments at this time, even sending a letter of support and congratulation to the new government in Iran. But he would soon realise his mistake.

The situation for the Church quickly began to deteriorate, the first ominous sign being the brutal murder of Arastoo Syah, a senior priest of the diocese, pastor of the church in Shiraz in the south of the country, apparently by two prospective Christians whom he had been instructing. This happened in the first week of the revolution.[27] In the second week men calling themselves members of the 'Revolutionary Committee' entered the hospital at Isfahan and confiscated all stocks of

27 H B Dehqani-Tafti, *The Hard Awakening: The Bishop in Iran,* Triangle, SPCK, London 1981, pp. 37-38. The perpetrators of the crime were never caught.

Christian literature. On their next visit they announced that they had been assigned by the Committee to supervise the administration of the hospital. A month later the hospital in Shiraz met with the same fate. Eventually both hospitals were taken over by the rebels despite the fact that the one in Shiraz was 'endowment land', *waqf,* which under Islamic law is regarded as almost holy and must not be interfered with.[28] The self-styled officials who took over these institutions demanded access to the bank accounts and usually succeeded in obtaining the money they wanted from the bank, but in fact it was not a great deal; only sufficient for the daily running of the hospitals. However, in the course of their investigations they discovered that another account existed, the Diocesan Trust Fund, which was the financial backbone of the diocese and had grown to a very large sum. It contained, for instance, the severance pay and pensions for about two hundred employees and was held in the name of the current bishop who alone could sign for withdrawal of funds. The new 'owners' of the hospital could not access this Fund through the bank, so they came to Hassan and demanded that he hand it over. He simply answered that the new 'owners' had acted unjustly and illegally in taking over *waqf* property by force, and he was therefore not in a position to hand over to anyone Trust money which legally belonged to the diocese. And so he consistently refused their request, which was inevitably a prelude to disaster

The next crisis which was a preliminary to a serious attempt on Hassan's life happened on 29 August, when thirty men burst into the bishop's house, thoroughly ransacked it, and made off with family photos, letters, and copies of the monthly pastoral letter including the names and addresses of recipients. Two weeks later an anonymous message was received, to the effect that the intruders had looted the house, tried to frighten the bishop, and warning that they would be back. Hassan was not fazed by this and remarked how amazing it is that one can get used to a succession of disasters. He gives some insight into his ability to cope by describing the effect of a mysterious illness he had three months into the revolution. He says:

28 The Shiraz Christian hospital, started in 1922, stood on land donated and endowed for the purpose by one of the wealthy families in Shiraz. One of the grievances of the Khomeini movement was that the Shah had tampered with such endowed lands. *Ibid.,* p. 43.

> The tension and perplexity made me ill. I spent three weeks in bed with a high fever. The clinical diagnosis was obvious enough: stress had prostrated me. The body had answered the weight on the soul. Medicine itself did not heal me but a new infilling of the love of God, and peace that only a new sense of God's presence could bestow. The God of love was the antidote to my anxiety about the future, and enabled me to endure the present.[29]

This illness gave Hassan time to ponder strategy in case worse was to come, which of course it was. One thing, however, became abundantly clear to him, and that was that the Christian community must remain true to its faith, whatever the cost. In other words there could be no policy of *taqiyeh,* 'tactical dissimulation', the Shi'ite belief that anyone had the right to hide the truth if it was to their advantage—a doctrine which he saw as totally contrary to Christianity. At this time Hassan was helped greatly through the reading of a book by Robert Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons,* which tells the story of Thomas More, Chancellor of England, who did not yield to the pressure put on him by the king, Henry VIII, but stood up for what he believed to be right and was martyred as a consequence.

Inevitably Hassan thought about death at this time, knowing full well that his own life was in danger. He was given the insight, however, that 'death is a gift from God', and that when it comes 'one has to accept it with gratitude, not with terror and fear, because it is only through death that we can be really and completely liberated from our twisted personalities.' [30] His illness taught him that he had to leave fear behind him and carry on with his duties as usual, abandoning himself to the conviction that if people wanted to kill him they would do so, but equally if God wanted him to live, he would survive. The important thing for him was to continue God's work with the utmost loyalty to the end.

Events now began to move quickly. A member of the so-called Revolutionary Committee called upon Hassan and again demanded that he hand over the Church Trust Fund, and again he refused. As a result he was threatened with arrest and the next day members of this

29 *The Unfolding Design of My World,* pp. 190-1.
30 *The Hard Awakening*, pp. 104-5.

'Committee' did indeed come and take him away. He found himself, after a short period of detention, in a large yard where young gunmen were standing around. Unbeknown to him this was the place used for public execution by firing squad. However, news of his disappearance had spread quickly and action was taken just in time. Providentially also foreign reporters arrived, one from *The Daily Telegraph,* to find out what was going on and his captors, obvious discomfited, let him go, but not before he had been dragged before a court hearing, still in his bishop's cassock where, under questioning, he remained very calm. The sequence to this was a surprise attempt on his life during the night when he was sleeping in the early hours of Friday morning, 26 October. He happened to open his eyes, only to see a revolver pointed at him less than a foot away. Then he heard five or six shots. Simultaneously his wife threw herself over his body in a gesture of protection, after which she pursued the intruders as they ran away. When she returned her left hand was streaming with blood; it had been in the path of one of the bullets intended for her husband, who incredibly was not hurt at all. However his pillow was pierced with four neat holes in a semi-circle round where his head had been.[31] Needless to say the perpetrators of this crime were never caught.

Hassan's life was saved, but shortly the life of his son would be taken. After the attempt on his life he set off with his wife for Cyprus where he had to attend a meeting in his role as President Bishop. Their son, Bahram, saw them off at the airport; little did they know that this was the last time they would see him. Bahram's passport had been taken from him so that he could not leave the country, the only reason given to him by the authorities being that he would not persuade his father to hand over the Diocesan Trust Money. His murder was the final blow which resulted in Hassan and his family being forced to live in exile in England. Hassan insisted he did not flee and had every intention of returning. He had left the country legally, having been strongly advised to do so, but in fact it was never safe for him to return. However, he continued as bishop in exile till 1990 when he had to officially retire.[32] Little is known of what happened to Bahram except the following:

31 *Ibid.,* pp. 60-61. In testimony of this the pillow case was kept and brought to England, where it was shown to the author by Margaret Dehqani-Tafti.

32 Information from Margaret Dehqani-Tafti, who insisted that for the first year in England (1980-81) they thought they would be returning.

Margaret Dehqani-Tafti had returned to Iran while Hassan remained in Cyprus at his meeting. He was awoken at 11.30 p.m. to take a phone call from his brother-in-law in London who announced bluntly that he was calling about Bahram who had been shot and was dead. Apparently he had been driving home from the college where he was a teacher in the early afternoon, when two men in a car drove in front of him forcing him to stop. A young boy who happened to be passing saw the two cars and a man talking to Barham in his car. Shots were heard after which the two men drove off in their car. The boy alerted the police and the body of Bahram was taken to a nearby hospital. The first thing Hassan did after receiving this news was to write to his wife. Two sentences stand out; the first echoing the Book of Job which meant so much to him at the time of his spiritual crisis at Cambridge University: 'May God give us strength to bear this tragedy for his glory. Whatever I have is from God and so I am happy to give him back what he has kindly given.' The second sentence, 'May God forgive the murderers of our son, because obviously they did not know what they were doing', recalls Jesus' words from the Cross (Lk.23:34).

The rest of Hassan's story is quickly told. The final chapter of his book *The Unfolding Design of My World* is given the title, 'Good-bye, Beloved Country', which intimates to his readers that although he had left Iran and its troubles far behind, the cost of living in exile should not be underestimated. As Bishop John V Taylor remarks in his Foreword to this book:

> There can be no doubt that the past nineteen years have been a heart-rending exile for Bishop Hassan. The cruellest irony of the Revolutionary Committee's insinuations that they (Christians) represented hostile, foreign interests lies in the fact that Hassan is so ineradicably and passionately Persian.[33]

It was through the good offices and friendship of Bishop Taylor that Hassan eventually became an Assistant Bishop at Winchester Cathedral. His family was also given accommodation and from here he was able to continue to minister in some measure to the Christian church he had left behind in Iran.

33 *The Unfolding Design of My World,* p. ix.

Hassan Dehqani-Tafti died in April 2008. He is buried in 'Paradise', the final resting place of the Bishops of Winchester, in the beautiful grounds of the cathedral. On his tombstone he is designated as a 'Confessor of the Faith', and there is also inscribed in Persian the text of Ephesians 2:19, 'No longer stranger or sojourner but fellow citizen with the saints.' And finally in English, 'Dust of the high plains of Persia in the earth of an English Shire.' His pectoral cross has now been framed and returned to the church he loved in Isfahan; a memorial of the past, but also a hopeful pledge for the future?[34]

34 The cross was framed with an explanation, by his wife Margaret, and returned to St Luke's church, Isfahan, by Mr Cecil Madhukar. (Notice in a Christmas/New Year message, 2011, from Margaret Dehqani-Tafti.)

THE IDEA OF BADALIYYA (MYSTICAL SUBSTITUTION) IN THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF LOUIS MASSIGNON

Paolo Dall'Oglio SJ

The issue of *badaliyya* (mystical substitution) is not for me here a matter of scholarly considerations.[1] This short paper, therefore, is not intended as an academic debate, but rather as a way of transmitting something of the spirit and faith that went into the foundation of *badaliyya*.[2] I am a monk in the Syrian Desert at a monastery called the Monastery of St. Moses the Ethiopian,[3] and for me, Louis Massignon is more than a teacher. He is a source of inspiration and an intercessor for my spiritual growth and my mission in the Islamic world.[4] Our monastic community seeks to participate in building harmony in the Islamic context. I wrote of this some years ago in an article on Louis Massignon and Charles de Foucauld in the light of Gandhi setting out these contours and trajectories.[5]

An Italian scholar, Roberto Christian Gatti, has written a Ph.D thesis entitled *Cristianesimo nell'Islam*: *L'approccio teologico di Louis Massignon* 2002. It was supervised by a man who is important for the concept of *badaliyya*, Fr Arij Roest Crollius SJ in Rome. Fr Roest Crollius had access to some important documents from Marie Kahil

1 R L Moreau, o.p, 'La Badaliya', and 'Extraits de letters et de convocations de la Badaliya (Louis Massignon)', in, *Hospitalité sacrée*, Textes inédits présentés par Jacques Keryell, Paris, Nouvelle cite, 1987, pp. 387-402; pp. 403-468.

2 P Dall'Oglio, 'La refondation du monastère syriaque de saint Moïse l'Abyssin à Nebek, Syrie, et la Badaliya massignonienne', in *Badaliya au nom de l'autre (1947-1962)—Louis Massignon*, M Borrmans and F Jacquin (eds), Paris, 2011, pp. 372-374.

3 On the history of Dair Mar Musa al-Habaschi, see Hubert Kaufhold, 'Notizen über das Moseskloster bei Nabk und das Juliankloster Bei Qaryatain in Syrien', *Oriens Christianus*, Vol. 79, 1995, pp. 48-119.

4 For the modern history of Dair Mar Musa el-Habashi Guyonne de Montjou, *Marmoussa: un monastére, un homme, un désert*, Éditions Albin Michel, Paris, 2006.

5 Paolo Dall'Oglio, 'Massignon and jihad, through de Foucauld, al-Hallaj and Ghandi', in *Faith, Power and Violence*, J.J. Donohue, sj, & C.W. Troll, sj (eds), coll. "Orientalia Christiana Analecta" 258, Rome, 1998, 103-114.

in Cairo in the 1960s and was the leader of a group of *badaliyya* in Rome. Marie Kahil wrote in one of her letters that he was the 'apostle' for the group in Rome'[6] and he held this responsibility for some years. Fr Roest Crollius has been faithful in his commitment to the *badaliyya* throughout his life. He has been my first and most important master in the spirituality of Christian-Islamic dialogue and I want to give witness to his enormous work to facilitate deep relationship and reflections between Christians, Moslems and Jews. He developed a department for Jewish-Christian dialogue at the Gregorian University in Rome. Now, at the end of his career, he is teaching again in West Africa in a Jesuit faculty there. This is interesting because of this passion for justice which is one of the central messages of Louis Massignon, and still alive in his disciples.

Things have developed over time with more attention to the mystical teachings of Massignon. When I was a young student of theology and Islamic studies it was fashionable to say that Massignon was a good scholar but not a good theologian. He was pre-Vatican II and therefore no longer seen as useful. He was said to be paternalistic with regard to Islam; his theology of sacrifice was old fashioned; his suffering style was masochistic and there were many other criticisms, also from Catholic traditionalists. Despite this I was fascinated by him and deeply influenced by his theology. Today Massignon is back in favour both in France and in the Anglo-American world. The Arabic and Islamic worlds also take him more and more into consideration.[7] He is again considered a source of inspiration to Christian theology with regard to the Christian-Islamic relationship.

Let us now consider the relationship between Louis Massignon and Charles de Foucauld. We have to look at the beginning of the story of *badaliyya* in order to understand the spirituality of the movement. We have to find the exact point where Massignon separated from Charles de Foucauld for, although he remained faithful to him all his life, he separated from him in thought.

In 1908 Massignon converted from agnosticism to Christian belief,[8] from narcissism to alterity and from aesthetical mysticism to the

6 Roberto Christian Gatti, *Cristianesimo e Islâm*, Messina 2002, p. 90.

7 Just an example in the publication in Arabic of his articles about the Holy Land issue: Louis Massignon, *Ishkaliyyat al-Ard al-Muqaddasa, Maqalat 1948-1954,* Oula for Publishing and Distribution, P. O. Box 7396, Damascus, 2005.

8 Cf. Daniel Massignon, *Le voyage en mésopotamie et la conversion de Louis Massignon*

Christian mysticism of the Cross. He considered there was a list of ten intercessors including his mother, al-Hallaj and Charles de Foucauld who he believed were interceding for his conversion at that moment. Massignon had received a letter from de Foucauld, thanking him for his book on exploration in Morocco. At the end of the letter, de Foucauld offers his prayer to the still agnostic Massignon. These alms were the efficacious *zakat* of prayer that Massignon afterwards felt to have been crucial in his way back to God. At that point Louis Massignon became increasingly interested in the experience of Charles de Foucauld, and he was also interested in becoming one of his disciples. It was in 1909 when Charles de Foucauld travelled to France that they finally met. This was a very important moment for de Foucauld, who was still waiting for someone to come and be a hermit in the desert with him in the south of Algeria.[9] However at the same time he saw that this did not work; the Lord had not sent him any disciple in the religious life and so he decided to found the group that became known as *Union Sodalité*, the Union of the Brothers and Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.[10] Mainly lay people, together with clergy and religious life members would join the confraternity.

With this group, de Foucauld had planned to create a spiritual system or a net of links between the missionaries, spread across the colonies of the mother-country of France. This was in order to offer witness through simplicity and hospitality to the evangelical goodness of Nazareth divine life and through evangelical presence in the name of Jesus in a hidden and calm way, a 'non militant' way. This was an attitude that was in direct contrast to the colonialist attitude of the day and the generally triumphal stand of Catholics. De Foucauld still used paternalistic and certainly nationalist and colonialist terms and language, but he moved further away from these attitudes so common in his time. Some terms were the same, but the spirit in which they were used was now significantly different.

On one cold night of common adoration at the Sacré Coeur of Montmartre, Massignon accepted to share the vocation of de Foucauld to which he remained faithful for the rest of his life. The small group of the Union, 45 people at the death of de Foucauld and 48 at the death

en 1908, *Islamochristiana* (Rome), No. 14, 1988, pp. 127-199.

9 Cf. Jean-François Six, *L'aventure de l'amour de Dieu*, Paris 1993, pp. 51ff**,** 92, 153.

10 Cf. Jean-François Six, *L'aventure de l'amour de Dieu*, pp. 55f, 145ff.

of Massignon, was a community that prayed and acted, in preparation for the Gospel to be preached to people, in the style of the Nazareth Family.[11] This was the only group that was directly founded by de Foucauld, and Massignon was the one who kept this group going and stayed faithful to this idea all his life.[12] By reading the last letter that De Foucauld wrote[13] to Louis Massignon on the day of his death in 1916, one can receive a strong insight into the missiological idea of the spirituality of the Union as the very basis of the idea of the *badaliyya*, but there is a difference. It is not a polemical difference as Massignon did not feel polemical towards his guide and master, de Foucauld.

Massignon had written an apologetic text in which there was a deep theological reflection on the role of Islam in Church history and salvation plan in an eschatological perspective.[14] Let me interpret the question quite freely as it stays in my memory and as I can imagine the discussion between Massignon and Foucauld on this important issue, seen in the light of today's issues. In his wider vision Massignon understands and sees a providential role, a charisma of Islam and therefore of its Prophet, in the coming of the Kingdom of God. This is in no way separate or separable from the role of Christ in the salvation of every single man and woman. Each civilisation in the perspective of the coming of the Kingdom of God is inseparable from the role of the Church for the salvation of each man and woman considered also in his cultural and religious belonging. He sent the text to de Foucauld and he received a reply saying that it was very good to love Muslims and we must offer them our life to be their servants, to be submissive, to be humble, to be evangelical with them, living with them like Jesus and Mary in Nazareth, but it was Massignon's theological beliefs on Islam that were not convincing to de Foucauld. The quranic contradictions with Christian dogma and some of the attitudes of Muhammad the prophet of Islam were irreconcilable with the idea of the true religion.[15]

11 Cf. Jean-François Six, *L'aventure de l'amour de Dieu*, p. 153.

12 Massignon also published the *Directoire* of de Foucauld for the Union of the brothers and sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus writing the preface. Charles de Foucauld, *Conseils Évangéliques 'Directoire*', Paris, 1961 and 2000.

13 Jean-François Six, *L'aventure de l'amour de Dieu*, p. 214 f.

14 Louis Massignon, *Examen du 'Présent de l'homme lettré' par Abdallah ibn al-Torjoman,* Roma : Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e d'Islamistica 1992.

15 Cf. Jean-François Six, *L'aventure de l'amour de Dieu*, p. 208. Cf. also J F Six, M Serpette, P Sourisseau, *Le testament de Charles de Foucauld*, Ed. Fayard, Paris, 2005, pp. 204-205.

Some of the Little Brothers of Jesus (the congregation inspired by Charles De Foucauld spirituality founded in Algeria in the 1930s by Fr René Voillaume) are strictly with de Foucauld on this point and others follow Massignon and his interpretation of the deep witness of de Foucauld.[16] Massignon's interpretation of the soul of de Foucauld went further than his master's theological awareness. There is here a first idea of the 'dialogue of life', and when this is underlined too much in today's Church life, this means most of the time that there is not a real desire for positive religious dialogue. This would often mean that there is no theological relevance in the theological beliefs of other religions and that we should start dialogue on a level of basic human life, serving the sufferings of others, taking care of the humanity of others, full of evangelical solidarity, but no more … This is insufficient from Massignon's point of view.

Without diminishing in any way the respect and thanks deserved by the first letter *Deus Caritas Est* of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI about charity, it is surprising that at the beginning of the third millennium such a letter on charity does not include the subject of inter-religious charity. We have to ask if it is possible, after Louis Massignon and the newly beatified Charles de Foucauld, not to put into practice that charitable energy that drives us to consider respect, love, search for values, light and deepness of mystical religious experience in other religions.[17] How can this be separated from today's practice of charity? If somebody loves me yet denies that I am in search for God, a disciple of Jesus, a member of the Church, with my belief and cultural deep belonging, what is there left of myself to be loved? The only point in which His Holiness Benedict XVI speaks about inter-religious reality is to say that it is up to the state to maintain inter-religious peace in a given society.[18] This is certainly true but it is not enough.

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16 Cf. René Voillaume, *Charles de Foucauld et ses premiers Disciples,* Paris, 1998, pp. 33-57. Jacques Keryell, 'Louis Massignon et l'Association Charles de Foucauld', in *Louis Massignon au coeur de notre temps*, Jacques Keryell (ed.) Karthala, Paris, 1999, pp. 173-193; Hugues Didier, *Petite vie de Charles de Foucauld*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 2005; H Didier, 'Louis Massignon and Charles de Foucauld', *ARAM* 20 (2008), pp. 337-353.

17 Ian Latham, 'Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916): Silent witness for Jesus 'in the face of Islam', in *Catholics in Interreligious Dialogue: Studies in Monasticism, Theology and Spirituality*, Anthony O'Mahony and Peter Bowe (eds), Gracewing, Leominster, 2006, pp. 47-70.

18 Cf. Benedictus XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, Rome, 2006, p. 16.

The point at which Charles de Foucauld and Louis Massignon separate is when de Foucauld invited Massignon to come for fieldwork on local, tribal, folkloric practices in a given particular society. From this point of view de Foucauld was a lover of other cultures. There is a marvellous dictionary of the Touareg language written by de Foucauld that has been acknowledged as an outstanding piece of scholarship and is still in use today. In his definitions of the words there is an inner deep sensibility and love of the culture of the Touareg that shows that de Foucauld's relationship with them was a love story. This is certainly not separable from the Islamic context and he was aware of that. But many 19th- and 20th-century Catholics felt that the main objective should always be to consider the nation as priority. Europe is so nation-centred that the concept of nationhood is always projected onto others. How many times have we heard of generous missionaries offering their lives for the Algerian nation and people? However, for many Algerians this is not such a relevant concept. Alternatively these missionaries offered themselves for the Moroccan nation or the Lebanese nation. I accept the idea that these people may have interiorized the concept of nation but it is still not an essential concept. For most of the people in the Islamic world, the concept of *Umma* is the most essential concept and they feel 'if you want to love me, love me in the context of my concepts and not in your projection of your own concepts onto me.'

On this particular point Massignon moved further than de Foucauld, although he respected de Foucauld's fatherly perspective. For him it was the element of unity in the Islamic world that should be considered; the community of Islam was Arabic first and then universal in terms of a kind of 'Islamic Catholicism'. It was this concept that was interiorized by Massignon. Wherever he went he looked for the heritage of al-Hallaj[19] from Indonesia to Morocco, and even amongst the Muslims obliged to become Christians on the Iberian peninsula or those who had emigrated to America. Therefore his search for Islamic spirituality really covered and embraced the whole Islamic world. He was in a deep communion of feelings with the whole Islamic *Umma*. He never forgot the particularities but did not underline them as a means of colonialist separation as many did; he always saw through the multiplicity of Islam's to the unity of the one Islam. This unity comes from the originality, the particularity, the individuality, the depth and

19 Louis Massignon, *La passion de Husayn Ibn Mansûr Hallâj*, Paris, 1975.

the truth of the quranic, Muhammad's experience of God. In this the unity of the Islamic world is rooted, one can say, in the soul of the one 'Prophet of Islam, Muhammad ibn Adbullah'.

Al-Hallaj's sacrifice has been shared deeply by Massignon and the mysticism of the supreme sacrifice, martyrdom, has also been shared by him with de Foucauld as appears clearly in his tragic martyrdom during the First World War. Massignon himself volunteered for the front and de Foucauld approved his choice, as he seriously considered going to the front as well, at least as a medic assistant. This is close to Gandhi's attitude and Simone Weil's. She died in London in 1943 in despair of not having been able to offer herself on the front, healing people. There is a neighbourhood between them: after the Second World War, Simone Weil's mother met the Massignon family, probably seeking consolation for the loss of her daughter.

This concept of suffering generous sacrifice is universal and very Christian, although also very political. For de Foucauld and then Massignon, to offer to die for France at that time was to volunteer to fight for civilisation against barbarism, to keep human, Christian civilisation alive. It was obviously a nationalist viewpoint but they felt that Europe was fighting secularism, aggressive nationalism and money-worship. All this fighting in the end was for humanity and Christian faith, as much as for true Islam in Massignon's point of view. Therefore it can be seen that this sharing of the mysticism of sacrifice and suffering was part of the context of the hero-attitude in the last century. But in the case of Massignon, as for de Foucauld, this language comes from the discovery of the humblest way of being disciples of Jesus. There is a shift from a missiology of the triumph of the Church, which is parallel to colonialism, to a missiology of humility which is the opposite of colonialism.

For Massignon it was clear that we must shift from the folklore, anthropological and sociological interests in local Islamic societies in order to be able to grasp the deepest inspiration of Islam. What was theological, mystical and devotional in the Muslim soul is already one in the soul of Muhammad. It is in this context that we must understand the fact that on 9 February 1934 in a Franciscan chapel in Damietta, Massignon and Mary Kahil made their vow of *badaliyya*.[20] For Massignon, Francis of Assisi was theologically a predecessor of Charles

20 Cf. Louis Massignon, *L'Hospitalité Sacrée*, Nouvelle Cité, Paris, 1987, p. 63.

de Foucauld. He saw a kind of route to de Foucauld back through the witness of Francis in favour of Islam. He felt that the history of humanity was a chain of effort toward holiness by the lovers of God and that people are connected by the same duty, that of taking humanity towards achievement in God. He saw Francis of Assisi as one of the individuals linked in this chain through his love for God, which led him to accompany the Crusades. In his soul he tried to find a way to peace through self-commitment and self-sacrifice. So Francis went to Damietta to meet the Sultan and he was a model of the love of Jesus for Muslims. Francis as *alter Christus* was willing to offer his life for the salvation of Muslims.

It is this that Massignon underlined in the chapel of Damietta. Mary Kahil remembered:

> I said to Massignon how sad I was to see this town in which so many Syrian Christians came, where my ancestors lived, and nothing remained. I took hold of the columns of the altar and Massignon told me: 'You are signed by a vow. Make a vow.'—'But which vow?'—'The one to love them.' I told him: 'It's impossible.' He said to me that nothing was closer to hate than love. 'Make a vow, to give your life for them.' In a state of exultation, impossible to relive, I made there the vow to live for them, to offer my life for them, to be in their place next to the throne of Jesus, throughout all my life and all my eternity, I'll ask the light for them.[21]

This is understandable only in the context of the Gospels when we read that God loves us as sinners in our sin. The solidarity of Massignon with the Islamic world is evangelical and without condition. Mary Kahil understood this in an ecstasy of spiritual love that she had never felt before and she was able to take the vow. We need more research on Mary Kahil, because the *badaliyya* is the fruit of the presence of God in two hearts that are made one by this vow. This vow of *badaliyya* was born in the love between a man and a woman in front of God and this is an essential element of it. In his book *The Three Prayers of Abraham* and in *Parole Donée* there are some expressions about the dream

21 Louis Massignon, *L'Hospitalité Sacrée,* p. 100.

of Massignon and Marie Kahil. It is a shared dream of a Monastery of Love in which contemplative men and women share in silence, contemplation and hospitality, a central 'Abrahamic', Arab, Middle Eastern and evangelical concept for Islam.[22]

We cannot move forward in the Catholic Church if we are afraid of being judged if we enter into deep discussions. It is a duty of the Church to make theological discernments on the opinions and writings of Catholic theologians and the theologians have the duty to respond by offering their theological opinions to the authority of the Community. Through humility and wisdom Massignon put aside the theological, apologetic document he wrote, the *Examen,* asking his son Daniel to consult with theologians as to whether or not it should be published. Daniel later published this document after his father's death.

I wish to speak in terms of hermeneutics of love when we discuss our relations with Islam. We must also talk about post-Christian awareness of other religions and what theologically we can do in the face of post-Christian societies. We must discuss the problems of belief and faith (already approached in the famous *Dominus Jesus*) and how people can have belief and faith outside the visible Church. We should recognise that faith experience is also held by Muslims, as Massignon's mystical and eschatological considerations argued. We should also, for example, interact today with the passion for justice in the Shi'a world so emphasized by him. In a deep interreligious communion of souls we must try to redefine our common and different experiences with the help of the phenomenology of religions. Massignon worked phenomenologically and sociologically on the inter-cultural development of religious language and experience in order to have theological access to grace relationship. It is the work of science as much as that of devotion. Massignon left it unachieved … we will take it on.

22 This led to my own foundation of Deir Mar Musa in the attitude of *badaliya* inspired by the texts of this dream of Massignon and Kahil. Their writings seemed like a prophecy of Deir Mar Musa. These interconnections are very important and link us into this spiritual history. Cfr. P Dall'Oglio, 'Massignon and jihad, through de Foucauld, al-Hallaj and Ghandi', in *Faith, Power and Violence*, pp. 103-144. See also P Dall'Oglio, *Speranza nell'Islam: interpretazione della prospettiva escatologica di Corano XVIII*, Casa Editrice Marietti, Genoa, 1991.

FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD: AN EASTERN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON CARE OF OUR PLANET

Robin Gibbons

The calamity facing us all

One of the great national treasures of the UK is the naturalist Sir David Attenborough whose documentaries and programmes on nature have entranced and engaged millions over many years. He is also a prophet in the mould of the Old Testament figures such as Jeremiah or Daniel, calling people to face the realities of their existence and the need for their constructive repentance and restitution of a grave sin against all of life. This collective sin is not one single issue but many actions and omissions adding up to what we can call 'Climate Change'.

Attenborough constantly places before us the sheer scale of a massive problem caused almost entirely by our own actions. In a BBC programme, *Climate Change the Facts*, aired on national and international television in April 2019, Sir David said that we face 'irreversible damage to the natural world and the collapse of our societies'. This is a refrain he uses insistently, but alongside the dire predictions of what is happening (and will happen), he also says that there is still hope if dramatic action to limit the effects of such damage is taken over the next decade, but he does not spare our blushes; there has been irreversible damage done by human activity, and a cataclysmic warning is in order: 'I believe that if we better understand the threat we face the more likely it is we can avoid such a catastrophic future.'[1] Too many pictures of communities now under threat, animals, insects and marine life driven to almost extinction or now extinct, and the impact of fossil fuels and our rubbish, especially plastic, on the fabric of our Mother Earth, show this dreadful pattern of destruction. What then can be done, how do we hand over the

1 *Climate Change—The Facts*. BBC One, Thursday 18 April 2019.

Earth and all on it to the care of another generation even yet unborn, and one we hope will learn from the tragedy of our mistakes?

What might be a Christian response?

How then do we as Christians respond? How do we as followers of Christ deal with this momentous issue? There are of course a number of people who regard it as of no consequence, or something that will right itself without too much effort on our part, or even welcome it as it will somehow hasten the end of all things (oh yes, there are those who want this!). There are also powerful persons in Church and state who reject the whole issue of climate change and global warming seeing it as scaremongering; such people (including senior Roman Catholic cardinals and the president of the United States) suggest it is all overblown hype! In some cases religious people of a certain temperament try to insist that this is not a religious problem at all and we have other things to deal with. We cannot afford to let their voices syphon off the real problems facing us or drown out the voices of the poor and weak, the little ones, whom God has an especial love and place for, who are even now suffering complete loss of home, livelihood, habitat or extinction of their species; we just cannot remain passive spectators but active participants in the 'life of the world', for he himself gave his very life for it!

The fact of the matter is that action needs to be taken now, and urgently, a particularly important point of view when facing the truth of the problem. We no longer have the luxury of endless debate and discussion. Politicians, scientists, religious persons, businessmen and women need to act now, both in the practical sense of halting destruction, reduce carbon emissions, plant more trees, exercise a radical loving care for life and our planet and, by a shift in mentality and approach, try to inculcate a different perspective, a far more compassionate sense of responsibility, that looks beyond the narrow selfish human confines to the rest of the planet and its future.

We are all in this together! New models and new horizons need to be sought, but if as Attenborough suggests: 'I believe that if we better understand the threat we face the more likely it is we can avoid such a catastrophic future,' then we need to look to our own religious

heritage and see if in our faith communities we can find ways to motivate, understand and change the patterns of human destruction. As Attenborough himself said in the final and harrowing episode of his *Blue Planet 2*, which showed the appalling destruction plastic wreaks on our oceans and all its life, and which was widely quoted on Twitter,[2] 'To chuck plastic into the ocean is an insult. To have the nerve to say, "this is our rubbish, we'll give you money to spill it on your land" is intolerable.' Sir David Attenborough says young peoples' concern for the planet is 'a great source of hope.'[3] But I have to ask the question, is there hope? Have we enough courage as Church people to really stand up and fight for justice of which this, the martyrdom of our planet, is perhaps the worst example of endemic greed and corporate sin?

The Synod for the Amazon as an exemplar and connection with the Middle Eastern Churches

The recent Synod for the Amazon held in Rome might not at first seem to be of value in examining the role of the Eastern Church in facing up to the 'Global Threat of Climate Change', but it speaks from a familiar paradigm, that of a people whose land is robbed and despoiled by other humans in order to gain access to money, wealth and privilege at vast cost to life. Whilst this Synod was about the Amazon, the poignancy of links with the Middle Eastern Christian community cannot be underestimated; moreover, the oft repeated charge that influence of politics and climate change has little to do with religion can be shown as a fallacy! Something the Eastern tradition knows well!

In an article about climate change in the Middle East, Nasser Karami argues forcibly that everybody has to be involved in both understanding climate change in order to create future policy, but also recognise that the impact of such change is a probability in the wider instability of institutions and governments.

> Thus, it is essential for decision-makers and local populations to understand the modality of climatic

2 https://www.radiotimes.com/news/tv/2018-08-29/blue-planet-2-plastic-waste-final-episode/; accessed July 2019.

3 https://twitter.com/BBC/status/1148532051492188161; accessed July 2019.

> trends in the Middle East. In an environmental management system, mitigation and adaptation are distinct economic and technical domains. In the comprehensive policymaking systems of countries in the region, the current abnormal situation in the Middle East has so far been considered an environmental and agricultural problem but the impacts of this phenomenon have resulted in widespread political, economic, and social instability as well. Moreover, many international institutions have emphasized that continued drought might have played a significant role in the spread of violence and international terrorism in the Middle East [4]

This is something that religious groups are beginning to grapple with in real terms, even whilst other destructive influences threaten their survival.

It has entered the rhetoric of politics, and I hope will not go away. Pete Buttigieg, one of the rising stars of the Democrats in 2019, linked and religion and climate crisis firmly together. At a CNN Democratic Candidates debate on climate disruption in Texas, three of the candidates, Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Pete Buttigieg, spoke of it as a moral crisis but it was Buttigieg who went further and characterised it as a religious one: 'You don't have to be religious,' he added, 'to see the moral dimension of this because, frankly, every religion and nonreligious moral tradition tells us that we have some responsibility to stewardship, some responsibility for taking care of what's around us, not to mention taking care of our neighbor.'[5]

The Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, called to reflect on the theme *New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology,* commonly called the Synod of the Amazon (held in October-November in Rome 2019), is perhaps a wakeup call to the Catholic Church in particular, but also to any involved religious community, to learn from our past mistakes and open ourselves to new horizons. In the *Instrumentum*

4 Nasser Karami, 'The Modality of Climate Change in the Middle East: Drought or Drying up?', *Journal of Interrupted Studies*, Brill, Online Publication 14 June 2019, Volume 2, Issue 1, p. 1.

5 *Independent online*, Wednesday 11 September 2019, https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/pete-buttigieg-religion-democratic-debate-texas-climate-change-a9101531.html.

laboris, the working document, the vision of Pope Francis is laid out clearly. This is not an isolated vision but one which has come from much dialogue between peoples, bishops and others and the pope's own knowledge of the region. Whilst the immediate focus is the Amazon region, the document is far more global in its concern.

The Introduction states this unequivocally:

> In the Amazon rainforest, which is of vital importance for the planet, a deep crisis has been triggered by prolonged human intervention, in which a 'culture of waste' (LS 16) and an extractivist mentality prevail. The Amazon is a region with rich biodiversity; it is multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious; it is a mirror of all humanity which, in defense of life, requires structural and personal changes by all human beings, by nations, and by the Church.
>
> The Special Synod's reflections transcend the strictly ecclesial-Amazonian sphere, because they focus on the universal Church, as well as on the future of the entire planet.[6]

Divided into three main sections, See, Discern and Act, the working document was received with enthusiasm by some, but attacked by more conservative forces who saw in this a destruction of tradition and doctrine, but as pointed out by more balanced commentators, this was a thinly disguised attack on Pope Francis. Sean Michael Winters writing in the *National Catholic Reporter* pointed out that the common theme from the critics is rooted in a particular mind set: 'we should remember that we are the ones with the truth, that they are the ones who need instructing, that their pagan ways must be "overthrown" and replaced with Christian, read Western, ways.'[7]

This is not a pastiche, some rather ugly actions over artefacts from the Amazon, which were used in various places, particularly

6 Preparatory Document, *Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology*, Preamble. Segreteria Generale del Sinodo dei Vescovi - © 2019 Website, http://www.synod.va/content/synod/it/attualita/synod-for-the-amazon--preparatory-document--amazonia--new-paths-.html; accessed July 2019.

7 Michael Sean Winters, 'Amazon synod's critics distort Catholic tradition for their convenience', *National Catholic Reporter*, 25 October 2019.

the Pachamma statues, indigenous artefacts of carved wooden statues of a pregnant woman representing fertility and land, around which much controversy was created—particularly by conservative, Western, Anglophone, Catholics. One of the sad things about their criticism, and the rather crude actions of those who wanted to score points by removing these images from the church where they had been, was the fact that Vatican officials seemed singularly ill equipped to deal with the furore and from those critical voices a wider knowledge of the Church and its own system of inculturation was notably absent.

Into this arena of present discussion the 23 Eastern Catholic Churches can give solid historical evidence, and a profound witness, of how, through history colonialism in ecclesial matters does not work whilst pastoral adaptation and openness to culture does, as Sean Winters wrote: 'What is missing from all these criticisms is any awareness of the fact that the Catholic Church does not, in fact, view indigenous cultures with such horror, and core teachings of our faith posit that God is active in every culture, indeed, in every human heart.'[8]

Meanwhile as a document that has far reaching and profound implications, the findings of this Synod, will I am sure, be of immense comfort, strength and value to our Middle Eastern Churches, who in a different way have struggled to live through oppressive and hostile circumstances, but whose presence and stewardship of the land is still crucial if the two lungs of the Church in East and West can breathe! If anything the success of this Synod will hinge upon our ability to be open to dialogue and to hold as a deep theological truth that legitimate diversity does not harm unity or communion between Churches but enriches it! The final document itself points to the Eastern Catholic Churches as witnesses to this:

> In the Catholic Church there are 23 Rites, a clear sign of a tradition that forms the first centuries has tried to inculturate the contents of the faith and its celebration through a language as coherent as possible with the mystery that is to be expressed.
>
> It is necessary that the Church, in her tireless evangelising work, work so that the process of inculturation of the faith may be expressed in the most coherent forms …

8 Winters, art. cit.

> preserving the material of the sacraments and adapting them to the form, without losing sight of what is essential.[9]

It may seem that this Amazonian Synod is far removed from our suffering Middle Eastern Churches, but that would be to miss the deep sense of *koinoia* that applies in the Church of Christ, no matter how fragmented it may seem. The ecumenism of martyrdom and suffering knows no boundaries, and cannot be confined to purely Church matters, our common home and common life together create a bond far more powerful than any division, where we live, what we do there, and how we connect with each other and with life matters. There is solidarity of hope, which we need to engender and those of us in other areas need to inculcate deeper awareness of dialogue but above all the capacity to listen and learn, rather than listen in order to respond!

Eastern Christianity

It is my contention that the Eastern Church has a deep resource for us to share in the case of environmental concerns, already partly tapped by many people such as Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Pope Francis. In his Encyclical for World Creation Day, 1 September 2019, Patriarch Bartholomew draws our attention to the witness of the Eastern Church in this matter, connecting, as in this quote, the spirituality so present in the liturgical life of the Church within the theological context of ecclesiology of communion and community. It is worth quoting a section of what he said because of its deeply rooted connection between the authentic, lived and prayed tradition of the Church, and his own sense of the commitment we have to make to our world, as those entrusted in some way with the care of the planet and its life as part of our vocation. In commenting on this, the patriarch moves us away, perhaps almost unknowingly from the rather elastic (and potentially autocratic and dare one say colonial) term of stewards towards a more comprehensive, inclusive and open vocabulary of being 'guardians' and 'co-workers':

9 Quotes from the unofficial English translation of the Spanish final document. *Synod of Bishops*: Special Assembly for the Pan-American Region. *Chapter 4. Rites for Indigenous Peoples*, Vatican, 26 October 2019. Art. 117,118, p. 29.

> Respect and care for creation are a dimension of our faith, the content of our life in the Church and as the Church. The very life of the Church is 'an experienced ecology,' an applied respect and care for creation, and the source of its environmental activities. In essence, the interest of the Church for the protection of the environment is the extension of the Holy Eucharist in all dimensions of its relationship to the world.
>
> The liturgical life of the Church, the ascetic ethos, pastoral service and experience of the cross and resurrection by the faithful, the unquenchable desire for eternity: all of these comprise a communion of persons for which the natural reality cannot be reduced to an object or useful matter to meet the needs of an individual or humanity; by contrast, this reality is considered as an act, deed the handiwork of a personal God, who calls us to respect and protect it, thereby rendering us His 'co-workers', 'stewards', 'guardians', and 'priests' of creation in order to cultivate a Eucharistic relationship with it.[10]

This is very much the inherited theology of the East, far more sacramentally involved with the world, in the sense that this pervades spirituality, work and thought, than some of our more western Christian traditions. It is notable that when the UN held its landmark Climate Accords in 2015 in Paris—COP 21—many Christian leaders spoke loudly in favour of the agreement, in particular both Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew representing Catholicism and Orthodoxy, as well as various Protestant leaders who also took part in these efforts.

In particular the Papal Encyclical '*Laudato si*, on care for our common home', published in May 2015, has already had an impact on the discussions concerning climate change, and it remains a document of far reaching importance politically and globally, in it Pope Francis uses the words of Saint Basil in one of his homilies,[11] to call us to

10 Prot. 582 . September 1, 2019
+Bartholomew of Constantinople
'Your fervent supplicant before God'.

11 Basil the Great, *Hom. in Hexaemeron*, I, 2, 6: PG 29, 8.

discern who and what we are :'In union with all creatures, we journey through this land seeking God, for "if the world has a beginning and if it has been created, we must enquire who gave it this beginning, and who was its Creator."'[12] Patriarch Bartholomew, always deeply involved with the climate change movement, made this comment as part of his wider address to COP 21, stating it was a 'moral obligation to engage actively in favour of environmental protection as the manifestation of a Christian ethos … we are all in agreement.'[13] This is a remarkable ecumenical endeavour, and dare I suggest, that no matter what might be going on doctrinally between our Churches, the pressing demands of action on climate change and a true *metanoia*, change of heart towards our planet, its poorer peoples, its endangered creatures and the very substance of life as we now know it are drawing us closer together than any metaphysical or theological agreement has yet achieved. However, there are as I have noted those who profoundly disagree with this view of things, some selfishly so, others for a variety of reasons.

Climate change, the witness of the Middle Eastern Christian

President Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Accord and constant rolling back of environmental safeguards does not help stability of purpose in the political realm. Large groups of mainly conservative American Evangelicals opposed the Climate Change Accord for a number of theological reasons: 'Some believed climate accords to be unnecessary; theologically, they believed that if a global cataclysm was at hand, God would intervene to protect them. Others who held millennialist beliefs mistrusted any global agreements.'[14] They are not alone, when the Trump Administration moved its US Embassy from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem and recognition of the city as Israel's capital in 2017, this highly contentious move brought widespread condemnation especially from Middle Eastern Christians and those aware of the deep tensions in the region, but tellingly approval from conservative Evangelicals.

12 *Laudato si* Rome, 24 May 2015, n. 174.

13 Patriarch Bartholomew, *Ecumenical Prayer for the Preservation of Creation,* Encyclical to COP 21, World Council of Churches, 3 December 2015.

14 Christianity Case Study, *Climate Change*, Religious Literacy Project 2018. Harvard Divinity School, p. 2.

The Washington Post for 13 December 2017 put it succinctly:

> While the news has been badly received among Christian communities in the Middle East, the move was in part a political gesture aimed at Christians: white evangelical voters, who backed Trump overwhelmingly in last year's presidential election. American evangelical Christians—who believe that the right of the Jews to Jerusalem is enshrined in the Bible and that their presence there will usher in Judgment Day—were a powerful lobbying force behind the decision.[15]

There are many casualties arising from this and other decisions like it, not least the strange lack of empathy by Evangelicals for the indigenous Christians of the Middle East. This is part of a general and profound ignorance of the very origins of Christianity itself, and it occurs on many levels, not least in subject areas such as Church and political history, biblical scholarship, spirituality, liturgical Church tradition and the constant story of persecution and oppression! No wonder that the previous Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Archbishop Michael Sabbah told Christians gathered at Beit-Shaour on the West Bank to celebrate Christmas (2017) 'Our oppressors have decided to deprive us from the joy of Christmas … Mr Trump told us clearly Jerusalem is not yours.'[16] But the present United States administration now has form in reneging on promises, not only through issues such as immigration but in actions such as the recent break with the Kurds and other forms of equivocation, which as always, has a far deeper effect within these regions causing great instability and more casualties from further conflict.

Concerned advocates and many Christians have been lobbying (to little avail) the US president to 'reconsider and reverse' his 9 October 2019 decision over Syria and his new alliance with Turkey. In an open letter of 9 October they wrote: 'It undercuts our own trust that this administration is truly committed to international religious freedom and the survival of religious minorities in the Middle East,' adding

15 Loveday Morris, 'Trump plan to move U.S. embassy to Jerusalem angers Middle East Christians', *The Washington Post*, 13 December 2017.

16 Art. cit.

that 'the proposed invasion zone includes key historic Syriac Christian towns and churches, all Kurdish majority towns, the population, and key administrative and education centers.'[17]

Advocates for religious freedom are extremely worried that Kurdish peoples and Syriac Christians who form the Syrian Democratic Forces, will be annihilated by Turkey, and that the region's inhabitants will be ethnically cleansed. All this destabilises the regions concerned but has a wider effect on the rapacious spoliation of natural resources and wanton destruction of animal and plant life.

To those cardinals and evangelists who claim some form of existential religious safe zone, far away from these concerns, in what can only be called a 'sanctimonious bubble', the voice of the beleaguered Melkite Archbishop of Aleppo, Jean Clement Jeanbart, acts as a warning, but also as a prophetic voice, for as the magazine *Crux* noted pessimistically, his recent comments that:

> … such a move by Erdogan risked causing a demographic earthquake, displacing Kurds from their homes and lands and creating the conditions for serious internal tensions.'
> 'It would be inhumane,' he (Jeanbart) said. 'A military solution has been chosen' (by Turkey) and this leads to 'the risk of a real massacre with many innocent deaths.'
> 'I hope that dialogue can be resumed in order to find a peaceful solution, a compromise that guarantees safety for all parties involved,' he said.
> The International Rescue Committee reports that 64,000 civilians fled the Turkish bombing in the first two days of the aerial bombardments.

This is hardly the stuff to give us hope, but it does point out the necessity of a concerted plan involving religious and political leaders!

This is the wider prophetic voice of the Eastern Church, for as the Synod for the Amazon's participants noted we know well from what is happening there and in the Middle East, particularly in the context of Israel/Palestinian problems, that: 'New ideological colonialisms hidden under the myth of progress are being imposed, thereby destroying

17 Dale Gavlak, 'Advocates to Trump: Don't desert Christians, Yazidis, Kurds in Syria', *Crux*, Catholic News Service. 11 October 2019.

specific cultural identities.'[18] Pope Francis and many other religious leaders appeal for the defence of indigenous cultures and, specifically in terms of knowledge and information, and for the 're-appropriation of a heritage permeated by ancestral wisdom'. This is where the Eastern Churches have such a powerful voice, their wisdom accumulated under circumstances of *dhimmitud*e and oppression, also by a poverty that also gives them the true Gospel authenticity of the *anawim*, the little ones loved by God. The words of the preparatory document show how Amazonia and Palestine share in bigger global issues and that religion has a role to play in changing attitudes! 'Such a legacy advocates a harmonious relationship between nature and the Creator,' and articulates the belief that 'defense of the earth has no other purpose than the defense of life.' It should be considered holy ground: 'This is not an orphan land! It has a Mother!'[19] This symphonic connection between land and heaven is deeply rooted in Eastern Christianity!

The vocation and insights of Eastern Christianity

In my book, *For the Life of the World: An Eastern Christian Approach to Nature and Environmental Care,* I explore issues around climate change and global ecological issues via the ability of Christianity—one of the world's most frequently practised religions, particularly from the point of view of the Eastern Christian tradition—to provide insight into how we might, even at this late hour, shift perceptions and change our lives and hearts.[20] I see this in that great prophetic call of those who like Pope Francis, Patriarch Bartholomew, Sir David Attenborough and others challenge us to radically shift our pattern of life and perception, but from the religious perspective of a conversion of 'heart'. The Eastern Christian tradition has some unique perspectives for strong theological discourse, unencumbered by medieval scholasticism, Reformation controversies and the later patterns of Catholic and Protestant thought! They look more to a living tradition inspired by the earlier and more Semitic origins of the faith. Hence their theology has a greater stress

18 Preparatory Document Amazonia, Section 5, Justice.
19 *Ibid*.
20 See Robin Gibbons, *For the Life of the World: An Eastern Christian Approach to Nature and Environmental Care*, Peter Lang, New York, 2019.

on the role and work of the Spirit but also has the ability to bridge divides in interesting ways between religious experience and ordinary life, maybe not a bad thing given the propensity of some Western religious persons to create a false dualism in terms of sacred and secular?

In the case of our planet any new or revived approach that takes the case of matter and life as blessed, good and important is a plus. One has only to delve into the deep wisdom of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, and of that great and powerful *hesychastic* tradition of monasticism to discover a different approach towards careful stewardship of resources, where the human is not 'in charge of' but 'responsible for' other creatures, a shift away from control and hegemony, towards pastoral care in the widest sense of inclusion, a movement away from the colonial ideal of a steward who is in charge, to the image of a friend of God who shares and supports created life and our Mother the Earth!

In this model of creation-centred servant-hood, the East shows us a particular way, the ability to allow the theological gift of *economia* to grow, that is adaptive discernment and practical application of the values of love, mercy, and forgiveness. This is done in terms of relationships of the human and the world of living creatures at every level, as well as challenging the unjust and destructive structures that are causing our planet to literally choke towards extinction. A strong theology of *economia* allows Churches to dialogue in different ways and give new directions to pastoral interpretations of particular moral and economic issues: in this sense the wisdom of the East has plenty to say to all of us at this moment in time![21] It also calls them into a vocational dialogue of ecumenism! As Pope Francis told the Eastern Catholic bishops and Church leaders at a meeting in the Vatican on 19 September 2019, Catholics are 'called to be artisans of dialogue, promoters of reconciliation and patient builders of a civilization of encounter that can preserve our times from the incivility of conflict.'[22] Never has this voice of an ancient spiritual tradition been more needed than at the present moment!

21 Orthodox Church 'economia' is the suspension of the absolute and strict applications of canon and church regulations in the the life of the Church, without subsequently compromising the dogmatic limitations, and is only applicable for a particular case.

22 Pope Francis, Comments in a General Audience, Eastern Catholics, Vatican, 14 September 2019.

Let me explain a little further, so as to offer a glimpse of the variety of such insights, sharing with you several examples of this style of transformative spirituality, so necessary and essential in our world. So many of us have lost touch with the interconnectedness of earth and life, of creature and human, of water, air, fire, life present together and dependent on each other. In its spiritual and liturgical tradition, Eastern Christianity opens out a more sacred and sacramental role for our everyday lives, perceiving the deep harmony in this relationship between material elements and all life, present now in the Kingdom realised amongst us, but awaiting completion!

In exile in the year 870, several times deposed Patriarch of Constantinople, Photios, wrote a letter to all bishops including those opposed to him, what emerges in this letter is compassion and friendship for all of them, a compassion born out of suffering but still filled with hope. In it Photios reminds everybody of the Byzantine Eastern understanding of the duality of Church and state in which the two leaders, Patriarch for the soul and Emperor for the body, both work in harmony—maybe this is also a prophetic reminder of the role the Church has within this world; in a moving passage he writes; 'Having one and the same purpose, all of us anticipating the same goal; he will lead us towards rewards of our heavenly calling. There, in heaven, is the Church of the first born … where no lie is honoured before the truth, where there is no strife, no tyranny, no desperation.'[23]

This is not empty theology, but a potential way forward. If understood and worked out honestly it helps remove the dualism often found in Christianity at certain periods where an artificial division is created and instead helps us with its theory of 'duality', different areas working together rather than apart! A hint of the dynamism it offers and how we may achieve conversion of heart, and work together with the political and 'secular' spheres of life, is seen in this preparatory prayer of most Byzantine liturgies where the Spirit is invoked as the active power of God in life:

23 Despina Stratoudaki White, 'Patriarch Photio's Letter to the Bishops in Exile', *The Greek Theological Review*, Volume XIX, Number 2, Autumn 1974, p. 126.

> O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who art in all places and fillest all things, Treasury of blessings and giver of life: come and dwell in us, cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O gracious Lord.

This beautiful prayer with its implicit theology of the role and person of the Spirit, and its explicit acknowledgement of activity, sums up the presence and embodiment of the Holy Spirit in the life of the person, the Church and the world, for present 'in all places', the Spirit is not only the giver of life but the one who sustains and in fact repairs and reconciles the damage of sin; so in essence the survival of all depends upon our receptivity, conductivity and openness to this dynamic Spirit, it also is present in all spheres of life, and as the tradition tells us clearly , in ALL life too. Unpacking the spiritual tradition of such liturgical and other texts often reveals some surprises!

Monasticism as a witness

The deep rootedness of monasticism gives to the Eastern Church a sense of alternative living which places hefty values on things we take for granted or waste. It challenges us to care for all things, demands we encourage proper self-sufficiency and respect for all forms of life on earth. The liturgy, particularly expressed in the monastic setting, which in the East is understood as part of the local Church, gives to all of this tradition a deeply rooted spirituality, ecclesial, community based, transformative and centred on the interplay between the Trinity and ourselves, between life on earth and that of heaven. John Paul II's letter *Orientale lumen* on the Eastern Churches succinctly points out,'… in the East, monasticism was not seen merely as a separate condition, proper to a precise category of Christians, but rather as a reference point for all the baptized, according to the gifts offered to each by the Lord; it was presented as a symbolic synthesis of Christianity.' That remains true and it is not for nothing that a renewal of monastic life is bringing about a profound understanding of ecological issues; one small example might hint at the wider context, work and prayer are one whole, into this even the ascetical discipline of fasting has several meanings, one of which, from an ancient tradition. is that by abstinence from meat

and animal products we respect those who give us nourishment and in fasting give them a space to recuperate—reminding ourselves that in the Kingdom of God we shall be one again with creation.

This theology also places before us the gift of the resurrection. What we do here is not a preparation for a future, but a sharing now in the life of the angels already given us in Christ! It is the vision of the transfiguration of all. What we grow, take, bless, and birth here, is also transformed by the Spirit into an offering for God, as we hope to be at the end of our temporal lives; as the Divine Liturgy puts it when the priest lifts up the Holy Gifts of consecrated bread and wine: 'Your own of Your own we offer to You, in all and for the sake of all.' If that seems strange let us put it this way, all things in this theology come from and lead back to God, matter, materiality, creature, land, water, stars, the dust that binds us together, belong together, not in any sense of pantheism, but because they are loved, created, sustained and belong with us in God.

Conclusion

There is much more one can say and share, such as the theology of the icon as an example of transformed matter, or of patristic treasures, that deep practical wisdom of saints such as Basil, who wrote wonderful homilies on the worm and other animals, or Seraphim whose love of creatures gave him the insight into God's love and joy revealed through the 'littlest ones'. All these are treasures from our sister Churches of the East to be further discovered, and also helped by our support. They have a prophetic voice, and in their history, suffering and very presence are gifts with a real meaning and purpose for us, primarily to place before us the choice of Gospel *metanoia*, that profound change of heart we all are called to hear, and hearing accept in joy! If we cannot take the lead and respond, trying to restore 'fallen eden' with 'Eden', who can?

FROM CRISIS TO GRACE: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON DEVELOPING TRENDS IN JEWISH-CATHOLIC RELATIONS, THROUGH ASPECTS OF THE WORK OF DAVID NEUHAUS SJ

Peter Colwell

Introduction

Nostra Aetate is rightly credited as the turning point in Catholic-Jewish relations in the twentieth century. With this document, the Second Vatican Council turned its back on theologies that spoke of the Church as the replacement of Judaism and on the 'teaching of contempt' which had been the characteristic of popular European Christian narrative about the Jews.[1] Instead it adopted an entirely different approach to Jews and Judaism which affirmed their continuing place within divine election. What *Nostra Aetate* deliberately avoided was making any comment on the place of Land within Jewish self-understanding, thus avoiding the geo-political issues that relate to the Jewish people's 'return to history', to use a significant phrase in Zionist thought. The purpose was to address specifically the post-Shoah reality whereby Christianity needed to address the Church's apparent complicity, through centuries of anti-Judaic discourse, in the Shoah. In recent years, however, the place of Land, has become a persistent issue within the broader Jewish-Christian encounter. This is because Israel is central to how most Jews understand their place in the world. As Rabbi Eugene Korn observes:

> Israel stands at the centre of Jewish self-perception—how most Jews see themselves individually and collectively as a people. Israel is the stage on which Jewish life and peoplehood is played out most vividly

1 See further, Mary C Boys, SNJM: "'What Nostra Aetate Inaugurated". A Conversion to the "Providential Mystery of Otherness"', *Theological Studies* 74 (2013), pp. 73-104.

> in the present, and the key to Jewish spiritual hopes for the future.[2]

Yet a theological account of Land must also take into account a modern nation state, namely Israel, and this creates its own challenges and dangers. This article explores how Land is emerging as a critical issue in Jewish-Catholic relations. This will be done through the work of the Israeli Jesuit Fr David Neuhaus, with some dialogical comment from Bishop Kenneth Cragg, the Anglican theologian who died in 2012, known particularly for his work on Islam and the Arabs, and who lived in the Middle East for many years.

Father David Neuhaus SJ is one of the leading voices within the Israeli Catholic community and as such is uniquely placed to offer perspective on Jewish-Catholic relations in particular, as well as the wider issues that relate to the current state of Jewish-Christian relations globally. He was born in South Africa to Jewish parents, he travelled to Israel in 1977 when he was 15 years old. He was to find faith through his encounter with Orthodox Catholic Christians, but also had a deep engagement with Islam, both in terms of a study of Arabic and through personal relationships with Palestinian families. He was ordained a priest by Michel Sabbah, the first Palestinian Latin Patriarch whose own ministry and writings have contributed significantly to Palestinian Christian thought. He gained a PhD in political science from the Hebrew University in Jersualem, a symbolically important place of learning in Jewish-Israeli consciousness, having been founded in 1918, as a fulfillment of Zionist intent. He went on to study theology in Catholic centres in Paris and Rome before returning to Israel. More recently he has served as the Latin Patriarchal Vicar for Hebrew Speaking Catholics and Migrants in Israel and on the teaching staff at Bethlehem University (in the Palestinian Territories).

Although Neuhaus never uses the word 'convert' to describe his journey, the fact that this secular Israeli Jew not only became a Christian but went on to become a Jesuit priest and theologian makes him both uniquely placed on the one hand and controversial on the other. His uniqueness lies in the fact that he is the only halachically Jewish Israeli Jesuit with a deep engagement with both Israelis and Palestinians, and

2 Eugene Korn, *The Jewish Connection to Israel, the Promised Land: A Brief Introduction for Christians*, Jewish Lights Publishing, Nashville, 2008, pp. ix f.

controversial in that 'converts' throws up significant sensitivities in an inter-religious dialogical context. He himself points out the sensitivity of this, and the sense of vulnerability that many Jews feel towards those that become Christian, as he relates his account of the initial reaction of his own family to this change in his life.[3] However, it should be said from the outset that Neuhaus does not demonstrate a hostility towards Judaism, on the contrary he manifests a deep respect for the Jewish tradition to which he is connected by virtue of blood, as well as faith tradition. In many ways Neuhaus is a living example of what *Nostra Aetate* sets out in written form.

Neuhaus has written numerous articles on the different aspects of his ministry and has published two books. All of his writings reflect a deep pastoral concern for all those of whom he writes: Jews, Christians and Muslims, Israelis and Palestinians, citizens, refugees and migrants alike. The first book, written with Alain Marchadour (2007)[4] explores the issues of land primarily from an hermeneutical perspective. The second is a collection of his writings on the Holy Land (2017).[5] He is a public speaker who is in high demand and is a powerful communicator who not only has important insights to bring, but draws powerfully from his own life experience.

This article focusing on four main themes that arise from Neuhaus' work: (1) Jewish identity and the Catholic Church, (2) salvation of the Jews (3) the writing of history together, (4) attitudes to the State of Israel and matters of justice in respect of the Palestinians.[6]

Jewish Identity and the Catholic Church

From the outset, Neuhaus wishes to impress upon his readers the need to engage with Jews and Judaism according to current Jewish self-understanding. He counsels against any sense of allowing a Jewishness

3 The reader is strongly urged to read Neuhaus' firsthand account of his own journey of faith, see *Writings from the Holy Land*, pp. 5-10.

4 Alain Marchadour and David Neuhaus, *The Land, the Bible and History: Toward a Land that I Will Show You*, Fordham University Press, New York, 2007.

5 David Neuhaus, *Writings from the Holy Land*, Studium Theologicum Salesianum Publications, Jerusalem, 2017.

6 These themes are drawn from Neuhaus' 2009 article, 'Moments of crisis and grace: Jewish-Catholic relations in 2009,' *One In Christ*, volume 43/2 (2009), pp. 6-24.

of our imagining to replace the Jew of reality in the modern world. This important starting point underlines why the Land is an important dialogical concept, for, as we have seen from the quotation from Eugene Korn, the State of Israel has become central to the identity of most Jews in the world. This echoes the words of the Anglican theologian Kenneth Cragg who notes that for most Jews, Israel is how they find their place in the world.

David Neuhaus underlines the importance both of how Jews see themselves and how Christians understand Jews. In doing so he identifies a disjunction between the two. He points out that *Nostra Aetate* was significant in changing the way the Catholic Church was to relate to religious otherness, not merely engaging with the religious other in terms of Christian understanding of them but according to the self-understanding of the religious other.[7] The need to dialogue with Jews according to how Jews see themselves today, rather than a Christian understanding of who the Jew is in the world, is paramount. Yet there is a challenge here in that Christians seek dialogical engagement with Jews through the lens of faith and religious belief, whereas Jews seek to engage with the world as a people and as a nation. In making this crucial point we are led to the recognition that the Jew of past centuries was a very different Jew from the one whom the Church engages with in a post-Vatican II context. The Jew of the past was a figure of contempt, blamed for the death of Christ, and became conflated with the myth of the Wandering Jew.[8] However, the Jew of today is primarily a member of a people who seeks to apprehend its place in the contemporary world. Unless this is acknowledged there is the danger that false presumptions are made as to the epistemology of the dialogical encounter. Crucially, this involves not only a theological response to anti-semitism and the Shoah but also a need to take seriously how Zionism relates to contemporary Jewish self-understanding.

7 *Ibid*.

8 Marchadour and Neuhaus, p. 121f ; see further P Colwell: 'The Return of the Wandering Jew: The State of Israel as a Theological Challenge for Jewish-Christian relations', *Current Dialogue* 58, November 2016, pp. 22-28.

Salvation of the Jews

Building on Neuhaus' call to engage with Jews according to their own self-understanding, there is an urgent need to address one of the fundamental theological questions, namely that of the salvific status of the Jews. The 'teaching of contempt' carried with it a presumption that the Jew was condemned unless they repented and were baptized.

However, in light of Vatican II this matter required re-examination. Should the Church proclaim the Gospel to the Jews or should Judaism be understood as a parellel means towards salvation? This is not a new question, for Jews as well as Christians. Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929), for instance, wrestles with this particular question in his seminal work 'The Star of Redemption' where spoke of the parallel and complementary aspects of the two faiths, with Judaism as the burning core of the star with the rays emanating forth as Christianity, the Church in the world. He understood the relationship as a complementary and even asymbiotic relationship that was essential for both traditions until a full eschatological reconciliation.[9] It is also part of the discussion around the nature of Covenant in Jewish-Christian relations in writers such James Parkes, John Pawlikowski and David Novak. For Catholic theology this question hinges on *Nostra Aetate's* assertion that the Gospel of salvation sprang from the Jewish people, that God 'holds the Jews most dear (and) does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues—such is the witness of the Apostle.'

This question appears in different places within Neuhaus' work. An important issue in this regard is shared scripture, and this can be viewed as *praeparatio eschatologica* rather than *praeparatio evangelica*. He quotes Walter Kaspar in support of this, who emphasized that Jews do not need to become Christians to be saved, but rather continue in faithfulness to God's commands.[10]

However, it is Neuhaus' article on the events of 2009, as discussed below, where these questions are placed within the wider geo-political

9 See further, Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame In., 1970 edition; Michael Barnes, *Traces of the Other*, Chennai, 2000; David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification*, Oxford, 1989.

10 Neuhaus, *Writings from the Holy Land*, pp. 155ff. It should be also noted that Walter Kaspar has spoken on Judaism as a 'sacrament of otherness', address on the 37th Anniversary of Nostra Aetate, 28 October 2002.

context.[11] The fundamental question that is posed is whether during the Papacy of Benedict XVI there was a rowing back from the Second Vatican Council towards a conservative retrenchment. In relation to the specific issue of the Jewish people and salvation this becomes a live issue for Neuhaus when these developments are read in the light of the declaration of Pope John Paul II, that the covenant with the Jews is not revoked.[12] John Paul II's assertion was widely understood by Jews (and many Catholics) at the time as meaning that there is no requirement to convert to Christianity in order to attain salvation. David Novak for instance, in his 2015 book on Zionism, states that Christians should believe that the Jewish covenant is not replaced, but merely supplemented by Christianity, implying that Christianity is the covenant of the Gentiles.[13]

However during the Benedict papacy the theological implications of this came to be teased out when the Bishops' Conferences in Germany and the USA clarified the Church's teaching on the Jews and salvation. The Central Committee of German Catholics in 2009 followed the similar US Jewish-Catholic document of 2002 ('Reflections on Covenant and Mission') which argued that missions to the Jews was an abrogation of the Jewish covenant. The German bishops, however, took the view that this was tantamount to a denial of the universality of the Gospel. Similarly the Catholic bishops in the United States did not rule out evangelization of the Jewish people but argued that it will 'take an utterly unique form, precisely because God has already established a particular relationship with the Jewish people.'[14]

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11 Moments of crisis and grace: Jewish-Catholic relations in 2009,' *One In Christ*, volume 43/2 (2009).

12 John McDade, 'The Continuing Validity of the Jewish Covenant: A Christian Perspective', and Francesco Rossi de Gasperis: 'Two Testaments—One Covenant', *The Month,* February 2000.

13 David Novak, *Zionism and Judaism*, Cambridge 2015, p. 143f.

14 Neuhaus, *One in Christ*, pp. 15ff; for further discussion on the relationship between the Jewish Covenant and Christianity, see John T Pawlikowski, 'The Search for a New Paradigm for the Jewish-Christian Relationship: A Response to Michael Signer', in J T Pawlikowski and Hayim Goren Perelmuter, *Reinterpreting Revelation and Tradition: Jews and Christians in Conversation*, Sheed and Ward, Franklin, Wisc, 2000. See also Pawlikowski, 'Vatican II on the Jews: A Dramatic Example of Theological Development', presented to the 1999 Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America, Miami, Florida; Eugene J Fisher, 'The Evolution of a Tradition: From Nostra Aetate to the "Notes"', in *Fifteen Years of Catholic-Jewish Dialogue 1970-1985*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988; Elliot N Dorff, 'The Covenant as the Key:

Neuhaus notes both the nuancing and clarifying nature of this comment. Furthermore Jewish understandings of divine revelation are always incomplete. So whilst God does not change his mind regarding the Covenant with the Jewish people—for this would render God capricious—the Church also believes that the fulfillment of the Covenant is only found in Jesus Christ. However, dialogue must never be used as a means of proselytism and whilst this assertion is welcomed by Jews, Neuhaus notes the persistent tension within Jewish-Christian relations, namely that Catholics come into dialogue with a conviction that Jew and Gentile alike are saved by Jesus Christ.[15] This point bears comparison with that of Bishop Kenneth Cragg, who, in taking issue with his fellow Anglican James Parkes on stressing dual covenant, makes the following salient point:

> He was right, on every count, to deplore and reject the familiar thesis of the supercession of the Judaic, to insist on taking to heart the Judaic reasons for non-participation (after the first stages) in the Christian thing. But in doing so, he adopted a thesis—since his time widely approved—which virtually surrendered the reasons for the Christian decision. He disaffiliated from the apostles and their Scriptures by seeing Jewry as not intended within the meaning of the Cross and therefore uniquely excluded from the intentions of a grace alleged to be universal.[16]

He suggests that Parkes, and those that have subsequently followed his line of argument, have rewritten the New Testament and the Creeds to suggest that Christ's salvific acts are directed only towards Gentiles and not the Jews.[17] Meanwhile, Christianity is born out of

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A Jewish Theology of Jewish-Christian Relations' in Leon Klenicki (ed), *Toward a Theological Encounter of Christianity*, Paulist Press, New York, 1991, pp. 43-66; Edward Kessler, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations*, Cambridge, 2010, pp. 170-190.

15 Neuhaus, 'Moments of crisis and grace: Jewish-Catholic relations in 2009', *One In Christ*, volume 43/2 (2009), p. 17.

16 Kenneth Cragg, *Troubled by Truth: Biographies in the Presence of Mystery*, Durham, 1992, p. 91f.

17 Other theologians have attempted to express a theological recognition of the ongoing validity of the Jewish covenant. This has included Monika Hellwig who speaks of Christ opening the door to enable Gentiles to encounter the God

an abandonment of this religious exceptionalism, but not to become a more open form of Judaism but a new community, the Church, which incorporates Jewish understandings of Covenant:

> (the New Testament) declared in the same breath in which is said 'there is neither male nor female'. This makes it clear that Jewry was in no way being excluded or invited into demise. Clearly the Church was no sexless society like a community of snails. Male and female blessedly persisted. The point of saying 'there is neither male nor female' is that in respect of the fellowship the distinction, still in being, has no significance. Likewise with 'Jew' and 'Gentile' … Both were equally called into a bond with God and between themselves in which all their continuing identity would find a unity.[18]

In his discussion of Cragg's approach to Judaism, Baptist theologian Nicholas J Wood characterizes Cragg's position as one of a theology of fulfillment, rather than replacement.[19] This observation might lead us to ask whether the clarifications of the implications of *Nostra Aetate* discussed hitherto suggest a move from theologies of replacement towards fulfillment rather than dual covenant.

For Neuhaus an important question is whether these developments on matters of covenant reflect a conservative retrenchment under the Benedict papacy? Neuhaus prefers the view that this is merely the outworking of the theological implications of *Nostra Aetate* and what

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of Abraham. Paul van Buren, who had argued that Christianity had eradicated Jewish elements from its theology in replacing it with a pagan-Christian tradition, culminating in the Holocaust; Christianity it is suggested should return to Judaism and see the two traditions as branches of a single covenant. For Hellwig the issue however is not so much whether one adopts a one or two covenant model but whether Judaism has been superseded by Christianity or whether Judaism has a continuing validity. See further John T Pawlikowski: 'The Search for a New Paradigm for the Jewish-Christian Relationship: A Response to Michael Signer', in J T Pawlikowski and Hayim Goren Perelmuter, *Reinterpreting Revelation and Tradition: Jews and Christians in Conversation*.

18 Kenneth Cragg, *The Christ and the Faiths: Theology in Cross-Reference*. SPCK, London, 1986, p. 128f.

19 Nicholas J Wood, *Faiths and Faithfulness: Pluralism, Dialogue and Mission in the Work of Kenneth Cragg and Lesslie Newbigin*, Paternoster, Milton Keynes, 2009, pp. 101-113.

it means to assert that the Covenant with the Jews is not revoked. This point echoes the assertion of Gavin d'Costa that the Second Vatican Council did not rule out mission to Jews but implicitly endorsed it whilst ruling out coercion and the targeting of one faith over another. Furthermore, d'Costa argues that the claims that the Vatican Council endorsed the view that Judaism is a means of salvation, that Judaism is a valid God given covenant and that missions to the Jews are illegitimate and tendentious as they do not appear in the documents of the Council. Doctrines, however, do develop and this is reflected in Neuhaus's treatment of the developments regarding salvation during the Benedict papacy.[20]

There is, it must be noted, a political as well as theological, significance to the salvific status of the Jewish people, due to the extent that Judaism is now largely defined through Zionist fulfillment in the Land. In many ways, Zionism is how Jews find their the place and salvation in the world. But this understanding of Jewish salvation through Zionist intentionality has never quite shaken off the charge that it was a negation of the divine, a salvation by human hand. Nevertheless, the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 (and its military successes, most notably in 1967) were viewed by many Jews as evidence of the saving hand of God. The 'stepping back into history' that Zionism represented was a departure from the quietist tone of Judaism hitherto. Rabbi David Hartman, an influential figure in late twentieth-century religious Zionist thought observes:

> Israel's return to history as a political community constitutes a proclamation to the world that Judaism and the Jewish people cannot be reduced to a spiritual abstraction. When Judaism manifests itself as the way of life of a particular historical people, as it can do in Israel today, it is a permanent obstacle to any theological view that perceives Judaism as the superseded forerunner of the universalist conceptions of Christian and Islamic monotheism.[21]

20 Gavin d'Costa, *Vatican II: Catholic Doctrines on Jews and Muslims*, Oxford 2014, pp. 113-159.

21 David Hartman, *A Living Covenant*, p. 304.

The image of the European Jew poring over the Torah and Talmud, awaiting the Messianic age, is one reacted against, and rejected by Zionist thought. Thus Messianic longing becomes actualized in political liberation and statehood, and this represents a pronounced theological challenge both to how Christianity understands and relates to Judaism, but also in terms of matters of theological language concerning 'salvation', 'Israel', 'Zion' and also matters of eschatology given the implicit abrogation of eschatology that many schools of Zionist thought represents. It is here that Zionism owes a debt to the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche's emphasis upon the 'will to power' and the importance of myth in culture and civilization more than echo the early Zionist spirit: a movement that sought to free Jews from assimilation and anti-Semitism in Europe and to transform a compliant and emasculated people into one that struggled against history, political power, even the land itself and especially the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine, in order to regain an ethnic masculinity. Nietzsche's appeal to early Zionists contains an inherent logic. Nietzsche came to believe that post-Enlightenment Europe had outgrown all that Christianity had taught and represented, but in declaring 'the death of God' he was not pointing towards a rationalistic, secular humanism, but the need to enter a new chapter in human spiritual and intellectual development, and to that end needed to create a new sense of human beings taking control of their own destiny and creating their own myths that would sustain them spiritually.[22] Zionists too were reacting against a Christian Europe that held them in chains for too long, and longed for an intellectual framework for Jewish self-determination. It is Zionism's blending of religion and nationalism, and of its absorption of the religious into the political that represents one of the most significant, though often under-acknowledged, challenges for Jewish-Christian dialogue especially if Neuhaus' starting point that Christians must engage with Jews as they see themselves is to be fully taken on board. To put this point differently, we might say that the 'teaching of contempt' has had a theological and a political price to pay.

These questions and challenges set the context for the Jewish-Christian encounter in contemporary times, framed as they are by a

22 See further the work of Israeli historian David Ohana, *Political Theologies in the Holy Land: Israeli Messianism and its critics*, Routledge, London, 2010; *Modernism and Zionism*, Palgrave, Macmillan, London, 2012; *Origins of Israeli Mythology: Neither Canaanites nor Crusaders*, Cambridge, 2012 (English translation), pp. 46ff.

post-Shoah context and the realization of messianic longing in the form of Zionism as realized political ideology. Neuhaus has, however, a number of other areas for dialogical focus that flows directly from this reality—the legacy of history and attitudes to the State of Israel, to which we now turn.

Can Catholics and Jews write history together?

Another important issue is the status of history and narrative. Neuhaus believes that the ability to speak of history together, rather than in competing or negating narratives, is central to the search for reconciliation. This is true for Palestinians and Israelis, and it is true also for Jews and Catholics. For Jews how history is told is important to matters of identity, especially as they relate to the Land.

The experience of Jews and land is a crucial issue for much of Zionist thought. Prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, Jews were a landless people often viewed as alien in the contexts in which they were found. The Jewish-Austrian (and, Catholic convert) composer Gustav Mahler (1860-1911), for example wrote: 'I am three times with a Heimat: as a Bohemian in Austria, an Austrian among Germans and as a Jew throughout the world—always an intruder, never welcomed.'[23]

Leon Pinsker, one of the founding fathers of Zionism also observed:

> To the living, the modern Jew is dead, to the native-born he is a stranger, to the long-settled a vagabond, to the wealthy a beggar, to the poor a millionaire and exploiter, to the citizen a man without a country, to all classes a hated competitor.[24]

The creation of the State of Israel, and thus Jewish return to landedness, as well as 'return to history' is critical to Jewish self-understanding. Likewise matters relating to the Jewish experience

23 Norman Lebrecht, *Why Mahler? How One Man and Ten Symphonies Changed the World*, Faber and Faber Ltd, London, 2010, p. 24.

24 Words of Leon Pinsker (1821-1891) quoted in Amos Elon, *The Israelis: Founders and Sons*, Penguin Books, London, 1971, 1983 edition, p. 70.

during the Shoah, and the role of the Church, are also of direct relevance to Jewish encounters in the contemporary world. The contested legacy of Pope Pius XII leads Neuhaus to ask an important question about whether it could ever be possible for Jews and Christians to write history together? Whilst the history of Jews and Christians, especially in Europe, is a traumatic one (he uses the phrase 'submerged in a valley of tears')—the story of the Church constitutes sacred history for Catholics. Here this 'sacred history' collides with alternative versions of Pius as lacking in courage, and even compassion, to act against the Shoah. Whilst noting the tendency amongst Pius' defenders to engage in hagiography, he points out that the frequent critics of the then Pontiff also lack critical reflection. The very existence of the Shoah, Neuhaus suggests, is a 'resounding accusation against the Pope, the Church and the world'.[25] However, it should be possible, and desirable, to document what the pope did at the time, to write and own this history together as Jews and Christians, as a vital task on the path to reconciliation, friendship and trust. Edward Kessler likewise stresses the importance of Jews and Christians remembering that in Nazi occupied countries churches were often targeted, as well as individual actions, such as those of the future Pope John XIII in providing baptismal certificates for Hungarian Jews in a bid to protect them from Nazi persecution.[26] This would echo Neuhaus desire for the writing of a common history, and it remains a critical issue that has resonances with other aspects of Jewish-Christian engagement.

An important question is whether such mutual historical writing would still be a sacred history?

Kenneth Cragg has spoken of the problems associated with the sacrilization of nationhood (in relation to Israel), and this poses the question as to whether history, as told within a religious or theological framework, seems destined to take on the vestment of the sacred. This is as true of Judaism's telling the story of the Shoah and the foundation of the state of Israel (including, and especially its narrative about its conflicts in 1948 and 1967) as the story of the Catholic Church in history.

Here we are left with important questions to ponder. In particular,

25 Neuhaus, 'Moments of crisis and grace: Jewish-Catholic relations in 2009', *One In Christ*, volume 43/2 (2009), p. 20.

26 Edward Kessler, '"I am Joseph, Your Brother": A Jewish Perspective on Christian-Jewish Relations since Nostra Aetate No.4', *Theological Studies* 74 (2013), pp. 48-72.

how does 'sacred history' (i.e. the theological understanding of the place of the Church within history) intersect and dialogue with political narratives of land that have taken on the vestiges of the sacred, albeit with an overt to secular language. A second question is whether as history written together by Jews and Catholics means that the writing of 'sacred history' has had Jewish participation in the process of its writing?

The State of Israel and the Palestinian Question

This last point brings us face to face with one of the defining question concerning Jewish-Catholic, and more widely Jewish-Christian, dialogue, that of understandings of the State of Israel but also the failure, thus far, of Palestinian self-determination. As we have already noted, Israel is central to Jewish self-understanding and even for Jews who do not reside there. For the majority it is still central to how they view their place in the world. Therefore dialogue with Jews will inevitably come back to Christian perceptions of Israel. Neuhaus understands this and begins to address the question 'does the State of Israel take on theological significance within the dialogue with the Jews? How does the modern State of Israel relate, if at all, to the Bible? Concomitantly what should the position of the Church be in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, a part of whom are Catholics?'

A consistent complaint from Jewish dialogue partners is that the Catholic Church has been reticent in recognizing Israel as integral to Jewish identity. Neuhaus identifies four reasons why this has been the case. The first of these is a wariness of theologizing the political which brings with it some of the dangers that are associated with fundamentalist movements, and whilst Neuhaus does not mention them by name, he clearly has Christian Zionism in his sights.[27] The second reason concerns the ongoing conflict in the region—unresolved issues relating to Palestinian refugees and Palestinian nationhood, Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the building of settlements and land which seizures have all impacted negatively upon

27 For an in-depth analysis of Christian Zionism, see *Land of Promise? An Anglican exploration of Christian attitudes to the Holy Land, with special reference to Christian Zionism*, Anglican Consultative Council, 2012.

Palestinians, including Catholics as well as Eastern Orthodox and other Christian communities. Thirdly there is the matter of different readings of the Biblical land. Catholics and Jews read the Bible differently in relation to the land.[28] Here Neuhaus makes the point that Israel is understood as having a wider meaning that merely 'Jews in the Land', which is how it is understood in Judaism. In Catholic theology Israel also means the Church, and the Biblical concept of land is a place of transformation through the Resurrection, where the land that is called holy is not restricted to Biblical lands 'but rather comes to signify the face of an earth transformed by Jesus' victory over sin and death.'[29] This point is also reflected in current Palestinian theologies of land, most notably that of the Lutheran scholar Munther Isaac, who maintains that Christianity has universalized understandings of 'Land' with a call and expectation to seek justice in any land where Christian witness and mission are exercised.[30]

Finally in this list of four reasons why the Catholic Church is reticent to recognize the place of Israel in Jewish self-understanding is the different understandings of Jewish vocation. This is where Neuhaus expresses his anxiety with respect to Zionism. He asserts that many Catholics are ill at ease with notions of Jewish return to the land and that since Vatican II the Church has fought against anti-Semitism 'so that Jews might find their home and their security among the nations of the world and fulfill their historic vocation.' He concludes this point with the distinction drawn by Pope Benedict XVI on differentiating between the Church's relationship to the Jews (spiritual and religious) and the attitudes towards to State of Israel (political) as offering a coherent distinction within dialogue, noting in conclusion that Catholic cannot ignore the concerns of justice.

The visit of Pope Benedict to the Holy Land in 2009 was a significant milestone in Jewish-Catholic relations. During that visit the pope visited the Western Wall, and Edward Kessler echoes the perception of many Jews that this contributed to a final repudiation of a 'theology of perpetual wandering'.[31]

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28 'Moments of crisis and grace: Jewish-Catholic relations in 2009', *One In Christ*, volume 43/2 (2009), pp. 22ff.

29 'Moments of crisis and grace: Jewish-Catholic relations in 2009', p. 23.

30 Munther Isaac, *From Land to Lands, from Eden to the Renewed Earth: A Christ-Centered Biblical Theology of the Promised Land*. Langham Monographs, 2015.

31 Kessler, *op.cit*.

Meanwhile the pope also spoke, during his visit of the basic link between the Church and Israel, but also did so whilst in Jordan, a predominantly Muslim country. One should not ignore the significance of this development. To affirm the connection of the Church to 'Israel' whilst in a majority Arab Muslim context raises important issues. Pope Benedict in doing this laid down a challenge to much Arab Christian discourse that seeks to deny the connection of Judaism to the Land, and which prefers to lay emphasis upon a close Christian-Muslim symbiosis.

The Christian-Muslim emphasis in Palestinian writing is fundamental. Father Rafiq Khoury—a Latin Catholic Priest—suggests that relations with Muslims is a particular vocation for Middle East Christians. Yet he sees dangers in attempting to create a separate Christian identity in the region that is homogenous in character but rather needs to develop a truly ecumenical identity within a predominately Islamic culture.[32] However, this trend is most explicit, and problematic, in the work of the Lutheran Pastor Mitri Raheb, who underlines the umbilical nature of Christianity's relationship to Islam by suggesting that the Qur'an is the Bible inculturated into Arab culture and context. Raheb suggests that Muhammad's experiences in Medina echo those of St Paul in his disagreements with Jews regarding the legacy of Abraham and whether it was for the Jews alone.[33] All of this raises important questions—has Western Christian theology should engage with Palestinian Christian thought in all its diversity, and how engagement with Jews and Muslims is impacted, questions which are outside the scope of this article.

Echoing Pope Benedict, Neuhaus has noted how anti-Judaism is a significant part of Middle Eastern discourse and whilst it is often suggested, as Raheb does, that this is due to Arabic being the common factor, such a narrative is also found in non-Arabic speaking societies such as Turkey and Iran, and therefore Neuhaus concludes, this anti-Judaic discourse is forged out of Islam rather than Arabic. And we might further note that in terms of classical Islam, Jews were the primary

32 Samuel J Kuruvilla, 'Theologies of Liberation in Latin America and Palestine-Israel in Comparative Perspective: Contextual Differences and Practical Similarities', *HLS* 9.1 (2010) 51-69.

33 Mitri Raheb, 'Contextualizing the Scripture: Towards a New Understanding of the Qur'an—An Arab Christian Perspective', in *Studies in World Christianity*, Melisende, London, 1997, pp. 180-201; see also Leonard Marsh, 'Whose Holy Land?', *Studies in World Christianity*, Volume 15 Issue 3, pp. 276-286.

religious other, something that came to be a significant theme in the work of influential Islamist thinkers of the mid-twentieth century including, and especially, Sayyid Qutb.[34]

To speak of Jewish-Catholic relations implies that there is merely a single discourse. Neuhaus, however, points out that there are at least two distinct paradigms with regard to the Jewish-Catholic encounter. The first is the more familiar Western European narrative of Jewish minority status within a powerful, and often anti-Semitic, Christian ecclesial context. This is the narrative against which *Nostra Aetate* reacted and sought to speak a different language as how the Church speaks of the Jews and Judaism. Jews were the outsiders in the European story, blamed for killing Christ, and often blamed for social calamity. In this paradigm the Shoah is the main reference point for Jewish-Catholic relations and the creation of the State of Israel the means by which Jews return to history and claim their own destiny.

However, a second narrative is that which arises out of a Middle-Eastern, Arab narrative where the main reference point is not the Shoah but the status of Palestine and particularly the *Nakhba* (literally 'calamity') that ensued from the creation of Israel as a Jewish State. This meant that for the first time Christians, including Catholics, have lived as a minority under Jewish political power. This alone makes Israel-Palestine a unique context for Jewish-Catholic relations, what Neuhaus calls a reversal of power relations. Thus the daily reality of Israeli occupation means that the nature of the dialogue is profoundly different from that within the European context.[35] However, in this context it is the primacy of Islam in Middle Eastern society that holds and forms the narrative. Yet, as Neuhaus and Jamal Khader observe in their 2005 article, Catholics of the region (Latin and Eastern) seek to engage with Jews as they understand themselves within the context of the Holy Land, which is in marked contrast to *Nostra Aetate* which

34 See further, Ronald L Nettler, *Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Muslim-Jewish Relations*, Oxford, 1995; Neil Robinson, 'Sayyid Qutb's Attitude to Christianity: Sura 9.29-35 in Fi Zilal Al-Quran', in Lloyd-Ridgeon, *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*, Macmillan, London, 2001; Colwell: 'To Defend Faith? Themes and Concepts in the Writings of Sayyid Qutb and Rowan Williams', *Living Stones Yearbook* 2015: 'Martydom and Christian response to conflict in the Middle East', *Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust*, 2015.

35 David Neuhaus, 'Catholic-Jewish Relations in the State of Israel: Theological Perspectives', in Anthony O'Mahony and John Flannery (eds), *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East*, Melisende, London: 2010, pp. 237-251.

avoids matters of the Land. Yet this is within the significant challenges of the acute political situation faced by Palestinian Muslims and Christians.[36]

The paradox however is that the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 contributed to the de-pluralization of the Arab world, where once vibrant Jewish communities in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen almost completely disappeared as a result of the geo-political changes that the creation of Israel set in train.[37] The often neglected experience of Jewish Arabs, many of whom found themselves expelled from lands where they had existed for centuries, is another aspect of this depluralization. These communities often had a deep engagement with Eastern Christian communities in those contexts, as well as Islam. Arriving in Israel they brought with them this experience of lost pluralism.[38] Neuhaus points out that with respect to Eastern Christian traditions, the only country where there is a developing dialogue between Judaism and Eastern Christianity is in Israel.[39] However, and additionally, the experience of Arab Jews points to how Israel has radically reshaped religious and cultural identity, which evidences how religious self-understanding can reshape and redefine the geo-political status quo. It is within this context that Catholic-Jewish dialogue is unfolding and may prove to be of critical self-importance.[40]

These two narratives of the Jewish-Christian encounter are powerfully illustrated by the perception of the Jew in the European as compared to the Middle Eastern context. The European Christian sees the Jew primarily as the victim of a misreading of the Christian tradition—the Middle Eastern Catholic sees the Jew often as a soldier, policeman or settler. Furthermore, Christians of the region do not see themselves as sharing the same experience of anti-Semitism that is felt

36 Jamal Khader and David Neuhaus, 'A Holy Land Context for Nostra Aetate', *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations*, Boston College Volume 1 (2005-2006), pp. 67-88; http://escholarship.bc.edu/scjr/vol1/iss1/art8.

37 Neuhaus, *Writings from the Holy Land*, p. 189.

38 See further: Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1984; Martin Gilbert, *In Ishmael's House: A History of Jews in Muslim Lands*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2011; Malka Hillel Shulewitz (ed.), *The Forgotten Millioms: The Modern Jewish Exodus from Arab Lands*, Continuum, London, 1999.

39 Neuhaus, *Writings,* p. 197.

40 See Neuhaus' article, 'Shimon Balas—a Jewish Arab at 80', in *Writings from the Holy Land*, pp. 97-108.

in European Churches, existing in a context of Jewish dominance.[41] This mirrors the contrast, even conflict, between the centrality of either of the Shoah or *Nakhba*. Notwithstanding this juxtaposition, Neuhaus notes that the official documents of the Catholic Church afford a pre-eminence to its relationship to Judaism, both in terms of the Jewishness of Jesus, the place and authority of the Old Testament and what the New Testament says about the ongoing validity of the Jewish covenant.[42]

Neuhaus' juxtaposing of these two anti-Judaic trajectories—that the Jew belongs neither in Europe nor the Middle East—is revealing in terms of much of Jewish, and particularly Zionist, consciousness where these two anti-Judaic narratives are often conflated and understood as having common threads. To return to Neuhaus' starting point with regard to Judaism, self-understanding is the important starting point for Catholic relations to Judaism, and critically the sense of belonging and land are central to Jewish self-understanding and why narratives, old and new, that reject Jewish legitimacy in the land (whether in Europe or in the Middle East) are so problematic for Jewish self-understanding.

Neuhaus suggests that matters of justice need to take centre stage within the Jewish-Catholic encounter, otherwise the emphasis upon 'common heritage' will fail to see the issues as they confront Palestinian Christians. This is most sharply demonstrated when it comes to the Old Testament as a clear example of shared heritage, yet in geo-political terms there is the risk that the Biblical Israel will be confused with the modern State of Israel. It is for this reason that the trajectory of Palestinian Christian thought and religious practice has sometimes avoided use of the Old Testament. The former Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah was one of the first writers to identify a problem that exists within Old Testament hermeneutics in the Palestinian context, whereby difficulties with particular texts could lead towards a new Marcionism, the early Christian dualist belief that rejected the Old Testament and the God of Israel, denounced by Tertullian as a heresy in 208CE. Samuel Kuruvilla suggests that Sabbah may well have in mind the writings of those Palestinians

41 Jamal Khader and David Neuhaus: 'A Holy Land Context for Nostra Aetate', pp. 67-88 http://escholarship.bc.edu/scjr/vol1/iss1/art8.

42 Neuhaus, *Writings*, pp. 188-191.

(Protestant) who hold a more liberationist emphasis.[43]

Be that as it may, Palestinian Christians are left with significant changes with regard to the shared language of both Biblical Israel and the modern Jewish State that bears that name. Kenneth Cragg underlines the critical issue:

> How should we read now the ardent prophecies of 'the land' and return from exile? In particular, how should Arab Christians do so in painful ambiguity of 'blessing the Lord God of Israel' when the Israel is that of Menachem Begin, Moshe Sharon, Rabbi Kahane and the Ansar internment camps—not the Israel of Zechariah the priest or of Luke the Christian in their Benedictus?[44]

These hermeneutical issues are relevant to the historical narrative because of the way in which, as Cragg puts it, 'statehood is sacrilized' which he declares cannot be unilaterally undertaken in the modern world.[45] How key texts from the Hebrew Scriptures are understood within Judaism, and how Christian writers *assume* they are understood by Jews, is a critical issue both in terms of how scripture relates to history and whether it has religious or secular status within Judaism. Rabbi David Hartman for example argues that for secular Zionists (who were the founding fathers and mothers of Israel), the Biblical narrative offered an anthropological framework rather than a divine directive:

> It was not valued as a way of discovering how to live one's

43 See S J Kuruvila, 'Reading the Bible in Palestine: Letters and Speeches of Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Michel Sabbah', book review of S J Drew Christiansen and Saliba Sarsar (eds), '*Patriarch Michel Sabbah—Faithful Witness: On reconciliation and Peace in the Holy Land*, Hyde Park, New City Press, New York, 2009', *HLS 8.2* (2009), pp. 239-25. Sabbah also identifies a particular hermeneutical challenge in relation to the land: both the claims of many Israeli Jews and Christian Zionists about the what the Bible declares to be the intended proprietorial nature of the Land; see Michel Sabbah, 'Reading the Bible Today in the Land of the Bible', Fourth Pastoral Letter of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem; Anthony O'Mahony and John Flannery (eds), *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East*, London: Melisende 2010, pp. 253-261. http://www.lpj.org/newsite2006/patriarch/pastoral-letters/1993/readingthebible_en.html.

44 Cragg, *The Arab Christian*, p. 237.

45 Hermeneutics is also a critical issue for contemporary Palestinian writers; see M Raheb (ed.), *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation: Towards a new hermeneutics of liberation*, Bethlehem, 2012.

> daily life in the presence of God but rather as a way of discovering and legitimating new expressions of Jewish peoplehood.[46]

Thus the language of 'Israel' becomes an important issue to be addressed in Jewish-Catholic relations (and more broadly Jewish-Christian) precisely because of its theo-political ambiguity.

Yet this is an issue that remains problematic within the wider Jewish-Christian encounter. Neuhaus illustrates this with an incident from the 2010 Synod for the Catholic Church in the Middle East when the Greek Catholic Archbishop Selim Bustros raised concerns about the confusion between conflating the Biblical and political language which led in turn to a very public demand by Rabbi David Rosen that the archbishop's remarks be repudiated by the Curia.[47] Rosen's remarks, it could be argued, illustrate a point of view of many within Judaism that are engaged in Jewish-Christian dialogue that fails to take adequate account of Arab Christian self-understanding and not to even acknowledge that there is an issue of concern in this regard. What Rabbi Rosen's remarks illustrate is the extent to which the Christian reference points in dialogue are framed within a Western discourse and how the emphasis of Eastern Christianity is not considered important enough to be of dialogical significance. This acute sense of being excluded from the broader dialogue is another important theme in Palestinian Christian writings, most vividly expressed in the world of Mitri Raheb who suggests that the recasting of Western Christian theology in a way that dispenses with replacement theology with regard to Judaism has in turn created a new-replacement theology whereby the Palestinian people are replaced by Israel:

> In the same moment when (Western) theologians were countering a kind of 'replacement theology', a theology that understands the Christian Church to have replaced Israel, they fall into another trap of 'replacement theology', a theology that replaces the Palestinians by the Jewish people and looks at the land being connected only to one

46 David Hartman, *Israelis and the Jewish Tradition: An Ancient People Debating its Future*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2000, p. 8.
47 Neuhaus, *Writings*, p. 194.

> people, that is the Jews, and not to those who remained there centuries and might have more Jewish roots than most of those 'imported' merely for demographic reasons … This 'replacement theology' provided a theological cover for an ongoing racial replacement policy of the State of Israel.[48]

A distinctive, if not unique, aspect of Neuhaus' writings concerns the changing nature of Christianity within Israel itself. He has carefully charted the trends regarding Christian communities that came to Israel as a result of Eastern European migration where people of Christian faith have a Jewish family connection, Hebrew-speaking (including Catholic) congregations, Messianic movements and those that have come as migrant workers or asylum seekers.[49] He identifies two significant challenges here. The first is with the transmission of the faith in a majority Jewish (and secular) context, with a trend (particularly amongst those of Eastern European heritage) to emigrate elsewhere (Western Europe and North America). The second challenge is an ecumenical one, for whilst amongst Palestinian (Arab) Christians there is a strong impulse towards what Neuhaus calls an 'ecumenism of solidarity', there has been a resistance to acknowledging the fact of Christianity in Israel itself is increasingly plural. There are here divergent ecumenical trends in relation to Judaism. The Palestinian ecumenism of solidarity has often problematized Judaism, seeing it as lacking historical rootedness in the land and thus sees greater need to stress a closer familial relationship with Islam. Meanwhile, many of the non-Arab Israeli Christians, searching for greater integration and recognition with the State of Israel, seek a deeper understanding of Judaism, often wishing to emphasize the Jewishness of Jesus. Neuhaus' observation that ecumenism 'thrives where political (or ideological) interests converge—pro-Palestinian or pro-Israeli' also points towards how inter-religious concerns impact at a deep level with emerging ecumenical identity.[50] However, this ecumenical identity is one that finds its context in the Land: Land therefore matters in respect of

48 Mitri Raheb, 'Shaping Communities in times of Crises: Narratives of Land, people and Identities', www.mitriraheb.org.

49 For a detailed account, see Neuhaus, 'The Challenge of New forms of Christian Presence in the Holy Land', in *Tantur Fest,* pp. 133-145.

50 'So that they may be one', p. 53.

Christian identity and theology, and this, I would suggest is a significant implication of Neuhaus' work.

Conclusion: Moments of Crisis and Grace

In the 2009 article that has already been cited, Neuhaus reflected upon events of that year and how they map the developing journey of Jewish-Catholic relations.[51] 2009 was a tumultuous year for Jewish-Catholic relations which had begun with Israel military action in Gaza and included controversies concerning the Fraternity of Pope Pius X[52] and the Williamson affair,[53] along with matters already discussed in this paper, such as accounts of Pope Pius XII and his actions during the Shoah, matters relating to the mission amongst the Jews that arose from the clarifications deriving from the Conferences of German and US Bishops, Israel-Vatican relations and ending with the visit by Pope Benedict to the Holy Land.

Neuhaus, noting that the word 'crisis' has its roots in the Greek word *κρισις* meaning judgment, decision or discernment. Thus the events of 2009 came to be seen as moments of 'crisis and grace'. Much of the necessity of 'crisis' in Jewish-Catholic relations is the need to work through the implications of *Nostra Aetate*, and the documents of the Second Vatican Council, taking seriously the reality that the Jew of older Christian imagining is not the Jew of the twenty-first century. The Land is central to this crisis: Israel means that Jews are able to speak for themselves, no longer, in the words Kenneth Cragg 'haunted by the trauma of homelessness.' Yet, as Neuhaus shows, moments of crisis in the unfolding story of the Church's ancient relationship with Judaism, also move this story forward into insights of grace, but one where the lived experience of Christians in the Land is central and not peripheral.

This is a strikingly similar chord to that of Kenneth Cragg—he also saw the uniqueness of the place of Christianity in the Holy Land. He notes that for Christianity, being an incarnational faith, events and place have a sacramental quality. The sacraments are instituted in a place,

51 Neuhaus, 'Moments of crisis and grace: Jewish-Catholic relations in 2009', *One In Christ*, volume 43/2 (2009), pp. 6-24.

52 The lifting of excommunication of four bishops, ordained by Mgr Marcel Lefebvre, the Fraternity having rejected the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

53 Bishop Williamson had cast doubt on aspects of the Holocaust.

with physical objects. Being born and existing in a place of sacramental institution gives a unique quality to Palestinian Christianity, and of course sacrament is also a means of grace:

> Such is the way of sacraments, and sacred geography can be one of them, the physical bespeaking the spiritual at the rendezvous with history … to be 'resident', however, as 'natives' are, is to be peculiarly in a privilege of grace. The Palestinian Christian is born into the very precincts of faith. It will be the Christian answer from everywhere, local or distant, that we need the same tests of faith … namely justice, tragedy, vicarious experience and the way through suffering and reconciliation.[54]

54 Kenneth Cragg, *Palestine: The Prize and Price of Zion*, Cassell, London, 1997, p. 218f.

THE ECCLESIAL THOUGHT OF KENNETH CRAGG IN RELATION TO THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND'S PRESENCE IN JERUSALEM. REFLECTIONS ON MODERN HISTORY.

David Derrick

Introduction

The prolific Arabic, Persian, and Islamic studies scholar, Arthur John Arberry (1905-1969) died in the same year as the publication of the two volume work, *Religion in the Middle East Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*,[1] of which he was the general editor. At the time of publication, this masterclass of essays[2] was generally well received,[3] and stands as a

1 A J Arberry (ed.), *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict* (Vol. 1 & 2), Cambridge University Press, London, 1969; republished as a paperback in 2010 by Cambridge University Press.

2 Publisher's note 2010: 'Experts from many parts of the world contributed individual chapters, and the whole work was co-ordinated by a team of leading scholars, making it an erudite study that will be of interest to anyone interested in the historical impact of Islam in the Middle East.' https://www.cambridge.org/gb/academic/subjects/history/middle-east-history/religion-middle-east-three-religions-concord-and-conflict-volume-2?format=PB&isbn=9780521088954 (accessed 06.12.2019.) The writers include: Charles Malik, 'The Orthodox Church'; Norman Bentwich, 'Judaism in Israel'; G C Anawati, 'The Roman Catholic Church and Churches in Communion with Rome'; W Montgomery Watt, 'Religion and anti-religion'; Eric F F Bishop, 'Islam in the countries of the Fertile Crescent'; Kenneth Cragg has two chapters: 'The Anglican Church', and, writing under the pseudonym of 'Abd al-Tafhum, 'Doctrine'. Cragg wrote some of his editorials for the journal *The Muslim World* using this pseudonym.

3 See for example: V Cantarino, 'Review of *Religion in the Middle East. Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*, I-II by A J Arberry', *Journal of Asian History*, 6(1), (1972), pp. 88-89. J C Greenfield, (1973). 'Reviewed Work: *Religion in the Middle East, Three Religions in Concord and Conflict. Vol. 1: Judaism and Christianity by A J Arberry*', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 32(1/2), pp. 266-267. J Kritzeck, 'Abrahamic Religions and the Middle East. *Review of A J Arberry, General Editor: Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), Volume 1: Judaism and Christianity, pp. xii, 595. Volume 2: Islam', *The Review of Politics*, 32(2) (1970), pp. 232-235. H M Sachar, 'Reviewed Work: *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict. Volume I, Judaism and Christianity*; Volume II, Islam by A J Arberry', *The American Historical*

testament to his life and scholarship. The Egyptian Coptologist, Aziz Suryal Atiya (1898-1988), wrote:

> This monumental work is a serious attempt to cover the story of the three great monotheistic religions of the Middle East in the course of the troubled years from 1850. It represents the last major project organised by the late Professor Arberry whose lamentable death took place in October 1969 before reaping the fruit of his labours from a work to which he must have devoted himself for a number of years, and which undoubtedly will remain as an enduring monument to his profound scholarship.[4]

As can be seen from a range of recent citations,[5] the work has endured. Writing in 2011, Baker notes:

> Several reference works are worth consulting for the historical and cultural background they provide on Middle Eastern Christianity. A J Arberry's (ed.) *Religion*

Review, 75(2), (1969), pp. 51-553. J B Segal, 'Reviewed Work: *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict* by A J Arberry', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 34*(3) (1971), pp. 597-601. J B Taylor, '*Review of A J Arberry. Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*', *Religious Studies*, 7(4) (1971). doi:10.1017/S0034412500000457. J E J Wood, 'Review of *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*. Edited by A J Arberry', *Journal of Church and State,* 11(2) (1969), p. 348.

4 A S Atiya, 'Review of *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict. Edited by A. J. Arberry. I: Judaism and Christianity*, Cambridge University Press, 1969', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 22*(1) (1971), p. 88.

5 See for example: L Scales and O Zimmer, *Power and the Nation in European History*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 52 footnote 28. M Baker, 'Christian Traditions in the Contemporary Middle East: A Bibliographic Essay', *Theological Librarianship* 4(1 (July 2011), pp. 68-74. Several reference works are worth consulting for the historical and cultural background they provide on Middle Eastern Christianity. A J Arberry's (ed.), *Religion in the Middle East* remains useful in this regard,' p. 72. A O'Mahony, 'Christianity in the Middle East: modern history and contemporary theology and ecclesiology: an introduction and overview', *The Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 65(3-4) (2013), pp. 231-260, footnotes 61, 63. K Papastathis, K, 'Religious Politics in Mandate Palestine: The Christian Orthodox Community Controversy in the Thirties', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 43(3) (2016), pp. 259-284, footnote 41. M Badar, M Nagata and T Tueni, 'The Radical Application of the Islamist Concept of Takfir', *Arab Law Quarterly*, 31(2), 134, footnote 59.

> *in the Middle East* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969) remains useful in this regard.[6]

Kritzeck relates 'that the writers were first invited to make their contributions to these volumes in 1964 and all had completed them by the end of 1966. This is of significance when considering the contribution to the book by Kenneth Cragg.'[7] The years between 1964 and 1966 were a difficult and uncertain times for Cragg. He was Warden of St Augustine's College, Canterbury, the Central College of the Anglican Communion which was set-up initially in 1848 as a missionary college. The *Encyclical Letter to the Faithful in Jesus Christ,* arising from the Lambeth Conference 1958, noted that:

> the Central College of the Anglican Communion established at St Augustine's College, Canterbury, after the Lambeth Conference of 1948, has become a striking symbol of the fellowship which binds all together.[8]

Yet in April 1966 the decision was made by the Consultative Body of the Lambeth Conference, (meeting in Jerusalem) to terminate the inter-Anglican grants to the college at the end of 1967. Cragg was reported by *The Church Times* as saying that 'this financial decision means in effect the closure of the Central College and the practical end of that concept.'[9] It also meant that Cragg not only lost his job and ministry, but his home. The college officially closed in 1967.

Kenneth Cragg, 'The Anglican Church'

In 'The Anglican Church' Cragg gives an indication of the circumstances, concepts and controversies that accompanied the Church of England from the joint bishopric of Jerusalem in 1841 to the inauguration of

6 Baker (2011) p. 72.

7 K Cragg, 'The Anglican Church' in Arberry, *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Harmony* (Vol. 1): Cambridge University Press, 1969.

8 *The Lambeth Conference 1958: The encyclical letter from the bishops, together with the resolutions and reports*, SPCK, London, p. 26.

9 'St Augustine's to abandon role of Central College: financial crisis', *The Church Times,* 1966, 4 November, pp. 1, 24.

the Anglican Jerusalem archbishopric in 1956.[10] It is a strange piece of writing, even for Cragg, perhaps owing more to the laments of *Book of Job* than to the edifying *Acts of the Apostles*. But, like most of his work, it is peppered with numerous literary quotations.[11] Although its main locale is the Church of England in Jerusalem, it ranges from Church of England to Anglicanism to Evangelicalism, and from Jerusalem, to the wider Middle East and beyond. The various beginnings in the early part of the 19th century of the Church of England's involvement in Jerusalem and the Middle East is set in the milieu of the Ottoman Empire with its millet system, within which had operated the ancient Eastern Churches. This system formed the operational basis for the British Palestine Mandate set up after the First World War. The Church of England's beginning of missionary work in the Middle East was not done in isolation.[12] The British Mandate also had a spiritual dimension. In his article, 'Albert Hourani, Arab Christian minorities and the Spiritual dimension of Britain's problem in Palestine 1938-1947', Todd M Thompson notes that:

> For Hourani, British imperial policy was not simply about the pursuit of national interests or the maintenance of power. It was primarily about the encouragement of proper moral and spiritual relationships …[13]

10 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 571.

11 'Virtuoso catenas of quotation like this may irritate some readers, but they illustrate the capacity of a mind searching the ranges of literature for clues about how to begin communicating with the bewildering variety of human experience.' C Lamb, *The Call to Retrieval: Kenneth Cragg's Christian Vocation to Islam*. Grey Seal, London, 1997. p. 6.

12 See for example: M Baer, U Makdisi, and A Shryock, 'Tolerance and Conversion in the Ottoman Empire: A Conversation', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 51.4 (Oct 2009), pp. 927–940. Y Ben-Arieh, *Jerusalem in The 19th Century, The Old City*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1984.

13 T M Thompson, 'Albert Hourani, Arab Christian minorities and the Spiritual dimension of Britain's problem in Palestine 1938-1947' in P S Rowe (ed.), *Christians and the Middle East Conflict*, Routledge, London, 2014, p. 67. While Cragg has often quoted Hourani in a positive manner, a certain negativity is suggested in Cragg's article 'Charles Malik and the meaning of Lebanon', *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 63(1-2): 'While Albert Hourani mused on the same territory as another notable, native scholar, it was from the intellectual perspective of Oxford and an English vintage. A certain contrast has to be acknowledged.' (p. 223) Cragg continued by citing A Al-Sudairi *A Vision of the Middle East: An Intellectual Biography of Albert Hourani*: Bloomsbury Academic, London, 1999). '… Charles Malik, the

Cragg points out that his essay 'The Anglican Church' is not a chronicle and that, 'no catalogue can be offered of places, dates and personnel and many worthy names must find no mention.' His main concern is the 'triangular relations of Judaism, Christianity and Islam' and his focus of attention is on Jerusalem.[14] He divides his essay into three sections: Impulses: 'the road to Jerusalem is in the heart'; Situations: 'the interests of India … and the Sepulchre of Christ'; Reflexions: 'our feet … within thy gates …'.

The meaning and paradox of the Anglican opportunity in Jerusalem, as viewed by Cragg, is embraced in the poem quoted by Cragg in the opening of his essay.

> O thou conqueror of Jerusalem,
> Lay the sword aside.
> The Cross
> Was not of steel, but wood.
> When I saw the humiliation of the crucified One,
> His two hands outstretched to embrace the poles,
> I understood that beyond weakness lies strength.
> The victory is to right and not to power. [15]

It was written by Ahmad Shawqi, born in Cairo in 1868, dying in 1932. Cragg describes him as 'the most celebrated Arab poet of that time'.[16] Formally named 'Prince of the Arab Poets' at a Cairo ceremony in 1927, Shawqi had previously written poems condemning the 1904 British occupation of Egypt.[17] Cragg sees the poem as a comment on Allenby's victorious entry into Jerusalem in 1917. 'Victory is to right not to power' being seen as a comment that Shawqi 'had suffered exile in Spain through the action of the British.' Cragg's use of the term 'suffered' is interesting. Certainly, Shawqi *experienced* exile, but did he 'suffer'? His exile was in Barcelona where he spent his time reading

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newly returned philosopher from Harvard who brought with him a philosophical approach different from the one Hourani had learned at Oxford.' (p. 21)

14 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 572.

15 *Ibid.,* p. 570.

16 *Ibid*.

17 A Goldschmidt, *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 2000, pp. 193-194.

classical poetry and visiting the monuments of Al-Andalus.[18] A J Arberry in his article on the two Egyptian poets Hafiz Ibrahim and Shauqi *[sic]*, notes some curious details regarding this exile. While Hafiz Ibrahim was regarded as the more politically revolutionary of the two poets, he remained in Egypt, while Shawqi was in exile. Arberry adds:

> It was a fortunate chance, however, that made him choose Spain as the country where he should spend the troubled years of the War and after-War period. When he was allowed to return to Egypt in 1920 he brought back with him a sheaf of poems written in the true Andalusian style, as well as material which he subsequently worked up into his only prose- drama, *The Princess of Andalusia*. His return was marked by a rapturous reception at the Cairo Opera House, at which he recited a notable poem beginning:
>
> 'So, I have come at last, when hope seemed lost, To thee, my country!'[19]

Suffering is a very elastic term. However, this does illustrate one of Cragg's great themes that run throughout his work, namely that religion has no place in politics, nor politics in religion. Jerusalem is one place where religion and politics perforce do mix, but with predictably disastrous results.

> But the Church, in the midst of them, has had its own brand of indecision and inward tension.[20]

Cragg then offers this mystification:

> The sacrament of geography is too much for our qualities of soul. Feeling becomes either sour or over-indulgent and in either case is religiously unreal. A score of temptations await the Christian in the precincts of

18 Goldschmidt (2000), p. 193.

19 A J Arberry, 'Hafiz Ibrahim and Shauqi [sic]', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1937, p. 51.

20 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 570.

> his redemption and are multiplied again when he takes up his ministries in its meaning to the other religions which, in their diversely passionate ways, possess the same territories. 'Half friendships', as William Blake wrote, 'are often bitterest enmities', a remark he worked out in his mystical epic of the union of Albion with Jerusalem, but which, transposed from those haunting yet perplexing subtleties of his *Jerusalem*, belongs with all the prosaic mutuality between English Christianity and the Near Eastern scene.[21]

It is interesting that Cragg refers to the now hackneyed poem ordinarily referred to as 'William Blake's *Jerusalem*' after it was set to music by Parry during the First World War. The words are part of the Preface to a large work entitled, *Milton a Poem in 2 Books: to justify the ways of God to men*.[22] Perhaps a better quotation would have been from the longest and perhaps most splendid of Blake's epic poems, *Jerusalem: the emanation of the Giant Albion*.[23]

> AWAKE, Awake, Jerusalem! O lovely Emanation of Albion,
> Awake, and overspread all Nations as in Ancient Time.
> For lo! the Night of Death is past and the Eternal Day
> Appears upon our Hills: Awake, Jerusalem, and come away!
> So spake the Vision of Albion, & in him so spake in my hearing
> The Universal Father.[24]

This is a better complement to Shawqi's poem than, *Jerusalem,* the hymn. Lawrence S Lockridge, writing on friendship in his book *The Ethics of Romanticism*, observes that:

> When reading Blake we are called on to distinguish

21 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 571.
22 E R D Maclaganand A G B Russell, *The Prophetic Books of William Blake: Milton*: A.H. Bullen, London, 1907.
23 Maclagan and Russell, p. 118.
24 *Ibid*.

between true pity and false, true reason and false, and even good evil and bad evil.[25]

The lines impart a greater sense of Blake's mysticism; *emanation*, being defined as 'deriving its existence from the essence of God'.[26]

Cragg relates that the Church of England in the Middle East began almost a century before the Mandate, being closely involved with the 'Anglo and the Palestinian'. As such, it was caught up in the convolutions of the Ottoman Empire. Again, he describes opposite poles exerting their influence: 'a double thread of high endeavour and besetting infirmity'; 'Jerusalem is no kinder to ecclesiastical ventures than to political: for the men of faith and ministry, as for the men of affairs there are the same intractable external circumstances … and that the strains within the ecclesia were revealed rather that created.'[27]

To illustrate his point, Cragg then quotes from Shakespeare's play, *King Henry IV, Part II*.

A Caution to Builders:
… survey
The plot of situation and the model:
Consent upon a sure foundation.
Question surveyors, know your own estate,
How able such a course to undergo,
… or else, like one
Beyond his powers to build it …
A naked subject for the weeping clouds. (1.3. 42-62)

The play is set in the early first part pf the 15th century when England is in the middle of a civil war. It is a story of rebellion and betrayal. The scene (appropriately enough) is The Archbishop of York's palace. The rebels, the Archbishop and the Lords Hastings, Mowbray and Bardolph discuss their plan to determine a sure foundation for their enterprise and to ascertain clearly what their means are. However, they have only got halfway through their expensive undertaking and

25 L S Lockridge, *The Ethics of Romanticism*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 195.

26 Oxford English Dictionary. http://0-www.oed.com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/view/Entry/60707?redirectedFrom=Emanation#eid

27 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 570-171.

have been exposed to the downpour which seem to bewail their folly. Lord Bardolph is urging caution in rebelling against the king. Is Cragg also commenting here that archbishops can also be guilty of betrayal? The sense of betrayal was very much in his mind as he was about to lose his position as Warden of St Augustine's College, Canterbury. In his semi-autographical book *Faith and Life Negotiate*,[28] musing over the closure, he cites the last verse of the poet Robert Frost's *Reluctance*:

> Ah, when to the heart of a man
> Was it ever less than a treason
> To yield … and accept the end
> Of a love or a season.[29]

Cragg ends this musing with:

> 'Treason' was not too strong a word, unless—in accepting our quietus—we were to disown what it had always symbolized and the love we had brought to it.

In the conclusion to his final Warden's Letter, he quotes from Meister Eckhart:

> Man's last and highest leave-taking, is leaving God for God.[30]

It is reasonable to ask if Cragg is allowing his feelings to influence his opinion of the Church of England in his chapter 'The Anglican Church'.

For example, Cragg states that to investigate issues arising from the history of the Church of England in Jerusalem, 'is to move amongst the deepest tests of spirit and will.' He then quotes Ronald Storrs 1881-

28 K Cragg, *Faith and Life Negotiate: A Christian Story-study*, Canterbury Press, Norwich, 1994, p. 151.

29 R Frost, *Complete poems of Robert Frost*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1994, p. 43.

30 Cragg often does not give references for his quotations. This quotation comes from Sermon 57. It can be seen in context at, for example, M O C Walshe and B McGinn, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, Crossroad Publishing Company, New York, 2009, p. 298. Part of the subject of the sermon is friendship.

1955, best known as military governor of Jerusalem following Allenby's conquest of Palestine in 1917 and then during the British Mandate, as Governor of Jerusalem and Judea from 1920 to 1926:

> 'There is no promotion', wrote one of its ablest servants during the Mandate and a devout Anglican, 'after Jerusalem.'[31]

This is followed by a strong outpouring from Cragg:

> For the identical reason, within Jerusalem there is no unambiguous prosperity. Sanctities dissolving into sentiments, sentiments reaching rudely after sanctities, are too close at hand. Mankind, it has been said, is one large Pharisee, and not least in belabouring its prototype. Even Gethsemane and Calvary become the themes of an accusing, and so an excusing, which contravene their true temper in controversy about their culprits. So their sufferer is wounded again in the house of his friends. They defend his 'Father forgive them' with a sort of 'Hold it against them for we know well who they are.' Of these perversities holy things are made at once the prey and the ground. Loyalties so readily become hypocrisies and fidelities unworthy when they have to do with sacred custodies.[32]

'Mankind is one large Pharisee.' Cragg does not give any reference as to who said this. However, this was a phrase used by Andrew Bruce Davidson, a Professor of Hebrew at New College, Edinburgh, in his book *The Called of God*:

> Mankind is perhaps but one large Pharisee. Socially, a Pharisee, with what diligence and gravity of decorum he keeps cleaning the outside of the cup and of the platter! Morally, a Pharisee, with what proud display he builds the tombs of the prophets …[33]

31 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 571.
32 *Ibid*.
33 A B Davidson, *The Called of God*. Clark, Edinburgh, 1905, pp. 258-259.

Davidson's phrase 'Mankind is perhaps but one large Pharisee' (note that Cragg has dropped the 'perhaps') seems to have been in common usage. John Oman uses it in his book *Grace and Personality*:

> … as Prof. A B Davidson put it, 'perhaps mankind is one large Pharisee,' unbelief is the most universal and deep-seated corruption in the human heart.[34]

A floating 'perhaps'? And does his remark, 'Loyalties so readily become hypocrisies and fidelities unworthy when they have to do with sacred custodies', refer as much perhaps to Jerusalem's sacred places as to St Augustine's College. Seldom in Cragg's writing does he mention his wife or family, but the college closure brought this forth:

> My Melita felt the departure from Canterbury as keenly as I for she had been joyfully fulfilled there and the loss of the College tenure meant also the loss of a home.

Finally, Cragg thought that he and his wife should simply agree with Bishop Stephen Bayne[35] that, 'Anglican history was littered with the wreckage of departed dreams' and reflect that another had been added. Again, Cragg gives no reference for the quotation.[36]

Returning to Ronald Storrs' quotation for which Cragg *does* give a reference, in which footnote Cragg writes:

> Ronald Storrs, *Orientations* (London, 1937), p. 516. It is odd that so perceptive and masterly an analyst of the Palestinian Mandate as Christopher Sykes (*Cross Roads to Israel: Palestine from Balfour to Bevin,* London, 1965) should have failed so completely to understand the remark.[37]

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34 J Oman, *Grace and personality* (second revised ed.), University Press, Cambridge, 1919, p. 137.

35 '… a leader in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion and a former chaplain of Columbia University.' 'BISHOP BAYNE, 65, EPISCOPAL LEADER' *The New York Times* (1974). Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/1974/01/19/archives/bishop-bayne-65-episcopal-leader-former-columbia-chaplain-and.html

36 Cragg. *Faith and Life*, p. 152.

37 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 157.

It is worth unpicking this brief footnote as it reveals two other aspects of Cragg's thought, one regarding his relationship with Jerusalem, the other relating to the State of Israel.
Storrs wrote:

> I cannot pretend to describe or analyse my love for Jerusalem. It is not wholly sentimental, aesthetic or religious-still less theological or archaeological; though I hope it contains something of all five. A little perhaps also that I had worked and enjoyed and suffered there from the beginning; that I knew the people so well and liked them so much; that after misunderstandings had always followed understanding; that I had shared the delight there of my father and mother; that I had begun there the happiness of my married life. Persons of wider aesthetic experience and more facile emotions have often come there to pray and gone away to mock. For me Jerusalem stood and stands alone among the cities of the world. There are many positions of greater authority and renown within and without the British Empire, but in a sense I cannot explain there is no promotion after Jerusalem.[38]

Christopher Sykes, writing on the sheer boredom of the British officials in Palestine observed:

> The unchanging duty of British officials in Palestine in normal times was to prevent the people there from doing what they wanted most passionately to do, to organize a state in their homeland. Ronald Storrs left Jerusalem in 1926, and nearly ten years after he wrote: 'In a sense I cannot describe there is no promotion after Jerusalem.' The phrase dates him as belonging to the hopeful days.
>
> Most of the British, especially in the junior ranks which make opinion felt unloved and miserable. For every one of them who shared something of Ronald Storr's *[sic]* romantic delight there were a hundred who only looked

38 R. Storrs, *Orientations*. Nicholson and Watson, London, 1937, p. 516

> forward to the day when they would 'get away from this bloody country'.[39]

The point Sykes failed so completely to understand was that Storrs' love of Jerusalem was not that of a romantic, but a genuine love of the city and its people. Rory Miller's article 'Sir Ronald Storrs and Zion: The Dream That Turned into a Nightmare', helps to put the two conflicting views of Jerusalem into some perspective:

> … there is a consensus amongst both Storrs' contemporaries and later commentators that, in the post of Governor, Storrs was a precocious talent with an agile mind and a deep appreciation for both Jerusalem in general and his position there in particular.[40]

It was Cragg's own deep commitment to and concern for Jerusalem that enabled him to see that Storrs commitment was far deeper than irenic romanticism. Also, Storrs' disquiet regarding Zionism would have resonated with those of Cragg. Although accusations of anti-Semitism were laid at Storrs, as Miller points out:

> Yet as Christopher Sykes has noted, during Storrs' time as Governor 'nothing was ever even faintly proven against him'. And it is possible to find leading Zionists of the time such as F H Kisch presenting Storrs as generally keen to foster cordial relations between Arab and Jew and 'sympathetic' to Zionist aspirations.[41]

Cragg's attitude to Zionism is the result of decades of reflection on the Israel-Palestine conflict and having lived and worked in the region for many years. Stephen W. Need, reviewing Cragg's book *Palestine: The Prize and Price of Zion*,[42] writes that Cragg offers a series of sensitive historical and theological reflections on the rise of Zionism and on

39 C Sykes, (1965). *Crossroads to Israel*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1965, pp. 125-6.

40 R Miller, 'Sir Ronald Storrs and Zion: The Dream That Turned into a Nightmare', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 36(3) (2000), p. 114.

41 *Ibid.,* p. 115.

42 Cragg. *Palestine: The Prize and Price of Zion*, Cassell, London, 1997.

the emergence of Palestinianism. Need notes that Cragg, given the subject, makes some judgements, but these, to the reviewer, appear sober. Need concludes that Cragg's final chapter ('The tests of faiths') needs nailing to the gates of Jerusalem.[43]

Gottlieb Pfander, Thomas Valpy French, and Edward Craig Stuart

> India and Pakistan, though part of the scope of these volumes, are here by design allowed to be peripheral. Several of the leading figures, like Gottlieb Pfander, Thomas Valpy French and Edward Craig Stuart, happily belong both to the sub-continent and the nearer East.[44]

From the 'worthy names', Cragg mentions three 'leading figures' in India and the Middle East, but gives no detail of their lives nor achievements. They are: Karl (also referred to as 'Carl') Gottlieb Pfander[45] (1803-1865); Thomas Valpy French[46] (1825-1891); and Edward Craig Stuart[47] (1827-1911) (a close friend of French). All three were from the evangelical wing of the Church of England, all three were CMS missionaries, all three worked in Middle East and India and two became bishops, French became the first Bishop of Lahore, (1877-1887), Stuart became the second Bishop of Waiapu, New Zealand (1876-1893).

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43 S W Need, 'Review of Palestine: the prize and price of Zion by Kenneth Cragg', *Theology*, 101(801) (1998). p. 219.

44 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 572.

45 Cf. A A Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, Routledge, London, 2013, Chapter 5, 'New Focus on Islam: The Reverend Carl Pfander and the Mizan al-Haqq (Balance of Truth)'. C Schirrmacher, 'The influence of German Biblical criticism on Muslim apologetics in the 19th century', in A Sandlin (ed.), *A Comprehensive Faith: An International Festschrift for Rousas John Rushdoon*, Friends of Chalcedon, 1966.

46 For French cf. H A Birks, *The life and correspondence of Thomas Valpy French, first bishop of Lahore*: volume I & II. John Murray, London, 1895. E Stock, *An heroic bishop: the life-story of French of Lahore*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1913. V Stacey, *Thomas Valpy French, First Bishop of Lahore*, The Christian Study Centre Rawalpindi, 1982.

47 Cf. Stock, pp. 123-125.

All three were seen to have followed in the footsteps of Henry Martyn, the nearest to a saint in the evangelical hagiography. Martyn was one of Pfander's role models.[48] Martyn's biographer, George Smith, considered French to be 'the missionary bishop who most resembled Martyn in character and service,'[49] having from early age been 'inspired by Martyn's life and writings'.[50] Stuart noted that a convert he had baptized, 'had gained a sincere faith in Christ from the simple reading of H Martyn's Persian Testament.'[51]

Pfander is remembered for a series of public debates concerning Islam and Christianity which took place in Agra, India, between himself and the Indian Muslim theologian Maulana Rahmat Allah Kairanawi. Christine Schirrmacher observes that:

> Both opponents are well remembered in the Muslim world and have influenced not only the form of modern apologetics, but the modern Muslim view of Christianity as well.[52]

To this extent, A A Powell considers that:

> In a real sense Pfander can be seen as a paradigm of 'Evangelical Orientalism', and the catalyst whose writings and activities created the high colonial interface with the world of Islam.[53]

Clinton Bennett writing on Martyn's 'Controversial Tracts' and his confrontational method, notes that Martyn's method was taken up by Pfander. Citing Christian Troll, Bennet notes that Pfander's work:

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48 C Bennett, 'The Legacy of Henry Martyn', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 16.1 (Jan 1992), p. 13.

49 *Henry Martyn, saint and scholar, first modern missionary to the Mohammedans, 1781-1812*, F H Revell, New York, p. vi.

50 Smith (1903), p. 566.

51 Smith (1903), p. 527.

52 C Schirrmacher, 'Muslim Apologetics and The Agra Debates of 1854: a nineteenth century turning point', *Bulletin of the Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies*, 13 (1994). p. 74.

53 Powell (2013), p. 132-133.

> sowed the seeds of enmity and hatred in the hearts of Indian Muslims who started to suspect the missionary efforts of the Christians as a plot to destroy Islam.[54]

Bennett demonstrates how Pfander's approach has been perpetuated, modified and rejected. Into the early twentieth century, Pfander's work was still being revised and translated. His work still remains in print today. The preface to 1986 edition of his book *The Mizan Ul Haqq, Or, Balance of Truth,* states:

> We do not hesitate to print such a book of fundamental importance … . Islam is still the same, and needs a definitive answer.[55]

Showing how Pfander's approach had been modified, Bennett notes that while French,

> acknowledged Pfander as his 'Master in missions', as a 'worthy successor of … Henry Martyn,' but modified his style, pioneering an approach to Muslims that avoided open disputation.[56]

Bennett notes that L Bevan Jones 'openly criticized and rejected Pfander's books.'[57] Lewis Bevan Jones writes:

> Despite the vogue Pfander's writings once had it has to be admitted that they chiefly serve today as a guide to something better. It was one of his failings that he either could not, or would not, issue a treatise on the Christian faith without turning aside to pass adverse criticisms on the teaching of Islam or the character of Muhammad. In places, too, his own arguments are weak, a fact of which Muslim controversialists took full advantage.[58]

54 Bennett, The Legacy of Henry Martyn, p. 13.
55 C Bennett, 'The Legacy of Karl Gottlieb Pfander', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (April 1996), p. 80.
56 *Ibid*.
57 *Ibid*.
58 L B Jones, *The People of the Mosque: An Introduction to the Study of Islam, with Special*

Bennett began his article with a quote from Lyle L Vander Werff, *Christian Mission to Muslims*, Pfander's work, 'stands as a vital link in the formation of a Christian apology to Muslims,'[59] and concluded in a similar tone quoting J T Addison, *The Christian Approach to the Moslem,* whether we regret or rejoice in Pfander's legacy, he occupies an 'honourable place in the history of missions to Muslims'.[60]

The memory of Thomas Valpy French is today championed by the former Church of England archbishop, Rowan Williams. An article in *CMS News*, 'Williams lauds CMS hero', claims that Dr Williams speaking at the 2007 London conference of Fulcrum, the open evangelical Anglican group, on the theme of 'Being disciples', hailed French as a personal hero.[61] Williams gives a more sober rendering of his address in Chapter One, 'Being Disciples', of Williams book, *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life*. He relates that:

> Thomas French, a great missionary figure of the nineteenth century … spent much of his ministry as bishop in the Persian Gulf at a time when the number of Christians in the area was in single figures, and … died alone of fever on a beach in Muscat … He wasn't there first to make converts, he was there first because he wanted to be in the company of Jesus Christ.[62]

For Williams, French's story 'demonstrates what a discipleship looks like that is concerned with being where Jesus is, regardless of the consequences.'[63]

Reference to India. Student Christian Movement Press, London, 1932, p. 240.

59 Bennett (1996), p. 76.

60 *Ibid.,* p. 81.

61 Anon. (2007), 'Williams lauds CMS hero', *CMS NEWS*. Retrieved from https://web.archive.org/web/20120211204855/http://webarchive.cms-uk.org/news/2007/williams-lauds-cms-hero-04052007.htm. Accessed 04.07.2019. See also: Williams, R. (2007). *'Being Disciples' - 2007 Fulcrum Conference Address*. Paper presented at the Being Disciples, St Mary's, Islington, London. http://aoc2013.brix.fatbeehive.com/articles.php/2113/being-disciples-2007-fulcrum-conf_erence-address%23sthash.aZ_cv7Noe._dpuf_. Accessed 04.07.2019.

62 R Williams, *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life*, SPCK, London, 2016. Ebook, Chapter 1, Section: *Being with Jesus*.

63 *Ibid*.

Bishop Edward Craig Stuart has no champions. He barely makes a footnote:

> Bishop Edward Craig Stuart came to Iran at age sixty-seven and stayed until 1909, having served in Iran for fifteen years.[64] He returned to England where he died two years later in 1911. He had gone to Agra, India, in 1850 and had helped to found the St John's College in Agra. Stuart had served in India for twenty-seven years before being consecrated the second bishop of Waiapu, New Zealand [1876-1893]. He was known for his tolerance and broadmindedness which never was a hindrance to his firm convictions as a Christian.[65]

There are a few brief references to him in Robin Waterfield's *Christians in Persia: Assyrians, Armenians, Roman Catholics and Protestants*,[66] where he also appears in a group photograph.[67] However, in the register of his old school in Edinburgh, the Edinburgh Academy, he has the longest entry of its three pupils who left to join the Church Missionary Society:

> In 1851 he … founded, along with Dr Valpy French (afterwards Bishop of Lahore), St John's College, Agra, for the higher education of Hindus and Mohammedans: in 1855 went to Jabalpur, and was CMS Secretary at Calcutta. 1860-72. [After a long interlude in Australia and as a bishop in New Zealand] at the age of 67 devoted his remaining years to mission work among the

64 'Bishop Stuart never had full episcopal powers in Persia, which was still under the titular jurisdiction of the Bishop of London. But in 1913 a great step forward was taken in the life of the Church in Persia when it was constituted a fully independent diocese of the Anglican Church and the Reverend C H Stileman was consecrated its first bishop. It must be admitted, however, that this was more an act of faith than a response to a felt need.' R Waterfield (ed.) *Christians in Persia: Assyrians, Armenians, Roman Catholics and Protestants.* Allen and Unwin, London, 1973, p. 162.

65 A C van Gorder, *Christianity in Persia and the Status of Non-muslims in Iran*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, Maryland, 2010, p. 131, footnote 51 (p 158).

66 Waterfield, *Christians in Persia*, p. 161.

67 Waterfield, *Christians in Persia*, Zillu's-Sultan and his favourite son, Akbar Mirza (Sareme Dowleh). Bishop Stuart and members of the CMS mission in Isfahan, c. 1904, p. 161.

> Mohammedans of Persia. When he reached Persia in 1894 the only CMS station was Julfa, a suburb of Ispahan, but on Easter Day 1910 he consecrated the new first [western] Christian church in that bigoted *[sic.]* Moslem city; he came home in 1910 after sixty years of foreign missionary work (Edinburgh Academy 1914: 90).[68]

There can be no doubt that these three *men* dedicated their lives to missionary work in India and the Middle East. However, by choosing these three for special mention, Cragg shows an uncritical bias towards the evangelical CMS. There is no mention, for example, of the work of the High-Church Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG).[69] In 1998 Cragg further honours Thomas Valpy French with an entry in his publication of *A Calendar of Middle East Saints*:

> July 15. Thomas Valpy French (1825-1898) Bishop of Lahore, India and missionary in Muscat.
> Sentence: God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control; do not be ashamed then to testify to our Lord (2 Timothy 1.7,8).
> Collect: Heavenly Father, you chose Thomas French to be an outstanding teacher, bishop and evangelist and to be a true fool for Christ. Renew in your Church today the loving zeal and grace you gave to him that the example of those whom you call to be shepherds in your Church may bring every man and woman and child in joyous worship before your throne. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.[70]

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68 Hauke Wiebe and Roger Jeffery, 'Edinburgh schools: suppliers of men for Imperial India in the long 19th century', in R Jeffery, *India In Edinburgh: 1750s to the Present*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2019.. Ebook: Chapter 7, Section: Planting.

69 Cf. A Pass, 'Swaraj, the Raj, and the British Woman Missionary in India, c. 1917–1950', *Transformation,* 31(3) (2014), pp. 175-188. H P Thompson, *Into all lands; the history of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1701-1950*, SPCK, London, 1951.

70 K Cragg, G Sinden and M Rhodes, *'Having in Remembrance.' A Calendar of Middle East Saints*: Jerusalem and Middle East Church Association (J&MECA), 1998. p. 41.

Through a careful reading, (and re-reading) and the following-up of some of Cragg's almost off-hand quotations, an angry and hurt voice is clearly heard. However, in his other works, his treatment by the Church of England and its effect on him and his family, were more muted in their tone. For example, in *Faith and Life Negotiate* (written much later in 1994), in his chapters 'Forfeit in Canterbury' and 'Unease in Zion', dealing with the closure of St Augustine's College and his elevation as assistant bishop, his tone is more measured. Indeed, he offers this counsel:

> Lest the reader fears I have lost the thread of my faith-with-life negotiation in this narrative of Anglican complexities in Palestine/Israel, let me now prove it not so. For they became part of my own story especially after 1968.[71]

His raw feelings, given vent in his essay 'The Anglican Church', clearly coloured his attitude toward the Church of England's enterprise in Jerusalem throughout the rest of the essay.

An Evangelical Bias

Kenneth Cragg was born in the seaside town of Blackpool in Lancashire on 8 March 1913 to Albert and Emily Cragg, a conservative evangelical family. They, like their parish church, Christ Church, were supporters of the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society (BCMS). This had broken away from the Church Missionary Society in 1922 in a bitter dispute over the increasing theological liberalism within the Church of England. The BCMS represented the conservative evangelical wing of the Church of England. By default, unable to go to be college of his choice, he was trained for the ordained ministry at the evangelical Bible Churchmen's Missionary and Theological College. Although he was able to question and modify much of his conservative evangelical theology, he remained anchored in, identified with and was identified by others as an evangelical churchman. His allegiance to this wing of the Church of England shows itself throughout his essay.

71 K Cragg, *Faith and Life Negotiate*, p. 127-178.

Here, he is quoting from Psalm 84 verse 5 but not from the King James version.[73] Although Cragg points out that he is not writing a chronicle, he does give a condensed history of Jerusalem and the Church of England.

Attempting to deal even-handedly with the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Churches and Protestantism, he wrestles with the strictures of the Reformation around pilgrimages and superstition and a (now) more liberal Church of England as he outlines the pilgrim movement from 1291 onwards, when 'the last foothold of the Crusaders at Acre was relinquished,' concluding that with regard to Jerusalem:

> Whether shrines, or memories, it was one attraction.[74]

He notes that the 'pilgrim' (his quotation marks) reappears in the reign of Queen Elizabeth following diplomatic ties with Constantinople as chaplains to the new merchant adventurers. Numbers and interests grew throughout the eighteenth century having a 'fascination of the Bible, territorial, enthusiastic, but not yet missionary'. It was not until 1851 that the Church Missionary Society (CMS) set foot in Palestine. Howard Le Couteur observes that 'The role of Evangelical/Protestant

72 More recently the Rt Revd Samir Kafity, President-Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East in a sermon opening Eucharist Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) 1996 makes the following prophetic statement using these words from Cragg, 'And now I want to come to the centre—Jerusalem. Bishop Kenneth Cragg of the United Kingdom and an assistant bishop in my Province wrote: 'The road to Jerusalem is in the heart; and whether present or absent, its passionate history absorbs the spirit.' It certainly does absorb the spirit, of all its past people, current residents, and all the pilgrims of all three monotheistic Abrahamic faiths. It is a peculiar spiritual focus, a symbol that could perhaps change the course of the present world.' S Kafity (1996), 'Sermon at the Opening Eucharist (Cathedral of St. Luke, Panama City, Panama) of the ACC', *ACNS (Anglican Communion News Service)*. Retrieved from https://www.anglicannews.org/news/1996/10/sermon-at-the-opening-eucharist-(cathedral-of-st-luke,-panama-city,-panama)-of-the-acc.aspx (Accessed 05.09.2019).

73 KJB: Psalm 84 v 5: *Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee, in whose heart are Thy ways*. I am unable to identify which translation Cragg is using. The nearest seems to be the Evangelical Heritage Version: *The highways to Jerusalem are in their hearts*. A footnote in the text points out that: 'The words to *Jerusalem* are added for clarity.' However, this translation was not published until 2017.

74 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 573.

Missionary Societies in the expansion of the British Empire has been well established, and there is an extensive bibliography on the subject.'[75]

With the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the nineteenth century was for mainland Britain, a time of military peace on one hand, and social upheaval on the other within which the Church of England became a casualty. The Church had become split into two main factions, the Evangelicals and the Tractarians. The Evangelicals, who saw themselves as the continuation of the Protestant Reformation, viewed the Tractarians as identifying with the Roman Catholic Church. Kenneth Hylson-Smith (former Bursar and Fellow of St Cross College, Oxford, and author of numerous books on Church history), sees that this was a powerful factor in the Church of England during first part of the nineteenth century.[76]

Preparing the way for some harrowing tales and some of the more farcical aspects of the Christian/Anglican presence in Jerusalem[77] Cragg injects a little humour into his historical discourse:

> The earliest protagonist, exemplar of many who followed, was Joseph Wolff, of the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews (founded in 1809). Son of a rabbi, converted at Prague, he made a notable journey in 1821-3 through Gibraltar, Malta, Alexandria, Tyre, Jerusalem and Damascus. According to a contemporary he could 'conciliate a pasha, confute a patriarch, travel without a guide, speak without an interpreter, live without food and pay without money … a comet capable of setting a whole system on fire.'[78]

75 H Le Couteur, 'Anglican High Churchmen and the Expansion of Empire', *Journal of Religious History,* 32(2) (2008), p. 193. He states that: the bibliography of Andrew Porter's recent book is excellent and exhaustive: Andrew Porter, *Religion versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700–1914*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2004.

76 K Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England 1734-1984*, T & T Clark Ltd, Edinburgh, 1989, p. 114-118.

77 For a fuller account of Christianity under the Ottomans in Jerusalem, see O Peri, *Christianity Under Islam in Jerusalem: The Question of the Holy Sites in Early Ottoman Times*, Brill, Leiden, 2001.

78 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 574.

Cragg gives a glimpse of the physical conditions in Ottoman Jerusalem:

> an insanitary warren of ruinous houses, enclosing at that time an ill-served population variously numbered at ten to twenty thousand.[79]

Many of the earlier travellers had commented on their disappointment on first seeing Jerusalem.

Sir Frederick Henniker's *Notes During a Visit to Egypt, Nubia, The Oasis, Mount Sinai and Jerusalem*, observes:

> Jerusalem is called, even by Mohammedans, "The Blessed City"—the streets of it are narrow and deserted—the houses dirty and ragged—the shops few and forsaken …

The *Monthly Review* of 1823, reviewing Sir Frederick Henniker's *Notes*, reports:

> Sir Frederick was disappointed by Jerusalem; and most of the travellers who have visited that city, with the single-exception perhaps of Chateaubriand,[80] have expressed similar feelings. 'It has not,' says the Baronet, 'one symptom of commerce, comfort, or happiness.'[81]

79 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 575

80 F R de Chateaubriand, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, Pourrat Frères, Paris, 1836: 'Suddenly, at the end of this plateau, I saw a line of gothic walls flanked by square towers; behind which rose the spires of various buildings. At the foot of the walls, a camp of Turkish cavalry appeared, in all its eastern pomp. The guide exclaimed: 'El-Kuds! The Holy City (Jerusalem)!' and took off at full speed … I now understand what historians and travellers have related, as to the deep emotion felt by crusaders and pilgrims alike on first catching sight of Jerusalem … If I live a thousand years, I shall never forget that desert which seems to breathe again the greatness of Jehovah and the terror of death (our old French Bibles call death *the king of terror)*. English translation from F R de Chateaubriand, A Kline, (2015). *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem (English Edition): Itinerary from Paris to Jerusalem*. (A. S. Kline, trans.). CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, London, 2015, p. 268-270.

81 Sir F Henniker, 'Notes During a Visit to Egypt, Nubia, The Oasis, Mount Sinai and Jerusalem', *Monthly Review*, 22 (September to December inclusive), 1823, pp. 354-368.

The Baronet, quoting Jeremiah,[82] then asks the following rhetorical question:

> Is this the city that men call the Perfection of Beauty, the Joy of the whole Earth?[83]

Edward Robinson in his journals of 1838 and 1852, found, as expected from the writings of previous visitors, 'houses of the city miserable, the streets filthy, and the population squalid.'[84]

The Anglican Bishopric in Jerusalem

Cragg introduces the beginning of the Anglican Bishopric in Jerusalem as follows:

> Hallowed in sacrifice by these beginnings, the mission to Jerusalem flowered in 1841 in the novel plan for an Anglican bishopric in the Holy City. The aegis was that of the London Society and the formal proposal the King of Prussia's, Frederick William IV.[85]

He gives the evangelical[86] Lord Ashley (1801–85), the 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, a leading role in in the formation of the bishopric:

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82 Although Henniker attributes the quote to Jeremiah, it is from Lamentations 2:15, King James Bible, 'All that pass by clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?

83 Sir F Henniker, *Notes, During a Visit to Egypt, Nubia: The Oasis, Mount Sinai, and Jerusalem*, John Murray, London, 1823, p. 274.

84 E and E S Robinson, *Biblical Researches in Palestine and the Adjacent Regions: A Journal of Travels in the Years 1838 & 1852: vol 1*, Crocker & Brewster, Boston, 1856, p. 222.

85 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 574.

86 Lord Ashley is reported as having said to his biographer: '"I am essentially, and from deep-rooted conviction … an Evangelical of the Evangelicals. I have worked with them constantly, and I am satisfied that most of the great philanthropic movements of the century have sprung from them. I stand fast by the teachings held by that party, but I am not, and never have been, a leader of that party." That was said in 1884.' E Hodder, *The Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, KG*, vol. 3, Cassell, London, 1887, pp. 2-3.

> But the travailing spirit was that most famous of all nineteenth-century Anglicans, the Earl of Shaftesbury …[87]

and that:

> The driving impulse was unmistakeably evangelical and its generating passion the biblical 'mystery' of the Jews. It was the controversial product of a remarkable upsurge of interest in Jewish evangelization.[88]

Indeed, Lord Ashley had written in his diary on 8 October 1838, (recently begun 'to assist his "treacherous memory" and to be a source of amusement in his old age'):[89]

> Could we not erect a Protestant Bishopric at Jerusalem, and give him jurisdiction over all the Levant, Malta, and whatever chaplaincies there might be on the coast of Africa?[90]

However, Sybil M Jack, in her article, 'No Heavenly Jerusalem: The Anglican Bishopric' (1995), is of the opinion that:

> The origins and acceptability of the idea of a joint bishopric still need explanation, for historians disagree even about who promoted it and the religious position of those who saw the project to fruition.[91]

Yet, Cragg further sings Lord Ashley's praises:

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87 For a recent evaluation of Ashley, see D Furse-Roberts, *The Making of a Tory Evangelical: Lord Shaftesbury and the Evolving Character of Victorian Evangelicalism*, Wipf and Stock, Eugene, OR, 2019.

88 See further Y Perry, and E Yodim, *British Mission to the Jews in Nineteenth-century Palestine*, Taylor & Francis, London, 2004.

89 Hodder, *The Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, K.G vol 1*, p. 230.

90 *Ibid*., p. 235. Cited in K Hylson-Smith, K, *Evangelicals in the Church of England 1734-1984*, T & T Clark Ltd, Edinburgh, 1989, p. 120.

91 S M Jack, 'No Heavenly Jerusalem: The Anglican Bishopric', *The Journal of Religious History*, 19(2) (1995). p. 181.

> His character and convictions are the clearest index to the impulse giving birth to the Anglican bishopric. Biblical, ardent, prophetical, he was dominated by a compulsion both to deplore the obduracy of a continuing Judaism and yet love its recalcitrant people, as being, withal, a first debt of Christendom and a future clue to the Divine providence.[92] It was a thrust capable of ignoring, even defying, appearances, eager for vindicating statistics, yet capable likewise of out-hoping the adverse ones. It was served, moreover, by outstanding scholarship.[93]

In light of Jack's remark, Cragg appears to be dogmatic in his promotion of Lord Ashley and the Evangelicals within the origins of the Jerusalem Bishopric.

On 28 April 1841 King Frederick-William IV of Prussia, through his friend and ambassador, Baron Bunsen[94] (who was also a close friend of Lord Ashley),[95] proposed to the British government that a joint approach be made to Turkey to secure greater protection of the Protestant Christians in Palestine. This was both a political and an ecclesial move by Prussia.[96] A bishop would be appointed to be

92 Furse-Roberts (2019) notes: 'As a premillennialist himself, Ashley typified this activism by immersing his energies in the missionary activity of the CMS, the evangelism of the BFBS and the factory reform movement as eschatologically purposeful causes.' (p. 36). Hodder (1887) records discussions between Ashley and his friend the evangelical Rev. E. Bickersteth, 'many a solemn hour had they spent together in discussing the state of the times in relation to Tractarianism ; in pondering over unfulfilled prophecies—the frequent subject of Mr Bickersteth's pulpit discourses—in talking over the restoration of Israel to their promised land, and, dearer than all, in hoping and praying for the Second Coming of the Son of Man.' (Vol. 2, p. 310)

93 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 575.

94 Eugene Stock considers Bunsen as 'the virtual founder of the Jerusalem Bishopric. E Stock, *The history of the Church Missionary Society Vol 2*, p. 45.

95 Lord Shaftesbury gave Bunsen a cocoa-nut chalice, chased in silver, 'in memorial of the Jerusalem Bishopric'. Bunsen used this as a bird bath. See, F F von Bunsen, *Memoirs of Baron Bunsen: Late Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary … at the Court of St. James,* vol 2, J B Lippincott, London, 1869, p. 276.

96 Frederick-William IV was also heavily influenced by oriental culture. 'In one case his oriental visions became a reality: in a small engine-house that he had had built by Ludwig Persius in Potsdam in 1841–2. This was built in the shape of a mosque and the steam engine, adorned with a chimney in the form of a minaret, pumped water from the local River Havel to a basin on a nearby hill, which in turn fed the fountains in gardens at Sanssouci.' S Wittwer, *Vision and duty: Friedrich*

nominated alternately by Britain and Prussia, to care for and support the existing German congregations and the English missions living under the Ottoman Empire. As Jack points out,[97] matters moved swiftly, as three months later, Bunsen was able to write to his wife:

> Monday, 19th July 1841.—This is a great day. l am just returned from Lord Palmerston; the principle is admitted, and orders to be transmitted accordingly to Lord Ponsonby at Constantinople, to demand the acknowledgment required. The successor of St. James will embark in October; he is by race an Israelite—born a Prussian in Breslau—in confession belonging to the Church of England—ripened (by hard work) in Ireland—twenty years Professor of Hebrew and Arabic in England (in what is now King's College). So the beginning is made, please God, for the restoration of Israel … .[98]

Jack thinks that this suggests that not only was there agreement that Michael Soloman Alexander, a Jewish convert, should be selected as bishop, but that the instrument for the running of the see was ready for adoption.

Moreover, Cragg gives no indication of the involvement of the English and Prussian crowns. For example, at the end of the year when the Jerusalem Bishopric came into existence, Friedrich Wilhelm IV had been invited to become godfather to Victoria and Albert's first son, Edward, who was christened in January 1842. It seems that:

> … although Friedrich Wilhelm's grandfather was the brother of Victoria's grandmother, the founding of a joint bishopric was more likely than any family connection to be the reason for this honour. Arguably, a clear political signal was being given by the Queen's wish that the Prussian King be present on this important occasion.[99]

Wilhelm IV of Prussia and the arts in the early Victorian era, Royal Collection Trust, London, 2012, p. 6: fig 12.

97 S M Jack (1995), p. 182.

98 von Bunsen, *Memoirs of Baron Bunsen,* p. 373.

99 S Wittwer, S. *Vision and duty*, p. 9.

As a result of this visit, the Prussian king, as a gift to the young prince, commissioned a *Glaubensschild* (Shield of Faith),

> as a symbol of protection for the child and of the new ecclesiastical alliance between Britain and Prussia.[100]

Cragg prosaically observes:

> The establishment in Jerusalem was the child of a philanthropy its main architect was elsewhere to make proverbial: it was rooted in his understanding, in both Old and New Testaments, of the philanthropy of God. (p 575)

However, Eugene Stock in his *History of the Church Missionary* is at pains to point out that the CMS was not directly concerned in the Jerusalem bishopric:

> The Church Missionary Society had no connexion, as a society, with the establishment of the Jerusalem Bishopric. It had then no work in Palestine; and although it had previously sought the revival of the Eastern Churches, this was not the particular purpose of the bishopric. That purpose, as already indicated, was the formation of a Jewish Church; and this lay outside the range of C.M.S. objects. Still, the promoters of the scheme were supporters of the Society. Of the five trustees of the fund, four were Vice-Presidents, viz., Lord Ashley, Sir T Baring, Sir E H Inglis, and Sir G H Rose, while the fifth, Mr John Labouchere, was one of the Society's bankers.[101]

Sybil M Jack gives a more nuanced view, noting CMS's association with the bishopric, and its missionary activity in Palestine as 'more symbolic than promising'.[102]

100 *Ibid*., p. 10: fig 22.
101 Stock, *The history of the Church Missionary Society Vol 01*. p. 422.
102 S M Jack, S. M. (1995), p. 186-187.

Michael Soloman, the first Anglo-Prussian bishop of Jerusalem (1841-45)

Michael Soloman Alexander[103] in 1832 succeeded Alexander MacCaul as professor of Hebrew at King's College London and was a man of 'competence and energy'. He was associated with Dr Alexander McCaul in the translation into Hebrew of the revised edition of the New Testament and made a major contribution to the translation into Hebrew of the Anglican Liturgy. Cragg notes that while Alexander was charged with evangelization amongst those outside the churches (Alexander concentrated mainly on the Jews), he had to respect and recognize the Christians of the Orthodox and Eastern Churches. Hence the Anglican Bishopric was styled 'in' and not 'of' Jerusalem.[104]

His appointment caused considerable controversy. In a report of the General Meeting of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) the following portion of a letter from the Right Revd Dr Alexander, Bishop at Jerusalem, was read:

> The bishop reported a safe arrival and favourable reception in Jerusalem, and contrary to 'strange reports [that] have since been busily circulated'[105] he was met with respectful and kind treatment from both civil and ecclesiastical authorities. Commenting on the 'thousands of pilgrims' that visit Jerusalem annually, among them 'a number of English travellers' who enquire after English books, the bishop asked for an allowance to help him promote education in 'this strangely neglected country'.

103 A converted Middle European Jewish Rabbi.

104 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 575.

105 An indication as to the objections to the bishop can be seen In a debate in the House of Common on Tuesday, April 11, 1843 concerning the Bishopric of Jerusalem, Dr Bowring said that, 'The policy of the appointment he thought bad, and the selection of the man he thought worse, because he was the son of a Jew, a class associated with feelings of contempt in oriental minds. The people were much astonished on the arrival of the Bishop's wife and family; for, according to their ideas, celibacy was associated with the sacerdotal character.' Sir R. Peel said, 'The Bishop had been received most cordially, and had received also marks of respect from the dignitaries of the Roman Catholic and the Greek faith.' *The Ecclesiastical Gazette or Monthly Register of the affairs of the Church of England*, Vol. July 1842-June 1843 Vol. V, Charles Cox, London, p. 242.

> It was agreed by the Standing Committee of the SPCK that books to the value of One hundred pounds be placed at the bishop's disposal.[106]

The Gazette also published a letter from the bishop dated 1 August 1842. He reports that almost all of his household has had an attack of fever. 'This is the trying season.'[107]

Cragg observes that Alexander's charge was the evangelization of the Jews, 'with a proper solicitude for, and recognition of, the Orthodox patriarchate and other oriental Christians'.[108] The Charge given Alexander was not only the conversion of the Jews, but the care of 'German as well as English Christians … attracted to the Holy Land by the influence of strong religious feelings.'[109] The charge also stated that:

> He will establish and maintain, as far as in him lies, relations of Christian charity with other Churches represented at Jerusalem, and in particular with the orthodox Greek Church; taking special care to convince them, that the Church of England does not wish to disturb, or divide, or interfere with them ; but that she is ready, in the spirit of Christian love, to render them such offices of friendship as they may be willing to receive.[110]

Subjoined to the charge were copies of the Commendatory Letter 'addressed by the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Rulers of the Greek Church, and of the same translated into Greek', making clear that:

> And in order to prevent any misunderstanding in regard to this our purpose, we think it right to make known to you, that we have charged the said Bishop our Brother not to intermeddle in any way with the jurisdiction of the Prelates or other Ecclesiastical Dignitaries bearing

106 *Ibid.,* p. 71.
107 *Ibid*., p. 73.
108 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 576.
109 *Statement of proceedings relating to the establishment of a Bishopric of the United Church of England and Ireland in Jerusalem. Published by authority*, Rivington, London, 1841, p. 4.
110 *Statement of proceedings (1841)*, p. 7.

> rule in the Churches of the East; but to show' them due reverence and honour; and to be ready, on all occasions, and by all the means in his power, to promote a mutual interchange of respect, courtesy, and kindness. We have good reason to believe that our Brother is willing, and will feel himself in conscience bound, to follow these our instructions.[111]

Cragg's account of Alexander's time in office is brief. The bishop travelled to Jerusalem on the warship HMS *Devastation,*[112] arriving on 21 January 1842 complete with his household goods, a piano and a harp and accompanied by the heavily pregnant Mrs Alexander in a litter. Cragg notes he entered Jerusalem accompanied by a hundred mounted guards.[113] The insanitary conditions and the stresses of the job caused underlying conditions to exact their toll. An account in W T Gidney's *History of the London Society* reads:

> A great blow fell upon the work in the autumn of 1845, in his sudden death, on Nov. 26, after the short episcopate of four years. The sad event occurred in the desert at Ras-el-Wady, on his way to visit Egypt, which formed a part of the diocese of Jerusalem.
>
> 'The immediate cause of death', wrote Mrs Leider, who formed one of the party, 'was rupture of one of the largest blood vessels near the heart; but the whole of the lungs, liver, and heart, were found in an exceedingly diseased state, and had been so for a length of time; the accelerating cause, doubtless, was great and continued anxiety—such as the Bishopric of Jerusalem and its cares can best account for. I heard it said on this occasion that had his lordship not come into the East, he might possibly have lived to a

111 *Statement of proceedings (1841)*, p. 17.

112 Alexander had refused the first ship suggested, the HMS. *Infernal*. M Hannam, 'Some Nineteenth-Century Britons in Jerusalem', *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 114(1) (1982), pp. 53-65. doi:10.1179/peq.1982.114.1.53 p. 58.

113 Accounts as to the size and composition of the bishop's entry into Jerusalem vary. Perhaps the eyewitness account of Alexander's chaplain is more reliable in F C Ewald, *Journal of missionary labours in the City of Jerusalem during the years 1842-4* (2nd ed.), B Wertheim, London, 1845, p. 23-25.

> good old age; but the mitre of Jerusalem, like the wreath of our blessed Lord, has been to him a crown of thorns.'[114]

A popular biography on Alexander is found in M W Corey, *From Rabbi to Bishop*,[115] and a more scholarly biography in Kelvin Crombie's *A Jewish Bishop in Jerusalem*.[116]

The Gobat Years (1846-1879)

With the death of Alexander, it was the turn of the King of Prussia to appoint a bishop. On Bunsen's advice, (who no doubt consulted Lord Ashley and others likely to know something of the CMS missionaries who had worked in the East)[117] Samuel Gobat was chosen. Amidst objections to his appointment, he was consecrated by Archbishop Howley in the chapel of Lambeth Palace on 5 July 1846. Cragg writes:

> The leadership passed to another figure, a French-speaking Swiss, Samuel Gobat, whose long career included fifty-five years of missionary labour, thirty-three of them as bishop. He was born in the same year as the CMS itself and his personality and episcopate epitomized its main qualities and problems.[118]

Gobat arrived in Jerusalem on 30 December 1846 and was in post for 33 years. Stock notes that converts were few and unsatisfactory. He turned his attention away from the Jews and towards 'a good many

114 W T Gidney, *The History of the London Society: For Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews, from 1809 To 1908*, London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews, London, 1908, p. 240.

115 M W Corey, *From rabbi to bishop; the biography of the Right Reverend Michael Solomon Alexander, Bishop in Jerusalem*. Church Missions to Jews, London, 1959. The author states that the work is largely copied from the biographies and autobiographies of the Bishop, his wife and daughter preserved in the library of St George's Cathedral, Jerusalem, p. 8.

116 K Crombie, *A Jewish bishop in Jerusalem: the life story of Michael Solomon Alexander*, Nicolayson's, Jerusalem, 2006.

117 Stock, *The history of the Church Missionary Society Vol 2*, p. 141.

118 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 575.

members of the Eastern Churches [who] were seeking more light.' This caused much friction. Cragg gives an indication of the tribulations:

> Gobat's leadership precipitated the whole gamut of issues implicit in a venture of evangelical Anglicanism, albeit speaking with a strong French accent, within the Orthodox world. And it perpetuated them in the shape of the 'Palestinian Native Church'—to use the title of its later council—resulting from this clash of evangelicalism and Orthodoxy. It may be doubted whether at that juncture either could have sustained its inner loyalties without collision.[119]

The human suffering resulting from these clashes needs to be seen against a broader background of unrest in the region, with rioting between Muslims and Jews, Muslims and Christians and amongst Christians themselves. A part of the *Tanzimat* (the period of reform in the Ottoman Empire started in 1839) was the Imperial Reform Edict of 1856. This was promulgated in the *Hatt-ı Hümayun* (an official document issued by the Sultan), which promised equality in education, government appointments, and administration of justice to all regardless of creed. It became lawful for foreigners to purchase land and property. This caused alienation and discontent among the Muslim inhabitants. Jack observes that Gobat 'was involved in almost continuous controversy both in Jerusalem and Britain.'[120]

Cragg continues:

> That the innate controversy had been anticipated in the apprehensions the whole Anglican bishopric project had aroused in the Church of England should not obscure the tenacity or the devotion with which Gobat unflinchingly suffered it in his own person … That the four archbishops of Canterbury, York, Dublin and Armagh came to his defence at a critical juncture in 1853 is proof both of the

119 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 576.
120 Jack, 'No Heavenly Jerusalem', p. 186-187.

> intensity of the issues Gobat provoked and of the official solidarity of the English Church with his policy.[121]

While Cragg mentions 'the apprehension' in the project of the Jerusalem Bishopric, he does not reveal the extent of the opposition. Leest notes that criticism of Gobat in Britain had increased after his annual report of 30th October 1851, culminating in 'Protest against proselytism attempted by Gobat' managed by Revd John Mason Neale (1818-1866), the warden of Sackville College. The protest, written in English and Greek, was addressed to the Archbishop of Constantinople, the Patriarch of Alexandria, the Patriarch of Antioch, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Synod of all the Russias, and the Synod of the Kingdom of Greece.[122]

The letters of Neale edited by his daughter show the course taken by this protest:

> At this time High Churchmen were greatly stirred by learning that Bishop Gobat, of Jerusalem, and his clergy were endeavouring to make proselytes from the Eastern Church, contrary to the Archbishop of Canterbury's original declaration that no such thing was to be done. J M Neale took the lead in a Protest to the Eastern patriarchs signed by English clergy. His letters shew how he spared neither time nor pains in attending meetings and collecting signatures. The number of signatures exceeded one thousand.[123]

Amazingly, Cragg appears to be excusing and condoning Gobat's excesses when he states:

> To a certain paradoxical degree, Gobat may be said in fact to have contributed substantially to later and more

121 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 576.

122 C van der Leest, *Conversion and Conflict in Palestine: The Missions of the Church Missionary Society and the Protestant Bishop Samuel Gobat*, Degree of Doctor, Leiden University(2008)., Retrieved from https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/12957/Thesis.pdf, p. 127.

123 M S Lawson (ed.), *Letters of John Mason Neale*, Longmans Green & Co, London, 1910, p. 221.

> fraternal times by the steady fidelity of his own mission … The stresses which the Ecumenical Movement is only slowly mastering a century on are there.[124]

Gobat has an entry in Cragg's *Calendar of Middle East Saints*:

> January 30: Samuel Gobat (d 1879). *Reformer Bishop in Jerusalem who loved The Ancient Churches of the East.*
>
> Sentence: The Lord will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young (Isaiah 40:11).
>
> Collect: God our Father, you called Samuel Gobat to leave his own country and his own kindred to serve the Christians of the Middle East. Give us a measure of the same pastoral zeal for the Gospel and for the unity of your Church, that your Church may rejoice in continued growth in faith and hope and love. Grant this through Jesus Christ your Son and our Lord … [125]

The biographical note which accompanies this entry adds '… the latter part of his time as Bishop saw a happier relation of both pastoral and doctrinal community with Eastern Orthodoxy.' Cragg has identified himself with Gobat's approach and attitude to the 'Ancient Churches of the East' as that of a reformer. He seems to have adopted the attitude of the much of the scholarship and travel writing of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Western writers about Eastern Christianity who saw the need 'for the re-animation of primitive Christianity in the Churches of the Mediterranean.[126] Martin Lings, in his article, *With all thy mind*, writes:

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124 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 577.

125 Cragg, *A Calendar of Middle East Saints*, p. 33.

126 W Jowett, *Christian researches in the Mediterranean, from MDCCCXV to MDCCCXX, in furtherance of the objects of the Church Missionary* Society, L B Seeley and J Hatchard, London, 1822, p. 227. For a nuanced account of the encounter between Orientalism and Eastern Christianity, see C D L Johnson, '"He Has Made the Dry Bones Live": Orientalism's Attempted Resuscitation of Eastern Christianity', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 82(3) (2014), pp. 811-840.

> 'Aloof' and 'introspective' are the epithets applied by Kenneth Cragg to the Eastern Churches, whom he severely criticizes in *The Call of the Minaret* for having done practically nothing throughout the centuries to convert the Islamic East to Christianity. It does not seem to occur to him that the qualities in question, though inconvenient for missionaries, are nearer to virtue than to vice. Moreover, the 'aloofness' may well be in part a subconscious unwillingness to 'rush in where angels fear to tread'.[127]

Bishops Barclay and Blythe

Cragg moves swiftly on. After the short episcopate of Joseph Barclay (1879-81) the third bishop, the link with Prussia was broken and the bishopric remained in abeyance for six years. In George Blyth (1887-1914), 'the person of its fourth bishop, the Anglican temper emerged with a different emphasis.' His 'temperament and training fitted him for a much closer sensitivity to the mind and ethos of the Eastern Churches.[128] Cragg argues that, 'paradoxically', Blyth's

> independence of the CMS traditions constituted him an alert and doughty champion of the Arab clergy, of Gobat's vintage, often against their own English 'superiors'.[129]

Once again, Cragg's bias towards the evangelical CMS shows become apparent in his argument. Furthermore, although he sees Blyth's episcopate as independent of the CMS tradition, he is still able to link Blyth with that tradition. Cragg sees Blyth's 'sober, indeed, meticulous, discretion towards the ancient Churches 'as the third strand' in the Anglican 'service for Jerusalem'. The first strand being 'Shaftesbury's love for Jewry and the Bible', and the second that of

127 M Lings, 'With All Thy Mind', *Studies in Comparative Religion*, 10.1 (Winter 1976). Retrieved from http://www.studiesincomparativereligion.com/public/articles/'With_All_Thy_Mind'-by_Martin_Lings.aspx (Accessed 06.12.2019.), footnote 4.

128 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 578.

129 *Ibid*.

Gobat's 'active evangelism among all and sundry'.[130] Here Cragg introduces another of his persistent themes, that of his concept of 'Embassy', where to give one description of mission, the Christian is a 'resident alien', needing an extensive adjustment of one's mind.[131] However, one might then wonder how Cragg can so fully justify Gobat's blunt approach which was clearly not that of an ambassador in Cragg's sense of the word.

Bishop Rennie MacInnes (1914-1931)

MacInnes' episcopate saw the end of Ottoman rule and Jerusalem placed under the British Mandate by the League of Nations and a growth in religious nationalism. Cragg writes that, 'The vicissitudes of these tragic events from 1920 to the present lie beyond our brief here.' There was a growing dissatisfaction between the Arab Anglican congregation and the see of Canterbury. The former aiming for full autonomy from the latter.[132] Cragg noted that under the Mandate the diocese saw a 'steady consolidation continued with new and vigorous ventures.' This included work in higher education and 'Medical and evangelistic work centred around four CMS hospitals.'[133]

Segal, in his review mentioned at the beginning of this article, notes this shift in emphasis from making converts to that of social work in education and medicine. He comments that:

> The heart-searching which accompanied the change in direction is well analysed in Canon Cragg's chapter on the Anglican Church.[134]

130 *Ibid*.

131 Richard Sudworth has written extensively on Cragg and the concept of 'embassy'. See for example: R. J. Sudworth, 'Hospitality and Embassy: The Persistent Influence of Kenneth Cragg on Anglican Theologies of Interfaith Relations', *Anglican Theological Review*, 96(1) (2014), pp. 73-89.

132 D Tsimhoni. 'The Anglican (Evangelical Episcopal) Community in Jerusalem and the West Bank', *Oriente Moderno*, 2 (63)(1/12) (1983), p. 252.

133 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 584-586.

134 J B Segal, 'Reviewed Work: Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict by A. J. Arberry', *BSOAS 34*(3) (1971), pp. 597-601. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/613907.

Cragg gives an uncharacteristically wide embrace regarding his appreciation of the role of education within that of mission:

> Nevertheless an education under Anglican auspices belongs with a remarkable proportion of the present-day leaders, merchants and professional classes within the Middle Eastern scene from Haifa to Kuwait. 'The elite of the Middle East', wrote the Prior of the Benedictine Monastery at Toumliline in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco, 'have been educated by Jesuits, Christian Brothers, Mesdames of the Sacred Heart and Franciscan missionaries of Mary.'

Cragg also gives the reference for his quotation in this footnote:

> In *Crosscurrents* (a quarterly pub. Crosscurrents Corporation, 103 Van Houten Fields, West Nyack, New York 10994), vol. xv, no. 1 (1965), p. 27. Toumliline is a remarkable venture in the fulfilment of the 'presence' concept of the Christian duty to Islam.[135]

Thus, Cragg offers a Roman Catholic example of his concept of 'Embassy'.

Bishop Francis Graham Brown (1932-1942)

'The decade in which Graham Brown was bishop saw the climax of educational endeavour.'[136] It is under Graham Brown's episcopate that Cragg makes his first entry into Jerusalem (1939), not via CMS but by the much smaller British Syrian Mission. He was under the authority of the Bishop in Jerusalem serving as Chaplain of All Saints, Beirut. Cragg mentions:

> St Justin's House, as an Anglican Hostel at the American University of Beirut, was designed by Graham Brown to

135 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 591.
136 *Ibid*.

> serve their graduates from Palestine. The hope through those years was that common school living and learning would symbolize and perpetuate co-operation in the new generation of Arabs and Jews.[137]

What Cragg does not mention is that he and his wife Melita, set it up in the summer of 1942 just before the bishop's tragic death.

> Even so, it was baptized in tragedy. Bishop Graham Brown was killed in late November when, his chauffeur-driven car was struck by a train at an unguarded level crossing on the newly built Haifa/Beirut railway which criss-crossed the coast road perilously at many points. He was returning to Jerusalem after dedicating St Justin's in two separate Services, one for the civilian church community and one for the academics. We were orphaned in our very infancy. It was a struggle to survive. The House-Chapel in which he had prayed never lost—while it had being—the savour of his presence.[138]

Graham Brown had become a father figure to Cragg, his 'second "father in God"',[139] so the bishop's death was particularly sad for him.

Bishop Weston Stewart (1943-1957)

Cragg observes that 'The termination of the Second World War brought the *descensus Averni*[140] to Jerusalem.'

> The urgency of the immediate refugee situation evoked a vigorous response from Christian sources, within the Near East Christian Council and by the energetic initiatives of Bishop Stewart.[141]

137 *Ibid*.
138 Cragg. *Faith and Life*, p. 97-98.
139 Cragg. *Faith and Life*, p. 70.
140 From Virgil's *Aeneid*, a metonym for the Underworld.
141 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 587.

In the footnote Cragg adds that 'The story is well told in Stewart Perowne, *The One That Remains* (London, 1954).'[142]

The title of this book is a quotation from Shelley's *Adonais*[143] (*An Elegy on the Death of John Keats)*; the sub-title explains its object. Its author after extensive service in Palestine, retired to stay in Jerusalem and assist the Anglican Bishop to build new villages for the refugees.'[144] The distinguished scholar and jurisprudent, Norman Benwich,[145] reviewed the book, seeing it as:

> the first serious record of life in the Arab city of Jerusalem since the tragic separation from the Jewish city was made in 1948. He is admirably qualified to write the story. He knows all Jerusalem through and through, having been schoolmaster, the Bishop's Secretary, and Government officer in the days of the British Mandate, and being now assistant to the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem in the work of helping the Arab refugees.[146]

Stewart Henry Perowne (1901-1989) was a son of the Rt Revd Arthur Perowne, Bishop of Worcester. His colourful life-style was such that he would have been condemned by the evangelical wing of the Church both then and today. This makes Cragg's footnote most interesting, worth following up, as it suggests a greater breadth of mind than many of his contemporaries.

Campbell MacInnes 1956-1969 (son of the fifth bishop)

Reaching the end of his narrative relating to the Anglican Bishopric in Jerusalem, Cragg notes two trends:

142 S Perowne, *The One Remains: a report from Jerusalem*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1954.

143 'The One remains, the many change and pass; Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;'

144 W E C, 'Reviewed Work: The One Remains: A Report from Jerusalem by Stewart Perowne', *The Geographical Journal*, 121(2), (1955), p. 217.

145 From Perowne's obituary of Bentwich: S Perowne ,'Obituary: Norman De Mattos Bentwich'. *Asian Affairs,* 2(2), 1971, pp. 200-201.

146 N Bentwich, 'Reviewed Work: The One Remains: A Report from Jerusalem by Stewart Perowne', *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs* 1944, 31(1) (1955), pp. 114-115.

> The first a steadily deepening desire among Arab Anglicans for a pattern of things more congruent with the realities of national independence; the other a growing sense of worldwide Anglican stake in the vocation of the Church in the Middle East.[147]

Cragg sees both of these trends as a move towards Anglican Arabs becoming independent from the See of Canterbury, by the establishment of an archbishopric and a constituent diocese within it. To this end, although still under the authority of the See of Canterbury, the Bishop in Jerusalem was elevated to the rank of an archbishop with a constituent diocese created within it, with Bishop Najlb Qubcayn, of the Diocese in Jordan, Syria and the Lebanon, becoming the first Arab Anglican bishop.

Cragg's Concluding Remarks

In his concluding remarks,[148] Cragg sees an 'insupportable ambivalence' for Arab Christians seeing their first burden being that of Zionism and reminds us that 'there being in Christ "neither Jew nor Greek".' This leads him to wonder if the Anglican presence in the Middle East had been unduly pre-occupied with the interests of its own expatriates and questions whether Anglicanism can transcend its Englishness. He asks, by what criteria can the Anglicans in the east be judged. His answer would lie in mission and devotion. He questions the move away from evangelism to that of the mission hospital and school which he claims,

> … ministers to egoism for the very reason that it ministers to suffering or to ignorance. Such is our perversity that even humility may be a matter of congratulation and sacrifice of pride. There is no natural immunity.[149]

He then turns his attention to the Anglican record in the field of

147 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 587.
148 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 587-595.
149 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 590.

inter-religious communication. Here he sees a change of approach in Christian-Muslim dialogue as Islam 'emerged from traditionalism' noting that:

> Its classic statement at the Jerusalem Conference of 1928 was given by Temple Gairdner[150] and represented a new acknowledgement of the 'mystery' of Islam, as well as its antipathy (a posture personified uniquely and within French Catholicism by Louis Massignon,[151] d. 1962). Whether vis-à-vis the synagogue or the mosque, Anglican thinkers and workers have, within the counsels of the Ecumenical Movement, stood in the main for the temper of reverence and good hope in Christ, in the study and discharge of the Christian obligations.[152]

Cragg notes that vis-à-vis the Middle East, ecumenism has had both 'notorious difficulties and substantial achievements'. Its achievements have resulted from 'The ministries of relief and rehabilitation, after both World Wars, [that] helped to cement and vindicate ecumenical unity in practical action.'[153]

He enters an introspection on the Anglican Communion that 'it is possible in fact and futile in reality, to be both comprehensive and uncomprehending.'[154] He sees that part of the problem lies in the inability to 'bring the genuine world wideness of the Anglican Communion into personal expression in the Mother Church.'

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150 Cragg is probably referring to an address 'Changes in the character of the missionary problem: II. In Mohammedan Lands, in *World Missionary Conference, 1910: The History and Records of the Conference together with addresses delivered at the evening meetings*, Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, Edinburgh, 1910, pp. 251-264. Gairdner deals with 'the modernist movement affecting … Turkey, Egypt, Persia, and India,—all of them countries into which European ideas have found their way, and have produced political and intellectual fermenting, both of which in turn are reacting on religion.' (p. 251)

151 See for example, A O'Mahony, 'The Influence of the Life and thought of Louis Massignon on the Catholic Church's relations with Islam' *The Downside Review*, 126 (444) (July 2008), pp. 169-192.

152 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', pp. 592-593.

153 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 593.

154 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 594.

In conclusion Cragg sees that:

> There is no essential reason why it could not assume much more of the "embassy" concepts towards Orthodoxy and take the brunt of relations in Christ by the Spirit with Islam. And there is every practical urgency that it should. Only then could it return, as in the foreseeable future it surely must, in critical freedom and loving dignity, to its English partnerships, both historic and contemporary. Only then will all the participants in Anglican Jerusalem have been true to the dimensions of their calling.[155]

Summary

Cragg's essay gives a particular ecclesial view of the Anglican Church in the Middle East. His background gives it an evangelical predisposition, while his life's work gives it an evangelising predilection. His own personal feelings come through in this essay to a greater extent than in most of his other writing. We perhaps learn as much about him, as we do the Anglican Church. This essay is an example of his complex style; his frequent use of quotations (often without references) and oblique footnotes can be annoying, but they do open windows onto another landscape beyond the text that can be unexpected, challenging and sometimes surreal.

Epilogue

In 1963, Cragg had been approached by Campbell MacInnes, Archbishop of Jerusalem through Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, to assist in the 'Arabicization of the Jerusalem jurisdiction'.[156] However, this scheme (which was not without controversy) was dropped. The 1967 Six Day War, which broke out between Israel and its Arab neighbours, has had lasting consequences. The scheme was picked up again when George Appleton succeeded Campbell MacInnes, as Archbishop of

155 Cragg, 'The Anglican Church', p. 595.
156 Cragg, *Faith and Life*, p. 158-161.

Jerusalem in 1969. Kenneth Cragg was elevated to the episcopate as Assistant Bishop of Jerusalem in 1970, one year after the publication of his chapter 'The Anglican Church'.

MATTA EL-MESKIN/MATTHEW THE POOR: A CONTEMPORARY DESERT FATHER (1919-2006) A LIFE OF KENOSIS

Anthony O'Mahony

The Egyptian Desert Fathers have had a strong and long hold on the religious imagination of the West; this interest has recently been revived by the monastic renewal in the contemporary Coptic Church.[1] Samuel Rubenson has stated 'Egypt is not only the land of Christian monastic origins, but also of modern monastic revival.'[2] The renewal in the Coptic Church is a product of the wide range of forces, but has been identified above all with significant individuals who personified the monastic spirituality and leadership which is at the heart of this movement—Patriarch Cyril VI (1902-1971), Patriarch Shenouda III (1971-2012) and the monk, Matta el-Meskin. The two monks who became patriarchs gave institutional strength, structure and meaning to the monastic renewal. Edward Watkin observed in his appraisal of Cyril VI: 'Not only has a monk become a patriarch, but the Patriarch has remained a monk.'[3] The third, Matta el-Meskin, was not only a spiritual author, he is also the cornerstone of the extraordinary renewal of the monastery of St Macarius in Wadi el-Natroun, in the Scete Desert; he is a major figure in the monastic renewal which the Coptic Orthodox Church has been undergoing since the 1950s.[4] Matta el-Meskin's radical

1 A Hamilton, *The Copts and the West 1439-1822: The European Discovery of the Egyptian Church*, Oxford University Press, 2006. Today there are a number of contemporary itineraries—Mark Gruber, *Journey back to Eden: My Life and Times among the Desert Fathers*, Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 2007; Tim Vivian, *Words to Live By—Journeys in Ancient and Modern Egyptian Monasticism*, Cistercian Studies, Kalamazoo, 2005.

2 Samuel Rubenson, 'Tradition and Renewal in Coptic Theology', *Between the Desert and the City: The Coptic Orthodox Church Today*, Nelly van Doorn-Harder and Kari Vogt (eds), Novus Forlag, Oslo, 1997, pp. 35-51, p. 35.

3 Edward Watkin, *A Lonely Minority: The Modern Story of Egypt's Copts*, William/Morrow & Co, New York, 1963.

4 Serge Tyvaert, 'Matta el-Maskine et le renouveau du monastère de saint Macaire',

focus upon personal faith and monastic enclosures stands often in contrast to the institutional religion and ecclesiastical authority.[5] That said, Matta el-Meskin, was an ecclesial person—a singular figure in the modern renewal and revival of the Coptic Church. 'All authentic service begins and ends with the Church … has for its aim to link Christ and the community' (Matta el-Meskeen).[6] The monastic revival has been sourced in the desert tradition itself, where radical hermits began to attract disciples.[7]

Fadel Sidarouss, has well described the character of the Coptic Church:

> The contemporary Coptic Orthodox anthropology draws its resources from the first centuries of the Christian era. Its sociohistorical foundations reveal: an Apostolic Church, founded, according to tradition, by the Evangelist Mark; a Johannine theology, namely the descending theology of the School of Alexandria; a history of martyrs and minority, all along its history, from the time of the Romans till today; a national Christendom, fundamentally linked with the history of Egypt; finally a unique monastic spirituality, founded by Antony, Pacome, Shenouda.[8]

Matta el-Meskin was determined that communal and solitary forms of Coptic Orthodox monasticism should exist in tandem, but he also taught the most compelling development of the monastic vocation for him was to be found in the solitary life.[9] How are we to

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Istina, Vol. XLVIII, 2003, pp. 160-179.

5 Nevine Mounir Tawfiq, 'Le chrétien et la société dans la pensée du père Matta al-Maskin', *Proche-Orient Chrétien,* Vol. 50, 2000, pp. 80-104.

6 John H Watson, 'Fr Matt el-Meskeen: Radical Coptic Orthodox Monk', *The Independent*, 27 June 2006. See also his *Among the Copts*, Sussex Academic Press, 2000.

7 John H Watson, 'The Desert fathers Today: Contemporary Coptic Monasticism', *Eastern Christianity: Studies in Modern History, Religion and Politics*, A. O'Mahony (ed.), Melisende, London, 2004, pp.112-139; John H Watson, 'The Ethiopian Servant of Christ: Abûnâ Abd el-Mesih al-Habashi', *Coptic Church Review*, Vol. 27, no. 2, 2006, pp. 34-57.

8 Fadel Sidarouss, 'Élements d'anthropologies copte', *Proche-Orient chrétien*, 2011, vol. 61, no 1-2, pp. 45-59; p. 59.

9 John Watson, 'Abouna Matta el-Meskeen Contemporary Desert Mystic', *Coptic Church Review*, Vol.27, No. 3 & 4 (2006), pp. 66-92.

understand the life and spirituality of Matta el-Meskin—this monk who represented the great outpouring of the spirit, lived through his monastic vocation, as part of the confluence of forces which have transformed the Coptic Church?

The spirituality of Matta el-Meskin today has not only influenced the wider Christian tradition but has taken root in the heart of readers in the world and the monastic enclosure. John Watson states, 'During the last few decades, a small number of monastics—Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant—have made a significant impact upon many Churches and other world religions. The Trappist Thomas Merton of Kentucky, the Russian Orthodox Seraphim Rose of Alaska, the Protestant Roger Shutz of Taizé, and the Benedictine Bede Griffiths of Shantivanam in southern India were all prolific authors. All four of them were also readers of the renowned Coptic (Egyptian) Orthodox monk Father Matta El-Meskeeen (Matthew the Poor).'[10]

One of the key texts for the dissemination of Matta el-Meskin's influence has been *Orthodox Prayer Life: The Interior Way*. This work—*Orthodox Prayer Life*—immediately spread through the whole Middle East. The first edition of *Orthodox Prayer Life* in Arabic appeared in 1952 and had a wide impact upon many Coptic and Arabic-speaking Christians. The second edition, published in 1968, was much larger than the first, with new added chapters and words of the Church Fathers. Its influence was such that Archimandrite George Khodr said, 'For the first time we Greeks are being schooled by a book written by a Copt!'[11]

The origins of this important text awaits its historian and critical edition, however, its beginnings are in the encounter between Lazarus Moore and Matta el-Meskin. Moore, an English convert to Eastern Orthodoxy, had lived on Mount Athos before joining the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR). Lazarus Moore served the Russian Orthodox Mission in Jerusalem for many years. It would

10 John H Watson, 'Fr Matta el-Meskeen: Radical Coptic Orthodox Monk', *The Independent*, 27 June 2006.

11 'The sense of *de facto* unity between the two families of Churches is strong, and indeed Oriental Orthodox such as Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios, Abba Matta el-Meskin or Vigen Curoian are important figures for contemporary Eastern Orthodox theology,' *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, Mary B Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008, p. 16.

seem that the primary source of *Orthodox Prayer Life: The Interior Way* was a typed manuscript in English of one hundred and twenty-two pages which Matta el-Meskin had in his possession. This manuscript came from Lazarus Moore. On finally opening its pages, Matta el-Meskin stated:

> When I finally opened the manuscript of the English pilgrim and found that it contained sayings on prayer, my heart leapt for joy. Aware of happiness and exhilaration overwhelmed me. How did God bring this treasure into my hand? This was my only inheritance in the world. I did not believe my eyes when I began reading the experiences that most strongly told of my own. They expressed my hope and the joy of my life. So I decided to pray in the words of these sayings. I sat down to read each of them many times until they became impressed on my mind. I would then stand up to pray in the words that I had just read, and so on. My spirit thus became aflame as if with fire. I never stopped thanking God, while my soul remained full with utmost joy.[12]

In the 1950s Matta el-Meskin took advantage of his time to read and write. In addition to mediating on the Scriptures and the Fathers (Anthony, Macarius, John Climacus, Isaac the Syrian), through the text of Lazarus Moore he soon grew to know, in addition to the Fathers, the holy men of Byzantium and Russia: Symeon the New Theologian, Seraphim of Sarov, Ignatius Briantchaninov, John of Kronstadt. In Matta el-Meskin a unique exchange took place between the Coptic and Russian tradition.[13] Matta el-Meskin, for example, read carefully the discourse between St Seraphim of Sarov and his disciple, which refers to the acquisition of the Holy Spirit but also to the fervent character of the nineteenth-century Russian tradition. It was also during his early days in monastic life that he drew up the first version of the Orthodox way of prayer which was initially a collection of notes. These first years were decisive: Matta el-Meskin had the spiritual experience of mystical

12 Preface, *Orthodox Prayer Life: The Interior Way*, pp. 9-10.

13 Oleg V Volkoff, 'Résonances coptes dans la vie monastique russe', *Le Monde Copte*, no. 2, 1977, pp. 57-60.

union with Christ, the communion with the souls of the saints. He was deeply marked by the spiritual figure of Abraham.

Over time Matta el-Meskin's *Orthodox Prayer Life: The Interior Way* had an important role in opening up the monastic life. It seems that it is remarkable that Matta el-Meskin's spiritual vitality is not only rooted in his reading of Scripture and the Fathers, but also in his reading of the Russian monks; indeed, the Holy Spirit knows no borders. Not unlike St Seraphim of Sarov he understood his role in passing on his knowledge and experience:

> To a disciple who asked Matta el-Meskin to teach him to pray, Maskin replied, 'Give me your Bible.' He opened the book, found the beginning of the Letter to the Ephesians, raised his eyes to heaven and said, 'Pray like this'. Having read the first verse aloud, he was quiet, repeated each word twice, and re-read everything from the start; they, the following verse, he raised his voice, chanted the verse repeating the words several times, raised his hands, cried … and thus for the whole chapter. During this time, he had totally forgotten the presence of the disciple who had remained next to him …

There is a deep common character to Matta el-Meskin's spiritual life, marked by a certain openness to alterity, which has allowed the wider Christian world to resume dialogue and exchange with the desert. We can discern this even in Matta el-Meskin's reflection on fasting which was such an important aspect of life. Aware that the practice of fasting was facing many challenges he writes:

> There is no fasting … without a period of abstinence. All fasts need this fixed time before eating, and it is only then that one can eat foods in accordance with the time of fasting. This time of abstinence is the main axis around which are centred both the meaning it holds and the spiritual fruits of the fast. A fast without a period of abstinence can in no way whatever be considered a fast in the desired spiritual sense: the most anyone can speak of in this regard is abstinence from certain foods.

Matta al-Meskin, however, emphasizes the positive aspects of fasting rather than its restrictions:

> Fasting is not forbidding certain foods, but freely renouncing them. It is not weakening of the body but vivifying the spirit. It is not enslavement or condemnation of the senses, but their freedom from interference in order to contemplate God. It is not repressing the pleasure of eating, but voluntary liberation from it in order to rise towards the love of God. Fasting is not to be understood as a privation or foolishness, but leads to joy and expansion of the heart. It is a rite general to the entire Church, as well as a pleasing personal choice. It is not a heavy burden to be laid down on the day of the feast; the secret of its success rests in the permanence of its effects on the day of the feast and afterwards. It is not a duty or requirement imposed on us, but a strict need which should never be passed by. It is linked less to the body than to the spiritual life and the Kingdom. Just as it is less an occasion to ponder one's faults and failings, and more a preparation for the soul to unite with its Creator and stand in his presence.

Sobornost/Eastern Churches Review on the death of Matta el-Meskin published a poem in his memory:

> 'In the quiet sea of the sand of the Scete,
> You sleep like its eternal rocks;
> The rocks are silent.
> Your lips no longer speak;
> Your death now speaks louder'[14]

This dialogical character in the spirituality of Matta el-Meskin I consider is what Fadel Sidarouss meant by stating that 'the roots of Christianity are decidedly Eastern. Consequently, when the West adopted Christianity, it in fact adopted an "other", something

14 George Bedawi, 'Father Matthew the Poor', *Sobornost/Eastern Churches Review*, Vol. 28, no. 2, 2006, pp. 51-55, p. 54.

different; this Eastern alterity became constitutive of its Western identity, which enabled it to be more easily open to difference throughout its long history.'

Can we describe Matta el-Meskin vocation as 'A Life of Kenosis'? *Kenosis* is a Greek word that means emptying. In Christianity, it refers to the self-emptying of Christ as expressed in Paul's letter to the Philippians 2. 5-11. The text offers a vision of the Christian faith and a testimonial to the earliest development of Christology. The exegesis of this text has a long history; the text continues today to be among the most disputed passages in the history of the New Testament (Gospel) exegesis. The 'Kenotic Christology' of Philippians has and remains one of the most fruitful in the tradition. Hans von Baltasar interprets *kenosis* from the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, as well. *Kenotic* self-emptying is God's Trinitarian nature and characterizes all of God's works, especially that of creation and redemption.

However, I would like to take a step back and place Matta el-Meskin in relation to Paul. The French philosophy Alain Badiou in his influential book has called Paul 'the founder of universalism'.[15] Today the idea of God is one of the most tortured of modern conversations. In my view Matta el-Meskin infused *kenosis* with an idea of the relationship between God and Man which provides 'spiritual direction' to those who seek God as a part of their humanity. Matta el-Meskin would have been deeply aware that 'idea of God' was posited differently in the Islamic tradition. Claude Geffré, the French Dominican theologian, articulates this strongly: 'Even if the Qur'anic revelation seeks only be the confirmation of the biblical revelation of the exclusive unity of the creator God, we can seriously ask whether the transcendence of the God of Islam does not finally obey the philosophical logic of the absolute, i.e. that of the identity which excludes all difference … is the expression of its self-sufficiency.' Geffré continues: 'On the other hand, if we follow Christian monotheism through to the end as an affirmation of the uni-trinity of God, we discover that the uniqueness of God must be thought of as unity which assumes differences. The God of Trinitarian monotheism is a life differentiated in communion. It is there that the originality of the God of the Christians proves to be so different from the God of natural theology.'[16]

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15 Alain Badiou, *St Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, tran. Ray Brassier, Stanford: Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2003.

16 C Geffré, 'The One God of Islam and Trinitarian Monotheism', *Concilium*, No. 1,

I think that it is this context that the significant exchange between Shenouda III and Matta el-Meskin on 'deification' might be understood.[17] Jacques Masson, writes 'As to the theology of the divinisation of man, it experienced an eclipse of more than fifteen centuries, being reborn only with the celebrated monk Matta al-Miskin (1919-2006).' Masson goes on to quote:

> My desire to melt into the herd, being no longer its leader or guide, continued to grow within me. And, in the annihilation of self, just when I had almost reached complete renunciation of myself and all my being, behold, a voice came from on high—and heaven was close since I had never before ventured so high up the mountain; and that no doubt, although I was unaware of it, corresponded with my interior state—a voice was teaching me that I no longer lived for myself, and that my sufferings were not a punishment but had value. And that was total communion with him, such as I had desired with tears for so long, without being able to know the content. My eyes opened, and for the first time in my life I understood what 'communion with Christ' was; and after much resistance, tears, cries, questions and internal conflicts, I resolved to penetrate the shadow of the Cross.

This confession of Matta al-Miskin, related in his autobiography, certainly marks a powerful moment in his spiritual life, an unforgettable interior experience. He was at Wadi Rayan, that place of frightful austerity, during a stay which would last nine years, and where he would lose his health. But this experience, linked to his constant reading of the Fathers, would give rise to his entire mystical theology, and to his numerous writings.

Like that of the Cappadocian Fathers, his theology is mystical. Matta al-Miskin reflected on the source of that theology and its validity. This reflection gave rise in him to an anthropology in which the 'spiritual'

2001, pp. 85-93.

17 Serge Tyvaert, 'Matta el-Maskine et le renouveau du monastère de saint Macaire', *Istina*, Vol. XLVIII, 2003, pp. 160-179.

is clearly distinguished from the 'mental'.

Faith in Christ presents itself at two levels:

> —The level of human intelligence, which conceives the reality of God, on the subject of which one can write books, talk, give long expositions on the Divine Being, who remains external to us, whom we consider from afar, and on the subject of which we divert ourselves.
> —The level of the Spirit, in which spiritual awareness perceives 'the Lord who is Spirit' and feels his presence, not like that of an 'other' external to me, but, losing the sensation of 'my' own self, it is henceforth from him that I receive proper knowledge of myself. I no longer exist but through him and in him: 'for him, I have accepted losing all, I regard all as loss, in order to gain Christ, and to be found in him' (Phil 3:8-9). It is clear from the words of St Paul that he has lost all, and no longer has anything but Christ! Christ has filled his entire being and existence. Paul no longer thinks anything, feels anything, except in Christ. St Paul's faith in Christ has meant that, for Paul, Christ is everything, even his very person.
> This spiritual perception, conscious of the person of Christ who fills all things, can in no way be arrived at through the intellect, since the intellect perceives others but not itself, and spiritual faith in Christ has made of Christ my own 'I': I am no longer another for Christ, and Christ is no longer an other for me: 'But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in Spirit' (1 Col. 6:17).[18]

Even if Matta al-Miskin does not himself use the term 'divinisation'—it is found, for example in his work on Pentecost, but is a Patristic quotation, from St John Chrysostom in fact,[19] the whole of his meditation is much more based on the unity existing between the risen Christ, head of the Church, and its members, the faithful baptised in the bath of their rebirth: and the term he quotes merely illustrates his entire thought.

18 Jacques Masson, *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, 2007.
19 *Ibid*.

To quote again from the Poem to Matta el-Meskin which appeared in *Sobornost/Eastern Churches Review* in 2006:

> 'Believing in the written words as the treasure of the future,
> We write, as you said once, for the coming generations.
> We have to put into their hands our tools.
> You opened our mind to the universal Christian heritage.
> A mind that has perceived freedom,
> A mind that has revived the light of Christ,
> Will never go back to the darkness [… of slavery to ignorance]'