

enjoyed good wine. There were consulates for France, Geneva, Venice, Castile, Cyprus, Naples, Ancona, Marseilles and doubtless other merchant states and cities.

And so, with storms at sea and sickness by land, the Lord of Angleure and his friends came home a year after their departure, sated with adventure and exalted with pious souvenirs. The reader is at liberty to form his own conclusions about the religious value of their pilgrimage, but I am confident that the contemporary reader of *Le Saint Voyage* itched to take his scrip and staff and to share in the author's blessing: 'Thanks be to our Lord Jesus Christ, who keeps all Christians who make and will make this holy journey, and who have made it, and may he bring us all to Paradise, Amen'.



## THE ORIGINS AND TENDENCIES OF CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS SENSIBILITY

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*The survey that follows is translated from the French. It appeared in the Supplément de La Vie Spirituelle, No. 48, for the first quarter of 1959, and has also appeared in our Dutch Dominican contemporary Tijdschrift voor Geestelijk Leven. Fr Schillebeeckx is a Flemish Dominican, a distinguished theologian, and we hope that his assessment of certain continental developments will be of interest to our English readers, though it may appear strange, and not perhaps be found wholly congenial, to those only familiar with our island scene.*

**T**O understand the religious sensibility of our time, we have to return to the forms of Christian life which characterized the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The modern way of living the faith is very largely a reaction against these older forms.

*An anti-Protestant reaction*

One might say that the old religious sensibility was *individualist*

and *moralizing*, 'devotional' and *bourgeois*. These characteristics were directly produced by the anti-Protestant reaction inside the Church. Under the pressure of the situation the Church was brought to stress precisely those aspects of the Christian faith which were denied by the Reformers, at a time when the points of agreement between Catholicism and Protestantism (some of which are in fact at the very heart of the personal encounter of God and man) were driven, by the very pressure of the reaction, into the background of religious consciousness.

For example, against the Protestant idea of religion as a purely personal relationship between God and man constituted by faith, the Church had to insist on the interior renewal worked by this encounter. But in the end this renewal came to be considered in isolation, detached from the encounter of the human person with God. The result has been to 'thing-ify' the life of grace.

Then too, against the Protestant denial of the *saving* nature of the Church *as an institution*, the hierarchic aspect had to be more strongly emphasized. But at the same time the old Christian conception was partly lost sight of, which stressed the other aspect of the Church, also perfectly real, as the community of grace and of union with Christ. Similarly the place of the layman in the Church was obscured.

Against the one-sided stress put by the Protestants on subjective religious experience, the Church once again saw herself forced to stress the objective aspects of sacramental life, so that popular experience has sometimes ended by conceiving sacramental life no longer as a personal encounter with the living Christ, but almost as a physical automatism.

Then again, as contact with the east was lost more and more, the ecumenical sense waned, and the Church therefore came to take a typically western, European form in her way of living religion. In the end the individualism and the middle-class mentality of the last two centuries put their seal on all this. Religion was widely thought of as a necessary adjunct of 'respectable people'.

In this old style of religion, which though superseded is still active, there was no place for any liturgical or ecumenical trend; the Bible was considered to be taboo; the spread of missions and the idea of the Church as a living witness were not vital; the idea of community was little mentioned; no other means were thought

of for making the ordinary jobs of everyday into a source of personal sanctification than tacking on to them a purely extrinsic intention.

*Sense of the real and the relative*

The renewal that is to be observed in our time is due to factors inside and outside the Church.

There is first of all *the new experience of existence*, the great event of our time since the two wars. It has created a quite different spiritual climate. It has already received concrete embodiment and characteristic form in *Existentialism* on the one hand, and in *twentieth-century Marxism* on the other. The ideas of personal encounter, of 'being-in-the-world', of commitment for humanity, of real grasp of the human condition and day-to-day human activities, are at the very centre of vital contemporary preoccupations. Apart from the two forms mentioned, this renewed human experience has also received an appropriate incarnation in the *Christian experience of religion*. And we must stress how remarkable it is that the trend of biblical and patristic renaissance has discovered a religious sensibility much closer to the modern, 'existentialist' outlook than to that of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For biblical and patristic thought is entirely dominated by the idea of *saving history*, while western thought, in the way too in which it has expressed itself in religious experience, has preferred to speak of *essences*.

All this is embodied in the liturgical and ecumenical movements; in the biblical movement; in the idea of the Church as a mission and a living witness; in the existential trend in religion, which is seen in a new way as a personal encounter with God; in the sense of the Christian's responsibility for the human world and the ordinary business of life. Formal *bourgeois* religiosity inspires nothing now but repugnance. There is a very keen sense of the relative value of many religious customs and conventions. Once upon a time one would never have dared to withdraw from religious practice when all inner sense of religion had faded out, because social life was Christian; but now, on the contrary, because of the de-Christianization of social life, lack of religious sense is boldly asserted in open abandonment of religious practice. Religion thus becomes much more of a personal *decision*, courageously taking a stand, broader and more active than the old

routine religion. There is also now far more understanding shown for the sinner, once considered taboo from the religious point of view; the fallen daughter was treated without mercy and even driven out of her home. There is now a risk of falling instead into a *mystique* of sin, thinking that true religious experience can be achieved only through sin.

There is also a keener awareness that man is existentially powerless to do good. The sense of the insecurity of life reaches into the depths of religion, which becomes by this very fact much more of an absolute trust in God, stripped of all *bourgeois* assurance; hope against all human hope. Apart from the popular *milieux* where the new spirit has not yet penetrated, there is a lack of interest in private devotions, relics, confraternities, pilgrimages, processions, mass rallies, etc. As against a spirit of extreme reserve, one now sees a spirit of generous openness, in search of meeting and communication; of priests with laymen, people of one denomination with those of another, social classes amongst each other. There is even more openness towards those who think differently and whom one endeavours to understand than towards one's own co-religionists, who are the subject of a more critical examination. And we have to add to all this that modern psychology has ruthlessly unmasked certain dimensions of religious experience and discovered many pseudo-religious reactions in what passed for 'official religion'. In a word, people want to lay hold everywhere and in everything of the authentic substance of religious living, the very centre of the revelation of salvation.

We thus have the right to conclude that the religious sensibility of modern man is quite different from that of a former time. We can justifiably speak of 'contemporary religious sensibility'.

### *The authentic and the one-sided*

But then the important question appears; is there no place for investigating what is authentically religious in all this and what is perhaps a one-sided emphasis, which in its turn is going to produce new reserves? Many of the faithful no longer feel at ease in the atmosphere of the old religiosity. Moreover—and this is even more serious—the young intellectuals are losing the faith, in a quiet way, sometimes even in a noisy way. The cause of this is for one thing that they have lost the way, because the old forms of religion are no longer in sympathy with their vital, experience

and even contradict it. In these circumstances it is urgent to investigate what is essential and unchangeable in the life of the Christian religion, to be able to disengage it more safely from out-of-date religious sensibility, without running the risk of injuring, by this disentanglement, features of Christianity which are authentically Christian and unchangeable.

It is no doubt justifiable to say, from the historical point of view, that the renewal of religion taking place in our day is the *fulfilment* of the endeavour begun, but in some sense spoilt, at the Counter-Reformation. The endeavour partly miscarried because the intention of the Counter-Reformation, which was to save the pure marrow of Christianity from the religious sensibility of the *end* of the middle ages, was too one-sidedly *anti-Reformation*, and therefore lacked a conscious affirmation of the *totality* of dogma, as a positive synthesis. This synthesis cannot be made by adopting one-sided positions. It involves assimilating something, without losing anything. It is in this synthesis that our review is trying to collaborate, by integrating itself in the tradition of the Church's life under the direction of her *magisterium*.



## ST HYACINTH MARISCOTTI

P.C.C.

**S**T HYACINTH MARISCOTTI could be called the patron of back-sliders or the saint of the second chance. A study of her life would do much to 'confirm the weak knees' of all those of us who are so prone to say, 'Sanctity is not for me'.

Born at Vignarello in the papal states, of a noble and wealthy family, in the early seventeenth century, young Clarice Mariscotti was sent to Viterbo to be educated in the Franciscan convent. She was not remarkable for her piety and probably suffered from having a sister who was a nun in the same convent. Doubtless the sister also suffered, and one can readily imagine that the friction between the reproachful piety of the one and the misdemeanours of the other may have had unfortunate repercussions