

## NEW FORMS OF CONTEMPLATION AND OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

My subject is vast. It includes not only new forms of "contemplation" in the sense where this word signifies an activity of prayer, which in itself is either a particular act or a series of acts or an inner attitude, but also new forms of "contemplative life," that is, of that particular mode, form, organization of existence, or again that "state of life," which aims at preparing and furthering the activity of contemplation. In both domains today "new forms" are appearing—which supposes that older forms already exist; nothing will be said about these here, except occasionally, in passing or by way of comparison. It goes without saying that any effort made to understand the new aspects does not imply a judgment on the older ones. Nor is there question of elaborating a new theory of contemplation or of the contemplative life, but simply of stating the facts of contemporary religious history and attempting to discern their meaning with regard to the general evolution we are witnessing. It is normal that a change of society as a whole should have repercussions on that human activity we call contemplation as well as on the means which people take to attain it. These new forms of contemplative life are, moreover, only one aspect of a very much wider renewal: we have the "new Jesuits,"<sup>1</sup> as they are called; there are new forms of pastoral, missionary, and family life. So why not "new monks," "new contemplative women"?

We shall be dealing here with some general and deep trends. It would be possible also to touch on some of the more particular problems and illustrate them with examples taken from various parts of the world; that could be the subject of a later article.

### GENERAL TRENDS IN CONTEMPLATION

The first fact which strikes us is the almost negative attitude which many adopt towards what only a short while ago we found no difficulty in considering as prayer and contemplation. An excellent example of the kind of judgment now made is found in Peter Harvey's pages, where he makes a penetrating criticism of the so-called traditional forms of prayer in the monastic life, without however making a radical criticism of monasticism and monastic prayer; he does acknowledge its worth. What he decries is the "division" which existed between the different forms of prayer, the absence of any unifying element, the impersonal nature of this activity, and the fact that it was an "obligation" for everyone. There

<sup>1</sup> Cf. George Riemer, *The New Jesuits* (Boston, 1970).

are so many reasons which prevented it from being sufficiently an "experience."<sup>2</sup>

But in the pages which come immediately after there is a positive approach: Sebastian Moore and Kevin Maguire are the spokesmen of all those who desire that their prayer should be a real "experience," or at least be more of an experience than it actually is.<sup>3</sup> They bring up the whole problem as to whether or not prayer can be an experience, and if so, in what way, and must it necessarily be so? In particular, the question is raised as to whether prayer can become a "personal experience" when it is carried out in common by a group of people. A recent congress was devoted to the theme of the relationship which can exist between "attention to God and experience in prayer."<sup>4</sup> Our two authors set the question to the reader in terms of being yourself, meeting yourself, of living yourself and being really you in the "now" of prayer. They make the distinction between prayer itself, made up of these moments of experience, and the symbolic acts of prayer. Prayer is a gift, an event which happens. It is to be wondered whether the acts which are intended to express this event do not risk substituting themselves for it. The answer is not necessarily negative. But it involves, on the one hand, the whole connection between private prayer and public worship, and on the other, the connection between prayer considered as a mystery, a gift, and an experience felt on the psychological level. If prayer is an experience, what is it that we really feel, and how do we feel it?

In practice, this may include every sphere where psychology plays a part, and principally in the exercising of freedom: the activity of union with God should surely be less submitted to precise and uniform regulations than in the past. Furthermore, prayer is thought of less as a subjective awareness which might well be no more than a dialogue with self; it is considered more as an objective meeting with Jesus Christ who unites us to the Father by the action of the Holy Spirit. In this contact with Christ the part played by the Scriptures is modified because of the progress which has been made in biblical and theological research; it can even be said that this contact with Christ is made easier by the fact that the results of this research are now within reach of the man in the street. If we judge by the amount of publication, we notice an increased interest in Jesus Christ, not so much for sentimental reasons as out of an intense and authentic desire to have a deeper knowledge of His

<sup>2</sup> *The Experience of Prayer* (London, 1969) pp. 3-8.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 14, 60-66, 103-4.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. "Colloque monastique d'Orval" (Sept. 14-19, 1970), in *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 33 (1971) 1-128.

mystery in order to participate in it more fully. There is one problem concerning meditation of the Scriptures as food for prayer which, though not new, is felt more keenly in our times: the problem of the "cultural frontier" which separates our contemporaries from the mentality of the Old Testament texts, the Psalms in particular. An attempt has even been made to rewrite some of them in modern terminology—which implies not only translating them into modern language, but also rethinking them in terms of present-day situations.<sup>5</sup>

New forms of psychological activity and new means of provoking these all lead to fresh problems. For example, the type of imagination and thus the symbols, esthetics, and poetry dependent upon it are constantly changing under the influence of movies and mass media. In this way television has intensified the primacy of the image in perception; this entails a modification of learning and of learning language in particular. This problem is being dealt with in pedagogy. Why should it not be given attention in the sphere of contemplative prayer? Should mass media be excluded from the contemplative life? And if we do use them, how should we do so, and to what extent? If we reject their value, we must be able to give our reasons for so doing. A recent document of the Church of Rome recognized their importance in contemporary Christian existence: it must be applied according to the demands of each different form of this existence.

New rhythms are coming into the outer life and the inner activity of mankind; they result in a new experience of time, duration, speed, space, and distance. None of this can fail to have repercussions on the life of prayer. Instantaneous, quick contemplation can become more frequent, more spontaneous, easier; the problem of "distraction at prayer" must be reconsidered.

New techniques in self-control, in pacification, are being introduced or spread. Some come from the Far East (different forms of yoga and Zen), others from the Near East (Hesychasm); others again are processes elaborated in the West and are intended to further self-discipline. We can learn how and why we should practice meditation; but this word has much more meaning than in the past, is now applied to texts and to much more widely varied types of activity. On the one hand, men and women, be they Christian or not, are initiating themselves to forms of meditation arising from Hinduism and Buddhism; on the other hand, we find that swamis or lamas who teach in the West things that were supposed to be pure products of Asiatic religions, either consciously or unconsciously have undergone Christian influence. And those Christians who are masters in Far Eastern disciplines do not hide

<sup>5</sup> Ernesto Cardenal, *The Psalms of Struggle and Liberation* (New York, 1971).

the fact that they are interested in a "Christian yoga" or a "Christian Zen" which would not be purely and simply what yoga and Zen are for true Buddhists or Hindus. Must we for all that consider seriously the attempts at "instantaneous Zen" or "electronic yoga" that people talk about in the United States? In fact, we ought to pay attention to a phenomenon traces of which were revealed in the 1968 Bangkok meeting of the monks in Asia, a phenomenon which is not restricted to Asia.

The traditional Benedictine primacy of the Opus Dei seems to have given way to a primary concern for interior spiritual experience. While this change has not been actually initiated, it does seem to be indicated, although this seems not to be fully adverted to by the participants. Yet this new emphasis may well be our best indication of the direction monasticism must take in its Asian development. If the traditional emphasis on liturgy is lessened, then monastic communities would tend to become contemplative centers where the techniques of meditation become more significant than choral recitation. This may be the most essential change indicated if there is to be a spiritual meeting of westerners and orientals within a monastic setting. This meeting in the realm of spiritual experience could provide the context in which the doctrinal and liturgical differences could be resolved with greater success than we are achieving at present. Traditional Christianity has been more committed to belief and worship than to spirituality, whereas much of Asia's greatest achievement has been in spirituality rather than in doctrine or ritual.<sup>6</sup>

The facts which have been noted so far in no way exhaust the vast subject of "new forms of contemplation." But at least they show that in the "now" which begins and orients the future, there lies a whole field of research to be followed, of experiences to be tried out and judged, of reflections which must be gone into more deeply, in docility to the Holy Spirit who is active among and in Christians in present-day circumstances and discoveries.

#### NEW TRENDS IN CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

The trends which are being brought to light in the prayer activity we call contemplation must go hand in hand with the trends which are taking that form of existence we call the contemplative life, and which we may say is in general led apart, on the margin of the ordinary forms of Christian life lived in the society of the times.

The first evident fact which strikes us is that we are in presence of a parallel realization of two apparently contradictory forms which are sometimes lived side by side: a renewal of the eremitic life, that is to

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Berry, in *America*, Feb. 27, 1971, p. 210, reviewing *A New Charter for Monasticism*, ed. John Moffitt (Notre Dame, 1970).

say, of the solitary contemplative life, and an increased need to share the life of prayer with others, whether it be lived alone or communally. These facts merit theological consideration and should be interpreted in the light of spirituality; they are already entailing fairly considerable practical and institutional consequences. However, they are not entirely recent. Certain of them started ten or more years ago, and we can only understand them in the light of the evolutionary stages they have already passed through. At the beginning these new attempts in prayer life still had many elements of the age immediately preceding them, elements which were considered as being "classical," intrinsic to the contemplative life, both eremitic and communal. Then they came to vary more and more, shaking off these so-called traditional forms. There is no room here to illustrate this statement with examples. The discretion which must cover those men and women who were engaged in these experiments is sufficient reason for silence, and it would be too long to bring up all the precise details called for by the spiritual, personal, economic, social, and political conditions peculiar to each experiment, in every country and setting. But the most recent forms of contemplative life are already learning the lessons of the recent past both as to the dangers revealed and the advantages.

Thus these forms of praying Christian life are constantly undergoing evolution, and the shapes they are taking are modified in continuity with the changes occurring in the psychology of individuals and in the structures of society and the Church. A constant diversity is to be noticed from one person to another, due to the more intensive and sometimes foreseen development of personalities which is being brought about by new methods in pedagogy, the broadcasting of a higher average culture through mass media, progress in hygiene and dietetics. Personalities are becoming not only more and more different from one another, but also richer, yet at the same time some of them are physically more frail, psychologically more sensitive, even hypersensitive. Consequently, there should be room for forms of contemplative life and monastic groups in which those who cannot develop in the institutions which have so far existed may respond to their vocation to prayer outside these institutions, but preferably remaining in connection with them. Here and there monks and nuns formed in traditional institutions and having heard the same deep call to follow their spiritual destiny elsewhere see that it is better for the Christian growth of one or other if they cease living together and yet continue to be a same community in the sense where this word signifies first of all an active communion in the same fundamental realities; they commit themselves to God and to

one another and are bound by a minimum of structure. In other places it is accepted from the beginning that groups made up of a few people, each of whom lives a consecrated life, should come together, more or less frequently, in order to pray together.

Thus centers of spiritual life and radiation are growing up; they are open to different vocations, respect the individual charisms, and admit that members have full- or part-time professional commitments. They are of contemplative orientation in the measure that they give priority to prayer and the sharing of it; other groups organize themselves more in function of some other service of the Church than the contemplative life. Are vocations to this life exceptional? Whatever be the case, they are becoming more and more numerous, whereas judging by statistics made of large populations, the contemplative vocations which were long considered normal are decreasing in number—which is not to say that they are on the way to disappearing altogether. Furthermore, the dynamism of prayer must be compatible with weak health, even with that of physically handicapped people, of whom there are more and more. And there is a universal tendency to give less and less importance to juridical structures.

Thus, in the Roman Catholic Church, the Decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship of May 31, 1970, has come just at the right time. While the Congregation for Religious is strengthening structures, defining and multiplying rules and control, the Congregation for Divine Worship has created others which are infinitely more flexible. And that is understandable: the former is dealing with the old forms of contemplative life, the latter with new forms. This Decree promulgated the new ritual for the consecration of virgins. Over and beyond the strictly liturgical aspect of this ceremony, there is an important innovation which, in reality, is a going back to the most ancient form of religious life in the Church. Today, as in the first centuries, the bishop can ratify the purpose of perpetual virginity which a woman, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, intends to live in the heart of the Christian community, that is, of the local church, which acknowledges that this Christian illustrates one aspect of the mystery of Christ and of the Church. The official recognition given by the bishop bestows on it a public status and raises it to the rank of a witness. This acknowledgment and rite by which it is signified may be conceded not only to nuns, but also to those women who, while remaining in the world, live a life of voluntary celibacy for the kingdom of God without being bound canonically to a religious institute. They either live alone, as hermits, or take part in the life and work of the Christian community. Certain obligatory conditions—in particular, that of the human and spiritual maturity

of the subject—must be fulfilled in order to receive this consecration from the hands of the bishop after he has in some way consulted the community. The existence of the consecrated virgin must be entirely inspired by the evangelical counsels and lived in submission to the bishop. This new form of religious life is not something which might come about in the future; it has already come into being.

Observers perceive two apparently contradictory phenomena and suggest the reasons. In the first place, centers of prayer are being increasingly acknowledged as a necessity. In a society which is focused on production and consumption, there is an equally indispensable need for something gratuitous by way of compensation; it is necessary that at least a few people in this society become voluntarily marginal and thus make themselves available for spending time in the search for God. In a “restless” society, where even “free time” is filled up with sports, touring, or “social” obligations—all three of which are subject to strict regulations—monasteries are the refuge of authentic leisure. On the other hand, these oases of calm will only remain so if they get away from heavy administrative and economic structures. Thus there is a tendency to set up “small groups” or else forms of community or communion in which “life in common” is reduced to allow for the personal realization of the members. The awareness of the responsibility which they have of their existence as a community will become apparent in their prayer, which, unless the personalities are rich, will have scarcely any value by either human or Christian standards. One of the criticisms often raised against big communities arises from the fact that they favor neither charity expressed in truly fraternal relationships nor a life of prayer stamped with this charity. Paul M. Boyle, C.P., charged with studying “the experiments of small communities” on behalf of the Conference of Major Superiors of Religious in the United States, has given very firm conclusions on this subject. It will suffice for our purpose to quote the final sentence: “This style of life will be normative in the future.” This applies to groups living the contemplative life just as much as to other groups.

This tendency towards little communities in Christianity and its monasticism is, moreover, parallel to a universal phenomenon: technocratic society admits and even calls for more and more room for marginality. In monasticism the charismatic is once again being given the primacy over organization, and spiritual freedom restored in place of the need for approval and legislation—which in no way excludes the existence of structures uniting vast entities and even working on a world-wide scale, so long as they respect the values indicated here. As has been said, we are moving in the direction of a monasticism which will

be more like the one which existed before the great institutions that appeared in the East from the fifth century onward and in the West during the Middle Ages. But circumstances have changed: Gnosticism, En-cratism, and the other menacing dangers of those times no longer exist; other needs are making themselves felt. We shall have to create new linking structures between these many different groups. In the present world, where interactions are being intensified and competence for all is becoming increasingly necessary, a small autonomous group, even an "abbey," will be able less and less to find within itself all the subjects it needs for government, administration, and the formation of new members. This means that we shall have to set up completely new forms of collaboration. No past epoch is comparable to our own. The sort of dispersion we are witnessing today is entirely different from the mushroom springing-up of monasteries of Cistercians and Regular Canons in the twelfth century, and of Dominican and Franciscan convents in the thirteenth. These facts were in no way determined by the personal encounter of numerous men with the holy founders of these orders; but the success of these forms of life was due to the fact that they corresponded to the need which many people felt to live together (even in big communities), to bind themselves to institutions and set up links between these. In a time when personalities are stronger, thus more diverse, and when the belief in successful institutions is fading more and more, the opportunities afforded to new forms of prayer life are quite as good as those of preceding centuries; it is just that these forms are different.

In the period of transition which we are going through, persons who are happy in ancient institutions must not consider the search for a real contemplative life outside these forms which have so long been connected with it as a sort of quack medical practice. The old institutions still continue to be not only legitimate but beneficial, and gradually relationships of mutual respect and help are being established. The ancient forms have accumulated and retain real values, even if they have sometimes come to be burdened with cumbersome observances, entirely secondary legacies of a long-gone past. The new forms have their specific values in addition to those which they have been able to receive from ancient institutions. These new forms are certainly not free of danger. But surely the others had dangers too. And may it not be that we have become too much at home with them?

Here and now, the attitude which must be adopted towards these new forms of contemplative life consists neither in inventing nor in imagining them, since they are appearing spontaneously; what we have to do is to welcome them with intelligent sympathy in an attempt to



understand them, trying to judge them on evangelical, not historical, principles, and in the light of the facts of our own times. We must even endeavor to foresee the role which they could have in those societies of tomorrow which will have succeeded in retaining some measure of freedom. It would be utopian to evade the world of technology, where the spreading of industry will be one of the conditions of just progress, and take refuge in countercultures which, though they may have some influence, will not succeed in modifying an orientation that appears to be irreversible. We have to accept that world, but we must also realize that the presence of houses of prayer must remain permanent—houses where we can meet men and women whose occupation is to think about God, and with whom we can converse about God. The function of monasteries will be to show that a certain leisure for God is still a legitimate thing. They will have to be inserted in this world, but not oriented towards it. They will not necessarily be “centers of charity” or “retreat houses” where we get together to do something useful. Persons will not even come for the sake of being welcomed, when welcome becomes such an absorbing activity that there is no time to pray. There are other centers of welcome in the Church and in society; what we need is not so much welcoming people (you can find them in other places) as a certain depth of welcome bearing the stamp of prayer, the search for God. And it is surely within our rights to hope that the Lord will give to His Church new saints, both men and women, without whom nothing worthy will spring up and last.

To close these reflections on the new forms of contemplative life, we can do no better than refer to those profound pages in which Karl Barth has pointed out the meaning of monasticism in the fact that it allows those in the Church who have heard a call to freedom to respond.<sup>7</sup> We may also refer to the following remarks made by one of our contemporaries who is a specialist of the history of religions: “Monasticism is one of the terms of a dialectic tension between the Church condemned to adapt itself to the world in order to survive and the same Church vowed to being not of this world, between ordered authority and the prophetic charismatic authority.” This is a phenomenon which can be verified throughout history, starting with antiquity: “Whereas the Church irrevocably fixed her structures along the lines of civil administration, monasticism restored the free inspiration of certain proto-Christian milieus. In reaction to this, the Church undertook to institutionalize what was movement. Far from losing by this, monasticism

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Dogmatique 4: La doctrine de la réconciliation 2*, §64 (Geneva, 1968) 10–15. I have summarized these pages in *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 34 (1971) 4, under the title “Marginalité et accueil.”

impregnated Christian society with its spirit." As regards what we can observe today and predict for the future: "It should be remarked, however, as many sociologists have already done, that monasticism illustrates in its way the theory of 'small groups' as being the privileged regenerators of ideals and values, and as reformers that are more efficacious than heavy, vast, and complicated structures. Because this theory is being confirmed in unexpected ways in our day, because our society is seeing fringe elements coming to be more the focal points of the basic bringing into question than many a professional of the reason for living, we may legitimately think that monasticism will be renewed, reinvented, and that equivalents, analogies, or replicas of it will be found (perhaps under paradoxical appearances which seem scandalous compared with present norms). . . ." The fact that there are "some abuses in no way authorizes us to condemn a promising movement. The realizations under way are still too recent for us to be able to make a synthesis, but their number and quality are sufficient to show that the fundamental themes of the monastic ideal are not tributary to the conception of certain centuries and that, if they call for an effort of adaptation to new situations, they are bound to survive."<sup>8</sup>

Lastly, I should like to suggest these few thoughts which appear to me to derive from all that has been said by theologians, historians, and sociologists. The monk is a free man. He is a Christian who has chosen freedom with regard to restrictions imposed by society, even religious society. If he accepts other restrictions—it is essential for him to be obedient—they can only be liberating ones. The acceptance of authority and obedience may in no way lead to fresh servitude. The monk is free to be and to remain himself in the presence of God such as God made him, perhaps refractory to every category, and in this sense original, marginal, atypical. But he is not, for all that, an egoist who shakes himself free from fellowship with men obliged to live within the framework of a society. On the contrary, this fellowship with all men, this assumption of universal responsibility, is his specific desire. He owes to all men the spectacle, more exactly the witness, of his freedom. Thus he owes it to himself and to them to remain free and to obey no authority which does not set him free. The monk will become more and more obedient and more and more free. All this concerns what we used to call asceticism, but which is now more readily termed the liberating effort: remain free and joyous, and become more and more so, in spite of those inward and outward pressures which menace us all. Free before men because free in the presence of God. If a Christian knows that he has been called to spend his time with God, to seek Him in prayer and the

<sup>8</sup> Article "Monachisme," in *Encyclopedia Universalis* 11 (Paris, 1971).

loving study of His mystery (we used to call this contemplation), in order to radiate in the world the humble experience received from Him, it is difficult to see in the name of what immediate efficacy we would have the right to deprive him of this freedom.

Free men are all the more necessary as the structures of society become more and more restrictive. This accounts for the fact that we notice the presence in dictatorial regions of poets, artists, and (a dangerous thing for themselves and for the regime) monks. Society needs these "useless" people. Many today feel, more or less clearly, that over and beyond the elbow-to-elbow of universal brotherhood and brotherly *entr'aide*, what they most need is for someone to share with them a freedom testifying to the freedom of God in which it has some part. A joyful freedom which blossoms out in prayer.

Now this freedom which busies itself with prayer, with seeking God in order to communicate Him, supposes a certain distance with regard to the structures of society. Formerly this was called *anachōrēsis*, separation from the world, enclosure. But whatever we may like to call it, it is always a liberating "distancing."

The monk is a Christian who has chosen that form of freedom for himself, even though in the past he knew that there were other means and possibilities by which he could be a man among men. He has not just taken the easy way out, taken refuge in escapism, evading responsibilities; he was never a man afraid to commit himself. Very much to the contrary, he willingly and knowingly chose to commit himself to the demanding service of freedom. This does not mean that he is just an "amateur" of freedom, one who dabbles in liberty. He is a passionate lover of the liberty of mankind with regard to the restrictions of the times in which he lives, even though these may take the form of doctrinal slogans and theological fashions. Instead of needing to do something, to produce results, to be efficacious in a way that can be measured, the monk prefers another form of service and commitment: that of spiritual freedom, active, binding, and fruitful. In contrast to other men who are professional "religious" within the Church, he does not feel that he is bound to "do something," to be efficacious—that is, visibly and outwardly so—in any other way than by this active fellowship with all men which he exercises in the particular service and form of charity which is the life of prayer and sacrifice. And history shows that if the institution which a monk formerly joined in order to acquire this freedom becomes in its turn repressive, or if he no longer has need of it in his education to freedom, then he shakes it off as did so many saints. The role of the institution and of obedience is to lead a monk to this freedom. When he has become sufficiently obedient to remain in submission to God without the immediate presence of a superior, then he can become a hermit,

following God outside the institutional framework, without however condemning or judging it in any way. Though he has become by vocation a man who protests, he is not one who makes a profession of contestation. He continues to understand and esteem the institution, and in this sense he remains submitted to it, without bringing it into question, in the measure that it continues to serve others in the way that it has served him.

Nevertheless he points out its limitations. It is only an institution, and as such is relative, provisory, subordinate to personal vocations which it must favor and which may perhaps be an evolution of the initial vocation, leading to rupture with this at a time of which the Spirit of God is the only judge. This sets the role of obedience in its right proportions and, what is more, shows up its right meaning. There are some persons, generally superiors, whose whole spiritual doctrine boils down to a form of obedience, and this leads them, for example, to interpret the whole of the Rule of St. Benedict from this point of view. A retreat master once started with the words: "You came to the monastery to obey. Period. That's all there is to it." And the whole retreat was based on this theme. It is true, of course, but only if it can be taken to mean that we are to get to know God's will more and more in order to accomplish it more perfectly. What it does not mean is that we have to give way to every will of a man who takes himself to be the legal and all-powerful mediator in the work of breaking in another man's will. We can guess how delicate a matter it is to discern what in the mystery of obedience is spiritual acceptance of God's plan and a psychological need to submit to the decisions of a superior. The mystery of obedience is only accomplished if the superior and the subject are humble, detached from the institution to which they owe so much, both equally anxious to love the Lord and Him alone, and to leave the Holy Spirit free in them to act in the service of the Church. When the institution has set a monk free, it can withdraw: the hermit is a person who has become sufficiently obedient to be able to obey without a superior. But he is only really free in this way with regard to the institution if he is first truly free with regard to himself. Otherwise it will be only himself that he will find again once he is outside the institution. Karl Barth pointed this out: "The hermit will never be entirely free from the most dangerous representative of this world: himself."<sup>9</sup> The same applies, and just as much, to the person responsible for the institution.

In this day the difficult duty which we have of living over again the dialectic tension between Christian freedom and the institution of the Church spoken of by Karl Barth and observed by sociologists has stirred

<sup>9</sup> *Dogmatique* 4/2, 12.

up research at all levels of existence, including that of the monastic life. In the sphere of new forms of contemplative life, as in that of the priesthood and marriage, it is not possible to predict what the future holds in store. These new forms of monastic life can only arise from a *sensus monachorum*, from that sensitivity to the demands of a life of prayer and asceticism which the Spirit will never cease to kindle in the souls of certain Christians. "The only really certain thing about this task is that it must be undertaken; its ways have still yet to be discovered, its stages and results can scarcely be imagined."<sup>10</sup>

*Clervaux, Luxembourg*

JEAN LECLERCQ, O.S.B.

<sup>10</sup> J. M. Pohier, in *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 54 (1970) 223.