

The
SPIRITUALITY
of the
CROSIER FATHERS

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PREFACE

Spirituality, in the strict sense of piety, is actually not a constituent part of a moral person. Nor is it something verbalized in books or enacted into law. It means a personal relationship between an individual soul and God. Hence in characterizing the spirituality of a monastic order, the writer will be compelled to move in a more or less abstract, theoretical, statutory plane, since he treats of the spiritual life of the order as a whole, not about that of its individual members. Yet it is self-evident that the spiritual life of the members of an order mirrors the spirit peculiar to the order itself, while vice versa, the latter is formed by the former.

As will become apparent in this treatise, the word spirituality is taken here in a rather broad sense. The compilation of the history of the Order of the Holy Cross is still in its infancy. Despite this obstacle we will attempt a synthesis of its spiritual life. In regard to the data referring to the first centuries of the existence of the Order, a distinction must be made between what is proposed as mere hypothesis—for instance, the information given us by Russelius—and facts gleaned from official documents, which are set forth as thesis. The data concerning the Constitutions have been painstakingly compared with the revised text of the original constitutions recently prepared by Dr. A. Van de Pasch.

The reader should also keep in mind that it is by no means our purpose to write a detailed synthesis about the spirituality of the Crosier Fathers. All we propose to do is attain a deeper insight into that ideal as a way of life ordained by God, even though we are greatly handicapped in our work by the lack of trustworthy historical data.

It stands to reason that in a study of this kind, the traits that are more or less peculiar to a monastic life are emphasized. This consideration, however, should not make us lose sight of the fact that the most important part of the spirituality of all monastic institutions is that which they have in common, namely their union with God by means of the three vows. Moreover all religious institutions draw their spiritual life from

the same faith, they all commemorate the same mysteries, and they all live under the guidance of the same Holy Church.

On the other hand, we may rightly presume that not only were the diverse monastic institutions called into being to relieve some particular need of the Church, but also that this variety is the work of the Holy Spirit, who causes the various mysteries of our opulent religion to have life and to beam forth in monastic institutions called into being for that purpose. Thus every single monastic order cooperates in its own way to realize God's one great plan of love, the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

With a heartfelt word of thanks to all who have in any way contributed to the publication of this treatise, we hereby present this study on the spirituality of the Crosier Fathers.

Diest,
Exaltation of the Holy Cross

The Author

INTRODUCTION

The spirituality of a monastic order may well be called its spiritual countenance, its spiritual facial features. In some respects all human faces are the same—the human being can always be recognized—and yet they differ from one another because each has its own distinctive traits. It is thus with the spiritual features of the monastic institutions of the Catholic Church. All have the same public vows; all set forth as their primary aim the self-sanctification of their members. Yet each monastic countenance has characteristics of its own in virtue of its particular aim, its peculiar spirit and make-up, its means of perfection, its organization and its independent growth.

Moreover, just as the face of an individual changes in appearance as he passes through childhood and adolescence to old age (though his main features remain the same), in the same manner the spiritual facial features of a monastic order assume different traits as the order grows in the course of time. This does not mean that the spiritual countenance of an order must gradually "show its age" as is the case with the human face, for "every comparison limps."¹ It simply means that every monastic order is a living and growing organism and as such is susceptible to change in the course of time. Yet even here the main features will and ought to remain the same. Besides, there are other factors that must be taken into consideration—sickness and recovery, failure and success, various conditions of life and occupation—all of which leave their traces on the human face, sometimes temporarily, sometimes permanently. The same holds true of a religious order. It passes through periods of decline and reform, it must adjust itself to circumstances of time and place, it must appraise the spiritual trends of each successive period, it must uphold the very practice of the religious rule. All this is bound to leave its traces behind. In some degree it all changes the spiritual countenance of the order, sometimes temporarily, sometimes permanently.

In this study we propose to sketch the spiritual features of the Order of the Holy Cross. The Order was founded more

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than seven centuries ago; we will try to draw its spiritual face in that infancy and throughout its development in history.

When we look into the past we are confronted by many difficulties. The most insurmountable of these is the want of documents and the insufficient research on the material which is at our disposal. Many documents and official papers pertaining to the Crosier Fathers have been lost and probably will never be found. Most deplorable is the loss of the archives of the motherhouse at Huy, Belgium. Many of the documents that have not been destroyed remain undiscovered. Of those which have been discovered only a few have been studied, although valuable work has been done in this field in recent years. Our purpose would also be better served by a more extensive examination of the spiritual writings of the Crosier Fathers, and of their manuscripts and liturgical books. It would likewise be a great help if we could obtain a clearer insight into the circumstances leading to the decisions of the General Chapters and of the motives that prompted them. Inadequate research will add to the difficulty of evaluating properly the spirit of the Middle Ages, a time when, so to speak, the whole of society had a different outlook. The standard of living, the organization of Church and State, the cultural, social, political and religious atmosphere, the mentality in every sphere contrasted sharply with our present-day state of affairs.

In composing this treatise we shall employ as our source of information all the studies on the history of the Crosier Order that have been published up to this time. In these endeavors we shall proceed with great caution. The result will be but a sketch, a general outline, a portrait lacking the finishing touches. Although of necessity unfinished and provisional, the picture will not be misleading.

Here, therefore, we intend to give merely a rough sketch of the spiritual life of our Order, its spiritual countenance. In our research we have not yet reached that stage which enables us to penetrate into its very soul. Yet only then can we be said to be familiar with a person—when we have an intimate knowledge of his soul, of his inner life; when we have a clear perception of the ideals and motives which harmonize and unify his exterior life.

The elements constituting the spirituality of a monastic order are many. For instance, there are the views held within the order regarding the life of prayer, the performance of penance, the apostolate, and the organization of the monastic life. Then there is the primary aim the order has in view and

the necessary means used to attain it. There is the attitude of the order towards the fields of culture, such as art, letters, science and study; the position it takes against earthly possessions and pleasures; its solicitude for the needs and welfare of Church and State.²

The factors producing this spiritual outlook itself are many. Such a state of mind is formed by the ideals and spirit the founder passed on to his followers; by the Rule, Constitutions and statutes of General Chapters; by the spiritual writers of the order; by the various spiritual movements which have influenced the order from without; and finally by the saints and other outstanding personalities who, even if they did not leave writings behind, have left a special stamp upon the spirituality of the order by their way of life.

In order to give the reader a clear understanding of the spirituality of the Crosier Fathers, we shall divide this study into three chapters. The first will treat of "The Origin of the Order," (1210-1248). In the second chapter, "The Order in the Course of History," we shall elaborate on the first and describe the development of the Order in history. In the third, "Under the Standard of the Cross," we shall try to set forth what we consider peculiar to the Crosier spirituality.

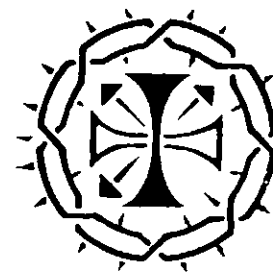
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Although Father Vincken gave the sources of nearly all quoted material, they have not been included in this edition. If the reader is interested, he will find them in Chronicon Cruciferorum (Tomus I—Fasciculus V, 1952; Lichtland—Diest. pp. 469-524) along with the original article, De Spiritualiteit der Kruisheren.



Blessed Theodore de Celles seeks the approbation of the Order from the Holy Father.

The Birth Of The Order (1210-1248)



In this chapter an attempt will be made first to determine the spirit and ideal of the founder, and to discover at the same time to what extent the origin of the Order was influenced by circumstances of time and place. Secondly we shall consider the definite organization of the Order.

The historical data at our disposal compels us to make this division. As a matter of fact, we possess but meager information about the personality of the founder and the conditions which led to the establishment of the Order. On the other hand, we possess more definite—although very incomplete—data concerning the ecclesiastical approbation of 1247-1248.

Of the period before 1248, we can affirm nothing as historically beyond doubt, although there are in existence many documents composed between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries that contain information about the origin of the Order. After a careful study of these documents, Confrere E. Fontaine has drawn the conclusion that already in 1216 the Order received the first ecclesiastical approbation from Pope Innocent III. His research has proven that these later documents allude to an approbation before 1248. But before these documents can be used as definite information about the personality of the founder, the circumstances which influenced him and the aim he had in view in founding an order, a thorough study of their historical worth must be made.

It is apparent that some of the accounts of the origin of the Order have been written merely for the sake of edification, with little, if any, regard for historical accuracy. At any rate, it is clear that either the writers did not have adequate historical data at their disposal or else did not go about their task in a critical manner. In this category we must place such tales

as name St. Helena, St. Quiriacus, St. Jude or Pope Cletus as the founder of the Order, and present the events of the thirteenth century as a "renovatio Ordinis"—a revival of the Order. Such stories must be placed in the realm of legends. The same must be done with those fables that speak of a mystical institution—the outcome of heavenly visions or revelations. It should not be presumed, however, that these narratives have no historical value at all. They must be duly appraised, as was recently done with some manuscripts that named five clerics from the province of Liege as founders of the Crosier Order.

At present the principal source of information at our disposal about the origin of the Order is the Chronicon Cruciferorum of Henricus Russelius, Prior of Suxy. Russelius himself declares that he spent more than twenty years of labor on his Chronicon, that he consulted more than three hundred authors and that he investigated the archives at Huy and all other available manuscripts. Yet he writes that even with all this aid, he was not in a position to write a complete history of the Order: "Not being competent to write a complete history, I willingly leave this task to those who are more qualified."³ Rather, it was his purpose to compose only an "account of some events in the Order which are worthy of remembrance."⁴

Still he writes about the Italian, Spanish and Bohemian Crosier Fathers from a period before the thirteenth century and erroneously allies the Italian with the Belgium-Dutch Crosier Fathers. Occasionally he makes false statements in regard to general history. The question therefore is, to what extent can the sources from which Russelius obtained his information be relied upon; and even more important, did he discover any sources of the thirteenth century? In not a single extant document of that period is even the name of the founder mentioned. Consequently Russelius's writings have to be taken with some restrictions.

On the other hand, it would be a maltreatment of history to reject these writings completely. Without doubt, Russelius has written with great caution. When he had concluded the chapter about the other Crosier Fathers, he introduces the chapter about the Brethren of the Holy Cross at Huy with these words: "It is our intention to publish, from the most ancient annals of the Order, 'How the Order sprouted out again in the year 1210,' to quote the very words of the Historical Register at the House at Huy."⁵ Therefore, in order to discover the spirit and the ideal of the founder, let us follow Russelius as our first guide.

THE SPIRIT AND IDEAL OF THE FOUNDER

Russelius informs us that the founder of the Belgium-Dutch Crosier Fathers was Theodore (Theodoricus or Diederick) de Celles, a canon of the Liege Cathedral. The year 1210 is given as the date of the foundation. Russelius makes no mention of Theodore's parentage, but there are in existence biographies dating from the seventeenth century, which inform us that he was the son of Walter de Beaufort and Oda de Celles, who were the guardians of the abbatial church of Celles near Dinant during the second half of the twelfth century.

Theodore is thought to have been motivated in founding the Order by four religious movements of that time. They were as follows.



Blessed Theodore de Celles
Founder of the Crosier Fathers

First, there was the Crusades. About that time the Papal Legate at Liege, the Cardinal-Archbishop Henry of Albino, was preaching a crusade against the Turks. Theodore, who at the time was a pupil in the chapter-school at Liege—of delicate health, but "full of enthusiasm"⁶—is said to have accompanied the Bishop of Liege, Rudolf of Zabringen, on this crusade (1189-1191). During this crusade, he became acquainted with the Crosiers of Jerusalem (the Canons of the Holy Sepulcher) and was impressed by their way of life.

A second religious phenomenon that affected the life of Theodore was the reformation among the secular canons. Upon his return from the crusade, Theodore accepted "with great piety"⁷ the function of a canon in St. Lambert's Cathedral in Liege, a position of honor he was to hold for eighteen years (1191-1209). This however happened to be the time when the community life ("vita communis") had begun to decline greatly among the capitulars, particularly among those of St. Lambert. Even the choir obligations were greatly disregarded. In the year 1203 Pope Innocent III had directed Cardinal Guido of

Praeneste to execute a thorough reformation. However, all the latter's efforts came to nothing.

Although Russelius does not state explicitly that Theodore took an active part in these endeavors, he calls our attention to the latter's actions, which certainly were at variance with the practice in vogue at that time. He informs us that Theodore distributed the greater part of his prebend to the poor: "His first act was to distribute his income among the poor, considering himself not its owner, but a faithful steward of his Master."⁸ A few years later Theodore withdrew to Clairlieu. This retirement may well have been a silent protest against the decaying way of life prevalent among the canons.

A third factor which left its influence upon Theodore was a popular pious movement, which began to unfold itself in the Netherlands in the beginning of the twelfth century and which was transplanted into other countries during the first half of the thirteenth century. Large numbers of men as well as women banded together with the sole purpose of imitating the ideal Christian life as practiced by the first Christians. In their devotions they placed great emphasis on the humanity of Christ.

A noted protagonist of the above-mentioned ideal was the saintly Beguine, Maria of Oignies, and it was from her that Theodore sought spiritual guidance. Russelius makes mention of their mutual friendship. He tells us that Theodore solicited her prayers, that he sought her advice, that she foretold him the future and that her prophecies were always fulfilled. Russelius also speaks of a close relationship between Theodore and James of Vitry, afterwards Bishop of Akkon, who had likewise become influenced by the ideal of Maria in religious matters.

A fourth event of import, mentioned by Russelius, is the meeting of Theodore and the founder of the Dominicans. In 1209 Theodore, urged to join the crusade against the Albigenses, departed for southern France. There he became acquainted with St. Dominic and became a "very intimate friend" of his.⁹ It was upon his return from this crusade that he began to muster companions to preach the crusade (against the Albigenses) and that, after a visit to Oignies, he relinquished his office as canon and withdrew to Clairlieu "in order that, having withdrawn from the world, he would be able to regulate his preaching in conformity with the apostolic rule of life."¹⁰ This meant that it was his design to base his preaching on the apostolic age, on the life of the primitive Church, on a life of poverty and common possession of all goods. The bishop of Liege granted the chapel of St. Theobald at Clairlieu to Theodore, who con-

sidered the spot "most suitable for contemplation."¹¹ He and a few companions who had joined him adopted the rule of St. Augustine and began to live a life fashioned after that of the Jerusalem Crosiers. In this way, their life of self-denial enabled them to continue to carry the same cross they had taken up in defence of the faith. Clairlieu became a center from which, under the direction of Theodore, some went forth to preach the crusade, and others to join the crusaders. Those who stayed at home practiced hospitality to the crusaders and the pilgrims. Yet one incentive inspired them all, a special devotion towards the Passion and Cross of Christ. Such, according to Russelius, was the seed out of which the Order of the Holy Cross has grown.

* * *

What is to be thought of this piece of history? Perhaps the best way to face the problem is to consider it in the light of general Church history with the aid of the authentic historical documents which speak about the definite organization of the Order in 1247-1248. The various papal and episcopal decrees of approbation given to the Order in 1248 reveal at least some of its characteristics with absolute certitude. Something can also be learned from a serious study of the original constitutions of the Crosier Fathers, although in this process one must proceed with great caution. The original text is no longer extant, but we have at our disposal half a score of copies of a later date. They may contain some interpolations, but these have not been detected.

The papal decree of approbation discloses the fact that the first constitutions were for the greater part borrowed from those of the Dominicans. Russelius records that the second Master General of the Order, Peter de Walcourt, adopted the Dominican constitutions, using the text revised by St. Raymond of Pennafort. He adapted it to the life of the Crosier Fathers, weaving into it "the traditions of our Father Theodore."¹² Without doubt the exterior aspect which the Order officially assumed in 1248 mirrored the ideal and spirit of the founder and his first companions. We must keep in mind that the Order was not founded in 1248, but that it was definitively organized and approved in that year. Even if we were to concede that it was not Theodore's original intention to call a new religious order into existence—as is often the case with founders of religious orders—we would have to admit that the Order, approved in 1248, was animated by the spirit and by the ideal of its founder. Therefore it will become possible to render judgment, at least

in some measure, of the narratives that give an account of the origin of the Order. Even so, the light that guides us in 1248 is very dim. Many questions remain unanswered. All the statutes enacted at the General Chapters which assembled before 1410 are, sad to say, lost. We have but little historical data in connection with the first monasteries of the Crosier Fathers; therefore we must continue to proceed cautiously. On the other hand, we have discovered some elements which, though few in number, can be said with historical certitude to be constituent parts of the structure.

THE DEFINITE ORGANIZATION

What was the position of the Order in 1248? Did it march along with the great religious movement of the time, known as the "Negotium Crucis," the service of the Cross? Neither the decrees of approbation nor the earliest constitutions attest to this. But as Dr. Haass rightly observes, new monastic orders are usually called into existence to meet a particular spiritual need at a given period of time. If such be the case, the Order of the Holy Cross was organized in 1248 for the purpose of joining the soldiery in the service of the Cross.

In the bull of approbation, the newly organized religious were called Fratres Sanctae Crucis Huyenses, the Brethren of the Holy Cross at Huy; and Crucis Servitores, the Servants of the Cross. The constitutions ordained that they wear a cross upon their cloak and scapular and that all their churches be dedicated in honor of the Holy Cross. It was not long before a peculiar devotion to the Cross characterized their way of life. The very fact that within a few years, communities were established at Toulouse (1256)—the headquarters of the Albigensian heresy—and in Paris (1258) may very well indicate some connection with the Crusades. On the other hand, if this was the case, it is hard to understand why the original constitutions do not contain a single statute about the preaching of the Crusades, or, for that matter, why they lay less stress on preaching than the constitutions of the Dominicans.

It should also be remembered that at that time, especially in the land of Liege, mystical devotion to the Cross and Passion was in full bloom, and this particular devotion undoubtedly entered into the spirit of this newly-founded institution. This belief confirms what Russelius has told us about the influence

of Maria of Oignies had on Theodore. From Father R. Haass we learn that this saintly Beguine, because of her sharp insight and sound judgement, was highly esteemed by those classes who strove earnestly after the realization of the primitive Christian ideals. It was chiefly the contemplation of Christ's Passion that impelled her to renounce the world completely, and in all her later life the devotion to the poor and suffering Jesus held a most prominent place. Hence Dr. Haass believes that the religious ideal of Oignies was a decisive factor in forming the peculiar character of the Order of the Brethren of the Holy Cross; the more so, since the first successor of Theodore was likewise in close contact with her. This opinion is strengthened by the fact that later on the Crosier Fathers often acted as spiritual directors of the Beguines. This historical fact surely suggests a parallel religious trend.

Likewise what may be called the Augustinian element shows the influence of Oignies on Clairlieu. The decree of approbation states that the Crosier Fathers chose to live according to the Rule of St. Augustine. Who selected this rule and why? The question remains unanswered. But we know that the Rule of St. Augustine was the only written law at Oignies. It is also quite possible that the exemplary way of life of the Canons of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem (which, as Russelius reminds us, was constantly present in Theodore's mind) influenced the selection of this rule. And finally, the intrinsic superiority of the Rule itself may well have been the decisive factor. It is rather difficult to adapt the Rule of St. Benedict to the care of souls, but the Rule of St. Augustine—while laying stress on the community life—is still compatible with this function. It was this Rule that St. Norbert and St. Dominic had chosen as the groundwork of their ideals. The Fourth Lateran Council obliged the founders of new religious orders to adopt one of the four extant and approved monastic rules. At that time St. Augustine was the protagonist of the spiritual life as well as of philosophy and theology. Many religious institutions in the land of Liege were being guided by the Rule of St. Augustine and the regular canons in particular deemed this Rule very suitable to their ideal.

The canonical character the newly-founded order assumed undoubtedly aided in the selection of this Rule. For it is beyond doubt that in 1248 the Order of the Brethren of the Holy Cross emerged as an order of Canons Regular. In the decree of approbation it is called "Ordo Canonicus," a Canonical Order. The formula used in the decree is similar to the one

used for the Premonstratensians, a formula quite unlike the one used, for instance, in the case of mendicants. In the original constitutions the clerici are called canonici. In contrast with the constitutions of the Dominicans, those of the Crosier Fathers gave precedence to the chanting of the Divine Office above the apostolate. On the other hand, the mandate concerning the ceremony of the weekly washing of the feet—a custom prevalent among the canons—was inserted in their constitutions. In the choir they wore the almutium, the hooded fur cape used by canons. Moreover, the Crosier Fathers always observed some kind of "Stabilitas Loci," the stability of domicile. The sum of all these facts affirms what Russelius has written, namely that the founder had been a canon himself and called to life an order of Canons Regular as a reaction against the decadence of the canonical way of life.

It likewise confirms what Russelius relates regarding the influence of the mendicants in general and that of St. Dominic in particular on the founder of the Order. For in some way, the Brethren of the Holy Cross were canons after a fashion all their own. They did not adopt the internal organization which was the norm among the other canons. Their monasteries were no autonomous abbeys with an abbot at the head; they were priories with only partial autonomy. They were independent only in so far as each house possessed the right to accept novices and admit them to profession, to establish filial communities, and to elect its own local prior and novice master. And although the members pronounced their vows in favor of an individual house, they actually promised obedience to the Prior-General in the formula of profession. With the exception of this relative Stabilitas Loci, of which the constitutions of the Dominicans make no mention, practically all statutes which pertain to the government of the Order and a great number of other statutes were copied almost verbatim from the constitutions of the Order of Preachers. The Crosier Fathers also made the Dominican breviary and missal their own with the addition of some proper feasts. Dr. Haass even calls attention to the similarity between the monastic habit of the Crosier Fathers and the garb of the Dominicans. He also notes that both orders called their members "Fratres,"¹³

In the observance of the vow of poverty, the Crosier Fathers approached closely to the ideal of the mendicants. In the building of monasteries they used more moderation than the Dominicans. As early as 1318, the Crosiers petitioned for the privilege of collecting alms and actually made use of that privi-

lege. On the flyleaves of a manuscript of the fourteenth century, the Brethren of the Holy Cross are depicted as monks who walk barefooted, abstain from all fleshmeat, and in general have all the characteristics of mendicants, except that the Crosier Fathers could hold possessions in common. For this privilege (common ownership of all goods) they had petitioned Rome explicitly already in 1248 and the privilege was granted. In this respect, therefore, their conception of poverty differs greatly from that followed by the mendicants.

Thus we see that the newly-founded Order of the Holy Cross was, so to speak, a composite of distinct elements, some taken from the canons regular, some from the mendicants, with the cult of the Holy Cross as a distinguishing mark of its own.

Does not all this data appear to be a normal development of what Russelius has written about the origin and the founder of the Order? And this being the case, what reason do we have to reject the particulars he gives us about the life of the founder? For Russelius has in truth written with great care and "from the ancient documents." Or would it be presumptuous to suppose that, as regards many of these particulars, Russelius did what is frequently done in relating the origin of human institutions—that he clothed it with every conceivable detail in order to make the beginning more outstanding? For while it is true that any new monastic order is called into being with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, He frequently conceals Himself behind weak human efforts. All beginnings need not, of necessity, be glorious.

The Order In The Course Of History



Now that we have concluded this historical inquiry, let us make an effort to get a somewhat deeper insight into the spiritual mentality of the medieval Crosier Fathers and watch its development until the present time. To paint a general picture will be a difficult task since this mentality unfolds itself gradually. In the labor of gathering into a specific whole scattered data which have been lying about for centuries, one incurs the risk of not giving a fully objective account and of falling into exaggeration. Because of the want of adequate documents dating from the first two centuries of the life of the Order, we shall be forced to judge that period in the light of those later documents which in some way reflect the primitive spirit. Proceeding cautiously, as is required in attempts of this kind, we venture on the following plan.

First we shall try to form an idea as close as possible to what may be called the Primitive Medieval Spirit. Next we shall point out the main Newer Trends that reveal themselves gradually, till step by step we approach the Crosier Fathers of the twentieth century. In this connection the words medieval and new are both to be taken in a rather broad sense. What we call a medieval ideal may stretch to the beginning of the eighteenth century, and what we term new ideas may have been injecting themselves into the original ideal of the Order from the fourteenth century on. As in general history, it is not always an easy task to draw the exact line between the Middle Ages and the modern era.

The word new may also have the meaning of "recently manifested, recognized or experienced." What appears to be a new trend may in many instances be only a particular trait of the Order which was unnoticed for a long time and suddenly

came into view. Or it may be simply a shifting of the center of gravity from one aspect to another. New activities are often but different manifestations of an identical endeavor. Even in instances where firmly established practices are being set aside their gist will continue to function in one form or another. Outward circumstances and influences may at times bring about alterations in the way of life of a religious order, but all spiritual life will be of the same nature as that of the seed from which it sprouted.

It would likewise be erroneous to regard every new trend as a decline of, or deviation from, the noble ancient standard of perfection. Each era has its own problems, its own ideas, its own spiritual needs. And the spirituality of a religious order especially if the order is not strictly contemplative, bears testimony thereto. To adapt oneself to the times, at least to a certain extent, is by no means a mistaken idea. On the contrary, it frequently becomes an imperative duty. This has always been the practice of the Church, which throughout the whole course of its history has consistently adopted this policy of adjustment.

THE PRIMITIVE MEDIEVAL SPIRIT

The Life of Prayer

It is still a moot question as to whom the Crosier Fathers were more closely associated, to the Canons Regular or to the Mendicants, during the first centuries of their existence. H. Van Rooyen and A. Ramaekers stress very strongly the canonical character of the Order. R. Haass, on the other hand, leans towards the other opinion; for, while conceding that from the very beginning the Order was juridically without question a Canonical Order, he believes that as far as the inner spiritual life was concerned, it was patterned more closely after the ideal of the Mendicants. "The first Brethren of the Holy Cross," he writes, "approached nearer to the Preaching Friars than to the Choir Canons."

We shall make no attempt here to solve this question. We dare, however, make this claim (which we are able to substantiate), that the single thought that animated the Order of

the Holy Cross has been that in their daily life community prayer should have the first attention. The officium divinum, the obligation of the choir, and the daily conventual Mass were to have precedence over all other duties and exercises. It is true that St. Dominic also retained the old monastic religious life in so far as it was feasible to do so. He kept intact the rather austere statutes regarding fast and abstinence, statutes even more severe than those the Crosier Fathers were to adopt later on. He likewise kept all exercises connected with the choir, even the nocturnal office. But all these regulations were made adaptive to the apostolic aim of the Order. For this reason the superiors were granted the power to dispense from the constitutions "expressly in those statutes which are thought to hinder the studies, the work of preaching and the welfare of souls in general; since it is well known that from its very origin it has been the aim of our Order to encourage preaching and promote the salvation of souls, and all our endeavors must be directed above all to the end in which we can be of the greatest advantage to the salvation of souls."¹⁴ The choir was to be recited rather quickly: "The Divine Office must be recited in the Church briefly and concisely, in such a manner that the brethren may not have to forego their spiritual exercises, and so that their studies may be interrupted as little as possible . . . by not prolonging the voice at the pause or at the end of the verse."¹⁵ The ideal of St. Dominic was a vita apostolica—an apostolic life—wherein, though a prominent place was given to contemplation, the care of souls was to be regarded as the first obligation in conformity with the maxim, "Contemplata aliis tradere"—To acquaint others with the truths on which we have meditated."

The Crosier Fathers did not follow St. Dominic into the field of the educational apostolate. It was undoubtedly their aim to combine some form of apostolic labor with the conventual monastic life. Yet they continued to lean toward the latter; they adhered more to their introspective, contemplative mode of living. This explains why, in adopting the constitutions of the Dominicans, they not only struck out the above mentioned statutes which set forth the peculiar aim of the Dominicans, but also left out the entire chapter "Concerning Preachers," and "Concerning Students" with the exception of a few excerpts. It likewise makes it clear why they made alterations in the directions concerning the choir. This is all the more significant, since the remainder of the Dominican text has been copied almost verbatim. In the first place, after the

example of the feudal abbeys, they had no inclination to hurry when praising the Lord: "The canonical hours must be recited slowly, prolonging the voice at the pause and at the end of the verse."¹⁶ The chanting of the Divine Office was to remain their most important obligation. This chanting was to be carried out with care, yes, even with solemnity. For, although the constitutions retained the verbal expression of the Dominican text, "horae dicantur," later documents furnish ample proof that the Divine Office was to be sung daily, at any rate in the houses where there was a sufficient number of brethren—where at least eight or nine religious resided. And from old antiphonaries which are still extant, it is evident that the expression cantare means more than to psalmodize.

It should be called to our attention that besides the daily office, the Fathers also recited the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin on a number of days. This custom was in vogue as early as 1415, at least as far as the choir was concerned. The Matins were chanted at midnight. This was done, the later spiritual writers explain, "in commemoration of our Lord's nativity." In order to make the exercises of the choir more impressive, many feast days of high rank were observed as prioral feasts. On such feast days, which date from 1434, the prior presided at the Divine Office and celebrated the Conventual Mass. This was not done to honor the prior, but to add luster to the festivity. At first these feasts were about twenty in number. The number of them, however, increased gradually till at the beginning of the seventeenth century the prioral feasts totalled about fifty. Hence, in order not to overburden the priors, a distinction was made in 1648 between prioral feasts, subprioral feasts, and prioral-or-subprioral-feasts-ad-libitum. At any rate, there were several days on which the Divine Office was celebrated with more than the usual solemnity.

In connection with the Divine Office mention should be made of the Capitulum Culparum or Chapter of Faults. At first this took place daily and was considered a liturgical action rather than an act of penance. The Crosier Fathers held it not at the end of the Prime as was the custom in other religious orders, but immediately before the Tierce. It was performed as follows: it opened with the reading of the Martyrology followed by the prayer "Pretiosa" (hence the name Pretiosa Solemnity, as the Capitulum was called in the writings of the Crosier Fathers for a long time), a short reading from the Scriptures or the Constitutions, and again some prayers; next the names of the

benefactors and those of the deceased brethren were read and Psalm 122 (Ad te levavi oculos meos) was recited for the living, and Psalm 129 (De profundis) for the deceased, both with the appropriate orations. The prior then delivered a short discourse and assigned to each of the brethren his work for the day. This latter performance was not mentioned in the constitutions but had become a custom. At the close, after the Fathers had confessed their transgressions, the prior gave the absolution and blessing. In this way, the Chapter became a transition from the time of prayer to the duties of the day, and joined, as it were, the whole of the daily tasks with the liturgy.

The evening collation taken on fast days was in reality a part of the Compline. It began in the refectory with the reading of the lectio brevis (during this reading the Fathers were allowed to drink something) and was continued in the church. Each Thursday at the ceremony of the washing of the feet, the graceful antiphons of the mandatum novum (new command) resounded: "Ubi caritas et amor Deus ibi est"—"Where charity and love are, God is."

In this way the Crosier Fathers developed their life of prayer in the atmosphere of the liturgy itself after the ideal of the canons. And although at present that life of prayer has not yet been expounded in all its aspects, we may well say that the celebration of the liturgical mysteries was regarded as the chief official duty of the Crosier Fathers, and that throughout the entire history of the Order the liturgical life occupied a prominent place in the mind of the genuine Brother of the Holy Cross. The liturgical works which the calligraphers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries embellished with graceful miniatures were not only products of art, but also fruits of piety.

In order to comprehend more fully the spiritual conceptions which more than all others rendered the life of the medieval Crosier Fathers fruitful, we must obtain a more profound knowledge of the nature of their liturgy. We may say that in general it remained exclusively Dominican until the seventeenth century. Then it began to assume a character of its own by raising some feasts to a higher rank and by introducing new ones. Some of the latter became what may be called proper feasts, such as those in honor of the Holy Cross, St. Augustine and St. Odilia. In conformity with the spirit of the Church, the Sanctorale (that part of the Divine Office which deals with the lives of the saints) did not have a very wide scope during the first centuries. Attention was centered mainly on the

mysteries of the ecclesiastical year. Even when the feast days of the Saints began to be more observed, the Crosier Fathers continued to adhere to the commemoration of the mysteries, especially during the seasons of Advent and Lent.

Very little is known about the practice of private devotions during the first centuries of the existence of the Order. The recitation of the Psalter, the celebration of Holy Masses and the offering up of prayers was prescribed as suffrages for the deceased brethren. It was the duty of the novice master to instruct his novices in the making of good and frequent confessions; confession was obligatory before profession. The laybrothers and the donati were allowed to receive Holy Communion about ten times a year. A statute from before 1466 hints that priests said Mass at least once a week. The Conventual Mass was celebrated daily. For the rest nothing is said about Holy Communion and Masses except that they could be forbidden as a punishment. Mention is also made of the prostration at the consecration and elevation. Devotion towards the Holy Eucharist is indicated by the exemplary actions of several Master Generals; Ecorad of Orsoy (1492) and Cornely of Clotingen (1512) had Holy Mass celebrated daily in the sick-room during their illnesses. This is about all the information available at present about private devotions practiced during the first centuries. It is, of course, evident that the data at our disposal at present is insufficient to give us a complete understanding of them.

Penances

To an intense life of prayer the first Crosier Fathers joined a life of penance, which was very austere in comparison with our present standards. They kept a strict fast on all weekdays from September 14 until Easter. The term "to fast" had a more concrete and limited meaning in those days than it has today. On fast days only one full meal was allowed along with only a collation in the evening at which the brethren were permitted to take some liquid. The one meal consisted of a cibus quadragesimalis (a Lenten dish without meat) which was made up of different kinds of food according to the custom of each region. All Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays were days of abstinence. The use of fleshmeat was likewise forbidden during the forty days before Christmas and from Septuaginta Sunday till Easter. Dispensations, however, were

granted to the sick and infirm.

The Crosier Fathers wore the large tonsure. They were obliged to make use of discipline very frequently. A hygienic as well as ascetic measure was the minutio, the bloodletting which took place four times a year. The observance of the silence was very exact. The original constitutions are silent about recreation, but documents of a later date hint at some form of diversion. At first the silence at table was never dispensed with. Later on (1416) dispensation was granted occasionally when a dignitary was present; but in that case, the seven penitential psalms had to be recited by the community as an act of reparation. Every night the circator made the rounds to discover the occasional confabulantes (those who broke the major silence) and to make a charge against them. In their choice of clothing, furniture, traveling expenses and the building of monasteries, the first Crosier Fathers were directed to show simplicity and the spirit of poverty. A mandate says that the garments of rough wool¹⁷ and the white color of the habit were considered symbols of the spirit of poverty. The Crosiers desired to keep as much as possible the natural color of the material; dyeing was considered a luxury.

Like the constitutions of the Dominicans, those of the Crosier Fathers obliged only under punishment unless a formal precept or contempt were involved. The main purpose of those punishments was to humble the transgressor. The penance for clamatio and proclamatio (self accusation or accusation by others) consisted in the recitation of one or more psalms. For faults of a more serious nature the punishment consisted of fasting on bread and water, scourging before the Chapter, etc. Anyone convicted of a public mortal sin (*culpa gravior*) was demoted for a long time to the lowest place in his rank; he was not allowed to take his place at the common table, but had to take his meals (coarse bread with water) sitting on the floor; even the fragments that were left were not to be mixed with those left from the common table as a mark of his separation from the other members of the community. For the duration of such a period of penance the offender was not admitted to the kiss of peace and had to prostrate himself in front of the door either of the church or of the refectory when the other brethren entered. He was also deprived of active and passive vote and forbidden to say Mass, preach or receive Holy Communion. The monastic dungeon was in use since 1421 "to confine and imprison brethren guilty of crime." And in case of extreme necessity incorrigible malcontents could be forcibly

expelled from the Order or delivered into the hands of the civil authorities.

Activities

We do not know if the medieval Crosier Fathers ever performed any manual labor. We do know that in the main this was the task assigned to the lay brothers. The original constitutions already made a distinction between the fratres clerici and the fratres conversi (lay brothers). It was the task of the latter to perform the domestic duties assigned to them. They were to be present at the chanting of the Divine Office without taking part in it; instead they recited a fixed number of Our Fathers. From the fifteenth till the seventeenth century there were also donati in the Order. They were individuals who gave themselves and their worldly possessions to the service of the Order. Their juridical standing as well as their way of life differed somewhat from those of the other members. Their habit was patterned after that of the Carthusian donati.

As to the fratres canonici it is difficult to point out exactly what field they worked in the beginning. A number of the statutes of the constitutions give the impression that they went out preaching: "The preachers are to be zealous in preaching." It may very well have been that at first their preaching was intended as a participation in the Crusades and the combat against the heretics, since Russelius mentions the fact that the first followers of Theodore took an active part in both. Mention is also made of confessors. From the fact, however, that in the thirteenth century the ecclesiastical authorities did not ordinarily allow non-mendicants to perform pastoral work outside the jurisdiction of their own Order, we may rightly surmise that the care of souls was not one of their principal activities at that time. We know of a few isolated instances, such as Paris, Tournay and Beyenburg, but we get the impression that the Middle Age Crosier Fathers entered into this field very cautiously. They continued to cling to the ancient monastic ideal, which reminded them constantly that it was their principal duty to sing the praises of the Lord and to take to heart the salvation of their own soul by fleeing from the world. As we shall notice presently, although pastoral work would gradually receive their more earnest consideration, it remained subject to and connected as closely as possible with their canonical duties.

E. De Moreau calls it "predication sedentaire"—slothful preaching. Warnings to this effect will be sounded till the seventeenth century.

The original constitutions, furthermore, instruct the brethren to be intent in their studies and the scriptores likewise in their writings. However, since no Crosier documents from the thirteenth century and only a handful from the fourteenth have been discovered, it is very difficult to determine what the first Crosier Fathers actually accomplished in this field. The earliest data at our disposal causes us to believe that they were rather distrustful of what we will call material cultural values. They were forbidden to study philosophy and the profane sciences without the permission of the highest authority in the Order: "The Brethren are not permitted to read profane authors or philosophical works even if till now they have studied them; neither are they allowed to acquaint themselves with the secular sciences or the so-called liberal arts, unless occasionally either the Prior of Huy or the General Chapter has seen fit to grant dispensation of one or the other; both young and old are given leave to read theological writings only." ¹⁸ This aversion to the profane sciences was widespread among the ecclesiastics of those days. Since they did not always know how to discern the truth from the falsehood, they looked upon them as detrimental to the faith. In this regard it is indeed noteworthy that the Dominicans (whose peculiar aim it was to foster pastoral work by means of education) kept this statute in their constitutions. Yet the first Crosier Fathers went even beyond this aversion. They showed somewhat of a distaste even for theology, and for that matter, for all forms of education. The Order was already two centuries old before it sent any students to the university. And, although in the centuries that followed students were sent now and then to these higher institutions of learning, they were not permitted to climb to a doctorate, except with special permission. As late as the seventeenth century one of the General Chapters still sounded the warning: "The assembled brethren ought to deem a pious and humble life of greater worth than a certificate of a degree in science." This state of mind was undoubtedly a heritage from the ancient monastic ideal expressed in the words of St. Jerome: "It is befitting a monk to be not a learned man but a lamentater."¹⁹ St. Bernard and nearly all spiritual writers of that period held the same belief more or less. Study was to be encouraged in as far as it nourished the spiritual life; in all other respects the religious should strive after simplicity.

There is other data which points out that spirit of simplicity. King John II of France, surnamed "the Good," offered his confessor John de Manneville—Prior of the monastery in Paris and afterwards Prior-General of the Order (1355-1358)—the bishoprics of Meaux and Laon; the Chronicles state expressly that the latter refused the offer out of humility. Master General Cornely de Clottingen (1500-1520) could never be persuaded to grant any of his subjects permission to become auxiliary bishop of Liege: "So much did this humble religious fear that such a distinction would impair the spirit of modesty and humility in the minds of his subjects and introduce among them the love for honors and display."²⁰ Many Master Generals, among them Wilhelm a Rivol (1512-1521) called themselves "totius ordinis Sanctae Crucis Dei patiencia magister generalis"—by the forbearance of God, Master General of the entire Order of the Holy Cross.

There are many other indications which remind us of this spirit of simplicity. There are hardly any traces which indicate that during the first two centuries after the foundation of the Order its members manifested any liking for calligraphy or any sentiment for art in the building of their churches and monasteries. The statute about "houses along moderate lines" is indeed significant. The dimensions were still smaller than those specified in the constitutions of the Dominicans. The walls of the monastery could not be more than fifteen feet in height—ten feet without the attic; those of the church no more than twenty feet. No arches were to be built except in the sanctuary of the church and above the sacristy.

Mystical Disposition

The first Crosier Fathers belonged to the Middle Ages heart and soul. The spirit of Christianity animated the medieval man. He entertained practically but one ideal, that of salvation, and all cultural standards were subordinate to it. Yet, in spite of this high ideal, the Middle Age Christian remained a weak human being, liable to sin. And he did sin, sometimes grievously. But to him sin was manifest as sin and this reflexion urged him to perform austere penances and to submit himself to various forms of painful corporal mortifications. It is true that at times he suffered such punishments under compulsion. This fact is demonstrated by the existence of dungeons built underneath the monasteries as well as by the

practice of delivering the guilty one into the hands of the civil authorities. Such a mode of procedure was not inconsistent at a time when Church and State cooperated fully, and people were very eager to engage in combat, even for religious ideals. And the Middle Age religious practices conformed themselves completely to the medieval spirit of cooperation. The guilds and other organized groups of that time were not only associations of men joined together in the pursuit of a common material welfare; they were also semi-religious societies impregnating the whole of society with a strong belief in the efficacy of public prayers. And thus it was the liturgy rather than private devotion which nourished the religious life of those days. Concerning this matter of piety, there remains one more element to be explained which we have not discussed so far, namely the medieval Christian's inclination to mysticism. In his various studies of the Brethren of the Holy Cross, H. Van Rooyen lays considerable stress on this important feature. If we are earnestly intent upon forming a correct mental image of the inner life of the medieval Crosier Fathers, we must not content ourselves with studying their religious exercises and penitential practices or with recounting the statutes which regulated their outward life. For the people of the Middle Ages understood better than any other generation before or after how to reach the core of Christianity. And in its very essence Christianity is not first of all a source of morality, a way to asceticism, a form of activity on the part of man. A Christian life is more accurately described as the joyful acceptance of a gift from God's loving benevolence, the extreme joy and rapture caused by the contemplation of God's fatherhood, and active cooperation with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In other words, in its inmost being Christianity is above all a mysticism. "And for this reason," H. Van Rooyen writes, "no one will ever be able to fathom the spirit of a medieval religious order, unless he has attained to a thorough understanding of its mystical leanings. The Middle Age Christians still remembered the triumphant shouts of children, the exclamations of delight for God's marvelous goodness and for the tender mercy of His sweet Mother; the unadulterated jubilation for the beauties of creation. But they could also cry like children, and then they were like children, susceptible to a word of consolation." But they also knew how to persecute the old man with a deadly hatred.

It is indeed regrettable that the data we possess about the life of the first Crosier Fathers is too scanty to determine what was their perception of God, Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin

and creation in general. In this line, however, there is extant a well-written treatise composed in the fourteenth century. It bears the title Vestis Nuptialis—The Wedding Garment—a name which the Middle Ages gave to the distinctive apparel worn in choir. Its author is the Prior-General Peter Pincharius (1382). Following the trend prevalent in the Middle Ages, Pincharius attaches a symbolic meaning to the various parts of the monastic dress, amplified by many texts of Sacred Scripture and of the Holy Fathers; it treats of the spiritual life in the usual method of three stages—statu incipientium, proficientium, perfectorum.²¹ Its contents, however, are more of an ascetical than of a mystic nature. This feature is easily explained by the fact that the treatise was written at a time when the monastic discipline was on the decline and manifold efforts were being made to restore it; and after all, a genuine asceticism is the only kernel out of which mysticism can bud forth.

A few documents dated from the fourteenth century demonstrate that such a process actually came to pass among the Crosier Fathers. Furthermore, a great number of manuscripts and spiritual works written in later centuries prove that, under the influence of the New Devotion and Humanism, their religious life was a survival of the original monastic spirit. The Crosier Fathers of the fifteenth century transcribed not only the works of the Fathers of the Church (such as St. Augustine, St. Bernard and many others), but likewise and even preferably the writings of Ruysbroeck, Henry Suso, Hildegard Van Bingen, Elizabeth van Schonau, Mechtild, Birgitta of Sweden, and so forth. In those times more than in our day, the library was esteemed as the "very valuable treasury of religion . . . and the armor of the spiritual soldiery"²²—a mirror of the spiritual life. Hence Doctor Haass rates the Brethren of the Holy Cross as inclined to mysticism and speaks of the monastery at Marienfrede among others as a center of mystical life in the fifteenth century.

The library of the major seminary at Liege is in possession of a manuscript written in the fifteenth century and originally belonging to the Crosier Fathers at Huy. It contains a legendary account of the origin of the Order. Again and again mention is made of the "mysterium crucis"—the mystery of the Cross—which unveiled itself in the institution of the Order. The Order itself is given the name of "ordo tam mystice institutus," the order instituted in such a mystic way. The founding of the Order is avowed to be visible work of God.

A memoir written in the seventeenth century and discovered in Paris relates that an angel appeared to Theodore de Celles and told him that the members of his Order should wear a red and white cross upon their chest. Such tales are devoid of historical value, but they bear testimony to the mystic tendencies of the writers. Heaven was close to them. This fact will become clearer when later in this study we shall dwell on the legend of the appearance of St. Odilia. Russelius himself portrays Theodore as an ecstatic contemplative of the Passion and Cross of Jesus Christ. In following sections we shall expound the particular devotion which the mystery of the Cross injected into the life of the Crosier Fathers. Yet, we shall not be able to discover the true spirit that animated the medieval Brethren of the Holy Cross until we have succeeded in bringing to light the bountiful spiritual ideals preserved in the ancient documents.

NEW TRENDS

Pastoral Privileges

In 1318 at their own request, the Crosier Fathers were granted together with a partial exemption the privileges of Mendicants—namely, they were permitted to take upon themselves the duties of the pastorate and to go begging. Does this mean a change of attitude in respect to the care of souls? This question is difficult to answer since we do not know the precise reason why these privileges were requested. R. Haass is of the opinion that the Crosier Fathers, no less than the Mendicants, have always been well disposed toward pastoral labors, but that they were prevented from actually engaging in it by difficulties over which they had no control; therefore, in order to overcome these difficulties they asked for the privileges. It is, however, rather difficult to harmonize this opinion with what has been said previously of the precedence of the choir exercises and the canonical character of the Order. On the other hand, Haass may be right when he says that the year 1318 did not initiate a radical change in the inner attitude of the Order in respect to the apostolate. In that case, however, we must take into account the spirit in which the Crosier Fathers

devoted themselves to these labors. In contrast with the Dominicans, the Crosier Fathers did not consider the care of souls as their primary aim, even after 1518. The fact that in later years they appeared as staunch defenders of the Mendicants is easily brought in harmony with this view. However, we may say that in 1318 a change was brought about in so far as they then were enabled to expand their pastoral labors. And it is most likely for this reason that more frequent mention of them is made in later history.

It was likewise during these centuries that the Order enjoyed a remarkable outward growth. Whenever a new foundation was erected it became the fixed policy to come to an understanding with the bishop or the local pastor in respect to the exercise of the pastorate. In the fifteenth century the Crosier Fathers initiated the custom of serving parishes under their own jurisdiction, which as a rule were incorporated with one of their monasteries. It was their good fortune to preserve the Catholic faith in many parishes of the Rhineland during the Reformation. In this territory they also assumed the office of spiritual directors in several Beguine courts during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. R. Haass informs us that in the fifteenth century there were in Cologne alone six such courts which were served by the Crosier Fathers. They likewise acted now and then as canonical visitators. In France their parishes were frequently called "prieures-cures"—piorate-parsonages. We also know that in England the Crosier Fathers went out preaching and hearing confessions. For a while the Crosier Fathers also operated hospitals and hospices. Was this work an extension of their primitive solicitude for the pilgrims of which Russelius makes mention? It is still rather difficult to determine the nature of this work; at any rate we perceive clearly that the Crosier Fathers interested themselves more and more in various forms of pastoral work in proportion as the various ecclesiastical and human needs arose.

It is of the utmost importance that we investigate the true nature of the parochial work, in order to understand how these activities were brought into accord with the more contemplative trend in the Order, a trend which continued to predominate. In most instances the parochial duties were carried out without any weakening of the religious discipline. The privilege granted in 1318 was restricted to the care of souls "in their own churches." These churches were, as a rule, part of a monastic plant and were served by the members of the community. This was also the case in parishes "under their own

jurisdiction." Usually there was already a monastery in that locality. There were, it is true, exceptions to this rule; besides, many of these so-called monasteries were in fact but residences of a few priests who attended to the parochial duties. But in such a situation the superiors entertained almost invariably the wish of transforming such houses into complete monasteries, although this wish was not always realized.

From 1638 to 1854 about forty Crosier Fathers labored in the so-called "Missio Batava" in those parts of the Netherlands which were reduced to the status of a mission territory on account of the prevailing heresy. They, however, took part in this labor "with fear and trembling," and as a consequence their participation remained very restricted. The superiors were very apprehensive about sending their subjects into this field of labor where they were completely estranged from their monastic life. There had already been some abuses and these caused the superiors to be firmer in their attitude. We learn that in those days there were Crosier Fathers who attempted to secure for themselves a pastorate without the approval of their superiors. This was undoubtedly the reason why in 1632 the provincial chapter of Venlo enacted the decree that the years spent in a parish not under the jurisdiction of the Order were not to be counted as years of profession. It was the apprehension of such abuses which in the seventeenth century made a commentator on the constitutions sound a warning against what he called "the golden freedom" of the pastorate by quoting the words of a certain abbot: "As often as I have sent brethren into the apostolic field, I have sent them to their destruction."²³ It would, of course, be a misconception to ascribe such a mental attitude to the Order as a whole. Yet from what we have learned regarding this problem, we must draw the conclusion that parish work, though gradually more esteemed and more appreciated, remained secundum mentem ordinis—in the judgment of the Order—greatly subordinate to the practice of prayer and the performance of penance for the Brethren of the Holy Cross. Keeping this in mind, we can readily understand why up till the nineteenth century the Crosier Fathers never entertained the thought of embarking upon the labors of the foreign mission field. While the Mendicants have been engaged in this kind of labor from the very beginning of their existence, the Crosier Fathers have left no sign, either in their constitution or in their activities, that they ever had such an undertaking in mind until that time. Other reasons may be brought forward, such as the relatively small membership

of the Order, various difficulties from without and from within, and the fact that the Church did not stimulate the missionary activity then as she does today. Yet the fact remains that the general state of mind, which invariably continued to lean toward the inner life, has undoubtedly exerted great influence upon this apparent apathy. The historical meaning of the words "Canons Regular" implies the idea of contemplation and of the liturgy as well as that of pastoral labors. In other words, it signifies the apostolate originating from and carried out by means of the liturgy of the Church.

We may say with certainty that, although the Brethren of the Holy Cross placed great emphasis on the contemplative element of their albeit simple liturgical life, it is rather difficult to determine how far they have applied this liturgical concept to their apostolic labors.

New Devotion

Before explaining this relationship between the contemplative element and the active more in detail, we must make mention of a reform movement of a spiritual nature which originated in the Netherlands at the close of the fourteenth century and with which the Brethren of the Holy Cross were closely connected. We have in mind the movement which is called the "New Devotion." It was a movement, both ascetic and mystical, of which Gerard Grote (1293-1383) was the founder. It was exemplified by the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life and the Canons of Windesheim. To some extent the movement was influenced by the fervent mysticism of John van Ruysbroeck the Admirable (1293-1381), a friend of Gerard Grote. Recent studies of this movement have demonstrated that its peculiar characteristic is to be looked for not so much in a fresh spirituality (as for instance the "invention" of the methodical meditation) as in an earnest endeavor to elevate the religious life in general. "The newness of the New Devotion was not drawn from its theology although it was marked somewhat with the nature of a spirituality; its characteristic consisted rather in the ardor and zeal with which the Devotees practiced their religion in their daily life."

At the time this movement made its appearance, the Order of the Brethren of the Holy Cross was passing through a period of religious decline. The traits of this decline, which at the

same time were the agents that had brought it about, displayed themselves outwardly in a life of worldly affections; at the same time the Western Schism had caused a wide division within the Order. In 1410, however, a strong and successful movement to restore the original discipline began within the Order itself. A few of the monasteries in the Netherlands set this movement in motion; and although we are unable to indicate its spiritual background, we may rightly assume that the religious revival which the New Devotion brought forth was a mightily influential factor. This presumption becomes all the more probable if we take into consideration the close relationship that existed between the Order and the New Devotees during the decades that followed. And there exist many proofs of this relationship; to mention but a few instances: The transfer of the monastery at Osterberg to the Order of the Holy Cross; the gift of manuscripts by the Brothers of the Common Life to the monasteries at Cologne and Saint Agatha; the historical fact that many of the Brethren of the Holy Cross received their education at Deventer. Of special importance is the letter of recommendation which the Prior-General of the Crosier Fathers, Helmicus Amoris Van Zutphen, wrote in 1424 in defence of the Brothers of the Common Life. The General praises highly the virtuous and praiseworthy life of the Brothers; he defends them against those who suspect them of heresy and schism, testifies to their fidelity to the true doctrine of the Church and finally bears witness to the fact that many worthy individuals educated by the Brothers have "obtained entrance into our Order." Such an attitude serves as a strong indication not only of the intimate union which existed between the Brethren of the Holy Cross and the Brothers of the Common Life at that time, but also of a parallel spiritual tendency. Indeed, much material exists which can be used to demonstrate that an identical inner disposition enlivened both societies. According to Post, the Devotees valued piety above profound theological speculations. There existed hardly any contact between them and the universities. Humility and simplicity were esteemed as the greatest virtues. Their piety was more characteristic of the highly susceptible piety of a Bernard or Francis who chose Christ, the God Man, as their model and exemplar than of the more speculative and abstract piety of the Dominicans. Theirs was a piety more Christo-centric than theocentric, which laid more stress on the practice of virtues than on high speculations.

This portraiture of Post about the mentality of the Devo-

tees is in perfect harmony with what we mentioned above about the aversion of the medieval Crosier Fathers to cultural values, their attitude toward study and erudition, their dislike for offices of honor, and their ascetic-mystical inclinations. A supplement, added to the constitutions in 1466, decreed that at every general chapter and every canonical visitation the Priors were to tender their resignation from office. Such was also the custom among the Windersheimers. And are we not spontaneously reminded of Thomas a Kempis's detestation of the world, when we hear that the Prior-General Cornely de Clotingen bade the novices to keep in mind that a monastery is not a resort of pleasure, but rather a prison in which one locks himself up voluntarily? Previously Pincharius had written in a similar ascetic sense: "Why didst thou take up the cross? Is it not in order to subdue the flesh by fasting; is it not in order to blot out the stains of a luxurious life by self-denial; is it not in order to become as much as possible like unto Christ?" Later spiritual writers expressed themselves in the same vein.

The Brethren of the Holy Cross transcribed with the utmost care the writers of the foremost representations of the New Devotion, such as Gerard Grote, Thomas A Kempis, Gerard Zerbolt Van Zutphen and Johannes van Schoonhoven. Various writers and poets of the Order chose as their favorite topic the Imitation of Christ. In 1632 the very prolific spiritual writer Prior Herman Woestenraedt published a poem dedicated to the "opus aureum" of Thomas a Kempis: "The Imitation of Christ, arranged in four books, composed in metrical form—the golden book of Thomas a Kempis, the Little Hammer."²⁴ Jacobus Dardeius, a Father of Huy, edited in 1663 "Jesus on the Cross, the Imitation of Christ, by Thomas a Kempis; the royal road of the Holy Cross; a play in poesy."²⁵ Hermans mentions still others who wrote in poetry the Imitation, wholly or in part.

Their peculiar devotion to the Cross led the Brethren of the Holy Cross without difficulty to an effective veneration of the person of Christ. Let us again give ear to Pincharius: "Above all . . . it is incumbent upon a Crosier Father to meditate chiefly on the Passion of Our Lord; he must contemplate daily the life and death of Christ with zeal and fullness of heart."

The Fathers made many transcriptions of Rudolf van Saksen's well-known booklet of meditations on the life of Christ. In a library at Cologne, an ancient manuscript, originally the property of the Crosier Fathers, contains a "Breviary after the manner of the Brethren of the Holy Cross."²⁶ The text of

the breviary itself is preceded by a few private prayers which practically all have reference to the suffering Jesus. One of these directs itself to the various parts of Christ's body which were afflicted during His Passion: "Hail venerable head... hail most handsome face... hail eyes... mouth and throat... ears... neck... hands and arms, chest... side... knees... feet... body... blood... soul of Christ."²⁷ To this similar passages from different manuscripts could be added.

The monastery of Marienfrede has left behind two manuscripts dated from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries respectively abounding in sentiments of devotion toward the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

We may therefore truly maintain that the Brethren of the Holy Cross allied themselves closely with the spirituality of St. Bernard and St. Francis. In this connection we may also mention the fact that the writings of St. Bernard as well as the spiritual literature of the Franciscan school showed forth markedly in the manuscripts of the Crosier Fathers. Haass is of the opinion that they clearly showed a predilection for the Speculum Perfectionis (Mirror of Perfection), a work which reflects more perfectly than any other the ideal of St. Francis. They transcribed likewise the Soliloquium, itinerarium mentis in Deum (the Soliloquy, a guidebook for the mind towards God) of Bonaventure and other Franciscan writings. At the same time the works of the spiritual writers and prominent theologians of the Dominicans were much copied, in some instances, even to a greater extent than those of the Franciscans. The Brethren of the Holy Cross also took a great interest in the speculative mysticism of Ruysbroeck and in the spiritual writings of Bede, Dionysius the Carthusian, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, and many others. However, a more thorough study of these manuscripts will be necessary to determine on which element they laid particular stress.

At any rate we may rightly conclude that their spiritual life was in a very high degree Christo-centric. And as their own spiritual writers testify, their piety was more of a practical than of a speculative type. In this regard they undoubtedly were one with the New Devotees. We might point out other similarities between the two societies such as the sympathy of both with the Nominalists (Gerson for example) and their liking for writing as an occupation of which we shall treat in the following section. We may therefore accept as a historical fact the existence of spiritual kinship between the Crosier Fathers and the New Devotees, and the great influence of the latter on

the former. Or rather, it is perhaps nearer to the true state of affairs to assert with Haass that there existed a "mutual fructification."

What new element did the New Devotion introduce into the original ideal of the Brethren of the Holy Cross? We must seek the answer to this question not in a particular new spirituality or in a change of attitude in regard to their customary religious exercises and activities. The Crosier Fathers of the fifteenth century leaned strongly toward the contemplative life although they expanded their pastoral activities and conducted one school at Tournay, while the Devotees and their adherents lived a vita mixta—a mixed life. The new element consisted in a more earnest and more zealous striving after the ancient original ideal of the Order, their main aim being to become more Christo-centric. What has been said thus far of the influence of the New Devotion on the invigoration of the monastic spirit among the Crosier Fathers should not be misconstrued as if that influence were direct, as was the case with many other religious Orders. The restoration of the religious discipline in 1410 originated among the Crosier Fathers themselves. Yet the widespread spiritual atmosphere created by the New Devotion was undoubtedly an inestimable aid in the execution of this restoration, at least in the regions of the North. In this way did the fifteenth century become for the Crosier Fathers an era of utmost inner strength, and at the same time one of a great outward expansion. The number of monasteries rose to about eighty. The Order therefore was fortified inwardly; she was in a strong position not only to withstand the assaults of the Reformation and remain in the faith, but also to contribute in no small measure to the preservation of the Catholic religion and the adherence to the Church in those regions where she was mostly represented—the Rhineland and the Netherlands.

Humanism and the Counter Reformation

The cultural movement which in history brought about the transition from the Middle Ages to the modern era is known by the name of Humanism or the Renaissance. The fondness for the profane arts fostered by this movement gradually created an interest in exclusively human cultural values, even in Christian and religious societies. The New Devotion, though essentially a religious movement, soon felt the influence of

this interest. This is plainly manifested by the predisposition the Devotees showed in transcribing the classical authors. It is not impossible that it was through this route that Humanism found entrance among the Crosier Fathers. At any rate there are strong indications that from the fifteenth century on, they began to show a considerable interest in erudite writings and calligraphy; the monasteries of Dusseldorf, Cologne, Hohenbusch, Marionfrede, Huy, Liege and St. Agatha especially housed very prolific scriptoria. The principal aim of these labors was to endow the libraries of their own monasteries with spiritual and cultural works. However, on occasion the transcription was done for monetary considerations. The constitutions prohibited transcribing on Sundays and holy days. J. Stiennon relates the story of a certain copyist who had overlooked this statute. The good monk closed his work with the notification that the manuscript could not be sold because he had worked on it on Sundays. The beautiful workmanship of the manuscript is an undeniable proof that the transcriber had the best of intentions; the copying of a sacred text was considered a participation in the opus Dei—the labor for God. Many amanuenses (copyists) signed the manuscript with their name, the monastery in which they made their profession, and other such information. Among the transcribers we find occasionally the name of a deacon and even (but rarely) that of a cleric or novice.

Other amanuenses affixed their signature to but one of their manuscripts or preferred to remain anonymous. It also happened sometimes that a confrere erased the name of the copyist, which was entered again by a third one. Hence it appears that humility vied with the love for art and culture. It is evident that the latter was esteemed very highly, for manuscripts are still in existence which possess a great artistic and cultural value. The libraries of the University and of the major seminary at Liege alone own at present some four-hundred-odd manuscripts which formerly belonged to the monasteries of the Crosier Fathers, and which for the greater part were transcribed by the Fathers themselves. In 1951 the university considered it worth-while to open an exposition of manuscripts which in the fifteenth century were the property of the monasteries of Liege, Huy and St. Agatha. The bibliographers called this collection "Une aubaine scientifique et didactique," a storehouse of science and knowledge, which in itself furnished us a complete history of the art of copying and which at the same time presents an ideal opportunity for studying the various

stages the artists went through before applying the final touch to the product. This final touch gives us abundant proof of their mastership in the art of bookbinding. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the monasteries of Huy, Liege, Namur, Tournay and Maestricht have indeed bequeathed valuable works of art in this line.

As a masterpiece in the art of miniatures, the graduals of Joannes Deventer deserve special mention. Joannes was a conventual of St. Agatha, and is called by a chronicler of the eighteenth century "a most renowned and eminent master of calligraphy."²⁸ His work is depicted as the "illustrious zenith of the last era of the art of miniature." And this pious artist has left us a striking example of the spirit in which this art was practiced. The artist has drawn a miniature of himself within the initial letter beginning the Introit of the Mass of the Vigil of the Assumption. He is seen kneeling at the feet of our Blessed Lady, who holds the Divine Infant in her arms. On a band which rises from the kneeling Crosier Father and winds itself completely around the figure of Our Lady, he has inscribed this prayer: "I beseech thee, O Mary, that by thy prayers thou wilt make this work acceptable to thy Son; for he rejects nothing which thou proposest, O Hope of the wretched; Joannes Deventer."²⁹ The Divine Infant is handing the Crosier Father a chaplet of red beads, a rosary. What piety and simplicity are contained in this minute detail of a great masterpiece.

Architecture began to be conceived in the same spirit. From the fifteenth century on, we perceive in the Order a remarkable tendency to build magnificent churches and sometimes even monasteries. Their attitude regarding "mediocres domus" was changed. Their increasing wealth undoubtedly was a factor in bringing this mental change about. Yet no work of art was considered too diffusive if it contributed to the service of God. It was on this account that the sanctuary, the choir stalls and the altars were artistically built. This mental attitude in respect to religious art reached its acme in the eighteenth century. Among the Crosier Fathers there were likewise skillful goldsmiths who produced artistic ciboria and monstrances, as well as capable builders of organs. Side by side with this fondness for art, novel concepts in regard to science and study came into vogue. Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas had been the pioneers of a scientific revolution which threw a new light on profane science in general and philosophy in particular by representing them not only as useful in themselves, but also as serviceable to the study of theology. In

default of documents, it is difficult to determine to what extent the Crosier Fathers went along with this revival at first. We do know for certain that in the fourteenth century one of the works of Aristotle was transcribed in the motherhouse at Huy. But there is ample evidence that in the fifteenth century the former mental attitude had been completely altered. By that time the ancient distrust of profane sciences had practically disappeared, although the warning "They shall not read philosophical works"³⁰ remained a statute of the constitutions for centuries. Until 1925 philosophical and scientific works were being transcribed as well as ascetic, theological and pastoral ones.

At the same time the study of theology was placed on a high level. The Prior-General Nicholas Van Haarlem (1472-1482) sent students to the universities of Paris, Louvain, Caen and Toulouse. In 1498 the Crosier Fathers erected a house of studies on the campus of the University of Louvain. About the same time, Cornelius Van Clotingen, who later was elected Prior-General, conducted a thriving theological school at Huy which was attended by many outsiders. During his term of office as Prior-General, Van Clotingen himself obtained his doctorate in theology at the University of Louvain. It is true that the statute requiring a special dispensation of the General Chapter to attain the degree of Doctor remained in force. Yet the number of those who obtained a licentiate kept on increasing. A few doctors became professors at the universities of Cologne, Paris and Caen. At Franeker (Friesland) plans were on foot to establish a Catholic University with the aid of the Crosier Fathers. Because of the rise of Protestantism, these plans came to naught. After a period of stagnation brought about by the disturbance of the Reformation, the Counter Reformation became a mighty incentive to an even greater love of study. The latter was put into effect for example by the establishment of "general regional study houses,"³¹ by attending the public debates (disputationes) at the universities, and by defending philosophical and theological theses in their own monasteries.

From what has been said thus far about studies, we should not draw the conclusion that the esteem for humanism and theology was as high as it is today. The decrees of the provincial chapter of the Meuse and Rhineland, in assembly at Cologne in 1675, plainly stipulated that the ordinary course in theology was to last but two years. And although not a few manuscripts of the fifteenth century bear witness to their interest in philosophy and letters, the fact remains that the Brethren were first

of all anxious to preserve the spiritual heritage of bygone centuries. The greater number of manuscripts treat of theology, Sacred Scripture and the writings of the Fathers of the Church; others are collections of sermons. Yet tomes on the spiritual life itself predominated in all the libraries. The Crosier Fathers still leaned strongly in that direction. This fact will be confirmed further on by what we shall learn about the writers of the Order.

Quite likely swayed by the Counter Reformation, the Crosier Fathers entered on an entirely new field of activity, namely that of the education of youth. This was accomplished either by opening Latin schools or by conducting common parochial schools. In the seventeenth century, many of these schools became greatly renowned. This was also the era in which most of the writings of the Crosier Fathers were published in print. During the preceding centuries, a few Crosier Fathers had occupied themselves with writing, but practically all of the "virii scriptis clari" whom Hermans mentions belong to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. With the exception of a few works on moral theology, Church history and philosophy, the writers interested themselves mainly in the history of their own Order and in works of a spiritual nature. The outstanding writer among them is undoubtedly the above-mentioned Pincharius, whose Vestis Nuptialis was revised and edited by the Crosier-humanist Aegidius de Vries in 1639. The names of some others have come down to us—Hermanus Voestenraedt, Thodorus Dalenius, Jacobus Dardeius, Arnoldus Hertzworms, Theodorus Candidus (Le Blanc) and Godefridus Van Lith. The last mentioned composed, besides other works, a very erudite and ascetic juristic commentary on the constitutions. In the archives preserved at St. Agatha, there is a first-rate commentary on the constitutions, written by hand. It is in all probability the work of the learned Prior of Cologne, Theodore Deghenns, and was written between 1679 and 1682 when the author filled the office of Provincial.

It is not an easy task to give a general outline of the spiritual writings of the Crosier Fathers.³² The works on the history of the Order and St. Odilia breathe forth a very great love for the Order and a genuine devotion towards its patroness. The commentaries on the constitutions lay special stress on the religious perfection which the Crosier Fathers must strive after. Among these may be counted such works as A Small Form of Devotion Concerning the Perfection of the Brethren of the Holy Cross,³³ An Allegory on the Meaning of the Cross We

Wear on Our Habit³⁴ and Revelations of a Deceased Crosier Father;³⁵ all three of these are of unknown authorship and composed in the fifteenth century. The Key of Heaven³⁶ (Cologne, 1628) by Dalenius belongs to the same category. Various writings of Woestenraedt aim to foster piety in daily life, for instance his The Monk or the Mystic Enlightening of the Recluse by Which the Servant of God is Inflamed to Love of the Spiritual Life³⁷ (Liege, 1621) and also his Dialogue between the Members of the Society of Jesus and the Brethren of the Holy Cross . . . about the Restoration of the Monastic Discipline among Religious.³⁸ As writings of a more or less general character, we may mention Spiritual Readings³⁹ by John Coci (1415), The Folly of the World or A Cure for the Seven Capital Sins⁴⁰ by William Portz (Cologne, 1687), and The Four Last Ends of Man⁴¹ (Liege, 1630) by Aegidius Colley. The Symbols of the Trinity⁴² by Candidus (Roermond, 1663) is an ingenious collection of 443 triune entities discovered by the author in Sacred Scripture, Church and profane history, science and nature. Each entity is described in a line of poetry. This work was undertaken for the Societies in honor of the Blessed Trinity which were established in some of the churches served by the Crosier Fathers.

A few booklets have been written to foster devotion to St. Joseph and our Blessed Mother. In 1675 the above-mentioned Theodore Candidus wrote a treatise in defence of the Immaculate Conception. The dedication of his writing plainly indicates that he interprets the sentiment of the whole Order. More than a century before this, Simon Van Asten, Prior and pastor of Wickrath (1525) had submitted a series of articles on "The Glory of the Immaculate Conception of Mary" to the theological faculty of Cologne. In regard to devotion to the Blessed Virgin, it would be worth-while to ascertain whether the well-known, Low German, Marian hymns composed in the fourteenth century by a Hans of Hansen are in reality the work of a Crosier Father. Brother Hans was a native of the Duchy of Cleve, and is pictured as a Crosier Father in various literary works. His Marian hymns form a large collection; the whole consists of six extensive metrical compositions, each containing more than one hundred strophes of seven lines in praise of Our Lady. If they could be proven to be the work of a Crosier Father, they would, in truth, constitute one of the most ancient and graceful forms of Marian devotion in the Order.

We should not forget to point out the symbolism contained in many of the titles. Vestis Nuptialis has already been men-

tioned. Hertzworms entitled his manual for retreats The Sacred Holidays⁴³ (Liege, 1648), and called his commentary on the Constitutions A Bright Light Placed Upon a Sacred Candlestick.⁴⁴ A booklet by Candidus on alms and generosity was called "Another Key of Heaven" (Roermond, 1676), as distinguished from the above-mentioned Clavis Coeli of Dalenius; it praises the honorable fame of the Order.⁴⁵ Woestenraedt prefaces one of his poems with the title The Hound of the Gospel,⁴⁶ and the "hound" growls against the corrupt practices prevalent in the Church among all classes of the clergy as well as of the laity.

Finally we may make the observation that, in general, the writings of the Crosier Fathers are devoid of lofty ideals and high learning; they aim rather to inculcate virtues and piety. They strongly recommend love of solitude, concern for liturgical prayers and the importance of spiritual reading; they lay stress on religious activities. But because of the dearth of manuscripts on the one hand and the multiformity of the subject matter on the other, it is in reality almost impossible to educe a peculiar form of spirituality from their writings, even though it is obvious that a special devotion toward Our Crucified Savior permeates them all. A great deal of research is yet to be done in this field. For instance, it would be an interesting study to investigate the copious volumes of manuscripts which copyists have left us and to determine which among them are from the hands of Crosier Fathers. For it is a fact that, notwithstanding the fair fecundity in this field during the seventeenth century, the Order of the Holy Cross has produced a comparatively small number of writers. This state of affairs naturally does not facilitate our task of discovering what spirit really animated them.

* * *

From what has been remarked thus far, it is evident that in the course of four centuries a gradual change had taken place in the spirituality of the Order. However, by 1500 the outward expansion, which had been on the increase till that time, had practically come to a standstill on account of the turmoil caused by the Reformation. The membership had decreased considerably while the field of pastoral and intellectual activity had widened. Consequently it became necessary—at first, only in particular places—to dispense with the singing of the Office and the rising at midnight. These dispensations were granted very cautiously and were restricted as much as possible; for instance, they were granted to individual mem-

bers (in most cases, to professors), or the community was permitted to recite a part of the Divine Office while the remainder was to be chanted. Moreover, the fact that the General Chapter was the only authority empowered to grant these dispensations amply proves that the Order attached great importance to the duties of the choir. It was also argued that the granting of these dispensations was somewhat counterbalanced by the practice of private devotions, which, in accordance with the spirit of the Church, began to occupy a more prominent place in the spiritual life of the Order. The first official regulations in regard to such practices as the weekly confession, yearly retreat and the retreat before the reception of the habit and before profession were all issued in the seventeenth century. Van Lith also mentions the examination of conscience. The establishment of the various general houses of study is an indication that serious efforts were being made to preserve the old spirit and the grandeur of the Divine Office as much as possible. Yet in reality, the shift from the contemplative to a more active life became very noticeable.

The penitential discipline likewise underwent a gradual modification; the daily Capitulum Culparum had already been discontinued for a long time; the strict fast could be dispensed with twice a week (General Chapter, 1463); at the collation a morsel of food was allowed. The alterations of activities and other circumstances had impelled these mitigations. Humanism had brought into being the more humanistic outlook on life; it stressed the harmony between nature and grace rather than the corruption of human nature. The improved financial situation which had come about by the gradual accumulation of monastic lands had made the privilege to beg unnecessary. At any rate, this privilege had led to much abuse. The Renaissance had likewise modified their mental disposition toward poverty and simplicity. Already in 1516, the Priors of London and Colchester were invested with the "pontificalia," which a century later (1630) were also bestowed upon the Master General of the Order. Doctors of theology enjoyed a certain precedence over the others. Since the Congregation of Rites had forbidden in 1635 that this precedence be allowed within the Order, the General Chapter of 1673 enacted this stipulation: "Doctors of Theology, who are either professors or professors emeriti, shall retain the rank of their profession in their own communities; outside of their community, they shall occupy the place immediately after the Prior on account of their doctorate." 47

It is not impossible that these factors and other not men-

tioned contributed to the creating of the psychological atmosphere in which the name of the Brethren of the Holy Cross was intermittently changed to that of Crosier Fathers. Dr. Haass is of the opinion that it was at this time that the Crosier Fathers first considered themselves Canons Regular, while up till then they had placed themselves among the Mendicants. Whatever may be the case, this periodic alteration of the name which started already at the end of the fourteenth century should not be taken as an evil omen. For the fifteenth century was indeed an era of intense spiritual life, the acme of mysticism. And it is a historical fact that later, when the Reformation battered the Order fiercely from without, she interiorly withstood these assaults energetically. It must be admitted that there have been obstructions (particularly during the regime of Master General Antonius Fresen Van Odorp, 1561-1575), that there have been cases of moral misbehavior and lamentable apostasy. We have but to recall the case of the learned Dutch humanist Gerard Geldenhauser; but the number of such cases is relatively small, and on the other hand, the True Faith found in the Order a genuine champion.

In the seventeenth century the Counter Reformation gave renewed life and energy to the Order. An indication of this is the new edition of the constitutions in 1660, which not only included the ordinances of the preceding chapters, but also were so rearranged as to conform with the decrees of the Council of Trent. The Dominican missal was exchanged for the Roman. As for the Breviary, though their own (Dominican) was used until 1856, it was gradually brought into harmony with the Roman Breviary. And as for the rest, the constitutions reflected the primitive image of the Order although actually the Order had been animated extensively by the Ignatian spirit. This observation is in some measure substantiated by the many works of this genre we discover in the monastic libraries.

This healthy state of affairs was to continue until the middle of the eighteenth century. This, however, is the century in which the system known as rationalism makes its appearance. Superficial thinking elbowed away the ancient medieval spirit of faith while the luxury spread about aided in lowering the standard of morality. This trend found its way also among the Crosier Fathers. It displayed itself in their clothing: they commenced to wear laced cuffs, wigs, a cauda on their habit; the monk's hood was replaced by the canon's mozetta. Some of the members worked to obtain high, honorary, ecclesiastical offices.

One of the causes of this decline was the fact that the General Chapters had been postponed too long. On account of the turbulent times brought about by the various wars, no General Chapter had been held between 1698 and 1715 or between 1739 and 1749. The provincial chapters, which used to be held regularly, had not met since 1681. Although the latter had been somewhat dangerous (because they encouraged a spirit of independence in some regions), as a whole they had been helpful in maintaining the monastic discipline. Later a long controversy arose as to whether the General Chapter should be held every six years instead of every three years. Fuel was added to this disorder during the generalate of Lambert de Fisen (1741-1778). This Prior-General and his subjects engaged in a battle about the introduction of new constitutions. The quarrel was very unfortunate although both sides were undoubtedly animated by the best of intentions. In 1768 Rome stopped this dispute, which had disturbed the whole Order, by decreeing that the old constitutions, those of 1660, were to remain in force. Although the reason advanced for the rejection of the new constitutions was that de Fisen's mode of procedure had been irregular, the decision had a salutary effect in that the primitive spirit of the Order reflected in the first constitutions and preserved in the later editions remained substantially unchanged. However, to vindicate Prior-General de Fisen, it should be stated that there exists no evidence whatsoever that it was ever his intention to alter the constitutions in substance, a mistake that many of his adversaries vehemently accused him of.

Harassed by this painful situation within, the Order of the Holy Cross was also dealt such terrible blows from without that it was actually on the point of expiring. The measures adopted by the reformers had been a means of demolishing many monasteries; the Emperor Joseph II continued this policy of destruction; the French Revolution annihilated the remaining houses in France and Belgium, while Napoleon completed this destruction by taking possession of the monasteries in the Rhineland. But two communities, those of Uden and St. Agatha in Brabant, escaped the onslaught. In these two monasteries a small number of Fathers, which gradually diminished, averted the complete disappearance of the Order. When at last the situation had come to such a stage that only four old Fathers remained, many monastic practices had to be abandoned; yet the old men continued the recitation of the Office in choir, although at times they had to call in secular clergy in order to accomplish this.

Vita Mixta

When in the year 1840 Netherland's King William II repealed the ordinance which forbade the acceptance of new members, the Order of the Holy Cross at once began to revive. At that time, however, it had determined upon a complete vita mixta. Its restorer, whomay well be called its second founder, was Henricus van den Wymelenberg. This energetic man, who had belonged to the secular clergy before entering the Order and who was chosen as its head immediately after his profession, was first of all concerned about the outward expansion of the Order. Consequently he established a new monastery at Diest, Belgium, in 1845; to this a college was attached in 1852. In 1855 he opened a monastery and college at Maeseck. The rejuvenated Order therefore possessed four monasteries, three of them conducting a college or Latin school. In 1849 some of the Fathers departed for Wisconsin, U.S.A., to labor among the Indians and colonists. It is obvious that in such an environment the contemplative trend could be followed no longer, not even in the milder form into which it had been directed before the French Revolution.

As a result, the custom of rising at midnight and that of singing the Divine Office was abandoned. The night-choir was to be held very early in the morning,⁴⁸ and the Divine Office was to be psalmodized. However, the Conventual Mass was a sung Mass, and the Compline (and also the Vespers on Sundays and feastdays) was usually sung. Van den Wymelenberg likewise completely abolished a great number of prioral feasts and the subprioral feasts. The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin was still retained. As for the Capitulum Culparum, it was ruled that the ordinance of 1581 should remain in force, namely, that it should be held at least every two weeks and at the liturgical hour (before Tierce). The statutes about the strict fast and abstinence were kept in the constitutions with the qualification that the strict fast could be dispensed with twice a week in virtue of the dispensation granted by the General Chapter in 1463. The statutes regarding the mandatum, the monastic tonsure, the use of the discipline and the minutio remained in force. With the consent of the members of the Order and of Rome, the stabilitas loci was abolished; henceforth profession was to be made in favor of the whole Order except in foreign missions. The community of goods between the various monasteries also became statu-

tory. Van den Wymelenberg had planned to give the reviving Order a completely new set of statutes; he had elaborated a design of new constitutions which was tested for a period of three years (1853-1855), but in the end they were rejected by the General Chapter. With great respect for tradition and a practical understanding of the existing needs, this great Master General then prepared and drew up a revised edition (1868) of the old constitutions.

These constitutions remained in operation until 1925 when the present constitutions composed in conformity with the new Code of Canon Law were promulgated. In 1911 Master General H. Hollmann had proposed a new form of the constitutions patterned after those of the Capuchins, but these were rejected by the General Chapter. Then in 1921 the first new constitutions embodying the principles of the new Code were sent to Rome for approval. The Congregation of Religious, however, returned them with the observation that they should be revised so as to preserve more fully the ancient tradition. The fact that the ancient and original constitutions finally became the basis of the new ones, in spite of the various attempts made in the course of centuries (undoubtedly, with the best of intentions) to arrive at a completely new legislation, may truly be called providential. It is true that the constitutions of 1925 cancelled many of the medieval customs and inserted new statutes regarding the governance, studies, vows and private religious exercises, all in conformity with the spirit of the Church. Yet Master General Hollmann characterized the new constitutions as truly a "vetusta via quasi novis lapidibus strata," the old road paved with new stones. When at the beginning of the thirteenth century Theodore had withdrawn to Clairlieu, he had done so for the purpose of making the religious life the basis of the apostolic labors. The outstanding apostolate of those days was the "service of the Cross."

Seven centuries have elapsed since. Yet at the present, the Order is still engaged in all the forms of apostolic labor: it serves parishes for the care of souls; it conducts schools for the training of youth in Belgium, the Netherlands, America and Brazil. Because of its labors in the Belgium Congo and Indonesia, it may be called in the fullest sense of the word a missionary Order. Missionary undertakings now form an important function in the calling of a Crosier Father. Ecclesiastical and profane studies also have advanced more and more. Yet the life of the Canon Regular still hovers over all these apostolic and intellectual activities; "the old road"—the chanting

of the Divine Office in choir and practice of penance—has remained the principal duty in the life of the Crosier Father.

The regulations governing fast and abstinence were mitigated and molded into a more humane form. And as time advanced, a gradual transition from the contemplative to the active mode of life became more and more apparent. It is obvious that this passage from one state to another eventually reached a stage when it became necessary to seek a balance between the two, although there never existed any cause to fear that the active life would supplant the contemplative one. Moreover, by its endeavors to regulate the apostolic activities as much as possible in strict accordance with the monastic life, the Order remained true to the reason for its existence as its founder had envisioned it: sequi in praedicatione institutum apostolicum. Juridically the Order of the Holy Cross is now an exempt order; its members are bound by the three solemn vows although only obedience is promised explicitly. The members likewise make their profession in favor of the whole Order, the foreign missions included.

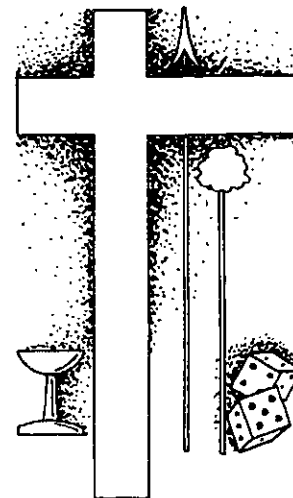
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We have depicted in a broad outline the role performed by the Order of the Holy Cross in the history of the Church. It has not been a pretentious one; for the Order has always been small; it has never produced any renowned men of learning, and up till now, Divine Providence has never permitted any of its sons to be canonized, not even its founder. Theodore de Celles is indeed venerated within the Order; in history, he is called here and there "venerable," "blessed" or even "saint"; he is mentioned in the martyrology of France of the seventeenth century. But we are still without positive historical data about his life. Neither are the Crosier Fathers in a position to boast of a peculiar school of spirituality in the sense of which we speak of the Dominican, Benedictine or Franciscan schools. Yet the system of its statutes, customs and ideals imprints upon the Order a character all of its own. And of its characteristics, the most outstanding is undoubtedly the aim to venerate and preach before all that most profound mystery of the Christian religion, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

On the other hand, false asceticism and mysticism have never been able to creep into the Order. We need not be naive eulogists of the past. Like Mother Church herself, the Order of the Holy Cross has passed through periods of decline and laxity as well as through centuries of exuberant spiritual growth. As H. Van Rooyen remarks, the spiritual heritage of the

medieval Crosier Fathers contained an exceedingly healthy kernel—the catholicitas, the clinging to the infallible tradition of the one, universal Church. For this reason the spiritual life of the Order after many vicissitudes remained sound at the core. We may perchance observe that the piety of the Crosier Fathers is characterized by a wholesome simplicity and lack of pretense, a natural endowment of Belgians and Netherlanders. While during the first two centuries of its existence the Order expanded in the direction of France, from 1410 onward the ancient low lands and the adjacent Rhineland became the center from which its monastic life moved forward. If therefore the spiritual life of the Crosier Fathers lacked that lively enthusiasm, which as a rule typifies the spirituality of the European Southerners, this very lack became their protection against hazardous excesses. In this way, history collaborated in imprinting the mark of simplicity and equilibrium upon the life of the Crosier Fathers.

Under The Standard Of The Cross



CULT OF THE CROSS

A peculiar characteristic of the spiritual life of the Crosier Fathers lies in their concentration on the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Already in those ancient documents which contain the approval of the Order, the Pope and the Bishop use such terms as fratres sanctae crucis . . . prior sanctae crucis de claro loco . . . ecclesia sanctae crucis, in qua divino estis obsequio mancipati . . . These terms, however, are in themselves no proof that it was the intention of those dignitaries to employ them specifically in order to give a peculiar character to the new institution. They may well have been used merely to designate a particular locality or church designated by the Holy Cross.

The document, however, of December 31, 1248 by which the Bishop-elect of Liege approves the constitutions of the Order is more elaborate. The Bishop remarks that he gives his approval first of all because it is his sincere wish and desire to contribute to the growth of the Church of Christ; therefore he gladly accedes to the request of the petitioners, "the Servants of the Cross," in order that they may have a means of persevering in their good resolution and continue their divine contemplation. In this way, he aims to promote the devotion to "Our Crucified Savior, with Whose emblem and Passion they are reverently sealed." In this passage, one of the characteristics of the Order is clearly indicated; its aim is "to awaken the devotion to the Cross"; in this endeavor, their attention is

directed principally to "Him Who is crucified" and is accomplished chiefly "by means of contemplation," viz., by means of a peculiar cult. The significance of the words, "being sealed with the emblem and passion of the Crucified," is that this is undoubtedly a reference to the cross the members wore upon their habit. Hence the name cruce-signati (those sealed with the cross), a name by which they were later frequently called. However, it was also the customary name given to the Crusaders. We have already made the observation that both the name and the garb suggest some kind of connection between the young Order of the Holy Cross and the Crusaders. At any rate, it is significant that already at an early period both were being interpreted symbolically. The quotation, "...out of respect for Christ Crucified, under whose title . . .," is frequently found in a more or less clear form in later documents in order to describe this peculiar characteristic of the Order. The first constitutions of 1248 already contained the statute that all churches be consecrated in honor of the Holy Cross; the meaning of this dedication was that all religious exercises which took place in those churches were performed in honor of the Holy Cross. Such was the medieval interpretation of the "Patronus Ecclesiae," the patron of the church. This was the way in which the first Crosier Fathers, being Canons Regular, esteemed their solemn liturgical functions as an uninterrupted homage to the Crucified Savior. It was for this reason that this statute was inserted in the chapter "De officio Ecclesiae."

Prompted by this feeling of devotion, the spiritual writers of the Order reminded their brethren that it was highly recommended that in the course of their liturgical hours of the Divine Office they meditate on the various stages of Our Lord's Passion. Here is an example from the writings of Pincharius:

Singing the seven canonical hours, we commemorate these events:

- At Matins we see Christ, Who washes away our sins, being bound with cords;
- At Prime we behold Him covered with spittle;
- At Tierce we hear Him being condemned to death;
- At Sext we gaze upon Him slain upon the cross,
- At None we look at His side being opened,
- At Vespers we see Him taken down from the cross;
- At Compline we witness His burial.⁴⁹

We have made mention before of another custom that was practiced among the Crosier Fathers from the very beginning,

namely the weekly ceremony of the washing of the feet, which was performed by the prior or the subprior of the house. The day on which this ceremony took place is of special significance. In other chapter houses, this mandatum was observed usually on Saturday, but among the Crosier Fathers it was done on Thursday evening. This was undoubtedly in some way associated with the devotion towards the Holy Eucharist which at that time reached its height in the land of Liege. In observing this mandatum, the Crosier Fathers intended first of all to commemorate the exceeding great love and humility of the Master in order to stimulate each other to obey the Great Commandment; yet further, by imitating Christ's example precisely on the evening before the day which is dedicated to His Passion, they meant to call to mind each week all that took place on the eve of Christ's Passion and above all to hold in memory the "memoriale Passionis Domini," the memorial of the Passion of our Lord.

Already at an early period, the feasts of the Finding and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, those of St. Helena and of St. Quiricus were raised to the rank of tota duplicia—hence to prioral feasts. From the beginning of the fifteenth century, the feast of the Exaltation was celebrated with an octave. Every Friday on which no other feast fell, the Office of the Holy Cross was recited. Whenever the rubrics prescribed the suffragia (and formerly this happened very often) the commemoration of the Holy Cross was always added. In 1656 the Crosier Father Albertus Tonsorius composed an Office of the Holy Cross; there exists no proof, however, that it was ever recited in common. Some breviaries and missals of the beginning of the sixteenth century have feasts in honor of the Sacred Crown of Thorns, the Sacred Lance and Nails, and the Sacred Shroud together with an oration for the Holy Sepulchre of Christ and a Mass in honor of the sufferings of Christ. The large gradual of John Van de Venter contains sixteen beautiful sequences in honor of the Holy Cross to be sung on the feasts of the Exaltation and the Finding of the Holy Cross and on various Fridays of the ecclesiastical year. When the Roman liturgy was introduced, many liturgical commemorations of the Holy Cross were abolished; the seven Passion feasts which are celebrated at present replace them but in a small measure.

Since 1520 the "Commemoration of Our Lord's death" (Commemoratio expirationis Domini) was observed daily. Immediately before the midday meal the bell of the monastery was rung "in remembrance of the life-giving Cross and Passion of

Our Lord, to which our Order is devoted in a special manner, and to spread this devotion among the people," as the General Chapter expresses itself. The brethren, gathered in the refectory, recited the verse and oration:

Thou Who suffered for us, have mercy on us.
Look down upon us for Thy name's sake.

Look down, we beseech Thee, O Lord, upon this Thy family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ did not hesitate to be delivered up into the hands of wicked men and to undergo the torment of the cross. Who liveth and reigneth . . .

When it later became a custom to ring the Angelus bell at noon, the ringing of the Passion Bell took place at three o'clock in the afternoon, the hour at which Our Lord died. In this way, the Crosier Fathers were able to commemorate that death every day.

Among the private devotions, the recitation of the Chaplet of the Five Wounds and the Way of the Cross occupied a prominent place. The latter, however, was never made obligatory except as part of the prayers for the dead. Already in the manuscripts of the fourteenth century, we find prayers for the Stations of the Cross. A Processionale printed in the eighteenth century contains a Way of the Cross which has seven stations composed in harmony with the liturgical hours of prayer. It was said on Good Friday. In 1845 the Crosier Fathers obtained the privilege of erecting the Stations of the Cross after the manner of the Minorites (Franciscans). And in regard to the devotion to the Sacred Heart, of which mention is made in many medieval manuscripts, emphasis was placed on the suffering Heart of Jesus, the Sacred Heart bruised for our offences and the source of grace and pardon. The devotion of the Sacred Heart is in reality an outgrowth of the veneration of the wound in Christ's side, and we find traces of this veneration among the Crosier Fathers at least as far back as the fourteenth century.

In the most ancient account of the origin of the Order, the red and white cross is depicted as a symbol of the water and blood that came out of Our Lord's side. This cross was intended to be a visible mark to distinguish the Crosiers from other religious and to identify them as true brethren of the Cross and the Crucified Christ. It entitled them to be called Brethren of the Order of the Holy Cross and qualified them to be esteemed as genuine devotees and servants of Him Who was crucified. The above-mentioned manuscript of G. Groot con-

tains, among other private prayers in honor of the Passion, a special prayer "In Vulnere Cordis," "In the Wound of the Heart." G. Van Lith accommodates the Canticle of Canticles (IV, 9: Vulnerasti cor meum sponsa . . .) very ingeniously to the devotion to the wound in Christ's side: "It is indeed significant," he writes,

"that here only the wound of the Heart is specified, although Christ received so many wounds during His Passion. 'Why, Lord, dost Thou show us but the wound of Thy Heart; why dost Thou lament and complain about that wound only? Is it not because all the other wounds are but the exuberance of the wound that was bleeding in Thy Heart?' His body would not have been covered with wounds, if His Heart had not already been wounded. He died out of love before His side was pierced by the lance. What rather caused the death of God's Son was the love that pierced through His Heart. . . 'It was this love which delivered Me into the hands of My enemies. . . ; it was this love which caused My death.' "

Many inspiring prayers in honor of the Cross and Passion have been preserved in the old manuscripts of the Crosier Fathers. In a manuscript of Marienfrede, we find The Spiritual Exercises on the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ in One-Hundred Chapters.⁵⁰ (This is not the one by Suso.) This manuscript contains a Mystic Anthology of a Pious Soul on the Whole Life and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ (fifty chapters), a "Prayer based on the Seven Words of Christ on the Cross," "Salutations in Honor of All the Members of Christ's Body," "The Seven Recollections of St. Ambrose for Each of the Canonical Hours," "A Prayer of St. Ambrose in Honor of the Lord's Passion," and "A Prayer in Honor of the Passion and the Seven Last Words."⁵¹ Other manuscripts contain such works as The Passion of Our Lord as Revealed to St. Brigid⁵² and seven meditations by St. Bonaventure on the Passion. A collection of all those ancient writings would indeed form a handsome anthology. We have mentioned previously the preference shown by the Crosier Fathers for the Imitatio Christi of Thomas a Kempis. They directed their attention especially to chapters 11 and 12 of Book II—"Few Love the Cross of Jesus," and "The Royal Road of the Holy Cross." It is therefore noteworthy that the Crosier Breviary of 1615 contains an Office of the Holy Cross, which was recited on Fridays; one set of lessons (the second Nocturn) is completely derived from the eleventh chapter of the Imitation. This same Office supplies us in twenty-eight of the lessons with a wealth of the most delightful

contemplations on the Cross—all borrowed from such spiritual writers as St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, Hugh of St. Victor, St. Anslem, Joannes Episcopus and Egbertus Abbas.

The spiritual writers, furthermore, remind us again and again that the chief calling of a Crosier Father consists in contemplating and imitating Christ's Passion; his very name and habit ought to remind him constantly of this duty. The red and white cross which he wears on his breast should be a reminder to him "of the water and the blood that came out of Jesus' side after He had died on the Cross, . . . of the bloody sufferings of Christ in His innocent body, . . . of the sinlessness and love of the Crucified Christ, which in turn ought to enkindle him with the desire to make himself innocent and loving by cleansing himself with water and immersing himself in the blood of the Lord." The gray scapular, which was originally worn, was considered a symbol of the color of the wood of Christ's cross. The Friday fast, which was observed throughout the year, has always been accepted as the fast in honor of the Holy Cross. Hence the statute, "Priors may not easily dispense with the law of the Friday fast for the entire monastery," to which the constitutions of 1925 added, "since the chief purpose for which this fast has been instituted is to honor the Holy Cross and Passion of Our Lord."⁵³

Finally it should be noted that the apostolic labors of the Crosiers were largely inspired by their devotion to the Holy Cross. Van Lith published forty sermons on the Passion of Christ and His sacrifice on the cross. In his Clavis Coeli, Danelius remarks that the Crosier Father wears a cross upon his breast in order that it may be seen by all men and in this way cause others to be mindful of Christ's Passion. We have mentioned already that the Passion Bell was rung also "to spread devotion among the people." In many of their churches, the Crosier Fathers erected confraternities of the Holy Cross. Processions were held on the feasts of the Exaltation and the Finding of the Holy Cross, and several popes had granted special indulgences to all the faithful who visited the churches of the Crosier Fathers on those days. At present the mission apostolate consists in the preaching of the Cross. This ancient tradition is therefore expressed properly in the statute inserted in the constitutions of 1925 (Statute 25):

Since the secondary aim of our Order is to lead our brethren, and all men, to honor and venerate the Holy Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to increase in all the

love for our suffering Savior, it follows that all the brethren should awaken in themselves a devotion to the Holy Cross and Passion of our Lord by meditation and contemplation, and in others by conversation, preaching and good example.

* * *

The deeper we penetrate into this subject the more we become convinced that all the phases of Christ's Passion can be traced in the asceticism and liturgy of the Crosier Fathers under the aspects with which the Church has viewed it in the course of the centuries: the Passion as the source of forgiveness and merits, as a reminder of the evil of sin, as a token of Christ's love, as a model in suffering.

In the cross, all these truths are clearly brought together as at a focus. Here we observe clearly two prominent viewpoints. Some spiritual writers emphasize very strongly the "suffering in fellowship with Christ." The Crosier Fathers must be "Cruciferi"—cross-bearers—after the example of their Master. "If you desire earnestly to be a bearer of the cross," Pincharius advises, "accept what the cross brings you." This engenders self-denial and suffering, which he sees symbolized in the form of the red and white cross fastened upon the scapular. This idea is expressed even more explicitly in the above-mentioned Cologne manuscript of the fifteenth century, Devotus Libellus de Perfectione Fratrum S. Crucis. It begins with the words:

Thou servant of God . . . in the cross that thou wearest, thou expresseth the outstanding traits of Christ's tribulations. For in His Passion He underwent a threefold affliction to which all His sufferings can be reduced; for we behold Him despoiled and deprived of all His belongings, despised and scorned . . . and tortured and afflicted in all the members of His body. All these afflictions Christ suffered in the highest degree . . .

The writer then proceeds to demonstrate that the perfection of a Crosier Father consists in following Christ in all these aspects of His Passion. Later when he expounded the name of the Order, Van Lith wrote in equally forceful language:

Our Fathers were animated with but one ideal, namely to glory in the Cross of Our Savior Jesus Christ and thereby to vindicate the glorious name they bequeathed to the members of their institution in order that the latter might keep in mind first of all that Christ is the leader under whom they battle and who will reward their exploits. And further, they wished that

those who would follow them would esteem the Sacred Emblem and the holy name of Christ—that they would be ready at all times to carry the Cross behind Him, the Cross which engenders vexation, mortification, pain, tribulation, persecution, injury, and even bloodshed and death. And finally, in order that their followers would look upon Jesus, the author and strengthener of their faith, with an ardent desire to follow Him and to copy Him, the most perfect model, in themselves and in others...

The drawings on the title page of Russelius's Chronicle reflect the same idea. It shows Our Savior, stooped down under the weight of the Cross, and a group of people walking behind Him carrying their crosses. It is therefore the duty of the Crosier to practice a peculiar asceticism of the Holy Cross and to seek the way of his own perfection in the contemplation and imitation of Christ Crucified.

Yet there is still another aspect under which the Crosier Fathers viewed the Cross, which may be called the more mystical aspect. It consists in the gratitude the joy, the jubilation springing from the Redemption brought to us by Jesus' death on the Cross. The Cross is above all the emblem of victory. It was this viewpoint which was stressed most strongly in the medieval liturgy of the Crosier Fathers. In the many sequences in honor of the Holy Cross and likewise in the Office of the Holy Cross, which was recited every Friday, the bitter pains of the Cross remained, as it were, unnoticed on account of the sweetness of the fruits it produced. The Cross is the "tree that bears the salvation of all mankind," "a ladder for sinners," "a remedy for body and soul," "a heavenly pearl," "the tree of victory," "the tree of triumph," and "the portal of light." It is "the consolation of the afflicted," "the strength of the weak," "the power," "the salvation," and "the victory." It is the supreme proof of God's love for us. The same thoughts are repeated over and over again in manifold figures of speech. Many symbolisms taken from the Old Testament are brought before our minds. The Cross is the key of David, with which the celestial cherubim has opened again the gates of paradise; it is the ark of Noe in which the whole human race finds rescue; it is the official seal of the covenant of peace between God and mankind; it is the brazen serpent upon which sinners can look; it is the savory game of the hunt, which was offered to the patriarch Isaac that he might bless his children.

Therefore we must sing the praises of the Cross. Joy, jubilation, thanksgiving must fill the heart of the Crosier, "who live under the protection and guidance of the Cross of Christ..."

and who rejoice in the glory which is due to the Cross." The whole world is invited to join in singing the glory of the Cross: "May the whole world delight in and all Christendom glory in the Cross." The sequence of the Mass of Easter was entirely adapted to the Cross in practically the same form as we have it today: "Victimae paschalis crucem adorent Christiani," Adore, ye Christians, the Cross of the Paschal Victim.

The same shouts of joy resound in the text of the Mass and the breviary on the Feasts of the Finding and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The Cross is called the emblem of our redemption; the tree of Paradise, bearing fruits of pardon and grace; our protection against the wiles of our adversary. In the ancient liturgy of the Church the Feast of the Exaltation was actually celebrated as a feast of Redemption, a second Easter. Even the Introit of the Mass in honor of the Sacred Crown of Thorns formerly began with this song of jubilation: "Let us rejoice in the Lord, celebrating the festival day in honor of the crown of Our Lord, for whose solemnity the angels rejoice and give praise to the Son of God." And although all the other ancient feasts in honor of the Passion recalled the bloody and painful phases of Our Lord's Passion in the smallest details, they never lacked the element of joy.

Besides the liturgy, there are other documents which speak of this joy in the Holy Cross. The General Chapter of 1410 opened its sessions with these words: "To all the priors, ... bliss by the merits of the same triumphant Cross, the seal with which we are marked."⁵⁴ In a compact history of the Order, Stochemius speaks of "the Order which derives its name from the salutary and blessed Cross."⁵⁵ The churches or altars were consecrated "in honor of the life-giving Cross," or "in honor of the glorious Cross of the Lord."⁵⁶ In like manner, the cross which the Brethren wore upon their breasts was considered an emblem of victory. The ancient Christian custom of carrying the cross without the corpus in a solemn procession was still in vogue in the Middle Ages. The Cross was a sign of triumph; it symbolized the victory of Christendom. This was especially true among the people of the Middle Ages, who never stopped at the symbol, but understood better than we how to arrive at its real significance. It is in this light that we ponder the cross the Crosier Father wears on his scapular. To him it should be a remembrance of the sorrows of the Master and therefore still more, of His love; of all the merits gained by His crucifixion, of His victory through the Cross. His cross is to proclaim the praises of the Cross. This aspect

is forced upon us even more strikingly if, as we mentioned above, we establish some conformity between the cross of the Crosier Fathers and that of the Crusaders. To the latter, the cross with which they were marked was first and last an emblem and a pledge of victory. We have stated previously that the spiritual writers of the Order laid great stress on the moral significance of the Cross. Yet they were not oblivious of its mystical meaning. In the previously mentioned little tract, In Honorem Summi Regis, the red and white cross attached to the black cape was regarded as a symbol of the redeeming light that penetrates the darkness of the unredeemed world. Elsewhere it is observed that the Crosier wears a cross as a token of gratitude. In an ancient litany in honor of the Holy Cross, the fruits it produced and the power it wields are lauded in diverse titles of praise. We have already recalled the fact that the medieval Crosier Fathers were mystics. Their mysticism was above all a mysticism of the Cross in which joy in the Redemption was a distinguishing feature. This joy is embodied in the motto which the Order has chosen: In Cruce Salus, In the Cross, Salvation. It is expressed in the title of the primary feast of the Order, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. It discloses itself in the spirit in which the apostolate is undertaken, especially in the mission fields which are to achieve the triumph and the exaltation of the Cross. The Crosier feels that he is called primarily to proclaim the joy that radiates from the Cross, to herald the salvation that the Cross has brought us. In executing this task, his attention is directed not to the Cross alone, but rather, his contemplation and preaching are transported preferably to the personality of the Crucified Christ.

Surveying what has been said on this subject, we may safely conclude that the spirituality peculiar to the Crosier Fathers is focalized on the most impressive and profound mystery of the Christian faith, the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ. "Hail, Divine Wisdom crucified for our salvation"; this is a salutation found in a medieval prayer book of the Crosier Fathers. The Eternal Wisdom has permitted Himself to be crucified for our sake. This is the greatest mystery of Christianity, and the Cross is its symbol.

The Cross therefore preaches penance and the spirit of sacrifice to the greatest degree. It reminds us of the incomprehensible evil of sin and rigid claims of Divine Justice since it brings to our minds the most cruel torments which Our Lord underwent for our sins. But it is likewise an undeniable mani-

festation of God's infinite goodness, Who "so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son . . . ;" "He . . . has delivered Him up for all of us . . ." " . . . obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross." ⁵⁷ For it was principally Christ's love for us that impelled Him to be crucified; that love "even to the death of the Cross" has conquered sin, appeased the justice of God and merited a wealth of grace and sanctity. Hence, though the Cross is frequently a heavy burden, it is always a fountain of joy and gratitude for those who carry it willingly because it brought God nearer to man. This is the gist of the glad tidings, the very core of Christianity.

Concluding what has been said on the devotion to the Holy Cross among the Crosiers, we may truthfully assert that this contemplation of the mystery of the Holy Cross has not clothed the spirituality of the Crosier Fathers with a cloak of gloom, but rather has brightened it with the jubilant joy of the children of God. The exercises of the choir are to the Crosier Father primarily a song of thanksgiving and homage in honor of Christ's sublime sacrifice of love; their penitential acts are truly com-passion with the Crucified Christ; their preaching proclaims the sublime doctrine of the Cross; their whole apostolate consists in bringing salvation to all, who, ransomed by Christ's precious blood, are again able to participate in the delight of God. Anyone who understands the language of the Cross feels himself compelled to be joyous, thankful, penitent, magnanimous, apostolic. "But it behooves us to glory in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ: in Whom is our salvation, life, and resurrection; by Whom we are saved and delivered." (In-troit; September 14)

OUR BLESSED LADY

The fact that the Crosier Fathers were more given to meditating on the joyful aspect of the mystery of the Cross may perhaps be brought forward as one of the reasons why devotion to the Mater Dolorosa never reached the height one would expect to find in the Order of the Holy Cross. Nevertheless, there exists conclusive evidence that the Crosier Fathers have been ardent devotees of Mary from the beginning. The founder himself is said to have recited the Little Office of Mary daily from his early youth. His followers continued this pious practice for centuries, until the year 1913. Since that year, in

which the Roman Breviary was reformed, it is no longer recited in common because of the extension of apostolic activities. However, to compensate for this omission, the constitutions made the Rosary in common obligatory.

There is, however, ample evidence that the Crosier Fathers practiced the devotion of the Rosary already at an early date. The constitutions of 1868 clearly imply that the Rosary was prayed in common, at least on Sundays and holy days; they explicitly state that on those days recreation was granted up till the recitation of the Rosary. In 1516 Pope Leo X granted the Master General of the Order the privilege of attaching to the Rosary an indulgence of five-hundred days to be gained for every Our Father or Hail Mary, although we do not know on what grounds this extraordinary indulgence was granted. Without doubt, through the erection of confraternities of the most holy Rosary, and later on through the bestowal of this indulgence, the Crosier Fathers cooperated to a great degree in promoting devotion to the Rosary. We may therefore rightly suppose that they practiced it themselves. To confirm this supposition, we may mention A Defense of the Rosary⁵⁸ which Alexander Mondet of Dourney copied from Alanus a Rupe about the year 1500; he prefaces it with a prologue (written in his native tongue) in which he defends the power of the Rosary with an enthusiasm characteristic of the Middle Ages. We mentioned already how John DeVenter in one of his miniatures depicted himself in a kneeling position at the feet of our Blessed Lady with a Rosary in his hands. All these works date back to the beginning of the sixteenth century. And already as far back as the fourteenth century, Pincharius urged his conferes to pray the Hail Mary frequently.

Since 1248 the formula of profession has been as follows: "I do profess and promise obedience to God, the Blessed Virgin Mary . . ." The feast days of Mary were celebrated with special splendor; the eve of these feasts was always a day of fast and abstinence, and on the days themselves Holy Communion was always distributed. They were observed as tota Duplicia and therefore as prioral feasts. Besides all the feasts celebrated by the universal Church, the Crosier Fathers formerly commemorated the feasts of the Compassion, the Conception, the Joys, and the Expectation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Until the seventeenth century, these feasts were celebrated with a proper office, and the ancient graduals contain very beautiful sequences in honor of Mary. In 1848 some new feasts were added, those in honor of the Holy House of Loretto, the

Purity, the Humility, the Divine Motherhood, and the Most Pure Heart of Mary. Master General Constantini (1586-1602) ordered the beautiful antiphon "Haec est praeclarum vas" to be chanted every Saturday. This prayer is of Netherlandish origin and was a supplication for deliverance from the plague. Later, it was chanted after Conventual Mass, a custom which has remained till the present day. Since 1627 the Litany of the Blessed Virgin has been recited daily at the end of Compline "for the needs of the Church and those of the Order." Before that date, a so-called Marian Te Deum, Dei Matrem Laudamus, was recited in its stead. Since 1815 the Crosier Father finishes his prayer of thanksgiving after the noon meal with a threefold Gloria Patri to thank God for the privileges He has bestowed upon Mary, especially for her glorious Assumption into heaven. The devotion to our Blessed Mother was also greatly promoted at the various shrines entrusted to the Crosier Fathers.

Finally we may ask, "Has devotion to the Mater Dolorosa ever found special favor among the Crosier Fathers?" The answer is that there is indeed evidence that points in that direction. It is certain that the feast of the Compassio B.V.M. together with the long and inspiring sequence Maestae Parentis (Of the Sorrowful Mother) was celebrated with great solemnity from the beginning of the sixteenth century. There is still in existence an old, small breviary (at one time, the property of the monastery at Marienfrede) which contains, among other exercises, "Religious Exercises on the Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary," and "Religious Exercises on the Com-passion of the Blessed Virgin Mary (the latter is a votive Office). The thumb marks on the leaves of the booklet are sure proof that especially the latter Office was prayed frequently. A "salutation for all hours" sounds: "Most hold Virgin Mary, our advocate, I beseech thee, let me now share thy grief with tears of sorrow."⁵⁹ Another Crosier breviary of the monastery at Cologne contains among the preparatory prayers a method of meditating on the Sorrows of Mary for each of the canonical hours:

(Preliminary explanation of each canonical hour of the Office of the Com-passion of the glorious Virgin Mary—)

At Matins, Mary is informed that Christ has been taken prisoner by the perfidious Jews.

At Prime, Mary sees her Jesus and follows Him to the tribunal of Pilate.

At Tierce, Mary hears that He is condemned to death and beholds Him covered with blood and crowned with thorns.

At Sext, Mary witnesses the crucifixion.

At None, Mary stands by when Jesus dies.

At Vespers, Mary bewails her Son when His body is taken down from the cross and laid in her bosom.

At Compline, Mary accompanies the body of Christ to the grave.

(At the conclusion of each hour the oration of the Com-passion is to be recited.)

Hence we may safely conclude that, together with the ordinary Office of the Com-passion (celebrated on the Friday after Low Sunday), the Votive Office of Our Mother of Sorrows was also recited on appointed days. It is possible that this devotion to Our Lady of Dolours originated in the German monasteries since the archbishop of Cologne had instituted the feast of the Com-passion as early as 1413. This was done to counteract the error of the Hussites, who abhorred the statue of Our Lady of Sorrows. At a later date the feast of the Seven Dolours took the place of that of the Com-passion of Mary. The Crosier Fathers also have dropped the oration connected with the "Haec est praeclarum vas" and substituted that of the Com-passion of Mary. This oration is also recited with the Litany at the end of Compline. There was also a feast known as the Festum Commendationis B.V.M. It was a commemoration of the scene that took place by the cross when Our Lord entrusted His Blessed Mother to St. John's care. This commitment was believed to have been one of Mary's deepest sorrows. The Royal Library at Brussels possesses an ancient document from the Crosier Monastery at Tournay, which recounts the fifteen Dolours of Our Blessed Lady (Les quinze regrets de N. Dame) in the form of a poem of fifteen strophes. There was indeed a time when devotion to the fifteen Dolours was practiced. We possess no data, however, to indicate that this particular devotion was ever in vogue among the Crosier Fathers, and therefore we have no means of knowing whether the above-mentioned poem is the work of a member of the Order. Since the sixteenth century the Mother of Sorrows, commonly called the Black Lady, was honored with a special devotion in the church of the Crosier Fathers at Venlo. A small, old prayer book which was in use at that time contains, besides other beautiful prayers, a litany composed of twenty-five invocations to the Sorrowful Mother of God.

It may be that further research will furnish us with more accurate data about the devotion to the Mater Dolorosa in the Order. Yet from the small number of manuscripts at our disposal, it is evident that the Crosier Fathers sought to combine

their cult of the Cross with their devotion to Mary. This association is depicted artistically in an ancient sequence in which a comparison is made between Mary and the Cross: In search for the Fruit that gives and sustains life, we can choose between Mary, the humble hyssop stem, or the Cross, the noble cedar, since both are life-giving sources. Which shall we choose? Borne on Mary's bosom, it is from her that this Fruit receives the vitality to nourish us; while nailed to the Cross, it strengthens us by the blood that flows from the wound in the heart. The Cross sustains us by invigorating us with the Fruit it carries; but it was Mary who first nurtured the Fruit. The Cross is like a pasture supplying nutriment all over, but it is Mary who renders the pasture fertile. In plain language, the idea behind these figurative words is simply this—we never find one without the other. He who chooses the Cross does not cast off the Mother, for when he has come to the Cross, he will find the Mother standing by it. And he who has given preference to the Mother has not suffered the loss of the Cross, if he understands the full meaning of the sword that pierced the soul of the Mother. Therefore whether we go to the one or to the other, we shall always find happiness in the presence of both.

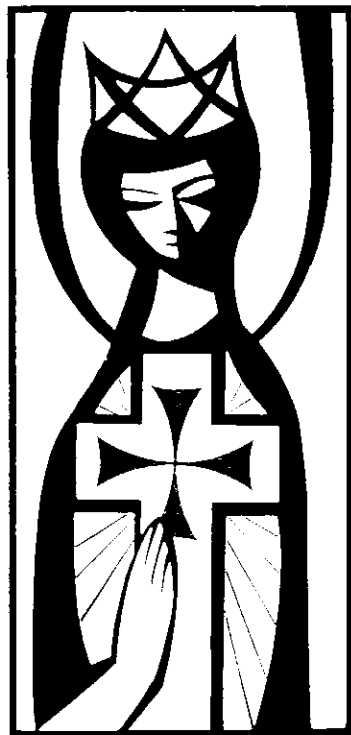
THE PATRONESS OF THE ORDER

The Crosier Fathers have always placed themselves under the protection of a Patron Saint. From shortly after the foundation of the Order, even likely from its very beginning till far into the fifteenth century, their patroness was St. Helena, the mother of Constantine. It was the lofty desire of this saintly woman to find and obtain possession of the Holy Cross. With this purpose in mind, she journeyed to Jerusalem, where (according to a legend kept alive in the Order) after discovering the true Cross, she selected a company of men who were to be its guardians. Although this entire group was put to death at the command of Julian the Apostate, the legend maintains that this same institution survived at Huy. Although the feast of St. Helena is still observed in the Order, she is no longer venerated as its special patron. Since the fifteenth century, she has been replaced by St. Odilia.

St. Odilia was one of those legendary virgins who together with St. Ursula, their leader, were martyred by the Romans

at Cologne. Her history has come down to us in the form of a charming legend, which Dr. Van Rooyen has made the subject of a strict historical research. These are the conclusions of this research: It may be stated as a historical fact that at some period during the Roman usurpation, virgins were martyred for Christ's sake in the neighborhood of Cologne. This fact is substantiated by an inscription of Clematius which is in the Church of St. Ursula at Cologne. This inscription, which dates from the period between 350 and 450, is the historical foundation from which the tenth-century legend of St. Ursula and the eleven thousand virgins had its origin. It is also historically certain that in 1287 John Novelan de Eppes, a lay-brother of the Crosier monastery in Paris, left for Cologne in search of the relics of St. Odilia (and those of the other virgins). Furthermore there exists, to say the least, considerable evidence that the relics which the Brother exhumed in Cologne and transferred to the mother-house at Huy the same year are those of a real martyr. This evidence rests upon a tradition steadfastly transmitted within the Order (and never disproved), which attests to numerous miracles that took place in the presence of the relics at the time of their transfer and even later on both at Huy and elsewhere. The number and the magnitude of these miracles may have been somewhat exaggerated, but the fact remains that miracles must have occurred.

The veneration of St. Odilia was in vogue at Huy as early as the thirteenth century. The feast of St. Odilia was most likely added to the liturgy at the time of the translation of her relics. At any rate, we find clear evidence of the observance of this feast as early as the fourteenth century, and in 1532 the General Chapter raised it to *tota duplicia*. As at present, it was the translation of her relics which was commemorated. In a sermon of Petrus of Amsterdam, "Sermo in Translatione



ST. ODILIA

Odiliae Virginis et Martyris," this transfer is considered in a twofold aspect; the first is the transfer of Odilia into heaven; the second, the removal of her relics to Huy. Russelius records that at the General Chapter of 1410 the shrine containing her relics was opened with great solemnity. On that occasion numerous miracles are reputed to have taken place as they had before. He further relates that with the applause of the spectators, the Crosier Fathers celebrated Mass and organized a procession in her honor. Out of Huy, the devotion to St. Odilia spread gradually throughout the whole Order to such an extent that from the end of the fifteenth century till now St. Odilia has been venerated publicly as the patron of the Order. Several histories of her have been written since. At present the feast of the Translation is observed as a double of the first class with an octave. Her relics, which were given into the safe keeping of persons outside the Order during the French Revolution, were for the greater part removed with great solemnity to Diest on July 24, 1949. A precious memorial of the devotion to St. Odilia prevalent within the Order is the decorated shrine which the Crosier Fathers of Huy ordered to be constructed in 1922. On its sides, we see depicted the martyrdom of the saint, the discovery and transfer of her relics, and a miraculous cure that took place at her shrine.

The Crosier Fathers have also been active in making the devotion to St. Odilia known outside the Order. She is especially venerated as the Patron of the blind, and her help is invoked against diseases of the eyes. Here again, the Crosier Fathers sought to harmonize their devotion to St. Odilia with the cult of the Cross. Much of what we learn in this respect is legendary. But in reality, there exists at all times an undeniable oneness between the sufferings of Christ and the martyrdom of His followers. This identity of character may truly be advanced as the principal reason why the veneration of the Virgin and Martyr St. Odilia is indeed in accordance with the aim of the Order of the Holy Cross.



Finding the Relics of Saint Odilia at Cologne (1287)



Transferring the Relics of Saint Odilia to Huy (1292)

Appendix

ANTHOLOGY

Excerpts selected from the ancient spiritual writings of the Crosier Fathers, spiritual works and prayer books which are preserved in their monasteries.

I

THE IMITATION OF THE DIVINE CROSS-BEARER

(from *Vestis Nuptialis*, the *Wedding Garment*, by Petrus Pincharius. Cologne, 1639; pp. 326-331)

One of the most important duties of the Crosier Father is to meditate upon the Passion of Our Lord and to imitate the example of the greatest of all Cross-bearers, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He must feel obliged to contemplate Christ's life and death daily with attention and devotion, and make a strenuous effort to suffer with Him. . . . We Crosier Fathers bear the sign of the Crucified Christ outwardly; in conformity with our monastic garment, we must likewise be Cruciferi—Cross-bearers—in spirit. For it would indeed be preposterous and completely useless to wear the cross on our attire and be called Cross-bearers unless the Cross were at the same time carved in our hearts. If you desire to be a true Cross-bearer, be content with what the Cross brings you.

Just as the Crosier Father was reborn in the waters of baptism, so also was he baptized in the Blood of Christ by means of his holy profession. He was united with Christ in the likeness of Our Savior's death, and as a true Cross-bearer he must be buried with Christ. He bears the sign of Our Lord's Passion on his breast so that he may affirm with another great Cross-bearer, "I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body,"⁶⁰ and that he may exclaim with the same, "But as for me, God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."⁶¹ And again, "With Christ I am nailed to the Cross. It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me."⁶²

The Crosier Father must practice this contemplation of the all-sacred and salutary Passion of the Lord every day, not only as an act of thanksgiving, but also as an incentive to action so that he may become a true follower of Christ according to the words of St. John,

"He who says that he abides in Him, ought himself also to walk as He walked."⁶³ For as St. Gregory remarks, "Whatever the Lord did, He did in order to instruct us." St. Peter writes most explicitly, "... because Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you an example that you may follow in His steps."⁶⁴ And again, "Since Christ therefore has suffered in the flesh, so you also arm yourselves with the same intent."⁶⁵ And he who is called Christ's vessel of election gives us this salutary advice: "... always bearing about in our body the dying of Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodily frame."⁶⁶ And finally the Eternal Truth Itself, Who is worthy to be followed in all things, says, "For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you also should do."⁶⁷

To render this meditation more fruitful, it will be very helpful to consider frequently and thoughtfully the benefits which Christ has bestowed so abundantly upon us, His unworthy servants. Bear in mind that Christ being impelled by an incomprehensible mercy descended from the inner recess of His Father into this valley of tears (1) in order to satisfy His Father's justice by undergoing the punishment which man deserved, and to fortify all who chose Him as their model by His patience; (2) in order to direct the wanderer toward the road to Heaven and to instruct the ignorant; (3) in order to manifest His exceeding great love for men and to induce him to practice virtue and goodness.

Man, indeed, was utterly helpless. He was weak, ignorant, sinful and powerless to imitate the Divine virtues, to come to the knowledge of the truth, to love goodness. It was to repair this pitiable state that Christ came down from heaven and became man. He offered Himself that man might follow Him, know Him and love Him. He came down by three steps, namely humility, poverty and bitterness. St. Luke (2, 12) tells us, "You will find an infant"—behold humility—"wrapped in swaddling clothes"—behold poverty—"and lying in a manger."—behold bitterness. And St. Paul (2, 7-8) indicates these three steps when he writes to the Phillipians: "He emptied Himself" (humility) "taking the nature of a slave..." (poverty) "... becoming obedient to death." (bitterness). And to what did these steps raise Him in the end? Listen to these words: "Therefore God also has exalted Him and has bestowed upon Him the name that is above every name."⁶⁸

* * *

The merits of Our Lord's Passion are the source of all grace and glory. The opening of His side merited for the blessed the revelation of the Beatific Vision; the nailing of His hands and feet merited for us the strengthening of our good resolutions; and His tasting of gall and vinegar produced in us a vehement desire for that love after which He thirsted.

Recall also that the remembrance of Our Lord's Passion furnishes man with the most effective antidotes against the poison of the seven capital sins. The bowing of the head removes pride; the stretching out of the arms kills envy; the diffusion of His merits slays our avarice; the longing for death goads our sloth; the meek answers allay our anger; His drinking of gall and vinegar restrains our gluttony; the piercing of His side bridles our voluptuousness. God therefore bore the wounds in His body to heal the wounds of our souls.

While the Sacred Passion was for Our Lord a well from which issued the bitter waters of suffering, it became for us a spring from

which emerged a seven-fold stream of wholesome sweetness. Look up to Christ crucified for our sake. He inclines His head to give us the kiss of reconciliation. He stretches out His arms to embrace us and to receive us into His grace. He permits His side to be opened that the ransom of our salvation may flow from it. Nails were driven through His hands and feet to betoken that He is mindful of us. The denudation of His body reminds us of our duty to bare our consciences in the sacrament of Penance. The carrying of the Cross is for us an example to imitate. The crown of thorns placed on His head is a symbol of the eternal crown of glory laid up for us in Heaven.

The true Crosier Father, therefore, must love the greatest of all Cross-bearers, He Who permitted Himself to be crucified out of love; he must never cease to cherish inwardly the remembrance of Our Lord's Passion, the emblem of which he wears outwardly on his breast...

II

LESSONS FROM THE BREVIARY

(from the Office of the Holy Cross for Fridays,
taken from the Crosier Breviary of 1512 pre-
served in the library at Uden.)

Let us pray,

O God, Who by the precious blood of Thy only-begotten Son didst sanctify the standard of the life-giving Cross, grant, we beseech Thee, that those who rejoice in the honor bestowed upon the Cross, may everywhere enjoy Thy protection. Through the same Christ, Our Lord.

Lesson I

All creatures in heaven and on earth honor and bless Thee, O dear Savior, Who by Thy holy Cross hast redeemed the world. I also, Thy most worthless creature, adore Thee in all humility and with joy, My Lord and My True God. And saluting the Cross and prostrating myself humbly before it, I exclaim to Thee, 'O vital wood and propitiatory altar, I adore Thee, hope of eternal life, and beseech Thee by the merits of Thy Passion to accept me as Thy servant consecrated to Thee.

Lesson II

To be Thy faithful servant is my only desire. The ardent craving of my love calls for it. My whole soul yearns after it. The words that fall from my lips ask for it. My heart hungers after it and my spirit thirsts for it. May Thy crucifixion be the means of destroying all the evil that is within me, suppress the ardor of my passions, regulate the confusion of my mind and cause me to lead a virtuous life.

Lesson III

O My Lord Jesus Christ, when Thou shalt come to judge the living and the dead and the world by fire, I beseech Thee, may Thy Holy Cross save me from the furious flames and shield me from the wrath of the Lamb. Grant me also, I beseech Thee, my merciful

Redeemer, that rest which Thou hast promised to all who believe in Thee, that rest in the haven of the heaven where Thy own people enjoy an everlasting Sabbath. Meanwhile, as long as I am a sojourner here below, guide my steps along the straight path of the Catholic faith, support me with a firm hope and comfort me with Thy love.

III

OUR UNION WITH THE SUFFERING AND
SUPPLIANT CHRIST

(from *Sidus Ludicum Peregrinantis Animae, A Brilliant Star for the Wandering Soul*, by Hermanus Woestenraedt, O. S. C., Liege, 1627; pp. 110-112)

"If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you." (John 16, 23) We pray in the name of Our Savior whenever we offer up to the Heavenly Father the death of Christ, His blood and all the merits of His bitter Passion. For the Passion of His Son is the supreme proof of the Father's mercy, which surpasses all His other attributes.⁶⁹ Just as the Patriarch Jacob could not restrain his tears at the sight of the bloody coat of his son Joseph and as the wrath of Assuerus turned into compassion when he saw the impotence of his beautiful Esther, so also the heavenly Father, our awe-inspiring King, will without fail be moved to compassion when He looks upon His Son, Who by shedding His blood in the winepress of the Cross stained His human body and delivered His soul unto death. And He, Who at first was greatly inclined to wrath, will undoubtedly be mindful of His mercy.

Whenever, therefore, the earthly pilgrim sees the number of his adversaries increasing and feels himself even reduced to great spiritual straits, he must adopt the tactics of the children of Israel who, as the Scriptures narrate, hid themselves in the caverns and the rocks when they were persecuted by the Philistines (1 Kings 13, 6). And which are these caverns and rocks but those mentioned in the Cantic of Canticles (2, 14) "My dove hides in the clefts of the rock." And since in the words of St. Paul, "the rock is Christ," (1 Cor. 10, 14) the clefts of the rock typify the wounds of the Crucified Christ. No matter, therefore, with what anxieties, vexations and trials the pilgrim may be afflicted and whatever be their cause, let him go up into that Temple of the Lord Which was raised up again in three days; let him enter into the clefts of this rock; let him close the door and pray to the Father Who sees in secret. . . . The prayer that ascends from within the clefts of the rock—that means a prayer sent heavenward with the recollection of the Crucified Christ in our minds and hearts—is an all-powerful means of driving away our adversaries. This the spouse of the Cantic understood when she said, "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, he shall abide between my breasts," (1, 12). As St. Peter Damian rightly remarks, "Is not myrrh, a bitter herb, the symbol of Christ's Passion? . . . As the wax melts at the heat of fire, so also the hostile powers melt away at the sight of the Cross and the painful Passion.

IV

THE LOVE, POVERTY, AND PATIENCE OF
CHRIST ON THE CROSS

(from *Vacantia Sacra, the Sacred Holidays*,* by A. Hertsworms, O. S. C.; Liege, 1684; pp. 109, 90, 77.)

Meditate on the love which Christ has shown by His death. Very appropriate indeed are the words of the Cantic of Canticles (8, 6), "Love is strong as death." Gaze at the handsome countenance of thy Christ; gaze at it with love that you may never have cause to look upon it with fear. Behold, His head is inclined to kiss you; His side is open to receive you into His heart; His arms are stretched out to embrace you. Listen. Christ, His heart burning with love for you, is asking, "Do you love Me?" See to it that you may truthfully answer, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Consider this further proof of an everlasting love. Christ had lost well-nigh all His blood because of the injuries and wounds which He had received; but a few drops were left in His Heart. Even these were forced out by the lance. The divine love consumed all as it is written, "Your God is a consuming fire." The blood and the water that came out of Christ's side furnish ample evidence of this love; they are the symbols of the two sacraments of love, Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. Through the former we are reborn; with the latter we are nourished. And when Christ ascended into heaven He retained all His wounds, those of His hands and feet as well as that of His side to present them to His heavenly Father as an everlasting ransom-price of His love. He offers this ransom-price incessantly to His heavenly Father out of love for you in order to intercede and obtain for you all your wants. (Some theologians are of the opinion that this is the one and only way He intercedes for us.) Behold, my dear reader, Christ's love for you. "The love of Christ urges us on," exclaims the apostle—that is, it urges us to love Him in return and to spend ourselves in His behalf as He did for our sake. Blessed Theodore de Celles, our first Prior-General at Huy, meditated every Friday on the inexhaustible love of Christ, dying upon the cross; he did this with such fervor that during this contemplation he became often so rapt in ecstasy that he appeared beyond himself; all his senses became inactive, and the only words he was heard to repeat again and again were, "O Bona Crux," O Sweet Cross.

Prayer

O Jesus, Our love. My love. . . Upon the Cross? Thou stretchest out Thy arms? Then let Thy left hand rest upon my head, and let Thy right hand embrace me. Thou inclinest Thy head? Bestow upon me a kiss from Thy mouth and incline my heart to comply with Thy requests. Thou hast opened an access of love to Thy heart? Then carry me into that chamber and whisper to me of Thy love. I wish to abide nowhere but within the wound of Thy side. Didst Thou not

* By "Sacred Holidays" Hertsworms means the days of retreat. This tract, originally written in Latin, was composed during the author's term as prior of Maeseyck, a period when retreats were becoming more and more an established custom.

shed Thy life-blood to the last drop out of love for us? I feel myself growing faint from love of Thee. I would die willingly out of a love that is stronger than death. And Thou doth still bear the five marks of Thy wounds in Thy glorified body? I shall draw with joy from these fountains of the Savior. O Center of my love, I shall never separate myself from Thee. Thou art my portion forever. My whole being shall rejoice in the living God.

* * *

Did you ever consider what Christ possessed when He was hanging on the Cross? His torn garments were divided among the soldiers, and His tunic without seam (which is still preserved at Treves) was carried off by one of the dice players. His body was without any covering while His soul languished in solitude; it was in this state that the soldiers put Him to death. Gall and vinegar were put to His mouth as a drink; a crown of thorns served as His pillow; His bed of repose was the Cross. His only consolation was the presence of His mother whose heart was filled with sorrow. The tumultuous blasphemies of the Jews were the only words spoken to Him.

Do you choose to imitate Christ and live dispossessed of all things? Then deny yourself all consolation on the part of creatures. Live without mirth, pleasure, comfort and even the necessities of life. Divest yourself of all riches, shun all honor, and flee from the praises of men. Lead such a life, not under constraint like the poor, but willingly out of love for God. You must act like a beggar who hungering and thirsting after God's love solicits God for these gifts as alms.

* * *

In the face of all these provocative grievances and curses, Christ never uttered a word of complaint. He never opened His mouth despite all abuse, defilement and mockery; He subdued His wholly justified wrath. Why? In order that you, dear reader, may learn to be patient in imitation of Him Who suffered for you; that you, with His example before your eyes, may do what He has done. Whatever the cups of suffering you may have to drain in the course of this distressful life, your grief will appear trivial when you think of the chalice of suffering that was put to the lips of Christ. The remembrance of Christ's Passion renders every torment sweet. Our Savior Himself has said, "Thou shalt possess thy soul in patience," thereby teaching us that we shall live a life of joyful and restful self-control, if we know how to restrain ourselves out of love for the patient Christ. For such a person is willing to endure all kinds of suffering. Patience renders unquenchable thirst and scorching heat tolerable; it endures even with joy all that is arduous to bear. A man of an impatient disposition finds the least inconvenience burdensome; to the patient man, on the other hand, no burden seems oppressive. For him every thorn turns into a rose that adorns him. He keeps his mind steadily fixed on Christ, his guide and leader. When he suffers injustice, he draws near to Christ, and Christ becomes his Avenger. When he suffers pain, Christ is the Healer; when he is injured, Christ repairs the injury; when he is in sorrow, Christ consoles him. In this way, the patient man offers his soul and body as a sacrifice of patience; for such a man, believing in the resurrection of the body, is convinced that after this short life, his patience will be rewarded for all eternity. The awareness of having done what is right is the only thing worthwhile in which he glories.

V

LITANY IN HONOR OF THE HOLY CROSS

(from a manuscript of Godefridus de Groot, O.S.C., which was written at Venlo in 1621; it is preserved in the library of the monastery at Uden.)

Lord, have mercy on us.	
Christ, have mercy on us.	
Lord, have mercy on us.	
Christ, hear us.	
Christ, graciously hear us.	
God the Father of heaven, have mercy on us.	
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.	
God the Holy Ghost, have mercy on us.	
Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.	
Cross, Vision of Patriarchs and Prophets,	Shield us.
Herald of Apostles,	"
Crown of Martyrs,	"
Delight of the Priesthood,	"
Luster of Virgins	"
Cross, Strength of Kings	Protect us.
Ornament of the Church,	"
Hope of Christians,	"
Altar (?) of Christ's Worshippers,	"
Glory of all Orthodox Christians,	"
Cross, Our crown,	Safeguard us.
Foundation of Peace,	"
Opener of Paradise,	"
Rod of God's Wonder-works,	"
Bulwark of our Faith,	"
Cross, Life of the Just,	Help us.
Resurrection of the dead,	"
Key of the Kingdom of Heaven,	"
Provider of the Poor,	"
Haven of those who suffer shipwreck,	"
Cross, Seal of Chastity	Enlighten us.
Teacher of Sanctity,	"
Aid of Chastity,	"
Palm of Immortality,	"
Treasure of All Good,	"
Cross, Comfort of the Afflicted,	Aid us.
Rescuer of the Desperate,	"
Overthrower of Heretics,	"
Banisher of temptations,	"
Vanquisher of our enemies,	"
Cross, Salvation of the Faithful,	Hear us.
Graced by the Body of Christ,	"
Ennobled by the Blood of Christ,	"
Hallowed by contact with Christ's Body,	"
Life-giving Emblem of the Son of God,	"
Cross, Imparter of health,	Comfort us.
Pact of freedom,	"
Highness of Heaven,	"



H. RUSSELIUS, Chronicon Cruciferorum (1635)
Frontispiece

NOTES

1. Omnis comparatio claudicat.
2. In short, the essence of the spirituality of an order consists in the way of life the order leads in relation to God, and in relation to everything else in so far as it is directed to God.
3. "Omnia recensere mei ingenii non est et majoribus illam curam libens cedo . . ."
4. "chronicon nonnullorum memorabilium Ordinis."
5. "Qualiter autem (Ordo) anno 1210 . . . ut habet liber definitionum domus Huensis repululaverit . . . ex antiquis ejusdem sacri Ordinis monumentis proferamus."
6. "magna animi alacritate . . ."
7. "... magna pietatis affectu . . ."
8. "... non ut dominus, sed ut fidelis Domini sui dispensator annonam suam coepit egentibus communicare . . ."
9. "Dominico familiarissimus"
10. "ut relicto saeculo, Apostolicum in sua predicatione sequeretur institutum"
11. "contemplationi convenientissimus . . ."
12. "ea quae a Patre nostro Theodore tradita sunt . . ."
13. Here we must observe that in the twelfth century even secular canons were called "FRATRES"; the Norbertines likewise were addressed as "FRATRES" or "Brothers" up till the sixteenth century.
14. "... in iis praecipue quae ad studium vel praedicationem vel animarum fructum videbuntur impedire, cum ordo noster specialiter ob predicationem et animarum salutem, ab initio noscatur institutum fuisse, et studium nostrum ad hoc debeat principaliter intendere, ut proximorum animabus possimus utiles esse."
15. "Horae omnes in Ecclesia breviter et succincte dicantur, ne fratres devotionem amittant et eorum studium minime impediatur . . . non protrahendo vocem in pausa vel in fine versus."
16. "Horae omnes *TRACTIM* . . . cum devotione dicantur . . . *PROTRAHENDO* vocem in pausa et in fine versus."
17. "vestes lanae non attonsae"
18. "In libris gentilium et philosophorum non studeant et si inspiciant, saeculares scientias non addiscant nec artes quas liberales vocant, nisi aliquando circa aliquos Prior Huyensis vel generale capitulum voluerit aliter dispensare, sed tantum libros theologicales tam juvenes quam alii legant."
19. "Monachus non doctoris sed plan gentis habet officium."
20. "... tant cet humble recrut craignait que cette distinction ne dimuera dans l'esprit de ses religieux l'esprit de modestie et d'humilite et n'introduisit parmi eux l'amour des honneurs et de la representation . . ."

21. About the state of the beginners, the proficient, and the perfects.
22. "pretiosissimus thesaurus religionis . . . arma militiae spiritualis"
23. "Quot fratres ad apostolatum misi, tot ad infernum misi."
24. "Thomas mallecli a Kempis opus aureum de imitatione Christi, quattuor libellis concinatum, carmine redditum."
25. "Jesus in Cruce, Thomas a Kempis De Imitatione Christi; de Regia Via Sanctae Crucis, Lusus poeticus."
26. "Breviarium secundum modum fratrum Sanctae Crucis."
27. "Salve tremendum caput . . . salve speciosissima facies . . . salvet oculi . . . os et guttur . . . aures . . . collum . . . manus et brachia, pectus . . . latus . . . genua . . . pedes . . . corpus . . . sanguis . . . anima Christi."
28. ". . . eximius et primarius in calligraphia magister . . ."
29. "gratum fac nato precibus Maria hunc rogo librum; namque nihil spernit quod tu fers spes miserorum; Fr. Joannes Daventriae."
30. "In libris philosophorum non legant . . ."
31. "studia generalia regionalia . . ."
32. In this book, the original titles of such works will be found in the notes; an English translation will usually be used in the text.
33. *DEVOTUS LIBELLUS DE PERFECTIONE FRATRUM S. CRUCIS*
34. *DE MYSTERIIS ALLEGORICE CRUCIS HABITUS NOSTRI*
35. *REVELATIONES CUIUSDAM RELIGIOSI DEFUNCTI CRUCIFERI*
36. *CLAVIS COELI*
37. *MONACHUS SIVE MYSTICA MONACHI ELUCIDATIO QUA SERVUS DEI AD SPIRITUALIS VITAE AMOREM EXCITETUR*
38. *DIALOGUS INTER S. CRUCIS ET SOCIETATIS IESU PATRES . . . DE RESTAURANDA MONASTICA RELIGIONIS DISCIPLINA*
39. *COLLATIONES SPIRITUALES*
40. *MORODOXION UNIVERSI SEU CURA SEPTEM PECCATORUM MORTALIUM*
41. *DE QUATTUOR HOMINIS NOVISSIMIS*
42. *SYMBOLA TRINITATIS*
43. *VACANTIA SACRA*
44. *LUCERNA SPLENDENS SUPER CANDELABRUM SANCTUM*
45. "Altera Clavis Coeli"
46. *CANIS EVANGELICUS*
47. "Doctores theologi, qui docuerunt aut actu docent, in conventibus locum professionis, extra conventus vero locum immediate post Priores habebunt ob dignitatem doctoralem."
48. ". . . summo mane . . ."
49. Haec sunt septenis propter quae psallimus horis: Matutina ligat Christum, qui crimina purgat; Prima replet sputis; Causam dat Tertia mortis; Sexta cruci nectit, latus ejus Nona bipartit, Vespera deponit; tumulo Completa reponit.
50. *EXERCITIUM CENTORUM ARTICULORUM DE PASSIONE D.N.J.C.*
51. *ROSARIUM MYSTICUM ANIMAE FIDELIS QUINQUAGINTA ARTICULIS TOTIUS VITAE PASSIONISQUE D.N.J.C.*; "Oratio ad Septem Verbis Christi in Cruce"; "Salutationes ad Omnia Membra Christi"; "Oratio de Passione J.C. et de Septem Verbis Ultimis"; "Oratio S. Ambrosii de Passione Domini."

52. *DE PASSIONE HEREN ALS SUNTE BRIGITTEN OPENBERT IS.*
53. Statute 41.
54. Underscoring added.
55. Underscoring added.
56. Underscoring added.
57. *JOHN 3, 16; ROM. 8, 32; PHIL. 2, 8.*
58. *APOLOGIA SUPER ROSARIUM*
59. "Nunc tecum plangere Maria Virgo sacrata, quaeso in lacrimis meracis de nostra advocata."
60. *GAL. 6, 17*
61. *GAL. 6, 14*
62. *GAL. 2, 19-20*
63. *I JOHN 2, 6*
64. *I PETER 2, 21*
65. *I PETER 4, 1*
66. *II COR. 4, 10*
67. *JOHN 13, 15*
68. *PHIL. 2, 9*
69. The relative clause cannot be taken literally.

