

The Spirituality of Western Christendom. II

THE ROOTS
OF THE MODERN
CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Introduction by Jean Leclercq
Edited by E. Rozanne Elder

CISTERCIAN PUBLICATIONS, INC.
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008

1984

RG - BIBL - ANTW



03 05 0016233 1

of the millennium had already set foot on the perilous slope toward sectarianism, whatever its intentions may have been.

BERNARD MCGINN

*The Divinity School
The University of Chicago*

*DEVOTIO MODERNA ATQUE ANTIQUA:
THE MODERN DEVOTION AND
CARTHUSIAN SPIRITUALITY*

The Devotio Moderna, a religious reform movement that flourished in the Netherlands and in Germany throughout the fifteenth and well into the sixteenth century, originated with Geert Groote of Deventer (1340-1384). His followers, dedicated both to the contemplative and active life, founded communities of the 'Brothers of the Common Life' and the 'Sisters of the Common Life'. Groote was also instrumental in establishing at Windesheim a monastery which soon grew into the Windesheim Congregation of Augustinian Canons Regular, the best known member of which is Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471).

The Carthusian order was founded in 1084 by Bruno of Cologne at the Grand Chartreuse near Grenoble, France. The Carthusians combined cenobitic (community) life with eremitic (solitary) life. They have never been a large Order, but recent scholarship has pointed out the strong influence of the Carthusians on monastic as well as on ecclesiastic reforms throughout the later middle ages.

MEDIEVALISTS HAVE ON occasion displayed a certain fondness for natural images in characterizing the late Middle Ages. For example, the fifteenth century in particular has been described as the 'waning' as well as the 'harvest' of the Middle Ages. More recently, it has been referred to by yet another image — that of the 'turning tide'.¹ All this seems to imply a foregone conclusion: 'the old has passed away, behold, all things have become new' — or are about to become new. Modernity is replacing antiquity, innovation is supplanting tradition. There is, in fact, nothing wrong in applying those images to human history provided we remember that harvest is followed by seed-time, that the waning moon also waxes, and that the tide that turns inevitably returns. In his *Myth of the Eternal Return*, Mircea Eliade has analyzed a corresponding

cyclical pattern in the history of religion. *Homo religiosus* has always believed in the necessity of a regular periodic return to the origins, the primordial beginnings, so that the fragile fabric of man and society, worn and torn by time and corruption, may be renewed and its original form restored.

Jürgen Moltmann, in an essay entitled 'Turning to the Future' (*Umkehr zur Zukunft*), finds that the 'Myth of Eternal Return' also dominates the religion and theology of early and medieval Christianity as well as the various movements for social and political renewal in western history.² We speak of the Renaissance and the Reformation, of revolution, revival, renewal, and restoration. As the prefix 're-' indicates, all of those movements did not seek discovery of a *novum* but rather the recovery of an *antiquum*: the 'paradise lost,' the 'golden age,' the original natural state of man, or the initial order of things. The Protestant Reformation wished to recover the golden age of primitive Christianity; the humanists called for a 'return to the sources'; and Copernicus, who is credited with revolutionizing our view of the cosmos, meant by revolution the return of a stellar system to its initial constellation. One is tempted to conclude that nothing is as conservative and reactionary as is the idea of the revolution of history to its point of departure.

In this context, innovation appears as renewal rather than as *novum*. It does not constitute a break with tradition but rather tradition's revitalization and continuation. One could say that tradition, in order to stay alive, demands innovation while the latter depends upon tradition for its authenticity and legitimacy. A case in point is the *devotio moderna*, a religious movement of the fifteenth century that began in the Netherlands and quickly spread into Germany. The very name *modern* which the modern devotionalists applied to themselves seems to suggest that in this movement we are indeed confronted with a *novum*, which is, in large part, discontinuous with medieval tradition. The majority of studies which have appeared during the past decades make that claim in one way or another.³ The

modern devotion is seen as a radical break with medieval monasticism, and the Reformation in Germany is indeed itself regarded as the product of the *devotio moderna*.⁴ The movement has been credited with widespread reform of public education and, through its own schools and teaching, with having influenced nearly every humanist of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁵ Furthermore, the modernity of the modern devotion is seen in its primarily lay membership, its democratic organization, its individualism and tolerance, its alienation from the Church, its rejection of external forms of religious practices, and its members' lack of vows and monastic rule.⁶

In a more recent and extensive study of the *devotio moderna*, R. R. Post has raised serious questions about these suppositions.⁷ Without going into details, let me briefly summarize Post's conclusions.⁸ The movement counted among its foundations two communities without vows (the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life) and, in addition, a monastic foundation (the Windesheim Congregation of Augustinian Canons Regular). The recognized founder of the modern devotion, Geert Groote, was fully in sympathy with the monastic state and extolled it as being the most perfect way of salvation. 'To enter the monastery is to choose the highest state of life and that which pleases God the most,' he asserted in one of his letters. Such an attitude does not suggest any basis for a radical break with medieval monasticism. From the very beginning, in all the places where the Brothers of the Common Life settled, they devoted their care to the pupils of the city schools. Some they admitted to their hostels and there prepared them for the monastic life and the priesthood. Apart from providing them with room and board and helping them with their studies by going over the lessons which these boys received in the city schools, the brothers emphasized their spiritual formation and religious training. Until the end of the fifteenth century this was the limit of the Brothers' work as teachers. Since with very few exceptions they did not attend universities, they were completely outside the academic world and not qualified to teach in schools. Hence

the influence of the Brothers on the development of humanism was negligible.

Still less can the Brothers of the Common Life be considered to have fostered the Reformation. Again, with few exceptions, they opposed the new doctrine everywhere and as a result, their houses ceased to exist in many German cities. According to most extant sources, the membership of each brother house consisted of priests, unordained clerics and at most two or three lay brothers, the *familiares*, who carried out the menial tasks of cooking, cleaning, and tailoring. If one adds the fact that the modern devotion included the many monasteries of the Windesheim Congregation, the term 'lay movement' is hardly an appropriate description. Finally, no substantial basis exists for the claim that the modern devotion alienated itself from the Church, and even less for the argument that its emphasis on inner devotion represented an outburst of modern individualism. On the contrary, there is overwhelming evidence that the movement continued throughout to be faithful to the Church in its emphasis on the importance of the Mass, daily vigils, and breviary prayer, as well as in its obedience to the hierarchy. In short, the *devotio moderna* seems to demonstrate, if anything, continuity rather than a break with tradition.

The movement originated under the impact of Geert Groote of Deventer (1340-84) who gathered followers dedicated both to the contemplative and active life. This led to the foundation of the community of the 'Brothers of the Common Life' and its counterpart, the 'Sisters of the Common Life'. Upon Groote's advice, his successors established — in addition to existing brotherhouses and sisterhouses — a monastery at Windesheim which soon grew into a congregation that included four new monasteries and was later to become the famous Windesheim Congregation of Augustinian Canons Regular. All these communities practised what they called 'inner devotion,' from which they derived their name. To study what the modern devotionalists meant by 'inner devotion,' how they put it into practice, and how they related the practice of devotion to the life of the com-

munity seems essential to a valid assessment of the extent to which the *devotio moderna* must be seen as either a return to or a turning away from medieval spirituality.

I.

Geert Groote emerged as the founding father of the *Devotio Moderna* during the last decade of his life (1374-84). Following a conversion he resigned the two benefices he had held at Utrecht and Aachen, donated his paternal house in Deventer to the city as a hospice for poor women, and, in 1374, entered the Carthusian monastery at Monnikhuizen near Arnhem where his friend Henry of Calcar was then prior and where he stayed for the next three years. It is curious that very few studies even mention this period in Groote's life, let alone assign any significance to it. Yet it was at Monnikhuizen, within the context of a monastic order that claimed *Cartusia nunquam reformata quia nunquam deformata*, that Groote developed his basic concepts of the spiritual life. It seems most unlikely that the formation of his spirituality remained untouched by this encounter with the monastic tradition of devotion. Thomas à Kempis, the later Windesheim Canon, describes Groote's life at Monnikhuizen:

Dressing in a long coarse garment of hair-cloth, totally abstaining from the use of meat and other lawful things, and passing a considerable portion of his nights in vigils and prayer, he forced his feeble body into complete subservience to the spirit.⁹

During the first period of his stay in Monnikhuizen Groote formulated his thinking under the title *Conclusa et Proposita*, a summary of how he intended to order his life thenceforth. In the opening paragraph he declared his purpose:

I intend to order my life for the glory, honor, and service of God and the salvation of my soul; to prefer no temporal good either of the body, or of honor, or of fortune, or of knowledge to my soul's salvation.¹⁰

He resolved to desire a benefice never again, to possess only essentials, and to be content with what is in accordance with participation in community life. He renounced all profit which he might acquire from learning and proposed to abandon all manner of scholarship. He did not wish to obtain any academic degree in medicine, law, or theology. He resolved not to devote himself to any field of study or to write any book to enhance his reputation. He wished to avoid all public debates and any dispute with private individuals. He even refused to continue his studies in Roman Law and in medicine. He rejected scholasticism, its conclusions as well as its method. Indeed, he rejected every branch of academic learning as non-essential.¹¹

What emerges in these resolutions is an attitude characteristic of the *devotio moderna* and one deeply rooted in the monastic tradition: the *contemptus mundi*, the contempt for the world. Indeed, Groote's *Conclusa* echo to a large extent the *Meditations* of Guigo I, fifth Prior of the Carthusian charterhouse, a book which had been widely copied and distributed and with which Groote no doubt became familiar at Monnikhuizen. Guigo wrote:

Lack of interior vision, that is, of God . . . causes you to go outside your interior, in fact you cannot abide within yourself as in seeming darkness, and you spend your time admiring the exterior forms of bodies or the opinions of men. To gain an interior vision of God and to receive his benefits one must deny the world and himself.¹²

Guigo continues:

The way to God is easy because one goes by disburdening. But it would be hard were one to go by taking on burdens. So, disburden yourself to the point where, having left all things, you deny yourself . . . Wean yourself henceforth from those forms of bodies, . . . learn to live without them, learn to live and rejoice in God.¹³

For Groote, the choice of this way of life depends upon man's knowledge of himself and upon his consciousness of the pres-

ence of the Spirit within him. Groote saw a correlation between interiority (the *locus* where God speaks to man) and piety (man's zeal for the glory of God). Both these notions make up the concept of devotion, and Groote considered both interior devotion and exterior works necessary components of the virtue of religion. He writes:

By the virtue of religion, man is inclined to consecrate himself to the service of God, in order to honor him in an appropriate way. The work and interior exercises of religion are an intimate devotion, interiority and submission to the will of God. Exterior works and exercises consist in adoration and the offering of oneself.¹⁴

This devotion manifests itself in a fervent desire for union with God and the salvation of the soul. The way to God is a life of struggle, of contempt for the world, and of self-denial. In order to attain the goal, one must imitate the humanity of Christ, especially the passion of Christ, the *passio Christi*. By *imitatio Christi* Groote meant a desire to share in Christ's passion and cross through meditation, prayer, and humble self-dispossession: '*Crux Christi in ruminacione passionis fabricanda est*.¹⁵ Imitation is an actualization of the model that one wants to become perfected in one's life. Groote called it the very door to an authentic spiritual life and urged 'that we should contemplate frequently on the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.'¹⁶

Despite his emphasis on interiority and conscious inner devotion, Groote did not reject what he called 'exterior works and exercises which consist in adoration and the offering of oneself.'¹⁷ Indeed, to external actions and bodily gestures he assigned considerable significance as symbols of inward devotion. Commenting in the *Conclusa* on one's actions during Mass, Groote wrote:

Our bowing ourselves at these words [the Gospel], and the bodily posture of reverence are symbols of the reverence of our minds . . . Moreover, the outward observance is a

means to induce inward reverence, but it is vain if one answers not to the other.¹⁸

And again:

A bent posture does admirably befit devotion of mind, for the motions of spirit do bear relation to the posture of the body.

These statements again resemble a similar opinion in Guigo's *Meditations*:

The greatest utility of bodies is in their use as signs. For from them are made many signs necessary for our salvation, . . . nor do men know the movements of one another's souls but by sensible signs.¹⁹

K. C. DeBeer in his study on Groote provides a list of the books which Groote had copied and of the authors to whom he constantly referred.²⁰ The list includes nearly the whole of medieval devotional literature, but notably the works of Cassian, Gregory I, and St Bernard. Clearly, Groote's spirituality sprang from the past and in no way can it be called revolutionary. It certainly shows the influence of the Carthusians.

Equally traditional in their spirituality were Groote's two immediate disciples, Florens Radewijns and Geert Zerbolt van Zutphen. Florens Radewijns (1350-1400) was, with Groote, the co-founder of the Brothers of the Common Life and the rector of the brotherhouse in Deventer from Groote's death until his own — that is, from 1384 to 1400. Apart from a few letters and various *Notabilia Verba*, two of his works have been preserved; these are referred to by their first words, namely *Multum valet* and *Omnes inquit artes*.²¹

The former work, *Multum valet*, is a devotional treatise that examines the goals of the spiritual life: purity of heart and love of God. Florens described two ways of attaining these goals. The first is the *via purgativa*, the practice of virtue through spiritual reading, meditation, and prayer. All three are discussed in detail with special emphasis on meditation and the subjects for meditation.²²

The second way is the *via illuminativa*, the luminous way, which consists of reflection on the benefits received from God. Once again Florens emphasized meditation and suggested texts concerning the *passio Christi* for every day of the week.²³ The classic third way, the *via unitiva*, is not mentioned at all by Florens. This is the way of perfection that is to culminate in union with God. In ignoring this aspect of traditional spirituality, Florens Radewijns reveals a certain anti-mystical attitude or at least a disinterest in mysticism which was also characteristic to some extent of Groote.²⁴ Florens instead tended towards the severely-ascetic, the practical-didactic, and the affective aspects of devotion. He strongly disapproved of purely theological learning, speculative mysticism, and, especially, scholasticism, all of which he thought hindered devotion and distracted one from the eradication of faults. He made no distinction between real and specious learning, but only between *studium devotum et morale* on the one hand and *studium intellectuale* on the other. All scholastic learning was therefore suspect and the Brothers were not permitted any such study. To make sure that they did not engage in it surreptitiously, the Brothers could enter the house library only through the librarian's rooms.²⁵

Florens' second work, *Omnes inquit artes*, is essentially a collection of texts from Scripture and from devotional writings linked together in such a way as to form a logical whole.²⁶ The first part closely resembles Florens' first treatise, *Multum valet*, with an exposition of the chief virtues to be practised — love of God and love of neighbour. Among the Brothers the latter must find expression in brotherly harmony, in giving and accepting fraternal reproof, and in obedience, which means above all renouncing one's own will. The aids toward attaining these virtues are again study (spiritual reading), meditation, and prayer as well as manual work which must also be accompanied by prayer and meditation.²⁷ The second part of the work deals with the subject matter of meditation: the passion of Christ, the Four Last Things, our sins, and the benefits received from

God. Florens selected his texts from among the numerous authors who were frequently quoted in the late Middle Ages and who were considered authorities. A great deal of monastic literature — i.e., writings by and for monks — is included in the selection, but the one author who is quoted above all others is John Cassian, whose writings were held in the highest esteem throughout the Middle Ages and who provides the theoretical basis for Florens' asceticism. As much as a third of the entire text of *Omnes inquit artes* is derived from Cassian. For a number of themes only or mainly texts from Cassian are introduced, as in, for example, the nature of perfection, the struggle between flesh and spirit, vices in particular and in general, brotherly harmony, obedience, prayer, and spiritual direction. Thus the spirituality of Florens Radewijns is completely determined by the monastic tradition in general and by Cassian's fund of ideas in particular.²⁸

Geert Zerbolt of Zutphen was perhaps the most successful and most important author the Brothers ever produced, although he — unlike Groote and Radewijns — had no academic training and only lived to be thirty-one years of age. He was one of the first Brothers to enter the brotherhouse in Deventer, where he assisted Florens, the rector, in difficult matters. He wrote two important spiritual treatises, *De reformatione virium animae* and *De spiritualibus ascensionibus*.²⁹ Both had a wide circulation and greatly influenced later spiritual writers, including — if only indirectly — Ignatius of Loyola. Their contents resemble Florens' two treatises, but the major themes were treated in different ways.

Zerbolt began with the concrete situation of sinful man who must through self-examination become conscious of his sin and of the necessity of conversion. In the very first chapter of his *De spiritualibus ascensionibus* Zerbolt described how man is inclined by nature to turn upwards to God:

I know, O man, that you are desirous of going upward and that you long earnestly to be lifted up, for you are a creature reasonable and noble, endowed with a certain great-

ness of mind, wherefore you seek lofty heights and ascend thereto by reason of a desire that is of your nature.³⁰

However, the spiritual ascent is blocked by man's depravity and degeneration as experienced in original sin, concupiscence, and mortal sin. Zerbolt continued:

From this it comes that now these powers and afflictions are inclined in a direction far removed from that to which God ordained them being prone to evil and going headlong to the desire of that which is unlawful . . . the will has become crooked, does often choose the worst part and loves carnal things, making light of things spiritual and heavenly.³¹

Zerbolt then proceeded from the decline of the soul's powers to their restoration by contrasting the threefold deprivation of the soul to a threefold ascension: conversion, ordered love, and sanctification of the soul's faculties. The means of ascending from one level to the other are self-knowledge, repentance, combat of sins, mortification, and the practice of humility and obedience.³² This framework of levels of ascent displays, according to Zerbolt, an order and pattern which is revealed and exhibited in the *vita Christi* which therefore becomes our model. Christ is the only model to be followed and imitated; *imitatio Christi* is at the very center of Zerbolt's spirituality. Imitation of Christ is realized in three different steps or ascents.³³ The first imitation is based on an appreciation of Christ's humanity and of the beauty of this humanity. The second imitation is found in the discovery of the divinity in Christ, which demands both devotion and love and fear and reverence. The third ascent in our imitation of Christ is union with God. Zerbolt wrote:

A man does begin to be in a certain manner and spirit with God, to pass outside himself, to perceive the very truth and to be made united with God and to cleave to him.³⁴

To achieve one's ascents in the imitation of Christ, Zerbolt prescribed four exercises: *lectio* (spiritual reading), *meditatio*, *oratio*, (prayer), and *contemplatio*, all of them centered on the passion of Christ.³⁵ He explained meditation as follows:

By meditation is meant the process in which you diligently turn over in your heart whatsoever you have read or heard, earnestly ruminating the same and thereby enkindling your affections in some particular manner or enlightening your understanding.³⁶

The material for meditation listed by Zerbolt included besides the passion of Christ the Four Last Things — death, judgment, heaven, and hell.³⁷

Zerbolt's description of the spiritual ascent to God resembles another Carthusian classic, the *Scala claustralium* of Guigo II, the ninth prior of Chartreuse, written in the form of a letter to a friend.³⁸ Its content concerns the four steps of the ladder that stretches from earth to heaven, and the four steps are *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*.³⁹

Guigo's purpose was not merely to enumerate the various steps in the spiritual formation of monks but to show their necessary order and inter-relatedness. Spiritual reading is the foundation that prepares one for meditation, meditation prepares for prayer and prayer for contemplation. Reading without prayer, Guigo insisted, is arid, meditation without reading is erroneous; prayer without meditation is tepid, and meditation without prayer is fruitless. Contemplation without prayer is rare or miraculous.⁴⁰

Giles Constable has shown that Guigo's steps were well-known by later spiritual writers, and that the *Scala claustralium* had become a favorite by the late Middle Ages.⁴¹ Its influence on Zerbolt's thought is unmistakable. Not only do his four steps in achieving one's ascent in the imitation of Christ — *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio* — exactly parallel the four steps of Guigo, but Zerbolt, like Guigo, insisted on their inter-relatedness. Meditation follows from spiritual reading but is quite distinct from it, and meditation, in turn, is distinct from prayer but not separate from it insofar as true prayer cannot be achieved without meditation.⁴² Zerbolt, unlike Groote and Radewijns, also emphasized the fourth step, contemplation, as the highest step attainable here on earth and treated the way

that leads to it, though the state of contemplation was not itself described in his work.

It seems, then, that the ideas of the founding fathers of the *devotio moderna* on the nature and meaning of devotion and the spiritual life were entirely traditional and closely similar to those of their favorite authors: Cassian, Gregory I, St Bernard, Guigo I, and Guigo II of Chartreuse. To see the modern devotion as a radical departure from the medieval concept is therefore totally unfounded and misleading. But what about the way these ideas were put into practice? Is it not true that the religious communities that were founded for this purpose — the Brothers and the Sisters of the Common Life — constituted a departure from tradition and, therefore, a radical innovation? My contention is that they did not, all outward appearances to the contrary. A comparison, however brief, of the *Consuetudines* (Customary) of the brotherhouses at Deventer and Zwolle with the Carthusian *Consuetudines* compiled by Guigo I will substantiate and confirm this contention.

II.

It is essential to remember, first of all, that the modern devotionalist's movement included, in addition to the establishments of many houses of the Brothers and the Sisters of the Common Life, the foundations of and subsequent alliance with the various monasteries that ultimately comprise the Windesheim Congregation of Augustinian Canons as well as the numerous convents of nuns that formed part of the Franciscan 'tertiaries', the third order of Franciscans. The widespread conversion and integration of brotherhouses and sisterhouses into canonical Augustinian chapters and tertiary Franciscan convents, is certainly indicative of the traditionalism of the modern devotionalist movement during its period of confrontation with Humanism and the Protestant Reformation. This traditionalism became apparent in the initial constitutions of the brotherhouses at Deventer and Zwolle which, without any essential modifications, were adopted and followed by all the subsequent

establishments of the movement throughout the Low Counties and Germany.⁴³

The 'Original Constitution of the Brothers of the Common Life' at Deventer, edited and published by A. Hyma, demonstrates the close association with, and the practical implementation of, the ideals of the Modern Devotionalist Movement — i.e. the revival of the medieval devotionalist tradition.⁴⁴ It is curious how the Brethren absorbed so much monastic and, in particular, Carthusian discipline in their attempt to reform the Church. The rigorous discipline of Windesheim is predictable. The brethren were, after all, a monastic body engaged in the reform of monasticism itself. Quite naturally they borrowed Carthusian discipline as it suited their aims. Much more noteworthy is the development of a style of life and discipline in a 'secular' institution which, in many respects, paralleled the externals of Carthusian life. A comparison of the 'Original Constitution of the Brethren of the Common Life' at Deventer with the '*Consuetudines Guigonis*' or the customs of Guigo will allow for some examples.⁴⁵ Although the Brethren's Constitution was not compiled until 1413, the practice of its precepts had been in use since the days of Radewijns and Zerbolt. Thus, the indirect influence of Groote can be assumed. The *Consuetudines* had also been a fact of Carthusian Life before Guigo collected and compiled them about 1128. So both documents represent a pre-existent style of life inspired by spiritual motivations.

The Brethren lived 'in the world' in a very real sense, in the cities, but, as the scriptures demand (John 15: 18-19), they were not part of the world. Part of their stated purpose, in the introduction of the Constitution, was the imitation of the example of the 'primitive' Church.⁴⁶ Their apostolate was geared to service in the secular sphere as copyists, operators of student hostels, preachers, and teachers. But throughout the Constitution there are admonishments to the effect that in no way should the apostolate draw one away from the spiritual life. The Carthusians, on the other hand, were not 'in the world' in the same sense as

were the Brethren, their apostolate being within the bounds of the cloister. Given the diverse nature of the two institutions, the similarities in their respective customs are remarkable. In the ninth chapter of the Brethren's Constitution there occurs a phrase which is often repeated thereafter in the document: *in camera sua*.⁴⁷ Also, in Chapter 37, we read: '*Sicut piscis ex aqua eductus statim moritur ita monachus perit, si foras cellam suam tardare voluerit*.'⁴⁸ This emphasis on the cell as a place crucial to one's spiritual life, as water is to fish, was certainly a Carthusian tradition. The Carthusian cell was indeed a very special place where one spent the bulk of his monastic life. The monk's cell was the physical focal point in his search for God. Guigo's *Consuetudines* delineate the function, property, and purpose of the cell.⁴⁹ The monk is exhorted never 'to make excuses for leaving his cell, at other than the appointed times, for he should consider it as necessary to his health and life as water is to fishes . . .'.⁵⁰ It is obvious that the stress which the Brethren placed on the cell's importance to their spiritual well-being had its roots in the Carthusian customs.

The second chapter of the Constitution proposes topics for meditation with which the Brethren were to occupy themselves — i.e., sin, death, judgment, and hell. However, lest the brothers despair over such matters, they are also advised to meditate on the mercy of God, on hope, heaven, divine benefits, and the life and Passion of Christ. These topics of meditation are further ordered by the day and church season.⁵¹ A Carthusian parallel is best seen in the work of the twelfth-century Carthusian, Adam de Dryburgh, entitled the 'Quadripartite Exercise of the Cell,' which deals in part with topics and degrees of meditation.⁵² For Adam, there were eight degrees or kinds of meditation, the second being penitential and the third being hopeful.

The inhabitant of the cell is to turn over in bitterness of spirit all his bygone days and years, his sins of thought and deed, his carnal inclinations and human frailty; then he is to consider the awfulness of the Creator, of death, and to

picture to himself the general resurrection and last judgment . . . Nevertheless, there should be wrought in the monk a certain illumination of mind, whereby he can pass to the third manner of meditations, which is to consider the sweetness of the divine clemency in the Father of Mercies, . . . and the love of the Son in his Passion and in His gift of His Body and Blood for our food and drink. This consideration is to do away with fear lest it degenerate to despair. . . .⁵³

There is nearly a one-to-one correspondence of favored subjects of meditation between the Carthusians and the Brethren. The formulaic prescription for daily practice of meditation appears to be in keeping with the regimen of Carthusian life as well as with that of the Brethren, as described in the *Consuetudines* and the 'Constitution'.

Manual labor was an essential part of the Carthusian vocation as it was of the Brethren's. The Brethren's Constitution states that man's nature is such that it cannot bear constant study or prayer and that labor is required to occupy part of one's time.⁵⁴ Guigo relied on the teachings of Cassian and St Gregory's Homilies and Morals to express the same notion. Manual labor, therefore, was undertaken as a means of relaxing the mind from constant study and contemplation. Yet for both the Brethren and the Carthusians, there was a greater significance to manual labor than merely as a sort of 'spiritual therapy'. The copying of books in which both groups were employed provided a source of income to both, but even this was not their primary concern. The ultimate reason and goal for the production of books by either group was the dissemination of the Word of God. In his *Consuetudines* Guigo wrote:

Books . . . we wish to keep very carefully as the everlasting food of our souls, and most industriously to be made, so that since we cannot do so by the mouth, we may preach the word of God with our hands.⁵⁵

The prior continues:

For so many books that we write, it seems to us that we make so many publishers of the truth, hoping for reward

from the Lord for all those who by them shall be corrected from error, or advanced in Catholic truth. . . .⁵⁶

The Brethren shared the same purpose, love, and care for books as the Carthusians did, as evident in their Constitution.⁵⁷ They produced books not only for income but for reform. They also had an advantage which their Carthusian mentors did not — i.e., the advantage of accessibility to the whole Church.

Many more parallels exist between the respective customs of the Carthusian and the Brethren. In fact, the entire meticulous approach for materially ordering the life of the community to spiritual ends was common to both groups. The examples given above were not mere coincidence. Diverse as their institutions were, the Brethren resembled the Carthusians in many respects.

III.

CONCLUSION

My purpose has been to emphasize the importance of Geert Groote's encounter with monastic spirituality for the movement which he founded, the *devotio moderna*. Both the devotional literature and language of Groote, Florens Radewijns, and Geert Zerbolt, and the ordering and structures of the communities they founded reveal a highly traditional monastic style. Jean Leclercq has clearly demonstrated the existence of a distinctive and identifiable monastic language and experience, large elements of which had been set down as early as Gregory the Great and given shape during the Carolingian revival.⁵⁸ The monastic style flowered in the work of the spiritual writers of the twelfth century who exercised widespread appeal, as Giles Constable has shown, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁵⁹ The devotional writings of the Modern Devotionists drew directly upon this monastic/meditative tradition — with particular emphasis on the *Vita Christi*, especially the scene of the Passion: "I have sinned gravely, my conscience is disturbed but not confounded, because I shall remember the wounds of the Lord."⁶⁰

An essential aspect of this literature is a clearly prescribed set of responses in its hearers and readers. The basic rubric is *imitatio* — an external imitation of the deeds and gestures of the narrative and an internal imitation of appropriate attitudes, emotions, and self-awareness. Both modes of imitation are inter-related. As we have seen, external gestures both represent and shape internal attitudes. The appropriate responses to the literature are clearly and extensively spelled out: obedience, self-denial, suffering, humility, and self contempt.⁶¹ A second important aspect linking the Modern Devotio with the monastic tradition is the inter-relationship between devotion and the ordering of the community. The primary contact between monks and their tradition was an aural contact. As Jean Leclercq has pointed out, devotional reading, whether private or public, entailed an aural experience; the *lectio divina* was an 'acoustical reading,' which fully engaged one's physical, emotional, and intellectual activities.⁶²

Both the customs of Guigo and the Constitution of the Brethren are quite clear about what may be called a code of behavior. This code has two parts: external actions and gestures (obedience, silence, service), and internal attitudes (humility, self-denial, hatred of self, and love of others). This two-part code, moreover, is based upon the capacity of the members to respond to the language and example of models of authority and to imitate them in attitude and deed. This interplay between christological imagery and monastic order is evident in an early sermon by John Staupitz, an Augustinian contemporary of Martin Luther:

In the first place, we should follow the life of Jesus Christ which is our instruction; if we have the example of the apostles and other saints, this [the life of Jesus Christ] ought to be examined most carefully . . . Christ, the living son of God, is foremost among the brothers and therefore he is the rule and norm of the brothers.⁶³

What we see here is the striking identity of devotional literature and the constituted order and social structure of monastic

groups. Devotional and constitutional literature share a common vocabulary precisely because the use of religious language is embedded in the very structure of the community.⁶⁴

The institutions of the *Devotio Moderna* are no exception to this generality. Indeed, they serve as a late medieval example of the continuing traditional monastic spirituality. This also explains why the Modern Devotion resisted the Reformation and why the latter must be understood as a radical break with the monastic tradition.

The devotion of the Modern Devotionalists, then, was modern only in the manner in which they put it into practice outside the cloister. In their effort to stem the tide of relaxation of discipline the Devotionalists brought a most necessary renewal to a wide area. They may indeed have propagated the *contemptus mundi* over too wide a field, as R. R. Post suggests,⁶⁵ permeating religious life with a pessimism against which the optimism of the Renaissance and the evangelical freedom of the Reformation reacted.

OTTO GRÜNDLER

The Medieval Institute
Western Michigan University

the Apocalypse Commentary of Hugh of St. Cher', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 46 (1978) 373-6.

93. . . . angelus Ephesi fuit beatus Benedictus et congregatio monachorum fuit sua ecclesia. Item, angelus Pergami fuit beatus Silvester papa et clerici fuerunt sua ecclesia. Item, angelus Sardis fuit beatus Franciscus et fratres Minores fuerunt sua ecclesia. Item, angelus Laodicie fuit beatus Dominicus et fratres Praedicatorum fuerunt sua ecclesia. Item, angelus Smirne fuit frater Gregorius Parmensis que a supradictis occisus. Item, angelus Tyatire est ipse frater Dulcinus dyocesis novarensis. Item, angelus Phyladelphie erit praedictus papa sanctus, et iste tres ecclesiae ultime sunt ista congregatio apostolica in istis diebus novissimis missa. Bernard Gui, 22. In the same letter written in 1300, Dolcino advances a theory of the history of the world involving four *status* instead of the customary Joachimite three.

94. Bernard Gui, 24.

95. Item, dicit quod omnes persecutores sui predicti prelatis cum ecclesie erant in brevi occidendi et consumendi, et qui ex eis essent residui converterentur ad sectam suam et unirentur ei, et tunc ipse et sui in omnibus prevalerent. Bernard Gui, 20.

96. In his final years Dolcino also apparently came to identify himself with the coming Holy Pope. See Töpfer, 304; and Reeves, *Prophecy*, 246.

97. See, e.g., G. Constable and B. Smith, *Liber de diversis ordinibus qui sunt in ecclesia* (Oxford, 1972), especially the 'Introduction'.

98. M. Hill, *The Religious Order* (London, 1973) 85-103.

99. Francis's belief that the Gospel alone was the center of his observance is evident in the Rule, the Testament, and in a host of the stories circulated about him, e.g., *Scripta Leonis, Rufini et Angeli*, ed. R. B. Brooke (Oxford, 1970) 94. For the background to this evangelical emphasis, see M.-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century* (Chicago, 1968) chap. 7.

100. Anselm of Havelberg, *Dialogues I*, ed. G. Salet (Paris, 1964), especially 34-44, and 116-8.

101. Reeves, *Prophecy*, 247, cites examples of survival into the fifteenth century.

102. See *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* 1:328-82 (Harper Torchbook ed.) for an analysis. Troeltsch's treatment of the Franciscans (355-8) highlights the problems of this application.

103. See chap. 2, 'An Ideal Type of the Religious Order', 19-60.

104. *The Religious Order*, 4-5.

105. E.g., his remarks on the Franciscans, 29-30, 95-100.

DEVOTIO MODERNA ATQUE ANTIQUA THE MODERN DEVOTION AND CARTHUSIAN SPIRITUALITY

NOTES

1. *The Turning Tide: Tradition and Innovation in the Fifteenth Century* was the theme of an international symposium on the fifteenth century held in Regensburg, Germany from August 11-16, 1982.

2. Jürgen Moltmann, *Umkehr zur Zukunft*, (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1970) 114-118.

3. A. Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance: A History of the 'Devotio Moderna'*, (2nd edition, New York: Archon Books, 1965). A Hyma, *The Brethren of the Common Life* (Grand Rapids, 1950). L. Spitz, *The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists* (Cambridge, 1963). L. J. Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974).

4. A. Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*, 309ff.

5. L. Spitz, *The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists*, 7.

6. L.J. Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin*, 12, 33, 36 ff.

7. R.R. Post, *The Modern Devotion: Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968).

8. *Ibid.*, 676-80.

9. A. Hyma, *The Brethren of the Common Life*, 19.

10. *Conclusa et proposita non vota*, in: Thomas à Kempis, *Opera Omnia*; ed. M. J. Pohl, 7 vols. (Freiburg, 1902-1921) 17:88.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

12. Guigo I, *Meditations of Guigo, Prior of the Charterhouse*, trans. John J. Jolin (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1951) 46-47.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14, 50.

14. *De Simonia ad beguttas*; ed. W. de Vreese (The Hague: 1950) 25.

15. *Gerardi Magni Epistolae*, n. 56; ed. W. Mulder (Antwerp, 1933) p. 243.

16. *Epistola* 9; p. 238.

17. *Conclusa et proposita non vota*; ed. Pohl, 7:97ff.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Guigo I, *Meditations*, p. 46.

20. K.C.L.M. de Beer, *Studie over de spiritualiteit van Geert Groote*, (Brussels: Nijmegen, 1938) 290-299.

21. In Archief voor de Geschiedenis van het Aartsbisdom Utrecht, 10 (1882) ed. J.F. Vrege, pp. 383-427. Critical edition of *Omnes, inquit artes* by Th. van Woerkum; typed copy in University Library of University of Nijmegen.

22. Post, p. 318.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, p. 320.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 321.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 318.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 322.

29. *De reformatione virium animae*; ed. de la Bigne, *Bibliotheca veterum Patrum* 5 (Parisii, 1624). Gerard of Zutphen, *The Spiritual Ascent*, trans. A. Landau (1907).

30. *The Spiritual Ascent*, c.1; trans. Landau, p. 2.

31. *Ibid.*, c.2;8.

32. Lucien J. Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin*, p. 20.

33. G. Zerbolt, *The Spiritual Ascent*, c. 27, pp. 55-60.

34. *Ibid.*, c. 27; p. 59.

35. *Ibid.*, c. 43; p. 193.

36. *Ibid.*, c. 198; p. 26.
37. Post, p. 327.
38. Guigues II Le Chartreux, *Lettre sur la Vie Contemplative* (L'échelle des moines), Douze Méditations. Ed. with introduction by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh. SCh 163. (Paris, 1970). English translation by Colledge and Walsh, *Guigo II. The Ladder of Monks and Twelve Meditations*. Cistercian Studies Series, Nbr. 48 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981).
39. *Ibid.*, Ch. II, p. 84 (CS 48:67-8).
40. *Ibid.*, Ch. XII, pp. 106-108 (CS 48:79-80); Ch. XIV, p. 112 (CS 48:82).
41. Giles Constable, 'The Popularity of Twelfth-Century Spiritual Writers in the Late Middle Ages', *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Hans Baron*, edd. A. Molho and J. Tedeschi (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971) 5-28.
42. Post, 328.
43. *Ibid.*, 3 f.
44. 'The Original Constitution of the Brethren of the Common Life at Deventer', in A. Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*, 2nd. ed., Appendix C, pp. 440-476. (Hereafter referred to as 'Constitution').
45. E. Margaret Thompson, *The Carthusian Order in England* (New York: MacMillan & Co., 1930).
46. 'Constitution', Cap. I, p. 442.
47. *Ibid.*, Cap. IX, p. 448.
48. *Ibid.*, Cap. XXXVII, p. 472.
49. Thompson, *The Carthusian Order in England*, 20-21.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
51. 'Constitution', Cap. II, pp. 442 f.
52. Thompson, 358 f.
53. *Ibid.*, 23 f.
54. 'Constitution', Cap. VI, p. 445.
55. Thompson, 34.
56. *Ibid.*
57. 'Constitution', Cap. XVI, p. 454.
58. Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2nd. rev. ed., 1974) pp. 33-56.
59. Giles Constable, 'The Popularity', 5-28.
60. Bernard of Clairvaux, SC 61:3 trans. Kilian Walsh & Irene M. Edmonds, *On the Song of Songs*, Cistercian Fathers Series, 31 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1979) 143.
61. *Supra*, notes 11-15; 32. See also: Darrell R. Reinke, 'The Monastic Style in Luther's *De Libertate Christiana*', *Studies in Medieval Culture*, X, edd. John R. Sommerfeld & Thomas H. Seiler (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1977) 147-154.
62. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 19 f.
63. David Curtis Steinmetz, *Misericordia Dei: The Theology of Johannes von Staupitz in Its Late Medieval Setting* (Leiden, 1968) 139.
64. This is the conclusion reached by Darrell R. Reinke in *Luther, The Cloister, and the Language of Monastic Devotion* (Diss. Washington Univer-

sity, 1972). See also, by the same author: 'Martin Luther: Language and Devotional Consciousness', in *The Spirituality of Western Christendom*, ed. E. R. Elder (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1976) 152-168.

65. Post, 680.

THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWING AND MYSTICA THEOLOGIA

NOTES

1. I agree with James Walsh, trans., *The Cloud of Unknowing* (New York, 1981), intro. pp. 2-9, that none of the arguments adduced against Carthusian authorship is sufficient. Walsh has shown in what way the circumstances of the text's composition point to Carthusian authorship, and has brought forward the slight external evidence available. I think the configuration of *The Cloud's* sources suggest Carthusian authorship. This point, without special reference to the question of authorship, will be treated in this study.
2. References to pseudo-Dionysius' *De mystica theologia* will be to the Latin text assembled by the editor in *Deonise Hid Diuinite and other Treatises on Contemplative Prayer Related to The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. Phyllis Hodgson, EETS 231 (Oxford 1955 for 1949, repr. 1958). See p. 95. In his translation of the work, the author of *The Cloud* renders these phrases, 'streite & litel . . . of short seinges', p. 4.
3. Aldous Huxley, *Grey Eminence: A Study in Religion and Politics* (New York, 1941) pp. 62-66.
4. *Deonise Hid Diuinite* and *A Tretyse of þe Stodye of Wysdome* are edited by Hodgson in *Deonise Hid Diuinite*, pp. 2-10, 11-46, respectively.
5. These three works are edited by Hodgson in *Deonise Hid Diuinite*, pp. 47-59, 61-67, 79-93, respectively.
6. *Deonise Hid Diuinite*, p. xxxvii.
7. See Guigo II, *Scala claustralium*, ed. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (*Lettre sur la vie contemplative*) (Paris, 1970). Colledge and Walsh restore the epistolary genre of this seminal monastic work. A Middle English translation of this work, *A Ladder of Foure Ronges by the which Men Mouwe Wele Clyme to Heven*, is edited by Hodgson, *Deonise Hid Diuinite*, pp. 100-117. For remarks on this translation, see *Lettre*, ed. Colledge and Walsh, pp. 45-52.
8. *De mystica theologia*, p. 94.
9. For Cicero's distinction between *oratio* and *sermo*, see *Orator*, with trans. by H. M. Hubbell (Loeb Classical Series, 1942) 19, 63-64, pp. 352-53. For the themes in Seneca's letters to which I have referred, see *Ad Lucilium epistulae morales*, 3 vols., with trans. by R. M. Gummere (Loeb Classical Series, 1953) XXXVIII, I, pp. 256-59 (*sermo* creeps into the soul, appeals to reason rather than passion); XL, I, pp. 262-71 (letters suited to communication of like-minded friends; plain, unadorned style appropriate to speech that 'heals the mind', contrasted with speech that pleases a crowd; the spiritual *medicus*); XLI, I, pp. 272-78 (God is to be found within the soul); LV, I, pp. 365-73 (sol-